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THE BROWN DRUG

At the end of last June I left Moscow by plane for the North Caucasus to obtain material evidence and eyewitnesses' evidence of German crimes. They are many, these crimes, and they are appalling in their brutality, in the number of innocent victims; they are ghastly in their methodical butchery.

I believe that there still are no small number of people who stand aloof from war and who with difficulty and even incredulity could picture to themselves a tank ditch where, covered by earth, at a depth of half a metre and stretching for over three hundred feet there lie buried venerable people, old women, professors, Red Army men with their crutches, schoolchildren, girls, women pressing their dead infants to their breast with decaying arms—infants whose mouths were found to be filled with earth, medical examination thus proving they were buried alive. It is hard to imagine German soldiers as they bawl out to each other in the kitchen garden where they are making a hasty search for a little girl. She has hidden herself because her grandfather and mother have just been killed—a photograph of a Red Army lieutenant was found in their possession: the Germans, having found the girl, in a field of tall maize shot her on the spot. It is hard to believe that on the eve of their retreat the Germans started selling reasonably priced alcohol and bicarbonate of soda in the municipal market, and that the alcohol was methylated spirit and the neat little packets labelled "Bicarbonate of soda" contained oxalic acid.

But sell they did, and more than seven hundred trustful inhabitants of Georgievsk were poisoned—fell ill and died. The inquiry, which will be followed by legal indictment, waits for those guilty of this crime, to send them up for trial.

Half of my life was spent during those years when European civilization flourished under the sun of almost half a century of peace.

Unafraid I stayed at German hotels, and slept there without locking my door for no one ever stole my luggage in Germany. I believed implicitly that every drop of my blood belonged to me, and that no German had the right to let it flow out through a little hole plugged by a bullet or made by a knife. I'm of the older generation. I fail to understand the Germans of today. During their five months' occupation of the North Caucasus, in Stavropol territory alone they forcibly requisitioned, that is to say, plundered, slaughtered and devoured and partly drove off to Germany one hundred and forty-nine thousand six hundred and seventy-four cows, one million eight hundred and fifty thousand two hundred and fifty-nine sheep and goats, one hundred and ninety-six thousand four hundred and sixty-two pigs, eight hundred and fifty thousand fowls, geese and also the famous local breed of black turkeys, and so on. . .

I cannot understand the Germans who in their hasty retreat from the North Caucasus in January did what a criminal does when leaving the house he has just burgled and where he has stabbed the owners to death—befouled the most conspicuous spot before his departure. In all the towns and villages of the North Caucasus and Kuban regions and republics the Germans blew up, burned down without exception: all schools, theatres, cinemas, hotels, libraries together with the books, hospitals, sanatoria, young pioneer clubs and public buildings. In those places where because of their hurried retreat their demolition squads did not arrive in time, the German soldiers dashed around with crowbars and pick-axes, smashing windows, bath-tubs, lavatory basins and even ventilation grids, peppering sculptured and modelled panels with sub-machine-gun bullets, ripping off upholstery, breaking furniture, gashing the zinc roofing metal with their bayonets—all of which serves as conclusive evidence of German thoroughness in work and their propensity for destruction. In Zheleznovodsk, a re-

sort unmatched in Europe for its medical equipment and comfort, the Germans set up a meat-smoking establishment; in the magnificent sanatoria where the rooms were panelled in costly hardwoods and marble they put up smoke ovens. For five months the smoke of fat and bacon came through the broken windows of these palaces. And in January, on fleeing from Zheleznovodsk, they dynamited all the sanatoria and the rest-homes.

Everything I describe I saw with my own eyes. But I have seen still more grievous sights. In the North Caucasus the Germans massacred the whole Jewish population, most of whom had been evacuated, during the war, from Leningrad, Odessa, the Ukraine and the Crimea. There were many scientists, professors and physicians evacuated to this region with their scientific institutions. The Germans began their preparations for mass murder in the very first days of their occupation. They organized Jewish committees, allegedly for the settling of Jews in the less densely populated parts of the Ukraine, and at the same time created intolerable and humiliating conditions for them: old men, adolescents, sick and ailing people, men of learning, doctors, old women who could hardly stand on their feet, were all driven to do navvies' work, without any wages or bread rations; they were ordered to wear a yellow star on their breast and were forbidden to enter dining-rooms, shops and other public places. They were not allowed to leave the town. And when, at last, "settlement day" was announced, it was with a feeling of great relief that the Jews assembled at the places named, together with their families, twenty kilogrammes of luggage per person and a two-day supply of food. The keys of their apartments had been deposited at the house committee offices, and the official order of the army commander had guaranteed the safety of all their property. An Armenian told me that he went to the Kislovodsk railway station that morning; a clamorous and animated throng was boarding nineteen open and closed railway cars; the twentieth was reserved for the members of the Jewish Committee. The Armenian found the woman he was searching for in the crowd and said to her: "Give me your daughter, I'll bring her up; you'll never reach the Ukraine." The seven-year-old daughter of this woman was such a beautiful and clever child that she attracted everyone's attention. He spent much time trying to persuade the woman but she stood silently listening with her arms around her child. "No," she answered at last, "no matter what happens, we'll never part."

At one o'clock in the afternoon the train, bearing about eighteen hundred people, steamed passed Mineralnyie Vody station and stopped in a field. The German officers accompanying the train began studying the lay of the land through their field-glasses but they were not satisfied with the results of their reconnoissance. The train was backed into Mineralnyie Vody again and switched on to a siding, coming to a halt by the glass works. The German convoys bawled: "Out with you! Come on, jump out!" The crowd began to show signs of worry and anxiety. The members of the Jewish Committee, which included four well-known doctors and the elderly writer Bergman, began to re-assure the people: "The Germans are enemies, they are harsh, but after all they are cultured people, we must believe in the promise given by the German command. . ." Then came the order to hand over all valuables. Ear-rings, rings and watches were quickly removed and dropped into the field-service caps of the German sentries. Ten minutes or so passed. A German staff machine drove up with Welben, the chief of the Gestapo, and the Commandant Paul. Then came the command: "Strip to the skin!"

All this was told me by the only survivor, an old man by the name of Fingerut: he hid in the grass between the wheels of a car on a distant siding. When the people were ordered to strip, they understood this to be the end of their lives, that their execution was now to begin. They started shrieking and dashing to and fro. They shrieked in such frenzy that their eyes started from their sockets and many went insane. Many of them began to strip, it's impossible to understand why, the women remaining in their knickers and the men in their under-pants. The sentries then herded this crowd of people across the aerodrome field, to the tank ditch about a kilometre from the glass factory. Fingerut saw a German soldier who was dragging two children along by the hand, pull out his revolver and shoot them dead. Those who tried to run away were shot. Several vehicles kept chasing up and down the field along the fringe of the

throng, shooting down all those who tried to escape. It is no easy thing to massacre eighteen hundred people; after being driven to the tank ditch, they were shot. The shooting went on from one o'clock in the afternoon till evening.

That same night closed trucks kept on driving up to the ditch from Essentuki. There, in exactly the same manner, cunningly persuaded through the medium of the Jewish Committee by order of the Commandant Beck, 507 able-bodied Jews and about fifteen hundred children, old men and old women were assembled at the school with luggage and a supply of food thinking that they were to be sent away. They stood waiting all day long. After eight o'clock the sentries began robbing them of their luggage and bundling groups of people into cars. By the following morning two thousand people had been put to death and dumped into the tank ditch at Mineralnyie Vody.

The testimony of witnesses and the autopsy held established the fact that the Germans put their victims to death not only by shooting, but also by asphyxiating them with carbon monoxide in hermetically sealed motor vehicles build specially for this type of massacre.

A German war prisoner, an automobile mechanic by the name of Fenichel, gave us a detailed description of one of these cars built at the "Deutsche Kraftwagen A.G., Berlin."

In Pyatigorsk two thousand eight hundred Jews—both children and adults—were assembled in the same way ostensibly for settlement somewhere else, driven off in the cars to Mineralnyie Vody, suffocated and dumped into the same tank ditch. The Germans continued their cleaning-up of Pyatigorsk for several days after this. One witness, a woman named Ostrovenets told us: "I lived in the yard where the Germans had arranged cells with bricked-up windows for prisoners. I used to see a closed black truck drive in and back close up to the cell doors. Then I would hear the command inside the cells: 'Strip!' Then I heard the wild shrieks of women and children imprisoned in the cells. After this, they were pushed out half-naked from the cells and shoved or dragged by the hair into the waiting car. The door was then tightly closed. An officer, accompanied by some Gestapo men, would come out of the prison and for some reason or other they always peered underneath the car. After this the driver would start the engine which made an awful racket but still could not drown the dreadful screams and stamping of feet inside. The Gestapo men would start whistling and roaring. This would continue for about five or seven minutes, after which everyone quietened down inside the car and it would drive off. . ."

The excavations made under my observation in the Mineralnyie Vody tank ditch disclosed a solid mass of corpses covering an area one hundred and five metres long. We estimated the number of killed as being over 6,000, a rather lower figure than that given as a result of eyewitnesses' statements concerning the deportation of the Jewish population from Kislovodsk, Essentuki and Pyatigorsk. Evidently some of the graves have still to be discovered. Near Kislovodsk, for instance, in a gully not far from Koltso-Hill, the heavy rains washed away the earth and exposed the dead bodies of children. Excavation in two spots in this gully resulted in the discovery of one hundred and sixty-one adult and seventy children's corpses. In Stavropol, when the trenches were being cleared out, new corpses were constantly brought to light. . .

In the old stone quarries on Mashuk Hill, Pyatigorsk, the bodies of about three hundred citizens of Russian nationality have been unearthed and identified. To this very day you can see on the chalk cliffs of the quarry black spots and splashes of blood, while between the rocks lie fragments of clothing and locks of women's hair. It was to this place that the Germans brought men and women who were half-dead from the horrible torture they had endured in prison. Evidence of torture was found on medical examination: here were broken and burned extremities, scalped heads, torn out jaws. The people were made to stand on the brink of the cliff and shot dead. Then the rocks were dynamited and buried them. So far, up to three hundred fifty-six corpses, including sixty-six women and children, have been discovered on Mashuk Hill, the brick works and other places.

In Stavropol, on August 10th the Germans asphyxiated with carbon monoxide six hundred and sixty patients from the psychiatric hospital. It was done in specially constructed closed trucks. On August 12th the Germans brought three thousand five hundred Jewish people to

the vicinity of the aerodrome and shot them with sub-machine-guns. On August 15th they brought another five hundred citizens of Jewish nationality to the grounds of the psychiatric hospital, shot them and buried them in the silo pits. Besides this mass butchery the Germans continued to arrest and destroy the Russian population, those they found undesirable for one reason or another. Altogether the Germans killed more than five thousand five hundred Russians and Jews in Stavropol.

Konevsky, who escaped, gives the following account of the slaughter on August 12th: "We were given shovels and told to take our seats in a canvas-covered truck, there being about thirty prisoners in the car. We were taken out of town, escorted by two passenger cars with armed Germans. The cars stopped on the outskirts of the town and the Germans selected eight elderly prisoners. The remaining twenty-two drove on to a place called Kholodny Rodnik. Here we were led to a cement pit, about twenty-five by forty feet, filled with dead bodies and covered with a thin layer of earth through which blood oozed. When we had shovelled earth over this pit we were ordered to do the same in another pit, smaller than the first, and also full of corpses. After this pit had been filled in we were all taken to some pits and trenches about a kilometre away; these pits and trenches were filled with the bodies of men, women and children who had been shot, they were lying in their underwear or entirely naked. Not far from the trenches, lying face downward on the ground, were the eight people who had been ordered to leave the truck on the outskirts of the town. They were still alive. When we started working, an officer drove up in a car and, at his orders, we lay face downwards on the ground. The Germans struck the other eight who were lying on the ground, made them get up and walk to the trenches, where they shot them down with sub-machine-guns. The eight bodies fell into the trench. After this we went on filling in the pits. In our group there was a man named Goikh, a professor of mathematics. While we were filling in a pit he suddenly recognized the bodies of his own two children in it and throwing down his spade he jumped into the pit. The German officer strode up and shot him dead. About noon three trucks with wounded Red Army men sitting and lying in them drove up to the spot. We were compelled to take them off the trucks, and they were all shot before our very eyes. The execution was done by Gestapo officers, about twenty-five or thirty of them; I know the name of one—Bayer."

And so it goes on. I turn the grievous pages of the testimony given by the witnesses of the murder and torture in the Gestapo, of the Germans' violence towards women and adolescents. . . I read the evidence of a victim, Nastassya Suprun, who tells how she was tortured by the interrogator Fischer who tried to wring from her a confession of espionage. Her fourteen-year-old niece Nina Suchkova was in the same cell with her. She too was interrogated by Fischer. "Ninochka was brought in again after being subjected to torture; for three hours she lay unconscious, a bloody froth on her lips. When she came to, all she said was: 'Auntie Assya, what'll happen to me?' When the machine of death returned after the mass slaughter, Ninochka was sent out to scrub and clean it. Ninochka told me that the floor of the car was littered with bits of torn underwear, hair, spectacles and excrement. Ninochka was again taken to be questioned, again beaten with sticks and dragged back into the cell unconscious. On November 4th she was taken away from the cell, and no one has seen her since. . ."

What is all this? I ask you: who are these Germans? How could the German people fall so low that its army perpetrates things which mankind will recall with shudders of horror and repugnance for a thousand years to come? What repentance, what deeds can wash away this shameful blot? The shameful blot of nazism. The German people did not spit in its tempter's face but followed Hitler to kill and to plunder. Woe to those Germans who, without postponing it until tomorrow, do not awaken at once from the brown drug!

ALEXEI TOLSTOY

PRESENT DAY THESES *

The time will come when the papers written by scientists and the theses submitted by candidates for degrees during the war period will become the subject of a special study.

We shall then be able to browse over the carefully filed stenographic reports of the reading of the theses, the speeches made by the official opponents, the opinions of the members of scientific bodies: we shall be able to study thoroughly the real substance, the heart of the theses, each of which is one of the most important events in the life of a young scientist.

One would like to make a special study of those theses which were read in Leningrad, to examine and ponder over them, to recall everything that happened in that beautiful city tormented by the enemy.

The scientific life of Leningrad continued during the siege. Two Institutes, the Pediatric Institute and the Physicians' Post-Graduate Institute, had their scientific bodies in the city and worked as usual. Theses were read in accordance with the normal rules. Official opponents made their speeches, the theses were discussed and all remarks were taken down in shorthand as is customary, fat file covers containing voluminous shorthand reports arrived in Moscow for confirmation, together with all the usual documents sent to the Higher Attestation Commission.

All this time Leningrad was being bombed, the enemy was torturing the city with hunger and darkness. We often speak of the "city-fortress." The "city-fortress" is not only defence works, cannon and machine-guns, it is a fortress of the spirit of the people, a fortress of the human soul within which the light of creative thought continues to burn and radiate its light beyond reach of the enemy.

The fact that the Scientific Counsel of two institutes remained in Leningrad enabled doctors to submit and read theses without leaving the city. Other scientific workers of the city, therefore, considered that the "medics" were in clover. Those who worked in the sphere of technology had no opportunities for reading theses, the majority of the technical institutes having been evacuated. Nevertheless scientists continued their work. The rooms in which they worked were cold, so cold that it was difficult to breathe and fingers were cramped. Librarians, blue with cold, searched amongst the remaining books for literature required for future theses. Snow lay on the benches in deserted lecture halls. Still the theses were written, page by page, theses were completed and pigeon-holed for the future.

Those who wrote them wanted to read them in public, read them in their own city, read them as theses had always been read before. Requests from Leningrad began to arrive in Moscow. Scientists working in the realm of technology asked to be given an opportunity to read their theses in Leningrad. They wrote letters to People's Commissars, petitioned the Higher Attestation Commission; their requests had the support of the Leningrad City Soviet; people insisted on their right to continue research work as though their city were living a normal life.

A temporary Scientific Counsel was therefore organized at the Leningrad Polytechnical Institute with the right to examine the theses of candidates for the degrees of master and doctor of science in the various branches of technology.

We know with what intensity our factories are working at the present time. We are also aware of that intricate arithmetic by means of which time is saved at the expense of sleep or rest. A man who is devoted to science, however, never betrays or deserts that

* Soviet Universities, Institutes and scientific bodies which accept post-graduate students and have the right to grant master's and doctor's degrees are governed by a Scientific Counsel. After the candidate for a degree has passed the necessary general examinations in his subject, he has to submit a thesis. The Counsel appoints two specialists in the subject as official opponents. The thesis is then read at a public session of the Counsel, the candidate for the degree "defending" it at the session. Members of the Scientific Counsel express their views for and against the points made in the thesis, and members of the general public may also participate in any discussion which arises. The findings of the Scientific Counsel are then sent, together with the thesis and a shorthand report of the meeting, to the Higher Attestation Commission, the only body in the Soviet Union which has the right to endorse degrees from master upwards. *Ed.*

science. Engineers continued their research work, gathering their material grain by grain, splitting up their scientific work into such tiny portions as could be added to an already tense and overcrowded day. They accumulated knowledge, these avaricious knights of learning, denied themselves sleep, forgot all about rest. Then, at last, the magic casket was filled. Everybody knows the feeling of joy and relief with which one looks at a long, difficult but beloved task that has been brought to a conclusion. It lies there before you, the result of joy and sorrow, of sleepless nights, of bitterest doubts; a neatly typed thesis whose pages have been so often corrected and re-written.

Chief engineers and factory managers, who have quite enough to do without giving themselves extra work, found time to help and encourage those who were preparing their theses. The chief engineer of the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine wrote to Moscow asking for permission for theses to be read and endorsed at the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Institute in order to economize on time and simplify the work of candidates for degrees.

Just before the war broke out many theses were publicly defended. In the Ukraine, in Byelorussia, in many of our cities people summarized the results of their research work, Scientific Counsels examined the theses written and then sent them to the Higher Attestation Commission in Moscow in order that the degrees granted should be confirmed.

Then the war began. Many candidates for degrees were called up for service in the army and left for the various fronts. Some institutes were compelled to leave the cities in which they had their homes. Archives, instruments and laboratories wandered over unknown roads, spread all over the country. In the lecture halls of the Kiev institutes the Germans trampled on the ashes of burnt papers, German generals plundered the libraries of their valuable editions. The smoke of huge conflagrations lay like a pall over the territory which the enemy had captured.

The theses travelled a long way.

They wandered on trains right across the whole country; trains loaded with ammunition, with guns on open platforms, muzzles pointed upwards, passed them on their way.

At last the theses found their way to Moscow. Their authors were at the time fighting at the front. There were few who gave a thought to their scientific work in those first days of the war. Time passed, and people became accustomed to the smoke and din of war, became steeled to it and gradually recalled what they had been doing formerly, what they had laboured over and dreamed about. Letters began to arrive from the front in which military men asked about the fate of their theses. They were answered and Guards captains or army surgeons learned that they had been granted the degree of doctor or master since the war began.

Everybody has heard of the Institute in Odessa of the famous ophthalmologist Academician Filatov. I was fortunate enough to be present at operations which Filatov carried out in his new Institute. I remember his pupils and assistants who stood around the operating table, the professor in his gauze mask; I remember the veins which stood out on the Academician's forehead, the strangely stiff man stretched out on the table, the tiny piece of cornea taken from the eye of a dead body, the tissues of the dead by means of which the living would again see the light of day.

There is probably little left of the charming building on the Proletarian Boulevard in Odessa, with its huge windows overlooking the sea, windows through which the blind first saw the light again. The people who worked in the Institute, however, are alive, they did not give way or lose themselves, and now we learn from Tashkent of new, interesting work carried out by Filatov and his colleagues.

We followed with interest the biological work of Academician Bogomolets in Kiev and of Academician Parnas in Lvov. We knew what the scientists of Dniepropetrovsk and Kharkov were doing. Now they have been scattered to the four corners of the country by the evil winds of war, but we learn of their new work, of the brilliance with which scientific thought has blazed up and is shedding its light.

It is hard to be without one's home, without its familiar walls, without every-

thing that had been so lovingly created over so many years. At that moment, however, when that profound, inner spiritual life which fills the very being of every real scientist comes into its own, all difficulties, all those little things which distract the scientist or blunt his spirit, disappear; the circle closes in and within the scientist there burns and gleams strong, clear thought.

A huge number of theses have been completed, read and endorsed since the war began, many of them worthy of particular attention.

Y. Mamedaliyev, an Azerbaidjan scientist, read a doctor's thesis on one of the most important problems of modern chemistry—the problem of the synthesis of toluol. Toluol is the basis of synthesis of trinitrate of toluol, better known as T.N.T. It is used for artillery shells, bombs, mines and many other things. The coal and oil industries are the chief source of its supply, but in addition to these older methods of obtaining toluol new processes for synthesizing the substance are now in use and Mamedaliyev's thesis was devoted to these new processes. This paper is closely, intimately connected with war, a scientific paper which has behind it the din of shells, smoke, fire, and shattering blows at the enemy.

Beside it lies another doctor's thesis submitted by the Ukrainian A. Penkov, who received his training in the Dniepropetrovsk Mining Institute. What is now happening within the walls of that Institute which was once the pride of the Ukraine? Where is the house in which Penkov lived, has it escaped the evil wind of destruction? The scientist, however, is continuing his work. His thesis makes clear the connection between various classes of metal structural systems and corrects a number of faulty solutions of problems given by other authors. The results obtained by the writer have more than a mere theoretical importance: they are of great practical interest in ship-building, airship-building and other branches of industry.

Then there is the doctor's thesis submitted by S. Strelkov, on self-oscillation in aero-dynamic wind tunnels, from which important results for the aircraft industry were obtained.

Another doctor's thesis was that presented by N. Fedorenko, a young sinologist. A work of great brilliance and erudition, the thesis is written on the subject: "The Historical Authenticity of the Ch'ü Yüan's Existence, and His Work." Ch'ü Yüan, a poet and political fighter, lived at the end of the IVth and the beginning of the IIIrd centuries B.C. For more than two thousand years the Chinese people have celebrated the 5th May, now known as the "Day of the Poet," in commemoration of Ch'ü Yüan's tragic death. Fedorenko's paper throws light on one of the earliest pages of Chinese literary history and proves the historical authenticity of the existence of Ch'ü Yüan, China's first great poet-patriot.

Packages of documents concerning theses that have been read continue to arrive in Moscow from all parts of the country. They vary in subject matter, in the profundity and brilliance with which they develop subjects as varied as the people who have written them. The power of life and of the human spirit, the concentration so necessary in our time, the power of that great weapon, of pure creative thought, are deeply felt in all of them.

TATIANA TESS

VISITING FRENCH AIRMEN

The outlines of two planes appear in the cloudless skies. The red stars on the blue body of the "Yakovlev-1" fighters can already be seen. The planes make a large circle round the aerodrome. One of them veers and continues to fly round the airfield. The shadow of the second plane races along the green grassy carpet.

Then, over the centre of the aerodrome, the plane lifts its nose steering sharply upwards as if climbing a hill. Gaining height, it swoops down with an increasing roar of its engines. At the last fraction of a second, when the approaching machine seems about to cut into the ground, it straightens out and with a terrific roar dashes right

The commander of the Normandie Squadron Major Tulasne (right) and Lieutenant Lefèvre

across the field. In a few moments the plane is again high in the air, performing head-spinning stunts. In the meantime the other aeroplane, guarding the first, continues its endless patrol flight along a circle.

"Who's in the air?" asks Captain Sibirin, commander of a fighter squadron, watching the skilful performance of intricate stunts.

"Frenchmen!" a few people watching the acrobatics with equal attention reply in chorus.

"Brought down a nazi!" one of the pilots concludes.

Just as a submarine returning from a successful cruise fires a salute on entering the harbour to announce the sinking of an enemy ship, so too airmen perform stunts in the air to inform their comrades of a successfully concluded air battle.

. . . A short run over the field, and one after another the planes come to their stations at the edge of a birch forest where other planes stand camouflaged on the front zone aerodrome. French mechanics rush to one of the planes and bending over lift it by the tail.

"Ra-az, dva-a, vzya-a-ali!" ("One, two, taken!") one of them orders in guttural accents, and they all repeat in chorus the words which apparently appeal to them: "Ra-az, dva-a, vzya-a-ali!"

The plane disappears in an artificial niche.

The transparent dome above the machine is thrust open, and a lithe well-built pilot in a short leather jacket jumps from the cockpit. It is Captain Albert Litolf, assistant commander of the Normandie Squadron fighting on the Soviet-German front. Captain Sibirin, commander of a squadron stationed at the same aerodrome, goes forward to meet his ally and congratulate him on his new victory. The Frenchman thanks him and points to his companion, a young lieutenant alighting from the second plane. Together they had just brought down a German fighter "Fokke-Wulf-190."

On the fuselage of both planes can be seen the five-pointed red star, side by side with the three concentric circles, red, white and blue, the tricolor French national emblem. The same colours adorn the nose of the plane in front of the screw. On the fuselage of the planes are two rows of coloured circles indicating the number of German planes shot down in battle: white circles stand for planes brought down in single combat, and yellow ones for those bagged in a dogfight.

Four aces painted fanwise can be seen peeping from behind a shrivelled birch brushing against the fuselage of the lieutenant's plane.

"This is my personal emblem," says the lieutenant, "you know what four aces means in poker?"

"The four aces is, of course, a strong

combination. But there are other and higher combinations in poker, such as the royal flush, for example. . ."

"You know," smiled the lieutenant, "flying is a queer affair. . . You can never be sure that your combination is the highest one."

Captain Litolf is a well-known French ace, and on the fuselage of his plane we counted ten white and two yellow circles. His latest victory entitled him to one more yellow circle. Every circle recalls violent battles, the planes making wild sweeps in the air, as the airmen try to detect weak spots in enemy tactics.

"When did you first come to grips with the Germans in the air?"

"In November, 1939, over Saarbrücken I encountered eleven German planes, attacked them and shot down one."

"What was the outcome of the battle?"

"The remaining ten brought me down," replied the captain amid shouts of laughter from the crowd.

"German pilots usually try to evade single combat," said Captain Litolf. "They like to attack when they have obvious numerical superiority."

At present, pilots of the French squadron, profiting from the experience of their Russian colleagues, prefer to go hunting in pairs. Having flown various planes through the skies of France, Britain and Libya, they consider the Soviet "Yak" the best plane they have ever used in air battle against the Germans.

Arriving at the Soviet-German front at the very end of last year, the French airmen immediately began to accustom themselves to Russian life and Russian air tactics. The former was the harder, for after the tropical heat of the Libyan desert the Russian winter seemed especially severe, all the more so to the mechanics. It was far easier to learn the Russian tactics, for the French airmen also love to seek encounters with the enemy in open battle and never try to hide from the enemy as their German oponents.

The Normandie Squadron began its operations on the Soviet-German front last spring as escort planes accompanying Soviet dive-bombers. The Frenchmen proudly recall that during their term as protectors of Soviet bombers of the "Pe-2" type, the latter did not suffer a single loss.

Seven French airmen are continuing the fight against the Germans in the Russian skies. On the Russian front they have brought down eleven German planes: five fighters of the latest "Fokke-Wulf-190" type, one "Messerschmitt-109-F," and five fire-corrector planes of the "Fokke-Wulf-189" and "Henschel-126" types.

The French and Soviet fighter-pilots stationed at the same aerodrome have nothing but praise for each other and live on very friendly terms. In the picturesque woods where the dugouts of the aerodrome are situated one may frequently come upon animated groups: Russian pilots conversing with the French in their national uniforms of blue pilot caps and open jackets, or brown leather blouses and jackets.

In clear weather the men may be seen having dinner in the open air under the trees, Norman and Russian sitting alternately, cracking jokes together as the foreigners gradually learn the Russian language, and having learned that some of the merry young Russian pilots had nicknamed the bustling dining-room manager Olga Afanassyevna *"Kumà"* (godmother), they all start shouting in chorus: *"Kumà, Kumà!"* as she serves them with their dinner.

As we said good-bye, we noticed that the French wear the same emblem—two golden lions on a red shield—on their breast, many of them above ribbons of decorations. In reply to our query they readily explained why:

"It is the emblem of the province of Normandie. Following the occupation of our country by the nazis, every squadron adopted the name of one of the provinces of France. Our squadron chose the name of Normandie. But the Germans will not rule there much longer. We'll soon be going back!"

E. KAPLANSKY

FRITZES — SUICIDES

The old woman, her wrinkled face motionless, as if petrified, said:

"Come along, I'll show them to you. We've carried them out of the room, and now they're lying in the yard, both of them—that big red-haired captain who

tore off his crosses and flung them away, and the little fellow with the glasses, whom the kids called 'the rat.'"

I followed the woman across the yard of the bombed house. Maria Kuzminichna Pavlova led us to the barn. There, on the ground lay two corpses—one tall, lean, its bony face freckled, dressed in the uniform of a German captain, and alongside, a tiny first lieutenant, still wearing glasses, his protruding teeth showing in a grin, which really did make him look like a rat.

It was early in the morning of the day Orel was captured. Shots were ringing out nearby. The outlying streets of the town were still smoke-filled and showed all the marks of recent battle. The sight of enemy corpses in the newly liberated town was too ordinary to cause any surprise. Yet these two corpses were worthy of attention. The two Germans had been killed by shots through the right temple, and the bullets had been fired at such close range that the skin of the face and the hair were singed by the powder. This tended to show that the two had committed suicide, and so they had. And Maria Kuzminichna Pavlova, the wife of a foreman in factory No. 5 told us how it all had happened.

The captain and the rat-like lieutenant had moved into No. 13 on Kromskaya street. As the front moved nearer to the town the spirits of Pavlova's lodgers sank visibly. In the evenings they began to get drunk. The lieutenant would weep and the big fellow would swear and threaten him with his fist. On the eve of August 4th, a short time before our troops forced their way into the streets of Orel the two officers became particularly noisy. The big fellow shouted something and then he tore from the wall a portrait of Hitler, which he had brought along with him when moving in, and trampled it under foot. Then he tore two crosses from his tunic and threw them into a corner. After that they lighted the stove and burned some papers. Towards dawn two shots rang out in succession, and Maria Kuzminichna found her two lodgers dead.

This case of suicide by two enemy officers would not be of any particular interest but for the fact that it reveals something new in the German army, something that has been mentioned by all the people of Orel, who have watched the behaviour of the Germans of late, especially during our summer offensive.

Nikolai Kuzmich Orekhov—a teacher of mathematics at a high school, Vassili Ksenofontovich Voronin—a former bank employee, now retired, Nina Sergeyevna Linyova, a druggist and others, told me that following our winter offensive a large number of deserters from the German army had made their appearance in Orel, making their way towards the rear and hiding with the civilian population. At night they would break into the houses of the people of Orel, begging them to hide them and either asking for or taking away civilian clothes. At first there were dozens of them and later hundreds. By the spring these cases of desertion became so numerous that Major-General Hamann, chief of the Orel garrison, was compelled to issue a special order by which any citizen who concealed a German deserter or who failed to report a known case of desertion, was to be shot as an accomplice.

But the order was of little use. Deserters kept on hiding in the city. Nikolai Kuzmich Orekhov and dozens of Orel citizens witnessed the passing of some three hundred German soldiers, all of them having their left arm bandaged, being led through the city from the Moscow railway station to the Briansk station. They were led at night under heavy escort. These were men with self-inflicted wounds, men who had fired what is known in German as the "Heimatschuss" (the shot that takes you home). On another occasion, this time towards the end of July, when the stream of deserters had increased despite every severe measure taken by the authorities, Voronin saw a large group of filthy, tattered deserters being taken off a specially guarded train and led across the city under escort towards the front.

And just before the evacuation of Orel, there started a wave of suicides among German officers and soldiers. Of these fourteen are definitely known to the people of Orel. But there were many more, for the Germans took every precaution to conceal them from the knowledge of the people: those civilians who happened to witness the suicide of a nazi or who even knew about it, were immediately arrested, and nobody ever heard of them again.

B. POLEVOY

VASSILI GROSSMAN

LIFE

It was already two weeks since the small detachment of the Red Army men in the Donets steppe had fought their way through to the mining village. Twice they had been surrounded by the Germans, twice they had broken through and moved farther east, but this time there was no chance of getting out. The Germans had drawn a close ring of infantry, artillery, and mortar batteries around the detachment.

It seemed to the German colonel that their refusal to surrender was the negation of all logic and reason. After all, the front was already a hundred kilometres away, and here was this handful of Soviet infantrymen settled in the ruins of the pit-head buildings, still firing away. The Germans pounded them with guns and mortars day and night. It was impossible to close in on them—the Red Army men had machine-guns and anti-tank rifles, and were evidently well supplied with ammunition, for they did not spare lead.

The whole business was becoming a scandal. Army Headquarters sent a sarcastic, annoying radiogram enquiring whether the colonel needed the support of heavy artillery and tanks. Insulted and chagrined, the colonel sent for his chief of staff.

"You realize," he said, "that there is no glory to be won by defeating this miserable detachment, but every hour it continues to exist is a disgrace for me, for each one of you, for the whole regiment."

His face was flushed in uneven blotches.

At dawn, the heavy mortars set to work on the ruins. Thirty-six pound yellow-bellied mortar shells sped straight to their objective. It seemed as though every metre of earth was being ploughed and torn by the explosions. One and a half regular issues of ammunition had been used up, but the colonel gave orders to continue firing. More than that—he brought in the artillery. Great clouds of dust and smoke rose into the air, the high walls of the building housing the pit-head gear collapsed with a thunderous roar.

"Continue firing!" ordered the colonel.

Stones flew in all directions. Iron girders were torn down like rotten thread. Concrete crumbled. The colonel watched this terrible work through his field glasses.

"Don't stop firing!" he repeated.

"We must have sent fifty heavy mortar bombs and thirty artillery shells for every Russian there," said the chief of staff.

"Don't stop firing!" said the colonel stubbornly.

The soldiers were tired and hungry but they had no chance for either breakfast or dinner. Not until five o'clock did the colonel give the word for the attack, and the battalions charged the ruins from four directions. Everything had been prepared—they carried tommy-guns, light machine-guns, powerful trench mortars, explosives, hand-grenades, anti-tank grenades, daggers, and spades. They approached nearer and nearer the ruins, shouting, rattling and roaring to drown the fear they felt of the men in the colliery buildings.

Dead silence met the attackers; not a shot, not a movement. The reconnoissance platoon were the first to break in.

"Hey, you, Russ!" shouted the soldiers. "Where are you, Russ?"

But the stone and iron remained silent. Naturally the first thought that entered their heads was that all the Russians had been killed. The officers gave orders for a rigorous search to be made, for the bodies to be dug out and

counted, for their documents to be examined and their unit ascertained.

The search was long and thorough, but not one body was found. In a number of places there were pools of blood or blood-stained bandages and torn, blood-stained shirts. Four light machine-guns crushed by German shells also came to light, but there was no sign of empty tins or packets from food concentrates, no scraps of biscuit to be seen. One of the scouts found a half-eaten mangel-wurzel in a scooped-out hollow. The soldiers examined the head workings and found traces of blood leading to the shaft. A rope was hanging from an iron rung of the emergency ladder hammered into the wooden facing of the shaft. Evidently the Russians had descended by the emergency ladder taking the wounded with them. Three scouts fastened ropes round their waists and let themselves down, grenades ready in their hands. The seam was at no great depth from the surface, for the shaft did not go down more than seventy metres. Hardly had the scouts reached the shaft bottom, when they began desperately pulling the ropes. They were drawn up, unconscious, bleeding heavily, with bullet wounds showing that the Russians were there. They obviously could not hold out long—the half-eaten mangel-wurzel was proof that their food supplies had run out.

The colonel reported all this to his superiors and received another particularly biting telegram from Army Headquarters; the general tendered his congratulations on the unusually brilliant victory and expressed the hope that within the next few days he would succeed in finally breaking the resistance of the Russians. The colonel was desperate. He realized that the situation was ridiculous.

The following measures were adopted. Twice over, an invitation to surrender, written in Russian, was let down the shaft promising the men that their lives would be spared and the wounded cared for. Each time the paper returned bearing the one word "No!" written in pencil. Then smoke bombs were tossed down, but evidently the absence of a draught prevented the smoke from spreading through the workings. The infuriated colonel gave orders for the women of the mining village to be rounded up and informed them that if the men down the pit refused to give themselves up, all the women and children would be shot. Three women were told off to go down the shaft and persuade the Red Army men to surrender in order to save the children. If the Red Army men refused, the pit-shaft would be blown up.

These were women of the mines, Nyusha Kramorenko, a timberer's wife, Varvara Zotova who had worked on a coal-washer before the war, and Anna Ignatyevna Moisseyeva, a woman of thirty-seven with five children, the eldest of whom was thirteen. Her husband, a blaster, had not worked underground since 1938, when he had lost an eye in an explosion. The women asked the Germans to allow the old hewer Kozlov to go down with them, they were afraid of losing their way, since the men had probably withdrawn to the distant workings. The old man himself had offered to accompany them.

The Germans rigged up a block over the pit-shaft and ran a hawser through it which they had taken from the wrecked cage; to the hawser they fastened an ordinary tub such as is used for transporting coal along the tunnels.

The three women were led to the pit-head, followed by a crowd of weeping women and children. They themselves were also in tears—they were saying good-bye to their children, their relatives, the village, to the very daylight itself.

On all sides they could hear the voices of the other women.

"Nyushka, Varka, Ignatyevna!" came the confused cries. "The Germans will shoot us all, we are lost, our children are lost, they'll twist their necks like chickens!"

The three women called back through their tears:

"Don't we know it ourselves! We have children too. Olechka, come closer, let me look at you once more!"

Old Kozlov led the way limping with his left leg—his foot had been crushed in 1906 in a roof fall in the western gallery. He stumped along, swinging his scorched miner's lamp with an even rhythm, as he hastened ahead of the weeping, wailing women who disturbed the solemn mood which always came over him when he went down the mine.

He was giving his fancy free play; he imagined the cage slipping down the pit-shaft, the damp air caressing his face, his walk along the quiet passage to the coalface with his lamp throwing its light on the trickles of dark water running down the slopes, and the beams covered with greasy, soft coal dust. At the coalface he would take off his jacket and shirt, fold them up, measure the cut and dig into the soft coking coal. An hour later his pal, safety man, would come to him and ask: "How are you getting on, still digging it out?" And he would wipe off the sweat, smile and answer: "What else should I do with it? As long as I'm alive, I'll dig it out. Sit here with me a bit and rest up." They would sit near the ventilation shaft, set down their lamps, and the stream of air would play softly on their blackened sweating faces, and they would talk leisurely about the gas pockets, about the new gallery being driven, about the roof of the main gallery, and joke about the fire boss. Then his pal would say: "Well, Kozyol, I can't sit here the whole shift with you," turn up his lamp again and go. And he would say: "Get along then, old chap," and himself would take his pick and feel it bite deeply into the soft black coal of the seam. Forty years at the game was no trifle.

But however the lame old man hurried he couldn't outstrip the women. The air was filled with their cries and weeping, and soon the whole crowd reached the dreary ruins of the pit-head buildings. Not once had Kozlov been near the place since that day when the stout engineer Tatarinov, pale, with shaking hands, had himself blown up the pit-head installations with T.N.T. That had been two days before the Germans came.

Kozlov looked around him and involuntarily removed his cap. The women were wailing. The fine cold rain pricked the skin of the old man's bald head. It seemed to him that the women were bewailing the dead pit, he had a feeling that he was again at the cemetery as on that autumn day when he had approached his wife's open coffin to take a last farewell. The Germans were standing around in their capes and greatcoats, talking among themselves, and smoking fat cigarettes as though all this death and desolation had come of itself.

The old man was the first to climb into the tub. Nyushka Kramorenko shouted at the top of her voice:

"Olechka, my darling, my little girl!"

A grimy little girl of about three, her stomach distended to an enormous size from beets and raw maize, looked at her mother, frowning, angry, as though reproving her for her noisy behaviour.

"Oh, I can't, there's no strength in my arms, in my legs!" cried Nyushka. She was afraid of the dark ruins, where the soldiers were hidden. "They'll shoot us all, they'll not be able to make anything out in the darkness," she cried, "they'll kill us down there, and you up here! . ." The Germans pushed her into the tub but she braced her feet against the sides. The old man wanted to help her, but lost his balance and struck his head painfully against the metal. The soldiers laughed and Kozlov, confused and angry, screamed:

"Get in, you idiot! You're going down the pit, not to Germany. What are you making all that fuss for?"

Varvara Zotova jumped lightly and easily into the tub, looked at the weeping women and children who were stretching out their hands to her, and said:

"Don't be afraid, folks! . ."

Her tear-filled eyes suddenly took on a more cheerful, courageous glow. As a girl Varvara Zotova had been known for her daring, and this dangerous trip appealed to her. Why, just before the war, a married woman with two children, she used to go to the pub on paydays with her husband, played the accordion and danced with the best of them, stamping her heavy iron-shod boots with the young loaders, her workmates on the coal-washer. And now, today, in this terrible and difficult moment, her eyes blazed and she waved her hand with a reckless, cheery gesture, saying:

"While there's life there's hope. What is to be will be, eh, Grandad?"

Anna Ignatyevna heaved her fat heavy leg over the edge, gasped and groaned.

"Varka, lend me a hand," she said. "I don't want that German to touch me, I'll manage without him," and she flopped into the tub. To her eldest daughter who was carrying an eighteen-month-old boy she said: "Lidka, don't

forget to feed the goat, the leaves are already chopped. There's no bread, but you take the half pumpkin left from yesterday and boil it in the iron pan, it's under the bed. Get some salt from Dmitrievna. And remember, see that the goat doesn't stray, it'd be snapped up in a twinkling."

The tub swung free and Ignatyevna, losing her balance, grabbed for the side, while Varka Zotova flung an arm round her ample waist.

"What have you got there under your blouse?" she asked in surprise.

Anna Ignatyevna made no reply but snapped angrily at the German corporal:

"Well, why are you spinning it out? We're all in, why don't you let us down?"

As though he had understood her words the corporal gave a signal and the tub descended. Three times it struck against the dark moss-covered boards of the pit-shaft so violently that all the women were thrown off their feet; then it moved smoothly downwards and the damp darkness enveloped them, broken only by the dim light of the lamp which picked out here and there the rotting boards with thin trickles of water silently running down them. The mine gave off cold, dank air, and as the tub descended, the colder and more fearful it became.

The women did not speak. They had been suddenly cut off from all the everyday things so dear to them; the sound of weeping and wailing was still in their ears while the sombre silence of underground enveloped them, subduing mind and heart. Suddenly they all thought of the men who had been sitting in the gloom for three days already. . . What were they thinking about? What were their feelings? What were they waiting for, what hopes had they? Who were they, young or old? Whom did they remember, whom were they complaining of? Whence came their strength to live?

The old man let his lamp shine on a flat white stone wedged in between two beams, saying:

"It's thirty-six metres from this stone to the shaft bottom, this is the first gallery. Better let a woman call out or the lads may start shooting."

The women obeyed.

"Don't be afraid, lads, it's women coming!" shouted Zotova.

"It's your own folks, Russians, your own people!" called Nyushka, at the top of her voice. And Anna Ignatyevna gave a long drawn out shout:

"Listen, bo-o-oys, don't sho-o-ot! Bo-o-oys, don't sho-o-ot!"

At the shaft bottom they were met by two sentries, each holding a tommy-gun and with a hand-grenade slung from his belt. They stared at the old man and the women and, screwing up their eyes painfully at the weak light of the lamp and shading them with their hands, turned away. This tiny yellow flame no bigger than a baby's little finger, surrounded by a thick metal gauze, dazzled them like bright summer sunlight. One of them offered his shoulder to help Ignatyevna alight, but he had overrated his strength and when she leant her weight on him he lost his balance and fell. The other sentry laughed and said:

"Fine one you are, Styopa!"

It was impossible to see whether they were young or old: thick beards covered their faces, they spoke slowly and moved cautiously, like blind men.

"You haven't a bit of anything to get one's teeth into, have you?" asked the one who had tried to help Anna Ignatyevna. The other immediately interrupted him:

"And even if they have, they'll give it to Comrade Kostitsyn, he'll divide it up."

The women stood silently, looking at them, while the old man, raising his lamp, lighted up the high vault at the shaft bottom.

"It's all right," he growled. "It's strong yet, strong enough, they put in good work that fixed it. God keep them!"

One of the sentries remained at the pit-shaft while the other took the women to the commander.

"Where have you settled down here?" asked the old man.

"Right here, through the gate, to the right, and down the gallery, that's where we are."

"That's not a gate," said Kozlov in surprise. "That's the ventilation shutter. On the first slope. . ."

The sentry walked beside the old man, the women following them.

A few steps from the shutter stood two machine-guns pointing towards

the shaft bottom. A few yards further on the old man raised his lamp.

"Are they asleep, or what?" he asked.

"No, they're dead," the sentry replied slowly, calmly.

The old man let the light shine on the bodies in their Red Army greatcoats and tunics. Their heads, chests, shoulders or arms were wrapped in bandages and rags, rusty with dried blood. They lay there side by side, pressed close to each other as though for warmth. Some of them wore boots with the ends of rags hanging out, two were in felt boots, two in jackboots and one barefoot. Their eyes were sunken, their faces covered with stubble, but not so thick as that on the sentries' faces.

"Lord, Lord!" whispered the women looking at the dead, crossing themselves.

"Come, what are we standing here for?" said the sentry.

But the women and the old man seemed rooted to the spot, staring at the bodies, sensing with horror the stench emanating from them. They moved on. A soft groan sounded from beyond an angle of the gallery.

"Is it here?" asked the old man.

"No, this is our hospital," replied the sentry.

Three wounded men were lying on boards and smashed ventilation shutters. A Red Army man was standing beside one of them, holding a pan of water to his lips; the other two were silent and motionless. The old man shone his lamp on them.

"Who are these people, where did they come from?" asked the man holding the pan; then, catching the women's eyes fixed on the two men lying motionless, he added soothingly: "They'll soon be dead, in an hour or two."

The wounded man who was drinking said in a weak voice:

"Mother, maybe you've some pickle or some salted cabbage?"

"We're a deputation," said Varvara Zotova, with a bitter laugh.

"What sort of a deputation? From the Germans?" asked the orderly.

"Never mind about that now," the sentry interrupted. "You can tell it to the commander."

"Show us a light, Grandad," the wounded man begged Kozlov, and with a groan which seemed to come from deep down within him, raised himself, and throwing the greatcoat to the ground exposed a leg battered above the knee.

"Oh, Lord in heaven!" cried Nyusha Kramorenko, and gasped again.

In the same quiet voice the wounded man was asking Kozlov: "Show me a light here, more light," and raising himself to see better. He looked, calmly and intently, examining his leg as though it had nothing to do with him, as though it were something apart from himself, unable to realize that this dead, rotting flesh, this black, gangrenous skin could be a part of his familiar, living body.

"Now, there you see for yourself," he said reproachfully. "There are maggots in it, you can see 'em crawling. I told the commander it was no good worrying about me, better have left me up there, I could have thrown a few grenades and then shot myself."

"But why should you suffer down here?" said Nyusha Kramorenko. "If you came up to the surface, at least they'd clean and bandage your wounds in hospital."

"And who'd do it for me? The Germans?" asked the wounded man. "Better let the worms eat me here."

"Come along, now, come along!" the sentry interrupted. "This isn't the place for agitation."

"Stop a minute, stop," said Anna Ignatyevna, and began dragging a piece of bread out from under her blouse. She gave it to the wounded man, but the sentry reached out the hand holding the tommy-gun and said sternly and imperatively:

"That is forbidden. Every crumb of bread in the pit goes to the commander to be distributed. Come along, come along! You're doing no good here."

And they went on past the hospital, already filled with that same stench of death they had sensed in the mortuary a few minutes previously. The detachment had taken up its position in some abandoned workings in the first western gallery of the eastern slope of the mine. Machine-guns stood in the gallery and there were even two light mortars there. When the deputation turned into the gallery they suddenly heard a sound so unexpected that they paused involuntarily. It was the sound of singing coming down the gallery—some song they did not know, a dreary, sad song sung in a muffled, weary voice.

"That's to keep our spirits up, instead of dinner," their guide told them se-

riously. "This is the second day the commander's been teaching it to us. He says that's the song his father used to sing when he was in prison in tsarist times."

A single voice rose again in long-drawn-out notes:

No foe could mock your passing,
For we were all your own.
We came to close your eagle eyes,
And you didn't die alone.

"Listen, you women," said Nyusha Kramorenko, quietly and seriously. "Let me go first."

Anna Ignatyevna strode ahead, passing Nyusha, and said:

"No, let me go, it's my turn now to speak."

A quiet voice sounded from the darkness:

"What's the matter there?"

The lamp shone upon a group of Red Army men reclining on the ground around a tall broad-shouldered man with a fair round beard, thickly encrusted with coal-dust. The hands and faces of those sitting around him were just as black as his, their teeth and eyeballs dazzlingly white by contrast.

Old Kozlov looked at them with a wonderful feeling of affection: these were the soldiers whose fame had rung over the length and breadth of the Donets Basin. Somehow he had expected to see them with Kuban jackets, red breeches, silver-mounted sabres, with a lock of hair hanging jauntily from under tall Cossack hats or caps with shining lacquered peaks. And here he saw the faces of workers, blackened with coal dust, faces just like those of his pals, hewers, timberers, blasters and pony drivers. And looking at them the old miner realized in his heart that the terrible, bitter fate which was theirs, was also his own.

He glanced angrily at Anna Ignatyevna while she was speaking.

"Comrade Commander," she said. "We've come to you as a kind of deputation."

The commander rose, tall, broad shouldered and very thin, and the Red Army men immediately rose too. They were all in quilted jackets and dirty caps with ear flaps, with a thick stubble of beard. The women looked at them. These were their brothers, the brothers of their husbands; they used to come home looking like this after the day and night shifts, black, calm, weary, blinking at the light.

"And what have you deputies come for?" asked the commander with a smile.

"It's very simple," replied Anna Ignatyevna. "The Germans rounded up all the women and children and told us to send people to the pit to persuade the men there to surrender, and that if we didn't manage to get them to come up, they'd shoot all of us, and the children too."

"So that's it," said the commander, shaking his head. "And what have you women to say to us?"

Anna Ignatyevna looked straight at the commander. She turned to the other two women and asked softly and sadly:

"What have we to say, women?" And from under her blouse she pulled pieces of bread, boiled beets, potatoes in their jackets, and some dry crusts.

The Red Army men turned aside, dropped their eyes, ashamed to stare at the food, so beautiful and impossible was the sight of it, so tempting its smell. They feared to look at it, for it was life. It was only the commander who looked straight at the cold potatoes and the bread.

"This isn't only my answer," said Anna Ignatyevna. "Our women gave me the things to bring you. I got them here, though I was mortally afraid the Germans would feel it under my bodice."

She placed the poor gift on a kerchief, bowed low, brought it to the commander, saying:

"Excuse us. . ."

He bowed to her in silence.

"Ignatyevna," said Nyusha Kramorenko softly, "when I saw that wounded man with the maggots eating him alive, when I heard what he said, I forgot everything!"

And Varvara Zotova turned smiling eyes on the Red Army men, saying:

"It looks as though the deputation came for nothing, comrades!"

The men looked at her youthful face.

"Stay here with us," said one of them.

"Wouldn't you like me for a husband?"

"Well, why not," said Varvara. "But can you support a wife?"

All laughed quietly.

The women had already been over two hours down the mine. The commander

and the old miner had gone aside into a far corner of the workings and were talking quietly.

Varvara Zotova was sitting on the ground, and one of the men, of medium height, leaning on his elbow beside her. In the semi-darkness she could see the pallor of his brow through the black of the coal dust, the bones of his face standing out through the skin, and the veins at his temples. His mouth half-open like a child's, he gazed at her face, at the whiteness of her neck showing under her kerchief. Womanly tenderness filled her heart, she softly stroked his hand and moved closer to him. A smile lightened his face and he whispered hoarsely:

"Eh, why did you come down here to upset us? Women, bread—everything reminds us of the sunshine."

With a swift, sudden movement she embraced him, kissed him full on the lips and burst into tears.

The others sitting round watched silently, seriously, without a thought of laughter or jokes. Not a word broke the dead silence.

"Well, time for us to go," said Ignatyevna, rising.

"Grandad Kozlov, Dmitrich, what about going?"

"I'll see you as far as the shaft," said the old miner. "But I'm not going up with you, I've nothing to do up there."

"What's that, Dmitrich?" said Kramorenko. "You'll starve to death down here."

"Well, and what if I do?" he replied. "I'll die here with my own people, in the pit where I've worked all my life."

He said this in such calm definite tones that they realized it was no use arguing with him.

The commander came forward.

"Well, friends," he said, "don't think harshly of us. I fancy the Germans only wanted to scare you and use you as provocateurs. Tell your children about us. Let them tell their children that our people know how to die."

"What if we sent a letter with them?" said one of the men. "Our last greetings to send our families after the war."

"No letters," replied the commander. "The Germans will probably search them when they come out."

And so the women left them, weeping, as though it were their own husbands or brothers they were leaving there, doomed to death.

Twice that night the Germans threw smoke bombs down the shaft. Kostitsyn gave orders to close all the ventilation shutters and pile up shale against them. The sentries made their way to the shaft through the air vents and stood guard in gas masks.

The orderly made his way in the darkness to Kostitsyn to report that the wounded men had died.

"It wasn't from the smoke bombs, they died their own death," he said, and feeling for Kostitsyn's hand, pressed a small piece of bread into it.

"Mineyev wouldn't eat it. 'Give it back to the commander, it won't help me anyhow,' he said."

Silently the commander replaced the bread in his haversack, the detachment's food store.

Hours passed; many of them. The lamp flickered and went out, the darkness was absolute. For a few seconds Kostitsyn switched on his electric torch; the battery had almost run down, the dark red filaments of the bulb scarcely glowed, insufficient to overcome the immensity of the darkness. Kostitsyn divided the food which Ignatyevna had brought. There was one potato and a small piece of bread for each.

"Well, Grandad," he said to the old miner. "Are you sorry you decided to stay with us?"

"No," the old man replied. "Why should I be sorry? Here my heart is at peace and my soul clean."

"Talk to us, Grandad, tell us something interesting," asked a voice out of the darkness.

"That's right, Grandad, we'll listen to you," agreed another voice. "Don't be shy, we're all working folk here."

"What kind of work did you do?" asked the old man.

"All kinds. Captain Kostitsyn here used to be a teacher before the war."

"I taught botany in a teachers' training college," said the captain, laughing.

"There you are. And four of us were fitters, I and my three friends."

"And all four of us are called Stepan. Four Stepans."

"Sergeant Ladyev was a compositor,

worked in a printer's, and Gavrilov, our medical orderly... he's here, isn't he?"

"Here I am," replied another voice. "My medical work's finished."

"Gavrilov used to be a storeman in a tool store."

"And then there's Mukhin, he was a barber, and Kuzin worked in a chemical factory."

"And that's the lot."

"Who said that? The orderly?" asked the old man.

"Right! You see, you're getting to know us already."

"So there's not one miner here among you, not one man from underground?"

"We're all underground men now," said a voice from a far corner. "All miners."

"Who was that spoke?" asked the old man. "One of the fitters, wasn't it?"

"That very same."

And there was a general quiet, rather weary laugh.

"And so now we have to rest."

"We're still in action," said Kostitsyn. "We're in a besieged fortress. We're distracting enemy forces. And remember, comrades, that as long as one of us remains alive, he is a soldier in our army, he is taking part in a great battle."

These words rang out loudly in the darkness, almost in a shout, and nobody saw how Kostitsyn wiped away the perspiration which sprang out on his face from the effort it cost him to pronounce those fine-sounding words.

"Yes, he's a teacher," thought the miner, "a real teacher," and aloud he said approvingly:

"Yes, lads, your captain could manage our whole mine, and he'd be a real manager."

Not one of the men realized what high praise this was, for nobody knew how all his life Kozlov had grumbled at the managers, saying that the man hadn't been born who could manage such a famous pit whose shaft Kozlov had sunk with his own hands.

Again the old man's voice sounded through the darkness and it was full of his trust and love for the people whose terrible fate he was voluntarily sharing.

"Lads," he said, "I know this pit like a man knows his own wife, like a mother knows her son. I've worked here all my life, ever since that first gallery was driven forty years ago. There have been breaks—three times, once in 1905 when they kept me in prison fourteen months for rebelling against the tsar; then in 1911 I was in prison for another six months for agitation against the tsar, and in 1916 I was sent to the front and was captured by the Germans."

"There you are!" called a laughing voice. "You old people do like to talk big, don't you? When we were on the Don there was an old Cossack who was always bragging, showing us the crosses he got from the tsar, making us all laugh. We aren't being taken alive but you were."

"You should have seen what I was like in their prison!" cried Kozlov. "You should have seen me there. I was captured when I was wounded, when I was unconscious."

"Sergeant, sergeant!" said Kostitsyn sternly.

"Excuse me, Comrade Captain," came the reply. "I wasn't meaning it badly, I was just joking."

"That's all right, it's no matter," said the old man with a gesture in the darkness which of course nobody could see, to show that no offence was taken. "I escaped three times," he said peaceably. "The first time it was from Westphalia. I was working in a mine there too, the same kind of work, the same kind of pit, but I just couldn't stand it. I felt I would choke and stopped working there."

"How did they feed you?" asked several of the men simultaneously.

"Well, they kind of fed us. Two hundred and fifty grams of bread and soup so thin you could see Berlin in the bottom of the plate. Not a drop of fat in it. Just hot water."

"I could drink the same hot water right now."

Again the commander's voice rang out in the darkness.

"Merkulov, remember my orders: no talking about food."

"But I was talking about hot water, that's not food, Comrade Captain," protested Merkulov in an amiable, weary voice.

"Yes," continued Kozlov, "I worked there about a month and then escaped and made for Holland, got through the frontier, lived sixteen days in Holland, and then took a ship for Norway. The Germans caught us at sea and brought us to Hamburg. They gave me what for there, tied me to a cross, I hung there for

two hours, while the doctor's assistant kept feeling my pulse and dashing water over me. Then they sent me to Alsace, to the iron mines, underground work there too. Our revolution came while I was there, so I escaped again, made my way through the whole of Germany. I didn't spend the nights in the villages, I tried to keep to the workers' settlements. I kept going like that. And when there were only twenty versts left to go, they caught me and sent me to prison. Then I ran away again at once for the third time. Made my way to the Baltic provinces, and went down with typhus. I lay there and thought: 'Shall I really never get back to the mines after all, am I going to die here?' But I'd been one too many for the Germans, and I was one too many for the typhus too. I got well again. Till '21 I served in the army in the Civil War, volunteered. You see, I hated the old way of things, when I was still a young fellow I used to distribute 'notices' as we used to call our leaflets."

"Yes, there's no getting you down, old 'un," said the man sitting next to Kozlov.

"Oh, I'm a rare 'un, I am," said the old man, with childlike boastfulness. "I'm a working man, a revolutionary. I have never begrudged anything for the sake of truth. Well, I came back when they demobilized me, in April. It was evening. I came. . ." He sat silent for a moment, reliving the past in his mind. "I came back, yes, came back again. And I'll tell you the truth, I didn't go to the village, but came right here, I wanted to take a look at the pit-head gear. I just stood there and the tears came. I wasn't drunk at all, but I was crying. It's the truth, by God! I looked at the pit, and at the slag heap, and cried. And the people recognized me and ran to tell my old woman. They went running to her crying: 'Your Kozyol's come back to life again, he's gone to the pit-head, he's standing there crying!' And do you know, to the last day of her life my old woman could never forgive me for going to the mine first before I went home to her. 'You're a miner,' she'd say, 'you've got a bit of coal instead of a heart.'"

He was silent a moment, then continued:

"But can you believe me, comrade soldier, I can hear that you're a working lad too, and I tell you straight: I always dreamed of working in this mine as long as I lived, and then dying there."

He addressed his invisible listeners as though they were one man. And he felt that this man was somebody he knew well, that after the hideous times he had lived through fate had brought him an old friend, a worker, who was now sitting beside him in the old abandoned workings, listening to him with understanding and affection.

He enjoyed that same calm beauty of spirit which filled the young commander and the men around him. It was sheer joy to be among them, after the degradation of the days passed among the Germans, with all the foulness, petty meanness, and cowardly lying to sully a man's soul.

"Well, comrades," said the commander, "come and get your rations."

"What about a light," said someone jokingly, "to make sure nobody comes twice?"

And there was general laughter, so far was it from their thoughts.

"Well, come along, come along, why aren't you coming?" said Kostitsyn.

Voices sounded from the darkness:

"Go on, what are you waiting for? Give our miner his ration first, give it to grandad. Go on, Grandad, what's the matter with you? Reach out for your ration."

And the old man fully appreciated the noble abstinence of these hunger-tormented men. He had seen much in his life, had many times seen how starving people fight for bread.

After the food had been apportioned, the old man remained sitting by Kostitsyn.

"Well, Comrade Kozlov," said the commander. "There are nine of us left now. The men are very weak, and there's no more bread. I was afraid that they would start to bicker and quarrel when they realized what people in our position suffer. And actually there was a moment when they began to wrangle about trifles. But then there came the turning point, and I give myself a good deal of the credit for it, we had a very serious talk before you came. And now we live here, and the harder things are, the closer we come to each other; the darker it is, the better friends we all are. My father was in prison under the tsar, when he was still a student, and I often remember the tales he told me when I was a child. 'There was very

little hope,' he said, 'but I had faith.' And he taught me: 'There is no such thing as a hopeless situation, keep on fighting to the end, as long as there's breath in your body.' And after all, your hair stands on end when you think how we've fought last month, what forces the enemy sent against us—and still we didn't surrender to those forces, we kept them off. There are nine of us left, we've gone down deep into the earth, maybe there's a German division standing up there, over our heads, but we are unconquered, we shall go on fighting, and we shall get out of here. They'll not be able to rob us of the sky, and the wind, and the grass, we'll get out of here!"

And in the same quiet voice the old man answered:

"Why leave the mine when it's like home? Sometimes you get ill and don't go to hospital— you lie here in the mine and it cures you."

"We shall get out, we shall get out," said Kostitsyn loudly, so that all could hear him. "We shall get out of this pit, we are unconquerable, we have proved it, comrades!"

He had hardly finished speaking when the roof and ground trembled from a heavy, slow dull shock. The props creaked and cracked, fragments of slag rattled on the ground, it seemed as though everything around was surging and heaving, and then drawing together, pressing on the men who had been thrown to the ground, crushing them, driving the breath from their lungs. There was a moment when it seemed impossible to breathe; the thick fine dust which had settled on the props and walls during many years was shaken off and now filled the air.

Coughing, choking, somebody's voice said hoarsely:

"The Germans have blown up the shaft! We're in our grave. . ."

Kostitsyn sent two men to go and examine the shaft. The old miner led the way. It was hard going, in many places the explosion had caused falls or brought down the roof.

"Follow me, hang on to me," said Kozlov, and made his way easily and confidently over the piles of shale and the fallen props.

He found the sentries at the shaft bottom—both of them in pools of still warm, but already cooling blood, each holding his shattered tommy-gun pressed close to him. They buried the two men, covering them with piles of shale.

"And now there are three Stepans left," said one of the men.

For a long time the old man felt his way about the shaft bottom, went to the shaft and made a considerable noise, examined the props and roof, was astounded at the force of the explosion.

"There's villains for you!" he growled. "To blow up the shaft! Whoever heard of such a thing? It's like hitting a baby with a club."

He crawled away somewhere far off and nothing more was heard of him. The men called him twice:

"Grandad, hey, Grandad, come back, mate, the captain's waiting!"

But there was no sound, no sign from the old man.

"Hope he hasn't been crushed," said one of the men, and called again: "Grandad, miner, where are you, there? Can you hear us?"

"Hey, where are you?" came Kostitsyn's voice from the main gallery.

He crept along till he found the men and they told him of the sentries' death.

"Stepan Korenkov, who wanted to send a letter with the women," said Kostitsyn, and they were all silent. Then Kostitsyn asked:

"And where's our old man?"

"He went off a long time ago, we've just been calling him," said one of the men, "maybe we'd better fire a burst from our tommy-guns, he'd hear that all right."

"No," said Kostitsyn, "let's wait for him."

They sat there silently, all of them continually looking in the direction of the shaft, trying to make out some sign of daylight. But the darkness was thick and impenetrable.

"The Germans have arranged our funeral, Comrade Commander," said one of the men.

"We're not buried so easily," answered Kostitsyn. "We've buried plenty of them, though, and we shall bury as many more."

"That would be fine," said the other man.

"Of course it would," slowly concurred the one who had said they were done for. But Kostitsyn could hear by their voices that they did not share his belief.

The rattle of falling shale was heard in the distance, then again silence.

"Rats scuffling," said one of the men. "What tough luck we've had! I worked hard from childhood, at the front I had a heavy rifle to drag—an anti-tank rifle, and now it's a hard death I've found."

"And I was a botanist," said Kostitsyn, and laughed. It always made him laugh to remember that he had once been a botanist. His former life now seemed to him so bright, so beautiful, he had forgotten the difficult weeks he had had with the professor, and how one of the lecturers had lodged a complaint against him, he had forgotten how his master's thesis had been a failure and he had had to write it again, swallowing his pride. Here, in the depths of the ruined mine, the past came to his mind as a laboratory with large, wide-open windows, or a forest glade with the morning sun shining on the dew-covered grass where he had directed the collection of specimens for the institute herbarium.

"No, that wasn't a rat, it was grandad rummaging about," said the other man.

"Where are you all?" Kozlov's voice sounded from the distance.

They listened for his breathing, it could be heard while he was still some paces off, and in the sound of it they sensed something agitated yet happy, something that put them on the alert, startled them.

"Where are you? Are you there?" asked Kozlov impatiently. "It wasn't for nothing I stayed down here with you, lads. Come quick to the commander, I've found a way out."

"I'm here," said Kostitsyn.

"Well, Comrade Commander, as soon as I got to the shaft I felt a draught; I followed it, and this is the way things are. The fall jammed up above and choked the shaft, leaving it clear as far as the first gallery. There's a crevice in the gallery caused by the explosion, and that's where the draught's coming from. There's a cross-cut there for about five hundred yards, it leads out into an adit. I used to cross it in 1910. I tried to climb up the emergency ladder, I got up about twenty yards, but after that the rungs had been knocked out. So I decided to use up my last matches, and found things as I've told you. We'll need to drive about ten rungs into the wall and clear away some of the stones blocking the shaft, get through about two yards, and we'll come out in the old workings."

Everybody was silent.

"Well, what did I tell you?" said Kostitsyn calmly and slowly, feeling how fast his heart was beating. "I said that we weren't to be buried here."

One of the men suddenly burst into tears.

"Is it really true, shall we really see the light again?" he choked.

"How did you know all this, Comrade Captain?" asked the other softly. "You know, I thought that you were just talking to keep our spirits up when you said that there was hope for us."

"I told the commander about the first gallery when the women were still down here," said the old man confidently. "It was I who gave him that hope, but he told me to say nothing until it was certain, so as not to get people upset all for nothing."

"Everyone wants to live, of course," said the man who had shed the tears and was now ashamed of them.

Kostitsyn got up.

"I must examine it myself, see for myself," he said. "Then we'll call the others here. Come, show me. And you, comrades, wait here, and if any of the men come, not a word until I return. You understand?"

And the men were left alone once more.

"Shall we really see the light again?" said one of them. "It's terrible when you start thinking."

"You can be all the hero you want, but everyone wants to live all the same," growled the one who was still feeling ashamed of his tears.

It would be hard to find anywhere in the world harder or more tormenting work than that achieved by Kostitsyn and his detachment during those days. The cruel merciless darkness pressed down on their brains, tormented them, while hunger racked them when at work and during their brief periods of rest. It was only now, when they saw a way out of their seemingly hopeless plight, that they felt the full weight of the burden pressing down on them, drank to the dregs the bitterness of that hell they were in. The simplest task for a strong healthy man, an hour's work in the daylight meant days of exhausting labour

to them. There were moments when the exhausted men dropped to the ground, feeling that no power on earth could raise them up again. But after a while they got up and, supporting themselves along the walls, resumed their labours. Some toiled in silence, slowly, methodically, grudging every ounce of strength used needlessly; others worked with feverish energy for a few minutes, gasped for breath, and sat there, hands hanging limply, waiting till they regained their strength. They were like thirsty men patiently and doggedly waiting while drops oozed out of a dried-up spring. Those who had rejoiced the most in the beginning and thought they would be out of the pit in no time lost faith the most easily. Those who had not expected immediate release were calmer and worked more evenly. Sometimes a desperate furious cry would ring out through the darkness:

"Give us a light. . . no strength to go on without light! . . How can a man work without food? . . If only I could sleep, just sleep! . . Better die than toil like this! . ."

Men chewed leather straps, licked the grease off their rifles, tried to catch rats in the graveyard, but the swift, elusive vermin slipped out of their very hands in the darkness. And with bursting heads and ringing ears, staggering from weakness, they returned to their toil.

Kostitsyn was like a man of iron. He had starved with the other men. He seemed to be everywhere at once, with the three fitters who were cutting and bending new rungs out of thick iron bars, with the men clearing away stones, with those hammering the new rungs into the wall of the shaft; one might have almost said that he could see the expression on the men's faces despite the darkness, and in a moment of need came to any who felt their strength ebbing away. Sometimes he would help to lift a man who had fallen, kindly, with comradely encouragement, sometimes he would say slowly, quietly: "I order you to get up, only the dead have the right to lie down here." He was merciless, pitiless, but he knew that if he allowed himself the slightest weakness or pity for those who collapsed, then all would perish.

Once Kuzin, one of the soldiers, lay there on the ground saying:

"Do what you like with me, Comrade Captain, I haven't the strength to get up."

"No, I'll make you get up," said Kostitsyn.

"And how will you do it?" said Kuzin, breathing heavily, with a tormented sort of mockery. "Will you shoot me? But there's nothing I'd like better, I can't stand this torture any longer."

"No, I shan't shoot you," said Kostitsyn. "Lie there if you want, we'll carry you up to the surface. But when we get up there in the sunlight, I won't give you my hand. I'll spit after you and send you packing."

And with a curse Kuzin rose, staggered, fell again and again rose and went to clear away rocks.

Only once did Kostitsyn lose his self-control. One of the men came up to him and said quietly:

"Sergeant Ladyev's fallen. I don't know if he's dead or if he's collapsed: he doesn't answer when I speak to him."

Kostitsyn knew the sergeant, a simple plain man. He knew that if he, the commander, were killed or wounded, Ladyev would take his place and lead the men just as he would do. And when he silently approached the sergeant in the darkness, it was with the knowledge that the latter had worked silently to the very end of his strength and had given out sooner than the others simply because he was weak from a recent wound and considerable loss of blood.

"Ladyev!" he called. "Sergeant Ladyev!" and passed his hand over the cold damp face of the man lying on the ground.

But the sergeant made no reply. Then Kostitsyn bent over him and poured water from his flask over the man's head and chest. Ladyev stirred.

"Who's that?" he muttered.

"It's I, the captain," replied the commander, bending lower over him.

Ladyev put his arm around Kostitsyn's neck, he pulled himself up till his moist face touched the captain's cheek, and said in a whisper:

"Comrade Kostitsyn! I can't get up. Shoot me." And he kissed the commander with his cold lips.

"Silence!" cried Kostitsyn. "Silence!"

"Comrade Captain, people can't stand it."

"Silence!" cried Kostitsyn again. "I order you to be silent!"

The terrible simplicity of these words, coming to him through the darkness, shook him with horror. He left Ladyev and swiftly moved in the direction whence the sound of work could be heard. And Ladyev crawled after him, dragging a heavy iron bar behind him, stopping every few yards to gather up his strength, and again crawling a little further.

"Here's another rung," he said. "Give it to the men working up above."

Whenever anything went wrong with the work, the men would ask:

"Where's the boss? Grandad, come over here! Grandad, where have you got to? Hey, Grandad!"

And all of them, including Kostitsyn himself, knew well enough that had it not been for that old man, they would never have been able to cope with that tremendous task which they had undertaken and which they carried through. He moved with a sure, light step in the darkness of the mine, felt around and found the material they needed. He it was who found a hammer and chisel, he who brought three rusty picks from a far-off working, he who advised the men working in the shaft to fasten themselves to the rungs with straps and ropes, he who drove new rungs into the wall in place of the missing ones. He was the first to make his way to the upper gallery and there found the stone closing the entrance to the cross cut. He moved lightly and swiftly, climbed up and down the shaft as if unconscious of hunger or fatigue.

The end of their task drew nearer. Even the weakest felt a new influx of strength. Even Kuzin and Ladyev felt stronger, they got to their feet and stood firmly, without staggering, when a voice sounded from above:

"The last rung's in!"

There was not a man of them who was not drunk with joy. For the last time Kostitsyn led them back to the old workings, distributed tommy-guns and ordered each man to fasten hand-grenades to his belt.

"Comrades," he said, "the time has come to return to the surface. Remember, the war is going on up there." He paused a moment. "Comrades," he continued, "we came down here twenty-seven, we return eight. May the names of those who remain down here never die!"

He led the detachment to the shaft. Silently they went, moved by feelings too deep for words.

It was only the nervous intoxication possessing them that gave these men the strength to clamber up the shaky rungs, to draw themselves up yard by yard through the wet, slippery shaft. It took more than two hours for six of them to make their way up to the gallery, but finally they were there, sitting in the low cross cut, waiting for Kostitsyn and Kozlov, the last two.

It was impossible for anyone to be certain in the darkness how it happened. . . It seemed to be a futile, cruel accident. But when he was only a few yards from the cross cut, the old miner suddenly lost his grip and went hurtling downwards.

"Grandad, Grandad!" cried several voices simultaneously. But the only reply was the dull thud from below as the old man's body struck the pile of rubble at the shaft bottom.

"What a damned, senseless tragedy!" growled Kostitsyn, as he passed his hands over the still, lifeless body.

It was only the old man himself who had realized some minutes before his death that there was something wrong with him, that something strange and terrible was happening. "Is it death I feel?" he thought.

At that very moment when the men had called out joyfully that the last rung had been hammered in, when the weakest of them felt he could move again, the old man sensed his strength to live leaving him. Never in his life had he had such a feeling. His head was spinning, crimson spots flashed and circled before his eyes. Slowly he pulled himself up the shaft leading from the pit where he had worked all his life, and with every movement, with each effort, his grasp weakened, his heart grew colder. And far-off, forgotten pictures flashed through his memory—his black-bearded father stepping softly in his bast shoes, leading him to the pit-head. . . the English mine inspector shaking his head and smiling as he looked at the small, eleven-year-old lad come to work in the mine. And again a wave of crimson seemed to roll before his eyes. What was that, sunset in the Donets Basin, the red sun shining through the smoke and dust, or was it blood, or that bold flaming piece of red cloth which he had pulled

out from under his jacket and carried before the huge crowd of ragged miners just come to the surface, his steps ringing out firmly as he made straight towards the Cossacks and mounted police dashing out from behind the office? . . He gathered up the last remnants of his strength and tried to call out, to shout for help. But there was no more strength in him, his lips moved soundlessly.

He pressed his face to the cold slippery stone, his fingers clung to the rung. The soft damp mould touched his cheek, water trickled over his forehead, and it seemed his mother's tears were trickling down his face.

Again he tried to shout, to call for Kostitsyn, and then his fingers lost their grip and he fell.

It was night when they came out into the open, and a fine warm rain was falling. Silently the men took off their caps and sat down on the ground, the warm raindrops fell on their bare heads. Not a word was said. The nocturnal darkness seemed bright to eyes accustomed to the thick darkness of the pit. They drew in deep breaths, looked at the warm clouds, gently ran their fingers through the wet blades of fine spring grass which had pushed their way through last year's dead stubble. They gazed into the misty darkness of the night, listened to the rain pattering on the ground. Sometimes a gust of wind came from the east, they would turn their faces towards it. They gazed and gazed around them, at the wide distances and in the darkness each man of them saw his heart's desire.

"Cover the tommy-guns from the rain," said Kostitsyn.

The scout who had been sent out returned. Loudly, boldly he shouted to them.

"No Germans in the settlement!" he called. "They went three days ago. Come along quickly, two old women are boiling potatoes for us there and gathering straw, we'll be able to lie down and have a good sleep. Today is the twenty-sixth, we've been twelve days in the pit. They say that the whole village was praying for us in secret... They thought we were dead."

It was very hot in the house. Their faces must have been terrible—the two women sobbed when they brought them hot water.

It was not long before all the men were asleep, lying pressed close to one another on the warm damp straw. Kostitsyn sat with his tommy-gun, on guard. He sat there, upright, head held high, and gazed into the darkness that precedes the dawn. He decided to spend a day, a night and a second day here and then the next night they would be on their way. A queer scratching sound caught his ear—something like a mouse scratching. He listened. No, that was no mouse. The sound seemed far off and at the same time quite near, just as though someone were timidly, gently and yet stubbornly knocking with a tiny hammer. Maybe it was the noise of that work underground still in his ears? Sleep was far from him. He sat there and thought of Kozlov.

An old woman, bare-footed, came noiselessly into the barn. Dawn was breaking. The sun breaking through the clouds lit up the corner of the white stove; drops of water glistened on the window-panes. A hen cackled, not loudly but excitedly. The old woman said something to it as she bent over the nest. Again that strange sound.

"What's that?" asked Kostitsyn. "Listen, Grandma, to that sound, just as though a hammer were tapping somewhere; or is it just my imagination?"

The old woman's reply came quietly:

"It's here, in the barn, the chickens are hatching out and breaking through the shells with their beaks."

Kostitsyn looked at the men lying there. They were sleeping soundly, without stirring, breathing slowly and evenly. The sun was reflected by a fragment of broken mirror on the table, and the reflection lay in a narrow bright strip on Kuzin's hollow cheek. Kostitsyn suddenly felt a real love for these men who had borne so much. It seemed to him that never in his life had he experienced such affection and warmth of feeling.

He gazed at the black, bearded faces, gazed at the torn heavy hands of the Red Army men. Tears ran down his cheeks, but he did not wipe them away. For who was there to see that Captain Kostitsyn was weeping?

The dead Donets steppe stretched before him, majestic and sad. The ruined pit buildings rose out of the mist, the slag-heaps looked dark, and a bluish smoke from the burning pyrites stole along their dark slopes and then, caught

by the wind, was whipped away, leaving only the sharp smell of sulphur. The steppe breeze swept between the miners' shattered cottages and whistled through the wrecked office buildings. Doors and gates half torn from their hinges creaked as they swung to and fro; the rusty rails of the narrow-gauge railway glowed red. Engines stood lifeless under the remains of a bridge which had been blown up. The huge winding gear had been thrown down by the force of the explosion, the five-hundred metre steel hawser had slipped from its drum and lay in coils on the ground; the sharp concrete mouths of the inlet ventilators were laid bare, the red copper of the torn windings gleamed among the wreckage of the mighty dynamoes, and the dusty bars of heavy coal cutting machines lay on the stone floor of the workshops. It was terrible here at night, in the moonlight. There was no silence in this kingdom of death. The wind whistled through the singing wires, loose sheets of roofing iron clanged like bells, an iron plate crumpled in the fire cracked as it straightened; a brick came crashing down, and the door of the mine bathhouse creaked. Patches of moonlight and shadows crept slowly over the earth, climbed up walls, wandered over the heaps of scrap iron and the scorched rafters.

Red and green sparks soared over the steppe, disappeared, extinguished, in the grey mist of the moon-filled clouds. German sentries, fearful of this land, this coal and iron which they had murdered, were firing into the air, striving to chase away the shadows. But the huge spaces swallowed the weak crackling of the tommy-guns, the cold skies swallowed the glowing bullets, and again the dead, conquered Donets coalfield would strike fear into the conqueror, and again tommy-guns would rattle, and red and green sparks streak across the heavens. Everything here spoke of a cruel, terrible destruction: boilers had burst their iron sides, iron from the open-hearth furnaces had poured out onto the earth, coal was buried under great layers of rock, soaked by streams of bitter, salty water, and the mighty power of electricity had burnt out the machines which generated it.

The sight of the dead Donets Basin brings not only grief but mighty pride. This is no death, this ominous picture of desolation. It is a testimony of the triumph of life, love and freedom which scorns death and conquers it.

CONSTANTINE SIMONOV

AXINYA IVANOVNA'S SON

Late in the spring of 1922 the Cossack Sergei Vershkov came home on leave at last. Now he had behind him three years of Civil War and a year of the Borisoglebsk military school, and his age was just twenty. No doubt, it was his youth that accounted for his delight in such an endless number of things. He had left the village four years before, a mere boy, and was returning to it now, a full-grown man and a Cossack, of which there was no lack of outward signs. For one thing, there was the order he had won for killing eleven whiteguards in a battle at Kastornaya; for another, there was his moustache, which, despite his youth, was nearly as good as Budionny's. In the third place, there were the red wound stripes on his coat, testifying to the fact that he was no longer Seryozhka to everybody but Platoon Commander Comrade Vershkov.

It was still early in the morning when he alighted from the train and started out through the Cossack settlement, walking at a leisurely pace, though actually he was longing to fling dignity to the winds and dash off at breakneck speed. At the corner of the familiar street from where he could already see the green roof of his home in the distance, three of the oldest villagers barred his way. They were very old indeed, these men, well-nigh the most ancient in the place; one of them had actually, it was said, fought in the Russo-Turkish war, in some long-forgotten day. Vershkov could remember them all from his earliest childhood, and it seemed to him they were unchangeable. They looked

exactly as he remembered them fifteen years ago.

Three old men barred his way. On their chests hung the soldiers' cross of St. George. But it was not only the wearing of the crosses that astonished Vershkov: the old men were in full-dress uniform, which they kept for none but very special occasions. When he was close to them, they suddenly stood at attention, and the oldest of all said in a cracked but loud voice:

"Your honour, permit us to congratulate you on your return to the home of your parents."

He saluted and was the first to hold out his hand to Vershkov and kiss him. This was an unheard-of honour, and Vershkov realized that now he had been acknowledged by the elders as a full-grown Cossack, and the settlement was proud of the fact that their fellow countryman had become an officer. He strutted a little as he accompanied the old men down the village street, rolled himself a cigarette, and, moistening it with leisurely dignity, stuck it in the corner of his mouth. Only when he was right by the house, and saw three or four paces away his mother standing on the steps in the old familiar wadded jacket, her arms folded beneath her shawl, did he start forward and, reaching the steps at a bound, press her to the broad chest that had been yearning for his mother's caress.

Twenty years passed by. It was the early spring of 1942. A green, mud-splashed car drove through the village street and drew up by the familiar steps. The adjutant sprang out and opened the door. Out of the car strepped a stocky man, no longer young, in a colonel's greatcoat. The hair at his temples was silvered, the face so tanned and weather-beaten that the eyes looked pale blue. Signing to the adjutant to wait in the car, the colonel, his wounded leg dragging a little, limped up the steps. He opened the door into the passage, then the one into the room, and after a moment's pause on the threshold, said softly to the woman seated at the table knitting:

"Mamma!"

The woman turned, cried out in astonishment, and without uttering a word, fell against his chest. He stood like that with her in his arms for a long time. He did not take off his cap or coat, but stood stroking the head that had begun to tremble a little from old age. At last, he placed her gently on the bench and with a weary movement threw off his greatcoat and sat down beside her.

Having gone straight from Siberia to the war, he had not been home for five years, and now he scrutinized his mother closely and with sadness. She had aged all at once, it seemed, in these years. The mother, in her turn, scrutinized him, attentively, wordlessly. He did not resemble the man she had known. His head had been shaven when he was wounded and was covered now with short grey bristles. The face was older, it had grown hollow and at the same time hardened. He looked firmer and more stubborn than ever. They sat like that a long time, looking at each other in silence. Then the mother turned away and wept. Vershkov understood: she was weeping for her younger son, Michael, of whom his own return had reminded her, and who would never again return to his father's house.

Vershkov did not attempt to comfort her. He knew that Michael had always been her favourite and that all consolation was useless. He himself had not been able to get over the loss, and whenever he thought of it, he saw in his mind's eye that younger brother, Mishka, as he had seen him for the last time, lean, sunburnt, easy and gay in his faded tunic, as he stood whacking at his high rubber swamp-boots with a switch.

"We'll get through," Mishka had declared. "We'll get through all right, Comrade Colonel," and gave his boots another whack with the switch, implying that getting through wasn't really worth talking about.

Glancing at his mother, Vershkov recalled Kiev. He had been the last to leave the city with his division. The late September weather was hot. It was dusty and sultry, and at times death passed so near that escape seemed unthinkable. One of the last to cross the river, he had listened to the reports of the officers who had crossed singly by various fords and shallows in the night. Those were the worst days of the war, and not everyone was at the top of his form. Some officers had lost their equipment, others had turned up with almost no men left. Vershkov, who could, as a rule, keep himself in hand, seemed to have lost all his power to remain calm, and whenever he heard anything that put him out of

humour, he spoke sharply, harshly, sometimes even rudely.

"Where are your men?" he demanded of a battalion-commander whose face twitched violently from shell-shock.

"I, personally, fought to my last cartridge," the captain stammered. "Look, my tunic's all bullet-holes. I had to fight my way across."

"Your men? Where are your men?" Vershkov repeated stubbornly. "You've lost your men, have you? Where are they?"

"I don't know," said the captain and, glancing into Vershkov's furious blue eyes, prepared for the worst. . .

But Vershkov restrained himself, gripped his hands hard behind his back, took three paces and, without turning, said:

"Court-martial."

The next to report was a lieutenant in command of a battery.

"Where are your men?" Vershkov demanded again.

"All here, with the exception of those who are killed," the lieutenant replied, evidently regarding the matter as over and done with.

"And your guns? Where are your guns? Here or over there?"

"The guns are over there," said the lieutenant. "We couldn't fetch them across. We hadn't the strength. I can explain it all, Comrade Colonel," he added, losing something of his assurance under Vershkov's eye, which was beginning to make him nervous.

But Vershkov turned sharply away from him.

"Hadn't the strength to fetch the guns across, eh? Hmph, after that I haven't the strength to talk to you. Court-martial. You'll be tried for this."

The men had never seen him like this before. At this moment, in the face of the Kiev tragedy, his usual mildness and kindness deserted him. He would not forgive people anything: neither their timidity, nor their bewilderment, nor their helplessness; he would not forgive them, just as he would not have forgiven himself.

And at that very moment his brother appeared. The whole division knew that Battery-Commander Senior Lieutenant Vershkov was Colonel Vershkov's brother. But the two were always very stiff and formal when they met, as though they did not want anyone to know of the relationship.

"Comrade Colonel, Senior Lieutenant Vershkov," he heard behind him and, turning, saw Mishka's face, weary, grimy, and cheerful as usual.

Vershkov looked him over. The senior lieutenant was in a terrible condition. His cap was gone, his tunic was filthy and torn, his hands all bruised and scratched. And for the first time in his life mortal dread came over Vershkov. He jumped to the conclusion that Mishka, like the rest, had—judging by his looks—swum the river alone, after losing his men and abandoning his guns. He thought to himself that if it was so, no power on earth could save this brother of his now. In those few fleeting seconds of silence, while he took in Mishka's appearance, all that was to happen in the next few minutes and hours flashed through his mind. He would ask his brother where the guns were and Mishka would say they were over there, left behind, and he would send him up for trial, and Mishka would be shot because people should be shot for this. And then he, Vershkov, would be accursed all his life, and could never again look his mother in the face, because he couldn't hope to explain to her why he had not been able to do otherwise, why he had used his authority to order the shooting of his younger brother, Mishka, that same brother he had once tossed in his arms, had seated for the first time on a horse, the brother who was the spoiled darling of the family.

"Where are your men, Comrade Senior Lieutenant?" Vershkov asked, getting himself in hand. And perhaps none but he and Mishka, who knew him too well to be mistaken, noticed that his voice shook.

"Here. About a kilometre to the left," Mishka replied cheerfully, with a flash of white teeth.

"And where are your guns?"

"They're all here," said Mishka simply, but his radiant smile flashed what was left unspoken: "Don't worry, old chap, I haven't let you down!"

Vershkov heaved a sigh of relief and for a few seconds kept silent, unable to speak. When the staff chief confirmed the report and said that the whole battery had been brought over in good order, Vershkov said:

"Good. Come into my office, I want to

speak to you, Comrade Senior Lieutenant," and, stooping, led the way through the low doorway of the fisherman's cottage where his temporary quarters were.

Here, without uttering a word, he threw his arms around his younger brother and hugged him so hard that the boy almost cried out. Then, when Vershkov relaxed his embrace and sat down, Mishka sat down opposite and for the first time in those three months of war, winked familiarly and said in an informal tone:

"Got the wind up, didn't you, Comrade Colonel?"

"I certainly did," Vershkov agreed. "What would I have said to our mother?" and, without finishing the sentence, handed Mishka a cigarette. "Here, have a smoke."

Afterwards, there were other crossings, following each other in quick succession, bloody crossings, terrible crossings under heavy bombing, amid dust and death. He had seen Mishka for the last time in a little wood from where they were to fight their way through the Germans to join their own ranks. He had put Mishka with his light guns in the worst of all spots, the rearguard, to cover the last desperate attempt to break through. Three times he embraced his brother as they used to at Easter-tide in their childhood, and having kissed him hard with lips that were cracked and parched from the heat let him go. Mishka, whacking his boot with his switch had said, with the usual laugh in his eyes:

"Cheer up! We'll get through, Comrade Colonel! We'll get through. . . May I go now?"

"Yes, go along now."

Vershkov had never seen his brother alive again. He himself had broken through with his units to the rest. He was badly hit. They carried him on a tarpaulin cloak-tent through the wood and when, on coming to himself, he had asked who had come through and who had been left behind, they told him that his brother had not come through. Even after he had recovered from his wounds, he was afraid for a long time to write to his mother, because it seemed to him that she had always felt easier in her mind, knowing that her youngest was under his elder brother's command. He felt responsible to his mother: he had always known that though he himself might fall in battle, he must return her youngest son alive to her. And now it had turned out the wrong way round, he was alive, while Mishka. . .

When his mother had grown calmer, or at any rate had dried her tears and become once more as Vershkov had always known her, he questioned her while she was laying the table about the old, highly respected Cossacks left in the village and the surrounding hamlets. A taciturn woman, she did not ask why he wanted to know but spent the whole evening telling him who was alive and who dead, who had gone elsewhere to live, which of the Cossack ancients was still in the land of the living, whose sons had gone to the army and when. Her son listened attentively, asking an occasional question, jotting down a name in his notebook. When morning came, his adjutant got into the car and drove to twenty addresses. He had orders to convey the colonel's respects to the old Cossacks and invite each one to come the same evening to see his fellow-countryman, Colonel Sergei Ivanovich Vershkov.

All was noise and bustle in the Vershkov's yard that evening. The horses tethered by the gate stamped and snorted, while the host, standing bare-headed on the steps, received his guests ceremoniously. After the preliminary greetings were exchanged, Vershkov, following the custom in these parts, did not at once approach the question he had at heart, but first saw that his guests were seated around the table. They drank a glass, then a second. His mother, as she served the guests with food, cast proud glances at this son of hers. The fact that the local Cossacks of the older generation had come to visit her son was for her a plainer and more conclusive proof of his honourable position than all the medals and ranks in the world.

When they had taken their third glass Vershkov rose to his feet, emphasizing by this the significance of what he was about to impart to the old men. He cleared his throat and informed them that he had been sent here to organize a Cossack volunteer division, that he had been chosen because he was himself a Cossack, and that he would be in command of the division. He, Vershkov, knowing the customs of the Cossacks, had called the elders here to ask them to help him,

and with their help he would make a beginning.

Before attempting to reply, the old men were silent a while, coughing occasionally and turning things over in their minds. Finally the oldest of those present, Trofim Ilyich Yerokhin, who had been a warrior in his day, stood up, stroked impressively the beard that still, in defiance of all the laws of nature, refused to grow grey, and said:

"We'll help you, and what's more, those of us who have the strength, will join the division. I'll join it, for one. Only see you manage it so that the doctors with the tubes of theirs don't start fooling about with us, and spoil the whole business at the outset with their medical boards. That's all we ask. As for helping, why, we'll help, of course, and willingly."

Upon this Yerokhin sat down, evidently regarding the question as settled. The others were equally sparing of words, partly because the matter seemed perfectly clear and already decided, and partly because there seemed to be no end to the food and drink on the table, and they could not resist the temptation of wetting their whistles once more while the opportunity offered.

Vershkov, who had inherited his father's and grandfather's strength, drank without getting drunk, and meanwhile observed the old men with curiosity. A truly amazing tribe: they refused to accept old age. It required decades, not years, for grey strands to show in their black beards, or for one grey hair to be added to another. The very look of the old men brought back a flood of reminiscences of childhood and youth. Though long accustomed to his rank, it seemed even now strange to him to be sitting at the table on an equal footing with these old men. He recalled that in his youth a young Cossack had not been regarded as a Cossack until he returned from the army: only after becoming a soldier was he treated as a grown man. There was a great deal of Cossack truth in this: in the stern upbringing, the profound conviction that first you must be a soldier and after that you could be whatever you liked; but if you had not gone through this soldier's school you could not yet really be considered a man. And if a young Cossack who had not yet served the army, dared to do any drinking, he could be whipped by the old men's orders, for they very rightly judged that first you should see service in the army, and after that you might allow yourself a spree. Exceptions were made only in one case: when the competitions for Cossacks, mounted and unmounted, were held at Whitsuntide and Michaelmas, whoever won was greeted that day for the first time by the elders and in the evening was invited to the same table to drink with them, whether he was still young and green or not. Vershkov recalled how once this honour had fallen to his lot. With what excitement he had taken his place at the table with the old men! God only knew how many years had passed over his head since that day, but the remembrance of that thrill survived. He felt a sort of excitement and awe at the very look of the old men, at their young eyes, their broad shoulders, somewhat rounded by the years, but not bowed, their big, knotty hands. The whole strength of the people stood in their backs, it seemed. And he thought that it would be a very good thing indeed if he had more old men like these in his division, and that while it was being formed they ought to be kept safe from the annoying attentions of those infernal doctors' "tubes."

In the course of the next few weeks the talk in the villages was all of the colonel who had come to form a division of Cossack volunteers: the colonel was a Cossack himself, and from these parts, and local people even knew him and remembered him.

"Who is he, then?"

"He's Seryozhka Vershkov."

"Which Vershkov is that?"

"Why, Axinya Ivanovna's son."

Those who did not remember Seryozhka Vershkov, remembered Axinya Ivanovna or Vershkov's father, Ivan Semyonovich Vershkov, a well-known Cossack who had been killed by the Whiteguards in 1920. And the fact that one of their own fellow-villagers had returned, a colonel, and that he, who was none other than the son of Axinya Ivanovna, was recruiting a division here, rejoiced their hearts and filled even those who were no longer young and those who had long since grown unaccustomed to warfare, with a desire for the things of their youth.

Vershkov's division saw action for the first time in the battles for the

Kuban River. The Germans had taken Rostov and were now advancing on Stavropol, Armavir and Krasnodar. It was a dusty Kuban August. The yellow fields of ripening grain where half the harvest still remained ungathered, the orchards where the boughs bent low under the weight of the apples, the melon-fields full of ripe melons—it was intolerable to look at it all; at this time of harvest, of the year's prime, of fruitfulness, it almost broke one's heart to leave this land.

They were always in the rearguard, they were always the last to go, giving other units the chance to break away from the Germans. They fought from daybreak till sunset as infantry; at nightfall, they saddled their horses, and they themselves broke away, appearing next morning where the Germans least expected them and engaging them in battle again. They fought at Kushchevskaya, at Tikhoretskaya, at Malorossiyskaya. In the evenings they rode quietly, without singing, through the villages.

They were not all Don Cossacks; there were many from the Kuban, and often, in one village or another, a Cossack would rein in his horse at a house and, bending low from the saddle, embrace a woman who wept soundlessly. But never a man remained behind when he passed through his native village. In these days Vershkov noticed in people a kind of rage against the Germans; he had never seen it before. It had not appeared at once, only during this second year of the war. Formerly they had regretted their homes and their families, but now this regret was always weaker than the desire to fight. They bade farewell to homes and families without thinking about it, without even considering whether there could be any other possible way. Now the chief thing was to keep their weapons in their hands and their souls in their bodies, and fight on to the bitter end.

The ranks that were thinned by those first few days of hard fighting were reinforced by hundreds of volunteers as they rode through the villages. Often there were children who joined their fathers, or fathers who joined their children. Father or uncle went to serve as a ranker (and thought it no disgrace) in the squadron commanded by a son. Many applications came from kindred and fellow-villagers to fight in one squadron or one platoon; Vershkov made it a rule never to refuse these requests.

At Kushchovka, Peter Mordvintsev, commander of the third squadron, was killed in action. In the evening he was picked up dead on the field. His father, Mikhail Semyonovich, a machine-gunner in the same squadron, stood for a long time staring down at his son's body. As they were preparing to bury the dead, Mikhail suddenly said:

"You needn't do that. I'll bury him myself." And, lifting his son on his powerful shoulders, he lurched away, bowed under the burden.

Vershkov raised no objection, but gave orders for someone to keep an eye on the old man. Mordvintsev skirted the village, reached an orchard that sloped down to a gully, and there, under the shade of a great apple-tree, laid down his burden. Unhurriedly, with firm, steady fingers, he rolled himself a cigarette, lit it, smoked it to the end, then, flinging the stub away, stamped it out thoroughly. He got his sapper's spade out of its case and started digging a grave. He took his time over the digging and made a deep tidy grave, made it, not like those hastily-dug graves soldiers make, but with care, as a father would. Having buried his son, Mordvintsev cut three marks, crossing each other, on the tree-trunk. Then he replaced his spade in its case, crossed himself three times and went back to the squadron. He never wept, nor complained, nor even spoke of his son to anyone. But in the morning, when a battle was expected near the village and some men were detailed to take the horses further away towards the woods, Vershkov, passing the spot where the third squadron was disposed, was accosted by Mordvintsev.

"Comrade Colonel," Mordvintsev began in a gloomy tone.

"What?"

"They've detailed me to look after the horses."

"Why?" Vershkov asked.

"Because my son was killed by the Germans yesterday. I can't just go and look after horses, I'm telling you. I've got to fight for the whole family now. Tell them, Comrade Colonel, not

to do it, or else I'll chuck the horses and clear out myself!"

And there was that in his face, there was a look of such bitter desperation in his eyes, that Vershkov, who, as a rule, brooked no liberties of this kind, forgave him at once the words: "I'll clear out myself," and gave orders that Mordvintsev was not to be detailed to look after horses any more.

The look of bitter desperation that Vershkov had observed in others, he felt now in himself. There were times even, when, as he was reprimanding his commanders for taking unnecessary risks in battle, he felt that he was talking without conviction, apathetically, lying, in fact. He knew that he ought to talk like that, but he did not want to, because any pity for himself and fear for his own life had disappeared that same month, and he knew only too well that in other people they might disappear as well.

Between Kropotkin and Krasnodar the division, it turned out, had got into a "pocket." At least half a regiment would have to be sacrificed in order to save the other two. Vershkov drove off to see the regimental commander at the command post and remained there during the whole day's fighting. It turned out a more terrible day than all that had gone before and were to come after. The Germans had no very large infantry forces, but their seventy tanks, breaking through all barriers at great speed, clattered the length and breadth of the regiment's positions for several hours on end.

The regimental commander was killed at Vershkov's side early that morning. Vershkov, who, as a rule, did not interfere in the details of his subordinates' activities when he visited them, now took the command virtually upon himself, though he appointed another commander. He did all that could be done on a day like this. While the despatch riders and officers came, he maintained that appearance of perfect calm which was dearer to them than all his orders. While communications were still working, he talked over the telephone and heartened his men. When all that had gone and the disposition of the regiment, beginning with the sentries placed for the night and ending with the command post, had been turned into a deserted level field across which the German tanks crawled, bellowing,—Vershkov prepared to do the only thing that remained under the circumstances: to die. He was taking advantage of a right that as a rule was not granted him as divisional commander, the right to a last hand-to-hand fight with the Germans. He fastened his collar, thrust into his belt a couple of grenades—no more than the rest of the men had—and left the commander's dugout for an open spot in a trench. None of those around him raised any objection, because very little hope remained, and everyone understood the divisional commander's desire to die fighting like a soldier and not simply be butchered.

By one of those strokes of luck that happen every day in war-time, the German tanks passed to the right and the left of the trenches, and Vershkov did not perish. That evening he led his regiment off the battle-field, and by a roundabout route they marched on Maikop, overtaking other regiments that had been far ahead of them.

Late in the autumn the division was transferred to the sandy country around Mozdok. All around them lay great slabs of sand, "breakers" as the Cossacks called them. There was very little snow, and that made it seem unusually bleak and cold. Here the division held a stable defensive position, and all felt that the culminating point of something had been reached. The Germans were played out and could go no further. As before, they were attacking, as before their tanks were breaking through here and there; yet it was not quite as it had been. They could no longer move ahead.

The national day, November the 7th, was celebrated here on these sands. The offensive had not yet begun, but it was already in the air. The quiet that reigned was soon to be broken, according to all signs, by a thunder-clap. Vershkov resolved to keep the 25th anniversary of the November Revolution that night.

They spread some broad tarpaulins from the Dodges between two big sand-hills and laid out on them the rations they had been saving for the last few days, their guardsmen's ration of vodka and all the food they could collect. Vershkov gave orders for a car with the headlights turned on to be placed

at each side. The light fell in four big pools of clear yellow on the tarpaulins and the solid ring of Cossacks. All who could be assembled without interfering with duty were here: regimental and squadron commanders, elderly bearded Cossack volunteers, the oldest in their units. Five or six kilometres northward on the perimeter, the usual desultory cross-fire was going on and an occasional flare lit up the dark sky.

None of those present had ever kept the day like this before. Snowflakes were falling into the mugs of vodka, and every now and then someone would clap his hands vigorously to warm them, or jump up and stamp his numbed feet. But the party was none the less merry, none the less a great occasion. First, they drank to the day, then to their fallen comrades, and afterwards, as usually happens in the soldier's rare moments of leisure, the talk turned to this, that, and the other, to marches, bivouacs, homes in the Don and Kuban countryside, and it seemed as if it would go no for ever, so much was there to remember and so many was there to recall.

When they had dispersed and returned to their posts, Vershkov paced up and down for a long time his boots crunching on the newfallen snow outside his dugout. The headlights of the cars had been turned out. Two Cossacks were rolling up the tarpaulins. Vershkov was thinking how many temporary dwellings he had seen hastily put up during the war, how many dugouts they had settled into and then abandoned, how many night bivouacs and marches they had seen, and how many they were still to see. And strange as it might seem, the thought evoked neither nostalgia nor sadness, but, on the contrary, brought a sense of tranquillity to the spirit. Because it meant that though everything else was constantly changing, places, towns, positions, the division was going on, was still a division, and he, Vershkov, would lead it to the end of its road, like something of his own, something that had grown into his own body and soul and could not be cast off. At that moment, though he was proud and ambitious enough, he wanted no rise in rank, all he wanted was to go on commanding his own division till the end.

I met Vershkov at the end of February, during the fighting between Rostov and Taganrog. His forecast of that wintry November night had proved correct, and the division was advancing over the ground from which it had once retreated. It had crossed the Don and was now fighting on the other side, on the Ukraine's frontiers. He had just returned from the regiment, and was seated at the table. He had thrown off his coat, but, as usual, forgotten to take off his cap. It was that particular hour when orders for the day's offensive had already been given, and first reports had not yet reached headquarters. For this brief spell a rare expectant silence reigned, when it was possible to indulge one's thoughts and meditate about something other than the pressing cares of the day. Vershkov was thoughtful and, throwing himself back in his chair, drummed absently on the table.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked him.

"Well, it's hard to say. About everything at once, I suppose. I remembered that not long ago, when we got back Kushchovka and made a halt there, I went that evening into the orchard where the old man buried Squadron-Commander Mordvintsev—you haven't forgotten my telling you about him, have you? When we got back to Kushchovka, the old chap wasn't with us any more. He'd been wounded at Tikhoretskaya and sent to hospital. So I went into the orchard instead of him, and found the tree with the three marks on it and watched awhile, instead of him, over his son's grave. And it seemed to me at that moment as though I were the father of them all, living and dead. And now when I think of my division, I fancy that though its regiments have thinned a lot, it's still a very big division, bigger than the one that once went into action in the first battle. For now it's made up of living and dead, of those who fought, and those who are still fighting in its ranks. And it's strong, not only with the strength of the living, but also with the strength of the fallen, the strength of their heroism, the strength of the lives they laid down for their country. When you come back over the ground where your dead lie, when you have their graves at your back, it strengthens your spirit, makes you stand fast. What do you think about it?"

He did not expect an answer, for he

fell into a reverie again. Then he suddenly smiled.

"I had a letter from my mother a while ago, that put me out a lot at the time. Someone on leave dropped in to see her it seems (I haven't been able to find out who the fellow with the long tongue was), and he told her some yarns about me. So what does she do but write: 'Seryozhka, I've heard tell that though you're in a very high position, you sometimes shove yourself forward where you've no right to be. Let me tell you this, I forbid you to do any such thing...' When I read it, I showed it to the staff-chief, and we laughed over it. But he must have told all the regimental commanders. Because now, whenever I visit a regiment, and want to go with the squadron, I'm prevented by the squadron commander. 'What right have you to forbid me?' I ask, and he's sure to say: 'I've a perfect right, Comrade Colonel, because your mother herself forbade you to do it.' Well, you know, of course, that among the Cossacks a parent's word is law; that's an old tradition. So they don't let me go with the squadron. How do you like that?"

Vershkov smiled again, and I felt that behind that smile there was the desire to be back again, just for a moment, at the Cossack settlement with his mother Axinya Ivanovna, to be sitting with her at the same sort of simple wooden table as he was then sitting at with me.

WINTER AND SUMMER "EVERGREEN"

HITLER — in winter: Never mind! In the summer it will be my turn to advance

The Germans' Summer Advance

Drawing by Kukryniksy

GREEN RIBBONS

"Mother! I can't help it if you're angry, but I'm not going to school with that Vera any more!" cried thirteen-year-old Volodya Krylov as he ran excitedly into the room and angrily flung his schoolbag onto a chair.

Antonina Denissovna shook her head disapprovingly, and an unaccustomed frown darkened her kind face.

"That doesn't sound at all nice, Volodya," she said. "'That Vera!' And why don't you want to walk with your own sister?"

"Because I'm ashamed of her, that's why ! Just now, as we were coming along the road, she started a fight with some boys, yes, and thrashed three of them! They ran off to tell their parents. Look, here she is. There's a fine sister for a fellow to have. . . beret on one side, red in the face. . . I'm sick of it. I'm not going to walk with her!"

A slender girl, tall for her ten years came into the room swinging her schoolbag. The warm dark tint of her skin was brightly flushed and an angry bruiss under one of her large green-blue eyes die not in any way quench the light of victory flaming in them. She straightened her beret, tossed her two long, dark, disordered plaits tied with green ribbons over her shoulders, and answered proudly:

"I don't see what he has to be ashamed of! They didn't beat me, it was I who beat them! And all three of them older than me! They went whining to their mothers and fathers."

"Vera!" Antonina Denissovna threw up her hands in despair. "You've been fighting in the street again?"

"But where else can I fight? They won't let me get at them in their own homes! And here I took them by surprise, and gave them something to take home with them. . . socked them in the guts good and plenty!"

"For shame, brawling like that! You talk like some gutter snipe: 'socked them in the guts'—you, a girl!"

"But that's why I beat them, because

Vera Krylova

I'm a girl. 'Socked them in the guts'—that's what they say themselves, all those rough lads, when they hit our girls. Mum, can't you understand, I beat them on account of our girls, for Katya Novikova and Manya Zelentsova. Those three hooligans beat them up on the quiet and dared them to cry or make a sound in case the teacher might hear them and find out what was up. Well, I'm not going to go complaining to the teacher, I gave them a thick ear myself. . ."

"Vera!"

"But, Mum, how can I be ladylike about it, when I gave those louts what for! They'd better remember that women and men have equal rights!"

The mother gazed at her daughter, and barely restrained her laughter. But all the same she was worried.

"Verochka, look at that great bruise on your cheek! Oh, dear, what shall I do with you, a girl doing such things! . ."

"It's all right Mummy, don't worry, you'll live to dance at my wedding yet!"

"Your wedding!" jeered the angry Volodya. "Who's ever going to marry you, I'd like to know? Who wants the kind of wife that'll start fighting with her husband?"

"Oh, they'll want to marry me all right—they'll be lining up three deep, you'll see! And I'll choose one who's not afraid of having a wife with some sand in her. . . He'll be a hero. . . Not like those louts I wiped the ground with today! Off they went whining. . ."

"Whatever shall I do with you, you'll be the death of me!" said her mother. "Hardly a day passes but you bring me some trouble, some new upset. I can't think who you've got it from, always fighting! . ."

"Who from? But you know you can't stand injustice yourself!"

Vera flung her arms round her mother and covered her troubled face with kisses, encircled her waist with her strong young arms and whirled her round the room.

"I won't make you angry again, ever again, Mum darling, I'll never do it again! Don't frown so, smile at me, my own Mum, smooth away that frown, that's right!"

"Verochka, stop, stop it, I tell you, my head's going round!"

"All right, I won't whirle you any more. . . I just did it to calm you!"

"To calm her! There's no calm for anyone where you are," said Volodya, as he left the room.

There certainly was plenty of trouble with this headstrong girl. But her mother well understood her hot-headedness, her fearless love of justice, and for that reason she could never be angry with Vera for very long. And even now a caressing tone had already returned to her voice as she said to her daughter:

"Go and wash yourself; bathe your cheek with cold water. And don't say anything if the boys' parents come to complain. Better let me excuse you, I'll promise that you'll never do it again. . ."

"No, Mother, don't you promise anything," said Vera with a sigh, pausing, as she was going out. "I shan't be able to keep my hands off them if they start plaguing us again. I couldn't even if I promised you a hundred times! I'll always fight brutes like that!"

"What do you mean by brutes? You always exaggerate so," her mother began, but Vera had already slipped out of the room, and all Antonina Denissovna could do was to sigh as she looked after her.

And two hours had barely passed when the youngest daughter, four-year-old Zhenichka, came running into the kitchen where Antonina Denissovna was washing up. Breathless, her face concerned and important, she gasped out—not forgetting to roll her "r's," a new achievement:

"Mummie, Verrra's sitting on the fence, rrright at the end! Volodya sent me to tell you. On the fence, rrright at the end!"

"That girl'll be the death of me!" cried her mother, dashing out into the yard. "Vera!" she cried. "Come down this minute, I don't know what you're thinking of! And no coat on, and nothing on your head. . . It's autumn now, you'll catch your death of cold! Oh, you'll have me in my grave yet with your naughtiness!"

Springing easily and lightly from the high fence, Verochka again began embracing and kissing her mother.

"But why in your grave? Nonsense, Mummie! I'm training! And I might tear my coat, and anyway it's easier without. Look, I can balance on the very end of the fence. . ."

"I'd prefer not to see it, thanks! Oh, Vera, Vera, I can't let you out of my sight for a minute! . . Better go and do your preparation."

"My preparation's nearly done. I've a good memory."

"And your arithmetic?"

"I've caught up with that last week. . . Only one 'fair,' all the rest of the time 'excellent.' And I'll do better yet. It was that poetry stopped me. Yesterday I wrote another poem, Mum. Don't you worry, the arithmetic'll be all right. And I think the poem's not so bad; like to hear it?"

The poem was bad enough, true, but the spirit and sincerity could be felt.

The Krylovs had always been considered an ideal family. The children were at school, the mother, a cashier, was considered one of the best where she worked, and the father was an engineer. But although he never complained, his work of bridge building meant living sometimes under difficult conditions, which gradually undermined his health. As always, careless of himself, he allowed illness to go too far, and died at his work.

This was Vera's first great grief. With an unchildlike repression she showed little of it, but would steal off to her father's grave whenever she felt troubled to draw comfort from it. Gradually the memory became idealized in her heart, and it was hard indeed for her when her mother married again, to see someone else taking her father's place.

Vera had been born in Samara province, but shortly before Antonina Denissovna's second marriage they moved to the Donbas. She used to spend a great deal of time however at Khanzhonkovo with her maternal grandparents, whom she loved better than anyone else in the world excepting her mother. Her grandfather, a fitter working on the railway, had been imprisoned for political activity in 1905.

"Granny, I'll fight for Soviet power too!" Vera would cry listening to her grandmother's stories. "I'll never be afraid of anything, even if they torture me or kill me!"

"You'll have no need to do that, darling," said the old woman. "You can live in peace, the old folk have won Soviet power for you!"

"And aren't there any bad people left now, no traitors?"

"Of course there are! It takes all sorts to make a world; one brother may be a hero and the other a coward, one a true man and the other ready to sell his own mother. We aren't living in heaven, we're on earth, there's still evil in the world!"

"And I hate it, Granny. I'll never be a coward or a traitor. Never, Granny!"

Vera's voice choked, her eyes blazed through large tears.

"Why, you're all upset, my darling! Of course, you won't, you'll be an honest Soviet girl, no coward or good-for-nothing. Believe me, an old woman who's seen something in her life. You don't need to worry about yourself or about other people either, we've a watchful government, it can deal with bad ones..."

There was a small, well-kept garden attached to the old people's house, where Vera loved to work with her grandmother. The sunny garden, the smell of the fresh soil, and the breeze from the flowering fields remained with her her whole life as one of her sweetest memories.

She had two girl friends in the village, and hosts of good comrades among the boys, whom she preferred if anything, admiring their skill at running, jumping and especially at riding. Don Cossacks can ride almost as soon as they can walk, and at ten years can manage the most refractory animal. They taught Vera to ride, and she would tear over the steppe, the wind whistling in her ears, her child's heart filled with wild dreams of pursuing the traitor, the good-for-nothing that would sell his own mother. She would trample him under her horse's hoofs, she would overtake the murderer and cut him down with one blow of her sword. When thirteen years old she played the part of all the heroes in her history books as she raced over the steppe, dreams of adventure, glory and great achievements filling her heart.

Years passed, and Vera finished the secondary school, and entered a medical school. Her war-like dreams softened and became more womanly. She experienced first love—for a boy a year older than herself who had finished the same secondary school and left for another town. There had been no tender words between them, no letters, no meetings, only an occasional exchange of glances or extra pressure of the hand and the answering flush on Vera's face to tell that they were not only firm friends, but loved each other.

When they parted they promised to write, but much time passed before the promise was fulfilled. At that time the joys and pains of first love passed lightly over the young girl's heart. Her time was filled with work, daily cares and her lessons. While studying at the medical school in the Donets region, Vera at the same time took a correspondence course from a Leningrad teachers' training college.

It meant hard work, but she was strong. She had grown tall and slender, and games and riding with the boys in her childhood had developed in her a great love for sport to which she devoted all the time she could spare from the medical school, sleeping little so as to utilize the night hours for her correspondence course.

In 1938 Vera graduated from the medical school as a first-aid instructor, received her teacher's certificate from the Leningrad institute and began teaching history and geography in a Donbas school. Her family had left for Siberia, where her stepfather had got work.

One day she received an urgent telegram informing her of her mother's serious illness.

"If only I find her still alive!" was the thought that tortured Vera on the way to Novosibirsk. "Mummie darling, no, I can't believe that your eyes will close for ever, like Dad's!"

And Antonina Denissovna recovered, but then Vera herself fell sick. On her recovery she was appointed to new work as a school inspector in a Novosibirsk district.

But there was one thought which was always in Vera's mind: "Everyone, however unimportant his work might be, must try to be a follower of Lenin and Stalin!" And to one of her friends she spoke fervently of her greatest ambition. "Look at me, I'm nineteen years old," she said. "At that age Lenin and Stalin were already real fighters for our cause. And I've done nothing in particular in my life, nothing heroic. . ."

"Yes, but you're living in different conditions, in Soviet conditions," argued her friend. "Up to now you've been studying, preparing yourself for life. . . And after all, not everyone can be a hero. . ."

"Yes, everyone must!" Vera interrupted her hotly. "Even if nobody knows about it, if only you yourself know that you are something, that you've done something! That you're someone! And I've done nothing all my life, I've fought nothing, crushed nothing vile. I've never even met anything really vile in my life."

But she did not have long to wait.

The 586th Regiment, in which Vera Krylova served as nurse, was holding front-line positions on the North-western front. Orders came through to make a breach in the enemy's defences, and our guns opened up, sending a hell of fire and metal into the forest thickets concealing the Germans. Enemy mortars replied, and the air was filled with whining, screaming shells and the thunder of explosions.

Through this inferno Vera crawled to the most forward positions, seeking and saving the wounded. One man, supporting himself on his elbow, was calling desperately to her, but her experienced eye saw that his wound was comparatively light, a flesh wound in the shoulder; while a little distance away a seriously wounded man was lying, gritting his teeth in agony.

"Wait a little, I'll come back to you," she called as she bent over the second man. The latter opened his eyes.

"Why don't you go to him? Can't you hear him screaming?" he asked. "Leave me to die in peace."

Her own nerves were torn by the cries, but mastering herself she replied:

"After I've seen to you, I'll manage you both. And you're not going to die, don't think it."

Swiftly she bandaged him, and started crawling away, drawing him after her, ignoring both the desperate cries of the man with the shoulder wound who thought he was being deserted and the pleas of the one she was attending to, to leave him in peace to die.

"I'll come back, just hold on," she called.

Mortar shells were bursting everywhere and bullets whistled by as Vera, pressing close to the ground, slowly dragged the wounded lieutenant to the dressing station, and then returned for the other man. She found him lying with his face pressed to the ground, sobbing heavily. Vera's heart was wrung with pity—she knew what he had suffered while he was waiting, and it was no fault of his if the shock and pain of his first wound made him think he was in desperate straits. Nevertheless, she also knew that she had no right to attend to him while a more serious case was waiting. She was well aware that if the lieutenant lived, it would be entirely due to his having received speedy attention.

Vera Krylova had already learned to go about her work under fire in an efficient businesslike manner, just as if fulfilling any ordinary job and her cool head and fearlessness under fire, already well known, led to her being appointed to the command of a stretcher-bearer platoon.

Between battles, Vera learned to use her revolver, a tommy-gun and machine-gun and to practise grenade throwing.

"Just for my own satisfaction," she explained. "I want a rest from the noble art of healing."

And soon it came about that she found her machine-gun practice of use in defending her right to practise that same noble art of healing.

A German bullet found a Russian machine-gunner at the moment when Vera was in the vicinity tending the wounded under heavy fire. Finding Russian medical workers left without cover, the Germans promptly turned their fire upon them, killing a nurse and an orderly.

"The villains—firing on the Red Cross!" cried Vera. "I'll give them a lesson!"

And a few moments later the enemy had cause to feel her wrath. Vera had made her way to the silent machine-gun and with her accurate fire forced the Germans to leave the wounded men and medical workers in peace. This was when she herself received her first wound, a slight hip wound from a splinter. It did not prevent her, however, from continuing her work until one of the orderlies insisted on bandaging her and taking her to the dressing station, despite her protests. Finally she found herself at the field hospital.

Two young girls were working there, Manyunia and Tanyunia, splendid workers and firm friends, who never seemed to give a thought to fatigue or the difficulties of working so near the firing line. When the stream of wounded became smaller or stopped altogether for a time between battles, their rejoicings were loud. Manyunia would dance around singing: "No more coming in! No more coming in!" Tanyunia would join in, and whistling or singing, they would let off their joy at the thought that for the moment, at least on their small sector, our boys were not being killed or maimed.

Vera would laugh merrily as she watched them, but although she was the same age as Manyunia and only a year older than Tanyunia, she felt almost like their aunt. "They're like my little brother, like Nellick," she thought.

All she wanted was to get back to the front, there she felt herself at home, that was her life. Her unit had become nearer and dearer to her than her own family. Which of them were still unhurt? And who had fallen on the damp soil, never to rise again? Not a day passed without Vera begging the doctor to discharge her.

The girl's healthy young constitution soon put her on her feet again, and she returned to her unit, which welcomed her like a sister or daughter returning home. Many were the names the men had for her as she passed by on her horse. One would shout "Cossack," and another "Eagle." But the favourite one which soon became general was "Green Ribbons," from the bows on her plaits which she still preserved.

Day followed day, battle followed battle; the Red Army was advancing, the former road of retreat had become the road of victory, and the legend of the invincible hitlerite army had been dispersed like a puff of wind. After the capture of Yelnya, Vera's unit was promoted to the Guards. Never to the last day of her life will she forget that day!

A brief command. The new guardsmen, kneeling on one knee, repeated their vow to their Soviet Socialist country. Vera's heart was beating hard, and tears of joy and pride stood in her eyes.

"We vow!" Her high tremulous voice mingled with the deep-toned chorus from the Red Army men.

"We vow never to lay down our weapons as long as our hearts beat in our breasts and the hot blood flows through our veins, to strike at the enemy until our land and the Soviet people are entirely freed from the yoke of the German invaders." The unit commander continued reading the text of the vow with a high spirit of enthusiasm, ringing through the clearly enunciated words.

"We vow!" thundered the reply of the Stalinist guardsmen in one voice.

"Let anyone who breaks this vow and sullies the Guards banner be accorded universal hatred and scorn!"

"Universal hatred and scorn!" came

the answering threat of the guardsmen, shaking the clear morning air like thunder.

This scene made an unforgettable impression on Vera's heart. Whether the coming days of her life be bright or darkened by grief, whether they are many, or cut short in battle—every hour, every moment will be warmed and inspired by this vow. Yes, indeed, hatred and scorn for anyone who breaks this vow of the Soviet guardsmen, even if it is one's own brother or one's best friend.

Vera well knew that this war with a strong and wily enemy would bring yet many difficult days, but she knew equally well that she would never weary, never weaken, and never be taken alive by the nazis. No suffering, not even the thought of death itself could shake her courage. Never would she break her vow to her country!

At the end of September, 1941, Vera's division was surrounded by the enemy and the commanders and men decided to fight their way out of the choking ring in separate units. The fighting was desperate, and soon the commissar of Vera's unit was killed and the commander received a mortal wound. He recovered consciousness while Vera was bandaging him.

"Do you know me, Mikhail Sergeyevich?" she asked.

Weakly moving his hands, he replied:

"I'm dying. . . And who's going to lead the unit out?"

He murmured something, and a tear rolled down his cheek from his one remaining eye. He heard nothing as the girl bent over his blood-stained face, whispering:

"I will. I'll lead them out. . ."

The simultaneous loss of the commissar and the commander sowed seeds of confusion which might well have spread throughout the unit. There is nothing so infectious as panic. Many other officers had already been killed and Vera found herself left as senior commander. Swiftly she assessed the situation and took over command, ordering Petrunin, a Red Army man who had already shown resourcefulness and a gift for leadership, to lead a counter-attack. Herself, she quickly mounted her horse, and heedless of the enemy fire, sped to the guns, followed by one of the men. A machine-gun behind some birches killed her horse, but the Red Army man hurriedly gave her his and settled with the enemy, while Vera dashed off to the battery.

"Why aren't you firing?"

The men looked somewhat embarrassed and answered that there was no commander.

The exact words of the command the young girl did not know or, maybe, she could not remember them in the heat of the moment, as she gave the command:

"Let off fire!"

Afterwards many a merry laugh was caused by the memory of that "Let off." But that was afterwards. Then, at the awful moment itself, three guns and seven mine-throwers, in obedience to the command of the young heroine, opened fire on the enemy, and they were driven off. Vera had the guns moved into the cover of the forest, and then wondered what to do next. The Germans had withdrawn, and the ground was strewn with wounded—Russian and German. "Chin up!" Vera whispered to herself, and found five German soldiers and an officer barring her way back to the forest outposts. Her horse wounded, Vera slipped to the ground, vicious faces neared hers, heavy soldier hands gripped her throat, blows rained on her, one of them beating out her teeth. Her eyes darkened, her ears sang, but through it all, one thought beat in her brain: "Better death than capture! Better death than capture!"

Summoning up her last strength, she drove out with her left fist. There was a cry of pain and one of the faces disappeared. A rifle butt descended on her head, she fell, and her last memory was fighting desperately on the ground.

Some of Vera's men came up in the nick of time to drive off the Germans. They bandaged her as best they could, and she resumed the command.

As soon as she had recovered somewhat from the tussle, Vera and her detachment were again on the move eastward, feeling their way without maps, with only a compass to guide them. They travelled by night under cover of darkness, resting in the daytime, sleeping the sleep of deep exhaustion on the swampy ground. Only when quite sure that there was no enemy near did they dare light a fire, and then, sitting huddled as close as possible to the flames, the men

would strive to forget their hunger and cold and danger by singing the songs of their homelands, one after the other. Merry ditties seemed to lack something, but the long, drawn out songs which contain all the spaciousness and enduring strength of the Russian steppe and the broad reaches of Mother Volga seemed to bring peace and fortitude to these sorely tried men.

The forest ended, open fields and ploughlands lay before the detachment. As they lay concealed in the bushes, they could hear the barking of dogs and smell the smoke of fires. But whom were these fires warming—their rightful owners or German brigands? Vera sent out scouts, and then the detachment settled down to the most difficult task of all: waiting.

"Nothing worse than waiting," groaned one of the men.

"Don't grouse!" snapped Vera. "It's not a wedding you're going to nor yet a birthday party. Better look to your weapons."

Two hours passed, another half hour, then Vera with determined bearing, rose, picked out seven of the men and went off herself to investigate. Rain had been falling since morning, and they had to crawl through thick sticky mud to the first gardens, where they stopped to listen. Dogs were barking here and there, and a few shots rang out from the far end of the village. The scouts crawled silently into the yard. A faint light could be seen through the half open door. Silently Vera led the way to the entrance, lay down on the threshold and looked into the cottage. After a few moments she distinguished a woman lying face downwards on the bed, her kerchief had fallen off and her grey hair fell in disordered strands about her shoulders, while sobs shook her whole body. Though muffled by the pillow, Vera could just distinguish the words, as she groaned rather than spoke:

"Oh! What shall I do? What shall I do now? My lad, my own boy, what have they done to you?"

Vera raised herself on her elbow and turning to the men behind her, said softly:

"Clear enough, comrades, the Germans have been in this house. The village is in their hands."

She swiftly gave orders for two of the men to return to the forest and place the mortar and machine-gun so as to command the village, the others to take up their positions in the yard and the barn. She herself entered the cottage and halted, as a child's trembling voice asked her:

"Are you the Red Army?"

Vera looked around her. The sobbing woman was still lying on the bed, but a child was nowhere to be seen. But she had certainly heard that voice.

"We're Russians, the Red Army," she replied quickly, "Where are you?" The green ribbons on her plaits, which had escaped from under her helmet with its red star, caught the weak light of the lamp.

"I'm frightened," was the reply. "Are you a soldier or a girl?"

Following the direction of the voice, Vera looked under the bench between the table and the wall, and saw a little boy of about seven lying there. Fearing to startle him, she made no move, but said softly:

"Don't be frightened, come out here. I'm one of your own people, and a Red Army commander. Where are the Germans?"

The boy crawled out from under the bench, and in an instant his fear had changed to childish curiosity. A thousand questions were trembling on the tip of his tongue.

The old woman on the bed replied instead of the boy. Raising her grey head, she said quickly in a voice hoarse with weeping:

"Get away quick! The Germans are here, they're placing a machine-gun on my roof now. Look, there are their greatcoats. . ."

She pointed to the wall dividing the kitchen from the clean living room. The little boy, realizing that this was not the time for questions, took up the story:

"I'm Vitya Golubtsov," he said, falling over himself in his haste. "The Germans came this morning. They shot Granny's Petya, because he didn't feed their horses. She's my Granny. And. . . my Mummie. . ."

He suddenly burst into loud weeping, and sobbed:

"They killed my Mummie. . . my Mummie. . ."

Vera swiftly caught him to her and kissed the top of his head.

"Quiet, Vitenka, quiet," she wnisper-

ed. "Quiet, little one. . . Where are the Germans? On the roof? And their things are there, behind the partition? Tell me all about it afterwards. . . afterwards."

She beckoned the men into the cottage and dashed behind the partition. German greatcoats and officers' haversacks were lying about everywhere. The scouts hastily ramsacked the pockets and took all the papers. Just as they were about to leave the cottage they met the Germans returning from the attic. The scouts shot down two of them and a fierce hand to hand fight began. Other German soldiers, alarmed by the sound of the firing, came running from all sides. But the dense autumn darkness proved a good friend to the Red Army men, and after killing nine of the enemy, they slipped away to the edge of the forest, leaving the Germans tearing about, firing at their own shadows in their panic, not knowing where the blow might be coming from, or whether they were attacked by regulars or partisans. Flames burst from the cottages, the dark shadows of the Germans standing out sharply in the angry light, looked as if they were performing some crazy dance which soon proved to be a dance of death as Vera's detachment began to mow them down from the darkness beyond.

By dawn the enemy had been driven from the village. The men hastily cleared the streets of German dead, rolled the heavy machine-gun back into the forest and started preparing a meal in the field kitchen, while the village people brought out all the best that was left them to offer their deliverers. Meanwhile Vera made her way to the end cottage where the skirmish with the Germans had started. She feared for the boy, and with all her heart pitied the old woman whose son Petya had been killed.

The thought of Vitya reminded her of her own little brother Nellick, and as she recalled his last letter—the last, so long ago!—she sighed, then glanced round involuntarily: no one must see a shadow on her face! He had evidently felt very important writing to his big sister at the front. "Vera!" he had written. "I advise you to give the Germans what for. And when you see the commander, ask him to take me, even if it's only as a partisan. . ."

"The dear little silly!" she thought. "I'm giving the Germans what for, all right. I got seven of them today, and if I added up all I've killed. . . Not the time for that now! I want to rest a little, to think of pleasant things. Of Mummie, of my family, of my little brother. And of life when Hitler's defeated. What was it he asked? 'Even if it's only as a partisan.' Not so easy being a partisan, little brother. When the war's over, you'll read in your history books how hard it all was."

Vera's beaming face surprised the old woman in the end cottage as she met the girl on the porch. She too bore herself bravely, but her calm was that of exhaustion after the grief which had torn her. She spoke and moved mechanically, but her mother's heart was wrenched and aching with an anguish more searing than that which finds relief in sobs and groans. Vera understood this well, she put her arm round the old woman, and pressed her close.

"I know, Granny, how my mother would have cried if I'd been killed like your boy," she said. "Not in battle, but just uselessly like that. . . They're like savage beasts, the Hitlerites. Come into the cottage and tell me all about him. What was he like, your boy Petya?"

With her arm round the old woman, Vera led her into the cottage, sat down beside her on the bench and questioned her about all that had happened, tactfully sparing her feelings and comforting her as though it had indeed been her own mother. At first the old woman looked askance at her and seemed to find speech difficult, but as they talked her tears gradually began flowing, refreshing, healing tears, not like the dry sobs which had shaken her during the night.

"Thank you, my dear," she said after some time. "I feel better now. My own daughter couldn't have comforted me more. How old are you? So tall and sensible, and yet your face is quite young!"

With a sudden spring Vera jumped up from the bench, clapping her hands.

"Granny, just think, you've reminded me, it's my birthday today!" she cried. "I'm not a bit young, I'm twenty-one today. I'm quite grown up now!"

The door opened and the head of Vera's elderly sergeant-major appeared in the opening. Today, his usually rather sombre face with the bushy brows bore the traces of the general satisfaction.

"What are you shouting about, Green Ribbons?" he asked. When off duty the men, especially the elder ones, spoke to Vera with an affectionate lack of ceremony that was at the same time respectful. Fate had made her commander, and notwithstanding her youth, she knew where to draw the line.

"Something to shout about, Stepanych!" she answered merrily. "I've come of age—I'm twenty-one today. Now you'll all have to toe the line and treat me with respect!"

"I can see them doing anything but that! But we'll find a birthday present for you, commander. . . Listen, there's a boy sitting here in the passage, wants to come in to you, but he's scared."

Vera glanced into the passage.

"Vityushka, what are you afraid of?" she asked. "Come along. Just a minute, I'll take off my coat. . . I never seem to have time to take my things off. . ."

After divesting herself of greatcoat and helmet, Vera sat down on the bench and took the thin little chap onto her knee, while the old woman looked at her, affectionately murmuring:

"Just like one of my own! Picks him up as if she'd known him all her life!"

"Is this your daughter's son?" asked Vera.

"No, my niece's. It's all orphans here now. His father was killed at the front, and the Germans killed his mother here. So now he'll have to live with the old woman."

Vitya suddenly buried his head in Vera's shoulder, and burst into tears.

"What is it, Vitya, what is it?" asked Vera gently.

"Where were. . . where were you when you hadn't come here?" he sobbed. "They killed my Mummie. . ."

Vera understood what the lad was thinking, and it was with a deep sigh that she answered:

"We didn't get here in time, dear. It was difficult getting here. See, my teeth have been knocked out. . . They nearly killed me. . ." And she told him about her fight with the Germans.

Tears were running down the old woman's face, while the lad gazed at her, his wide eyes filled with fear and an unchildlike sorrow. When Vera came to the end, Vitya took up the story, already dry-eyed.

"The Germans came to us," he said, "when I was still asleep on the stove. It was in the morning. Mummie was lighting the fire. And there was a portrait of my brother, an officer, on the wall. . . and a picture of Stalin. And the Germans got as mad as mad! They tore them both off the wall and began tearing them up and stamping on them. And Mummie wanted to stop them, she shouted at the Germans, she even stamped, and then. . ." Vitya's lips trembled, but no more tears came, only his little voice seemed somehow dry. "They killed her with their bayonets," he said slowly. "Then they went away, and left her lying there on the floor. And I cried and called her: 'Mummie! Mummie!' but she didn't get up, and she never got up any more. Then Auntie Darya took me to Granny, and they shot Granny's Petya because he forgot to feed the horses. . . And I was frightened and crawled under the bench, and I lay there. I was afraid of the Germans. But you weren't afraid. . . You drove the Germans away! Don't go away and leave us any more, Auntie, please don't!" He clutched the girl's shoulders with a feverish grip and pressed his meagre little body close to her. "There's nobody else who'll protect us!"

"There's the whole Red Army, Vitya. They will help you, yes, and avenge you."

While Vera was patiently, tenderly comforting the little fellow, the sergeant-major came to ask her to come and accept a birthday present from the detachment.

Silently, without a smile, Vera followed him. The boy's trembling voice was still ringing in her ears. She gazed darkly at the detachment's "present"—seven prisoners. One of the Germans had a large sack on his shoulder with a birch cross in it. He explained through the interpreter that he was one of a special group detailed to prepare crosses for graves of the German dead. The best crosses were made of birch. They had been given orders to carry a supply with them in case their advance should bring them to a district without birches. Vera's wrath overflowed.

"Enough, you scoundrels!" she cried. "You won't have much further to advance, and the Russian forests have sufficient birch trees for all the Hitlerites, don't worry about that!"

The detachment did not stay in the village for long. As soon as they had eaten

and rested for a short time they were on their way again, toiling, fighting, stubbornly pushing on towards the main forces of the Red Army.

Serpukhov! The word sounded like music to the ears of the detachment, even as the word "land" sounded to the ears of Columbus' crew. At last they had broken through the enemy encirclement. It meant no more toiling along difficult forest paths, no more to be in constant danger of attack by stronger forces with no other units near to aid them. They had lost many of their comrades on the way and on hastily fitted up carts they dragged several seriously wounded men already in their last throes. In Serpukhov they would be attended to in the hospital. On, then, to Serpukhov!

But Vera had her own ideas.

"I'm not leading you into the town like this," she decided. "Weary, dirty, hungry as you are. We've not been defeated, we've fought our way out. We'll halt and rest up in this village, and make ourselves look a bit respectable. I'll go to the town and arrange for the wounded and get food for you."

Vera hurried to headquarters in Serpukhov, where for the first time in her life she was guilty of a breach of discipline by bursting into the commander's room without waiting for permission: wounded men were in need of immediate attention. She drew herself up smartly to attention and reported, clearly and rapidly, how she had brought her unit through after being surrounded by the enemy. The commander swiftly gave the necessary orders, and Vera dashed back to the village, followed by Red Cross conveyances for the wounded. Having seen them safely in hospital, she went to get supplies, and by evening her men were gaily unloading the cigarettes, butter, bread, sausage, meat and wine.

"Green Ribbons never lets us down!" cried one of them.

"We've got the right kind of commander!"

"We used to say our commander was like a father to us, now we have a mother instead!"

"Might be our sister, but she answers as both father and mother!"

The sergeant-major had a suggestion.

"Now we've got all this," he nodded at the growing pile of provisions, "we ought to be celebrating your birthday again!"

"Why not?" said the girl, laughing gaily. As he turned to go, she caught his sleeve. "Listen, pal," she added, "I've a confession to make. Today's the nineteenth of November—a memorable day, the day we got through to Serpukhov. And I was born on November 19th. Back there at the village I added a few days on—I had to do something to distract that old woman's attention from her grief."

"So we'll celebrate again! Only we shan't bring you prisoners this time, we'll have songs and dancing."

There wasn't time for much of that however before night fell and a watch had to be set on earth and sky. The Germans were making their push for Moscow, and paratroops might make their appearance at any moment.

In the cottage she had chosen for headquarters, Vera slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, her head on the table, without even the strength to undress.

For two days the detachment rested in the village, cleaning themselves up. The sleep and good food worked a miracle in their appearance. Even the horses began to put on flesh. On the third day Vera gave orders to fall in in marching order.

Smartly the ranks of the detachment swung through the streets of the town, Vera leading them on horseback, a gallant figure. At the place designated she handed over the command.

Vera Krylova, twenty-one years of age, received the Order of the Red Banner for leading her troops out of encirclement and was promoted to captain of the Guards.

Many a time she looked death in the face without flinching. In one of the December battles she got a serious concussion and was sent to the field hospital, but by January, 1942, she was back with her unit, and was immediately sent with a ski patrol into the enemy rear.

This was a difficult assignment. Skin cracked, eyelids were frozen together by the hard frost, blizzards blinded one. At the approaches to a certain town the commander was wounded by enemy fire, and Vera again took over. Almost immediately she too received a bullet wound in the shoulder. For a moment everything swam before her eyes, but then she pulled herself together, and continued to lead her

patrol into the town, where she captured twelve prisoners in the street fighting. Her comrades were just in time to catch her as she swayed and fell, and sent her off to hospital.

Just as soon as she could persuade the doctors to discharge her, Vera was back on the battlefield; but a bullet wound in the leg soon sent her back again.

"The Germans have taken a fancy to me," she joked, white-lipped, fighting down the pain as the wound was dressed. "But they've found the wrong one! I'm not easily killed, and I'll settle accounts with a few more of them yet!"

While still in hospital, the girl learned that her valour had earned her a second decoration.

Vera entered her second year in the firing line. But her ears needed rest from the sound of firing, her eyes from gazing on death, she needed to recuperate from her wounds. Vera was summoned to Moscow.

Moscow! Her delight knew no bounds. To meet those comrades whom she had only read about, to see the Red Square, the theatres, the museums. But she knew nothing of another great joy awaiting her: a meeting with her mother.

In far-off Novosibirsk Ninel Krylov, a fourteen-year-old lad, tall for his years, with snapping black eyes, was dancing about excitedly and shouting:

"We'll fly to Moscow in an aeroplane! Mum, we must fly! Oh, it's fine, isn't it fine, Mum?"

Antonina Denissovna, thinner and paler than of old, but still youthful-looking, stretched out her hands to keep off the wildly capering boy.

"Don't jump around like that, you're making me dizzy. Wait a bit, calm down, first we've got to write to Moscow."

"Of course! Only see that we don't go by train, Mum, but in an aeroplane. They said we could, didn't they?"

"Yes, yes. Of course, it will be quicker."

Antonina Denissovna was sitting on a sofa in the Hotel Metropole, Moscow, almost afraid of her own happiness. She seemed in a dream. There was the tall figure sitting opposite her with Vera's green eyes and thick lashes, her merry smile and the two thick plaits. . . . but below it was a smart military uniform with the four wound stripes, and the Orders and the Guards badge standing out on the neutral colour of the material. Soon another was to be added to them. The mother could hardly believe it was all real. Looking more closely into the young face, she saw the front teeth missing.

"Vera, what happened to your teeth?"

"The Germans bashed them out. I'll tell you all about it later." And Vera seized her mother and swung her round the room just as she had done as a little girl, while Nellick laughed and clapped his hands. Yes, it was all real enough, and the little family gathering became gay and noisy.

Late that evening the telephone in Vera's room rang loud and long. And somehow she at once had the feeling that this was no ordinary call, that something was coming which would affect her whole life.

"Yes, yes. . . very good. . . I understand. Good."

She had suddenly become very pale, then a bright colour flamed in her cheeks and died down again, to rise and spread again to her very hair. Carefully, as though it might break, she laid down the receiver.

"Mummie," she said in a small voice, filled with a deep excitement, "I'm to meet Stalin."

And the men at the front saw Vera Krylova again, already major of the Guards. Like a symbol of the youth of our country she races over the battlefield on horseback, her dark plaits with the green ribbons streaming behind her in the wind. And when the fighting is fiercest, she always carries in her mind the memory of Stalin, and his fatherly kindness during her meeting with him. With this memory she fears no wounds, no dangers, however desperate. Vera Krylova is inspired with a burning love for her people and a raging hatred for its enemies. Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin is her teacher. And the will and strength of the youth of his epoch is invincible!

LYDIA SEIFULLINA

The decision had been made, the plan worked out in detail, and when it was discovered that nobody could carry it out except Sashko, the Old Man ordered them to send for the Champion.

"Champion! Champion!" echoed softly along the dark beach.

"Here's the Champion," came the immediate response in a youthful, somewhat husky voice.

The cliff seemed to open up, a yellow light flashed out from the opening in the glow of which the stocky figure of a man appeared. The sail which covered the entrance to the cave dropped back into its place and the beach was once again plunged in impenetrable darkness. There was absolute silence broken only by the soft plash of little waves on the shore.

The cave was low and not very large, just enough room for the commander, the commissar and the chief of staff. The commander was known as the "Old Man," despite the fact that he was only born in 1917. The commissar they called "Midshipman," although that was a rank he had held at the time of the *Potemkin* [1] episode, had commanded a gunboat during the Civil War and for twenty years since then had been running a fishing smack in a fisherman's cooperative. The chief of staff was also the commander of the demolition squad: he had come to the partisan column straight from the Opera House where he had been a pyrotechnist and now bore the latter title as a nickname. The Old Man, the Midshipman and the Pyrotechnist stared silently and sternly at the young man with the forelock who was standing before them.

The Champion's natural element was the water, his trade swimming: crawl or breast stroke, distance, time, sprint or endurance.

The name on his passport was Alexander Karpovich Golubenko, but even his own mother called him only Champion.

"Well," began the Old Man, merrily, "you, Champion, have got to do your stuff with a vengeance."

"Aye, aye, Comrade Commander!" answered the Champion, seamanlike.

"You've probably heard of the submarine-tanker?" put in the Midshipman, sadly.

"Heard of it?" The Champion felt hurt. "After all the talk there's been about it!"

The Pyrotechnist twisted round excitedly and whispered thoughtfully:

"If we could blow it up! What a show that would be!"

The Champion felt that he had been invited to a conference, and this flattered his youthful pride. Clearing his throat and selecting his deepest bass notes, he said authoritatively:

"We have neither divers nor diving dresses."

"It must be done!" exclaimed the Old Man, the Midshipman and the Pyrotechnist in unison, "our people ask us to do it and have given us all the necessary information. The decision has been taken and the plan worked out."

"Submarine-tanker," of course, was a somewhat pretentious name. The thing itself was really much simpler, and "submarine-tanker" was a purely conventional term. The Germans had built an aerodrome on a spit of land jutting out into the sea. Bomber-planes left this aerodrome to attack the front line and wreak destruction among Soviet communications in the areas immediately behind the lines. The Soviet air force had frequently bombed German aircraft on the ground and had set fire to their petrol supplies in this way paralysing their aerodrome. The Germans could not bury their petrol tanks in the ground for the promontory was solid granite; so they decided to lower their fuel tanks down to the sea-bed. They filled a huge gasometer with petrol and sank it in the bay, laying a pipe line under the sea from the tank to the aerodrome. Soviet bombers appeared over the sea every night. They plastered the bay with depth charges, but under the Soviet airmen there was nothing but a desert of water and they had no chance to aim at the spot where the gasometer had been sunk. Soviet bombers dived down over the water but were unable to locate the tiny buoy, the only indication of the place where the wretched submarine-tanker lay.

[1] Revolt on the battle-ship *Potemkin* broke out in June, 1905.

The commander of the partisan column had decided to place a signal light on the water above the gasometer.

It was no easy matter to fix up a light at sea, at a point ten kilometres from the coast held by the partisans and five hundred metres from the Germans' coast defences! The light had to be kept burning right under the Germans' noses until the Soviet bombers arrived! . .

The Midshipman sighed sadly. Only the Pyrotechnist was excitedly fussing about; he had never run across such a problem even at the Opera House.

Orders, however, are orders. The Pyrotechnist suggested a means of carrying out the plan by placing an ordinary five-watt electric lamp on the buoy, lit up by a motor-car accumulator supported on floats alongside. So that the Germans would not see it from the coast, the Pyrotechnist fixed the lamp inside a light-proof cone; the ray of light would then only be visible from above. Under these circumstances the affair was quite simple; one had only to swim to the German coast, put the accumulator in position and light the lamp.

"Is such a thing possible in principle?" asked the Old Man with interest.

"People have swum across the English Channel. . ." said the Champion, evasively.

"How many kilometres is it across the English Channel?" the Old Man was curious to know.

"About forty. . ." answered the Midshipman, unwillingly.

"How far can you swim, Champion?"

The Champion blushed in confusion.

"I've swum twelve. . . Ten's nothing to me."

"You'll have to swim twenty," the Midshipman reminded him in a tragic whisper. "Ten there and ten back."

The Champion heaved a deep sigh and turned his eyes away:

"Coming back I can take things easy. There's no need to hurry. I can lie on my back, paddle along, rest and then go on. . ."

"You won't freeze? You won't get cramp?"

The Champion hissed disdainfully through his teeth. Did they think he was like the young lady from the "Swallow's Nest" Sanatorium? He would take a knife with him and if he did get cramp—a knick in his leg, the blood would run out, and he would never even know that he had had cramp. . .

"Order them to issue me," ordered the Champion in a deep bass, "some kind of fat, enough to smear me with from head to foot: a good layer of grease warms you up in the water like a fur coat. And let me fasten a thermos flask of hot wine to my belt. And some chocolate would be useful, about half a kilogram. . ."

"Chocolate—that's not much!" sighed the Midshipman sadly. "Eat pickled cucumbers, sauerkraut, goat's-milk cheese. . ."

"They're no use," objected the Champion authoritatively, glad of the opportunity to show his erudition. "The food must be nourishing, contain calories and vitamins and not too heavy to be carried."

"Wouldn't fresh butter suit you?" asked the Old Man. "The lads brought some from the shore yesterday."

"The very thing!" said the Champion joyfully. "Fresh butter is not a heavy food, it's nourishing and contains calories and vitamins."

"That's enough," the Old Man advised them gaily. "Establish a record, Champion, and have done with it."

The four of them went out of the cave and began preparing the Champion. It was early on a summer's night. Little waves softly lapped the shore. It was still a long time till three o'clock.

The Champion undressed. The Old Man himself smeared him with porpoise fat. The Midshipman provided light for them with a dynamo-torch. He squeezed the lever and the torch whined angrily, lighting up in the darkness the Champion's somewhat gaunt and muscular torso. The whining of the torch died away and the three figures again disappeared in the darkness. The Pyrotechnist brought the lamp and the motor-car accumulator from the cave.

"That's no good!" exclaimed the Champion, looking at the accumulator, his voice rising to a youthful soprano. "I'll drown after two kilometres with that thing. . . A motor-car accumulator weighs much more than one kilogram."

The discouraged Pyrotechnist did not answer. The disappointed Old Man and the Midshipman were silent. The wavelets whispered faintly as they lapped

the shore. The dynamo-torch in the Midshipman's hand whined and went out.

The Champion took the torch from the Midshipman.

"Won't this do?" he asked.

"The light's too weak," sighed the Pyrotechnist, "they may not see it from above. . . And what's more it only burns when it's in your hands, when you press it. No use at all!"

"What d'you mean, they won't see it?" asked the Midshipman indignantly. "They flashed a signal from Ai-Petri to Yayla! A kilometre as the crow flies. In Sevastopol they sent morse signals across the bay. . ."

"Quite true," put in the Old Man. "I can guarantee it at five hundred yards. Only you need an ordinary torch, a pocket torch with a battery. It's a weak light, but you light it and then get well out of the way!"

An ordinary pocket torch was produced and carefully wrapped up in a fish bladder.

"Now then, Sashko!" The Old Man embraced the Champion tenderly, smothering himself in porpoise oil. "I'll see you off."

"All right, let go the rope," said the Midshipman and kissed the Champion.

The Champion sighed deeply. Then he took the dynamo-torch from the Midshipman's hands and stuck it under a belt that already had a knife, a thermos flask of wine and a pot of fresh butter dangling from it.

"I'll take this as well, just in case. . ."

With an exclamation the Champion sprang into the air a couple of times, took a run and plunged into the water. The waves closed over him; he dived up a few yards from the beach, his head like a black ball in the sea, then immediately disappeared into the black foam of the waters.

The Champion swam on changing over from crawl to breast. When he felt that he had put yet another kilometre behind him, he turned over on his back and rested for a few seconds. The great, dark bowl of the sky spread over him, generously sprinkled with stars. The swell rocked the lad's gaunt body and the stars swayed over his head, planets and worlds swayed to and fro. The Champion was alone in this great waste of waters, alone in a whole world, a world so colossal, so unattainable that it scared him and he wanted to sing in a loud voice to drive away feelings of horror and elation. The Champion rolled over rapidly on his belly and began swimming again, first breast then crawl. . .

To be out there at night face to face with a mighty element is awe-inspiring and the feeling of helplessness and insignificance might make him lose consciousness, drive him mad. The Champion, however, was not inclined to philosophize and was accustomed to ponder only over absolutely concrete things. In the final analysis this was not a bad training. He had swum across Sevastopol Bay before. Now he could boldly set out across the Gelenjik Strait. And there also—from Kerch to Taman. Then the time would come when he would go to the English Channel, the Straits of Dover. . . Then, a few years later he would set up an unbeatable world record. . .

By the time the thermos flask was half empty, the Champion had a clear view of the broken line of cliffs in the east. It was now not more than a kilometre to the German coast. Another five hundred yards and he should be somewhere near the buoy. The Champion had already begun to lose his strength, he began to breath with difficulty, his muscles hardened, a horrible shivering seized his body. . .

The Champion lay on his back for about three minutes, swallowed about half a pound of butter and half a glass of wine and swam on with a swift breast stroke: his coat of porpoise fat did not keep him very warm, the shivering became more persistent.

The Champion turned a little to the right, a little to the left, turned back, again swam eastwards—that devil of a buoy should be around somewhere!

Suddenly the buoy popped up right in front of his nose. The Champion's heart stood still, then began to palpitate furiously and joyously: now all he had to do was light the torch, wrap it round with the fish bladder so that the battery would not get wet, fix it in the black cone between the two floats and then get away as quickly as possible before the Soviet bombers arrived to plaster the bay with depth bombs.

The Champion lifted his head. The

stars still hung as high up in the black heavens. Dead, black night held the whole universe in its grasp. The outline of the cliffs in the east, however, was already lighting up. Dawn would soon break, so he had to hurry.

Suddenly the Champion stopped working, even the shivering stopped; a horrible thought struck him: the waves would betray him. The Champion drew himself up as tense as a violin string, then lay on the water, dead still. There could be no doubt about it: the outline of the cliffs came into sight and then disappeared again. The swell increased and from far out at sea huge rollers were coming in with great black gulfs between them. The buoy disappeared in those gulfs and was then raised again on the crest of a wave. . . If the floats with the black cone were fastened alongside the buoy, the cone would tip over at the moment when a roller passed and the Germans on shore would see the rays of the torch. . . The torch must not be lit too soon!

Just at that very moment the wind carried sounds of a distant tense whine. Soviet aircraft flying towards their target!

There was now no time for reflection: the Champion must either light the torch and get away immediately, or get away immediately without lighting it and without giving the bombers their target. . . Bright lights shot up in several places on shore, white rays shot up into the sky, ran back and forth, parted company and again crossed as the searchlights opened the battle. Short, sharp barks, brief spurts of flame rising from the earth, and the Ack-Ack guns got into action. Then all at once up above a thick cluster of red and blue lights burst out followed by a hail of tracer bullets.

The Soviet aircraft appeared much more quickly than one would have expected: their shadows darted rapidly across the carpet of stars, dodging the anti-aircraft shells. Now they were flying low, almost on the surface of the water. This, however, was only for a second. The bombers raced upwards again. Now they would dive.

The Champion threw aside the cone and seized his dynamo-torch. Choosing a moment immediately after the anti-aircraft batteries had fired, he began, with all his strength, pressing, releasing, pressing, releasing the lever of the dynamo. He could not hear the whirr of the dynamo through the roar of the cannon and the rattle of the machine-guns, but the point of light sent its little ray upwards, and there in the black waters, lower than the rays of the searchlights, it showed a tiny, but unexpectedly brilliant light. The Champion pressed the lever harder and harder, and the point of light became ever brighter. . .

At that moment a black silhouette, lit up in the crossed rays of the searchlights, hung in the heavens. The searchlights had caught an aeroplane. That lasted but a second, however. The aircraft dropped like a stone, rushing away from the point where the searchlights had fixed it. A furious howl made itself heard through the gunfire, grew nearer, louder. A Soviet bomber was diving.

The Champion kept on pressing the lever of the torch. A tiny spot of light glowed amidst the stormy, black waves, but it seemed to the Champion that his hands were flaming fire, lighting up the whole bay, the whole sea, the whole world. . .

. . . A huge column of water shot up suddenly out of the sea as though it would strike at the black sky and split it.

Then a second column arose, a column of roaring, raging brilliant flame.

That was the end of the submarine oil tank.

The Champion had established a world record that will never be broken.

GEORGE SMOLICH

BOGDAN THE ELUSIVE

Picture to yourself a small town somewhere in the Ukraine. A tranquil summer's day. The Herr Gebietskommissar (the German area commissar) sits at home, at ease in his slippers, enjoying the thoughts of how fate, generally speaking, has smiled on him, snatched him from that inferno of war out there in the east and put him here, a thousand kilometres from the front,

where his sole concern is to confiscate from the population bread, butter, cereals and other highly nutritious food and despatch it to Germany; of how really fine it is in this town taken on the whole: there are no aerial bombings and no partisans; and if there is any worry, then it is with sending people to Germany: the inhabitants refuse to go, they hide in the woods, and five or ten of them had to be hanged in the market square, as a lesson to others.

And Herr "Gebiets" takes it comfortably, sipping his coffee and thumbing documents and papers, now and again throwing a glance through the window. Suddenly a strange noise reaches the ears of the "Gebiets," muffled cries and shouts; then a single rifle shot. The adjutant sent out to learn what was the matter returns as pale as a ghost, his teeth chattering with fright. All he can pronounce are two words: "He's here!" The Kommandant jumps to his feet and grabs his sub-machine-gun. At that moment a hefty kick sends the door flying wide open and a more than odd looking group appears on the threshold. The newcomers include men dressed in the uniforms of German gendarmes, even wearing orders, and in the uniforms of SS-men; others are neatly clad in civilian clothes of Lodz-made cloth, still others wear Russian shoulder-tabs, while some are dressed in embroidered Ukrainian peasant shirts.

Thirty minutes later the "Gebiets" is already dangling from a poplar tree not far from the Kommandant's office and the people who had so unexpectedly appeared are busy working at the warehouses distributing among the population all the produce which the Germans had looted. And sixty minutes after this a German motorcycle detachment, urgently summoned to lend help, arrives to find the town as calm and as imperturbable as ever. Everything is quiet. As if nothing at all had happened, except for the "Gebiets" who swings in the noose, and the small hinterland garrison which has either been wiped out or taken prisoner. On the papers which lie on the table in the Kommandant's office—reports of the progress of despatch of labour to Germany—is a pencilled note:

"Be seeing you again soon. Bogdan."

The wires are humming, and one "polizei" shouts in the receiver to another "polizei":

"He's here! He's here!"

But Bogdan has already disappeared, vanished into thin air. After a certain period of time he will reappear somewhere far, far from the little town just described, and he will dynamite the railway tracks, or attack the railway station, derail and wreck a train, or burst into a town and destroy enemy supply dumps.

Bogdan's group is a mobile, sortie partisan detachment. It is on the go all the time and its active operations are not confined to one area or region. This detachment has covered many a thousand kilometres in its battle actions. It has made long gruelling marches, appearing at the most unexpected spots, delivering a lightning-swift blow, and again vanishing from sight.

More than once have the Germans thought that at last they have him trapped in their pincers. They closed these pincers. Cautiously and methodically, step by step, they drew their ring tighter, combing the woods where, according to their information, that elusive Ukrainian, Bogdan, was sheltering. But when one such operation, planned and organized most carefully, according to all laws, rules and regulations, with clockwork precision and accuracy — when this operation seemed to be drawing to a successful close, all that the members of the punitive expedition found were empty tin cans, traces of campfires on the grass, and an old goat, with a note pinned to his wool:

"Be seeing you again soon. Bogdan."

Meanwhile Bogdan himself is now several hundred kilometres away from here, and, to the music of accordions and gramophones, he makes a triumphal entry into some backwoods Ukrainian village, jubilantly welcomed by all the inhabitants. He arranges here reports on current topics, dance evenings, and sometimes even stages performances. His propagandists go round the village huts, giving topical chats to the population, and from the church pulpit the priest reads out to his congregation the latest communiqué of the Soviet Information Bureau and the message of Metropolitan Sergei.

A propos of priests. Among Bogdan's troopers is a priest who has joined the

partisans. He is an old man, hailing from Kiev. After the Germans occupied Kiev, he left for a remote, out-of-the-way little village. From the church pulpit, quoting texts from the Bible, in parable form he mercilessly flayed and branded the Germans. News of this quaint interpretation of the Scripture spread far and wide, and peasants from all the neighbourhood began attending his mass services. When the partisan detachment entered the village, towards the end of the morning service, Bogdan heard the priest's sermon—and this time not in parable form—stigmatizing the Germans, and calling outright on his congregation to smite them and burn their supply dumps. And this was how the priest came to join the partisans, suiting his word to the deed.

There was a time when the Germans were within an inch of capturing Bogdan, and the partisans refer to this enemy operation as the "wet sack." This is what happened.

That spring Bogdan had taken up a position at the confluence of two big rivers, far behind the German lines. When navigation opened he began sinking steamers, barges and other craft plying along the rivers, sending them to the bottom with cannon and armour-piercing rifle fire. In a short time he had already sunk fourteen steamers. Traffic on the river came to a standstill. The Germans equipped a punitive expedition consisting of armoured motor-launches. But learning of the Germans' intentions beforehand, the partisans were fully prepared, and the enemy launches went the way of the other craft—to the bottom of the river, together with about four hundred Germans. Matters attained such a pitch that the news reached Berlin. By special order of the highest circles an expedition was equipped, consisting at first of one division and later augmented with another two rifle regiments and one armoured regiment. The Germans succeeded in unexpectedly closing in and Bogdan found himself locked inside a triangle formed by the confluence of the two rivers—in a "wet sack."

The Germans attacked and for two days and two nights the partisans fought them off, repulsing one tank attack after another. The enemy however had an overwhelming superiority in forces and the sack was being drawn ever tighter. Bogdan seemed to be done for. He found a way out though, by felling the woods. The men of the detachment took turns: returning from the forward line where they had staved off one attack after another, they changed over from armour-piercing rifles and tommy-guns to saws and axes and started felling trees, sawing them into beams and carrying them down to the river, at night. Then they would return to the forward line to relieve the men at the guns and machine-guns and the latter would thereupon continue with timber felling and sawing.

This was backbreaking toil, but it was the only way out of the situation. On the third night, under cover of darkness, in a few hours Bogdan laid a road across the river, wholly unexpected by the Germans, landed his raiding party and descended with a sudden crushing blow on the slender chain of Germans protecting the further bank. The whole detachment broke through in safety and got away, together with its supply train. Reaching the partisan camp at last, all that the Germans found was the traditional goat, bearing the traditional message:

"Be seeing you again soon. Bogdan."

Bogdan's fighting operations have taken him far and wide. He has been in action in West-Ukraine, dynamiting bridges, wrecking enemy troop- and munition-trains, wiping out German garrisons; he has been eyewitness of the savage mistreatment of the Ukrainians and Poles by the Germans and saw for himself with what ardent hopes and eager impatience the population of West-Ukraine awaits the coming of the Red Army.

Bogdan has been close to Kiev too, and some of his troopers even made their way right into the city. They saw the one-time smooth metalling of the roads and pavements all torn up and the paint on the houses of this erstwhile lovely spick and span city peeling off and falling into neglect; they saw its inhabitants, plundered by the invaders. Bogdan's intrepid troopers viewed the evening life of Kiev, with its "Cafés for German officers," with its gambling dens and its houses for German officials (on the doors of these buildings hang notices: "Russians are warned

to keep away. Penalty—death by shooting") and women wearing a phosphorescent badge on their breast in the form of a lantern on the background of a door—tag of a prostitute.

The partisans have covered many a long road through the woods and across the steppes. They made their way far behind the enemy lines, their sorties always unexpected and audacious, their trails and roads inscrutable for the Germans. And it was with good reason that after each major operation the various functionaries of the German administration and police for dozens of miles around would all flee helter-skelter, homeward bound for Germany, taking with them their wives and children brought from Germany and the pigs, cows, poultry and furniture they had looted in the Ukraine. The more cunning of the German "Gebietskommissars" would even send their "ambassadors" to Bogdan, promising him an "armistice" if only he will shift off to another area under the administration of a neighbouring colleague and stop molesting the negotiating "Gebiets."

In the winter these ever roaming partisans would put up for the night in villages and in the summer they bivouacked in the woods in rude tents made of tree branches or of parachutes.

Anyone seeing this formidable column on the march would be at a loss to place this detachment straightway. More than half of Bogdan's troopers were dressed in German uniforms, part of them wore civilian clothes tailored somewhere in Lutsk or Rovno and there was even a peppering of Slovakian and Polish uniforms among them. And in the supply train was a goodly stock of apparel suitable for all kinds of partisan operations: SS full-dress uniforms, Italian army breeches, Ukrainian embroidered shirts and civilian jackets.

It is with good reason that when Bogdan approaches some village or other the police find themselves in a state of perplexity for a short while.

"Partisans!" one polizei cries out to another. "Quick! 'Phone the Kommandant's office, raise the alarm!"

"What are you talking about? Partisans! How come partisans to be here? Impossible! If we raise a false alarm, we'll get it in the neck from them!"

But very soon infallible proof is forthcoming as to who it was that had actually arrived, and both polizeis—the cautious and the incautious one—are dangling side by side on a birch-tree.

Besides his everyday operations on booby-trapping roads, blowing up bridges, raiding motor-vehicles, small garrisons and railway stations, Bogdan sometimes undertakes major campaigns. Each such campaign receives its special name among the self-appointed annalists in this detachment. Here are some details of one such operation, referred to as "The Partisan Cannes."

Appearing suddenly at the right bank of the river, having secretly forded across two big rivers, Bogdan and his detachment entered a district almost untouched by war. In the district centre was stationed a German garrison numbering 400. And Bogdan decided to take this town. One night they cut off all the roads and the next morning, wholly unexpected for the Germans, the detachment burst into the town. The fighting continued for twenty-four hours, the town shaking to the thunder of artillery and the spatter of machine-guns. The partisans forged steadily ahead, capturing one street after another. The battle ended with complete annihilation of the encircled enemy garrison. So powerful and sudden was the blow that a rumour spread to the effect that a regular formation of the bolshevik army had broken through and for a distance of 150 kilometres to the west all Germans and area commissioners took to their heels, some even making off by plane.

Bogdan's partisan detachment includes a good number of Soviet people who had been forcibly driven off to Germany and who had escaped from servitude there. Here is the story of one of them—a girl by the name of Valya Z. Valya, who was an orphan and had been brought up in a children's home, was driven off to Germany and forced to work in an underground war factory. She began to suffer from rheumatism and though her hands and feet were painfully swollen, she was forced to continue working. Valya managed to escape and made her way across the whole of Germany and Poland. With almost nothing to eat, she plodded onward by night only, burrowing a hole in the woods and hiding by day. And it was in the woods that the partisans

found her, half dead with hunger and illness. Valya proved herself a most courageous partisan fighter. All on her own, she once brought in seventeen Slovakian soldiers, having talked them over to surrender to the partisans. She has made her way right into the heart of the German positions and spent days on end in intent observations, hidden right near German staff headquarters and even once attended a ball given by the German officers.

The men of Bogdan the Elusive's partisan detachment are all ordinary Soviet people of the most peaceable of pre-war professions. Furious rage at the enemy invader has exalted them and turned these one-time workaday townsfolk and villagers into truly remarkable people—men and women of gallant deeds and battle exploits. They smite the Germans, and hit to kill. It often happens that in those places where the Germans seem to feel themselves in relative tranquility, where the apparent peaceful calm merely covers a seething national ocean, where to the German it seems that he stands firmly on his feet and that his bullets and gallows have done their job of "pacification" — there appears Bogdan the Elusive, the avenging sword of the Ukraine!

EUGENE GABRILOVICH

BEING ALIVE

Strictly speaking, his life was over. Not merely because he was seventy-one, but because all the most important and interesting things that can possibly happen to a man, seemed to have happened to him already: left far behind were the shipbuilding yards where he had worked as an engineer; and the mines the shafts of which he was never to descend again; and that tannery, so prosaic at first glance, yet so absorbingly enticing when once he had started working at it. It seemed, there was nothing he had not turned his hand to—except, perhaps, aviation; but that, mark you, was its own fault: it came into being too late for him to take a shot at it.

And the travels he had enjoyed so much were also far behind. France, England, Italy, Austria, Germany. . . He had a knack of seeing things. It was not only machinery he saw. It all comes back to him: the great concert hall in Vienna; the sultry air of Naples; the chestnut trees in Paris, all in bloom; and those jolly and animated French—something of an urchin about every man-Jack of them; and the German officers, those swaggering turkey-cocks, with their feathers all abristle in anticipation of the war to come. He was in Berlin in 1914, just before it broke out.

He had come across many people, contracted many unexpected friendships, had his fancies and his disappointments—all this was over, too. Now he never saw anyone. But what were the things that were still left to him? Well, here was his bed in the quadrangle partitioned off from the rest of the large room by sheets of plywood; the wireless set; on the small table close by, the telephone; very few calls for himself, and a lot for a certain Ignatyich he did not know anything about. Every time he explained at length and very politely that this had been his telephone for the last seventeen years and, for the love of God, would the citizen be more careful next time in dialling the number.

And who are the people he's got around him now? The staunch and faithful friend—his wife, Nadezhda Pavlovna. Once in a blue moon Babe will rush in—what a pity she's so very busy, this nine-year-old granddaughter of his (if only he could be half so busy!). Well, there is certainly one more person, the physician, but with this one everything is always known beforehand. The topics are always the same: short of breath, emphysema, angina pectoris. Oh, that beastly angina pectoris! It means a throttler. The witty sufferer who first gave it this appropriate name really hit the mark. It does not let him make an extra gesture or take an extra breath without getting a stranglehold on him as if to remind him of its watchful presence.

Time hangs heavy, wearisome. The hour hand of the clock seems hardly to crawl. Even the minutes try to linger

more than is their due. No, when he was young the tempo was quite different. The earth is presumably spinning away very much as usual, but some fifty odd years ago it was a young Nicholas Riabov who walked it; while now, this same Riabov has to keep a horizontal position. Well, he's got enough humour in his composition to understand this.

But once in a while things come to a point when even irony is of no use. Nothing can help then—neither Babe's photos, nor Paul's postcards from the North, nor Kolya's letters from the front. This is not the angina pectoris: it is just anguish. The two are very much alike. Still, he could bear them better were it not for the strenuous times. . .

Well, he can't help it. When all's said and done, seventy-one does make something of a force majeure. If times were different, he could be content with drawing his pension, taking pride in his two boys: Volodia, the director of a factory, and Kolya, an engineer; he could rejoice at Babe's triumphs, he would indulge in reminiscences. After all his life was not wasted. He'd done a thing or two in his time. One was entitled to rest. But he drove away the past, he did not want to resign himself to a life of reflection, least of all did he want to rest.

What he did want was something to do, something vital that really mattered. Bedridden, now of all times! Oh, he could be useful still! He did his best to keep abreast of events. He avidly scanned the newspapers and hardly ever switched off the wireless. He pictured everything to himself as vividly as if he saw it all with his own eyes. He saw those Prussians just as he had seen them in the Friedrichstrasse: stuck up, inflated with conceit. Nothing short of a bullet could ever prick that conceit. He had been aware of it all along.

Days dragged on, all alike. Whatever was going on there, in the war zones—here, behind the plywood partition, everything remained the same.

In the morning, pupils usually came to Nadezhda Pavlovna. Lying in his bed he would venture to guess now and then who it was. Surely that one must be Volodia. To judge by his hesitating walk, the young gentleman was none too sure of his lessons today. Just what he thought. . . Wasn't he a lazy beggar, the young scamp! . .

Boys and girls practised their scales. He listened to them and went on with his thinking. Then the children went off. He and his wife had their rather sketchy dinner, after which she usually sat down to do the rest of her work, that of correcting the papers of her correspondence pupils. There being nothing to listen to, he would just lie and think.

Nadezhda Pavlovna did not manage to finish her work till late in the evening. They talked again before going to sleep. They had always been well posted in each other's affairs, but now there was only one kind of affairs left, hers.

"You know, Nikolenka, I've got some more letters from the front today. The pluck of these men is beyond belief! They're fighting, and yet they want to go on with their studies. You remember that working boy in Kamchatka, don't you? You felt worried because his letters had stopped. Well, his paper came this afternoon. It shows considerable progress. And what do you suppose are his plans for the future?"

In Kamchatka, it is sunrise. A young fellow is getting up to start on his daily round. He had no inkling that in Moscow, in one of the rooms of a gigantic house, two people were discussing his affairs far into the night with so much passion and good will.

. . . The idea that he too, bedridden though he was, could do something that would be helpful to the common cause, came to him unexpectedly. He was thinking of the partisan fighters and picturing them to himself very vividly, as was his wont. Here they were, just back from an operation, in their makeshift war-time home—a hut or a dugout. How damp it was and cold! How cold and tired they were! Something hot to eat before getting to sleep—that would be the very thing! But you just try to light a fire, and there will be the devil to pay: the flames and the smoke will be as good as signalling to the enemy. It's a hard life they're having, those heroes! If one could but think of some gadget that would make their life easier!

What he finally invented was unlike anything he had ever had to deal with.

It was a portable camp kitchen stove with a peculiar system. Cabbage soup and porridge could be cooked under most unfavourable conditions and tea brewed for a small group of partisans; and it would take very little time and fuel.

But there were a lot of things to consider. First of all, the contraption must be light and easy to handle; a knapsack of sorts—you'd just shoulder it and go right ahead; then, it must be smokeless; and last but not least, it must be a thermos as well as a stove.

He lay quietly thinking. He considered only the technical points of the matter: where to fit in the chimney of the stove, how to decrease its weight—no digressions into lyrics; no reveries of partisans threading their way through the woods in the dead of night; this kind of thing resulted in his getting excited and short of breath.

He worked out the device in detail, and then he took a sheet of foolscap and covered four pages with his firm handwriting.

All was ready. Now he could afford to imagine what it would be like when the partisans actually used it. Let him be short of breath now, let another attack begin—the deed was done. Well, not yet, not quite.

"Nadyusha!" he called from behind his partition. "Come here, never mind what you're busy with!"

She came and sat down, at the foot of his bed.

"Now, Nadyusha, whom do you think I shall send it to?"

"I don't know, Nikolenka; to some military office or other, I suppose."

"Stalin—that's whom I'll send it to. Here you are. And please don't prevaricate."

"I'm not going to do anything of the kind. But don't you think it would be better to choose someone who's got more time to spare?"

This peeved him.

"Will you fetch me that little book there?" He opened the booklet and sought out the familiar words. "Here you are; what did I tell you? That's what Stalin said when the war started, about the necessity for organizing partisan detachments, both foot and horse, to worry the Germans in every way."

Together they seal the envelope, and she goes out to mail the letter. He awaits her return in such a flurry that one might think that she had not merely gone to drop the letter into the mailbox just round the corner, but straight to the Kremlin to deliver it in person.

Now that the letter has been safely mailed, he is beset with misgivings.

"Look here, Nadyusha: doesn't it seem rather tactless of me to have sent it up to Joseph Vissarionovich himself?"

Now it is her turn to persuade him it is all right; she takes down the booklet with Stalin's speech, they find the familiar words and read them once more.

"And when do you suppose I can expect an answer? In two weeks or so?"

"No, Nikolenka, that would be expecting too much. In a month may be, or a month and a half, not sooner."

All right. He would reconcile himself to waiting. Let it take a month or a month and a half. . . The point is—he had done it.

Three days later the telephone buzzed. A stranger's voice asked for Nikolai Pavlovich Riabov. Would it be quite convenient for him to have visitors later in the evening, regarding the letter he had sent to Stalin?

He could not believe it, afraid there might be a mistake. You never knew with the telephone.

After dusk there came a knock at the door. Two men entered. They were engineers from the People's Commissariat for Defence. Nikolai Pavlovich felt like getting up, but the familiar grip of suffocation stopped him. He made an impatient gesture as if to brush it aside: please, please, later on as much as you like, only not now!

The engineers spent the whole evening with him, then they called again. The three of them improved the design, made the stove lighter, introduced alterations until they got what they were after.

The drafts were sent to the factory. The business did not progress like clock-work, at least not with the speed one would altogether like, but it was progressing for all that.

One fine day they were notified by the People's Commissariat for Defence that engineer Riabov had been awarded a bonus.

Nothing seems to have changed in his life. There are the same scales behind the partition, the same nightly talks

with his wife; the telephone is as persistent as ever in quest of the mysterious Ignatyich; but even though nothing has altered, everything seems different. And it is clear to him why it is so: at a time like ours nothing, neither disease nor old age, will justify a man in keeping aloof and not working for the common cause. Other people may find excuses for him, but the man himself will eat his heart out.

"Don't draw any rash inference," he says. "The old man, prone in his bed, is not really so very helpless. Swallowing pills and annoying his doctor is not the only thing he can manage. You must understand that when a man stops working he stops living as well. He must consider himself already dead, though he may be said to breathe, to exist. Nadezhda Pavlovna went to the office and told them about me and now the paper is brought in regularly. It means there's still some use in me, doesn't it?"

And though his invention has long since been put into production, and somewhere in the Ukraine or in Byelorussia partisans cook their cabbage soup in his combination kitchen-range thermos, wishing the inventor good luck, and though at the moment he is busily inventing something new—yet now and then he remembers it:

"Of course, it's immaterial whether Joseph Vissarionovich read my letter or not: one man cannot attend personally to the heaps of correspondence he must get; and then, my handwriting is abominable."

It is obvious, however, he would like to believe Joseph Vissarionovich did read his letter himself.

NINA IVANTER

HIMMLER'S "SOUND LOCATING APPARATUS"

Himmler is taking furious measures in Germany, enforcing them with unheard of cruelty. Plain-clothes police are sniffing' round every public place and all the shops.

From the newspapers

Drawing by Kukryniksy

"INVASION" — LEONID LEONOV'S NEW PLAY

Our readers have already made the acquaintance of Leonov's new play, [1] the title of which gives an excellent idea of its content. The character of the German invasion, the ruthless depravity of the nazis, the sorrow and suffering they have brought the Soviet people, the impotence of the invaders when faced with the moral strength of the Russians, the inevitable course taken by the invasion on Soviet territory up to its final collapse—such is the theme of the play. The behaviour of each of the characters can only be understood if examined in the light of the foregoing. None of the characters may be termed the "hero" of the play in the generally accepted meaning of that word. The play depicts events of real historical significance and the place which various people occupy in those events. In this respect it is epic, if we accept the point of view that "the modern form of the epic is the novel and narrative literature," put forward so long ago by the famous Russian critic Belinsky. The picture of life in the play, which to some extent reflects the life of the whole country, the story of several Soviet people and their clash with the enemy, behind which is sensed the struggle of the whole people—these things give us the right to speak of the epic character of *Invasion*.

Alarm, a terrible tension of the will and of all the senses when faced with the onrolling wave of the bloody German invasion—such is the frame of mind in old Doctor Talanov's family, in whose flat Leonov's play opens. The small Soviet Russian township threatened with temporary occupation is the dearest place on earth to Talanov. Words fail to express the pain and suffering he feels and Talanov hardly speaks of his emotions. Short, terse phrases pass between Talanov's wife, Anna Nikolayevna, her daughter Olga and the old nurse Demidyevna. Every patriot is ready to meet the unbidden guests in a worthy manner, and is prepared to find his own particular place in the new and difficult conditions of life under the heel of the enemy.

Anna Nikolayevna is chiefly anxious about her unfortunate son, Fyodor, who had once been the idol of the family. In a fit of jealousy Fyodor had attempted to kill the woman he loved. Society had condemned his immoral act and he had been sentenced and imprisoned. His term of imprisonment had ended shortly before the war began and he had returned home on the eve of the Germans' arrival (Act 1). At first Fyodor was ready to put the blame for all his failures and misfortunes on those around him, considering himself to have been unjustly dealt with. Anna Nikolayevna wanted her family to be united and honourable, firm and noble, when facing the enemy. For this reason she was later prepared to curse her son (Act 3) when he seemed guilty of cowardice before the Germans. She does not know how Fyodor will behave and it pains her not to be able to speak of him unhesitatingly as a fighter for his country. Anna Nikolayevna's maternal feelings are mingled with those of patriotism, with the feelings of the people as a whole.

This indivisibility of the individual and the society in which he moves is the strongest feature of Leonov's work.

Olga does not speak about the part she is to play in the coming struggle. The calm and grim reticence which she shows in the first scene, however, speak more strongly than words. Olga has not only decided on her general course of action, but has even been given a concrete and definite task. You feel this in particular in her meeting with Kolesnikov, the leading figure of the local Soviet authorities, you feel it in that stern but intimate mutual understanding in the relations existing between Olga and Kolesnikov when the latter comes to the Talanovs to say good-bye. He is remaining in the town to organize resistance to the enemy. Olga's reticence

[1] See *International Literature*, No. 6, 1943.

and calm obviously spring from a knowledge of the task in hand. We have not long to wait for a confirmation of this: in the first scene of the second act the partisans come to Olga in the guise of teachers—Olga is performing the difficult task of acting as a link between the partisan groups and Kolesnikov's headquarters.

Doctor Talanov also decides not to leave his native town. In answer to a proposal to evacuate he says to Kolesnikov: "I was born in this town, I've become a necessary part of its property. . . And I feel it an especial honour that I am so necessary as this. In the past thirty odd years I've seen half the people in the town born and held them in my arms. . ." Talanov believes that he will be needed more than ever in the town. He does not as yet know what work he will be able to do, but Kolesnikov, who knows Talanov, silently accepts his reason for staying in the town. At the same time Kolesnikov makes his own reason for staying on quite clear to the doctor: "It's just that. . . I'm staying in town myself. . . for some time. I'm a Party member and as long as I'm alive. . ."

And so, to quote Fyodor's words, "the Nibelungs are moving eastwards" and were threatening to occupy the town. The Soviet people were preparing to meet the invader: they were mustering their moral forces and preparing for the coming struggle.

As the invasion drew nearer the misfortunes of the people increased, the picture of the sufferings of the Russians became more clearly defined and more terrible. In the first act Talanov says to Fyodor: "Look around you, Fyodor. The trouble that's creeping over our country. The many sufferings of the Russian woman weeping by the campfire in the forest. . . and her children by her side still smelling of the smoke of burning homes, a smell that will never leave their souls. Do you know how many of these poor little battered chickens have passed through my hands? Yesterday, for instance. . . (*He gestures with his hand.*) Aye, one's head swims with pain and wrath, pain and wrath!"

Pain and wrath are the sources of the hatred which gives the Soviet people such great strength in their struggle.

The suffering of the people is the most important theme in Leonov's play, and in developing it the artist is ruthless. In depicting the terrible existence of the people under the German yoke, he creates scenes that bite deeply into the heart. In this work we see the pain and wrath of the Soviet writer for the defiled honour of the Russian soil that is so dear to him. In the play there is the figure of a young girl, pure and direct to the point of naiveté, Aniska, the granddaughter of Demidyevna. Aniska is nature herself, a little wild flower. When one sees her it is hard to restrain a smile of admiration. And it is precisely this little creature who is doomed to suffer the most terrible and unbearable grief. Aniska becomes the victim of Kuntz, a sensuous German officer, Kuntz who, after ravishing her, hands her over to a platoon of "Aryans"... Horror and fear haunt the eyes of this once sunny-tempered girl and she cries out with anguish to Fyodor, seated on her bed: "Oh, run, run! They'll get you, they'll hang you by the neck! Run!" (Act 2).

Before Leonov nobody had ever depicted in drama with such power, such wrath, such will to avenge, a picture of the sufferings of Soviet people tormented by the Germans. Moreover Leonov has been able to stress the active side of the suffering. Our people are powerful and strong. They are not to be broken by threats and torture, which only serve to fan the flames of hatred in the fire of which the insolent enemy himself will perish. This is the idea behind the theme of suffering in Leonov's play. The fate of Fyodor Talanov and the very moral drama woven around his figure show how menacing a man can be to the enemy when he loves his country and is burning with the sacred fire of hatred at the sight of the sufferings of his people.

A whole series of important ideological problems are connected with the character of Fyodor. When Fyodor first makes his appearance, he is in a state of extreme nervous excitement. He has only just returned from prison. Leonov treats of Fyodor's biography very briefly. We only know of the crime for which he was punished, we know that he has been the favourite of his parents. We have to conjecture Fyodor's former history from discussions and arguments which do not deal with the past but with

the "today" of the play. But here we find ample material to guide us.

Let us take the first conversation between Fyodor and his father in the first scene of the play. His father calls him an egotist. The meaning of his egotism, the ground on which it has ripened, becomes clear after a response of Fyodor's, the most fiery and the bitterest speech which he makes throughout the whole play: "FYODOR: Doing right? (*With gloomy fire:*) And you, do they do right by you, who have tended and healed them for thirty years? You were the first to perform heart operations, when it was a thing unknown. And it was you who founded the clinic on your own hard-earned money. You have become part of the town's property, a public utility, like the fire-hose. . ."

The logic and the meaning of this outburst are clear from the whole course of Fyodor's existence. Fyodor is one of the unfortunate ones of life. He had prepared to play a particularly prominent role in life. He was an egotist, eager to blame "them," that is, society, for failing to appreciate the brilliant individuality, the outstanding labours, the talent of such-and-such a man in a certain sphere of activity. And, as it happens, the case of Doctor Talanov himself, of an individuality that is really brilliant and really organically linked up with society, provides the best possible refutation of Fyodor's attitude. Fyodor, whether he wants to or not, is slandering both his father and society. The stage direction "with gloomy fire" is a perfect expression of Fyodor's psychological state, the blindness of an exasperated man, who cannot muster up courage enough to admit that the harmful, limited, "dark" thing is his own, Fyodor's individuality. Fyodor's resentment inevitably brings him closer to people who are hostile to the Soviet system. The former merchant Fayunin, a declassed element, senses this outward tendency of Fyodor and tries to exploit it. Not all members of the privileged strata of society behaved like Fayunin after the Revolution. Some who were patriots recognized the great progressive significance the Soviet system had for their country and began to work with the Soviet authorities for the benefit of the people. Others placed their own personal interests above the interests of society, and became the bitter enemies of their country. So it was with Fayunin. For a brief moment under the Germans Fayunin experiences a "renascence" of his personality such as he has waited twenty-five years for. Fayunin begins to expand under the rule of his fascist masters and is inclined to regard the life of Fyodor in the light of that of his own son who in the early days of the Revolution had run counter to the people and had received his merited reward. Fayunin would have liked Fyodor to have donned the wreath of the "martyr." Fayunin saw in Fyodor a potential assistant. Such were the hopes which Fyodor's bitterness raised in the enemy camp. But in *Invasion* as in life, the hopes of the nazis and their vile accomplices from amongst those "risen from the dead" were blown to the four winds: Fyodor's pride was broken. That which he saw around him, the solidarity of the Soviet people, their selflessness, the sufferings of the people, the whole atmosphere of the noble spirit and great deeds of Soviet patriots, was a moral help to Fyodor. He became an active fighter against Hitlerism—he began killing the invaders. The nazis' hopes that the unity of the Soviet people would collapse, torn by internal contradictions, proved to be groundless. This miscalculation of the "fools from Berlin" concerning the "fifth column" to be found in the U.S.S.R. determined their ultimate inevitable defeat. The German invasion did not lead to the collapse of Soviet society but to its consolidation, its solidification, and millions of self-styled "conquerors" are now breaking their heads against its rock-like resistance. In Leonov's play only Kokoryshkin and Fayunin hitch their waggons to the chariot of the nazi enslavers—half-crushed insects that they were, a "dust-cloud."

The Russian people stand shoulder to shoulder in an unparalleled struggle for their desecrated land. There is no fear of death in their eyes. They are ablaze with the fire of hatred for the enemy. In them is written the doom of the Germans. Fyodor is a Russian. This is the point that Leonov stresses most of all. Fyodor, tortured by mental and physical distress, saw, on returning to his native town, the pain and suffering caused the people by the Germans who were approaching the town, he saw the results

of air raids, the glow of burning villages, he saw pitiful streams of refugees, tornfrom hearth and home, and he was filled with one desire—to join the common struggle against the invaders. As this thought ripens within him, he returns to his father's house after wandering about the town for three days, and in a melancholy and sorrowful voice answers the old nurse Demidyevna's remark that he had better get any kind of a soldier's coat that'll fit him: "They won't take me. (*Very softly, looking round first:*) My chest's bad." As soon as he meets Kolesnikov, Fyodor asks to be accepted into a partisan unit. Kolesnikov refuses. This was the only possible course a real partisan leader could take: if we do not count childhood years long past, this was the first time he had seen the young man and knew only of his criminal past. The Talanov family saw only Fyodor's painful, bitter, scathing outbursts. His behaviour at the beginning of the play is filled with them. It is difficult for Fyodor to overcome his egotism, to get out of himself, without outside help, and sympathy and pity are what he least of all wants: despite his egocentric self-love there is in him the pride of the Russian patriot who is conscious of his duty in the hard times of war and suffering. This sacred feeling has first to conquer for all that is superficial in him to fall off like a useless husk. But when this happens, we see before us a modest, simple Russian, resolute in his anger and in the struggle. The last drop which caused the cup to overflow was the fearful lot of Aniska. The sufferings of this naive girl whose youth was trampled on before it had blossomed forth, made Fyodor pull himself together, and take action from his own desire and his own effort. In the third act Fyodor kills the commandant Wibbel and his bodyguard. Face to face with the enemy in the interrogation scene of this act Fyodor, side by side with his parents and Kolesnikov, typifies the unwavering firmness of spirit of the Russian people. Anna Nikolayevna is then able to say: "He's mine, he's with us now!"

Kolesnikov and the Talanovs are described tersely and simply. There are no spectacular situations in their roles and they have no rhetorical and brilliant lines to speak. Their modesty and lack of ostentation, however, must not deceive the reader. These are the characters—Talanov and Kolesnikov—who typify the unwavering firmness of the people which the Germans and their underlings soon run up against. Talanov and Kolesnikov support Fyodor morally. From them he gets that great strength of spirit which is characteristic of the Russian. They are prepared to sacrifice everything for their country. Patriotism is part of their flesh and blood. That is why all their deeds are natural and unforced. Their heroism is the heroism of millions of Soviet people who do not have to be reminded of their civic duties. Let us take the interrogation of Fyodor in the third act. In order to deflect the blow from Kolesnikov, who is hiding with the Talanovs under Fyodor's name, Fyodor himself takes Kolesnikov's name. His father and mother are called upon to sacrifice their son in order to save the man who is leading the struggle against the Germans in the town. And, overcoming their pain and sorrow, they firmly give evidence to the German officer who is questioning them: yes, that is Kolesnikov. They have only three lines to speak during the whole of this culminating scene of the play, three lines which raise them to the highest peak of tragedy. Their silence however is more eloquent and more pregnant than the garrulity of Fayunin and others. We realize that we have before us people with great souls, with full and active characters—and what seemed trifling becomes great, and what was obscure becomes clear.

The German invasion of a small Russian town goes through all the stages of its development, from brief triumph to inevitable retribution and collapse. Leonov stresses the logical nature of this course. The sequence of phases not only takes place within the framework of the German-occupied town and what happened there. Leonov's theme, disclosing the regularity of development of the struggle, runs ahead of events, if we keep strictly to actual historical truth. It is hardly possible that such a regular, classical succession of events could take place in any one concrete locality. But Leonov insists on this sequence of events. He does not attempt to conceal the logic of the artist and every scene of the play represents a stage in the development of the German invasion.

The first act deals with the approach

of the nazi hordes, the strain and excitement of waiting, the numerous forerunners of the bloody, destructive German avalanche. At the end, before the curtain falls, we see German helmets at the Talanovs' window.

The second act is a picture of German rule and of the first signs of retribution in the form of the bodies of German soldiers with an expressive message pinned to their breasts, bearing the one word: "Welcome." The Germans try to strengthen their rule. The Russian patriots close their ranks and prepare to strike still harder at the enemy.

In the third act the clash between Russian and German reaches its climax. Fyodor kills the German commandant and his escort who are on their way to a celebration at the burgomaster Fayunin's. The enemy is thrown into confusion, he wavers and loses courage in face of the fearlessness of the Russians. Soon the news arrives that things are going badly with the Germans at Moscow. The interrogation is brought to an abrupt end. Fayunin is seized with panic, feeling that the end of his short and pitiful "renascence" is near. The fate of the German invaders is fore-ordained—retribution is at hand. This idea is well expressed at the end of the act in a remark made by Kolesnikov whose doom seems to be sealed. Kolesnikov tells Fayunin: "You think that in this town you are the master, but it is I who am the master. Here I stand—unarmed, your prisoner. My shoulder hurts... And nevertheless you're afraid of me..." All the doors to Fayunin's house are guarded by German sentries. When Kolesnikov disappears, Fayunin rushes to the telephone, rings up the commandant, and sends a squad to arrest Olga, hoping in this way to force Kolesnikov to return. This move, however, does not succeed.

The fourth act—retribution under way. The Red Army and the partisans liberate the town from the German scum. Fayunin, the head of the town, again tries to disguise himself as a pilgrim and to get away unnoticed, but he is recognized and punished according to his deserts. We do not know how far this town is from Moscow or how quickly the armies from the Moscow front could reach it. Leonov does not tell us concretely, as the author of an ordinary real-life play should do, how freedom came to the town. Leonov however has an argument which is a more powerful determinant of the development of the play: the logic of the course taken by the Russian people's struggle against the Germans, faith in the victory of man over brute beast. The moral strength of the people, their faith in the justice and greatness of their cause are for Soviet people embodied in the figure of Stalin. This is the leitmotif of the fourth act. Stalin lends strength to Fyodor and his comrades when they leave the half-dark cellar where the Russian patriots are imprisoned (the scene of the action), to go to their execution. Stalin's name is pronounced with hope by the tormented people. "Stalin, Stalin's come!.." shouts the boy Prokofi when he catches sight of parachutists through the window.

Leonov interchanges events to stress their general significance, singling out moments of ideological importance. This story of the German invasion of a small Russian town to a certain degree reflects the story of the German invasion of the whole Soviet country, both in the present and at the time when it will be dispersed to the four winds of heaven.

In his play Leonov has recourse to a form of expression which reminds us of the dramas of the symbolists. This however is only an outward resemblance. In contrast to the symbolists, Leonov's characters are wholly and completely of the real world, their symbolic form expresses the real connection between people and events.

There are several moments illustrative of this which are worthy of the reader's attention.

Fayunin, "risen from the dead," Kokoryshkin, "a rising star"—in these ironical stage directions the author stresses the real functions of his characters. Fyodor comes to his father as though to a doctor, both in the professional and in a still deeper sense of the word: Fyodor is stricken with tuberculosis and crushed spiritually. Talanov gives Fyodor "a medicine, the strongest there is on earth": he shows to his son Aniska, mutilated by the Germans.

Fayunin's first appearance is also significant (first scene in the play). There is the sound of gunfire, darkness, the tinkle of broken glass. Olga hurriedly lights a candle and everybody sees a little old man in ragged clothes *sitting* in an

arm-chair near the door. Fayunin hadn't just come where there was light in fear of the German air raid. This "ci-devant," this survival from the dim past, appears as the forerunner of the German invasion, stresses Leonov. Shortly afterwards German tanks rattled by outside the window.

The stage directions which accompany Spurre's movement to the table when he visits Fayunin, are typical: "Spurre takes his place on the left of the arm-chair intended for Wibbel. There is a very *obvious* vacant space all around him." We may also recall the characterization of the guests at Fayunin's celebration, and the way they appear, as though out of cracks and crannies in the house. The element of the grotesque introduced in the present instance by Leonov has its motive in reality, and has real ideas behind it: only disinterred, mouldy types would be likely to come to Fayunin as guests. Living people, Russian patriots, come to this gathering of living corpses in order to conduct a struggle to defeat the enemy: this is how Fyodor and the Talanovs behave in the scene with Fayunin's guests, not by a single word do they betray to the Gestapo monsters the fact that their son is not Kolesnikov.

Leonov's success in portraying the enemy is undoubted. The Germans are dealt with very briefly, but so well that in the figures of this "holy trinity" of nazi crime, in the persons of the loathsome sadist Kuntz, the wooden, haughty, puffed-up Wibbel, the huge, corpse-like Spurre, figures which stand somewhere on the borders of the animal world, we feel the true dimensions of the German invasion. It is a mighty force, but one that is stupid and limited. In its limitations and "organized" stupidity is the guarantee of its downfall. What has to be found is a power that is inspired, creative, gazing boldly in the face of danger, and the resistance of this power to the bloody terrorism of the Germans leads to the end of Spurre and the others. In the characters of the Talanovs and Kolesnikov, Leonov gives us an indication of this power. It is the power of Russian people who love their country. They are ready to undergo any trials for the sake of their country. Spurre cannot break their will or make them flinch.

Leonov uses the unexpected method of contrast to draw the characters of those "resurrected from the dead"—Fayunin and Kokoryshkin. These lifeless mimics, insignificant creatures are outlined with deadly accuracy in the pitiful and ephemeral period of their triumph. It is unnecessary to make a special analysis of this. Attention must, however, be drawn to something else, to the language used by Fayunin and Kokoryshkin. The brief "renascence" of Fayunin and Kokoryshkin is accompanied by a piece of original linguistic buffoonery. Like peacocks they spread their tails, whine about their "good fortune," cover the paucity of their souls with a high-sounding, fawning, long-winded bravado, and do their best to win the sympathy of those around them. The terse, stern vocabulary of the Talanovs and Kolesnikov, on the other hand, is "simplicity rich in fantasy," as C. Stanislavsky put it, there is spiritual profundity behind it, real intellect, the sacred feeling of patriotism.

Such is Leonid Leonov's play. The spirit of this play is the spirit of all Soviet art, an art which stands shoulder to shoulder with the warriors of the people who on the battle-field are wiping out the enemies of liberty-loving mankind.

YURI KALASHNIKOV

A DOCUMENT OF THE WAR *

The *Front-Line Diary* is the last work of Eugene Petrov, who died a year ago at his post of war correspondent. The beautiful, manly figure of the writer rises from the pages of this book as "one still alive, speaking to the living."

Eugene Petrov is known not only in the U.S.S.R., but also abroad by his satirical novels *Diamonds to Sit on* and *The Golden Calf*, written in collaboration with Ilya Ilf. These two friends are also well known for their joint newspaper articles on burning questions of the day, articles so striking that they have won for themselves a permanent place in literature, and by their remarkable collection of essays *Little Golden America*.

Theirs was an excellent friendship. Like the Goncourt brothers, they profoundly understood and supplemented each other, creating organ-

* E. Petrov, *Front-Line Diary*. Moscow, "Soviet Writer," 1942.

ically blended works. The comparison with the Goncourt brothers was suggested by a joke of theirs. In reply to the perpetually repeated question: "How do you two manage to write together?" they had once said: "We just do. Like the Goncourt brothers. Edmond runs round the editorial offices, while Jules keeps an eye on the manuscript in case one of our friends takes a fancy to it."

Exuberant imagination, inexhaustible humour, keen observation characterizes all of the works of Ilf and Petrov. It has often been said that poetry is the ability to see the unseen in that which everybody can see. How penetrating the authors must have been to be able to discern bungalow America in the land of skyscrapers, as it was seen by Ilf and Petrov!

In 1937, Petrov was orphaned by the death of his colleague. The loss of such a close friend and fellow-writer may well be called orphanhood. But Petrov did not lay down his arms. Soon came the grim years of war, and Petrov passionately defended his country at his writer's post. Very popular were his essays on the liberation of the Western Ukraine, written in 1939. His activities during the last three years of his life were extraordinarily varied. He worked both as editor of the magazine *Ogonyok* and war correspondent for a number of leading newspapers. He wrote several scenarios for musical films, broadcast over the wireless, and wrote, wrote incessantly. . .

The very first months of the Great Patriotic War saw Petrov at the front. He eagerly recorded every new impression, studied the war in order to be able to tell about it better, more comprehensibly. Especially characteristic is a confession of his in one of the entries of his *Front-Line Diary*: "I am ashamed to admit it, but I very much craved for a German air raid. I wanted to see our batteries in action, and I was lucky. An 'alert' was sounded."

This is the craving of a person for whom literature and life are inseparably blended into one. This is why his front-line diary is so convincing and concrete. It embraces a period of one year, June, 1941—June, 1942. Every entry in this diary casts a vivid light on one aspect of the war. The first part of the diary is entitled *Near Moscow*. Petrov had been to many sectors of the Western front, both during the enemy offensive against the capital, when he became conscious of and experienced with his whole being all the "tension of the difficult, bloody work of war," and on the occasion of the destruction of the German fascist hordes near Moscow.

Master of rapid characterization, the *mot juste*, condensed sentence, Petrov possessed the quality absolutely necessary for the skilful essayist: the sense of selection. From dozens of facts and events he selected the most typical ones, and it is precisely because of this that the part *Near Moscow* offers a complete and clear picture of what transpired there in the unforgettable months of September, 1941—April, 1942.

In picturesque terms, with descriptions every detail of which indelibly remains impressed on the memory, it draws the picture of the dreadful destruction wrought by the Germans wherever they appeared. Here you will meet an old woman from the city of Istra which was burned to the ground; here, too, is a thrifty old peasant vainly searching for his cow stolen by the Germans; a fifteen-year-old girl who swoons at the mere thought that the Germans might return to her village; and the wrecked little house of Chaikovsky, representing, as it were, a symbol of nazi barbarism. Petrov admirably expresses the feeling of intense hatred for the enemy which all this inevitably calls forth. "Difficult as the war may be, painful as it may be to lose daily some friend or comrade, terrible as may be the thought that this can be one's last day on earth—an earth which, though reeking of smoke and petrol, is still beautiful—the feeling of hatred for the nazis is the strongest feeling of all." "Strike them! Strike them so that not a single one gets away alive!" writes Petrov in his essay *What Is Happiness*, quoting a phrase he had heard spoken somewhere by a collective farm woman.

There is a vivid description of the defence of Moscow, of the remarkable air battles in which for the first time in history Soviet fliers rammed enemy planes and, finally, of the impetuous avalanche of the Red Army offensive against the German hordes after their rout near Moscow.

"By the morning another village will have been captured, the name of which will not even appear in the communiqué, because too many villages will have been captured at the front by this morning." Thus ends one of the essays, and these simple, laconic words inspire the reader with that real optimism which Eugene Petrov himself possessed so abundantly.

Here, too, Petrov not only describes portentous historical events, but notes with his inborn humour what may at first appear insignificant, but which are in fact very characteristic episodes, showing the heroism and resourcefulness of the Russian people. Everyone knows of cases when the resourcefulness of people of the most humdrum occupations saved the situation. But one such instance at least may be mentioned here:

"In one of the villages beyond Klin occurred an episode which was as heroic as it was amazing. The first to find out that the Germans were preparing to flee were some young boys. They stole up to the German trucks and made away with all the crank-starters. When the Germans learned that they had lost their only means of escape, they were furious. But they had no time to waste. They were forced to resort to the most elementary means of escape—Shank's pony. As soon as our troops appeared in the village, the boys solemnly handed over the crank-starters and the lorries were started up and at once brought into action."

In one of the pages of his book Petrov says that the strength of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that "it rose above the chaos of the war, while at the same time subordinating itself to the war."

Petrov sees proof of this in an old painter in a blindage, "painting with passionate enthusiasm the portrait of a heroic Soviet scout with greater pleasure than if he were in his studio before a huge easel painting a still-life"; in the ten-year-old boy who prefers acting as guide for a scouting party in the German rear to learning his lessons; in the young girl who fires at a German general, vastly unlike those girls who "copy poetry in plush-covered albums and await their bride-grooms"; and in the young female singer who is not disconcerned

by the approach of a "Messerschmitt" in the middle of her performance before the troops at the front, but strikes up with undiminished verve a popular song, the words of which she modifies impromptu on the spot, etc., etc.

Petrov is often as laconic as the communiqués of the Soviet Information Bureau: his material requires it.

"In the village of Domanovo the Germans shot Vassili Afanassievich Novikov because he had been a deputy to the village Soviet, the veterinary surgeon Anton Borissovich Yermakov, and two peasants, Ivan Vassilievich Illarionov and Konstantin Semyonovich Simonov, who was seventy years old. The latter was killed by the Germans for refusing to give up his fur coat and felt boots. The Germans murdered a fourteen-year-old girl, Nina Utkina; they dragged her into a stable, assaulted her and then stabbed her in the back with a knife."

Nothing needs to be added to the above exposition. The facts may speak for themselves.

Petrov loves and understands nature and, in spite of his own dictum that "in time of war there is no beauty," and that only "on the day Hitler is defeated—the first day of peace—will people again become aware of the beauty of the world around them," he never ceases to observe the life of nature with the eye of a real artist. "The moon over Moscow was huge and bright. The sky was full of stars. It was such scintillating astronomy that one could not tear one's eyes away from the sky. Yet the earth, too, was beautiful. Sharp, African shadows lay across the streets and houses. It resembled a sultry day in Algiers, observed through a blue glass."

And how expressive is the following image of the land of forests and snow: "Through this forest passed the bear of war. With his metal sides he tore the bark off the trees, broke off the branches and strewed them over the ground, stampeding hither and thither with his massive body, churning up the ground and uprooting the bushes. Then snow fell nearly a whole day long. The bear of war departed westwards and the snow covered over the terrible wounds that the war had inflicted on nature."

A keen sense of history, characteristic of many of the best Soviet writers, is also characteristic of Petrov. He often draws analogies with the Patriotic War of 1812, making a comparative analysis of both wars. In this connection at least one excerpt from his essay *Stop the German* is worth quoting: "If we were to draw a historical parallel with 1812, I should like to compare the battle of Borodino with the October battles on the Western front, when our armies, fighting all the way, rolled back from Vyazma and Bryansk, and the wounded enemy, who had made a leap of 200 km., had to halt in order to lick his wounds and gather new strength. Now the battle which is being fought at the approaches to Moscow is precisely the one Kutuzov did not choose to give Napoleon, but which he would infallibly have resolved to fight if, while defending Moscow, he had found himself in modern conditions."

Petrov saw many German prisoners, was present at many cross-examinations, talked to them himself and became firmly and lastingly convinced that "millions of murderers had been cold-bloodedly trained in the centre of Europe over a number of years," that they had been taught "to hate the whole of humanity," and that "we shall remember the atrocities they have committed as long as our earth continues to exist."

Near Moscow takes up the main part of the *Front-Line Diary*. But Petrov had visited various other sectors of the front-line, stretching from the White to the Black Seas ; he had also visited the Far North. His *Notes from the Arctic Regions* describe the peculiar war conditions in May, 1942, in the Murmansk direction.

Petrov always wanted to be in the thick of the battle. And so, resolving to leave the region of Murmansk, where the fighting had died down, he set out for Sevastopol where the struggle was raging with the greatest intensity. Ilya Ehrenburg was present when Petrov was asked whether he "would like to go to Sevastopol." "He at once brightened up," writes Ehrenburg in his preface to the *Front-Line Diary*, "and answered: 'Of course, I would!'"

Sevastopol is the last address from which Petrov's war correspondence arrived. He went there directly from the North. "Even the fast flight by plane cannot reduce the impression of the geographical greatness of this distance," he wrote. "The human organism cannot immediately adjust itself to the change of climate. Not very long ago I got clear of a May blizzard in Murmansk in an American tourist car—a blizzard capable of snowing a chap under together with all his note-books and typewriter. And now I am writing somewhere on the Black Sea dripping with perspiration, though I was born in Odessa and should have acquired some sort of immunity from the Black Sea heat. Incidentally, this month of June happens to be exceptionally hot, both actually and figuratively speaking."

Petrov's three Sevastopol essays wonderfully render the tremendous tension under which the heroic Red Navy and Red Army men and the civilian population defended their city. Petrov considers the defence of Sevastopol to be "one of the greatest military feats of all ages and all peoples."

His last Sevastopol essay remained unfinished. Eugene Petrov died in the full bloom of his creative powers, active, joyous and brave. And this victim of the war against German fascism will never be forgotten, nor shall we ever forgive those responsible for his death.

Concluding his introductory article to the *Front-Line Diary*, Eugene Petrov writes: "One year of war has just come to a close. Volumes will be written about the war. Years will pass by and our talented people will give the world a new Tolstoy, who will be capable of coping with the immense subject of the Patriotic War of 1941—1942. So far, all that has been printed and published about the war appears to me as mere material for future works. I, too, should like to add to this material my own war correspondences."

Among the historical and literary documents of the epoch of the present war, Petrov's *Front-Line Diary* will undoubtedly occupy a prominent place. It is the work of a great writer and a fine man, possessing a keen eye, an incisive power of expression, and a warm heart.

LYDIA BATOVA

A DEBATE ON THE HISTORICAL PLAY

The war, with its gigantic battles which have no parallel in the history of mankind, has revived in the minds of millions of Soviet men and women moments of their country's past when the people fought for and defended its freedom. The great figures of Russian history have come to life again. No wonder therefore, that so many new plays drawing their subject-matter from Russian history have appeared of late.

Even before the war Russian playwrights manifested great interest in historical subjects. In 1938, for instance, the Pushkin Theatre in Leningrad staged Alexei Tolstoy's *Peter I*. Much could be said to the credit of the play *Field Marshal Suvorov* by Bakhterev and Razumovsky, brilliantly staged by A. D. Popov in the Moscow Central Red Army Theatre of Solovyov's play *Field Marshal Kutuzov*, staged by the Vakhtangov Theatre, and of *Nadezhda Durova*, a comedy by Kochetkov and Lipskerov, whose heroine became famous during the war against Napoleon in 1812 when, dressed up as a man and under an assumed name, she distinguished herself as a fighter in a hussar regiment. Maretskaya is splendid in the role of Nadezhda Durova. The heroic defence of Sevastopol in 1854—1855 has inspired a number of new plays, of which we shall here only mention *Rear-Admiral Kornilov* by Sergeyev-Tsensky.

During the war Soviet playwrights have considerably extended their range of subjects, delving far back into the earliest period of Russian history. Bayadjiyev and Olga Forsh have just completed a play *Prince Vladimir*, the action of which takes place at the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century. *Alexander Nevsky* by Litovsky is based on an episode from Russian history of the thirteenth century, when the famous Russian national hero Alexander Nevsky routed the knights of the Livonian Order. Borodin has adapted for the stage his historical novel on Dmitri Donskoy, whose victory over the Mongol invaders in 1380 laid the foundation for Russia's liberation and unification.

Alexei Tolstoy is at present working on a trilogy about tsar Ivan IV, known as Ivan the Terrible, which shows every sign of becoming a landmark in the history of the Soviet drama. The first part of the trilogy is entitled *The Eagle and His Mate*; the second, *Trying Years*. *Ivan the Terrible* is also the title of a new play by Smolin.

Of interest among the plays which deal with the war of 1812 is Shapovalenko's *Denis Davydov*, the hero of which is the same Denis Davydov, hussar, partisan and poet, on whom Leo Tolstoy modelled his character of Vaska Denissov in *War and Peace*. Another very successful effort is Gladkov's play *Long, Long Ago*, which centres round the figure of Nadezhda Durova whom we mentioned above. The play aptly combines light comedy with heroic vigour, thus fully conforming with the author's own description of his play as "a heroic comedy." *Long, Long Ago* is now having a successful run at the Central Red Army Theatre in Moscow under the management of A. D. Popov.

Many historical plays are based on the recent past, as for example, *General Brussilov*, by Ilya Selvinsky, which presents a sharp contrast between two personalities—the Russian, Brussilov, and the German, Ludendorff.

The Soviet historico-patriotic play is seeking its own paths of development, perfecting its own artistic method. There is much that fails to satisfy the authors themselves, who would like the great characters portrayed by them to appeal to the hearts of contemporaries of the Great Patriotic War, without losing any of their historic faithfulness.

At the beginning of July the All-Russian Theatrical Society held a conference dedicated to the question of the historico-patriotic play. The speakers included historians, as for example, Pankratova, a winner of a Stalin Prize, and Bakhrushin, both corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Professor Druzhinin, Professor Bazilevich and others, on the one hand, and playwrights and critics, on the other hand. This was the first meeting of the kind between historians and playwrights.

Both the historians and playwrights agreed that the historical play must supply and answer problems agitating our minds today. Is it not true that the remarkable historical plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries reflect the problem which agitated the whole of England at that time, the threat of a Spanish invasion?

In a speech full of pointed wit Krzhizhanovsky, playwright and critic, described how quite recently he dug up a history textbook which he had studied in high school thirty years ago. It bore pencil marks indicating the passages to be studied and the margins were covered with the remarks "from here" and "up to here." In other words, the course of history was mechanically split up into water-tight compartments. Krzhizhanovsky spoke of two kinds of limitations typical of playwrights. The first group he described as the "from-here" group and the second as the "up-to-here" variety. "When Mr. 'From-here' writes a play on a contemporary subject," said Krzhizhanovsky, "he fails to see the past which led up to the present. On the other hand Mr. 'Up-to-here' fails to see the future inherent in this past, the future which in the final analysis is our present. When we speak of a hero of Russian history we must remember that the historical path of the people leads from him to our own days."

This statement provoked a heated discussion. Some of the historians addressing the meeting, while correctly directing the attention of the playwrights to the necessity for a more profound study of documentary sources, the ancient Russian chronicles in particular—nevertheless in my opinion stressed rather too hotly the educational function of historical plays. In my own speech at the conference I dwelt precisely on this question. "From your plays," say the historians, addressing the playwrights, "the youth will learn history." This theory, when boiled down to its simplest form, may be interpreted in such a way as to convert the historical play into a mere illustrative supplement to history. All "illustrativeness" is in my opinion a defect in literature. Naturally, the author of a historical play must be acquainted not only with the requisite documentary material but also with the general conclusions of contemporary histor-

ical science (although it sometimes happens that the poet is ahead of the scientist as regards his conceptions). As Pankratova correctly pointed out, in writing *Boris Godounov* Pushkin adhered to the greatest historian of his time—Karamzin. But Pushkin's *Boris Godounov* no less than Shakespeare's histories are by no means mere "illustrations." Pushkin and Shakespeare are less "illustrative" than, for example, Walter Scott or the well-known Russian writer of the nineteenth century A. K. Tolstoy, author of *Prince Serebryany* and a trilogy of historic plays. What is the explanation of this? In my opinion, one of the most essential points to remember is that the historical play of both Pushkin and Shakespeare have what may be called a "second theme." To Shakespeare King Richard III is not only a historic personality, but also an ethical problem which directly agitated him and found its further expression in the characters of Iago and Macbeth notwithstanding the fundamental differences between the three of them. Sir John Falstaff, as he is conceived by Priestley, whose views are largely shared by the Soviet theatre in this respect, may be regarded as the expression of the joy of life revolting against the ascetic monasticism of the Middle Ages and the prudery of the Puritans, and can also be considered as the "second theme" of *Henry IV*. Puskhin's *Boris Godounov* is not only the artistic reproduction of an episode of Russian history, but a tragedy of conscience. This "second theme" is far less evident in the works of writers such as Walter Scott and A. K. Tolstoy. The Soviet historical play in my opinion has already selected the path of Pushkin and Shakespeare, and its subsequent development will follow this path. This will by no means detract the Soviet historical play from its historical accuracy.

A precise account of an historical event usually abounds in personalities. The historical novel has nothing to fear from this and easily reconciles itself to the great number of personages involved. In the drama, however, in order to condense the action, some authors combine two or more historical characters into one, which assumes thereby a dominating position, the "amalgamated" character preserving the historic name of one of its components. Historians speaking at the conference justly protested against this method. The use of synthetic characters, combining the actions and characteristic features of a number of historic personages drawn from contemporary descriptions, cannot be avoided in the historic drama, but these synthetic characters must bear invented or "neutral" names. The importance of creative imagination in the historical play, and the necessity for composing a great epic plan, creating monumental synthetic characters which embody the strength and wisdom of the people, was well elaborated at the conference by the well-known producer F. N. Kaverin.

Great importance must also be attached to the reproach addressed by the historians to certain playwrights with regard to their distortion of the social and political relations of the epoch in question. For example, Pankratova pointed out that the political activities of Prince Vladimir of Kiev in the play by Bayadjiyev and Olga Forsh, which depicts Vladimir as a man who united the Russian State, rather resemble the activities of the great princes and tsars of the Moscow State in a far later period of our history. After heated discussion Bayadjiyev recognized the justness of his opponents' criticism and is now engaged in remodelling his play.

Another important criticism levelled by the historians against certain dramatists was the schematic nature of some of their characters and the lack of local colour. This also applies to the language. It frequently happens that a tenth and a fourteenth century character are made to speak one and the same language. What is to be done in such a case? Should one aim at the mechanical archaeological reproduction of décor, accessories and costume, as well as of language, gestures, etc.? No, objects alone can convey nothing, just as language and gestures in themselves cannot convey anything. It is the people who must do the speaking. To find the living people under the dust of centuries accumulated over historical documents—such is the task to be realized by the combined effort of historians and playwrights. External details, mere language and gestures, are too trifling an aim for any true art. They will not satisfy our spectators who demand the living truth of the events described. And it is this living truth which will determine both language and gesture—the living truth which has nothing in common with trifling pedantic precision. This should be the real object of our still youthful historical drama. It must achieve a synthesis of "historical truth" and "artistic truth" and in this it has every chance of success.

An interesting problem was raised by the scholar of histrionics Chushkin, that of the aesthetic character of the historical play. In Chushkin's opinion, inasmuch as we do not separate mechanically the past from the present, history from present-day life, the historical play has not and must not have a special aesthetics of its own; as regards the aesthetic interpretation, it makes no difference to the author whether he is dealing with a historical subject or a subject from contemporary life.

One might of course object that whereas we observe contemporary life with our own eyes, we merely imagine the past and that, consequently, the interpretation of a historical theme will inevitably contain more "theatricality." In essence, the question here turns on the aesthetics of performances as expressed in the old controversy between the partisans of the "theatre of experience" and the supporters of the "theatre of presentation," reverting once again to the old debate between the school of the Art Theatre and that of the Maly Theatre.

The Art Theatre demanded above all that "the actor find his own self in the given circumstances of the play." As regards the basic method of approach to the character, it made no difference to an actor of the Art Theatre whether he represented a historic character or a contemporary one, whereas the Maly Theatre actor based his interpretation of the character on the objective imitation of life. It is not therefore a matter of indifference to the latter whether he is dealing with something that he has personally seen or something that he can only imagine. In the latter case his performance will be marked more frequently by the elements

of "excitement" and theatrical pathos—elements which are rejected not only by the theory but by the whole of the artistic practice of the Art Theatre.

The Soviet theatrical press recently lent its pages to a lively debate on this problem of "theatricality" and the discussion was continued by some of the speakers at the conference on the historico-patriotic drama. In the sixteenth-century English play *A Warning for Fair Women* History herself with flag and drum appears on the stage. Hardly anyone imagines the Muse of the modern historical play to behave like this. But to what extent should it be adorned in the garb of everyday life, free from any trace of "theatricality"? To this question our playwrights have different replies to offer. Only their works can supply a convincing answer.

Such were the problems touched on during this interesting discussion. Criticism from the point of view of historical science speaks eloquently of the high demands made by our times on the author of historical plays. And moreover the heat of the debate testifies to the fact that both historians and playwrights are equally concerned with the future of our historical drama, and consequently there is a pledge of continued friendship between the two groups, a pledge of that comradely friendship between science and art which is one of the characteristic features of the spiritual culture of our country.

MICHAEL MOROZOV

STUBBORN "FRIENDSHIP"

The Rumanian press asserts that Rumania cannot agree to the transference of North Transylvania to Hungary. And in turn the Hungarian press insists that Rumania has no right to Transylvania

Drawing by Kukryniksy

A Holiday Demonstration — *By Alim Anvarov aged twelve*

YOUTHFUL ARTISTS OF UZBEKISTAN

The exhibition of drawings by children of Uzbekistan, one of the flourishing republics in the Soviet East, reflects the events of the two years of war as seen, understood and experienced by Soviet youngsters.

Children's drawings are not made specially for exhibitions. They originate organically, almost spontaneously, expressing the child's desire to learn the world surrounding him, to record its outlines and colours. . . During the war, the Central House for the Artistic Education of Children in Uzbekistan collected a total of more than 4,000 children's drawings. Only a fraction of these is displayed at the exhibition in Moscow, but even this is remarkable for the diversity of talent and directness of expression.

A Bukhara Bride — *By Ira Karavey aged seven*

A prominent place in the exhibition is held by the drawings of Uzbek children. Characteristic is the fact that Uzbek landscapes are no less fascinating to children of other nationalities to whom Uzbekistan had become a second home, an adopted land. Eight-year-old Masha Elkonina has been living in Tashkent for two years. She is attracted by the romanticism of the past, the historic genre, if one may say so. Along with Alexander Nevsky and Peter I, along with Pushkin and the Battle of Kulikovo Field, Masha portrays the story of Farhad and Shirin, one of the most beautiful legends of Uzbekistan, and along with the original and characteristic interpretation of a Russian fairy tale there is a drawing based on an Uzbek fairy tale.

Russian and Uzbek motifs are just as organically intertwined in the works of Boris Vlassov, a Leningrad boy. His Russian landscapes drawn from memory are inferior to the views of Tashkent and Chimgan, remarkable for their faithful and fine reproduction of the nature of Uzbekistan. The water-colours of eight-year-old Boris Vlassov show the youthful artist's rare talent. They are remarkable for integrity of conception, feeling for colour and sense of perspective.

Veritable poems in colour are dedicated to their country by the little Uzbek artists. One such poem depicts the Voroshilov Collective Farm in Tashkent Region. It is a series of drawings made up of "Gathering the Fruit

Crop," by Khamida Shukurova, "All Out to the Cotton Plantations," by Lutfa Razykova, "Off to the Front" and "Early Melons for the Wounded," by Khamida Rashidova. These drawings, made with loving hands, are replete with unexpected but invariably interesting details of national life on the collective farms.

At times, when the subjects seem rather over-important and intricate, their authors resort to literary supplements. Twelve-year-old Ganya Tursunova accompanies her drawing "New Family" with the following caption: "The Pulatov family has adopted Valya and left for the Pakhta Camp, where he now lives." An even more difficult problem confronted eleven-year-old Zebi Navatova from Ferghana. Her drawing is something in the nature of a triptych. The subject is developed in three separate drawings and the text becomes an organic part of the composition: "The Son Goes to Front," "The Son Wounded by the Germans," "The Mother Works Hard in Place of Her Son."

Until recently old Uzbek traditions banned every reproduction of living beings. Today talented children of the Uzbek people depict the life around them in all its manifestations: picking cotton and fruit, spring sowing and the work of combine harvesters, men going off to the front, nursing the wounded, radio in a tea house, the construction of canals, theatrical performances and public processions. The best and most expressive drawings are the works of M. Khamrakulov "My Father Is a Collective-Farm Shepherd," Suleiman Rakhmanov's "Metal Salvage," Farkhat Akhadova's "Children in the Orchard," Alim Anvarov's "A Holiday Demonstration," Arslan Shodibayev's "Uncle Shura Comes Home," and Farkhad Mukhitdinov's "Welcome Guests on a Collective Farm."

Farkhad and Shirin is the most popular source of inspiration among the Uzbek children. The story of Farkhad and Shirin, revived in the minds of the Uzbek people in connection with the construction of the powerful Farkhad power station, is represented in a great number of drawings at the exhibition. The legend of Farkhad is intertwined with the reality of the present war. The gigantic project brought into being by the people has found its enthusiastic historians in the youthful artists. The magnificent mountain landscape in which the power station is being built, the tense labour of hundreds and thousands of people, the work of the machines—all this is represented in the drawings made from life by Mark Zozulya, Boris Vlassov, Iga Yussupov, Yulik Labas. Scenes from the labour front here are inseparable from the heroic exploits on the war front.

Recently the poetess Vera Inber described some Leningrad children. "The AA guns no longer wake me," one boy told her. "Only a bomb explosion rouses me from my sleep." In this Great Patriotic War the little citizens match in courage their brave fathers and brothers. At the same time they do not relinquish the rights to which their age entitles them. They take part in olympic exhibitions of children's amateur art, contribute poems and stories to school magazines, fill their albums

Triptych "The New Family" 1. The son goes to front. 2. The son wounded by the Germans. 3. The mother works hard in place of her son

By Zebi Navatova aged twelve

Pushkin

By Masha Elkonina
aged eight

with numerous drawings suggested by their free childish imagination.

During the winter of 1941—1942 thousands of children were evacuated to Uzbekistan. There were many orphans among them. In the districts along the route of the enemy's offensive they saw for the first time in their young lives ghastly pictures of death, the glow of fires, the blood of their dear ones. They know full well the meaning of the word German. Little Oleg Ivanov from Rostov is now in Tashkent. He sent a drawing to the exhibition in Moscow showing a German gallows against a background of blazing buildings. All too early he learned the feeling of noble hatred and grief for his country.

Three youthful artists: Zozulya, Vlassov and Yussupov, have produced an important series of battle pictures. Volik Volkov should be added to this list. The rout of the Germans at the approaches to Moscow, the Battle of Stalingrad, enemy raids, paratroop landings, naval battles, scouting operations, violent hand-to-hand clashes, tanks, planes, artillery, Germans being taken prisoner, partisans,—nothing has escaped the attention of the young military artists.

A special place in the exhibition is held by multi-coloured intricate Uzbek ornaments. Interest in ornamentation is also revealed in many genre pictures.

The exhibition of Uzbek children's war-time drawings is a welcome event. It has attracted much attention among children and adults alike and among artists and the public at large.

MARK NELIDOV

MY IMPRESSIONS OF THE FRONT

I am the daughter of a theatre box attendant. In his youth my father was a serf, later on he was given his freedom and got a job as box attendant in the Maly Theatre. Theatre and actors were the favourite topic of conversation in our family, a typical Russian family. Petty officials, merchants and the proverbial Moscow "match-makers" were frequent visitors in our family circle. Old Moscow with its peculiar atmosphere had free access to our house.

In my early childhood I familiarized myself with our Russian customs and knew by heart many old folk songs. I grew up every whit a Russian, passionately loving my people, with their great, warm, noble heart. And when I appeared on the stage, this Russian life began to unfold before my eyes in its richness of bright colours and imagery. I had the good fortune to work with the very flower of the actors of the Moscow Maly Theatre. A great many reminiscences dear to my heart are connected with this oldest Russian dramatic theatre, the upholder of all that is sacred in our theatre culture.

I still remember that extremely exciting day when I had, for the first time in my life, to perform before Leo Tolstoy. It happened on the 6th of January, 1892. That day the great writer was present at the performance of his comedy *The Fruits of Enlightment*. I performed the part of Tanya, the parlourmaid. All in a quiver, engrossed in my part, moving to and fro across the stage, I laughed, gave my cues and yet all the time from the corner of my eye watched the box where Tolstoy was sitting. Can you imagine how happy I was when he approved of my acting! Only he said that I was too thin: a country wench must be buxom and look healthier.

It is not easy now to remember how many parts and in how many plays I have performed for scores of years on the stage.

From the daughter of a serf to the high position of People's Artist of our country, that has been the path of my artistic career. With all my heart and soul I love my homeland which has opened up a wonderful vista of limitless development for culture, art and our beloved theatre. And when the war broke out and the news of the barbarous acts committed by the Germans first reached us, acts connected with the destruction of the places to which we

attach the names of Alexander Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, Peter Chaikovsky and Anton Chekhov, my heart bled for these precious treasures of our spiritual life crushed under with the iron heel of the German soldier.

And so when they told me in the theatre that I was to go to the front to entertain Red Army men, my first reaction was one of pure joy. At last I, a Russian actress, was able to take a direct part in the great struggle of my homeland.

The car we went by, stopped in the middle of a field. I felt taken aback. But where were the dugouts, breastworks and trenches? They were part and parcel of my imaginary picture of the front. Nothing of the kind was to be seen. As far as the eye could reach, there stretched a wide expanse of land slightly powdered over with freshly fallen snow.

"Have we lost our way? Have we come to the wrong place?" I asked the lieutenant who accompanied us.

"No, no! This is our destination all right," he said smiling. Then he led the way somewhere down underground. He pushed open a door, and wrapped in a thick cloud of frozen air we scrambled down into a spacious dugout.

It was a whole underground settlement. It reminded me somehow of the huts of hard-working beavers. The dugout was roomy, thick resinous pine-logs supported its walls and ceiling, its earthen floor was well trodden down. It is true, the ceiling leaked slightly, but nothing to speak of. The main thing was that it was warm there, very warm, even hot. We had reached the "watchmen of the air," the anti-aircraft gunners.

"We are living underground but shooting at the sky," said the commander jokingly, coming up to give us a hearty welcome.

I was struck with the cleanliness everywhere in the dugout: the floor was swept clean, coloured postcards and pictures were hung on the walls.

Our concerts turned out to be a real holiday for the Red Army men. For a very long time they had not heard anything but the zooming of the enemy planes and the bursting of anti-aircraft shells. And we had a mind to make this entertainment still more joyful and holiday-like. We had got smart concert dresses as part of our make-up, and we made a point of putting them on for each performance. In some corner, most frequently close to the red-hot brick stove, we changed, and we appeared here in this dugout dressed as though for a Moscow concert hall.

The Red Army men fully appreciated this thought on our part. They responded to it with the same warmth and cordiality. Everyone tried to say something pleasing and gratifying. For our concerts some careful hands had hung up bunches of fresh greenery on the walls of the dugout, mostly aromatic branches of Russian fir-trees. The cooks put such enormous portions on our plates that we were quite unable to cope with them. And the hospitable hosts kept on repeating: "Have some more please, have some more!"

We had a chance to watch these people performing their severe military duties. We met real heroes, intrepid, simple and modest. I still remember my chat with a young mortar gunner. During one of the terrific explosions that took place he was buried under a heap of earth. For two long days he remained lying half-blind, gasping for breath, buried alive. He grew deaf and could not hear anything. At last his pals managed to dig him out. Gradually his hearing came back to him, and now he is again in the fighting lines.

"How much you have had to go through!" I said.

"Nothing much. Just the ordinary run of things," he said, smiling shyly.

Among the crowd of people in khaki surrounding us on all sides, we caught a glimpse of many young girlish faces. Yes, there are many girls among our anti-aircraft gunners. They mostly work in the capacity of "instrument minders." I really don't know how to put this, you'll have to make allowance for my not being an expert in military terminology; but they have something to do with those complicated instruments by means of which we hear an approaching plane, determine its speed as well as the direction it is taking. In general they carry on a kind of air reconnoitering from below.

The officers with one accord praise the girls: "You can fully rely upon them, no mistake," they say. "This job requires precision, extreme care, careful execution and attention to detail, all of which are inherent in women." Being a woman myself, I felt gratified on hearing this remark. Later on I had an opportunity to test their ability to handle this job.

First I could not make them out, they seemed all alike; but later on, when I felt more at ease amidst these new and unusual surroundings, I began to watch my new friends.

And now one of these girls comes to my mind. She was so naive and artless that when watching a love scene during one of our concerts, she grew crimson and modestly lowered her eyes. But afterwards we found out that this timid girl knew perfectly well how to handle her machine-gun, had taken part in a number of military operations when without lowering her eyes she looked fearlessly into the very face of death.

Then I remember a girl student who went to the front before she was through with her studies. A tragic fate has fallen to her lot. The Germans shot her mother who was living in one of the southern towns. Her father joined the Red Army on the very first days of the war and nothing has been heard of him since. Her brother, who was also a soldier, has been killed. Her little sister, wounded by a German shell splinter, is now lying in the hospital. "I shall be a mother to her," says the girl with firm conviction. Later on I found out that for her friends this girl had been an elder sister, a second mother. They used to come to her not only for advice on some point of their speciality but they looked up to her for support and help in the time of their greatest need.

I had the chance to see another girl, a real Russian beauty. Tall, slender and blue-eyed, she came into the dugout like a fairy princess. And I was astonished at the atmosphere of absolute moral purity and chastity with which her fellow Red Army men surrounded her, the men who had been sharing in common with her for many months all the hardships of their rough camp life.

E. Tourchaninova as Princess Tugoukhovsky in "Wit Works Woe" by A. Griboyedov

And then another one comes to my mind: a cheerful, good-natured, plain-faced, snub-nosed girl. She found great delight in her army job. You should have seen how smartly she saluted, how clear and distinct was her articulation while making her report, and how dexterously she turned on her heel. And the words she used were all somewhat short and sharp like little volleys or discharges of a gun.

I looked at these touchingly charming girlish faces and I thought: "Mind, you were just as young as they are now when you first appeared on the stage in 1891. Only imagine if they had told me: 'Put on a uniform and take a rifle.' It seems to me I should have died of fright." Just look at them. How quietly, how bravely they are fulfilling their duty to their country!

It is true, the Russian woman has always been capable of heroic exploits. It is enough to remember the exploits of the cavalry girl Nadezhda Durova who during the invasion of Russia by Napoleon in 1812 disguised herself under a man's name, put on a hussar's uniform and joined the army as a volunteer. We also know of heroic women at the time of the siege of Sevastopol in 1854—1855. But these are only a few isolated instances. Now the whole country, moved by one powerful impulse, has risen to a man in defence of its sacred rights. And our patriotic women, not wishing to lag behind their menfolk, go to the front with arms in hand or replace their husbands, fathers or brothers at their jobs in the rear.

With motherly tenderness I look into their beautiful blue, brown, grey or black girlish eyes, thinking: "Darling girls, the war has put you into the sober garments of a soldier, your homeland has trusted you with arms. We too place our trust in you. We know that you are worthy daughters of your people. As soon as the unprecedented bloody ordeal comes to an end, you will go back to your peaceful labour on the golden fields of our collective farms, into the busy life of factory buildings or into the quiet rooms of the universities. May this long-wished-for day, that all humanity is thirsting to see, come soon!"

While at the front, we tried to do all we could for our Red Army men. During the thirteen days we were there, we gave fifty-five entertainments, almost all of them underground. Especially for this trip our woman poet Tatyana Shchepkina-Koupernik wrote some verses. Shchepkina-Koupernik is the great-granddaughter of our eminent actor Michael Shchepkin (1788—1863), famous in the annals of the Maly Theatre and of Russian theatre art in general. When reciting these verses, I was carried away with emotion. They expressed the belief of the people in the courage and determination of their defenders and their ardent love for their own Red Army:

This one great heart,
The heart of a united nation!

EVDOKIYA TOURCHANINOVA
People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R.

ART IS MY WEAPON

More than half a century has elapsed since that happy day when I made my first appearance on the stage. From that time on, my whole life has been dedicated to art. I love the theatre and cannot live without it. I pride myself on being an actress of the oldest Russian theatre, the Moscow Maly. The whole history of my family is closely bound up with this theatre. My father, Nicholas Musil, was a famous Russian comedian. I have plunged heart and soul into the life of this theatre. And now, on that very same stage, you can see my son Nicholas Ryzhov.

You may say, it's time for her to stay at home and give herself up to writing her memoirs! But I say no, nothing of the kind! I can't at the present time limit myself to thoughts of the past: I belong in every fibre of my being to the present, the thrills and excitement of every new day, in a word, life!

These emotions have become especially intense during the war. With all my heart and soul I live through the stormy and epoch-making march of military events. I am an old Russian actress and look with motherly love on our Red Army men. Russian soldiers! I bow the knee before them! They fight like lions and are ready for any dare-devil deed in the name of their homeland. Hung around with grenades, they fling themselves under the caterpillars of the enemy tanks to stop their progress. . . My heart bleeds whenever I think of it. I look at them and whisper to myself: "My darling boys, my blessing on your future exploits! Carry on! Smash the enemy! Drive him out of our sacred territory!"

I was in Moscow during the first air-raids. You may ask me whether I was afraid? To tell the truth, I was. But stronger than all sense of fear was a feeling of hatred, rage and revenge. This is a feeling we all share alike. This is what spurs our men on in battle. This high feeling of justice!

I've travelled a good deal during the war. First I was in the South, then our theatre played for a considerable time in Chelyabinsk, a far off town in Siberia. But all the time I couldn't tear my thoughts away from Moscow, for I'm a Moscovite through and through. Here I was born and spent all my life, and here I hope to end my days. I love the crooked little side-streets of Moscow, the multi-coloured domes of our churches, and I admire the splendid new buildings that have been erected during the last twenty-five years. And *this* is the Moscow that the Germans dreamt they could take from us! It seems to me, if only I could shoot, I would snatch up a rifle and march against the enemy.

But I have my own weapon—my art, and I place it entirely at the service of my homeland. Just as in the past, in the days of my youth, I am working now in our dear Maly Theatre. Nowadays our audience consists mostly of military men. In the semi-obscurity of the body of the hall I can see the glitter of epaulets and orders, and the excited, eager faces, and a feeling of deep satisfaction fills my heart.

Very often I perform in the hospitals for the wounded. I simply have no words to express what I feel there. The poor bandaged men raise themselves on their elbows, crane their necks to catch every word we utter. Some are quite unable to move and are carried on stretchers into the ward where the entertainment is taking place. They lie motionless but their eyes, their eyes. . . What delight, what joy is expressed in them! And I myself share their happiness: with pride I recognize that at least one part of my work has been devoted to the Red Army, and that I have been able to do my bit for our Red Army men.

Especially for this kind of entertainment the actor Vassili Khlebnikov and I have written a little one-act play. It is called: "Don't get too excited." This little sketch features two elderly people. Their only son has been at the front for a considerable time. Suddenly news comes through that he has distinguished himself in action and that the title of Hero of the Soviet Union has been conferred on him. The neighbours are the first to convey this joyful news to the old father with a warning that he should be careful how he tells it to the mother: "Don't forget, she suffers from a weak heart, it's bad for her to get too excited!" And a few minutes later someone 'phones up the mother and warns her to be careful how she conveys this news to the father: "Don't forget, he's no longer young, and his health is failing." And then a touching scene takes place. Both the old folks, their hearts overflowing with joy, fear to let drop a word of their happiness in their anxiety to spare each other a shock. I found a real pleasure in drawing up this little sketch for the hospitals.

Perhaps you would like to know how I fill up my life these days? I'm consumed with an unquenchable passion for work. Sometimes I catch myself thinking: "Don't forget, you are no longer young. It's time you began to think about a rest." And then immediately I say to myself: "Tired? How can you think of resting when those at the front, so dear to our hearts, are fighting and battling, sacrificing their lives, heedless of fatigue or need of rest, face to face with death?"

B. Ryzhova as Anfissa Tikhonovna in "Wolves and Sheep" by A. Ostrovsky

Every day I wake up with the thought: how are things at the front? I'm up already at six o'clock to hear the first broadcast. How familiar and friendly does the voice of the announcer sound when he speaks of our well-known old Russian towns, recaptured from the Germans. . . One longs to be off there, to perform before our brothers and sisters in the liberated territories.

I am a true believer. My faith has done much to support me in these days of war. I have with me the icon of Seraphim Prepodobny, it goes everywhere with me, just now it is hanging over my bed. I firmly believe that God will help us to vanquish Hitler. Divine compensation will bring about the downfall of him who sheds blood on earth, of him who takes from innocent people God's gift—their lives. . .

At the beginning of this war, when German planes were still able to break through over Moscow, a high explosive bomb fell on a house quite near where I live. The ceiling and walls of my flat still show the cracks caused by the terrific explosion. I have left them untouched. Let them remain! Let every day, every hour be a reminder to me of my duty as a woman patriot. Then when the war comes to an end, when the last German falls dead on our soil, I will have them painted in the gayest, most cheerful colours. We'll build anew the ruined houses, we'll reconstruct the towns destroyed by flames, and a free happy life will be built up everywhere.

BARBARA RYZHOVA,
People's Artist of the U.S.S.R.

THE FATHER OF RUSSIAN POETRY

In the Soviet newspapers, among war-time snapshots showing smoke-clouded battle-fields, air fights, shattered German tanks and files of captured nazis, there appeared the other day the seemingly incongruous old-fashioned picture of an old man in an ample fur coat and a high beaver fur cap: that is how, many years ago, Repin represented Gavriil Derzhavin, the oldest Russian poet, whose 200th anniversary was commemorated in July, 1943, all over the U.S.S.R.

Derzhavin's verse marks the zenith of Russian poetry in the XVIII century. He was the first of the constellation of poets glittering with the names of Alexander Pushkin, Michael Lermontov, Nicholas Nekrassov—down to that of the most prominent poet of the Soviet period, Vladimir Mayakovsky.

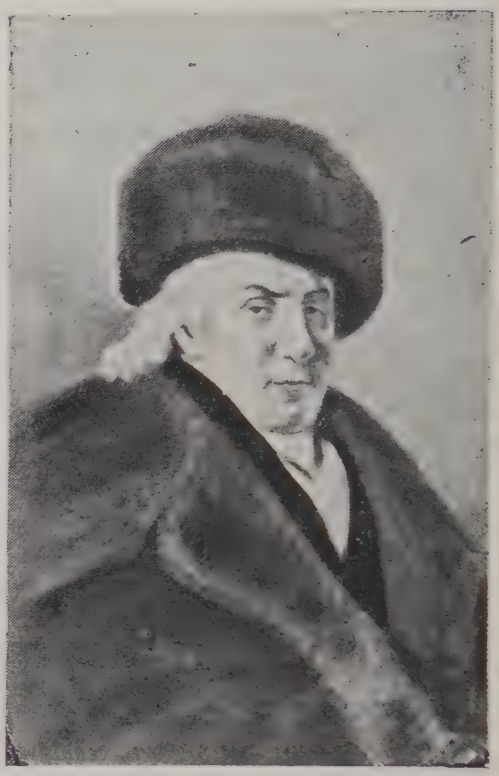
Derzhavin belonged to the provincial nobility, but his family was poor. In his youth he had a hard time of it: for ten years he was a private in the Preobrazhensky regiment of the Guards. It was his outstanding talent that enabled him to reach the top of the ladder. Derzhavin became the first poet of Russia. In addition, he proved to be a capable statesman. He was the Minister of Justice and secretary to the Empress Catherine II. The richness of his life's experience made it possible for him to give a truthful and comprehensive picture of Russian life in his poetry.

Gavriil Derzhavin (1743—1816) lived in the golden period of Russian military history. The South and the West reverberated with the thunder of one victory after another. And Derzhavin who, echo-like, responded to the ringing exploits of the Russian arms, became an enthusiastic eulogist of Russia's military power.

200th anniversary was marked by the Soviet press in a variety of ways, by numerous articles by the best poets, critics and historians of literature. In these the personality of the old Russian poet stands out as that of a living participator in the events the Russian people are living through nowadays.

"Derzhavin loved Russia most devotedly and held it dearer than anything else in the world," says Nicholas Gudziy. "He extolled and glorified his epoch, eternalized by the exploits of the brilliant Russian generals. His poems are a veritable chronicle of Russia's conquests." In this connection Leonid Timofeyev reminds us of Derzhavin's own words that love of one's country is "the chief virtue of a great soul." "He loved his fatherland, the great land of the Russians," writes the well-known poet Vassili Lebedev-Koumach, "with all the force of his ardent, passionate heart, he loved her history, her military glory, her nature, and her people."

Valeri Kirpotin writes that "Derzhavin's poems convey the vastness of the Russian land and the austerity of its nature, which tend to produce strong characters which do not easily give way to despondency." Characterizing Derzhavin's works, Sergei Shervinsky, a poet and translator, points out that "it was not only the feats of the Russian armies that Derzhavin extolled, but also the beauty of the Russian landscape and the peaceful life of the Russian people. He admired the dances of country-girls and enjoyed the songs of mowers carrying their glittering scythes."



A portrait of Derzhavin painted by I. Repin

A poet, according to Derzhavin, should be the herald and servitor of truth. Hence the independence and firmness inherent in his own poetical works. Dmitri Blagoy, analysing the purposeful satire in many of Derzhavin's poems, states that themes particularly characteristic of the great public-spirited Russian poetry of the XIX century rang out for the first time in Derzhavin's satirical odes.

In his days poets were hampered by the numerous laws of the so-called pseudo-classicism, which restricted soaring imagination and forbade certain subjects as being low and unworthy of art. For some time Derzhavin adhered to the universally adopted rules. But the artist's unerring instinct soon made him turn to real life as his source of inspiration. He dropped the classical precepts. He was the first to introduce into poetry the simple inflections

of popular speech and the burning questions of his day.

Derzhavin's importance as an innovator was repeatedly emphasized in the anniversary articles.

"Derzhavin enriched the Russian poetical vocabulary," writes Vassili Lebedev-Koumach, "he brought poetry into close contact with life and the people. It was he who first described in verse the Russian landscape and every-day life—and described them in his own, essentially Russian way: he transformed the pseudo-classical conventional shepherds and shepherdesses of uncertain nationality into Russian people, palpitating with life, and made the nature of his mother-country shine in his poetry with its own distinctive and inimitable charm."

The same idea is expressed by poet Pavel Antokolsky: "Derzhavin flung wide open the doors of the conventional classical verse to let in concrete impressions of life, and filled it with poignant, burning and frankly up-to-date reality. Derzhavin has no use for abstractions, which are inevitable in classical art. He has put life into the mythological allegories themselves, and lo!—their marble-like countenances have turned out to be just ruddy Russian faces. The life-like Russian landscape, with some poignantly familiar features in the scenery, correctly perceived and painted with an almost exagerated vividness in Derzhavin's poems, is sometimes populated by those notoriously naughty people—nymphs, cupids and such like; but even these guests from antiquity seem to have become humanized and appear to be quite at home in our hyperborean regions."

Vissarion Belinsky, the great Russian critic, defined Derzhavin as "the father of the Russian poets." When, in 1843, the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth was being celebrated, Belinsky wrote—and the Soviet critics of today are ready to back him: "And so, a whole century divides the younger generation of today from the time of Catherine's bard. . . Yet, Derzhavin is not dead, just as the epoch glorified by him is not dead either."

The historical perspective which separates our Soviet life from Derzhavin's epoch, has become still greater, the gap is immeasurable; and yet, even now, Derzhavin's words do not sound obsolete; and this anniversary is a heartfelt date.

"His vocabulary and versification have inevitably become somewhat archaic, removed as they are from us by the lapse of time, but even now we feel the power of his poetical genius and are irresistibly captivated by its charm."

From Derzhavin there is but one step to Pushkin. "We are justified in stating that the great old man Derzhavin cleared the way for the great young man Pushkin."

In his extreme old age, Derzhavin met Pushkin. The meeting took place at the examination at the Lyceum where Derzhavin was invited as an honorary guest. Pushkin looked back on it as one of the most exciting and momentous events in his life:

"I was reciting my *Reminiscences in Tsarskoye Selo*. I stood only two steps from Derzhavin. I cannot describe the state of my soul when I reached the line where Derzhavin's name was mentioned, my boyish voice rang with emotion and my heart throbbed with ecstasy. . . I do not remember how I came to the end of my recitation, whether I ran away. . . Derzhavin was delighted: he called for me, he wanted to embrace me. . . They looked for me, but I could not be found."

This meeting is recorded in Ilya Repin's celebrated picture "Pushkin at the Lyceum Examination." The subject was revived recently in Yuri Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* where it is allotted a whole chapter.

Derzhavin's favourite hero was the great Russian strategist Alexander Suvorov. Derzhavin saw Suvorov as the personification of courage and Russian military genius, of resourcefulness, hardiness and the ability to take great pains and do great deeds for his country's sake. Many of Derzhavin's poems are devoted to Alexander Suvorov and his glorious victories. He may be justly called the singer of Suvorov's praises. To describe his hero, Derzhavin used words and images reminding one of folklore and epics of legendary giants:

He stands over the mountains, which shake beneath his tread,
He lies upon the waters, which foam around him.

Derzhavin made no distinction between Suvorov and his soldiers. In his conception they formed one mighty force, the might of the Russian people and of Russian patriotism. Derzhavin regarded Suvorov's brilliant victories as "the fruit of national enthusiasm; they followed naturally from the fundamental characteristics of the Russian man whom nature herself made fit for toil and exploits." (Excerpt from Antokolsky's article.)

And this magnate and court poet himself had the soul of a soldier. When Napoleon's armies invaded Russia, Derzhavin, old and infirm though he was, took up his pen to make a strategic plan for fighting the aggressors' troops; he suggested all kinds of obstacles to be built in their way "to make the enemy, on entering Russia, pay for every step with his own blood." On July 14th, 1812, a month after the invasion, he wrote: "The fire raised by the foe is spreading fast, and there is no other means of stopping it than to start with the same swift decision, a similar counter-fire."

Fortunately, Gavriil Derzhavin lived long enough to see the Russian forces victorious and Bonaparte's armies routed.

He could have addressed the peoples of Europe after this victory in the words he had already once used, when speaking of Suvorov's magnificent crossing of the Alps: "The Russian fights for the common good, peace for you, for himself, and everyone."

Re-read now, at the time of the Patriotic War, Derzhavin's poems make us feel the more our bond with the whole of the Russian culture. Over the gap of two hundred years the old Russian poet holds out his hand to the Soviet soldier fighting for the great past and the happy future of his country.

On United Nations Day, 14th June, 1943, an important concert was broadcast by the Moscow radio of musical works of the nations fighting against Hitlerism. Patriotic songs of the peoples of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and France formed the central theme of the concert, while the works of British and American composers such as Elgar, Foster, MacDowell and Baumann, and songs by Soviet composers written to the lyrics of English poets, were included. The finale of the concert was Chaikovsky's triumphant *1812 Overture*.

Cinemas in Moscow and many other Soviet cities showed English documentary films and newsreels dealing with various episodes from the operations of the allied navies, armies and air forces.

VOKS, the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, has opened an exhibition in the Central Red Army Club in Moscow, depicting the cultural relations existing between the Soviet Union and the democratic countries.

The exhibition gives a clear picture of the flourishing anti-Hitler democratic commonwealth of liberty-loving peoples. At the same time it demonstrates the lively public interest and sympathy for the heroic struggle of the Soviet people against the nazi invaders.

Posters, photographs and drawings from various countries are exhibited. Special stands carry a huge collection of articles that have appeared during the war years in the newspapers of Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, China, India, Iran and Afghanistan. The articles deal in the main with the struggle and victories of the Red Army at Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad. The visitor's attention is attracted by a drawing by the English cartoonist Low—soldiers of the Red Army, bayonets fixed, charging the enemy. The drawing bears the title "Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad."

A special section of the exhibition shows the help which the United States and Great Britain are giving to the Soviet Union. The photograph of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, attended by 25,000 people, and the eight huge red-bound books which contain the signatures of four million Americans who welcomed the strengthening of Soviet-American collaboration, are very impressive exhibits. On a stand nearby is a Chinese battle standard with a five-pointed star sent as a gift for the best Soviet army.

The exhibition shows the growing interest in Russian literature as seen in the foreign editions of Russian classics and the works of modern Soviet writers, such as Mikhail Sholokhov, Ilya Ehrenburg, Eugene Petrov, A. Polyakov and many others.

Particular interest is shown in the Soviet cinema. Since the war began 22,400,000 people in England have seen Soviet films. The Soviet film *Russia Hits Back* was a great success abroad and was awarded the first prize in the newsreel section in the annual contest of the American Academy of Cinema Arts and Sciences.

Another section of the exhibition deals with Russian plays produced abroad and performances of Russian classical and modern composers. A special stand is devoted to Dmitri Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, first performed in the U.S.A. on 19th July, 1942, by Toscanini.

The exhibition is crowded daily by people who display a lively interest in these exhibits depicting the growth of international anti-nazi cooperation.

Nation-wide tribute was paid to Fyodor Gladkov, one of the most popular Soviet writers, on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Fyodor Gladkov, who first appeared in print in 1899, endowed Soviet literature with his great experience of life and writing. His novel *Cement* became very popular, went through many editions and was translated into a number of foreign languages. Man's labour is the main theme of all Gladkov's writing. Maxim Gorky wrote to him, on the subject of his novel *Cement*:

"You are the first in the whole period of the Revolution to handle the most important theme of our days, labour. Nobody before you has handled the subject so cleverly and with such strength."

In his novel *Electric Power*, which was a sort of sequel to *Cement*, in his short stories *New Earth* and *The Tragedy of Lyubasha* and in the stories from the *Little Trilogy* Gladkov remains true to his favourite topic.

Since the war began Fyodor Gladkov has been working in the Urals as a correspondent for the newspaper *Izvestia*, where he has been writing about the people working in the rear. His Urals impressions have been collected in a book published under the title *The Seared Heart* (published by "Soviet Writer," 1943).

Moscow writers celebrated Fyodor Gladkov's 60th birthday with a soirée at which Alexander Fadeyev, Anna Karavayeva, Lydia Seifullina and others spoke. Gladkov was also congratulated by a representative of one of the Red Army Guards Divisions, who read a letter in which the officers and men of the division thanked the writer for visiting their unit and wished him every success in the creation of new patriotic works.

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, the Soviet Government awarded Fyodor Gladkov the Order of the Red Banner of Labour for his outstanding work in the realm of literature.

Forty years ago, in 1903, a minor Lithuanian magazine published a story called *The Night Watchman*. The author of the story was a then unknown Lithuanian lad of seventeen, Liudas Gira. Then appeared Liudas Gira's verses, and in 1908 his first collection of poems entitled *Play, Play, Little Whistle*. His next collections *Green Meadow*, *Roads of the Homeland*, *Songs of the Fields* enhanced the young man's reputation and with the passing of the years he became the recognized national poet of the Lithuanian people.

Liudas Gira's activities are many and varied: he is a poet, playwright, translator, literary critic and experienced editor. He was at one time manager of the Lithuanian Theatre in Kaunas where his plays *Dawn Has Broken* and *Vengeance* enjoyed great popularity with the

public. Liudas Gira also did some interesting research on the "dain," the Lithuanian folk-song. For a number of years he was editor of *Rainbow*, the first Lithuanian literary journal. As a translator he is well known for his versions of classical authors, especially Alexander Pushkin and Taras Shevchenko.

The nazi invasion compelled the poet to leave his native Lithuania for the time being. Despite his advanced age, Liudas Gira joined the Lithuanian division, in which he is working as writer and propagandist. He has written inspiring poems and songs calling on the Lithuanian people to engage in an implacable struggle against the German invaders. They were collected in a recently published book *The Word of Struggle*.

The 40th anniversary of Liudas Gira's literary and public activities was widely marked in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government awarded the writer-patriot the Order of the Red Banner of Labour and articles on Gira's work were published in the newspapers. On the occasion of his anniversary the writer is at his post of duty as a soldier. He is a firm believer in a bright future, in the liberation of his native Lithuania. Words that he once wrote have now acquired a new meaning:

My gloomy songs shall arouse Lithuania,
Arise, ye scythe, strike out!

A book of selected verses by Yanko Kupala, the poet of the Byelorussian people, has just appeared. Throughout all the years of his work (1905—1942) the poet faithfully portrayed his people and his country.

The Byelorussian plains, the open woodlands, the frowning skies, the quiet villages, the rainy autumns—such is the Byelorussian landscape as we see it in Yanko Kupala's work. The poet paints the Byelorussian village in rich, warm tones, the village to which the Revolution has brought new ways of life. Yanko Kupala has a fine understanding of the language of his people, he feels all the miraculous strength of the native tongue. His work is a milestone in the development of the Byelorussian language and literature.

Hatred is a force no less than love in Kupala's verses, hatred for the enemies of his homeland which was one of the first to suffer from the blows of the nazis. "The enemy will gain nothing. We'll give the enemy nothing," wrote Kupala. "If the enemy picks an apple that has ripened in our orchards, it will turn into a bomb in his hands! If he reaps but a handful of our heavy-eared corn, it will scatter in a hail of bullets and lay him low!"

Yanko Kupala's selected poems were published on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death.

The Union of Soviet Writers of Uzbekistan has issued a collection of stories entitled *Battling for the Homeland*.

The book, published in Tashkent, is a collection of writings by Soviet authors of many nationalities, including soldiers and political workers of the Red Army who have been in the city, particularly those who lay in hospital there.

Each of the stories is based on a shorthand report of conversations between the soldiers and the authors who wrote up the stories.

The authors, amongst whom are such famous names as Alexei Tolstoy, Vsevolod Ivanov, the well-known Russian historian M. Nechkina and others, merely gave literary form to these stories, all of which deal with the first year of the war.

Some treat of the bigger operations, the fighting on the approaches to Moscow, on the Southern front, the heroic struggle of the partisans, the operations of the Soviet air force, in particular the bombing of Berlin, etc.

Battling for the Homeland gives a true picture, based on concrete facts, of the high fighting qualities and morale of the Red Army.

Professor A. M. Kirchenstein, Vice-Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and head of the Latvian Republic, recently presented the Order of the Red Banner of Labour to the Latvian writer A. M. Upits. The presentation of the Order awarded for outstanding services in the field of literature took place in the Kremlin.

On receiving the order, A. M. Upits said: "All my literary work for the last forty-five years has been closely bound up with the life of my people, in particular with their struggle against their oppressors, the German barons. Together with my people I fought for a better future, for the emancipation of labour, for freedom of thought and speech. My life of literary work is still not over. I feel that I can produce still better work and that it is my duty to the Soviet people to do so."

Koltushi is well-known both in the U.S.S.R. and abroad. It was in this little town's numerous laboratories and specially equipped buildings that the ideas of Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, the famous Russian biologist, were developed, and energetic research work along those lines carried out. The war has somewhat curtailed the work of the Pavlov Institute of Evolutionary Physiology and Pathology of the Higher Nervous System, but has not brought it to a standstill. Some of the Institute's workers were evacuated; only those pupils and colleagues of Academician Pavlov whose work would not bear interruption remained in Koltushi.

Professor M. K. Petrova, the director of the Department of Experimental Pathology of the Higher Nervous System, has just finished one of her most important pieces of research on the influence of the nervous system (the brain cortex) on the origin and growth of tumours (cancer) and other pathological processes in the skin and the internal organs of dogs. This work is the result of many years of observation of dogs suffering from neurosis and of specially arranged experiments. Petrova's latest work has given a number of brilliant experimental proofs of the important role played by the brain in various pathological processes and in the origin of tumours.

Scientists of the Department of Experimental Genetics of the Higher Nervous Activity, working under the guidance of Dr. Voskressenskaya in a newly equipped temporary laboratory for the study of conditional reflexes, are studying the hereditary regularity of certain peculiarities in the organization of the nervous system of animals. The summary made of the work of this large group of scientists during the past few years enables preliminary postulates to be made on the way in which

characteristic features of the nervous activity of animals are inherited.

Doctor Golovina is working on a study of the case histories of patients being treated in the Pavlov Clinic for Mental Diseases (her study covers patients suffering from delirium) with the object of discovering in their illnesses the physiological bases of higher nervous activity as worked out by the Pavlov school.

Soviet historians are carrying out important research for the purpose of exposing nazi "ideologists," in particular the fascist falsifiers of history. The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has just completed a number of new works. A new book of over seven hundred pages has been prepared for the press; it deals with the origin of fascism in Germany, the development of the nazi party and its assumption of power and the establishment of nazi despotism. The work throws light on the hitlerian policy, its attitude to the working class, to the peasantry, to the middle class, and its system of degenerating and demoralizing youth. Fascism is shown as the worst enemy of culture and of human progress.

A book *Against the Fascist Falsification of History* is now in the press. On the basis of concrete historical examples it exposes the despicable methods and impertinent ignorance of the nazi falsifiers of world history: of ancient, medieval and modern history and the history of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

An exhibition of war paintings by Constantine Dorokhov, an artist who was called up in 1941, at the beginning of the war, has opened in Moscow. The young artist joined the Navy. The silhouettes of war-ships, the smoky sky lines of naval ports, and the grim sailors became the subjects of his war-time studies. Reviewing the exhibition of Constantine Dorokhov's works, P.Sokolov-Skalya, a wellknown Soviet artist and Stalin Prize winner, said:

"Dorokhov went to the war to fight. He immediately reacted, through the medium of his art, to the new environment, so utterly unlike his surroundings in peace-time. . . When you see the exhibition of Dorokhov's works—there are about 300 on display—you feel a great respect for the artist who has seriously and deeply studied the expressive material of war-time life."

Dorokhov's Leningrad series and snapshots of Shlusselburg are outstanding.

Among the exhibitions held in Moscow since the spring of this year, is that of the old master V. Svarog, recently decorated with the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, was prominent. He has worked for over forty years at various kinds of painting, doing his best work in water-colour and pencil. V. Svarog is an expert portrait painter. His water-colour portraits of Valerian Kuibyshev, a prominent Soviet statesman who died some years ago, and an extraordinarily expressive portrait of Mikhail Klimov, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., attract attention. He also has good portraits of Marshal Voroshilov and Maxim Gorky.

Igor Grabar, critic and art expert, himself an outstanding artist, gives special praise in his review of Svarog's exhibition to an excellent series of sketches in black and white.

The celebrations of Professor Alexandrov's sixtieth birthday in Moscow were marked by a cordial and festive atmosphere. Prof. Alexandrov, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., has been an active member of the musical world

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By C. Darokhov

for forty years and is known to all as leader of the famous Red Army Song and Dance Ensemble.

Alexandrov is a follower of the prominent Russian composers Anatoli Liadov, Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Glazunov, and of Serge Vassilenko still flourishing today. For a number of years Alexandrov was active as musician and teacher in the provinces and later in Moscow, where he was a professor at the State Conservatoire.

Fifteen years ago (in 1928) Alexandrov organized and led a small Red Army ensemble, consisting of eight singers, two dancers, an accordion player and a reciter. That was the embryo of the first-class ensemble of 250 performers which Professor Alexandrov leads today.

Alexandrov's ensemble immediately won the affection of the Red Army. The ensemble began to grow, its ranks augmented by talented singers, brilliant dancers and splendid musicians. The main asset of the ensemble is its profound grasp of the national spirit of its musical productions. The genuine folk spirit of the ensemble's performances is expressed in the purity of the musical style, and in the fire and masterly ease of its rendering of Russian dances. The Red Army ensemble has travelled from end to end of the country. It has been on tour in France and Czechoslovakia. It was awarded the Grand Prix for its performance at the International Exhibition in Paris.

Professor Alexandrov is not only the creator and conductor of the ensemble but also its composer. His services in the dissemination of Russian choral art are unique. He has given us masterly adaptations of numbers of old songs which are great favourites with the people. *I've Travelled the Whole World Over*, *Snowstorm* and many other songs have been given a new lease of life among the Soviet people thanks to their excellent rendering by the ensemble. Professor Alexandrov has composed a number of new songs. His *Sacred War* was heard at the very beginning of the war and has now become one of the most popular songs in the Soviet Union.

"Alexandrov's talent can express to the full that spirit of heroism so deeply rooted in Russian folklore," writes Aram Khachaturian, the composer. "Alexandrov's songs attract by the power and scope of their musical images, the brevity and relief of their words."

Professor Alexandrov and his ensemble are doing intense work at the front in these days of war, serving the boys in uniform. The arrival of the ensemble is a real holiday for every unit.

At the celebration meeting, Colonel A. Tsaritsin, representing the Red Army, spoke of the ensemble's wide popularity among the people and the Red Army. Dmitri Shostakovich, who read a letter from the Composers' Association, warmly greeted Professor Alexandrov. In a brief speech Aram Khachaturian paid tribute to the creative and public activity of the Professor. Delegations from theatres and representatives of musical institutions and the public brought greetings. Particularly affectionate was the speech of Uliana Domrina, a woman collective-farm chairman at the village of Plakhino, Ryazan Region, where Alexandrov was born.

At the celebration meeting it was announced that Professor Alexandrov had been awarded the Order of Lenin.

In reply Professor Alexandrov thanked the Government for recognizing his public and artistic activity by conferring upon him such a high award, and spoke of his plans and of his readiness to devote all his future work to the service of his country.

The Soviet Composers' Association has compiled a book about the composer and performer Serge Rachmaninov. Many interesting facts were furnished by Professor Alexander Goldenveiser, the pianist, who was a close friend of Rachmaninov, and to whom the composer dedicated his Second Suite for pianoforte.

The book also contains a little known "musical letter," a comic romance of Rachmaninov's which he sent to Constantine Stanislavsky on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Moscow Art Theatre.

The fundamental kinship of Chopin's compositions with Polish folk music and the presence in his works of very many folk melodies is generally known and is naturally stressed in many of the famous composer-pianist's monographs. Nevertheless, in the very extensive literature on Chopin in various languages and even in works by Polish authors, nobody until now has tried thoroughly to study and determine the sources of Polish folk music upon which Chopin drew. That interesting task has now been attempted by Vyacheslav Paskhalov, the Soviet music expert and excellently accomplished in a recently published book called *Chopin and Polish Folk Music* (Muzgiz Publishing House, Leningrad).

Taking as his basis the documentation of Polish folk songs provided so fully in the work of thirty-three volumes by O. Kolberg, the Polish ethnographer and folklore expert, Paskhalov emphasizes the typical characteristics of its rhythm and harmony and endeavours to determine which particular tunes Chopin employed for his polonaises, mazurkas and other compositions. It appears that we are concerned not only with snatches of purely folk songs and dances of the Polish countryside but also with tunes and songs of urban origin, with melodies that were once popular in the environs of Warsaw and Plotsk and which of course reflect the refined musical culture which looms so large in the polonaises.

Paskhalov's researches amplify considerably and, in many cases, rectify the conclusions of his predecessors in investigating the creative path of Chopin.

An important concert by masters of Kirghiz art has been given in Moscow. The program reflected the intensive cultural and artistic life of the Kirghiz Republic in war-time.

Those popular favourites, the bards "akins" in summer heat and winter storm cross the eternally snow-capped mountains on horseback to bring their patriotic songs to the people. In every *aeel* (village), in every camp of the Kirghiz collective farmers, the "akin" is a welcome guest.

The composers of Kirghizia are doing good work as well as the bards. The composer Abdy-

las Maldybayev, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., has written twenty popular songs during the war. Dzhumamutdin Sheralyev also enjoys success. His war songs have particular appeal. The war has brought to the front the young composers Mukash Abdyrayev, Askar Tuleyev and Akhmet Amanbayev.

Kirghiz theatres are staging plays by national authors, dedicated to the country's defence. Outstanding among them is *The Pledge*, a play by A. Tokombayev about the deeds of gallant Kirghizians at the front. Kasymaly Jantoshev's *Kurmanbak Batyr* is a play dealing with the heroic past of the Kirghiz people. Alykul Osmonov, the poet, has written an opera libretto called *The Heart of a Hero*.

The Kirghiz theatre is introducing its audience to the best productions of Russian art. Chaikovsky's classic opera *Eugene Onegin* is now being staged in the language of the Kirghiz. Bakhterev's and Razumovsky's play about Suvorov, the great Russian general, has been translated from Russian. The translation of *Russians*, a war play by Constantine Simonov, has been concluded.

From the very first day of the war Kirghizian artists have been giving concerts for army units. To date they have given over 2,000 performances.

In the two years of the Patriotic War composers of Kazakhstan have written a number of works, many of which are of high merit.

Akhmet Zhubanov has written *On the March*, a musical play, and several new songs about Stalin and about Moscow for chorus and orchestra.

Not long ago Lati Khamitsi, Honoured Artist of the Kazakh S.S.R., finished a wartime march called *For Country* which was performed by the Kazakh National Orchestra, and also a song about the 8th Guards Division.

E. Brussilovsky, People's Artist of the Kazakh S.S.R., has composed an opera called *Forward, Guards!* and a symphony-suite entitled *The Steppe*. Kazakh folk melodies form the basis of the symphony, which will soon receive its first performance in the capital of the republic.

Other composers, too, are doing well and have written many scores for films, plays, overtures, cantatas, symphonic pieces and songs about the Patriotic War.

The Moscow Regional Juvenile Theatre has staged *The Sword of China*, a new play by P. Malyarevsky. The action of the play is laid in the old China of six hundred years ago, when it was fenced off from the rest of the world by the ancient Great Wall. The play is based on the uprising of the "Red Pikes," an episode from the Chinese people's battle for freedom. Critics have reviewed the play favourably, saying that it "develops in the young spectator courage, nobility, staunchness and love of country."

The Lenin State Library has always carried on a brisk exchange of books with other countries, and this has continued despite the war. At present the library is in communication with twenty countries. Books and magazines come to Moscow from the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, China, Iran and the countries of South America. Research institutes, universities, libraries and publishing houses regularly send their latest works to the U.S.S.R.

Lately the Lenin Library has received more than 6,600 books and magazines from abroad. There are the titles of 600 magazines alone. Recently the library received the British Ministry of Information's publication called *The Front Line*. An interesting acquisition is the New York edition of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* containing maps of the movements of Napoleon's army. The library has received fifteen volumes of the history of English literature, the work of the Royal Society.

The Soviet Government has decorated Leningrad's two oldest newspaper-sellers with the "Medal of Honour." Generations of Leningradites remember them, always at their posts in fine weather and foul. F. Morozov has been selling newspapers for thirty-six years and his friend P. Andreyev for over thirty years.

At the beginning of the war Morozov's three sons went to the front. One of them gave his life in defence of his country. The old newsseller's wife and daughter have begun to work with him. In the heaviest days of the siege of Leningrad the Morozov family might have been seen making their way to the city gates. Armymen would lean their rifles against the wall for a minute or two while they read the latest news. During enemy bombing and bombardment of the city Morozov carried the papers around the bomb-shelters.

A unique clock made by A. Balleté in Paris in the year 1873 has been repaired and set going at the museum in the town of Ivanovo. Up to the beginning of the twentieth century it was exhibited in the capitals of Europe, was brought to Russia and in 1912 was sent to Ivanovo.

The clock mechanism is housed in a case two metres sixty-five centimetres in height and three metres in width. The clock has ninety-six faces which show the movement of the stars, sun and moon. The mechanism indicates the daily change in the phase of the moon. Separate faces show the time (hours and minutes) in the biggest towns of the five continents (Leningrad, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Marocco, Haiti and so on). The clock has twenty-five main-springs most of which are wound twice a month. Some springs need winding only once a year and some once in three years. This unique clock stopped in 1898. Now A. Lototsky, an assistant professor at the Ivanovo Teachers College, has repaired it.

Editor-in-chief:: HELEN STASSOVA

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Drawing by P. Vassilyev

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