

Unforgiving Years Victor Serge

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In pre-World War II Paris, secret agent D, along with his lover Nadine, attempt to escape from the Soviet intelligence service.

Unforgiving Years is a thrilling and terrifying journey into the disastrous, blazing core of the twentieth century. Victor Serge's final novel, here translated into English for the first time, is at once the most ambitious, bleakest, and most lyrical of this neglected major writer's works. The book is arranged into four sections, like the panels of an immense mural or the movements of a symphony. In the first, D, a lifelong revolutionary who has broken with the Communist Party and expects retribution at any moment, flees through the streets of prewar Paris, haunted by the ghosts of his past and his fears for the future. Part two finds D's friend and fellow revolutionary Daria caught up in the defense of a besieged Leningrad, the horrors and heroism of which Serge brings to terrifying life. The third part is set in Germany. On a dangerous assignment behind the lines, Daria finds herself in a city destroyed by both Allied bombing and Nazism, where the populace now confronts the prospect of total defeat. The novel closes in Mexico, in a remote and prodigiously beautiful part of the New World where D and Daria are reunited, hoping that they may at last have escaped the grim reckonings of their modern era. A visionary novel, a political novel, a novel of adventure, passion, and ideas, of despair and, against all odds, of hope, Unforgiving Years is a rediscovered masterpiece by the author of The Case of Comrade Tulayev.

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One cold Moscow night, Comrade Tulayev, a high government official, is shot dead on the street, and the search for the killer begins. In this panoramic vision of the Soviet Great Terror, the investigation leads all over the world, netting a whole series of suspects whose only connection is their innocence—at least of the crime of which they stand accused. But The Case of Comrade Tulayev, unquestionably the finest work of fiction ever written about the Stalinist purges, is not just a story of a totalitarian state. Marked by the deep humanity and generous spirit of its author, the legendary anarchist and exile Victor Serge, it is also a classic twentieth-century tale of risk, adventure, and unexpected nobility to set beside Ernest Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls and André Malraux's Man's Fate.

"1919-1920- St. Petersburg, city of the czars, has fallen to the revolution. Camped out in the splendid palaces of the former regime, the new masters of the city seek to cement their control, even as the counter-revolutionary White Army musters its forces. Conquered City, Victor Serge's toughest and most unrelenting narrative, is structured like a detective story, one in which the new political regime seeks to track down and eliminate its enemies the spies, speculators, and traitors hidden among the exhausted mass of common people.

Conquered City is about terror- the Red Terror and the White Terror. But mainly about the Red, about the Communists who have dared to pick up the weapons of power police, guns,

jails, spies, treachery in the gamble that by wielding them with purity, in a righteous cause, they can put an end to the need for terror, perhaps forever. And yet those who wield these weapons know that they are doomed. Conquered City is their tragedy and testament."

An eyewitness account of the world-changing uprising—from the author of *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*. "A truly remarkable individual . . . an heroic work" (Richard Allday of *Counterfire*). Brimming with the honesty and passionate conviction for which he has become famous, Victor Serge's account of the first year of the Russian Revolution—through all of its achievements and challenges—captures both the heroism of the mass upsurge that gave birth to Soviet democracy and the crippling circumstances that began to chip away at its historic gains. *Year One of the Russian Revolution* is Serge's attempt to defend the early days of the revolution against those, like Stalin, who would claim its legacy as justification for the repression of dissent within Russia. Praise for Victor Serge "Serge is one of the most compelling of twentieth-century ethical and literary heroes." —Susan Sontag, MacArthur Fellow and winner of the National Book Award "His political recollections are very important, because they reflect so well the mood of this lost generation . . . His articles and books speak for themselves, and we would be poorer without them." —*Partisan Review* "I know of no other writer with whom Serge can be very usefully compared. The essence of the man and his books is to be found in his attitude to the truth." —John Berger, Booker Prize-winning author "The novels, poems, memoirs and other writings of Victor Serge are among the finest works of literature inspired by the October Revolution that brought the working class to power in Russia in 1917." —Scott McLemee, writer of the weekly "Intellectual Affairs" column for *Inside Higher Ed*

Startlingly human and unflinchingly honest, this thinly veiled fictionalized firsthand account of talented political writer Victor Serge's time in prison is an important addition to the canon of prison writing as well as an unfiltered view of humanity in the early 20th century. Rejecting the opportunity to present political propaganda, Serge's portrayal of imprisonment is instead an insightful and emotionally wrought tale of repression. The depraving brutality that Serge experienced behind bars is at once a mirror of a society at war and a deeply personal question of purpose. Originally published in 1930 and translated from the French by Richard Greeman in 1977, this reprint makes a fascinating and compelling novel available again with a new introduction by Greeman that situates the work in the context of Serge's life.

"A New York Review Books Original Victor Serge is one of the great men of the twentieth century: anarchist, revolutionary, agitator, theoretician, historian of his times, and a fearless truth-teller. Here Serge describes his upbringing in Belgium, the child of a family of exiled Russian revolutionary intellectuals, his early life as an activist, his time in a French prison, the active role he played in the Russian Revolution, as well as his growing dismay at the Revolutionary regime's ever more repressive and murderous character. Expelled from the Soviet Union, Serge went to Paris, and barely escaped the Nazis to find a final refuge in Mexico. *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* describes a thrilling life on the frontlines of history and includes brilliant portraits of politicians from Trotsky and Lenin and Stalin to major writers like Alexander Blok and Andrey Bely. Above all, it captures the sensibility of Serge himself, that of a courageous and singularly appealing advocate of human liberation who remained undaunted in the most trying of times. Peter Sedgwick's fine translation of Serge's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* was cut by a fifth when it was first published in 1963. This new edition is the first in English to present the entirety of Serge's book"--

In 1933, Victor Serge was arrested by Stalin's police, interrogated, and held in solitary confinement for more than eighty days. Released, he spent two years in exile in remote Orenburg. These experiences were the inspiration for *Midnight in the Century*, Serge's searching novel about revolutionaries living in the shadow of Stalin's betrayal of the revolution. Among the exiles gathered in the town of Chenor, or Black-Waters, are the granite-faced Old Bolshevik Ryzhik, stoic yet gentle Varvara, and Rodion, a young, self-educated worker who is trying to make sense of the world and history. They struggle in the unlikely company of Russian Orthodox Old Believers who are also suffering for their faith. Against unbelievable odds, the young Rodion will escape captivity and find a new life in the wild. Surviving the dark winter night of the soul, he rediscovers the only real, and most radical, form of resistance: hope.

"Victor Serge's *Notebooks* provide an intensely personal account of the last decade of the legendary Franco-Russian writer and revolutionary. They evoke Popular Front France, the fall of Paris, the 'Surrealist Chateau' in Marseilles, and the flight to the New World. They are replete with vivid life portraits (Gide, Breton, Saint-Exupéry, Lâevi-Strauss), and moving evocations of fallen revolutionary comrades (Gramsci, Nin, Radek, Trotsky) and of doomed colleagues among the Soviet writers (Fedin, Pilniak, Mandelstam, Gorky). Serge's Mexican notebooks provide a fascinating account of his exploration of pre-Columbian cultures and portray political and cultural figures in Mexico City, from the exiles' psychoanalytic circle, to painters like Dr. Atl and Leonora Carrington and poets like Octavio Paz. These writings paint a vivid self-portrait and convey the intense loneliness Serge also felt in these years, cut off as he was from Europe, deprived of a political platform, prey to angina attacks, and anxiously in love with a younger woman"--

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