

The Ration Ticket

Excerpt from the diary of Jules Flegmon.

by Marcel Aymé

Translated by Karen M. Reshkin

February 10 — There's an absurd rumor going around the neighborhood about new austerity measures. In order to ward off shortages and insure greater output from the laboring element of the population, there will supposedly be executions of non-productive consumers: the elderly, the retired, those of independent means, the unemployed and other non-essential persons. Deep down, I feel that this measure would be quite fair.

Just now, out in front, encountered my neighbor Roquenton, that impassioned septuagenarian who last year married a woman of twenty-four. He was sputtering with indignation. "Why should age matter?" he protested, "I'm the light of my pretty baby's life!" In lofty terms, I advised him to accept the sacrifice of his person for the common good with joyful pride.

February 12 — Where there's smoke, there's fire. Dined today with my old friend Maleffroi, a councilman at the Seine Prefecture. I skillfully drew the truth out of him after loosening his tongue with a bottle of Arbois. Naturally, putting all the non-essentials to death is out of the question. The plan will simply cut back on their time alive. Maleffroi explained to me that they will be entitled to so many days of existence per month according to their degree of uselessness. It seems that the time

ration cards are already printed. I found this idea as a propos as it is poetic. I believe I remember saying some truly charming things about it. Undoubtedly a little affected by the wine, Maleffroi looked at me warmly, his eyes misty with friendship.

February 13 — It's an outrage! A denial of justice! A monstrous assassination! The decree has just appeared in the newspapers and I'll be damned if they haven't placed artists and writers in amongst "those consumers whose upkeep is not offset by any justifiable compensation"! I might possibly have understood if the measure applied to painters, to sculptors, to musicians. But to writers! In this, there is an inconsistency, an aberration, which shall remain the supreme shame of our time. After all, the usefulness of writers needs no demonstration—certainly not mine, I can say in all modesty. Now I shall be entitled to only fifteen days of existence per month.

February 16 — With the decree going into effect on March 1st and the sign-up deadline the 18th, those people relegated by their social situation to partial existence are busy looking for a job which would allow them to be reclassified under the category of full-time livers. But the administration, with diabolical foresight, has forbidden any personnel movement before the 25th of February. I got the idea to telephone my friend Maleffroi to find me a job as a porter or museum guard in the next forty-eight hours. I was too late. He had just filled his last available opening for an office boy.

"Why the devil did you wait until today to ask me for a position?"

"But how was I to guess that the measure would affect me? When we dined together, you didn't tell me."

"If I may remind you, I specified in no uncertain terms that the austerity measure would affect all non-essential personnel."

February 17 — Clearly my concierge already thinks I am half-alive, a phantom, a barely visible shadow from the underworld, for this morning she neglected to bring me my mail. As I came downstairs, I impressed upon her the importance of my situation. It is in order to fatten up lazy pigs of your ilk, I told her, that the elite are sacrificing their precious lives. And deep down, it's quite true. The more I think about it, the more this decree strikes me as unjust and inequitable.

Ran into Roquenton and his young wife just now. I felt sorry for the poor old fellow. He will be entitled to exactly six days of life per month, but the worst part is that Mme Roquenton, because of her young age, will be allowed fifteen days. This discrepancy has thrown the old husband into a state of wild anxiety. The girl seems to be accepting her fate more philosophically.

Over the course of the day, I met a number of people whom the decree will not affect. Their lack of understanding and their ingratitude toward those who will be sacrificed disgust me profoundly. Not only does this iniquity seem to them the most natural thing in the world, but they seem to be rejoicing over it. Human egotism shall never be chastised cruelly enough.

February 18 — I waited three hours in line at the 18th district city hall to get my time ticket. We were there, lined up in double file, around two thousand unfortu-

nate souls pledged to serve the appetite of the laboring masses. And this was just the first little batch. About half of the number looked to be elderly. There were pretty young women whose faces were languid with sadness and who seemed to sigh: 'I don't want to die yet.' 'Working girls' were numerous. The decree had touched them particularly hard by reducing their time alive to seven days a month. In front of me, one of them was complaining that she was condemned forever to her role as a lady of the evening. In seven days, she complained, men don't have the time to form an attachment. I'm not so sure about that.

In the waiting lines I recognized, not without emotion, and I must admit, with secret satisfaction, comrades from Montmartre, writers and artists: Céline, Gen Paul, Daragnès, Fauchois, Soupault, Tintin, d'Esparbès and others. Céline was in a dark mood. He said that it was just one more maneuver of the Jews, but I think that on this particular point, his bad mood led him astray. Actually, in the terms of the decree, it allows Jews, without distinction for age, sex, or activity, one-half day of existence per month.

On the whole, the crowd was irritated and tumultuous. The many officers assigned to security duty treated us with great disdain, clearly considering us the scum of the earth. Again and again, as we grew tired of this long wait, they appeased our impatience with kicks in the ass. I devoured this humiliation with silent dignity, but I stared at a police sergeant while mentally roaring a cry of revolt. Now it is we who are the damned of the earth.

I was finally able to pick up my time ticket. The adjoining tickets, each worth twenty-four hours of existence, are a very tender shade of blue, periwinkle blue, such a soft blue that it brought tears to my eyes.

February 24 — About a week ago, I wrote to the agency responsible for the ration program to have my personal case taken into consideration. I received a supplemental twenty-four hours of existence per month. It's always like that.

March 5 — For the last ten days I've led a feverish existence which made me neglect my journal. Not wanting to lose a moment of such a brief life, I've just about given up sleeping at night. In these last four days, I've filled more paper than I would have in three weeks of normal life, and still my style has the same brilliance, my thoughts the same depth. I am pursuing pleasure just as frenetically. I want all beautiful women for myself, but it's impossible.

With the same desire to seize the day as it passes, and perhaps also in a spirit of vengeance, every day I've had two very copious meals on the black market. At noon I ate three dozen oysters, two poached eggs, a quarter of a goose, a slice of beef filet, vegetables, salad, assorted cheeses, a chocolate mousse, a grapefruit, and three mandarin oranges. As I was drinking my coffee, I found that although I couldn't escape the idea of my sad lot, I did feel a certain satisfaction. Am I becoming the perfect stoic? Coming out of the restaurant, I ran into the Roquentons. Today the old fellow was living out his last day for the month of March. Tonight at midnight, when his sixth ticket is used up, he will sink into non-being and remain there for twenty-five days.

March 7 — I paid a visit to the young Mme Roquenton, temporarily widowed since midnight. She received me with a graciousness made all the more charming by her melancholy. We spoke of one thing and another and also of her husband. She told me how he vanished into nothingness. They were both in bed. At one minute to midnight, Roquenton was holding his wife's hand and giving her his last recommendations. On the stroke of midnight, she suddenly felt the hand of her companion evaporate in her grasp. There was nothing left beside her but an empty pair of pajamas and a set of false teeth on the pillow. This vivid description moved us both a great deal. Since Lucette Roquenton was shedding a few tears, I opened my arms to her.

March 12 — Last night at six o'clock I went to have a drink at the home of Perruque of the Académie Française. As you know, the administration has accorded this lot of debris the privilege of full time life, in order not to compromise their reputation as "The Immortals". Perruque's self-importance, hypocrisy, and spitefulness were revolting. There were about a dozen of us there, all sacrificers who were living out our last tickets of the month. He treated us with kindness, like diminished, impotent beings. He told us how he pitied us, with a nasty gleam in his eyes, promising to defend our interests in our absence. He was rejoicing at being, on a certain level, something more than we were. It was all I could do to keep from calling him an old goat and a mule carcass. Ah, if only I didn't have hopes of succeeding him some day!

March 13 — Had lunch this noon with the Dumonts. As usual, they quarreled and even insulted each other. With a note of sincerity he couldn't hide, Dumont

yelled: "At least if I could use my life tickets during the second half of the month, I'd never have to live at the same time as you!" Madame Dumont burst into tears.

March 16 — Lucette Roquenton entered into non-being tonight. Since she was quite fearful, I stayed with her in her last moments. She was already in bed when I went up to her place at nine-thirty. To spare her the agonies of the final minutes, I made sure to set the alarm clock on her nightstand back a quarter of an hour. Five minutes before the dive, she had a crying fit. Then, thinking that she still had twenty minutes to spare, she took the time to put herself back in order with a coquettish concern which I found most touching. At the moment she passed, I was especially careful not to take my eyes off her. She was laughing at some remark I'd just made, and suddenly her laughter was interrupted at the same time that she vanished from sight as if a magician had spirited her away. I touched the place where her body had lain and found it still warm. I felt the silence that the presence of death imposes descending upon me. I was rather painfully impressed. Even this morning, at the moment when I am writing these lines, I am pained. Ever since I got up I've been counting the hours that remain for me to live. Tonight at midnight it will be my turn.

This same day at a quarter to midnight I am picking up my diary again. I have just gone to bed and I want this temporary death to take me with pen in hand, exercising my profession. I consider this attitude rather gallant. I like this form of courage: elegant and discreet. In fact, the death which awaits me, is it really temporary, or might it be just death pure and simple? This promise of resurrection doesn't appeal to me in the least. Now

I'm tempted to see in this a clever way of concealing the sinister truth from us. What if, in fifteen days, none of those who were sacrificed resuscitate? Who, then, will come asking for them? Not their inheritors, that's for sure! Now that I think of it, the sacrifices are all supposed to resuscitate at once on the first day of next month, that is, April First. It could be the opportunity for quite the April Fool's Day joke. I am filled with a horrible panic and I...

April 1 — Here I am, quite alive after all. It was no April Fool's joke. What's more, I had no sensation that time had passed. When I found myself in my bed again, I was still in that wave of panic that preceded my death. My diary had remained on the bed, and I wanted to finish the sentence that was still in my mind, but there was no more ink in my pen. When I discovered that my clock had stopped at 4:10, I began to suspect the truth. My watch had also stopped. I had the idea to telephone Maleffroi to ask him the date. He didn't hide his displeasure at being roused from his bed in the middle of the night like this, and my joy at being resuscitated touched him only moderately. But I needed to pour my heart out.

"You see," I said, "the distinction between space and time is not a philosopher's fantasy. I am proof of it. In reality, absolute time does not exist..."

"That's quite possible, but it is nevertheless half past midnight, and I think..."

"Mind you, it's a great consolation. These fifteen days during which I wasn't alive are not lost time for me. I fully intend to recuperate them later on."

"Good luck and good night," said Maleffroi, and hung up.

This morning around nine o'clock, I went out and I sensed a sudden change. The season seemed to me to have made a considerable leap. In truth, the trees had already been transformed, the air was lighter, the streets had a different look. The women were also looking more like spring. The idea that the world had been able to live without me caused me some spite (and still does).

Saw many resuscitated people this evening. Exchanged impressions. Mother Bordier held me up for twenty minutes telling me about how, detached from her body, she had experienced two weeks of sublime and heavenly joys. My funniest encounter was with Bouchardon, who was just coming out of his house. The temporary death had caught him while he was asleep on the night of March 15. This morning, he woke up entirely convinced that he had escaped his destiny. He was making the most of it by heading off to a wedding that he believed was today, but which, in reality, must have taken place two weeks ago. I didn't bother to set him right.

April 2 — I went and had tea with the Roquentons. The old fellow is completely happy. Since he has no sensation of the length of his absence, the events which took place during that time have no reality in his mind. The idea that, during the nine days that she lived without him, his wife could have cheated on him, is clearly just idle speculation to him. I am very happy for him. Lucette kept on looking at me with misty, languid eyes. I detest these passionate messages expressed before an oblivious third party.

April 3 — I haven't calmed down since this morning. Perruque, while I was dead, maneuvered to get the inauguration of the Mérimée Museum moved to April 18. On this festive occasion, the old rascal was well aware, I was to give a very important speech which would have opened the doors of the Académie to me. But on April 18, I will be in limbo.

April 7 — Roquenton has died again. This time he accepted his fate with good humor. He had asked me to dine with him and at midnight we were in the living room, drinking champagne. At the moment when he took the dive, Roquenton was standing and suddenly we saw his clothes fall in a heap on the carpet. In fact, it was rather comical. Nonetheless, the fit of mirth in which Lucette indulged herself struck me as inappropriate.

April 12 — Received a distressing visit this morning, from a man in his forties, poor, shy, and in fairly bad physical condition. He was an ailing worker, married and the father of three children, who wanted to sell me part of his life ration tickets so that he could feed his family. His wife was ill, and he himself too weakened by deprivation to keep up a physically demanding job; his allocation just barely permitted him to maintain his family in a state closer to death than to life. His proposition to sell me his life ration tickets filled me with embarrassment. I felt like an ogre of legend, one of those monsters in old fairy tales who collected a tribute of human flesh.

I mumbled some protest and, refusing my visitor's tickets, I offered him a certain sum of money without compensation. He was conscious of the magnitude of

his sacrifice, and he took a legitimate pride in it, so he didn't want to accept anything that he hadn't paid for with one or several days of his existence. In the end, since I couldn't get him to change his mind, I wound up taking one ticket from him. After he left, I shoved it in the bottom of my drawer, firmly decided not to use it. Since it was deducted in this fashion from the existence of a fellow man, this supplemental day would be odious to me.

April 14 — Met Maleffroi in the subway. He explained to me that the reduction decree was beginning to show results. Since the rich were greatly affected by the decree, the black market lost important outlets, and its prices had already fallen considerably. In high places, they hope to put an end to this wound soon. In general, it seems, people are better fed, and Maleffroi pointed out to me that Parisians looked healthier. This observation gave me mixed feelings.

“What is no less appreciable,” continued Maleffroi, “is the atmosphere of tranquility and relief we enjoy in the absence of these newly rationed individuals. It makes us realize how much the rich, the jobless, the intellectuals, and the prostitutes can be dangerous in a society where they do nothing but introduce disorder, vain agitation, unrest, and nostalgia for the impossible.”

April 15 — Refused an invitation for this evening from the Carterets who had requested me to please consent to be present at their ‘mortal agony’. It's a custom that's been adopted by the ‘swing’ crowd to gather their friends together for the occasion of their temporary death. I have been told that sometimes these gatherings give rise to orgiastic melees. How disgusting.

April 16 — I shall die tonight. Not the slightest apprehension.

May 1 — This night, in coming back to life I had a surprise. Relative death (that's the fashionable expression) caught me standing up, and my clothes having collapsed onto the carpet, I found myself completely nude. Same thing happened at the home of the painter Rondot, who had gathered ten guests of both sexes, all candidates for relative death. It must have been pretty funny.

The month of May promises to be so fine that it's going to be difficult for me to pass up the last fifteen days.

May 5 — During my last slice of existence, I got the impression of a rising opposition between the full time livers and the others. It seems to be growing more pronounced; at any rate, no one can deny that it exists. First of all, it's a reciprocal jealousy. This jealousy is easily explained for the people who have ration tickets. It's not even surprising that they also feel a solid bitterness toward the more privileged. As for the latter, at any moment I have the opportunity to realize that they secretly envy us for being the heroes of mystery and the unknown, all the more so since this barrier of nothingness which separates us is more visible to them than to us, because we don't perceive it. Relative death seems to them like a vacation, and they feel as though they're riveted to their chain. They tend to let themselves slide into a disagreeable pessimism and bad temper. On the contrary, the ever-present awareness of fleeting time and the necessity of adopting a faster rhythm of life incline those of my category to good humor.

I was thinking about all this at noon as I dined with Maleffroi. Sometimes disillusioned and ironic, sometimes aggressive, he seemed to have his heart set on discouraging me about my fate, and he emphasized his good fortune with the obvious intention of convincing himself. He spoke to me as one might to a friend who belongs to an enemy nation.

May 8 — This morning, an individual came to me offering life ration tickets at 200F apiece. He had about fifty of them to get rid of. I threw him out without any formalities, and he has only his strong build to thank for not feeling my foot on his backside.

May 10 — This evening it will be four days since Roquenton entered into relative death for the third time. Haven't seen Lucette since, but I've just learned that she's obsessed with a vague little young blond fellow. I can see the animal from here, a young calf belonging to the swing species. All things considered, I don't care a fig about it. That little lady has no taste, I've noticed it long before today.

May 12 — The black market for life tickets is getting organized on a vast scale. Prospectors visit the poor and persuade them to sell a few days of life in order to insure that their families will have an additional means of subsistence. Old men living on meager pensions and the unemployed wives of prisoners are also easy prey. The going rate for a ticket is currently between 200 and 250 francs. I don't think it will go much higher, because the clientele of rich or just well-off people is still fairly small compared with the numbers of the poor. What's more, many people refuse to admit that human life can be

treated like vile merchandise. As for me, I will not compromise with my conscience.

May 14 — Mme. Dumont lost her ration tickets. It's a real nuisance, for in order to obtain a new one, you have to wait at least two months. She's accusing her husband of having hidden it from her so that he can be rid of her. I don't believe that he'd have such a black heart.

Spring has never been as beautiful as this year. I'm sorry to have to die the day after tomorrow.

May 16 — Dined yesterday at Baroness Klim's. Among the guests, Monsignor Delabonne was the only full time liver. When someone brought up the black market in life ration tickets, I spoke up against a practice I regarded as shameful. I couldn't have been more sincere. Perhaps I also wanted to make a good impression on the bishop, who has a number of votes at the Académie. I immediately felt a chill among the assembled guests. Monsignor smiled at me kindly as he might have done at the confessions of a young priest consumed with apostolic ardor. We changed the topic.

After dinner, in the living room, the baroness engaged me in conversation, in a low voice at first, about the black market in life ration tickets. She pointed out to me that my immense and undisputed writing talent, the depth of my views, and the great role that I was called to play all made it my duty, my moral obligation to make some extensions to an existence devoted to enrichment of thought and the greatness of the nation. Seeing that I was weakening, she brought the debate before her guests. They were pretty much unanimous in blaming my scruples for stealing the true paths of justice

from me behind a fog of false sentimentality. Monsignor, when asked for his opinion, refused to decide the case, but expressed himself in a very meaningful parable:

An industrious farmer does not have enough land, while his neighbors leave theirs lying fallow. From these negligent neighbors, he buys a portion of their fields, plows them, sows them, and reaps rich harvests which benefit everyone.

I allowed myself to be persuaded by this brilliant assembly and this morning I still had enough conviction to purchase five life ration tickets. In order to merit this existence supplement, I shall retreat to the country where I will work away furiously on my book.

May 20 — Have been in Normandy for four days. Aside from a few walks, my time is entirely devoted to work. The farmers aren't at all familiar with the ration ticket. Even the old folks are entitled to 25 days a month. Since I would need one more day to finish a chapter, I asked an old farmer to sell me a ticket. When he asked, I told him that in Paris tickets sell for 200 francs. "You must be joking!" he exclaimed. "With the price we get for our pigs on the hoof, you come and offer me 200 francs!" So I didn't conclude the bargain. I'll take the train tomorrow afternoon to be in Paris in the evening and die at home.

June 3 — What an adventure! The train was running considerably behind schedule and temporary death surprised me a few minutes before arriving in Paris. I came back to life in the same compartment, but the car was in Nantes, out in the yard. And naturally, I was

completely nude. What a lot of trouble and humiliation I had to go through; I'm still getting over it. Fortunately, I was traveling with someone who knew me and sent my personal effects to my residence.

June 4 — Ran into Mélina Badin, the actress from the Argos, who told me an absurd story. Some of her admirers had insisted on ceding her a parcel of existence, and she found herself, last May 15, with twenty-one tickets. Now, she claims to have used them all, and says that she lived thirty-six days in the month! I thought I was expected to make a joke:

“This month of May, which consents to prolong itself five days for your sole benefit, is truly a gallant month,” I told her.

Méline seemed genuinely upset at my skepticism. I'm inclined to believe that she's mentally disturbed.

June 11 — Drama at the Roquentons'. I only found out about it this afternoon. Last May 15, Lucette had her pretty boy with the blond hair over at her place, and at midnight, they sank into nothingness. When they returned to life, they came back to their bodies in the bed where they had fallen asleep, but they were no longer alone because Roquenton resuscitated in between the two of them. Lucette and the dandy pretended not to know each other, but Roquenton finds that very hard to believe.

June 12 — Life ration tickets are selling at astronomical prices, and you can't find them anymore for less than 500 francs. This must mean that poor people have become more stingy with their existence, and the rich

greedier. I bought ten of them at the beginning of the month for 200 francs apiece and the morning after that purchase, I received a letter from my uncle Antoine in Orléans who sent me nine. So here I am with nineteen tickets. Since the month has thirty days, I have five too many. I won't have any difficulty in selling them.

June 15 — Last night, Maleffroi came up to see me. He was in a very good mood. The fact that certain people are paying huge sums in order to live for a full month as he does, has restored his optimism. It took nothing less than that to convince him that the fate of full-time livers is enviable.

June 20 — I'm working relentlessly. If I had to believe certain rumors I've heard, Méline Badin might not be as crazy as she seems. In fact, many people claim to have lived more than thirty-one days during the month of May. For my part, I've heard quite a few of them. Naturally there's no shortage of rather gullible people to believe these fables.

June 22 — Taking reprisals against Lucette, Roquenton bought tickets on the black market for ten thousand francs and is reserving them exclusively for his use. His wife has been in nothingness for ten days already. I think he regrets having been so severe. Loneliness seems to weigh cruelly on him. I find him a changed man, almost unrecognizable.

June 27 — The rumor which says that the month of May was extended for a few privileged people is steadily gaining ground. Laverdon, who is certainly a trustworthy man, assured me that he had lived thirty-five days in the month of May alone. I fear that all this time ration-

ing has disturbed many brains.

June 28 — Roquenton died yesterday morning, apparently from sorrow. This is no relative death but death plain and simple. On July 1, when she comes back to life, Lucette will find herself a widow.

June 32 — One must truly admit that time has as yet unknown perspectives. What a puzzle! Yesterday morning, I entered a store to buy a newspaper. It bore the date of June 31.

“Well, well,” I said, “the month has thirty-one days?”

The saleslady, whom I’ve known for years, looked at me without seeming to understand. I glanced at the newspaper headlines and I read:

“M. Churchill will be in New York between June 39 and 45.”

In the street, I caught a snatch of conversation between two men:

“I’ve got to be in Orléans on the 37th,” said one of them.

A little farther on, I came upon Bonrivage taking a walk and looking haggard. He informed me of his stupefaction. I tried to comfort him. There’s nothing to do but take things as they come. By the middle of the afternoon, I had noticed the following: the full-time livers are not aware of any anomaly in the flow of time. The people of my category, who fraudulently let them-

selves into this prolongation of the month of June, are the only ones who are disconcerted. Maleffroi, when I shared my astonishment with him, understood nothing and thought I was a crackpot. But what do I care that our duration is swelling? Since last night, I am madly in love. In fact, I met her at Maleffroi’s. We saw each other, and at first sight, we loved each other. Adorable Elisa.

June 34 — Saw Elisa again yesterday and today. I have finally met the woman of my life. We are engaged. She is leaving tomorrow for a three-month trip to the non-occupied zone. We have decided to get married when she returns. I am too happy to speak of my happiness, not even in this *diary*.

June 35 — Took Elisa to the station. Before she got into her compartment, she told me, “I’ll do my utmost to come back before June 60th.” When I think about it, this promise worries me. Because, after all, today I am using up my last life ration ticket. What date will I be at tomorrow?

July 1 — When I speak with people about June 35th they don’t know what I’m talking about. There’s no trace of those five days in their memory. Fortunately, I met a few people who lived them fraudulently and I was able to talk about that time with them. It turned out to be a rather curious conversation. For me, yesterday was June 35th. For others, yesterday was the 32nd or the 43rd. At the restaurant, I saw a man who had lived until the 66th of June, which represents quite a supply of tickets.

July 2 — Since I thought Elisa was traveling, I didn’t see any reason to show myself. But I had a doubt, and I telephoned her at home. Elisa declared that she didn’t

know me and had never met me. As best I could, I explained that she had spent, without realizing it, some intoxicating days with me. Amused, but not at all convinced, she consented to see me on Monday. I am mortally worried.

July 4 — The papers are full of “The Tickets Affair”. The trafficking in time ration tickets will be the big scandal of the season. Because the rich have been monopolizing life ration tickets, the savings realized on foodstuffs is pretty much nil. What’s more, certain cases are arousing a big outcry. There is the story, among others, of the extraordinarily wealthy M. Wadé, who is supposed to have lived between June 30 and July 1 a total of one thousand nine hundred sixty-seven days, that is to say a mere five years and four months.

Just ran into Yves Mironneau, the famous philosopher. He explained to me that each individual lives for billions of years, but that our consciousness only has brief and intermittent glimpses of this infinity, which, juxtaposed, constitute our brief existence. He said some far more subtle things, but I didn’t understand very much of it. It’s true that my mind was elsewhere. I am to see Elisa tomorrow.

July 5 — Saw Elisa. Alas! All is lost and I have nothing to hope for. In fact, she didn’t doubt the sincerity of my story. Perhaps this evocation even touched her, but without awakening in her any feeling of tenderness or sympathy. I got the feeling that she had a liking for Maleffroi. In any case, my eloquence was futile. The spark which flashed between us on the evening of June 31 was nothing but a coincidence, a chance born from the mood of the moment.

After this, let them try to tell me about soul mates! I suffer like a damned man. I hope that out of my suffering I’ll produce a book which will sell well.

July 6 — A decree has abolished the time ration ticket. I couldn’t care less.

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