Book I

June 21, 1922. 6:30 pm – December 24th, 1922

- House arrest
- New reduced quarters
- Meeting Nina and exploring the hotel with her
- A visit from Mishka
- Christmas sense of well being
- Foreshadowing that in four years he will be 'climbing to the roof…to throw himself into the street below."

Book II

June 21, 1923, 5:00 pm – 1926

- The Count meets with Mishka who can't stay to 'celebrate' his one year anniversary at the hotel
- The Count meets Anna Urbanova and dines with her
- The Count discovers the door to the roof and has coffee, bread and honey with the 'old handyman'
- Anna back at home becomes increasingly upset by the Count's having hung up her clothes on his way out the door of her room at the Metropol. She persists in not hanging up her clothes for days and when her maid rebukes her throws her clothes out the window…and then in the late night goes into the street to gather them up herself.
- The Count becomes invisible — Nina counts prime numbers
- Andrey takes the Count to the wine cellar to show him the unlabelling of the contents due to "the existence of the wine list [running] counter to the ideals of the Revolution…. a monument to the privilege of the nobility, the effeteness of the intelligentsia, and the predatory pricing of speculators." — the Count now understood his place in the passage of time: "the Bolsheviks, who were so intent upon recasting the future from a mold of their own making, would not rest until every last vestige of his Russia had been uprooted, shattered, or erased. "
- Count's philosophical leanings are "essentially meteorological" — The Count recalls to mind the story of the 21st birthday in late autumn of the charming Princess Novobaczky
- In the ballroom of the Metropol Nina tests Newton's calculation of the speed of gravity and Galileo's principle that objects with different mass fall at an equivalent rate.
- The Count details Russia's contributions to the West: 1) Chekov and Tolstoy— "the bronze bookends on the mantelpiece of narrative;" 2) Act one, scene one of The Nutcracker – "Dark, cold, and snowbound, Russia has the sort of climate in which the spirit of Christmas burns brightest. And that is why Tchaikovsky seems to have captured the sound of it better than anyone else;" 3) caviar. The Count tells Charles Abernethy–presumptive heir to the Earl of Westmorland how the 'rash lieutenant' takes his revenge by seducing Helen and then publicly betraying her. The Count shoots and wounds him as he is riding off.
- As the Count is on the roof teetering on the parapet, Abram the handyman insists he comes to see the return of the bees—"pinpoints of blackness, like the inverse of stars."

Book III

June 20, 1930 8:30 am

- "through Emile's swinging door walks Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov—with the white dinner jacket of the Boyarsky draped across his arm."
- The triumvirate: Emile, Andrey, and the Count
- Letter from Mishka
- Rostov sees Nina in the hotel lobby with three youths and another woman – Nina says… "for generations the kulaks have farmed the land for themselves, organizing the local peasant labor to their own ends. But the time has come for the common land to serve the common good. It is a historical necessity…an inevitability. After all, does a teacher only teach his own children" Does a physician only care for his parents?"
- Rostov begins his affair with Anna
- Rostov is summoned by Osip Ivanovich Glebnikov—former colonel of the Red Army and an officer of the Party to teach him to understand the privileged classes …as a matter of developing certain diplomatic skills
- The triumvirate make bouillabaisse – Andrey tells of his days under the big top and his skill as a juggler.
- "Life is every bit as devious as Death. It too can wear a hooded coat. It too can slip into town, lurk in an alley, or wait in the back of a tavern."
- Nina delivers Sofia into Rostov's care
- Rostov tells Sofia about the twice-tolling clock— "The Count's father had believed that while a man should attend closely to life, he should not attend too closely to the clock…. when the noon bell sounded. The diligent man could take pride in having made good use of the morning and sit down to his lunch with a clear conscience. [Then] having been suitably industrious before lunch, he should spend his afternoon in wise liberty. …walk among the willows, read a timeless text, converse with a friend beneath the pergola, or reflect before the fire—engaging in those endeavours that have no appointed hour, and that dictate their own beginnings and ends. And the second chime? …one should never hear it. …one should be soundly asleep before twelve.

Book IV

June 21, 1950

- Sophie is revealed to be a musical prodigy – a pianist who wins a piano competition
- The Count meets the young architect sketching in the Piazza – The fantastical sketch
- Sophia reveals she knows Anna and about her romance with the Count – 'You like to keep your buttons in their boxes"
- Richard asks the Count to engage in espionage and the Count declines
- Stalin dies (Mar 3, 1953)
- Sofia wins a piano competition and Anna connives to keep her in Moscow out of the clutches of a rural orchestra
- Sofia's win is celebrated on the 6th Floor
- Katerina arrives in the middle of the celebration with Mishka's 'project' and learns that it was Mishka who wrote the poem attributed to the Count, a ruse that ultimately saved the Count's life
- The Count asks Katarina where she will go now and she replies, "Does it matter?"
- The Count reviews Mishka's project, a collection of fragments— "a compendium of quotations from seminal texts arranged in chronological order, but in each of which the word **BREAD** had been capitalized and printed in bold. Beginning with the Bible, the citations proceeded right through the works of the Greeks and

> Romans onto the likes of Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe. But particular tribute was paid to the golden age of Russian literature"

The turn/the resolve:

...The irony of course, was that Chekov's observation was no longer even accurate. For surely, by now, the Russian people knew better than anyone in Europe how good a piece of bread could be. … he was thinking about Katarina…with a sense of foreboding—that in the course of twenty years this firefly, this pinwheel, this wonder of the world had become a woman who, when asked where she was going, could answer without the slightest hesitation: *Does it matter?*

Book V

Jan 21, 1954

- In six months Sofia will go to Paris to perform at the Palais Garnier
- The Count executes his plan to have Sofia stay on in Paris and his escape from the hotel
- He views Casablanca with Osip Glebnikov, Former Colonel
- He and Anna return to his original home where a young boy and his sister show them the remains of the old estate.

QUESTIONS

1. Why Five Books? – Are they 'nested dolls'?

2. Why do all the 'chapter' titles begin with the letter "A" and so many names of the Metropol staff?

3. Why do so many of the dated chapters begin on the 21st of June (first day of summer)? …And why is the timeline so detailed and also so fuzzy?

> 1922
> 1923
> 1946
> 1950
> 1952 – a Wednesday evening in late June (June 21 was a Saturday)
> 1954 – "Having taken his seat, the Count confirmed that six months hence, on the twenty-first of June, Sofia would be in Paris, France."
> 1954 – "Afterwards…" – "On the twenty-first of June 1954 Viktor Stepanovich Skadovsky left his apartment shortly before midnight in order to keep an appointment."
> 1954 – "And Anon" – On one of the first afternoons of summer in 1954, a tall man in his sixties stood in the high grass among some ragged apple trees somewhere in the Nizhny Novgorod Province."

4. Nature and significance of the narrator's voice

> "The majority of A Gentleman in Moscow is told in the third person from the Count's point of view. There is, however, an overarching narrator with a perspective different from the Count's. Initially, this narrator appears in footnotes, then in the "Addendums," then in the historical introductions of "1930," "1938," and "1946."

- What is his role in the narrative?
- How to characterize this narrator?
- How does he differ from the Count in terms of his point of view and tone of voice?

Subjects/Themes

- Imprisonment, resistance and escape OR "managing your circumstances through practicalities"
    - – "the Count's…model for mastering his circumstances would be a different sort of captive altogether: an Anglican washed ashore. Like Robinson Crusoe stranded on the Isle of Despair, the Count would maintain his resolve by committing to the business of practicalities. Having dispensed with dreams of quick discovery the world's Crusoes seek shelter and a source of fresh water; they teach themselves to make fire from flint; they study their island's topography, its climate, its flora and fauna, all the while keeping their eyes trained for sails on the horizon and footprints in the sand."
    - Physical imprisonment — loss of liberty vs. possession of the master key and hidden pistols – Is not 'loss of liberty' the common denominator for all citizens of communist states?
    - Deprivation vs. enrichment
    - Mental/emotional imprisonment in the past – nostalgia vs. envisioning a better future
    - The pace of time passing — work, and finding purpose — socializing and games
    - Need to escape vs desire to escape
    - Imprisonment as protection, safe-keeping
    - Treatment of this theme in other novels:
      Secret Scripture by Sebastian Barry
      The Room by Emma Donoghue
    - Why does this theme invite so much scrutiny in literature and why in the contemporary novel? — Allegory for the human condition
    - Moscow vs Paris
    - www.penguinrandomhouse.com - Reader's Guide: One of the pleasures of writing fiction is discovering upon completion of a project that some thread of imagery has run through the work without your complete awareness—forming, in essence, an unintentional motif. While I was very conscious of the recurrence of tolling bells, keys, and concentric circles in the book, here are a few motifs that I only recognized after the fact: Packages wrapped in brown paper, such as the Maltese Falcon, Mishka's book of quotations, the Russian nesting dolls discovered in the Italians' closet, and the Count's copy of Montaigne (in Paris). The likeness of stars, such as the freckles on Anna's back and the beacon on the top of the Shukhov radio tower. Sailors (often in peril), such as Robinson Crusoe, Odysseus, Admiral Makarov, and Arion in the myth of Delphinus. What role do any of these motifs play in the thematic composition of the book?
    - www.penguinrandomhouse.com - Reader's Guide: At the opening of Book Five, the Count has already decided to get Sofia out of Russia. What occurs over the course of Book Four to lead him to this decision? Why does he choose to remain behind?

- Hiding in plain site
    - Nested dolls
      Wikipedia: "Matryoshkas are used metaphorically, as a design paradigm, known as the "matryoshka principle" or "nested doll principle". It denotes a recognizable relationship of "object-within-similar-object" that appears in the design of many other natural and crafted objects. Examples of this use include the matryoshka brain, the Matryoska media-container format, and the Russian Doll model of multi-walled carbon nanotubes. The onion metaphor is of similar character. If the outer layer is peeled off an onion, a similar onion exists within. This structure is employed by designers in applications such as the layering of clothes or the design of tables, where a smaller table nests within a larger table, and a smaller one within that."

Matryoshkas?
Grandmother
Helena
Nina - yellow
Anna - willowy
Sofia –

The Triumvirate
Emile – the chef
Andrey – the maitre d'
The Count – the headwaiter

Book I, Advent, "The Count…carefully lifted the lid …only to discover another box wrapped in yellow and tied with a dark green bow. Setting the empty box aside, the Count…pulled the strands of the second box, and lifted the second lid…only to discover a third box. Dutifully, the Count repeated the debowing and unlidding with the next three boxes, until he held one the size of a matchbox. But when he untied the bow and lifted the lid on this box, inside the cozy chamber, strung on a bit of the dark green ribbon, was Nina's passkey to the hotel."

- The hiding game – played with the thimble
- Invisibility
- www.penguinrandomhouse.com - Reader's Guide: Near the novel's conclusion, what is the significance of the toppled cocktail glass in Casablanca? – Restoration of order

- Necessities of life: Food, shelter, clothing and how to obtain these
  - Food and wine
    Evelyn Waugh on writing Brideshead Revisited:
    — novel by English writer Evelyn Waugh, first published in 1945. It follows, from the 1920s to the early 1940s, the life and romances of the protagonist Charles Ryder, including his friendship with the Flytes, a family of wealthy English Catholics who live in a palatial mansion called Brideshead Castle. Ryder has relationships with two of the Flytes: Sebastian and Julia. The novel explores themes including nostalgia for the age of English aristocracy, Catholicism, and the nearly overt homosexuality of Sebastian Flyte's coterie at Oxford University.
    … In various letters, Waugh himself refers to the novel a number of times as his magnum opus; however, in 1950 he wrote to Graham Greene stating, "I re-read Brideshead Revisited and was appalled." In Waugh's preface to his revised edition of Brideshead (1959) the author explained the circumstances in which the novel was written, following a minor parachute accident in the six months between December 1943 and June 1944. He was mildly disparaging of the novel, stating; "It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster – the period of soya beans and Basic English – and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language which now, with a full stomach, I find distasteful."

  - Architecture, interior decoration, and furnishings
  - Personal appearance, grooming, and fashion
  - Social interaction: manners, forms of address, ways of speaking, friendship —The Gentleman vs The Comrade – See Gordon S. Wood, *The Revolutionaries*
  - Work
  - Recreation and play

- Politics and revolution – purpose/importance and how to bring about change
  "the drear miseries and state sadism of Stalin — the king of famine and the gulags" – Rex Murphy

- Russian nationalism – Search for Truth and Beauty
  - History
  - Religion
  - Writing and literature
    - Significance of 'the Count's' Poem
      - Amazon.com —"A Gentleman in Moscow is the 30-year saga of the Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov, who is placed under house arrest inside the Metropol Hotel in Moscow in 1922 when the Bolsheviks spare him from death or Siberia because of his 1913 revolutionary poem written in university."
      - http://www.latimes.com: Count Rostov is the protagonist of Towles' "A Gentleman in Moscow." In the opening pages of the book, Rostov finds himself before the Emergency Committee of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. The year is 1922. As well as being a former aristocrat, Rostov is also a poet. [NO!] He is not a nakedly political one, sympathetic to the ideals of communism but not a subscriber to the iteration unfolding before him. Still, in the verse the reader gets to see, Rostov posing existential questions about Soviet rule: "Well, where is our purpose now?" In merely asking the question, the commissariat authorities tell Rostov, he has identified himself as one who "has succumbed irrevocably to the corruptions of his class — and now poses a threat to the very ideals he once espoused. On that basis, our inclination would be to have you taken from this chamber and put against the wall." But Rostov is spared, on one condition. He must remain within the four walls of the Hotel Metropol, a real Moscow hotel where the fictional Rostov had been living since the revolution. If he sets foot outside, he will be shot. The book tracks this somewhat gilded variety of political imprisonment over 30 years.
      -
    - Chekov to Tolstoy
    - Montaigne
    - Aphorism as wisdom
      - "The Count had restricted himself to two succinct pieces of parental advice, …the first was that if one did not master one's circumstances, one was bound to be mastered by them; and the second was Montaigne's maxim that the surest sign of wisdom is constant cheerfulness."
      - "As both a student of history and a man devoted to living in the present, I admit that I do not spend a lot of time imagining how things might otherwise have been. But I do like to think there is a difference between being resigned to a situation and reconciled to it."
    - Propaganda
  - Music
  - Science
    - Scientific method

  - Darwinian theory – adaptation vs stasis – the Pepper Moth
- Espionage

REVIEWS

www.nytimes.com/ …Craig Taylor, editor of the literary magazine Five Dials, is the author of "Londoners."

> "Towles is a craftsman. What saves the book is the gorgeous sleight of hand that draws it to a satisfying end, and the way he chooses themes that run deeper than mere sociopolitical commentary: parental duty, friendship, romance, the call of home. Human beings, after all, "deserve not only our consideration but our reconsideration" — even those from the leisured class. Who will save Rostov from the intrusions of the state if not the seamstresses, chefs, bartenders and doormen? In the end, Towles's greatest narrative effect is not the moments of wonder and synchronicity but the generous transformation of these peripheral workers, over the course of decades, into confidants, equals and, finally, friends. With them around, a life sentence in these gilded halls might make Rostov the luckiest man in Russia. …The count "found political discourse of any persuasion to be tedious." Bolsheviks are a bore, getting in colloquiums and congresses to "levy complaints, and generally clamour about the world's oldest problems in its newest nomenclature." But even the gray Soviet world melts inside the golden warmth of the Metropol. The transformation is what's important. Rostov's battles are less political and more concerned with the fight against any gradual diminishment of pleasure."

www.washingtonpost.com/ … Ron Charles is the editor of Book World.

> The novel's trickier challenge is the potential for glibness. There could easily have been something unseemly about a light comedy that takes place against the background of two world wars and the fathomless horrors of Stalinism — "Hogan's Heroes" with room service. Towles' solution is wry understatement that extends to a series of historical footnotes. "Let us concede," he says at the start of one chapter, "that the early thirties in Russia were unkind." It's an approach that allows him to pursue his warm-hearted story while acknowledging, with Russian irony, the ocean of suffering taking place all around it. …In our own allegedly classless society, we seem to have retained only what's deplorable about aristocracy — the oppression, the snobbery, the racism — and thrown out those qualities that were worth retaining. Which makes "The Gentleman of Moscow" an endearing reminder of the graciousness of real class. It has nothing to do with money; it's predicated on the kind of moral discipline that never goes out of style.

http://www.latimes.com: However inadvertently, … Towles has written a book about the notion

> of individual resistance. In Rostov's rather idiosyncratic experience of Soviet Russia, very little of which involves what you could call direct political engagement, he is still actively resisting the Soviet regime. It's simply that, being locked into one building, he does so by savouring smaller pleasures: good wine, good food, friendships of long standing and even, eventually, parenthood.
>
> Towles catalogues these pleasures endlessly in the book, to the point where one suspects he somewhat shares Rostov's nostalgia for the aristocratic era. Towles admits this. "Of

course, you wouldn't want to re-create the era of aristocracy; it was a totally unfair era. The finer aspects of it were admirable, and so there's nostalgia for that: the behaviour, the values, the cultural sensitivities.

"I knew the hottest spot for the book would be someone who really knows a good deal about Russian history and cares about Russian history, who feels that the book does not do justice to the crimes that were committed in the era," Towles says. But he ran the risk because he believes that it is possible for people in repressive regimes to enjoy art, regardless of circumstances. To think otherwise, he says, "belittles the courage and the pride of the average citizen."

Towles also points to an observation the Count makes to one of the officials who is supervising his imprisonment, someone who admires how well Rostov has adapted to his circumstances: "As both a student of history and a man devoted to living in the present, I admit that I do not spend a lot of time imagining how things might otherwise have been. But I do like to think there is a difference between being resigned to a situation and reconciled to it."

www.NPR: "Russia and all of its sufferings seems incidental to the plot — the book could have taken place in a grand hotel in Paris or London or New York just as easily. When the outside world makes itself felt, it's usually as an excuse for a charming caper of some kind"

www.worldliteraturetoday.org: Other major characters are the men and women who make the hotel hum no matter what is going on outside, even the horrors of World War II or Stalin's barbarities. In fact, news of the outside world comes only as messengers bring it or as the hotel hosts the occasional political meeting. Some readers may be disappointed that Towles does not take on the political situation in Russia during these years, but that would be a totally different novel than the one he has written. The Metropol may exist in a bubble, out of time and place, but Towles does mock those whose worlds revolve around Communist politics, like the waiter who rises through the party ranks and decides that all the labels should be removed from the bottles in the wine cellar to create a strange kind of equality. The CIA, political machinations, and notions of historical inevitability come in for a bit of skewering as well. …There is a good deal of humour here as well as some darker emotions, and many allusions to the great Russian writers, for Towles is more engaged with the Russian spirit than with the country's quotidian concerns. The novel almost floats; we are engaged from beginning to end, and one couldn't find a better companion than Rostov.

MY THOUGHTS

Clever, charming, seductive

A warm bath of a read – www.NPR: "a winning, stylish novel that keeps things easy"

A wise spiritual allegory – 'How to kill time before time kills you' (LEM) – "Yes, exile was as old as mankind. But the Russians were the first people to master the notion of sending a man into exile at home."

A 'sampler' keepsake full of original and noteworthy aphorisms— over 400!

P227 "It is a fact of human life than one must eventually choose a philosophy…We must all eventually adopt a fundamental framework, some reasonably coherent system of

> causes and effects that will help us make sense not simply of momentous events, but all off the little actions and interactions that constitute our daily lives—be they deliberate or spontaneous, inevitable or unforeseen."
>
> P518 For when life makes it impossible for a man to pursue his dreams, he will connive to pursue them anyway."

BUT
Full of fragments – like Lincoln in the Bardo? (Why?)

Crazy uneven pacing –seemingly plot less for at least half of the book and then intensively plotted in Book Five. Why?

A historical novel
Tone of wry understatement is inappropriate for the subject matter.
It is dangerous to hold a tiger by the tail and watch it only peripherally.
If one intention of this work is to be didactic (intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive), it seems to miss conveying the extent of the revolution's carnage and Stalin's evil. (See above: "I knew the hottest spot for the book would be someone who really knows a good deal about Russian history and cares about Russian history, who feels that the book does not do justice to the crimes that were committed in the era," Towles says.)

> 1938 – "An Arrival" – "Let us concede that the early thirties in Russia were unkind. In addition to starvation in the countryside, the famine of '32 eventually led to a migration of peasants to the cities, which, in turn, contributed to overcrowded housing, shortages of essential goods, even hooliganism."

Alternative titles:

How to Kill Time before Time Kills You
A Stitch in Time
What goes around comes around
Inevitable Happenings
A Lament for Gentlemanliness
Comrade Dreams of Paris
The Russian Solstice Blues
A Knapsacking Interlude
Goodbye Moustaches
Buttons in Boxes, Dollies in Dollies
Unreconciled, Undaunted

Rex Murphy NP Sat Aug 25, 2018

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. That's Shakespeare again, supplying us in elegant, precise and frequently beautiful language, the exact "headline" for almost every human situation. It is one of the miracle features of his writing that phrases, lines, even whole speeches, work both in the plays and own a second, independent life — as poetry, as wisdom — outside them. Proven, once again, at least for me this week when viewing film or pictures of the extravagantly moving reunion of some 200 North and South Korean families. Mothers meeting daughters, sisters their brothers, grandfathers and grandmothers embracing (hitherto) unseen grandchildren: the images were a gallery of untellable pathos.

These were family members who had been frozen from all contact since 1953 when the Korean conflict was suspended, so in many cases it was necessarily the old meeting the very old, a detail that further darkened the cloud of sorrow overarching the event. Every single reunion had its spike of raw feeling.

One stood out for me. There's a photograph of a South Korean, a 99-year-old mother pounding on the window of the bus as it takes her from her children. The Daily Mail wrote the caption: "Han Shinja moved her lips to say 'don't cry' as her children, both in their 70s, sobbed and chased the moving vehicle before being stopped by North Korean officials." This was Lear carrying Cordelia for our time: that terrible scene which overwhelmed the great Samuel Johnson every time he came upon it.
It is the last time mother and daughters will ever meet. These limited reunions, which have sporadically, and with much more restricted publicity, been occurring since 2000, have one implacable feature: No one has a second chance to see their relatives. Should one wish a recipe for torment and joy in a single moment, here it is.

It is useless even to try to sketch the malevolence and cruelty of the hell state of North Korea. (There are a number of recent memoirs of escapees that give an acid flavour of the place.) With what should life there be compared?

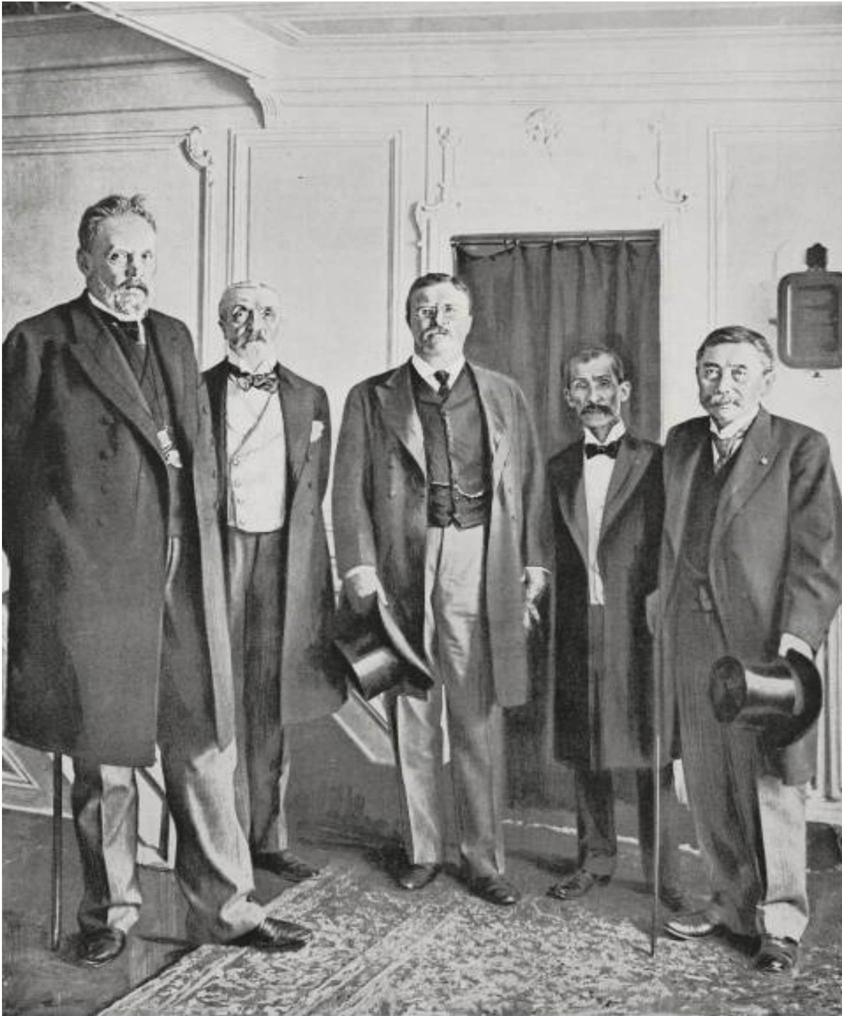
We have various darkling lodestars of modern inhumanity, the grimmest manifestation of the ferocity of evil (pace Hannah Arendt) being the Hitlerian inferno. There is only a single qualification to be placed on that eruption: that it was unique, that it so completely fulfilled the concept of what is utterly and irredeemably detestable that — save for the zaniest scatterings of wasted DNA who practise goose-stepping and hold torchlight marches in the backwoods of various nations — Nazism is universally repellent. Its manifold horrors cauterized all but the most crazed attempts at the reanimation of its creed.
We can, alas, compare North Korea. Does its starvations and repressions not elicit recall of China's gruesome Maoist Cultural Revolution? Or the drear miseries and state sadism of Stalin — the king of famine and the gulags? Who cannot still weep for Cambodia's days under Pol Pot's communist Khmer Rouge — an interlude of torture, death and determined savagery that earns a place in the same theatre of depravity as North Korea.

There are more. The communist islets of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. East Germany itself with its Stasi, a whole country spying on itself. That fragment of a bankrupt ideology we know as Cuba under the Castros. Che Guevara, a sapling in the same huge dark wood. The salient difference between all of these and the Hitlerian nightmare is that the latter was a plague that choked on itself: while communism — all its horrors confirmed with every repetition or variant of the model — is epidemical. Communism has powers of replication that defy its own history. Despite the world of tears that follow its every instalment, it inexplicably does not excite in parts of the world — that must know better — a repulsion equivalent to that that greets Nazism.

Some repair to that inexplicability is, thankfully, being attempted. This past week's international Black Ribbon Day, started by the European Union in 2008, and supported by the United States and Canada, puts both creeds in the same blender, and at the very least thereby puts a shadow over the spurious glamour that communism, as contrasted with its Nazi twin, has and has had for so many Western intellectuals from George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb early in the past century, down to the Hobsbawms of recent days.

It is one thing to argue or remonstrate, offer another parade of words on what should be manifest even to a stone: that the system of ideas called communism is fatal to humane instinct wherever it finds a landing place. The photograph of a 99-year-old mother telling her daughters "Don't cry" as she is ferried from North Korea and they are left in all its bleakness has more than argument can offer. In that desolate polity, every day is a Black Ribbon Day.

MISCELLANEOUS RESEARCH



Russian diplomats Sergei Yulyevich Witte and Roman Rosen, President Theodore Roosevelt, and Japanese delegates Komura Jutaro and Takahira Kogoro, on board the Mayflower, United States of America. Treaty of Portsmouth, 1904-05

The nine sovereigns at Windsor for the funeral of King Edward VII photographed on 20 May 1910. Standing, from left to right: King Haakon VII of Norway, Tsar Ferdinand of the Bulgarians, King Manuel II of Portugal and the Algarve, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Prussia, King George I of the Hellenes and King Albert I of the Belgians. Seated, from left to right: King Alfonso XIII of Spain, King George V of the United Kingdom and King Frederick VIII of Denmark.

The Russian Civil War (November 1917 – October 1922) was a multi-party war in the former Russian Empire immediately after the two Russian Revolutions of 1917, as many factions vied to determine Russia's political future. The two largest combatant groups were the Red Army, fighting for the Bolshevik form of socialism led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and the loosely allied forces known as the White Army, which included diverse interests favouring political monarchism, economic capitalism and alternative forms of socialism, each with democratic and antidemocratic variants. In addition, rival militant socialists and non-ideological Green armies fought against both the Bolsheviks and the Whites. Eight foreign nations intervened against the Red Army, notably the former Allied military forces from the World War and the pro-German armies.

The Red Army eventually defeated the White Armed Forces of South Russia in Ukraine and the army led by Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak to the east in Siberia in 1919. The remains of the White forces commanded by Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel were beaten in Crimea and evacuated in late 1920. Lesser battles of the war continued on the periphery for two more years, and minor skirmishes with the remnants of the White forces in the Far East continued well into 1923. The war ended in 1923 in the sense that Bolshevik communist control of the newly formed Soviet Union was now assured, although armed national resistance in Central Asia was not completely crushed until 1934. There were an estimated 7,000,000–12,000,000 casualties during the war,

mostly civilians. The Russian Civil War has been described by some as the greatest national catastrophe that Europe had yet seen. Many pro-independence movements emerged after the break-up of the Russian Empire and fought in the war. Several parts of the former Russian Empire—Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland—were established as sovereign states, with their own civil wars and wars of independence. The rest of the former Russian Empire was consolidated into the Soviet Union shortly afterwards.

The Shukhov radio tower also known as the Shabolovka tower is a broadcasting tower in Moscow designed by Vladimir Shukhov. The 160-metre-high freestanding steel diagrid structure was built in the period 1920–1922, during the Russian Civil War.

Mishka: Well my friend, I think we can agree that a new age has begun: the Age of Steel. We now have the ability to build power stations, skyscrapers, airplanes."… "You have seen the Shukhov Radio Tower?"
The Count had not.
"What a thing of beauty, Sasha. A two-hundred-foot structure of spiralling steel from which we can broadcast the latest news and intelligence—and, yes, the sentimental strains of your Tchaikovsky—into the home of every citizen within a hundred miles. And with each one of these advances, the Russian morality has been keeping step. In our time, we may witness the end of ignorance, the end of oppression, and the advent of the brotherhood of man."
…
"*But what of poetry?* You ask. *What of the written word?* Well, I can assure you that it too is keeping pace. Once fashioned from bronze and iron, it is now being fashioned from steel. No longer an art of quatrains and dactyls and elaborate tropes, our poetry has become an art of action. One that will speed across the continents and transmit music to the stars!"

<u>Casablanca</u> (From Wikipedia) — Casablanca is a 1942 American romantic drama film directed by Michael Curtiz based on Murray Burnett and Joan Alison's unproduced stage play *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. The film stars Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Paul Henreid; it also features Claude Rains, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, and Dooley Wilson. Set during contemporary World War II, it focuses on an American expatriate who must choose between his love for a woman and helping her and her husband, a Czech Resistance leader, escape from the Vichy-controlled city of Casablanca to continue his fight against the Nazis.

Music — The music was written by Max Steiner, who was best known for the score for *Gone with the Wind*. The song *"As Time Goes By"* by Herman Hupfeld had been part of the story from the original play; Steiner wanted to write his own composition to replace it, but Bergman had already cut her hair short for her next role and could not re-shoot the scenes which incorporated the song, so Steiner based the entire score on it and "*La Marseillaise*", the French national anthem, transforming them as leitmotifs to reflect changing moods.

You must remember this
A kiss is just a kiss
A sigh is just a sigh
The fundamental things apply
As time goes by

And when two lovers woo
They still say "I love you"
On that you can rely
No matter what the future brings
As time goes by

Moonlight and love songs
Never out of date
Hearts full of passion
Jealousy and hate
Woman needs man, and man must have his mate
That no one can deny

It's still the same old story
A fight for love and glory
A case of do or die
The world will always welcome lovers
As time goes by

Release — Although an initial release date was anticipated for early 1943, the film premiered at the Hollywood Theater in New York City on November 26, 1942, to coincide with the Allied

invasion of North Africa and the capture of Casablanca. It went into general release on January 23, 1943, to take advantage of the Casablanca Conference, a high-level meeting in the city between British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Office of War Information prevented screening of the film to troops in North Africa, believing it would cause resentment among Vichy supporters in the region.

Interpretation — Casablanca has been subjected to many readings; Semioticians account for the film's popularity by claiming that its inclusion of stereotypes paradoxically strengthens the film. Umberto Eco wrote:

> Thus Casablanca is not just one film. It is many films, an anthology. Made haphazardly, it probably made itself, if not actually against the will of its authors and actors, then at least beyond their control. And this is the reason it works, in spite of aesthetic theories and theories of filmmaking. For in it there unfolds with almost telluric (of the earth, of the soil) force the power of Narrative in its natural state, without Art intervening to discipline it ... When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us. For we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, and celebrating a reunion.

Eco also singled out sacrifice as a theme, "the myth of sacrifice runs through the whole film". It was this theme, which resonated with a wartime audience that was reassured by the idea that painful sacrifice and going off to war could be romantic gestures done for the greater good.

Koch also considered the film a political allegory. Rick is compared to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who gambled "on the odds of going to war until circumstance and his own submerged nobility force him to close his casino (partisan politics) and commit himself—first by financing the Side of Right and then by fighting for it". The connection is reinforced by the film's title, which means, "white house".

Harvey Greenberg presents a Freudian reading in his *The Movies on Your Mind*, in which the transgressions which prevent Rick from returning to the United States constitute an Oedipus complex, which is resolved only when Rick begins to identify with the father figure of Laszlo and the cause which he represents.

Sidney Rosenzweig argues that such readings are reductive and that the most important aspect of the film is its ambiguity, above all in the central character of Rick; he cites the different names which each character gives Rick (Richard, Ricky, Mr. Rick, Herr Rick and boss) as evidence of the different meanings which he has for each person.