SCHWEYK IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Texts by Brecht

THE STORY

The Good Soldier Schweyk, after surviving the First World War, is still alive. Our story shows his successful efforts to survive the Second as well. The new rulers have even more grandiose and all-embracing plans than the old, which makes it even harder for today's Little Man to remain more or less alive.

The play begins with a

Prologue in the Higher Regions

wherein a preternaturally large Hitler with a preternaturally large voice talks to his preternaturally large police chief Himmler about the putative loyalty, reliability, self-denial, enthusiasm, geopolitical consciousness and so on and so forth of the European 'Little Man' The reason why he is demanding such virtues of the Little Man is that he has made up his mind to conquer the world. His police chief assures him that the European Little Man bears him the same love as he does the Little Man in Germany. The Gestapo will see to that. The Fuhrer has nothing to fear, and need have no hesitation about conquering the world.

There has been an attempt on Hitler's life. Hearty applause from the 'Chalice' in Prague, where the good dog-dealer
Josef Schweyk and his friend Baloun are sitting over their morning drinks and discussing politics with the Chalice's landlady, the young widow Anna Kopecka. Fat Baloun, whose exceptional appetite presents him with special problems in these days of Nazi rationing, quickly lapses into his normal gloom. He has learnt from reliable sources that the German field kitchens will dish out sizeable helpings of meat. How much longer is he going to be able to hold out against the temptation simply to go and join up in the German army? Mrs Kopecka and Schweyk are greatly disturbed by his situation. A soul in torment! Schweyk, ever the realist, suggests making Baloun swear an oath never under any circumstances to have anything to do with the Germans. Baloun reminds them that it is six months since he last had a square meal. In exchange for a square meal, he says, he would be prepared to do anything. Mrs Kopecka thinks something might be arranged. She is a blazing patriot, and the idea of Baloun in the German army is more than she can bear. When her young admirer turns up, the butcher's son Prochazka, they hold a touching conversation in which she poses Cleopatra's age-old question: 'If it truly is love, then tell me how much?' She wants to know if, for instance, his love would run to the scrounging of two pounds of pickled pork for the undernourished Baloun. He could take it from the paternal shop, only the Nazis have established heavy penalties for black-marketeering. None the less, seeing the way to the widow's heart open before him for the first time, young Prochazka agrees in a positive tornado of emotion to bring round the meat. Meanwhile the Chalice has been filling up and Schweyk has started letting all and sundry know what he thinks of the Munich plot against Hitler. Inspired by the announcements on the German radio, he plunges with foolhardy innocence into a mortally dangerous conversation with Brettschneider, who is known to all the regular customers as a Gestapo agent. His classic drivelling fails to deceive the Gestapo man. Without any more ado Herr Brettschneider arrests the amazed but obliging Schweyk.
Introduced to Gestapo headquarters in Petschek's Bank by Herr Brettschneider, Schweyka fings up his right hand, bawls out 'Long live our Führer Adolf Hitler! We are going to win this war!', and is discharged as chronically half-witted.

Hearing that Schweyka is a dog dealer, the interrogating SS officer Ludwig Bullinger asks about a pedigree dog he has seen in the Salmgasse. 'Beg to report, sir, I know that animal professionally', says Schweyka cheerfully, and goes on to expatiate on the racial question. That pomeranian is the apple of Privy Councillor Vojta's eye, and not to be had for love or money. Schweyka and the SS officer discuss how best to have the Privy Councillor arrested and expropriated as an enemy of the state; however, it turns out that he is 'no yid' but a quisling. So Schweyka gets the honourable job of stealing the pedigree pom and showing himself to be a good collaborationist.

Returning in triumph to the Chalice, Schweyka finds that a tense situation has developed. Fat Baloun is waiting for his meal like a cat on hot bricks, fully prepared at the first glimpse of the meat to abjure all intention of ever joining Hitler's army. It is now ten past twelve, and young Prochazka has not yet shown up. Schweyka has been considerate enough to bring along SS-Man Müller II from Gestapo HQ, with the promise that widow Kopecka will tell his future by reading his hand. At first the landlady refuses on the grounds that she has had unfortunate experiences with her predictions. Young Prochazka now finally appears, and everyone looks nervously at his music case—he is a student at the music academy—because of course the SS-Man must not see the meat. To get him out of the way Mrs Kopecka sits down and reads his hand. It seems that he is destined to perform heroic
deeds, and has been picked out finally for a hero’s death. Depressed and demoralized, the SS-Man lurches out and Baloun flings himself on the music case round which he has been longingly circling for some time. The case is empty. Young Prochazka makes his miserable confession: he didn’t dare steal the meat because the sight of Schweyk’s arrest gave him such a fear of the Gestapo. Angrily the widow Kopecka spurns him with a biblical gesture, for he has failed the test as a man and as a Czech. Despondently he leaves, but no sooner does the bitterly frustrated fat man speak slightly of her suitor than she snaps back that the Nazis are to blame for it all. So Baloun’s wrath is diverted to the oppressors of his once beautiful country, and when Herr Brettschneider the Gestapo agent comes in he starts singing the subversive song of the black radish, which must ‘get out’, and be ‘sliced and salted’ till ‘he sweats’, all of which strikes Herr Brettschneider as suspicious but without offering him any pretext to intervene.

First Schweyk Finale
Interlude in the Upper Regions

The mighty Hitler, having encountered obstacles in his attempt to conquer the world, needs more planes, tanks and guns, and inquires of the mighty Goering whether the European Little Man is prepared to work for him. Goering assures him that the European Little Man will work for him just like the Little Man in Germany. The Gestapo will see to that. The Führer has nothing to fear and need have no hesitation about carrying on conquering the world.

Schweyk’s operation against the germanophile Privy Councilor Vojta’s pom takes place in the gardens along the Vltava or Moldau, which is where Vojta’s maidservant and her friend
Paula are accustomed to take the pedigree hound for his walkies every evening. Schweyk and Baloun come up to the bench where the two girls are sitting, and pretend to have erotic aims in view Schweyk warns the girls in all honesty that SS-leader Bullinger wants to annex the pom for the sake of its racial purity and have it sent to his lady wife in Cologne; he has had this on impeccable authority. Thereupon he goes off ‘to meet someone at the Metropole’. Baloun exchanges pleasantries with the girls, and they are moved by the Moldau’s majestic flow to start singing a folk song. By the end of the song the dog has gone. Schweyk has underhandedly lured it away as they were singing. The girls rush off to the police station, and Schweyk has just returned with the pom to tell his friend that they mustn’t let the SS-leader have it till he has put down the money, when a fishy-looking individual appears on the scene. Schweyk the dog-catcher has a man-catcher on his track; the individual identifies himself as a functionary of the Nazi Labour Organization whose job it is to recruit idlers and loafers into the ‘voluntary labour service’. Concerned for the pom, Schweyk and Baloun are led off for registration.

Dinner break in the Prague goods sidings. Schweyk and Baloun have become shunters for Hitler and are waiting under the eyes of a heavily-armed German soldier for their cabbage soup to be sent up from the Chalice. Today it is widow Kopecka in person who brings their enamel dishes. The stolen pom left in her care by Schweyk is becoming the focus of some intense political activity, and must be got off the premises. The controlled press is saying that the dog’s disappearance is due to an act of vengeance by the population against a pro-German official. Schweyk promises to come and collect it. He is only half concentrating, since he is troubled by the state of Baloun. The sentry’s dinner has arrived—
goulash! Trembling from head to foot, Baloun has gone sniffing after the pot as it was borne past him. Now he is excitedly asking the sentry whether the helpings in the German army are always as big as that, etc., etc., and scarcely pays attention to the imploring glances of his friends. The soldier is plunged in thought as he munches his goulash, all the while silently moving his lips between goblets. He has been told to memorize the number 4268, being that of a waggon with agricultural machinery for Lower Bavaria, and this is something he finds difficult. Always ready to help, Schweyk sets out to teach him a mnemonic technique which he learned from a water-board statistician who was one of the regulars at the Chalice. By the time he has finished explaining it the poor sentry’s brain is in such a tangle that when they eventually ask him for the number he helplessly points to any old waggon. Schweyk is afraid that this may mean that a waggonload of machine guns for Stalingrad may get sent to Bavaria in lieu. ‘But who can tell?’, he remarks consolingly to Baloun and Mrs Kopecka. ‘By that time perhaps what they’ll need most in Stalingrad will be combine-harvesters and it’ll be Bavaria’s turn to want machine-guns.’

Saturday evening at the Chalice. Dance. A morose Baloun takes the floor with the Privy Councillor’s maidservant, who is there with her friend. The police are still interviewing the two girls about the pom. Yesterday however they dropped a hint to Herr Brettschneider as to its whereabouts: at SS-leader Bullinger’s; possibly by now in Cologne. Baloun hints that this may be his last evening at the Chalice: he is fed up with feeling hungry. And it incidentally emerges that the noisy fun of the dance floor serves a higher purpose: covering up the sound of the news from London, which Kopecka is listening to and passing on to the guests. Enter then Schweyk, cheerfully, with a parcel under his arm: meat for Baloun’s
goulash. The fat man can hardly believe it; the two friends embrace most movingly. Baloun’s enthusiasm is such however that Schweyk asks Mrs Kopecka to put extra paprika in the goulash, since it’s only horsemeat. The landlady looks quizzically at him, and he confesses that it is Mr Vojta’s pom. A police car draws up. SS-leader Bullinger enters the Chalice, with SS-men at his heels. Hue and cry for the Vojta pom. Asked by Bullinger whether he knows the dog’s whereabouts, Schweyk innocently replies that he hasn’t got it. ‘Didn’t you see in the papers, Herr SS-leader, where it said it had been stolen?’ Bullinger’s patience gives way. He bellows that the Chalice is the source of all subversive Czechish subversiveness and will have to be smoked out. Moreover the dog can only be there. The SS is starting to search the place when Herr Brettschneider arrives. Herr Brettschneider, who has long pictured himself in the role of protector (this is, after all, a Protectorate) to the charming Mrs Kopecka, forcefully stands up to the fuming Bullinger and invites him to Gestapo HQ, where he has some rather revealing information about the present location of the missing dog. Mrs Kopecka’s house is above suspicion; he would go to the stake for that. Unfortunately at this very moment the gentlemen’s attention is drawn to a parcel reposing on one of the tables. The wretched Baloun has been unable to keep his fingers off Schweyk’s gift. A triumphant Bullinger discloses the contents of the parcel: meat. So the Chalice is a centre of the black market! At that Schweyk feels forced to admit that he put the parcel there. He claims that a gentleman with a black beard gave it to him ‘to look after’. All those present affirm having seen the man, while Herr Brettschneider, after going to the stake on the Chalice’s behalf, thinks it very possible that the criminal spotted the SS a hundred yards off and accordingly ran away. None the less Bullinger insists on arresting Schweyk, and the gentlemen escort him out of the Chalice—Bullinger, with the parcel under his arm, prophecies that he will find that dog yet. Cold-shouldered by the widow, young Prochazka has spent the entire evening sitting in a corner;
now he slinks guiltily out, followed by the widow’s icy stare. Baloun bursts into tears. Thanks to his weakness the loving couple has been parted and his friend landed in mortal danger. The Chalice’s landlady consoles him. In a big song she foretells that just as the Moldau washes away all the dirt, so her oppressed people’s love of their country will wash away the cruelties of their invaders.

Second Schweyk Finale
Interlude in the Upper Regions

The anxious Hitler, having been caught by the Russian winter, needs more soldiers. He inquires of the anxious Goebbels whether the European Little Man is prepared to fight for him. Goebbels assures him that the European Little Man will fight for him just like the Little Man in Germany. The Gestapo will see to that.

As a result of disagreements between Bullinger the crocodile and Bretschneider the tiger, and what with Hitler’s screaming for fresh soldiers, the good soldier Schweyk has moved from the cellars of the Gestapo to the German Army recruiting bureau. Among those whom he encounters there is Privy Councillor Vojta, who is being sent to the front because his porn was stolen. All the inmates are discussing what loathsome diseases they can report to the doctors at their medical inspection. Schweyk for his part feels another bout of rheumatism coming, since he has no time to travel to Russia for Hitler when ‘nothing’s been settled in Prague’. Hearing that young Prochazka is standing outside the barracks with an important message for him, he fears the worst. Happily Prochazka manages to bribe an SS-man to smuggle in a note to him, and it is an encouraging one. The Chalice landlady’s suitor writes that, having been deeply moved by Schweyk’s
self-sacrifice and ghastly fate, he will now supply 'the desired article'. At that Schweyk feels prepared to devote himself with an untroubled mind to Hitler's Russian affairs, said to be going none too well. Outside is heard the Nazis' notorious Horst Wessel song; a battalion is moving off to the East. The inmates begin singing their own version of the Nazi anthem, where 'The butcher calls' and they 'march like sheep'; and an NCO comes in who is mistaken enough to praise them for joining in so cheerfully, then informs them that they are all undoubtedly fit to enlist and are accordingly accepted into the army. They are to be divided among different units to prevent them from getting up to any filthy tricks, so Schweyk bids a touching farewell to the Privy Councillor and goes off to Hitler's war.

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Weeks have elapsed. Deep in the wintry plains of the Russian empire Hitler's good soldier Schweyk is marching to join his unit near Stalingrad, where it is supposed to combine with other sections of the Nazi army in holding back the Red Army's terrible assaults. As a result of one of his numerous misadventures he has lost contact with the rest of his draft. Untroubled by geographical preconceptions, however, and in his usual blithely trusting frame of mind, he is marching towards his allotted destination wrapped in a great bundle of assorted articles of clothing to keep out the cold. A semi-demolished signpost says that Stalingrad is 100 miles off. While he is thus marching to Stalingrad the Chalice keeps looming up in a rosy light before our good Schweyk's eyes. He pictures to himself how young Prochazka lives up to his promises. The man's love of the landlady has overcome his fear of the Gestapo, and to her agreeable surprise he hands Mrs Kopecka two pounds of pickled pork for Schweyk's unfortunate friend Baloun.

* The stage is divided in two.
As he battles courageously against the icy blasts of the steppes the indefatigable and utterly well-intentioned Schweyk becomes uncomfortably aware that he is getting no closer to his goal. The further he marches, the greater the distances shown on the signposts to Stalingrad, where Hitler so urgently needs him. A thousand miles away Anna Kopecka may at this moment be singing her ‘Song of the Chalice’, that homely and hospitable place. The voracious Baloun’s long-awaited meal will have developed into a wedding feast for the landlady and young Prochazka.

Schweyk marches on. The blizzards on those interminable eastern steppes, where the distance to Stalingrad always remains about the same, cloak the sun by day and the moon by night from the view of the good soldier Schweyk, who set out to give the great Hitler a helping hand.

Epilogue

It is likewise deep in the eastern steppes that the good soldier Schweyk personally encounters his Führer Hitler. Their conversation in the driving snow is brief and almost entirely swallowed by the storm. The gist of this historic conversation is that Hitler is asking Schweyk whether he knows the way back.

[GW Schriften zum Theater 3, pp. 1186–96. Dated New City, May 1943. This preliminary summary of the story was made for Kurt Weill, and it contains some differences from the final text. Thus the interludes balance more neatly; there is no interlude after scene 2; and Goebbels appears instead of von Bock. This is the only version which makes Prochazka a music student (scene 3) and has Schweyk preparing for an attack of rheumatism (scene 7). It omits the Chaplain and the singing of the ‘German Miserere’, and the ending is unlike that of any of the scripts.]
STAGING

The Chalice bar in Prague forms the centre of the set. Black oak panelling, bar with brass fitting, electric piano with a transparent top in which the moon and the flowing Moldau can appear. In the third act only a part of the Chalice appears to Schweyk in his thoughts and dreams: his own table. Schweyk’s ‘Anabasis’ shown in this act; move in a circle around this part of the Chalice. The length of his march can be indicated by such devices as having the peasants’ hut roll forwards or backwards, growing larger or smaller in the process.—The interludes should be played in the style of a grisly fairy tale. The whole Nazi hierarchy (Hitler, Goering, Goebbels) can appear in all of them (plus Himmler and von Bock as the case may be). The satraps can accentuate the verses with shouts of ‘Heil!’
Editorial Note

I. General

Brecht's Schweik play derives from Jaroslav Hasek's novel The Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk [or Schweik] in the World War, or more precisely from its German translation by Grete Reiner, which was first published in 1926 and from then on remained one of Brecht's favourite books. It was promptly dramatized by Max Brod, the Prague German writer who was responsible also for the publication of Kafka's posthumous novels, and by the German humorist Hans Reimann. The resulting play was one of those chosen by Erwin Piscator for his first season with his own company in Berlin in 1927–8, when Brecht was one of his team of dramaturgs, and because it seemed far too conventional and static for the form of production which Piscator had in mind, which was to make use of a treadmill stage and George Grosz projections, it was radically overhauled by this team. In Brecht's own mind he himself was the main author of the Piscator version of this play; thus according to The Messingkauf Dialogues 'he did Schweik for him entirely'. However all other accounts give Piscator's principal dramaturg Felix Gasbarra (whom Brecht did not like) an equal or even greater share in the new adaptation, and there is nothing in Brecht's papers to bear him out, beyond his pencilled title-page to the script: 'Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik. / Brecht, Gasbarra, Piscator, G. Grosz.' Nor, so far as we know, did either he or his editors ever contemplate publishing it among his own works, even though these contain a number of adaptations, in several of which he had collaborators. It first appeared in 1974, in Herbert Knust's Materialien zu Bertolt Brechts Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg (Suhrkamp-Verlag, Frankfurt), which gives a much fuller account of the play's evolution than we can do here.

Brecht's copy was probably sent him from Russia by Piscator in the early 1930s—Knust points out that it is on Russian paper—when there was some question of the two men collaborating on a script for Mezhrabpom-Film. It differs from the Brod-Reimann version above all in its attempt to match the 'epic' and picaresque form of Hašek's unfinished masterpiece. In his journal Brecht termed it a 'pure montage from the novel', though in fact it incorporated some of the earlier version and was performed under the original adaptors' names (since they held the rights and were

The second part, drawn from parts II and III of the novel, is in a slightly confused order (e.g. the numbering of the second scene) and differs from the staged version in its ending. (Piscator himself recounts that his team suggested various alternatives, but that he finally settled for Gasbarra’s idea, based on Cadet Biegler’s dream in the original, of a scene in heaven with Schweik and war wounded parading before God; when this proved under-rehearsed however it was changed for the parting scene between Schweik and Voditchka, who agree to meet ‘at six o’clock after the war.’) Again, the scenes are as follows: 1. [II/1] Transformation scene: in the train, changing to the station police office at Tábor. / 5. [II/2] Film, with Schweik marching (the start of Schweik’s ‘Anabasis’) and episode with the herdsmen. / 2. [II/2] Transformation scene: country road, then Putim police station, then film. / 3a. In a troop train (about Baloun and his hunger). / 3b. Schweik rejoins his unit. / 3c. [III/2] In the train (where Baloun has eaten the sardines). / 3d. [III/3] Beside the railway track (with Baloun doing physical jerks). / 3e. [III/2] Other side of the train (with Schweik made to do the same). Schweik here tells the 4268 episode as a story. / 4. [III/4] Battlefield. (He gets lost, puts on Russian uniform and is taken prisoner by a Hungarian unit of his own army. A shell bursts, and he is killed.) Though the typescript finished here, Knust’s Materialien volume follows this with the closing scene which Brod wrote for Piscator after discussion with him and the dramaturgs. Called ‘Schweik in Heaven, An
Epilogue, it consists of two parts, the first of which shows the entrance gate guarded by an angelic sentry, with a crowd of mutilated soldiers of all nations trying to get in. Among them are Schweik and Marek, who get through only by jumping on to the back of a general’s staff car. Part 2 then shows them being marched before the Supreme Commander, who finally accepts Marek as ‘a good honest atheist’ but rejects Schweik on the grounds that ‘the fellow will simply put a spanner in any works’. He is packed off back to earth, where he arrives just in time to keep his rendezvous with Voditchka in the Chalice.

In returning to this material with a view to reworking it for the Second World War, Brecht found little that he could incorporate as it stood. Discussing his plan with his son on his return from New York at the end of May 1943 he realized that he was changing Schweik’s character by allowing him to risk frequenting so dangerous a pub as the Chalice (which figures little in the book), and sacrifice himself for the sake of Baloun. ‘That indeed is where the situation is sharper than in 1914’, he noted in his journal for 27 May, where he reports that he had been re-reading the novel in the train on the way back:

once again I was overwhelmed by hašek’s vast panorama and the authentically un-positive point of view which it attributes to the people, they being themselves the one positive element and accordingly incapable of reacting ‘positively’ to anything else. whatever happens schweik mustn’t turn into a cunning underhanded saboteur. he is merely an opportunist exploiting the tiny openings left him.

He had already written the ‘Story’ for Kurt Weill before leaving New York, and it seems that he soon showed this to Eisler, who commented that Schweik could not be seen as a typical ‘little man’ and suggested that Brecht’s play ought to end with him leading Hitler to Stalingrad, not back home. Another diary entry, of the 29th, shows that he also discussed it with Peter Lorre, whom he evidently had in mind for the title part, while again on 12 July when the first rough version was already complete, he noted that

the language of the play differs substantially from that of the german hašek translation. south german elements have been worked in, and in various ways the gest is different. so it would be wrong, e.g., to speak bohemian dialect in this play; in other words the tone of voice shouldn’t be bohemian-german.
Scene 2 of the first part of the Piscator adaptation is the only one to have survived in recognizable form, and even there Brecht changed the sex of the landlord Palivec, turning him (doubtless for Lotte Lenya's sake) first into Mrs Natonek, then changing her name to Kopecka. Most of Hašek's characters, too, he abandoned, so that aside from a brief glimpse of Father Lacina (the less interesting of Hašek's two disgraceful chaplains) only Baloun and the police agent Brettschneider appear with Schweik in the play; all other characters are Brecht's or belong to history. But the basic concept and a number of subsidiary situations or elements were transplanted into the new terms: the stealing of the dog for instance, Baloun's embarrassing appetite, the incident of waggon 4268, the notion of an 'Anabasis' with its semi-conscious loss of orientation, and above all the whole Schweikian approach to authority, patriotism and war. Though the songs were mainly Brecht's, three of Schweik's chants are taken from the book— 'He stood beside his gun' (p. 119) from II/2; 'When we marched off to Jaromír' (p. 124) from III/4 (Piscator II/5); and 'When Hitler sent for me' (p. 126) from I/8 (Piscator I/7)—while Baloun's 'Beseda' song (p. 107) can be found in III/4, where it is described as 'the song the Czech regiments sang when they marched and bled for Austria at Solferino'. And despite what Brecht says, Schweik's whole way of speaking derives from the novel. If at times it resembles that of Mother Courage, or Matti (in Puntila), or even Galy Gay (in Mann ist Mann: another part which Brecht identified with Lorre), this is only because they too in some measure reflect the same source.

The new play was at first simply called Schweyk, the phrase 'in the Second World War' making its appearance as an addition on the title-page of what seems to be the latest of the four versions in the Brecht Archive. The other three of these all date from 1943 and consist of a bound copy in Brecht's typing, dated Santa Monica, July 1943; a largely identical Brecht typescript (but divided into acts and with a different ending) which he gave to Peter Lorre; and a fair copy not typed by Brecht. In summarizing their slight differences scene by scene we will refer to them respectively as the bound script, the Lorre script, the fair copy and the old Berliner Ensemble script (it bears that company's stamp). The first printed text appeared in volume X of the collected Stücke (1958), though a duplicated stage script was available from Henschel-Verlag in East Berlin in 1956.
2. SCENE-BY-SCENE ACCOUNT

Prologue in the Higher Regions. Our text is identical with the bound script. The fair copy has a different version of the first three lines:

HITLER
My dear Himmler, forty-eight is the age I’ve now got to.
And so henceforward ‘now or never’ must be my motto.
Accordingly I’ve just decided [‘to bid for world domination’, etc.].

This version ends, after ‘how does the Little Man view me?’:

HIMMLER
My Führer, he loves you—at any rate that’s the plan—much
as the Little Man in Germany loves you too. The Gestapo
arrange all that.

HITLER
It’s just as well they do.

—thus matching the last lines of the subsequent Interlude be-
tween scenes 3 and 4, and between scenes 6 and 7.

Scene 1. Virtually unchanged from the bound script.

Scene 2. Virtually unchanged. The report about the banker
Kruscha and Bullinger’s reaction to it were additions to the
first script.

Interlude in the Lower Regions. Is in the bound script but not in the
Lorre script, the fair copy, the old Berliner Ensemble script or
the duplicated stage script.

Scene 3. The fat woman is an addition by Brecht on the bound
script, which remained virtually unchanged.

Interlude in the Higher Regions. Unchanged. In the Lorre script this
begins Act 2.

Scene 4. One or two cuts have been made since the bound script,
notably a characteristic Schweyk story following after ‘Yes,
the Moldau’ on p. 99. The Moritat ‘Heinrich schlief bei
seiner Neuvermählten’, unattributed by Brecht, who gives it as
an appendix in the printed version, is by J. F. A. Kazner (1779);
according to Dr Sammy McLean it is also known as ‘Heinrich
und Wilhelmine’, ‘Die Geisterstimme von Mitternacht’, and
'Der ungetreue Liebhaber'. Eisler set it to the tune of a south German folksong.

In the bound script this scene was originally followed by a second 'Interlude in the Lower Regions', which Brecht cut.

Scene 5. A speech by Schweyk about sabotage, added as an afterthought to the bound script, was dropped in the fair copy.

Scene 6. All through this scene the references were to the London, not the Moscow Radio. The amendment was made on the bound script, but not on the other three, nor on the duplicated stage script. Kati’s remark about Schweyk’s hat (p. 114) was an addition to the bound script, which also lacks the Song of the Moldau at the end, presumably because Brecht was still rewriting it (besides those in the other scripts, there are seven separate versions of this song). Eisler’s melody for it starts with a quotation from Smetana’s Vltava.

In the Lorre script Act 2 ends here.

Interlude in the Higher Regions. Stalingrad replaced Rostov on the bound script, and the same with the numerous references that follow up to the end of the play.

Scene 7. Virtually unchanged.

Scene 8. The drunken chaplain was originally not Bullinger’s brother but the Reverend Matz from Rosenberg. The relevant amendments were made on the bound script, but the fair copy and the duplicated stage script still have him as Matz. An ironically meant reference to alleged Russian torture chambers was also added, and taken over into the fair copy; after which it was dropped. The price specified in Mrs Kopecka’s song ‘Come right in and take a seat’ (which was accompanied by a melody in Brecht’s characteristic notation) was 80 Kreuzers in the bound script; the final cry ‘On to Stalingrad!’ was missing; and there were a number of other even smaller changes.

Epilogue. Three of the scripts and the duplicated stage script originally had Schweyk saying of the south (p. 137): ‘But there are piles of corpses there’.

Hitler

Then I’ll push East.

Schweyk

Then we’ll have the British in our hair.

(We have omitted the stage directions.) This is changed to the
present reading on the bound script alone; hence it seems likely (as with the references to the London Radio) that Brecht used this script for his final amendments in the 1930s. In the Lorre script (as cited in Knust’s *Materialien*) the ending is different from mid-scene on; thus after ‘where the front or the rear is’ [p. 136] the Führer asks:

Can you tell me, Mr Schweyk, the quickest way to the rear?

*SCHWEYK*

Excuse me, the way to what?

*HITLER*

To the rear!

*SCHWEYK*

Beg to report, sir, this blizzard makes it impossible to hear.

*HITLER*

Because you’re not trying. Just wait; you egotists arouse my fury.

*SCHWEYK*

Oh, calm down. What’s the good of being so gory?

*HITLER*

I have made history.

*SCHWEYK*

They’ll say ‘That’s just *his* story’.

*HITLER*

Don’t you realize that ten peoples are now subject to my directing?

*SCHWEYK*

Not least the Germans, who are supposed to do the subjecting.

*HITLER*

The average German’s useless without my grip to keep him steady.

*SCHWEYK*

You kicked him too hard when he was down; he’s a master race already.

*HITLER*

When I took over I found his international reputation had been sinking.

Now you and he are fighting side by side.

*SCHWEYK*

I’d rather he and I were drinking.
HITLER
It was always my assumption that the stronger man had to win.

SCHWEYK
And so it turned out.

HITLER
Mr Schweyk, if somebody gets done in,
It's because history has decreed he should disappear.
Now take the case of Adam . . .

SCHWEYK
Tell me as we go, or we'll get frozen solid here.
You want a place where you can feel secure.
Right; but the cold may be too much for you to endure.
I can find the way backwards, though, I'm sure I can
Backwards will suit me fine, make me another man.
As for the future, nobody can tell:
What suits me fine may suit you none too well.
But let me lead you now, not that I care:
Without a leader you won't get anywhere.

Schweyk picks up his rifle and shoves Hitler in front of him. They stop at the signpost, and Schweyk turns his torch on it. He reads 'Stalingrad—5 km', and marches on in that direction with Hitler before him. The darkness and the storm swallow them up.

The final chorus then follows as in our version.
THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE

Texts by Brecht

NOTES TO THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE

1. Realism and stylization
Actors, stage designers and directors normally achieve stylization at the cost of realism. They create a style by creating 'the' peasant, 'the' wedding, 'the' battlefield; in other words by removing whatever is unique, special, contradictory, accidental, and providing hackneyed or hackneyable stereotypes the bulk of which represent no mastery of reality but are just drawings of drawings—simple to provide since the originals already have elements of style in them. Such stylists have no style of their own, nor any wish to grasp that of reality; all they do is to imitate methods of stylization. Plainly all art embellishes (which is not the same as glossing over). If for no other reason it must do so because it has to link reality with enjoyment. But this kind of embellishment, formulation, stylization, must not involve phoneyness or loss of substance. Any actress who plays Gruska needs to study the beauty of Brueghel's 'Dulle Griet'.

2. Tension
The play was written in America after ten years of exile, and its structure is partly conditioned by a revulsion against the commercialized dramaturgy of Broadway. At the same time it makes use of certain elements of that older American theatre whose forte lay in burlesques and 'shows'. In those highly imaginative manifestations, which recall the films of that splendid man Chaplin, the tension focused not merely on the progress of the plot (or only in a much cruder and larger sense than now), but more on the question 'How?'
Nowadays when we are 'offered an amusing trifle' it is simply the feverish efforts of a rapidly ageing whore who hopes that her graceless tricks will serve to postpone or annul the moment when her painful and frequently-operated vagina has once again to be handed over to a client. The pleasure of telling a story is inhibited by fear that it will fall flat. Unleashing this pleasure however does not mean freeing it from all control. Detail will be of the greatest importance, but that does not mean that economy won't be of great importance too. Imagination can be applied to the achievement of brevity. The point is not to abandon something rich. The worst enemy of true playing is playing about; meandering is the sign of a bad story-teller, while cosiness is just self-satisfaction and to be despised as such. Direct statement is among the most important methods of epic art, and it is as fair to [speak] of epic restlessness as of epic repose.

3. The chalk circle
The test of the chalk circle in the old Chinese novel and play, like their biblical counterpart, Solomon's test of the sword, still remain valuable tests of motherhood (by establishing motherliness) even if motherhood today has to be socially rather than biologically defined. The 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' is not a parable. Possibly the prologue may create confusion on this point, since it looks superficially as if the whole story is being told in order to clear up the argument about who owns the valley. On closer inspection however the story is seen to be a true narrative which of itself proves nothing but merely displays a particular kind of wisdom, a potentially model attitude for the argument in question. Seen this way, the prologue becomes a background which situates the practicability and also the evolution of such wisdom in an historic setting. And so the theatre must not use the kind of technique developed by it for plays of the parable type.

4. Background and foreground
In the English language there is an American term 'sucker',
and this is exactly what Grusha is being when she takes over
the child. The Austrian term ‘die Wurzen’ means something
of the same sort, while in High German one would have to
say ‘der Dumme’, ‘the fool’ (as in the context ‘they’ve man-
aged to find somebody fool enough to . . .’). Her maternal
instincts lay Grusha open to troubles and tribulations which
prove very nearly fatal. All she wants of Azdak is permission
to go on producing, in other words to pay more. She loves
the child; her claim to it is based on the fact that she is willing
and able to be productive. She is no longer a sucker after the
hearing.

5. [Setting of the play]
The play’s setting needs to be very simple. The varying back-
gounds can be indicated by some form of projection; at the
same time the projections must be artistically valid. The bit
players can in some cases play several parts at once. The five
musicians sit on stage with the singer and join in the action.

6. Incidental music for the Chalk Circle
Aside from certain songs which can take personal expression,
the story-teller’s music need only display a cold beauty, but
it should not be unduly difficult. Though I think it is possible
to make particularly effective use of a certain kind of mono-
tony, the musical basis of the five acts needs to be clearly
varied. The opening song of Act 1 should have something
barbaric about it, and the underlying rhythm be a preparation
and accompaniment for the entry of the governor’s family and
the soldiers beating back the crowd. The mimed song at the
end of the act should be cold, so that the girl Grusha can
play against the grain of it.

For Act 2 (‘The Flight into the northern mountains’) the
theatre calls for thrustful music to hold this extremely epic
act together; none the less it must be thin and delicate.

Act 3 has the melting snow music (poetical) and, for its
main scene, funeral and wedding music in contrast with one
another. The song in the scene by the river has the same
theme as the Act 1 song in which Grusha promises the soldier to wait for him.

In act 4 the thrustful, scurrilous Ballad of Azdak must be interrupted twice by Azdak's two songs (which definitely have to be simple to sing, since Azdak must be played by the most powerful actor rather than by the best singer). The last (lawsuit) act demands a good dance at the end.

7. Behaviour of the Singer in the last scene of Act 1
The playwright suggested that the general principle of having the scenes embody specific passages of the singer's song in such a way that their performance never overshadows the singer's solo performance to the villagers ought to be deliberately abandoned in production.

8. Casting of Azdak
It is essential to have an actor who can portray an utterly upright man. Azdak is utterly upright, a disappointed revolutionary posing as a human wreck, like Shakespeare's wise men who act the fool. Without this the judgement of the chalk circle would lose all its authority.

9. Palace revolution
The curt orders given offstage inside the palace (sporadically and in some cases quietly so as to imply the palace's vast size) must be cut once they have served to help the actors at rehearsal. What is going on onstage is not supposed to be a slice of some larger occurrence, just the part of it to be seen at this precise spot outside the palace gate. It is the entire occurrence, and the gate is the gate. (Nor is the size of the palace to be conveyed in spatial terms.) What we have to do is replace our extras with good actors. One good actor is worth a whole battalion of extras; i.e. he is more.

[Sections 1–6, 8, and 9 are from GW Schriften zum Theater 17, pp. 1204–8. The typescripts suggest that 1–4 belong together, and we have put them in their original,
Dance of the Grand Duke possibly accidental but still logical order. They and section 6 are thought to date from 1944. Sections 5 and 7 are notes accompanying the first version of the script that year, 7 being taken from BBA 192/178. The last two were written nearly ten years later, 8 being assigned to about 1953 by BBA while 9 relates to a rehearsal held on 4 December of that year in preparation for Brecht's Berliner Ensemble production.]

DANCE OF THE GRAND DUKE WITH HIS BOW

Oh, the green fields of Samara!
Oh, the bent backs of a warlike race!
O sun, o domination!

I am your prince. This bow they are bringing
Is elm tipped with bronze, strung with flexible sinew.
This arrow is mine, which I mean to send winging
To plunge itself deep, O my enemy, in you.

Oh, the green fields of Samara!
Oh, the bent backs of a warlike race!
O sun, o domination!

Off, off to the fight, bowstring taut. Aren't you frightened
To feel how much deeper the bronze will go worming
Its way through your flesh as the bowstring is tightened?
Fly, arrow, and cut up that enemy vermin!

So I tug, tug and tug at the bow that they made me.
How strong are my shoulders! A fraction more. Steady...
Why, it's broken! All lies! Elm and bronze have betrayed me.
Help, Help! God have mercy: my soul's so unready.

Oh, the cattle-stocked fields of Samara!
Oh, the bent backs of a warlike race!
Oh, the cutting up of the enemy!

[BBA 28/23. A pencilled note by Elisabeth Hauptmann, dating probably from the 1930s or later, identifies this as material discarded from the play.]
CONCERNING THE PROLOGUE
Your dislike of the prologue puzzles me somewhat; it was the first bit of the play to be written by me in the States. You see, the problem posed by this parable-like play has got to be derived from real-life needs, and in my view this was achieved in a light and cheerful manner. Take away the prologue, and it becomes impossible to understand on the one hand why it wasn’t left as the Chinese Chalk Circle, and on the other why it should be called Caucasian. I first of all wrote the little story which was published in Tales from the Calendar. But on coming to dramatize it I felt just this lack of elucidatory historical background.

CONTRADICTIONS IN ‘THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE’

1. Main contradictions
The more Grusha does to save the child’s life, the more she endangers her own; her productivity tends to her own destruction. That is how things are, given the conditions of war, the law as it is, and her isolation and poverty. In the law’s eyes the rescuer is a thief. Her poverty is a threat to the child, and the child adds to it. For the child’s sake she needs a husband, but she is in danger of losing one on its account. And so forth.

Bit by bit, by making sacrifices, not least of herself, Grusha becomes transformed into a mother for the child; and finally, having risked or suffered so many losses, fears no loss more than that of the child. Azdak’s judgment makes the rescue of the child absolute. He is free to award the child to her because there is no longer any difference between the child’s interests and hers.
Azdak is the disappointed man who is not going to cause disappointment in others.

2. Other contradictions

The petitioners prostrate themselves before the governor as he goes to Easter Mass. Beaten back by the Ironshirts, they fight wildly among themselves for a place in the front row.

The same peasant who overcharges Grusha for his milk is then kindly enough to help her pick up the child. He isn’t mean; he’s poor.

The architects make utterly servile obeisances to the governor’s ADC, but one of them has to watch the other two to see how they do it. They are not just natural arse-creepers; they need the job.

Grusha’s spineless brother is reluctant to take in his sister, but furious with his kulak of a wife on account of his dependence on her.

This spineless brother cannot say boo to his kulak of a wife, but is overbearing to the peasant woman with whom he fixes up the marriage contract.

The motherly instincts of the peasant woman who takes in the foundling against her husband’s wishes are limited and provisional; she betrays it to the police. (Likewise Grusha’s motherly instincts, though they are so much greater, so very great, are limited and provisional: she wants to see the child into safety, then give it away.)

The maid Grusha is against war because it has torn her beloved from her; she recommends him always to stay in the middle in order to survive. However on her flight into the mountains she sings of the popular hero Sosso Robakidse who conquered Iran, in order to keep her courage up.

[GW Schriften zum Theater 17, pp. 1208-10. Assigned by BBA to 1954. However, Brecht’s concept of main and subsidiary contradictions (i.e. conflicting elements in a situation) derives from Mao Tse-tung, whose pamphlet On Contradiction he seems to have read in 1955.]
SIDE TRACK

P: The people at X want to cut ‘the flight into the northern mountains’. The play is a long one, and they argue that this whole act is really no more than a side track. One sees how the maid wants to get rid of the child as soon as she has got it away from the immediate danger zone; but then she keeps it after all, and that, they say, is what counts.

B: Side tracks in modern plays have to be studied carefully before one makes up one’s mind to take a short cut. It might turn out to seem longer. Certain theatres cut one of Macheath’s two arrests in the Threepenny Opera on the grounds that both might have occurred because he twice went to the brothel instead of clearing out. They made him come to grief because he went to the brothel, not because he went to it too often, was careless. In short they hoped to liven things up and finished by getting tedious.

P: They say it weakens the maid’s claim to the child in the trial scene if her feeling for him is shown as subject to limitations.

B: To start with, the trial scene isn’t about the maid’s claim to the child but about the child’s claim to the better mother. And the maid’s suitability for being a mother, her usefulness and reliability are shown precisely by her level-headed reservations about taking the child on.

R: Even her reservations strike me as beautiful. Friendliness is not unlimited, it is subject to measure. A person has just so much friendliness—no more, no less—and it is furthermore dependent on the situation at the time. It can be exhausted, can be replenished, and so on and so forth.

W: I’d call that a realistic view.

B: It’s too mechanical a one for me: unfriendly. Why not look at it this way? Evil times make humane feelings a danger to humanity. Inside the maid Grusha the child’s interests and her own are at loggerheads with one another. She must acknowledge both interests and do her best to promote
them both. This way of looking at it, I think, must lead to a richer and more flexible portrayal of the Grusha part. It’s true.

[From ‘Die Dialektik auf dem Theater’ in Versuche 15, Suhrkamp and Aufbau Verlags, 1956. As with other dialogues in that collection, Brecht shows himself as B, talking with some of his young collaborators: in this case P for Peter Palitzsch, R for Kathe Rülicke and W for Manfred Wekwerth. They were not literal transcriptions.]
Editorial Note

I. GENERAL

*The Caucasian Chalk Circle* brings together two threads that had been twining their way gently through Brecht’s mind for several years before Luise Rainer asked him to write the play. They are of course the old Chinese story of the chalk circle, with its strong resemblance to the Judgement of Solomon, and the story of the eccentric, paradoxical judge which (though one can never be certain of this) Brecht appears to have devised for himself. Of the two the former probably has the longer ancestry—in Brecht’s mind, that is—for Klabund’s modern German dramatization was staged by Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater, where Brecht had just spent a year as a junior dramaturg, on 20 October 1925. Brecht knew Klabund, or Alfred Henschke (as he was really called), from Munich as a writer and singer of ballads faintly akin to his own—he had actually replaced Brecht in the second performance of the *Red Raisin* programme that followed *Drums in the Night* there—and Klabund’s wife the actress Carola Neher was to become one of Brecht’s best-loved performers. Moreover his still earlier friend, her unrelated namesake Caspar Neher, was designer for the new play, while Elisabeth Bergner, then coming to the peak of her fame in Germany, played its leading part. ‘We all saw it,’ said Hanns Eisler later.

Described as ‘*The Chalk Circle.*** A play in five acts from the Chinese, by Klabund’, the text was published the same year (by J. M. Spaeth Verlag, Berlin). In fact it and its heroine the prostitute Haitang have a good deal more in common with *The Good Person of Szechwan* than with *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and almost certainly helped also to inspire the former play, which was already written by the time of Brecht’s arrival in the U.S. Even the basic situation of the chalk circle differs from Brecht’s version, in that the heroine (who naturally wins the test) is the biological mother and the false claimant a stepmother, while the symbolism of the circle is already underlined by Haitang and her princely lover in the first Act, as he draws one in white on a black wall, to represent the vaulted sky and the uniting of two hearts:

**HAIrTANG**; Whatever lies outside this circle is nothing. Whatever lies inside this circle is everything. How are everything and nothing linked? In the circle that turns and moves (drawing spokes in the circle)—in the wheel that rolls ...
The test is conducted twice, first by the corrupt judge Tschutschu in Act 3, when Haitang loses, then again by her old lover, now become emperor, in Act 5. ‘Take a piece of chalk’, says the emperor to his master of ceremonies:

draw a circle here on the ground before my throne, put the boy in the circle.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: It has been done.

EMPEROR: And now, both you women,
Try to draw the boy out of the circle
At the same time. One of you take his left arm,
The other his right. It is certain
The right mother will have the right strength
To draw the boy out of the circle to herself.

*The women do as he says. Haitang grips the boy gently; Mrs Ma tugs him brutally to her side.* It is clear that this person indicating Haitang cannot be the mother. Otherwise she would have managed to draw the boy out of the circle. Let the women repeat the experiment. *Mrs Ma once again pulls the boy to her side.* Haitang, I see that you do not make the slightest effort to draw the boy out of the circle to you. What’s the meaning of that?

Haitang explains that, having brought the child up, she knows that his arms are too delicate to stand tugging:

If the only way I can get my child is by pulling off his arms, then let somebody who has never known a mother’s sufferings for her child pull him out of the circle.

EMPEROR standing up: Behold the mighty power locked in the chalk circle! This woman indicating *Mrs Ma* aimed to get control of all Mr Ma’s fortune and to that end seized the child. Now that the real mother has been acknowledged it will be possible to find the real murderer...

for Mrs Ma had murdered their joint husband and accused Haitang of the crime. She now confesses, and together with the judge is pardoned by Haitang, who is left alone with her son and her imperial lover as the curtain falls.

At the time this slightly sugary play provoked Brecht to parody it, making Jackie Pall in *The Elephant Calf* of 1926 (Vol. 2 of the *Collected Plays*) pull his mother out of a ‘doubtless most incompetently drawn circle’ in order to prove contrariwise that he, the elephant child, is her son or alternatively her daughter. It also
stimulated Friedrich Wolf to write the counterplay *Tai-yang erwacht*, originally to be called *Haitang wakes up*. Roughly twelve years later, however, when Brecht was living in Svendborg, he took up the theme again and must have wondered whether to give it a Chinese or a European setting. The title *The Odense Chalk Circle* (Odense being the principal city of Fünen Island, where Svendborg is situated) seems to suggest the latter, but only a few fragmentary notes under this heading are left, e.g.:

the governor who has to act like a poor man. he pretends to eat too crudely and is sharply rebuked.

—and:

the gentry are scared because the governor has been driven out. they flee, fully expecting the peasantry to institute a bloodbath.

but the peasants don’t come and there is no bloodbath.

by an oversight the judge appointed by the rebels is confirmed by the governor.

he pronounces judgement in the case of the two mothers.

There was to be a character called Hieronymus Dan, while another note suggests accompaniment by ‘old and austere music (fifes, drums, organs)’. There is also however a more coherent scheme headed simply *The Chalk Circle*, and this is full of Chinese names. It appears to go thus:

I
how schao-fan gets to be a judge. he hides a hunted man. this upsets his wedding. the bride’s family withdraws.

the peasants propose schao-fan for the judge’s post. laughter all round.

the governor returns to power and sends a messenger appointing a judge: schao-fan.

the wedding takes place. ([what] was taken out is brought back in before the scene starts, silently or to a song: love is an irresistible force, etc.) the new judge gives judgement in a long lawsuit between the village and the bride’s family. the judge finds for the village by sticking to the letter of the law.
II
the judge's pranks. he gets drunk in a case involving property and makes everything depend on what shape one of the litigants' nose is, etc.
he is put in gaol. his house is destroyed as if by a tornado.
the maid's wanderings with the child, through the dangers of the blizzard, through the worse dangers of the slums.
she rejects good food for the child and exposes it to hunger.

III
the mother denies the child. by acknowledging him she would be acknowledging that she is the judge's wife.
the maid adopts it, mutely, behind her own back, like a jackdaw whose thieving is hereditary.

IV
the judge gets his post back by mistake.
he bribes witnesses, he fails to examine them once bribed, he muddles everything, proposes marriage to a lady witness in open court and so on.

Section III was later shifted to precede Section I.
A single sample of the dialogue (BBA 128/05-06) shows how Brecht's interest was already centring on the disreputable judge, and goes on to outline a 'second part' in which the heroine is again called Haitang:

PEOPLE: he's a very bad judge. he breaks the law—no, he's never read it—ay, it was pure accident he got the job. he used to be a rice planter. one night an old man broke into his paddy-fields and begged him to have mercy: soldiers were after him. tao schun was sorry for him and hid him in his hut under some old baskets. that old man was the governor of the province, and after the foiling of the plot against him that night thanks to his flight and the planter's sympathy he quickly smote down his enemies. he had the planter trained and made him a judge, but tao schun was a great disappointment to him. he said quite openly in a bar that it just hadn't occurred to him to ask the old man what level of society he came from. and so he had treated him as a fugitive not as a
governor, but for that he'd no doubt have handed him over to
the soldiers. he regretted having saved one of the oppressors.
—for some time they've only been giving cases to tao schun
when the senior judge is ill, like today.

PARTY WAITING: jump up appalled: is it really tao schun on the
bench today? if so we must have an adjournment. to one
another: he won't accept a thing. we're sunk.

PARTY OPPOSITE: tao schun's in charge! hear that? it's all up,
then. he won't accept a thing.

PARTY OF THE FIRST PART: hey, you! we've just been told
one of our family's seriously ill. so we'd like to go home.
would it make any difference to you if we held the case some
other day? in an undertone: you dirty lot of vultures!

PARTY OF THE SECOND PART: it's all the same to us so
long as the truth comes out.

THE FIRST FAMILY: you're right there. better lose our field
tomorrow than today. let's go. exeunt.

THE FAMILY OPPOSITE as they leave: those crooks. wait till
judge tai's recovered, that'll put paid to their claims even if it
costs us 50 taels.

THE JUDGE, TAO SCHUN sings:
the judge is unwell, his thumb's feeling sore—
he pretends to count money
—so today there's a healthier look to the law.
but what d'you imagine a verdict is for?
eat your fill; then you'll stink all the more.

The few notes headed 'second part' follow:

haitang is caught in the civil war. together with the child, she
is forced to take risks for the sake of the cause. she exposes
the child to many dangers. their journey through the blizzard.
cheerful song. their journey through the slums. (more
dangerous.)

L:
in face of a snowstorm
i once was full of courage
but in face of people
i now am cowardly.
the snowstorm will not destroy us.
the earthquake is not avid for us.
but the coal merchant wants money
and the shipowner must be paid for the voyage.
Even before leaving Denmark however Brecht had begun work on *The Good Person of Szechwan*, for which this last ‘aria’ could easily have been written, and around the same time he seems to have set aside the oriental version of the story and started to see the judge figure in German garb. Thus Mother Courage, in the 1939 script of that play, recalls a corrupt judge in Franconia who sounds very like him (*Collected Plays*, Vol. 5) while the following year Brecht wrote the short story ‘The Augsburg Chalk Circle’ which appeared in the June 1941 issue of the Moscow *Internationale Literatur* and later in *Tales from the Calendar*. This develops the theme a lot further in the direction of our play, at the same time shifting it bodily to Brecht’s own home town and the period of the Thirty Years War. Here the child’s mother, fleeing before the invading Catholics, spends too long packing her clothes and runs off without it. Instead Anna the maid takes charge, watching by it much as does Grusha at the end of scene 2:

When she had spent some time, an hour perhaps, watching how the child breathed and sucked at its little fist, she realized that she had sat too long and seen too much to be able to leave without the child. Clumsily she stood up, wrapped it in its linen coverlet, took it on her arm and went out of the courtyard with it, looking shyly around like someone with a bad conscience, a thief [cf. p. 163].

She takes it off to her brother’s in the country; he then makes her marry a dying cottager with the same results as in the eventual play. When the child’s mother arrives ‘several years’ later and removes it she sues for her boy’s return. The judge is one Ignaz Dollinger, who is described as ‘a short but extremely meaty old man’, famous for ‘his homely hearings, with their cutting remarks and proverbs’ and accordingly ‘praised by the lower orders in a lengthy ballad’. ‘Is he yours?’ he bellows at her, accusing her of being after the dead father’s property. ‘Yes’, she replies, ‘... If I can just keep him till he knows all the words. He only knows seven’ (cf. p. 235). So he hears the case, concludes that both mothers are lying, and makes the test of the chalk circle, in which Anna lets the boy go, so that he is jerked to his mother’s side.

Old Dollinger got to his feet.
‘And that shows us’, he announced in a loud voice, ‘who the right mother is. Take the child away from that slut. She’d tear him cold-bloodedly in two.’
Three or four years later, when Jules Leventhal commissioned him to write the play for Broadway (which may seem inconsistent with his professed 'revulsion' but was not wholly so), the main structure and principal characters were ready in Brecht's mind, and the only remaining problems were setting and framework: what period and country to pick for it and how to relate it to the present day. The choice of medieval Georgia and of a contemporary Soviet framework must already have been made before he left New York in mid-March 1944 to return to Santa Monica and work on the script, for there is no sign of hesitation. Certainly the resulting first script is written with great sureness and an unusual scarcity of amendments and afterthoughts, while there are far fewer drafts and alternative versions than for some of the less complex or elaborately developed plays. The dating of the framework was to change; in the first script the prologue is set in 1934, without reference to the war. So were most of the names of the characters, which started by being mainly Russian and were Georgiandized later; thus Grusha Vachnadze was originally Katya Grusha (or at one point Katya Kirshon), her soldier Volodya Surki, her brother Piotr and the lesser characters Petrov Petrovitch, Maxim Maximovitch and the like, while the princes were Boyars and Grusinia Georgia throughout.

Just when the various alterations were made is impossible to say. A journal entry of 8 May shows that Brecht was held up for a fortnight while he evolved social reasons for the judge's shabby eccentricities, grounding these ultimately in

his disappointment that the fall of the old rulers had not introduced a new era but merely an era of new ones. hence he goes on practising bourgeois justice, but in a disreputable, sabotaged version which has been made to serve the total self-interest of the judge. this explanation of course mustn't modify what i had in mind, and is for instance to be no excuse for azdak.

But this hitch is not reflected in the script. Nor, other than very marginally, is the remodelling of the heroine which another entry of 8 August says has taken him three weeks; he may have found Katya in the first script 'nicer' and not enough like Brueghel's Dulle Griet (who is glued on the title-pages of the three earliest scripts), but he does not seem to have altered her much, or provided those practical motives for her goodness which Feucht-wanger (who thought her 'too holy') had asked for. Altogether the changes to his first conception were surprisingly slight.
The first script bears a note by Brecht, ‘first version’ and is dated ‘Santa Monica 5.6.44’, the day when he posted it off to Luise Rainer. By August James and Tania Stern had embarked on a rough translation and Auden was prepared to do the verse. Brecht’s second script, which contains the new version of the prologue and an ad lib epilogue, is similarly headed ‘second version’; it must have been finished early in September, and consists very largely of carbons of the first, with some retyped pages. Its title-page gives the names of Eisler and Winge as ‘collaborators’ as well as that of [Ruth] Berlau who figures alone in the published version; John Hans Winge was an Austrian who had been working in a Los Angeles factory. Both scripts were bound for Brecht, and he seems to have made his amendments, e.g. of names, indifferently in one or the other. These were then taken into a third, undated script of 1944, which would appear to be the version photographed and put into the New York Public Library by Ruth Berlau early in 1945. Like the first two, it was typed by Brecht, but this time using upper- and lower-case letters. The play was first actually published in English, not in the Sterns’ version, with Auden’s lyrics, but in a new translation by Eric and Maja Bentley which appeared as one of Two Parables for the Theatre in 1948. The first German publication was in the special Brecht issue of Sinn und Form (Potsdam) the following year. This in turn was amended by Brecht for publication in the Versuche series in 1954.

2. SCENE-BY-SCENE ACCOUNT

The following are scene-by-scene notes on the main differences:

1. The Struggle for the Valley

In all three scripts and the Sinn und Form version this was called ‘Prologue’, and perhaps as a result many critics and directors have taken it as not forming an integral part of the play. However, as Brecht pointed out in his letter to his publisher Suhrkamp (p. 304), it forms the beginning of the first script and, though altered, was never thereafter omitted. In that first version, which sets the episode on Sunday, 7 June 1934, there are no references to war damage and the scene is nearly two pages shorter. We reproduce it in full on pp. 324–28. Another early note, which may even have preceded it, specifies:

scene: in the background a school with posters and a soviet flag.
a few dusty trees.
meeting: the folklore not to be overdone. those present are in their sunday best, no traditional costumes. among them a soldier on leave. a woman has a child on her lap. some of the men have very short haircuts.

the singer wears european garb. very comfortable; like all suits, his is somewhat crumpled. his musicians wear russian shirts; one of them has a georgian cap.

the tone of the discussion is very relaxed; a general delight in argument is evident. now and again one of the young people shoots a paper dart at a girl opposite and is told to shut up.

Within three months the scene had been rewritten virtually in its final form. Only its ending was different, being taken from the first version, from its last stage direction (‘While they begin to move off’, etc.) to the Voice’s closing announcement. This was altered in 1954, after the Sinn und Form publication. Another minor point involved the switching of the names of the two collective farms, which was done on the second script but inadvertently overlooked in the Sinn und Form version. Here Hanns Eisler performed what he ironically called ‘one of my great services to German literature’ by telling Brecht that, given the insulting use of the term ‘goat’ for a woman in Germany (cf. the English ‘cow’), he should not identify a goat farm with the name of Rosa Luxemburg.

2. The Noble Child
The scripts all amplify the opening stage direction by the words ‘his manner of performing shows that he has done it a hundred times before; he turns the pages mechanically, casting an occasional glance at them. By slight movements he tells the musicians when to come in’. In the first script this ran on . . . ‘and prefixes each entry of the actors by striking the ground with a wooden mallet’. See the note in Brecht’s journal for 3 July 1944, which argues that the play’s successive episodes are ‘embodiments of the main incidents in his tale’ and pictures him striking the ground thus and behaving like a director at a performance. ‘This is necessary to avoid illusion and its intoxicating effects’. This idea is abandoned in number 7 of Brecht’s notes above (p. 302).

Aside from the subsequent change of names, which has already been mentioned and which gives a much more Georgian flavour, the amendments to the first script are generally minor ones. The
dusty messenger originally entered just before the Governor’s ‘Not before divine service’ (p. 152) which was followed by the exchange ‘Did you hear’, etc. (p. 154); this was altered only in the 1950s. The references to geese in the dialogue between Grusha (Katya) and Simon (Volodya Surki) were originally to fish, but appear in the second script. Katya’s answer to the query ‘Is the young lady as healthy as a fish in water’ was

Why as a fish in water, soldier? Why not like a horse at a horse market? Can it pull two carts? Can it stand out in the snow while the coachman gets drunk? Being healthy depends on not being made ill.

surki: That won’t happen.

—while when he asks if she is impatient and wants apples (not cherries) in winter she retorts ‘Why not say “does she want a man before she’s too old?”’ This and the new stress on her aptitude for the role of ‘sucker’ (‘You simple soul’, ‘You’re a good soul’, ‘You’re just the kind of fool’, p. 163) represent the main differences between Grusha and the Katya of the first script.

Her song ‘When you return I will be there’ (p. 159) was a response to Konstantin Simonov’s war poem ‘Wait for Me’, whose translation, by Nathalie Rene, Brecht had cut out of Moscow News and gummed in his journal at the time of the first work on Simone Machard:

Wait for me and I will come.
Wait, and wait again.
Wait where you feel sad and numb
And dreary in the rain.
Wait, when snows fall more and more,
Wait when days are hot ...

e tc., the ‘I’ of course here being a soldier. The remainder of the verse in this scene is virtually unchanged from the first version, though the ‘temptation to do good’ there was ‘great’ and not ‘terrible’. It is interesting perhaps that the whole line in its present form should have been very firmly written in by Brecht on the second script; he clearly felt it to be important.

3. The Flight into the Northern Mountains
Much of the unrhymed verse (which was originally not broken into lines but divided by oblique strokes) differs in the first script, where it is mainly struck out without having yet been replaced by
the new versions; maybe these became detached from the script. In the second script it is all there, virtually as now. According to Rudolf Vápeník the song ‘O sadly one morning’ of the two Ironshirts on p. 173 is translated from a Moravian folksong set (as one of his Slovak Folk Songs) by Bartók; it could be a by-product of Brecht’s researches for *Schwyzer*.

The first episode (Grusha getting milk from the old peasant) is one of those which Brecht retyped entirely for the second script, but despite some rewording it was not substantially changed. As revised it ended with the words ‘Michael, Michael, I certainly took on a nice burden with you’ (p. 167), followed by the stage direction:

*She stands up, worried, takes the child on her back and marches on.*

*Grumbling, the old man collects his can and looks expressionlessly after her.*

The next episode (In front of the caravansary), which figures in the first script, was then cut, not to be restored till the collected edition; it was not performed in Brecht’s production. The brief appearance of the two Ironshirts which follows was slightly bowdlerised in the 1950s; before ‘He lets himself be hacked to pieces by his superiors’ (p. 173) it read ‘When he hears an order he gets a stand; when he sticks his lance into the enemy’s guts he comes’. The short scene with the two peasants is virtually unchanged from the first script, but once Grusha runs into the Ironshirts there are a fair number of alterations; the central part of the episode being among the passages retyped by Brecht for the second script. The gist of his changes here is to make Grusha more evidently frightened of the soldiers than was Katya in the first version, and also to make it seem less likely that she is handing the child over to the peasants for good. Thus Katya was not ‘frightened’ (p. 175) and did not ‘utter a little scream’ (p. 176)—these directions appearing only from the third script on—while instead the first script made her laugh and say:

*Corporal, if you’re going to question me so severely I’ll have to tell you the truth: that I’d like to be on my way. How about lowering your lance?*

The episode of the bridge is once again almost as in the first script, though there is one possibly significant detail: the First Man originally greeted Katya’s feat in exactly the words the First Soldier uses of the similarly-named Katrin in the drum scene of *Mother Courage (Collected Plays, Vol. 3)*: ‘She’s made it’. Brecht
changed this in the 1950s to ‘She’s across’, presumably in order not to stress the connection between the two characters, both of whom were at that time played by the same actress, Angelika Hurwicz.

4. In the northern Mountains
Originally entitled ‘Katya Grusha’s sojourn at her cowardly brother’s: her strange marriage and the return of the soldier’. A number of passages here were retyped and rewritten for the second script, for instance the episode of the melting snow, starting with the Singer’s introduction (p. 135):

THE SINGER

The sister was too ill. The cowardly brother had to shelter her / She lay in the store room. Through the thin wall she heard him talking to his wife: / ‘She’ll soon be gone’, he said. ‘When she’s well. How soft your breasts are . . .’. / The sister was ill till winter came. The cowardly brother had to shelter her. / The store room grew cold and she heard him talk to his wife. / ‘When spring comes she’ll be gone’, he said. ‘How firm your thighs are . . .’. / The room was cold. The road was colder. The winter was long, the winter was short. / The rats must not bite, the child must not cry, the spring must not come. / Where to go when the snow melts?

Still weak, Katya squats at the loom in the store room. She and the child, who is squatting on the ground, are wrapped in rugs and rags against the cold. The child cries. Katya tries to comfort it. [At this point there is a photograph of a Mongolian-looking woman at a spinning-wheel gummed into the script.]

KATYA: Don’t cry, or do it quietly. Otherwise my sister-in-law will hear us and we’ll have to go Cockroaches aren’t supposed to make any noise, are they? If we keep as quiet as cockroaches they’ll forget we’re in the house. Remember the cockroaches. The child cries again. Hush. The cold doesn’t have to make you cry. Being poor’s one thing, freezing’s another. It doesn’t get you liked. You keep quiet and I’ll let you see the horses; remember the horses. The child cries again. Michael, we have to be clever, we’ve no wedding lines for my sister-in-law. If we make ourselves small we can stay till the snow melts. She draws the child to her and looks, appalled, at one particular point. Michael, Michael, you’ve got no sense. If it’s on account of the rats you don’t need to cry. Rats are quite human. They have families. They store up food for 500 years.
PIOTR slips in: What's up? Why are you looking over at that corner, Katya? Is he frightened?

KATYA: What's he to be frightened of? There's nothing there.

PIOTR: I thought I heard scuffling in the straw. I hope it isn't rats. You wouldn't be able to stay with the child here.

KATYA: There aren't any rats. It'd be impossible to get a job anywhere with him.

PIOTR sits by her: I wanted to talk to you about Lisaveta . . .

Piotr is Lavrenti, and Lisaveta his wife Aniko, and the conversation continues much as in our text from 'She has a good heart' to 'Was I talking about Aniko?' (pp. 186–7), then:

You can't think how it upsets her not to be able to offer you anything better than this room. The big room above is too hard to heat. 'My sister will understand': I've told her that a thousand times, but does she believe me? She even blames herself privately for not being able to stand children. That's because she hasn't any of her own. Her heart's not strong enough, you see.

Grusha's song 'Then the lover started to leave' (p. 186) then comes after the second 'Grusha is silent' (p. 187). After the 'heat of the falling drops' (ditto) Piotr makes his proposal about the marriage, much as in our text except that Katya is to come back to live in his house again as soon as her bridegroom dies; the provision about her being allowed to stay on in the latter's farm for two years (p. 189) only appearing in the third script. The wedding ceremony itself was hardly changed except in this respect, thus on leaving (p. 190) Piotr/Lavrenti says 'I'll wait for you by the poplar at the entrance to the village, Katya'.

KATYA: Suppose it takes longer?

MOTHER-IN-LAW: It won't take longer.

The conversation among the guests (p. 193) was retyped virtually as now for the second script; in the first it ran:

THE GUESTS noisily: There've been more disturbances in the city, have you heard?—Ay, the boyar Rajok's besieged in the palace, they say.—The Grand Duke is back and it's all going to be like it used to be.—Lots of them coming back all the time from the Persian war.—They even say the old governor's wife's come back, and all the palace guard with her. Katya drops the baking sheet. People help her to pick up the cakes.
A woman to Katya: You not feeling well? Too much excitement, that's it. Sit down and have a rest. Katya sits down.
The guests: Here today, gone tomorrow. Gone tomorrow, here today. But we still have to pay taxes.
Katya feebly: Did someone say the palace guard had come back?
A man: That's what I heard.
Another: They say, though, that boyar Rajok's green flag is still flying over the palace. But the palace is being besieged. The old governor's wife is supposed to be living in one of the houses opposite.
Katya: Who told you that?
The man to a woman: Show her your shawl...

Thenceforward (p. 193) to the end of the scene the first version has been altered very little, the one significant addition (on the second script) being Grusha's explanation that she cannot go back to Nukha (originally Kachezia) because she had knocked down an Ironshirt.

5. The Story of the Judge
Most of the amendments to this scene are minor ones, and a good few date from 1954; the three scripts are thus close to one another, only the episode with the Fat Prince's nephew having been to some extent rewritten after the first script. Already there the Singer, who up to that point had only figured as such, began from the beginning of the A zdak ballad on (p. 213) to be 'The Singer together with his musicians', and this is oddly enough the only hint anywhere in the play or Brecht's notes that he may be required to perform A zdak's part, though Brecht seems to have taken this for granted in the production.

The Ironshirts' action in dragging A zdak to the gallows was added in 1954; previously they had been slapping him and Schauva genially on the shoulder. The Fat Prince's (the boyar Rajok's) first speech was altered and expanded in the rewriting for the second script; at the same time the chatter of the Ironshirts (p. 209) emphasizing their awareness of their (momentary) political importance was also added. Some small changes were made to heighten the dialogue where the Nephew pronounces his verdict (p. 211), both in the rewriting and in 1954. After the first two of A zdak's cases (respectively the doctor and Ludovica) the stage direction showing A zdak on his travels (p. 217) along the
Military Highway and the two accompanying verses of the Azdak ballad were introduced in 1954. The presence of Ironshirts behind Azdak’s throne each time, with their flag as a tangible sign of support for him, was an addition on the first script, as was also the appearance of the Fat Prince’s head on one of their lances (p. 220).

6. The Chalk Circle
In the first script there is a song near the beginning of the scene (after the Cook starts praying, p. 223) which was thereafter omitted:

SINGER softly:
The people say: the poor need luck
They won’t get far by using their heads.
They won’t grow fat by the work of their hands.
Therefore, it is said
God has devised for them games of chance
And the dog races. Likewise God
In his unremitting care for his poor folk
See to it that the tax inspectors sometimes slip.
For the poor need luck.

All through there are two elements missing from this version—the threat which the wounded corporal represents to Grusha, and Simon’s confession that he is the father of the child. Instead Simon alleges that it was the son of one of his comrades. Then after the entry of the Governor’s Wife, the First Lawyer goes on from his condemnation of the judge as ‘about the lowest’ (p. 226) to say

I insist you settle this matter out of court.
GOVERNOR’S WIFE: As you wish.
FIRST LAWYER: In view of the size of the estate which the child is inheriting, what do a few piastres count here and there? On a nod from her be strolls over to Katya: A thousand piastres. Seeing Katya’s look of uncertainty: I am authorized to offer you a thousand piastres if the case can be kept from coming to court.
THE COOK: Holy Mary, a thousand piastres!
FIRST LAWYER strutting off: You see what your friends think.
KATYA: Are they trying to offer me money for Michael?
THE COOK: And they’d certainly go higher.
VOLODYA darkly: A meal that doesn't fill you makes you hungry, they say.

FIRST LAWYER coming back: Well, what about that thousand? GOVERNOR'S WIFE: Is she being brazen enough to think it over? CROSSES TO KATYA: You shameless person, don't you know you've to bow when I speak to you? KATYA bows deeply, then: I can't sell him, Milady.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE: What? You call that selling, when you've got to return what you stole? You thief, you know it's not yours!

VOLODYA sees KATYA hesitating: at attention: I attest that this is the child of my comrade Illo Toboridze, Mrs Anastasia Sashvili, sir.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE: Aren't you one of the palace guard? How dare you lie to me, you swine?

VOLODYA: Straight from the horse's mouth, sir, as the saying goes. The Governor's Wife is speechless. Ironshirts have entered the courtyard and the Adjutant has been whispering to one of them. The Second Lawyer tugs the Governor's Wife's sleeve and whispers something to her.

THE COOK: They wouldn't be offering money if they weren't frightened of Azdak's favouring you. He goes by faces.

All this was dropped in the second script, which contained the present short bridge passage to cover the cut.

The first part of the actual hearing, up to Simon's testimony, was retyped after the first script, everything between Grusha's 'He's mine' (p. 228) and the middle of the Second Lawyer's speech beginning 'Thanks, Your Worship' (p. 229) being new. Originally Grusha was followed by the Second Lawyer saying

Excuse me, Maxim Maximovitch, but the court wants facts. My lord, ...

FIRST LAWYER: My dear Pavlov Pavlovitch, I would have thought my address ... 
SECOND LAWYER: Is dispensable, my dear Maxim Maximovitch. My lord, by an unfortunate chain of circumstances, this child, [etc.]

This means that all reference to the Abashvili (or Sashvili) estates was lacking from the original scene, since the same is true of their mention in the Second Lawyer's speech later on p. 235. Much of the backchat between Azdak and Grusha likewise comes from the
second script, which first introduced Grusha’s long diatribe starting ‘You drunken onion’ (p. 232) and ending ‘than swinging from the gallows’ (below). Her passage too with the Governor’s Wife (p. 234) is a product of that script, but from then on till the final dance the first version has survived very largely intact. It ends with the Singer’s final verses in a slightly different line arrangement, and without the ironic qualifying word ‘almost’, which was an addition to the second script. An epilogue follows, but was evidently written later; its use was to be optional, and it is not included in the third script or any of the published versions other than the Materialien zu Brechts ‘Der kaukasische Kreidekreis’ (Suhrkamp-Verlag, Frankfurt, 1966), from which the following translation has been drawn:

**EPILOGUE**

*(ad libitum)*

The ring of spectators from the two collective farms becomes visible. There is polite applause.

**PEASANT WOMAN RIGHT:** Arkady Tcheidse, you slyboots, friend of the valley-thieves, how dare you compare us members of the Rosa Luxemburg collective with people like that Natella Abashvili of yours, just because we think twice about giving up our valley?

**SOLDIER LEFT TO THE OLD MAN RIGHT, WHO HAS STOOD UP:** What are you looking over there for, comrade?

**THE OLD MAN RIGHT:** Just let me look at what I’m to give up. I won’t be able to see it again.

**THE PEASANT WOMAN LEFT:** Why not? You’ll be coming to call on us.

**THE OLD MAN RIGHT:** If I do I mayn’t be able to recognize it.

**KATO THE AGRONOMIST:** You’ll see a garden.

**THE OLD MAN RIGHT BEGINNING TO SMILE:** May God forgive you if it’s not one.

*They all get up and surround him, cheering.*

3. **PROLOGUE FROM THE FIRST SCRIPT (1944)**

Public square of a Caucasian market town, with peasants and tractor drivers of two collectivized villages seated in a circle, smoking and drinking wine; among them a delegate from the planning commission in the capital, a man in a leather jacket. There is merr laughter.
THE DELEGATE in an effort to get their attention: Let’s draw up an agreed statement, comrades.

AN OLD PEASANT standing: It’s too soon for that, I’m against it; we haven’t thrashed things out; I object on scientific grounds.

WOMAN’S VOICE from the right: Not thrashed it out? We’ve been arguing ten hours.

THE OLD PEASANT: And what about it, Tamara Oboladze? We’ve still got four hours left.

A SOLDIER: Correct. I’m surprised at you, Tamara. Who’s going to get up from table when there’s still a quarter of a calf left in the dish? Who’s going to be satisfied with ten hours of argument if he can have fourteen?

A GIRL: We’ve done Cain and Abel, but nobody’s even mentioned Adam and Eve yet. Laughter.

THE DELEGATE: Comrades, my head’s in a whirl. Groaning: All this elaborate business about scientifically based goat breeding, all those examples to back it, all those subtle allusions, and then great masses of goat’s cheese and endless jugs of wine to top it off! I suggest we close the discussion, comrades.

A TRACTOR DRIVER decisively: Even the best things must come to an end. Hands up those who want the discussion closed! The majority raise their hands.

THE TRACTOR DRIVER: The closure’s carried. Now for the statement!

THE DELEGATE: The point at issue then he begins writing in his notebook is a difference between two collective farms, the Rosa Luxemburg and Galinsk, concerning a valley which lies between them and is not much good for grazing. It belongs to the Rosa Luxemburg collective addressing those stage left of him and is being claimed by the Galinsk collective, to those stage right of him, that’s you people.

THE OLD MAN: Put down that we have to have the valley for raising our goats, just like we have to have other valleys, and it’s always belonged to our village. Applause left.


THE DELEGATE: Why don’t we say the valley belongs to you now?
THE PEASANT RIGHT: And when you say you have to have it for your goats, better put in that you’ve plenty more pasture land not more than half an hour from there.

A WOMAN LEFT: Put this down. If goats are driven half an hour every day they give less milk.

THE DELEGATE: Please don’t let’s go through all that again. You could have government aid to build stables on the spot.

THE OLD MAN LEFT: I’d like to ask you addressing the Peasant Right a small personal question. Did you or did you not enjoy our goat’s-milk cheese? On his not immediately replying: Did you or did you not enjoy those four or five pounds you were tucking away? I’d like an answer, if you don’t mind.

THE PEASANT RIGHT: The answer’s yes. So what?

THE OLD MAN triumphantly: I wonder if the comrade knows why he enjoyed our goat’s-milk cheese? Pause for effect. Because our goats enjoyed the grass in that particular valley. Why isn’t cheese just any old cheese, eh? Because grass isn’t just any old grass. To the Delegate: Put that in your book. Laughter and applause right.

THE DELEGATE: Comrades, this isn’t getting us anywhere.

THE PEASANT RIGHT: Just write down why we think the valley ought to be made over to us. Mention our expert’s report on the irrigation scheme, then let the Planning Commission make up its mind.

THE DELEGATE: The comrade agronomist!

A girl stands up right.

NATASHA: Put me down as Nina Meladze, agronomist and engineer, comrade.

THE DELEGATE: Your native village of Galinsk sent you to technical school in Tiflis to study, is that right? She nods. And on getting back you worked out a project for the kolkhoz?

NATASHA: An irrigation scheme. We’ve a lake up in the mountains that can be dammed so as to irrigate 2000 versts of barren soil. Then our kolkhoz can plant vines and fruit trees there. It’s a project which can only be economic if the contested valley is included. The yield of the land will go up 6000 per cent. Applause right. It’s all worked out here, comrade. She hands him a file.

THE OLD MAN LEFT uneasily: Put in a word to say that our kolkhoz thinks of going in for horse breeding, will you?

THE DELEGATE: Gladly. I think I’ve got it all now. There’s just one more suggestion I’d like to make if I may, comrades.
It would please me very much if I could add a footnote to my report saying that the two farms have come to an agreement after having heard all the arguments put forward this day, Sunday June 7th 1934.

General silence.

The Old Man left tentatively: The question is, who does the valley belong to? Why don’t we have another drink or two and talk it over? There are still some hours to go. . . .

The Peasant right: All right, let’s take our time over the footnote, but do let’s close the discussion as decided, specially as it’s holding up our drinking eh, comrades?

Laughter.

Voices: Yes, close the discussion. How about a bit of music?

A Woman: The idea was to round off this visit by the Planning Commission’s delegate by listening to the singer Arkadi Cheidze. We’ve been into it with him. While she is speaking a girl runs off to fetch the singer.

The Delegate: That sounds interesting. Thank you very much, comrades.

The Old Man left: But this is off the point, comrades.

The Woman right: Not really. He got in this morning, and promised he’d perform something which had a bearing on our discussion.

The Old Man left: That’d be different. They say he’s not at all bad.

The Peasant right to the Delegate: We had to telegraph to Tiflis three times to get him. It nearly fell through at the last minute because his chauffeur caught a cold.

The Woman right: He knows 21,000 verses.

The Peasant right: It’s very difficult to book him. You people in the Planning Commission ought to see he comes north more often, comrade.

The Delegate: I’m afraid we’re mainly involved with economics.

The Peasant right with a smile: You sort out the distribution of grapes and tractors; why not songs too? Anyhow here he is.

Led by the girl, the singer Arkadi Cheidze enters the circle, a thick-set man with simple manners. He is accompanied by four musicians with their instruments. Applause greets the artists.

The girl introducing them: This is the comrade delegate, Arkadi.
THE DELEGATE shakes his hand: It is a great honour to meet you. I heard about your songs way back as a schoolboy in Moscow. Are you going to give us one of the old legends?

THE SINGER: An extremely old one. It’s called ‘The Chalk Circle’ and comes from the Chinese. We perform it in a somewhat altered version of course. Comrades, it’s a great honour for me to entertain you at the end of your day of strenuous debates. We hope that you’ll find the old poet’s voice doesn’t sound too badly under the shadow of Soviet tractors. Mixing one’s wines may be a mistake, but old and new wisdom mix very well. I take it we’re all having something to eat before the performance begins? It’s a help, you know.

VOICES: Of course. Everyone into the club.

As they disperse the Delegate turns to the girl.

THE DELEGATE: I hope it won’t finish too late. I have to go home tonight, comrade.

THE GIRL to the Singer: How long will it take, Arkadi? The comrade delegate has got to get back to Tiflis tonight.

THE SINGER offhandedly: A matter of hours.

THE GIRL very confidentially: Couldn’t you make it shorter?

THE SINGER seriously: No.

VOICE: When you’ve finished eating, Arkadi Cheidze will give his performance out here on the square.