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*The Threepenny Opera, Baal, and The Mother*

## BERTOLT BRECHT

### The Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke

The Measures Taken  
*Translated from the German by Carl R. Mueller*

The Exception and the Rule  
*Translated from the German by Ralph Manheim*

He Who Says Yes/He Who Says No  
*Translated from the German by Wolfgang Sauerlande*

Edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim



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# Introductory Note

## The Lehrstück or Learning-Play

*The following note is excerpted from an essay by Brecht on 'The German Drama: pre-Hitler', published in English in Left Review, London, July 1936. The full text appears in Brecht on Theatre, translated and edited by John Willett, Methuen, 1964.*

Briefly the aristotelian play is essentially static; its task is to show the world as it is. The learning-play [Lehrstück] is essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and also how it may be changed). It is a common truism among the producers and writers of the former type of play that the audience, once it is in the theatre, is not a number of individuals but a collective individual, a mob, which must be and can be reached only through its emotions; that it has the mental immaturity and the high emotional suggestibility of a mob. We have often seen this pointed out in treatises on the writing and production of plays. The latter theatre holds that the audience is a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and of reasoning, of making judgments even in the theatre; it treats it as individuals of mental and emotional maturity, and believes it wishes to be so regarded.

With the learning-play, then, the stage begins to be didactic. (A word of which I, as a man of many years of experience in the theatre, am not afraid.) The theatre becomes a place for philosophers, and for such philosophers as not only wish to explain the world but wish to change it. . .

For theatre remains theatre even while it is didactic, and as long as it is good theatre it is also entertaining. In Germany, philosophers discussed these learning-plays, and plain people saw them and enjoyed them, and also discussed them.

For some years, in carrying out my experiments, I tried, with a small staff of collaborators, to work outside the theatre, which, having for so long been forced to 'sell' an evening's entertainment had retreated into too inflexible limits for such experiments; we tried a type of theatrical performance that could influence the thinking of all the people engaged in it. We worked with different means and in different strata of society. These experiments were theatrical performances meant not so much for the spectator as for those who were engaged in the performance. It was, so to speak, art for the producer, not art for the consumer.

# THE MEASURES TAKEN

Lehrstück

*Translated by Carl R. Mueller*

# Characters

The Four Agitators  
 who play the parts of  
 The Young Comrade  
 The Head of the Party House  
 The Overseer  
 Two Coolies  
 Two Textile Factory Workers  
 The Policeman  
 The Merchant

The Control Chorus

Written 1929/1930. Collaborators: S. Dudow, H. Eisler.  
 First produced in Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, on 10 December  
 1930.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: Step forward! Your work has been successful. The revolution marches forward even in that country. The ranks of fighters are well organized even there. We agree with the measures taken.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: Wait, we must tell you something! We must advise you of the death of a comrade.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: Who killed him?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We killed him. We shot him and cast him into a lime-pit.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: What had he done that caused you to shoot him?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: Most often he acted with us, occasionally against us, but finally he endangered the movement. He wanted to act with us and acted against us. We demand your verdict.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: Describe how it happened and why, and you will hear our verdict.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We will submit to your verdict.

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## The Teachings of the Classics

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We came as agitators from Moscow. We were to proceed to the city of Mukden for propaganda purposes and to aid the Chinese Party. We were to report to the Party House, the last before the border, and ask for a leader. We were met there by a young comrade and spoke of our mission. We repeat the discussion.

*They arrange themselves into two groups of three and one; one of the four represents the young comrade.*

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**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** I am the secretary of the Party House, the last before the border. I sympathize with the revolution. The sight of injustice compelled me to become a fighter. Man must help Man. I support the cause of freedom. I believe in humanity. I am for the measures taken by the Communist Party, fighting against exploitation and ignorance for a classless society.

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** We are from Moscow.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** We were expecting you.

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** Why?

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** We can't go on. There is disorder here and want: too little bread and too much fighting. Many of us are courageous but not many of us can read. There are few machines and few of us understand them. Our locomotives have broken down. Have you brought locomotives with you?

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Have you brought tractors with you?

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Our farmers still yoke themselves to old wooden ploughs. And so we have nothing to till our fields with. Have you brought seed-corn with you?

**THE FOUR AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Have you at least brought munitions and machine-guns?

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** There are only two of us here to uphold the revolution. Surely you have a letter from the Central Committee telling us what to do.

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Then will *you* help us?

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Day and night without sleep we guard against the onslaught of hunger, against ruin and counter-revolution. And yet you bring us nothing.

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** Yes: we bring you nothing. But to

## THE MEASURES TAKEN 11

the Chinese workers across the border in Mukden we bring the teachings of the Classics and the Propagandists: the ABC of Communism. To the ignorant we bring instruction concerning their condition; to the oppressed, class-consciousness; and to the class-conscious, practical knowledge of the revolution. We are to ask you for a motor-car and a leader.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Was I wrong to ask?

**THE THREE AGITATORS:** No; for your good question received an even better answer. We know we are asking the utmost of you; and yet we will ask even more: one of you two must lead us to Mukden.

**THE YOUNG COMRADE:** Very well. I'll leave my post, which not even two of us could handle, but which one must handle now. I'll go with you. We will march forward and propagate the teaching of the Communist Classics: World Revolution.

**THE CONTROL CHORUS:**

*In praise of the USSR*

The world was already discussing  
Our misfortune  
But still there sat at our  
Meagre table  
All the hopes of the oppressed, who  
Were satisfied with water  
And who with clear voices  
Behind crumbling doors  
Enlightened their guests with knowledge.  
When the door crumbles  
We will sit there even more visibly:  
Whom neither cold nor hunger can destroy  
Untiringly advising  
The fate of the world.

**THE FOUR AGITATORS:** And so the young comrade from the border station agreed with our mission. And we, four men and a woman, appeared before the head of the Party House.

**The Effacement**

**THE FOUR AGITATORS:** But the work in Mukden was illegal. And so before we crossed the border we had to efface our personal features. Our young comrade agreed with this. We repeat the proceedings.

*One of the agitators represents the head of the Party House.*

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE:** I am the head of the Party House. I agree that this comrade from my station should accompany you as your leader. Yet there is discontent in the factories of Mukden. The eyes of the world are turned on us today in this city, to see if one of us emerges from the hut of a Chinese worker. I have heard that gunboats are ready on the rivers, and armoured trains on the railway embankments. They will attack at the moment any of us is seen there. I therefore ask our comrades to cross the border as Chinese.

*To the agitators.*

You must not be seen.

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** We will not be seen.

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE:** Should one of you be injured, he must not be found.

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** He will not be found.

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE:** Then you are prepared to die and to conceal the dead?

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** Yes.

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE:** Then be yourselves no longer: you no longer Karl Schmidt from Berlin; you no longer Anna Kjersk from Kazan; and you no longer Peter Sawitsch from Moscow. You are nameless and without a past, empty pages on which the revolution may write its instructions.

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** Yes.

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE** *gives them masks which they put on:* And therefore from this moment you are no longer no-one; but rather from this moment on, and in all probability until your disappearance, you are unknown

workers, fighters. Chinese, born of Chinese mothers, yellow-skinned, who in sleep and in delirium speak only Chinese.

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** Yes.

**THE HEAD OF THE PARTY HOUSE:** In the interests of Communism you agree with the advance of the proletariat of all lands. You agree with World Revolution.

**THE TWO AGITATORS:** Yes. And so the young comrade demonstrated his agreement by effacing his personal features.

**THE CONTROL CHORUS:**

He who fights for Communism  
Must be able to fight and not fight  
Must tell the truth and not tell the truth  
Render service and not render service  
Place himself in danger and avoid danger  
Be recognizable and be unrecognizable.  
He who fights for Communism  
Has of all virtues only one:  
That he fights for Communism.

**THE FOUR AGITATORS:** We proceeded towards Mukden as Chinese - four men and a woman - for propaganda purposes and to aid the Chinese Party with the teachings of the Classics and the Propagandists, the ABC of Communism. To bring to the ignorant instruction concerning their condition; to the oppressed, class-consciousness; and to the class-conscious, practical knowledge of the revolution.

**THE CONTROL CHORUS:**

*In praise of illegal work*

It is good to use the word  
As a weapon in class warfare.  
To call up the masses to battle  
With loud and resounding voices.  
To trample down the oppressor, to free the oppressed.  
Our petty daily work is difficult but useful.  
Tenacity and secrecy are the links  
That bind the Party network against the  
Guns of the Capitalist world:  
To speak, but  
To conceal the speaker.  
To conquer, but

To conceal the conqueror.  
 To die, but  
 To hide the dead.  
 Who would not do great things for glory; but who  
 Would do them for silence?  
 The pitiful peasant invited honour to his table  
 And out of his narrow and crumbling hut  
 Greatness emerged unhinderable.  
 And glory seeks in vain  
 For the doer of great deeds.  
 Step forward  
 For one moment  
 Unknown and hidden faces, and receive  
 Our thanks!

THE FOUR AGITATORS: In the city of Mukden we carried on  
 our propaganda among the workers. We had no bread for the  
 hungry, but only knowledge for the ignorant; therefore we  
 spoke of the primal causes of misery, not of the elimination  
 of misery, but of the elimination of the primal causes.

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### The Stone

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We first of all went to the lower city.  
 There we saw some coolies on the bank of the river tugging  
 at a barge attached to a rope. But the ground was slippery.  
 When one of the coolies slipped and the overseer kicked him,  
 we said to the young comrade: 'Follow them and make use  
 of your propaganda. Tell them that in Tientsin you saw shoes  
 for barge-haulers with boards on the soles so they won't slip.  
 Make them demand such shoes. But you must not fall prey to  
 pity.' And we asked him: 'Do you agree?' And he agreed, and  
 hurried towards them and at once fell prey to pity. We will  
 show you.

*Two of the agitators represent the coolies, during which time they  
 tie a cable to a wooden stake and pull the rope across their shoulders.  
 One of them represents the young comrade, the other the overseer.*

THE OVERSEER: I am the overseer. This rice must be in the  
 city of Mukden by evening.

THE TWO COOLIES: We are the coolies who haul the rice  
 barge up the river.

### *The Song of the Rice Barge Haulers*

In the city up the river  
 A mouthful of rice awaits us.  
 But the barge is heavy, this barge we must pull.  
 And the water flows down the river.  
 We will never get there.  
 Pull faster, our bellies  
 Need their dinner.  
 Pull together, don't push  
 Your neighbour.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: This beautiful song that hides the  
 torment of their work is repulsive!

THE OVERSEER: Pull faster!

### ONE OF THE COOLIES:

Night will soon come. The hut  
 Too narrow for a dog's shadow  
 Costs half a mouthful of rice.  
 The shore is too slippery here.  
 We can make no progress.  
 Pull faster, our bellies  
 Need their dinner.  
 Pull together, don't push  
 Your neighbour.

ONE OF THE COOLIES *slips out of line*: I can't go on.

THE TWO COOLIES *while they stand there being whipped,  
 until the man who fell is back on his feet*:

This rope that cuts our shoulders  
 Will last longer than we.  
 This overseer's whip  
 Has seen four generations of us.  
 We will not be the last.  
 Pull faster, our bellies  
 Need their dinner.  
 Pull together, don't push  
 Your neighbour.

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THE YOUNG COMRADE: Who could look at these men and not feel pity?

*To the overseer.*

Don't you see how slippery the ground is?

THE OVERSEER: What's wrong with the ground?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: It's slippery!

THE OVERSEER: What? Too slippery to haul a barge of rice on?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes.

THE OVERSEER: And you probably think the city of Mukden doesn't need rice!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: If your people continue falling, how can they haul the barge?

THE OVERSEER: You want me to prop each step with a stone from here to the city of Mukden?

THE YOUNG COMRADE:

I don't know what *you* should do, but I know what *they* should do. *To the coolies*. You must not believe that what was impossible for two thousand years will always be impossible. In Tientsin I saw shoes for barge-haulers with boards on the soles so they wouldn't slip. This was made possible by constant complaint. You must also complain constantly and demand such shoes for yourselves!

THE TWO COOLIES: We can never pull this barge without such shoes.

THE OVERSEER: But the rice must be in Mukden by evening.

*He lashes them. They pull.*

THE TWO COOLIES:

Our fathers pulled this barge just a little way  
Up the river. Our children  
Will reach the top. But we  
Stand here between them.  
Pull faster, our bellies  
Need their dinner.  
Pull together, don't push  
Your neighbour.

*The coolie stumbles again.*

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THE COOLIE: Help me!

THE YOUNG COMRADE *to the overseer*: Aren't you even human? I'll take one of these stones and place it in the slime.

*To the coolie.*

Now tread on that!

THE OVERSEER: Of course. What good are shoes in Tientsin to us here? I'd rather your pitying partner ran alongside with a stone for every foot that slips.

THE TWO COOLIES:

There's rice in the barge. The farmer who  
Harvested it was paid  
With a handful of coins, but we  
Are paid still less. An ox  
Would cost too much. And there are too many of us.

*One of the coolies slips; the young comrade puts down the stone; the coolie recovers himself.*

Pull faster, our bellies  
Need their dinner.  
Pull together, don't push  
Your neighbour.

The food comes from down the river  
And goes up-river to the buyers. We  
Who haul that food never  
Taste of it.

*One of the coolies slips; the young comrade puts down the stone; the coolie recovers himself.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I can't go on. You must demand other shoes.

ONE OF THE COOLIES: He's a fool. We laugh at people like him.

THE OVERSEER: No, he's one of those inciters trying to stir up the people. Hurry, capture him!

THE FOUR AGITATORS: And he was captured at once. And he was chased for two days before he found us; and then we were chased through the city of Mukden for a whole week and dared not be seen in the lower half of the city.

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### Discussion

#### THE CONTROL CHORUS:

But isn't it right to aid the weak  
To help the oppressed and exploited  
In his daily affliction  
Wherever he is?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: He didn't help us; he hindered us  
from using our propaganda in the lower part of the city.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: We agree.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: The young comrade realized that he  
had separated feeling from reason. But we consoled him with  
the words of Comrade Lenin:

THE CONTROL CHORUS: He who makes no mistakes is not  
wise; but rather: He who quickly corrects his mistakes is wise.

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### Justice

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We founded the first cells in the  
factories and trained the first officials. We organized a Party  
School and instructed its members how to make the forbidden  
literature available, albeit secretly. But at the time we were  
working in the textile factories, and when wages were lowered,  
some of the workers struck. But the strike was endangered  
because the other segment of workers continued working. We  
said to the young comrade: 'Stand by the gate of the factory  
and distribute these leaflets.' We repeat the discussion.

THE THREE AGITATORS: You failed with the rice barge  
workers.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Did it teach you anything?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Will you do better with the strike?

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THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes

*Two of the agitators represent textile factory workers and a third a policeman.*

THE TEXTILE FACTORY WORKERS: We are workers in the  
textile factory.

THE POLICEMAN: I'm a policeman. I'm paid by those in charge  
to combat dissatisfaction.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

Come out, comrades! Risk  
The penny that isn't a penny  
Your lodging with its leaking roof  
And your job that you will lose tomorrow without fail!  
Come out into the streets! Fight!  
The time for waiting is past!  
Help yourselves, and you will help us, too: practise  
Solidarity!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Give up whatever you own, comrade:  
You have nothing.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

Come out, comrades, face their weapons  
And insist on your wages!  
If you realize you have nothing to lose  
Then their police will be defenceless!  
Come out into the streets! Fight!  
The time for waiting is past!  
Help yourselves, you will help us, too: practise  
Solidarity!

THE TEXTILE WORKERS: When the factories close, we go  
home; our wages have been lowered; we don't know what to  
do; so we continue working.

THE YOUNG COMRADE *slips a leaflet into the band of one of  
them while the other stands idly by*: Read it and pass it on.  
After you've read it you'll know what to do.

*The first worker takes it and walks on.*

THE POLICEMAN *takes a leaflet from the first worker*: Who  
gave you this leaflet?

THE FIRST WORKER: I don't know, someone handed it to me  
on his way by.

THE POLICEMAN *approaches the second worker*: You gave him this leaflet. We police are looking for your kind handing these out.

THE SECOND WORKER: I didn't give anyone a leaflet.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Is it a crime to instruct the ignorant about their condition?

THE POLICEMAN *to the second worker*: Your instructions lead to terrible things. Teach such things to factory workers like these and they won't know their own boss anymore. This leaflet is more dangerous than ten cannons.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: What does it say?

THE POLICEMAN: How should I know?

*To the second worker.*

What does it say?

THE SECOND WORKER: I never saw it before; I didn't hand it out.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I know he didn't do it.

THE POLICEMAN *to the young comrade*: Did you give him the leaflet?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: No.

THE POLICEMAN *to the second worker*: Then *you* gave it to him.

THE YOUNG COMRADE *to the first worker*: What will happen to him?

THE FIRST WORKER: He can be shot.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Why do you want to shoot him?  
Aren't you a proletarian too?

THE POLICEMAN *to the second worker*: Come with me.

*He strikes him on the head.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE *stopping him*: He didn't do it.

THE POLICEMAN: Then it was *you*!

THE SECOND WORKER: He didn't do it!

THE POLICEMAN: Then it was both of you!

THE FIRST WORKER: Run, man, run, your pockets are stuffed with leaflets!

*The policeman strikes down the second worker.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE *pointing towards the policeman: to the first worker*: He's striking an innocent man; you're a witness.

THE FIRST WORKER *grabs the policeman*: You hired dog!  
*The policeman pulls his revolver.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE *cries out*: Help us, comrades! Help!  
They're attacking innocent people!

*The young comrade grips the policeman from behind by the neck as the first worker bends his arm back slowly. The gun goes off, the policeman is disarmed and struck down.*

THE SECOND WORKER *getting up; to the first worker*: Now that we've struck a policeman we don't dare come to work tomorrow and -

*To the young comrade.*

- it's your fault.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: If you go into that factory you're betraying your comrades.

THE SECOND WORKER: I've got a wife and three children, and when you walked out and struck they raised our wages. Look here, I was getting twice as much!

*He shows him the money.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE *slaps the money from the second worker's hand*: You should be ashamed, you hired dogs!

*The first worker grabs him by the neck while the second worker picks up the money. The young comrade knocks his attacker down with a rubber club.*

THE SECOND WORKER *cries out*: Help! These men are agitators!

THE FOUR AGITATORS: The workers from the factory appeared at once and drove off the strikers.

#### Discussion

THE CONTROL CHORUS: What could the young comrade have done?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: He could have told the workers that

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their only defence was to win over their fellow workers and form a common front against the police. Because the policeman had committed an injustice.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: We agree.

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What is Man?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: Our daily battle was with that ancient alliance: Oppression and Despair. We taught the workers to fight for power instead of better wages. We taught them the use of weapons and how to fight in the streets. We then heard of the conflict over tariffs between the merchants and the English who ruled the city. To turn this dispute of rulers to the benefit of the ruled, we sent the young comrade with a letter to the richest of the merchants. In it we said: 'Arm the coolies!' To the young comrade we said: 'Conduct yourself so that you get the weapons.' But when the food was brought to the table, he did not keep silent. We will show you.

*One of the agitators represents the merchant.*

THE MERCHANT: I am the merchant. I am awaiting a letter from the coolie alliance concerning a common front against the English.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Here is the letter from the coolie alliance.

THE MERCHANT: May I invite you to share my table with me?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: It is an honour for me to be invited to share your table.

THE MERCHANT: While our food is being prepared I'll tell you what I think of the coolies. Please sit down.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I'm very interested in your opinion.

THE MERCHANT: Why do I get almost everything cheaper than anyone else? And why will a coolie work for me for almost nothing?

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THE YOUNG COMRADE: I don't know.

THE MERCHANT: Because I'm an intelligent man. You are intelligent people too; you, too, know how to make a living from the coolies.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Perhaps. But will you arm the coolies against the English?

THE MERCHANT: Perhaps, perhaps. I know how to handle a coolie. You give him just enough rice to stay alive so that he can work for you. Is that right?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes, that's right.

THE MERCHANT: No, I don't agree: because when coolies are cheaper than rice, then I always get a new coolie. Is that perhaps more right?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes, that's more right. But when will you send the first shipment of arms to the lower part of the city?

THE MERCHANT: Soon, soon. But first you must see how the coolies who load up my leather goods buy rice at the canteen.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes, I must see that.

THE MERCHANT: Do you think I pay them too much?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: No, but your rice is expensive, and the work has to be good; but your rice is bad.

THE MERCHANT: You are very intelligent people.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: And when will you arm the coolies against the English?

THE MERCHANT: After we've eaten we can visit the arms room. But now I'll sing you my favourite song.

*The Song of Commodity*

The rice grows down the river.  
The people in the upper provinces need that rice.  
If we leave the rice where it is  
Then rice will grow more expensive.  
The coolies who haul the rice-barges will get even less rice then.  
Then rice will be even less expensive for me.  
What is rice anyway?  
Do I know what rice is?

How should I know who should know?  
I don't know what rice is.  
All I know is its price.

When winter comes, people all need clothes.  
One goes out and buys cotton.  
One doesn't give away one's cotton.  
When cold weather comes, clothes become more expensive.  
What is cotton anyway?

Do I know what cotton is?  
How should I know who should know?  
I don't know what cotton is.  
All I know is its price.

A man like that eats too much.  
That's why he becomes more expensive.  
If one's to grow food, he'll need men to grow it for him.  
Cooks make food less expensive, but  
The consumer makes it less cheap.  
On the whole there are too few people.

What is Man anyway?  
Do I know what Man is?  
How should I know who should know?  
I don't know what Man is.  
All I know is his price.

*To the young comrade.*

And now we will eat some of my excellent rice.

THE YOUNG COMRADE *rises*: I can't eat with you.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: And when he had said that, neither smiles nor threats could compel him to eat with that man he despised; and the merchant drove him off; and the coolies went unarmed.

### Discussion

THE CONTROL CHORUS: But isn't it right to place honour above all else?

THE FOUR AGITATORS: No.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

### *Change the World: It Needs It*

With whom would the just man not sit  
To help justice?  
What medicine is too bitter  
For the man who's dying?  
What vileness should you not suffer to  
Annihilate vileness?  
If at last you could change the world, what  
Could make you too good to do so?  
Who are you?  
Sink in filth  
Embrace the butcher, but  
Change the world: It needs it!  
We shall not listen to you much longer as  
Judges. But  
As students.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: He was scarcely out of the door when the young comrade realized his mistake and trusted our judgment whether to send him back across the border. We were clearly aware of his weaknesses, but still in need of his help. He had a large following among youth assemblies. He was a great help in those days in uniting the Party network in the face of capitalist guns.

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### The Betrayal

THE FOUR AGITATORS: That week the persecutions grew worse. We now had a single hidden room for our type-setting machine and the leaflets. But one morning violent hunger riots broke out in the city, and news reached us of great unrest in the plains as well. On the evening of the third day we arrived at our hiding place, though not without endangering its secrecy, and were met by the young comrade at the door as we approached. Several sacks stood in front of the house in the rain. We repeat the discussion.

THE THREE AGITATORS: What are these sacks?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Propaganda material.

THE THREE AGITATORS: What are they doing here?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: There's something I must tell you. The new leaders of the unemployed came here today and convinced me we must start the action at once. We must distribute our propaganda material and attack the barracks.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Then you've shown them the wrong way. But tell us your reasons and try to convince us too.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Their suffering is growing worse, and there's rioting in the city.

THE THREE AGITATORS: The ignorant are beginning to realize their situation.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: The unemployed have accepted our instruction.

THE THREE AGITATORS: The oppressed are becoming class-conscious.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: They're in the streets threatening to destroy the spinning-mills.

THE THREE AGITATORS: They've had no experience in revolution. Our own responsibility is just that much greater.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: The unemployed can't wait any longer, nor can I wait any longer. There's too much suffering.

THE THREE AGITATORS: But we still don't have enough fighters.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Their suffering is unendurable.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Suffering is not enough.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: There are seven men inside here sent to us by the unemployed. There are seven thousand others standing behind them. And they know: that misfortune doesn't grow on the breast like leprosy; that poverty doesn't fall like tiles from the roof; but that misfortune and poverty are the work of Man. Want is cooked in the pots on their stoves, and misery is their only food. They know all there is to know.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Do they know how many regiments

the government has?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: No.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Then there's something they don't know. Where are your weapons?

THE YOUNG COMRADE *shows his hands*: We'll fight with tooth and nail.

THE THREE AGITATORS: That's not enough. All you see is the misery of the *unemployed* and not the misery of the *employed*. All you see is the city and not the farmers of the plains. You see the soldier only as an oppressor and not as a wretch in uniform who oppresses. Go back to the unemployed now, withdraw your advice to attack the barracks, and convince them to take part in the factory workers' demonstration tonight. We will try to convince the dissatisfied soldiers, so that they'll join with us in our demonstration.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I've already reminded the unemployed of how often the soldiers have fired at them. Am I to tell them now that they're to demonstrate with murderers?

THE THREE AGITATORS: Yes. These soldiers can just as easily be brought to realize how wrong it was to fire on their own suffering class. Remember the classic advice of our Comrade Lenin: Not to regard all peasants as class enemies, but to win over the poverty of the villages as a comrade-in-arms.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Then I'll ask you this: Do our classics allow misery to wait?

THE THREE AGITATORS: Their methods encompass the totality of misery.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Then do our classics fail to allow immediate aid to the miserable before all else?

THE THREE AGITATORS: Yes.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Then our classics are worth nothing and I tear them to pieces! Man, a living being, cries out in his misery and destroys all obstacles of instruction. That's why I must have action now, at once. And so I cry out, to destroy all obstacles of instruction.

*He tears up the writings.*

## THE THREE AGITATORS:

You must not destroy them! We need them  
 Every one. Open your eyes to the truth!  
 Yours is an impetuous revolution that will last a day  
 And be throttled tomorrow.  
 But our revolution begins tomorrow.  
 It will conquer and change the world.  
 Your revolution will end when you end.  
 But when you have come to your end  
 Our revolution will continue.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Listen to me: I can see with my two  
 eyes that misery can't wait. And therefore I oppose your  
 decision to wait.

THE THREE AGITATORS: You have failed to convince us. Go  
 to the unemployed now and convince them that they must  
 stand in the forefront of the revolution. We demand this of  
 you in the name of the Party.

## THE YOUNG COMRADE:

But who is the Party?  
 Does it sit in a house with a telephone?  
 Are its thoughts secret, its decisions unknown?  
 Who is the Party?

## THE THREE AGITATORS:

We are the Party.  
 You and I and he - all of us.  
 It is hidden in your clothes, it thinks in your head  
 Where I live is its home, and where you are attacked it fights.

Show us the way which we are to go, and we  
 Will go that way with you, but  
 Do not go the right way without us  
 Without us it is  
 The wrong way.  
 You must stay with us!

We may be wrong and you may be right; therefore  
 You must stay with us!

We do not deny that the shortest way is better than the long way.  
 But if one of us knows the short way  
 And hasn't the power to show us, then of what use to us is his  
 wisdom?

Be wise with us!  
 You must stay with us!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I can't submit, because I know I'm  
 right. I can see with my two eyes that misery cannot wait.

## THE CONTROL CHORUS:

*In Praise of the Party.*

The individual has only two eyes  
 The Party has a thousand eyes.  
 The Party can see seven lands  
 The individual a single city.  
 The individual has only his hour  
 The Party has many hours.  
 The individual can be annihilated  
 But the Party cannot be annihilated  
 For it is the vanguard of the masses  
 And it lays out its battles  
 According to the methods of our classics, which are derived  
 from  
 The recognition of reality.

THE YOUNG COMRADE: That means nothing now. Now, in  
 the face of battle, I reject all that was meaningful even  
 yesterday; I denounce all agreements I have made; my actions  
 will be totally human. The battle is here. I place myself at its  
 head. I sympathize with the revolution.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Silence!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I see oppression. I'm for the cause of  
 freedom!

THE THREE AGITATORS: Silence! You'll betray us!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: I can't keep silent, because I'm right.

THE THREE AGITATORS: Right or not - if you speak, we're  
 lost! Silence!

## THE YOUNG COMRADE:

I have seen too much.  
 Therefore I will stand before them  
 As no one but myself, and tell them the truth.

*He takes off his mask and cries out.*

We have come to help you.

We have come from Moscow.

*He tears the mask to bits.*

THE FOUR AGITATORS:

And we watched him, and in the twilight  
 We saw his naked face  
 Human, innocent, and without guile. He had  
 Torn the mask to bits.  
 And from their houses came the  
 Cries of the exploited: 'Who  
 Disturbs the sleep of the poor?'  
 And from an open window a voice cried:  
 'There are foreigners out there! Chase the agitators!'  
 And so we were discovered!  
 And at that moment we heard of riots  
 In the lower part of the city, and the ignorant waited in the  
 Assembly houses and the unarmed thronged the streets.  
 And we struck him down  
 Raised him up and left the city in haste.

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### The Limits of Persecution and Analysis

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

They left the city!  
 Riots arose in the city  
 But its leaders escaped across the border!  
 What measures did you take?

THE FOUR AGITATORS:

Let us finish!  
 It's easy to know the right course of action  
 Far from the danger of battle  
 With months of time for planning  
 But we had ten minutes'  
 Time and  
 Thought only of the guns shooting at us.

When in our flight we approached the lime-pits outside the  
 city, we saw our pursuers. Our young comrade opened his  
 eyes, learned what had happened, realized what he had done,  
 and said: 'We are lost.'

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

What measures did you take?  
 In times of persecution and when theory is in a state of  
 confusion  
 Fighters are expected to make a sketch of the site  
 And carefully consider all defences and possibilities.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We repeat the analysis.

THE FIRST AGITATOR: We must get him across the border, we  
 said.

THE SECOND AGITATOR: But the masses are in the streets.

THE THIRD AGITATOR: And we must get them into the  
 assemblies.

THE FIRST AGITATOR: Then we'll never get our comrade  
 across the border.

THE THIRD AGITATOR: If we hide him and he's found, what  
 will happen when they recognize him?

THE FIRST AGITATOR: There are gun-boats ready on the rivers  
 and armoured-trains at the railway embankments. They'll  
 attack us if any one of us is seen there. He must not be found.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

When they come upon us, wherever it may be  
 They cry: 'Down  
 With the despots!'  
 And the cannons let loose.

Then when the hungry  
 Groan and strike back at their tormentors  
 They say we are the ones who paid them  
 To groan and strike back.

It is branded on our brows  
 That we oppose exploitation.  
 Our arrest warrants read: 'They  
 Are for the oppressed.'

Those who help the despairing  
Are the scum of the earth.  
We are the scum of the earth  
We must not be found.

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## The Burial

## THE FOUR AGITATORS:

We decided:  
That he must disappear, completely.  
Since we can neither take him with us nor leave him behind  
We are compelled to shoot him and to cast him into the lime-  
pit where the  
Lime will burn him up.

THE CONTROL CHORUS: 'You found no way out?

## THE FOUR AGITATORS:

Pressed for time, we found no way out.  
Just as animals help their own kind  
We also wished to help him who  
Fought with us for our cause.  
For five minutes, in the face of our persecutors  
We deliberated in hope of finding a  
Better possibility.  
Now it's your turn to deliberate.  
And find a better course of action.

*Pause.*

And so we decided: we now  
Had to cut off a member of our own body.  
*It is a terrible thing to kill.*  
We would not only kill others, but ourselves as well, if the  
need arose.  
For violence is the only means whereby this deadly  
World may be changed, as  
Every living being knows.

And yet, we said  
We are not permitted not to kill. At one with the  
Inflexible will to change the world, we formulated  
The measures taken.

## THE CONTROL CHORUS:

Continue your story. We  
Sympathize with you.  
It was not easy to do what was right.  
It was not you who sentenced him, but  
Reality.

THE FOUR AGITATORS: We repeat our final discussion.

THE FIRST AGITATOR: We want to ask him whether he agrees  
with us, because he was a courageous fighter. (That face, of  
course, which appeared from under the mask, was not the  
same face which he had once hidden with the mask; and that  
face, which the lime will extinguish, is different from the face  
which once greeted us at the border.)

THE SECOND AGITATOR: But even if he does not agree with  
us, he must disappear, completely.

THE FIRST AGITATOR *to the young comrade*: If you are  
caught you will be shot; and since you will be recognized, our  
work will have been betrayed. Therefore we must be the ones  
to shoot you and cast you into the lime-pit, so that the lime  
will burn away all traces of you. And yet we ask you: Do you  
know any way out?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: No.

THE THREE AGITATORS: And we ask you: Do you agree with  
us?

*Pause.*

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Yes.

THE THREE AGITATORS: We also ask you: What shall we do  
with your body?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: You must cast me into the lime-pit,  
he said.

THE THREE AGITATORS: We asked: Do you want to do it  
alone?

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Help me.

34 THE MEASURES TAKEN AND OTHER LEHRSTÜCKE

THE THREE AGITATORS:

Rest your head on our arm.  
Close your eyes.

THE YOUNG COMRADE *unseen*:

And he said: In the interests of Communism  
In agreement with the progress of the proletarian masses  
Of all lands  
Consenting to the revolutionizing of the world.

THE THREE AGITATORS:

Then we shot him and  
Cast him down into the lime-pit  
And when the lime had swallowed him up  
We turned back to our work.

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

And your work was successful  
You have propagated  
The teachings of the Classics  
The ABC of Communism  
Instructions to the ignorant concerning their condition  
Class-consciousness to the oppressed  
And to the class-conscious, practical knowledge of the  
revolution.  
And the revolution marches on there, too  
And there, too, the ranks of fighters are well organized.  
We agree with you.  
  
And yet your report shows us what is  
Needed to change the world:  
Anger and tenacity, knowledge and indignation  
Swift action, utmost deliberation  
Cold endurance, unending perseverance  
Comprehension of the individual and comprehension of the  
whole:  
Taught only by reality can  
Reality be changed.

## THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE

Lehrstück

*Translated by Ralph Manheim*