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— T H E —
**CONSERVATIVE
TURN**

Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers,
and the Lessons of Anti-Communism

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for my mother and father

Petersburg, 1913. A lyrical digression: the last reminiscence of Tsarskoe Selo. The wind mumbles, perhaps a recollection, perhaps a prophesy:

Bonfires warmed the yuletide,
Carriages fell from the bridges,
A whole city floated in mourning.
Unknown to what end,
With, or against, the flow of the Neva,
But away, away from its graves.
An archway crouched dark on Galernaya,
In the Summer Garden a weathervane hummed
And brightly over the silver age,
The silver moon grew cold.
Because, along all the roads,
Up to all the thresholds,
A shadow slowly crept.
The wind tore posters from the wall,
Smoke danced about the roof
And the graveyard smelled of lilac.
Cursed by Tsarina Avdotya,
Dostoevskian and demonic,
The city shrank into fog.
A rakish old Petersburg playboy,
Peered out once again from the darkness,
And the drum beat before the hanging . . .
The darkness before the war,
Frigid, prodigal, dreadful,
Filled with some future din,
The din was more muffled then,
It hardly troubled the soul
And sank into snow banks along the Neva.
Like a person, mirrored in a dreadful night,
Who rages and refuses
To recognize himself.
Along the embankment of legend,
It drew near—not on the calendar—
The real Twentieth Century.

—ANNA AKHMATOVA, FROM “POEM WITHOUT A HERO”
(TRANSLATED BY DANIEL KIMMAGE)

