

MY SOVIET PASSPORT

I'd rip out

bureaucracy's guts,

I would.

No reverence for mandates-

good riddance!

Pack off to very hell

for good

any old paper,

but this one...

Past berths and compartments

drawn out in a line

moves a customs official,

most courteous looking.

Folks hand in their passports

and I hand in mine,

my crimson-jacketed

bookling.

Some passports

bring smiles

in a matter of instants.

Others

are fit but to fie on.

Special deference

is shown,

for instance

for those

with the double-bed

British Leo.

Bowing non-stop,

as if rocked by a ship,

eating their eyes

into the "kind old uncles",

they take,

as if they were taking a tip

the passports

of lanky Yankees.

At Polish passports

they bulge out their eyes

in thick-skulled

policemen's

donkeyness,

as if to say:

what

the devil are these

geographical

novelties?

Without even turning

their cabbage-like heads,

hardly deigning

to touch them,

they take,

absent-minded,

the passports of Swedes

and all sorts

of other Dutchmen.

But suddenly

Mr. Officer's face

turns awry,

as if

he has smelled disaster.

You've guessed it:

the officer's taken my

red-skinned hulk of a passport.

He handles it

like a hedgehog

or bomb,

like a bee

to be nipped

by the wings,

like a twisting rattlesnake

three yards long

with a hundred

deadly stings.

The porter winks;

to tell the truth,

he'd carry your luggage

free

all the way for you.

The gendarme

looks questioningly

at the sleuth,

the sleuth looks back:

what to do with this wayfarer?

With what delight,

by the gendarmes,

damn it,

I'd be flayed,

crucified,

hanged

for the crime of holding

a sickled,

hammered

Soviet passport

in my hand!

I'd rip out bureaucracy's guts,

I would.

No reverence for mandates -

good riddance!

Pack off to very hell

for good

any old paper,

but this one...

As

the most valuable

of certificates

I pull it

from the pants

where my documents are:

read it

envy me -

I'm a citizen

of the USSR!

1929