# Twitter Thread by Maurice Casey 

# I am reading through reams of late-1920s communist poetry and easily my favourite title so far is: "To a Lady who Rejected a Poem about Spring as a Petit-Bourgeois Deviation" 

The last lines:
"So here's my hat into the air,
Three cheers for your amazing hair,
For coal mines, and for turbines, too,
For steel, the Comintern and you!"

A not exactly graceful (though possibly satirical) title: "Lines Disassociating Myself from Yessenin and Supporting the Otherwise Unfounded Legend that I am a Foremost Proletarian Writer"

An excerpt:
"Goodbye verses of Yessenin
Goodbye literary slop-
You are not the line of Lenin
You are not the line of WAPP

Never shall I moan a
simple lyric from the heart
I'll devote my new corona
to the proletarian art"

The poet was Joseph Freeman, who published much of his revolutionary verse in the New Masses, a stylish journal of the interwar American literary Left.


There's an interesting history behind "Portrait of a German Comrade", a 1926 tribute to the Polish-German revolutionary Elise "Sabo" Ewert, who lived with Freeman in Moscow's Hotel Lux.

## POEMS FROM SOVIET RUSSIA

## By JOSEPH FREEMAN

## HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

In houses people live and laugh and cryAnd merchants walk the world to sell and buy; The merchant buys and sells each lovely thing, And ho, my friend, the merchant is our kingl
Then knock him down, and rolling in the gutter Let him compute the price of bread and butter. While down the Avenue we'll damn all wrongs, Shout merry tales and whistle merrier songs. Damn it! forget your job, forget trade ordersThe skies have stars; the town, thank heaven, has borders; The fields are wide for any man to range;
The seas are older than the Stock Exchange!
And better worlds than ever a merchant made Shall spring to life behind the barricade.

On the Volga River.

## DEATH OF A REVOLUTIONIST

## F. E. Djerdjinsky

Time shall forget the monstrous nightmare of czars landlords bankers priests
Time shall remember our time of heroes scouring tyrannys rubbish off the earth
not one, not ten-millions struck for freedom the world heaved with masses breaking free resolute the advance guard marched before them the iron-hearted leaders showed the way
these seeing mankind going mad, cried out blew the sirens, knocked on the factory doors (Earth, take this comrade dearly to your bosom he was of those who saw, labored, fought)
workers strict battalions, marching,
beat the streets of cities like deep drums
the dark-faced peasants' roar rocked the meadows saluting the sunrise of the new-born day
nine years loom like nine black tombstones over the tyrants graves
nine years gleam like nine steel gateways swinging open to the workers world
this was not done with white gloves, this was not done with prayers and invitations (Earth, take this comrade dearly to your bosom he was of those who saw, labored, fought)
workers and soldiers, hold heads high at his grave watching the outlines of the world he dreamed of he died with the battle raging: bury him slowly keep rifles clean: the last shots must be fired.

Moscow.

PORTRAIT OF A GERMAN COMRADE
moscows midnight
painting the window blue
exhibits the independents show
of gilded academic domes outside
piercing the sky with spires
looming behind
picassos beer hall
yellow and green across the street
the waiter shoves the bank clerk
on the droszhky
she serves us tea at home
around the table
with the shaded lamp
shining in the darkness of her room
as shines a good deed etc
this delicate touch
expropriated from the worlds bohemia
lenins wise face
smiles on the wall behind her head wonderful clever eyes eight inches from his beard
a postcard stalin
covers rykovs nose
hydroelectric stations slaughtered midnights magic no one remembers nightingales buy roses at the corner
the english comrade
from hampstead heath
having once read this fellow keats tells how the boys
walloped during the general strike
the cops in sheffield


DRAWING BY WANDA GÁG
she lays out ham and sausage cuts bread like a man with thumb and penknife pours tea quickly pours tea quickly
statistically cursing ultra lefts statistically cursing ultra lefts
brunhilde playing housewife -men do not take to me as men she lights a cigarette scorning to explain
digresses to the year
she learned to read her Marx in english in a canadian jail in a canadian jail
the Party saw the eyes of victory
-we should have fired
we had no iron leaders
o the years the years
the hundred miles an hour years
at twenty when the war was young she wrote three chapters of a novel took courses in aesthetics
-now is no time for fooling
next year
back to germany
dieses mal mussen wir gewinnen
-you are young she says pouring tea
i do not measure you by calendars
learn to be critical
conserve hit hard
behind her wisdom
lurks a deeper wisdom
how should she say
be strong like me
choose
eliminate
march straight as heroes do
she
never kneeling at his shrine
sees what is great in lenin and in man measures this age
with the vast gauges of her nature
pouring tea quickly
in moscows midnight blue
quoting faust
kidding the english comrade
from hampstead heath
Moscow.

## PRINCE JERNIKIDZE

Prince Jernikidze wears his boots above his knees: his black mustache curls like the kaisers: when he shoots, friend and foe turn white as ash.

The movements of his hands are svelt Ivory bullets grace his chest.
The studded poignard at his belt dangles down his thighs: the best
dancers in Tiflis envy his
light lesginka's steady whirl.
He bends his close-cropped head to kiss the finger-tips of every girl.

Over the shashleek and the wine, his deep and passionate baritone directs the singing down the line, and none may drain his glass alone.

When morning breaks into his room, he dons his long Caucasian coat; marches to the Sovnarkom, knocks on the door and clears his throat;
opens the ledger with his hand,
bows to the commissars who pass,
calls the janitor comrade-and
keeps accounts for the working class.
Batoum.

## TIFLIS

Here, from the distant shores of Greece, Jason sought the Golden Fleece;
These hills heard Rustavelli's voice,
And saw Tamara's love-lit eyes;
The Persian elephant-riders came
And left their mark in blood and flame;
Turkish scimitars were gory,
For rich lands, horses, Allah's glory;
Here Russian duke and Princess met
And drank the Georgian peasant's sweat;
Sniffing petrol in the air,
Britons turned machine-guns here;
This town Jordania's salesmen sold Upon the Paris Bourse for gold, Till workers, roaring like the sea, Struck down the head of tyranny.
Now creeps the tramway from afar
Shining with the Soviet star;
The peasant leads his mountain ass
Where commissars and comrades pass;
Red soldiers, singing in the rain,
Swear to defend the workers ${ }^{\prime}$ gain;
Swear to detend the workers gain;
And from the walls look Lenin's eyes,
Impatient, resolute and wise.

Right, here's some more excerpts from the Comintern Tractor Love poem, since everyone's enjoying it:
"There is the turbine and the steel,
The coal mine and the tractor wheel;
Let them continue to be there,

So long as I can see your hair"
"Industry that's running snappy
Is good it it makes mankind happy
But men not only work with steel,
They sometimes even think and feel"

