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THE FRENCH VOLCANO

The 22nd of June brought France the odious anniversary of the armistice. Compiègne! In the place where Foch, on the 11th of November, 1918, received the envoys of Ludendorff who came to beg for the cessation of hostilities, on Saturday the 22nd of June, 1940, Germany gave herself the contemptible satisfaction of summoning the emissaries of Pétain.

Hitlerite Germany, which lives only by blood and destruction, has sworn that she will never permit France to rise again. Hitler outlined his plan in *Mein Kampf*, a book that might well be termed the product of a madman. A hundred times his public howlings have given an advance view, have given a frenzied impetus to this process of annihilation.

A perverted political surgery is chopping France up into impotent fragments incapable of independent life. The country is divided by internal frontiers, bristling with machine-guns and patrolled by packs of wolfhounds and human hounds. The country has been deliberately stripped of all it possessed, all its resources, all its capital. Material riches and historical heritage, gold and archives, sausages and statues, machines and libraries, wheat and museums, political liberty and liberty of thought have all been the object of the same requisitioning, the same total, direct, brutal and bloody confiscation. The joy of humiliating increases the rage for annihilation. The aim is both to pillage and to destroy. Not a trinket is left in the shops, not a vestige of dignity in the soul. Hunger, cold and sickness have installed themselves in empty homes.

The armistice of 1940 had been long and carefully elaborated in Hitler's government offices. The internal frontiers dividing the three zones had already been drawn in on the maps which the Germans distributed in the Sudetes as propaganda material at the time of Munich in 1938. These maps showed the future phases of German expansion. On them was to be seen the "living space," the *Lebensraum*, growing year by year like a tumour, like a cancer gradually devouring the continent. The completed Hitler Germany was depicted as an immense black patch stretching from Baku to the Pyrenees. Paris and Kiev were nothing more than regional centres. The Italian jackal got his bone to gnaw—Lyons and Marseilles, Corsica and Tunis. Hitler did not foresee that his famous *Lebensraum*, his "living space," would so soon become a *Todesraum*, a "dying space," the place where he would send so many millions of Germans to their death.

Since the 22nd of June, 1940, since Compiègne, the guillotine and the volleys of the firing squad have been killing the best sons and daughters of France. The prisons have become too small. In the few palaces which German officers and engineers did not occupy, the Gestapo have installed their torture chambers. Every morning they wash away from the parquet flooring of rare woods the stains of blood spilt during the night. The concentration camps are encroaching on the cornfields. The manufacture of coffins has replaced the manufacture of cradles.

The German jack-boot treads insolently from Bidassoa to Flanders. The châteaux of Touraine, the farms of Normandy, the villas of the Côte d'Azur, the vineyards of Burgundy, the pictures of the old masters are passing into the hands of the Germans. The cost is not very great. Fritz pays with wads of banknotes straight from the printing press.

Laval and Pétain, that lamentable pair, in their anxiety to surrender everything, to sell everything, handed over first class war materials to the value of billions of francs. This material was a great help to Hitler in preparing his campaigns of 1941, his perfidious attack on the U.S.S.R.

Such is the armistice of Compiègne. Such is its content. This is what the sinister date of June the 22nd, 1940, recalls to every Frenchman.

Signed on Saturday the 22nd, the armistice did not come into force until Monday the 24th. Hitler demanded that Italy have satisfaction before that time. These forty-eight hours were given over to the creatures of the *Luftwaffe* and to the fascist crews of the "Caproni" and "Savoy." Hitler presented them with these two days to wallow in the dirty joy of obliterating, without any risk, a few extra thousand civilians and some more French towns. And it is the same people who today are trying to move the world to pity at the fate of their own country.

For three years have passed since that infamous day. And what changes have taken place! The insolent conqueror of 1940 sees defeat and punishment overtaking him. Hitler is besieged within the territory that he has conquered and which he is feverishly trying to transform into a fortress. He is no longer the one to determine campaigns; he merely wonders where the next blow will fall.

This 22nd is also another anniversary—the anniversary of the day on which Germany hurled herself at the U.S.S.R. History repeats itself. This wicked and treacherous act of aggression opened up before the monster of Berchtesgaden the road to his downfall. Drunk with continuous success, he anticipated further easy victories. He announced that his troops would march straight into the Kremlin; but he battered himself in vain against a great people welded together by real unity, rallied solidly behind a beloved government. In the Soviet Union the political and military leaders do not fear the people. They have faith in the people, and the people in them. For twenty-five years these leaders and this people have been working to make the U.S.S.R. one of the leading industrial nations of the world and to provide it with an army worthy of its great task. And this army is the faithful reflection of the entire nation. This traditional Russian patriotism has reached even higher levels in the defence of a regime born of the popular will. And the regime has provided this patriotism with the finest arms and the finest leaders. Hitler has been shattered by a technology at least as good, as if not better, than the German, by an army which he now knows to be the best in the world, by a brilliant military leadership.

The 22nd of June is Compiègne, but it is also the hitlerite attack on the U.S.S.R., and so this day recalls a crime, one of whose consequences will be the wiping out of Compiègne. Since the 22nd of June, 1941, the U.S.S.R. has, in defence of her independence, shed torrents of blood and temporarily lost part of her territory. At this cost she has checked fascism with its mad dream of world conquest and world domination. At this cost the U.S.S.R. has done damage to the formidable machine of war and slavery which the despicable masters of Germany had built up. The U.S.S.R. has done still more: she has shattered the prestige and the superstitious reverence which surrounded the military and political power of hitlerite Germany. Thus has the blood of Soviet heroes saved the world.

The task is not yet fully accomplished. Hard battles lie ahead. From now on France will claim her place in the struggle. The unparalleled victories of the Red Army, the immortal example of the Soviet people have galvanized her. She has progressed from the refusal to accept to the will to conquer, from resistance to offensive. The Anglo-American victory in North Africa, in which French arms played such a splendid part, has brought the guns of victory to the gates of Europe, to those of France.

The conditions of the struggle in the occupied countries, however, are becoming correspondingly more difficult. As defeat succeeds defeat and the danger increases, Hitler has ordered French families to be dispersed and all France to be emptied of its adult population. The great hunt for Frenchmen has begun. The prisoners taken in this new campaign are on their way to Germany in their hundreds of thousands, manacles on their wrists. On the sealed trucks which convey them the following four verses are found chalked:

We are not volunteers!
Down with Hitler!
To the stake with Laval!
To the grave with Pétain!

But hundreds of thousands of the more determined have found means of escaping the police of Laval and Himmler that

have been let loose throughout France. Partisan warfare is spreading like wildfire. The French volcano has erupted.

Struck simultaneously in the face and in the back by the basest treachery history has ever known, the French people have yet succeeded in consolidating and gathering their strength for the day of resurrection. They have found, named and condemned the scum who led them to the gates of death. They have separated the wheat from the chaff. They have been purified in the fires of suffering. The leaders' jealous mistrust of the people had divided and enfeebled France. The return of confidence and unity of purpose have brought back her strength. Union, union in action and for action, is now the lever of restoration.

Since 1942 the Day of the United Nations has transformed the 14th of June, the date of the fall of Paris, from a day of horror into a day of hope. For the French the 14th of June has ceased to be a symbol of solitude and wretchedness. It has become the symbol of a future of friendship. And the 22nd of June has also ceased to be an anniversary of mourning, shame and despair. It has become a symbol of renascence. Compiègne is no longer a bottomless abyss, it is a springboard from which the regenerated athlete gets a new start, from which the rejuvenated nation, encouraged from afar by the powerful voice of the Soviet Union, and aided by sister nations, is setting out for a new future of greatness and prosperity.

JEAN-RICHARD BLOCH

THE VALE OF DEATH

In one of the barracks of a camp for prisoners of war of the axis I am trying to find out from the German, Hungarian and Rumanian soldiers how the Germans, Hungarians and Rumanians treat captured Red Army men.

Here are some of the things seen and heard by the war prisoners, who answered my questions. They denied of course having taken part in these atrocities, though most likely they had participated in and not merely observed the crimes perpetrated.

One Hungarian described how a large group of captured Red Army men, stripped to their underwear, were beaten with rifle butts and rubber clubs by his detachment all the way from Stary Oskol to Kiev. Nearly all of them were wounded. Along the road many, at the end of their tether, dropped to the ground. The Hungarians shot down everyone who was unable to keep on his feet. The bodies of murdered Red Army men mark every mile from Stary Oskol to Kiev like so many milestones.

After this I took down the story of a Rumanian. He described how Rumanian soldiers tore the Red Army stars from the caps of the Soviet people they had taken prisoner, held them over the fcames till they were red hot and then pressed them to their foreheads. Goaded by the cruel pain, one of the prisoners made a superhuman effort, broke the cords that bound him and attacked his torturers with his bare fists. The Rumanians felled him with the rifle butts, hung him to a tree by the arms and kindled a bonfire under his dangling feet.

The German proved to be more talkative, and the testimony of this eyewitness deserves to be given in detail.

There are concentration camps for prisoners of war at Demblin, Tiraspol, Kaunas, Byelostok, Kerolevka, Krasnisto, Roslavl—camps, all of them, after the approved German pattern. There is a camp of the same type not far from Warsaw. It stands in a valley and is fenced in by several rows of barbed wire. Watch towers mounted with machine-guns threaten on all sides. This is the "Vale of Death." The camp of death.

The camp guard quartered in the building of a distillery, and the war prisoners were crowding in a few warehouses, but mostly in the open. But it is wrong to say "were crowding," one should say "crowded," since they have all succumbed by now, everyone of these more than four thousand Soviet men.

The fascists brought Red Army men, as well as men and boys between fourteen and fifty years of age declared to be

war prisoners, to this camp exactly in the same way as potatoes for distilling purposes used to be carted to the distillery. They packed up to a hundred war prisoners in one car. And when after several days' journey the Germans unlocked the doors, every car contained half dead men and the bodies of those who had died of starvation.

The war prisoners received their "rations" in the camp. That means that every ten men got 800 gr. bread once in three days and that each evening everyone got 500 gr. of slops, in sheer mockery called soup. It was just dishwater, with a small admixture of bran or with a few small bits of half-rotten cabbage leaves. Yet even this soup was doled out to the prisoners by no means every day.

When the territory of the distillery was turned into camp for war prisoners, a few carloads of completely rotten potatoes, left over from last year's stock, were shovelled out of the warehouses for the starved prisoners. An epidemic of dysentery was the direct result. Typhus broke out in the camp about the same time. The prisoners fell victim to it in hundreds.

In the warehouses the sick men in the throes of death rolled over each other. They did not even possess the strength to crawl outside to relieve themselves.

Those war prisoners who were not yet stricken with the dread disease tried to help their sick comrades, but they could not even obtain water to slake their thirst or to wash the sick. The entire water supply for the four thousand war prisoners was brought to the camp in one barrel. Besides, the prisoners could only get what was left over after the guard and the kitchen had been satisfied.

Every shower was a happy occasion for the camp. When it rained, even men at the last ebb crawled out of the warehouses, lay on their backs and greedily gulped the rain water.

A lot of patients perished. The guard made the rounds every day, searched out the corpses, piled them on to wheel-barrows and carted them beyond the precincts of the camp.

The dead were stacked in a trench several yards long and as many broad, and buried only when it was quite full.

The captives took advantage of this arrangement to organize their escape. They feigned death, were wheeled out to the trench and drenched with a fresh solution of slaked lime.

The plucky fellows suffered hellish torture but kept silent, for they had made up their mind to get out of the Vale of Death at any price.

Nevertheless the fascists found out about this method of escape and after that made it a rule to run a bayonet through the hearts of the deceased as a test. When it was no longer possible to escape from the camp with the dead, a large group of prisoners decided to flee under cover of night. Empty-handed, they attacked barbed wire enclosures and watch towers equipped with machine-guns. . .

That was an unequal fight in the dark. But few prisoners succeeded in escaping. Forty were killed. Three fascists too perished. The fugitives strangled them to get possession of their arms. The next morning the fascists lined up in the courtyard all the inmates of the camp. Even the dying had to fall into line. The interpreter declared that both the organizers and those participating in the attempt to flee had to give themselves up of their own accord. Nobody uttered a word.

The interpreter called for the camp to name the culprits.

The camp was silent.

The infuriated camp commander ordered fifty Communists, fifty Komsomols and fifty commissars to be shot. They were ordered to step forward of their own free will, the commander threatening to shoot every tenth prisoner unless this order was complied with. The camp was in a quandary. The bewildered prisoners stood irresolute. Nobody knew what should be done. Then out of the ranks stepped one Communist, another followed and after him all others. And all at once with one accord the whole camp took a step forward. The whole camp declared themselves Communists, Komsomols and commissars.

The frenzied camp commander gave the order. The machine-guns turned against the crowd opened fire. More than two hundred prisoners were slain and most of the others wounded. Nobody thought of dressing the wounded. There was no doctor, no bandage. There was not even a piece of rag in the entire camp. When the epidemic of typhus had broken out, the fascists had taken away all

the prisoners' wearing apparel and underwear to be disinfected, so they said, but instead of their clothes they returned to the prisoners some sort of rugged garments. No underclothing at all was served out. If anyone protested, he was beaten black and blue, tortured and shot.

All at once a "new life" began in the camp. The prisoners were given a slice of bread every second day, and the "soup" could even boast of pepper. The fascists promised to send a doctor and drugs. But the price the prisoners had to pay for this "new life" was heavy indeed.

The interpreter announced that the Red Army had laid down arms, that peace negotiations had been started and that anybody wishing to enter German service was free to do so as being released of the oath of allegiance sworn to the commissars.

To anyone volunteering for work in Germany or for fighting the partisans the Germans promised marvels.

All the camp inmates were again formed up. After reiterated interrogation there volunteered. . . eight men all told. Five signed on for work in Germany and three agreed to be gendarmes. The camp commander considered this result fell short of the mark. He began threatening, but the prisoners stood silent. Except these few traitors nobody would consent to serve the Germans.

The prisoners stood in line till the evening, then they were dismissed. As punishment none of them received a morsel of food.

Next morning the prisoners were lined up again. Some of them were so weak that they were unable to stand and dropped to the ground. The fascists fell on them immediately, beat them unmercifully with cudgels and with the butts of their rifles. The head of many a prisoner was smashed by the fascist scoundrels.

Yet throughout the whole day till dusk fell only a few consented to bow their necks under the yoke of bondage. These cowards were so frightened that the fascists would smash their heads with their rifle butts, that they preferred to become slaves. The fascists shoved upon their heads a peaked cap with a badge displaying the letter "D" as a token that they were to be volunteer gendarmes (volunteer is in Russian "dobrovolets") in the service of fascist conquerors.

The commander of the camp ascribed the miserable failure of the "recruiting campaign" to the baneful influence of Communists, Komsomols and above all of commissars. But how could the camp commander find out from four thousand war prisoners who was a Communist, who a Komsomol and who belonged to that most abhorred species—commissars? The camp commander gave the camp one night to think it over. He announced that every tenth prisoner would be shot unless the camp named the Communists, the Komsomols and the commissars the next morning.

The racking night came to an end. For two days already no one had had a bite of food or a sip of water, and the shadow of death was hanging heavily over the camp.

Next morning the prisoners again had to fall in line. The commander of the camp and the interpreter stepped in front of them. Fascists armed with guns and machine-guns surrounded them, just as the night before, looking like the evil incarnate in their cruel immobility, in their soulless automatism.

The interpreter repeated the proposals of the day before. "He who turns traitor and says he is finished with the people's struggle for freedom will have bread, will have his life spared." But no traitors were found in the camp.

Not one!

But there were heroes. Twenty-three men of their own accord stepped forward from the ranks and gave themselves up as Communists, Komsomols and commissars. They wanted to prevent the fascists shooting every tenth man in the camp, and to this end they were willing to lay down their lives. The twenty-three Communists were executed. The youngest among them was quite a boy; the oldest, an old man. There were civilians and Red Army men among the murdered, just so many honest and brave Soviet men.

After the Communists had been hanged in the presence of the entire camp, the fascists once more addressed the prisoners offering them to enlist as slaves to the fascist dogs.

Nobody signed on. Not one.

Some hundreds of men perished in the camp of the Vale of Death that day. The fascists shot every tenth man.

After that life in the Vale of Death became even more ghastly. The prisoners were given a slice of bread once in three days, and the skilly grew more disgusting every day. Starvation and sickness weakened the prisoners so much that they could not even muster the strength to remove the corpses. Many went mad and behaved violently. They were bound by those comrades who were still strong enough to do it. The maniacs howled night and day without stop. They disturbed the fascists in their sleep. And the fascists shot all the madmen.

The prisoners could not stand the torment and agony any longer. The majority decided to flee. But they had no arms, and the fascists mowed them down with machine-guns in front of the wire fencing. The abortive attempt to break out of the camp was the last show of activity in the Vale of Death. After that the surviving war prisoners waited with complete apathy for the inevitable end. It came sooner than they thought. The plague broke out in the camp. A number of fascists fell ill too. The entire German guard was immediately isolated and moved into tents. But before retiring these butchers shot every prisoner without a single exception.

Thereupon the fascists set fire to the camp with all the dead bodies scattered in it.

The distillery flamed up brightly and burned down to the ground. All the other buildings too were burned to ashes.

Deep calm reigned over the Vale of Death, the calm of a cemetery. The Germans are avoiding the place at present. Ghosts walk there, the fascists say.

It is the Spirit of Vengeance that the murderers are calling "ghosts." Ruthless revenge is claimed by the inhuman sufferings and extermination of four thousand Soviet people.

ZOLTAN WEINBERGER

Chinese cartoon. On the flag: Eastern campaign. *On the shadow:* Famine and poverty *On the map:* Europe

MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV

THEY FOUGHT FOR THEIR COUNTRY

Chapters from the novel

In the blue, dazzlingly blue sky, the July sun blazed and flamed, and thinly scattered, wind-tossed clouds gleamed incredibly white. On the road were the broad traces of tank tracks, distinctly printed in the grey dust and criss-crossed by the marks of automobile tyres. And on either side of the road was the heat-prostrated steppe, the wearily drooping grass, the lack-lustre, lifeless glimmer of the salt marshes, the flickering blue haze over the distant mounds, and such silence all around that the whistling of the marmots could be heard far and wide, and the dry rustle of a flying grasshopper's red wings trembled long in the sultry air.

Nikolai was marching in the front ranks. On the crest of the hill he looked round and with a single glance took in all who were left after the battle for the village of Sukhoy Ilmen. One hundred and seventeen officers and men—all that remained of the regiment which had been so severely battered in the recent fighting—were marching in close formation, dragging their legs wearily, swallowing the biting steppe dust that wreathed over the road. As ever, Captain Sumskov, commander of the 2nd Battalion, who had taken over command of the regiment after the major's death and who was suffering from shell-shock, walked along the side of the road, limping slightly. As ever, the staff of the furled regimental banner in its faded cover, found and brought to the regiment from somewhere among the effects of the reserve battalion only just before the retreat, swayed on Sergeant Lyubchenko's broad shoulder. And as ever, without dropping behind, the lightly wounded men marched in the ranks, their bandages grimy with dust.

There was something majestic and touching in the slow movement of the battered regiment, in the measured tread of the men exhausted by fighting, heat, sleepless nights and long marches, but ready to turn again at any moment and join battle once more.

Nikolai cast a rapid glance over the familiar faces, grown so hollow-cheeked and ashen. How many men the regiment had lost in the course of those accursed five days! Feeling his parched lips beginning to quiver, Nikolai hastily looked away. A sob rose to his throat, gripping it in a sudden brief spasm, and he bent his head and pulled his sun-baked helmet over his eyes lest his comrades see his tears. . . "I've gone soft, gone quite crazy. . . It's the heat and the exhaustion that do it," he thought, moving his leaden feet with difficulty, straining his every nerve not to fall behind.

Now he marched along without looking round, staring dully at the ground under his feet, but once again before his mind's eye, as in a dream from which one cannot wake, rose fragmentary and amazingly vivid pictures of the recent battle that had marked the beginning of this major retreat. Once again he saw the thunderous avalanche of German tanks tearing along the slope of the hill, the fleeing tommy-gunners in clouds of dust, the black fountains of exploding shells and the men of the neighbouring battalion retreating in disorder through the field, through the unreaped wheat. . . And then the encounter with the enemy mobile infantry, the escape from encirclement, the murderous fire from the flanks, the sunflowers snipped off by shell splinters, the machine-gun with its ridged nose buried in a shallow crater,

and the dead machine-gunner, who had been thrown out by the explosion, lying on his back and bestrewn with the golden petals of a sunflower, fantastically and frightfully spluttered with blood. . .

Four times the German bombers had pounded the forward position of the regiment's sector on that day. Four enemy tank attacks had been repulsed. "We fought well, but we did not hold out. . ." thought Nikolai bitterly, remembering.

For a moment he closed his eyes and once again saw the great sunflowers, the creeper trailing over the mellow soil between the even rows, the dead machine-gunner. . . He began to think incoherently that most likely the sunflowers had not been weaded because there was a shortage of hands on the collective farm; that in many collective farms the sunflowers must be standing like that among a tangle of weeds that had not been pulled out once since spring; and that the machine-gunner must have been a regular fellow, otherwise why would a soldier's death have been so kind to him, not mutilating him, so that he lay with his arms outstretched like a picture, absolutely intact, the golden petals of a sunflower strewn over him like a starry flag? And then Nikolai thought that all this was nonsense, that he had often seen regular fellows mutilated and torn to bits by shell splinters, cruelly and wickedly disfigured, and that it had simply been a matter of chance with the machine-gunner: the explosion has caused a blast of air and the young sunflower petals had gently showered down on the dead lad, touching his face in a last earthly caress. Perhaps it was beautiful, but in war outward beauty looked blasphemous, which was why he remembered so long that machine-gunner in the colourless, sun-bleached tunic, his strong arms outstretched on the hot soil and his unseeing dimmed blue eyes looking straight upwards at the sun. . .

By an effort of will Nikolai drove away these needless memories. He decided that at present it would be best to think of nothing at all, to remember nothing, but just to tramp along with closed eyes, catching the heavy rhythm of the marching feet, trying as far as possible to forget the dull ache in his back and his swollen feet.

He wanted a drink. He knew there was not even a drop of water, but all the same he reached for his empty flask and shook it. With difficulty he swallowed the thick, sticky saliva that filled his mouth.

On the slope of the hill the wind had licked the road clean, lapping up and carrying away all the dust. The tread of marching feet, until now almost inaudible, muffled by the dust, rang out unexpectedly loud on the bare ground. Nikolai opened his eyes. Below he could already see a village, some fifty white Cossack houses surrounded by orchards, and a wide stretch of water on a dammed steppe river. From the hill the dazzlingly white cottages looked like river pebbles carelessly scattered over the grass.

The men who had been marching along in silence livened up. A voice was heard:

"Most likely we'll halt down there."

"I should say, we've done thirty kilometres since morning."

Someone behind Nikolai smacked his lips loudly and said in a grating voice:

"A spring, and about half-a-pail of icy water per man. . ."

Walking around the motionless outstretched sails of a windmill, they entered the village. Russet spotted calfs were lazily plucking the shrivelled grass near a fence. Somewhere a hen was clucking away endlessly. Behind the palings bright red hollyhocks nodded their heads sleepily. A white curtain barely stirred in an open window. And such peace and tranquillity suddenly breathed around Nikolai that he opened his eyes wide and held his breath as if he feared that this familiar scene of a peaceful life, which he felt he had seen once before, long, long ago, might suddenly disappear, melt into the sultry air like a mirage.

On the square, which was thickly overgrown with pigweed, the measured tread of the infantry was smothered again. All that could be heard was the heavy swish of the grass that covered the boots of the men with green pollen as they waded through it up to their shins, and the subtle and sad fragrance of flowering pigweed was added to the stifling smell of dust.

The war had reached even this village, lost in the boundless steppes of the Don. In the yards, against the walls

of the barns, stood the ambulances and trucks of a hospital battalion; along the streets marched Red Army men of a sappers' unit; three-ton lorries heavily loaded with freshly sawn willow-planks were heading for the river; in the orchard not far from the square was an anti-aircraft battery. The guns were standing near the trees, skilfully camouflaged by the leaves. Wilted grass lay on the earth, thrown out of the recently dug trenches, and the menacing, bristling barrel of the gun nearest the street was trustingly embraced by the broad branch of an apple tree, thickly loaded with pale green unripe Antonovka apples.

Zvyagintsev dug Nikolai with his elbow as he exclaimed gleefully:

"There's our kitchen, Mikola! Keep your chin up! We'll stop here all right, and there's a river and water, and Petka Lissichenko with his kitchen. What more do you want?"

The regiment halted in a big neglected orchard right on the river bank. Nikolai drank the cold slightly salty water in small gulps, frequently lifting his mouth and then again bending eagerly to the edge of the pail. Watching him, Zvyagintsev said:

"That's just how you read your letters from your son: you read a little, break off and then start again. I don't like to drag things out like that. Haven't got the patience for it. Come on, give us the pail, or else you'll swell up!"

He took the pail from Nikolai and throwing back his head drank long, without stopping for breath, in big noisy gulps, like a horse. His Adam's apple, overgrown with red hair, bobbed up and down fitfully, his grey goggle eyes were screwed up blissfully. Having drunk his fill, he cleared his throat, passed his sleeve over his mouth and dripping chin, and said in a dissatisfied tone:

"Pretty rotten water. All that's good about it is that it's cold and wet, but it wouldn't have been a bad idea to take out the salt. Do you want any more?"

Nikolai shook his head, and then Zvyagintsev suddenly asked:

"Your son keeps sending you letters all the time, but I haven't noticed you receiving anything from your wife. You're not a widower, are you?"

And surprising even himself Nikolai answered:

"I have no wife. We're divorced."

"Long?"

"Since last year."

"So that's it," said Zvyagintsev, slowly and sympathetically. "But whom are your children staying with? I think you said you had two?"

"Two. They're living with my mother."

"Did you chuck your wife, Mikola?"

"No, she left me. . . You see, on the day war was declared I came home from a business trip, and she wasn't there, she'd gone. She'd left a note and gone. . ."

Nikolai spoke eagerly, but then somehow cut himself short and fell silent. Frowning and pressing his lips tightly together, he sat down in the shade of an apple tree and began to take off his shoes in the same silence. In his heart of hearts he was already sorry for what he had said. For a whole year he had carried about this dumb, unuttered pain in his heart just to blurt it out for no reason at all to the first chance person in whose voice he thought he heard a note of sympathy. Why on earth had he been babbling like that? What had Zvyagintsev to do with his troubles?

Zvyagintsev did not see Nikolai's lowered, gloomy face, and continued prying him with questions.

"What was the trouble, did she find someone else, the slut?"

"I don't know," replied Nikolai curtly.

"That means she did!" said Zvyagintsev with conviction, shaking his head accusingly. "What creatures these women are! You're a presentable fellow, no doubt, made a good living too. What the devil did she want? Did she give the children a thought, the bitch?"

Glancing more closely at Nikolai's helmet-shaded face, Zvyagintsev realized that it would not do to continue the conversation. With the tact of naturally kind and simple people he fell silent, sighed and shifted awkwardly from foot to foot. And suddenly he felt sorry for this big strong man, the comrade beside whom he had been fighting for two months sharing with him the hard lot of a soldier, and he wanted to console him and tell him about himself. Sitting down beside Nikolai, he began to talk:

"Quit grieving about her, Mikola! We'll fight this thing out, and then we'll see. The most important thing is that you have children. The main thing now,

brother, is children. The way I look at it, it's in them that the very root of life lies. It's they who'll have to fix up this ruined life, 'cause the war did a hell of a lot of damage. But as for women, let me tell you straight, they're impossible. Some of them would tie themselves up in knots to get their own way. Terrible creatures women, I know them, brother! See this scar on my upper lip? That happened last year too. On the first of May me and a couple of friends of mine who run harvester combines too decided to get together for a drink. We had a real family party, with our wives, dug up an accordion, had a few drinks. Well, I had a drink too, of course, and so did my wife. As for my wife — how'll I put it?— she's something like a German tommy-gun: if you load her she won't stop until she's fired the whole belt, and she also tries to take the position by main force.

"Well, at this party there was a certain young lady who danced the 'Gypsy' swell. There I sit looking at her and admiring her, without a single uncalled for thought about her in my head, when my wife comes up, pinches my arm and hisses in my ear: 'Don't look!' Well, thinks I, that's a new one. Am I supposed to sit at a party in blinkers or something? And I look again. Again she comes up and pinches my leg, with a nasty twist, so's it hurt real hard. 'Don't look!' Well, I turned away. Thinks I, to hell with it, I won't look, I'll deprive myself of the pleasure. After the dancing we sat down around the table. My wife sat opposite me, her eyes round and darting sparks like a cat's. And me with black and blue marks smarting on my arm and leg. Forgetting myself, I glance at that miserable young lady grumpily, and I thinks to myself: 'It's on account of you, you little devil, that I have to suffer undeservedly! You shook a leg, and I have to pay.' And just as I was thinking this my wife grabs up a lead plate from the table and with all her might plunk at me. The target, of course, was a good one. I had a pretty fat mug at that time. Believe it or not, that plate bent double, and the blood started to stream from my nose and lip just as if I had been seriously wounded.

"The young lady, of course, ohed and ahed, while the accordion player fell on the sofa, his legs flying up over his head, laughing and shouting in his disgusting voice: 'Sock him with the samovar, his phiz will stand it!' Everything went black in front of my eyes! I gets up and I rips out at her, that is my wife. 'What's the idea,' says I, 'you wildcat, what are you doing, you so-and-so?!' And she answers me in a calme voice: 'Don't make eyes at her, you red-headed devil! I warned you.' By this time I calmed down a little, sat down and says to her real polite: 'So,' says I, 'Nastassya Filippovna, that's how you show your breedings? I must say it's hardly polite of you to throw plates in front of people, just remember that, and at home we'll have a heart-to-heart talk!'

"Well, it's clear enough that she ruined my whole holiday. My lip was split in two, one tooth was loose, my white embroidered shirt was all blood, my nose was swollen and even squashed to one side. I had to leave the company. We got up, said good-bye, made our excuses to our hosts, everything nice and proper, and went home. She walked in front and I, like the guilty one, trailed behind. All the way, damn her, she walked along as lively as can be, but no sooner does she walk through the door that—bang!—down she flops in a faint. There she lies and doesn't breathe, her face as red as a beet, her left eye open just a crack and staring at me. Well, thinks I, I can't be swearing at her in this condition, hope nothing bad's happened to the old woman. I poured some water on her somehow, and saved her from death. A minute later, and again she flops in a faint. This time her eyes are closed tight. Again I poured a bucket of water on her. That brought her to, and did she raise a shout and burst into tears and start kicking her heels!

"'You,' says she, 'such-and-such, you've ruined my new silk blouse, poured water all over it, and now I won't be able to wash out the stains! Traitor! Making eyes at every girl you see! I can't go on living with you, w th a philanderer!' And all the rest of it. Well, thinks I, if you can kick your feet and remember about your blouse, that means you've recovered all right, that means you'll pull through the winter, my dear!

"I sit down at the table, start smoking and see my beloved get up, crawl

over to the trunk and begin to put her belongings in a bundle. Then she walks over to the door with the bundle and says: 'I'm leaving you. I'm going to live with my sister.' I, of course, see that the devil's got into her and that there's no crossing her now, so I agree. 'Go right ahead,' says I, 'it'll be much better for you there.' 'Oh!' she says, 'is that so? You love me so much you don't even try to stop me? Well, I won't go anywhere, so there! I'll hang myself right now, and then your conscience will torture you all the rest of your life, you son-of-a-bitch!'"

Zvyagintsev's memories had put him in a high good humour. Smiling and shaking his head, he pulled out his tobacco pouch and began to roll himself a cigarette. Nikolai was unwinding the strips of cloth in which his feet were wrapped, damp and hot with perspiration. He was smiling too, but sleepily and lazily. He should have gone over to the well, and washed the cloths, but he did not want to interrupt Zvyagintsev's amusing story, besides he hadn't the energy to get up and walk through the blazing sun. Lighting up, Zvyagintsev continued:

"I thought for a bit, and then I says: 'Go right to it, Nastassya Filippovna, hang yourself; you'll find a rope behind the trunk.' She plumped down her bundle, grabbed the rope, and into the parlour. She pushed up the table, tied one end of the rope to the hook from which the baby's cradle used to hang, made a noose on the other end of the rope and put it around her neck. But she doesn't jump from the table, only bends her knees, braces her chin on the noose and begins to gasp as if she was choking for air. And I keep sitting tight where I am. The door to the parlour is open just a crack, and I can see the whole thing as plain as plain. Well, I waits a bit and then I says real loud: 'Well, thank God, looks like she's hanged herself. I'm through with my suffering!' You should have seen her jump from that table and take for me with her fists! 'So you'd be glad if I hanged myself?! So that's the kind of loving husband you are?!' I had to use force to get her quiet again. By then the effects of the liquor had worn off completely, and it was all for nothing that I'd drunk a litre of vodka at the party. I sits there after this scrap and thinks: 'People go to the clubhouse to see a show, but I've got my own show right here at home, free of charge.' And I bursts out laughing, but somehow deep down inside I don't feel so happy.

"So you see what these women—that devil's own brood—are capable of! Good thing the kids weren't home that night, my mother took them to her house for a visit, or else they'd have been scared to death."

Zvyagintsev was silent for a while and then began again, but this time without his former animation:

"Don't think me and my wife've been getting along like that all our lives, Mikola. It's only the last two years that she's been spoiled like that. And I tell you straight: it's novels that spoiled her.

"For eight years we lived like any people. She used to work on a tractor, and never went into faints or cut up any high jinks. But then she got the habit of reading all kinds of literary books, and that started it. She's got so wise, she never says anything straight out, plain like, but everything round about. And she got so taken up with those books that she'd read the whole night through and walk around like a giddy sheep all day long, and sigh all the time, and everything'd be dropping out of her hands. Well, once she got to sighing away like that, and then she walks over to me with a silly grin on her face and says: 'If only you'd utter words of love to me, Vanya, at least once! Never once have I heard from you those tender words that are written in books!' I nearly threw a fit: 'She's sure read enough!' thinks I, but I says to her: 'You're cracked, Nastassya! Here I've been living with you for ten years and we've raised three children, what under the sun would I be uttering words of love to you now for? Why, my tongue wouldn't even be able to get around any such business! Since I was a young man, I never said tender words to anyone but always used my hands more, and I certainly won't start now. I'm not such a dope as you think! And as for you,' I says to her, 'instead of reading silly books you ought to be taking better care of the children.' And as a matter of fact the kids were being terribly neglected, running around like orphans, dirty, their noses running, and in the house too everything topsy-turvy·

"Just imagine, Mikola, is that right? I of course have nothing against cultural amusement, I like to read a good book myself, something about engineering, about motors. I had all sorts of interesting books: about the care of tractors, and a book about internal combustion engines, and one about the installation of Diesels on a guard ship, not to mention literature about harvester combines. How many times I used to ask: 'Go on, Nastassya, take this book and read about tractors. It's a terribly fascinating book with drawings and blue prints. You should study it; after all, you're working on a tractor.' But do you think she read it? Like hell she did! She turned up her nose to my books, like the devil at incense; just give her novels, yes, and novels from which the love simply oozes, like dough rising out of a pot. I cursed and I asked her nicely, but nothing helped. As for beating her, I never beat her because before I learned to work on a harvester combine I worked for six years with a sledge-hammer, and my hand got terribly heavy.

"So that's how our family life dragged along, brother, until the time came when I was called up. And do you think that now that we're separated, things are any easier for me? Nothing of the sort! Let me tell you frankly and confidentially: I simply can't get my correspondence with my Nastassya Filippovna going properly. It just doesn't work out, and that's all. There's nothing I can do about it! You know yourself, Mikola, how everyone of us here at the front likes to get letters from home and how we read them to each other out loud. Take yourself, you've read letters from your son out loud to me, but I can't read my wife's letters to anyone because I'm ashamed. Once, when we were still around Kharkov, I got three letters from her one after the other, and every letter began like this: 'My dear Chickie!' I read that, and my ears start burning like fire. From somewhere she'd dug out that fancy word: I beg my boots she'd got it out of some book. Now if she'd written like an ordinary human being: 'Dear Vanya,' or something like it, but that 'Chickie!' When I was home she used to call me red-headed devil most of the time, but as soon as I left for the front, right away I became 'Chickie.' And in all these letters she lets me know sort of by-the-way and hastily that the children are alive and well, that there's no special news in the Machine and Tractor Station, and then she bleats about love on all the pages, and uses such queer, bookish words that they make my head swim. . .

"I read these impossible letters through twice, and they simply make me feel as if I was drunk. Slyussarev from the 2nd Platoon comes up and asks: 'What news from your wife?' And I slips the letter into my pocket as fast as I can and just waves my hand: go away, so to say, old man, don't bother me. He asks: 'Everything all right at home? By your face,' says he, 'I see you've had bad news.' Well, what was I to say to him? I think a bit and then I says: 'My grandmother died.' Well, that shut him up and he went away.

"That night I sat down and I starts writing to my wife. I sent my regards to the kids and to all the relatives, I wrote about myself here down to the last detail, and then I writes: 'Please don't call me all sorts of impossible nicknames. I have a Christian name of my own. Maybe thirty-five years ago I was a 'Chickie,' but I guess now I've fully grown up into a rooster, and my weight, eighty-two kilograms, doesn't at all fit a 'Chickie.' I also want to ask you to stop writing that love stuff, and don't make me sick. Write more about how things are going in the M.T.S., and which of our friends have stayed at home, and how the new director is getting along with the work?'

"And here I get a letter in answer just before the retreat. I take the letter, my hands shaking, open it, and I just go hot all over! She writes: 'Hello, my beloved Kitten!' And then again four notebook pages all about love, not a word about the M.T.S., and in one place she doesn't call me Ivan but some kind of Edouard. 'Well,' thinks I, 'the old woman's gone bats altogether! Most likely she copied all that stuff about this damn love out of a book, or elsewhere did she dig up this Edouard, and why are there so many commas of all kinds in the letters? She never knew the least thing about commas, and all of a sudden she sticks in so many that you can't even count them. A freckle-face has less freckles on his mug that there are commas in a single one of

her letters. And what about those nicknames? First 'Chickie,' then 'Kitten,' what next?' thinks I. 'In her fifth letter maybe she'll call me 'Tresor,' or some such other pet name for a dog. What the hell is this anyway, was I born in a circus or something?' When I left home I took a textbook on tractors with me,—I carry it around in case I should happen to want to read,—and by heavens, I wanted to copy out a page or two of this textbook and send it to her so's to get even with her, but then I thought better of it. Maybe she'd take it as an insult. But I really have to do something to cure her of all this nonsense... What do you advise, Mikola?"

Zvyagintsev glanced at his comrade and sighed heavily. Nikolai, stretched out on his back, was sound asleep. Under his drooping black moustache his uneven teeth gleamed white, and in the raised corners of his mouth there was a tiny wrinkle—the shadow of a smile that had not yet vanished from his lips.

Nikolai soon woke. A slight breeze was stirring the leaves of the apple tree. Fantastically changing patches of light were skimming over the grass. Somewhere a turtle dove was cooing, and drowning it out a tractor was chugging away intermittently. Voices and laughter could be heard in the street, and someone was shouting in a young, ringing tenor:

"I told you the spark plug was on the blink. Got the spanner? Bring it over, sweetheart! Let's have it, fish-eye!"

There was a smell of wilted grass, smoke and scorched porridge in the orchard. Near the field kitchen, Nikolai's friend, tank buster Peter Lopakhin was standing with his bow legs wide apart. He was smoking and lazily bandying words with Lissichenko the cook.

"You've gone and cooked porridge again, you bay gelding?"

"Again. And cut out the swearing."

"That's where your porridge sticks in me, see?"

"I don't care a hoot where it sticks in you."

"You're no cook, devil alone knows what you are. You've got no imagination. There isn't a single good idea in your head. You've got a head like an empty boiler, a lot of noise in it and nothing else. Couldn't you have managed to wangle a sheep or a pig in this village, without the man of the house knowing? You might have cooked a good *shchi*, made a second course. . ."

"Pull up your anchor and get going, we've heard the likes of you before!"

"For three weeks we've had nothing but millet porridge from you. Is that the way decent cooks do things? You're a shoemaker and no cook!"

"Oh, I suppose you'd like an entrecôte? Or a pork chop, maybe?"

"Ought to make a chop out of you. You're the right stuff all right, stuffed like some commissary sergeant!"

"You better be careful, Petka, I've got boiling water to hand here... Did you go to the hospital battalion?"

"I did."

"Well?"

"Well, nothing."

"What'd you go for then?"

Lopakhin pretended to yawn and was silent. The smiling Lissichenko, his arms akimbo, stared at him, waiting for an answer.

"I went there just like that, looking for friends," said Lopakhin indifferently.

"There used to be a swell number there. You didn't bump into her, did you?"

"I didn't try to bump into her."

"Come on now, cut it out! I myself saw you cleaning your boots with grass and polishing up your medal with a bit of rag. I suppose even the medal didn't help? But then how could it? Now then if you had, let's say, an Order, that would have been a different story, but just imagine: a Medal for Valour! The people who land there, brother, have more than that."

"Ass!" said Lopakhin good-naturedly. "I tell you I wasn't going anywhere in particular, I just went for a stroll through the village. After the grub you hand us, there's not much high flying you can do. Lately I've gone so skinny that I've even stopped seeing my wife in my dreams."

"What do you dream about then, my hero?"

"Empty dreams, I dream of all sorts of rubbish, like your porridge."

"They're in the mood for wagging their tongues all right," thought Nikolai as he got up and stretched his stiff arms.

Lopakhin came up to him and bowed mockingly.

"And how didst thou sleep, most esteemed Mr. Streltsov?"

"Go talk to the cook, I've got a headache," said Nikolai grumpily.

Lopakhin screwed up his light, roguish eyes and shook his head understandingly.

"It's quite clear: depression as a result of our retreat, the heat and a headache? Come on, Kolya, let's have a swim before dinner, we'll be moving soon. Our fellows simply won't get out of the river. Even I've already rinsed my sinful body once."

Nikolai had made friends with Lopakhin recently. In the battle for the "Svetly Put" State Farm their trenches had been side by side. Lopakhin had come to the regiment only the day before, with the last reinforcements, and Nikolai saw him in action then for the first time. The tank busters had set fire to two tanks, letting them come up to within a hundred and fifty to a hundred yards, but when gunner No. 2 had been killed, Lopakhin had been held up in firing, and the third tank, firing as it came on, had rolled over the tank busters' trench and made for the battery's position at full speed. Nikolai, who was kneeling, fitted a drum to his tommy-gun with trembling hands. He saw the yellow, clayey soil showering down from under the tank caterpillars into Lopakhin's trench, and thought that the tank busters must have perished. But after a few seconds the long barrel of a gun poked up from the half-ruined trench through a cloud of yellow dust that had not yet settled, and turned in the direction of the tank that had broken through. A shot rang out and a flame crawled like a lizard over the dark armour of the suddenly halted tank, after which dense black smoke began to pour forth. And almost immediately Lopakhin called over to Nikolai:

"Hey you, brunette with the moustache! Are you alive?"

Nikolai raised his head and saw Lopakhin's fiery, malicious clay-smudged face.

"Why aren't you firing, damn your eyes? Don't you see them crawling up over there?" shouted Lopakhin, rolling his light eyes savagely, as he pointed towards the Germans who were making their way on their bellies along the belt between them.

With his first brief burst Nikolai snipped off the white heads of some daisies growing on the crest between the two trenches, but when he aimed lower he heard with pleasure through the furious chatter of his tommy-gun a sharp, twice-repeated cry.

That evening, after the fighting, Lopakhin came into the dugout. He looked over the Red Army men closely and asked:

"I say, fellows, where've you got that brunette with the moustache, a handsome fellow who looks like the British minister Anthony Eden?"

Nikolai turned his face towards the light, and catching sight of him, Lopakhin said briskly:

"I found you after all! Come on, pal, let's go out and have a smoke in the fresh air."

They set down near the dugout and lit up.

"It was a neat job the way you got that last tank," said Nikolai looking searchingly through the dusk at the sunburned, brick-red face of the tank buster. "I thought both of you were buried for sure. Then I look and see a gun poking up..."

And then Lopakhin interrupted him jeeringly:

"Well, well, just what I was waiting for... You go into raptures over my work, but why didn't you fire when the tank was rolling over my trench? Why didn't you fire at the tommy-gunners until I bawled you out? I need your admiration about as much as a stiff needs a mustard plaster, get me? What I need is action and not admiration!"

Smiling, Nikolai replied that he had delayed just then because he had emptied all his drums. Lopakhin frowned, cast a mistrustful sidelong glance at him and said:

"Got ready to fight, and then it turned out that you weren't prepared for the fight, eh? In our relations with you there's just one thing missing: all you'd do, having put your conscience in your pocket, would be to chuck me a few bullets and praise me, while I'd do the fighting for you... Is that it? Marvellous relations that would be! .."

Seeing that Nikolai was scowling, Lopakhin held out his strong, stumpy hand and said good-naturedly:

"Don't be sore. You shouldn't take

offence at the truth, should you? Since necessity has already thrown us together, we'll fight together. Let's get acquainted. I think we hail from the same place. You come from the Rostov region, don't you? Well, and I'm from the town of Shakhty. Let's be pals."

From that day on they really became friends, with the simple and strong friendship of the soldier. Sarcastic, sharp of tongue, a lady's man and gay dog, Lopakhin seemed to complement the reserved, taciturn Nikolai, and watching them, Sergeant Poprishchenko, a leisurely, elderly Ukrainian, often used to say:

"If only you'd make a dough out of Peter Lopakhin and Nikolai Streltsov and then knead the dough thoroughly and shape a person out of it, perhaps you'd get one real person out of the two, and then again perhaps you wouldn't: who knows what would come out of such a mixture?"

At the river the sappers' saws were buzzing merrily, and one could hear the splash of water and the happy guffaws of the bathing Red Army men. Lopakhin and Nikolai walked side by side over the trampled grass in silence. Then Lopakhin suggested:

"Let's go behind the bridge, it's deeper there."

He was the first to step over the fallen fence, and with a nod indicated the tractor standing on the road. Two tractor drivers in oil-stained overalls were busy beside the engine. Helping them was Zvyagintsev, stripped to the waist. His broad back and muscular arms were thickly smeared with oil, and there was a black streak across the length of his face. He had prudently taken off his tunic, and delighted with the chance to get near a machine, was skilfully, lovingly and carefully working away with the spanner.

"Hey, you dandy! Take the sand pail from the kids and let's go swimming, we'll manage to scrub you clean somehow," called out Lopakhin as he passed.

Zvyagintsev glanced in his direction, and, catching sight of Nikolai, grinned broadly.

"Look at this tractor, Mikola, that's what I call a tractor! It's amazingly powerful. Did you see the toy it drags? Took hold of the wheel, and it was just as if I was back home, at my own M.T.S. . . . I swear this engine would drag three combines as easy as pie, honestly it would!"

Zvyagintsev's shiny, perspiring face was beaming with such artless delight that in his heart of hearts Nikolai involuntarily envied him.

Yellow water-lilies were floating in the still waters. There was a smell of ooze and river dampness. Nikolai stripped and washed out his tunic and foot cloths. Then he sat down on the sand, hugging his knees. Lopakhin stretched out beside him.

"You're down in the dumps nowadays, Nikolai. . ."

"What's there to be happy about? I see no reason."

"What special reasons do you need? You're alive. Well, be glad that you are. Look at the weather we're having! What a day! Sunshine, the river, water-lilies floating around over there. . . Glorious, that's what it is! I'm surprised at you. A real veteran, been fighting nearly a year, and you go about mooning all over the place like any new recruit. Do you think because they've given us a bit of doing that means it's all up? That the world's come to an end? That the war's over?"

Frowning wistfully, Nikolai replied:

"What's the end of the war got to do with it? I don't think anything of the sort. But as for lightly passing off what's taking place, I simply can't do that. And that's just what you're doing, acting as if nothing in particular has happened. It's quite clear to me that there's been a catastrophe. How big a catastrophe, neither you nor I know, but we can make a guess. It's the fifth day we've been on the go, soon we'll be at the Don, and then Stalingrad. . . Our regiment's been smashed to smithereens. And what about the others? What about the army? It's clear there's been a breakthrough on a big sector of our front. The Germans are hanging on to our tail. We only shook 'em off yesterday, and all the time we're floundering. As to when we'll attack, no one knows. It's simply sickening to keep going like that and to know nothing! And the looks the population give us when they see us off! It's enough to drive you crazy!"

Nikolai gritted his teeth and turned his head aside. He was silent for a moment

or two, trying to master the agitation that had swamped him, then began again, only more quietly and calmly:

"The whole thing tears your heart from your body, yet you preach: 'You're alive, aren't you? Well, be glad, there's the sunshine, water-lilies, floating around . . .' Go to the devil with your water-lilies! Makes me sick to the stomach to look at them! You're like some cheap optimist in a rotten play. You even managed to wangle going to the hospital battalion. . ."

Lopakhin stretched himself, making the sand crunch.

"Too bad you didn't come along," he said. "There's a little doctor, third-grade, at that place, Kolya; if you just take one look at her you'd want to rush into a battle that very minute, so's you'd be wounded immediately. She's no doctor, she isn't. She's an exclamation mark, by God!"

"Go to hell!"

"No, seriously. Such womanly grace, such beauty, it's simply awful! She's no doctor, she's a six-barrelled mortar. She's a menace to our brother privates, to say nothing of the officers!"

Nikolai remained silent, his eyes fixed gloomily on the reflection of a white cloud in the water. And Lopakhin burst forth in a tone of pent-up fury:

"As for me I see no reason for keeping my tail between my legs like a cur, get me? Licking us, are they? Well, that means we deserve a licking. Fight better, you sons-of-bitches! Hang on to every hillock on your territory, learn to thrash the enemy so that he rattles with the death rattle. And if you can't do that, don't be sore if he pounds your mug till it's bloody and if the population gives you dirty looks. Why should they meet us with bread and salt? You ought to thank 'em for not spitting in your face, and be glad of it. Now you're no optimist, tell me: why is it that the Germans sit tight in some little village the size of a pimple, and you can pry them out only with the greatest difficulty, while we sometimes give up a city without a fight, going off at a jog trot? We'll only have to take it back again, won't we? Or is some kind uncle going to take it for us? And that happens because you and I, mister, haven't learned yet how to fight as we should, we're not sufficiently fighting mad. When we learn to pitch into a fight so that we're foaming at the mouth with rage, then the Germans will turn back to the West, get me? Take me, for instance, I've already reached such a degree of rage that if you spit on me I sizzle. That's why I'm an optimist, that's why I keep my tail up. It's because I'm mad right through! And you've got your tail between your legs and are drenched in tears. 'Oh dear, our regiment's smashed! Oh dear, the army's smashed! Oh dear, the Germans have broken through!' May they rot in hell, those damned Germans! As for breaking through, they've done that, but who's going to get them out of here when we gather our forces and strike? Even now when we're retreating we give them some knocks; when we attack, we'll pound them ten times as hard! We're retreating, and that's all there is to it, but they won't have to retreat, they won't have anything to retreat on! As soon as they turn back to the West, we'll tear those bastards' legs out of the place they grow from, so's they'll never walk over our soil again! That's how I look at it. And let me tell you: don't you come weeping on my shoulder, please! I won't wipe a way your tears. My hands've got tough in this war, you never know, I might scratch you yet . . ."

"I don't need your consolation, you sap, and don't go wasting your eloquence like that, but tell me instead when, in your opinion, will we begin to fight? When we get to Siberia?" said Nikolai.

"To Si-be-ri-a?" echoed Lopakhin drawlingly, blinking his bright eyes rapidly. "Not at all, my dear sir, that school's too far away for us to go to learn in! We'll learn right here, in these very steppes, see? And for the time being, let's just cross Siberia right off the map. Yesterday Sashka—that's No. 2 in my crew—says to me: 'We'll go as far as the Urals, and there in the mountains we'll soon fix the Germans.' And I says to him: 'If you say another word about the Urals to me, you ground beetle, I won't grudge an armour-piercing bullet, I'll take my gun this minute and blow your silly block off!' And he starts backing out, says he was only joking. And I tells him I was only joking too. 'Think I'd fire an armour-piercing bullet,' says I, 'and from such a swell anti-tank gun as that at such a fool?' Well,

and that finished that pleasant little conversation."

Lopakhin crawled round so that he was closer to the water, and busied himself for some time with scrubbing the tough soles of his feet with the wet coarse sand. At last he turned his face towards Nikolai.

"I just remembered something the late Political Officer Ruzayev said, Kolya. I think they were the words of a certain well-known general: 'If every Red Army man killed one German, the war would have ended long ago.' That means we're not thrashing them enough, the skunks, isn't that so?"

Tired of the conversation, Nikolai replied crossly:

"A fairly primitive arithmetic. . . If everyone of our generals would each win one battle, I guess the war would be finished even sooner."

Lopakhin stopped scrubbing his feet and burst out laughing.

"But how can the generals win battles without us, you sap? Besides, you just try winning a battle with men like my Sashka. He's not even reached the Don yet, and he's already looking round at the Urals. A general without soldiers, or with bad soldiers, is just like a bridegroom without the thing he needs most. And we without a general are like a wedding without a bridegroom. Of course, there are generals like Sashka too. Some poor beggar the Germans began to peck at right at the border, and they're pecking away at him like that to this day. Well, and he let it get him down, lost heart, and now he doesn't think anymore about how to lick the Germans but about how he himself can get out of being licked another time. But there aren't many like that, and it's not they who call the tune. But among us it's a habit that whenever the front happens to be the least bit shaky, the generals begin to be bawled out in whispers: they're such-and-such, and they are so-and-so, and they can't fight, and everything that's wrong is their fault. But if you look into it fairly, they're not always to blame, and we really ought to tone down on cussing them, because generals are the most unfortunate people in a war. What are you staring at me for like a sheep at a new gate? It's just as I say. There was a time when I was foolish enough to envy generals myself. 'Eh,' thinks I, 'what a life! Walks around all dressed up, like a peacock, no digging trenches for him, no crawling through the muck on his belly. . .' But later, when I began to think it over, I changed my mind.

"I was still a rifleman at that time and not a tank buster, and one day they sent our company into an attack. To be perfectly frank, I kind of dawdled. The fire was pretty heavy, and I didn't want to get off the ground. Well, the platoon commander comes running up, levels his revolver and yells: 'Get up!' and gives me a good bawling out, you know. We went into the attack, and afterwards I thinks: 'Now then I'm a rank-and-filer and I got one bawling out for my remissness. I answer for myself alone; but the divisional commander answers for thousands of men; if there's something amiss on his part, how many bawlings out must he get? And what about an army commander?' I began to do some figuring, and my hair actually stood on end with that reckoning. 'No, thank you!' thinks I. 'I prefer being a private.'

"Just picture it to yourself, Nikolai. All night long the general sits with his chief of staff preparing an attack, doesn't sleep, doesn't eat, just thinks of one thing. He's got bags under his eyes with the strain of all the thinking, his head's splitting with all the different hypotheses; he's got to foresee everything, guess everything. . . And then he moves the regiments into an attack, and the attack falls through with a bang. Why? How many reasons there are! He, let us say, depended on Petka Lopakhin, like he would on his own father, and Petka turned tail and took to his heels, and after him Kolka Streltsov, and after Streltsov a bunch of other milksops of the same kind. And there you have the end of a perfect day! Those who were killed, of course, make no claims on the general, but those who've rested up safely after running away curse the general with every cussword under the sun! Curse him because they honestly think the general's to blame for everything, while they've got absolutely nothing to do with it. Everyone, of course, in accordance with the rules and regulations, keeps his swearing to himself, but does that make it any easier for the general? He sits in his dugout, his head in his

hands, and all around him the invisible cusswords—thousands of 'em!—flutter thick and fast, like moths around a flame. And on top of that the telephone rings. They're calling the poor general direct from Moscow. His hair simply stands up on end, raising the handsome cap on his head, as he picks up the receiver thinking to himself: 'My poor, unfortunate mother! Why did you have to give birth to a general?' But over the telephone they don't call him a son-of-a-bitch, the people in Moscow are polite. What they do say to him is something like this: 'How is it, Ivan Ivanovich, that you're bungling this fighting? After all, the government spent money on you, taught you, clothed you, fed you, and now you come across with such things! You can excuse a nursing baby for making a mess in its diapers, that's why it's a nursing baby, but you're no baby and you've messed up not a diaper but an offensive. How'd that happen? Kindly explain yourself.' Such a quiet, polite voice talking, yet this quiet voice makes the general's breath come short, and the sweat runs down his back in three streams. . .

"No, Kolya, you can have it any way you like, but as for me I don't want to be a general! Ambitious as I am, I don't want it, and that's that! And if they'd suddenly call me to the Kremlin and say: 'Comrade Lopakhin, take over command of the X. Division,' I'd go pale from head to foot and flatly refuse. And if they'd begin to insist over there, I'd go out, climb the Kremlin wall and jump into the Moscow River, just like this!"

Lopakhin folded his hands together over his head, sprang high into the air and dropped like a stone into the opaque, green water. He came up in the middle of the river, spluttering and rolling his eyes wildly as he shouted:

"Hurry up, jump in, or else I'll drown!"

Nikolai dived in immediately, letting out a whoop as he felt the sudden prickly cold sear his whole body, and throwing out his long arms energetically swam up to Lopakhin.

"Down you go now, you bow-legged devil!" he said smiling, and was just about to seize Lopakhin when the latter pulled a foolishly terrified face, dived again, his shining tanned buttocks flashing for a second, and began to thrash his legs about frantically under the water.

The swimming refreshed Nikolai. His headache and tiredness had vanished. And with sparkling eyes he already looked differently at the world around him, drenched in the streams of the blinding noonday sun.

"Was that good! Feel as if I'd been born all over again," he said to Lopakhin.

"After a dip like that a glass of something strong would hit the right spot, and a good home-made *shchi*. But that goddamned Lissichenko's gone and cooked porridge again, may it choke him!" said Lopakhin peevishly, as he hopped about clumsily, trying to get his foot into the flapping trouser leg. "What do you say we go and ask some old lady for a bit of *shchi*?"

"It's not the thing."

"Think she wouldn't give us any?"

"Maybe she would, but still it's not the thing somehow."

"To hell with it! And what if we had no field kitchen? Why isn't it the thing? Come on, let's go! Imagine being here in our own district, and not asking for *shchi*!"

"But we're not tramps or beggars," said Nikolai irresolutely.

Just then two Red Army men whom they knew came out from behind the dam. One of them—tall and thin, with infantile, colourless eyes and a tiny mouth—was carrying a wet bundle in his hand, the other was trailing after and fastening the collar of his tunic as he walked. His face was as blue as the face of a drowned man, drawn with cold, and his blackened lips were shivering. When they came up on a level with Lopakhin, the latter stretched out his neck rapaciously and asked:

"What you got there in that bundle, my lads?"

"Crayfish," answered the taller Red Army man reluctantly.

"Oh-ho! Where'd you get 'em?"

"Near the dam. Are there springs over there or something? The water's so cold it's enough to make you throw a fit."

"Why didn't we think of that?" exclaimed Lopakhin regretfully, glancing at Nikolai. Then turning to the tall Red Army man he asked in a business-like tone: "How many'd you catch?"

"About a hundred, but they're not big."

"All the same that's too much for two," said Lopakhin resolutely. "Take us in

with you. I'll see about getting a pail and some salt, and we'll cook 'em together. Is it a go?"

"Go catch your own."

"Come on now, old man! How can we do it now? There's no time. You treat us, and don't pull any faces, and as soon as we land in Berlin I'll blow you to some beer, give you my word of honour as a tank buster!"

The tall one curled up his lips until they formed a small tube and whistled derisively:

"Now that's what I call consolation!"

Evidently Lopakhin had his heart set on tasting some cooked crayfish. After thinking for a while he said:

"Incidentally, I can do it right now. I've got about a snifter of vodka apiece; was keeping it in case I'd be wounded, but I guess we'll have to drink it now on account of the crayfish."

"Let's go!" said the tall one briefly, his eyes gleaming with pleased anticipation.

As confidently as if he were at home, Lopakhin flung open the rickety gate and went into the yard, which was thickly overgrown with weeds and nettles. The tumbledown sheds in the yard, the shutter hanging askew on a single hinge, the rotten wooden steps leading up to the porch, all showed that there were no men at home. "The master of the house must be at the front; it ought to be a walk-over," Lopakhin decided.

Near the barn a crusty-looking little old woman in a worn dark blue skirt and dirty blouse was piling up cakes of dung and straw for fuel. Hearing the gate creak, she straightened her back with difficulty, and raising a wrinkled, brown hand to shade her eyes stared in silence at the strange Red Army man. Lopakhin walked over, greeted her respectfully and asked:

"I say, mother, could we get the loan of a pail and a little salt from you? We caught some crayfish and want to cook them."

The old woman frowned and in a rough, almost male voice replied:

"Salt for you? I'd hate to give any of you one of these foul dung cakes, let alone salt!"

Lopakhin blinked in bewilderment.

"Why are you so hard on us?" he asked.

"And don't you know why?" she retorted grimly. "Shameless, that's what you are! Where are you going? Hurrying to get across the Don, are you? And who's going to do the fighting for you? Maybe you'll be ordering us old women to take up guns and defend you against the Germans? This is the third day that soldiers are passing through the village, we've certainly got our bellies full with the sight of you! And who are you leaving the people to? You've got no shame, no conscience, damn your eyes! And when did it ever happen before that the enemy got as far as these parts? All my born days, since I've been in this world, I don't remember the likes! You can already hear the guns roaring of a morning in the direction of the sunset. Got a hankering for salt, have you? May they salt you in the next world, not to say oversalt you! I won't give you anything! Get out of here!"

Crimson with shame, confusion and rage, Lopakhin heard out the old woman's wrathful tirade, then said lamely:

"You're sure fierce, mother!"

"And you're not worth being nice to! Think I ought to take pity on you because you were clever enough to catch some crayfish? They didn't by any chance hang that medal on you for catching crayfish, did they?"

"You leave my medal out of it, mother, it doesn't concern you."

The old woman was bending over the scattered dung cakes, but she straightened up again and her deep-sunken black eyes flashed youthfully and wickedly.

"Everything, my lad, concerns me. I didn't bend my back till my old age, pay all my taxes and help the government so that you could run like mad now and leave everything to go to rack and ruin. Can you get that into your empty head?"

Lopakhin groaned and made a wry face as if he had a toothache.

"I know all that without you, mother! But you're wrong the way you look at it. . ."

"I look at it the way I can. You're too young to be teaching me."

"Most likely you haven't got anybody in the army, or else you'd look at things differently."

"I've got no one in the army? Go and ask the neighbours, and see what they'll tell you. I've got three sons and a son-

in-law at the front, and the fourth, my youngest, was killed in Sevastopol, see? You're an outsider, a stranger, that's why I'm just quietly talking to you; but if my sons were to turn up now, I wouldn't let them get past the gate. I'd bless them over the head with a stick and tell them plainly as a mother: 'You've taken it on yourselves to fight; well then, fight, you rascals, like you should, and don't go dragging the enemy after you across the whole country, don't disgrace your old mother in front of everybody!"

Lopakhin wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief and said:

"Well, then. . . excuse me, mother, we're in a hurry, I'll go to another house and borrow a pail."

He said good-bye and walked down the weed-choked path, thinking with vexation: "The devil alone made me come here! After that talk I feel as if I'd had one too many."

"Hey, soldier, wait a minute!"

Lopakhin looked round. The old woman was coming after him. In silence she turned into the house, slowly walked up the creaking steps and after a moment came out again with a pail and salt in a chipped wooden bowl.

"Bring back the dishes," she said as sternly as ever.

The ever resourceful and carefree Lopakhin mumbled indistinctly:

"Very well, we're not proud. . . I'll take it. . . Thanks, mother!" And for some reason or other he suddenly bowed low.

And the little old woman, tired, bent with labour and age, passed him with such stern majesty that Lopakhin felt as if she were almost twice as tall as he and that she looked down on him from the heights, contemptuously and pityingly. . .

Nikolai and the two Red Army men were waiting for Lopakhin near the yard. They were sitting in the shade near the fence and smoking. The crayfish were stirring around with a scrunching noise in the wet shirt in which they were tied. Glancing at the sun, the tall Red Army man said:

"Why is our tank buster so long in coming? Looks like he can't get a pail. We won't have time to cook the crayfish."

"We've plenty of time," said the other. "Captain Sumskov and the battalion commissar have just gone to the ack-acks to call up."

Then they began to talk about the grain yield being good everywhere this year, about how difficult it would be to harvest such luxuriant, drooping wheat with reaping machines, and how hard it would be for the women to cope with the harvest this year. And they spoke of how the Germans would grow fat on all this food if the retreat did not stop. They spoke about farming matters thoughtfully, in detail, as is the custom among peasants while sitting outside their cottages on a holiday; and listening to their rough voices, Nikolai thought: "Only yesterday these men took part in a battle, and today it is as if the war no longer exists for them. They've had a little rest, they've gone for a swim, and now they're already talking about the harvest, Zvyagintsev's busying himself with a tractor, Lopakhin's busy with his job of boiling the crayfish. . . Everything's clear to them, everything's simple. They scarcely mention the retreat, just as they say nothing about death. To them the war is something like a steep mountain climb: victory is there, on top, and so they just keep going without any abstract discussions on the unavoidable hardships of the road, without any subtle philosophizing. Their own sufferings they keep in the background. The main thing is to get to the top, to get there at all costs! They slip, lose their hold, fall, but get up again and march on. Who the devil can stop them? They'll break their nails, lose their blood, but they'll get to the top all the same. Even though they have to do it on all fours, they'll get there, crawling on their bellies!"

It gave Nikolai a warm, pleasant feeling to think about the men with whom the friendship of the service had linked him, but soon Lopakhin broke into his thoughts. Perspiring and red in the face, he came up to them hurriedly, puffing and saying:

"What a scorcher! It's hot as hell!"

He cast a tentative glance at Nikolai, trying to guess by the expression on his face whether he had overheard his conversation with the old woman.

"You didn't ask about *shchi*, did you?" asked Nikolai.

"What do we want *shchi* for, if we're going to cook crayfish!" said Lopakhin irritably.

"Why were you so long then?"

Rolling his eyes craftily, Lopakhin replied:

"I came across such a jolly, talkative old lady that I simply couldn't get away. She took an interest in everything: who we are, where we're from, where we're going. . . She's a wonder, and not an old lady! She has sons in the army too, well, and when she saw a soldier she naturally melted and began to invite me in, wanted to treat me to sour cream. . ."

"And you refused?" asked Nikolai in alarm.

Lopakhin looked at him witheringly.

"What do you think I am anyway—a tramp or a beggar, to be grubbing up a poor old lady's last drop of sour cream?"

"Too bad you refused," said Nikolai wistfully. "We could have paid her for the cream."

Glancing aside, Lopakhin said:

"I didn't know you were so fond of cream, or of course I would have taken it. But we can always put that right: I won't take the pail back, I've had enough of that pleasure. You'll take it back and at the same time ask for the cream. She's such a kind old lady she won't take a kopek from you. And don't you take it into your head to offer her money, or she'll be most offended. She said to me: 'I'm so sorry for the retreating soldiers, so terribly sorry that I'm ready to give everything away to them! Well, let's go, or the crayfish'll go bad!"

Nikolai finished his porridge and washed and dried his dixy. Lopakhin hadn't eaten his. He was squatting on his haunches near the bonfire and staring longingly at the crayfish in the pail as he stirred them with a stick, poking their outstretched motionless claws back into the steaming water. There was an appetizing aroma of dill near the fire, and from time to time Lopakhin distended his nostrils, smacked his lips and said:

"This is just like being in the Intourist Hotel on the Sadovaya Boulevard: smells of dill and fresh crayfish. . . Half-a-dozen bottles of iced bear, and nothing more would be needed. Hold on to me, mates! I'm liable to tumble into the fire with all these smells!"

The vehicles of the hospital battalion were coming down the street at intervals, heading east. The last to pass was an American open truck, brand new, its green paint gleaming dully, but already riddled with bullet holes in many places, its hood bent and dented by splinters. Lightly wounded Red Army men were sitting in the truck, leaning against the sides. Their tanned, sunburned faces were set off by dazzlingly white fresh bandages.

"If at least they'd cover the car with a tarpaulin!" said Nikolai in a vexed tone. "Those men'll be roasted in this heat!"

The tall Red Army man watched the wounded men as they passed, and sighed.

"Why in hell have they got to move them during the day? The steppe is bare, planes may come over, and a pretty mess they'd make! Some people have no sense!"

"But maybe they had to be moved!" objected the other. "Look, the sappers have stopped hammering. We're the only ones who seem to be taking it easy."

Nikolai listened intently: there was an ominous silence in the village. All that could be heard was the clatter of the retiring trucks and the carefree cooing of the doves. But soon the familiar, groaning howl of artillery fire could be heard coming from the west.

"The crayfish are giving us the merry ha-ha!" exclaimed Lopakhin peevishly, and ripped out a string of curses in real miner fashion.

And indeed they did not manage to finish cooking the crayfish. Within a few minutes the call was sounded and the regiment mustered. Captain Sumskov cast a fleeting glance over the Red Army men, and jerking his shell-shocked head in a slightly agitated way, said:

"Comrades! We've received orders to take a stand on the hill at the crossroads back of the village. We are to hold the hill until reinforcements come up. Is that clear? In the course of the last few days we have lost many men, but we have kept the regimental banner and we must preserve the honour of the regiment in the same way. We shall stick it to the end!"

The regiment began to leave the village. Zvyagintsev nudged Nikolai with his elbow, his eyes sparkling and dancing as he said:

"Now going into battle with the banner is something like it, but as for retreating with it—God forbid! These last few days I got so fed up with the sight of it that more than once I thought: 'If only they'd give it to Petka Lissichenko so that he'd carry it away on the quiet, together with his kitchen. This way we are marching with our backs to the enemy and with a banner.' I tell you I was embarrassed in front of people, both for myself and for this banner. . ." He was silent for a moment, then asked: "What do you think? Will we hold out?"

Shrugging his shoulders, Nikolai answered evasively:

"We ought to hold out." But to himself he thought: "There you have the romantics of war! There's practically nothing but rags and tags left of the regiment, only the banner, a few machine-guns and anti-tank guns, and the field kitchen has been preserved, and now we're marching to put up a barrier. . . We've no artillery, no mortars, no signals. It's interesting to know from whom the captain got his orders. Was it from his senior neighbour? And where is this neighbour of ours? If only the ack-acks would support us in case of a tank attack, but most likely they're moving down to the Don to cover the crossing. And, anyway, what was the point of their hanging around this place? Everyone has gone off to the Don. Some wild stray units are wandering over the steppes. I bet even the commander of the front himself doesn't know the situation, and there's no strong arm to put all this in order. . . And there's always such a devil of a mess when there's a retreat!"

For a moment Nikolai thought with alarm: "And what if we're surrounded, if they pile up a huge number of tanks, and the reinforcements don't manage to come up in all this muddle?"

But so strong was the bitterness he felt at the defeat inflicted on them, that even this pernicious thought roused no fear in his consciousness, and in his mind he brushed everything aside with a wave of his hand, thinking with malicious glee: "To hell with them! The sooner we come to grips the better! If we manage to dig in, we'll make it hot for the Jerries! We'll make it hot for them all right! If only the cartridges hold out! The men who have remained in the regiment are old-timers, most of them Communists, and the captain's a good egg; we'll hold out!"

Near the windmill a barefoot flaxen-haired boy of about seven was tending a flock of geese. He ran up to the road, stopped short, barely moving his red lips, gazing at the passing Red Army men with the utmost admiration. Nikolai looked at him closely and opened his eyes wide in astonishment: what a resemblance there was! The very same widely placed blue eyes, the very same flaxen hair as his elder son. . . There was an indefinable similarity in the features of the face too and in the whole small, sturdy figure. Where could he be now, this small, boundlessly dear Nikolinka Streltsov? He wanted to take another look at the little boy who was so strikingly like his son, but he refrained from doing so: he didn't need memories that would soften his heart before a battle. He would not think of his orphaned children or of their bad mother at the last moment, as people in books usually do. He would think of them after the Germans had been thrown back from the nameless hill. Right now tommy-gunner Nikolai Streltsov must clench his teeth and try to think of something else, no matter what it was. It would be better so. . .

For some time Nikolai marched on in agitation, staring straight ahead of him with unseeing eyes and vainly trying to recall how many cartridges he had left in his kit-bag, but in the end he could not resist the temptation and looked back. The column had passed, but the little boy was still standing by the roadside, following the Red Army men with his eyes and timidly waving a sun-burned little hand over his head in farewell. And once again, as in the morning, Nikolai's heart was unexpectedly and painfully wrung, and a hot, throbbing lump rose to his throat. . .

The sun-dried virgin soil on the hill was as hard as stone. The entrenching tool bit into it for a few centimetres with the greatest difficulty, breaking off small crumbling bits, leaving a glossy, shiny trace where it had dug in.

The men were digging away with feverish haste. A German reconnoissance plane had just flown over. It had

circled over the hill without coming down, fired two brief machine-gun bursts and flown off towards the east. "We'll be having visitors soon," said the Red Army men to one another.

Nikolai had dug his trench to the depth of his knees and straightened out in order to catch his breath. Not far away Zvyagintsev was digging himself in. The back of his tunic was damp and sweat-stained, his face was beaded with perspiration.

"This is no soil, it's a curse on the people, that's what it is!" he said panting and wiping his crimson face with his sleeve. "It should be blown up with dynamite and not tickled with a shovel. It's a good thing the Germans aren't in a hurry, or you wouldn't get anywhere, tackling such soil under fire."

Nikolai listened to the roaring of the guns in the distance, and having rested a bit, set to work with his shovel again.

The dust ate into his eyes and nostrils, his heart beat painfully, and it was difficult to breathe. He had dug down almost to his waist, when he suddenly felt that without a rest he would be absolutely unable to throw out the earth he had dug up from the bottom of the pit, and furiously spitting out the sand that was gritting under his teeth he sat down on the edge of the trench.

"Well, how do you find it, pretty stiff going, eh?" asked Zvyagintsev.

"Quite."

"That's what you call a war, Mikola! It's simply terrible how much of this soil you turn up with a shovel! I figured that I myself have dug no less at the front than a wheel tractor would dig in a whole season. You couldn't put our work into any work-days!"

"Come on now, cut the cackle!" shouted Lieutenant Goloshchyokov sternly, and with a nimbleness unnatural to him. Zvyagintsev dived into the trench.

By about three in the afternoon the trenches were dug to the height of a man. Nikolai picked bunches of dove-coloured dwarf wormwood and carefully camouflaged his pit, placing his tommy-gun drums and grenades in a hole he had dug in the front wall and putting at his feet his open kit-bag in which the cartridges were scattered among his simple soldier's belongings, and only then did he look around him closely.

The western slope of the hill dipped into a ravine overgrown with sparse scrub oak. Scattered along the slope wild briar and hawthorn grew green. Two deep gullies that began on either side of the hill were connected by the ravine, and Nikolai felt reassured at the thought that the tanks would not be able to break through at the flanks.

The heat had not yet died down. The sun continued to grill the earth mercilessly. The acrid smell of rank wormwood roused an indefinable feeling of melancholy. Wearily leaning his back against the wall of his trench, Nikolai stared at the sere, scorched steppe, thickly covered with the mounds of old marmot burrows, at a hen-harrier gliding over the tips of the feather grass, looking as bleached as the grass itself. The impenetrably dense blue of the sky gleamed between the stalks of the wormwood, while on a distant eminence the vague outlines of a glade could be seen through the haze, looking pale blue from here, like steam rising from the earth.

Thirst tormented Nikolai, but he took only one mouthful from his flash, knowing from experience how precious every drop of water is during a battle. He glanced at his watch. It was quarter to four. Another half-hour passed in irksome waiting. Nikolai was puffing away avidly at his second cigarette when the distant roar of motors came to his ears. The rumbling thunder, hanging low over the ground, kept growing and spreading, becoming ever more distinct and menacing. Down the road that wound erratically along the ravine, dust was rising in a long grey streak. The tanks were coming. Nikolai counted fourteen. They took cover in the ravine, scattered and formed up for the attack. The roar of motors did not cease. Truck-borne infantry was speeding over the road now. The last vehicle to crawl up and take cover behind the declivity of the ravine was a low-slung, armoured gasoline truck.

And now began those brief and terribly tense moments preceding a battle, when hearts beat fast and hollow, and every man, no matter how many comrades are around him, feels for an instant the icy chill of solitude and a keen, heart-wringing anguish. Nikolai knew this feeling and knew what gave rise to it. Once, when he had spoken of it to Lopakhin, the latter had said with a seriousness unusual to him: "You see, we

fight together, but we'll die separately, and everyone of us has a death of his own, something like a kit-bag with his initials on it in indelible pencil. . . And besides, a rendez-vous with death is a serious thing, Kolya. Whether this rendez-vous takes place or not, your heart pounds all the same, as if you were in love, and even with people all around you feel as if there were only the two of you in all the wide world: you and she. After all, every person is a living being—what else do you expect?"

Nikolai knew that as soon as the fighting began this feeling would be replaced by others, brief, flaring, perhaps not always dependent on reason. . . His breath coming in gasps, he began to peer closely at the thin green strip separating the ravine from the slope of the hill. There, beyond this strip, the motors were still racing in a muffled and even purr. Nikolai's eyes began to ache with the strain, and his whole big body, now no longer wholly belonging to him, began to make dozens of slight, unnecessary motions. For some reason or other his hands began to grope for the tommy-gun drums lying on the ground, as if these heavy, sun-warmed metal disks could have disappeared. Then he pulled the folds of his tunic straight, and still not removing his eyes from the ravine shifted his tommy-gun the slightest bit, and when dry lumps of clay sprinkled down from the breastworks, he felt for them with the toe of his boot and stamped them flat; he moved a spray of wormwood, although he had a clear enough view without doing so, twitched his shoulders. These were involuntary movements, and Nikolai was not even conscious of them. Immersed in his observation, he kept his eyes steadily and intently fixed on the west and did not answer Zvyagintsev's low call.

The motors began to roar in the ravine, and the tanks appeared. Following them and walking upright, not troubling to take the slightest cover, come the infantry.

"How bold those bastards have become! Marching along as if they were on parade. . . We'll give you a nice welcome all right! Pity there's no artillery here, or we'd greet your parade in accordance with all the rules and regulations," thought Nikolai, hate choking his breath as he watched the figures of the enemy, diminished by the distance.

The tanks were advancing slowly, keeping with the infantry, cautiously avoiding the mounds of the marmot burrows, raking suspicious spots with bursts of machine-gun fire. Nikolai saw a hawthorn bush some two hundred yards ahead of him tremble as if a breeze had blown through it and the leaves and twigs shower down, clipped by bullets.

The tanks were also sending out shells as they advanced. Most of the shells fell short of the top, bursting near the bushes. Then the black fountains of explosions began to shift, moving closer and closer to the trenches. Nikolai pressed his chest against the wall of the trench, ready to drop to the bottom at a second's notice.

When the tanks had covered a little over half the distance and, reaching the bushes, picked up speed, Nikolai heard the long-drawn-out shout of a command. Almost simultaneously the anti-tank and machine-gun crews opened fire, and the rifle shots that merged with the grumbling chatter of the tommy-guns sounded particularly dry and crackling.

For some time the German infantry, which had lagged behind the tanks, still continued to advance, despite the casualties they were sustaining; then they fell flat, pinned to the ground by the fire.

The shots of the tank busters became more frequent. The first tank came to a halt without reaching the clump of briar. The second flared up, made an attempt to turn back and stopped short, a scarcely wavering soot-black smoky flame shooting upwards from it to the sky. On the flanks two more tanks were burning. The men intensified their fire, aiming at the infantry that was attempting to rise, at the observation slits in the tanks, at the tankmen who were scrambling out of the hatches of their burning vehicles.

The fifth tank managed to advance to within a hundred and twenty yards of the defence line, taking advantage of the fact that tank buster Borzykh's anti-tank gun, which was covering the centre, had fallen silent. But Corporal Kochetygov was already crawling up to intercept the tank. Pressed close to the ground, the small and nimble Kochetygov slipped rapidly between the marmot mounds, and only the scarcely perceptible swaying of a strip of feather grass betrayed his progress.

Nikolai saw Kochetygov suddenly jump up, swing his arm back and immediately drop to the ground again, while an anti-tank grenade, describing a heavy arc, went flying to meet the thundering caterpillar tracks of the steel monster.

To the left of the tank a broad column of earth shot up, cut by a slanting pale flame, looking as if some fabulous huge bird had suddenly flapped its black wings, and the tank, trembling convulsively, swung round on a single track and froze stock-still, exposing its cross-marked side to the fire.

Tank buster Borzykh's gun, which had been silent for several minutes, began to fire again point-blank at the wrecked tank, which was listing helplessly to one side. After the very first shot, smoke began to seep through the observation slits. One of the tank machine-guns fired a long, shuttering burst and fell silent. The tankmen either did not want to quit the tank or could no longer do so; a few minutes later the ammunition in the tank began to blow up, and smoke poured through the bullet holes and the silent turret in thick, curly clouds.

Flattened out by the machine-gun fire, the enemy infantry made several attempts to rise, but each time fell to the ground again. At last they got to their feet and began to make short spurts ahead, but just then the tanks turned abruptly and began to move back, leaving six burning and wrecked machines on the slope.

From somewhere, seemingly from under the ground, Nikolai heard the muffled, jubilant voice of Zvyagintsev:

"Mikola! Did we wipe 'em up, the bastards! They wanted to take us on the march, in one swoop, but we wiped 'em up! We sure wiped 'em up! Let 'em just try it again, and we'll mop 'em up again!"

Nikolai fitted a new drum to his tommy-gun, drank a mouthful of the disgustingly tepid water from the flask, and glanced at his watch. It had seemed to him that the fighting had lasted only a few minutes, but actually more than half-an-hour had passed since the attack had begun. The sun had noticeably dipped to the west, and its rays were already losing their recent fiery viciousness.

Taking another swallow of water, Nikolai removed the flask from his parched lips with regret, and cautiously peeped out of the trench. His nostrils were assailed by the oppressive smell of burning metal and gasoline, mingled with the bitter, ashy odour of burned grass. The grass had caught fire beside the nearest tank, and tiny tongues of flame, almost invisible in the daylight, were darting through the tops of the feather grass. On the slope the charred, blackened hulks of motionless tanks were smoking, and there seemed to be a larger number of mounds near the marmot burrows, only now they were not all the same brownish colour. Viewed from above, many of them seemed flatter, greyish green. Looking closely, Nikolai realized that these were the bodies of dead Germans, and in his heart he was sorry that there were not quite as many grey-green mounds as he would have liked. . .

Machine-guns began to chatter from the ravine. Nikolai ducked behind the breastwork and rested, leaning his perspiring back against the wall of the trench, raising his head and looking upwards. Only there, in that chill blue, indifferent to everything, nothing had changed. A hawk was circling just as high and just as smoothly, occasionally flapping its broad wings, lit up from below. A white, lilac-lined cloud, looking like a sea shell, steeped in tender mother-of-pearl, still rested in the zenith, seemingly motionless. From somewhere high above the trill of larks, so simple, but going straight to one's heart, sounded just as before. Only the misty haze on the distant hill looked the least bit more transparent, and the glade framing it no longer seemed unsubstantial like steam emanating from the earth, but had become a darker blue and had now acquired a coarse solidity tangible to the eye . . .

Nikolai expected the second attack of the Germans to begin with a flanking movement of the tanks and the tommy-gunners, but the Germans were apparently in a hurry to break through to the cross-roads and come out on the gradient over the hill. With doltish stubbornness the tanks and the infantry accompanying them came on in a frontal attack, just as they had done the first time, advancing over the corpse-strewn incline.

And once again, cut off from the tank by the fire, the infantry fell flat on the bare incline, and once again the tanks that had pushed ahead advanced full speed towards the line of defence. This time two of them on the right flank managed to reach the trenches. Both of them were hit by grenades, but one had succeeded in crushing several nests and, already in flames, was still trying to push ahead. Its one undamaged caterpillar track thundered impotently and furiously. It kept up its gun fire from the revolving turret, but from its red-hot armour bluish yellow flames were already darting, and the sinister looking dark paint on the sides was curling up with the heat.

The slanting rays of the sun penetrated under his helmet, and it was difficult to see and to take aim at the fleeing figures, often concealed by the sun. Nikolai fired in brief bursts, saving his ammunition, aiming only to hit, but all the same his sun-dazzled eyes were overstrained, and when the second attack was repulsed he sighed and with a feeling of relief closed his eyes for a second.

"Wiped 'em again! . ." came Zvyagintsev's muffled but this time more restrained voice from the side. "You all right, Mikola? Still kicking? That's fine! The question is whether we'll have enough ammunition to make a clean sweep of 'em... You keep firing away at them, but they keep crawling up like some pestiferous turtle into the wheat. . ."

He mumbled something else below his breath and indistinctly, but Nikolai was no longer listening to him. The low, intermittent, bass roar of German planes flying somewhere had rivetted his entire attention.

"That's all that was missing. . ." he thought, searching the sky vainly and cursing the sun for obstructing his vision.

Twelve "Junkers" were flying north-west of the hill, evidently heading for the Don. Having determined the direction of their flight, Nikolai at first decided that the planes were flying to bomb the crossing. He actually breathed a sigh of relief, and through his mind flashed the thought: "That's over!" But almost simultaneously he saw four of the planes break formation, turn and come straight for the hill.

He crouched down still lower and made ready to fire, but only managed to fire a single burst at the plane that was swiftly coming down on him at a slant. The brief, rising wail of a bomb was added to the roaring howl of the motor.

Nikolai did not hear the ground-shaking, rumbling thunder of the explosion, nor did he see the huge fountain of earth that rose heavily into the air beside him. A wave of compressed hot air had sent the earth of the breastwork showering into the trench and had forcibly thrown back Nikolai's head. He hit the wall of the trench with the side of his helmet so hard that the strap snapped under his chin and he lost consciousness half-stifled, deafened. . .

Nikolai came to long after the planes had vanished, having made two sorties and dropped their entire load. The German infantry was launching its third attack and was almost abreast of the defence line, preparing to make a final thrust.

Fierce fighting thundered all around Nikolai. The surviving men of the regiment were holding on with their last bit of energy. Their fire had weakened, there were not many left to keep up a defence. Hand-grenades were already flying on the left flank. Those still alive were getting ready to meet the Germans with a last bayonet attack. Meanwhile Nikolai, half-buried under the earth, was still lying at the bottom of the trench like a sack, sobbing tremulously as he gasped for air, his cheek touching the caved in soil in the trench with every breath. . . Warm blood was gushing from his nose, tickling his face. It had evidently been flowing for some time, since it had already dried on his moustache and pasted his lips together. He passed his hand over his face and raised his head. A severe attack of nausea forced him down again. Then that too passed. Nikolai got up, looked around with beclouded eyes and took in the situation at a glance—the Germans were close.

With his weakened hands Nikolai took a long, painfully long time to put a new drum in his tommy-gun, a long time to rise, trying to get to his knees. His head was swimming, and the sour stench of the food he had vomitted threatened to bring on a new fit of nausea. But he overcame the nausea, the dizziness, the disgusting weakness that seem-

ed to paralyse his whole body. And he began to fire, deaf and blind to everything that was taking place around him, completely in the grip of two mighty desires: to live and to fight to the end!

In this way passed several minutes that seemed to him more like hours. He did not see how from the south, on the other side of the ravine, three Soviet heavy "KV" tanks accompanied by a motorized infantry brigade came down on the German tommy-gunners, and it did not immediately penetrate to his dim consciousness why the Germans who were lying in a chain some hundred yards from his trench suddenly let up on their fire and began to crawl back hastily on all fours, then rose and took to their heels in disorderly fashion, this time not back to the ravine but north-west, to the deep gully.

They tumbled down the incline like grey-green leaves, torn down and driven by a strong wind, and many of them, like leaves, fell, merging with the grass, never to rise again. . .

Only after Zvyagintsev, Lieutenant Goloshchyokov and several other men, their faces pale with rage and triumphant joy, had jumped over shell holes and come running past, did he realize what had happened. A shout welled up hoarsely into his throat, and he too, like the Red Army men running past him, shouted something without hearing the sound of his own voice. He too wanted to jump up and run beside his comrades as he had always done, but his arms slipped over the jagged edge of the trench in his fruitless endeavours to raise himself, senilely impotent. He was unable to hoist himself out of the trench. . . He rested his chest on the wrecked breastwork and groaned, and then burst into tears of rage and anguish at his helplessness, and of joy that they had held the hill till help had come, and the thrice accursed, hated enemy was fleeing! . .

He did not see how Zvyagintsev and the others set to work with their bayonets as soon as they caught up with the fleeing Germans at the gully itself; did not see how Sergeant Lyubchenko, who had been left far behind by the Red Army men rushing ahead, rose heavily on his wounded leg and moved on, an unfurled banner in one hand, a levelled tommy-gun pressed to his side in the other; did not see Captain Sumskov crawl out of a trench that had been smashed by a shell. Leaning on his left arm, the captain was crawling down the hill after his men; his right arm, all but torn off at the shoulder by shrapnel, dragged heavily and frightfully after him, held by the blood-steeped shreds of his tunic; f m time to time the captain would lie down on his left shoulder and then begin to crawl again. There was not a drop of colour in his chalk-white face, but he kept right on, and throwing back his head shouted in a childishly shrill piercing voice:

"Good boys! Forward, my lads! . . Give it to 'em!"

Nikolai neither heard nor saw anything of this. In the tender evening sky the first, faintly twinkling star had only just been lit, but for him black night had already set in—a saving and lengthy oblivion.

THE OLD SURGEON

1

On the 22nd of June, when the surgeon, a man nearer seventy than sixty, entered his hospital with his usual leisurely step, he was accosted in an unexpected way:

"Ivan Petrovich! You've heard? The war!"

He knew nothing about it, there was no wireless in his flat. He saw bewildered faces around him; everybody seemed excited.

He couldn't even grasp, all at once, whom the war was against, and had to ask questions. His heart started missing beats, he poured himself a glass of water out of a carafe.

Then his wife came. Medicine was her speciality too, but she was a therapeutist, not a surgeon, old like himself, with a lot of grey in her thin dark hair. She looked at him anxiously through her spectacles and said:

"Do you know what I heard in the streets, Ivan Petrovich?"

"I do, Nadezhda Gavrilovna," he answered.

It was not the solemnity of the moment that prompted their using each others' patronymics: it was simply an old habit with them.

"I suppose it's a very bad thing indeed," she mused, peering inquiringly at him through her glasses.

He nodded and echoed:

"A very bad thing indeed."

And then inconceivable things started happening, happening in a rush, in a whirl they couldn't have ever believed possible.

The frontier was a good few hundred kilometres away, but the map showed them that the distance between their town and the front was diminishing appreciably from day to day.

"If they're going to push on like that, then. . ." she said one day, and left her sentence unfinished.

Doing his best to look quite calm, Ivan Petrovich smoothed his silver hair, parted over the right temple, and answered with confidence:

"They'll be stopped, Nadezhda Gavrilovna, they'll be stopped."

Since it was a seaside town, the enemy was expected to attempt landing his invasion troops there. So wire-entanglements were hastily put up on the shore, vineyard stakes were driven into the bluish gravel of the beach.

During all this, the weather was perfectly calm, the sea as smooth as a mirror; but two days or so later, a north-east wind blew up, a storm broke out, raging waves lashed the shore; and before an hour was out the wire traps had been swept clean off, and the tangled lace of the barbed wire, along with the clean new stakes, were dancing wildly on the crest of the waves. Then after the sea had its bit of fun, they lay scattered on the beach, the wire and the stakes, in prickly heaps, like so many enormous hedgehogs. The bathers pulled them farther up the beach, out of the way when they were undressing and going into the water. After that the stakes were driven in farther inland, beyond the reach of the breakers.

Everybody started digging trenches in front of their houses as shelters from bomb-splinters. German bombers were expected to come from the direction of the sea, from the coast of Rumania.

Not only the halo of his silvery hair, but his whole bearing, his way of looking at people and speaking to them, made Ivan Petrovich look like an old university professor. Though he had spent a good part of his life in that town, surrounded by vineyards, and honey-combed with wine-cellars as it was, he did not take to wine-drinking, though, heaven knows why, surgeons are apt to develop this predilection.

"You never have any headaches, Ivan Petrovich, and your memory's as good as ever," his wife once remarked. "On the whole, you show no sign of cerebral sclerosis."

The old man replied:

"By the way, speaking of cerebral sclerosis, I've spoken today to our dentist Prilutsky, sounded him as to whether he was going to leave, and why; the

Germans are pushing on, you know.' And just imagine what his answer was: 'I'll just stay where I am!' 'And if,' I insisted, 'the Germans do get here?' 'Well,' he said, 'suppose they do? The Germans, indeed! Man, don't I know what Germans are like? Why, a German's got teeth, same as the next bloke. . . It's all the same whose teeth you happen to be messing about with.' 'Do you mean you're really going to stay?' 'Of course I am,' he declared. 'I'm curious to see what they look like.' Do you think that is symptomatic of sclerosis, Nadezhda Gavrilovna?"

"I think it's symptomatic of villany," she answered decidedly.

2

The more surely a man knows that the sands of his life are running out, the dearer everything round him seems to become. Life presents him with something unlooked for in the most trivial things. The man looks at things long familiar, just a little drab detail of everyday routine, and all of a sudden it takes on a new aspect and shines with a dazzling brightness that makes his eyes smart with sheer happiness.

This happens to hale old age, and it happened to Ivan Petrovich, for he was a hale old man.

From time to time Nadezhda Gavrilovna would have a little go at Ivan Petrovich in her professional capacity, to satisfy herself as to the state of his heart. She would apply her stethoscope to his chest and listen attentively, and then say something like this:

"Not so bad. Heart's just what it should be at your age. Even a bit younger, perhaps."

In such instances of her care for him or for other people he seemed to find something fresh even in the wife he had lived with, day in, day out, for thirty-six years, and it moved him deeply. He wondered how he had never noticed it before.

The house they had lived in for a long time, for ower twenty years, stood on a hill and was reached by a stone staircase; but neither of them felt any inconvenience in this as yet.

"It's worthit for the air up here; it's really grand, like pine-apple juice," Ivan Petrovich would often declare.

What he meant was that sea breezes blew constantly sometimes from inland, sometimes from the sea, over their hill-top; the air there was much fresher and purer than in the streets down below.

It seemed to Ivan Petrovich that even the tea-roses he had grafted himself on the dogroses about the house were a wonderful success. He liked to "operate" on them, to prune them in autumn and spring and to train the bushes into the shapes he desired. They were all of the kind that blossom far into the winter, till the beginning of January,

Once he had to use his surgical skill operating on a stray sheep-dog run over by a motor-car. The animal had been badly bruised and dragged by the car some way along the street, so a lot of street rubbish had stuck in its back. The dog recovered and stayed with his rescuer. He was named Ralf, and fondly called Ralfy, which was modified to Ralfish and later abbreviated into Fish.

A year or so later Nadezhda Gavrilovna brought from the courtyard into the living room a chubby pup, Fish's son, a perfect ball of a pup, so absurdly woolly that it was instantly given the name of Fluffy. And so they lived together at the doctor's, Fish and Fluff, a full-blooded sheep-dog and a mongrel, setting a praiseworthy example of good-fellowship.

Now and again, Ivan Petrovich would speak approvingly of Fish:

"Just look, Nadezhda Gavrilovna, what wonderful eyes he's got: like a human being's. It somehow makes you feel queer to look into them."

"Oh, he's as intelligent as they make them," Nadezhda Gavrilovna would agree. "And what a nose! I tried to hide this marble from him a dozen times, and he never once failed to find it! Fluff, certainly, isn't so clever, but then he's such a jolly little fellow!"

Ivan Petrovich was also fond of Fluff, but he pretended to be shocked at the creature's brown woolliness, and now and again would address it, trying his best to look stern:

"No, sir, it rests with you to prove you're a dog! I mean it. Though I know a lot about zoology, I just can't make out what kind of beast you are."

Lying at his master's feet, Fluff would look up as though about to ask a question, and mumble apologetically.

3

The wooded hills, curly-headed as if covered with sheep-skins, now that it was summer-time; the sea, dazzlingly blue, though without the calmness it had had in spring; the cheerful tiles of the house roofs, their mellow crimson so pleasing to the eye in the morning sunshine; the Lenkoran acacias, which everybody here called mimosas, glowing with the exuberance of their pink blossoms; the meandering beach, so smooth and soft-looking; and many more pleasant ordinary things had already seemed to be receding from old Ivan Petrovich; but they had been receding ever so slowly, little by little, as if with a gentle farewell smile, like that of a loving mother as she tiptoes out of the nursery, where her children have fallen asleep after a day of games and running about.

Now, all this was whirling away, everything seemed to darken and take on a strange unfamiliar look. This strangeness was jarring and disturbing, like the flash of lightning so near that it must be followed in less than a second by such a deafening clap of thunder that you can't help wincing.

The lightning flashes of firing and the thunder-claps of the cannonade were drawing inexorably closer and closer: the war had swallowed up those kilometres that had divided the quiet seaside town from the front-line. On the beach, sacks were being filled with sand and gravel and taken away on lorries as bomb protection. Companies of the Home Guard marched along the streets. Window panes had already strips of paper pasted on; now the townsfolk carefully replaced the paper with strips of cotton, but experienced people assured them that it was of no avail: the glass would break into smithereens at the first bombardment.

From the dusk until daybreak, no light relieved the gloom. And in the dark, no one could tell why, the faint noise of the surf was heard more distinctly and the flood rolling on from the west seemed more inescapable than ever.

At the meeting to collect funds for national defence, Ivan Petrovich came forward; he spoke passionately, mentioned Minin and the people of Nizhny-Novgorod, and contributed his excellent gold atwch, a set of silver tablespoons, all his State Loan certificates and a thick roll of banknotes. Then, Nadezhda Gavrilovna and he between them rummaged their house from top to bottom and brought to the salvage-collecting station all the copper they could lay hands on: a samovar, a huge pan for making jam, a little bell, a mortar with a pestle.

Every morning he asked the neighbours who had a wireless about the news from the front, and consulted his map. Every day he read the newspaper accounts of Soviet people shot, hanged, tortured, buried alive in craters left by shells, burnt alive in houses and barns.

"What is it, eh? What does it all mean, that's what I'd like to know?" Ivan Petrovich appealed to his wife. "Have they got a generation of atavistic monsters in Germany? Is this war? It certainly is not. There have been plenty of wars, and we've had the misfortune to live through some of them, too, but this kind of war is the work of madmen, or gorillas! Probably the former!"

Nadezhda Gavrilovna nodded and said meditatively:

"Of course, this seems to be an epidemic of psychosis. Do you know what it reminds me of? The trials of witches in the dark ages. Just think, a lot of 'witches' were burnt at the stake."

"But surely they were burnt by gorillas?"

"No, by people who had diseased minds, even though they happened to wear judges' robes."

"And the Inquisition were a pretty lot of gorillas too. . . but what's the inference? The only possible inference is that a certain part of mankind falls an easy prey to mental disease and becomes dangerous to mankind as a whole. Then, a world war must inevitably follow. If homicidal maniacs are not controlled, they'll leave no one alive. These people declare openly it's only our territory they want: they have no use for the population. That's what they think. . . and do! But you just wait a bit, my lads! Don't count your chickens until they're hatched! You've outstayed your time here, as it is. Let's see what the autumn will bring!"

4

Meanwhile autumn was approaching. In these parts, however, its signs were

a greater abundance of fruit. It was a year of splendid crops.

Fruit farmers, horticulturists and market-gardeners, who had a retentive memory, pointed out that the year the first World War started had also been one of exceptional vintage and crops. Out of this coincidence they drew inferences that savoured of mysticism. Nobody knew what to do about this glut of tomatoes, melons and water-melons. People ceased driving crows off pear-trees in the orchards, since they saw no chance of preserving or selling the fruit.

Formerly, when the grapes were nearly ripe, vineyard owners used rattles to scare away thrushes, which are a mischievous lot for all their being pleasant singers early in spring. Now thrushes, the black and the grey varieties, were playing havoc in the vineyards, unmolested.

In the wine-cellars, where wine was being matured in thousands of gigantic tuns, people were at a loss to know what to do with it. And there was the new yield of Muscat, Alicante, Don-Pedro, Murved and Saperavi waiting for attention. In case of emergency, there was a heavy pick lying ready by each cask, so it would take only a moment to knock out the bottoms and let the wine run out.

Big shoals of bullhead appeared off the coast, and in their wake arrived bands of rapacious dolphins. There was no one to spoil their hunting: the men who used to go after dolphins were all in the Army.

One day, in the street, Ivan Petrovich ran into a certain Wald, a man some ten years younger than himself, but already living on his pension. His joints seemed to be loose, and he never looked quite sober. The man was tall, bearded, carelessly dressed, but very rough in his opinions; he was in the habit of slouching about, leaning on his long walking-stick, with a slow step, because of his rupture, casting scathing glances at people he met.

He called himself an artist and sought to prove it by taking orders for portraits, though his production was never accepted. He was known to have been a lawyer in Makhach-Kala; to have been in the dock for something or other and got eighteen months imprisonment. It was even hinted that during the Civil War he had dealings with the Whitse, while his brother had been executed before the Revolution by the tsarist government for espionage.

To the hospital he came as often as possible, having a mania for discovering all kinds of bodily ailments; that was why Ivan Petrovich knew his Christian name.

So meeting him in the street on that mild September day, he called him Fyodor Vassilyevich, whereupon Wald narrowed his eyes mockingly, thrust up his beard and stuck out his lower lip.

"A slight mistake, I'm afraid: not Fyodor Vassilyevich but Theodor Wilhelmovich," he rolled out in a loud voice, and looked triumphantly round to see whether he had been heard by anybody besides this "wretched" leech.

Though the word leech had not been actually said, but Ivan Petrovich felt it in his bones it was implied in the tone of the new-fangled Theodor, who had been a plain Fyodor for so long a time.

Wald's head shook under his ancient straw-hat with the tremour of the habitual toper, but his stare was disdainful. This annoyed Ivan Petrovich and made him mutter in a puzzled tone:

"Then how is it you haven't been interned or something, I'd like to know?"

"Interned? Me?"

Wald tittered hoarsely, spat and added in almost a shriek:

"I can have anybody interned if I choose, no one can intern me!"

Flabbergasted, Ivan Petrovich turned his back on him and went on his way asking himself: "Mad? Or simply a rascal? Or both?"

While Theodor Wald stood, holding his stick in both hands, and looked after him triumphantly, his beard thrust up; what with his broad-brimmed yellow hat, and his dirty white blouse, he was very conspicuous against the pale-blue background of the sea.

5

At last, the first batch of bombs were dropped from German planes, though there was not a single factory in the town. The enemy aircraft appeared not from the sea, whence they had been expected at the beginning of the war, but from inland. The fighting line was now quite close. Heavy army cars rumbled incessantly in the streets, making not

only window-panes, but the very house walls shake.

Just then the sea was exceptionally heavy, the breakers were unusually high. The landing stage was an old, rather rickety affair, as landing-stages go. Deep down the sturdy piles it rested on had long been damaged by rust, but this was not apparent on the surface. The surf that was now hurling big lumps of rock onto the quay, instead of a little sand and gravel, shook it so fiercely that the whole thing crashed. With it crashed the hopes of many people that a steamer would arrive at the eleventh hour and take them somewhere.

Both the sea and the ground were rumbling.

People were leaving the town on foot if they had no other means. They went due east keeping to the shore, and taking as many of their household goods as they could carry. They were all in a hurry, many of them wept; they dragged children by the hand; they carried children in their arms; some drove their cows in front of them or tried to harness the frightened creatures to clumsy makeshift vehicles.

Had the sea swollen and flooded the valley that was full of vineyards and gardens, people would have fled from it just as hurriedly; but they wouldn't have fled such a long way,—only as far as the hills. Now they had no idea what they were making for, where they would be able to stop.

Whenever German bombs exploded, even if they were far away, Fish and Fluff hid themselves like lightning, not in the trench in the yard, which afforded but a flimsy shelter and was apt to be muddy after a shower, but in the quiet nook under the porch, where they would stay till morning came. Nobody had taught them to do this, it was their own idea.

The wine-casks in the cellars were opened and the wine oozed out slowly; there was no time to be lost, so the picks were applied to the bottoms.

The cellars were flooded with wine, people had to walk knee-deep in it, as they were going from one tun to another.

The air all round the cellars was full of its vapours, and attracted drunkards. They arrived armed with buckets, jugs and bottles and were loud in their indignation:

"Isn't it a shame to spoil one's own property! Let's have at least a jugful each. It's a crime to waste liquor like that! Who's appointed you? Wreckers! Let's get just one bucketful, anyway!"

But the entrances were guarded by men with rifles; only the muffled boom of casks being broken came from below, and the sharp, pungent smell that tickled the nostrils.

Fresh cases were brought to the hospital without end, all of them surgical: people badly wounded when bombs burst, houses fell in and fires raged. There were already no beds empty, but the injured could not possibly be sent away. So those who had already been in hospital for some time had to be signed off, those who were able to walk went of their own accord.

The doctors went too: not that they left in a body; but one after the other, unobtrusively, they just disappeared. At last there was nobody left to cope with all the work but Ivan Petrovich, Nadezhda Gavrilovna and three or four elderly nurses.

The wounded lay moaning. They looked at one with feverish imploring eyes. . . It was hard work to attend to them, but how could they be left uncared for? One simply couldn't desert them.

Before this last batch of wounded came, Nadezhda Gavrilovna had made a half-hearted attempt at packing a few things one could not do without on a long journey. She selected two old cases, but the tighter she crammed them the more things, quite indispensable things, there appeared to be; so there had to be more valises, or baskets, or bundles. . . When people stay in one place for a few decades, they seem to get swamped out with accumulating belongings.

Having made up her mind that the two valises were all they could manage, she tried to lift the smaller one and failed. And when she thought of Fish and Fluff, who had to be left behind to shift for themselves, she said to herself determinedly:

"One must not be selfish even to one's dogs!"—and started unpacking.

In assisting her husband at operations and bandaging the wounds, Nadezhda Gavrilovna forgot her plans for going away somewhere, somehow, without any clear idea as to where. Here people were suffering, and the only thing to do was

to save their lives at all costs. That was the main point; the Germans, only a secondary one.

At nightfall, troops filled the streets, retreating, making for the east; the wireless informed the inhabitants, those who were still there, that at dawn the town would be evacuated and the Germans would occupy it. Ivan Petrovich and Nadezhda Gavrilovna were at the hospital, and remained there for the night.

They did not go to bed, though they were tired enough after their day's work. They couldn't have slept for a moment: life was too agonizing! At the same time, they stopped worrying about themselves, an atmosphere of tranquility seemed to cling to them as if their death-warrant had been read and no change could be expected.

Only once did Nadezhda Gavrilovna let slip:

"What do you think will happen to us?"

Ivan Petrovich replied, with a sigh and a vague shrug:

"Well, we've lived our lives, haven't we? Heaven help other people to live as long."

After a pause, she asked:

"And what if they torture us before death?"

"Torture? Why should they? . . I really don't know why they should torture us. And then our troops may return in a day or two. . ."

6

German officers entered the hospital with an imperious, domineering air; this was the first thing about them that struck the eye. For the last twenty odd years no one had entered the place with quite such a commanding air.

Their interpreter turned out to be Theodor Wald who, being appointed deputy burgomaster, was riding an unnaturally high horse.

He had replaced his well-worn straw hat with a black felt, and his dirty white blouse for a grey checked jacket.

The officers—there were three of them,—were taking their first look at the ward, when Wald was already ordering Ivan Petrovich about, as he pointed at the wounded.

"You've to chuck out all this rabble!" he said. "German soldiers will be housed here."

"But wherever can I take people who are unable to leave their beds?" Ivan Petrovich said, more astonished than indignant.

"That's not my concern. Those are my orders, and that's final! You may poison them for all I care, we want no cripples."

Ivan Petrovich caught his wife's eye. On her face, pale with anxiety, the black-rimmed spectacles stood out sharply.

The senior officer wanted to see the operating room. Once there, he inquired about the state of the surgical instruments and even asked for the cupboard to be opened that he might see them.

As a result of bombing, the windows were mostly without glass, but the openings were protected with gauze to keep out flies, of which there were swarms now that the fruit-season was in full swing. This drew the attention of the senior officer, upon whom Wald fawned.

When the officer had told Wald to see to it that the windows should be glazed by the next day, Ivan Petrovich understood that the decision to convert the place into a military hospital was final.

The officers left shortly, but Wald, before departing with them, repeated his command to clear the hospital of patients. The surgeon and his wife spent the rest of the day trying to make arrangements for the wounded. Some of them were taken to their homes by their relatives, kindly neighbours contrived to put up some of the others; still, there were a few left, all seriously wounded, for whom no shelter could be found; moreover, there was no food for them outside the hospital, even if they should be transferred to the wood-shed, which Ivan Petrovich had first thought to be a solution: so for the time being they remained in their beds.

Late in the afternoon Wald returned with two glaziers who had two tightly packed boxes of window glass, that had just been removed from some dwelling houses. Ivan Petrovich hoped that when alone, without the officers, Wald would be more compliant and would let him put up the remaining handful of his patients in some nook or corner. But the man said haughtily:

"Neither they nor yourself are of any use to us. Take yourself off this very minute!"

Ivan Petrovich, with another glance at the wounded, shook his head and went out.

On the way home Ivan Petrovich supported Nadezhda Gavrilovna, who felt very ill, complained of her heart and had hardly any strength left to go up the stone stairs leading to the house.

7

That night, the old man and his wife had no sleep, though they were at home. It was all a nightmare; late in the evening one of the nurses called and told them that the wounded had been shoved on to lorries "like so many logs" and taken off to the dumps where all the rubbish and refuse of the town was usually carted.

"Cowards! Gorillas!" cried out Nadezhda Gavrilovna, horrified.

"It was only to be expected," said Ivan Petrovich.

He looked unperturbed; but as soon as the nurse was gone, he began to fumble in his medicine chest. Owing to his emotion, or to his having a badly burning candle end in his hand, he could not find what he wanted and muttered:

"Hmm. . . That's odd. . . It must have been mislaid."

Finally he found it, and put aside one little phial. Then, as an afterthought, he put it in his pocket.

In the morning came a German corporal. He was accompanied not by Wald, but by Prilutsky, the dentist, a swarthy, fidgety man with a fixed unnatural smile on his skinny eunuch-like face.

"Well, Ivan Petrovich, it's very wise of you to have stayed," he began in a lively tone, the moment he was on the threshold. "You're requested to come to the hospital and work. I'll deal with their teeth, you with the rest. I've been engaged too."

"Work? What kind of work?" Ivan Petrovich was slow to grasp it.

"Hang it all! Your usual work—surgery! Not scrubbing floors,—what do you think?"

"But I've heard the wounded have all been removed from. . ." Ivan Petrovich began, but Prilutsky interrupted him quickly.

"You're all wrong. They've just been brought there. A few officers and a score or two of privates. You can't deny it, these Germans get everything done as if by magic. . . Well, hurry up!"

"All right, we shall come presently," said Ivan Petrovich firmly, "you go there first, we'll follow you."

"I promised to bring you!"

"I'll just have a glass of tea, and we'll start."

"Promised to bring! I like that!" said Nadezhda Gavrilovna resentfully. "If we are willing, we'll come by ourselves, and if not how do you think you can bring us? On a leash or what?"

"I promise we shall come immediately," repeated Ivan Petrovich earnestly, looking Prilutsky in the face.

And Prilutsky went away with the corporal who did not understand a word of Russian, and so had stood the whole time unruffled, his dull eyes with whitish eyelashes blinking sleepily.

"It's beyond me!" said Nadezhda Gavrilovna. "Only yesterday this rascal Wald literally turned you out of the hospital, and today you promise Prilutsky, another rascal, to go back. Can you really think of working with. . ."

"Does Wald matter?" interrupted Ivan Petrovich. "He simply wanted to show he was in power. While a surgeon is necessary in any army. In war-time, there's always a shortage in surgeons."

His wife was amazed.

"Can you?" she tried again. But he stopped her by embracing her and whispered in her ear.

"I'll have to, for we've got no syringe." He took the little phial out of his pocket, and showed it to her.

She understood.

Her eyes, red for lack of sleep, blinked involuntarily and became rather moist, but she managed to nod.

They crept out of the house stealthily, so as to prevent the dogs from noticing their departure. They went along the street, arm in arm, gravely, very attentive to everything round them, peering at the vast gleaming blueness of the sea, the darkish ribbon of the beach marred just then by a few German soldiers tinkering at some kind of machine, the hilly shore and the white houses on it surrounded by tall poplars, the ruins of what used to be people's houses all about them, and the glittering pieces of shattered glass under their feet.

They had not lingered at home, yet they met Prilutsky with the corporal in the street, about to repeat their visit,

because on seeing the old people they turned round and went back to the hospital.

"So you see, we're expected."

"Expected. . . Well, it doesn't matter," she answered under her breath, and then she repeated a little louder: "It doesn't matter. . . let them expect."

In the courtyard they were met by one of the officers they had seen the night before, and beside him the obsequiously beaming Prilutsky.

The officer took the cigarette out of his mouth and said: "Morn'n!"

Ivan Petrovich pretended he had not understood the greeting, but lifted his hat a bit.

On entering the place they had entered thousands upon thousands of times, both husband and wife put on the usual white overalls. The cupboard with the surgical instruments Ivan Petrovich made for at once was open, although there was nobody nearby, in the operating room. Thinking this a wonderful stroke of luck, yet feeling a trifle agitated, the old surgeon found in the cupboard the neat little nickel box with the syringe and thrust it into his pocket, with one expressive look at his wife. She merely puckered her eyebrows a little to show she understood.

When the officer, unaccompanied by Prilutsky, came into the operating room, Ivan Petrovich had the enthusiastic look of a man about to do a job he knows inside out.

8

Medical men have all a common tongue: Latin; so Ivan Petrovich, whose German was not one of his strong points, was able to keep up a lively conversation with the young German surgeon, while examining the six German officers who appeared to be rather badly wounded.

The German doctor, who had a common-looking longish face rather like a horse, was surprisingly deferential to the Russian and even called him "Herr Professor." Whether he was impressed by the scholarly appearance of Ivan Petrovich or whether Prilutsky had been boosting him, or whether it was simply that the German felt he was not much or a doctor himself, at any rate he was ready to add the weight of his opinion to that of his Russian colleague.

All the wounded officers were in need of immediate operation; this was corroborated by Nadezhda Gavrilovna, whose spectacles and grey-streaked hair, as well as her being the "professor's assistant," won the German's respect.

Two of the six had to be given up, thought Ivan Petrovich. So he said "Malum"—very bad—and the German surgeon looked duly grave. But the order in which the other four were to be operated had to be decided upon. This done, Ivan Petrovich, in a calm business-like way, took out his unlabelled little phial and the syringe.

Nadezhda Gavrilovna, who had been watching every movement, caught his inviting little nod, stepped aside to the window and put out her arm bared up to the elbow.

Having filled the syringe out of the phial, Ivan Petrovich made a subcutaneous injection in the arm of the woman whom he held dearer than anybody or anything in the world.

His hands shook, but he tried to control their trembling; then he handed her the phial and the syringe, having filled it first. Seeing her falter, he pricked his arm himself.

This took him two minutes at the outside, but he felt his strength ebbing, he wanted to take a seat or, better still, to lie down. He saw Nadezhda Gavrilovna was already sitting on a white hospital stool; her face very pale, she raised her hand to her heart and looked at him fixedly with dilated eyes.

Then with a great effort of will he drew up another stool, sat down beside her, nestled his head on her shoulder and let the empty syringe and phial out of his hand.

The German surgeon, the officer and the orderlies who had left the ward a few minutes before to take the first man to be operated to the operating room, came back and stopped in amazement. Then the surgeon seized the phial lying at the doctor's feet, sniffed and said in a frightened voice:

"Venena!"

The swift and powerful poison, whose faint but unmistakable smell pervaded the ward, had already done its work. The old Russian surgeon and his wife lay dead on the floor.

In the dead man's pocket they found a piece of paper with a few words on it: "Better death than a cowardly life".

POETRY

MAXIM RYLSKY

TO UKRAINIANS IN AMERICA

Wide is the rainbow's dazzling span;
But blurs and fades as yet we gaze.
The bridge of thought from man to man
Abides and strengthens through the days.

Let continents and seas divide,
A brother's word has passage sure,
The cry that dies on the Dnieper-side
Is heard on the far Atlantic shore.

Of hours and days, in fire and strife,
We lose the count, but keep to-date
The mounting score of blood and life
Our foe will pay at bitter rate.

Our soldiers storm the rise again,
Our sailors put to sea again,
Our flyers brave the skies again,
Help us and we'll be free again!

All back! The horizon-touching wheat,
The soil we treasured on our palms,
The wheels with wealth in every beat,
Our dawns, our dews, our rivers' psalms!

We know how wide, how crushing fell
The sway and weight of that fungus-throne.
We'll rend the gloom, our courage tells
It must, it will be overthrown.

A stir of tongues, of rivers three,
Moscow, Volga, Dnieper loud;
Hear Asia join the colloquy,
From Elbrus rolls a thunder-cloud.

Ukrainian thatch, white walls a-peel,
Black bombers shadow the empty street;
The Germans gloat, but they can feel
The shadow of their own defeat.

We'll disembowel that glutton-guilt,
We'll pierce with death that evil brain,
Join fast your hands on the common hilt,
Workers, peasants of our Ukraine!

Let the people rise, invincible
Make head, all efforts unify.
No seas of woe will overwhelm,
They'll fear no flash from the blackest sky.

Freely translated by John Evans

IN GERMAN-OCCUPIED KIEV

(Excerpts from the diary of Pavel Petrovich Nazarenko, a Kiev citizen and former worker of the "Transsignal" factory. These lines were carried across the front-line by Lucy Balakireva)

"So many are the sufferings and hardships inflicted upon us by the Hitler brigands that I have decided to jot down all the events, so that after my death my children may know every thing and take revenge for all the trouble the accursed fascists have brought on us.

Kiev, June 5th, 1942. Today two Hitlerites came to my house. They entered my room, inspected the furniture and pointed to the china cupboard, the mirror and the chairs. The interpreter explained to me that the Germans liked these articles and were going to take them. They would give me a receipt stating that they were taken for the German army. The Hitlerites carried the things into the yard, where a lorry half-full of all kinds of things stood waiting. Upset, I returned to my empty room. From my neighbours, the Skitskys and Levadas, the Hitlerites took two rugs, a blanket, a table, a sewing machine and a child's chamber. Evidently all these things will be shipped to Germany.

June 12th. The cost of living is incredibly high, it is impossible to buy a thing. The collective farmers tell me that it is only with the greatest difficulty that they manage to get to Kiev. Along the roads at the approaches to bridges, at the landing stages and in the streets, the people are being stopped by soldiers and policemen and robbed of the produce they are carrying. Anybody who succeeds in buying something secretly and at an enormous price, hides his purchase and hurries home. I was stopped by several policemen; they inspected the contents of my basket, took half of the produce and dashed the basket at my feet. In reply to my protests, the policemen declared that "all surplus goods are confiscated for the needs of the German army."

June 26th. This is the anniversary of the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian S.S.R. What a happy day it used to be! On the occasion of the holiday I went to pay a visit to an old friend of mine. I found him terribly changed, he didn't recognize me. I walked along the Kreshchatik with him. The street was swarming with Hitlerites in uniform and in plain clothes. Heavy patrols guarded the houses where the Germans were billetted.

August 15th. I am ill, unable to leave my bed. There is no way of calling a doctor, and no medicine of any sort.

August 24th. This is my first visit to town after my illness. I've sold my son's overcoat. Wherever one goes, one runs into the police. It looks as if there were ten gendarmes and at least two dozen policemen to every inhabitant of Kiev.

August 27th. In the evening my friends brought Eugene Skitsky who had been badly beaten up. A week ago he was seized on the street and sent on a bridge building job. The German foreman picked on the boy and beat him with an iron rod.

September 2nd. The whole day passed like a nightmare. This morning Vera Sergeyevna Skitskaya, a quiet, delicate woman, seized an axe, hacked to death her sleeping daughter Galochka and threw herself off the balcony on the third floor. She left a long letter saying that she had no more strength to fight starvation and the insolent aggression of the Hitlerites, that she had resolved to kill her daughter and herself, and put an end to their suffering.

September 19th. This morning the manager of the house and a policemen threw my belongings into the yard and locked up the apartment in which I had lived over twenty years. Not only this, I had to sign a paper that I would pay

the rent I owed within a week. Fortunately my old friends, the Golutvins, invited me to stay with them. I am writing these lines in a tiny room in one of the streets of the Podol district.

September 28th. I've been offered a job in an artel, selling matches manufactured by them. Fifteen roubles was the price of a box, an incredibly high price, for to earn a few honest roubles in Kiev was something only a few could manage. For each box sold I was to receive twenty kopeks. I agreed. A disabled metal worker, called an "invalid of labour" and now selling matches! But this was preferable to working for the Germans. If I could only pull through until victory over the Hitlerites and the return of my children!

October 1st. And so I am selling matches on the streets. This afforded me a chance of observing all kind of scenes. There is no limit to the Germans' impudence. They stop women in the street and, laughing insolently, offer them a piece of bread for a night. I saw a young girl strike a Hitlerite in the face. She was shot on the spot, and her dead body was flung into the ruins of a building.

October 7th. During the day I hear so much shouting that the noise rings in my ears day and night. In the streets the Hitlerites hunt for young and middle-aged men, to be sent for compulsory labour in Germany. The chase starts early in the morning. Passers-by are stopped by Hitlerites and policemen and sent to do all kinds of work: road repairing, collecting scrap iron and chopping wood. All kinds of tricks are resorted to by the Germans to catch the people in Kiev, but people take every precaution to see they are not caught.

October 28th. I've spent seventeen days in prison. On the 11th of October the Hitlerites appeared at our artel, bringing a motion-picture projector with them. We were told to remain and see the fascist newsreel, otherwise we'd be dismissed. Our hearts swelled with indignation and disgust as we saw on the screen how the fascists bombed one of our own cities. It seemed to us as though the bombers were flying straight for us. There were shouts and hoots from the audience. Exclamations: "Robbers!", "Fascist murderers!" were heard in the dark.

The Germans stopped the film, and the lights went on. This made everybody jump up from his seat. Then the Hitlerites called for a German detachment. All of us, old men and disabled workers, some of whom could hardly move, were arrested and driven to the Lukyanov prison.

The seventeen days spent there were a real torture; the wind whistled through our damp, cold cell. Water dripped from the walls. We slept huddled together on the floor. Our daily ration consisted of fifty grams of bread and a cup of hot water. We were questioned day and night and beaten with a piece of rubber hose. Among those who died from the beatings were Guriy Grigorievich Trushnikov, aged sixty, Semyon Nikiforovich Drobiazko, aged sixty-five, Taras Sergeyevich Krasnitsky, aged sixty-two, and Evgeni Nikolayevich Khobot, aged sixty-eight.

Another seven men died in the cell from various illnesses; among them were old friends and comrades with whom I worked at the "Transsignal" factory: the disabled worker Mikhail Alexeyevich Druzhinin and Vikenti Vikentievich Panassyuk. And despite everything the fascists were unable to establish the identity of those who shouted at the film show. Those who remained alive were released, or, to be exact, carried out of the prison and warned that they were regarded as "suspects." Should something be found against us, we would be hanged at once. Our artel was dissolved.

November 7th. This is the anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. Our hearts used to be filled with joy on this great holiday. Despite all difficulties, the Soviet Union is very much alive! The detachments of gendarmes and policemen in the streets are larger than ever and the people are ordered to show their documents. The Germans are afraid of the partisans. The following inscriptions in Ukrainian and even German were found on the walls of the houses, including the residence of the German governor-general, in different parts of the city: "Long live the anniversary of the October Revolution!", "Long live Stalin!", "Long live the Soviet Ukraine!", "Ukrainians! Fight for complete victory over the fascist occupationists!" The police were busy cleaning

off these slogans. Many people were arrested in the streets.

I was told of this by my old neighbours, who came to visit me. We spoke of our children and recalled our happy past, and these recollections strengthened our firm belief in the victory of the Soviet people over the hitlerite invaders. . .”

Here the diary breaks off. Pavel Petrovich Nazarenko, aged sixty-three, ex-foreman at the “Transsignal” plant and disabled worker, died on November 9th, 1942.

TANKMAN MUKHIN'S FAMILY

He lay with his hands locked at the back of his head, and his heavy winter cap tilted low over his brow. It was past midnight. The well-heated hut had cooled since evening. His comrades, too, lay stretched full length in the straw. The charcoal stove glowed dimly.

Tankmen sleep soundly after battle. I looked at the pale face of Ivan Mukhin and noticed that his eyelids fluttered. Mukhin opened his eyes.

“Aren't you asleep, Mukhin?”

“No, why?”

I moved closer.

“Did you find your people?”

“Yes. . .” the tankman answered hesitantly, as if he were incapable of tearing himself away from some thought or other.

. . . Heavy engagements had taken place. Every mile had been won from the Germans with bitter fighting.

Mukhin's tank had been the first to burst into the town. It was ablaze. The tankmen had been wreathed in smoke. Rafters and the walls of houses had crashed on the pavement. The tankmen had blazed away with machine-guns while on the move, clearing the streets of the Germans. Mukhin had sent shell after shell after the retreating enemy. The tank operating alongside had bored into the centre of the town while Mukhin had turned towards the station.

There was nothing left of the station but a mass of smouldering ruins. From time to time the wind would fan them into flames, and for a moment the silhouettes of columns or part of a wall would show up. The old church flashed by, and further on stretched a long row of one-storey houses with their grounds, flights of steps and gardens.

To some, no doubt, that street would have looked unpretentious, even poor. But to Mukhin it was dearer than the wealthiest of streets. He knew every house here, every tree, every dove-cote.

Mukhin tapped the driver on the shoulder. The tank stopped at No. 54 Voroshilov Street. Mukhin raised the hatch, threw a quick glance at his home, and his heart seemed to miss a beat. He jumped down and hurried inside. In the dark passage Mukhin found the door handle with the confidence born of habit and threw open the door.

The first thing his gaze lighted on was the familiar couch on which he had liked to rest and read. He used to smoke there with his father, chatting idly after dinner. Now the covering had been torn off and the bare boards showed through the flock.

A woman was sitting on the couch, her face drawn and pale, a threadbare, torn dress covering her prominent shoulder-blades. The woman was old and worn-out.

“Mama!”

The woman jumped to her feet, and with a cry rushed to the door. She stood still, her arms clasped around the neck of the tankman.

“Vanya!”

Fifteen long, unspeakably painful months had parted these two. Four hundred and fifty days of anxiety, of gruelling uncertainty and loneliness. How many nights the tankman had thought of his near ones, not knowing where they were and what had happened to them!

Ivan Mukhin well remembered the day of parting. Before he had recovered from his first wound, he had said good-bye to his family and left for his unit.

Through his mother's sobs he now caught the word: “Father. . .” He pressed back his mother's grey head slightly.

"What did you say?"

"They murdered your father!"

Ivan Kuzmich Mukhin had been an old charge-hand at the engine yard, a man highly respected in the town. He loved his home and family, loved his engine yard and comrades at work. The Germans had not broken his spirit. He had refused to go to the yard. He would rather have died than work at the machines under foremen brought from Germany.

Once old Ivan Kuzmich had gone for water and had not returned. Yelena Kirillovna and the children had sought him for three days. He had disappeared without a trace. At last one of the gendarmes had been bribed into telling her that the Germans had murdered the old man in front of the public baths. It was there they found the body. Gripped in his hand was his Soviet passport. His head was covered with a handkerchief. He had been stabbed in the thigh, shoulder and side, and there was a gash in the temple.

Ivan's young brother Vitali showed him a paper. This was a death certificate, No. 2582. It said that citizen Mukhin had died on the 13th of October, 1942, at the age of fifty-six. Cause of death: internal hemorrhage, fractured ribs and breast-bone.

That day Ivan's brother Nicholas had said to his mother:

"Mama, I'm going to run away, I can't live like this any longer! Even if it means travelling hundreds of miles, I'll get to our people."

And Nicholas went. At every street corner in the town stood German patrols. They were out to catch young Russians evading despatch to Germany. Nicholas managed to give them the slip. He reached the front, but there he was hit in the leg by a German bullet.

There was no news of the lad for two weeks. One night he arrived home and dropped into his bed. In the morning Germans came and seized him. His mother ran after the soldiers, begging them to have mercy. Blood was flowing from her son's battered mouth. Nicholas was dragged to the railway station and thrown into a truck. The door slammed. The train soon drew out, and nobody knows to this day the whereabouts of Nicholas Mukhin who tried so hard to escape German imprisonment. It is not known if he is still alive.

Every day brought fresh misfortunes and suffering. The Mukhins' once happy home was now gloomy, the house was practically empty. But one morning there came a knock at the door. Mother and daughter sat motionless. The knocking rose to a thunderous battering.

"Right now!" called Yelena Kirillovna nervously.

Two Germans stepped over the threshold.

"Your daughter," said one of the Germans in broken Russian, "is a nice girl, and she'll go to Germany."

At first the woman and girl didn't realize what they meant.

"I've nobody left but my daughter."

"She must go."

"My daughter! I won't give her up!"

The German demanded a bribe.

Yelena Kirillovna rushed to the neighbours. She had to find 12,000 roubles, but the neighbours were just as poor as she was, had been ruined and robbed by the Germans.

The train was ready to start. Mothers lay upon the rails striving to block its way. The girls locked in the trucks were struggling to get out.

Vitali showed Ivan the only letter Ludmila had sent from slavery in Germany: "I'm always thinking of you all, of my dear brothers, of your health. Mama darling, if you only knew how I want to see little Vitali! This awful life often makes me weep. . ."

Ivan Mukhin did not finish reading that letter. Between the lines he saw the tear-swollen eyes of his sister, Ludmila,—who had been a student in her third year at the medical college,—in German slavery. In liberated towns and villages he had heard of the savagery of the Germans, of their violence towards Russians carried off to Germany. He saw his ransacked home. Before him stood his mother in her miserable threadbare clothes, his emaciated brother, also in rags.

"Mama dear, let me see dad's picture."

Yelena Kirillovna rummaged in the table drawer and gave him the photograph. For several minutes Ivan Mukhin gazed at the familiar face as if he were making a silent pledge.

"Well, good-bye, it's time I went."

He hugged his sobbing mother.

"Don't cry, dear, I'll avenge him!"

Ivan Mukhin's tank again dashed along the streets, now cluttered with German dead. Not one of the fascists got away, not one of them escaped the fire and crawler-treads of the Soviet tanks. . . .

. . . Dawn came, and the stove went out. The battle in the neighbouring village, which had gone on all through the night, flared up with renewed violence. The tankmen were called to the aid of our infantry.

A. BULGAKOV

THE TRAGEDY AT KAMENSK

The snow is disappearing, leaving the Don lands bare. Inhabitants of the town of Kamensk are finding their fellow townsmen whom the Germans have murdered, in cellars, wells and gullies. Nobody in Kamensk can say exactly how many people the fascists have tortured to death there. Every day dozens more victims of the German occupation are found.

Townspeople who witnessed the tragedy tell the awful story of the shooting of fifty-seven boys of between eleven and sixteen.

It is painful to listen to the accounts of the German atrocities, to look at the pale bloodless face of Seryozha Udovidchenko, one of two boys who saved themselves from death.

When the Red Army was drawing close to Kamensk, when the fighting had already reached the outskirts of the town, two of our whippet tanks broke through to the factory settlement. Boys taking cover in the basement recognized them for Soviet machines.

The tanks opened fire at the German gun-posts, silenced several of them and destroyed a gun. The Soviet lads applauded the success of our tankmen with joyous shouts. The Germans took note of it.

The fighting again rolled back to the outskirts, with only desultory shots ringing out in the settlement. Then a German punitive squad arrived.

They entered the houses, and brushing the girls aside, pushed the boys into the street. Soon there were fifty-seven of them in the street. Mothers, full of forboding, thronged around their sons, but the Germans and gendarmes, wrenching the women away and threatening them with their tommy-guns, drove the boys off towards the school.

The Germans halted the lads at the school and, roughly seizing three from their ranks, dragged them into the school basement. A minute later tommy-gun bursts were heard, and cries and groans reached those outside. Hurrying out of the school, the gendarmes seized three more boys from the crowd and dragged them into the cellar, too. Again there were shots and groans.

The lads, who at first had not understood what was taking place, suddenly realized that they'd all been brought there to be shot. Some wept, others maintained stoic silence.

Kolya went to his friend Seryozha Udovidchenko and said:

"Let's go together."

"All right," replied Seryozha.

Meanwhile the police kept running out for fresh victims. The group of boys dwindled.

. . . Seryozha Udovidchenko recovered consciousness in the cellar to find himself wounded.

In moving he felt somebody's cold hand on his face. Then Seryozha raised himself and whispered:

"Is there anyone alive?"

From somewhere in the corner came an answer:

"Yes, here."

"Let's try to get out."

Before leaving the cellar Seryozha called out again:

"Maybe there's someone else alive?"

And from somewhere under a heap of bodies they heard:

"Yes, save me!"

The two wounded lads dug out the third, and all three crawled out of the cellar.

By morning each of them had reached home, but in the evening a gendarme and a German came to the Udovidchenko's apartment.

Seryozha, dressed in a girl's frock, lay

with his chest in bandages. The gendarme asked:

"What's he lying in bed for? Is he wounded?"

"No. . ." Seryozha's mother mumbled uncertainly, lifting her tear-swollen eyes to look at the gendarme.

"You're lying!"

The gendarme stepped up to the bed and said:

"Pick him up and take him into the street. We'll shoot him there."

The mother covered her son's body with her own:

"Then shoot us together!" she said.

"Take him, haul him into the street!" the gendarme insisted.

And then, suddenly, the mother took her son in her arms and carried him out of the house. Her lips moved as she whispered:

"Let all the people see it. . . Let everyone see. . . let! . ."

The gendarme and the German followed her.

First the people in the same house, then all the neighbours and all who happened to be in the street began following the woman bearing in her arms her doomed son. Cries were heard:

"Monsters! Accursed beasts!"

The German and the gendarme went along the street, past the women and the old men who had forgotten their own peril. And so great was the hatred, the rage, in the eyes of the people of that workers' settlement, that the Hitlerite suddenly came to a halt, gave Seryozha's mother a shove and said:

"The devil take him! Let him live!"

And they went on along the street, the German and the gendarme, without a glance back, hunching their shoulders in dread.

That very same day the Germans poisoned one of the other lads who had saved himself. Of the fifty-seven boys whom the Hitlerites had seized, only two remained alive, one of them was Seryozha Udovidchenko.

Never will the inhabitants of Kamensk forget that ghastly butchery of the schoolboys. The blood of Soviet children tortured and shot by the Germans cries out to the men of the Red Army for vengeance.

A. SOFRONOV

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE

We arrived at the airfield of Major Klyamin's regiment at night, when things were just beginning to get busy.

There is something grim and exciting about night bombers setting out on an assignment. The airfield was still plunged in darkness. Only lavender-hued corolla-like flames shot out of the exhaust as the engines were being warmed up. A blue pencil of light roamed the sky like the luminous pointer of a gigantic compass.

From opposite sides of the airfield came a buzzing as the engines were started; now and then, machine-guns would sputter and cannon were being tested. A high wind drove wet snow against the wings of the planes. The black, bulky shapes of the bombers glided forth into the night.

"Would you like to see the radio-station?" suggested the chief of staff. "You'll be able to warm yourselves up a bit."

In the dugout heated almost to the point of stuffiness, messages were being tapped out: the planes in the air were keeping contact with the ground. Out of the stormy darkness the crews were speaking to their regiment.

"Martyanov has settled on his course," said the radio-operator.

The radio-operator was a girl, whose appearance seemed a little old-fashioned, perhaps because of the heavy knot of chestnut hair at the nape of her neck. The heavy tresses were most decidedly out of keeping with the revolver attached to her hip and the dagger which had a plexiglass hilt of the kind aviation mechanics turn out in their leisure hours.

The dugout was spotlessly clean. At the little window hung cut-out paper lace edgings that gave quite an atmosphere of home. "A woman's hand," we thought. "Probably made them herself."

Meanwhile, the treble voice of the Morse kept on crooning its monotonous tune, bringing to us, through the thundering storm of the dark vastness above, tidings of the airmen on their hazardous route.

Suddenly, a young pilot burst into the room, wrapped in a cloud of frosty vapour; he looked huge in his fur-lined suit and calf-leather boots; the laryngophone wires hung loosely about his neck like little pigtails; his face was glowing with a fresh winter tan. The blue eyes looked straight at you as only the eyes of children can look, of children or highly courageous men, whose hearts know no fear.

"So long, little Dasha," he said to the radio-operator. "I'm off."

"When shall you be back?" she asked, her fingers busy with the key.

"Oh, in a brace of shakes! Just going to pay a little call."

"The milk is on the table," Dasha cried out after him, without taking her eyes off her work. "I've wrapped the jug in a blanket to keep it warm. Be sure to drink it when you come back."

"Yes, sir! I'll drink it all right, Comrade Senior Sergeant!" And the pilot dived through the doorway.

"Now, comrades pressmen," said the chief of staff, an elderly major with a clean-shaven head. "That, by the way, is Dasha's husband. They've been soldiering together ever since the war broke out. Captain Kuzovkin. One of our best airmen."

We looked out of the little window. In the black, stormy sky there suddenly flared up a fantastic constellation of three stars: one ruby-coloured, one yellow and one emerald-green. The stars slowly drifted westward; they were, probably, the side lamps of Captain Kuzovkin's plane. The constellation faded away in the blizzard. . .

A few minutes later Dasha informed us in an even, almost unconcerned voice:

"Kuzovkin's message: altitude 12,000 feet. Course 260. Square 05."

"Tell Kuzovkin to start on his flight," said the chief of staff.

Dasha gave her order to the Red Army man: "Start out!" The dynamo roared, and the girl's fingers sent the major's command into the air.

And then again the inflow of radiograms, call-signs and codes. . . Somewhere, far away warehouses were being blown up, anti-aircraft guns fired, the blizzard whirled the snow, and overworked engines roared, blinded when caught in the beam of hostile searchlight. . . While here, in the dugout, the Morse receiver kept on singing its everyday little song in its everyday little voice, recording all the ups and downs of military luck.

Soon Captain Kuzovkin's call-signals once more appeared among the others.

"Volga! . . Volga! . . Falcon speaking. . . Falcon. . . Passing over the front-line. A.A. fire. . ."

All of a sudden the radio-operator's voice changed:

"Kuzovkin reports: control rod smashed by a shell. Proceeding to the objective."

The light of a "bat" type lantern fell on her face; in that one moment it had grown peaked and wan.

"Order Kuzovkin to return."

Once again the roar of the dynamo, and the answering squeak of the Morse.

"Kuzovkin asking for permission to unload: objective near. What am I to answer?"

For a moment the radio-operator let her eyes dwell on the major's face. Her look became stern. But her lips were dry. How hot the room was! She unbuttoned the collar of her jacket.

"Tap out: if the objective's near and he can reach it, let him fly on. But he's not to take undue risk."

"Yes, Comrade Major."

A few painful minutes passed, and the girl cried out:

"Kuzovkin reports: load released; successful; homeward bound."

Where was her sternness? She even clapped her hands like a little girl.

"Tell Kuzovkin he's a brick," ordered the chief, and, bending over to us, added in a confidential whisper: "How do you like these boys? Reached the objective, with the control rod smashed. . . and dropped the eggs in the teeth of everything. . . Good chaps!"

This prosaic "good," applied as it was to

an act of heroism, merely emphasized the splendid nerve of Captain Kuzovkin and his crew. To reach the objective in a plane almost entirely out of control, relying purely on the engines, that's worth something, damn it!

And, as if she had read our thoughts, Dasha cast a proud look at us. Brimful of emotion, her radiant eyes made the dugout lighter. Or was it simply the lantern that had become brighter?

The inflow of radiograms renewed:

"Shumidub bombing a troop train."

"Kvochkin approaching the railway station of K."

"Nechiporenko sights a tank-column."

"Kuzovkin's on his return course. Approaching front-line. He'll be home soon."

Dasha buttoned the collar of her jacket. After all, it was not so very warm in the dugout. Perhaps, because the dawn was not far off. . . Her fingers seemed glued to the key.

And then. . . We'll never forget those eyes, stricken with grief, those cheeks, over which a pallor spread all at once.

"Comrade Major, Kuzovkin's attacked by enemy fighter craft. . . The plane's afire. . ."

And a second later:

"The gunner-radio-operator says Captain Kuzovkin's evidently killed, his plane's in a spin. . ."

"Pull yourself together, Dasha," repeated the major, evidently disconcerted, wiping the beads of perspiration from his shaven head with his handkerchief. But there was no need for him to have said that: Dasha's face was calm with the calm of an immensurable grief, more terrible than tears or moans. Her dry eyes were staring at the lantern, staring at the flame without blinking, as if she were blind. Her fingers kept tapping out a message unconsciously. Here was the numbness of disaster that can exhaust the heart in a single moment.

A minute later the whole regiment has earnt that Captain Kuzovkin was dead. The commander and the airmen came to the radio-station to Dasha.

"Go home, Comrade Kuzovkina," said the colonel. "You know that the regiment will avenge your husband."

The words were simple, even a little trite. But, spoken as they were, with the memory of the hero still fresh, they sounded like the solemn oath of a warrior.

"Go home, Dasha, do go home!" the colonel kept repeating, calling her by her first name; in this small detail, insignificant to a civilian, he expressed all the warmth of a soldier's heart.

But Dasha replied quietly:

"I can't leave, Sergeant Glushchenko's ill and has been taken to the hospital. There's no one to relieve me."

Sergeant Glushchenko worked shifts with Dasha.

. . . . Dasha was going on with her work very much as usual. Senior Sergeant Kuzovkina received coded messages, radiograms, call-signals.

Only, from time to time, she would come up to the window and gaze at the runway through the paper lace. At intervals of a few minutes dive-bombers landed one after another in the faint light of the early dawn. They swept over he near-by wood, flying low, like pelicans, shaking snow off the fir-trees, and ran along the concrete runway, irrepressible and thunderous like an avalanche. And every time the pilots, gunners and navigators, hardly out of their cabins, with the hoar-frost still clinging to the collars of their flying togs, would hasten into the dugout and, without saying a word, shake Dasha's hand.

One of them, Lieutenant Shumidub, if we are not mistaken, hot after his recent fight, asked:

"Is there a glass of water or something here?"

Dasha looked up at him and said:

"You know what, Comrade Lieutenant? Go to my dugout: there's a jug of milk on the table there, under a blanket. I think it's still warm. Drink it please."

And she wept for the first time.

A month passed, and once more we happened to visit that regiment. Talking about people we knew, we asked about Dasha.

"Oh, by the way, she's very happy," said the chief of staff. "Her husband has turned up. Yes, Captain Kuzovkin."

And the major told us that about two weeks after the catastrophe a bearded man in a peasant's sheepskin coat and tattered bast-shoes came to the regiment. Tucked under his arm, he had a loaf of rye bread. When asked who he was, the newcomer broke the loaf and produced three Orders of the Red Banner. To make a long story short, the bearded fellow was Captain Kuzovkin.

It appeared that when wounded during the homeward flight, the captain has baled out and landed somewhere on enemy territory. For about a week he was nursed by an old country-woman who hid him from the Germans. Then the captain baked his decorations in the loaf and started for home. And here he was.

"Where on earth is Dasha?" Kuzovkin asked eagerly.

"You'll have to wait for a quarter of an hour or so," his comrades answered smiling. "She's sure to turn up soon."

A quarter of an hour passed. Bombers, back from an operation, were landing on the airfield. And when the crew had jumped out of one of the planes, Captain Kuzovkin recognized his Dasha in the gunner-radio-operator.

"She'd been positively nagging me, this wife of yours," the colonel spoke severely to Kuzovkin, trying not to look at the happy Dasha. "I was to let her be a gunner-radio-operator, neither more nor less. 'I've got my private score to settle with the Germans,' she'd say. Well, she was wheedling day and night, wheedling and practicing to be a machine-gunner. Well, one isn't made of stone, she won me over. Now here she is, an airman. . ."

And doing his best to appear stern, he turned his face away to conceal his emotion.

While the chief of staff put in:

"She has already downed one Hun, by the way."

Having come to the end of the story, he concluded didactically:

"It only goes to show, comrades pressmen, how very obstinate some women can be!"

The milling machine was loaded on a truck at the very end of the train. As for Timchenko, he was travelling in a goods-car together with the other workers of his plant. The heavily-laden train was crawling eastward. Trains followed close on one another. At the stations all sidings were blocked. The trains had been hurriedly assembled, and goods-trucks were to be found next to carriages of the suburban electric railway and empty tankers. You could see stream-lined "Pullmans" coupled to trucks and refrigerators. And all this was moving to the East. . . to the East.

The journey was long, tedious and full of trying experiences. The stretches of country over which the trains were travelling seemed endless. Entire factories were transporting their equipment loaded on trucks. At first the yellow leaves of autumn, then the first blanket of snow covered the machines. Dross corroded the uncovered metal parts of the machines. Clothes were hung out to dry on the pulleys. In the cars on the sides of which the words "Factory management" had been hastily chalked, typewriters were rattling away.

At every stop along the way Sergei Timchenko would dash along to the end of the train to see how things were with his machine. It was a heavy, sturdy horizontal milling machine. In the old days it used to look so spick and span! Now the wind had torn off the tarpaulin sheet, snowflakes nestled in the grooves of the mechanism. Sergei's heart sank as he saw the state of his machine after the long journey. It seemed to him that he would never be able to clean the noble body of his milling machine, as though one could never again set going everything which had been left far behind, beyond the engine smoke.

P. Chernykh at the rolling press turns out 175 per cent of his quota
Drawing by P. Vassilyev

Then the train drew into a big city in the Urals. How bleak and unfriendly the Urals appeared to Sergei! The very sky was grey, nothing like the azure blue of the Ukraine. The people themselves walked and spoke in quite a different way. Sergei's ear, familiar as it was with the lilting tones of the southerners, could not accustom itself to the husky, hurried, and somewhat interrogative manner of speaking of the people of the Urals.

Factory after factory was arriving, and everyone of them had to be allotted a site. Everybody was in a hurry. Those were the anxious days of the autumn of 1941. No one could afford to take it easy. The front was in need of arms. When Sergei saw the enormous untidy stacks of machines, machine-tools and all kinds of equipment at the railway station and in the near-by streets, he had the impression that life was upside down and that it would never be righted again. The Urals seemed to be stunned by this invasion of factories.

Though actually something of a miracle was being performed under Sergei's very eyes. New spacious buildings sprang up on waste plots of land. With business-like cordiality the Urals were welcoming the newcomers. And though just installed, factories were getting down to work right away. Walking along the street, Sergei could see brand new whippet tanks rumbling out of a small gate one after another. Locomotives were meekly waiting at the gate, now and again emitting a bellow like oxen just back from the pasture. The gate would open and the engine would steam into the yards drawing truckloads of equipment behind them. Machines were set up in private houses, in the corridors of offices which had left their buildings, in the halls of institutes which had made room for them, in club rooms.

The vibration of machine-tools, the whirr of transmission belts, the thud of machines shook the walls not built for such heavy strain: so the houses were girded from the outside with steel bands just as barrels are hooped when dry.

The breath of the Urals was hot as these factories threw up clouds of smoke and steam. At night an incessant glow coming from the lights and furnaces of the plants seemed to keep watch over the town.

A site was also ready for the factory with which Sergei Timchenko had arrived.

Sergei was anxious while his machine was being unloaded. It seemed to him that his milling machine was not being handled as carefully as it should. He kept worrying people with his remarks and requests, and even got into trouble when he filched a piece of matting which covered another machine, also shipped to the Urals with its factory. . . Well, then Sergei did not spare his own blanket

and placed it over the exposed parts of the machine.

At last the milling machine was mounted. Sergei took off its wrappings, bolted it in place and gave it a good cleaning and oiling. And when he took his place at his familiar machine, he was no longer at a loss. It seemed to Sergei now that it was his place, the one he had always occupied at the Ukrainian factory where he had grown to be a man and where he had but recently been given the chance to operate this complex latest model machine-tool. To hell with these Germans for having wrought havoc with life! Work had been successful with Sergei. He had been able to achieve two—three times his quota on his horizontal milling machine. He had even had in mind a certain device with which he would have obtained not less than five times his quota, and now. . .

"Just switch on the automatic feed, will you?" he heard a voice say, and turning round saw a wizened old man with stern eyes set too close together.

The old man's eyebrows were bushy and grey as were his moustache, and these three grey tufts formed a sharp triangle. In fact the old man himself was somewhat angular. Broad-shouldered, thick-set, and narrow waisted. His pointed boots were partly covered by his baggy trousers, the kind worn in the Urals.

"Well, go ahead and show me what's wrong here. Show me, will you? . ." the little old man spoke sternly and very swiftly. He pushed Sergei aside as he started to run his eye over the machine. He bent down on all fours before it, glanced up at it from below, then got up and walked slowly round it. "What are these spindles doing here, bit unusual, aren't they?"

"That's a new idea," mumbled Sergei looking at the fitter disapprovingly, but in his heart of hearts somewhat pleased that the old fellow from this locality had never seen a machine-tool like this before. "It's our factory's design. Never seen one like it here, have you?"

"No. We haven't, as you say, but now we'll look at it. And you, how long have you been 'stitching' on it? A week less than a twelvemonth, I'd say. You're only a kid. Now take my son Victor, who's at the front, of all the milling-machine workers here he was the finest. He's something to look at too. . . Like an eagle. He's better made than you."

Sergei felt quite offended.

"I can't help that, can I?"

But the old tool-setter did not seem to hear him.

"The machine is all right. . . If it is in proper hands, why then, things will go smoothly. Pity my Victor isn't here. He'd have known how to fix things. We'll have a long way to go to catch up with Victor. The fellow's got brains! In the fighting now. He volunteered. I was on pension. Now I've turned up at my job again. They've put me to work as tool-setter with you. What do you think? All my life long I've been knocking about this factory. Now I'll see what the new workers are like who've come. Well, if anything's wrong, come to me. Comrade Bukharyov, that's me. Call me Zossim Petrovich simply."

A. Shirinkina, the mother of two servicemen, turns out 200 per cent of her quota at the lathe

Drawing by P. Vassilyev

At first things went wrong with Sergei at his new job. Sometimes the machine wouldn't run smoothly, its mechanism having worked loose during transit; at other times there was a shortage of spare parts. Sergei worried. Zossim Petrovich's coolness, his slow Urals speech and the way he took his time irritated the eager Ukrainian. Sergei had a go at using the device he'd invented some time ago. The fitter examined the design sketched by Sergei.

"Risk it. We'll see. Maybe it will work." He thought for a while, then added: "My Victor was sharp at understanding those things. If you and I could have him here, then straight away. . ."

Gradually the old man was getting used to Sergei. He was pleased with the way the young milling-machine worker tackled all the details of his work himself and the way he put his heart and soul into it. As Zossim Petrovich put it, he had "ideas in his head," he seemed to him "to have his wits about him." But when the device was ready and with great excitement Sergei set it going, it did not give the results anticipated.

"It seems there's something you and I haven't caught on to," said Bukharyov. "There we were discussing and discussing, and now we've spoilt it all. It would have been much better not to have let people know what we were doing and then when we'd done it to tell them. It's no good without Victor. He was thinking about this idea all along."

It seemed to Sergei that the old man was not quite fair to him and that in his heart

he was glad that a stranger had not been able to solve the problem, the secret of which was known only to his son. But hard though he tried, things would not go right. Even Ogloblin's manual brought along by Sergei had no helpful advice to offer. It was absolutely necessary that he should get the device to work. Sergei was milling a very important part for the gear-box of a tank, a clutch. This was known as a tight spot in the shop. It was a great hindrance in the production of battle-cruiser tanks.

Meanwhile the bitterly cold Ural winter had set in. Sergei was not used to the keen winds which came from the distant Asia and swept over the Ural mountains. One day Zossim Petrovich kept looking at Sergei's feet when he'd come in from the frost and was stamping with all his might to warm them. The old man did not say a word, but the next day brought a pair of felt-boots and offered them to Sergei.

"Here, take these boots," he said. "They are my son's. Wear them for a time."

But one morning Sergei who was at the shop when night was still blue over its imbricated glass roof, did not find the old fitter. He was very much astonished. Usually Zossim Petrovich was in the shop long before any of the others. But that day Bukharyov came just before the whistle blew. He seemed to have grown old in one night. His broad shoulders drooped as under a heavy burden. His eyes had sunk deep in the dark circles under his grey eyebrows. Silent he walked up to Sergei's machine-tool and stopped in sorrowful perplexity.

"He's been killed, my Victor," he muttered in scarcely audible voice, making a helpless gesture with his hands. "A notice has just come from his unit. . . The commander himself wrote. . ." Then he stopped with his head bowed. "Keep the boots. Wear them in memory. . ."

Slowly tears filled his eyes which seemed hidden under his eyebrows, and brimming over they streamed down his cheeks, to his moustache. He did not brush them away.

"You'd better go home, Zossim Petrovich," said Sergey shyly.

"Shut up, will you?" Bukharyov stopped him. "I know where my place is at a time like this." He examined the machine, twisted the wrench in his hands and touched the device. "The thing is it's no use our expecting Victor. . . Let's use our own wits, son."

Sergei gave a start. It was the first time Zossim Petrovich called him "son." It quite took his breath away.

"I couldn't sleep all night. . . My trouble knocked all sleep out of me. . . That was a milling-machine operator if ever there was one! Only the Urals rear the likes of him. Well, I've looked through some note-books of his. Seems I've got hold of something. Well, this isn't the time for feeling hurt. Maybe my tears, the tears of a father, will act as a balm. But then, you see, it is quite different with you. You're sort of adopted by me, just like we adopted your factory."

He took out of his pocket a blue note-book rolled into a scroll and smoothed it out.

"Look here, son, that's what he arrived at after hard thinking! Could the two of us have been as cute? But here, see, is something he couldn't solve and you, Sergei, you have found it out yourself."

Sergei scrutinized the clumsy draft and suddenly everything became clear to him. A light broke upon him as he turned the pages of the note-book. He understood everything. Here at last was the conclusion he had not been able to form himself. Even after his death Victor Bukharyov, the son of a Ural fitter, this unknown brother of his, had lent a helping hand.

Within a week the new device was ready. They decided to test it. The old fitter was no less excited than Sergei. Two days running he did not stir out of the shop.

"It'll be a broiling hot day for us," he said. "We'll have to sweat over it today, won't we? Seryozha. . ."

But the device worked without a hitch. And during the very first shift Sergei turned out eight times his quota on his milling machine. The old man was pleased.

From then on milling was done with the new device which was named "The Bukharyov-Timchenko system." The milling-machine operators earned much more money.

On Saturday evening Sergei stopped the old fitter at the entrance to the shop.

"Just a moment, Zossim Petrovich," he began, looking at the concrete floor with an embarrassed air. "There's something I wanted to suggest to you. This is what I have to say to you. Let's buy our tank, Zossim Petrovich. All the chaps are willing. I've saved some money. Let's buy this fine tank of ours, the two of us, and let's call it 'Victor Bukharyov' in memory of your Victor."

Frowning, Zossim Petrovich peered into Sergei's face. Then his face broadened into a smile.

"How much have you saved? I'll add up. I've got savings too. If I look in at the savings bank I may find something."

And so the old Ural fitter Zossim Petrovich Bukharyov, the Ukrainian milling-machine operator Sergei Timchenko and his workmates bought the tank and named it as had been agreed, the "Victor Bukharyov." Zossim Petrovich himself looked after its assembling, and when the machine was coming off the conveyor he triumphantly drove out of the factory gate standing on the tank together with Sergei. With the consent of the management he took the tank named after his dead son to the front.

Soon after this Sergei Timchenko received a letter from Zossim Petrovich. The old man informed him that the tank "Victor Bukharyov" was one of the first to burst into the self-same Ukrainian town from which Sergei Timchenko had brought his machine to the Urals a year-and-a-half ago.

LEO KASSIL

MAYAKOVSKY TODAY

If Vladimir Mayakovsky were alive today, he would be fifty. His contemporaries can hardly picture the poet at this age. Their memory has preserved him young, "handsome and twenty-two year old," as he referred to himself in the poem *A Cloud in Trousers*. To his coevals and contemporaries Mayakovsky has always been young, full of vigour and energy, in the heyday of his literary career, as he was at the time he wrote his poems *Lenin* and *Good!*

That is why it is hard to picture him at the age of fifty, Mayakovsky on the threshold of old age, and at a time when his country is going through the trying ordeal of the Patriotic War.

There is no doubt that were Mayakovsky alive today he would have revealed to the full his splendid fighting spirit, his unique talent and noble loyalty to his country, to which he had given unstintingly all his strength. Mayakovsky's life and work afford convincing proof that his talent would have been fully commensurate with the events of the Patriotic War, events unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Mayakovsky belonged to the generation which has had to shoulder the brunt of the hardships and trials of our age. He never tried to evade these trials but always marched forward to meet the approaching storms. He was very young, indeed a mere lad, when the years of reaction set in, following the Revolution of 1905. He never wavered, he had no misgivings or doubt as to the necessity of the upheaval of 1905.

It was during his imprisonment in a cell of the Butyrskaya Prison in Moscow that he first ventured into poetry. "Comrade Constantine" was the nickname under which the young revolutionary was known. His confinement in the tsarist prison marked the beginning of the difficult and glorious path of the poet of the Revolution.

The war of 1914—1918 found Mayakovsky at the height of the struggle for his literary individuality, for the unique poetic language native to him, and to him alone. One must know thoroughly the epoch preceding the war of 1914—1918 to appreciate the magnitude of his struggle for his individuality in literature, for his recognition and place in it. In the literary salons of those days poets grew accustomed to a narrow, restricted circle of readers. Poems were read first to connoisseurs, to expert critics of poetry. Tastes were determined and literary prestige created by the magazine *Apollo*. Poetry was dominated by the symbolists. It was with great reluctance that the decadent circles forgave Alexander Blok, the brilliant Russian poet, the "social" themes of some of his poems, the echo of Nekrassov's verse resounding in others. Pushkin's verse—undoubtedly admirable—and the traditions of Pushkin's versification were con-

sidered inviolable canons, and any violation of the accepted form was looked upon as blasphemy. It was forgotten that Pushkin's verse was also the verse of an innovator who fought against the outmoded poetry of his opponents. Of the recognized writers of the older generation only Maxim Gorky gave Mayakovsky his support and recognition. A great man of letters himself, Gorky appreciated the originality of Mayakovsky's talent and the significance that he and his art would have in the development of Russian poetry. It must never be forgotten that the biggest volume of Mayakovsky's verse at that time was published with Gorky's aid. It was called *As Simple as Mooing*.

There is hardly another poet in whose works we could find as deep and inspired a reflection of national events as Mayakovsky. Even in what the poet considered his ordinary "newspaper" work, in his urgent propaganda verse, we can see the epoch reflected, can feel it "crudely and visibly," to use his own words. The future novelist, to whom writing a novel of our time will mean delving into history, will inevitably draw on Mayakovsky's poems for the general colour of the period. This can be verified by glancing through the posters issued by Mayakovsky at the beginning of the war of 1914—1918, and also his propaganda posters during the Civil War. The restoration period, the Stalin Five-Year Plans, events of world significance, all that concerned our country, everything that held the attention, admiration or evoked the indignation of the popular masses, is reflected in Mayakovsky's poetry. That is why reading him is like scanning the history of two decades, of turbulent and grim decades equal to centuries in their importance.

The originality of Mayakovsky's poetic talent embarrassed his critics, particularly in the early period when the poet's talent was not yet fully developed. In those years the critic sought in his works the influence of Verhaeren, of Walt Whitman and, finally, of the western futurists. Mayakovsky's strength consists precisely in that he is a Russian poet, that his poetic language, the form of his verse are native to Russian poetry. In the profoundly patriotic fervour of some of Mayakovsky's verse we hear the voice of a son of our Soviet country, happy and proud in the realization that he is a son of his people and of his native land.

During the Civil War, at the time of famine and blockade, he wrote his poem *150 Millions*.

Russia—
Not a ragged beggar,
Not heaps of debris,
Nor homes reduced to ashes. . .

wrote Mayakovsky at that time, addressing himself with indignation and bitterness to those who regarded his country as a prostrate colossus which would take a long time to recover from the destruction caused by the war. These few lines breathe a feeling of dignity, of national pride, love for country worthy of a poet and citizen, of a patriotic poet. The poet who created his own poetic syntax, who enriched the Russian language with his unusually bold and unique rhyme and with new words coined by himself, addressed the youth of fraternal national republics with:

Young comrades,
eyes on Moscow,
Your ear to the
Russian attuned. . .
And were I an ancient
Negro, let's say,
Yet with fervour
not unlike the young
I would learn to speak
Russian just because
It was
Lenin's tongue.

Among the many rare qualities of Mayakovsky's poems are their force of conviction, their passionate appeal. He was a propagandist and agitator in the fullest sense of this word, and that is why when a speaker tells the people about their country, about self-sacrifice, selfless love for one's native land, he frequently cites the following verse:

. . . the land
that you won in battle
and nursed
back to health,
where you rise with bullet
and drop with rifle,
and merge with the masses
in one stream,

with such
a land
you'll march
to life,
to labour,
to joy,
to the death.

We have already passed over the second anniversary of the Patriotic War. For many months our country has been fighting the German invaders, defending every inch of native soil, giving hard blows to the fascist hordes. The world, mankind is paying tribute to the heroism of our people on the front and in the rear. The great "migration" of plants and factories from West to East, the creation of powerful industrial regions in the Urals and in Siberia, the heroic labour of our workers in bitter cold, all this is still vivid before our eyes. The mind can barely conceive the magnitude of human determination, endurance, the limits to which it stretches. In Mayakovsky's verse we find the indication of the sources of this matchless heroism and selflessness of our people:

We'll work
withstanding all odds,
That turning
the wheels apace
Life might rush
its iron course
In our trains,
through our steppe-land space
To those frozen
cities of ours!

The present war would not have taken Mayakovsky by surprise. His poetic intuition, his presentiment of war always troubled Mayakovsky:

The open
paper rustled
softly through the air,
and wafted in
the powder smoke
from all frontiers.

There are among his verse also concrete, literally prophetic lines that might have been written on the eve of this war:

They are preparing
but think it better
to bide their time,
As yet
diplomacy
smiles to win.
But come it will
with a roar
and clatter,
With tanks
making for
our homes and machines.

Mayakovsky envisioned the future enemy, he openly named him to us:

In all
the corners
of the globe
May the workers'
slogan be one today:
Speak to
fascists
the language of fire,
Of bullets, shells
and bayonet point.

For more than thirteen years Soviet poetry has been developing, following its own course without Mayakovsky, but the ranks of Soviet poets lack the man whose whole life and work tempered him for this unparalleled battle for country, for independence and freedom. The traditions of Mayakovsky's works still retain their authority in our poetry. The poet's wish came true: "The pen has won equality with the bayonet," but Mayakovsky himself is no longer with us. And this loss is felt particularly keenly in war-time. In Mayakovsky's poetic heritage we find lines fitting for both the poet's epitaph and for the inscription on the monument to him which is to be erected in Moscow:

Name me with
the builder, the weaver,
Whom work raises
to joyous fever.
I praise
what the fatherland is,
And thrice
what it will be.

One of the busiest squares in Moscow is called Mayakovsky Square. This name has become part and parcel of the capital, and Moscovites have long forgotten the old name.

To youth Mayakovsky's life has become a kind of a legend in the making; with his monumental aspect, his inimitable

voice, passion, fervour and fighting vigour, the living Mayakovsky looks at us from the reminiscences of the poet's contemporaries and from his own works. His poems are recited by the best Soviet actors, they are studied in the schools. Books have been dedicated to him. The fame of Mayakovsky, the best and most talented poet of the Soviet epoch, is firmly established and indisputable.

To the new generation of readers it seems strange that throughout his life Mayakovsky had to struggle for his individuality in poetry, to defend the right to speak his own poetic language. The new generation of his readers regard as ridiculous the articles by some of his critics who denied the poet's great talent, who did not see in Mayakovsky's verse his profound selfless love for country, his feeling of fervent patriotism. But the country, glorified and loved by its faithful and talented son Vladimir Mayakovsky, gave him its recognition and appreciation.

In his poem addressed to Russia's great national poet Pushkin, Mayakovsky says that they are fated to stand side by side. At one time these words evoked a hail of stupid witticisms, reproaches, ridicule. But Mayakovsky said what was soon to be confirmed by facts. From Pushkin to Mayakovsky—this is the path traversed by Russian poetry. There are sculptures of Pushkin and Mayakovsky at the entrance to the Lenin Public Library in Moscow. Pushkin Square is close to Mayakovsky Square. And for us these two names ring out as a beautiful reminder of the immortal glory of Russian poetry, the poetry that is a product of a great heart, a great mind and love for country.

LEO NIKOULIN

MAYAKOVSKY TRAVELS THE SOVIET UNION

P. Lavut, excerpts from whose reminiscences are published below, was the impresario who worked with Vladimir Mayakovsky, the greatest modern Russian poet. In these brief notes about the journeys and lectures of the late poet is to be found a faithful record of many traits of Mayakovsky's character, both as a citizen and as a poet. This man with the thunderous voice was tender, almost shy, in his personal life, a lyricist and orator for audiences thousands strong. A real Russian poet, bound by ties of friendship to Georgian artists, Byelorussian actors, and Tatar students, Mayakovsky loved his country and its people and was an indefatigable traveller. In his poetry this patriot and mouthpiece of his people endeavoured to embrace as many aspects of modern life as possible, and above all else the life of his own country. The very nature of his work demanded frequent contact with people of all walks of life. Mayakovsky was especially fond of the Soviet youth, and was always pleased when students, young farmers and Red Army men crowded into his hotel room.

Mayakovsky was the very antithesis of these literary cosmopolitans who travel in order to avoid their own people and their own personal boredom. The Russian poet could observe and understand the life of other nations because he had penetrated deeply into the history and ideals of his own nation, and had his roots deep in the soil of his own land. He found remarkable words to describe the poetic landscapes of America and for lyrical verses about France. With joyous enthusiasm Mayakovsky toured the Soviet Union, breathing deeply of the spirit of construction characteristic of those years. The extensive creative work that was going on in industry and in the countryside, the tempestuous intellectual life, the new people—all these are things which Mayakovsky found time to record only partially in his verses. These reminiscences show how many creative ideas of Mayakovsky's awaited expression in poetry. Lavut's notes also offer a lively commentary on the work which the poet accomplished.

Moscow and Leningrad were favourite subjects in Mayakovsky's poetry, and after them there were literally dozens of Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian cities that Mayakovsky came to regard as his own. He wrote splendid poems dedicated to the Urals, the Caucasus and the Crimea. Mayakovsky studied his country tirelessly. His journeys were inspired and at the same time strictly planned; he wanted to visit the most out-of-the-way places in the U.S.S.R., where large-scale construction and the spiritual growth of the Russian people were already making themselves felt.

Not only Mayakovsky's poems but the figure of the poet himself have retained all their purity and militant spirit in our times. These pages from the impresario's diary to which we call the reader's attention give some conception of this.

OUR FIRST MEETING

A tall broad-shouldered man walked on to the stage of the Seamen's Palace. In his hand he carried an imposing stick. He walked with such a confident mien and such an energetic gait that the caretaker could not make up his mind to challenge him.

Mayakovsky paced up and down the empty stage, a cigarette in the corner

of his mouth. It was here, in the Seamen's Palace, that today's soirée was due to take place.

He was alone, and I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to strike up a conversation with him. The day before I had heard him read. As in Moscow, his performance had been so fascinating and interesting, and he himself so unusual, that this time I resolved to meet him at all costs. I had just concluded some business negotiations in Odessa and was in no hurry to return to Moscow. I told him so and added that interest in his lecture would especially now that the season was at its height be very great at the health resorts (this was at the end of June, 1926).

"Drop in at the hotel tomorrow. Only make it one sharp. Don't be late, I'm leaving for Yalta tomorrow."

I was at his room by one o'clock. Essential organizational details were decided in a few minutes. Having disposed of them, Mayakovsky set energetically to work composing his bills.

Instead of the original title *I Discover America* he used others in the Crimea: "Spain," "The Atlantic Ocean," "Havanna," "New York," "America," "Chicago and other towns." Perhaps he was simply unwilling to repeat the title of a book that had but recently been published.

On the bills he styled his performance "A Conversation-Journey." He made a few new additions, including the poem *To Sergei Yessenin*, to his "verses and poems on various countries."

When I left, he added:

"If our work shows any promise, we'll develop it in every possible way."

That moment marked the beginning of my connection with Mayakovsky, a connection which was destined to endure until the last day of his life.

THE CONVERSATION-JOURNEY

Mayakovsky walked on to the stage. The audience, which consisted mainly of young workers and students, greeted him with great enthusiasm.

"Comrades," he began in his stentorian voice, "I want to tell you about my journey to America last year."

What followed was a short résumé of his book *I Discover America*, impressions of his trip to the U.S.A. in 1925 (excerpts from which were published in *International Literature*, No. 4-5, 1940). The story was interspersed with readings from his *American Verses*.

In accordance with his request there was never anything on the stage but a small table and a chair. On the table he laid his book and the remarks sent up to him by members of the audience. Here also stood a bottle of "Narsan" water. The latter he usually brought with him. He drank out of his own squat little tumbler, which he carried in a case in his pocket. He hardly ever sat on the chair, sometimes he leaned on it or placed his foot on the seat, but mostly he used it to hang his jacket on when he felt warm. He was moving about all the time, pacing up and down the stage along the footlights, sometimes retiring to the very back of the stage and then returning. Sometimes he came right forward and stood balanced there, as though he wanted to be nearer the audience.

While describing the voyage to America, he suddenly interrupted his narrative with the remark:

"Now I'll read you a poem called"—and here he spoke in a particularly loud voice for emphasis—*"The Atlantic Ocean."*

At first he read slowly and with the suspicion of a drawl in his voice. But when he came to the words "over the ocean," he gave one a vivid impression with his voice of the ponderous bulk of an ocean liner with his groaning, the swaying of his whole body. Towards the end of this poem about the ocean he again slowed down, pronouncing each word precisely, and raising his voice:

By the breadth,
and the cause,
and the blood,
and the spirit,
of my revolution. . .

and, abruptly breaking off the last line, he raised his hands:

. . . the elder brother.

"On my way back from the U.S.A., I wrote the poem *Home!*"

He read the end of this poem staring straight and sternly at his audience, his head held high, with a kind of responsibility and gravity:

I want pens
listed with bayonets,
the output of poems listed
with iron and steel.
Let there be items
on the labour of poems
in Stalin's reports
To the Politbureau.

During the second half of the evening he alternated the reading of his poems with answers to the notes. As the number of notes increased, the answers took up more and more time. They were to some extent a continuation of the lecture, enlivening and developing it. Mayakovsky was thus able to arrange a soirée which formed a complete and monolithic whole, drawing the public into it. From the very beginning he was in close contact with his audience. His lecture was really a conversation, and after his verses the talk began afresh and the answers to the notes strengthened his bond with his hearers.

Possessed of an incomparable gift for rhetoric not inferior to that of many a famous orator, Mayakovsky at the same time knew how to talk to the masses. When he read out a note and then answered it, the audience became more animated, interjections from a number of places sometimes merging into a general uproar. His audience argued with him, agreed with him, and his instantaneous sharp repartee called forth approval and laughter. He always remained master of the situation. In this matter his powerful voice was a great help.

IN EUPATORIA

At the "Mayday" Club the big open space was so filled with people that there was hardly any room for the ticket-holders to squeeze in. The sanatorium audience was in a happy and uproarious mood. Mayakovsky was at the top of his form.

"Eupatoria's something to write home about! It's a fine place!"

The next day, by request of the Management Board, Mayakovsky lectured at the "Thalassy" Sanatorium for people suffering from tuberculosis of the bones.

The verandah of the main building formed the stage. The patients were ranged in front of the verandah, the more seriously ill were brought there in their beds, while others, less serious, were carried in and made comfortable in deck-chairs. The whole of the staff of the sanatorium attended, making an audience which totalled some 400 people. Passers-by had a good view of this unusual spectacle and could hear Mayakovsky from a distance.

Mayakovsky, the man who never lost his self-possession, seemed this time rather embarrassed as he came out on to the improvised stage. Although he had known beforehand the sort of public he would have to face, he stood motionless for a few seconds, apparently making up his mind as to the best way of beginning his lecture and gaining the attention of his unusual audience. He began to speak in a particularly loud voice:

"Comrades! I shan't worry you for long. In a couple of words I will tell you about my trip to America, and then I'll read you a few of my best poems."

In the tone with which he pronounced the word "best" and the smile that accompanied it, there was something so merry and encouraging that a ripple of laughter ran through the audience, followed by a burst of applause and shouts of encouragement. He had won his way straight to the hearts of the patients.

On this occasion he read the poem entitled *To Sergei Yessenin*, which he considered to be one of his best. After the words:

. . . all life
must be
from end to end reformed,
and when reformed,
we'll sing its praises. . .

he paused for a second, although probably nobody noticed it. Mayakovsky knew that the next four lines, which contained the word "cripples," might offend the patients, remind them of their own misfortunes or distract their attention. Accordingly he omitted them altogether.

Mayakovsky continued for an hour-and-a-half without a break. When he finished, the patients gave him the send-off of an old friend.

Before Mayakovsky left his hotel, the management approached him with the "humble request" that he write something

in their visitors' book. For a long time Mayakovsky refused, but the manager insisted:

"Everybody writes something. Just look at the famous names in the book. There are lots of foreigners. No one ever leaves without writing some remark or other in the visitors' book, nobody ever refuses."

They laid a huge album before Mayakovsky. He glanced over the entries.

"Just take a look at them: everybody's satisfied. Something queer about that! Everybody's satisfied! How they write! What they write! Pure ecstasy!"

Then he also added a few lines, but not as a compliment to the management. He proposed that the hotel be disinfested of the mosquitoes which had not given him a moment's peace all night. The first unfavourable entry had appeared in the book.

Of all his lectures at the health resorts within range of Yalta, Mayakovsky was particularly pleased with those which he held at Kharax in the Sanatorium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, and in the Army Club at Gurzuf. Mayakovsky spent a lot of time rambling round Gurzuf. He was delighted with everything: the park, the club with the cosy little stage in the middle of the park, and the Pushkin House.

"This is where Pushkin himself used to come in," he said, pointing to the main entrance. He went over the house thoroughly and with obvious satisfaction. "It's pleasure to think that Pushkin lived here once." As he left Gurzuf in the motor-boat by moonlight, he said: "I'll always come back to lecture here. I love evenings like these."

People often asked Mayakovsky why he lectured and read so much at health resorts. It seemed so much like the work of a travelling comedian.

He answered:

"You've got a wrong idea about health resorts. People come here from all over the Soviet Union. Workers, collective farmers and intellectuals, all gather in the same audience. And then people come from all sorts of places you can never get to yourself. Then they all go back to their own districts and spread the poems around, and that is my chief aim. Just take a look at the visitors to our rest-homes and sanatoriums. I read for all of them, and I don't think I'm wasting my time."

In the summer of 1927 Mayakovsky was back again in the Crimea. As before, Gurzuf and Kharax gave him great pleasure, but most of all he liked Livadia with its palace that had been turned into a sanatorium for peasants.

. . . where you still
can read
there in the palace.
What?
Poems!
Who to?
Why, the peasants!

At Livadia, Mayakovsky lectured in the open sports ground in front of the club. The stadium was divided into two sections, one of which was reserved for the "local inhabitants," the peasants. They were admitted free, having been relieved of the necessity for buying tickets, as they could be recognized by the sanatorium pyjamas which they all wore. The other side was for the sanatorium staff and visitors.

He read them his poem *A Most Extraordinary Adventure Which Happened to Vladimir Mayakovsky in His Summer Villa*. In these verses he recalls the posters which he began to produce regularly almost as soon as the Civil War began. He sketched the pictures himself and wrote the verses which formed their captions. Before reading a poem he would share reminiscences of the period with his audience:

"This poem deals with posters. There was a time when I was engaged on this work. It wasn't easy, sometimes I drew day and night. Often I didn't get enough sleep. In order to prevent myself from oversleeping I would put a log under my head instead of a pillow. That was how we produced the posters which became known as the 'ROSTA (Russian initial letters of the Russian Telegraph Agency.—*Transl.*) Windows' which often took the place of papers and journals at that time. We wrote on topical subject so that our work would be of practical use for a day or so. These posters were placed in the windows of the big shops in Moscow, on Kuznetsky Most and other places. Some of them were duplicated and sent to other towns. . ."

"I still have some couplets I wrote at the beginning of the Revolution. You'll find them in one of my books. The Red Guard attacked the Winter Palace singing those couplets. I am more proud of them than of anything else I have ever written in my life."

ROSTOV

When he put up at hotels, Mayakovsky always liked big rooms where there was enough space to walk up and down. This meant that he could work.

In Rostov they gave him their biggest room, and he announced proudly:

"We're in luck!"

Another success: we learned that all the tickets for that night had been sold out in advance.

Before the soirée began, a number of young people surged up on to the stage. The firemen wanted to drive them off. But there was no room for them in the orchestra stalls, all the seats were occupied by the artists of the theatre. Mayakovsky defended them.

"I need them here, I can't work without them."

"In the first place, citizen, stop smoking," a fireman shouted curtly at Mayakovsky, "and then I'll talk to you."

"I'm acting, I'm almost an artist, and during my show I have to smoke. At present I'm rehearsing. D'you understand?"

Advancing argument after argument, Mayakovsky eventually got his own way. His victory over the fireman left Mayakovsky overjoyed.

The bills declared:

"It is not true that poetry is an easy matter, that can be picked up from a book in a few lessons. Writing the literature which is to lead the working class in struggle is the hardest business in the world."

"Inspiration is the bedrock of all kinds of labour. It sometimes happens that a whole day has to be spent not only in conceiving a poem but in searching for a rhyme, and I myself usually don't produce more than six or eight good quality lines a day."

"Now I'll read you a new poem, *To Comrade Nette, the Ship and the Man.* Nette was our diplomatic courier in Latvia. He was attacked and killed in the execution of his duties by foreign agents in a train on Latvian territory. There was another diplomatic courier with him at the time, a man called Makhmastal, who escaped with only a wound. I knew comrade Nette very well. He was a thickset Lett with a pleasant smile and wore huge horn-rimmed spectacles. I met him a number of times. I once travelled abroad in the same coupé with him. On the streets of Rostov I heard the newsboys shout: "Attack on our diplomatic couriers Nette and Makhmastal!" I was petrified. That was my first meeting with Nette after his death. The pain I felt on hearing the news soon died away. I found myself in Odessa, from which town I went by steamer to Yalta. When our boat was leaving the harbour, we passed another, and the sun lit up the gold letters on its bows, two words: "Theodore Nette"; that was my second meeting with Nette, this time not with the man but with the ship."

"*To Comrade Nette, the Ship and the Man,*" announced Mayakovsky, slowly and significantly, emphasizing the word "man."

NOVOCHERKASSK

I brought him statistical data on the population of Novocherkassk. He read them over in ecstasy.

"Wonderful! So many students in such a little town!"

It was about Novocherkassk that he wrote his poem *Blue Stripe* [1]. The epigraph to this poem consisted of the words: "In Novocherkassk out of 60,000 inhabitants 7,000 are students."

The lecture hall of the Don Polytechnical Institute was filled to overflowing. Almost all members of the audience were students. After his lecture Mayakovsky read them many of his poems. There were so many notes that it was physically impossible even to announce them all. In the hall there were arguments, from the hall questions were asked aloud. Mayakovsky invited anybody who wanted to do so to speak from the stage.

"Come along, don't be shy. Here I am doing all the work, come over here and lend me a hand."

There were some bold ones amongst them. One of them tried to demonstrate

[1] The colour of the piping on the students jackets was blue.

that it wasn't the correct way to write, the poems couldn't be understood. He was interrupted by a triumphantly, confident and jolly voice from the audience:

"I like Mayakovsky!"

It came from a professor of chemistry who was standing near the platform. His exclamation disconcerted the petty and boring would-be critic. All the evening he had shouted louder than anybody:

"Bravo, Mayakovsky!"

During the whole of our four years' work the Novocherkassk lecture was the longest he ever delivered: it lasted four-and-a-half hours. When it was over, the professor invited Mayakovsky to his study.

"I can't let you go, Vladimir Vladimirovich, until I've treated you to some wine of my own manufacture."

We went to the laboratory. The professor introduced his wife and from somewhere in the cellar produced his wine. We drank out of measuring glasses and test tubes. Mayakovsky also drank out of a sterilized beaker, fans in the lecture hall had carried off his flat drinking glass "as a souvenir." The professor, a man of 63, read his poems to us. After the poems there was singing, and the professor's wife sang. We sang Mayakovsky's favourite Gypsy songs and even arias from operas.

"Drinking wine is the thing for me, I'm a real Caucasian!"

Said the professor:

"And even more for me: it's my own brew!"

We got home at six the next morning. At eight o'clock we were at the station, and at ten o'clock back in Rostov. In spite of his sleepless night and his exhaustion after the previous day's performance, Mayakovsky strictly fulfilled all the obligations he had undertaken. On the very first day of our stay in Rostov representatives came to him from the workshops of the Lenin Railway and he agreed to lecture there during their lunch hour. Young Communist League writers, worker correspondents of newspapers, all came to Mayakovsky with requests for lectures. In the one day at his disposal, and not a full one at that (he was only free till seven o'clock in the evening), Mayakovsky agreed to deliver three lectures.

In the huge workshop which was not, of course, in any way adapted for lecturing, his mighty voice carried every word to the thousand people that formed his audience.

After the meetings with the Young Communists and the correspondents a large group of young people set out for the station to see him off. He sat down at a table in the station restaurant, and ordering them drinks, a thing he never forgot, continued his heated and passionate conversation. They did not want to let him go, and he got into the railway carriage at the very last moment. The shouts of the people seeing him off followed him, and he waved his hand as long as they were in sight.

THE VOLGA IN WINTER

"I can't stand these river tortoises." (I had proposed that he put off his trip to the Volga towns until the beginning of the navigation season) "This isn't a pleasure trip, but hard work to be done with our sleeves rolled up."

I did my best to persuade him: frosts, discomforts, privations, changing trains at night. . .

He remained obdurate.

We crossed the river in a sledge at Nizhni-Novgorod, in a 30-degree frost and a piercing, bitter wind. Mayakovsky sat hunched up but not discouraged.

As soon as arrived he asked the usual question:

"How's business? Will the people come? Are they interested?"

"They may be interested all right, but the frost is apparently going to last. We'll see when it begins."

"Then it's a good job I handed out a lot of complimentary tickets and promises. I've had visits from the students and worker correspondents. I promised to let everybody in, and in addition I invited the writers along. In other words, there'll be plenty of people."

Kind and generous by nature, he handed out whole packets of complimentary tickets to his lectures. It sometimes happened that the number of his free visitors was as many as a third of those who paid.

The evening was a success, but it was cold in the hotel room. He suggested that

we warm ourselves up with billiards. When we entered the billiard room, Mayakovsky went through a sort of holy ritual. The first problem was the selection of a good cue, heavy, long and straight. Testing one cue after another in his extended left hand, he sought a suitable one for a long time. Then he laid aside a good piece of chalk for the game. He carefully chalked his cue and the finger joints of his left hand. He often put up the balls himself; for him this was part of the game. He only played at "American," the simplest of all games in which the player may select any two balls as the cue and object balls. He had not sufficient patience for other games. He liked a rapid change in the situation, movement.

He walked quickly round the billiard table, never once sitting down to rest. He chewed a cigarette in the left corner of his mouth. At times, according to the course of the game and the degree of his excitement, he would roll the cigarette to the right corner and back with his lips. He was capable of going through a whole box of cigarettes in one evening.

Sometimes he would remain silent for a long time over a game. At other times he volleyed forth a stream of witticisms, keeping his face straight the whole time and only occasionally allowing his lips to relax into a faint smile. Sometimes he conversed in quotations from poems, his own and other people's.

He was a good player and had the great advantage of being able to use his cue with equal strength and accuracy in both hands. His height also helped him, enabling him to reach any ball even on a full-sized table. His greatest advantage in play however was his pertinacity and doggedness.

At about four in the morning, when I was almost asleep standing up, he would try to liven me up, singing in his deep bass "One more last tale" from the opera *Boris Godunov*. (Having no ear for music, he sang flat, but still he sang, and he was very fond of that aria.)

There were about five of these "last tales". . .

. . . In Kazan the students persuaded Mayakovsky to lecture at the University.

It was the 21st of January, the third anniversary of Lenin's death, and Mayakovsky read excerpts from his poem *Lenin* to his young audience with particular feeling, giving each word its special shade of meaning, sternly but at the same time tenderly, simply and inspiredly.

In the morning the worker correspondents came with a request for a lecture. There was no time, so Mayakovsky suggested the only thing possible: to meet in his hotel room at five that evening.

The hotel management was alarmed at the number of guests: about fifty worker correspondents crowded in by hook or by crook and settled down somewhere, somehow in the room. They brought extra chairs, but there were not enough to go round, they occupied them by couples, overflowed the couches, and some of them squatted on the floor. Only Mayakovsky did not sit down. This unusual meeting impressed him greatly.

The guests were interested in questions concerning his work, and in problems of Soviet literature. Mayakovsky willingly and kindly answered them in detail.

Gradually losing their shyness, the worker correspondents, one after the other fired questions at Mayakovsky; they only left when it was already time for him to go to his lecture at the theatre.

A real pilgrimage to his room in the old "Kazan Palace Hotel" began. Journalists and students gave place to poets, both local and visiting. A bashful young man came in and after much beating about the bush read *Left March* in Chuvash. Mayakovsky hold someone's notebook containing poems in his hand. Again it was *Left March*, this time in Tatar. Mayakovsky was equally hospitable to all comers, listened to them all and answered them all. Then *Left March* a third time, in Mari. In ever increasing numbers newcomers flocked to his rooms, all anxious to see Mayakovsky, to hear his opinion of their poems, of literature, of life, of newspaper work. . .

This bustle of travelling, this continual meeting of new people, this constant rush, pleased Mayakovsky. Nothing gave him greater satisfaction than a well-filled day. He hated "pauses" on the road.

We were working out our itinerary from Kharkov to Batum.

"When there are heavy frosts in Moscow, it is still warm in my native district. I love to travel to the South in winter. If circumstances permit, I shall remain in Georgia till the New Year."

He was very fond of Kharkov and often jumped up from his work in order to wander about the city. He liked the idea of the city being constantly under construction, and the green zone being constantly extended. He liked to see the new factories, museums, houses and, more than anything else, the new universities and technical colleges. He noticed which streets had been asphalted in his absence. Growth and construction excited him.

Lecture after lecture. Town after town. Sometimes he had to lecture two or three times in one day. To journalists, in workers' clubs, to youth. He was overtired and was suffering from influenza. Mayakovsky proposed cutting Grozny out of the itinerary and going straight to Baku in order to take some rest both in the train and in the hotel, and to have the pleasure of two free days before the next lecture.

"If I go to Grozny with the 'flu, I shall have to miss both Grozny and Baku. It's a pity, it would have been interesting to stop at Grozny."

The warmth of Baku soon put him to rights again. Whilst he was still in bed, Mayakovsky began to write a poem on Baku. It was only when we arrived in Tiflis, however, that he put the finishing touches to it and published it in one of the Tiflis newspapers under the title of *Baku*.

When he recovered from his illness, Mayakovsky was especially eager to make the most of the new city. He inspected the streets, new construction jobs, and was very pleased with a trip on what was the first electric railway in the Soviet Union. He visited the oil fields and the factories.

In addition to this he lectured every day, and to the most diverse audiences: in the Red Army Club, at the Lieutenant Schmidt factory, at the Shaumian Workers' Club, for students and for pedagogical workers.

Before a soirée in the Tyurki Palace of Culture Mayakovsky visited the reading room with a number of local writers. He greatly admired the Azerbaijan publications. He struck up a conversation with the librarian. She told him that some schoolchildren with whom she worked had for a long time refused to read poetry. So she got them together and taught them a composite declamation from Mayakovsky's works. In this way they gradually became accustomed to verse and formed a liking for it.

Mayakovsky went to the Shaumian Club by tram, refusing the offer of a car.

"It's more interesting by tram: you see more."

The club was filled with young workers. It was cold in the hall, and Mayakovsky kept his coat on, afraid of a relapse of his influenza.

"Comrades! As this is the first time I have lectured here, I suppose that you will be rather bashful: you will shout, whistle, stamp, in a word you'll demonstrate your delight, and that will be a sign of success."

A laugh went round the hall, the youngsters were not afraid of the cold. Mayakovsky announced his *Left March*. He read it with great feeling, and the audience in good earnest was stirred, shouted and applauded from sheer delight.

At the Schmidt Factory he was an even greater success. He never bragged about his lectures to worker audiences or of his success with workers. But it was the very work of giving these lectures that made him happy.

The next day Mayakovsky went to the "Paris Commune Dock" during the lunch hour. When the whistle blew, he climbed up on to a machine in the engineering shop. The majority of the workers had decided to eat first. Mayakovsky suggested that they should not wait for the others. Someone protested, and Mayakovsky announced:

"I am prepared to read until night falls and I foam at the mouth, and to any number of listeners."

The workshop however soon filled up. Groups of workers came up from all parts of the docks. Mayakovsky read *Left March*, and his voice reverberated hollowly under the arches of the workshop. He liked to give his voice full play, and this circumstance spurred him on. After reading a few poems he made

way for two young Baku poets, introducing them to the audience as interesting authors. After them he concluded the meeting with his verses dedicated to Lenin.

The workers went out into the courtyard with him, some of them accompanying him to the gate. They asked him to visit them more often.

"I am getting near to my native village. I like these parts. It would be good if you could come along as far as Bagdadi[1]. I'd be able to show you round and tell you about a lot of interesting things."

He never succeeded in making this trip. Urgent business called him back to Moscow.

He felt quite at home in Tiflis. Everything here pleased him, he was satisfied with everything, he was always lively and merry.

One day I tried to fix up a rendez-vous with him at a definite time on a certain urgent matter.

"You won't be able to find me."

"Why not?"

"Quite simple, I shall be sitting in a dukhan[2]. I don't know the address, but I'll explain where it is as well as I can. You go as far as the Pushkin memorial, then turn right, then left. . . in a word, you'll see a nice looking sign hanging out with two wonderful herrings on it, as large as life. That's where I'll be. You get a better meal in that place than anywhere else."

"Surely it's not better than our restaurant?"

"Don't talk nonsense! There's no comparison! They have real Caucasian food there. Just come along, and you'll see."

The dukhan was really first class. In Tiflis I discovered that Mayakovsky was a connoisseur of the Caucasian cuisine. He initiated me into whole series of culinary intricacies with a serious face which bespoke pride in his knowledge.

He went to his favourite dukhan every day. Spreading out his magazines and papers in front of him, he would sit there for two or three hours on end.

He concluded his visit to Tiflis with some lectures at the Transcaucasian Communist University to which writers and journalists had been invited, and at the Central Workers' Club.

Urgent matters awaited him in Moscow, and only for this reason he hurried away from his native country. On the journey he asked me to write out a "behaviour curriculum": we were to play cards as far as such and such a station, we were not to smoke until we reached this or that station, now we were to read, now lunch, now lie down and not talk, now we were simply to chatter, sing, and so on. According to this time-table we were due to play at "thousand" (a card game) as far as Gudermes. The train, however, was late, and I proposed abandoning the time-table. Under various pretexts I made frequent escapes from the coupé in order to get breathing space.

"That's enough running about and dogging! Be a man of your word!"

"And why isn't our train a man of its word?"

"That doesn't concern me, we're people and not trains."

We played "thousand" until we reached Gudermes.

At Taganrog, Mayakovsky went out for a walk. The train was about to depart, and he still had not returned. As the train was moving, he dragged himself panting into the carriage. I protested that he had given me cause to worry. He thrust a huge tin of caviare into my hands.

"You shut up! It was all for your sake. I was running about looking for a birthday present for you. That's no easy job when you're travelling." (I had told him casually in Tiflis that I would not reach Moscow in time for my birthday.)

. . . In Moscow, when we climbed into the cab, he said:

"Travelling's good, but I'm always glad to find myself back in Moscow. Every time there is some sort of special feeling. . ."

Leningrad, the city of Lenin, the city where the Revolution was accomplished, was no less dear to him. In October, 1917, Mayakovsky had entered the Winter Palace with the Baltic seamen about whom he has so often sung in his verses.

In 1928 in Leningrad he read his poems to the Putilov workers in the fine new Palace of Culture in the Moskovsko-Narvsky District, in the smaller hall, and in 1929 he read them in the

[1] Village in the Kutais Region where Mayakovsky was born.

[2] A kind of Georgian restaurant.

huge theatre hall with its two thousand seats. He enjoyed reading to the same audiences. They came in great numbers each time, and he was pleased that they had become to some extent "his people." As the years passed, they began to understand his poetry better, to feel and comprehend it. He loved to share his plans of work with "audiences he knew."

In 1929 a particularly large audience gathered: not only from the Putilov works, but also from neighbouring factories. They almost filled the hall in spite of the fact that the time of the lecture, the middle of the day, was an unusual one.

"Look, every year we get a bigger and bigger audience, and their qualifications improve before your eyes!"

In the Army Political Academy he read his poem *Good!* written on the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution.

When he faced a military audience, Mayakovsky was a soldier reading to soldiers. Here he sensed that feeling which was so strong in him: that his poetry was a weapon.

I want pens
listed with bayonets.

"Rhyme," said Mayakovsky, "is a strong whip with a weighted thong which causes the enemy to tremble and tears him to pieces..."

He dreamt of a number of trips but did not manage to bring his dream into effect. I remember we were examining a map one day in a railway carriage—maps, as opposed to guides, he was very fond of,—and he jabbed his pencil right in the middle of the map. He struck Elista.

"That's where we'll have to go."

The places that he "simply had to visit" were without number.

Mayakovsky was very fond of the Urals, Sverdlovsk, and particularly the youth of Sverdlovsk. He liked the "northern" calm of his audience, and their ability to listen well.

"That was once dead-and-alive Yekaterinburg, and now it's flourishing Sverdlovsk in the course of transformation. And what will it become! This is only the beginning!"

The trip to the Urals was very successful on the whole, and Mayakovsky's good mood did not desert him throughout the tour.

He dreamt of visiting, and for long periods at a stretch, industrial districts of the Soviet Union, collective and State farms:

"One ought to have a really good look round, stay in each place for a long time, otherwise there is no sense in travelling."

P. LAVUT

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

This is a book without heroes. It would be vain to search for the name of any particular collective farm or village in it. There are thousands of such farms and villages. And there are millions of such people, not "dull" folk, as certain Polish writers, critics and publicists are pleased to call them, but the ordinary, average people whose heroism displays full range of the colours of the rainbow.

The hero of this novel is the people, the people who grew into the land, who merged together with the land into an integral whole, that no power on earth could separate or wrench away from the land.

A war, incomparable to any that history has recorded, has exposed the pettiness and insignificance of the stunted "cosmopolitan" ideas of intellectual hucksters wholly detached from the masses. It has shown the strength of a people truly free, a people who purchased this freedom at a great price, the price of heroic struggle and heroic labour; its strength is multiplied a hundred times growing into the invincible strength of a giant and merging easily and naturally into the struggle for freedom of other nations.

This book about the struggle in a Ukrainian village was written by Wanda Wasilewska, a Polish woman. Wanda Wasilewska was the writer destined to create, while the war was at its height, a tale wherein all the pathos of this war of the people should find its full, poignant expression.

The Rainbow [1] was the creation of an author who has woven the entire fabric of her life and creative work into

[1] Published in excerpts in *International Literature*, No. 3, 1943, and in full by the Foreign Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1943.

the struggle of the Polish people, who has gone with them into action, whose every book has been a volley aimed at the foe. Her books were written in the thick of the fight; never for a moment did she leave the ranks. That is what makes her a genuine representative of the Polish people; a Polish writer, Polish not only in the language of her books but in their spirit. The roots of her work reach deep down into Polish literature; she upholds and continues its finest traditions, but she has succeeded in transcending the bounds of narrow, strictly Polish problems and writing a story about a Ukrainian collective farm village. It sears like a red-hot iron; it grips the reader, no matter what his nationality may be. It is a summons to action, it mobilizes people for the struggle. *The Rainbow* is the contribution of the whole Polish people to a vital sector, the Soviet-German front of the war against Hitlerism, and it bears witness to the fact that, at the most critical time in their history, the Poles are taking part in the creation of universal culture.

Wanda Wasilewska is not an emigrant. She has become an integral part of the life of the Soviet Union to which she came in September, 1939. She knows the Soviet country and its people, but she has not severed a single link that bound her to her own people, the Poles. This blending of her love for Polish land and for Soviet land is expressed with great feeling in a short article published under the title of *Peter and Tatyana* in the Polish magazine *Nowe Widnocręgi* (New Horizons). Peter and Tatyana are the chief characters in Stefan Żeromski's tale *Uroda Życia* (The Charm of Life). Peter Rozlucki loved Tatyana, daughter of a tsarist general.

"Peter Rozlucki loved that general's daughter, loved her alluring smile, her black hair, her tender voice, to frenzy, to madness. .. And left his love. For the shade of his insurrectionist-father, lying in a lonely grave, gave him no peace all the long night through. Athwart his love fell the shadow of Poland in mourning, the spectre of his trampled country's suffering, and poisoned every minute of love.

"Between him and the Russian Tatyana, the general's daughter, lay blood-drenched Poland, a Poland drowned in tears. . .

"This general's daughter with the gleaming silks, with the fragrance of exquisite perfumes, and the coal-black eyes full of allurement, was swept away in the whirlwind of 1917."

In her place came a new Tatyana, the girl Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya who was known as "Partisan Tanya," who "could toil for her country and give her life for it."

Peter was a Polish officer who had come from the German camp for war prisoners in ravaged Poland, and who had crossed the front-line, to the land of the new Tatyana, in order to fight for his country's freedom.

"I meet Tatyana every day at the front," Wasilewska writes. "She carries the wounded off the field under machine-gun fire. She creeps through the grass, making her way across the front-line. With dexterous, slim fingers she joins the broken ends of telephone wires. She fights day and night for her country.

"And then I remember Peter. Where is he now, the officer from the dugout near Kursk? I see his eyes, happy eyes, calculating the straightest, shortest way to his country, the way from east to west, clear and comprehensible.

"The way I follow. . ."

When one reads these words written by an author who is sure of her path, one recalls involuntarily, by force of contrast, the Polish papers and journals published in London, and the complaints of certain miserable emigrants who have contrived in the course of a few years to lose contact with their own country. They have found no common language with the people among whom they live, have failed to understand them and have remained cut off from them, alien to them; at the same time they have remained alien also to the sufferings and struggles of their own people.

The Rainbow is the story of a Ukrainian village, occupied by the nazis.

"At the edge of the square stood a gallows—two upright posts and a cross-beam. The body of a man was hanging from the centre. Indifferently Pussya passed by this symbol of Kurt's (the German commandant.—*S. W.*) authority in the village. She was already accustomed to the sight: the young fellow had been hanging there when she had come here with Kurt a month ago. He had become stiff and rigid, losing

all semblance to a human being and looking more like a block of wood than a human body."

And in the gully across the river lay the dead bodies of Red Army men whom it was forbidden to bury.

"There he lay, frozen stiff and stretched out as taut as a violin string. Yet he seemed smaller, much smaller than he had been in life. His face might have been carved in ebony. Her eyes wandered lingeringly over that face whose every feature she knew so well, but which was at the same time the face of a stranger. The lips were frozen into immobility, the nostrils distended and the lids lowered over the eyes. There was a petrified serenity about the face. On one side, quite close to the temple, a round hole yawned. The congealed blood at its edges was an unnaturally brilliant crimson. A bloody seal on a black ground.

"Apparently death from the wound had not been instantaneous. Apparently he had still been alive when they had dragged off his clothes. He had either been alive or still warm. It was not death, but the hand of the marauder that had straightened out his legs and pulled his arms down stiffly by his sides. On the day of the battle, the day when he had been killed, there had also been a bitter frost, which had immediately seized the dead in its clutches, turning their bodies to stone. They could never have stripped the dead. And plunder him they had, leaving only his shirt and underpants. They had torn off his greatcoat, pulled off his boots and breeches, even stripped him of his socks. The blue underpants seemed to have grown into his body; they looked as if they had been painted on wood, so impossible was it to distinguish cloth from skin. His bare feet, unlike his dead black face, were white with an inhuman chalky pallor. One foot had split in the frost, and the dead flesh had come away like the sole of a boot, leaving the bone bare."

Between the gallows and the gully, full of unburied dead, things took place that were inhuman in their cruelty. A woman in the last stage of pregnancy is driven naked to and fro over the frosty snow. The brutalized German soldiers goad her on with their bayonets. Commandant Kurt Werner kills a woman-partisan's new-born infant, her first-born, before her eyes, in the hope of wringing a confession from her.

There is more than the full passion of hatred in these pages; there is profound sympathy for human pain, not the barren sympathy that is often enough encountered in Polish literature, for example in Stefan Żeromski's works, but the sympathy and at the same time the protest of one who cannot look on, indifferent, at pain and suffering.

Wasilewska's fellow-feeling for suffering, imbued as it is with a conscious and active hatred for man's persecutors, is raised to the level of social consciousness. She understands why executioners torture people, and she knows the way to lead the tortured "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Her forerunners in Polish literature did not know this way.

Żeromski wanders through a pathless land without compass or direction. He sees deliverance in a miracle, and expects it from his hero, from an individual, from the "death machine" in *Rose*, from Granowski's millions in *The Struggle with Satan*. He does not notice the human masses, and the joy of marching in step with them, of sharing their hatred, is unknown to him.

Wasilewska knows this path. It was this same path she was seeking as far back as her book *Native Land*, and she found it, together with the old farm-labourer Krzysiak, in the younger generation. We remember the conclusion of this tale about the Polish peasants: "But he knew already what had changed when he glanced into eyes that blazed with wrath, eyes that were full of hatred, the eyes of his own son who was growing up."

It is a path of loyalty to the people, wrath and hatred for their oppressors, unity in a life-and-death struggle.

The Ukrainian village is strong in its unity. Fedossya Kravchuk, who is trying to guess the identity of the person who reported her to the authorities for her daily pilgrimage to the unburied corpse of her son, feels sure of her fellow-villagers' silence: "The village, of course, knew, but the villagers were all her own people."

When the Germans caught Olyona, the partisan, the question was: "Who saw everything and reported it all? . . Who could it have been? She herself had known

about Olyona as soon as she had returned to the village. Others had known as well, but they were all her own people, her fellow-villagers, collective farmers, the fathers and mothers of soldiers who were fighting along the whole front of their boundless native land in those fearful frosty days and bright nights."

But what is the peasants' attitude to Pussya, the German officer's mistress? The whole village is unanimous in its contempt for her, in its merciless scorn.

"It was true that they avoided her as though she had the plague, trying not to meet her even accidentally. Children scampered off if they happened to cross her path."

The peasants' solidarity in this respect was not limited to this village. It extended to the whole people, to the whole of this immense country. Old Yevdokim, languishing, a hostage, in captivity, says:

"'And all the same nobody will give them any grain. . .'

"'Of course, they won't,' confirmed Checherikha.

"And everyone thought the same, the whole village, down to the last cottage above the gully. The grain had been carefully hidden, buried deep in the ground. It lay in pits dug in the distant field, in ground frozen hard as stone. In the ground lay the golden wheat, and the rye, and the barley, everything they had not managed to hand over to the Red Army, everything that was left of their golden, lavish, unequalled harvest of last autumn. The golden grain lay carefully covered in the ground. It lay under a thick mantle of snow, under snow-drifts piled up by the wind. Nobody could find it, nobody could even guess where it lay. Would the Germans ever dig up hundreds and hundreds of acres, dig it all up two or three yards deep? For the golden grain lying in the earth was not merely grain which provided the village with bread. They could have denied themselves bread for the sake of their lives. But in the earth lay the golden heart of the country, secreted, hidden away, out of sight of the insatiable German eyes. There lay the harvest which the soil had given over to the peasants, the flower of this soil, its heavy golden fruit. To surrender the grain meant giving the German army bread. To surrender the grain meant feeding the lousy Germans, filling their empty stomachs, warming their rotting, frozen bodies. To surrender the grain meant dealing a blow at the hearts of those who, in frost and blizzard, were selflessly, devotedly, heroically fighting the enemy. To surrender the grain would mean betraying the land to the enemy, betraying one's own people, admitting before the whole world that the German was master of the gold-bearing Ukrainian soil, the lord of the Ukrainian villages. To surrender the grain meant betraying oneself and one's own people, meant disobeying the order which had flown from village to village, which had reached every ear and impressed itself on every heart: not a crust of bread for the enemy! To surrender the grain meant renouncing one's own country, selling oneself to the enemy, betraying those who had died for their country in this war, in the Civil War, in 1918, and still earlier, to betray all who had fought for human liberty, who had won liberty at the cost of their life's blood."

"But now, in the darkness of that close room, in the village where the body of a sixteen-year-old lad was hanging from the gallows, where the dead lay in a ditch, where the waters had carried a woman's dead body away under the ice, where death had spun its web over all the houses, the old song rang with the same lament, the same sorrow that had steeped it for hundreds of years:

Oh Lord above, send good to him
Who fights for what is right. . .

Thus sang the hostages awaiting execution.

And the realization that they were "fighting for what was right" gave the whole village confidence that the day of vengeance and victory was coming. The peasants were firmly convinced of the rightness of their cause:

"From time to time, a shadow fell on the blue glow of the window. It was the sentry pacing back and forth in front of the house. The snow squeaked under his feet, and she could hear him stamping up and down in a vain attempt to warm his freezing feet. She smiled to herself. Keep watch, keep watch over the officer's sleep, the warm sleep with his mistress in a plundered peasant bed, under a stolen peasant quilt. . . You cannot guard him, you cannot pro-

tect him, not if you stamp a hundred times harder, not if your feet freeze off, not if you run up and down outside the cottage till you drop. . . The night will come when you will have to awaken from this sound sleep and run out into the frost barefooted in your underclothes. The night will come when you will envy those who lie unburied in the snow, when you will envy Levonyuk, whose body has been hanging from the gallows a month."

And the hostage Grokhach says:

"Strength lies in sticking to your guns and not giving in. . . The most important thing is to remember that all this will end, and not one of them will get away from here alive. And look at what the Germans did to us in 1918. And yet what was the result? Not a trace, not a sign of them remained; but we remained. The land remained, and the people on that land. . . in other words, everything remained."

Wanda Wasilewska knows the way and knows the goal to which it leads. The hero of the tale, the Ukrainian people, knows it, too, and that is the reason why, in the village where "death has spun its web over all the houses," where suffering and agony reign supreme, there is no submission to suffering, no pessimism, no wavering in their faith.

The ravens may feast on the bodies of the fallen, but even in days as grim as these, no one indulges in sinister croaking like Żeromski's: "The black ravens will pick our bones." For the land will remain, and the people of the land will remain; in other words, everything will remain.

"There she was, Olyona Kostyuk. Once, long ago (the same as in the *Native Land.—S. W.*), they had worked together in the landlord's fields. Together they had trembled under the bailiff's lash and still more before his advances. Together they had wept over their lot, the dreary, hopeless lot of girl farmhands."

But afterwards the Ukrainian people began a new life.

"Then later they had worked together on the collective farm, had rejoiced together at the sight of the growing wheat, at the increasing yield from the collective farm cows, and at the fact that life itself was smiling, becoming ever brighter and happier."

Can a people at whom life smiles ever brighter, a people who has known what freedom is, be broken?

The village does not renounce its freedom without a fight. The village has sent everyone capable of bearing arms to the partisan detachments in the woods. The village will not give up its grain. Under the German yoke the village breathes the pure air of struggle; and in this atmosphere a hero-collective, not a hero-individual, is born. Malyuchikha, whose son has been killed by the Germans, has, unknown to anyone, rescued the body from the ditch where the Germans flung it. The Germans demand that the village should hand over the "culprits." They take hostages, and announce that if the true culprits are not forthcoming, the hostages will be shot.

Malyuchikha's conversation with the hostage Grokhach's wife is one of the most powerful passages in the book.

Malyuchikha is thinking of saving the hostages by going to the commandant and confessing that it was she who removed the body of her own child from the ditch. But the moral atmosphere in the village excludes any such possibility, forbids anything that remotely resembles surrender to the German invaders. Grokhachikha, noted in the village for her testiness and evil temper, scolds Malyuchikha:

"Have you gone stark, raving mad? Taken leave of your senses altogether? You'll go to the Germans? . . The very idea! Where's your sense of what's right? It's not a peasant's and not a woman's! Just playing into the elder's hands! They only had to lock up five people, and right away the one they're looking for pops up. Do you know, you idiot, what the result will be? Do you want to show them the way, show them how to get at us? You go to them today, and tomorrow it won't be five but fifty they'll lock up! Never heard of such a thing! So far none of our folk have gone crawling to the Germans, and you go and take it into your head. . .

"Just don't think about yourself, think about everybody. When you think about everybody, then it's quite clear, you have no right to say anything. You have no right to put your neck in the German noose on your own! They can't do anything to us. Let them tor-

ture, hang and shoot. . . One, two will die, but all of us are more than they can manage. . . We must hold on till our boys come home, hold on tooth and nail."

So the village hangs on, tooth and nail. Hatred, a deadly hatred that forgives nothing, hardens the fighters' hearts.

"I want to see the last German die here in our village!" says Grokhach. "I want to see the last German hanging from the gallows in Kiev."

The Germans, too, feel that they will not hold out for long, that the land and the people on the land will always remain as they were.

"I tell you straight it's fierce here," the German sentry exclaims.

"Fierce. . ." the second rejoins. "And how I want to go back home! . . They'll never work for us anyway, I know them."

These Germans who are terrified here on Ukrainian soil, are no mere automatons. Wasilewska has given them human features, human thoughts and human dreams; they do not bear the stamp of gloomy murderers and nothing more. They have their own accounts to settle, between soldier and soldier, between soldier and N.C.O; they have their own troubles and conflicts at work. On sentry-duty they yearn for their native towns, or for "Michael, who will be ten years old next spring."

Captain Kurt Werner has his "moods," too. During the interrogation of Olyona, "a sudden wave of boredom, disgusting, cloying, hopeless boredom, swept over him . . . He recalled his home in Dresden. What were his wife and his children doing there now? It was a long time since he had seen them." And it is just these human features in the sadists, the child-slayers, robbers and hangmen, this image of man reflected as in a distorting mirror, this semblance of a human creature, that emphasizes the traits of the brute beast.

Great indeed must be the writer's art that delineates with such depth and realism the enemy for whom she feels deadly hatred.

The same realism is evident in the drawing of Pussya, the German commandant's mistress. In the occupied countries painted girls, smiling, cringing, flattering, making up to the German soldiers, appeared in the ruined towns in the midst of the devastation that held memories of yesterday's heroism and preparation for the struggle of tomorrow.

It is clear that Wanda Wasilewska was thinking of the Pussyas of Poland when she painted the portrait of the Ukrainian Pussya.

"What do you want from me? What else could I have done? Starve to death? Wait? Wait for what? They've come here to stay! I had to get myself fixed up somehow. What sort of life did I have here? Nothing to wear. Worry your head off over every pair of stockings. . ."

It is a question of stockings. . .

Then from stockings to betraying one's land, one's people, one's husband. . . A soulless, infinitely stupid creature, amoral by nature.

It was not her environment that reared this traitor with the rat-face and the triangular teeth and ears. Her sister, the teacher, was a well-balanced, more—a noble, thoughtful woman. But Pussya is not even a female; she needs neither love, nor family, nor children. "She just did not want them, and that was all there was to it. There were children enough in any case." Pussya was a prostitute born to the trade, a type of street-woman created, as it were, for nothing but to serve the German soldiers' lust.

Then there is another type of traitor, Gaplyk, the kulak, the old inveterate enemy of his fellow countrymen, a member of Petlyura's gangs in 1918. Now once again he is in the employment of the Germans, the Ukraine's enemies.

But how helpless this cunning rogue and traitor proves to be against the united village, its determination, its unbending will to resistance and self-denial in struggle! When the peasants' court brings in the verdict "finish the bastard off," he creeps and cringes and whines, begging and praying them to spare his despicable life.

"Ugh, makes me sick to look at you! You couldn't live like a man, and you can't die like one either!" a woman who took part in the trial exclaims in disgust.

When Soviet scouts penetrate to the village one frosty night, and the Red Army units storm it, this is not simply a happy ending to the tale. It is a finale

dictated by life itself, by the logic of struggle; the struggle of the village, the struggle of the whole Ukrainian people. It is not that the Red Army men bring freedom on their bayonets from outside; the village has never for an instant capitulated, it has kept up a persistent and staunch defence throughout. It has fought fearlessly and tirelessly. For it knew that freedom is not to be had for nothing, that freedom must be won at the price of suffering, torment, and blood. Nazis are driven out of the village by a common effort, in a common battle. The people who wear Red Army greatcoats and those who are dressed in peasants' cloaks are one and the same.

In the liberated village of Levonyuchikha, the mother of Mitya, whom the Germans hanged, bears another son, whom she calls Victor, in honour of the final victory.

The note that is sounded here is full of a profound faith in victory and in the might of life, it responds to the whole content of this book on human suffering, on self-abnegation, on struggle. In the optimism of *The Rainbow*'s concluding pages lies that faith in the future which runs like an undercurrent through the whole story, to find at last its outlet and break like a "living wave."

The Rainbow is not Wasilewska's first book on the Ukrainian village and the Ukrainian people's struggle. She painted a startling, an unforgettable picture of the Ukrainian village under the yoke of the Polish landowner, the police, and the "ossadnik" or colonist, in a book *Lights in the Marshes* [1], written before September, 1939, while she was still in Poland. Wanda Wasilewska, a Pole, took sides with the Ukrainian peasant, supported him in his struggle, fought beside him in the ranks. And always she repeated the same truth to her own people, the truth that was uttered by Polish democrats during the rising against the foreign yoke: that there could be no freedom for the Polish people in their own country while the Ukrainian peasant was groaning under the Polish landowner's lash, and while the Polish police sent punitive expeditions to the villages of Volynia.

From *Lights in the Marshes*, from the tale of a Ukrainian village under the Polish landowners' yoke, to *The Rainbow*, a tale of a Ukrainian village in the clutches of the German occupation, the writer has followed the straight path of struggle against oppression and servitude, of struggle for the freedom of all enslaved peoples.

And when certain, pitifully insignificant Polish emigrants in London and New York utter despairing protests against the reunion of the Ukrainian people, when they stretch out their feeble, but greedy hands for what the Ukrainian village, the village of *Lights in the Marshes* and *The Rainbow*, has won through bloody strife, then this new book by an outstanding Polish writer, a fighter for the Polish people's freedom, acquires a special significance. For it expresses the will of the Polish democracy, and its faith in what will be accomplished by the fraternal union of the Ukrainian people within their own State.

In the concluding passage of her book Wanda Wasilewska says:

"The Red Army men were marching off towards the wisps of smoke in the distance which marked the site of fire-ravaged Levanevka, to villages nestling in the snow-drifts. Gripping their rifles firmly, they marched over Ukrainian soil, trampled on and strangled by the German yoke. But invincible, inflexible, fighting still."

And with them "from east to west the rainbow arched," the rainbow that heralded freedom, the arc of light flung across the lands of the Ukraine to the author's native land.

STEFAN WIERBLOWSKI

[1] Published in excerpts in *International Literature*, Nos. 8—9, 1940.

THE ENSEMBLE OF FOLK DANCES OF THE U.S.S.R.

Folk dancing enjoys great popularity among Soviet audiences. Particularly big strides have been made in this field of art by Stalin Prize winner Igor Moisseyev, twice decorated by the Government, the organizer and art director of the Ensemble of Folk Dances of the U.S.S.R.

This ensemble was founded only some six years ago. Rehearsals began on February 10th, 1937, and on September 1st, 1937, it gave its first performance at the Fifth International Festival of Art.

At the time it was formed, 60% of its members had formerly belonged to amateur art groups and 10% came from the different national republics who gave splendid performances of their national dances. The remaining 30% were professional dancers. Now all its members, of whom there are 117, have gone through intensive training as professionals.

Particular mention should be made of Nina Podgoretskaya, Actress of Merit of the R.S.F.S.R., ballet dancer of the Bolshoy Theatre. Her dancing preserves strictly academic traditions.

An extremely wide creative range, complete mastery of the medium of expression are the qualities that distinguish the acting of Ivan Kartashov. He is, probably, the most talented dancer of the Ensemble. Kartashov is superb in the Kalmuk dance "Chichirdyk," in the Tadjik dagger dance, in the Russian dance, in the two-step parody. It is as if his dancing refuted the accepted conception of type, the limitations that cramp the talents of the actor.

Valeryan Arsenyev is inimitable in "Moscow Lyrics," a sketch in choreography. It is spring. The plaintive notes of an accordion can be heard. Before long a melancholy accordion player strolls slowly across the stage and sits down on a chair. The accordion player's face expresses utter indifference, even smug boredom. He is followed by a young couple (V. Arsenyev and Kobzeva). The girl is dressed in a full skirt, yellow blouse and short jacket. A wayward strand of hair peeps from beneath her kerchief. Her companion is a young lad wearing a cap, high patent leather boots, a jacket over a Russian shirt; the tassel of his plaited silk cord that serves as a belt shows beneath the jacket.

Arsenyev's acting is fine because it is not overdone and enhances the comedy of the scene. His every movement is most dignified. Looking at him the audience seems to read his biography. He is no greenhorn. He is the experienced village Lovelace, the breaker of hearts who knows the power of his charms, conscious of the fact that they are irresistible. Rosy-cheeked and robust, he imagines himself to be a veritable Adonis whom no woman can resist. He actually likes the girl he has taken out. In fact he is even in love with her, but he loves himself more. With what condescending politeness he hands her a flower, gazes at her, demoniacally distends his nostrils, raises his eyebrows. . . Sometimes he deigns to smile; that's just it, deigns, and doesn't simply smile. He is, of course, so much superior to her. The lad has heard a lot about "heart-breaking" romances, and he tries to captivate his companion with lyrics. This exaggerated lyricism, like the exaggerated self-admiration of the hero, adds considerably to the comedy of the sketch.

The accordion player starts playing a folk dance, and the couple begins to dance. The dance is something after the style of the usual Russian folk dance. It is something like a dancing competition where both partners in turn try to "outdo" the other in intricacy.

V. Arsenyev's dancing is light and expressive. It is based almost entirely on movements characteristic of the real Russian dance, although even here his movements are exaggeratedly funny.

When the dance is at its height, the accordion player suddenly switches over from a lovely tune to a plaintive melody and strolls from the stage with the same indifferent, bored expression he had when he first appeared. The dancers have no recourse but to cut short their dancing and slowly follow in the wake of the musician. This ends the sketch.

"Moscow Lyrics" is, of course, a sketch, but a good cartoonist must be a portrait painter. The success of a sketch depends on the artist's ability to pick out the most characteristic features in the scene selected by him. In emphasizing and exaggerating these characteristic features, he not only attains the comical, but also a likeness. The producer was successful in his presentation of "Moscow Lyrics" for the very reason that he based the sketch on the typical characteristics of the folk dance. One of the essential features of the Russian men's dance is the dignified bearing of the dancer. In stressing this feature, Moisseyev achieved the desired effect.

Podgoretskaya, Arsenyev and Kartashov were dancers of the classic ballet of the past.

There are several choreographic systems in the U.S.S.R., and no two of them are alike. Some are folk dances, as for instance Byelorussian, Lituanian, Latvian, Estonian, Karelo-Finnish, which are a branch of the West-European dance. Actually they are old ballroom dances such as the polka, valse, quadrille, which came to the village, became assimilated with folk dances and acquired national colouring. The most interesting in this group are the Byelorussian folk dances which are remarkable for the vigour, natural daintiness and gayety they express. For example, Moisseyev's

"Lyavonikha," "Yurochka," and particularly "Bulba" (the Byelorussian word for potato), a graceful women's dance portraying work in the fields.

Other dances, as, for instance, those of Central Asia—Uzbek, Tadjik,—belong to an entirely different choreographic system, similar to the choreographic system of the East. In contrast to the European dances, the main medium of expression are the hands after the manner of Greek and Roman orchestics.

Then there are the gay dances of the Kazan Tartars; the beautiful Moldavian dances which in their poses remind one of designs on Attic vases; the angular movements of the Armenian dance; Ossetic simdg where the women in flowing white dresses glide across the stage like swans, while the men in their black Circassian coats try to attract their attention by executing daring dance numbers such as balancing themselves on their fingers like toe dancers, or leaping through the air drop on one knee, whirl around and then drop on the other. . . and so on without end.

In dance and song a people, guided by its own conception of the typical, expresses its ideal. High-spiritedness, agility, prowess and a feeling of personal dignity are the principal characteristics of Russian folk dances performed by men. The first demand made of the male dancer is that he should be a handsome, dashing fellow, in all respects "a man of beauty" to use Maxim Gorky's expression. That is why, as a rule, the dancer does not wish to appear ridiculous. On the contrary, he aims at a greater beauty, grace and agility than is evident in daily life.

In analysing the character of the Russian female dance, one soon discovers that, on the whole, the ideal feminine type corresponds to the masculine counterpart in all respects, expecting a bold dashing style. Suppleness, strength and grace are as much part of the female dance as personal dignity.

Only in rare cases does the peasant resort to the comic in his dance. This is most likely to happen when the dancer portrays some ludicrous character (a stupid, angry, old father-in-law, a grumbling mother-in-law, a drunkard or a cripple) or mimics the amusing antics of some animal (such as the bear, goat, hare, cock).

In other words, in translating this into the old-time language of the drama, one may say that the Russian dancer and his partner are mostly hero and heroine; this dictates the character of their movements. Breadth of treatment rather than boisterous hilarity, plasticity rather than mincing fussiness are characteristic of the Russian dancer. True Russian folk dances express a multitude of emotions which demand most varied mime. This is particularly evident in the case of the girl who dances a love duet with her partner. In the course of the dance varying expressions of coquetry and timidity, pride and amiability, audacious teasing and restraint, shyness and challenge, cross her face. Herein are mingled a desire to be loved and dim apprehension for the unknown future, as well as certain perplexity bordering upon bewilderment. The girl seems to beckon to her partner, and then, when he becomes too insistent, she hides her face in her sleeve and, feigning embarrassment, steals a look at her pursuer, hoping that he has not taken her seriously. At times she pretends to be running away, warding off with a gesture the too ardent admirer, dancing in the squatting posture that is one of the characteristic Russian dance-steps. Unfortunately, our producers do not fully exploit the rich range of emotions embodied in folk-dancing, and are apparently satisfied with one tone only.

Moisseyev devotes a great deal of attention to Russian themes. Some of his creations based on Russian folk dances are the "Youth Dance," the "Russian Suite," the "Trepak" to Chaikovsky's music, "Collective Farm Tableaux" and "Moscow Lyrics."

In genuine folk art, however, the outstanding traits of the popular ideal present a harmonious whole and are indivisible. One performer expresses a whole range of emotions

and is endowed with the qualities dear to the hearts of the people.

On the other hand, in Moisseyev's production the integral type is split up into its component parts, as for example in the "Youth Dance" where the chief stress seems to be laid on vigour, whereas in the "Russian Suite" the ballet-master endeavours to render the feeling of personal dignity. Due to this disintegration the type as a whole is emotionally impoverished, is shown as a monochrome, from one aspect only.

Here, however, one must not forget that Moisseyev's gift inclines more to comedy than tragedy or lyricism. His finest attainments are in the realm of the comic. He is a keenly observant and highly sensitive artist, but in contemplating his surroundings, he is struck first of all by the humorous elements.

Although the heroic and lyric are not altogether alien to Moisseyev's nature, they apparently mean much less to him than the humorous sphere. We do not doubt, however, that the gifted dance-director will succeed in staging a performance which will live up to the popular conception of the ideal Russian, that is, in creating a many-sided personality. At present these searchings are in the experimental stage, mere gropings. And the characters composing the dance are either jolly fellows or the merely handsome but rather cold type. Nevertheless, the very perseverence with which the dance-director approaches the folk dance treasury is highly promising, for perseverence coupled with talent invariably leads to victory.

The Ensemble's repertoire consists of some 50 national dances of the U.S.S.R. But the majority of the dance numbers presented by Moisseyev are by no means an exact copy of the folk dances. They are adaptations, and sometimes very bold ones. Rephrasing he accentuates certain elements, eliminates others, combines several dances into one. Often the folk dance merely serves as the canvas, the material used by Moisseyev to create an independent composition.

"I am an artist, and not a collector of dances. I would have very little respect for myself if I were content merely with duplicates," Moisseyev is fond of saying.

The work of seeking, studying, carefully reproducing already existent examples of choreographic folklore, is a work that requires an altogether different temperament, the temperament of the ethnographer, explorer, collector, it demands considerable knowledge. Moisseyev is drawn by vivic theatricality. He is a bold embodiment of reality. All he observes in life refracts through the prism of his perceptions, is coloured by the subjective attitude, is affectionately mocking with a kindly irony. Hence his love for the theatrical has inclined him towards the paradoxical.

Before his work in the Ensemble, Moisseyev was dancer and ballet master at the Bolshoy Theatre. He made his debut as a producer in 1930 when, together with L. A. Lashchilin, he staged the three-act ballet *Football Player*. Later he produced the ballet *Salambo* (1933) and *The Three Fat Men* (1935). His academic training served him in good stead in his subsequent theatrical work.

Moisseyev possesses the art of presenting dance scenes in which boldness of invention is combined with laconic statement. He is able to hold the attention of the audience by his unexpected staging effects. His staging is remarkable for its sensitive feeling of form. He possesses the gift of planning the dance movement on the stage, of arranging the lines which form the contours of the dance in such a manner that the audience, admiring the diversity of the movements, does not notice the very limited number of elements that compose the choreographic picture (thus, for instance, the colourful dance "Bulba" consists in all of two movements).

The Ensemble has now returned to Moscow after an absence of one and a half year. It visited 107 towns and villages in this period, the Urals, the Kuzbass, the Soviet Far East, the Mongolian People's Republic. For five months it danced for the sailors of the Pacific Fleet. The Ensemble's artists covered more than 50,000 kilometres by rail, 6,500 kilometres by road, crossed the whole of Siberia, the Gobi desert, gave concerts at Lake Hasan, Halkhin-Gol. The Ensemble's performances in the Soviet Far East received marks of appreciation in orders of the command of the Pacific Fleet, in certificates presented by the Soviet military command and government of the Mongolian People's Republic. In 1942 I. Moisseyev was awarded the Stalin Prize.

VICTOR IVING

The Kalmuk dance

NEWS AND VIEWS

A GREAT FIGURE IN ADVANCED SCIENCE

It's the 100th birthday of the remarkable Russian scientist C. A. Timiryazev that was celebrated on June 3rd, 1943, in the U.S.S.R., as an important date in the history of science and social thought in this country. Numerous articles and public addresses by Soviet men of science evoke the personal charm of the explorer and thinker who not only left deep traces on Russian culture, but also influenced the development of modern science as a whole.

Timiryazev, universally recognized as a theoretician in the field of natural history, was the direct opposite to the abstract scientist. As a daring experimenter, who had done much to popularize scientific knowledge, and as an active participant of the Russian democratic movement he was known and remembered in his own country.

In his tribute to Timiryazev Academician N. V. Tsitsin writes:

"Through half a century Timiryazev carried the materialistic teaching of the great Darwin as if it were a fighting banner. . . All his life he tirelessly developed Darwinism, enriching and extending the evolutionary world outlook. Timiryazev, the greatest of Russian followers of Darwin, was not merely an adherent of the great English scientist. He blazed independent trails in science and fully merited the name of 'Russian Darwin.'"

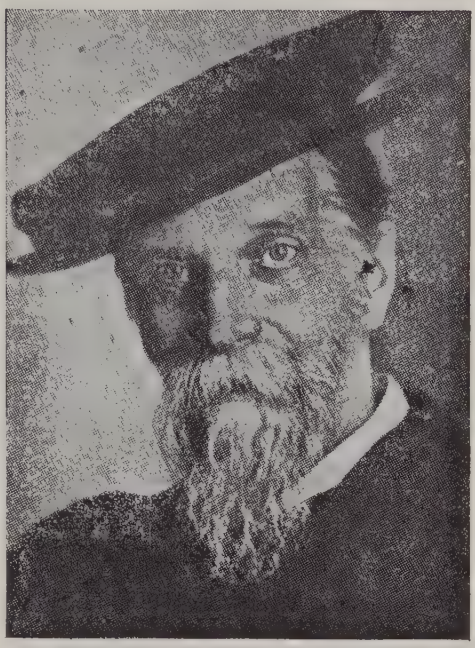
"Expert in the use of the newest physical and physico-chemical methods," writes Prof. Koshtoyants, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., "Timiryazev succeeded in finding the basic solution for one of the main problems of the development of life on the globe: the synthesis of organic matter in plants and the part played in this important process by the sun's rays. Timiryazev was the first to give an experimental analysis of the problem of the transfer of solar energy to plants and animals."

Timiryazev was barely twenty-five years old when he began his work on this major problem of natural history. His first paper on this subject was read at the first Congress of Russian Biologists in January, 1869.

In his scientific works which opened a new page in biology, Timiryazev showed how chlorophyll helps plants to absorb the vitalizing energy of the sun. Charles Darwin, who had a profound regard for the young Russian scientist, told him once: "Chlorophyll is perhaps the most interesting element in the whole organic world."

Throughout his life Timiryazev was guided by the motto: "work for science, to write for the people." He believed that science must serve the interests of the masses of the people.

The President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Academician V. Komarov, stresses Timiryazev's interest in practical questions of national life: "Timiryazev never relinquished his efforts to prove that theory must be linked with practice, must help in and benefit from its experience. . . He referred to universities and laboratories as 'workshops of science,' thereby stressing their vitally practical character."



C. Timiryazev, in his Cambridge robes. The great scientist was an honorary member of the university

This explains Timiryazev's keen interest in applied science. "Timiryazev," writes Academician L. Orbéli, "was the true founder of scientific agronomy in Russia, the ceaseless advocate of 'rejuvenation of the soil' to facilitate the progress of agriculture."

Timiryazev is the author of more than 140 scientific works on Darwinism, botany and the physiology of plants. Many of them have become indispensable manuals for generations of Russian scientists.

As an outstanding representative of Russian scientific thought, Timiryazev maintained close contact with world science. He frequently travelled abroad, and maintaining correspondence with eminent world scientists, especially British, he kept abreast of scientific achievements in both hemispheres.

He fully shared the views and approvingly quoted the words of the famous British scientist Armstrong who said that in a democratic

country science could occupy its proper place only if its achievements and its significance were widely realized. He wrote enthusiastic articles about the American Burbank and urged the continuation of his remarkable experiments in Russia. He presented the Russian reader with an abridged edition of *New Earth*, the work of the American writer Harwood.

On their part, progressive scientists the world over held Timiryazev in high esteem. Horace Brown, outstanding physicist and President of the British Association, wrote that he was amazed at the remarkable beauty and import of the works of Mr. Timiryazev. In 1903 Timiryazev received an invitation to deliver the so-called Croonian lecture to Europe's most eminent scientists; in it he summarized the results of his classical works on chlorophyll. For his outstanding scientific achievements, Timiryazev was elected member of the London Royal Society, given the honorary degree of doctor of the universities of Cambridge, Glasgow, Geneva and other scientific institutions.

Noteworthy among the numerous articles published in the Soviet press in connection with the centenary of Timiryazev's birth, are the reminiscences of Academician D. Pryanishnikov. This eminent Soviet scientist was one of the first of Timiryazev's pupils. With great emotion D. Pryanishnikov recalls the exceptional attention and respect which Timiryazev, then a young professor, enjoyed among Russian students.

An interesting episode from Timiryazev's early youth is described in an article by Academician L. Orbeli. Young Timiryazev, who revealed brilliant abilities, entered St. Petersburg University. But a year later he was expelled. . . for refusing to sign an obligation "not to take part in social disorders." This first political protest of the nineteen-year-old student sheds a light on the whole later life of Timiryazev, the scientist, public figure and democrat. Timiryazev's attitude to the October Revolution was the natural outcome of his life's experience. He was a venerable age when he welcomed the Russian Revolution with joy and took an active part in the scientific and social life of the Soviet Union.

We should like to draw our readers' attention to the film *Baltic Deputy* in which the character of Professor Polezhayev has been modelled on Timiryazev.

In 1919, at the age of seventy-six, he published the collection of articles *Science and Democracy*. V. I. Lenin expressed his appreciation of this book in a friendly, cordial letter to Timiryazev.

Moscow railway workers elected the aged scientist a member of the Moscow Soviet. In his message to the working people he wrote: "We all, old and young, manual and brain workers alike, must unite in the common army of labour. . . and work, work, and work!"

The last thoughts of Timiryazev (he died during the night of April 27th, 1920) were of his people, of Soviet power, of Lenin.

". . . I have always tried to serve mankind," he said to his doctor, "and at a serious moment like this I am glad to see you, a representative of the Party which really serves mankind. . . Please express to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin my admiration of his brilliant solution of world problems both in theory and in practice. Please convey to all comrades my sincere greetings and wishes for further success in the work for the happiness of mankind. . ."

The centenary of Timiryazev's birth was marked by a special decree of the Soviet Government regarding a memorial immortalizing the great Russian scientist.

Two Timiryazev scholarships for post-graduates and five for students were instituted in both Moscow State University and in the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy.

The State Scientific Research Institute of Botany of the Moscow University is henceforth to be known as the Timiryazev Institute.

The Academy for Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences have been entrusted with the publication of centenary editions of the collected works of Timiryazev.

The State Publishing House has received an order for the publication of Timiryazev's collected works and for a monograph on the life and work of the great scientist.

A memorial tablet is to be placed on the house in Moscow where Timiryazev lived.

A special memorial session was held by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., in conjunction with the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. Addresses and reports at the session were delivered by Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. L. Orbeli, and by Academicians D. Pryanishnikov, T. Lyssenko and M. Mitin.

Messages of greetings were read at the session from V. Komarov, President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., from the Royal Agricultural Society of Great Britain, the Royal Society, the oldest and most important British experimental station in Rothamstead and many others.

FIELD MARSHAL M. I. KUTUZOV

In the spring of 1813, a hundred and thirty years ago, the great Russian Field Marshal Mikhail Illarionovich Kutuzov died in the little town of Bunzlau, Silesia. His death took place at the very height of the Russian army's victorious offensive, which routed Napoleon's forces and drove them back to Paris.

For the people of Russia Mikhail Kutuzov is the very incarnation of a military leader in the most vital sense of the term. More, his military genius closely approaches the theory and practice of modern warfare. Soviet military leaders today study Kutuzov's activities, profit by his experiences and utilize his strategy as a model still of value at the present time. Soviet commanders find much to assist them in his biography.

It is for this reason that the 130th anniversary of the great field marshal's death was celebrated in the Soviet Union as an important data having a close connection with the events of the present time.

The most important Soviet newspapers featured articles by scientists, writers, and military experts on the subject of Kutuzov, his half-century of military activities, and his main and outstanding historic achievement, the rout of Napoleon's forces in Russia.

"During the war of 1812," writes *Izvestia*, "Kutuzov showed himself to be one of the greatest military leaders known to history. It was owing to the genius of Kutuzov that Napoleon's forces, which had won so many victories and subdued the whole of Europe, were smashed and destroyed in Russia."

But Kutuzov was not only a military leader. One of the most widely educated men of his time, he was also a first-class statesman, diplomat and military theoretician. He himself was a pupil of that other great Russian general, Suvorov (1729—1800), who entertained the highest opinion of the abilities of his younger colleague. Recalling the valour and skill displayed by Kutuzov during the storming of the Ismail fortress, Suvorov said with his characteristic humour: "He was my right hand on the left flank!"

"Kutuzov's military art was thoroughly individual and original," says the newspaper *Trud*. "His outward calm and reticence concealed an ardent heart and a passionate intellect, the ability to size up a situation swiftly and correctly, and a mathematical precision in the computation of forces. To all of these he added a broad and far-sighted vision. Kutuzov was remarkable for his caution, sang-froid and, at the same time, decision and resoluteness in action."

Napoleon's forces were seasoned troops with many years' fighting experience; they were excellently equipped and numerically superior to the Russian army, which was forced to retreat farther and farther into the heart of the country. . .

It was in those days of dark menace that Field Marshal Kutuzov was placed at the head of the Russian forces. His appointment at once raised the spirits of the troops. The people had faith in Kutuzov, and the soldiers were prepared to follow him through fire and water. These close ties between Kutuzov and the people were understood by his contemporaries. In August, 1812, a few days after his appointment to the supreme command of the army, the young officer F. Glinka wrote:

"Our leader has come, crowned with grey hair and laurels! I have seen him, seen the famous Kutuzov, sitting on a plain bench beside a hut, surrounded by a crowd of generals. The men's joy is indescribable. Faces are brighter, the talk round the camp fires is livelier, and songs have begun to ring out in the smoky air of the camp. . ." (*Letters of a Russian Officer*, published Moscow, 1821.)

In the army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Soviet Academician E. Tarle has given an accurate analysis of the historic moment when Kutuzov assumed the command of the Russian army:

"A task of appalling difficulty had been placed before Kutuzov. He was to take over the management of an army which had been continually retreating and was thoroughly dissatisfied. He knew that a crisis was brewing. He had to put everything in order and to defeat an enemy flushed with a series of victories, advancing on Moscow.

"He knew beforehand that he could not undertake an immediate head-on attack. The chief rule in warfare is never to do what the enemy wishes. Napoleon was thirsting to join battle; in other words, the battle must be delayed, Napoleon longed for a frontal attack; in other words, he must not get it.

M. I. Kutuzov

"'We'll see what that old northern fox will do,' said Napoleon, when he learned of Kutuzov's appointment. When this remark was repeated to Kutuzov, he replied: 'I shall do my best to justify the great general's opinion of me. . .'"

It was an inglorious end that was awaiting the proud conqueror who had penetrated to the very heart of Russia. Napoleon himself had a premonition of this, and it was he who first attempted to negotiate for peace, "peace at any price."

The Soviet writer M. Braghin, author of a series of works dealing with Kutuzov, has published the following description in *Pravda* of the meeting which took place between the field marshal and General Lauriston, the French Emperor's envoy:

"Kutuzov received Lauriston very politely, accepted Napoleon's two letters: one addressed to himself, the other to Alexander I, and led the conversation to such subjects as the weather, Paris, French women, anything but the war.

"Lauriston politely reminded him that one of the letters was addressed to himself personally. The old field marshal opened the letter, read it, and toying with the envelope, again turned the conversation on to amusements, theatres, women and acquaintances common to them both. Throwing diplomatic etiquette to the winds, Lauriston interjected sharply that he had come to discuss peace. Kutuzov replied that the Russians were *only just beginning* the war and they would not finish

it while there was a single French soldier left on Russian soil.

"Kutuzov made it plain to Lauriston that he was backed by Russia still capable of resistance and that he was fully aware of the situation in Europe which was labouring under Napoleon's rule. Lauriston found himself faced with a wise, far-seeing military leader and diplomat, and felt that in the old field marshal's plump hands lay not only the letter of the French Emperor, but the fate of the French army, and that it was here, in this little Russian village of Lotashovka, and not in the capitals of the world, that the outcome of the war and the fate of Europe were being decided."

Kutuzov fully realized that the forces of the Russian people were growing, whereas those of Napoleon were wasting away. Kutuzov, moreover, was the first military leader in history to organize the cooperation between the army partisan detachments and the peasants on such a scale that their combined blows became an important strategical factor.

The war of 1812 ended with the destruction of Napoleon's army. Kutuzov himself died before the Russian forces entered Paris, but he lived to know the incomparable joy of victory. He led his troops to the town of Vilno, where he was once the military governor, and wrote from there:

"The war has ended with the complete extermination of the enemy!"

Summing up Kutuzov's qualities, Academician Tarle once wrote:

"Kutuzov's greatness lies in his mastery of the finest subtleties of military skill, a mastery which far exceeded the abilities of the generals surrounding him. He knew incomparably more and saw further. It was for this reason that his decisions were imbued with a wisdom that his contemporaries sensed instinctively, even when they failed to understand it. In leading his forces, Kutuzov brought into play and developed the whole wealth of strategical resources. In difficult and seemingly hopeless situations, he was capable of discovering some course of action which an average mind could not have conceived. And it is, above all, this high level of skill in military leadership that constitutes the chief lesson to be learned from Kutuzov's example. That is the reason why at present, in the period of the Patriotic War, the figure of the great Russian general remains so present and vivid in the consciousness of the Russian people."

The name of Kutuzov is a symbol of Russian fighting power. It is not without reason that the military Order of Kutuzov was instituted in the U.S.S.R. in July, 1942, during the Great Patriotic War against the nazi invaders. The statutes of the Order require a profound mastery of modern military science, and emphasize the most valuable traits of Kutuzov's tactics, tactics which have preserved their importance up to the present day.

"The Order of Kutuzov," read the statutes, "is awarded to Red Army commanders for well-planned and well-executed operations covering whole fronts, armies or individual units, resulting in serious losses for the enemy, and the preservation of the fighting capacity of our own forces."

Many Soviet commanders have already been granted the Order of Kutuzov, eloquent testimony to the fact that the best traditions of the Russian soldier live on today in the ranks of the Red Army.

Field Marshal Kutuzov understood how to utilize all branches of the service to defeat the enemy. On the 130th anniversary of the field marshal's death, the newspaper of the fleet *Krasny Flot* printed an interesting article by Captain A. Ponevezhsky, showing the role of the Marine Guards in the Patriotic War of 1812.

The Russian forces under the command of Kutuzov included a small naval unit of Marine Guards, comprising not more than a few companies. The Russian sailors made full use of their experience of conditions at sea in their work on the rivers, which constituted arteries of the utmost importance to the country. During the first period of the war, when the Russian army was retreating, the Marine Guards built bridges and organized river crossings over the Vilya, the Western Dvina and the Dnieper. Under the skilled hands of the seamen, the work went swiftly and well, and the Russian army realized how much they owed to the Marine Guards. All this, however, was merely a matter of setting up pontoon bridges, and the seamen were burning to fight. They drank to the dregs the bitter cup of retreat, and dreamed of combat with the foe, a wish which found its realization at the famous battle of Borodino. Even before the beginning of the battle, they received orders to blow up the bridge which the enemy was intending to utilize. Fully aware of the tactical importance of this bridge, the enemy had made its approaches into a veritable death trap, whistling with lead. Nevertheless, the Russian seamen pushed through to their ob-

The Order of Kutuzov

jective, and the bridge went up the very moment Napoleon's vanguard set foot on it.

The Marine Guards showed their skill once more during the pursuit of the retreating French army. When Kutuzov reached the frontier in January, 1813, the troops had to cross the river Vistula. This time the Marine Guards had to build a bridge 187 sazhens [1] in length in the teeth of an icy wind that parched and lashed the skin like flame. But the famous quick wits of the navy saved the situation: they set up an improvised bridge on 33 anchored ships.

The Marine Guards won their greatest fame, however, in the battle of Kulm, Bohemia, on August 17th, 1813. At the beginning of the battle the seamen chose a lonely fruit tree as their landmark, in order to keep their bearings in the fighting, and resolved not to retreat a single step, but on the contrary to push ahead until they reached this tree, rally there and then advance farther. They went into battle, rifles sloped, with their peculiar rolling gait, to the piercing whistles of the boatswain's pipes. . . Every man took part in the battle down to the drummer boy and the clerk, every man capable of holding a gun. The wounded refused to leave the field but fought on to their last breath. For their exploits at the battle of Kulm the Marine Guards were decorated with the highest award of the time: the banner of St. George.

That was a hundred and thirty years ago. Yet in the same way the chronicles of the Russian people's present war against the nazi invaders will preserve for all time the exploits of the Soviet seamen, the men of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets, the men who fought in the battles of Odessa, Sevastopol, Leningrad and Stalingrad. In battle with the fascists, they are displaying brilliant fighting qualities they inherited from their forbears, who fought under the banners of Kutuzov.

The State Historical Library in Moscow has opened an exhibition of books and illustrations for the 130th anniversary of Kutuzov's death, containing about two hundred books ranging from rare works written by contemporaries of the field marshal to the latest publications of the Soviet Union on this subject. A considerable amount of space is devoted to Kutuzov's army orders, instructions and reports, and the plans of those battles in which he led the Russian forces.

The department devoted to fiction dealing with Kutuzov contains symposiums of works by Russian and foreign writers on the Patriotic War of 1812. Writers have found the figure of the great military leader a very attractive one; one need but mention Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* in which Kutuzov is one of the central figures. Many Russian theatres are at present showing the play *Field Marshal Kutuzov* by the Soviet playwright V. Solovyov to large and appreciative audiences, and work is under way on a film scenario, also by Solovyov, dealing with the same subject. A number of books on Kutuzov has been published, including works by M. Braghin mentioned above and K. Ossipov.

Under the lofty arches of the Kazan Cathedral in Leningrad is the grave of Kutuzov, fenced off by a low railing and surrounded by a group of old military banners. His own words to the Russian soldiers are traced on black velvet beside his bronze bust:

"Your iron breast fears neither the harshness of the elements nor the fury of the foe: it is the firm rampart of the homeland against which everything beats in vain and breaks."

In the same place there is a small but well-chosen exhibition illustrating the life and work of Kutuzov.

Every day the grave and the exhibition attract large numbers of visitors, men and commanders from the Leningrad front, Baltic seamen, factory workers, students, schoolchildren, who come to pay their tribute to the genius of the past and draw inspiration for the present.

A NEW COMPOSITION BY REINHOLD GLIERE

The history of music knows many cases when composers turn for their themes to the antique. Taneyev's *Oresteia* was based on the immortal trilogy of Aeschylus. There is Rimsky-Korsakov's prelude-cantata *From Homer*, telling of the meeting of Odysseus with Nausicaa, and other works of Russian composers.

Reinhold Gliere has recently completed a poem for soprano and symphonic orchestra, for the text of *Gaea* by the young poet Victor Krylov, whose patriotic writings have been set to music by several Soviet composers. Noteworthy among these are the poem *Orlitsa* [1] in which he describes the courage and heroism of Zoe Kosmodemyanskaya, a Russian girl tortured to death by the Hitlerites, his ballad *Thirty-three Heroes* on the defence of Stalingrad (both set to music by S. Khalatov), and *Story of a Partisan* (music by A. Kotilko), showing the wrath of the people's avengers in the enemy rear.

In his poem *Gaea*, the Greek goddess of the earth is anxiously awaiting the return of her son Antaeus, who is absent on a long and dangerous journey. For his treatment of the subject Victor Krylov has used a monologue by the goddess, agitated and at the same time lyrical, filled with maternal anxiety for the hero. It evokes an echo in every heart at the present time; it conveys the suffering of the mother, her fear for the life of her son, her pride in his courage and valour.

These are the feelings that pervade Gliere's expressive, poetic musical accompaniment for the goddess' monologue, and make it a poem for soprano and orchestra.

The number of instruments demanded is very large, but the harmony is exceptionally clear. Here the composer's gift for colourful writing is displayed to the full. An extensive use has been made of the tonal possibilities of two harps, the celesta and hand-bells which are included in the orchestra. Reinhold Gliere has given his music a legendary, fantastic colouring that harmonizes well with the antique.

But at the same time the colourful orchestral harmonies in no way overshadow the spirit

[1] About $^1/_4$ mile.

[1] It means the female eagle.

of the music which is lyrically emotional, developing great strength of feeling.

This music conveys the tragedy of the mother waiting for her dearly-loved son, the depth of love. Towards the end, however, the tragic threatening feeling in the music lifts, as though in anticipation of the hero's victorious return:

". . . And full of hope's miracle is the stillness."

The State Symphonic Orchestra of the U.S.S.R., conducted by Nathan Rachlin, will shortly present this work for the first time in Moscow. The soloist will be the talented singer Faina Mileikovskaya.

IGOR BOELZA

RUSSIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC IN MOSCOW

In addition to popular works by Glinka, Chaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Skryabin and Rachmaninov, which hold their place in the repertoires of symphonic orchestras, a number of little-known compositions have been performed at recent concerts of Russian classical music in Moscow. These are works which have been newly-edited and in some cases completed in our own times.

Glinka's symphonic overture on the theme of two Russian folk songs, for example, presented by the State Symphonic Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. conducted by Nathan Rachlin, aroused considerable interest. This composition consisting of Glinka's unfinished sketches, was completed and orchestrated by Vissarion Shebalin, who brought the composer's unfinished conception to completion with fine artistic taste and feeling for style.

The Radio Committee Orchestra, chorus and soloists conducted by Alexei Kovalyov, have done a great deal of work preparing the first public performance of the *Triumphal Cantata* by Alexander Glazunov. This composition was performed only once before, fifty years ago, for a small Court circle. The text of the cantata, intended for this same audience, had little relation to what was genuine folk-music. The poet Victor Krylov was asked by the All-Union Radio Committee to write a new text for the cantata. It is remarkable for its poetic fervour and is vitally expressive of Glazunov's music, which in this way has become accessible to wide circles of listeners.

IGOR BOELZA

The Affiliated Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow is completing the staging of a new opera, *At Moscow's Approaches*, by D. B. Kabalevsky, on the rout of the Germans near Moscow at the end of 1941. People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. S. A. Samossud is working on its scenic and musical effects.

This opera is to be followed by *Lyubov Yarovaya*, an opera composed by V. Enke on the play of the same name by C. A. Trenyov, one of the oldest Soviet dramatists. The scenes are laid during the Civil War, and the heroine is an ordinary Russian woman, a teacher. Her husband betrays the people's cause, and, though she loves him, Lyubov tears her love from her heart.

The corps-de-ballet is reviving the classical ballet *The Nutcracker*, by Chaikovsky.

The Bolshoy Theatre, at present working in Kuibyshev, is preparing to stage Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *A Night in May*, one of the most popular Russian operas, to mark the centenary of the birth of the famous Russian composer in March, 1944. It has also revived Bizet's *Carmen*, and is rehearsing *Tatyana*, a new ballet by A. Krein, a Soviet composer. In addition to this, the theatre is reviving B. V. Assafyev's ballet *Flames of Paris*, showing the French people's fight in 1792. The ballet has been subjected to musical and literary revision.

In the near future the theatre is to undertake the staging of *1812* by Prokofyev and *Eugene Onegin* by Chaikovsky.

D. D. Shostakovich has completed his second sonata for pianoforte, in three parts. The composer has dedicated this sonata to the memory of his teacher, the noted pianist, Professor L. V. Nikolayev of the Leningrad Conservatoire. Shostakovich's first sonata was written when he was still a youth. His well-known concerto for pianoforte, horn and orchestra, as well as his cycle of preludes, also belong to his early creative period. Except for the quintette for pianoforte, written just before the war, Shostakovich has returned with his second sonata to pianoforte compositions after an interval of many years.

May 5th is Press Day in the Soviet Union. On this day a general survey is made of the dissemination of printed matter among the public.

The number of newspapers, magazines and books issued in Russia has grown enormously within the past decades. This is plainly shown by a glance at the figures: whereas statistics for 1913 show that 859 newspapers were published, with a total issue of 2,700,000 copies, by the 25th anniversary of Soviet power (taking statistics for 1941) 6,543 papers were being published in the U.S.S.R., with a total issue of over 33,000,000, while the issue of books and pamphlets rose from 86,700,000 copies to 520,800,000. The general improvement in the cultural level of the people is indicated by the fact that whereas in tsarist Russia the yearly proportion of books published per person was 0.7, the figure is now 4.1, and that with a greatly increased population.

Books are published in 109 languages of peoples inhabiting the territory of the Soviet Union. It is notable that it was only under Soviet power that the first books were published in Mingrelian, Turkmenian, Tajik, Kirghiz, Bashkir, Lesghian, Kalmuk, Ingushetian, Nenets, Evenk and other languages; not to mention the fact that the actual written language of over 40 peoples of the U.S.S.R. only came into being after the Revolution.

During the period of the Great Patriotic War, publishing in the U.S.S.R. has increased still further in scope. According to figures issued by the All-Union Book Repository, over 30,000 books and pamphlets of various kinds have been published during the first year-and-a-half of the war, with a total issue of 605,000,000. A third of this, that is to say 9,500 titles, are devoted to military and defence themes. Over 6,000 books deal with questions of industry,

transport and communications, which are of primary importance in war-time.

Fiction dealing with the war of the Soviet people against the hitlerite invaders enjoys a wide circulation. The total issue of works by Alexei Tolstoy during the war has reached 5,000,000 copies. Forty-five anti-fascist books by Ilya Ehrenburg have been published during the same period, in twelve languages, while P. Lidov's short novel *Tanya*, about Zoe Kosmodemyanskaya, the heroic girl-partisan, ran into an edition of 1,500,000.

The Lenin State Library of the U.S.S.R. has prepared a special exhibition on "The Press in the Patriotic War Period," showing the books, pamphlets, newspapers and magazines published in various languages of the U.S.S.R. during the war-period.

In the centre of Moscow there is a boulevard, one of the oldest in the city. At one end a statue of Pushkin is etched against the sky. This statue dates from the past century; Dostoyevsky himself made an inspiring speech at its unveiling. At the opposite end of the boulevard, there is a memorial raised by the Soviet government to the Russian scientist C. A. Timiryazev (1843—1920). A fascist bomb fell beside this statue during the air raids on Moscow in August 1941. But in a very short time the people of Moscow again saw the impressive figure of this great thinker restored to its old place. It had been done at a miraculous speed, and the only trace of a bomb-splinter can be discerned in the folds of the stone mantle. It serves to remind the passer-by that the enemy of science and culture is still ravaging Europe, and that in the interests of all progressive mankind he must be destroyed.

Every year, a spring book bazaar, already become traditional, is held on this boulevard between the statues of the great poet and the great thinker. The light wooden kiosks are bright with many-coloured piles of books. This year the bazaar has been particularly well-patronized. There is an especial demand for fiction and children's books. The salesgirls soon found themselves bought out. Books to the value of 300,000 roubles were sold at the bazaar.

The reading public of the U.S.S.R. is well-acquainted with its writers. When Alexei Tolstoy appeared at a bookstand, he was immediately surrounded by a crowd of fans all wanting his autograph on the book *The Road to Calvary*. His first autograph was written in a copy belonging to a naval captain spending some days in Moscow. Then an elderly woman approached him.

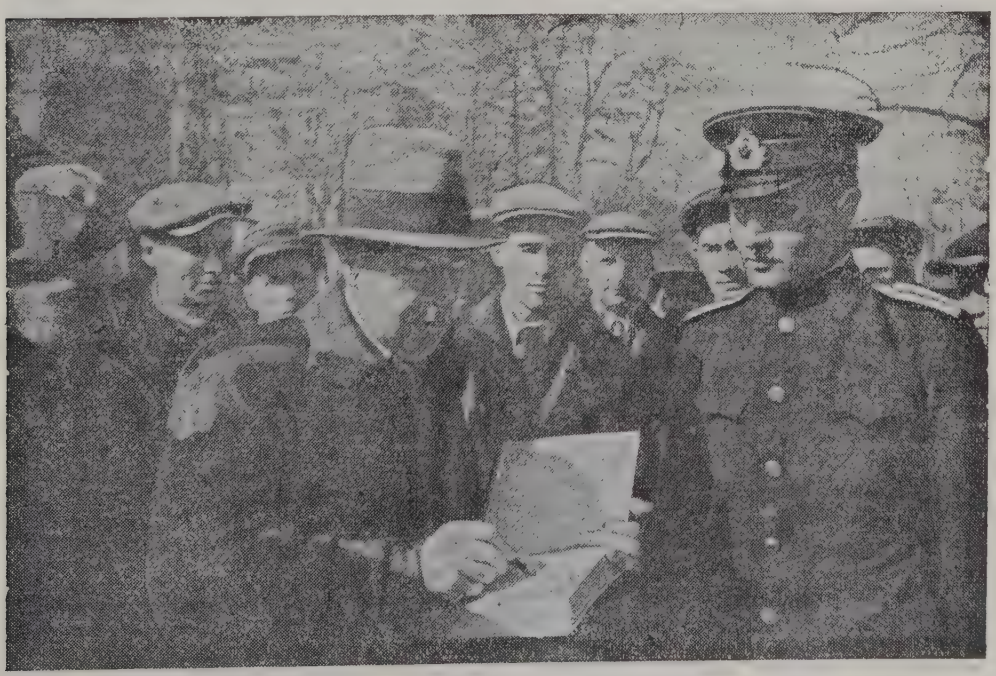
"My son is wounded, he's in a military hospital," she said. "I had a note from him a few days ago asking me to get him your book. I'm sure he'd be especially pleased if his present bore the author's signature."

On the first page of the book A. N. Tolstoy wrote: "To Mikhail Terentyev, with heartiest wishes for a quick recovery."

He had to sign his name many times more after that.

"Is there enough ink in your fountain pen?" asked Sergei Mikhalkov, the well-known children's writer and Stalin Prize winner. But soon he too found himself taking to the pen, to satisfy the demands of a crowd of children who wanted him to autograph their copies of *My Street*, on sale at the bazaar.

The spring bazaar went with a swing in Leningrad, with interesting publications on literature, art and science, not to mention large



At the Moscow Book Bazaar. Alexei Tolstoy signing a volume of his "Road to Calvary"

numbers of collectors copies, including incunabula, a Bible printed in Nuremberg in 1472, bought by the Public Library.

The book lottery and auction was especially popular. The whole of the profits from the bazaar as well as one day's wages given by the salesgirls, were contributed towards founding a public library in one of the districts of Leningrad region freed from the hitlerite invaders. The most recent works of fiction have been set aside for this library, as well as Russian and Western-European classics, and books dealing with the historical, social and economic sciences.

"Humanity, beauty, the people, the Ukraine: these were his favourite topics; they were as much a part of himself as his own heart, his mind, and kind eyes. . . He had a particular tenderness for his Ukraine and often thought he could smell hollyhocks when there was none near. And once, on Capri, when he saw some pale pink hollyhocks beside the white walls of a fisherman's cottage, he beamed all over his face, and taking off his hat, said to the flowers in his own language:

"'How do you do? How do you feel in a strange land?'"

The above lines were taken from Maxim Gorky's reminiscences of the Ukrainian writer M. M. Kotsyubinsky, the thirtieth anniversary of whose death was commemorated by the Soviet people in spring 1943.

M. M. Kotsyubinsky (1864—1913) was one of the Ukrainian people's most popular and best-loved writers. His works are deeply imbued with the spirit of his country. His tales and sketches are alive with the poetic Ukrainian spirit, with the charm of its rich, musical and expressive language. Literature was not his profession, it was an achievement, a fight for human dignity. He was a hater of despotism, of cowardice or a poor spirit, of any form of degradation of the personality, as is shown in his books *Persona Grata*, *On the Road*, *On the Stone* and *What Is Written in the Book of Life*. He was thoroughly imbued with the idea of community, of the close relations of different nationalities. Many of his works deal with the life of non-Russians. *For the Common Good* is about the Moldavian people, *On the Stone* about Tatars. In *He Is Going* the characters are Jewish. Kotsyubinsky's best work, his tale *Fata Morgana*, depicts the position of the Ukrainian peasantry at the beginning of the twentieth century and shows the continual striving of the Ukrainian people towards liberty and happiness.

Kotsyubinsky's writings are closely linked with the literary heritage of those other great Ukrainian writers: Kotlyarevsky, Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Panas Myrnyi and Karpenko-Karyi. An artist of originality, he is a worthy member of this brilliant group. Kotsyubinsky extended the range of Ukrainian prose, introduced new ideas, boldly treating a number of social, philosophical and psychological problems which were extremely urgent at the time when he wrote.

Kotsyubinsky's works are cherished and valued by the Ukrainian people, and have found a wide circle of readers among the general Soviet public. Thirty years after the writer's death his words had lost none of their force and freshness: "Sun! I thank you! You have sown golden seed in my heart—who can tell what it may bring forth? Perhaps flames?" Like golden sun-flames the loftiest impulses of the artist are sown in Kotsyubinsky's works and make him a writer to be read and loved and remembered by the people.

Kotsyubinsky was a friend of another great writer of the Russian people, Maxim Gorky, and through him was closely connected with the advanced trends of Russian literature. Hence the many points of contact in his works with those of Chekhov, Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Korolenko. Their humanity, love of liberty and faith in the strength of the people have made Kotsyubinsky's books very dear to the Russian reader.

The German-fascist invaders, who defiled and destroyed the historical monuments and national treasures of the Ukraine, have plundered and burnt down the two Kotsyubinsky museums which the Soviet government had opened in the towns of Vinnitsa and Chernigov, where the writer spent his life. But his works survive among the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, and are a living protest against the outrages and barbarism of the hitlerite murderers.

A number of new books have appeared in Leningrad, including *To Our Army*, a collection of poems by N. Tikhonov, V. Inber, O. Bergholz, A. Prokofyev, V. Sayanov, V. Rozhdestvensky and others; a mass edition of songs, giving the words of forty-five of the most popular songs written during the war; a collection, *Songs and Couplets of the Leningrad Partisans*, including some very interesting folk melodies from the districts where these partisans are active; *The Pulkovo Meridian*, a poem written by Vera Inber during the siege of the city; and *The Childhood of a Leader*, chapters from a poem by G. Leonidze on the childhood and youth of Joseph Stalin. Another new book published in Leningrad is the novel *Dmitri Donskoy* by S. Borodin, a Stalin Prize winner. With regard to its publication in Leningrad, Borodin said: "The fact that my book was published in the besieged city in direct response to the demand from the men on the Leningrad front and the working population in the city, is a source of particular gratification to me. The people want to read about their own past, so that the example of their forefathers may inspire them to fight as courageously for their present and their future."

That gallant son of the Tatar people, Salavat Karymov, has been awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. He went to the front as a Red Army man but earned the rank of captain. The deeds done and the valour displayed in battle by this exceptionally courageous scout are described in the book *Salavat Karymov*, by the Tatar writer A. Yerikeyev, issued by the Young Guard publishers.

A collection of publicist articles by Maxim Rylsky, Stalin Prize winner, has just been issued by the Soviet Writers of the Ukraine Publishing House, under the title *The People Is Immortal*. Another book from the same publishers is *Conquer and Live*, a collection of poems by Pavlo Tychina, Stalin Prize winner.

From the Young Guard publishers comes a book by M. I. Kalinin, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., entitled *On Youth*. The book includes Kalinin's talks with young people and speeches he made at youth rallies during the war.

P. P. Konchalovsky, artist and Stalin Prize winner, has completed his new picture, "Lermontov." This canvas shows the famous Russian poet Lermontov (1814—1841) during his stay in the Caucasus. While awaiting the horse which is to carry him further on his travels, the poet has lain down to rest on a divan in a little posting station at the foot of Kazbek. Through the half-open door there is a glimpse of sun-bathed mountain summits. An April issue of *Literature and Art* published an interesting article by Vsevolod Ivanov on Konchalovsky's latest work. Boldly and clearly the writer describes the great Russian poet as he sees him on Konchalovsky's canvas:

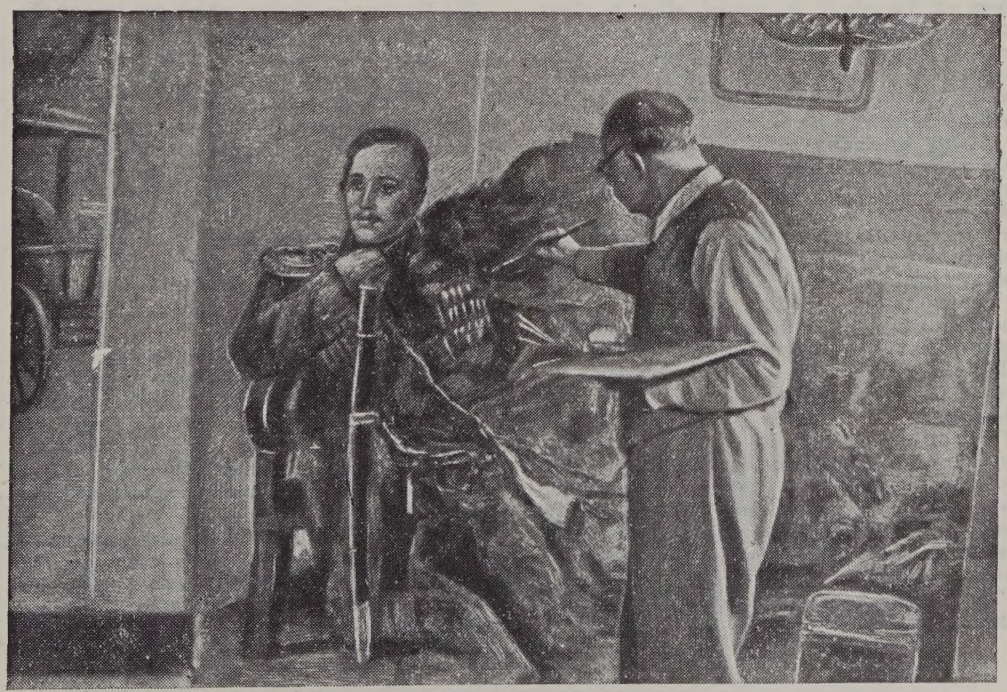
"Is he sad? Hardly. . . Youth is rarely sad, and talent still more rarely. Melancholy may be read in his eyes, but that is something different. He may be melancholy, but he cannot be sad. He is to great a poet. His wings are mighty, but he is not allowed to spread them, to let them bear him through the skies. Yes, this is what he longs for, the cause of his melancholy. Yes, he is dramatic, as everything great is inevitably dramatic. And all the same he is not happy, although young, talented and awaited everywhere, by those of the older generation and of his own, by aristocrats and simple folks. He is a poet in the noblest sense of the word, that is to say, he loves to sing of his country, he honours her life and battles and hates her enemies. He is a poet, he is a patriot, he is the Russian patriot-poet!"

Konchalovsky painted his picture of Lermontov when German air raids on Moscow were at their worst. Sirens screamed, searchlights slashed night-sky, anti-aircraft guns barked, shells burst. It was very cold in the unheated studio, the artist had to paint in his greatcoat.

"Heedless of the cold, the artist works steadily on! At midday, when he begins to feel too hot, he throws off his greatcoat, and as he rids himself of the fur of his coat, he paints out the fur from the Caucasian cloak on his canvas, as though he feels that this young officer of the dragoons, poet, patriot and Russian, who travelled from Tiflis to Vladikavkas so many years ago, had not left Russia, as though he is near to each and everyone of us, defending together with us the honour and independence of our country."

In the day-time they are busy in the kitchens at huge tureens of steaming soup, flitting between the tables balancing pyramids of plates, carving meat, rolling dough, peeling vegetables; in the evening, off duty, they dance, sing, play the accordion. . .

The Catering Workers' Amateur Art Society is one of the oldest in Moscow, where it was formed some ten years ago. Many of the amateur singers and dancers joined the society when they were children. Zhenya Yermilova was only nine when she was first included in the "children's jazz band." She can play several instruments now, and her artistic talent has developed. She's the soloist of the "adult" jazz band and plays the saxophone like a professional. S. Sychova, a cook at one of Moscow's dining-rooms, is a great exponent of Russian



P. Konchalovsky putting the last touches to a portrait of Lermontov

folk songs, sings folk airs with feeling, and for ten years has been a constant and active worker in the society. Grishin and Loganova, two excellent dancers, work at a huge factory-kitchen in Moscow: he is an electrician, she—a waitress.

To some war might seem no time for dancing. But our amateurs have no such gloomy view of life. Valya Loganova, the waitress, even says that dancing is a rest for her hands and feet when tired after work. . .

The war has confronted the group with new tasks. Not long ago the whole team went to the front with a new repertoire on burning topics of the day. The amateurs performed in dugouts, on lorries, in field hospitals. . . At the front they met old comrades, volunteers and new recruits. Ivan Kozakov, chef at a Moscow restaurant before the war, was a member of the society, his forte being sentimental and comic songs. He volunteered for the front after the first air raid on Moscow in July, 1941. Now Kozakov is a commander and has been decorated for distinguished service in the fighting at Rzhev. But even in the stern setting of the front he hasn't lost contact with his old friends. "Send me some new music," he writes to Moscow, "our fellows love a good song."

The Catering Workers' Amateur Art Society took part in a recent amateur art festival. Iron and steel workers, telegraphists, bookkeepers and teachers, weavers and militiamen, people of the most varied trades and professions sang, danced and acted before Moscow audiences. Every large Moscow factory and office has its artistes, its amateur-art circle.

The review showed that the war hasn't stopped their work: just the reverse, it has given it new, more vital forms.

The Fyodor Volkov Theatre in the ancient town of Yaroslavl is named after a great Russian actor who was born in the town. It is now presenting *General Brussilov*, a play written by the Soviet dramatist Ilya Selvinsky on one of the most outstanding Russian military leaders, a hero of the last World War.

Critics especially note the timeliness of this play. The leading character is powerfully and convincingly drawn. An ardent Russian patriot, he was up-to-date in his methods, and proved capable of dealing the German command, as personified in Ludendorff, a shattering blow.

The interest of the audience, which includes many Red Army men and commanders, never flags for a moment. It is held by Brussilov himself, as played by P. Gaideburov, one of the oldest Russian actors. Soviet soldiers see in this Russian general an exponent of the fighting school of Suvorov, a school, by the way, incomprehensible to the German understanding. This is, strictly speaking, an army play which grips the audience not by means of gunfire or lighting effects, but by the intense dramatic feeling that increases with the development of the plot.

The Yaroslavl Theatre is shortly to present this play in Moscow.

It was during the war that the Georgian Rust'hveli Theatre staged *Oleko Dundich*, a drama woven around one of the most gallant figures in the Civil War. The title role is played by A. Khorava, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. "When I play Dundich," he said in an interview, "I strive to depict the free, strong spirit of a man confident in victory."

In *Moscow Skies*, G. Mdivani takes the present war for his subject and shows the defence of the Soviet capital from hitlerite air raids.

The older Georgian plays still retain their popularity on the stage of the Rust'hveli Theatre. Notable among these are *Motherland* by Eristavi and *Treachery* by A. Sumbatov-Yuzhin.

At the very beginning of the war a group of the theatre's best actors organized to play for the army on the Transcaucasian front.

Although it is war-time, master-craftsmen of Soviet ceramics are carrying on their work. Their new productions are inspired by the martial events through which we are living.

Recently the pottery at Dulevo produced a sculptural grouping, "A Girl Pioneer Writes to a Wounded Soldier," the work of sculptor N. Ventsel. Vera Mukhina, a prominent Soviet sculptor, has modelled a symbolic figure entitled "The Woman Partisan," now reproduced in porcelain. Artist V. Yuryevskaya is painting portraits of heroes of the Patriotic War on china ovals.

The Kuzyayevsky pottery has produced original pipes and Turkish style pipes with caricatures of Hitler done in relief. Sculptor E. Yefimenko-Kozhukhova has finished a work called "They Will Find a New Home," showing a group of children who fled from German-occupied territory.

The Dmitrov potteries, which are among the oldest in Russia, have begun work on an eight-feet sculpture "Alexander Nevsky" to commemorate the victory of this popular Russian hero. The sculptor is S. Orlov.

Russian ceramics have been produced for two hundred years. The secret of preparing china clays was discovered by Dmitri Ivanovich Vinogradov (1720—1758), a contemporary and friend of M. V. Lomonossov. In the State Museum of Porcelain there is a white glazed dish with a lid, marked with a "W," Vinogradov's mark, and dated 1748; it is indisputably the first dated specimen of Russian porcelain.

After Vinogradov the manufacture of porcelain became firmly established. Besides the State potteries, many private potteries were started and worked successfully. The vases and porcelain of the Gardner, Popov, Terikhov, Kisselyov, Kornilov and Kuznetsov potteries are known to collectors and connoisseurs throughout the world.

After the Revolution, Russian porcelain potteries continued their work with success. Soviet ceramics have been awarded gold medals and certificates at international exhibitions in Paris and New York.

Editor-in-chief: HELEN STASSOVA

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