

will be these writers who will carry back the ideas of the Free World to their own countries, once the totalitarian nightmare has ended.

Finally, I would like to record the generous help of the Intellectual Freedom Fund which, at the recommendation of Mr. David Carver, the International Secretary of the P.E.N., and of Mr. John Leihmann, has made an initial grant towards the translation cost of this volume and enabled us to pay even the contributors a small advance.

STORM JAMESON

The Cost of Freedom

A letter written eighteen months ago by a young German woman living in a largely destroyed city said: "Why do you and others make such a ridiculous fuss about freedom for writers? What on earth does it matter? Nothing in the world matters except to remember that this day eight years ago my cousin and her baby were roasted alive in the cellar of her house—I can see the ruins from my window. You must have memories of your own very like mine. Then how can you care whether a writer is able to write his books or not? What do you think anyone's books have to say to a world full of hungry or frightened people? I should like to send this letter to every writer in the world. You are all egoists and absurd."

There was a good deal more to the letter, but this is enough. It is an old argument, given a new turn by the anguish of our age. When it is put to us in this extreme form, it can be answered only by an equally extreme statement. If there were only half a dozen people in the world with the time, energy, taste to read, the freedom of writers would still be a matter of prime importance. We ought not to make any excuses for ourselves and our existence in a time of troubles. There are always troubles: as citizens we are bound during an emergency to do our share in the Sisyphean task of curing them: as writers we are obliged to spend the intervals between emergencies in rebutting any attempt to hamper by controlling it the free movement of our minds. It would be treacherous of us not to insist on this, even in a hungry and frightened world. And this is true even though most of what we write will evaporate or have a brief useful after-life as curl-papers. The modest immortality of a Sophocles or a Tolstoy does not make it any more true, but perhaps less shocking.

Is it, as a simple matter of fact, possible to subject a Tolstoy to direction by an outside power without doing him, as a writer, incalculable harm? Direction is something more precise than mere censorship. A censor can be, and in the past often has been, an irritation, an obstacle which the energy of the writer is finally able to by-pass or cheat. Direction, especially intelligent direction, by external authority is something else, something to which a writer submits at the cost of moral suicide. Or is forced into by fear, or seduced into by a specious promise. This is not the plea of an anarchist for an illusory absolute freedom. If you ask a Tolstoy to attend seriously to anything except the movement of existence you deflect or cripple him—at best. At worst, you put him spiritually to death. In this sense, it is impossible for authority to direct him, since what it finds itself directing is a maimed version of the real Tolstoy, a pseudo-Tolstoy. Or a corpse. In the end, authority can kill but it cannot direct.

So what? Does it, after all, matter a hoot, except to Tolstoy himself, if he is morally or only physically killed? Can a state suppress, or pervert