The Orient Express

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by Evelyn R. Bracken

English, Sr.

The last leather-clad man winks
As he steps down. The eagle-crested buttons
Come back instead a hammer and sickle.
Scanty train oozes across the rusty edges
Of Jugoslavia, and stops again.
Gray wool people pull themselves
Into compartments. They smile humbly, sheepishly.
The rank odor of a Peoples' Cigarette
Violates lungs. A gentle lurch—
Precise by the station clock outside.
The landscape flickers between dingy tunnels.
The soft metal that packs sardines
Twists and squeaks. Oil drips
Onto fist-sized chunks of bread. Stiffly,
Fingers lay the shiny slivers
On top of the white and crusted pores.
Smacking lips sound like feet
Working themselves out of a muddy hole.
A tired arm extends the broken loaf
And dark eyes, reflecting in their depths
A youth, a gayer day, repeat:
"Let us break bread together."