

I do not conceal that, just like Straszewicz, I was afraid. Perhaps I was not so afraid of the army and war as of the fact that in spite of my best intentions, I could not handle them. I am not made for these things. Mine is a different realm. My development has always moved in a different direction. As a soldier, I would have been a catastrophe. I would have brought disgrace upon myself and you.

Do you think that patriots such as Mickiewicz and Chopin did not take part in the struggle out of simple cowardice? Or perhaps because they did not want to make fools of themselves? They probably had the right to defend themselves before that which exceeded their strength.

Perhaps these confessions are awkward and unnecessary. Perhaps it would be enough to say that at the time when the war broke out I had an army category "C," and that when I reported to a medical commission at the consulate in Buenos Aires, I was given a category "D."

Enough of this alphabet. I prefer to wrap this up.

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One has to admit that Straszewicz is wonderfully noble. I respect his virtues, do not diminish his attainments, and I have sympathy for his writer's predicament, but this article smells of Pasek's Memoirs. Straszewicz invokes judgments against Młosz and Gombrowicz. What does this mean? Once again, then, instead of a serious discussion, we are given a sejm, hullabaloo, and commotion. Once again profound letters—written by various fans kicking up their heels, protests, counterprotests, attacks, and jibes—addressed "Respectful Editor." Has that frog's croaking coming from the stagnant waters of your pond repulsed you yet?*

No. You may judge me only by reading my works more carefully, in the calm and quiet of your conscience.

Sunday

With the deepest humility, I confess that I, a mere worm, had the Spirit appear to me yesterday and hand me a Program, made up of five points:

1. To restore confidence, pride, momentum, and flight to a Polish literature that is fatally one-dimensionalized, weak, and pusillanimous.

2. To base it solidly on the "I," to make the "I" constitute its sovereignty and power, to finally introduce that "I" into Polish . . . but emphasize its dependence on the world. . . .

3. To switch it to the most modern tracks and not at a snail's pace, but with a jump, like this, straight out of the past into the future (*les extrêmes se touchent*). To draw it into the most complex issues, into the most painful complexities . . . yet to teach it lightness and how to maintain distance. . . .

To teach it contempt for the idea and cult of the personality.

*A political or debating assembly, with the connotation of being unruly.

4. To change its relation to form.
5. To Europeanize it but, at the same time, to exploit all its possibilities to oppose it to Europe.

At the bottom appeared the ironic: sausage is not for dogs!*

Saturday

I headed for where the light blinds you. First a three-day trip by car to a certain city, bursting with sunlight. There the roads ended. Seventy kilometers still divided us from the *estancia*, so we flew over them by plane.

COUNTRY DIARY

Saturday

We landed smoothly in a meadow, not far from trees, scattering the sheepish cows—sheep were also grazing close by—and I disembark, but really have no idea which direction is south, which north, and generally do not understand what is going on, because I sweat so much that I exhaust myself and the air is so thin and heated that it dances before my eyes. . . . A manor amid eucalyptus trees, broken by parrots cawing.

The sun draws my eyes shut with its little paw, I walk among the trees, but Sergio is saying something and a large bird takes wing—I sweat—takes wing and I sweat—and I hear him say, how about going hunting, but I am sweating. I am sweating and am somewhat nervous! Grumpy. And finally I am bored by the fact that this fellow always does what is expected of him. When food is served he sits at the table, when it is late he yawns, and when we come to the country he suggests hunting. I asked that he quit boring me with banalities and try to be less predictable. He said nothing. Flies buzz.

Sunday

I awoke quite late and tried to figure out where I was but that was not easy because the beating sun does not allow you to open your eyes. I see only the sandy soil underfoot and, I guess, ants. I tried to lift my gaze and glanced to the right but a cow was there and when I looked to the left, another cow was on that side. I walked straight ahead among the sunny waves slipping through the lanes, I know there is a tree ahead. Sergio, who accompanied me, climbed the tree. I asked him if he couldn't think of something more original? Instead of answering, he climbed down, but probably without the tree. I say "probably" because from under my lowered lids, I couldn't see and, who cares, I am melting.

*A Polish saying meaning "it's too good for the likes of you," "you haven't grown up to it."

Monday

I think about my work, my place in literature, my responsibility, my destiny and vocation.

But a mosquito buzzes on my left, no, right, green melts into blue, parrots squawk and until now, I couldn't get a good look because first, I don't really feel like it, and, second, I am melting. I assume that there are palm trees, cacti, brush, pasturelands, swamps or marshes, but I don't know for sure. I saw a path, took it, it led to bushes that smelled like tea, but it was not tea, then I saw Sergio's legs from under the wings of my hat, close by, on the left. What was he doing here? Did he want to accompany me on the walk? In a fit of irritation I asked, will he ever stop being conventional, at which his legs as if rose from the ground and began stepping above it, about fifteen centimeters in the air. This lasted a few minutes. Then they came down and trod the earth. . . . I used the words "as if" because I did not believe that this was possible and I was sweating and the hat, glare, and shrubbery limited my field of vision. Mandioka.

Tuesday

Nothing happened. If I am not mistaken, a whole herd of horses is watching me and cows, too, are looking at me in great numbers.

The evenings are cooler yet in spite of this, my head is compote, my bones sprawl. Sergio lit a curtain instead of a cigarette at supper and I was ready to scream but as it turned out, he didn't light it altogether, that is, not completely, rather halfway, to the astonishment of his parents, which was also half-hearted, and I said, in a mood of some sort of benevolent condescension—well, well, Sergio, so what are you up to?

Wednesday

I am melting and dissolving but everything else is dissolving, too, where is north, where is south, I know nothing, maybe I am seeing the landscape upside down, but I see no landscape only little flies, stalks, lines, the tremulous atmosphere, the buzzing, drowning in light. Sergio, on the other hand, begins to amaze me. Today at breakfast he amazed us somewhat by somehow turning so that, having entered the dining room, it was as if he had walked into the dining room once again, that is, somehow from the inside, yes, it was as if he had walked into the inside from inside which then allowed him to leave the inside to go to the inside to go to the inside and then only from the inside to the outside. . . . I say "as if," "somehow," because all of this was happening only to a certain degree, but undoubtedly this boy is moving further and further away from cliché. His parents reprimanded him, but only to a certain extent because it is impossible to concentrate when the sweat pours down your body and everything grows blurry. . . .

Thursday

If not for my sweating, I would feel profoundly disturbed, and maybe even afraid, as very strange things are happening. At noon, in the most intense heat and tremulousness, Sergio was mounting a horse. To the amazement of not only his parents, but also the entire estancia, he did not quite get on his horse, and not quite galloped after which he somewhat dismounted and went to his room, just like that, not quite enough. I had a lengthy conversation with his parents, who did not conceal their concern, which melted along with them in the tropical heat and as a consequence of this conversation, I turned to Sergio with the request that he be more predictable in the future. He answered that ever since I had opened his eyes to unknown possibilities, he felt like a king and did not intend to abdicate. I did not like it at all and I indicated all the impropriety of these games, to which he replied: Good, good, yes, naturally, I think, however, that you are right. . . . This "however" indicated that he was still clinging to his indirectness, incompleteness, that, however, he was trying to take advantage of that murkiness, fogginess, prolixity of everything for his own purposes, that taking advantage of the fact that we, nolens volens, must close our eyes to this, he would do mischief perhaps not quite and would take liberties not quite entirely. . . .

The conversation had no positive effect, especially because, at the same time, we were taking a path that led into the brush near the swamp and at a given moment I noticed that I was in the cane and next to me, in addition to Sergio's legs, Chango's and Cumba's feet, two farmhands from the estancia. Then something horrible happened. Namely, everyone stopped (I did, too) and Sergio's hand gave me a rifle while his other hand suddenly indicated something in the shape of a triangle, in a yellow-green-blue light shadow there, in the bushes. . . . I shot.

A thunderclap shook the whole place. . . .

Something swished, darted, disappeared. After that nothing but the buzzing of mosquitoes. So I walked with them in the heat and shortly found myself home. A crocodile. Crocodile! A crocodile, shot, but not sufficiently; not quite killed, hit, but not enough. . . . and he now shoots everything around him. In addition to this, a blast the blast that also shot through and what was worse, sealed shut, yes, sealed shut!!! The hellish scorching of the sun. Sweat and a flash, bewilderment, laziness, and the crocodile, not quite a crocodile over there. . . . Sergio didn't say anything but I knew he was game for this. . . . and it didn't surprise me at all when he not quite, but already openly, flew to a branch and gave out a chirp. Why not! Now, to a certain degree, now, whatever happens, he can allow himself everything.

I am somehow preparing myself for flight. I pack my suitcase to an extent. The crocodile, not quite, not quite a crocodile! Sergio's parents have almost gotten into the buggy harnessed to four horses and are almost growing distant. . . . almost in a hurry. . . . Hot. Heatwave. Scorching heat.