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Vice-Admiral F. OKTYABRSKY

THE SECOND DEFENCE OF SEVASTOPOL

On July 3rd, by order of the Red Army Supreme Command, Soviet troops abandoned the town of Sevastopol. For eight months our heroic sailors, valiant infantrymen, daring fliers, artillerymen, trench-mortar and tank crews had defended this naval fortress with a courage and perseverance unprecedented in history. The enemy entered the town over veritable mountains of their own dead, weltering in their own foul, black blood. For so-called "victory" the Germans paid an exorbitant price. It was, indeed, Pyrrhic victory! Never will the Germans be able to conceal this fact from the public opinion of the world, however much they may desire to do so.

During our heroic defence of Sevastopol, the Germans suffered extremely heavy losses, about 300,000 officers and men killed and wounded, and during the last 25 days alone—over 250 tanks, 300 airplanes, some 250 guns, and large quantities of arms and munitions. They lost much—and gained a heap of ruins.

What, briefly, is the history of the 1941—1942 defence of Sevastopol? What were the circumstances under which, for a prolonged period, we were forced to contend against a numerically superior foe?

In the past it was held that a military-naval base was destined, primarily, to combat the fleet of the enemy. On this hypothesis the entire system of defence of many naval bases was constructed.

The experience of the Patriotic War has shown that we are confronted by an enemy fighting mainly with land forces. In the limited period preceding the siege of Sevastopol, a strong system of land defence was built up round the town, consisting mainly of heavy, long-range coast batteries with the guns reversed, muzzles pointing landwards. In addition, strongholds and anti-tank obstacles were erected on the approaches to the naval base.

Our air forces — both naval and military — proved to be a weighty factor in the defence of the town. Time and again they frustrated the plans of the German fascist High Command by subjecting enemy troops to heavy bombardment. Our sailors, shoulder to shoulder with our splendid Crimean land forces, which on so many occasions have emerged victorious from the field of battle, performed wondrous feats of courage and heroism during those eight months of siege.

The significance of the closest co-operation between the Navy and the Red Army units was demonstrated, as never before, by the battles of Sevastopol. Without the Red Army, without this daily, close interaction, we should never have achieved such remarkable results. The defence of Sevastopol is a vivid example of the co-operation of the Red Army with the Navy, with the coast artillery, the system of anti-aircraft defence, ships, auxiliary units in the rear and so forth. From October 30th, 1941, up to the very last day, our Red Army units together with the Black Sea Fleet disputed every inch of Soviet soil, and the personnel of all branches of the armed forces displayed unheard-of endurance during this period.

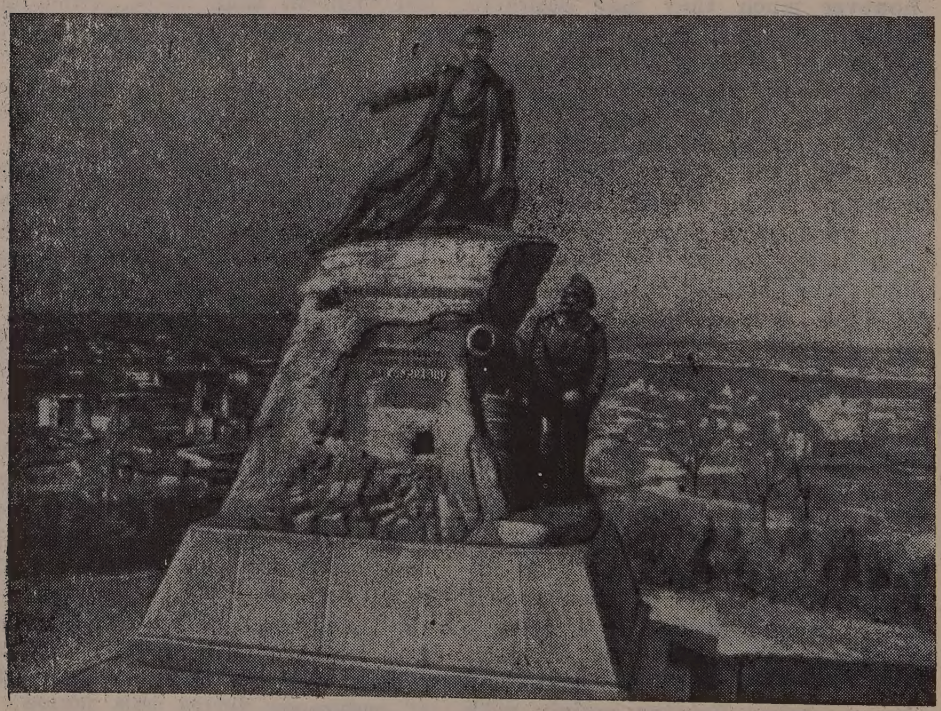
Of enormous importance, too, in

the defence of Sevastopol was our naval artillery. The Black Sea Fleet took a most active part in repulsing the German attacks. First in October and then a second time in December, the onslaught of the enemy was repulsed with the active support of heavy-artillery bombardment from our ships. At the third and final attack launched by the Germans on Sevastopol, our ships were unable to support the defenders of the garrison with the full force of their guns. This is to be explained by the lack of suitable accomodation for aerodromes which would have made it possible to concentrate fighter-planes for the defence of vessels. The tiny patch of land around Sevastopol, which was incessantly shelled by artillery and trench-mortars, would accomodate but a small number of fighter- and attack-planes. Our lack of aerodromes gave the Germans command of the air and hindered our vessels from taking a more active part in repelling the attack on Sevastopol.

In spite of this shortcoming, however, our cruisers, our glorious destroyers, did much to repel the frenzied attacks of the fascists. The vessels put into Sevastopol Harbour at the most critical stages of the fighting and sent tornadoes of fire onto the heads of the Germans, at the same time beating off innumerable torpedo- and bomber-plane attacks.

In preparation for the storming of Sevastopol, the Germans concentrated a colossal force on the approaches of the town. The original forces they put into the field included the 22nd, 24th, 28th, 50th, 72nd, 132nd and 170th German Infantry Divisions, the 1st and 18th Rumanian Divisions, supported by the 18th Armoured Cars and Tank Group and 8th Air Corps. The enemy reckoned to capture Sevastopol in three days with these forces, but the overweening fascist generals miscalculated. They suffered such losses during the first three days that they were obliged to entreat Hitler to send reinforcements.

The fighting was exceptionally stub-



Monument to General Kornilov in Sevastopol

born. The champions of Sevastopol repulsed daily from fifteen to twenty attacks of the enemy. Mountains of corpses lay heaped up before the front-lines of our defence. In the first three days of June alone, our valiant Black Sea sailors and the Red Army men of the Maritime Army routed the 22nd, 50th and several other German Divisions. The fascists were obliged to bring up fresh reserves to reinforce the enfeebled divisions. Out of three or four routed divisions, scarcely one regiment could be formed, which was merged into another division. We were able to ascertain, for example, that in the 50th German Division the actual numerical strength in officers and men did not exceed two regiments, and yet the names of more than ten regiments figure in this division. This implies that the remains of the routed divisions had been reformed by the Germans, merged into the 50th Division and then flung anew into the attack.

The complaints made to the High Command by General Boldescu, Commander of a Rumanian infantry division, graphically indicate the enemy's casualties at Sevastopol. The general lamented that even before going into action he had lost 3,000 men killed in three days. German war-prisoners testify that after the first few days of battle losses in officers and men were so heavy that literally a handful survived.

The fascist High Command was deprived of the finest of their divisions. After the first four days of fighting they transferred to Sevastopol from the southern shore of the Crimea the 4th Rumanian Division and the two remaining regiments of the 46th German Infantry Division, which had been located in the Kerch Peninsula. In addition, one regiment of the 97th Division, one regiment of the 125th Division, one regiment of the 213th Division, one regiment of a division number not ascertained, a regiment of SS troops and several minor reinforcements were swiftly transferred from the Southern Front to Sevastopol.

A week after the beginning of the offensive, the fascists hurled into battle the entire 22nd Tank Division and strongly reinforced the 8th Air Corps, which had suffered the loss of some 200 planes in the first ten days.

These fresh forces continued to storm Sevastopol without intermission, but the heroic defenders of our naval base mowed down the fascist reinforcements with their former persistence. The German soldiers' ardour for attack was blasted by the courage and stamina of our Red Army men and Red Sailors.

Enemy soldiers who surrendered to our men testified:

"When we were transferred to Sevastopol from the Kerch Peninsula, we were in high spirits. Our officers told us: 'We'll take Sevastopol in three days.' We believed that this would be so, but Sevastopol turned out to be 'Journey's End' for most of us, and we understood that this was not Belgium, neither was it France."

On May 20th the Germans brought their air forces into play in preparation for the attack. The raids grew in intensity. Between June 2nd and 7th Sevastopol was stormed from the air; hundreds of planes, the whole of their Air Corps, appeared over the front-lines of our defence and over the town. The fascists dropped daily from 2,500 to 6,000 bombs, and during a month of aerial attack the enemy made as many as 25,000 flights, dropping over 125,000 bombs on Sevastopol. These were bombs of 100-kilogram calibre and over; as for small-calibre incendiary bombs, their number was legion.

By this time the Germans had brought up siege-artillery, including 24'' guns, and, in addition to bombs, several hundred thousand shells were sent bursting into the town. They fired up to 37,000 shells in the first

Red Fleet sailors landing on enemy territory

two days alone of the aerial-artillery attack. That was June 2nd and 3rd, 1942. The Germans were firmly convinced that their aviation and gunfire had exterminated every living thing in Sevastopol, but what was their astonishment and alarm when the "dead" trenches came to life and answered the German onslaught with death-dealing fire!

On June 10th, the fascists did not enter Sevastopol as they had planned. They did not even advance one inch from their initial position.

"In all those countries where I have so far seen active service," declared a signaller who was taken prisoner of war by us, "I had a job to keep up with the troops and unwind enough wire. But here not even a metre is required for days at a time. I was ordered to the front as there was nothing for us, signallers, to do."

Another war-prisoner repeated a conversation overheard by him between his company commander and colonel:

"I have no more men to launch into the attack," declared the company commander, "my whole force is only twelve men."

"Get together what's left of the routed companies, merge them into one and carry on," ordered the colonel.

"By the time I get to Sevastopol there won't be a couple left," growled the company commander in answer.

By June 15th the Germans had lost more than half their divisions. In general, we did not have for the defence of Sevastopol a fifth of the numerical force that the enemy had at their disposal, even if we count all the naval and other units which, to a greater or lesser degree, participated in the heroic defence of the town.

The garrison of Sevastopol—that marvelous town—did its duty to our country to the very end. As already announced by the Soviet Information Bureau, the 22nd, 24th, 28th, 50th, 132nd and 170th German Infantry Divisions, four expeditionary regiments, the 22nd Tank Division and a mechanized unit, the 1st, 4th and 18th Rumanian Divisions, and a host of units from other formations were completely routed during the twenty-five days of the storming of Sevastopol. In all, the fascist casualties in officers and men for the period in question amounted to 150,000, no less than 60,000 being killed.

Although we abandoned Sevastopol, the laurels of the victors in that incomparable struggle fall to us. What gave us the power and what

secured the wholesale rout of the Germans at Sevastopol?

In spite of the fact that we were blockaded from the sea, cut off from overland communications in the rear, confined on a small strip of Soviet territory, small even in comparison with the size of the Crimea, we did not for a second feel alone, cut off from the motherland, or doomed. We were conscious daily of the support of the whole country, conscious of the care and attention of our leader. Our brothers-in-arms from the Baltic, the North Sea, the Pacific, Amur, the Caspian, workers from all districts and regions of the Soviet Union, gave us their moral support, and this augmented our strength, increasing it tenfold.

The whole world followed events in Sevastopol with the keenest interest. We received greetings from the garrison of Malta and from other garrisons of our allies, and in response we fought with our former tenacity and heroism. We exterminated the foe regardless of everything, not by force of numbers but by skill enhanced by unprecedented heroism, utmost devotion to our country. We exterminated the foe by our monolithic strength and good organization, by the force of our implacable hatred.

The champions of Sevastopol have immensely added to the laurels, to the honour and renown of Russian arms, to the honour and renown of the Red Army and Red Navy.

To the glorious deeds of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers at the battles of Chesma, Sinop and Ochakov, at the First Defence of Sevastopol, we have added the feats of the champions of this heroic epoch which will go down in history as the Second Defence of Sevastopol.

Here are a few episodes which illustrate the courage, daring, fearlessness and heroism of the champions of Sevastopol,— sailors, Red Army men, commanders, political officers and working men and women of the staunch town.

The enemy had broken through

Women in besieged Sevastopol sewing for the Army in a tunnel

on the Northern Side. At that point there was a small telephone exchange, with our girl-operator in charge, and a garrison of twelve sailors. About sixty enemy tommy-gun-men with two guns and grenades got through to the exchange. When the sailor on sentry-go caught sight of them, he opened fire and brought down six Germans. The fascists scattered in all directions and then began to surround the building. Hearing the firing, the other sailors seized their rifles and prepared for defence. The girl-operator did not leave her switchboard. She never wavered. She informed the central telephone exchange:

"Pass on the following message: Some Fritzes have sneaked through here. We are putting up a fight. Have accounted for six already. They are sprawling on the ground not far from where I am."

Through the din of exploding grenades and the whistling of bullets, the girl-operator continued to transmit details of the fight of the twelve Red sailors against sixty fascist tommy-gun-men.

From two in the afternoon until eleven at night, twelve sailors and a girl held the telephone exchange. The Germans wheeled two cannon up to the door of the exchange, but the sailors picked off everyone who tried to approach them. They annihilated over half the band. At night a cutter was sent to rescue this handful of brave young people who, after blowing up the exchange, got away to the centre of the town.

The heroic feat of the five sailors of the Black Sea Fleet, who with strings of hand-grenades round their bodies threw themselves under the fascist tanks, is known the world over.

Colonel Donetz and a handful of men were defending a warehouse. The warehouse was surrounded by about two companies of enemy tommy-gun-men who began to pepper them with grenades. Colonel Donetz ordered his men to swim to the other side:

"I won't swim, I'll stay and fight it out to the bitter end," he announced.

One engineer and several sailors remained with him. They fought to their last cartridge. Then they blew up the warehouse. They lost their lives, but all the enemy tommy-gun-men were blown up at the same time.

Captain Alexander, commander of a coast defence battery, is a real hero of the people. For many months on end his battery thundered at the enemy. The fascists sent hundreds of shells from 24" guns; they dropped thousands of bombs, but the battery remained intact and continued to function. A dozen times the guns were put out of action and smothered in earth, but the sailors dug them out overnight and repaired them. Then once more they renewed their devastating fire. Even when surrounded, the gunners refused to down arms, and when it was no longer possible to fight, these brave men blew up their battery and perished like heroes.

Captain Shatsky, commander of a naval vessel, broke into the enemy trenches with his tommy-gun-men time and again, and exterminated hundreds of German and Rumanian soldiers.

Hundreds and thousands of such incidents could be cited from the siege of Sevastopol.

Sevastopol snipers have demonstrated to the entire Red Army and Red Navy how to annihilate the German fascist soldiers who have forced their way into our country. Many have accounted for from 200 to 300 Hitlerites.

It is difficult for me now to single out the heroes,—all were heroes. The names of General Novikov, Colonels Laskin, Bogdanov and Potapov who held back and dealt the first blows at the Germans; Commanders of Naval Regiments and Brigades Taran, Gusarov, Zhidilov, Gorpishchenko; the names of the heroic Generals Petrov and Morgunov, Rear-Admiral Fadeyev who worked like a Trojan to safeguard the lines of

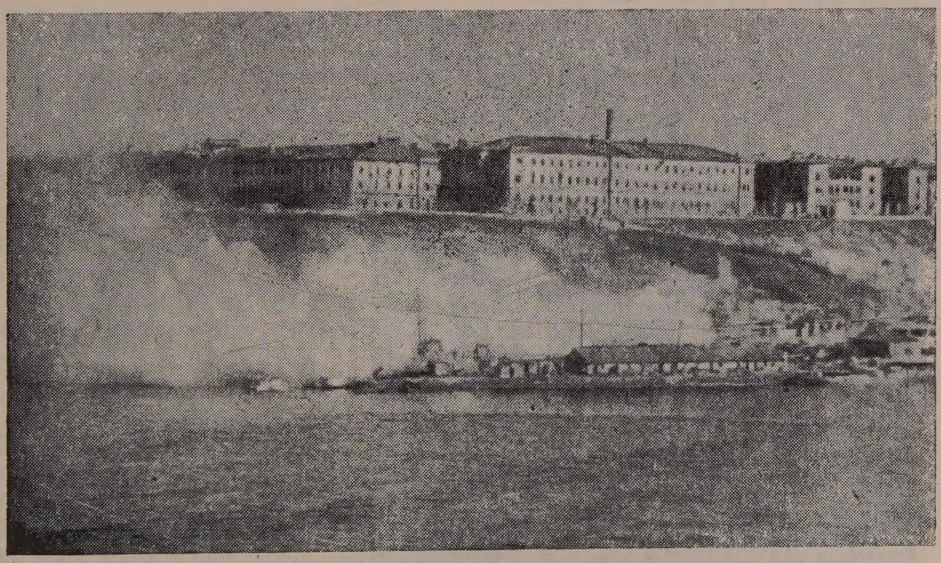
communication for the Fleet; our fearless naval air-falcons Yumashev, Naumov, Captains of Naval Vessels Buryak, Eroshenko, Shevchenko, Pavlenko, Fartushny, Ivanov, our heroic Commissars Ekhlakov, Mikhailov, Slessarev, Gladkov, our artillerymen Fayn, Ryzhi, Radovsky, Alexander,— these and scores and hundreds of other names will be written in letters of gold in the pages of the Patriotic War. And all in good time will these deeds of the numberless heroes of the Second Defence of Sevastopol be woven into a brilliant fabric of legend, poem, verse and song by the Soviet people and its poets.

An immense amount of work, demanding great strain and effort, was performed by Major-General Krylov, Naval Captain Tityurkin, Engineer Paramonov and others. They devoted all their energy and knowledge to the organization of the defence of Sevastopol.

For eight months the champions of Sevastopol preserved unexampled discipline and power of organization. In face of the most devastating fire they never flinched, never gave way to panic, but bravely and courageously disputed every foot of Soviet soil. The Red sailors and Red Army men followed the lead of their commanders and commissars and were ready to go through fire and water when duty called. The military prowess and bravery of our commanders and commissars inspired our Red sailors and Red Army men in the heroic struggle against the detested foe.

Steeled by privation and hardship, the champions of Sevastopol heroically upheld the honour of Soviet arms. They frustrated and balked the plans of the German High Command, hampered the flaunted spring campaign and dealt the fascists a severe blow.

Inspired by the heroic example of Sevastopol, our Red Army and Red Navy will deal new crushing blows at the German fascist robber army. Not far distant is the hour when these footpads, to the last man, will meet with an inglorious end on the wide fields of the Patriotic War, just as hundreds of thousands of them have already done under the walls of our historic Sevastopol.



The port on fire after a fascist air-raid

ALEXEI TOLSTOY

KILL THE BEAST!

Once again the earth has traced its full orbit in the black abyss of space and offered to the sun its torn sides. A year has passed, and now everywhere she reeks with blood. No peaceful corner has remained, no family can now gather quietly to talk beside the hearth, around the homely supper-table, of this and that, of a solid home, of a serene old age, of the happiness of the babies sleeping in their cots, confident that freedom and well-being are secure and unthreatened.

The year which has passed has been a severe school for humanity. In the deepest recesses of his being man has realized the necessity of defence against fascism, has realized too that attack is the only defence. The Anglo-Soviet Treaty and the Agreement with the U.S.A. are evidence of it. We must attack at all costs as soon as possible, combining our strength and effort, and we must do it in this year of 1942.

Our next step will be the common spontaneous realization that the only emotion possible in these times, the only passion with which man must burn, is and shall be hatred of the enemy.

Man must wake with this stubborn hate, work and fight with his hate active, and fall asleep at night with his hate still onslaked.

You love your wife and your child? Then, turn your love inside out so that it hurts and oozes blood. Your task is to kill the enemy branded with the swastika sign of Cain. He is the enemy of all lovers. He will transfix your child with his bayonet in fiendish cruelty. He will throw your wife down on the floor and violate her, and the least gruesome fate in store for her is to be deported to carry stones for road building under the

Destroy the German Monster!

Drawn by Kukryniksy

Break the Bloody Talon of Fascism!

Drawn by Kukryniksy

whip. This is what, taught by Hitler, he will do to every non-German woman, however tender, lovely, beautiful. Kill the beast! It is a sacred commandment for you.

You are young, your mind is ardent and keen. You desire knowledge and high wisdom. Your heart is wide open, you are cramped at home. You would like to embrace the life of the world in its entirety? Concentrate your mind and every heart-beat on the sights of your automatic, for now you must kill with blazing hate. For the fascists you are but a beast of burden, a donkey prodded with a stick with a nail in its end, to make him walk on and on carrying his load till he drops, moving heavily with his blackened tongue lolling out of his mouth. A shot at the fascist—this is the imperious rapping on the door of your freedom; the killing of a fascist is your sacred duty to culture.

Love your hate of the enemy. Be proud of it. It is the banner of your victory.

A commander told me this:

"... Our company was advancing. The cold was so intense that it hurt your chest, and the gun-barrel burned your palm trough your mitten. My boys got tired stamping through the deep snow. Their spirit was sinking. That's bad, I thought, how shall we proceed with the operation? What words can I find to stir them up? And yet it is absolutely essential to take that hamlet and to dislodge the Germans. My lips are frozen and cannot move for cold. Besides I don't know what to say.

"The day was dawning when we reached the road, and suddenly we saw an absolutely naked little baby lying on the ground. We went a few steps further, and there was another dead baby by the wayside, and further on a number of them. Some carefully bedded in the snow, wrapped in their blankets, and some just flung down anyhow. Now we understood what had happened. The Germans were driving our women along with them. The bigger children toddled along somehow, but the babies were freezing in their mothers' arms. And now one, now another of them would stop and sit down to nurse her child at her lean and half-empty breast, just to warm it a little, but the escort tears the child out of her arms and flings it into the snow-drift, hitting her with the butt of his gun between the shoulders: 'Here, get a move on! Don't fall back, Russian swine!'

"My men saw the babies' corpses, and their frozen lips parted and their eyes blazed again, and every trace of downheartedness disappeared. 'Let's go, quicker!' And they attacked that little hamlet with such intensity that those Fritzes had not even the time

to hitch up their trousers. And they'll never need to do it again... And mark, Alexei Nikolayevich, that since that day my company is noted for its fury."

For twelve months now the Red Army has shouldered the entire burden of the world war, allowing England and the U.S.A. the time to arm themselves.

The Red Army had to stand the violent shock of Hitler's armies with all the advantages of suddenness and initiative of attack on their side. The entire reorganization of the dislocated military industry had to be planned at shortest notice, and the tempo of armament production speeded up. This task too was carried out, though some considered it an impossibility as a few years ago they thought the Five-Year Plan.

The rear of the Soviet Union is doing its duty to the motherland and freedom-loving humanity. From defence the Red Army has proceeded to attack. The war has entered its decisive phase which may be fraught with all sorts of accidents, difficulties and privations. But one basic fact is beyond all doubt: Hitler's army is speedily marching to its ruin, to a gloomy and bloody autumnal setting.

Hitler's adventure has failed. And he will soon be biting his nails in the

VENGEANCE ON THE BARBARIANS!

It is impossible to look at this photo without shuddering. Here there once stood a splendid palace, a monument of eighteenth century architecture. Beautiful statuary graced the flights of marble stairs, while before the palace rose a giant bronze Samson tearing asunder the jaws of a lion from which a mighty fountain played.

We have carefully preserved famous memorials of by-gone days. These sights of Peterhof were well-known far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. Thousands of the workers of our town used to visit them at week-ends.

But for the frenzied Hitler "no monuments in the East are of any value." And the palace has been reduced to ruins. Before its destruction, all the things were stolen. The Germans thieved valuable collections of china, pictures, engravings, books, bronze, silver, crystal, dishes, carpets, divans. The statues were stolen, the bronze Samson sawn up and removed in sections.

presence of his implacable judges, unless even before that some soldier empties his automatic into his belly. The Anglo-Soviet Treaty ratified on June 18th by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. was signed on May 26th with the point of a sword sharpened by inexorable hatred, just in order to prevent a similar adventure repeating itself in the history of humanity ever again, under any conditions, in any form.

The speed of the World War is so rapid, the forces of the three great allies, the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and the U.S.A., actively engaged in the war, are so concentrated and organized, that the rout of Hitler's Germany will not be long in coming. It will take place before the end of this year.

Friend, comrade, dear companion, both at the front and in the rear, if your hate is growing cold, if you are getting accustomed to it, then stroke the warm head of your child, if only in your thoughts. It will look at you candidly and innocently, and you will realize that you cannot get used to hate. Let your fury burn in you like a constant pain, like a sight of the black German hand tightening on the throat of your child.

The glorious fountains of Peterhof no longer play. The marble staircase is shattered and strewn with shell fragments. Heaps of rubbish, smashed masonry and coal lie scattered over the former site of one of the greatest productions of architectural art. The silence of death reigns where once was the busy stir of life.

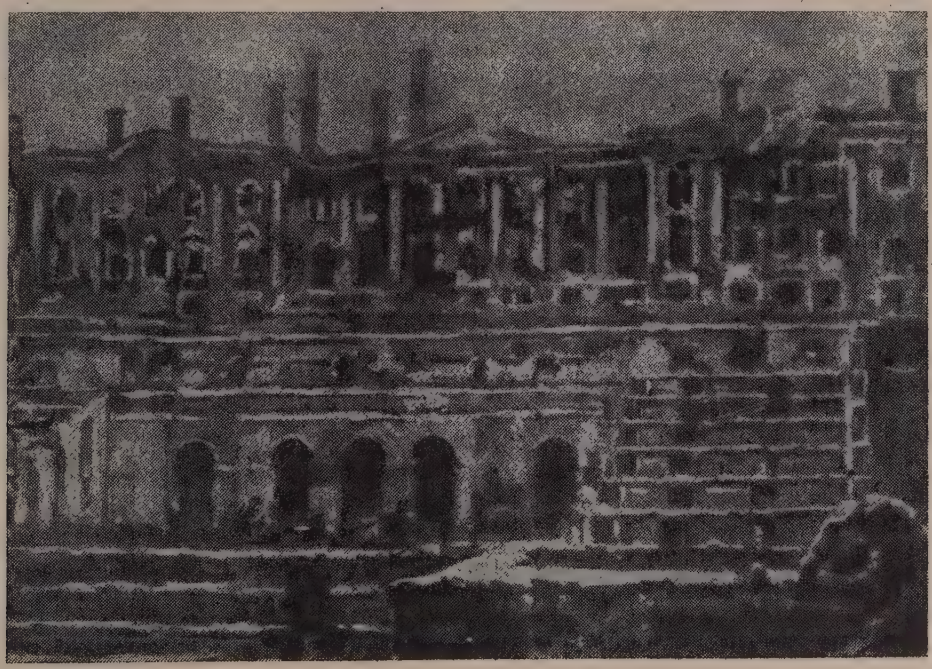
The hearts of Leningrad people bleed when they look on this scene of destruction. For the acts of vandalism committed on our soil, the German bandits will pay dear. Our hour will come. We shall take vengeance on the fascist barbarians for everything; everything without exception. They shall not escape the reckoning.

They shall have to answer for our monuments they have shattered, for priceless things stolen from our people.

We shall free the palaces of Peterhof as we freed Yasnaya Polyana.

Nothing will be omitted from the bill of reckoning which Hitler and his bandits will pay in full. And we shall exact payment with the same mercilessness with which they laid waste our treasures. We shall forget nothing. We shall forgive nothing.

N. TIKHONOV



EUGENE PETROV

BREAKING THE BLOCKADE

A few days before his untimely death the writer Eugene Petrov left for Sevastopol on the leader *Tashkent*, which broke the ring of the enemy blockade and reached the besieged town. Returning on the same vessel to a point on the coast, Petrov set to work on a sketch for the newspaper *Red Star*, describing the expedition. Sudden death at his post interrupted his writing. Below we publish this unfinished sketch.—*Ed.*

The leader *Tashkent* carried out an operation which will go down in naval text-books as a model of bold methods in breaking a blockade. But it is not only in text-books that the story will be recorded. It will live forever in people's memories of the glorious defenders of Sevastopol, as an astonishing example of military valour and of the grandeur and beauty of the human spirit.

People knew exactly what they were in for. They didn't comfort themselves with any illusions. The *Tashkent* was to break the German blockade of Sevastopol, unload a cargo of ammunition, take on board women, children and wounded, and, again breaking the blockade, return to its base.

On the 26th of June, at two in the afternoon, the long, narrow, bluish-coloured vessel weighed anchor. The weather was murderous,— the sea absolutey calm, smooth and gleaming like a mirror, the heavens crystal clear with an enormous fiery sun. It would have been impossible to conceive worse weather for attempting to break a blockade.

I heard someone on the bridge say: "They'll come out of the sun, use it as a screen."

But for a long time yet there was silence, nothing broke the blinding blue calm of sea and sky.

The *Tashkent* looked very strange. If a year ago the seamen, who loved their elegant ship as a cavalryman can love his horse, had been told that they were to undertake a trip of this sort, they would have been very surprised. The decks, corridors and orlops were chock-full of boxes and sacks, as though she wasn't the leader *Tashkent*, the prettiest, swiftest vessel of the Black Sea Fleet, but some snorting old cargo-boat. Passengers sat, or lay, all over the place. A passenger on a naval vessel? What could be more incongruous? But people had long ago ceased to be surprised at the peculiarities of the war being fought out on the Black Sea. They knew that the cases and sacks were necessary now to the defenders of Sevastopol, and that the Red Army men they carried would bring them some relief in their predicament.

The Red Army men took up their quarters on the decks and immediately set about their own affairs. The commander and commissar of the battalion consulted together, gave orders, and the sailors saw these Red Army men from Siberia, who had never before in their live set eyes upon the sea, drag a heavy machine-gun into the bows, then another to the stern of the vessel, setting up light machine-guns round the sides and taking up their positions so that they could readily fire in any direction. Coming on board the ship, they had immediately

looked upon it as territory they had occupied, and the surrounding waters as territory occupied by the enemy. And so they were preparing to defend their position from every angle, according to all the rules of military science. The seamen were delighted. "Look what smart chaps we've got aboard!" they said.

And the sailors and Red Army men were on friendly terms straight away.

At four o'clock the alarm sounded. A German reconnoissance plane appeared in the sky. There came a thin, long-drawn-out ringing as though a vibrating copper-wire were being rapidly drawn through the heart. The anti-aircraft guns barked out. The plane melted into the blue. Now hundreds of pairs of eyes still more attentively watched sea and sky through range-finders, stereoscopic telescopes and binoculars. In dead silence the ship rushed forward to meet the unavoidable battle. An hour later it began.

We were expecting an attack by torpedo-boats, but long-distance bombers Heinkels flew up. There were thirteen of them. They came one after the other from out of the sun, and as they passed over the vessel dropped heavy bombs—in a somewhat leisurely fashion, it seemed to me.

One man alone held in his hands the success of the expedition, the fate of the ship and of the people on board. The commander of the *Tashkent*, Captain of the Second Rank Vassili Nikolayevich Yaroshenko, a man of medium height, broad-shouldered, swarthy, with coal-black moustaches, didn't leave the bridge. With rapid but restrained steps he strode from one end of the bridge to the other; screwing up his eyes against the glare, he watched the sky above, and suddenly, making up his mind in a split second, shouted in a loud hoarse voice:

"Larboard!"

"Larboard it is!" echoed the helmsman.

From the moment the battle started the helmsman, a tall, handsome fellow with blue eyes, began to carry out his duties with special smartness. He spun the wheel round rapidly. The ship, shuddering throughout its length, turned. We lived through one of those seconds which, to borrow a phrase from banal novels, "seemed an eternity," and to the right or left, ahead of the bows or behind the stern, in our wake, there rose from the sea a dirty white column of water and bomb-splinters.

"Explosion to larboard," reported the signalman.

"Good," answered the commander.

The engagement lasted almost without a break for three hours. While some of the Heinkels bombed us, passing over the ship successively, others flew off for new loads of bombs. We longed for darkness as a man in the desert longs for a drop of water. Yaroshenko strode tirelessly from side to side of the bridge, straining his eyes upwards. And hundreds of eyes followed his movements. He seemed all-powerful, a god. And then, passing me between the falling of two bombs, this god of the second rank suddenly winked his black eye, showed his white teeth in a grin, and shouted:

"What the hell! I'll put it over them all the same!"

He expressed himself more strongly, but not everything said at sea during a battle is fit for print.

Altogether the Germans dropped forty heavy bombs, about one every four minutes. They aimed very accurately, for at least ten bombs fell on the very spot where we would have been if Yaroshenko hadn't dodged in time.

It was already dusk with a faint moon when the last bomb fell far away on the port side. And ten or fifteen minutes before that we had the pleasure of watching a Heinkel, enveloped in rosy smoke, drop into the sea in the wake of the sun.

The bombing was over, but there was no easing of the tension. We were nearing Sevastopol. It was dark by this time, and a great full moon

hung in the sky. The silhouette of our ship stood out sharply against the path of the moon. When we were just across from Balaklava, the signalman shouted:

"Torpedo-boat to starboard!"

Our guns opened fire. The worst of it was that at night it is impossible to see a torpedo and dodge. We waited, but there was no explosion. Apparently the torpedoes had missed. The ship went on full steam ahead. We lost sight of the torpedo-boats. Probably we had out-distanced them.

And there, at last, in the moonlight we saw that stretch of cliffy coast of which all our Soviet land is now thinking with pride and sympathy. I knew how small the Sevastopol sector of the front was, but my heart contracted when I saw it from the sea. It seemed so tiny! It was very distinctly outlined by incessant bursts of gun fire. Framed in a fiery arc. You could take it all in without turning your head. Searchlights swung unceasingly across the sky, and along their shafts the lights of tracer-bullets trailed slowly upwards. When we were mooring at the wharf and the noise of the engines ceased, we at once heard the almost uninterrupted thunder of the cannonade. The Sevastopol cannonade of June, 1942.

The commander even now didn't leave the bridge, for the battle was in reality still going on. It was only in a new phase. He had to approach and moor at a place which before the war nobody would have risked going near with a ship like the *Tashkent*, and where no captain in the world would have risked mooring. He had to land cargo and people. He had to get on board the wounded and the women and children to be evacuated. And he had to do all this fast enough to get away while it was still dark.

The commander knew that the Germans would be on the look-out for us in the morning, that planes were being prepared, bombs were being hung. It was all right if they were Heinkels. But if they were dive-bombers? The commander knew that by whatever route he left Sevastopol, all the same he would be discovered. It was impossible to avoid an encounter, and the Germans would do all in their power to destroy us on the return trip.

I saw the commander standing there on the bridge, watching the unloading. A beam of moonlight caught his tense face. The muscles over his cheekbones twitched. What was he thinking of as he watched the lightly wounded helping each other up the gangways, the seriously wounded being carried up on stretchers, the mothers with their sleeping children held tight to their breasts? It all took place in almost complete silence. People talked in hushed voices. In the course of two hours the ship was unloaded and loaded again. The captain took on board two thousand people. And each of them, as he came aboard, raised his head and with his eyes sought the bridge, and the commander on it.

Vassili Nikolayevich Yaroshenko knew perfectly well what it meant to lose a ship at sea. In his time he had been commander of a small vessel which had been sunk by a direct hit by an enemy bomb. On that occasion Yaroshenko had defended his ship to the last, but he couldn't save it. He was seriously wounded, too. The vessel had gone to the bottom. Yaroshenko saved the crew,—there were no passengers then. He was the last left on the bridge, and jumped into the sea only when the bridge began to go under. In one hand he had his Party ticket, in the other his revolver, for he had decided to shoot himself if he should become exhausted and begin to drown. Then he'd been picked up. But what was to be done now? Now he had passengers, women, children, wounded. Now he would have to save the ship or go to the bottom along with it.

The vessel left Sevastopol about two o'clock. . .

VSEVOLOD IVANOV

FOUR POINTS

On receiving his instructions, the major called the survivors together and announced:

"Exit from encirclement is to be carried out in small groups of five or six men."

He paused to give them a chance to grasp the ominous magnitude of the words of the order, and then added:

"There are four points in this task of ours: a) to reach our objective point in the Vorobiovsk district; b) to create a panic in the enemy ranks on the way there; c) to collect information about the enemy; d) to beware of spies, and above all not bring any along with us. The march is to be done at night. That's all. Well, so long, comrades."

Towards evening the remaining men of the unit, having sunk their ordnance and smashed up their lorries, left the battle-ground.

It so happened that the last group was made up of five men under Grigori Mirskikh, the political instructor. They were the last to go because People's Volunteer Miron Podpaskov could not get all his innumerable belongings into his old sack. At length he found an empty haversack somewhere, and squeezed his winter outfit into it, but even then it would not all go in. He brought a second haversack and loaded it on his bosom pal, Semion Otduzh, a tall, lanky, sickly-looking fellow with patient dreamy blue eyes that gave wordless expression of his constant need and his constant belief that this need would pass,—pass at the will of his fellow-villager, this same Podpaskov.

"Won't that be a bit too heavy for you?" Mirskikh asked.

"Why should it be too heavy? It's all my own stuff," Podpaskov replied.

His broad, squarish face, his waddling, rapid and somehow crafty way of moving, his constantly-blinking eyes, the peculiar habit he had of twitching his shoulders as though it was always raining and the cold drops kept running down under his collar, the unusual and unnecessary number of wrinkles in his face and clothes,—all these might prove irritating even in less trying circumstances.

And true enough, the third man, Gnat Neredka, was irritated almost beyond endurance. He was a stocky young fellow of twenty-five or so, broad and sturdy as a flat-car, and with movements so smooth and graceful that one had only to see to exclaim: "There's a born soldier!" He had both dexterity and gumption, liked carrying out orders, liked war—the din of battle, the marches; rifles were just his size, and tommy-guns brought out his good points still more forcibly. By the time the major had uttered the last words of the order, Gnat Neredka was ready for the march. Now, with his haversack at his back, his water-flask and emergency-rations stowed about his person and his tommy-gun in his hand, he was standing at the political instructor's side, with an expression of the strongest disapproval on his face as he watched Podpaskov fussing with his things. But since the political instructor passed no remark, Neredka did not think fit to do so. He could have said a great deal, though. Instead, he got out a large clean blue handkerchief, blew his nose, folded the handkerchief into six, and asked the instructor if he might have a smoke.

Mirskikh was gazing out over the heads of Podpaskov and Neredka at the battle-field, at those burnt-out tanks, smashed-up guns, blown-up dug-outs, motor-lorries in ditches, and at the innumerable German and Russian corpses that covered the harvest-field. The Germans had ceased firing. They must have got wind of the Russian manoeuvre and were now transferring troops to our flank to cut off the division. The autumnal sun, clear and bright, was just setting. On that field many had seen it for the last time; and perhaps for Mirskikh too it was the last time he would see a field like this. He did not often think of death, but now it might be nearer to him than ever before. The rain, the chilly autumn nights and the long marches had brought on a relapse. He was very feverish at night, especially towards morning, and in the daytime head-aches and perspiration were wearing him out. He did not want to see a doctor, partly because he did not like undergoing treatment, and partly because he knew that there were plenty of others in a much worse state than himself, men who stood in more urgent need of medical assistance. Whenever his comrades, alarmed by the unhealthy flush on his cheeks, urged him to go to the doctor, he put them off with a joke: "They'd never find a bed long enough for me in the hospital." True, he was unusually tall.

The battle-field had an extraordinary beauty and grandeur for him today. How many poets of the future would visit it! How many songs would be written about the Russian division that had held this field for five days against five German divisions! How many tears would be shed by those who saw the films depicting this battle! And would they not recall how, after the battle and before leaving the stricken field, an ordinary Russian tailor, by the name of Lubchenkov, popularly known as Sosulka, a little round-shouldered fellow who looked like a dipper, had sat down on a tree-stump and played a tune on his mouth-organ. The concertina belonging to the company had been smashed, together with the field-library, by a shell, so he amused himself with picking out melodies suitable to the none too extensive range of this tin-bound wooden toy.

"What's that you're playing, Lubchenkov?" the political instructor asked him.

Lubchenkov paid no more heed to the question than if it had never been asked.

"What are you playing, Sosulka?" Mirskikh persisted.

"It's 'Down Mother-Volga in winter-time,'" Sosulka said in a high-piched voice. "Why, doesn't it sound like it?"

And he laughed.

"If a soul was something like a coat, then from these mine-throwers, you might say, would fall of not only the outside but even the inside. A song is like the lining of the coat. The war goes rolling on in its fiery chariot, mowing down soul and song together. Isn't that so, little pipe?" he said, blowing on the mouth-organ.

And he answered his own question with a song. The air was recognizable. The broad and wintry reaches of the Volga unfolded before the listeners. Sleigh-bells tinkled, the driver tightened the reins. His beloved one was at the window, waiting.

Even Podpaskov felt at last that his things were properly packed and stood leaning on his spade, thinking of his home, and the children, and the mother, for whose sake he had been working four years as a bricklayer in the town, so as to get a town education, some book-learning, and become, on his return to the village, at least the chairman of the collective farm. He waited now till Sosulka had finished his tune and then, pointing to the field, observed:

"Look at all the grain that's been trampled down, but it's not done for yet, see? The ears are springing up afresh."

The political instructor was already accustomed to the allegorical language in which Podpaskov, Otduzh and Sosulka spoke. He understood that this meant now they were all ready and could go ahead. He gave the order. They moved off.

Before the war Mirskikh had worked as director of a museum. It was work that he had appreciated and respected, and above all he had a fine instinctive taste of his own. In the cellar of the Regional Museum he had discovered, in a pile of rubbish, a picture that bore, in his opinion, the undoubted traces of some immortal brush. The scholars of the capital acknowledged it to be the work of Daniele da Volterra. Further research confirmed the premise that it had been painted, after a drawing of Michelangelo's, by an artist of his school or even by one of his own pupils.

And now, as they emerged from the gully into the meadow, beyond which lay the autumnal wood, Mirskikh, looking at the maples and oaks, called to mind a copy of the picture hanging in the third room of the museum. It was obvious that a master's brush had touched it just as the powerful brush of autumn had touched the wood and transformed its monotonous green of yesterday. Like Danae it now lay flesh-tinted on the sombre couch of earth, under a canopy of purple, while still higher, over the beauty herself, drifted a white, fleecy cloud, from which a shower of gold appeared to be descending. Yes, autumn had set in—late and wild. . . And at the feet of Danae, like the bushes, wind-tossed and bent, crouched the ancient crone, catching the golden coins in her apron.

Gnat Neredka put his own interpretation on the attentive glance the political instructor accorded the woods. Imitating the terse military language generally used by the major, he remarked:

"The question stands like this, Comrade Mirskikh, the majority of the men ought to begin digging themselves in as soon as they reach the depths of the wood."

"You think the Germans are likely to start combing it?"

"Certainly, Comrade Mirskikh. Such are their tactics. And for this reason I suggest settling down in the thicket before night comes on and we can't find the way."

"As near as we can to the bog?"

"Exactly. The German will be looking for us in a dry spot; he's afraid of catching influenza in the bog."

They sliced off two hummocks, flung them to the side, and started to dig pits under them. The peaty soil, black with yellow veins, was easy to dig, but at the depth of about a metre there was water; so it appeared that they would have to sit in the pits doubled up. The soil was flung into the bog. As might have been expected, Neredka and Podpaskov proved to be good at digging. But for that matter even Sosulka,—that dun-coloured creature who looked as if he was knocked together just anyhow, without care or grace, a man to whom even the leather coat and breeches could not lend a more imposing air,—handled his spade as though it were no heavier than a needle. He followed Mirskikh respectfully to the pit, covered it with the hummock and inquired laughing:

"Isn't it a little tight across the shoulders?"

Neredka and Mirskikh, being the bulkiest of the men, had one pit, while the three smaller men got into the other. Before they settled down they opened a tin of green peas, ate them with a chunk of bread as thick as their palms,—this was their ration for the day,—washed down the meal with the green, oily bog-water and decided to get a couple of hours of sleep. Sosulka, who never believed that the enemy was going to shoot, but was never surprised when he did, declared:

"There won't be any combing of the wood; where's the comb to come from?"

Almost before the words were out of this mouth, here came a deafening roar over the wood, twigs pattered down, the earth vibrated as though it was being wrenched and warped; all the men felt a momentary stifling contraction in the chest that they had never experienced on the field of battle. Here they were alone, and it seemed that it was on them that the trees and earth were falling, the sharp, red-hot lumps of metal flying, that it was they who were being torn by the air-wave.

Mirskikh could feel with his whole body that he was shivering, but he could not have controlled the trembling if his life had depended upon it. When the firing ceased for an instant, he managed to say, moving feverish lips with difficulty:

"What's up, Neredka?"

This very ordinary question was precisely the one Gnat Neredka needed at the moment. Had Mirskikh attempted, as he usually did, to explain what was happening, Neredka might have perhaps reached that state of terror which works havoc with even the best soldier. As it was, he shook the clods of earth off, and taking himself in hand, replied in his usual challenging and slightly husky voice:

"They've stopped combing the wood with the mine-throwers, now they'll start with the tommy-guns, Comrade Political Instructor. Am I to keep a look-out?"

"Yes, keep a look-out there."

Then they both remembered that a peep-hole had been made in the hummock. Through this they could see part of the cutting, the hillock with its ascending ranks of trees, and beyond them a glade. As far as they could judge, the Germans should emerge from the side of the glade. By turning his head to the right and rising a little so that his head came up against the grass-roots straggling out from under the hummock, Mirskikh could see over Neredka's shoulder part of the glade and a twisted oak in it. He settled the tommy-gun he held pressed against his knee, and slipped a disk under himself.

"Allow me to take the tommy-gun, Comrade Political Instructor."

"What for?"

"Our orders are to create a panic."

"We'll do that when it gets dark, it's light yet."

"It's getting dark, Comrade Political Instructor."

Mirskikh made no reply. The crack of tommy-guns came from somewhere in the wood, and Neredka said:

"They're acting in just the same way."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, so that they can comb it in three layers. The first shaves off the topmost branches, the second takes everything at the rifleman's own height, horizontally, and the third mows us down."

"How? I don't understand."

"The third skims directly over the ground, searching for holes like ours. If I only had a tommy-gun, I'd show them what a mole's life like mine is worth."

"Sit still, Neredka."

"Very well, Comrade Political Instructor."

He glued his eye to the peep-hole once more and did not turn round; in a whisper,—though even if he had shouted at the top of his voice he could not have been heard above the rifle-fire,—he described what he saw in the wood. Mirskikh lay close against his shoulder. Dusk was not falling thickly yet, and they could still clearly see, from the dark of the dug-out, not only the outlines of the tree-trunks, but also the figures darting among them. At first a few Red Army men who had been concealed in the wood ran out. Ten or fifteen of them disappeared into the field, and as many remained lying in the roadway.

"Wounded," Neredka whispered. "I'm afraid the Germans are going

to finish them off, Comrade Political Instructor!"

Mirskikh himself had been afraid of this, but when Gnat expressed the same thought, it confused him, weighed heavily on him. Now he fancied that the wounded were groaning, now that they had risen and escaped into the field, now that the Red Army men had turned back and carried them away. At the same time he saw the Germans emerge into the glade with calm, measured tread, saw the flashes of light that leapt from among the trees, and even caught the words of the order, for he knew German. "They'll pass on the left," he thought to himself. And, as though in reply to the unspoken thought, Gnat said:

"Nothing doing, they're going straight for them."

And sure enough, the Germans were marching towards the wounded. The tommy-guns were silent, and at the same moment Mirskikh heard a long, hoarse, despairing cry:

"Comrades, dear comrades!"

There were nine Germans. One of them, lowering his tommy-gun, pulled out his revolver. The wounded man raised himself on his elbow and repeated his cry. The German fired at him, and he lay still. Then the first German turned and said something to another one who was in the second line, but Mirskikh could not catch what it was. The German who had shot the wounded man scratched his neck thoughtfully with his revolver and went to the next wounded man.

"Murdering cripples!" Neredka muttered.

"Murdering cripples!" Mirskikh repeated, then shouted loudly: "But don't you see—it's dark already?"

Then, as though he had suddenly come unrolled, he sprang out of the pit, stood up to his full height and let out a furious yell:

"I'll kill millions of you for this! Millions!"

And when at last, shaking from head to foot and sweating with hatred, he fired again and again at the Germans, it actually did seem to him that he was destroying millions. After using up a whole disk, he pulled out his knife and rushed after four of the enemy. But just then an intolerable pain stabbed him in the chest, a fit of coughing came on, and he sat down helplessly on the ground, covering his eyes with his hands. When Neredka, Podpaskov and Sosulka returned, he was sitting on a hummock and drinking water. His head was in an agony of pain, he had a singing in his ears, and the water did no good.

"Well, you certainly got worked up and went off like a rocket," Sosulka said, laughing. "You did away with five of them, Comrade Political Instructor, and the rest we bayonetted."

"Where are the wounded?"

"None of our chaps are wounded, and those we found on the way we bandaged up and sent to the village."

"What's the next order?" Neredka asked, seeing that the political instructor was staring at them in silence.

"Let's go on," said Mirskikh, getting to his feet. "And by the way,—we've got to economize with the cartridges."

"What made you volunteer?" Mirskikh once asked Sosulka.

"What sort of a war would it be without volunteers? They're fond of company, comrade. If there'd been any partisans in my district, I'd have gone with them. What do you think of the partisans?"

Mirskikh, who was accustomed to generalizing and summing up his opinions, replied:

"The partisan movement of today has more difficulties to face than ever before. At one time the partisan could hide in the woods as safely as in a fortress, now it's easier to sit in the house than in the woods."

"So it follows that you don't think I'd do for a partisan?"

"It doesn't seem as though you would, but we'll have to try you.

You're very wasteful with cartridges for one thing, and that's not much like a partisan, is it?"

"I can't help it,—they seem to go off of themselves, Comrade Political Instructor. As soon as they catch sight of a German, they can't stay where they are. A bullet's just like a fidget woman. I've blistered my feet a bit, will you give me leave to have a rest? I'll change my socks, and then I'll tell you an anecdote about a soldier and a parson's wife."

He knew a great many anecdotes and was always ready to tell them, but he had an unfortunate habit of repeating himself, and this irritated Mirskikh. For that matter, many things irritated him just now, and this was a torment to him, because, though he knew he ought to control himself, he could not. He snapped at Sosulka, interrupted him in the middle of his anecdotes, and when the man declared that he was tired and needed a rest or to change, Mirskikh would read him a long lecture on the way a Red Army man should behave. He realized perfectly well that his conversation lacked the fire he usually put into it, but the more conscious he was of this, the lengthier became his discussions. Besides this, he suspected that Sosulka was not as tire as he made out and only asked for these halts to give the political instructor a chance to rest. As for the anecdotes, Mirskikh suspected Sosulka was so keen on telling them simply to cheer up his comrades.

So, instead of sitting down during the halts, Mirskikh would remain on his feet, trying to breathe as evenly as his companions, only leaning lightly against a tree. There he stood, tall, well-built and thoughtful, alert and ready always for the duel, and the others seemed like his seconds. And, when all was said and done, they envied, with a pleasant, tender kind of envy, his power and endurance.

Taking it all in all, it turned out that they were going slower every day, particularly through the wood. The point was that after every "combing" the Germans left "cuckoo" snipers, supplied with a ten-day stock of food and cartridges, and skilfully masked in the tree-tops. These snipers, who were for the most part members of the fascist party, were supposed to destroy anyone who passed through the wood. They changed shifts after each combing. For this reason Mirskikh always led his men through the wood between three and five in the morning, when the tree-snipers, tired out after the night's watching, dozed off to sleep. The five men went barefoot, on tiptoes, trying to make no sound and to refrain from speaking; they communicated with each other by signs, by imitating bird-notes, by the snapping of a twig, by light clapping.

As soon as morning came, they hid in the pits. They had learned to dig these at great speed and to conceal them so cleverly that more than once they had heard the steps of the German soldiers over their heads. A German soldier stumbled over a pit, and one foot sank in. He cursed roundly, dragged his leg out, then sat down by the edge to take off his boot and shake the earth out of it, and went on further. When the sound of the foot-steps had died away, Sosulka exclaimed:

"Oh, boys, how I yearned to pull him by the boot—I thought my very heart would burst I wanted to so badly. The boot smelt of tar, you know, he must have grabbed it from some collective farmer or other. I'd like to have dragged him down into the pit and stamped all over those eyes, those eyes, and that ugly mug of his. . ."

On another occasion they were crouching for a long time in a bog, under the thick, overhanging boughs of the trees on the steep bank. The Germans had just finished combing the woods. It was about seven in the evening, night had not yet fallen. Had it not been for the snipers, they might have gone on. Very cautiously they crept out of the bog, wrung the water out of their clothes, or rather out of the rag-

ged garments they had got in exchange for their own from the peasants, and sat down on the moss, still shielded by the high, overhanging bank. They heard two or three "cuckoos" calling to each other, and listened eagerly, trying to guess their whereabouts and if there was a chance of getting at them. Then all was still in the woodland.

"Grigori Matveich, would you like to wrestle a bit, just to get warm?" Sosulka whispered.

Mirskikh felt feverish, his head ached violently, but he agreed. After a turn at wrestling with Sosulka, he paused out of breath, and, choosing what he thought would be a warm place, lay down among the tree-roots. They cut into his body like barbed wire, his mouth was full of a sticky bitterness, his eyeballs pricked.

Then through this pain he caught a snatch of a good Soviet song. The voice that sang was young and, it seemed, strongly moved, for it broke very noticeably from time to time. "I'm delirious, now, as if there wasn't enough without that," Mirskikh thought with great dissatisfaction. Yet he knew that delirium came on in short snatches, while the melody he heard broadened, strengthened and became more and more complete every moment. He raised himself on his elbow.

"There's somebody singing," Sosulka said in a whisper. "Who, do you think, it could be, Grigori Matveich? A gramophone, maybe?"

"Yes, they're singing", said Otduzh dreamily, "singing very nicely, too. A gramophone wouldn't sound nearly so nice."

They rose from their crouching position and crawled, holding on by the roots, to the top of the bank. Then they bobbed their heads up cautiously and listened in amazement.

The wood had come to life. Footsteps and voices were heard; some daring spirit climbed a tree and fired two or three shots from his revolver, and the wood rang with the startled yell of a "cuckoo"-sniper. The wood where, an hour before, it had seemed that even a sparrow could not survive, where every living thing had been huddled in terror, where every bush and even grass-blade had been so skilfully bullet-riddled, was crowded now with Soviet people,—partisans; so crowded, indeed, was it, that the German snipers jumped down out of the trees in terror and ran for their lives in every direction.

"No, you don't!" Otduzh exulted,—and the reason he had joined up as a volunteer was immediately clear. "No, you can't plug any of our fellows as easy as that!"

The wood had come to life. It had been brought to life with a song, as the creative always brings life. Song was supreme here now. Song! Yes, though Germans armed with tommy-guns and mine-throwers were no more than three or five kilometres away, it did not matter: song prevailed in the wood. It was not, of course, the care-free song we heard before the war; this was another song, though sung to the old familiar air and the old familiar words. It was weighty and ominous like a commandment, like a law. In it you caught the fire of hatred, the vow to hurl the enemy tooth and nail, if weapons did not suffice, from our land. It was a bond, an agreement, forever valid, to struggle to the last. Yes, this was a real song, the song of our country, that could be neither conquered nor destroyed.

The five men stood with bated breath. The song twisted their ears as a sheet of paper is twisted up to light a fire. Fire raced through their veins. They trembled with joy and exultation.

Tears rolled down Mirskikh's and Otduzh's cheeks and flowed into one stream, though from different sources. There might not be a single communist among the partisans singing in that wood, but just the same their tracks led to the Communist party. That was why Mirskikh wept; but the peasant Semion Otduzh wept because he understood that people with a song like this will never surrender their land to the

land-owner and that after this war we shall live a life which will be even more beautiful than before. Otherwise, of what value would people and their dreams be? And the sweet intoxication of victory shed a glory around his head,—tousled and untidy, with earth and mouldering leaves.

Sosulka simply vamped the tune on the mouth-organ he held close against his cold, parched lips.

But Gnat Neredka, though approving the tune and its martial spirit, was wondering at the same time for what purpose it was being sung.

Miron Podpaskov was grumbling as usual, shuffling along and twitching and shrugging his shoulders as though rain was pouring down his collar. Yet he was moved, too, after his own fashion. The partisans would give them food,—porridge and cabbage-soup, a slice of bacon maybe, because, as he had seen at the cinema once, partisans were very soft-hearted, compassionate people . . .

These partisans proved to be anything but soft-hearted.

When the five men were brought before the partisan leader, he received them as if they were deserters. Mirskikh, in particular, seemed to arouse his suspicions for some reason. The leader was sitting on a tree-stump, with a blanket wrapped around his legs and a warm cap with earflaps on his head. The light from a "Bat" lantern fell on his short arms and young clean-shaven face that wore a particularly sour and official expression. He examined the documents and the photograph for a long time, and compared the photo with Mirskikh, to make sure that the tall fellow before him resembled the one in the picture; the photograph was of the kind from which it is difficult without a lively imagination to recognize even the original standing beside it. Mirskikh felt hurt and replied curtly and coldly. When the partisan leader had finished cross-examining them all, he took the blanket off his legs, which proved to be bandaged, and ordered a stretcher to be brought. On this he was laid; then he saluted, and the detachment moved on, taking with it the two German snipers, who had climbed down their trees in sheer fright when they saw so many partisans appear unexpectedly.

"And what about us, comrade?" Podpaskov asked the leader.

"Well, what about you?"

"Have you no instructions for us?"

"Well, go on ahead wherever you were going," was all the leader said.

So they went.

None of them spoke. Sosulka alone attempted to whistle the tune of the partisans' song, but it was a failure. After they had been tramping for fifteen minutes, Neredka spat and remarked:

"That's a good soldier. And he'll rise from among the crowd accordingly."

Just then an elderly partisan on horseback overtook them and asked them to return to the detachment.

"I told you they would give us food!" cried Sosulka. "People who sing like that couldn't leave us without food."

The leader was seated on the tree-stump as before, with his legs wrapped in the blanket, and the same impenetrable expression on his face. "What a fellow this is, to be sure!" Mirskikh thought with annoyance. The leader addressed him in the voice of an interrogator.

"Do you know foreign languages?"

"He's a freak, into the bargain," thought Mirskikh, "he'll ask me in a minute if I know Russian." But aloud he said:

"Yes, I do."

The partisan leader was cleverer, however, than Mirskikh gave him credit for.

"And do you know German?" he went on.

"Yes, I know German," Mirskikh answered graciously.

"Can you read it?" the leader asked in as gracious a tone.

"Yes," said Mirskikh in an even pleasanter fashion.

"And can you write it also?" the partisan persisted, quite pleasantly now, and even smiled.

"Yes, I can write it too," Mirskikh agreed. "You don't happen to have any cigarettes, I suppose?"

"Why shouldn't we?"—and the partisan leader gave each of them a cigarette. Then, pointing to the German soldier in the short fur coat and short-legged boots: "This cuckoo-sniper has to be questioned at once."

When the questioning was over, the partisan leader became quite amiable, gave them another cigarette a-piece and ordered five pounds of bread and half-a-pound of butter to be spared them out of the partisan detachment's meagre store. The bread they were given, but there proved to be no butter.

"It must have given out, then," the leader said, looking thoughtfully at Mirskikh. "But we did have a stock of butter, don't you think we hadn't. The worst of it is we've no one who knows the language. Last time we were on guard, for instance. They are in touch with the town, and I could have found out everything if only I'd known the lingo or had a man who did. As it was, I took up the receiver, I could hear a German breathing at the other end of the line, and I couldn't say a word to him. I was so mad I couldn't even swear. Yes, these things weren't so well-arranged as they might have been in our C.I.D."

And he looked thoughtfully at Mirskikh once more. Neredka's face, which up till then had worn an approving and almost enthusiastic expression, now changed suddenly and became shrewd and concentrated. He was afraid the partisan leader was going to suggest that Mirskikh should stay with them. How could he do that? After all, there were no instructions from the major allowing for this. Rapidly summing up all these thoughts of his, he found a sentence that would give the leader to understand at once that he and Neredka were, to a certain extent, in the same position where orders were concerned.

"Our orders are to head eastwards, comrade," Neredka said, raising his hand to salute. "Will you allow us to wish you good luck now?"

The leader understood him. He smiled and, with a glance and a nod in Neredka's direction, remarked to Mirskikh:

"A first-rate soldier, that! You're sure to get there safely with him. Well, so long!"

Ten kilometres further on, when they were out in the fields, Mirskikh observed, thinking of the partisan leader:

"A plucky fellow."

"The kind that'd build a palace out of straw," Otduzh said.

"Fond of his little joke, too," Sosulka added.

When, after going another five kilometres, they halted to let Mirskikh catch his breath, Neredka remarked:

"Yes, that's a good soldier. And as for his not giving us any cartridges,—well, we'd do the same in his place, I dare say."

Hunger is a thing that acts as a brake on every campaign.

The action of this brake was both swift and oppressive. The peasants at whose doors they knocked seeking appeasement for their hunger, understood them by their knock, and with a kind of martial impressiveness informed them that there was no bread because the Germans had taken it all. "If you don't believe us, come and see for yourselves." And one peasant said a thing that greatly delighted Sosulka:

"The German has told us we can trade wholesale and retail as much as we like. But all we have to trade in is death, and nobody will give a farthing for that." He paused as though listening to footsteps they could not hear, and then added: "Here it comes, stamping."

And as they went away from the house they were thinking that their

last bread, received from the partisans, had given them the chance to stamp their feet at least once more, but who on earth would give them bread again?

When they had left the village, they descended into a kind of park. They inhaled the scent of poplars, and it seemed strange to them when they thought of it that the village they had just left had not smelt of anything. And though the avenue itself was dry, it seemed as miry and as difficult for walking as though there had been a week's rain.

The men were tired out and craved for food. It consoled them a little to think that when they attacked the enemy according to point D of the major's instructions, the Germans had been hungry, too; for the water-biscuits found on them had been as thin as paper and about as nourishing.

Yes, they badly wanted something to eat. So urgent was this craving that it seemed all living things fleed before them. The world was wretched, pitiful and meagre. And overhead hung a blue autumnal emptiness like the tawdry trappings on a coffin. Oh, but things looked bad!

The first to complain of hunger was Podpaskov. He had his own particular way of doing this. He recalled in great detail the pigs he had fattened for killing at holiday-times. Once he had been fattening two sucking-pigs, and then it happened that a good while before Christmas the younger of them lost the use of its legs and so had to be killed. They set out a grand table and invited guests, and would you believe it,—the whole pig was devoured in a single evening. And above all nobody grudged the food... Blinking his swollen eyes, he exposed his chest, scratched and bloody, and exclaimed turning to Mirskikh:

"Where's our food? Here we went and trusted you, and what have you brought us to?"

Hunger, lack of sleep and fatigue had weakened Mirskikh, but they had not deprived him of his eloquence,—his words, it seemed, rang out with a more compelling clarion-call than ever. And now, as before, he seemed when he spoke to be forged of white-hot, glowing iron. His words entered and fitted into a man like a revolver into a holster. He never distorted words. Pure himself as a spring, he was the incarnation of the pure spring of the present time.

"We have brought you," he said, "to where we went ourselves. There was no other way. Perhaps you will come to understand this in time, Podpaskov."

"I want to understand it right now."

"Then kindly listen to what I have to say. All this that you see around you,—murder, fire and violence,—gives you some idea of the justice of what we are doing. You and I have but one shelter and refuge—our own strength. There is no other shelter, no other country for us. If we let go of this strength of ours, if we render it up to the German, then we shall have no shelter at all. If our house stands by the path of the war, there is no help for it: you can only block the path if you stand right in the middle of it."

He had lapsed, without noticing it, into the manner of speaking in parables adopted by Podpaskov, Sosulka and Otduzh. And this allegorical quality and the high voice that rang out clear and strong in spite of his great weariness, carried the point of his words home to them all.

"We've got to carry out orders and not whine, that's the sum and substance of it," Neredka declared.

Then he got out his blue handkerchief, now faded with much washing: he washed it every day and hung it on a bush to dry. As he folded it up again, he added:

"It isn't the fact of having no bread that'll make us suffer. It's this having hardly any cartridges that gets us down and makes us worry."

Podpaskov was silent. No one ever told them to go to the devil when they asked the peasants for bread, but when they asked for cartridges they often heard this. For, like the five men, the peasants clung desperately to the last cartridge; not because they intended to shoot themselves if the worst came to the worst. No. But because a cartridge was indispensible if courage was to be maintained. A cartridge was that small, cramped refuge wherein the solitary and resentful soul found shelter. A cartridge was cherished with more care than a piece of bread, even when a man had not eaten for three days and was relying on that last piece to support his failing strength.

They found cartridges and rifles left by the fleeing enemy. But they did not carry them with them, since, according to the order, they were supposed to bring in their own arms, and these seemed to shorten the distance between themselves and the faraway Vorobiovsk. It lay in the East,—the district they were heading for through forest and swamp, through burned and trampled fields, through deserted villages, past infuriated and revengeful enemies.

Gnat Neredka still had a few cartridges left, but Podpaskov was sure to have the most. His two sacks and the two Otduzh was carrying came in extremely handy. As soon as Podpaskov had grasped the fact that cartridges were more valuable than bread and possessed the power to raise their drooping spirits, he showed an astonishing cleverness in trading and coaxing them out of the peasants. He seemed to know by instinct the house where they could be found, and would hold the owner enthralled by a story of his misfortunes until the peasant, wiping away his tears with a sigh, would get a couple or so of cartridge-clips out from under the floor.

Sosulka has fewest cartridges of all, never more than three. "But think of all the songs that are sung about three," he laughed. This light-hearted laughter roused Podpaskov's ire. He wanted Mirskikh to administer a stern reproof to Sosulka, but Mirskikh was getting daily weaker, and they had to carry him on a stretcher more than half of the day, taking turns. And the curious thing was that every time Mirskikh opened his eyes, his gaze rested on Podpaskov. He found Podpaskov scrutinizing him too, and thought to himself: "If the picture were to be cleaned, maybe a new overture could be heard in it. . . " He mixed up the words, but the idea was correct: he did not want to leave Podpaskov the same as when he had met him. The thought would increase or decrease by turns, now gaining clarity and meaning as under a microscope, now shrinking and fading as though the night had swallowed it up.

And the essence of this new idea, as Podpaskov himself began to think of it, lay in caring for and looking after one's comrades as much as possible, in cultivating in one's self the certitude that without this there was no life, and above all, in being able to convince others of this. Once, when they were changing shifts at carrying Mirskikh, and Podpaskov took up the handles of the stretcher, he pulled out all his seven cartridge-clips and laid them on Mirskikh's burning feverish palm.

The sick man felt the chill of the metal and opened his eyes. His fixed inquiring gaze seemed to say: "And what about you, comrade? You have given me all you had." And to this warm, steady gaze Podpaskov responded with a look as warm and steady: "Never mind, comrade, I'll find more,—I'm pretty sharp at that sort of thing." Mirskikh, as he closed his eyes again, said: "Thanks, old chap!" It seemed to Podpaskov then that for a long time he had been saving up these thoughts,— thoughts that not only affected his eyes and made them moist, but softened his heart as well,—and had accumulated so many of them that he was capable of thinking for a long time with

great concentration of other people,—a thing he had been by no means so ready to do formerly, except perhaps in the case of his near relatives.

In the morning, when they settled down in the wood, he disappeared.

He did not return for so long that Gnat Neredka grew anxious. He alone of them all, perhaps, failed to understand the crisis Podpaskov was going through, but at the same time he alone could not believe that anything had happened to Podpaskov.

"He's a good soldier," he said, "that kind never gets lost. Unless he got wrong instructions."

But no one had given Podpaskov any instructions. Mirskikh was lying unconscious; none of the rest had seen Podpaskov properly. Neredka went over to look at Mirskikh: his breath came quickly, he was puffing like a tired pedestrian going uphill. As Neredka looked, he thought to himself that the political instructor had got his discharge from life and was even now waving him away. He fancied, too, that away in the distance someone was galloping, though he knew there could be no riders in these parts.

Gnat Neredka exclaimed in his distress:

"This is a terrible set-back to us. Who's going to make speeches and explain decrees so that we won't be narrow?"

Then Mirskikh opened his eyes and made his last speech, the shortest he had ever uttered:

"Podpaskov will bring you cartridges. . ." he said; his fingers made a movement as though he were untying a knot, then he heaved a deep sigh and died.

The three men stood motionless, looking at him attentively, seeming to have recognized in him something tremendous and important that could not be deserted. They stood overwhelmed by this feeling, which might be called the dread of parting. At first it seemed to them that the road to the East was lost to them forever. Then each started to think of Mirskikh after his own fashion, retaining nevertheless the common dread that united them. Mirskikh was lying under the bushes; the twig his last breath had disturbed still quivered.

"Since we've had the honour of being present at such an heroic death, while Political Instructor Mirskikh was leading us, without a compass, to the East,—in view of the circumstances, I take upon myself the responsibility of the command," said Neredka.

"Oh, well!" was all Sosulka could find to say. He pulled out his mouth-organ. It seemed a ridiculous toy now, unworthy to exist in great days like these, and he wanted to throw it away. Neredka as commander grasped his intention at once, although a couple of hours ago, before Mirskikh's death, it would not have occurred to him to think of it like that. He took Sosulka by the arm and said:

"Why are you going to throw it away?"

So, over the remains of Political Instructor Grigori Matveich Mirskikh, "by the willows in the field,"—as it is said in the song,—appeared a low mound and a stake, freshly-stripped of bark and bearing a star plaited of green twigs and the inscription: "Political Instructor G. M. Mirskikh of the N. Regiment. He died a heroic death for the sake of his country's welfare. Comrades, destroy fascism!"

While they were engaged on the inscription, Podpaskov returned. He was carrying a case of cartridges. He dropped it by the burial mound; the men exchanged glances full of emotion, and the same thought occurred to them all: that this case of cartridges was an everlasting and indestructible monument raised over the grave of Political Instructor Mirskikh.

And, after they had saluted the dead, Neredka said to the rest:

"We're not going to sit shut up today. According to the four points, my orders are to march eastwards."

Only four of them remained now.

The road became still more winding and miry. Rainy weather set in, they came across Germans more and more frequently, their cares increased, and their fatigue was so great that it seemed as though they had been plodding on for years through these bogs, woods and long stretches lumbered with fallen trees.

Political Instructor Mirskikh appeared to have been forgotten.

Podpaskov forgot him with the philosophy of a peasant, a philosophy that considers life in terms of whether a man's troubles are over for him or are still tormenting him. "Yes, a good fellow's troubles were over when my brother died," he said and wept; it was the highest praise he could give. That was the way he thought of his father when he died, that was the way he thought of his brother who had met his death at the hands of bandits fifteen years before. He grieved over them, wept for them, then set about the jobs they had left undone on the farm.

With that grandeur of impulse that distinguishes all poets and musicians, Sosulka played a march over Mirskikh's grave; it was a moving and longdrawn out march, and he also composed a song in which he and the dead political instructor climbed a high mountain from which the whole truth was visible,—and then he began to tell his comrades anecdotes; because, after all, these three, too, needed consolation and jokes, to keep up their spirits.

Gnat Neredka forgot because there was no one now whom he could consult about what he called "idea-saturation,"—the itinerary for the day,—and it became intolerably difficult and took up all his thoughts. He had to draw from himself that martial pride and respect for a war which now, more than ever, it was necessary to carry on boldly and unflinchingly. In addition to these difficulties he was, as everyone knew, fond of food and physical exercise. There was no lack of exercise, but the food was conspicuously absent. This was a point to be considered. Neredka considered it.

Political Instructor Mirskikh was perhaps most often present to the mind of the man to whom he had had least of all to say, but whom he understood better than the rest. Mirskikh had regarded Semion Otduzh as an ardent, enthusiastic and determined man, who through ill-health and the actual want which had so long tormented him, had lost faith in his own determination. That was exactly how it was. The fact that his friend Podpaskov, unusually practical—he and Semion had even left their native village together a year before an extremely bad harvest—a peasant who thought only of himself and his own farm and his own affairs; the fact that he now thought exclusively of others and, above all, of Sosulka, a singer, a joker, and generally speaking, an empty-headed good-for-nothing,—seemed to Semion the great miracle wrought by the will and resolution of Political Instructor Mirskikh. His dependence on Podpaskov, which Semion had at one time fancied to be rather unflattering and incomprehensible, was now comprehensible and worthy of respect. That was why Semion wanted to know as much as possible about the political instructor. But all his comrades knew very little: they had met Mirskikh for the first time just before the campaign, and he was not a man to talk much about himself. All they knew was that he had been in a tsarist prison and in exile, that before joining the People's Guard he had been director of a museum where paintings hung on the walls.

"Why?" Semion wondered. "What is there in pictures?" He confused paintings with the cinema, which he rarely visited, as he considered that the people in them moved about a lot too much and talked too little, or rather, reflected too little aloud, and Semion regarded people's reflections and opinions as the most

important things in life. His wife, to whom he was greatly attached and whose reflections he valued highly, had paid a visit to a museum—the Kremlin Armoury—when she had attended the Collective Farmers' Conference in Moscow. There she had seen the crowns of the tsars—all gold and precious stones,—and swords of various sizes, but as far as Semion could recall, there had been no mention of pictures in her reminiscences. As for that crown, he had thought it all nonsense then and was further convinced of it now that he was wearing a helmet. The right headwear should be light and warm, so that, if the occasion demanded, you could put it under your head and go to sleep on it. "Yes, I ought to go and see that museum for myself," Semion mused as he strode over the marshes, impatiently beating off the autumn gnats,—the last and therefore the most plaguing. "She's a decent enough woman in her way, but she must have missed something in that museum," was his conclusion.

"Step out, now, step out!" Neredka called out with an effort in his hoarse, strained voice, and looked askance at the lagging Semion.

"I'm stepping out," Semion replied, "stepping out straight for the museum, I am."

Neredka did not understand what museum Semion could be stepping out for. And since Semion never by any chance made a joke, Neredka came to the conclusion that the man was not quite right in the head, so he suggested:

"As soon as we get there, you'll go and ask for some quinine."

Now it was hardly twenty kilometres, as the crow flies, to Vorobiovsk. But this same stretch of twenty kilometres was so beset with German soldiers and their guns that the four men could not go as the crow flies, but had to skirt the road by at least a hundred and fifty kilometres. And these were a hundred and fifty kilometres of nothing but bogs, damp, heavy, cold mud, where you could neither light a fire, nor have a smoke, and where, in every suck of your boot as you dragged it out of the mire, you could hear the jeers and scorn of the adversary.

They were standing on the edge of the gully in which they would have to hide now that daybreak was at hand. The gully, a meagre, bare shelter, breathed clammy dampness on them and gave off an abominable, sickening mustiness.

"A wolf's lair," Podpaskov remarked.

"Yes, and the wolves have all starved to death in it," Sosulka added; it was his last joke for that day.

From the East, where the first pale rays of light glimmered, came spasmodic rumbling as of a steamroller over pebbles. It came from the Soviet guns. This distant but determined voice gave them the right to live, but at the same time it turned them dizzy: before them lay the roundabout road,—all the hundred and fifty kilometres of bogland.

Before reaching the gully, they had skirted the village that now lay behind them. But although they had their backs to it they remembered its outlines well: bluish, with a strip of common like a blackened faggot, and three timid wisps of smoke from its chimneys, it had brought a yearning and a hope into their hearts. And just now they were wondering perhaps they ought to return to it, perhaps they would find there some good compassionate soul.

An airplane with a swastika on its wings flew by, and they flung themselves down flat, cursing. When they got up, the village seemed to have come nearer, and the precipice looked still more repelling than before. They scowled at its sides, seamed with fissures from time immemorial; at the bottom with its sparkling boulders, at the banks with the gnarled and twisted oaks among which it was so easy to creep. But the very thought of having to creep stealthily unsteadied them, set them swaying and threw them into a sweat.

Yet, if it had not been for the clucking of a hen announcing the appearance of another new-laid egg, they would not have turned towards the village. They badly wanted something to eat, and they thought, too, that you could not bring life to a standstill. This faint and scarcely audible clucking, no stronger than an exhalation, turned all four worn, pinched faces towards the village simultaneously. The temptation was great. It was the craving for life.

Taking into consideration the fact that they were weak, they covered the distance to the village well and quickly, six or seven paces to the minute.

The nearer they drew to it, the clearer it grew in all the sordidness and shame of war,—a village slashed and crumbled. The ridge of the backbone of the village,—the shops,—was twisted by fire; the window-frames had no glass left in them; the sheds and other outbuildings had no doors. Three corpses lay stinking in a ditch. A little way off, in the school-house, they heard voices calling to each other in a strange tongue, and they stood still.

"Give me all the cartridges!" Neredka said suddenly.

They obeyed without asking what he wanted them for. But he volunteered an explanation in his usual complicated manner of speaking:

"I be ordering you to seek help, inasmuch as we're absolutely doubled up with hunger. In case of your non-appearance, I take upon myself the responsibility of rescuing and defending you. And I must request you not to misinterpret my instructions."

That was to say he instructed them to go in search of assistance from the peasants, while he himself remained in reserve in case anyone betrayed them. When he had said that, he saluted and turned into a vegetables garden; and the others went on their way, by the wicker fences.

A pendulum, though balanced, fluctuates, but it never departs by a fraction from its task of showing the time.

So it happened with the remaining three.

They hesitated and wavered themselves for some time before they looked over a fence into the yard and called for the owner in weak voices.

The sun led them along wheel-tracks to a farm-yard that looked very little different from the rest. Here, as in the others, the fruit-trees had been broken down by the Germans, here, as everywhere else, the doors had been torn off their hinges, the windows smashed; and here, too, the appeal to the charity of the head of the house and bread-winner met with no response for a long time.

At last the door was flung open. As they expected, they were confronted by a face distorted by terror and wild of eye. It was a peasant with a short grizzled beard; with a flash of his eyes like an unsheathed knife, he suddenly stood aside and said huskily:

"Come in!"

At the table opposite the stove sat a second and somewhat younger peasant, rooting in the embers for a light for his cigarette. He wore a soldier's coat, but was barefoot. His glance flashed with the same force as his father's; it was a glance that could bowl a man over as a storm overturns a boat.

"Making your way, I take it?" the elder of the two asked.

Podpaskov, to whom the command had passed, wished to bring exactitude and definiteness into his relations with this peasant. If you are a spy, he thought, then sell us, and to hell with you!—but do it straight away. And then it suddenly occurred to him: how weak they must be if they had forgotten to agree on a sign with Gnat Neredka. How was Neredka to know that this particular peasant had betrayed them and where to come to their rescue? But, even though Podpaskov did not know

the rule that the philosophic word requires a setting that is the outcome of long and patient workmanship, like the setting of a diamond or a ruby, while a countryman's thought is grand in itself like a great boulder alone in a valley,—Podpaskov said ponderously, as though he were rolling this boulder:

"Give us something to eat, will you?"

Without replying, the peasant went over to the stove and the second man handed him out an earthenware jar. In the bottom of it were the remains of a soldier's dinner of millet porridge, evidently brought by the son. The three men ate it up instantly, and when the bottom of the jar was clean, they exchanged glances, and again the same thought flashed through their minds: "Will he give us away?"

"Well, now let's go to the granary."

And he led them down into a cellar.

It was doorless, too; the pit was empty, and rotting straw lay on the floor. The peasant stood still in the middle, hung his head and spread out his hands with a gesture of despair. And seeing that gesture and his narrow shoulders, Semion Otduzh said to himself: "He won't give us away." The peasant said:

"And tomorrow Ivan'll take you away. . . He wants to go over there. Well, let him, if he wants to, let him take you. . . It's my son, my lad. . ." The man's voice was quenched and empty with grief, and only hunger and weariness hindered Podpaskov from comprehending that grief. Sosulka was fast asleep already, burrowed into the rotting straw. Semion Otduzh, though anxious not to upset his friend, still ventured, when the elderly peasant had gone, to say:

"We can't, by any means. . ." and did not finish the sentence.

"What can't we?" Podpaskov demanded in the rough tone he always used to Semion, as raising himself on his elbow, he looked keenly into the yard.

"We can't think that way of him."

"Then how? Tell me."

"Well, just in the ordinary way. . ."

"So you're sticking up for him? Sticking up for a Judas?"

"Judas is one thing, but this fellow is another."

"You saw how much they gave us to eat, didn't you?"

"Well, maybe it was all they had. And he's not keeping us here. . ."

"There's no need for him to keep us when there are Germans all round. . ."

And, sure enough, strange voices sounded from the gate. Then came the thud of a rifle-butt, a bottle dashed against the wall of the house, and it was as though something had flashed and stabbed them to the heart. The Germans roared with laughter. Podpaskov covered Sosulka with straw and whispered to Otduzh:

"Lie down, I'll cover you up."

"No, let me cover you up, I'm thin," Otduzh whispered. Podpaskov gave him a fierce dig in the ribs and hissed:

"Lie down! My orders!"

Otduzh lay down. It was hard to breathe, and he no longer wanted to sleep.

"They're looking for lasses," Otduzh said in a scarcely audible voice.

"Not for lasses but for us," Podpaskov returned.

"Why should anyone look for us, we're asleep," Sosulka said, waking for an instant. Then turning over on the other side, he dropped off again.

"It's right—the saying: fools are lucky," Podpaskov sighed.

"He's no fool," said Semion.

"No? Then we must be fools, because we don't understand him."

Podpaskov shook the straw out of his hair.

"They've gone. Get up. They've gone, I tell you."

The voices of the Germans could hardly be heard. The elderly peasant passed, groaning to himself, through the yard, and Podpaskov said:

"Only, what's he hanging about here for, I'd like to know?"

Waking again for an instant, Sosulka said:

"A young fellow was interested in a girl, and what does she do but present him with twins and an order for maintenance."

Podpaskov laughed and immediately afterwards felt sleepy. "Go on, try and get some sleep," he bade Otduzh sternly, and the man lay down. Podpaskov covered him up with some more straw, then lay down himself and fell fast asleep.

They were awakened by the anti-aircraft guns. The sun was already high. And higher and still hotter than the sun, it seemed, Soviet bombers were flying over the earth. The hearts of the three men glowed with pride and Podpaskov's was overflowing with it. Sitting there in the rotting straw, hugging his knees, he was thinking that they ought to dig a pit in case of anything, while at the same time he said to himself: "And what do I care about you, cannibals?" He found it pleasant to think like that. He even winked to himself with a moist, emotional eye and muttered: "Aye, you came here all right," by which it should be understood that he was perfectly capable of carrying out any order of his commanders. That he had now become a different, a genuine man, was of no interest to him; and that with eyes full of tears he was looking at the sky where Soviet bombers were flying, seemed to him not a crisis taking place in his soul, but the conscientious execution of instructions received. He confirmed this, muttering: "Why, of course, since these are our instructions, we'll help." For one second the thought of home flashed through his mind, but the thoughts with which he had joined the People's Volunteers—that is, the idea of winning a medal, coming back as the chairman of the collective farm, earning big money, and buying a few expensive and unnecessary things,—seemed to him now so trivial that, no matter how he tried, they would no longer remain stable. He could no longer picture his wife in a new dress with an amber necklace and a gold wrist-watch on her plump arm. All he wanted now was to see her face and even that—only when his country gave him permission.

"Semion, can you hear?"

"Yes, I can hear all right," Semion replied in an excited voice, and Podpaskov found it astonishingly agreeable to know that Semion shared his thoughts, or had thoughts perhaps even loftier and more moving than his. But his duty as commander, as he felt himself to be now, did not permit of his indulging in these fancies for very long.

"I'm thinking of something else, Semion. I'm giving you the job of fetching Gnat from under the willows there. And meanwhile I'll dig a pit for one of us to lie in, in case of emergency."

"Very good, Comrade Commander."

"If you feel you're not up to it, say so, and I'll go myself."

"I'll do it, Miron Yefimych."

"Be careful, we're trusting you with our lives, Semion."

"Oh, whatever you may say of me, at least I understand what trust means, Miron Yefimych!"

And, whispering to himself, Semion went off.

Podpaskov and Sosulka took up their spades. A battered barrel, that had once held pickled cucumbers, stood in one corner. They decided to dig the pit under the barrel and throw the earth into the cellar. Digging was difficult as the earth in the cellar had lain there a long time, was caked and mixed with broken stone. They worked for a couple of hours without interruption, and by that time Otduzh returned.

"I got orders to go ahead," he explained, running into the "granary." "Here, give me that spade, we've got to make the pit wider, or we'll never hear the end of it from Gnat."

And sure enough, when after an interval of perhaps fifteen minutes Gnat Neredka appeared on the scene,

he glanced at the pit and said disgustedly:

"A cat couldn't sit in that pit, much less a soldier," and, looking them all over by way of re-assuming command, he added: "This order had to be given because there's four of us now and according to the Points one of us ought to be kept in reserve, in case of being required to avenge us or something of that sort. Semion, get into that pit and wait there."

Semion did as he was told. Then they moved the barrel over the pit. Neredka got a piece of paper out of his pocket.

"Whoever wants to write home should do it now. If the Germans cut us up, at least one will be left, and he'll take the letter. The same with the report. Tell us the address, Podpaskov, and what to write."

"Write this," and Podpaskov began in a drawl: "My dear wife and children, I am writing to you from my unit which is surrounded by the Germans. We are fighting under the command of comrade Gnat Neredka. At all events, the fascists will be destroyed, the enemy will be beaten, and the victory will be ours. By the time you receive this I shall be dead, but may the children grow up and fight with the fierce enemy for that prosperous life. . ."

"That'll do," Neredka broke in, "or else there won't be enough paper for us all. What's your address, Sosulka?"

"You write my address on that letter of Podpaskov's. His wife's the sort that gets things done, she'll write to my wife and then there'll be enough paper left for a cigarette each."

"That's right," Gnat agreed, writing Sosulka's address in Podpaskov's letter. "The tobacco will go round even, and the paper as well. Get into that pit, Sosulka, and let Semion write his letter now."

They had crouched in many pits in their time, but this one, in the cellar, proved to be the stuffiest and closest of all. But they stayed there without grumbling, each in his turn, as Neredka ordered. On the edge of it lay the three notes with their addresses, and as soon as the next shift got into the pit, the other three repeated, almost without noticing it, all they had said before to the man who had just come out.

The sun had set. The dew was falling. The moon rose. A chill wind blew from the north, and clouds gathered in the sky. It was Sosulka's turn for the pit.

"A man is taller by moonlight and fouler by sunlight," he said as he pulled the barrel over the mouth of the pit. "If that old chap gives us away, I'll set the house on fire, boys, and he'll burn up together with it."

"Hush, there's someone coming," Gnat warned. "Don't forget the letters. All in accordance with the points of the instructions."

"Don't you worry, boys. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" they said in a whisper.

The peasant came in with the crusty end of a loaf in his hand.

"The Germans took our horses, so Ivan's gone and taken them back from them," he said simply and unhurriedly, holding out the bread to them. "Let's go and see the horses before the Germans miss them."

In the darkness his eyes seemed still more melancholy, and his voice went to their hearts. But they kept themselves in hand and tried not to trust him.

"My son wants to go over there," said the peasant. "Well, since he wants to go,—let him, I say."

He led them out beyond the garden. Two horses harnessed to a light vehicle were standing by the fence. Ivan sprang down off the seat and stooped to tighten the saddle-girths, not so much because it was necessary as because he wanted to hide his tears. Then he kissed his father, who said to the three men:

"Get in. Else the Germans may guess we're up to something."

"Oh, they'll guess in any case,"

his son said bitterly. "You'll not be left alive, father."

"Well, never mind!"

"Why doesn't your father come with us?" Gnat Neredka asked the younger man.

"He can't, Paraska's laid up sick. How can we all leave her?"

"We can't all leave her," the elderly peasant repeated.

Podpaskov and Otduzh had taken their places in the cart. Neredka was standing with bent head.

"Wait for orders," he said.

The leader was thinking of the same thing as his subordinates. There was no longer any doubt, they all trusted the peasant. He kept glancing about him hastily and suspiciously; four German rifles and some cartridges lay in the bottom of the cart, and the cart itself, it appeared, had not been got for nothing: the whole front of it was splashed with blood. It was clear that their suspicions had been groundless, and that the premonition of evil had appeared as a result of the hunger and weariness that tormented them.

And now what? The idea had been that they were leaving Sosulka to survive, saving him; now it appeared that they were leaving him to die.

"My instructions are to correct the order," Neredka decided, and, turning abruptly, he returned to the granary-cellar.

Podpaskov explained to the elderly peasant:

"We've made up our minds to take the fourth man with us."

"Yes, I knew he was in there," the man said, "but we supposed that he didn't want to go, or that you were leaving him on account of work he had to do."

The four got into the cart.

"Well, good-bye, Ivan!" said the father.

"Good-bye, father!" answered the son.

Neredka looked anxiously into Ivan's face. It was a handsome, honest and proud face. He was hurrying to battle. He wanted to defend his country. And, likely enough, under the influence of the gracious moonlight of which Sosulka had spoken a short while ago, the leader of the little unit thought (completely forgetting point D of the major's orders): "You could make a banner of a face like that!"

"Let's start," said Neredka.

The cart entered the wood, and they drove through it by such boggy and impassable ways, that sleepy as the four men were, they could not but admire Ivan's skilful manoeuvring.

"Why, there's nothing in it," he told them. "We know every foot of the way because we come here regularly for hay. And you ought to get some rest while you can. It's six hours anyway to Vorobiovsk."

They dropped off to sleep.

Ivan sat staring at the road, but saw nothing of it. The horses went on themselves. He was thinking of his father, of his poor ailing sister, and of these ragged, starved men who had reminded him of his love for his country, and of the need for defending it; and it was his first glance at these four that had decided him to leave home for "over there." He felt proud that they had trusted him from the first glance, and he resolved to repay them by never leaving them. In the moonlight he looked still finer, even more handsome and more trustworthy. Had one of the men awakened at that moment, he would certainly have said that Ivan resembled Political Instructor Mirskikh staringly; he might even have fancied in that phantom radiance shed by the autumn moon that the young villager had vanished, having handed the reins to Mirskikh, and that the cart was now being driven by the political instructor himself.

Well, and after all, there were five of them now once more.

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

SPRING

The house was unbelievably neglected. It had survived bombardments, which had smashed its window-panes and frames here and there; it had been through a hail of shells, causing fires in different places in the attics and upper stories. During the winter rubbish had accumulated, the pipes had burst, in the bathtubs and washbowls there were coatings of ice; snow and dirt lay in heaps on the terraces; the floors had been hacked about by someone chopping wood right there on the parquetterie; the walls were begrimed with smoke, and the cold and damp had covered every corner with mildew.

The people attached to the hospital had set themselves the task of putting the house in good repair. Nobody had persuaded Ivan Nikolayevich into doing this dirty work, and he would have been surprised if he—a surgeon—had suddenly been asked to become a common labourer. The house, however, had to be put into such a condition that it could be opened as a hospital. The house itself was all right, strong, but it needed energy to put it into anything like order. Everybody was run off his feet, especially the commissar who knew no peace by day or night.

The house swarmed with people. Here you could see carpenters hanging about, there house-painters, but they were not in reality either carpenters or painters. They were members of the hospital staff—surgeons, nurses, members of the fire-brigade, orderlies—with their sleeves rolled up, scrubbing, soaping, planing, painting and cleaning up. Through the open windows came the dull roar of the city, the rattle of the first trams to run since the winter, the hooting of motor-cars, the more distant sound of the ever-watchful planes, the din of the artillery cannonade.

On this particular morning Ivan Nikolayevich asked a nurse, smothered up to the eyes in white lime:

"Where can I find Dr. Katonin?"

She gave him the necessary information. He mounted up and up the broad staircase, then attacked the narrow stairs with their dark, cold railing, and came out on the roof. The roof was flat and wide, and there was a summer-house at one end. From here you had a fine, comprehensive view over the town. Above a sea of red roofs rose isolated spires. The distance showed spring-like, a bluish-green. The whole roof was littered with lumps of ice from which boards and other scraps of material projected.

Dr. Katonin was hewing away with a pick-axe at this dirty greenish armour; pieces of ice flew, hissing under the blows; but the doctor did not turn round, and Ivan Nikolayevich watched in silence his powerful movements. Finally, Katonin straightened himself up, flung the pick-axe on the ice, clapped his hands together and turned round. Without the least surprise he glanced at Ivan Nikolayevich and said:

"You see, colleague, it's interesting work, damn it! But it's necessary to put an end as soon as possible to this disgraceful state of affairs. When all's said and done, we have to live and to work here. . ."

He spat on the palms of his hands and once more attacked the frozen mass with the ardour of a miner. Ivan Nikolayevich, putting his hands behind his back, looked now at him, and now at the town lying below, looked

at it attentively as though he were seeing it for the first time. And yet it was by no means the first time that he had been on this roof. Once there had been a restaurant here, full of life and noise. . .

Katonin now went on with his work without raising his eyes or changing his position. Ivan Nikolayevich left the roof on tiptoe. The lines on his forehead had deepened and his shoulders twitched nervously.

The following day he went to the store and, with a vague gesture in the direction of a distant corner where some tools were lying about, said to the manager:

"Find me a. . . what do you call it. . . a crow-bar or spade, and a rake,—you know what I mean,—to clear the roof."

"But your hands, doctor?" said the manager. "Is it worth while for you to do it? We'll manage somehow without you."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Ivan Nikolayevich. "Don't worry about my hands. I'll take care of them myself. Give me what you have. I've already spoken to the commissar, and everything is arranged."

With the crow-bar over his shoulder and the spade in his hand, he started on his expedition to the roof. There he chose a corner on the side opposite to Katonin.

Here was piled up a sort of greyish mound, into which was frozen a strange variety of objects. Even the broken leg of a chair stuck out, like a bone in a lump of brawn. He began gently to manipulate the crow-bar, and at first it hurt his hands a good deal. He dealt some clumsy blows which quite exhausted him.

Then he went for the top of the heap. He carved out some steps with the help of the crow-bar, climbed on top and, spade in hand, began to throw down lumps of rubbish, snow and ice. After a couple of hours work his spade struck against something hard, and a head appeared from beneath the snow which softly slipped away from it.

In his astonishment he crouched down and gazed at the marble head as though it were something miraculous. And in reality it was strange to see, in the midst of an indescribable heap of frozen rubbish, this beautiful female face, charming though a little haughty in appearance, with the hair looped back in a loose knot.

"Upon my word!" he said, rubbing his brow. "If I were to speak of it I shouldn't be believed. Well, let's get on."

But now he cleared away the snow more cautiously, splitting the ice and the stony rubbish in which the statue had been buried. He went downstairs, took dinner, went to consultations, chatted with his friends, but, strange to say, he more than once caught himself thinking about the statue on the roof more frequently than it merited. Every day he went on the roof, and when once an orderly came with a spade to replace him, he made a gesture of dismissal with his crow-bar and said angrily:

"There's work enough for everybody, my good man. Go to Dr. Katonin, here I can manage alone."

But once he himself scrambled down the frozen hill, went up to Dr. Katonin and pulled him gently by his sleeve.

"Well, what's up, Ivan Nikolayevich?" asked the latter.

"I want your opinion on a small matter."

"That's all right! Just this evening we are going to have a discussion," began Katonin.

But Ivan Nikolayevich interrupted him:

"No, this discussion is necessary here and now, not far away, a couple of steps from this spot. Do, please, come."

Katonin accompanied him over the roof, and when they came to Ivan Nikolayevich's corner, he saw, rising out of the dirty snow, a splendid torso, strangely white against the charred background of the wall.

"What, in your opinion, does this statue represent?" asked Ivan Nikolayevich. "You see, here I've unexpectedly become an archaeologist."

"It seems to me it's a Venus," said Katonin with the air of a connoisseur, and he even stepped back a couple of paces and gazed at it, shading his eyes with his hand.

"I agree with you," said Ivan Nikolayevich. "You see, all my life I knew from books that Venus rose from the waves of the sea, from the foam, and here goodness only knows what she is arising from, but she is rising, and not with the assistance of Zeus but with that of our old surgeon with a crow-bar in his hand; and yet he really is bringing her to life. And mind—I'm coming to the end of my work."

"You're getting on quickly," said Katonin enviously, "though, it's true, you have a Venus, and in my plot there's nothing of the kind."

That day Ivan Nikolayevich slowly, wearily, but with a smile of satisfaction, went through the different floors where the most rapid repairs were being carried on, and he was interested in everything. He stopped to join in a discussion about a hole in the floor, and advised the two flushed nurses who had invented some kind of paste to fill up the cracks in the floor, how to improve it by adding some floor polish; he took the brush from the hand of an embarrassed nurse and painted over the door jambs, saying:

"You're not doing it right. Look here, you must begin at the top and paint it over smoothly. You make blotches, you must do it more evenly."

He exclaimed in the clean, newly painted ward:

"The work's not bad! It's really touching, everything in blue! Who thought of having it blue?"

A young attendant with rosy cheeks answered cheerfully:

"There was no other colour, comrade surgeon, we had to take blue."

"But I'm not blaming you," said he, "on the contrary, it's splendid! And above all, it's clean. . ."

In the evening, at supper, he spoke in the small doctors' dining-room:

"It's astonishing, spring re-acts on one like a health-resort. Just look, it's a real pleasure to walk down the streets. People have grown more cheerful, their faces have lost their pallor; the children are playing, and you're continually running the risk of being knocked down by their roller-skates; the girls smile, and even the ruins are not so repulsive as they were in winter, to say nothing of the air. . . Where we had our office not long ago, on the ceiling there's a sort of stucco moulding,—and imagine, an old woman scrambled up there, putting a smaller table on top of another one and then a step-ladder on that, and was dusting the chinks without the slightest fear. An absolute circus turn."

Every day the house took on a more ship-shape appearance. It was already evident that this cleaning was a success. Already freshly painted night-tables stood near the beds, already the windows were clean to the point of brilliancy, the baths had returned to their pristine purity, the water gushed from the taps, everybody appeared contented, remembering how frightened they had been at first by the fearfully neglected state of the building.

Recently, the surgeon had been suffering from insomnia. In spring he always woke very early, and now he wasn't able to sleep at all. At dawn he got up, dressed, washed, ate a piece of bread sprinkled with salt so as not to smoke on an empty stomach, rolled a cigarette and made his way to the roof.

He sat on the railing, dangling his legs like a school-boy. He looked admiringly at the Venus which he had found, now all bathed in the rosy flush of dawn. He had cleared away the last remnants of rubbish the previous day, and now the statue stood on its pedestal as calmly as before

that awful winter, so merciless both to people and statues.

The great city was bathed in a fiery sea of transparency, as though some illuminating energy was emanating from the gigantic accumulation of buildings stretching to the horizon. The city was so youthful, so strong, so spring-like, that Ivan Nikolayevich felt an irresistible desire for movement. Springing lightly from the railings, he began pacing up and down, then stopped before the statue. It seemed to him that she was just on the point of bursting into a hearty laugh at his ridiculous emotions, at his clumsiness, at his hurried steps at a moment when most people were sleeping.

But the morning was so glorious that he sat down, walked about, smoked and reflected on life, on the town, on the war; on those whose lives he had saved on the operating table splashed with blood; as to how many days he had passed amidst this dirt and rubbish and snow, with a crow-bar, a spade and a pick-axe.

He stopped in front of the statue and said softly:

"You know how strong a man can be, there is nothing in the world stronger than his free will, and how talented he is—to have built such a town, to have created such a statue! And some despicable ignoramuses want to destroy all this! But we'll see, let them try who'll come out on top!"

"You approve of the labour of your hands?" rang out the familiar voice of the commissar. "The statue is good, you've been drawn into the swim, doctor, but why did you get up so early?"

The doctor walked away together with the commissar. He was not quite at his ease that the commissar had caught him unexpectedly in the midst of his thoughts, and brushing aside the kindly mockery, he said:

"Oh, drop it, there's nothing to be drawn into. Her shoulder is crooked, and the arm is out of position!"

"So you're looking at it from the specialist's point of view, Ivan Nikolayevich?"

"Of course, from the specialist's point of view," said Ivan Nikolayevich, and left the roof arm in arm with the commissar, who was in high spirits as it was evident that he would start the new hospital a fortnight before time.

HANDS

The frost was so severe your hands felt it even in warm gauntlets. The surrounding forest seemed to encroach on the narrow, rutted road, on either side of which ran deep ditches, now filled with treacherous snow. The trees brushed their branches against the lorry, snow flakes fell on the roof of the driver's cabin, branches scratched the sides of the fuel tank.

He had seen many a road since he became a chauffeur, but never such a one as this. And over this very road he had to travel backward and forward. You had to be as strong as a cart horse. No sooner had he come to the dug-out, where it was crowded dark and damp, and laid down his tired head in a corner among his weary comrades, than again he'd be called, again it was time to start. Sleep would have to come later. Now they must work. The road called. In this case you couldn't say: "Work's not a bear, it won't run away from you." That was just what it would do. If you didn't keep your eyes skinned the whole time, you'd find the lorry in the ditch, and have to ask your comrades to help drag it out,—it was beyond one man's strength, that was certain. And the frost? As though the North Pole itself had set up on this very road as a traffic cop.

Now a fog came crawling down, now a wind blew from Ladoga, such a wind as he had never known: piercing, howling, unabating; then there'd be a blizzard, you couldn't see two steps ahead. The tire-treads weren't iron either,—they gave out; then you had to help your comrades that had got into holes in the road, seeing you brought up the rear, and, above all, you had to deliver the load on time. And that reminded him, how was the load getting on?

Bolshakov stopped the lorry, got out, and, with difficulty stamping down the snow, made his way to the petrol tank. He climbed up, and, by the pale light of the winter noon, saw something that made cold shudders run down his spine: down the sides of the tank, satiny with frost, flowed an unbroken stream. The tank was leaking. It had burst at one of the seams, which gaped open. The fuel was running out.

He stood and looked at the narrow stream which he knew no way of stopping. Was he going to have such a hell of a time on the road and then deliver an empty tank? He remembered all his former accidents and breakdowns, but couldn't recall anything like this. His face burned with the frost. Well, standing there and just looking wouldn't help matters much.

Sinking deep into the snow with every step, he got back to the cabin. The political instructor was sitting there, with his coat-collar turned up and his frozen nose buried in the sheepskin where it was warmed by his breath.

"Comrade Political Instructor," called Bolshakov, "I'll have to trouble you."

"What, have we arrived?" asked the political instructor, waking up at once.

"It looks like it," said Bolshakov. "The tank's sprung a leak. What'll we do?"

The political instructor tumbled out of the cabin. He stumbled along, rubbing his eyes, but when he saw what had happened he began thoughtfully to strike his hands together, considering what was to be done. Then he said:

"Let's go on to the first repair-point, pour out the fuel there and have the tank repaired. How's that?"

"No good at all," said Bolshakov. "How can we do that, seeing we're taking the fuel not to any old place, but to Leningrad, to the front, urgent? How are we simply going to pour it out? We can't do that."

"Then what *can* you do?" asked the political instructor, watching the stream of petrol running down along the burst seam.

"Let's have a try,—I'll patch it up," answered Bolshakov.

He opened his box of instruments, and they seemed to him implements of torture. The metal was as though white hot. But he boldly took hold of a blunt chisel, a hammer, a bit of soap as hard as a rock, and climbed up. The petrol flowed over his hands. There was something uncanny about that petrol: it burnt with a kind of icy fire. It saturated his gauntlets, seeped up through his shirt sleeves. Bolshakov, spitting, in silent despair flattened out the seam and caulked it with soap. The petrol stopped flowing.

With a sigh, he went back to his place. They went on ten kilometres. Bolshakov stopped the lorry and went to have a look at the tank. The seam had opened again. The stream of petrol was flowing down the curved wall. He'd have to start all over again. Once more the blows of the hammer and chisel rank out, the petrol burnt his hands, and the streak of soap overlaid the flattened edges of the seam. The petrol stopped flowing.

The road seemed endless.

Soon he stopped counting how many times he got out and climbed up on the tank, he ceased feeling the pain of the petrol burns, it seemed to him that it was all going on in a dream: the dense forest, the snow-drifts, the petrol flowing over his hands.

He tried to reckon up in his head how much of the precious fuel had already run out, and according to his calculations it worked out not so much, forty or fifty litres; but if he

stopped patching it up every ten or twenty kilometres, all his efforts would go for nothing. And once more he began all over again, with the stubbornness of a man who has lost all sense of space and time.

He was so fagged out that it began to seem to him that he wasn't moving, but standing still. Every forty minutes or so he seized hold of the chisel, while the seam appeared to widen in a mocking grin at him and his efforts.

Suddenly, on turning a corner, he came out on a strange, empty expanse, huge, limitless, whitish. The road was going over the ice. The vast lake seemed hostile, it seemed to sniff at him like a wild beast, but he had no longer anything to fear. He drove the lorry confidently, rejoicing that he had got to the end of the forest. Sometimes he struck his head on the steering-wheel, but immediately pulled himself up. Sleep lay heavy on him, as though a giant was standing behind him and pressing his head and shoulders downwards with huge hands in warm, soft gloves. The lorry jolted on and on. And somewhere within his frozen being, dazed with fatigue, there was an inexplicable happiness. He had known for a certainty he would hold out. And he had held out. The load was delivered.

. . . In the dug-out the doctor looked with astonishment at his poor hands, skinless and mutilated with burns, and said perplexedly:

"What's this?"

"I patched up the seam, Comrade Doctor," he answered, compressing his lips with pain.

"And couldn't you have stopped on the road?" asked the doctor. "You're not a child, you yourself know well enough that to get petrol all over yourself in such a frost. . ."

"It was impossible to stop."

"Why? Where were you going in such a hurry? Where were you taking the petrol?"

"I was taking it to Leningrad—to the front," he answered loudly, so that the whole dug-out heard.

The doctor looked at him searchingly.

"So-o," he drawled, "to Leningrad. I understand. There's no more to be said. Let's bind them up. You'll have to take care of them."

"Why not take care of them? I'll take care of them till morning, and then to the road again. It'll be warmer driving in bandages, and as for pain, well, we'll manage somehow. . ."

Artillery in action on the Leningrad front

CESAR M. ARCONADA

THE ADVENTURES OF THREE LITTLE WAIFS IN CUATRO CAMINOS*

Little Colas lived with his grandmother in the filthy suburb where the ragpickers lived. In times of peace she used to sell roasted chestnuts in the streets, but now that no chestnuts were to be had, she picked rags and collected garbage. These she carried away in a large bag, assisted by little Colas, her grandson. The old woman was completely insane, and as she walked through the streets of the borough, her hair unkempt, clad in rags, looking like an old hag of a witch, she was the laughing stock of the people and a source of merriment for the children.

Colas, who was only seven, and who had no one but this grandmother of his to take care of him, lived the free, adventurous life of the little street gamins. Filthy and ragged, a militiaman's cap on his head; he spent most of the day trumping around the de las Salesas Convent section and in Franco Rodriguez street, where the Fifth Regiment was stationed. But each night, like a bird which flies about freely in the day-time and has to return under cover at night, he would go back to his grandmother's cabin, where she would either caress or beat him, just as her mad fancy would dictate.

The fascist guns were mounted in a line around Madrid, on the hills of Carabanchel, Garabitas, Retamares, Casa de Campo and Angel's Hill. A better position could not have been desired by the hunters of the royal hunting parties given by King Ferdinand II[1] But the destruction of Madrid failed to dishearten the people, who kept on cracking jokes at the fascists' guns.

One afternoon the fascists shelled the University City section of the town. That night, as Colas came home, he could hardly recognize the place where his cabin once stood, for it was almost levelled to the ground by the fascist gun-fire. Nothing but crumbling walls, heaps of rubbish, windows through which patches of blue sky could be seen, broken wires dangling loosely and heaps of all kinds of furniture... The boy trembled with fear. The place was empty, the people having fled and abandoned it, and the wind howled sadly through the ruins. Colas walked toward his home, but a pile of stones, boards and twisted timber was all that greeted his sight. The boy stood still in front of his former home, rooted to the spot. He felt like shouting, but the silence of the ruins and of the night choked him, and all he could utter was a week: "Grandma! Grandma! . ."

Many people were killed in that bombardment, and not all the dead bodies were recovered. Some were still buried under the ruins, and among them was Colas' grandmother, for nobody had thought of looking for and recovering her body.

"Grandma! Grandma!" the boy called again, but only the mocking sound of the wind came back in reply.

The child began to cry bitterly. Wearily he sank down on a heap of stones next to his vanished home, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. For a while Colas was absorbed in the anguish of his weeping, and when it began to abate, fear seized him again. Suddenly he shuddered.

"Meow... meow... meow..." came

* Cuatro Caminos—a workers' borough in Madrid, in the Northern part of the capital.

[1] King of Spain, 1527—1598.

from under the ruins. Colas thought that his grandmother's cat might be among the many hidden among the ruins, but he suddenly heard some stealthy steps behind his back. Turning around, he saw a boy, older than himself, crouching and advancing slowly, a cake-vendor's drum on his back.

"What are you doing here?" the boy asked, and added: "Why, you aren't crying, are you?"

"This is where my home was. . ." Colas replied, pointing his finger at the ruins. "You see what's left of it! I have been calling my grandma, but she doesn't answer."

"Don't cry! Look, what would the fascists say if they saw you crying. . . They'd say you were a coward! Before the war I had a house, too."

"And a grandma?"

"A grandmother? No. But I lived with my landlords who took care of me. See this?" And he pointed to his drum. "I used to sell cakes."

Little Colas stopped crying, as if his anguish were all over, and looked with curiosity at the boy's drum.

"Got any cakes?" he asked greedily.

"I'll show you what I carry," the other boy, whose name was Lucio, replied. And then he added: "If you want to, you may spend the night with me, but you must help me catch these cats that roam around here."

"The cats?" Colas repeated incredulously. "One of them is ours, I am going to call it." And he went towards the spot where the meowing came from and called:

"Puss, puss! . . Pocito! . . Pocito! . . "

In the darkness of the night, among the ruins of the bombarded houses, stepping over the grandmother's dead body, the two boys started chasing after the cats, as if it were a game. They caught two, Pocito among them. Lucio put them into the drum, where they joined two cats caught previously. Then they walked together in the direction of Lucio's home. Colas was eager to know about the cats, and while walking he asked repeatedly:

"But why do you need so many cats, when there is no food to be got?"

Lucio replied reluctantly:

"I'll sell them to an innkeeper in Bravo Murillo street. There they'll be roasted and served as rabbits."

"Oh no!" Colas exclaimed indignantly. "My cat is not going to be put on the roasting pan! I'll fight you if you sell my Pocito!"

"All right, my boy, don't get excited! We'll let him live and keep my dog Verbena company."

At last they arrived at Lucio's home. It was a cabin knocked together out of old boards, on the outskirts of Dehesa de la Villa. At the approach a dog started barking, and Lucio called him by his name:

"Verbena! Verbena! Look, this is a new friend of ours!" And he pointed to Colas, who tried to caress the dog; he did it hesitatingly, for the animal was rather surly.

They entered the cabin, and as they stepped over some straw mats Colas stumbled over a heap.

"What is this?"

"Don't be afraid, it's probably my sister Tina."

Lucio struck a match, and his sister rose from the mat, half-asleep and rubbing her eyes. The girl was younger than her brother. She had small round eyes and a flat nose. Without paying the slightest heed to the newcomer, she scratched her head violently and started silently to eat a piece of bread and some dried fish which Lucio had handed her.

A little later the three went to sleep. In the middle of the night Colas awoke with a start, for he heard some shooting which sounded as if it came from the top of the house itself.

"I believe the fascists are coming! Do you hear, Lucio?" he nudged him with his elbow.

"You may sleep quietly, they won't enter Madrid! We have a sentry at the outpost. You'll see tomorrow."

That first night Colas was unable to fall asleep, he was so scared. In the morning Lucio, Colas and Verbena undertook a general examination

of the territory. They reached what they called the outpost, actual trenches dug by the boys of the borough. One of them was on guard, and when he saw Lucio he stood at attention:

"At your service, captain! Nothing new at the front!"

But what was Colas' surprise when he saw that this really was almost the front! He peeped over the trench and saw all of University City with its bullet-riddled buildings. Now and then a machine-gun would break the silence. Many stray bullets reached the line which the boys had built as a game. The danger was pointed out to the new comrade, and he was shown the arms and the trophies in the trench: guns made of tree trunks, machine-guns, rifles, banners, leather straps and caps. A well-hidden case contained the "Treasure" consisting of unexploded bullets, cartridges and fragments of shells collected after the bombardments. . .

A few days later Colas felt at home in the new environment and pleased with his new comrades. He became quite chummy with Tina and Verbena. In the morning the three would start out for the gates of the barracks or for the Cuatro Caminos or Tetuan markets in search of some food. Lucio, as the oldest of them—he was already thirteen—was busy with his cats, always with the drum on his back. At night they'd come home and play at war with the boys of the Dehesa de la Villa, who had organized a real regiment. Their marches, at which they wore militiaman's caps, carrying drums, trumpets, red banners and wooden rifles, and invariably preceded by Verbena, were the talk of the borough.

One day Colas and Lucio had a quarrel, for Lucio, who had little use for the affection felt between members of a family, sold Colas' cat. Colas was very angry, and he even threatened to sell Verbena as a reprisal, but Lucio laughed and retorted:

"Now you are angry, but the other day you were glad and even licked your fingers when you ate the tidbits I brought you. Well, they were made of your cat!"

Colas did not know what to say, for the meat had really tasted well and he had enjoyed it immensely.

This cat business brought about a funny incident. On a certain morning Tina, Lucio and Colas stood on the corner of Carranza street. Lucio, standing in the midst of a crowd, was slowly deciphering the contents of a poster pasted on the wall. It was a decree issued by the city authorities, insisting for the third time that the children and women of Madrid be evacuated.

"What does it say there?" Tina asked, as soon as Lucio emerged from the crowd.

"That we, boys, are to be thrown out of the city," Lucio replied angrily. "What do they think? I am not going to leave Madrid, even if they hang me!"

"Why, if we leave, the fascists will come in!" Colas said with comic gravity.

"Let the grandmother of the one who wrote it go!" Lucio exclaimed with scorn.

The sound of music played by some soldiers marching down the boulevard caught their ear. The three little urchins marched at the head of the company with many more boys, stepping out in time. Lucio carried his drum on his back and was the butt of all kinds of jokes and allusions as usual:

"Hey, there! Let us have some pancakes of fat dog meat!"

"Will you have a game of clavo with me?"

And Lucio replied invariably:

"No, the drum is empty."

In the wake of the soldiers, they reached Goya street. Then the company turned into Velasquez street, and the boys were now in the formerly aristocratic section, and, though the war had robbed it of its elegance, the appearance of three ragged and dirty little urchins was more conspicuous there than elsewhere. In front of a

convent stood several trucks ready to receive some women and children about to be evacuated. The three stood there watching the people. Some of the women were crying. Suddenly the guards noticed the youngsters and shouted:

"Hey, you, get into the truck too! You have no business staying in Madrid. In Levante you will eat much better. Have you parents?"

And they caught Lucio, Tina and Colas and made them get into the truck. The children cried and protested: "We don't want to leave Madrid, we dont't want to! . ."

The women in the truck tried to console them, while the guard tried to take their parents' names and addresses, to be able to advise them of the evacuation, though they considered the children homeless waifs as soon as they sighted them.

After a while, seeing that they would be unable to get off the truck, Lucio conceived a clever idea. Having communicated it to Colas and Tina, he addressed the women as follows:

"Would you like some pancakes? I am giving them away free of charge, just for the asking!"

The women had nothing against, and at that moment Lucio opened his drum; out jumped five starving cats and streaked like lightning between the heads of the women, who started to yell at the tops of their voices. In the ensuing tumult the youngsters escaped before anybody could hold them back.

Shortly afterwards an accident happened to our little friends. On a certain afternoon Lucio and Colas were playing war against the fascists, in what they called the outposts. The real fascists, however, were not far away, in University City. Everything was rather mixed up, the children's game and reality, the front of the children and that of the armies. And so it happened that on that afternoon a stray bullet killed Verbena, who had mounted a little hill like a real hero. This accident caused deep consternation among the children. Death was instantaneous, the dog fell dead at the moment they heard the whizz of the bullet. At first they were afraid to go near it, but then they plucked up courage, and crawling flat on the ground, they dragged the dog into the trench. They examined it and discovered that the bullet had entered its head, from which a few drops of blood trickled.

The news of Verbena having been killed by a fascist bullet soon spread throughout the children's world of the district. The children resolved to bury the dog with honours. A boy, whose father was a carpenter, made a real coffin out of some boards. Others dug a grave in Dehesa de la Villa, near the Canal, behind Paloma College, while the rest formed the military cortege.

The next morning the funeral was held, to the edification of the entire district and in the presence of people. The red banner was carried in front of the procession, then followed some trumpets and drums. Behind these more than sixty boys marched in formation, carrying or wearing some military appurtenance, be it a wooden rifle, a cap or a strap. In the centre four boys carried the open coffin with the dead dog, paws up, lying there like a human being. It wore a militiaman's cap with a red star. Behind the coffin came the family, like at real funerals: Lucio, Tina and Colas.

Thus they marched until they reached the open grave, where the dog was buried with military honours, like a hero. A cross was placed on the grave, and a paper attached to it read: "Here lies buried the dog Verbena, killed by a fascist bullet on the 25th of March 1937." And lastly, in imitation of a real funeral, the whole crowd passed in front of the family, shaking their hand and saying: "My condolences." This they repeated to Lucio, Tina and Colas separately.

The game of war was over on the day when the boys' enthusiasm reached such a pitch that they left the trench and wanted to cross into enemy territory, to rout the fascists there. They

went as far as a small hill, which actually belonged to enemy territory. There they hoisted a red flag, which was so conspicuous that the military authorities had to cut short these dangerous excesses of the children.

The police rounded up the children and kept those who had no family. Our three little urchins fell into the net, which was now more serious than at the time when they pulled the trick with the cats. Now Lucio, Tina and Colas had to leave Madrid, and they cried bitterly. They did not want to go, to leave Madrid, with the same patriotic affection for that city and the same scorn of the danger as all the inhabitants of the capital felt.

On a certain day they left by truck, together with many more people, in the direction of Valencia. The three children wept as they left the city. The truck passed through the Ventas borough and Canillejas. Madrid, besieged, shelled and tortured by the fascists, remained behind. After the Jarama fighting, the direct road for Levante could not be followed.

First control. Second control. A village on the plateau. Castilla. A line of trucks stood waiting for the examination of the drivers' documents. It was towards nightfall, and the three kids, having agreed on a plan of action, got away and hid until their truck was gone.

They roamed around the village, picked some figs in the moonlight and slept on the grass at the foot of some mudwalls.

In the morning they walked over to the highway, and asked the truck-drivers to give them a lift back to Madrid. Women and children were not allowed to enter Madrid, but this regulation was disregarded and thousands of little tricks used in doing so.

"Give us a lift, sir?" they would beg the drivers.

"Are your papers in order?"

"If the inspectors ask us for our papers, we'll show them an old newspaper," Lucio would reply.

Nobody wanted to take them along. But one driver took a fancy to the little tramps and bade them get into the truck. He was carting casks of wine, and in one of them that was empty the three hid. Thus they entered Madrid once more. The driver let them off at an inn, and from there they reached Cuatro Caminos, riding on the top of street cars.

They did not dare to re-enter their old cabin. It is possible that fearing to be evacuated again Lucio conceived the idea of changing his mode of living, but it may be that the reason lay in his age, for he was now fourteen. It is also possible that the example set by the city and by the people made him think of a change. The moment was propicious.

"What are we going to do now? How shall we earn a living? They drove us from Madrid because we were waifs," Lucio declared. "Everybody does some work, and we, too, should work like men."

"I would like to work as a soldier against the fascists," Colas suggested.

"You are much too young to be admitted to the militia."

"I want to join the militia, to shoot from a real rifle," Tina added.

"You are a little greenhorn," her brother admonished her seriously. "We'll have to find you a decent accommodation."

They slept in the Cuatro Caminos subway station and in the day-time they hung around the market. But this was only temporary now. A little later, with the help of the connections which Lucio had established while selling cakes to the inns, they found work. Lucio found a job in an automobile repair shop in the Paseo de Ronda. His face and hands were greasy and sooty. He assumed the airs of an adult and even started smoking cigarettes made of grass, and found himself a girl friend, as boys at his age usually do.

Colas began to sell newspapers in a kiosk on Glorieta, and for each paper sold he received three centimos. He still wore his militiaman's cap.

Wide awake and lively he hurried through street cars, the metro and the movies, always with a pile of papers and calling lustily: "*Mundo Obrero*!" "*El Sol*!" "Fascists routed on the Levantine front!"

As to Tina, her brother did not know what to do with her; she was a girl after all and a bother as such. At last he managed to place her as a nurse in a rich man's house. She was very pleased, threw off her rags, and gradually she lost her waif's mentality, too; dressed in clean clothes and wearing a white apron, she could be seen on Santa Engracia street taking the masters' baby out into the sun.

With the advent of these new social positions the relations between the three lost their previous intimacy, yet they saw a great deal of each other. On a Sunday they went to Dehesa de la Villa to call upon their former comrades. There was great joy at the reunion, and they were told that the old home of theirs had been razed by fascist shells. They also visited Verbena's grave. It was overgrown with grass, and only a pile of stones which the children had heaped over it showed where it was.

Time was marching on, and the dramatic day came when anti-fascist Madrid was betrayed. There was great excitement and anxiety in Madrid's last hours.

"The fascists are coming!"

"Poor Madrid!"

"Madrid, Madrid! . ."

And the people of Madrid started on an exodus, like the passengers of a sinking boat rushing to save their lives. Gloomy days of confusion, of removing all wares from the capital. The streets were crowded with trucks carrying people away. Days of grave silence and grim faces. Days of pain and sorrow! . .

One day Lucio, a knapsack on his back, appeared at the booth where Colas sold his papers, but the latter was not there. It took Lucio a long time to locate him.

"The fascists are coming, Colas!" he burst out.

"Yes, I know; we'll have to run!" Colas replied.

"I am leaving!"

"Me too, let's go together."

"These loathsome fascists shan't catch us in Madrid!"

They went to Tina to bid her goodbye. There she stood, sad and wavering between a desire to leave and a fear of losing her good job. The boys advised her to stay.

At nightfall they two went to Ventas, where they stood asking the truck-drivers to give them a lift and take them away from Madrid, from the fascists who were already at the capital's open gates. The two boys, who during the war would not leave Madrid despite all dangers, now hurried to abandon their beloved city, heart broken and moved by a hatred and revulsion for fascism.

They finally climbed into a truck with people who like themselves did not know where they were going to, where they could find salvation. The truck started off along the road which never had seen such traffic before. And behind them remained Madrid, that great, heroic city, over which night fell slowly. . .

KORNEI CHUKOVSKY

CHILDREN AND WAR

1. A CHILDREN'S ARMY

Liuda Tomilina—a petted, spoilt, fourteen-year-old school-girl, was considered quite a fine little lady by her family. However, the war had scarcely broken out when she went over to her neighbour's apartment and knocked at the door. Standing on the threshold she announced:

"I've come to look after your baby."

The woman was somewhat taken aback.

"My baby? But who are you?"

"I'm from the Timur Detachment."

The neighbour did not understand and, quite startled, hugged her six-months' baby to herself as if shielding it.

"From the Detachment? But from what detachment?"

However, in less than half-an-hour Liuda, without losing her dignified demeanour, was already hanging out the child's multicoloured clothes on the line; then she went out to get the baby's milk.

This I saw with my own eyes in Moscow, but it might have occurred anywhere from Bokhara to Vladivostok.

"Timurite" is a new Russian word which appeared only two years ago. That was after Arkadi Gaidar, the well-known Soviet writer, had written *Timur and His Detachment*, a story about the adventures of Timur.

Please don't imagine that Timur was that lame hero who in ancient times conquered Samarkand and Iran. This new Timur was just an ordinary thirteen-year-old boy who organized a closely knit detachment composed of the neighbouring children, all living then in the country cottages around Moscow. The aim of this detachment was to extend all possible assistance to the families of the commanders and privates of the Red Army; to keep hooligans away from their kitchen-gardens and orchards; to fetch water from the wells for their old mothers.

Gaidar's book caught the fancy of Soviet school-children. But only after the war had begun did the Timur movement amongst Soviet children assume such an all-national scale.

Immediately dozens of Timurs appeared on every block, and for each Timur a detachment seemed to be in readiness to obey his orders implicitly. The leaders generally selected by the Timurites are the most intelligent, sprightly and energetic boys or girls.

As soon as the leader learns that someone from this courtyard or from that village has gone to the front, he takes the family under his protection, and one of the Timurites is sent to take constant care of them.

"Timurism" is a mass movement. It is not a sentimental fancy of two or three individuals but a lasting broad activity of thousands of united children. Children of the Land of Soviets almost from their swaddling clothes live a collective life in their nurseries, children's homes, schools and Pioneer Palaces. They are accustomed to unity, to being closely knit, and that is why in war-time they have proved (as we shall see later on) to be such a tremendous social help.

At the beginning of October, 1941, two cautious eight-year-old little girls living in a village near Moscow led me (after they had become convinced that I was not a German spy) to their very special and secret "bower." There, as a special favour, they showed me their cherished hoard: a pit covered with sheets of iron.

It was filled with fragments of shells from anti-aircraft guns which rained upon them nightly from the heavens, since anti-aircraft batteries were placed not far from their house.

It turned out that every morning these kids, yet hardly awake, ran with baskets to the neighbouring woods and meadows. There, just as they had used to gather blackberries, they now gathered the newly-fallen fragments of shells to give to the military plants for the manufacture of new shells. They search for this fragments with such indefatigable energy, there is such joy at every find, however scanty,—that one would think that the fate of our army depended on these collections of bits of metal.

Their proud certainty that they, even they, with their eight-year-old fingers, can render our army and our thousand-kilometre front some sort of a service, is magnificent.

The war had hardly begun when Soviet children throughout the whole of the Union: in Moscow, Bokhara, Irkutsk, Baikal, Bashkiria, immediately considered themselves a mobilized army. Such an enormous monolithic unity of children mankind had not yet seen.

In one district of Stalingrad in one single day the children collected 60 kilograms of non-ferrous metals from the inhabitants. In the city of Chkalov (also in one district of the town and in one single day) 350 youngsters collected one and a half tons of this valuable raw material for our factories working for defence. Children in one of the Uzbekistan regions—Andizhan—collected 380 tons of scrap-iron, in Surkhan-Darya 796 tons, in Tashkent 871, in Ferghana 321, and so on, altogether totalling 2,525 tons, a whole mountain of raw material, more precious to our army than gold.

Formerly the striving of children to render all the aid they could to the army was chiefly expressed by a certain Petya or Vanya thirsting for a hero's glory, running away from home to the front. He was caught and taken back to his home town, but ran away again. At last some kind-hearted and moustached corporal presented him with a soldier's cap, and he remained in the regiment as a "general favourite"—a poetical but utterly worthless figure.

What is noteworthy now, is the fact that children *en masse* are endeavouring to render the army collective economic assistance.

"Now it is war-time, and we want to be of more use to our country. We are going to the fields to weed potatoes," wrote Vassili Kroshka and Vitali Muzychenko, two 6th-grade Ukrainian boys.

No matter where you go, or where you travel to, you can see all these Vassili Kroshkas like ants on giant ant-hills crawling on the ground, weeding beets, carrots, potatoes, planting onions and pasturing goats and sheep; while those children who are older are mowing hay, rooting out stumps and draining swamps; in a word, in many spheres of work they are really taking the place of adults who are at the front.

And many amongst these patriotic toilers are genuine heroes of labour. With a norm of 35 kilograms, Shura Sharasheva, a pupil of the 4th grade in Tashkent, gathered 80 kilograms of cotton in a day. Vladimir Sokolov from the same school gathered 63 k., Irisalieva 70 k., Lyaina also 70, in three collective farms of the Syr-Darya district, and all that done in an organized jolly fashion, with a full understanding of that responsibility which they bear to their country. Rose Klein, a Tashkent pupil from the 9th grade, while working in the cotton-fields, composed an artless song which was caught up by all. This is the chorus:

For our country's sake, each one a
cotton picker,
So that the enemy will be crushed
the quicker.

2. CHILDREN NEAR THE FRONT-LINE ZONE

When children living near the front-line zone are involved in the atmosphere of war, Red Army men time and again become convinced that the kids are their real comrades-in-arms.

The outward appearance of these youngsters is for the most part not at all heroic, and they would be very much astonished if anyone told them that their actions were considered exploits.

In the South I met Kolya Gussiatnikov, an insignificant-looking, tousle-haired boy in his mother's jacket. He stood there, paying no attention to anyone, sniffing with his freckled nose, and kept on nibbling a turnip with tiny mouse-like teeth. He was highly praised, many words of gratitude were spoken, but he did not wink an eyelash, as if the whole matter was not about him. All his attention was concentrated on the half-eaten turnip.

Children helping to gather the harvest

Yet this boy was a real hero. When the Germans occupied the village where he lived with his aged grandmother, he put on an expression of extreme servility, feigned to be half-witted, giggled, hung around the fascist soldiers and strove to please them. He obtained a bottle of pepper-brandy for them, and when they were sunk in a drunken stupor he threw their motorcycle into the pond, stole their grenades and from a nearby ravine brought a partisan detachment which squared accounts with the invaders in their own fashion.

An incident reported at a press conference of foreign correspondents deserves mention.

During the beginning of November three pioneer children living in a certain village armed themselves with grenades and, approaching a group of Italian soldiers idly standing about in the street, began to sing and dance. The fascists must have liked their lively dancing, for soon a dense crowd assembled around the children. Suddenly they ran out of the circle of gapers and threw their grenades into the crowd. Their action was so unlooked-for and it so stunned the fascists, that they made no attempt even to hinder the daring children's get-away.

Girls living near the front-line zone do not lag behind their brothers in heroism. Sergeant Savva Mikolaychuk has reported the following incident to the press. He had been wounded and was in a hospital train lying in an ambulance car, when fascist planes started to bomb it. Soon flames began to envelop the car. Those who could manage it attempted to save themselves. The sergeant's legs were bandaged, he could not move. There was no sign of the ambulance-man, for he lay wounded by the shrapnel. Nothing remained for the sergeant but to start creeping on his hands, and thus he crawled to the door of the car and began to slide down the sidestep. His bandages had uncoiled, and blood flowed from

his wounds. Then things grew dim before his eyes and he fainted.

"When I came to myself," he said, "I saw a girl no more than twelve-year-old bending over me. Where had she come from and who had sent her? Deftly and swiftly she bandaged my wounds and helped me to a shelter. We began to talk. Her name, it turned out, was Vera Tarassova."

An ordinary Soviet school-girl. Her mother would not allow her to go out.

"You'd better stay at home," she said, "there's firing going on."

"No, I can't stay at home. I'm going." And out she ran to the burning train.

A tragic role fell to the lot of many children living near the front-line zone: that of avenger for their brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers tortured by the fascists.

I will never forget the exploit of Lida R., a school-girl living not far from one of the Southern towns. Soldiers of the German-Rumanian army killed both the parents right before her eyes. At first she almost went mad from grief, but after a while seemed to come to life again, consumed with a single idea: to avenge her mother and father. Having learnt that a Rumanian detachment had arrived at a nearby village, she ran to her former teacher, a commander of the local partisans. Through secret paths she led them to the school where the enemy troops were quartered. There the partisans hurled their hand-grenades at the school and seized two automobiles, a machine-gun, etc.

Russian people are not vengeful by nature. But the bestiality with which the savage fanatics have attacked us has aroused a thirst for vengeance even in small children.

School-children of the Gorky Region, who are building a tank from their own funds, declare in an appeal to their comrades: "We want to avenge all the children tortured by the fascists."

How could they keep from thinking of avenging, for instance, those children near the front-line zone who saw the Germans in the village Basmanovo shoot two hundred of their friends who had come from afar to gather the harvest?

3. HITLER IS MISTAKEN IN HIS HOPES OF INTERFERING WITH OUR STUDIES

Probably nothing can express so forcefully the heroism of Soviet children as the fact that despite the bloody events among which they have to live they endeavour to study anywhere where there is the slightest possibility of doing so.

Can one study physics and geometry, for instance, when the work in the fields is in full swing? It appears that one can do so, and at times even better than at school.

Last summer a group of children led by N. Kaverin, their teacher, worked on the collective farm "October," near Moscow. One evening, after finishing their work, the teacher asked them what geometric forms the plot they had worked on had. One lad, giving the plot a momentary glance, confidently replied:

"Well, of course, it's a rectangle."

"What do you mean?" said another. "What kind of rectangle do you call that? It's a trapezium."

A third here discerned the figure of a parallelogram. They argued back and forth, and then realized that words in this case would not prove anything. The field would have to be measured.

"Everything they could find was used for this purpose: chains, measuring tape, etc.," wrote N. Kaverin in the *Teachers' Newspaper*. "And despite their weariness after digging out carrots and drying the hay, the youngsters enthusiastically paced the field. They measured the straight lines, drew perpendiculars, measured the angles. You see, the whole thing was not about some unknown, abstract plot of land, but a real plot where, with bent backs, they had worked all day."

"When the school-children began to argue during the dinner-hour as to whose group had dug the most carrots, they again had recourse to geometry: carrots in a cart have a parallelepiped form, while a carrot-heap is cone-shaped. This meant that the problem could easily be solved: find the size of the heap, the size of the cart, and calculate the result. But how much do the carrots or beets dug by each class weigh? Since there are no weighing scales at hand, the science of physics comes to our aid. Can the specific weight of all the carrots be learnt? Of course, it can. Then that means that if the specific weight and volume of the vegetables are known, then the weight can easily be calculated. Pencils fly over scraps of paper, and in two or three minutes the solution is ready."

On the first of September schools opened everywhere and studies began. It would seem that under war-time conditions the pupils' discipline and diligence would be greatly lowered; particularly since parental control had slackened: most of the fathers were at the front, and many of the mothers were engaged in all-absorbing defence work. Besides, thousands of teachers were also at the front. And most of the school-buildings had been destroyed by the fascist bombs. But here we see that, according to the unanimous evidence of the school-teachers and principals, children in many localities had never before showed such zeal or maintained such discipline. Naturally it would be an artificial miracle if in some places there would not have been a falling-off of established school-discipline.

The youngsters have even worked out a special formula which has become habitual, as a lesson learnt by heart: "We'll study to get an excellent mark, so that we won't be ashamed to face our fathers when they return from the front." Even nine-year-old school-children repeated this formula one after another like a battle oath. It is as if Red Army men are invisibly present in every class, at every lesson, check every pupil, encourage the most diligent and severely reproach the lazy.

In the autumn of 1941 V. P. Potemkin, People's Commissar of Public Education, appealed to the school-children in a letter in which he mentioned, amongst other things, that despite the circumstances of war the schools would obtain more than forty million text-books and more than eighty thousand teachers substituting for those who had left for the army.

Of course, during the past year there were many obstacles facing school-children on the road to knowledge. Very difficult indeed was it for those evacuated, the children finding themselves in an unknown region, in an unfamiliar school and amongst strange children. In other localities the number of pupils was tripled, while the number of schools was decreased, since some of them, including the best, were requisitioned for military hospitals and children's homes for evacuees.

There is a fine four-storey school in Tashkent, which is situated on a hill and attended by 1,500 school-children. With their own hands the pupils planted flowers and trees, constructed an arbour, shower, fountain and playground; briefly, they made it still more beautiful and cosy. But on November 4, 1941, the entire 1,500 pupils left their splendid building because it was turned into a surgical hospital.

The school was transferred to a dumpy one-storey house where they did not have one-tenth of the conveniences they had become accustomed to. The pupils studied in three shifts amongst which, during the intervals, was a fourth one. There were only ten class-rooms in the school, while the other building had twenty. Hence all kinds of difficulties arose. But you should have seen how cheerfully and bravely the children overcame these hardships, bending all their efforts to prevent the lowering of the quality of their everyday routine!

Naturally, in pre-war times the

children would have murmured if they had been subjected to such overcrowding. But now they did not express the slightest dismay. On the contrary, one mild, starry December evening, when we were hurrying to the tram stop along the wide asphalted avenue, I broached the subject to them. In order to draw them out I said that probably they were longing for their own school which we were passing by at that moment. They, however, indignantly rejected any crafty insinuation with: "How can you talk that way? Why, the wounded are there!" To Soviet school-children the wounded are the most honoured persons.

Willingly the school-children became patrons of the hospital which had taken over their school. The older pupils are on duty there daily in two shifts from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. This does not seem to interfere with their studies in the least. The will of the children to achieve victory, their firmness and strongly developed collective feeling, to a considerable extent counteract the harm which the war has inflicted on them.

4. CHILDREN BEHIND THE LINES

A portly woman hurried up to school No. 44 and, exactly as if she were in a store, but not addressing anyone in particular, asked:

"Have you any children here?"

This was some time ago in Tashkent. I rather liked her impatience; it seemed that she was dying to get a child, and wanted it not tomorrow but today, just at that very moment! She was even angry when told that the school had no children for her; that she had to go to the Commissariat of Public Education, get some references, visit a children's home, and in general be patient until the following day.

"But how can I," she exclaimed, "when I've already put the water on to boil!" (Evidently she intended to bathe the child.)

A young scout

This purely feminine joy, incomprehensible to many men—that of bathing a child, soaping and scrubbing his little body, kissing him, then bundling him up in a warm towel—this joy had obviously long tempted her. For this happiness she had long hungered, and that is why she so hurriedly went to the Commissariat of Education and ran up to the third floor where reference forms were issued. With this she could obtain a child from a children's home.

In Tashkent subsequently I happened to witness repeatedly this passionate yearning for children. A certain woman travelled from Termez to Tashkent only for the purpose of adopting a child from a children's home. She wanted two four-year-old children. "A boy and a girl, if you please." You can't imagine how disappointed she was when she was informed that she would have to wait until the following Monday because all the four-year-old children had already been adopted.

"Oh, how long to wait!" she sighed. "And today's only Saturday!"

She spoke as if at least a year or two intervened between Saturday and Monday.

"I wanted to buy them suits and rabbit's wool berets. . ."

You might say that all this is as it should be—that this is the ancient powerful maternal instinct. But what was it then that made Alikhan Sharafutdinov, an elderly teacher, come to the same Commissariat and announce that he also intended to adopt and bring up a child,—it mattered not of what nationality: an Ukrainian, an Uzbek or a Russian.

"But you have a large family already," he was told.

"Not so very large," replied the teacher, "only ten people altogether. Oh, but two have left for the front: one is a commander and the other a doctor. Room for a child can always be found."

All these people are inspired by the ardent patriotism of Soviet people to ease the heavy burden of the war as far as is within their power. The combination of such sublime feelings as patriotism and motherly love in Soviet women should ensure to evacuated children that affection the lack of which almost inevitably causes a child to grow up morally deformed or crippled. What is characteristic is that these children are adopted mostly by poor women with large families, who know the wise rules of needy people that where you can feed five, a sixth can also be fed. Here the patriotism is that of the purest water, without the least tinge of repressed maternal instincts.

A woman worker recently expressed this sentiment in a children's home when she said: "I'll adopt any child you offer, even if it's squinty or carroty-haired, as long as I'll be helping my country."

Quite a number of children from the cities and collective farms temporarily seized by the fascists, are now in Uzbekistan. There are amongst them sons and daughters of men killed at the front, and also children whose parents, peaceful Soviet citizens, did not manage to evacuate together with their children and so remained behind in fascist captivity.

Many of those who have the slight-

Helping to take care of the lambs on a sheep-farm

est chance of showing hospitality to a child evacuated from the front-line zone, receive him into the family as one of their own.

And in this hospitality is expressed—in its most moving and poetical form—that indissolubility of the fraternity of peoples which is such a firm basis of the entire Soviet order.

Here one can clearly see Stalin's national policy embodied in the everyday life of the Middle-Asian people.

The swarthy, plump Uzbek woman in her traditional Oriental dress, moving along the narrow Uzbekistan streets of the "old town" with her stately eastern gait, is leading along a snub-nosed, fair-haired child from Pskov. It would be difficult, indeed, to imagine a more striking poster symbolizing the unity of the Soviet peoples.

Blue-eyed Ivan from Ryazan is looked upon as their own son by the family of Niyaz Aliev, an Uzbekistan worker. Although the family is a rather large one—nine people, they were yet able to crowd themselves somewhat to make room at the table for the little boy from Ryazan.

In one of his earlier stories Maxim Gorky narrates how a handful of workers in some foreign southern city for a few days sheltered the children of some of their comrades on strike. This fraternal solidarity called forth an enraptured paean from Gorky. But how infinitesimal this incident seems in comparison with the all-national movement which has arisen in this Middle-Asian republic!

Uzbeks living in collective farms recently sheltered more than hundred evacuated Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian children, and have taken upon themselves the upbringing, feeding and clothing of these children on an equal footing with their own, for many years to come.

The time will come when poems will be written about the magnificent hospitality which the collective farmers offered to the orphaned children.

In many farms the collective farmers themselves renovated all the buildings and fixed all the windows. They brought a bed for each child, new quilts, sheets, towels and pillow-cases. Stocks of food-supplies were prepared. Teachers were assigned to each group of children (all of them were from the junior classes), so that they might begin to study as soon as they arrived.

Three other collective farms in a certain Tashkent district pledged themselves to bring up forty evacuated children. Six more collective farms in the same district adopted about 150 children.

A meeting of women took place in Tashkent on January 2nd, 1942, which drew up a proclamation addressed to the women of Uzbekistan. The proclamation reads in part: "There should not be amongst us a single hardhearted person or one indifferent to the sufferings of children! Public assistance to evacuated children must be extended! We will carry out our fraternal duty to the great Russian people, to the peoples of Ukraine and Byelorussia! Ever higher shall we raise the banner of internationalism and fraternal friendship in the Soviet Union!"

Many of the evacuated children with their own eyes witnessed the slaughter of their mothers and fathers by the savage fascists. Even now they begin to tremble at any noise in the street, for it seems to them that they are being bombed.

Not long ago I happened to visit children's home No. 14 where evacuated children of pre-school ages lived. They had just awakened from their afternoon nap, and instead of saying "Hello," as soon as they saw me they shouted: "My daddy's at the front!" This was the most important thing that each one of them considered necessary to tell a stranger. And this gives them the peculiar right to be received everywhere in the rear as welcome guests.

It is remarkable, indeed, to see with what ardent sympathy the

Uzbek children welcome the newly-arrived children from afar.

"What should I do with my husband?" asked a charwoman from school No. 44 of the principal. "He keeps on saying: 'Adopt a child.' It looks as if I'll have to do it."

A week ago I was in the kindergarten of the Textile Combinat. There is a teacher there who adopted a three-year-old boy from the Ukraine. She dressed him up in a miniature military uniform, and the children called him the "colonel."

"So many children bring him sweeets," she said, "that I'm afraid the 'colonel' will soon have a tummy ache. Everyone treats him to something. 'Go ahead, colonel,' they say, 'and eat.' And they stuff raisins, caramels and cakes into him."

"He was bombed on the train by the fascists," say the children, and just because he suffered from the hated Hitler, the children sacrifice their sweets to the "colonel."

This same woman's ten-year-old daughter left only a tiny slice for herself when her mother gave her an apple to share between herself and the "colonel."

"I don't feel like having an apple today, mother," she said.

In such a singular manner our kiddies express their patriotic affection towards children rescued from fascist atrocities.

Many a time I saw school-children hardly able to breathe for joy triumphantly informing their school-mates:

"Mother's agreed, she says tomorrow we're going to the children's home to get a baby!" It turned out that the mother for various reasons could not decide to adopt a child, but her son or daughter—or both—coaxed her with such passionate insistence that she finally gave in. And how excited they are on the day when the guest from the front-line zone is at last to appear at their home!

Eleven-year-old Valya, daughter of an employee of the Commissariat of Public Education, arose before dawn one morning and immediately began to arouse her mother:

"Mama, mama, it's time to go for the child!"

"What do you mean! It's not even 6.30 yet. Go to sleep now," was the reply.

"But, mama, perhaps our clock is slow. Let's hurry, because all the children may be adopted, and there won't be even one left for us."

Such haste may seem to be superfluous since 85,000 children were evacuated to Uzbekistan; but it was soon found that Valya was right. Demands for the arriving tots are so great in Tashkent that in many places there were not enough four-year-old children to go around. All of them had been adopted in a week.

Marie Vladimirova, who manages for the Commissariat of Education the distribution of children, had to re-assure many citizens who had applied for small children:

"Please call on us again in a day or two. How were we to know that they'd be taken away so quickly!"

In the office of one of the children's homes the telephone rang continuously from morning to night, and the secretary patiently repeated:

"There are no more evacuated four-year-old children left. They've all been taken away already. Please call next week, we expect a new batch to arrive."

People of the most varied professions participate in this patriotic care for the children. Among them are scientific workers of the Middle-Asia Institute of Sericulture, a Young Communist League member engine-driver, teachers, book-keepers, post-graduates, engineers, workers from tailoring shops, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan Communist Party, and so on. In a word, there is no group of Soviet people whose representatives did not adopt a child into their families.

Wishing to serve their country in the most useful way, Soviet people frequently adopt the most emaciated and weak children, and thus take

Fifteen-year-old Fedya Trubnikov, who was adopted by a Red Fleet unit, painting steel helmets

upon themselves the responsibility of rearing them and seeing to it that they recover their health and strength so that they can become fit for future work.

A few thousand children have passed through the Tashkent Evacuation Board. Most of them were sent to the vocational-training and railway schools, while the rest were sent to work.

Wounded Red Army men and commanders find much joy, in the monotonous time they must spend in the hospital, because of the untiring Tashkent school-children, who have organized a Song and Dance Ensemble in the local Pioneer Palace. This Ensemble appears practically nowhere but in hospitals, and has already given 178 varied concerts.

A new profession has appeared among the children in that same Pioneer Palace—a profession which did not exist before, that of children story-tellers and narrators, who visit the men and entertain them with readings and recitals.

The mass collective help rendered by the children is characteristic of our Soviet era. In this respect Uzbek children won one of the foremost places in the Union.

Most of the children are Timurites, for Timurism sprang up here at the very beginning of the war. After seeing the film *Timur and His Detachment*, Ilya Soloveichik, a pupil of the 7th grade, organized in July, 1941, the first Timur Detachment in Tashkent. The first family his detachment visited was that of Red Army man Loginov who had gone to the front at the very beginning of the war. After assisting this family for a while, he (together with some of his followers) sent Loginov a letter ending with the words: "Don't worry about your family, we are taking care of them." The letter was signed: "Ilya Soloveichik, Commander of the Timur Detachment."

Loginov's wife herself, at one of the Timurite parties held at the Pioneer Palace, recalled what had taken place:

"When my husband," she said, "was mobilized for the front, I was very much at a loss, for I was left with two children, one of three and the other of four years. But Ilya and his detachment appeared, very attentive and thoughtful. They cleaned

my room, washed the floor, brought water from the well (and that's pretty far away), took the child to and from the kindergarten. I no longer felt that I was alone, and could have almost cried for joy."

The People's Commissariat of Education of the Uzbekistan Soviet Republic is actively engaged in the care of evacuated children.

One of the rooms in this Commissariat contains a certain precious book which cannot be read without emotion. In appearance it is an ordinary office ledger the blue pages of which would seem dull to read: just names and addresses. But I never saw any other book arouse such strong feelings in people.

Gloomily turning over the pages, a tired-looking woman suddenly cried out, threw up her hands, laughed, cried, leaped to her feet, and then her weary body collapsed over the table.

When she came to herself, she began to cry again, pointed to the book and whispered rapturously:

Hakassian school-children drying vegetables for the Red Army

"My child's name and address are here!"

She began, devoutly to kiss the book, the battered rough cover, and again wept for joy.

This is not a melodrama or a motion picture, it is an actual fact that for many months this woman had been searching for her lost son in various cities and collective farms of the Union. Finally in Tashkent she suddenly found the name of her son in this book. The information given there was that he was being taken care of by a certain Tashkent school. It was no wonder that this ordinary looking book seemed to her to be the most beautiful and interesting she had ever read in her life.

The book contains lists of names of children and adolescents evacuated from the front-line zone, who do not know where their parents are. Right before our eyes this book brought somebody the greatest happiness. Thanks to it a bereaved mother had found her long lost son.

There was another bereaved mother in the room.

"I wouldn't cry," she said to the first mother. "If I should find my children, I'd laugh all day."

She was given the book, and soon she cried out:

"There's my girl, my girl! My God! There's my boy too! My girl and boy!"

She began to sob.

"You promised to laugh," said the first woman to her through her tears.

This second fortunate woman found out from the book that her two children were in a Tashkent children's home, and immediately rushed there.

"The thirty-sixth," said one of the officials quietly. This meant that only recently thirty-six women had found their children through the help of the Commissariat.

I love this little narrow room. Although officially the work which is done here is most prosaic—"Registration of Evacuated Children,"—yet the humane Soviet society has lent it such an air of intimacy that

this room seemed to me the most fascinating in the entire three-storey building.

If any Hitlerite were to pass at least an hour in this room, his own eyes would convince him how closely united our rear and front are. The enemy would gnash his teeth if he would see what long lines were formed at the desk: lines composed of workers, collective farmers, actresses, professors, house-wives, wives of commanders, engineers, motormen,—expressing their readiness to immediately adopt an evacuated child into the family.

There can be no doubt that the husbands at the front wholeheartedly approve the patriotic impulse of their wives. Before me lies a letter from the front written by Red Army man Andrew Izmaylov to his wife who adopted an evacuated girl.

"If money is scarce," he wrote his wife last January, "don't send any to me. I can wait. I don't need it. Don't forget that we now have a daughter for whom we must live, and the time will come when she will live for us."

Another letter from him: "I am glad to have received Lily's photo. We shall love her like our own child."

These letters are so full of Lily that sometimes Izmaylov forgets to write about himself. He has never seen Lily, he is thousands of kilometres away, but he is so concerned about her that he shows an interest in every detail of her life: he advises how to dress her, how to arrange her hair; evidently he thinks of her all day long.

One of the inhuman tasks which the Hitlerites have set before them is to bereave and annihilate as many Soviet children as possible and thus deprive our country of its great future.

The unprecedented care for the children which we observe at practically every step in Uzbekistan, as well as in other republics and regions, has smashed to pieces the dastardly plot of the Hitlerites.

A MOTHER'S BLESSING

(A True Story)

The troop-train tore westward. The car in which Sergeant Mikhail Ilyukhin found himself was crowded and noisy. He stood apart from his comrades, pressed against the jamb of the wide-open door. Eagerly he gazed into the distance as the telegraph poles, forests and rivers flashed by. The thumping of his heart seemed to outrace the beat of the wheels.

Fatherland!

It was just one year ago since he had been here the last time. The train had been just as fast, the sky just as blue. Then he had been an ordinary passenger, a student of an agricultural technical school on his way home for the holidays. His mother had met him then... But now? The youth looked around. Bursts of song filled the car. The train was on its way to the front.

"A penny for your thoughts!" The hand of one of his comrades fell on his shoulder.

"This is my native place," Mikhail quietly replied, pointing: "Right there at the outskirts you can see our village."

As he thrust his head out of the window, the wind whistled by his ears.

Alas! Charred ashes, the bare frame-work of stoves and chimneys met his eyes. A ghastly sight! The young Red Army man closed his eyes, his heart contracted with pain.

The whistle. Slowing down, the train drew near the station. Mikhail knew that it would stop just for a minute; there would be no time to see his mother, relatives and friends. But were they even alive? Not a single line had he received from them the whole year. He squeezed a note in his hand as two school-girls approached.

"Give this to..." The wind snatched up and blurred his words. Like a white bird the bit of paper fluttered in the wind.

The train began to gather speed. Here was the railway shed, there the points-woman with her coloured flags. Something about the elderly, slightly bent woman—the gestures of the hands raised to her eyes, the felt cloak and galoshes, the dark scarf—seemed sharply familiar to Mikhail.

"Mother!"

It was so sudden, so unexpected that his comrades barely managed to hold him back by the hem of his army greatcoat. Everyone crowded to the door of the car. The points-woman waved her hands and the

flags; she shouted something and tried to run after the train; she stumbled. She had recognized her son.

At the next station the train stopped to unload, and Mikhail was able to telephone. Late that evening his mother trudged in, and all his comrades witnessed their touching reunion. The mother gave her son the linen, bread and milk she had brought with her, and then began carefully to untie a kerchief wrapped around something. Everyone waited, what other gift had the mother brought her warrior-son?

Slightly touched with rust, a new revolver lay on her trembling palm.

"I've kept this from the Germans, saved it," she said, looking around at those surrounding her, as if seeking approval for her action. "I've three sons,—all in the Red Army. I've waited and thought to myself: I'll give this to the one I see first." With this she handed him the revolver, kissing him.

"Bless you, my darling son!"

Not another word was the old mother able to utter. And no one there was ashamed to wipe away his tears.

I. PANOV,
Army doctor

THE BASTION ON THE BALTIC

Leningrad's streets stretch before us in strict regular lines. A yawning hole gapes in the facade of a palace—an inspired work by Rastrelli. Further on is a massive apartment house where a heavy bomb crashed through five floors. On one storey in a room which chanced to escape destruction, a grand piano stands forlornely; another storey is littered with wreckage and rubble. The rosy hued marble columns of an XVIIIth century house have been wrecked by shell-fire. Klodt's steeds have been removed from their pedestals on Anichkov Bridge. The charred remains is all that is left of the Perinnaya Line in Gostiny Dvor.

Broken glass crunches underfoot. An hour ago a fascist armoured train opened a hasty and haphazard fire from the near approaches to the city. . .

We stroll through the streets and remember past days.

Saturday night, June 21st, 1941. A clear, warm, white St. Petersburg night,—a night glorified in Pushkin's verse. Advertisements in Neon light, the merry jingle of the tramcars, the tender strains of Tchaikovsky from the loudspeakers, the intricate web of the bridges flung across the Neva. . .

Beautiful, dear, happy Leningrad!

Then came the German, the fascist, the Hun, thickskulled, malignant, square-chinned, with vacant, cold, cruel eyes. Thousands upon thousands of bombs are sent hurtling onto the happy city, thousands of children are left without parents, fires break out in the suburbs. The enemy puts his boot in ancient palaces, rides rough shod over places sacred to Russians: alleys where Pushkin liked to muse, museums which treasured the glorious traditions of Russian art, palaces and parks so lovingly preserved by the people. All this defiled, demolished, desecrated. He launched against the city a host of tanks with the emblems of dragons or the swastika on their turrets, hundreds of thousands of marching robots in steel helmets who sowed death and desolation, misery and poverty. He cut the network of railway-lines which supplied Leningrad with food and fuel, reached the Neva, reached the tram-terminuses, and shelled the Forel Hospital with his trench-mortars. . .

The Finnish radio broadcast to the world "news" of street fighting allegedly going on in the quiet streets of Vassilyevsky Ostrov. And why hide the fact? Very many of our numerous friends all over the world, with pangs in their hearts, considered the city as good as lost. Leningrad the city of October, Leningrad the cradle of the Revolution. . . Warsaw had fallen, and Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris, Belgrade and Athens. . .

No! Never!

Leningrad declared: No! Never will that be! Never will a German foot tread here! And the words: "No! Never!" rang clear like a vow, like an oath, like a solemn hymn.

No! Never! Leningrad did not fall! The jackboot of the foreign aggressor did not trample upon, did not subjugate that proud and glorious city on the banks of the Neva! The inhabitants of the City of Lenin—freedom-loving citizens—did not surrender their city. They defended it, repulsed every attempt to capture it, defended it with their blood, their nerves, their muscles, their will, by their superhuman efforts and superhuman privations,—but they held it!

Detachments of armed men march in never-ending columns across the Liteiny Bridge. Who goes there? The men from the Vyborg Side. Workers' battalions from Vassilyevsky Ostrov, from the Nevskaya suburb, from the Petrograd Side. The Baltic sailors, the city's favourites, leave their ships to fight for Leningrad, to fight as their grandfathers, fathers and brothers fought.

Leningrad turned out to see the sailors off to the front. They looked long after the black, monolithic column. They had faith

in them. Their sailors would never surrender the city, would not yield an inch. . .

And so the defence around the city grew stronger. The onward march of the Prussian goose-step of the fascist armies became slower and slower—as if lead weights had been attached to their legs, as if their hobnailed boots were marching not over the smooth, asphalted roads of the suburbs, but across impregnable swamps. And now it was not a question of scores of kilometres, or not even one kilometre,—one metre of territory captured was broadcast by the Germans as an enormous victory, even though that victory cost them the lives of tens of thousands of Fritzes and Hanses. A short while passed—and the communiqués issued by the staff-headquarters of von Loeb's Northern Army were not able to report that a single yard, not even an inch of ground had been gained.

The German machine was brought to a standstill. They thought that it was for a day, but it proved to be for a long, long time. And the more Hitler's generals peered through their field-glasses in the distant haze at the dim outlines of the city of Leningrad lying almost within reach, the more they became discouraged and disheartedned. So near and yet so endlessly far from them was this strange, inexplicable city.

Leningrad withstood!

History provides innumerable examples of the masterly defence of cities and forts. Flaubert in *Salammbo* has given us a detailed account of the siege of Carthage. Homer's picture of ancient Troy has been handed down through the ages.

But how can one describe the 1941—1942 defence of Leningrad, unique even in the annals of history? The defence of the city where the right to immortality was won by men at the front and the women with babies in arms; by the Guard regiments of the Baltic and the aged professors of Leningrad university, who with pick and shovel, up to their knees in the autumn slush and mud, dug the defence-lines in the suburbs; by the house wives who cleared the roofs of the shower of incendiary bombs; by the school-children who disarmed spies and wreckers; by the young girls who sacrificed their lives to rescue men wounded on the field of battle; by the youngsters from technical schools who took their fathers' places in munition works.

Such are the people of Leningrad!

Tolstoy wrote about the Fourth Bastion, the defenders of which became accustomed to the never-ending hail of shells and learned to look death calmly in the face.

During the period of the blockade Leningrad was transformed into just such a Fourth Bastion. This is no exaggeration. Shells burst on the Nevsky; tanks left the gates of the Kirov Plant and headed straight for the front which was only a few kilometres away from the plant, and the workers, in spite of the heavy bombardment, went on calmly forging ever new weapons for the front. The old Russian Izhor Plant was within a stone's throw of the foremost lines. One night of danger and alarm, when the whole sky was alight

Setting up barricade near the Leningrad Kirov Plant

An anti-aircraft gun in Leningrad

with the flames of fires raging all around, the chairman of the Kolpino City Soviet, Anissimov, assembled the workers of the Izhor Plant. He spoke to them briefly and to the point:

"Those who consider themselves unfit,—let them stay behind: we won't think any the worse of them. Those who consider themselves fit, let them take up arms. Days of stern trials have come for the workers of the Izhor Plant."

And the workers of the Izhor Plant took up arms and followed their elected deputy. They checked the advance of the Germans and saved the plant.

And in the shops of the Izhor Plant the crews of the tanks and armoured cars would smoke a cigarette while their machines were undergoing lightning repairs; their machines overhauled and rejuvenated, they would leave the plant directly for the front.

Such are the people of Leningrad!

November 6th—the eve of the holiday—will ever remain in our memories. On previous occasions the vessels on the Neva would be aglow with a myriad lights, fireworks would cleave the sky above the granite banks, and on the walls of the Peter-and-Paul fortress slogans would gleam like something alive. . .

November 6th, 1941. Searchlights cleave the murky sky, the darkened ships are bombarding the enemy; the city rumbles to the heavy thunder of long-range naval guns. Leningrad on the eve of the holiday was steeped in darkness, watchful, alert. Excitedly the inhabitants of the city were thinking: how was it with Moscow? Those were the days when Hitler, having concentrated a gigantic force on the approaches to Moscow, reckoned to settle with the metropolis no matter what the price.

And suddenly, as though in a fairy tale, the grim silence of the watchful city was broken by a familiar voice: "This is Moscow calling. Comrade Stalin will speak. Listen, besieged Leningrad,—Comrade Stalin will speak!"

Leningrad listened to Stalin's words with bated breath. The alert was given at that very moment. Enemy planes appeared above the city. Anti-aircraft guns came into action. A bomb shrieked in the sky.

But the radio-broadcast did not stop for a moment.

Leningrad listened to Stalin,—listened to his words with the thunder of the guns, the crashing of bursting bombs ringing in their ears, with the inky black sky lit up by the lurid glow of distant fires. And it seemed to us that Stalin's voice cleft the inky darkness, lit it with a titanic superpowerful beam.

The closing words of the leader were drowned by an ovation. Stalin left the rostrum, and the men on the Leningrad front took their places in the trenches, the workers returned to their places in the shops where work went on day and night, and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet stood watch defending the approaches to the City of Lenin. And on this night of military storm and stress the hearts of the Leningrad people

beat joyously, the naval guns battered away at the enemy's lines with particular force, and in the plants and factories the Stakhanovites gave better and still better results. . .

On this night, too, with the din of artillery in his ears the German soldier Herman Fuchs wrote to his brother:

"Here, on the approaches of St. Petersburg, hell has been let loose. So it was yesterday and so it is today. Yesterday we were ordered to attack a gigantic line of defences. The artillery bombardment went on all day. In that solid mass of fire it was impossible to distinguish individual shots. Now we're having the same thing all over again. In the St. Petersburg harbour there's still one dreadnought and several cruisers. You can't imagine the craters the shells from the naval guns make. One shell burst within two hundred metres from me. Let me tell you,—I was sent hurtling for at least a couple of metres through the air. Believe it or not. The whole countryside is dotted with holes and craters from bombs and shells. Here there is an arm, there a leg, over there a head; people receive several wounds at once as a lasting reminder of Russia. The only thing to do with them is to wipe them out root and branch. Nothing else can be done with them. . ."

At first these murderers complained that some imaginary "Maginot Line" encircling the city was the one thing that hindered them from capturing Leningrad. After that they took offense at our naval artillery, and then they shifted the entire blame for all their reverses on the bitter frosts.

Yes, the frosts that year were particularly bitter. Blizzards and snowstorms raged with particular fury. The mercury dropped to forty below. It was a grim, ruthless, severe winter. But the people of Leningrad, too, had to live through that winter, and what a glorious, heroic winter it was! Without water,—the water froze in the mains; without light; with the streetcars at a standstill owing to the lack of fuel; with the bread ration issued to the inhabitants of the besieged city reduced to an absolute minimum. . . Yes, it was a grim and remorseless winter! The inhabitants of Leningrad paid a heavy toll during those months of blockade. Many of us lost our fathers, our mothers, brothers, sisters, children. The eyes of many became deep-set and hollow, grew dim; deep furrows, marks of exhaustion, lined their foreheads, and the lines about their mouths became still sharper and more grim.

But what a passion raged in their hearts,—the proud hearts of the people of Leningrad! Hatred for the enemy became more keen, more sharp, sharp as a dagger. Their will became tempered, tempered like the finest steel, their eyes sterner, and their arms firmer, the strong, muscular, resolute arms of the people of Leningrad.

Leningrad withstood!

During long months the only link between the city and the hinterland, their beloved country, was a narrow strip across the ice of Lake Ladoga. But the people of Leningrad were ever aware of the concern of their country, and never for a moment did the people of our city feel themselves torn asunder, isolated from the rest of the country, from its destiny, its struggle.

"The bitterer the privations, the sweeter are the fruits of victory," so spoke the soldiers of Washington's army during the struggle for the independence and liberty of America.

"Yes, the bitterer the privations, the sweeter the fruits of victory," echo the people of Leningrad.

In the day-time the July sun shines above the city, and at night—the white Leningrad nights—a soft breeze blows over the gulf, over the Baltic, coming from the West.

We stroll along the proud and silent streets, thinking of the stern battles impending. And we know the city is ready.

There are cities which have ceased to be mere geographical conceptions, mere larger or smaller circles on the maps of the world. We say—Vichy, and to everybody it implies betrayal. We say—Lidice, and to everybody it implies the tears and hatred of Europe. We say—Cologne, Essen, Bremen, Rostock, and they stand for retribution.

Our country knows that Leningrad will defy death, because when we say—Leningrad, it means staunchness, stubbornness, immortality.

A. STEIN

THE HEROES' WILL

The newspaper we brought with us on our arrival at divisional headquarters announced that the division had been named Guards. The wind swept the raindrops from the leaves, the mud squelched under our feet, and the leaves, the tree trunks and the moist grass shone with a dull sheen.

After a walk through these woods the commander's dug-out felt doubly cozy, and, in fact, it was rather picturesque, the entrance being in the steep slope of a dell overgrown with grass. "Just like a mountain hut," somebody ventured the comparison, and it caught everybody's imagina-

tion at once. A flimsy bridge of freshly-planed logs was flung across a muddy stream, while some wooden steps flanked by dainty banisters—just as in the Caucasus—led uphill towards the dark entrance.

Everybody was in excellent humour. Some said aloud: "colonel of the Guards" and "commissar of the Guards regiment," just to hear how it sounded. In a small room nearby, the telephone kept on ringing, transmitting congratulations from the army. Officers of the Guards came and went, introducing themselves noisily, and the sound of "hurrah" came in from different parts of the woods.

When the noise of congratulations and welcomes abated, the conversation turned on memories of the past.

The division boasted a long, glorious past. Its regiments were formed in days as far back as the civil war, and it was about to celebrate its twentieth anniversary on July 20th. It was awarded an order for its part in the Lake Hassan fighting, and now it was awarded the Guards standard for its seven months of incessant fighting.

Silence fell over the dug-out as the name of Polosukhin, the unit's commander, was mentioned.

"Wouldn't Viktor Ivanovich have been happy today. . ." someone thought aloud.

Yes, he certainly would, that fighting commander! That was understood. Everyone of those present knew him—some from personal contact, others had spent many fighting days with him, and in the memory of all he remained the hearty fellow and valiant fighter that he was. They recalled how during the battle for Moscow his division had broken through three German lines of defence and how he met his death at the village of Ivanniki. The men had wavered for a moment, but seeing him in their midst when the danger point was reached, they rushed forward in the attempt to protect him with their bodies, but a bullet fired by a German tommy-gunner outran them by a fraction of a second. He was buried in the centre of Mozhaisk, next to the monument to the victims of the Revolution; several shady trees now guard his last place of rest, and on sunny mornings young pioneers adorn his grave with bouquets of field flowers.

Then the conversation turned to a poem by Sergei Vassiliev, recently published in the newspaper *Pravda*. "Why, it was our division that he wrote about," some commanders remarked, and stories about the heroes of that poem, comrades-in-arms of those present, were related. Though the stories were told in plain language and no flowery words were used, the exploits themselves were remarkable for their splendid heroism.

Nobody said that they were worth imitating, and there were no edifying phrase, but they all understood that there was a reason why on the day when the division was awarded the title of Guard division, they recalled those whose names already belonged to history.

A Guard may die, but he never surrenders. Unforgettable is the story of the death of Mikhail Khomutov, political instructor, a man of unusual courage and presence of mind.

It was a day of fierce fighting near Moscow. Columns of black smoke rose over the burning villages. Melancholy lines of refugees streamed towards our advancing troops, while Mikhail Khomutov marched at the head of his company, thinking neither of death nor of heroic deeds. All he said was:

"Today the Germans will pay!"

A day of hard fighting followed, one of those days when nothing but fragmentary memories are left behind: a smoke stack of a factory shot through by a shell, the blue sky visible through the hole and making one wonder how it still stands up; a path along which the men are crawling, while behind them the white snow looks as though bespattered by bursting mines; German barbed wire entanglements, passages laid through them by our artillery fire; the first enemy blindage, the flinging of hand-grenades, the shout of "hurrah," the dead body of a Fritz crouching strangely, some more German corpses, green coats, cans of all kinds, and for some unknown reason papers and still more papers.

The last one to catch a glimpse of Khomutov was a wounded sergeant; it happened at the moment when a group of our men broke through and reached the road; there they came up against a fortified position and prepared to meet the enemy's attack. The rest of the story was told by Khomutov himself, up to the last minutes of his life.

To this day the telephone operator is unable to forget the intonation of his voice, while his words are remembered and cherished by the entire division.

When the crackling sound in the earphones was over, after the usual cipher: "This is Volga speaking," "Let me have Dniepr" was exchanged and prolonged and the complicated manipulations of the communication servicemen done with, the hoarse voice of the junior political instructor was heard at last:

"Have captured a stronghold. . . Our group of eight has broken through ahead of the rest. . . The Germans are attacking. . . We shall not surrender the road, we'll hold on to it. . ."

For a few minutes nothing but the dry crackling of the current came over the earphones broken now and then by a sound like a gust of wind. Then the operator, his ears glued to the phone, heard Khomutov's voice once more:

"The Germans have fallen back. Now they are crawling, trying to outflank us from the left, but we'll give it to them in just a minute. . ."

Again silence, an irritating pause followed by Khomutov's voice: "Attack repulsed. . . They are starting to fire mines at us. . . One of our men is dead, two are wounded. . . We are crawling along over the trench. . . I've ordered the men not to shoot, to have the cartridges. . ."

A long silence followed, and only forty minutes later the voice came over again:

"I've told the wounded to crawl away. . . Looks as if they've managed to do so. . . One more killed. . . Four of us left. . . And now the Germans have closed the circle around us. . . All the better. . . wherever we shoot, we'll hit the enemy! We'll try not to miss the mark. . ."

Major Petrov, chief of regimental headquarters, was biting his bloodless lips. He listened to that courageous voice, he knew what was going on out there, and he was maddened by the realization that he could not help, could not do a thing! The Germans had sent ahead thirty tanks, cutting off the entire first battalion from the road and trying to penetrate deep into the position of our troops. This counter-attack had to be repulsed at all costs, for the success of the offensive depended on it. The major understood that it was the unparalleled spirit of Khomutov's dwindling group that was cutting off the enemy infantry from its tanks; Khomutov, too, must have realized it as clearly. And his voice came over like thunder:

"Boy! The Germans are on the run again! Their dead bodies lie in a heap in front of our trench. . . There are only three of us left, but we shall fight to the last cartridge. . ."

What was the man over there feeling? What powerful emotions was he going through? Mikhail Khomutov's last crisp phrases, his legacy to his comrades and to posterity, now sound like a clarion call:

"They are coming! . . I can see their loathsome faces. . . No more cartridges left in the tommy-gun. . . nothing but seven bullets in the pistol. Farewell, comrades! Everyone who has been with me has died like a hero. I am dying for my fatherland, for our victory!"

The report of a pistol rang out over his voice: Mikhail Khomutov was using his pistol.

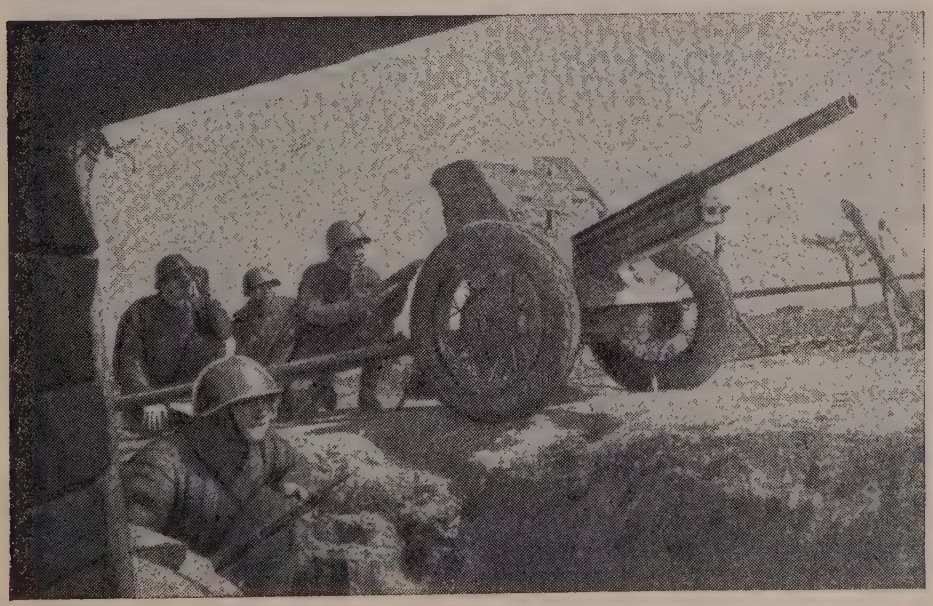
Then the voice died. . . In vain did the telephone operator press the earphones against his ears until it hurt. In vain did Major Petrov and his two adjutants scrutinize the operator's face with anxiety. . . It was all over. . .

There was silence over the streaming battle-field as the body of the hero was borne to its place of rest by the commander and the men.

There was silence in the dug-out as all of us mentally stood guard over the coffin of that plain Russian man and citizen of a great country, of Mikhail Khomutov.

As soon as the dawn of the following morning broke, every battery of the division fired a salvo. They were firing at points measured and calculated beforehand. It was their first salute of the Guard, their oath of fidelity to a cause for which Viktor Polosukhin, Mikhail Khomutov and their fighting comrades had given their lives,—they who had willed to the division the golden heritage of unparalleled courage and scorn of death.

B. GALICH



Sniping at the enemy

BOOKS AND WRITERS

A STORY OF THE COURAGE OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

("Batu" by V. Yan,—an Historical Narrative)

The year 1237 stands out as a black date in the history of the Russian people. The hordes of Batu-Khan, the grandson of Genghis-Khan, invaded Russia and conquered a considerable part of the country. In 1237 begins the dark age of the Mongolian domination over Russia.

The events of 1237 are narrated in the second book of the trilogy *The Mongolian Invasion* by V. Yan. The first book, which bears the title *Genghis-Khan*, was awarded a Stalin prize. The second book is called *Batu*. At first glance Batu is the hero of the narrative. The greater part of the book is devoted to him, but actually behind the stormy events of that period, behind the motley pictures of nomad life, battles, the Mongolian princes, Batu's rivals, is seen the real hero of the book—the Russian people. As we turn over the pages, we see the ordinary Russian man. More than seven hundred years separate us from him, but we recognize him, we see him through the ages, we hear his voice. The strength of Yan's book lies in its truth, in his ability to revive the past, to bring us closer to it.

In the year 1237 the Mongols descended upon Russia like a thunderbolt. Russian villages and cities were set on fire. Hordes of plunderers massacred the inhabitants with savage brutality. Children were murdered before the eyes of their raped mothers. The Mongols, who had hardly emerged from the primitive state, acted exactly in the same manner as the German fascist monsters today. As now, prosperous regions were turned into deserts. The historical narrative by V. Yan is very up-to-date, but this doesn't imply that the author is trying to modify the facts of long ago to fit the present. No, the author is very exact and accurate as to historical facts and their sources. His imagination does not carry him beyond the boundaries of history. It is the Hitlerites who, by their savagery, have gone back to the Middle Ages. They have surpassed the monstrosities and violence of the savages of the ancient times. They commit crimes "before which the atrocities and infamies of Genghis-Khan, Batu and Mamai pale" (Molotov).

This is one aspect of Yan's book. The other is the true story of the courage, fearlessness and heroism of the Russian people and of their fight for their fatherland. We see how the historic character of the Russian people developed throughout the centuries; we see the early links in this process—the very process which afterwards, on Soviet soil, out of various national features forged that wonderful metal that the Soviet defenders are made of.

The book *Batu* begins with the chapter "Genghis-Khan's Will." This chapter connects it with the first book of the trilogy. Between the two books there is a lapse of fourteen years.

Genghis-Khan himself wasn't able to carry out his wild scheme of conquering the earth. He desired to reach the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, but his death intervened. Then Batu-Khan took upon himself the task of accomplishing what his grandfather had failed to do.

However, the Russian princes had not learned the lesson that the terrible battle on the river Kalka [1] should have taught them. They did not understand that the first invasion of the Mongols had been only a scouting party. The Russians considered the departure of the Mongols as a sign of their weakness. The ruling princes of Russia took no heed. There was no unified power, no strong central government. The prince of Vladimir, Georgui Vsevolodovich, the strongest of the princes of that time, used to say haughtily: "I am not the one to be afraid! I know well the habits of these herdsmen." He believed the Mongols would invade, loot and depart again.

Batu expected to sweep through Russia, toward the West, quickly and easily. His chief captain Subudai believed that he would find the same submission in Russia that Genghis-Khan had in other subjugated Asiatic countries. Before the siege of the city of Vladimir, Subudai said: "Let us wait: at midday the aldermen in their brocaded robes, trembling, will present you the keys of the city on a golden platter. Indeed, it was always thus in China, in Tangoot, in Bokhara, in Samarkand! And so will it be here!"

But the Russian cities did not follow suit. Batu did not encounter any "trembling" Russians—neither old nor young. His hordes advanced only after fierce fighting. He paid a heavy toll for the plun-

[1] The battle on the river Kalka, in which the Russians were defeated by the Mongolian reconnoissance troops of Genghis-Khan in 1223.

der of Russian cities. His plan of marching "through Russia" failed. The Russians and other Slavonic peoples wore out the terrible Mongol hordes, before they could penetrate into Western Europe. The folly of Genghis-Khan's strategy was revealed on the plains of Russia. His cavalry, victorious in the boundless steppes, stopped short on reaching forests and swamps.

Batu's calculations as to the lack of unity among the Russian feudal princes were justified, for discord among the princes was Russia's weakness and the cause of her defeat. He failed, however, to take into consideration the resistance of the Russian people.

When the full gravity and danger of the country's situation was realized, "all Russia was aroused. The peasants sharpened their axes and turn-pikes, and asked where the armed men were to gather."

People rallied from every village and town. Regiments of volunteers quickly mustered. People at that time were trained to defend themselves. Life was full of dangers, and the ploughman worked in the field with an axe in his belt. The turn-pike was an effective weapon not only against animals. Soldiering was not complicated at the time, but it required skill, dexterity and experience.

Russian people were skilful fighters. During the first encounters, the Mongols suffered defeat. The Russian infantry sturdily held out against the Mongol horsemen, who attacked, shouting and screaming, aiming first of all to frighten their opponent.

"The Russians furiously attacked the horsemen, slashing their fur cloaks and iron helmets.

The Ryazan men were getting the upper hand, their ranks standing firm against the Mongol attack. The Russian volunteers fought desperately, with clenched teeth, cutting down the whirling Mongol horsemen."

These battles proved the Mongolian cavalry could be defeated, and it would have been defeated by the Russians, if their armed forces had not been scattered, if the unified patriotic impulse on the part of the people had been united with an intelligent, far-sighted and centralized political and military leadership. But this was lacking. The feudal system weakened Russia. This gave predominance to the Mongolian Khans.

Yan creates picturesque images of Russian warriors, based upon folk legends. Very convincing is his Toropka, brave and fearless in the fight, proud in captivity before his torturers, resourceful and quick-witted in difficult situations during battles. One believes that such was the Russian warrior of that time, because his characteristics are reproduced in his descendants—the present-day Red Army men.

Ryazan was besieged. The Mongols surrounded it, with their superior numbers pressing the Russians hard, but the invitations to capitulate were rejected with scorn. The Russians preferred death to shameful surrender.

"For five days the town was continually stormed day and night. But the Ryazan people sturdily held out. However, their ranks thinned, and there were none to replace the fallen. Women took the place of men, killed by arrows or crushed by enormous stones. And the Tartars brought up new and fresh reserves. They stubbornly forced their way forward in the hope of easy prey: the one who could break through first would have the right to pillage all he desired."

The enemy was astonished at the staunchness and courage of the Russians. Looking at the corpses of the Russian warriors Evpati and his friend Ratibor, Batu said:

"My warriors must learn from these men!"

The Russians were not conquered. They were defeated in an unequal conflict. The Mongolians triumphed. But the first day of their triumph was the day their defeat began.

The Mongols swept on, leaving behind them devastation. But the Russian people revived, built anew and prepared for new struggles to liberate themselves. The iron heel of the conqueror only strengthened national feeling. Hatred of the enemy who had invaded their native land and now collected tribute, did not weaken with the years, but, on the contrary, grew stronger. The Russian people united in a common effort to create a powerful central government. Russia accumulated strength, while the Golden Horde, which had flourished on the plunder and enslavement of the people, continually weakened. The Russian people lived, and their one aim was to cast off the cursed yoke. Bards sang ballads about it.

Marx wrote about the basic principle of the Mongolian Khans: ". . . to turn men into submissive herds, and fertile lands and inhabited places into cattle-breeding pastures." The historic development of Asiatic countries was disrupted and halted for centuries by the Mongolian invasion. The Russian people could not be turned into submissive herds. The historic hour arrived—and Russia emerged as a great power, but the empire of the Mongolian conquerors fell apart and disappeared.

The same force which inspired the Russian people in those distant times, when the enemy threatened their freedom, lives in the hearts of the Soviet people and the Red Army men of today. Against German fascism, which treacherously attacked our country, stands the Russia of today, a united and mighty Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The power of patriotism, which always inspired the Russian people, will defend the honour, freedom and independence of our fatherland and annihilate the cursed enemy of mankind—German fascism.

D. ZASLAVSKY

HEROIC DAYS

A new documentary news-reel, *The Battle for Leningrad*, has appeared on the Soviet screen.

The glory of Leningrad, its struggle and triumph, is one of the most brilliant pages in the history of the Soviet people's fight against the German fascist hordes.

Beleaguered, with the enemy tightening its ring around it, the splendid city stands unwavering, courageously repelling the onslaught of the bloody Hitlerites. The heroism of the people of Leningrad is indeed supreme.

The film shows the heroic city, the patriotic men and women, the valour of the Red Army and Red Fleet men in the battle for their country, for their beloved Leningrad.

Life itself speaks forth as the film is flashed on the screen before us. It is a deeply stirring, magnificent, monumental picture.

Soviet reality, the truth about the new life which the entire progressive world desires to know and see with its own eyes, has caused Soviet war news-reels to flourish. More than thirty film- and camera-men who worked on these documentary films have been awarded Stalin prizes.

Documentary films appear on the list of the best productions of the Soviet screen, such as: *Kirov*, *The Chelyuskinites*, *The North Pole*, *The Papaninites*, *The Sedovites*, *A Day in Soviet Russia*, and others.

The titles of the pictures speak for themselves. The films reflect with historical accuracy the major events of Soviet life. Each film is a new chapter in the history of the Soviet people, their activities, their struggles, their life.

When the roar of guns ushered in the war, the journalists of the screen, as Henri Barbusse has called the camera-men, set out for the front. Today there are more than 120 camera-men shooting films at the front-lines. Their cameras untiringly record everything everywhere: tankists, infantry, artillery men, pilots and marines on war ships. They have created a magnificent documentary film *The Rout of the Germans Near Moscow*, and today they have created *The Battle for Leningrad*. This film is produced by the Leningrad News-reel Studio. There are over fifteen news-reel studios in the Soviet Union, and the Leningrad Studio is one of the most renowned. And not even during the most critical months of the blockade did the work in the Leningrad studio cease for a moment.

The author of this article left Moscow for the North-Western front via Leningrad on the 25th of June, 1941. I bade my fellow camera-men farewell in that glorious city. I wished them good luck. At the time everyone realized the severe struggle ahead.

When the winter of 1942 arrived, we were in the "defence lines" near Lake Ilmen. All around us lay Russia, enveloped in snow, and not so far from our pill-boxes was Leningrad, grim and ever watchful.

I recall the winter eve when we received the precious letter from the blockaded city. It was delivered by plane. I read it aloud by candle-light. Camera-man Yefim Uchitel wrote:

". . . We are working despite the blockade. We film houses bombarded by the enemy artillery, bombings, fires, corpses of people emaciated by the hardships of these days; trolley-buses silently lined up in the deserted streets; the Baltic ships frozen in the Neva; a Red Army man on leave to see his family; and new and ever new detachments marching to the front.

"Certainly, it is extremely difficult at times. But we don't lose heart. Even Galina Zakharova, a camera-girl, not accustomed to such strenuous work, doesn't lag behind, covering daily ten kilometres with the heavy load of the camera. She simply says: 'I am also from Leningrad.' Yes, she realizes too, like all of us, that we are the only ones who can record for posterity the true pictures of these epic Leningrad days, to record them on the films and save them for our country, our fatherland lying beyond the steel ring of the blockade, and for the progressive world fighting against Hitlerism. So we turn the handle of the camera and stick to our post."

Later, I learned that during the filming of one of the bombings Shuliatin, an excellent, jolly fellow, a militant camera-man, was severely wounded. Philip Pechul, laureate of the Stalin prize and bearer of the Order of the Red Banner for the filming of the *Mannerheim Line*, was killed during a battle with the Finns.

Camera-man Serge Fomin was travelling on a transport that was torpedoed by an enemy submarine, but he shot pictures till the very last moment. He stopped turning the handle only when he found himself in the icy water. Clinging to some wreckage, he managed to hold on to his camera and saved the film. Later on he was picked up by a man of war.

Camera-man Slavin was twice wounded. He was severely wounded in the leg while trying to film our men bravely attacking the fascists, despite the heavy bombing

of enemy planes. Upon his recovery he went to the Volkhov front, where he was wounded for the second time. This time he lost three fingers of his right hand. After long training he learned to operate the camera with two fingers. At present he is in the ranks of the camera-men once more, filming at the front.

A couple of words about young Boris Sher. He spent more than three months in the German rear. He fought with the partisans and filmed their encounters with the enemy. He participated in several operations of the partisans in the Leningrad region. He managed to shoot rare pictures of partisans swooping down upon a German patrol. Lying in ambush for several hours, his camera ready, he snapped passing German soldiers just a few paces in front of him, and then filmed the charge and the rout of the Germans by our men.

In this manner, from all sections of the Leningrad front, from ships of the Baltic Fleet and from the dense forests of the Leningrad region, to the studio-building on Kamenny Island in Leningrad, were brought numerous round tin boxes—reels of the future film *The Battle for Leningrad*.

The film opens with beautiful scenes of the glorious city: the stately figure of Lenin, the Neva tranquil between its banks of granite, the Peter-Paul Fortress, the humming broad avenue of the 25th October, and the smoking chimneys of plants and factories.

We hear the usual hum of a peaceful June morning in a large town. Suddenly the loud-speakers, breaking in on the harmony, charge the air with Comrade Molotov's words about the treacherous onslaught of German fascist troops upon Soviet territory.

As the film unrolls before us, we see Leningrad seething with wrath. The Baltic ships lift the muzzles of their guns. The Soviet marines take up their posts at the land batteries. Detachments of People's Guard volunteers march along the streets. The parting of a mother and her son. A Red Army man kisses his beloved. Leningrad troops leave for the front.

Scenes showing the first battles on the distant approaches of the city follow. Amidst the thunder and the din of artillery fire and the smoke and flames of blazing villages, we see collective farmers of the Leningrad region abandoning their dwellings and driving away their cattle. At the same time, heavy guns, tanks and infantry rush by in the opposite direction. They inflict heavy losses, tire out, grind and rout the best German divisions. But the enemy, despite severe losses, is bringing up more and more reserves, pressing closer and closer toward the city of Lenin.

Grave danger is threatening Leningrad.

Children from a nursery out for a walk in besieged Leningrad. A still from the film

Thousands of men and women rise, like an iron wall, to defend their city. At the famous Kirov plant workers shoulder rifles to form regiments. In the suburbs, in the alleys, broad avenues and streets, barricades spring up. Men and women, young and old, dig anti-tank ditches. The city becomes an impregnable fortress.

Soviet patriotism! The great meaning of these words is unveiled before us on the screen. All private interests are subordinated to this: to repulse the enemy with all our might, to help the front in every possible way.

Women sew clothes for the men at the front, and mountains of warm clothing are piled up. Armaments flow to the front in a torrent: tanks, grenades, machine-guns, armoured trains, etc.

At the gates of the city the enemy encounters an iron wall of defence. The plan of storming the city fails. Air raids begin. We hear the horrible piercing cry of the syren rending the air. The sight of deserted streets throws a spell of enchantment over the beautiful city, as though its pulse has stopped.

We see a watchful, frowning giant city, as it is shot by the camera from a plane. On the roofs, "spotters" stand on the look-out for enemy planes. Order and discipline reigns in the shelters. Then, suddenly we hear the evil buzzing of the Junkers breaking through the still air. The din and uproar of anti-aircraft guns begins. There is a whizz of a descending bomb, an explosion, and we see a house crumble, a huge building that had stood there for scores of years. Everything is recorded in detail by the camera. It is horrible, but such is the grim reality of war. Such are the bloody traces of Hitlerism. This must be seen and known. And the heroic camera-men of Leningrad, who stuck to their post with the watchful eye of their cameras, recorded all this grim reality. Thanks to them we shall include all this in our bill of reckoning: the corpses of peaceful citizens, the hospital swallowed up in flames, the demolition of the Opera House, etc.

The enemy paid a heavy toll for each air raid. We see the wreckage of many German planes which were shot down on the approaches to Leningrad. The anti-aircraft batteries and pilots defended their city staunchly, and Leningrad is proud of their names. Names of such as the young pilot Sevastyanov, for instance, whom we see on the screen caught by the camera's eye in the flash of a searchlight, ramming a fascist bomber in a night battle.

New and ever new detachments of Red Army men and the Baltic marines flock to the defence of their beloved city. "Not a step back!" is their slogan. This is the order of their country and the Soviet people. Such is the law of the defenders of Leningrad. And so we behold the fire of hundreds of long-range guns, remarkable feats of snipers and the attacks of the Baltic Fleet, which sow death among the enemy.

The city dwellers are also at their war posts. A veteran Leningrad worker, a pensioneer, grand-dad Bobin, as they call him, is back in the shop, standing at his lathe. A turner of the Kirov plant, Konstantin Vaskov, is leaving for the front with the People's Guard volunteers, and a young girl Natasha Matveyeva is setting out at the head of a volunteer nurses' detachment.

The enemy tries to starve the city by a hunger blockade, and cut the railway lines connecting it with the rest of the country. The city is in a grave plight. Every day brings new hardships. The fascists begin to shell the city with long-range artillery. Shells strike apartment houses and trams full of people, but the answer of the city is tranquility and firmness. The roof of a plant is rent open by German shells, but the workshops go on with their work; the assembling of guns is kept up.

There is not enough electric power. Ice-covered trolley-buses are standing still. The trams have also stopped. The snow is not cleared away, and the streets are covered with snow mounds. The water mains have burst, and the people get their drinking water from the canal and the river by means of boring holes in the ice.

The people are undergoing hardships, rations are meagre, and every ounce of bread is weighed with the greatest care. In the streets we see pale, exhausted, emaciated people. The camera-man brings out his camera and films a despondent woman painfully dragging a sled with a corpse on it. The watchful eye of the camera also catches sight of a man dropping unconscious into the snow.

But the city goes on working, fighting and creating. We see bonfires in the shops, where the workers warm their hands and then go back to their conveyor to repair tanks and turn out shells. In a fur coat, cap and felt boots, the famous composer Assafyev lovingly bends over his notes by the dim light of a candle.

The city is enveloped in fires and clouds of smoke. Bruised and war torn are the Leningradites, but their fighting spirit has not wavered.

Leningrad is not cut off! We hear the roar of gigantic airships delivering food supplies.

Leningrad is not cut off! We see an automobile road piercing the ice of Lake Ladoga. The laying out of this ice-track and the heroism of its builders and chauffeurs delivering food and war supplies in stormy weather by day and by night, under heavy shell fire and air bombings, is vividly shown on the screen.

The Leningrad Hermitage after a fascist bombing. A still from the film

And during the entire winter the troops on the Leningrad front kept the initiative in their hands, dealing the fascists one blow after another. They began to take the offensive battles. The camera-men were with them. In the filming of the activities at the front we see the same passion and strength, the same staunchness and valour that we have just witnessed in the defenders of Leningrad.

Grim and romantic are the scenes showing our avengers—the partisans. The camera-men stayed with the partisan detachments for several months and broke through the front-line together with the food transport, sent as a gift to Leningrad by the partisans.

Finally, the advent of the spring of 1942 is shown. Once more the beautiful Neva rolls its waters before us, free of ice now. A cross is floating on its surface, one of the thousands of crosses from German graves. The spring freshets carry away this vile filth, and one imagines that the air has become cleaner. The Ladoga ice road is still operating, but the machines make headway with great difficulty, the wheels forcing their way now through water. The flow of food supplies to Leningrad was kept up until the 21st of April.

The city endured the hardships of the winter blockade. And now we see the bakeries hanging out notices with new increased bread rations for April. The warm spring sun shines over the city. Children crowd the boulevards in happy throngs. People gather in the streets to clear away the remaining snow and ice. Women bring picks and shovels. Smiling toward the spring sun, a young girl and an elderly woman are breaking up the ice on the pavement with the same youthful zeal. Amidst this noisy joyous throng of people in the street awakening to new life, we see an artist recording on his easel these historical spring days. This is truly a symbol of immortal Soviet art.

The trials and tribulations of winter are left behind. The city, after having undergone the severest ordeal, is ready for new battles. The people of Leningrad grasp their arms firmly. Their city is their front. The gates of the Kirov plant open, and we see a new detachment of workers with rifles over their shoulders and bayonets bright in the spring sunshine, marching out.

Never shall the enemy humble proud and indomitable Leningrad!

The film lasts an hour, but you feel as though you yourself had been to Leningrad and had lived through all the hardships of those long winter days, those nights lit by the flares of fires, and that together with the Leningradites you have defended the city. Walking out of the theatre into the coolness of the evening, one carries away burning hatred against the enemy and sacred love for one's country. One feels new strength, courage and certainty of the coming victory.

The work of the film- and camera-men in the making of this film is an example of unequaled devotion and self-sacrifice.

In spite of the difficulties of filming, the authors proved to be really great artists. Their recordings of the front outside of the city are vivid and impressive. Very few films show such a genuine war atmosphere, such battles, as are depicted in the scenes showing the liberation of villages from the Germans during the Leningrad offensive. For instance, enemy air bombings and the entry of a Soviet landing party supported by armoured cars; stills of German war prisoners in whose faces one can read their doom, no matter how they snarl and rush forward.

The filming of the city is quite remarkable. The camera shows Leningrad in all its loveliness. One will never forget the scenes of the city just before the air alert, the town during the blackout, the contours of the Kirov Bridge, the statue of Suvorov, the high water mark of the Neva during the spring flow, the stern beauty of the city, the severe lines of its streets, avenues and squares during the blockade period.

Despite all difficulties, the camera-men and the directors carefully figured out the composition of every reel and its expressive interpretation. Throughout the film they have always remembered that they were artists.

Now, having finished the film, the camera-men are continuing their activity: they keep on filming Leningrad of today also.

The struggle with the deadly enemy of our country is going on, but we know—victory will be ours.

R. KATSMAN

"THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR" IN BALLET FORM

English art, the art of a freedom-loving, democratic country, permeated with lofty ideals and progressive strivings, has long since attracted the warm sympathy of the Russian people. It is hardly possible to meet an educated Russian, who, alongside with the great works of his own national literature, has not read Milton, Swift, Defoe, Byron, Shelley, Dickens, Thackeray, Walter Scott and other great English writers, especially Shakespeare.

For the last hundred and fifty years Shakespeare's works have had a permanent place on the Russian stage. Following the production of original plays of the great dramatist, operas on Shakespearean subjects made their appearance. Now it is the turn of the ballet.

It is not the first attempt of Soviet choreography to approach Shakespeare. In 1940, the Leningrad Opera House produced *Romeo and Juliet*, an excellent ballet composed by S. Prokofiev and staged by L. Lavrovsky. And now, recently, the Moscow Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre has presented us with the first performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, composed by V. Oransky and staged by V. Burmeister.

The complicated task facing the stage-manager V. Burmeister was undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is one of the few plays of Shakespeare in which more attention is paid to the development of the plot than to the outlining of the characters.

The performance is a great success. This is due to the talent of the stage-manager and the performers.

A merry wit, resourcefulness, an inexhaustible variety of invention in the arrangement and succession of the scenes; an understanding of the exact forms of dancing needed to represent the characters, to express the action in dancing; the meaning and vivacity conveyed by the mimic scenes which are imperceptibly transformed into dancing scenes; the tendency towards the extensive use of the rich arsenal of classic technique; an understanding of the style of the play; a strong sense of humour,—such are the chief merits of the young ballet-master.

Owing to the special demands of the ballet, the scheme of the play is changed. The succession of scenes is here in some cases reversed, for instance the carrying off of Anne by Fenton is transferred from the last act to the end of the preceding act. Some personages in the play, as for example Judge Shallow and Parson Evans, are fused in one person, the parson turning out to be the uncle of Slender. Of Falstaff's numerous attendants only the page-boy Robin remains.

In this ballet a number of scenes are introduced which do not exist in Shakespeare's original work. In Shakespeare's play Dr. Caius fight is a duel not with Slender, but with Evans; Falstaff is not turned out of the inn for a non-payment; the suitors do not burst in on Fenton when he is carrying off Anne, and in fact the carrying off and the besieging of his own house by Ford are only mentioned but not actually shown in the original.

But these liberties taken with the original text have enabled the ballet-master to display some effective scenes, very dramatic in themselves and in no way contradicting the spirit of Shakespeare's comedies.

Such, for instance, is the excellent scene in Ford's house, where the merry wives make a fool of Falstaff. This scene begins with Mistress Ford sitting primly in a comfortable easy-chair by the fireside,

running her fingers over the strings of a lute. Falstaff is at her feet; wine bottles, glasses and a vase of fruit are set before him. He has already eaten his fill. In the interior of the room a table with the remnants of supper may be seen. Falstaff delicately picks off some grapes from the bunch, pours out a huge goblet of wine, offers it to Mistress Ford, and when she refuses, drinks down at one gulp the contents of the goblet.

But music, singing and delicate sentiment are good only for artless youth—not such is the aim of the old voluptuary. His courtship becomes more insistent. This is expressed in dance. At first there is something like a classic adagio, then both partners of the pas-de-deux dance separately, the dancing of Mistress Ford being mincing and coquetish. She dances on tiptoe. Falstaff's dance is bold, passionate and heavy. From time to time Falstaff throws himself on his knees and actually runs very nimbly on his knees after Mistress Ford across the whole stage, clasping his hands in supplication as though imploring the cruel beauty to crown his passionate ardour. In the end he unceremoniously seizes her in his arms and puts her on his knee. Mistress Ford slips away from his embrace, jumps on a chair as though saving herself from the importunity of Sir John. The knight again falls on his knees, showering tender assurances, but no sooner does he lower his eyes than Mistress Ford skilfully changes places with Mistress Page, who has all the time been hidden behind the screen. Falstaff, on raising his head, is unable to understand what has happened. It is a sort of spell. To be sure, the fervour of passion has made him lose his head, but not to such a degree! True, he drank a good deal, but surely he is not so drunk as to take one woman for another. In perplexity he draws back from Mistress Page, gazing at her with something like fear. She doesn't give him time to come to himself. The dancing duet now takes on a different character, the aggressive part being taken by the woman and the defensive by the man. Mistress Page throws herself on Falstaff's bosom, flings her arms round his neck, and hangs upon him. Her body, suspended horizontally in the air, swings round Falstaff who cautiously turns on one spot. And little by little Falstaff becomes enflamed. Both partners sink down on the sofa. Mistress Page jokingly throws her scarf over Falstaff's face, and when he struggles himself out of it, again he beholds Mistress Ford! Falstaff is faced with a new perplexity. Could it be that he was dreaming when he embraced Mistress Page? Was it possible that it was Mistress Ford who was with him all the time? Now he steps back from Mistress Ford, but no sooner does he renew the interrupted play of love than Mistress Page again appears.

A scene from the second act. Mistress Quickly—A. Finn, Fenton—A. Klein, Anne Page—M. Sorokina

She hides behind Mistress Ford, then slips out anew. These changes become more and more rapid. Finally the two women appear simultaneously. Falstaff is alarmed. Evidently he is seeing double; unquestionably he is more tipsy than he imagined; or perhaps there is some evil spirit in all this, or he is simply going mad? All these doubts and fears are vividly reflected on the expressive face of Falstaff. And how pleased he is when he at last understands his mistake! Everything is for the best. Instead of one he will have two sweethearts, ready, without dispute, without jealous reproaches, to share his caresses. The love duet is transformed into a love trio in the shape of a classic dance.

The fat knight is delighted. But his joy is not of long duration. Mistress Quickly warns them of the arrival of Mr. Ford. Falstaff rushes about the room, trying to hide himself under the couch, but gets stuck there. The women extricate him with difficulty by his legs, and for some hilarious seconds he advances drolly on his hands like a living wheel-barrow. Later on everything takes place almost literally as in Shakespeare. The women hide the knight in a basket of dirty linen. The enraged and jealous Mr. Ford rushes into the room, routs out every corner, flinging threats at his wife. The difference between the libretto and the original lies only in the fact that now the basket

remains on the stage during the whole scene, and the servants carry it out only after Ford is fully re-assured as to his suspicions.

Very amusing also is the duel between Caius and Slender. It resolves itself into lively buffoonery. The spectator sees one of those amusing tavern brawls so vividly pictured by Scarron and Cervantes. Caius is presented as a quarrelsome brawler. It seems as though nothing can stop the enraged Frenchman. He forces his opponent to flee and drives away his seconds who try to interfere in the duel. The comic effects increase from minute to minute. Slender jumps on Evans' back and continues the fight as though on horseback. The parson, fleeing from Caius, seizes the branch of a tree and hangs on to it like a huge black monkey. The tempo of the ridiculously furious fight is constantly speeded up. It seems as though nothing more comical can be added, but at the very moment when Caius considers himself the victor, Falstaff unexpectedly throws himself bodily at him and, with all his weight, pins him to the ground, as though putting a complete stop to the whole scene. The comicality of the duel is emphasized by the extreme gravity of all concerned, not one of them overdoing their amusing rôles.

I don't recollect any other ballet where the spectators laughed as often as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Just as in the performance of an amusing comedy, hearty bursts of mirth were to be heard at frequent intervals in the hall.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, two central actions, two plots are developed at the same time. Falstaff, his surroundings and the merry wives are one group, Anne, Fenton and the suitors—the other. Both plots are skilfully interwoven.

The first scene of the ballet serves simply as an introduction, presenting to the spectator some of the characters and showing the relationship of Anne Page to Fenton, her chosen lover, and to the official suitors—Dr. Caius and Slender.

The second scene is more lively—the market in the square before the Garter Inn. It also serves in reality as an introduction to the second line of the plot. Here for the first time Falstaff appears. Greedily he gazes at the hams, sausages, fish and vegetables. He is hungry, but his pockets are empty. The innkeeper, charmed with the grave signorial appearance of the fat knight, treats him to a dinner. The feast is in the style of Gargantua. Especially remarkable is Falstaff's dance after he has eaten his fill. There is something monumental in it, almost threatening, almost ominous. This is, in a way, the hymn of a full stomach, the apotheosis of gluttony.

In this same scene the quarrel between Caius and Slender is shown, which ends up with the challenge to a duel.

The third scene takes place in the park. It is a meeting between Fenton and Anne, a classical love duet with effective dance movements. It is interrupted by the arrival of the duellers. The lovers hide in a summer-house, but at the end of the duel Caius unexpectedly discovers their presence. Mr. Page drives Fenton away and threatens his daughter.

The second act begins with Falstaff being turned out of the inn. In the same scene he writes a love-letter to each of the two merry wives. Mistress Quickly leads him to Ford's house, and at the end of the scene the tipsy Ford storms his own house.

In the following scene we see the meeting between Falstaff and the merry wives and the famous scene with the basket of linen. The final scene of the second act begins with Falstaff crawling out of the Thames, where he had been dumped out by the servants together with the dirty linen. Then follow the episodes depicting the intention of the merry wives to entice Falstaff into the forest, to the mysterious oak of the hunter Herne, their reconciliation with their husbands, the part which the inhabitants of Windsor are willing to take in the mystification of Sir John by disguising themselves as the spirits of the wood, and finally the flight of Anne with Fenton in spite of the efforts of Slender, Evans and Caius to prevent the lovers.

The third act is the scene in the forest of Windsor.

Such in brief is the scheme of this ballet in three acts and seven scenes. The action continues with increased verve up to the thrid act, where its impetuous current evaporates, almost losing itself in the general movement of the ballet. The author of the libretto and the regisseur have taken from the concluding act of the Shakespeare's play only the scene with the fairies. Here we are shown how the inhabitants of Windsor, disguised as fairies, mystify Falstaff, who has come to meet the merry wives; how they pinch him and scare him. The ballet-master here took his opportunity to show a series of effective ballet turns.

In the person of I. Kurilov the theatre has found a good interpreter of the rôle of Falstaff, though the external appearance of the artist does not correspond to the traditional conception of the burly knight. Falstaff should not only be stout but of enormous build. He has something in him of Pantagruel. A barrel of lard, a whale, Goliath, mount Pelion—such are the epithets with which those around him distinguish him; and he himself constantly affirms his stoutness. But, of course, no "padding" put under the clothing can transform an average-sized artist into a giant. Still, Kurilov replaces the absence of external gifts by expressive acting. Gluttony, cowardice, sensuality, swindling, boasting, all these characteristics of Sir John are depicted clearly and with assu-

rance. The remarkable scene in the Fords' house, rich in dances, enables the artist to show his exceptional talent for comedy. Excellent is the scene where Falstaff, placing a sheet of paper on his page's back, enthusiastically scribbles love messages to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, putting the stops with such energy that his living desk involuntarily squirms with pain.

Good partners of Kurilov are A. Filipova, in the rôle of the mincing Mistress Ford, and N. Ignatyeva, as the plump and cheerful Mistress Page. The rôles of their husbands are carried out by M. Andrianov (Ford) and Honoured Artist of the Uzbek S.S.R. A. Tomsky. The rôle of the madly jealous Ford naturally supplies the actor with more opportunities to show off his art. The comic rôles of Parson Evans (V. Terentyev) and his silly nephew Slender (A. Tolsky) are treated in the spirit of the old ballet tradition.

Mistress Quickly (A. Finn) plays an important part in the piece. Adroit, artful, she is the principal connecting link between the various characters; she directs and pulls the strings of the complicated plot. She reminds us rather of a playful soubrette from Molière than of the rough countrywoman of the Shakespearean text. And in reality, such an interpretation of the rôle by the ballet-master and the actress was necessitated by the music.

The central female part, that of Anne Page, is played by Honoured Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. M. Sorokina. Her performance is distinguished, as usual, by nobility, assurance and first-class technique. Every movement breathes victorious, triumphant strength. But the interpretation of the personage gives ground for possible dispute. While striving to personify a bold, ardent, impetuous girl of the epoch of the Renaissance, M. Sorokina lays on the colours too thickly. As a result she appears rather as Fenton's mistress than his betrothed.

A. Klein, in the rôle of Fenton, is very handsome. Unfortunately, in this rôle there is no great display of choreographic solos. He only supports his lady, but does not dance himself.

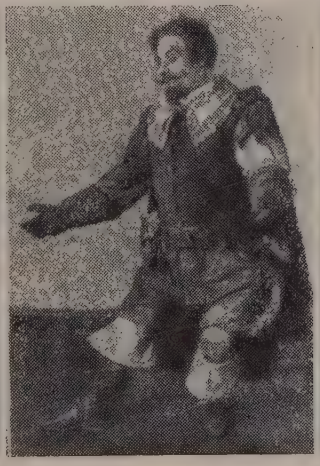
In the sphere of melody and harmony the composer, V. Oransky, has shown excellent taste. Into the musical textures he has skilfully interwoven the old-world melodies. Such, for instance, are the appearance and dance of the tipsy Page and Ford, accompanied by a lively Scotch song. The second scene of the second act, namely the scene in the Fords' house, starts off with the song, so popular in Shakespeare's days, of "Oh, my green sleeves." Certain extracts are also drawn from the works of the famous English composer Purcell.

The two fundamental musical themes are those of Falstaff and of Anne and Fenton. The theme of Falstaff—insolent, conceited, rounded-off and heavy—advances lumberously, swaying backwards and forwards as though supporting a corpulent stomach which hinders its progress as well as that of the burly knight. The lyrical love-theme of Anne and Fenton is worked out in the same spirit as is usual with similar themes. The dreaminess is as essential here as is the bluish-green moonlight in the pictures of painters representing the meeting of lovers in a park.

The Merry Wives of Windsor is an outstanding event of the Moscow theatrical season. Here, in a town which is not far from the front-line, the actors present us with a merry rollicking performance, and the spectators are enraptured. This buyoant play bears witness to the bravery and spiritual steadfastness of our people.

V. IVING

Mr. Page and Mr. Ford (A. Tomsky and M. Andrianov)



Sir John Falstaff (I. Kurilov)

Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford (N. Ignatyeva and A. Filipova)

NEWS AND VIEWS

More tragic news has reached us from occupied Poland. In a nazi concentration camp Tadeusz Boy-zelenski died [1]. He was one of the most brilliant Polish writers, critics and journalists and an exceptionally active propagandist of French classical literature in Poland, as well as first-class translator. Up to the time of the nazi invasion he was a professor of the Soviet University in Lwow.

The late Boy-zelenski's literary career developed in a somewhat unusual way. Born in Cracow, the son of a prominent Polish composer, the future writer graduated from the faculty of medicine at the ancient university of that city. When he had already reached maturity, he migrated from the clinic into the realm of art and literature, and began by writing ditties and short ballads which he performed himself at an artists' cabaret called "The Little Green Ball" ("Zielony Balonik"). Boy's short songs, some of them pure lyrics, others wittily ridiculing local bigwigs or the vices and events of the day, won their author popularity, and later on a volume of his songs and ballads ran through a number of editions.

As years went on, the scope of his literary activities grew. He became a well-known theatre critic, and his articles published in several volumes entitled *Flirting with Melpomene* constitute a very valuable review of theatrical activities in the Polish Republic well-nigh for the whole time of its existence.

The most conspicuous feature in Boy's writings is his unfailing quest of historic and human truth; he was strongly opposed to any kind of reactionary and chauvinistic trends in literary and biographic research.

Even when busy with writing his essays, Boy untiringly translated into the Polish language the masterpieces of French literature: he translated Villon, Rabelais, Montaigne, Stendhal, Balzac and Verlaine. The *Boy Library* published by the translator himself amounts to hundred volumes,—the result of immense labour. From the point of view of the purity and vividness of their style, this series of translations has been defined by critics as exemplary.

Boy-zelenski's contribution to the development of Polish culture is undoubtedly large. And the personality of the writer, tortured to death by the barbarous Gestapo in the prime of his creative power, will arouse the love and respect due to one who perished a martyr!

P. E.

[1] An obituary by Helen Ussiyevich showing high regard for late Boy-zelenski appeared in No. 3 of the Polish magazine *Nove Vidnokrengi* (*New Horizons*).

The delegates to the first conference of Italian war-prisoners, held in camp 99th this summer, spoke about the half-naked shepherds of Sardinia, the starving population of Abruzzi, the skeleton-like peasants of the Udine province.

Under the bounteous sky of Italy war and famine now hold sway. Women, old men and children crowd around town-barracks, begging soldiers for left-over crusts of bread. Once Mussolini promised to lead Italy to glory,—as a matter of fact, he has led it to humiliation and shame. He was cuffed by tiny Greece, he made a mess of things in North Africa, was beaten in the war with Abyssinia. The war against the Soviet Union started under Hitler's orders has brought the Italian people untold hardships.

Scores of thousands of men from the sunny South have found their graves in the snows of Russia. To go on with this war, which is altogether beyond his strength, Mussolini robs the Italian people, despoiling them of everything that can possibly be taken away, down to the very last corn-cob. It is not only cannon-fodder that Mussolini supplied Hitler with, but it's slaves as well. Over half a million Italian workers have been transported to Germany to drudge there like galley-slaves for starvation wages.

These home-truths concerning the fascist regime in Italy were told by Italian soldiers themselves—men of many different trades: former peddlars, mechanicians, masons, hair-dressers, hospital-orderlies. All of them had been thrust into military uniforms and compelled to fight for other people's profits, for a cause that is decidedly not theirs.

The conference, which was attended by numerous representatives of the Italian war-prisoners, passed an address to all Italian soldiers, to the whole Italian people; it reads:

"Retreat to the mountains, form partisan units to fight for free Italy! Uphold Garibaldi's glorious traditions! Turn your weapons against the Germans! Fight on the side of the Red Army! Down with fascism!"

The destroyers of culture, the German nazi bandits, have demolished and plundered Gogol's museum in Sorochintzy,

the picturesque Ukrainian village, where the great Russian writer was born and spent his boyhood.

Out of Gogol's personal letters and unique editions of his works the Germans made a bonfire. Miscellaneous household stuff and furniture which were Gogol's personal belongings have also been burnt.

Busts of Gogol the nazis "executed," i. e. they fired their pistols and automatics at them.

Children's unaffected voices ring in our ears, when we open the book *Children Take the Floor*, published in 1942 in Tashkent by the "Soviet Writer" Publishing House.

In this book the little folk tell us about the war incidents they were eye-witnesses of. The writers L. Chukovskaya and L. Zhukova did some very useful, as well as interesting work: they visited a number of children's homes and schools of Uzbekistan, interviewed evacuated children and wrote down their simple artless stories.

The writers are quite justified in refraining from "working up" the collected material: each story has retained its individual touch, the spontaneity of its psychology and expression. One cannot help feeling a lump in the throat when reading this terrible truth about the war, which fill the volume from cover to cover.

"We had macaroni soup for the first course," a little Byelorussian boy, Vitia Yakushevich, tells us; a German air-raid found him in Minsk—his native town—on June the 22nd, 1941. "Mother had just finished helping everybody, father, my two brothers and little sister... And then she sent me to fetch some water from the well."

At that very moment the first German planes appeared over the town. And one of the bombs demolished Vitia's little house.

"I ran up; there were only bricks and black smoke, no mother, no brothers, no little sister. . . I found daddy under the bricks, but he had no head and one arm was missing."

There are some thirty stories in the book, told by Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Russian and Jewish youngsters. They all speak of the same experience—of terror, death and violence. But all the stories have the same end: it is implied in the following short note, which concludes everyone of the stories: "1942. Tashkent. Children's Home No. . . ." This means that the little eye-witnesses of the war are now well fed, clothed and shod, that the State takes care of them, that the sheltered security of childhood, broken up by the nazi bombs, is theirs again.

Eight hundred years ago a few scattered log-houses appeared amidst the jungly forest covering the steep slopes of the hills near the river Moskva. That was Moscow coming into being.

FASCIST MONSTERS IN SOROCHINTZY
Drawn by Kukryniksy

"With a crash the panes flew right and left and a hideous pig's head leeringly presented itself."
From the "Fair at Sorochintzy" by Gogol

In 1947 the Soviet people will celebrate the 800th anniversary of their capital, with which all the history of the development of the Russian State is so closely linked. Prominent Soviet scientists, headed by Academician Y. V. Gautier, are preparing a fundamental four-volume *History of Moscow*. The first volume is already finished. The book contains comprehensive materials and data concerning the development of culture and art, building methods, architecture and municipal improvements from the oldest times up to the days of Peter the Great. Art experts and geologists, as well as archaeologists and architects, are collaborating with the historians. The *History of Moscow* will be published by the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

The Theatre of the Slavs—such is the subject of an exhibition organized in Moscow by the Russian Theatrical Society. This exhibition displays rich literary and photographic material concerning the theatres of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in pre-war times. Among other exhibits there are photos of the most prominent Slavic composers, playwrights and actors, as well as scenes from different plays and specimens of bills and posters.

In the Czechoslovakian section the visitor's attention is drawn to the manuscript score of Smetana's well-known opera *The Sold Bride*, very popular in the U.S.S.R., and the orginal of both text and music of the national anthem *Where My Motherland Is*, work of playwright Joseph Tyl

and composer Franz Škroup. Czechoslovakia, being a country of highly developed musical culture, takes rightful pride in the fact that it was in Prague in 1787 that Mozart's marvellous opera *Don Juan* was first performed. Photos of the bills of that epoch-making night are also among the exhibits.

Very abundant are the exhibits displaying the development of the Polish theatre, the evolution of which is demonstrated from the end of the XVIIIth century up to the time present. The central place is occupied by the three eminent Polish romantic poets, Adam Mickievicz, Zigmund Krasinski and Julius Słowacki, whose plays are represented by photos of several productions. Polish opera is represented by photos from one of the productions of *Galka*, that masterpiece of Stanislav Moniuszko, and also by works of I. Paderevski and K. Szimanowski.

Photographs in the Bulgarian Section acquaint us with the National Theatre in Sofia.

A number of exhibits represent the theatrical art of Yugoslavia.

Considerable space is given to the puppet theatres of Slav peoples, particularly to that of Czechoslovakia, which has attained a world-wide renown.

The exhibition gives the visitor a clear idea of the relations linking the theatres of the Slav peoples, it affords an understanding of the lively intercourse and goodfellowship existing between them. *Ruslan and Liudmila*, an opera of the great Russian composer M. I. Glinka, was first performed in Prague as early as in 1867. The score had been brought to Prague by the Russian composer M. Balakirev, under whose direction the opera was staged, and who conducted on the first night.

The opera was a great success with the Czech audience.

The Czech composer O. Jeremiaš wrote an opera *The Karamazov Brothers*, based on the novel by Dostoyevsky.

Before the war twenty-two operas and plays by Russian classics and modern Soviet playwrights were on the repertory of Yugoslav theatres. The late director of the Moscow Little Theatre, A. I. Sumbatov-Yuzhin, was then elected Honourable Regisseur of the Serbian Royal Theatre.

A number of Soviet theatres—the Art Theatre, the Kamerny, the Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre—visited Czechoslovakia and played there.

This interchange of artistic work and ideas is a striking illustration of the unity of cultural interests of the Slav peoples, now linked together in their common fight against nazi vandalism.

In the dense forests of the Smolensk province, in a partisan detachment deeply feared by the German invaders, a young actor, V. Nevzorov, fought side by side with many collective farmers and workers. Now he has returned from the region occupied by the Germans and is appointed

A scene from "The House on the Hill" performed at the front

A scene from a play by A. N. Ostrovsky performed at the front

director of a newly formed Young Folks Theatre. The theatre is to work at the front. As often as not, secluded forest glades will serve as halls and the actors will perform to the accompaniment of a cannonade. The principal purpose of the theatre is to represent the evolution of the Young Man in different periods of history, and to demonstrate the formation of the character of Soviet youth with their strongly developed will-power. Apart from anti-fascist plays by modern Soviet playwrights, the theatre has on its repertory some plays by Shakespeare and Ostrovsky.

And here's another theatre, and all its actors are easily packed away into one reasonably large trunk! This is a most tractable cast, convenient to work with in any emergency that one may expect to crop up when one has to move from place to place along the front-line. It is not without reason that the puppet-operators sing in one of their ditties:

Ours is not a troublesome art:
We're always fit on a march to start.

The travelling puppet-theatre directed by Evgeni Demmeni, a master of this art, has been on the Leningrad front for five months running. Over 650 performances have been given. The war has suggested a new theatrical genre—a political pamphlet. a modern fable, which permits of producing a show that is bright, interesting and especially adaptable to the peculiarities of the puppet-show. In one of their productions the Leningrad puppet-men used the principle of "posters coming to life," namely in the play entitled *The Strategists* Hitler is represented by a grotesque puppet "Petrushka" (a Russian variety of Punch) with flexible hands.

A vast concert program has been prepared by the Central Puppet Theatre under the direction of Sergei Obraztsov. Here you find many and diverse items, among them a one-act musical comedy, a satirical review, and dolls' character dances. On the satirical "television" broadcast from Berlin dog-puppets form the cast. While the "master" is away, the old mangy hound Pétain whines piteously; the big mongrel, Mussolini, yelps in a hoarse basso voice as if he were nursing a cold; Mannerheim, who has been beaten everywhere and by everybody, emits senile goans, and Antonescu howls sulkily; but they all have their tails well between their legs when a lean ravenous sheep-dog—Hitler—appears on the stage.

The Soviet puppet-men make their art work for the front, and their performances are always a success with Red Army audience

Many decades ago, on the sun-lit squares of Uzbek towns, in the noisy eastern bazaars with their motley crowds, "kyzykchi," that is travelling actors, folk-buffoons and jokers, could be seen demonstrating their art to the sounds of merry outcries and laughter. Their artistic traditions and tricks

were passed down from generation to generation. The Uzbek people were very fond of "kyzykchi's" shows.

An interesting undertaking has recently been launched by the New Uzbek Theatre organized at a big cotton mill near Tashkent. The actors of this young theatre have dug out one of the very last "kyzykchi" "Mohicans,"—People's Artist Yussup Kyzyk Shakirdayev. Under his direction, an ancient national show, sparkling with humour and merriment, is being revived. The theatre will avail itself of the valuable material obtained by special ethnographic expeditions organized by the Uzbekistan Art Institute of Ethnography of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences in 1936 and 1940. In the villages of Ferghana valley the scientists that took part in those expeditions put down in black and white a great many folk-tales, farces and jocular dialogues. All these will be made use of in building up the repertory of the New Uzbek Theatre.

There are contributions from many lands in the collection of children's drawings at the Central House of the Artistic Education of Children in Moscow.

English children are represented by about 500 works, the most interesting among them being some illustrations to popular English fairy-tales and to American Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The art of children of the U.S.A. is represented also by a series of drawings—some quite out of the common—intended to illustrate musical works of Beethoven, Saint-Saens, and Schumann; a number of American drawings deal with *Robinson Crusoe*, that favourite of youngsters.

Delicacy of drawing distinguishes the work of Chinese children, a delicacy resulting from the traditions of Chinese national art.

Nature and everyday life provide the themes preferred by most Norwegian children: the sea, fjords, cliffs, fishing, winter sports. Polish children have supplied interesting works reflecting events of urban and rural life. The art of Dutch children is represented by numerous portraits and scenes of home-life. Among the work of Czechoslovak children applied graphic arts prevail: labels, posters, placards.

In the drawings of Soviet youngsters war plays a prominent part (partisans, anti-aircraft gunners, scouting, the defence of Moscow) as well as the heroic past of Russia.

The exhibition of children's drawings was opened at the Moscow House of the Architect.

Soviet people take a lively interest in the culture and arts of England and America.

A series of conversations and lectures on Anglo-American literature have been organized by the Union of Soviet Writers. The first of these took place in the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest, in the Green Theatre which can seat several thousand people.

Lectures on Shakespeare, Chaucer, Whitman, Twain, Shaw, Wells and other outstanding writers of England and America are read in the auditoriums of the Moscow State University and the Polytechnic Museum.

The Russian Theatrical Society is organizing a scientific conference on classic and modern dramaturgy of England and the U.S.A. The opening of an exhibition representing productions of English and American plays on the Russian stage is timed to coincide with this conference.

A number of lectures on American art have been organized by the Moscow State Museum of Modern Western Art; two of these have already been delivered by A. Altukhova, senior scientific worker of the Museum; their subjects were "American art of the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries" and "Modern American Art."

In the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Rest in Moscow there are two exhibitions of books: "The Writers of England and America in the Original" and "Writers of England and America Translated into the Languages of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R."

The interest that Soviet readers take in Anglo-American literature is reflected in the work of the State Central Library of Foreign Literature in Moscow. There is an ever growing demand for books by Wells, Priestley, Wodehouse, Upton Sinclair, Dreiser, Hemingway, Caldwell, Maugham and Bennet: Moscovites read them in original. The Library has issued reference books on Shakespeare, Sheridan, Shaw, Dreiser and Whitman. A bibliographical guide, *The Best Works of English and American Writers in Russian Translations*, has already come out.

The Library has duly marked the 150th anniversary of Shelley, as well as Galsworthy's 75th birthday.

The popularity of the English language grows. During last year alone over 50,000 consultations were given by specially appointed workers of the Library to groups and to people studying English individually.

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