

25th

How beautiful is the twenty-fifth, if you have not been killed on the twentyfourth. Incidentally, the letter is certainly not to blame! Because it read:

"De Haan! I tell you with the following: If you do not leave our country by the twenty-fourth of this month, you will be shot down like a mad dog. All your efforts, to get hold of the writer of these lines, are useless. Useless as all your efforts will be to protect yourself against us. And even if you are surrounded by police officers and detectives, we will know to find you anyway to fulfill the sacred commandment: And you should clear away evil from among you!

Remember and do not forget the twenty-fourth! Remember this day!

The Black Hand."

And this gracious and well-intentioned letter is of course written in Hebrew, the language of our national rebirth. Of course, no language errors in it. And it's in a style whose beauty I in Dutch, which is not yet born again, can not reproduce. And the envelope is an official, with the nice big words: "On His Majestys Service". Allah is great. - -

II.

I wonder what letter to do under these circumstances better than to give it to our Jewish secret agents (who, between ourselves, is waz too fat to be keep secret). Everyone knows him and the born-again scoffers say he sees anything but his head and his feet. A serious case. Of course, one must not be scared. But you never know. And one has to be very careful. The envelope of His Majesty? An insult! - He wants to write a report.

At noon a very nice young Jewish officer comes who speaks the language of rebirth. He is still young, but very serious. I should just be careful. The Black Hand is a powerful group. He examined my garden shed from scratch up the ground. Yes, the house is perfect for a man condemned to death. Windows on three sides. And a thin door. "You must remember," says the sensible servant of the law: "They have their spies everywhere ... maybe they come out at night ... they will concentrate their fire on your bedstead ... if I may advise you to sleep under the bed" ,

Whether I incidentally wish the protection of a police officer? Whether I want to have permission to carry a revolver? Yes, yes: one week before being shot to death, the government is very friendly. Maybe it's better to leave the country. "For some time, at least," says the officer, "It is a powerful group, and one can not know."

III.

What do two detectives know can not remain secret. Jerusalem knows that I received my death sentence delivered to my home. Life becomes very important now. People who are too reborn for me, speak to me on the street: "Is it really true? ... You received the letter in your home? ... May one read the letter?"

"Yes," I say, close to death, "it really is true ... I was sent a death sentence ... No, I cannot show you the letter ... it is with the police. But demand the letter from them, I will give to a recommendation, because now I am held in high regard there."

Many smart people advise me to yield to the reasonable request of the Black Hand. But I do not want to.

How amazing these times are! If I do not want to go in the evening in a meeting, I simply say, "Well, do you think, I'm going to go out at night? Not even a lamp ... I light when it gets dark. I hide myself under my bed ... because maybe they come out at night and concentrate their fire on the bedstead ... "

There are also people who want to encourage me. "Stupidity", they say, "the black hand? ... There is no black hand, don't let them frighten you." I hate these people. Begrudge me because I got sent my

death sentence? And that I would be shot dead on the twenty-fourth? Is not life already unimportant enough? I hate them.

IV.

Yes, there are great days! Someone visited me and tells me strictly in confidence his nephew had heard the messenger of the Loan Fund, just while I passed, say, "Just take care, take care!" Have I been speculating of a secret relationship between the Loan Fund and the Black Hand somehow? "Go to the police," I say with a shudder. In the afternoon the Jewish policeman comes back to me. No, the police has not yet caught the writer of the letter. Even the headquarters of the Black Hand are still invisible. But finally, if I want to carry a gun, they will send me the permit. And when I hear someone call threatening words behind my back, I should inform them immediately. You will then put him away immediately.

In the late afternoon before it's time to crawl under the sofa, I am walking on Jaffa street. How beautiful is the world! The soft south wind and the air full of a finely woven breeze. The shops close. The work is finished. And the people walking. But what are they? And who are they? When I go to the police and tell them that they have shouted threatening words behind my back, they will all be picked up and the prison cells of Jerusalem will be filled. I might as well take a gun and shoot them all down. Life is truly great. Why not?

V.

We have reached the twentieth. Four days before death. Or I will not die on the twenty-fourth? Uncertainty. Between now and the future is an iron curtain. -

In the afternoon I get another letter from the Black Hand. The second.

They have heard, that I still have not requested my passport. I just should not believe they would show mercy. At the twenty-fourth!!

I feel that death is near to me. And that in my dread I can do nothing better than to go to the police. Yes, we are going through serious times. Have I heard that even one of the Jewish architects has received a death sentence? He refused to sign a contract with the obligation to give work exclusively to members of the socialist workers union. But he was smart enough to know that one day after the signing of such a contract strike would break out, with no prospect of replacement. That's why he took Asian Jews who have not yet penetrated to the consciousness of the Fourth International. And who would rather work than go on strike. But there is no place in Palestine for such an architect. "From the Black Hand" I ask trembling? "No," says the police officer: "of the starving Chalutz".

VI.

How strange it is on the twenty-third, if one is to be shot dead at the twenty-fourth. Of the twenty-fifth I can not think. Dead and buried. Everything remains then in my room as it was and I do not come. For I am dead. But if I do not know that I'm dead, I'm not dead. For I have eternal life. But if I do not know that either? Yes, these are great and deep thoughts, about which a lot should be written. But what good is this the day before my death? It is better to lay low and to wait and to discuss this after my death with the spiritualists themselves. Will it work?

The twenty-third. Yes, the Black Hand has long fingers and I will probably not escape her. I am spooked with fear. For I am somewhat cowardly predisposed. And my heart - oh, how my heart beats violently. I pick up a calendar page to see how the number 24 looks. I have not felt this way until today. And now it's too late for reconciliation.

And it is finally necessary? I prefer mimicing the ostrich and leave the sheet on the calendar. Yes, I want to jump from the twenty-third to the twenty-fifth. If one does not break the sheet from the calendar, there is not the next day. And this year will remain. Stupid that I did not earlier come to this brilliant conclusion. Let's see if the Black Hand or the hungry Chalutz can do something about

it.

VII.

Last night I slept quietly in my bed. I dreamed of our small town, autumn glow, and we were blissfully children of our good mother. All happy. - The windows are open. The Door. And the wind, not yet burned by the sun, blowing through the morning expanse. For me, no twenty-fourth exists. The friendly detective comes back. We talk Hebrew, still the language of our national rebirth. He says I should not be afraid. I will be watching me all day. I should just tell him where I want to go anywhere today. Of course I could tell him that the twenty-fourth does not exist for me. But he will not understand it, because it's so easy. The officer is in a great hurry today. Because life in Jerusalem is always getting more interesting. Until recently, we were at least able to say that among the Chaluzim there are no predators. Well, today we know better. Four Chaluzim yesterday raided an old Jewish merchant on his way home, half-strangled and robbed him completely. They have escaped. But one has left his hat in this national dispute. And there is hope that he will be caught. We walk briskly forward.

Now I hear that posters have been put up throughout the city proclaiming a traitor anyone who gives work to Arabs and that he will immediately be taken down: Hebrew posters signed by the Black Hand and the hungry Chalutz ...

VIII.

And today? Oh - how glorious it is the twenty-fifth, if you were not murdered on the twentyfourth. I got up this morning and tore two pages from the calendar. How beautiful the numeral 25 stands. And I'm not dead. I firmly believe that I am not dead. My new friend Leo has arrived today. If he gets money, he wants to go on a long journey. Damascus, Baghdad, Tehran, Erzerum and Angora to Constantinople. He then intends to send detailed travel reports on all large newspapers in Europe. The entire itinerary is ready, except for the money and the relations with the newspapers. Now in anticipation of these things he is staying at a deaf uncle who earned his piece of bread through hard work.

"You must not worry about making money," Leo says kindly, "I've always managed without money. My uncle is a good man, but bourgeois, very bourgeois ... For a pound he will hurry from here to Jaffa ... I do not care for money at all. "

Srur returns from the market. He brought full, beautiful Mishmish (apricots). Too bad we do not have ice, Leo is worried. We could then cool the apricots in ice water and eat them cold. - The entire itinerary is finished except for the money and the papers.

Today's is as always. Perhaps a bit more friendly. What would have happened if I had been shot to death yesterday? What would the American newspapers have written then? Would there have been inquiries in the English Parliament? But life is not that great. And on my calendar now it now says calmly:

25th