International Literature

11

1943

THE STATE LITERARY PUBLISHING HOUSE
Printed in the Soviet Union

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE TWENTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET STATE

The thunder of the guns saluting the gallant troops who had liberated Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, the cradle of the Russian State and culture, accompanied the Soviet people's celebration of the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. On the eve of the holiday, November 6th, the privates, officers and generals of the Red Army who are continuing their victorious advance towards the western borders of their country, and the millions of citizens in the rear listened with enthusiasm and justifiable pride to the report given by the Chairman of the State Defence Committee, Marshal J. Stalin, at the special session of the Moscow Soviet of Working People's Deputies.

On the occasion of the twenty-sixth anniversary of the October Revolution, greetings poured in from all parts of the world, from people prominent in the political, cultural and public life of the countries fighting together with the Soviet Union against hitlerite tyranny and its criminal "New Order."

Smoke is still rising from the ruins of towns and villages burned or blown up by the German-fascist vandals; the dying groans of their victims—old people, women and children—can still be heard; cultural centres are still being defiled and altars desecrated; the mournful procession of white slaves being driven to fascist servitude still winds along the roads. But for humanity shaken to its depths by hitlerite savagery, it is clear that the nightmare which has fastened upon it is nearing its end. No thinking person in the world can dispute the great historic service rendered by the Soviet people and their heroic Red Army in this war which is approaching its final phases in the impending defeat and collapse of Hitler Germany, her satellites and Quislings.

The year separating the twenty-fifth and the twenty-sixth anniversaries of the October Revolution saw a turning point in the course of the war. This year will be, nay, is already being entered on the tablets of history. It was here, under the walls of the great Volga stronghold, —Stalingrad—on the banks of the mighty Russian river, that the Red Army in November 1942, after a long and staunch defence launched its grandiose winter campaign — a campaign whose direct continuation was the victorious summer offensive this year. As a result of these campaigns, the Soviet forces flung the Germans back five hundred kilometres on the central sectors of the front, and thirteen hundred kilometres in the south, liberating about a million square kilometres of territory, or almost two thirds of the Soviet territory temporarily captured by the enemy. The hitlerite invaders have lost over four million soldiers and officers, including not less than 1.800.000 killed along this path of unceasing blows and defeats, which began with the German army's Stalingrad catastrophe. In the course of the year, the enemy troops have been driven back from Vladikavkas to Kherson, from Yelista to Krivoi Rog, from Stalingrad to Kiev, from Voronezh to Gomel, from Vyazma and Rzhev to the approaches to Orsha and Vitebsk. This year also saw the blockade of Leningrad broken. The Red Army offensive is continuing!

In their attempts to conceal their terrible losses in manpower and equipment the German command is covering up the shameful collapse of their adventurist strategic plans with feeble, tongue-tied babble about "elastic defence," a "planned retreat to previously prepared positions," "shortening the line of the front," and of "voluntarily severing contact with the enemy."

The Hitlerites sought the decision of the war as a whole on the battlefields of the Soviet Union. They hurled against this front the main mass of their armed forces, hundreds of German divisions, as well as the forces of their vassals. But the Soviet state, formed twenty-six years ago by the Party of Bolsheviks guided by Lenin and Stalin, the state based on the ardent patriotism and friendship of the peoples and grown in the years of peaceful construction to a high economic and cultural level has now, in the days of war, become an indestructible, impregnable fortress. The wily and ferocious enemy who attacked the U.S.S.R. erred bitterly!

The trials of war are always a test of the material and spiritual force of any people; for the U.S.S.R. they have been a test of the social structure created twenty-six years ago, of its means of production, its social form and culture.

During these twenty-six years the peoples of the U.S.S.R. have changed fundamentally. They have lost the feeling of mutual distrust fanned by the tsarist state, and have achieved a real brotherhood in the economic and cultural construction within the system of one union of states. The test of war not only did not weaken the ties linking the nations of the Soviet Union, but on the contrary, made the family of peoples of the U.S.S.R. one indivisible camp devotedly supporting its Red Army. Front and rear, whose firmness has often been marked by world public opinion, have become one indivisible whole.

The truly heroic labour of the workers, collective farm peasants and intellectuals have their part in the splendid victories won by the Red Army.

Our readers may recollect numerous facts testifying to the heroic labour being performed in factory and field, which show how, under the difficult conditions of war, Soviet intellectuals continue to advance in science, technique and art. Alongside with the writers' correspondence from the front, with the war novel and the play, many lyrics are also being written, which depict the spirit and feelings of those fighting for their happiness.

The successes of the Red Army have had their influence far beyond the Soviet-German front. They have changed the whole of the further course of the world war. At the time when the Soviet Union, upon whom had fallen the main burden of the fight against the German fascist bandits and their satellites, was dealing them blow after blow, the Anglo-American forces entered the fight for the common cause. They opened operations in North Africa, in the Mediterranean basin and in southern Italy, accompanying their land and sea operations by powerful air raids over Germany's most important industrial centres and internal communications.

Hitler clutched at his last hope—he placed his stakes on the hopes of prolonging the war. This bankrupt adventurer dreamed that the longer the war lasted, the more hope there was of his being saved by a weakening in the cooperation between the members of the anti-hitlerite coalition, by a split in the ranks of the united nations.

These fascist hopes and calculations received a crushing blow from the decisions of the Moscow Conference of foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the U.S.A. At the Moscow Conference the governments of these three countries, expressing the will of their people and the passionate longing of all mankind to put an end to the hitlerite plague, unanimously put forward as their first aim the hastening of the end of the war against Germany. Clearly and unequivocally, the communiqué of the conference speaks of definite military operations, "with regard to which decisions had been taken and which are already being prepared." A similar unanimity and readiness for firm cooperation runs through the resolution of the Conference on the formation of a European Advisory Commission, the declaration on Italy, the declaration on Austria and the declaration on general security; the last declaration was signed by the Chinese government as well.

A menacing warning for the hitlerite bandits lies in the declaration published during the Conference by President Roosevelt, by J. Stalin, head of the Soviet Government, and by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on the responsibility of the Hitlerites for atrocities they committed. The German soldiers and officers are warned that those guilty will not escape the hand of justice even at "the uttermost ends of the earth."

In their statements on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the October Revolution, the press of the united nations and many prominent persons in the allied countries noted with full justification the significant fact of the increased collaboration between the three great powers—the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and the United States, which will hasten the final rout of Hitler Germany and her associates in Europe, a bloc which is already in a state of collapse.

Freedom loving peoples in fraternal unity will achieve the liberation of Europe from the fascist invaders, will attain the stern punishment of the hitlerite criminals and will create a new common life for the peoples of Europe based on mutual trust, mutual aid and a firm peace.

The Soviet Union always was and is a stronghold of peace. The important role played by the Soviet Union in the war against the hitlerite barbarians and in the future organization of peace after the war cannot fail to strengthen the existing ties between Soviet culture and the advanced culture of the democratic countries.

In his message of greeting to the Soviet people on the occasion of the twenty-sixth anniversary of the October Revolution, Upton Sinclair called "the survival of the Soviet Union and its resistance to the nazi gangsters" "a miracle of the modern world," and asserted that at present thinking people share the hopes of the Soviet people "for building a new democratic cooperative world."

Facts show that this belief is shared by those peoples sincerely united with the U.S.S.R. in the struggle for a better future for mankind.

IMMORTALITY

"Before my comrades in arms, before my dear much suffering country, before the whole people—when joining the ranks of the 'Young Guard' — I take this solemn oath:

"To carry out unwaveringly any task assigned to me by a senior comrade.

"To keep absolutely secret everything concerning my work in the 'Young Guard.' I swear to avenge without mercy the burned down cities and villages, the blood of our people, and our thirty martyred heroic miners. And if, to attain this vengeance I have to give my life, I shall sacrifice it without a moment's hesitation.

"And should I break this oath, whether under torture or for want of courage—then let my name and my family be accursed for ever and my comrades pass relentless judgement upon me.

"Blood for blood! Death for death!"

This oath of loyalty to the fatherland and of resolve to fight to the last breath to liberate it from the German invaders was taken by the members of the Young Communist League underground organization, the "Young Guard," in the town of Krasnodon, Voroshilovgrad region. They took it in the autumn of 1942, standing in front of one another in a small shuttered room, while the biting autumn wind howled over the enslaved and ravaged Donbas. The little town lay crouching in the darkness, there was nobody about, only a few German hirelings and masters of the rack from the Gestapo were ransacking the people's houses in the dead of night and giving full vent to their brutality in its torture-chambers.

The eldest of those who were taking the oath was nineteen, and the initiator and organizer of the group—Oleg Koshevoy—but sixteen.

Thus at the time of our country's ordeal the youngest generation of fighters for her freedom and happiness repeated Stalin's oath that sounded many years ago from the tribune at the II Congress of Soviets:

"We swear to you, Comrade Lenin, that we shall not spare our efforts to fulfil honourably this commandment of yours!"

In late autumn and winter the Donets steppe is grim and desolate in the piercing wind, and the black earth freezes into hard clods. But we belong here, it is our soil, peopled by miners giving power, heat and light to the great country. To keep this land free her best sons fought in the Civil War led by Klim Voroshilov and Alexander Parkhomenko. This soil is the birthplace of the splendid Stakhanovite movement

which changed the very countenance of the whole Union. The Soviet man penetrated deep down into the bosom of the Donets land and all over its bleak expanse powerful mills sprang up—the pride of our technical achievements—new towns flooded with electric light, our schools, clubs and theatres, where the genius of the Soviet man expanded and revealed itself in all its greatness. And now this land was being trodden by the enemy, by the dastardly German. He was sweeping over it like a flood, like the plague: plunging towns into darkness, turning schools and hospitals into stables or barracks for quartering his boorish soldiers, and transforming clubs and crêches into torture-chambers of the Gestapo.

Fire and rope, bullet and axe—these horrible instruments of death—had become inescapable companions of Soviet people here. These people were doomed to unthinkable agonies which only men deprived of human reason and conscience could devise. Suffice it to mention the thirty miners, whom the Germans buried alive in the city-park of Krasnodon for failing to register at the German "Labour Bureau." When the town had been liberated by the Red Army and the victims were exhumed, their bodies were found upright,—they had died standing—their heads appeared first, then their shoulders, arms, and trunks.

Innocent people had to wrench themselves away from their nearest and dearest to go into hiding. Homes were broken up. "I said good-bye to dad and wept bitterly," recounts Valya Borts, a member of the "Young Guard." "Something seemed to tell me I was seeing him for the last time. He went, and I stood there until he vanished from sight. Up to now he had had a family, his children and his home—and now he was to be on the tramp, like a stray dog. How many others have been shot or tortured to death!"

Young people, who were doing their best to escape registration, were seized and sent away to slave in Germany. One could often witness heartbreaking scenes in the streets. The harsh shouting of the police, their obscenities, mingled with the sobbing of the fathers and mothers whose boys and girls were being torn away from them.

With filthy lies spread by their rotten rags and leaflets about the capture of Moscow and Leningrad and the fall of the Soviet system, the Germans tried to poison Soviet people's minds.

Older men who had remained in Krasnodon with a view to organizing a struggle against the invaders, were soon spotted by the enemy and either perished or had to lay low. The task of organizing a struggle against the enemy fell to the lot of the young people. Thus it came about that in the autumn of 1942 there was formed an underground organization called the "Young Guard."

They were Soviet youths, just like those we see growing up all around us in our schools, in the "young pioneer's" details and the Y.C.L. organizations. The enemy strove to crush the spirit of liberty, the creative joy and elation of inspired work grafted by the Soviet system in them. And the Soviet young man reacted by proudly raising his head.

Oh, the free Soviet song! It always sounds in the hearts of our young people, it has become part and parcel of their lives.

"One night Volodya and I were on our way to Sverdlovka to see grandad. It was quite warm. German transport planes kept whirring overhead. We were walking through the steppe. There wasn't a soul about. We started singing: 'Still are the dark barrows. . . Out into the Donets steppe has come a lad.' Then Volodya says:

"'I know where our armies are.'

"He started telling me the communiqué. I rushed at him and embraced him."

One cannot help feeling moved by these artless lines of Volodya Osmukhin's sister.

Initiators and leaders of the "Young Guard" were Oleg Koshevoy, born 1926, member of the Y.C.L. since 1940; Ivan Zemnukhov, born 1923, Y.C.L. member since 1938; and Sergei Tyulenin, born 1925, Y.C.L. member since 1941. Soon the three patriots recruited new members: Ivan Turkenich, Stepan Safonov, Lyuba Shevtsova, Ulyana Gromova, Anatole Popov, Nicholas Sumskoy, Volodya Osmukhin, Valya Borts and others. Oleg Koshevoy was chosen as the Commissar. Ivan Turkenich, a member of the Y.C.L. from 1940, was appointed Commander by the staff.

And these youngsters, who had no experience of the old regime and consequently knew nothing of underground

political work, for months played havoc with all the regulations of the German usurpers and roused the townspeople and villagers of Krasnodon to resist the enemy; branches were formed in the neighbouring villages of Izvarino, Pervomayka, Semeikino. The number of the members grew to seventy, then to over one hundred—children of miners, peasants and intellectuals.

The character of the group, its methods, the general spirit of it show its members to be heirs to the immortal revolutionary school of Lenin and Stalin. The "Young Guard" circulated hundreds and thousands of leaflets—at the markets, in picture-houses, in the club. Leaflets were to be found on the walls of the police-station and in the very pockets of policemen's uniforms. The "Young Guard" procured four wireless sets and let the population know daily the communiqués of the Soviet Information Bureau.

Under the hard conditions of underground work new members were admitted, temporary cards handed out, membership fees paid. As the Soviet troops advanced, an armed revolt was prepared and arms were procured by diverse means.

At the same time assault groups carried out acts of sabotage and destructive work.

On the night of November 8, Ivan Turkenich's group hanged two policemen. Each had a placard on his breast: "This will be the lot of every filthy dog who sells himself."

On November 9, on the Gundorovka—Gerassimovka road, Anatole Popov's group wrecked a motor-car with three German officers of high rank in it.

On November 15 seventy-five Red Army men and officers from a prison camp in the hamlet of Volchansk were set free by Victor Petrov's group.

Early in December Moshkov's group set fire to three tankers of benzine on the Krasnodon—Sverdlovka road.

A few days later, on the Krasnodon—Rovenki road, Tyulenin's group made an armed assault on the escort driving off five hundred head of cattle—plundered from the villagers. The escort was killed and the cattle scattered over the steppe.

Those "Young Guard" members who by order of headquarters had "filtered" into German posts, put spokes in the Germans' wheel more than once: Sergei Levashov working as a garage mechanic disabled three cars one after another; Yuri Vitsenovsky arranged several big accidents in the mine.

December 6. In the dead of night three brave members of the "Young Guard"—Lyuba Shevtsova, Sergei Tyulenin and Victor Lukyanchenko succeed in carrying out a brilliant operation: they burn the German "Labour Bureau" to the ground with all its papers, thus saving many thousands of Russian people from being transported to Germany.

On the night of November 7, members of the organization hoisted the Red flag over the school, the former district co-operative stores, the hospital and on the highest tree in the park. "When I saw our flag on the school a thrill of joy and pride swept over me," says a Krasnodon inhabitant, M. A. Litvinova. "I woke up the children and rushed to Mukhina. I found her standing at the window in her underwear, her thin face all stained with tears. She said: 'Maria Alexeyevna, it is for us, for the Soviet men and women that this was done. Our people haven't forgotten us!' "

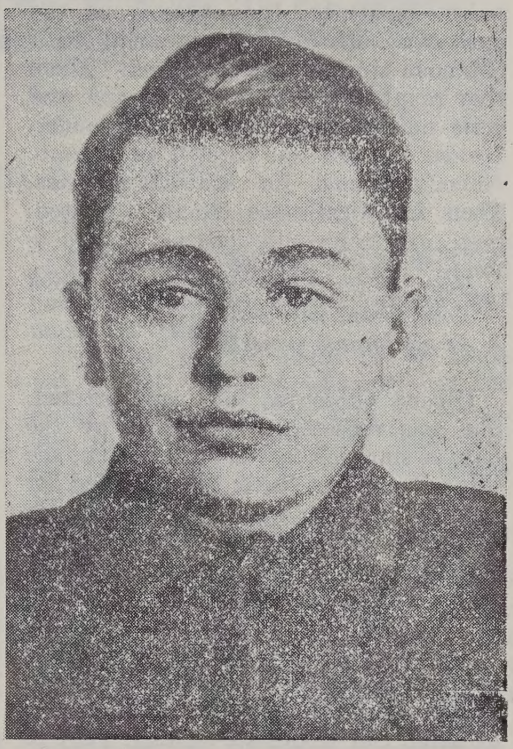
The organization was finally discovered having admitted into its ranks too wide a strata of young people, among whom there were some of a weaker strain.

But when the "Young Guards" were subjected to unimaginable tortures by the frenzied enemy, the high morale and sublime inner beauty of the young patriots were so forcible that the memory of these boys and girls will inspire our youth for generations to come.

Oleg Koshevoy, though a mere boy, was a splendid organizer. He was both dreamer and businesslike, practical man rolled into one, and the plans of the most daring operations originated from him. Tall and deep-chested, he was health and vigour personified; more than once he took part in daring sorties to harass the enemy. When arrested, his cool contempt maddened the Germans. They branded him with red-hot iron, they drove needles into his body—his will and fortitude didn't fail him. After every "examination" there appeared new strands of silver in his hair: when he was going to the place of execution he was quite grey.

Ivan Zemnukhov was one of the best educated and well-read members of the "Young Guard," the leaflets he wrote were remarkably good. Ungainly in

Ulyana Gromova



Oleg Koshevoy

appearance but strong in mind, he was universally liked and respected. He had a name for being a fine speaker, was fond of poetry and wrote verse—as, incidentally, did Oleg Koshevoy and many others of the "Young Guard." Ivan Zemnukhov was put to the most refined tortures. They would hang him with a noose drawn over a block and pull him up; when he swooned, they would bring him round by drenching him with cold water—and then repeat the process. Three times daily he was flogged with lashes made of electric wire. The police thought they could beat him into making a statement. It was they who were beaten: they got nothing out of him. On January 15 Ivan Zemnukhov, together with other comrades, was thrown down the shaft of pit No. 5.

Sergei Tyulenin was a small lively lad, impetuous and with quite a temper of his own, and brave to the point of recklessness. He acted in the riskiest operations, and killed a good many Germans. "He was a man of action," his surviving comrades characterize him. He hated blabbers, braggarts and idlers. He used to say: "You just do things and leave telling about them to others."

Tyulenin had to bear not only physical pain—he had to look on while his old mother was being put through the same torture. But like his comrades Sergei Tyulenin was staunch to the end.

Maria Borts, a teacher from Krasnodon, thus describes Ulyana Gromova, the fourth member of the "Young Guard": "She was a tall good-looking girl, a brunette with curly hair. Her piercing black eyes showed intellect and earnestness. She was a sensible, well educated girl, never indulging in passionate outbreaks or cursing her tormentors as did some of her comrades. She only remarked: "They hope to retain their hold on the land by terrorizing people! Stupid men! As if they could make the wheel of history turn backwards! . ."

The girls once asked her to recite the *Demon* to them. "This will be a pleasure to me," she replied. "I like the *Demon*. What a wonderful poem it is, isn't it? Just think, he dared against God himself!" It had grown quite dark in the cell. She started in her pleasant tuneful

voice. Suddenly, the stillness of the dusk was shattered by a wild yell. Gromova stopped and remarked: "There they're at it again." The groans and cries outside grew louder and louder. Inside, the cell was as still as a tomb. Nobody stirred for several minutes. Then, in a firm voice, Gromova quoted:

"Why is your courage on the wane,
Heirs of the Slavs, sons of the snow?
Your tyrant will perish
As all tyrants perished."

Ulyana Gromova, too, was tortured. She was repeatedly suspended by the hair, a star was carved on her back, she was put on a hot stove; they branded her with red-hot iron and dusted the wounds with salt. But even in the face of death her courage never left her and by rapping on the wall of the cell in a code used by the "Young Guard" she sent her friends messages of encouragement: "Don't lose heart, friends! Our army's near. Keep a stiff upper lip. The hour of freedom is at hand. Our troops are coming. They're coming! . ."

Her girl-friend Lyuba Shevtsova was entrusted by the "Young Guard" with intelligence work. She established connection with Voroshilovgrad and visited this city several times a month. Donning her Sunday best she played the part of a former big business man's daughter hating the Soviet system. This gave her the opportunity of mixing with German officers and getting hold of important papers. Lyuba Shevtsova's tortures lasted longer than anybody else's. The town police admitting themselves beaten, she was transferred to the Rovenki gendarmerie. There they drove needles under her finger nails and cut out a pentacle in the skin on her back. Her high spirits and fortitude were amazing: back in her cell, notwithstanding excruciating pain, she found it in her to sing songs—to spite the butchers. Once, in the middle of the torture, there came the drone of a Soviet plane; and Lyuba laughed and said: "It's our people calling to us!"

February 7, 1943, Lyuba Shevtsova was shot.

So died most of the "Young Guard" true to their oath to the very last—only a handful of them are alive today. On their way to the execution place they sang Lenin's favourite song: "Tortured to death by cruel captivity. . ."

Their heroism, and their integrity demonstrated with sweeping forcefulness the traits of people fostered by Lenin and Stalin. The traits of our best men—Dzerzhinsky, Kirov, Ordzhonikidze and many other good Bolsheviks—seem to be inherent in them.

The "Young Guard" is by no means the only organization of its kind on the territory invaded by the Germans—not a solitary exception. Everywhere, far and wide, the proud Soviet man is fighting the enemy. And though the members of the "Young Guard" have perished, they are immortal—for their traits are the traits of the new Soviet man, they are the traits of a strong people—the people of the Socialist country.

ALEXANDER FADEYEV

ALEXEI TOLSTOY

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

They picked her up along the road. At first they thought that it was a dead girl lying there and Grisha spun the wheel so as not to run over her bare legs. But she raised her head, the wind catching the strands of her hair, so that it streamed out like dry grass. Grisha jammed on the brake and Yuri jumped out of the seat beside him and bent over the girl.

"Get up into the lorry."

She stirred, tried to raise herself on hands and knees, and again collapsed on her side in the mud of the road. Her thin face, with the half-closed eyes, looked starved and ill, like that of a dog sitting by a fence with a piece of rope tied to its neck, asking nothing, simply looking at the people passing by. Yuri glanced around—not a sign of a dwelling anywhere on the steppe, stretching into the distance beneath the heavy spring clouds.

"Well, that's clear!" said Yuri sternly although nothing at all was clear to him, and he raised the girl. Her head fell back and rested against his breast, but she at once raised it and drew it down between her shoulders as though terrified. She was so thin and light that her very bones seemed empty.

Yuri seated her in the back of the lorry on a piece of folded canvas, among the cases of shells, dashed into the cabin and slammed the door with its dirty glass.

"Step on it. We're late."

"She probably lives somewhere round about here," said Grisha, spinning the wheel, "and we're taking her off to the devil knows where."

Five kilometres further on, Yuri answered in the dry, rasping, slow tones he had acquired during the war:

"I wonder what the inside of your head's like!"

The lorry left the road and made its way over the last year's stubble churning up the black earth, the engine running hot, until they reached a ravine—a steppe gulley, descended its steep slope, brakes screaming, and halted not far from the battery camouflaged under its netting.

"There's hardly likely to be much left of her," said Grisha, wiping the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve. But the girl was still alive. They carried her into the lorry's cabin and Grisha told her sternly:

"See you don't touch anything here, sit quiet."

But he need have had no fear—the spark of life was flickering very dimly under the ragged gingham frock. For a long time Yuri gazed with cold eyes at her wilted face, the half-open mouth drawn in lines like that of an old woman. As soon as the artillerymen had finished unloading the machine, he went into the dugout.

The captain in command of the battery was sitting on an upturned shell-case at the entrance to the dugout luxuriously drawing in the smoke from his short pipe. His clean-shaven face was tanned to a copper colour.

"Quiet here, eh?" he said to Yuri. "You can hear the larks singing. They were over here this morning, though, damn them."

"How's things?" asked Yuri.

"Well, last night we gave the Jerries something to go on with. Like to take a look? From the hillock there you can see what a fine mess we made of them. . ."

Yuri listened politely to the captain, who had not yet cooled down after the night's work, and then said in a decided tone:

"Have you any candies here in the battery? Chocolate, for instance?"

"Chocolate?" said the captain in surprise, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"I've got a girl out there in the lorry."

"Why didn't you say so at once?"

In the same cracked voice Yuri explained that the captain had not quite understood him. They went to the lorry. The captain's copper-coloured face was

drawn with pity when he saw the martyred child.

"What do they call you? Where do you come from? Who are your people?" he asked thickly.

But without answering the girl cowered and drew her head down between her shoulders.

"They beat her up," said the captain. "It's clear what's been happening. . . Oh, the swine, the lousy bastards! . ." and he sighed slowly, remembering his own family, scattered and trampled by the Germans. "She must be from the village of Vladimirskoye, over there to the side. . . What do you think of doing with her?" Yuri shrugged his shoulders. "It'll be noisy for her here, at the battery. . ."

"Don't, don't!" whispered the girl, barely audibly, when the captain, Yuri and Grisha tried to put a piece of chocolate into her mouth. Their fingers all seemed so thick and clumsy, and the girl's mouth so small that they were almost afraid to touch it. They tried every way, talked to her, and at last she tasted the sweetness of the chocolate on her lips and opened her mouth. Chuckling with pleasure, the captain thrust half a tablet into her mouth.

They left the girl in the cabin with Grisha, while Yuri climbed up onto the back of the lorry to watch the sky. Lurching from side to side, with oil smoking, the lorry set off on its way back. After some time Grisha noticed that the girl was looking at him—that meant that the chocolate had had its effect, she was livening up. He gave her the second half of the tablet, saying:

"Now won't you talk to me? You're a big girl, after all."

"No, I won't," she replied softly.

"Why not? We're your own folks. Tell me your name. Where are your father and mother?"

The girl turned away, and neither looked at him again or ate the chocolate.

They brought her into a dugout with a board floor in a forest ravine, beside a munitions dump not far from the station. Here Yuri, Grisha and five other Red Army men were living. They made the girl a bed of soft grass covered with greatcoats, washed her hair in the spring, and gave her a piece of soap and told her to bathe herself. Yuri washed out herfrock and mended it. The first day they were careful about feeding her, giving her a little at a time, but frequently. But as all seven men were feeding her, she again began saying "Don't, don't" when they would put something into her mouth. She would lie there in the dugout all day, her face turned to the wall, perhaps dozing. If anybody talked or joked with her she would turn away. One evening Yuri began reciting a child's poem to her from memory, as far as he could recall it. But the girl turned to him with such a tragic, reproachful look that he lost the thread, and left the dugout—for a smoke.

"She's been manhandled," Grisha told him. "She's not quite right. Get it fixed up to take her to town, get her into a hospital somewhere."

It was sensible advice, but as it was Grisha giving it and not himself, Yuri snorted into his pipe.

"She's not a bit sick, and not been messed up either. . . It's the easiest thing in the world to bring a person off their balance. . . Hospital, indeed! It's not the smell of iodoform she's needing! She's had more grief than any child could stand. . . That's what's the matter with her. . ."

Morning and evening, in the half light, German aircraft roared and choked among the stars. Over towards the station ack-ack guns barked, and heavy explosions could be heard. Men learned to sleep like a dog, with one eye open. One morning Yuri and Grisha returned and without waiting to eat, pulled off their boots and flung themselves down on their beds. The machine-gunner, Vanya, came over and sat down on Yuri's bed. He was having an easy time here in the ravine, for the Germans had not come over once.

"Listen, she was crying the whole night long," said Vanya. "Crying bitterly, not like a child at all. I couldn't sleep for listening to her."

Yuri's hollow eyes rested somberly on his round face, as he thought: "I see anybody stopping you from sleeping. . ."

It turned out that all the previous day, wherever Vanya had gone, the girl had followed him like a stray puppy. Wherever he went, she would be behind

him. He went to the machine-gun position, and there she was among the bushes. He even scolded her: "Take cover, don't expose yourself." She got down and crawled, sat down in front of him—he was taking the lock apart—and in a quiet, despairing voice said: "Vanya! . ." He asked her: "Well, what it is, do you want something to eat?" And again: "Vanya!" in a tone that sent cold chills down the machine-gunner's back.

Grisha listened to all this lying there on his bed, and replied drowsily:

"Right. She's thawing. And what is she called, did she tell you?"

"She didn't say anything else but 'Vanya, Vanya!' She gave me no peace all day. And then crying all night."

It was quite evident to everybody, even to Yuri, that the girl really was thawing. Vanya was so simple, unhurried and kind, and his talk and his whole manner breathed such an assurance that everything was for the best and would come all right, that it was quite natural that the girl should follow him about, and that it should be to him she could unburden herself of her agony.

That night Yuri awakened, and lighting his electric torch, saw that the girl was lying, knees drawn up, clutching the grass-stuffed pillow, weeping bitterly in her sleep and calling in a stifled voice: "Mummie, Mummie, where are you?" Yuri decided not to wake her—let her find her mother even if only in a dream... "Why are you hiding, Mummie?" Suddenly the girl was silent, gasped and gave a weak, joyful cry. . . So she had found her. . .

Turning on his back, Yuri lighted his pipe. Slow thoughts passed through his mind. Once upon a time, in the past, Ivan Karamazov, sitting in an inn, had asked his brother Alyosha: "If the people's happiness demanded that just one child be sacrificed, be tortured—could you torture a child even for the people's happiness?" Ivan Karamazov had been convinced that he had posed an unanswerable problem. At that time Alyosha had not replied. . . To torture a child! What could be more terrible! . . Even to secure a blissful happiness for all humanity. . . Such happiness would be accursed. . . But Karamazov's riddle was solved quite simply, now they had solved it: "Yes, yes, let it be tortured, but let the child be myself. . ." But that's a stupid problem, imaginary, speculative. Life itself poses another question: to save one child from torment isn't everybody calling himself a human being ready to give his life? A straight question and a clear answer. And Grisha, and the machine-gunner Ivan, and the other four snoring lustily in the dugout, and he himself, Yuri, replied: "Yes, they are ready."

Yuri filled his pipe again. His throat contracted with anger. Enough philosophizing. The question was a practical one: to demand a reckoning—three million Germans for this one girl, three million of the lanky light-haired creatures with their cow-like eyelashes and their obscene minds. . .

Vanya the machine-gunner took a pan and climbed down among the bushes to the bottom of the ravine, where the stream had formed a pool. This was where he would go and catch crawfish in his free time.

Vanya pulled off his tunic and shirt, lay down on his stomach at the edge of the pool and began feeling about in the depths, sometimes going so deep that his head was under water. When he felt a crawfish, Vanya would say: "That's you caught, Hans-Shpans Pop-Eye—you're right out of luck. . . Into the pan with you!" Once, blowing lustily, he let himself down in the chilly water almost to the waist, and when he straightened up, there was a huge green crawfish in his hand, flaying the air with its tail. Behind him, Vanya heard a soft laugh. Wiping the water from his face and hair with his hand he turned, and there was the girl laughing.

"What do you mean by it? Laughing at a soldier?" he asked.

The girl opened her blue eyes very wide, her brows rose and twisted—in another moment she would have been in tears.

"I'm just joking, Masha, don't cry."

"I'm not Masha, I'm Valya," the girl replied.

"Aha, now you've told me your name, good girl." Vanya's teeth were chattering, he put on his shirt and tunic, sat down beside Valya, put his arm round her shoulders and drew her to him.

"What about having some crawfish?"

"Yes, let's have some," she replied.

"But first, a smoke. Right?"

"All right."

Vanya tore off a piece of newspaper, folded it, filled it with makhorka [1] from a tin box, twisted it up and stuck it down with his tongue.

"Don't be angry with me, Valya. Lieutenant Yuri instructed me to find out all your secrets. Of course he's strict, but he's fair. But of course, if I don't carry out orders I'll be for it. . ."

Vanya pulled a primitive lighter out of his pocket, struck the steel on the flink three times till the wick caught, emitting a pleasant-smelling smoke, and lighted up.

"Now come along, tell me all about it."

This was what emerged from Valya's brief narratives, that day and later. Valya had lived with her mother, Matryona Khrabrova, in the village of Vladimirskoye. Her elder brother, Andrei, had been in the Red Army, and the younger, Misha, had disappeared the previous year when the Germans had taken the village.

Matryona Khrabrova was particularly afraid of one man, and when she looked out of the window and saw him passing, she would mumble with restrained anger:

"Again that anti-Christ passing the yard! There's no getting away from him. . ."

When Valya asked: "Mummie, why do you call Mikhei Ivanovich 'anti-Christ?'" her mother replied: "You'll understand when you're bigger. . . And you keep a still tongue in your head, Valka. . . Don't you run around chattering about what your mother says at home. . . Remember what I tell you."

It was a hungry life they led. They had three hens—two white and one yellow, and a much respected cock which always gave the hens everything he found. Matryona concealed them from the Germans, continually finding different hiding places.

"In the spring, when the sun gets warm," she would say, "our hens will give us three eggs each day, little daughter, and then you'll feel more cheerful."

One day, three weeks previously, Matryona had awakened Valya just as day was breaking.

"Put on my boots, daughter, and my shawl," she said, "and go out and see what the cock's so angry about. Maybe a fox has got into the shed. . ."

Valya drew on her mother's boots, threw the shawl over her shoulders, went out into the yard and saw—the shed door open, the wicket gate open, and the hens all gone; only the cock was there, running about the yard angrily. Valya gasped in horror and looked out of the gate. . . A German soldier was walking away from their yard, carrying the hens by the legs—their wings were already hanging. . . Valya cried out and ran after the soldier. Still carrying the chickens, he slipped into a covered lorry, greeted by hilarious shouts from under the canvas cover; then the machine drove off, while Valya kept calling after it: "Uncle, Uncle, those are our hens!"

On the opposite side of the street, a little to one side of Matryona's cottage, rose the new brick school. Not long ago a lorry had drawn up before it filled with men in black greatcoats and caps, who had thrown the desks and books out into the yard, white-washed the windows, and covered the fence with barbed wire. The school had become the Gestapo. The people of Vladimirskoye shunned that place, and went by roundabout ways past it, while Matryona slipped through the fence round the corner when she had to leave the yard.

As she stood there on the street after the lorry had driven off, Valya saw Mikhei Ivanovich come out of the Gestapo stamping his feet, pass the sentry on the porch, and stagger like a drunken man. His face was blue—or so it seemed to Valya—and wrinkled as though he were screwing up his eyes against the light. He went right up to Valya, stopped, and fixed her with a vacant stare.

"What are you staring at me for? Toad stool!" With these words he struck Valya on the head, and began trying to kick her, but missing her every time. Matryona had already run out into the yard, and fastened her nails into Mikhei's round, suffused face, screaming: "What

[1] A strong tobacco smoked in Russia.

do you mean by hitting my daughter?" She threw him down on his back and slapped his face: "Accursed anti-Christ!" He was either drunk or frightened, but did nothing but wave his arms about, while Matryona continued beating him until someone came out of the Gestapo porch, shouting angrily.

Mikhei did not forgive Valya's mother for that thrashing. That night two black-clad soldiers with flashlights came into their cottage and took up their post at the doors. Then came an officer with a long neck, a small face and no chin, and after him Mikhei Ivanovich.

Matryona trembled and pressed herself to the stove. "This is the end of me, little daughter. . ." she whispered. Mikhei dragged Valya's hand from her mother's and pushed her to the other side of the partition wall where the bed stood.

"Do you wish me to conduct a search, Herr Oberleutnant?"

The officer seated himself beside the table and replied slowly in Russian:

"Do your work."

Valya could see through the crack of the door how Mikhei climbed up on the bench and went straight to the icons in the holy corner.

"Here it is, Herr Oberleutnant, here is a letter from her son Mishka. . ."

Valya heard her mother reply quietly and clearly:

"The letter has been put there. . . Believe me, Sir. My son Mikhail disappeared last year, everybody in the village knows it's so. . . There can't be any letters from him. . ."

The officer pulled out a white cigarette case, opened it, and imediately a cigarette protruded and a flame appeared.

"He-he, a clever gadget!" said Mikhei.

The officer was smoking. His upper lip was longer than his lower one. He propped his elbows on the table and began reading the letter. Fawning around him, Mikhei whispered: "It's his letter, Mishka's; he's with a reconnoissance column, and keeps in touch with his mother. . . And her other son, Andrei, flies across the front line to the same column. . ."

"Believe me, Sir, he couldn't have written to me, I can't read or write," said Matryona again.

"We'll soon find out whether you can or not." The veins suddenly stood out in the officer's long neck. "I shan't waste my time on you. You'd better come out with the truth at once, the whole of it, or you'll get hurt—badly." Then over his shoulder to the black-clad soldier: "Prepare a rope, a bench and a brazier." And suddenly he began looking from under the peak of his big cap, drawn down over his eyes, at Matryona's blue hands folded over her stomach.

Even to the machine-gunner Vanya, Valya could never tell what happened next; her teeth would chatter, her throat close up, and no words would come, only a thin squeak like a mouse. . . But it was possible to understand that for several hours Valya, hidden behind the board door, had heard her mother being tortured, had heard the groans and gasps, the cries of pain, disjointed words and again sounds, cries, screams in an unrecognizable voice. . .

The next day a neighbour made her way stealthily to Matryona's cottage. On the floor were blood stains, strands of hair and rags. She found Valya behind the partition on the overturned bed among torn and bitten pillows. The girl was unconscious. The neighbour took her home, and the door of Matryona's cottage was nailed and boarded up.

Hot, exhausting, windless days followed. Along the roads the dust raised by the endless stream of motor-vehicles never subsided. A copper-coloured sun burned through dust clouds. On the rare occasions when Yuri appeared in the dugout now he was thin, blackened and bad-tempered, and spoke through his teeth in a rasping voice that was irritating to hear. Everyone understood that the storm was gathering—the Germans were preparing a blow somewhere, and it would be a hard one. . .

The captain in command of the battery came along in a jeep, his face looking broader than ever, grey with dust from head to foot. He sat down on the bench under a small oak tree beside a one-legged table, took off his cap with a sigh of relief and asked for some spring water.

"I've come here from the station," he told Yuri. "You've got fine crawfish in the pool, let's have fifty or so of them." He called Valya over to him and touched her already rounded cheek with his finger approvingly. "You've perked up now, just look at you, Bright-Eyes. . .

And remember how you didn't want the chocolate?" He gave such a shout of laughter that Valya started back. "And now you eat everything that's going, eh? Good for you, good girl. . . Well, run along and get me some fine big crawfish."

The captain drank off a glassful and a half of the cold water, began to smoke and talk about this and that, as they do at the front in leisure moments: of home, and sweethearts, of the past and of how this year ducks and partridges were as thick as mosquitoes. "I shall have leave in the autumn. I shall go home to my mother in the Urals, and get some hunting. . ." He envied Yuri, whose job took him about all the time. . . "And I sit there at the battery like a badger, and dream of getting something by Alexandre Dumas to read. . . Have you read anything of his?"

"And what's the news about the Germans?" rasped Yuri. "Is all this messing about going to stop soon?"

"We're expecting it in five days. . . Jerry's evidently getting jumpy. There's an artillery regiment concentrated on my sector, just been brought over. They used to have some of their 'total mobilization' bunch in front, but now they've brought up picked units—hardly a man of them without some order or medal. As for capturing a 'tongue'—it's a job and a half. No end of tanks and aircraft. . . We keep waiting and waiting—I'm as sick of it as you are."

Yuri thrust his sharp nose forward.

"They'll break their teeth on us," he said.

"You're dead right. This isn't '41... We'll send them packing."

The captain was glad to change the subject as Valya came in bringing a willow basket full of green crawfish rustling angrily. The captain put on his cap, rose and stretched himself.

"I'm not inviting you to the battery. . . The devil alone knows—they might take it into their heads to make a move tonight, even. . . My scouts captured an order—they reckon it'll take three days to surround the Red Army and four to settle its hash. . . Gave us a good laugh. . . Well, good-bye! May be some time before we see each other again. . ."

Now it was not only from wheels that dust was rising—the west was thundering, and a heavy black curtain covered the horizon. The sky was filled with the deafening roar and drone of myriad aircraft. Day and night it continued without a break, week after week. And finally the two hydra-headed giants came to grips. Like an anthill, the rear was filled with coming and going—companies, regiments and divisions not caring what the road was like, ammunition lorries racing about—it was as though the Volga, the Urals and Siberia were hurling handfuls of glowing coals into this seething, thundering belt of land where the German army in deadly fury was striving to smash its way through the Russian army and could neither pierce nor break it, and perished; and fresh grey-green companies, battalions, regiments and divisions dashed out of buses, lorries, rushed up on tanks or behind them, and were blown to pieces, burned, charred, torn to fragments and hurled through the air in the explosions of Russian artillery, heavy aircraft and guards mortars, which the German prisoners, half crazy, called "the Stalinist organ."

During these days Valya was forgotten. One day Yuri dashed in for some cigarettes, his hollow cheeks covered with stubble, his sunken eyes burning. And he saw that the dugout, where nobody had been living for a week, had been swept out, the beds made, and a tiny bunch of yellow flowers placed on the rusty stove. Valya was sitting there quietly making a doll's frock out of rags, and there was a doll itself, made out of waste from the lorry, its face of paper with the eyes drawn in.

"How do, Valya? Well, how goes it—all right? Not frightened?"

"No, I'm not frightened, Uncle Yuri."

"How are you managing without hot food?"

"The matches are all finished, leave me some, Uncle Yuri. . . I made some dinner. . ."

"That's all right. . . Sit tight, Valya! . . Things aren't going too badly. . . Good-bye! . ."

The village of Vladimirskoye had been taken so suddenly that not a single German had been able to get away. Not even the Gestapo escaped—a huge lorry filled with black-clad soldiers and their officers was caught on the dirt road and set on fire with all in it. The front continued

to move westward, and Yuri moved over with all his goods and chattels to a ravine near Vladimirskoye.

One day, after supper, when the driver Grisha was telling all the latest front news which somehow or other drivers always seem to know first, he mentioned Valya in the course of conversation.

"She's an energetic girl, she is, that Valya of ours. She's been running about the village everywhere asking about that Mikhei Ivanovich; a queer surname he's got—Nepei. And she came back all gloomy, 'cause Nepei disappeared as though the earth had swallowed him. If you ask the people about him and his doings, they tell you: 'He was worse than the plague,' they say, 'we'd have buried him alive, and well he knows it. So he's made himself scarce. . .'"

Hardly had Grisha mentioned Mikhei than Valya appeared. Her face was gloomy, frowning, like that of an adult, her lips pressed together. She took a seat on the edge of the bench beside Yuri. When the talk died down, and the machine-gunner Vanya pulled a German mouth organ from his pocket and began practising, Valya spoke, her head bent down:

"Uncle Yuri, find me that man that tortured my Mummie."

All turned and looked at the girl.

"We'll try, Valya, we'll try to get him," said Yuri, his nostrils flaring. "Comrades, we must collect all the information about him."

The driver Grisha undertook that job, and a few days later, at the same time, he already had something to impart.

Mikhei Ivanovich had come to the village, a stranger, eight years previously, married a widow, a collective farmer, and speedily drove her to her grave. He told people that he came of a mining family, but it seemed probable that before the Revolution his father had been a mine superintendant. He was a shifty and unpleasant person, and home-made spirits could always be had in his cottage for money or barter. There was a time when the veterinary would come to him for drinking bouts, and this is what they had cooked up. . . (It was known only later, when the Germans were ruling the village, and Mikhei himself bragged about his exploit.) Early in the morning, the day before the Pokrov Day, a milkmaid entered the cowshed and saw the Siementhal cow "Predsedatelnitsa," the pride of the collective farm, lying dead in the straw, mouth gaping widely. There was a great running to and fro, and the veterinary, who had spent the night with Mikhei, came with the collective farmers to examine the cow.

"Move away, comrades," he said weightily, "there is a danger of foot and mouth disease."

The cow was carefully carried outside the village and buried without being skinned, and the shed was disinfected. And heaven be praised, there were no more cases. But all that winter, Mikhei and the veterinary ate salt beef. And what was it he had done, as he bragged later? He had taken a large potato, entered the cowshed during the night with a key he had made, and thrust the potato into "Predsedatelnitsa's" windpipe, pushing his arm in up to the elbow. And the next night he and the veterinary had dug up the cow and cut it up.

When the war with the Germans broke out, Mikhei became so bold that he could no longer hide his malicious joy, and all that day he would greet people with sparkling eyes and words: "Oh, there's going to be blood-flowing! . . Oho, the blood will flow! . ." When our troops passed through the village in their retreat, staggering from weariness, hungry and gloomy, and Red Army men knocked at Mikhei's door to ask for a glass of milk, he only raised the window.

"I have none, I have none, dear people," he would say. "The Soviet authorities have cleaned me out. . ."

When the Germans entered in the wake of their tanks, Mikhei, his hair combed and greased down, wearing a clean shirt and his best jacket, was standing at the gate holding a loaf and a silver salt-celler on an embroidered cloth. He stood there bowing to the Germans until one of the passing officers took the loaf from him and gave it to a soldier, saying:

"Excellent, most praiseworthy. . ."

Very soon Mikhei began going around the farms and talking to the people, sitting there on the porch, beating his stick on the floor and gazing equivocally at the master and mistress of the house who would stand there gloomily, their faces expressing their doubt and confusion.

"I don't know," he would say, "I really don't know how we shall live now, under the new power, we collective farmers? You know how I was in a hurry to offer them bread and salt, hasty-like as I am. . . But now, in a way, I'm beginning to think different. All the same, the Soviet power did give us something. . . Of course with the Germans there's order and private trading, and everything—but all the same, he's a hard master. . . And sometimes I think this way and sometimes I think that. . . And I go about among the folks." And frowning, he scratched behind his ear with his finger. "There's what you're used to. . . social life. . . the collective. . . after all, there's many going off to the partisans, that means there's something to it all. . . And is it certain that the Germans are here to stay? That's another question. . . What do you think about it all, Stepan Petrovich?"

At the beginning, for the first two or three weeks, the soldiers of the German garrison seemed to take little notice of the people. They lived as though they were on holiday—drilled, played football, tootled their horns, and went about the street shamelessly in shorts. But when the black-clad troops arrived and a plywood board was nailed up beside the school with its announcements and threats of the death penalty on any and every occasion—that was when the Germans began to show their wolves' teeth. They plundered the village in the most organized and efficient manner—cleared it out, and all that the black-clad soldiers did not take off in their lorries was cleaned up by those of the garrison.

The Gestapo began to take an interest in every family, and now the Vladimirskoye people realized the reason of Mikhei's visits and his equivocal talk. The crafty villain had managed to skilfully extract all information in the course of conversation as to who had a son or son-in-law in the Red Army, or who had connections with local Communists, who had been friendly with the teacher, Veryovkin. On the eve of the Germans' arrival this teacher, together with several of the young fellows, had concealed himself in the forest, and now it was said that they were blowing up bridges and stores in the district, had wrecked a train carrying an SS panzer battalion and set on fire a lot of lorries on the road.

After the terrible destruction of the train—the coaches had telescoped when running at full speed and hurtled down a high embankment—the SS men began rounding up the people, including old people and adolescents, and taking them to the school. And the majority they took from those farms which Mikhei had visited. Fearful screams would ring out from the school cellars at night—they could be heard from one end of the village to the other, and people would sit on their benches, unable to sleep, shaking their heads, while old men and women murmured prayers.

People began to whisper that Mikhei was present at the torture: if not, then why had two new cows and a bullock appeared at his farm? As for himself, he began going about in a green jacket, shaved his face and head, and once he was seen smoking a cigar. When people saw him coming towards their cottages, they would hide all the food and clothing they had left, and send the children away. They had no wish to let Mikhei in, but it was dangerous to keep him out. And now when he came visiting, it would not be just to pay a simple call, he would pull a bottle of schnaps out of his pocket. . .

"My countrymen don't like me," he would say, sitting down at the table. "I can see it, I can see it all. . . They don't trust me. . . There's scandal being whispered about me, scandal. . ." (He took pork fat from another pocket and began cutting it into cubes.) "And aren't I a human being like everybody else? Am I a wild beast, or a fiend? Eh, dear friends, how weary I am. . . how weary I am with the Germans! . . They believed in me from the very first moment. . . And if a German believes in you, he'll never doubt you. . . That's technique, organization. . . He has no time to think, and he doesn't think much." (Mikhei poured out the spirit and pushed the glass and a piece of fat to the hungry master of the house.) "And they've spread a lot of filthy tales about me, that I work in the Gestapo. . . They want to tie me down, so that if the Soviet authorities return there's nowhere for Mikhei to go. . . Well, come along, neighbour, let's drink. . . And if in a moment of weakness I said or did what was wrong, then for the love of Christ forgive me. . . See, I asked them for this bottle—they

gave it me, but how? 'Here, you!' and they shoved it in my face like a dog. . . And then there's these cows of mine. . . I'd had the money for a cow saved up for a long time. . . I'm partial to milk, and still more to salt meat." (He winked slyly and poured out another glass, laughing.) "Well, the devil take them, the cows, when I get such a name. . . I'll drop everything, leave here. . . get over the front, let them do what they like with me. . . I'll go to Veryovkin, throw myself at his feet: 'I want,' I'll say, 'to pay for all my sins with my blood! . .'"

If the master were wise, he was silent and avoided his guest's eye; if foolish, he began to believe what he heard and agree with everything. And in a few days the black-clad ones would come for him.

Yuri went with Valya to the major, in the political department, and told him about Mikhei. Her eyes roving anxiously from Yuri to the major and back again, Valya listened with such eagerness and intensity that it seemed as though her little life hung on the one hope—to find that man, as though failing to find him, the spark would die out. The major noted down the details. "We shall search out the scoundrel. . ." And Valya smiled, looked at him, and again her face twitched in agitation.

Yuri walked back to his camp in the grove so swiftly that Valya had to trot to keep up with him. . .

"Uncle Yuri, will they find him?"

"How can I say, Valya? . . If he said they'd search for him, then they will. . ."

"Uncle Yuri, I'll go myself to look for him."

"Where do you think you'll go? Foolishness! . . You'll fall foul of a mine, or a lorry'll run over you. . ."

"Mayn't I?"

"No, you mayn't, so don't keep on pestering, keep quiet. . ."

For several days Valya went about quiet and sad, answering only "yes" and "no" when spoken to, sat somewhere away to the side, her short arched brows twitching. And one morning she had disappeared from the dugout. Run away. The men talked it over, but it was evident that she had gone off to search for Mikhei. Everyone was upset—hang it, the girl would get herself killed. Grisha went about the village asking everybody about Valya. Someone had actually seen her beside the nailed-up door of Matryona's cottage, and she had asked someone else about Mikhei, but where she had gone after that nobody knew.

Three days later Valya stole into the camp like a conscience-stricken dog, her hair rough and matted, scratched and dirty. Nobody scolded her or asked her where she had been, they coldly ignored her and that was all. Valya slept for nearly twenty-four hours, had a good meal, and in the morning she had disappeared again.

One woman, the wife of a local Communist, who had returned with her two children to her wrecked home, told the neighbours (and an hour later two boys brought the news to the driver Grisha in the grove) that she had met Matryona's daughter on the road about fifteen kilometres from the village, and the girl had told her everything, so pitifully. . . "And what sense the girl's got, she guessed that Mikhei would certainly hide himself somewhere on military constructions. . . 'I'm going to search everywhere, Aunt Stepanida,' she had said, 'where the roads are being mended, or anti-tank ditches dug, I shall look at everyone. . .' We cried together, I gave her a rusk and she went on. . ."

"Uncle Yuri, Uncle Yuri! Get up quick, and come with me!"

Yuri wheezed deeply as he awoke. The morning light was barely glimmering through the tiny window of the dugout. Valya was standing by the bed touching his face. . .

"So you've turned up. . . Good morning. . . And what do you mean waking me up, you bad girl? . ."

"Come to that man, where we went before. . . Uncle Yuri, I've found him. . ."

Her voice had a strange ring. Yuri wheezed again, drew on his high boots, put on his belt and smoothed his rumpled hair.

"Well, I never! Do you mean to say you've found him?"

"U-ha. . . I'll tell you everything there, only hurry up!"

They went to the major in the political department. He was asleep on two benches placed side by side, wrapped in his great-coat, with his portfolio for a pillow. Without waiting for him to rise and sit down at the table, Valya hastily

began to tell him how she had found and recognized Mikhei.

"I had to go about a hundred miles, but I got him in the end, Uncle, he's shaved off his beard and mustache. Nobody would know him but me. . ."

A little later, Valya and the major left for the place where the highroad, torn up by the Germans, was being repaired. Standing up in the open car, Valya gazed tensely over the windscreen. Raising her hand, she turned and whispered to the major:

"Here. . ."

A stooping figure was breaking stones, white with lime dust, his head wrapped in a cloth and rags around his feet, planted far apart. When the car stopped, he raised his head, and screwed up his eyes so that his snub-nosed shaven face was lined with wrinkles, as though he were looking at some bright light. . .

"It's him!" cried Valya, pointing to the man.

"What's up?" said the man hoarsely, as the major approached him. "You want to see my documents? Here they are. . . Everything in order. . ." His sharp eyes flashed an evil glance at the girl standing beside the major, then he bent down again and began breaking stones.

"Your surname is Pavlov, Alexei Demyanovich, born in 1903?" asked the major, turning the leaves of the passport. Valya's cold hand stole into his and pressed it.

"Quite correct, Pavlov, Alexei Demyanovich," the man replied without raising his head. "But what's the matter?"

"The matter is that this passport of yours is from the German commandant."

The man slowly shook his head and laughed.

"Don't you try to bulldoze me, comrade, my passport was issued by the Smolensk police. I'm a refugee from Smolensk, and an invalid from the time of the Civil War." He suddenly pulled a long face. "It's a dog's life. . . Breaking stones, and nothing to put in your mouth. Spilt my blood for the Soviet government and then someone comes along with. . . 'your passport's from the Germans. . .'"

All this time the major was silent, but when the man choked with tears, he drew out his revolver.

"Stand up!" Reluctantly the man arose and dropped his hammer. "Hands up! . ." The major patted his pockets. "Now go to the car, in front of me. . ."

Mikhei did not hold out for long—witnesses soon established his identity. Then he began to tell everything:

"With the Germans I was drunk the whole time, first of all I was celebrating, and then because my conscience tormented me. . . I won't hide it from you—I met the Germans with bread and salt, I felt smothered under the Soviet regime, I thought that under the Germans I would have a better life, you understand, citizen examining magistrate,—better life! But they deceived me, I ask you to let me tell that over the radio, to tell all the people. At first I was glad to work with them, as an actor, an artist, so to speak. It was interesting to draw his real thoughts out of some stubborn boorish peasant. He would distrust me, he would shut up like an oyster and I'd use my head, I'd get around him and make him speak out frankly. . . The Soviet regime had disdained me, but here I made myself somebody. . . When they began dragging my peasants into the Gestapo, yes, and when I heard them screaming there—ah, the state I was in! I was in a frenzy. . . I wanted to lay hands on myself. . . But again vodka, again that fear of the men in black. . . They're terrible people, citizen examining magistrate. . . You ask me questions. . . I'll tell you everything, I'll show you everything. . . Enough to make your hair stand on end. . ."

For several nights he told about the sufferings of Russian people, of torture and executions in the Gestapo. He showed the trench where the bodies of those tortured to death were buried, showed the instruments of torture buried by the Germans in the cellars of the school, the brazier, the iron hooks on which they hung people by their ribs, the rubber truncheons, the wooden splinters which they thrust under people's nails.

He told about the tortures quietly, in detail, as though describing how cattle were killed and made into sausages in some slaughter-house. . . "I was present, during the torture many times, I was present," he stammered, closing his eyes. And suddenly he cast himself down on the floor, and began tearing the earth with his nails. "There it is, blood,

blood. . ." and kissed the earthen floor.

"Stop posing, you're revolting," said the officer in charge of the interrogation, his feelings getting the better of him; then, when they were back in the room, he questioned him further:

"Mikhei Nepei, did you ever think when you were working for the Germans that you were selling the Russian people, selling your country?"

"Yes, I thought about it, I thought about it. . . But your stomach won't be filled by your country only, your own shirt sits closer. . ."

In a word, everything was plain to the tribunal. In the presence of the Vladimirskoye people crowding near the school or inside it, even perched on the window-sills, the court sentenced Mikhei Ivanovich Nepei to be hanged. When the court pronounced the sentence, Mikhei, standing at attention, never even blinked, not a muscle quivered on his unshaven, bristly, puffy face with the low forehead. The people in the hall gasped with satisfaction; hundreds of hands applauded and a woman's voice called out angrily:

"It's too little for him, the villain! . . It's too good a death for him. . . He should be flayed alive! . ."

In the morning the whole village gathered again by the gallows—two pillars of medium height with a crossbar. Mikhei was led in guarded by four Red Army men. He walked as though his legs were stuffed with cotton wool, head hanging. The judge again read the sentence. Mikhei was led to the stool. He staggered. They seized him, stood him in place. . . Then he fussily slipped the noose over his own head. And all saw his flat, whitish eyes filled with hatred, his smile filled with hatred distending his mouth with its small teeth. . .

Clenching her fists, Valya, standing quite near, screamed at him:

"Don't you dare laugh! . . You should scream as my mother screamed. . ."

BORIS GORBATOV

UNBOWED

Below we give an extract from the second part of Boris Gorbatov's novel *Unbowed* the first part of which appeared in Russian under the title *Taras Family*. This novel describes the life in a Soviet town temporarily occupied by the Germans. One of the characters, Stepan, who figures in this extract, was formerly a leading political worker of the district and remained in the enemies' rear as one of the organizers of the partisan movement.

Stepan proceeded along the highways and country roads of ravaged Ukraine, and he saw: the Germans had harnessed the peasants in the yoke and made them plough and till for them. And the people were silent. Along the roads were driven thousands of ragged, tortured prisoners; some fell in their tracks—dead, and the living plodded along, stepping across the lifeless body of their comrade, and submissively trudged on to penal servitude. Captives wept in iron-barred railway cars, wept so bitterly that it tore at the heartstrings, but they travelled on. The people were silent. The best men and women hung swinging on the gallows. . . Maybe all to no purpose?

He was now passing through the steppes of the Don region. This was the most peaceful nook in his area. It was here that the Ukraine met with Russia; no boundaries could be distinguished—neither in the steppeland feather-grass with its equally silvery sheen on the near and hither side, nor in the people. . .

But before bearing west to circle the region, with a wry grin Stepan resolved to pay another call. Here, to one side of the big roads, nestling away in a wooded gully was old Panas' bee-farm, and whenever Stepan happened to be in these parts he invariably made it a point to drop in to enjoy a relishing feed of fragrant honey, to loll for a while on the sweet-smelling hay, to enjoy that perfect tranquility, to breathe deep of the tangy air of the woods and to rest—both his spirit and his body—from all cares and worries.

Stepan was in need of a brief rest from this constant expectation of pur-

suit, from the long road he had travelled on foot. To stretch his bones and relax. To repose under the wide open skies. To ponder on his doubts and fears. And maybe not to think of all this, but merely for the sake of eating some golden honey at the bee-farm.

"But is the bee-farm still here?" was the doubt that assailed him as he neared the gully.

It was. And so was the sweet hay stacked in a rick. And as always, that balmy, tangy smell of the woods, of lime blossoms and mint and, for some reason, also of crushed pears—just as in childhood days. Or maybe it was just Stepan's imagination? All around quivered with the lucid silence; only the bees were busily and concertedly humming. As usual, sensing the arrival of the guest, Serko the dog dashed out ahead, followed by the thin small figure of old Panas, white-haired and clad in a homespun linen shirt with blue patches on the shoulders.

"Ah! Howdy-do!" he called out in a voice resembling the hum of bees. "Come in, come right in! Make yourself at home! It's a long time you've been! Too long!"

And he placed before his guest a plate of honeycomb and a sieveful of wild berries.

"We've still got a bottleful of yours here," he hastily added, "a whole bottle of sparklin' wine. So you needn't worry, it's still uncorked."

"Ah!" Stepan said with a sad smile. "A whole bottleful, you say? Come on, then, let's have it!"

The old man brought the bottle out, together with drinking bowls and, with his sleeve, wiped the dust from the bottle as he carried it.

"Well, here's to the return of our happy life, and may all our boys come home safe and sound!" he said as he carefully took the brimful bowl from Stepan's hands. Closing his eyes, he emptied it, licked the bowl clean and coughed: "Fine stuff!"

The two drained the bottle dry and old Panas told Stepan that this year's was a fine and generous summer—and bumper crop all round—honey and berries, and the Germans hadn't looked in here on the bee-farm. The Lord watching, and besides the Germans do not know the road.

Stepan sat thinking.

"Look here, Grandpa," he suddenly said, "I'll write something on a paper and we'll put it in this bottle and bury it."

"Mhm. . ." the old man concurred, failing to understand the point.

"And when our people return you'll give them this bottle."

"Aha, I get you. . . I see. . ."

"Yes, it must be written down!" Stepan thought as he reached for pencil and notebook from his pocket. "At least, let our people know of how we here. . . died. Otherwise there won't even remain a trace. The Tsypliakovs'll wipe out our trace."

He began writing. He tried to write in a restrained and dry style, so that our people would find not a trace of doubts in his lines, so that they don't take bitterness for panic, so that they don't shake their heads mockingly at his alarms. To them everything will appear different when they return. And he entertained not a minute's doubt that return they would. Maybe they won't even find our bones in the ditches, but return they would! And he wrote them sternly and restrainedly, as a warrior writes to warriors, of how the best people, when dying in the torture chambers and on the gallows, spat in the enemy's face, of how cowards cringed at the feet of the Germans, of how traitors betrayed and frustrated underground work and of how the people were silent. They hated—and kept silent.

Every line of his letter was a bequeath. "And, comrades, don't forget to erect a memorial to the Komsomol member Vassili Pchelintsev, and to the old miner Anissim Bespalov, to the quiet young girl Klavdia Priakhina, and to my friend, Secretary of the City Party Committee Alexei Shulzhenko: they died like heroes. And another thing I demand of you is that in the joy of victory and the bustle of building work you do not forget to punish the traitors—Mikhail Filikov, Nikita Bogatyryov and all the rest of whom I have written above. And if Matvei Tsypliakov comes to you with his Party book—don't believe in his Party book, it's tainted with mud and stained with our blood."

He should really mention all those who, without sparing themselves, gave him—the underground worker—shelter

and fed him and sighed over him when he fell into a dozing, lightly sleep,—he thought to himself,—and also those who closed their doors in his face, who drove him from their threshold, threatening to let loose their dogs on him. . . But is it possible to write everything?

He sank into thought, and then added: "As for me, I am doing my work." He felt a sudden urge to add a few more words, words hot like an oath—that he feared neither the gallows nor death. That he believed in victory and would be happy to lay down his life for it. Then it crossed his mind that there was no need to write this. Everyone knew this of him without being told.

Stepan signed the letter, folded it into a thin roll and inserted it in the bottle.

"That's that," he said with a grin, "a letter addressed to eternity. Come on, Grandpa, let me have a shovel. . ."

They buried the bottle under the third bee-hive, by a young lime-tree.

"Will you remember the spot, old man?"

"'Course I will. . . I know every grassblade here!"

At daybreak next morning Stepan took leave of the old bee-farmer.

"It's fine honey you've got, Grandpa," he said, and he turned his face to the road where his lone death waited for him, heading for his gallows.

He decided to spend that night in the village of Olkhovatka, with a distant relative of his—Uncle Savka. Savka—a brisk, tousled peasant with a shrewd and knowing mind—was always proud of his notable relative. And now, when Stepan turned up at twilight, Uncle Savka was glad and fussily made him welcome, bringing out eatables from the oven and placing them on the table as though Stepan was still the notable guest from town as of old.

But before they had time to sit down to their meal the door suddenly opened without any preliminary tap and a tall, heavily-built middle-aged peasant entered the hut. His beard was grey and his eyes wore a keen and wise look.

"Good evening," he said gazing intently at Stepan.

Stepan rose to his feet.

"Who's that?" he asked Savka in an undertone.

"Our Elder. . .", was the answer given in a whisper.

"Good evening, Comrade Yatsenko!" the Elder said with an odd grin, as he stepped to the table. Stepan grew pale. "Risky going about the village so openly! I saw you from the window and recognized you. Well, once again—good evening, Comrade Yatsenko!" And the Elder concealed a sneer in his beard.

"It's all over!" Stepan thought to himself. "Here's the gallows!" But he still remained composed, without moving, still standing at the table.

The Elder ponderously seated himself on a bench near the icons, and placing his large gnarled hands with their blackened fingers on the table, he looked at Stepan.

"Have a seat!" he said with a grin. "What are you standing for? Take the weight off your feet."

Stepan paused in thought and then sat down.

"That's better!" the Elder exclaimed. "Don't you recognize me?"

Stepan threw a look at him. "I've seen him somewhere or other," was the thought that flashed through his mind. "Very likely he was a kulak. . . But I can't remember."

"It's hardly to be expected," the Elder said with a short laugh. "There's lots of us peasant folk—and you're only one, so how can you remember us all! Like ears of rye in the field. You even had chats with me, true—it wasn't eye to eye but in company," he added, "we never chanced to speak eye to eye. For six years you pounded your propaganda at me to join the kolkhoz. And for six years I didn't join. I didn't agree—that's all, just simply didn't want to—I was unagreeable. And ever since I've been called Ignat Unagreeable."

Savka fawningly sniggered. Now Stepan recalled the peasant. Hard as flint!

"I'm unagreeable!" the Elder continued. "That's so. And on the seventh year I came and joined the kolkhoz myself. And why did I join? Hey?"

"Propaganda proved it to you, I suppose. . ." Stepan said with a shrug.

"No!" Ignat emphatically shook his head. "Propaganda'll never get me. No, I became convinced myself. I worked it out this way and that way, and every way it came out more profitable to be in the kolkhoz. And I agreed, and joined."

Stepan failed to see the purpose of the Elder's story and wriggled impatiently on the bench. "If they'll convoy me through the village I'll make a break for it. I won't let them tie my hands."

"The Germans are spreading leaflets," the Elder continued, "promising to give us the land for perpetual and individual use. What do you think, will they?"

"They won't. . ." Stepan replied.

"They won't? . ." Ignat nibbled his moustache. "And that's what I think: they won't. They'll cheat us out of it. They'll give it to their own squires. And perhaps to one or two others," screwing up his eyes with a knowing look. "Yes,—one or two others,—just for show, eh? Say, the industrious peasants? . . And that means the Elders. . . They will, eh?"

"Yes—to the likes of you," Stepan resentfully retorted, "for zeal."

"So they will, hey?" Ignat was quick to catch up, pretending not to understand Stepan's tone. "But I'm somehow thinking they will give it to the likes of me. But I won't take it!" he suddenly ejaculated in an uptone, and hit the table with his palm. "I just won't take it, see?!"

Stepan looked at him dumbfounded.

"I won't take it! D'ye understand what I mean? Eh! . ." he suddenly waved his hand, "how can you be expected to ever understand? You're a city man, comrade. And I'm a muzhik. I've grown root and soul into this soil. It's my heartache, this soil. And all my life's in it. And my father's too, and my grandfather's and great-grandfather's! I can't be without the earth. But. . ." and suddenly calming down, he concluded: "it's not individual farming soil I want. It's not profitable. It won't suit me. Worries and troubles and nothing else. And too small for my liking. No, without the kolkhoz there's no life for my farmer soul."

"Hold on! I can't understand anything," Stepan mumbled. "Hold on a minute! Tell me, whom are you for?"

"I'm all for the kolkhoz!" the Elder firmly replied.

"Then that means you're for the Soviets too? For our power?"

Ignat suddenly wrinkled his features in a sly grin, looked around at Savka, winked to Stepan and smiling into his moustache said:

"Well, once there's no other power on earth that's agreeable to have kolkhozes excepting our Soviet power then there's no other power that I'm wanting."

Stepan smiled and heaved a sigh of relief!

"How about you?" Ignat bent towards him and asked him in an undertone: "Going around just all on your own? Escaping pursuit? Or are you authorized?"

"Authorized," Stepan answered with a smile.

"I'm not needing your indentification papers!" Ignat waved his hand. "I know you. Well, once you're the authorized representative of our power, here's what I tell you so that you can tell them. Tell our Soviet power that our kolkhoz is still living. Living so to say, underground. We've got our chairman. The same as before. Decorated with an order. We're keeping him carefully camouflaged. And we've got our bookkeeper who's running all the accounts. I can show you all the account books. And we've hid all our collective farm property. Here, ask your relative. . . Isn't that so, Savka?"

"Absolutely!" emphatically confirmed Savka with a look of glad surprise. "It's been done with brains—everything nice and shipshape."

". . . And the Germans didn't get a single corn grain out of our village!" Ignat cried out. "Only what they looted, and nothing else. We didn't give them a single grain. How? My back knows how." He fell into thought his head dropping, blackened fingers drumming the table. A sneer fleeted across his lips hidden under their greying moustache. "Village Elder! A German Elder. . . and me in my ageing years. . . Shame and disgrace. . . All around the Elders are wild beasts and parasites. Kulaks! And I says to the villagers: 'Have respect for my elder years. I've got sons in the Red Army.' But they wouldn't agree and they persuaded me."

"Yes, our whole village persuaded him to!" said Savka with a sigh.

"It wasn't the village!" Ignat strictly put him right. "It was the kolkhoz that persuaded me. 'You've got an unsubmissible soul, Ignat,' they says, 'a heart that's unagreeable with falsehood. Stand up for us.' And here I am, standing up for them. The Germans bawl at me: 'Where's the bread, Elder?' And

I tell them there's no bread. 'And why is the rye shedding on the fields, Elder?' ''Cause there's nothing with what to reap it.' 'And why are the ricks standing under the rain and rotting, Elder?' ''Cause there's nothing with what to thresh it.' 'We'll give you machines, Elder!' 'There's no people,' I tells them, 'do what you like to me, but there's no people.' And they do what they like to me, they beat and whip me to death, but there's no bread coming to them through the Elder."

"They can't make his soul submissive, that's what it is!" Savka feelingly said to Stepan with tears in his voice.

"And not only my soul!" Ignat chuckled, "they can't even make my back submissive. It's an unbending back, mine is!" he exclaimed as he straightened himself up. "Nichevo. . . it'll stand it!"

"Thank you, Ignat!" Stepan feelingly said, rising from the bench and stretching out his hand. "And please forgive me, for heaven's sake, forgive me!"

"What's there to forgive?" Ignat registered surprise.

"I thought badly about you. . . And not of you alone. . . Anyhow—please forgive me—but for what, I know myself."

"There, now. The Lord will forgive you this!" said Ignat with a smile as he fondly put his arm round Stepan in a fatherly gesture.

At break of dawn the Elder himself saw off the underground worker to the edge of the village, where they stood for a while, smoking.

"If our power," Ignat said in undertone, "or maybe the partisans, need bread, give us word, and they'll have it."

"Good. Many thanks!"

"It's not me you should thank. It's not my bread, but the kolkhoz's. I'll take a receipt."

"Very well."

"Well, you'd better go now. . ."

Stepan stretched out his hand to him and Ignat took it in a firm clasp.

"There's something else I want to ask you. . ." he whispered, peering into Stepan's eyes. "Tell me—will our people return? I'm not asking you if they'll return soon, because you yourself don't know. All I'm asking is whether they'll return. . . Tell me the truth!" and his gaze glued itself on Stepan's eyes.

"They'll return!" Stepan exclaimed with stirred feelings. "Yes, Ignat, they'll return, and soon!"

"That's good!" the Elder ejaculated with relief. "My back'll hold out, don't worry!" And he gave a gruff laugh giving Stepan's hand a final shake.

Stepan threaded a field path, right through the Olkhovatka rye which was shedding its grain, and all the way he cheerfully cursed himself:

"You bureaucrat, you! . . believing in the traitor Tsypliakov and doubting the people! You ink-pot heart! Here are the people unbowed and mighty. You red-tape office-chair filler! They're not silent, the people. They're ringing. Like a dry tree, ringing with hatred, longing for the spark. And you—you good-for-nothing faint-heart have been placed here as the match. No, not as the match! A match is struck, flares up and then dies out. Flint! It's flint you've got to be! Flint, devil, Stepan Yatsenko! So that you make sparks fly from you and fan the flames of the people's vengeance!"

ARVID GRIGULIS

THROUGH FIRE AND WATER

A dismal night rain poured down on the depleted company in the swamp.

Standing in front of the men, Senior Lieutenant Pliens studied them. He studied them with the thoroughness of a sniper checking up on his rifle before going out on an assignment: not even the tiniest speck of rust must pass unnoticed.

The commander's thickset, athletic figure was a blurred silhouette as he dragged first one foot and then the other out of the oozy earth. When standing firm again, he took out his tobacco and lit up. In the darkness two little lights gleamed: the tip of his cigarette and the luminous dial of his wrist compass. They lit up his

smooth, bony face; a face so shiny that the men had a standing joke about being able to shave in it.

"That means," he took the cigarette out of his mouth and spit out some tobacco shreds, "everything's clear? No questions?"

"No."

"What do you mean, no?" signaler Zaks, a watchmaker from Ruen, whispered from the back line. "Questions can always be found."

And then came a string of old, moth-eaten wisecracks like: "Why is a hole holey?" Their voices fused with the sound of the rain, the squelching of the swamp water and the crackle of firing nearby.

The cigarette was finished. The luminous dial on Pliens' wrist described an arc in the air as he threw away the butt.

"The first group follows me, the second follows Junior Lieutenant Krist!" he barked. "Forward march!"

When the first group was almost out of sight, the second started.

As Krist marched along at the head of his group he tried to rid himself of an unpleasant feeling. There was no need to go into details about the Island; that was not what disturbed him. What he did not like was that out of the whole company only two officers were left: he and Pliens. Subtract one from two, and one is left. Amazingly simple arithmetic.

Peter Krist was a handsome fellow, only slightly effeminate. His thin, symmetrical features, his eyes, long eyelashes, blond hair, well-built, lithe body and melodious voice had appealed to many girls. They appealed to the little nurse Sigrid from the neighbouring unit. Sigrid frequently teased him by saying: "Krist keeps the world at the end of a ten-foot pole."

In peace-time Krist had been a movie mechanic. However, everyone, Sigrid included, called him a movie actor—which did not please him at all.

Krist and Sigrid had met before the war, at a ball in the Riga Palace of Young Pioneers. Even now, amidst all this blood and mire, from time to time the voluptuous strains of one of those evening's waltzes would ring in his ears. By closing his eyes he could see the sparkling chandeliers, the glistening parquet floor and laughing girls in bright slippers.

Many people envied Krist. Pliens almost hated him just because of his figure. Krist could put on any old suit, frequent any odd place and still always appear well-dressed. As for Pliens, no matter how hard he tried, his clothes hung on him like a sack always about fall off his short, angular body.

The company marched north until it reached the river, where the swamp ended abruptly on a steep, clayey bank. The men climbed down to the water's edge and under shelter of the bank marched to the west. They had a long way to go. Every now and then someone would stumble into the water. In some places the cold water of the swamp stream came up to their necks. Swearing, the men would clamber back to the bank and march on. They had been covered with mud; now a layer of clay was added.

Somewhere ahead tommy-guns opened fire, stopped and then began again.

Suddenly several figures in the darkness blocked the path. Giving the password—the name of a city and rifle part—the company crossed the bridge and turned again to the north; again the swamp and mud.

To the right something black loomed in the distance through the rain. Pliens knew that this was a forest, and that the Germans were there. Suddenly, just in front of them, three flares rose, shattering the darkness. It became light as day.

Blinded momentarily, Pliens stopped. All the men stopped. Then as though impelled by some invisible hand, all the figures fell to the ground while bullets whistled over their heads with an evil sound.

"Deeper, deeper into the mud, boys!" said someone very close. Only then did Pliens notice the well-camouflaged machine-gun nest at his feet.

"The Island's on the left, isn't it?" he asked.

"On the left," answered the calm voice from the nest. "After a hundred metres you'll have to slog through the water. The German machine-guns have the whole moss-bog covered."

Bending ever close to the ground, the company marched on. When the first three flares had fallen to the earth, three more went up. There was no sense in waiting.

Spongy moss underfood was followed by wild berry-bushes and other swamp

plants. Tracer bullets drew beautiful red and white streaks of death across the sky.

"Mind the guns!" hissed Pliens, and was the first to throw himself down onto the moss.

Crawling was not easy. The moss sank under the weight of the body; hands and feet got tangled in the small plants and roots. Someone choked and began to sneeze.

"God bless you! . ."

"The climate just suits him. . ."

"For all the world a bathing beauty. . ."

"The Daughava river is groaning and rough. . ."

The joking cheered everyone up; and the company slowly moved forward. Just when it seemed to everyone that this would end only when the war ended, their hands touched firm ground. This was the Island.

"This way! This way!" someone called out of the darkness.

Following the voice, the company reached a communications trench. The men tried to get into a conversation with the Islanders, but with no results; the swamp had laid its heavy imprint on them.

Pliens quickly ran through the formalities of relieving the garrison. Curt commands rang out, and soon the new arrivals remained alone on the Island.

II

The Island was an eminence from eight to ten metres wide and 130 metres long in the western part of the swamp. From a distance it looked like the fish in the fairy tale who climbed out on shore to sun himself. Shrubs and even raspberry bushes once grew on the Island, but mines and shells had plowed its surface into a mass of blue and yellow clay.

A bullet's flight from the Island, across the moss-bog, grew thickets where the Germans were entrenched. Beyond the thickets lay a forest. The Island was a sort of bridge between the swamp and the thickets.

After two months of futile attacks the Germans had transferred their blows to the southern part of the swamp. Nevertheless, the Island had not lost its importance, for it was the most advanced point on the right flank.

Across the Island ran a deep, winding trench, with many short offshoots. This was the whole defence system. When the men came back from duty on the forward line they rested in the alternate trenches.

In almost the entire length of the trench it was possible to stand up straight; only in places did one have to kneel or bend down so as not to be noticed by the enemy. On the slimy bottom lay fragments of logs, broken boards and German mines that had not exploded.

There was a telephone line connecting the Island with the headquarters five kilometres away. Hot meals and ammunition were brought up only at night, along the same route taken by Pliens' men.

Pliens distributed duties among the men, assigned some to the posts, checked up on the machine-guns and set up two new ones, sorted the hand-grenades, looked at the sky as though to determine whether the rain would stop, and understood that here the most difficult hours would come when there would be nothing to do.

Krist saw to it that Pliens' orders were carried out to the letter. This custom had stood them in good stead on many a critical occasion.

Lanky Plostnisk was the first to be killed, just when he had decided to make himself comfortable and had leaned against the wall of the trench. It was only then everyone noticed that the upper ridge of the rear wall was completely bullet-ridden. The enemy was situated somewhere on a higher level, from which he kept this strip covered. No sniper could wish for anything better than this solitary slit in the swamp whose occupants, even when employing the greatest caution, occasionally exposed themselves to bullet fire.

Plostnisk was carried over to a side trench used as a cemetery and buried. Pliens was present at the burial.

Alone in a bend of the trench, Krist was overcome by boredom. He pushed his helmet onto the back of his head and leaned his forehead against a wet stake. The wood was cold and hard. The rain soaked right through his clothing.

Krist did not know how long he had remained in this position until suddenly he felt someone touch him. He turned to find himself facing Pliens, whose thin lips were tightly set.

Pliens raised his arm, and putting it around Krist's shoulders, drew him close.

"It takes a lot of strength to push forward in a storm, but how much more one needs to hold firm in a storm. . ."

And suddenly Krist had the sensation that he and Pliens were standing in a rowboat with the black sea all around them. This was not the last time a similar feeling was to come over him.

A bullet whistled past very close. Krist smiled bitterly and shook his head. His dejection was passing.

"Are we going to be here long?"

"Hold your breath and listen."

Somewhere in the distance artillery was booming. Krist had been hearing the guns for several nights running.

"They're driving this way. When they come up, we'll go farther. Maybe we'll get reinforcements, and then we'll push out to meet them. We'll wait and see. . ."

Leaving Krist short, precise instructions, Pliens went to the command post to sleep. Krist was in charge until sunrise. He did not mind, for he could not have fallen asleep now anyhow.

"Eyes open," cautioned Pliens as he left.

Pulling down his helmet, Krist made the rounds of the posts, bending where the trench was shallow. He walked taking two steps, and stopping on the third. The enemy had ceased sending up flares. There was no firing either. The swamp was plunged in sleep—but in war one should not trust in the silence of sleep.

Morning brought no particular changes. The rain stopped but the sun did not come out. A slight wind blew over the Island, drying the men's uniforms.

The usual skirmish began, an exchange of morning greetings, as it were. Pliens got up with red, swollen eyes and drove Krist off to sleep. Krist made his way to the command post. He found it to be a small dugout in one of the subsidiary trenches, covered by a triple layer of logs.

There was one bunk in the dugout and a stool for the telephone operator.

Krist took off his wet greatcoat, stretched out on the bench and drew the coat over his head.

Quietly, but with accentuated gaiety, Pliens answered the greetings of the men as he made the rounds of the machine-gunners, the posts and those off duty. Mines were coming down and the earth groaned. And then something happened about which later no one was able to give all the details.

Pliens had frequently told his men: "Don't be afraid of mines. You won't hear your mine in any case, because it travels faster than sound."

And indeed, on that morning Pliens did not hear his mine.

Like many German mines, this one did not go off, but it pierced Pliens' helmet and smashed his skull. He sank to the ground without a cry, as though felled by some gigantic hammer.

Krist had not yet fallen asleep when a Red Army man rushed in and reported the officer's death. Everything became clear to him at once. What he had feared more than anything else had happened. Rising from the bench and supporting his hand on the log ceiling, he listened to the excited man. Half the company had already been killed in action and death was a familiar thing—but this was something more serious than death. . .

The Red Army man stopped and glanced at Krist. The face he saw was chalk white, with blue shadows around the lips and under the eyes.

"You may go," Krist said without hearing his own words.

The men around Pliens' body made way as Krist approached. Someone had covered the body with a sergeant's greatcoat. Krist lifted the greatcoat.

Almost the entire company was there. Krist realized that he had to say something. He straightened and said as loud as he could:

"Comrades, from this moment on till we receive further orders I am commander of the company. Act as though Senior Lieutenant Pliens was still with us. My first order is: everyone to his place with the exception of those on duty. Four men remain to bury the senior lieutenant. That is all."

The men silently dispersed.

Sergeant Licis who had covered Pliens' body with his coat, three Red Army men and Krist dug the grave. Noon was approaching. Clouds covered the sky but from time to time the sun shone through making steam rise both from the swamp and the men's uniforms.

When the grave had been dug they all stood for a time as though waiting for something, looking into the black hole slowly filling with water. Krist was

silent. Then sergeant Licis let himself down into the grave. His strong hands raised Pliens' body without effort and lowered it into the water.

They filled the grave. The swamp had received one more lodger.

Krist handed his shovel to Licis, and everyone understood that it was time to go. Krist remained alone.

III

Orders came from headquarters to defend the Island to the last man, for the time being no reinforcements would be sent. Junior Lieutenant Krist was appointed commander of the company, and recommended for promotion to the next rank.

Krist had not expected anything else when he sent in his report of Pliens' death, for he knew the state of affairs in the regiment.

Until evening he studied the enemy fortifications through the tele-stereoscope trying to recall all he had learned at a recent period in training camp.

He would do his duty to the bitter end. He was responsible for the whole Island and its men. What was death in comparison to his duty to the Soviet country and the Soviet people?

He alone was responsible.

Bullets rattled against the parapet of the trenches. Dusk fell and the moon came out. At midnight men crawled in with thermoses of hot food, kegs of vodka and ammunition. The men had not received vodka for a long time and everyone rejoiced, for vodka meant warmth.

Krist decided to stand by while the food and vodka were being distributed to make sure there was no abuse. He came up when they had just begun to hand it out. Nobody paid any attention to him.

As the distribution neared its end Krist realized that he had nothing to fear, for not a single man would dream of taking even a drop from another.

A short Red Army man in a coat torn by mine splinters knocked his elbow against the wall of the trench and upset his cup. The poor fellow's eyes filled with tears, his numbed white fingers trembled.

"Have to hold it in your hands, Apsit, in your hands," admonished the cook.

Simultaneously, ten mugs were raised, and from each a little was poured into the empty mug until it was full.

Krist turned hastily and vanished. He had witnessed genuine comradeship.

The following morning Krist summoned Sergeant Licis to replace him while he rested. For a longer time than usual he gazed into the pock-marked, serious, apathetic face of this elderly soldier. Soon Olin, the company's clerk, who also was temporarily second man on the fourth machine-gun, came up. Olin was a jolly, round-faced, rosy-cheeked fellow who had been a mathematics student before the war.

Krist asked him for a list of the company's men, with as much detailed information about each one as possible.

Together with Licis he drew up a report to headquarters on the appointment of the best soldiers to the non-commissioned vacancies.

Six hours later he received an affirmative reply from the divisional commander and an order on the appointments. Since this usually took several weeks,—it was evident that over there they were doing all they could for the Island.

In the afternoon the new corporals and sergeants were assembled in Krist's little dugout. These were men with whom he had fought in several battles after his return from training camp and who had come to the Island together with him, yet it seemed to him that he was seeing them for the first time.

After the meeting many of the men changed their opinion of the movie actor. Krist experienced the sensation of having found a rare and entertaining book which he could not stop reading. His glance swept the men and rested on Zaks, who was standing in the doorway and trying to light a small lamp that was like a cigarette lighter. He held the telephone receiver clamped to his ear, the long wire allowing him to move around freely. "Like a cow on a tether," he said.

"Anything from the other end, Zaks?"

"Nothing new, Comrade Lieutenant."

Krist wanted to say something, but he did not know what.

"What are you most afraid of?" he asked.

"Mice," was the answer.

"And the Germans?"

"I'm not afraid of the Germans any longer."

The lamp lit up Zaks' countenance—a

big nose, round cheeks, thick lips over flashing white teeth.

Zaks told Krist five brand-new anecdotes, his opinion of German armaments, and that Ruen was the most beautiful of all Soviet towns. Toward the end the conversation turned on watches and Krist began to comprehend that it was a science in itself.

The conversation might have gone on till morning, but suddenly a ray of light flashed into the dugout and died at Zaks' feet. Krist realized that someone had sent up a flare just outside. Immediately afterward, to the accompaniment of tommy-guns, two machine-guns opened fire.

"It's them," said Zaks, his voice taking on a higher note.

Without a word Krist went out.

In the darkness someone ran up to him, and fell back. Pressing his gun to his side, Krist fired. The figure fell. There was nothing else to be seen. The flare died out. Another went up. Out on the swamp everything became quiet. The machine-guns and tommy-guns ceased fire.

"The attack has been beaten off," Licis came up and reported. According to preliminary calculations sixteen Germans had been killed on the swamp.

"Not many," said Krist.

He asked to be connected with headquarters. Only then did he realize that he had repulsed the first attack. Maybe it was much simpler than he had imagined.

The whole night the Island was on the alert. Small groups of Germans attempted two more attacks, but both were beaten off with no losses for the Islanders.

A light, steady rain began the next day, and boredom seized the company. Toward nightfall German snipers seriously wounded two men who had been smoking. For the first time in his life Krist was speechless with anger, then he began to curse; all the words he had heard during his life at the front and which had more often than not passed him by now came pouring out.

Olin and Avens, the second signalsman, stood not far off.

"Our chief's becoming a real soldier," remarked Olin in half-surprise.

"Yes, I haven't heard such strong language for a long time," Avens said, thoughtfully scratching his bristly chin.

Krist's first impulse was to forbid smoking altogether, but he immediately realized how impossible that was. So he forbade the men to smoke while sitting or standing; they could smoke only in a lying position or squatting at the bottom of the trench. However, smoking was permitted in the subsidiary trenches; on duty it was strictly forbidden.

Krist himself was the first to feel the full effect of this order. Lying at the entrance of his dugout, he struck a match to light up, but the match went out. Angrily he brought the box up close to his face and scratched the match with all his strength. A fragment of burning sulphur fell into the box and all the matches flared up. Krist felt a sharp pain in his eyes.

He dragged himself to the bench, and gritting his teeth lay down. It was dark in the dugout, for in the order against smoking Krist had forbidden using the lamp, the only source of light on the whole Island.

"Wounded?" asked Avens, who was at the telephone.

"It's nothing."

Krist lay there for a long time. Finally, feeling that it was around midnight, he went out to relieve Licis. He opened his eyes only outside. They still pained him, but he could see, so it was really nothing.

Walking through the mud in the trench, Krist stopped at every step and listened. He had learned to listen, and painstakingly sifted the important sounds from the unimportant, the useful from the useless. Flares were now sent up only during the darkest hours, or when there was reason to expect something from the enemy.

As Krist approached the northern end of the Island he stopped dead. There could be no doubt about it: the observer was asleep. Krist wiped the raindrops from his face and again felt a sharp pain in his eyes. He pulled out his revolver.

"I'll shoot him on the spot," he thought, and came up close to the dark figure at the end of the trench.

It was little Apsit. He had placed his gun on the parapet, and lay leaning against the butt, breathing heavily.

Krist gritted his teeth and cocked his gun. Awakened by the snap, Apsit straightened up and raised his head. It was so dark that he could not make out the face, but he recognized Krist and realized what was up. He stopped back shakily, lowering his head.

Suddenly Krist saw Apsit as he had seen him the night the vodka was distri-

buted, the night when he had really seen the faces of the men.

He put his revolver into his pocket.

"Are you ill?"

Apsit was silent. Krist also said nothing. To Apsit it seemed that the silence would last forever.

"Who is your direct superior?"

"Sergeant Kadikis."

"Report that I order him not to put you on duty for twenty-four hours. Try to rest up. And. . ."

"Never again... Never..." mumbled Apsit.

"I believe you. Get going."

Apsit splashed off through the mud, repeating:

"Never... Never again... Never..."

Krist took his place. Screwing up his scorched eyes, he peered into the night.

A strong wind began to blow.

The enemy was silent.

No one asked Krist any questions the next day: here people changed frequently, both in face and figure.

In the day-time the Germans sent over a squall of mines, scoring several direct hits. Two fell into the trench; four Red Army men were killed and six wounded.

Krist pondered for a long time, and at dusk called a meeting of the non-commissioned officers. He announced that he found the trenches imperfect and intended to perfect them. The whole Island should be covered with a network of trenches, which would allow the men to be scattered and would mean less casualties, especially if the Germans were to use artillery instead of mortars. The trenches would have to be dug by the company itself by night.

Everyone agreed that the trenches should be improved, but most of them doubted whether the tired men would be able to cope with such heavy work.

Licis supported Krist and declared that the work could be done if everyone pitched in.

That night they began to dig. To the exhausted men it seemed easier to support the whole world on their shoulders than to dig those deep trenches through the rain-soaked clay.

Zaks recalled that Pliens once had said: "If your watch ticks regularly when you put it to your ear, that means everything is all right. And if you put your finger on the pulse of the company when things get difficult and hear wisecracks everything is all right." The senior lieutenant's proverb appealed immensely to Zaks. Perhaps because he was a watchmaker.

But joking became rarer and rarer on the Island. The men, rain-soaked and mud-covered, became stupefied, gloomy. While shoveling they perspired, then became chilled, and soon the whole company was coughing. The coughing never stopped; one man would cease and another would take it up. The whole Island barked hoarsely, like a sick dog; in quiet weather this bark could be heard a long way off.

Every night there would be several small attacks to interrupt the work of digging, and then the men would put down their shovels and take up their guns.

Shovel in hand, Krist worked side by side with the men.

Once Krist heard a voice from around a bend in the trench ask:

"Are all of us really going to die here?"

"We're all going to win," came the answer accompanied by a hollow cough. "But some of us will remain here."

The digging had been going on for nine days and was coming to an end. The whole Island was criss-crossed with trenches. Now the company was more scattered.

The rain no longer poured down ceaselessly but came in squalls. In one of the intervals between squalls mines again flew over the Island. Some of them fell in the old trench, but fortunately no one was nearby. However, one happened to fall in the swamp and cut the telephone wire. Avens was on duty at the time, so Zaks set out to repair it. He had crawled halfway when snipers' dum-dums began to whistle around him. The rattle of a machine-gun broke out at the same time.

"Careful!" shouted Krist from the other end of the trench.

Zaks turned over on his side like a swimmer in order to crawl on, but the next moment he rolled onto his stomach and lay still with outstretched hands. Almost at the same moment Krist put his hands on the parapet, drew his knees up to his chin, and pushing with his foot dove towards Zaks. A bullet pierced his helmet, another one punctured his kit, while two tore through his uniform.

Krist began to think connectedly only

after he had handed over Zaks' body to Licis. Then he jumped down into the trench. In Licis' look he could read approval mingled with reproof.

Zaks was laid on the bench in the command post, where he recovered consciousness three hours later. He smiled and took the company commander's hand.

"They were using dum-dums?"

"Yes."

"Where am I wounded?"

"In the stomach."

A sad expression appeared in Zaks' smile.

"Bad business—a nine between two aces."

"What?"

"Nothing. I'm to be evacuated?"

"Yes, tonight."

"I want to ask you a favour, my last request. Let me stay here."

With lowered head Krist kept silent.

"Any child will tell you that no operation can save me. Now, if it were winter. . ."

Krist realized that Zaks was right. He could not protest.

The medical orderly came several times to see the wounded man. Toward evening Zaks became delirious and shortly before midnight he died.

That night the trench-digging was completed.

Krist returned from work sweaty and tired. He wanted to sleep. Glancing around the dugout, he took off his coat, threw it onto the floor and lay down beside the bench where Zaks lay cold and quiet. Like a watch that has stopped.

In his sleep Krist felt warm, black water lapping around him. When he awoke he had sharp pains in his back, left leg, and left hip. Straining every muscle, he managed to rise but could not straighten up. Something had bent his back and leg, his breath came short and his head swam with the excruciating pain.

All twisted up, gritting his teeth with pain, limping and swearing, he gave orders for Zaks' burial.

The orderly wanted to rub him down with vodka, but Krist sent him to hell, drank the vodka and declared that he would take treatment after the war—in Kemeri.

That night Krist the movie actor was buried and Krist the Twisted, as the company called him from then on, was born.

When the men learned from Avens why Krist had fallen ill, they blinked as though the Island were suddenly flooded with bright sunlight.

"If there are great men, then he is one of them," declared Apsit, looking down at his muddy boots. He wanted to say he would die for Krist, but he realized that this was not much, for today and every day henceforth, everyone of them at a single word from Krist would allow himself to be roasted over a slow fire, and for that reason all of them were silent.

After Zaks' death there were two rather sunny days, which passed quietly. The men dried their clothes and coughed less.

On the morning of the third day the Island was swept by artillery fire. Five artillery shells fell on the Island. After making the rounds of the trenches, Krist telephoned headquarters. They advised him to be on the alert and said that if necessary machine-guns and artillery would support him from the side of the river. The signal was two green flares.

It was Licis who gave the alarm; the day had brought nothing new, but in the evening things became hot. The air became dark and filled with acrid smoke; the earth groaned and rocked. In many places the old trench caved in entombing four and killing two.

The barrage ceased at nightfall. Then, under cover of machine-gun and trench-mortar fire the Germans came on in waves. The night was dark and foggy.

Krist dashed about the Island swearing and shouting commands. He swore chiefly because the attacking party was almost invisible, but one could feel that the swamp teemed with them.

At first Krist sent up one flare. The fog was thick, swallowing up much of the light. Then he sent up two at once, and when the battle became hotter—three at a time. The men worked splendidly, particularly the machine-gunners. As Krist passed the fourth machine-gun he heard Olin's voice singing loudly as he fired: "The square root of one is one!"

About a hundred metres from the Island the dark silhouettes of men rose and fell, like in a puppet theatre. But this was a theatre of death.

Trench-mortar fire increased in intensity with every repulsed attack. Fragments of fire, earth, stones, iron and boards flew through the air.

A splinter whistled past Krist's cheek and grazed the skin. He felt blood on his hand as he passed it over his face.

The next instant he felt a blow in his right eye, so powerful that it made him stagger back. It was a big lump of earth. His cheek burned and his ears rang as though someone was beating on a copper kettle in his head.

Someone pulled him to the side. Looking around, Krist saw that Licis was standing next to him shouting something, but he could not hear a word. Then he turned his left ear to Licis. The supply of flares was coming to an end.

"Send up one at a time. Use the signal rockets. It seems to me we have a lot of them. Only don't use the green ones."

Licis disappeared.

"It's the eve of Midsummer's Day on the Island," the men joked.

An hour, perhaps two, passed. Licis reported that the signal rockets were giving out. The sergeant was calm. Leaning against the trench wall Krist wiped the blood off his face with the palm of his hand. He spat out the blood in his mouth, closed his lashless eyes, then opened them and said, as though convincing himself:

"When we have no more rockets let the paired machine-guns relieve one another and keep up steady fire. Not a moment's breathing space, not even half-a-second. And the tommy-guns, too. Steady, frequent fire. We've got to put up a wall, a solid wall. . . To the last bullet. . . So that not a mouse, not a mosquito can get through. . . Have the hand-grenades ready. A lot of them, as many as possible. That's all. . ."

Licis saluted and left. Krist turned, and aiming carefully, let out the cartridge clip, put in a new one and continued to fire. It was beginning to get light.

A biplane, the kind that frequently flew over the swamps, came over the Island during the heaviest fighting. At the sight of so many signal rockets the pilot evidently realized what was going on, and dropped four bright flares.

"Hurrah!" came from the Island.

"Three cheers for the friendship of peoples and arms!"

"Three cheers for the king of the air—the little biplane!"

"Three cheers for the farmer and his pilot!"

"Three cheers for the U-2!"

"Hurrah!"

Some even threw their helmets into the air.

Turning in the direction of the enemy, Krist laughed.

The plane helped the Island. When the flares began to die out, it returned and dropped another bunch. It was already getting light when the plane came down low and described a half-circle. The pilot leaned over the side, waved his hand and flew off.

At the same time the battle ended. Heaps of enemy corpses lay in the swamp around the Island. On the Island, the men buried their dead and evacuated the wounded. Now there were even fewer men in the trenches. Deaf in the right ear, his cheek gashed, Krist plowed through the long trenches. He was satisfied; he had held his position.

Days of quiet followed the big attack. During this time Krist sent in a request for a large consignment of mines and mined the swamp. Sometimes at night one could hear German scouts who tried to get to the Island being blown to pieces.

The clouds dispersed and the weather was sunny for a few days. The top-layer of soil dried up; only in the bottom of the trenches was there mud. To dry their feet the men lay for hours with their legs sticking up along the walls of the trenches.

But the nights were so cold that the men's teeth chattered. Fogs came up toward evening which intensified the cold. The men huddled together like animals for warmth while they slept, yet still they froze. Arguments arose about which was better: warm, rainy nights, or dry, cold ones.

Krist caught cold and almost lost his voice. When he tried to speak, he wheezed; when he became angry, all he could produce were inarticulate sounds. His fire-scorced eyes itched.

The men began to get boils as a result of their colds. Boils broke out on Krist's neck, face and legs.

The days passed slowly. The company was eager to meet the enemy, on whom it could vent its anger, but the enemy lay low.

Before this Krist had not thought of Sigrid once during all the time on the Island. Now he frequently dreamed about her; in his dreams he talked to her and they danced together. Avens

even said that Krist groaned in his sleep.

When Licis was on duty Krist loved to sit in the dugouts with the men and listen to them talking about good food, whiskey, bonfires. In a husky voice Olin sang tangoe-like ditties of his own composition about tropical countries.

But no one believed for a moment that they might be in any place except on this Island. Every day Avens received the news from the other fronts by wire and listening to it the men would say:"That's the way it should be. . ." Once Licis said to the cook:

"Now Krist and the company could go through hell and get back again."

The German corpses in the swamp were beginning to decompose. They stank even more than before, but the men were used to it. The enemy snipers caused no more casualties, for the art of taking shelter had been completely mastered.

All conception of time vanished; no one could say how long they had been on the Island: maybe a month, maybe a year. The rumble of artillery moved still closer, but no one paid any attention to it.

Then for several nights in succession small enemy scouting parties attacked the Island. They were allowed to come up close and then were wiped out.

At dawn of the thirtieth day the artillery began to roar from behind the forest in the voice of a thousand lions. Several shells fell almost on the Island itself. Krist roused himself as though from a deep sleep, and remembered Pliens' words. He telephoned headquarters and asked them to have the radio operators help direct their fire away from him. Now Avens and Licis had the additional task of correcting the fire of the artillery behind the forest. For three days invisible lions tore at the forest. Sitting in their trenches as though in a theatre box, Krist's men watched the magnificent spectacle and wagered sugar on the outcome. On the fourth day, the forest surrendered, raising broken, leafless branches to the sky; quiet fell over all.

Not another mine fell on the Island, not another bullet whistled over their heads. Finally Olin could not stand it any longer. He stuck his head out over the trench, but no one fired at him. Krist punished him with five details out of turn.

That night headquarters reported that operations in the swamp were over. The company was ordered to clear the Island and move up into a zone hitherto considered neutral. It was to cross the forest and the hollow, and join the regiment on Height 148.

The men glanced at each other with an awkward feeling. They wanted to say something, but words seemed inadequate. When they came out of the trenches they could not make up their minds to stand up straight up, still not believing it possible. Then they quickly gathered wood and lit up the bonfires they had been dreaming of for so many nights. They even picked up burning embers and rubbed their hands over the flames to get the sensation of heat.

With the first rays of dawn the company prepared to set out.

IV

They entered the sun-lit forest and began to climb the hill. This was not easy, for their legs had forgotten how to move. Felled forest giants, shattered and slung aside by the tornado of the artillery fire lay everywhere; they formed what looked like tank barriers.

Cursing his leg, Krist clambered over the tree trunks trying not to lag behind the company with Licis at its head.

Suddenly a dozen mouths let out an impetuous cry of joy:

"Sand! Sand!"

Scrambling over the trunks, they all strained forward. Krist climbed onto a stump to make out the reason for all this joy. On the slope of the mine-gashed hill the men of the swamp had spotted sparkling white sand. They ran forward and threw themselves down on it as onto a priceless eastern carpet. They sifted the soft, dry sand through their fingers, murmuring softly, and talked about life. To live. . . To live. . .

Krist moved aside and sat down on a charred pine log. He turned his face toward the swamp, thinking of Pliens. Pliens had placed a mountain on his shoulders and ordered him to bear it through the swamp. He had. Now his bones ached a bit. But not he alone had carried the burden. There they were, those giants, now stretched out like children on the dry, white sand.

Through the hollow they were crossing ran a river. Krist ordered the company to halt so that the men could bathe.

An old, blackened root lay on the bank of the quiet stream, and Krist got undressed and climbed onto it. Bending over the water, he saw his disfigured face and figure. He bent still further, almost touching the water with his face.

"And I didn't even notice how it happened," he said, as though to himself.

"Just as you didn't notice how you turned into a soldier," said Licis, up to his neck in the water.

Height 148 was covered with a carpet of green. Men moved about under cover of the green leaves of the bushes and the pine branches. The scent of withering birch leaves, pine pitch and the acrid odour of rifle oil mingled in the air. Hidden among the bushes was a large tent, from which came sounds of splashing water and the clanging of iron pots. Clouds of steam rose from the doorway. . . All over the slope of the hill the men were seated in groups amidst their spread out rifles gazing into the sun. They had flung off the burden of the previous days and were gradually falling into stories and recollections.

On the northern slope the artillerymen were cleaning their guns, washing them with streams of water.

In the hollow the horses were grazing.

Several more belated units arrived. The last to arrive was a small group of men.

On a new-made bench in the shade of a huge pine sat Major Strazde studying a map. Small signs marked the forests, fields, rivers and lakes. Above them red arrows pointed to the west. Lazily the major shifted the map on his knees and his glance fell on a pale green spot, the swamp.

He remembered what his father, a village schoolmaster, had told him a long time ago:

"If you go forward boldly, forest will incline before you, mountains recede and swamps divide."

From a clearing in the trees appeared a girl in the uniform of a nurse. She came up to the major and greeted him.

Strazde lifted his head. Deep-sunk eyes bearing the shadow of many sleepless nights in them glanced questioningly at the girl. She blushed and asked if she might go to meet Junior Lieutenant Krist.

A smile flickered across the soldier's face, perhaps because the girl blushed, or perhaps because she was so young and sweet.

"Krist is now a lieutenant."

The girl thanked him and started to leave.

"What is your name?"

The girl turned.

"Sigrid," she said.

"Good."

Before she had time to leave a rather unusual figure appeared on the path. The sentry stopped him, but he gave the password and continued to approach. Something rooted Sigrid to the spot.

As this elderly, bent man in a torn and rumpled commander's uniform, his helmet riddled with bullet holes, with a limp in his left leg, approached, one could see that his inflammed eyes were lashless and his eyelids covered with scabs. There was a broad raw wound on his right cheek and two boils on the left. His forehead and mouth were marked by deep, dark lines.

He halted a few steps away from the major, straightened himself as well as he could, and saluted. The major rose and looked at him closely.

"Who are you?" he asked.

It was only then that Krist realized he was unrecognizable.

"Junior Lieutenant Krist, commander of the 7th Company. By your orders the company has arrived here," he said hoarsely.

"Is it really you, Krist?" Strazde put out his hand.

With quick, firm steps Sigrid came up to Krist. Her arms spread in an embrace; her lips opened, but not a sound came forth. She laid her hands on Krist's shoulders, raised herself on tiptoe, and putting her face close to his as though wanting to find out if it were really he, said softly:

"Darling. . . I didn't recognize you. . . But it doesn't matter, really it doesn't, does it?"

The major, a bit confused, turned away.

"It doesn't matter," he repeated. "When the dross disappears I shall have one more tempered soldier."

Somewhere an accordion began to play. This was a sign that the unit was resting.

COSSACKS

The German Taganrog army group was routed in August 1943. General Kirichenko's Cossack cavalry corps and General Tanaschishin's tanks effected a bold thrust through the German lines, an operation which played an important part in the defeat of the German southern army. This story describes a battle full of interesting episodes.

The plan to make a breach, its aims and the tasks which had to be achieved by the corps were all plotted on the operations map. The orders had been drawn up and sent out to the divisions. The divisions all knew what they had to do. The regiments also knew their tasks in respect of time and space. Everybody was waiting for his hour to strike, from the Cossack trooper to the General.

Kirichenko, in a blue cavalry cap, was sitting in the shadow of a small half-ruined hut that had once been the village school. With the greatest difficulty he squeezed his huge, bulky body into a school desk. His chief of staff, Pichugin, a tall man with greying hair, sat opposite him at a desk hacked and scratched with pen-knife cuts. A large map with the latest information plotted on it lay spread out between them. Both of them, however, knew the locality in which the operation was to take place without the map, knew the high-roads and the lanes, the hills, heights and gullies, knew the disposition of the enemy's forces whose communications they had to cut and destroy. Just knowing all this was not enough, they had to be able to do it.

The narrow streak of a red glow spread slowly, gradually covering half the sky. The windows of the school-hut rattled, the earth trembled under the men's feet. The guns roared heavily and persistently as the artillery hammered away at the enemy's outer defences. Then another sound was added to that of the artillery, short heavy blows like those of a gigantic hammer beating the earth—enemy bombers were attacking. Kirichenko was drinking strong, scalding hot tea in short gulps. He raised his head and listened.

"That's the third wave of 'Junkers,'" said Pichugin.

There were three phases to the operation. During the first the divisions moved up to a position behind our infantry. In the second the cavalry were hurled into the breach. The third and final phase was the operation in depth. In the first phase everything depended on secrecy. The divisions moved like the outspread fingers of the hand. On making contact with the enemy the fingers closed in like a clenched fist.

The horses had been standing amongst the maize the whole day through. Huge fields, open on all sides, stretched away to the north, south and east. There were heights in the west overlooking the broad expanse of field in which the cavalry were concentrated. Fighting was going on quite near the maize fields. Our infantry were attacking, clearing a road for the cavalry. Horses, tachankas, guns, mortars, all were safely under cover out of sight of the enemy. The Cossacks stood their horses in the old trenches, dug covered shelters for the wagons and guns and camouflaged themselves and their horses with maize and straw. The field seemed lifeless, the men hardly ever moved at all. When it was necessary to send a message from the squadron to regimental H.Q., the runner or officer crawled the whole distance as though he were under fire. The wireless stations were silent. Everything was immobilized before the time for the thrust. Wave after wave of German aircraft flew over. They circled over the maize fields and the horses shivered at the noise of the engines and the howl of the bombs. They were real war horses but, like men, they experienced dull depressing feelings. With blood-shot eyes they stamped about and the horseholders thrust their caps into the animals' jaws to stop their whinnying.

Still the army corps commander did not give the order to attack: the time was not yet ripe. They had to wait until the infantry and the artillery had fulfilled their tasks, until they had breached the German defences and opened the gates for the cavalry and tanks. And then—there would be no hesitation! At the moment, however, only one thing was demanded of them—patience, patience and again patience. If they could stand until night and retain in their own hands that sharpest of weapons, surprise, then the allotted task would have been fulfilled. The cavalry would charge through the gap in the German defences, strike at them from the rear, destroy communications between and control over the enemy divisions, create a panic, split them up into smaller units and with the aid of the tanks and infantry would "put them in the pot," as the saying goes, that is, surround and annihilate them.

On the previous day when one of the staff officers had muttered something about the infantry taking too long the General had sternly stopped him.

"The infantry are working for us," he said. "They have, perhaps, the hardest job. . ."

The most alarming hour of all was that preceding the cavalry charge into the gap. The divisional commanders sensed and realized this. It was not the first time they had fought together as a cavalry corps. They had become masters at the art of forcing a breach, they had been together on Cossack raids behind the German lines in the Kuban and in the Mozdok steppes. They called their corps commander "father." Kirichenko was their senior both in years and experience. He really loved them like sons and knew the value of everyone of them.

It is to be supposed that when he made Tutarinov's division the vanguard, giving them the task of going ahead and cutting a road for the other units, he was taking into consideration the character of Tutarinov and his officers. This was a task of which Tutarinov, a young, lively and dashing general, was quite capable. And not only was he capable of it but it was entirely to his liking: to be in the vanguard was completely in accordance with his nature.

Tutarinov loved fighting. It was in his blood, in the blood of the Astrakhan

Lieutenant-General of the Guards Kirichenko

Cossack from the stanitsa (Cossack village) of Krasny Yar. When he was born they named him Ivan after his grandfather who had fought under the leadership of Skobelev. Tutarinov the grandson still remembers his grandfather, strong as an oak, his Kirghiz bay charger, and his sword that had been handed down from ancient days. When the war broke out Tutarinov was serving at Brest-Litovsk on the western frontier. At 4 a.m. on the 22nd June the Germans opened fire and a shell came in through the window of the house occupied by the chief of staff of Tutarinov's brigade. From that moment he began to fight against the Germans. During the whole of this time he had only spent a month away from the front, the time when he formed the Cossack division. When his eyes shine and he says: "It's fine, isn't it?" he really means it.

The division's present task was an honourable one. Hot-tempered, impatient Tutarinov kept himself in hand, tried not to let his excitement be seen. His favourite horse, his Don charger "Voskhod" was wounded by a chance splinter. He said "good-bye" to "Voskhod" whom the orderly led away to the veterinary hospital. He stood for a long time in the evening twilight listening to the retreating sound of artillery fire. This

was a good sign. It meant that our troops had penetrated the German defences. Tutarinov brightened up. He sent for the commander of the tank group and for Colonel Karapetyan, commander of the leading regiment. At any moment the signal to advance was likely to be given. Again and again Tutarinov, Karapetyan and the tank officer went over the details of the order in which they were to charge into the gap, the signals to be given by radio, rocket and tracer bullets. He told Karapetyan the same thing as Kirichenko had told him:

"Your task is to go forward irrespective of everything. There will be Germans on your left and right—to hell with them. . . Forward. . . forward!"

He had his last conference with the regimental commanders. It was decided that no Cossack reconnoissance would be sent out so that the fact that the Cossack corps was going into action would not be disclosed. Under no circumstances must the Germans know beforehand that the Cossacks would attack here, their presence would be felt all the more terribly in the rear. The tankmen had to carry out the reconnoissance.

When the long-awaited hour came Tutarinov sighed with relief. Zero hour ! It was nine o'clock in the evening. Tutarinov gave the gunners their signal. All the guns simultaneously opened a raking fire from the right and from the left. The cavalry regiment advanced into the narrow gap between two walls of artillery fire. Tutarinov stood with the regimental commander watching the tanks and the leading squadron, those of Romanyuk and Kuznetsov, first. The horses and the machine-gun carts disappeared into the darkness. Tutarinov embraced the tall swarthy Karapetyan and wished him success.

When Tutarinov informed Kirichenko by radio that the division had entered the gap, the general, usually calm and restrained, struck his palm with his fist.

"Now we are Cossacks! Now we are living!"

The charge into the gap demanded the skill, daring, ability to take risks and rapidity in summing up the situation which is characteristic of the Cossacks. It is for this reason that Tutarinov had sent Karapetyan's regiment ahead. The swarthy, gaunt colonel was an old cavalryman who had fought in the Civil War. He knew and loved his regiment and the regiment in battle knew and loved its commander. In addition to Cossack qualities—dash and steadfastness—the regimental commander possessed another quality which enabled him to divert the Cossack character, tempestuous as the Kuban river, into the required channel: he was an officer who took risks soberly, a man with a warm heart and a cool head.

It was a dark, dead, still night. Captain Novikov's tanks and Captain Kuznetsov's cavalry squadron led the way past sleeping hamlets. Only the roar of the motors and the clatter of horses' hoofs disturbed the silence. Their road led them through a village in which unsuspecting Germans were sleeping their first heavy sleep.

"Don't wake them, please," Karapetyan ordered Kuznetsov. "They are sleeping, which is all to the good. And if they wake up then we can sing a different tune. . ."

The Cossacks were in light battle order, just horse and man. Cloaks, Cossack hoods and tunics had all been left behind in the second echelon transport. In the darkness horse and man merged into one. The tankmen liked the idea of this thrust forward into the German lair in the dead of night. From time to time Novikov stuck his head out of the hatch of his machine and glanced back: he was afraid the Cossacks would get left behind. They were keeping up with him, however.

Tutarinov with his staff was in the centre of the division. During the first half of the night the situation was not clear to him. Later on, of course, an explanation was found for everything, and everything became logically clear when it was entered up on the map and formed part of a report. At the time, however, everything was rather hazy. Where was Karapetyan, had he gone far, why was he silent? Night and the mist only served to increase his alarm. Tutarinov mounted his charger "Villis" and raced after Karapetyan.

He went into the cottage where the regimental control post was situated, threw off his cloak which hampered his movements and asked quickly and with a smile:

"What's the good news?"

From the bottom of his heart, Karapetyan would have liked to say something pleasing. He did not exaggerate, however, and answered honestly and straightforwardly:

"Kuznetsov is still silent. Everything is quiet on the road, only occasional shots."

"Is that all?"

"That's all," said Karapetyan, and then again assured the General: "the regiment will fulfil its mission."

He sent his signal officer forward to Kuznetsov. Moved by solicitude for his divisional commander he mentioned softly that the General was in danger here. Tutarinov answered him shortly and sharply:

"I know where I ought to be and when."

Karapetyan did not return to the subject again. His regiment was the key to the night operation and the divisional commander considered that he ought to be with him at the moment.

Kuznetsov soon sent word of himself. The occasional firing from left and right began to die down which meant that the most dangerous place, the gap itself, was already behind them. Now they should come into a village situated on the road. But no matter how they stared into the darkness the Cossacks could see nothing of any village. Kuznetsov began to doubt: perhaps his squadron had lost the road. The first shot which burst out deafeningly in the darkness pleased the captain. The shot came from ahead and by the sound of it Kuznetsov decided that it came from a German rifle. The horses advanced a couple of hundred yards farther and then there was no doubt that ahead of them lay the garrison which the squadron had to wipe out in order to clear the road for the regiment, and behind the regiment, the whole division.

The German-held village, unseen in the darkness, became visible as a result of frequent flashes of machine-gun and rifle fire. Sensing that something was wrong, the alarmed German patrols opened uncontrolled fire. Success now depended on seconds. Kuznetsov dismounted his squadron and led them into the village. To the tank commander he said:

"Stay here and make a noise. . ."

The roar of the tank engines on the road was to create the impression amongst the alarmed Germans that the place was overrun with Russian tanks. In the meantime the dismounted Cossacks would crawl up to the garrison and clear the village in one vehement rush.

This iswhat actually happened. Within a quarter of an hour everything was over. From the centre of the village Kuznetsov sent a rocket into the dark sky. The rocket was a signal to the horse-holders and tanks that the road was clear. The regiment continued to advance. A distance of more than ten kilometres lay between them and the German forward positions. The Cossacks rode southward behind the German lines and parallel to them, crossing one road after another.

The sound of a motor came to them through the night. The Cossacks signalled with a torch for the machine to stop. It was a huge German five-ton truck with high sides. A German sergeant-major, blinking from the brightness of the light, jumped unsuspectingly from the cabin.

"Russians?" asked the astonished German.

"Yes, Cossacks," Kuznetsov assured him.

The sergeant-major reported humbly that he was taking hot dinners for officers to the front. Kuznetsov had no time to worry about the Germans and their dinners. He placed a tankman on board the truck and sent them back to Karapetyan. Karapetyan was both pleased and astonished when the tankman brought him Kuznetsov's operation report and hot dinners in the German thermos flasks. It was clear that things were going well with Kuznetsov. He suggested to Tutarinov that they eat. At that moment however, a radio report came from Regimental Commander Pushkaryov who was following on behind, to the effect that the Germans had cut the road.

The Germans, having recovered themselves, had filtered in between Pushkaryov and Karapetyan. The situation had become more complicated. The divisional commander, however, was in an excellent mood. He now knew where the enemy was and where they could take countermeasures. He gave Karapetyan complete freedom of action: move forward and clear the road. It is true he took away one of his squadrons and his tank reserves

Major-General of the Guards Tutarinov

and sent them against the Germans who had cut the road. The squadron and the tanks attacked the Germans from the rear and Pushkaryov's regiment attacked from the front. The Germans, pressed from two sides, fled.

It was beginning to get light when Karapetyan reported in a husky voice: "The regiment has fulfilled its task."

During the night they had penetrated thirty-five kilometres into the enemy rear. When information concerning Karapetyan's operations were received at corps headquarters, Pichugin, the reticent general of the staff, actually beamed. Like a real staff officer he treated reports with a certain amount of scepticism. Karapetyan, however, he believed: he would not exaggerate, he always told the truth, even when the truth was bitter. Karapetyan's regiment, then, had carried out the mission they had been given. The Cossacks had succeeded in effecting a surprise and the road was open for the cavalry corps. New forces had to be brought into play. Pichugin pulled the map towards him. He moved his hand as though he were playing a piano.

"Now everything will click," he said ordering the other units to move into the gap.

At dawn Tutarinov established his headquarters on "Melovaya" hill. It overlooked the undulating steppe overgrown with yellowish, dried grass. On the mist there was something moving in the open. Squadron Commander Romanyuk dashed up, leant down from his horse and whispered something to Karapetyan. The latter glanced towards the steppe.

"How many?" he asked Romanyuk.

"Five hundred of them," said Romanyuk.

Karapetyan went to the divisional commander. Tutarinov, leaning over a map, was giving Regimental Commander Pushkaryov his instructions. Karapetyan waited patiently. The mist was slowly dispersing. That which was advancing across the steppes towards the hill could already been seen in outline: now a large group of Germans led by a mounted Cossack came into view. The Germans were marching with their hands held up.

The lieutenant-colonel turned respectfully to the divisional commander.

"Comrade General," he said, "please accept a gift from the regiment: the Germans surrendered."

The General turned sharply around. For a long time he looked out over the hazy steppes on which the sun was already shining, at the distant mounds and at the slowly moving Germans.

"A wonderful picture!" he muttered admiringly and after a few moments of silence, turned to Pushkaryov:

"You will have to march strictly on a bearing. . . Your task. . ."

II

A new day dawned and a new, fierce, ruthless phase of the battle began. The squadrons and regiments of the cavalry corps had to their right and left, before and behind them, a strong, savage enemy, infuriated at the idea that the Cossacks had broken into his lair. Many a time had the Germans hunted after these Kuban Cossacks, trying to encircle them, but every time the Russians had got away. Now the Cossacks themselves, at their own desire were behind the backs of the German troops and were

attacking from the rear, upsetting the well-organized system of the German defence. To gain time was to gain space. Tutarinov gained time. During the night he had penetrated to the rear of the German units and reached the line of their communications. The first phase of the operation—pouring cavalry and tanks into the gap—had been successful. Now everything depended on the rate at which the other divisions of the corps moved, depended on their disposition at the beginning of the action, their initiative, flexibility and manoeuvrability.

During the summer campaign of 1943 the tactics of flanking drives, the art of manoeuvring for encirclements had by right become the leading idea in Soviet military practice. According to the plans of the High Command the Kuban Cossack corps, together with tank units, infantry and artillery were to "put the Germans in the pot" on their sector of the front. This expression was introduced into military language by the Germans to denote the highest degree of the manoeuvre to encircle the enemy. The "pot" formula is easy to define: encircle, divide, destroy. To effect this a great deal was required, first and foremost an ability to manoeuvre on the field of battle. Kirichenko intended—and this formed the basis of his plan—that one division would give chase, the second destroy and the third take over and complete the task of annihilation.

From the very moment when Tutarinov cut a lane through the German lines and the units of the cavalry corps and the tanks, straddling the road, disrupted the communications of the enemy group, its main nerve, that of control, was paralysed. Every German unit operating within a distance of 90 kilometres was left to its own devices. The enemy was cut off from his bases. A German staff officer who was taken prisoner was questioned on the fighting ability of his panzer division.

"When you captured me you decided the fate of our division," was his mournful answer.

"Why so?" asked Kirichenko.

"I supply them with fuel and ammunition," was the German's laconic answer.

Fuel, ammunition and ration dumps were already in our hands. This however was not the main thing. The General's strict admonition to remember the main thing, to remember the enemy, was firmly fixed in the consciousness of every Cossack.

There was still a long way to go to victory. The general outlines of the battle were still but barely discernible on the decisive sectors. Things were all mixed up on Pichugin's operations map. The layman would have found difficulty in trying to make head or tail of the labyrinth of lines, circles, dots and shading in different coloured pencils. Big, fat arrows denoting the main direction of the divisions were crossed in many places by blue dotted lines. On the smooth surface of the map there were crimson elipses, the squadron positions, either moving forward or surrounded by the blue horseshoes of the German motorized infantry. The black rhomboids of tanks stood out clearly in this complicated design which was the general situation of the operation, showing at a glance the movement of the German panzer units which the enemy had hurled into a counter-attack on the flanks and rear of the Cossacks.

The Cossacks themselves, however, were on the flanks and in the rear of the enemy, and had their own tanks. They had already cut off from their units and destroyed the bases of three German infantry divisions and one tank division as well as the army dumps of a large group of Germans. On their way the Cossacks ate bread that had been baked for them by captured German bakers. The Cossacks ate Dutch chocolate, made soup and fried cutlets from meat intended for German tankmen and infantry. The Cossacks burned barrels and tanks of petrol which the German command had stored up for their tank division, blew up and destroyed dumps of cartridges, shells, bombs and other military stores, completely laying waste the bases of the enemy infantry divisions. The Cossacks tore down telephone and telegraph lines, turned German five-ton trucks heavily laden with army stores, into gullies.

At midday, Kirichenko held a "reception" at his headquarters out in the green-grown steppe: the 44 German officers taken prisoner by the regiments were brought to him. From them the corps commander learned

everything he wanted to know about the enemy. "Cossacks, tanks!"—the words flew over the steppes like the wind spreading panic in their wake. The rumour that the Cossacks had broken through did as much damage as sword and bullet.

Fighting broke out everywhere: ahead, left and right, on the flanks and in the rear. German bombers appeared. The "Heinkels" flew at an altitude beyond the range of the Cossacks A.A. guns, their motors wailing plaintively. They began bombing selected areas. They divided the area occupied by Kirichenko's corps into a number of squares and, with the methodic pedantry of the Germans, showered hundreds of H.E. and splinter bombs into each square. They dropped leaflets to the effect that they would make a fabulous number of sorties and that it was almost, if not quite, Göring himself who had ordered the bombers to wipe the raiding Cossacks off the face of the earth.

The Cossacks dug themselves in. Many horses were killed in the steppes. They mourned for their horses as for friends, for their comrades. "Lisa" was badly wounded, "Verny" (Faithful) was killed and "Rezvy" (Dashing), the favourite of the corps, a clean-limbed racehorse, who took every fence so beautifully, was wounded. The situation became more difficult but still the Cossacks continued advancing, continued to strike at the Germans from the flanks and the rear. The blows from the rear and the flanks were struck by the whole corps, every division and every regiment and every squadron. When the Germans concentrated on a battalion of infantry and some tanks at one village and tried to get about 200 trucks of ammunition that had been cut off back to their own unit under cover of this force, they were suddenly attacked by Captain Nazarchuk's squadron that had made a flanking movement along a gully. It was a dashing cavalry charge with the Cossacks whooping and whistling. Nazarchuk had no time to count the number of Germans that his squadron cut down in that tempestuous charge. He only had time to enter the number "200" in his field notebook, the number of officers and men taken prisoner and sent back to the regimental commander.

The more circles and lines appeared on the operations maps and the more intricate, at first glance, the situation became, the clearer the final objective of the operation really stood out. Enemy garrisons wiped out en route, army and divisional bases mopped up, this was the beginning of the last phase of the thrust. The main task was still before them. The main point in the battle had to be found in this seething cauldron and never for one moment must control be lost. Far away to the left of the Cossacks, where the German line of defence lay, artillery fire became ever fiercer. The wind brought the breath of a great battle from that direction, a battle that our infantry were waging with the Germans manning the defences. Deprived of their bases and knowing that the terrible Cossacks were encircling them from behind their backs, the German infantry, huddled in their trenches and dugouts, were not able to withstand the pressure of our troops for long. Kirichenko realized this. He carefully studied everything that was going on here on the roads in the enemy's rear that were straddled and controlled by his corps. The feeling for the battle which the leader possessed, his analysis of details, reconnoissance, dozens of other indications imperceptible to another person told the General that at any hour the mass retreat of the Germans from their defences was to be expected.

Kirichenko had a clear picture of the crisis in the psychology of the Germans when he moved to a new command post with his mobile operations staff. It happened that the new owners moved into their headquarters while the old were still stamping about not far away and not knowing where to run to.

"There's a house-warming for you," said Pichugin, pointing to the German tanks and transport scurrying about near the command post and less than half a mile away from it.

Although there were some minutes of alarm for the control post and for the safety of the headquarters on which the maddened Germans might stumble, Kirichenko was jubilant: the enemy was scurrying about, felt that he had been caught in a trap.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Kirichenko.

Everything now had to be forseen—where the German units would retreat to, who was to meet them and where it would be easier to smash them. The staff of the corps had to think for themselves and for an enemy who would fight back savagely.

The thrust began to develop from a tactical success into an operation deciding the fate of a large group of Germans on a wide front.

The Cossack corps was able to take advantage of conditions for operations in the German rear that had been created by Soviet infantry and motorized troops. They offered every chance for success. The Cossacks, making use of these advantages, created, in turn, new opportunities for our tanks and infantry in their battle for the annihilation of the German Taganrog army group. This co-operation was the basis of the Cossack raid, the successful outcome of which was only possible thanks to the prearranged joint blows of Cossacks and infantry, ensuring the rout of the enemy. The honour of fighting in the very centre of the battle fell to the lot of the Kuban Cossack corps. The infantry began. The Cossacks together with the gallant Stalingrad tankmen continued and developed the operation. It became clear that the German Taganrog group was now surrounded. Just surrounding them, however, was not enough, they had to be annihilated.

In their desperate rush back in an effort to reach the next line of defence as quickly as possible, the avalanche of the retreating enemy could cut the Cossack corps into parts, break their way through and make the thrust, the raid that had begun so successfully, of no significance whatever. The task was for the Cossacks to cut the Germans into sections, to do the encircling and, together with the infantry advanced from the east and squeezing the enemy in a strong vice, destroy them.

Kirichenko explained and formulated all this in the order he issued to the divisions. Tutarinov was the first to feel the pressure of the enemy, who turned about and stood face to face with the Cossacks. Thrusting at the Germans from the flank he drove deep wedges into their positions. Other units of the

Senior Lieutenant of the Guards Romanyuk

corps had to finish what Tutarinov had begun, that is by means of vehement attacks cut the enemy up into groups, annihilating each of them separately. If the Germans found a gap and crept out they would find General Millerov's Cossacks waiting on their probable line of retreat.

That day Karapetyan had ague and then suddenly went blind. The blindness was caused by that terrific nervous tension in which he had been living for the days and nights that preceded his leading the regiment through the gap. This grey-haired, elderly man was burnt like a clear, bright flame in battle: he took on himself all the risk, all the responsibility which fell to the lot of the leading regiment, and his elderly, wound-wracked organism gave out. His full name was Musheg Ambartsumovich Karapetyan, but Shakin, his second in command and political officer, called him Misha.

"Misha, you're all on fire. You must be running a temperature," he said to Karapetyan.

"It'll go," said Karapetyan, slowly,

licking his dried lips. "The mission must be fulfilled."

His gaunt face with the skin drawn tightly over the cheekbones was flushed with heat. He wrapped himself in the greatcoat which had been spread on some hay and said in a hoarse whisper: "I told the General that the regiment would fulfil its task."

The chief of staff and Shakin drew near Karapetyan. They conferred on the way the regiment was to act. He could hear their voices but strain his eyes as he would he could not see them. Dimly, as though through a mist, the wraith-like figures of his comrades swayed before him. Towards evening the fever increased. Tutarinov came galloping up. This was his best regiment and Karapetyan his favourite commander, his hope and his mainstay.

From the door he shouted to Karapetyan:

"What's the matter? Can you see me, old chap?"

Karapetyan did not answer. Tutarinov bent over him.

"I can't see," said Karapetyan sadly.

Tutarinov blew up like powder and turning to the officers asked why they had kept silent, why they hadn't let him know about Karapetyan's illness before. The lieutenant-colonel answered softly, with his usual calmness:

"Don't worry, Comrade General, the regiment will fulfil its task."

The General placed Karapetyan in a car and told the adjutant who was taking him to the hospital that he was to try to find doctors to give Karapetyan back his sight.

Karapetyan sighed deeply:

"To leave the regiment at such a time. . . Such events ahead! . ."

III

When the Germans, under pressure of our infantry from the east, began to retreat along the north road, they were met, as Kirichenko had anticipated, by Tutarinov's and Golovsky's regiments. On coming into contact with the Cossacks the whole stream of enemy men and machines turned left along the southern route. They allowed the Germans to go on a few kilometres, deliberately left them alone.

"They won't go far," said Kirichenko, "they're in a trap."

Then the Germans turned to the west, to a bridge across a river, not knowing that it had long been in Cossack hands. It had been occupied by Major Minakov's regiment.

The main blow of the retreating enemy fell on Millerov's division. Kirichenko moved this division on to the main path of the German retreat. They had the toughest job, Kirichenko hurried them to those places for which the Germans were heading. This division had to withstand the whole assault of the enemy tanks, artillery, infantry, hold up this avalanche that was trying to fight its way through the Cossack ring. This division had to become the anvil on which all the blows of the Germans would fall. The selection had not been a chance one. Divisional Commander Millerov and his troops possessed the excellent quality of steadfastness. Other units of the corps were also staunch and steadfast in battle, but, according to Kirichenko, these qualities were more clearly expressed in Millerov's division. Experienced people say that you can judge the character of the troops from that of their commander. Divisional Commander Millerov was a cool-headed man who did not loose his self-possession in difficult moments when the scale was on the turn, who maintained his doggedness, courage and a clear head at the most difficult moments.

When it first became known that the enemy, having come into contact with Tutarinov, had bounced to one side like a ball, and, still in possession of strong forces, was making for the line held by Millerov, the chief of staff stated with evident satisfaction:

"This is that which was to be demonstrated."

Millerov sent a radio message to Kirichenko: "Germans moving sixty tanks on to my sector." The General understood things must be going hard with him if he reported this fact. The movement of the Germans in this direction had been foreseen by the plan. This was as it should be: the Germans were going where they should be going according to our plan. This, however, could scarcely console the divisional commander. Sixty German tanks and self-propelling guns, opening fire on his positions from the line of

march, was a large force, a real threat. The tanks and the guns might be able to gnaw a way out of the trap.

The first part of the operative plan had been fulfilled: the enemy was going where Millerov wanted. Now they had to display especial accuracy in tactics, speed and efficient manoeuvring. It was easy to change the positions of regiments, guns and tanks on the map and put them where they were needed. But imagine the brilliancy of thought that was required to move that mass of Cossacks, tanks, guns and ammunition, fuel and supplies along roads bombed by the Germans. Nevertheless it was done. A hundred guns, self-propelling artillery, tanks, armoured cars and Cossacks met the German mailed fist on this particular sector.

The enemy turned on the Cossacks all the fire power of his artillery and tanks and there on the spot they showed him what a Cossack is. A Cossack is not just a shaggy cloak and a hood that goes flapping in the wind, a flashing sword and a dashing cavalry charge. All this comes to the fore at the proper time and in certain types of fighting. There is, however, something else about the Cossack—his ability to adjust himself to fighting on foot.

"The Cossack digs a hole for himself, spreads it with grass and fights to the last cartridge. That's the Kuban Cossack!" said General Kirichenko, when it was reported from the regiments manning the line on the main direction: the Cossacks are holding fast. The German could only pass over dead bodies but as long as one Cossack remained alive the road was closed by bullet, grenade and when necessary by the Cossack's body.

It was a sad moment for Karapetyan when they told him that Pokotilo, a squadron commander, had been killed while raising the Cossacks from the ground to lead them into the attack. Pokotilo was brought down by a bullet and the Communist Party organizer led the regiment. The Party organizer also fell when Captain Kochubey, a descendent of the legendary Kuban Cossack Ivan Kochubey, came to the rescue with his squadron. That is how the Cossacks fought.

. . . The spirit of the German troops had been broken. The steppe, wide and boundless, scared the Germans. Danger awaited them everywhere, the Cossacks were on all sides.

. . . For Kirichenko these wide, distant, steppe horizons were like a chessboard. Every move had to be well thought over, he had to get a clear idea of the consequences of the move, how the enemy would parry, when and where he would give the decisive check and mate.

The fierce attacks of the German infantry supported by sixty tanks were repulsed. Millerov sighed in relief:

"The worst is apparently over."

He reported the situation to the corps commander—they spoke on the telephone—and Kirichenko asked him:

"And how do you feel?"

"As though I'd just had a shower bath," shouted Millerov in reply, "a shower that was both hot and cold. . ."

"That's good for the constitution," Kirichenko consoled him. "The second shower is easier to stand."

Millerov was on the alert. Another shower? He knew that "father" did not speak idly. They could expect a blow from the Germans on the old line, where the attack had been repulsed, although a flank attack was not out of the question. Kirichenko sent part of his forces there. And Tanaschishin sent some of his Stalingrad tankmen to help them out. It was a good thing that this was done in time. It was a good thing that the division and Tanaschishin's tanks acted swiftly. Procrastination in taking and fulfilling the decision would have cost them dear.

We shall not go into all the details of the co-operation between the Kuban Cossacks and the Stalingrad tank units. The task of creating the breach they performed in close co-operation. The Cossacks spoke of General Tanaschishin's tankmen with respect: "They will never let you down."

The spectre of final defeat faced the Germans, dogged their footsteps, entered their consciousness like a nightmare. Still they did not give up the idea of breaking through. Gathering a "fist" of 150 tanks they sent them against a gap between two Cossack units. Using their tanks as a ram they hoped to cut themselves a path.

The steppe roared with the low, menacing voices of the motors, and flashes appeared like sheet lightning. Again Kirichenko concentrated his tanks and guns in one place and again he gave the order to stand or die. This battle was the deciding one. If we could hold out here the

Germans would most certainly croak, they would spring back and get caught in the iron grip of two other divisions who would complete the destruction. The General knew the nature of the Germans: they were strong as long as they were successful but if fate turned her back on them they soon lost heart.

The General sat in the corner of the cottage and dozed with half-closed eyes. The walls of the cottage shook and the wind brought the sounds of distant firing. The window was suddenly lit up by a thick, alarming light, a rocket flared up in the field. A young staff officer sat by the telephone holding the handset ready. Information was coming in irregularly.

"Something is being held up," whispered the officer.

"And what do you expect?" said Kirichenko in a lively tone and opening his eyes. "A wave of the hand and everything done? That rarely happens. You don't get much with impudence, you have to sweat, lad, sweat. . ."

Kirichenko had two troubles to worry about.

Although he concentrated all his attention on Millerov's sector he never for a moment forgot Minakov. Millerov was fighting staunchly. And how were things with Minakov: what if that regiment were driven from their position leaving the bridge open and the Germans got out of the trap? Short field reports came from Minakov. "Am holding on, fighting against superior enemy forces." Then communication was cut. Minakov had time to say that he was fighting and was half surrounded. After that there was silence. It took the signal officer a long time to reach Minakov.

Kirichenko had given Millerov everything, men and guns. Tanaschishin's tanks were co-operating with him. He had nothing with which to help Minakov at the moment. Minakov would have to hold out with his own forces until the crisis on Millerov's sector was past and then he would send the forces that had been freed to the bridgehead. Suddenly the long awaited signal officer returned from Minakov. Kirichenko sent for him immediately.

"Well, tell me quickly, how's he getting along?"

"He's holding out, fighting, taken about a thousand officers and men prisoner," said the officer all in one breath.

"Wherefrom? How? He's half surrounded himself!"

"True," answered the officer opening a map. "They forced him back on this side and he was half surrounded. But here Minakov in turn surrounded a German regiment and forced them to surrender."

Kirichenko brightened up and laughed heartily.

"That's Minakov for you! It's a rare thing in my experience for the enemy to surrender to a half-surrounded regiment. Splendid, what?"

Minakov's regiment, with difficulty, it is true, beat off all the German attacks. Then an accident helped Minakov. The figure "38" was the unlucky number of the commander of a German infantry regiment. At one time the German officer had been in battle against a Russian cavalry unit having the number 38, and now he was fighting a cavalry unit number 138. The eyes become big with fear. Knowing that other Russian units were operating in his rear and assuming that he was threatened with an attack from both sides the German regimental commander mistook Minakov for his old acquaintance, and from this thought alone lost himself completely. Depressed in spirit he called his officers together and communicated his ideas to them. "We have," he said, "a Russian division fighting against us that we have met before. We are helpless, they will rout us. We had better surrender."

And they laid down their arms, a thousand Germans who mistook Minakov's regiment for a division and who had the spectre of the Cossacks everywhere before them. To tell the truth Minakov himself was shaken by this turn of events. But he did not show it. On the contrary, believing it to be the correct thing, he accelerated the preparation for accepting a German regiment as prisoners. He had every reason to hurry. He had to control the fighting and repulse attacks. The situation was quite serious and here were these thousand Germans that had to be got away from this dangerous sector as quickly as possible.

The commander of the surrendering German regiment desired to see the divisional commander. He said with an insinuating smile that it was an old friend of his. Minakov was surprised: there was no divisional commander here.

"You are probably acting on the authority of the commander of the 38th division?" asked the German.

"On my own authority," answered Minakov, "I'm the boss here. I command the 138th regiment."

"Regiment?!" asked the horrified German. He took his head in his hands. Curse them, they had deceived him! The Russians had played a dirty trick on him. He had surrendered to a division and here there was a regiment! . .

The incident at the bridgehead was a kind of apotheosis to the thrust. The Russian Cossacks were the masters of the steppe. Together with the infantry and the tanks they had mastered the rabid wolf that raced about the steppes, losing his strength and dripping blood. The pincers were reliably placed and many a German lost his life in those broad fields.

The rout of the German Taganrog army group was a heavy defeat for the Germans. The bold manoeuvre of Kirichenko's horsemen and Tanaschishin's tankmen made possible this heavy defeat.

When the corps had finished operations for this thrust a delegation visited them from Checheno-Ingushetia. They brought gifts for the Cossacks, grapes, young wine, cheese and melons.

Amongst the delegates was an old highlander with clear, kindly eyes. He walked silently with an easy gait. When they met, the General commanding the corps and the old Ossetian, they stood silent for a long time looking at each other.

"Do you recognize me?" asked Kirichenko.

The Ossetian recognized him. This was the Russian who had been his friend during the Civil War. At one time Kirichenko had presented him with his sword. The old man had treasured it all these years. Here it is. . . The old man held it out to the General: "Do you recognize it?"

When the echo of the salute fired in Moscow in honour of the Cossack corps reached the mountains, the old man came down into the valley to look for Kirichenko in order to give him his sword back.

"When you look at it you will recall your youth," he said to the General. "When you touch it your spirit will become younger."

They went away together and nobody interfered with their reminiscences of youth, a fine, happy time. Then the General unfolded the map and told the old man about the thrust.

We saw that map. Grimly and accurately it told the story of the operation. Somebody said that the time would come when by these maps of regiments, divisions, army corpses, and armies one would study the great war and write its history.

A purple leaf twirling in the air dropped onto the map. The General brushed it away and carefully folded the map worn at the edges.

B. GALIN,
N. DENISSOV

FOR THE UKRAINE

We are marching through the Ukraine. Heavy, dust-laden sheaves of wheat lie by the roadside. Villages are burning and the crimson reflections of the fires are like gaping wounds in the sky. We are advancing like an avalanche of steel, breaking down enemy resistance; on these days of our return we recall the gloomy autumn of the first year of the war, the autumn that filled our hearts with an unbearable sorrow and taught us to hate...

There are already many towns and villages behind us. We have already seen joy in tormented faces and heard many a heartrending story of the hardships endured under German slavery. Many a son has already met a mother grown grey with sorrow. Many a father, standing amidst the smoking ruin of his own house, seeking and not finding his children, has gripped his rifle in determined hands and gone after the platoon with a look in his dry, burning eyes that speaks no mercy for the enemy. Time and again girls met us with bunches of wild flowers, gave us warm milk straight from the cow and poured cold water into the radiators of our trucks out of the earthen jars that hung from the long beams over the wells. Our journey had only just begun, the whole of our path still lay ahead of us... Poltava and Kiev still beckoned us, the charred ruins of Chernigov still stood pointing upwards to the sky, people on the banks of the Dnieper and the Bug still awaited us...

I found Fyodor Semibratov's regiment near a small railway station which they were to occupy that evening. Lieutenant-Colonel Semibratov, a handsome young man of twenty-eight, big in body and pure in heart, was in a dugout that had been built overnight in a gully. All preparations for the storming of the station had been made, battalion commanders had reported complete preparedness and now they were only awaiting zero hour and the arrival of the tanks which Headquarters had promised; there was, however, no lull during this period of waiting. Firing still continued, machine-guns rattled away and occasionally the guns which stood near the regimental command post also joined in.

From the dugout we could see the lower, opposite bank of the gully and the grove of young oaks with a blindingly white cloud hanging over it. There were five of us in the tiny dugout: the regimental commander, his second in command Major Livanov, the adjutant whom everybody called Mitya, a Red Army telephonist and I. People who have never been at the front will hardly believe it, but nevertheless it is true: we carried on a lively conversation on the simplest, and for the most part peace-time topics. The conversation gradually turned on another subject—everybody began to describe and praise his native place, and it was only now that Semibratov, who had remained silent up till now, spoke.

"I don't want to offend anybody, everybody likes his own place best, but it's true, you'll never find better land than in the Ukraine. . ."

Strangely enough nobody spoke, and I, not knowing the reason for the silence, asked:

"Are you an Ukrainian, Lieutenant-Colonel?"

"No," answered Semibratov, "I'm a Siberian... Irkutsk, d'you know the town? Well, I'm from there, but as far as the Ukraine is concerned..."

Leaving the sentence unfinished Semibratov looked up, listening—a shell whistled over the dugout, the sound gradually receded ending in an explosion. A second shell followed the first, then came a third... The shells followed quickly one after another and all fell in one place not far away.

"What are they firing at?" asked the adjutant Mitya in astonishment going out of the dugout. "They're firing at the grove, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel..."

The colonel ordered the signaller to stand aside, slowly pulled the telephone towards him and took up the receiver.

"Give me the Medical Company... Out of order? Repair it!"

He carefully put down the receiver beside the telephone on the earth bank on which he was sitting, got up, went outside and joined the adjutant. We followed him. Shells whistled over our heads and burst, further on, in the wood. I looked at the officers, they were excited

but outwardly calm; there was a particularly calm tenseness in Semibratov's face. He was looking at the grove which was no more than half a kilometre away, staring hard as though he wanted to find something in that chaos of falling trees shrouded in smoke and dust...

The shelling of the grove continued... The adjutant could not contain himself. He ran down into the gully, fell several times, picked himself up and again ran on, disappearing amongst the trees at the edge of the grove.

Lieut.-Col. Semibratov was at the telephone receiving the last instructions from Divisional Headquarters for the forthcoming attack, when a young woman wearing the insignia of a captain of the Medical Service came into the dugout followed by the adjutant Mitya whose face was beaming with one of those dazzling smiles seen only on the faces of very young and very good people. The woman tucked a strand of grey hair into her cap, saluted, and smiled with her eyes alone, eyes from which streamed an astonishing warmth.

"Everything is all right, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel," she said. "The wounded were all under cover and nobody was hurt."

"That's good... That's good!.." repeated the lieutenant-colonel several times, and his clear, light-grey eyes seemed to embrace the woman. Then he turned to me, smiled and blushed like a boy.

"Let me introduce my wife..."

She called herself Valentina Sushko. Her hands were small and thin but you felt unusual energy and will-power in her handshake. Was she beautiful? Yes, she was beautiful, especially her brown Ukrainian eyes and thin nervous lips...

"How you, officers have smoked this place out!" exclaimed Semibratov's wife clapping her hands in mock astonishment. "The chief thing in war-time is to look after your health. I believe even Schweik said that! There's no firing now, so you can smoke outside the dugout "

We went out, sat down under a bush, and Major Livanov, chewing the mouthpiece of his enormous pipe, told me all he knew of Valentina Sushko and Fyodor Semibratov.

As was the case with many, June 1941 was a dividing line in the Semibratov family. On the morning of the 22nd Senior Lieutenant Semibratov went out with his unit to meet the Germans who crossed the frontier. He was not quite clear as to what had happened. Before he reached the border he came into contact with the German vanguard. The number of German tanks and motorized infantry astounded him. The battle lasted more than twenty-four hours. On the night of the 23rd the unit was ordered to retire. The line of retreat lay some distance from the town where Semibratov had left his family. The men sent to fetch the officers' wives did not return, enemy tanks broke through and cut them off.

The towns, villages and rivers which Semibratov defended were too numerous to count. At Ostrov he got concussion from a bomb which dropped five paces away from him, in the autumn of 1941 he was wounded in the chest and leg by bomb splinters at Kharkov. In the spring of 1942 he was in the Oboyan region. He spent about two months with the regiment to which he was posted and was again wounded, this time in the head and badly. He recovered consciousness at Balashov, where he underwent one operation after another and ought to have begun to recover, but the severe wound plunged him, time after time, into a state of semi-coma.

One day he felt somebody's warm and tender hand on his forehead, opened his eyes and saw a strangely familiar, grey-headed woman who leaned over him, tears running down her gaunt, darkened face; a familiar voice set him trembling painfully.

"Valya... Valentina!.." he shouted.

More than a year had passed since that morning when the alarm had sounded and he had gone into battle leaving Valentina and the children in a little West-Ukrainian town some fifty kilometres from the frontier. At midday she left the town that had been ruined by German air raids, a bag with food and clothes on her back and little Zhenya, wrapped up in a bright-coloured cotton kerchief, in her arms... Maximka walked beside her along the edge of the road, a bottle of boiled water sticking out of his pocket. Passing motor-trucks covered them with dust, the Germans bombed the road, forcing them to lie for hours in the ditches. When the aircraft flew off some captain put them in a truck

loaded with household goods that creaked and groaned at every jolt as though it were bemoaning its fate. Then it turned out that the Germans were ahead of them and the long column with which they were travelling melted away... The driver fled and Valentina was left alone in an unknown village. Zhenya had fever and Maximka was so tired that he could go no further. The Germans entered the village at dawn. The old woman with whom Valentina had spent the night hid her and the children in the cellar. At night Valentina came out of the cellar and made her way eastwards. Maximka's shoes were torn. The fever did not leave Zhenya, his little body seemed to dry up, his eyes grew dull and lifeless, but Valentina could do nothing for him... She buried Zhenya in the woods near Volochev.

Her dress was torn to tatters. In the autumn she worked as a farm labourer in order to provide food and shelter for Maximka. The "starosta" (village elder in the employ of the Germans) discovered that she was a refugee and handed her over to the Germans. They cast her into the "Umansk pit" where prisoners died by the thousand from hunger, cold and shooting. Maximka died here and she was left alone with her sorrow. Twelve people attempted to escape but only three got through the fire of a machine-gun mounted on a pylon: tankman who had refused to give his name and rank, an elderly commissar who was short winded and she...

Together they travelled eastward. The heavy frosts came, birds died on the wing, but they slept at night in the fields, lying in ricks of unthreshed corn; nothing could stop them, for they were going to their own land...

Months passed before she found her husband. She got on his tracks and then lost them again, but she still believed that Fyodor was alive; his name was an unusual one and that helped her... They went to the regiment from Balashov hospital together, he as its commander, she as a doctor. That was before our offensive on the Don. Life continued, joy came again, but it was a different joy and a different life the whole meaning of which was contained in the words: "go on to the end in order to avenge."

That evening Fyodor Semibratov's regiment occupied the station. I found the lieutenant-colonel established in a new place. His headquarters was now in a concrete culvert under a railway embankment. Bent over a map, he was discussing a new operation with the chief of staff.

When the chief of staff went out, Semibratov took another map out of his case, spread it out and sat thoughtfully looking at it... I stood behind him and instead of the usual mass of lines and conventional signs I saw one thick line drawn on the map with a red pencil: it began at Voronezh and ended in an arrowhead at the station which Semibratov's regiment had just captured. It was not a straight line, there were zigzags from one firing line to another, but in general it led towards the western edge of the map.

"We shall get there," said Semibratov to himself.

He went out of his concrete shelter and standing by the embankment gazed silently at the afterglow of the sunset... His face was handsome with the silent strength of all-conquering love which knows no defeat and which never dies.

LEONID PERVOMAYSKY

ALEXANDER MATROSSOV

By an order of the People's Commissar for Defence dated September 8, 1943, the 254th Guards Infantry Regiment of the 56th Guards Infantry Division has been named after Alexander Matrossov. Hero of the Soviet Union, Guardsman Private Alexander Matveyevich Matrossov is placed for all time on the rolls of the Regiment's No. 1 Company. Below is a description of Alexander Matrossov's deed.

On the 25th anniversary of the Red Army, 23rd of February, 1943, the battalion Youth League organization held a meeting while resting in a big forest. They discussed the best means of carrying out the combat assignment—to take

Matrossov's Exploit. Drawn by V. Shcheglov

the village of Chernushka. Sasha Matrossov, a young, fair, curly-haired chap with a tommy-gun dangling on his chest, stood up to speak. His eyes, blue and swift as the Dnieper, took in the crowd as he said solemnly and forcefully:

"I shall fight the Germans while my hands can still grasp a weapon, while my heart still beats. I shall fight for our land, scorning death."

And all distinctly heard how the glades of the ancient forest re-echoed: "Scorning death!" It rang out like a pledge.

All night long the battalion struggled through the mud and thickets of the forest. The night was calm, there was a smell of spring in the air. Water gurgled under the melting snow. The bare branches of the trees swayed noiselessly. Robust and agile, Sasha Matrossov went ahead of the tommy-gunners followed by his friends Bardabayev, Kopylov and Vorobyov. Together they had trained and together they had come to the front. It was but a very short time back that they had reached manhood and now they gave all their passion and zeal of youth to what they felt to be their calling. The enemy compelled them to break away from all they had already learned to love, all that had become dear and familiar. They clenched their teeth in fury and took to arms.

Stopping to light a cigarette and hiding the glowing butt in the sleeve of his great-coat, Sasha Matrossov, more than once that night, said to his friends:

"Well, brothers, remember our pledge: if fight we must, let us fight in earnest. Rather die than fail in our job."

Pushing his way to the head of the column Senior Lieutenant Artiukhov approached the tommy-gunners and said in a low voice:

"Is that you, Matrossov?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Come with me," said Artiukhov, "you are to be my orderly."

"Right you are," replied Matrossov.

At dawn Artiukhov's group arrived at the fringe of the forest.

They still had to cross a meadow with an island of scrub, pass through the dwindling and thinning edge of the forest and then come to a village. But here they encountered the Germans. Three machine-guns were firing from a height. The battle began.

The two German pillboxes on the wings were silenced comparatively soon but the third, in the centre, kept up furious fire barring the approaches to the village. It was clear that it would be no easy matter to take that forest bastion. Go-

ing to the right Artiukhov and Matrossov got to about forty metres from the pillboxes. From there they could see well how the bursts of fire spurted from the loophole. Taking cover behind a fir Artiukhov ordered:

"Six tommy-gunners!"

Matrossov brought up six tommy-gunners. Artiukhov picked three of them.

"Crawl up to the pillbox and fire into its loophole."

The tommy-gunners crawled off but no sooner did they reach the field than they were spotted from the pillbox. An oblique burst of fire came from its loophole. One man was killed instantaneously, the other two wounded. Senior Lieutenant Artiukhov summoned the other tommy-gunners:

"Crawl more to the right."

But they perished too. The machine-gun went on blazing away from that forest fortress. Explosive bullets pinged resoundingly along the entire forest edge. Sasha knew that where these bullets were slapping our men were lying, painting the ground crimson with their blood.

Matrossov raised himself and said quietly but firmly:

"I'll go."

He took a few sharp strides then fell on his side and, rapidly lifting his tommy-gun, crawled to the right of his dead comrades. He was seen only by his own men who watched the plucky fellow with bated breath. Matrossov crawled up to the pillbox very quickly. The smoke issuing from the loophole was already curling round him when suddenly his tommy-gun lunged forward and he delivered a burst. There was an explosion inside the pillbox. As was discovered later his bullet had hit a mortar mine. The German machine-gun lapsed into silence. All who witnessed the scene sighed with relief. They got ready to dash ahead but a few seconds later the machine-gun came to life again. Then the men saw Matrossov rush forward, jump to his feet and close with his left side, with his heart, the loophole spurting smoke and flame. The thud of the bullets at the forest edge ceased on the instant. Voices rose in excitement. The men dashed forward. The forest fortress was taken, the village freed.

Matrossov kept his word. He loved life, believed in it, and was not afraid of death. With his young life he paved the way to victory over the enemy. His name has been enscribed for all time in the rolls of the company with which he went into action. Daily at 9.15 p.m. Sergeant Major Goryunov musters the men of Guardsman Senior Lieutenant Khrustalyov's company for the roll-call and taking the rolls calls out:

"Hero of the Soviet Union, Guardsman Red Army man Alexander Matrossov."

"Died the death of the brave in action against the German invaders," comes the reply from the right by Guardsman Sergeant Bardabayev, friend of the hero.

Silence follows for a few brief seconds. In those seconds the veteran guardsmen seem to see as if still alive a fair curly-haired jolly Russian lad with a tommy-gun accross his chest.

Major N. KONONYKIN

THE INDOMITABLE

Notes from the German Rear

We are flying over German-occupied territory. Everything seems the same: the sky, the forests and the hamlets stretching below. Just as on our side of the front. Is it surprising that we recognize it as our native Russian soil? Still our hearts tell us—we are across the front! Down below twinkle the lights of beacons—German beacons which light the way, not for the Soviet pilot but for the German who has invaded our country. Take a good look below. Do you see those miserable patches of land? They were collective farm fields before the Germans overran them and destroyed the fruits of many years' arduous and diligent toil. Away, over there where the highway stretches, the moon sheds its light on a heap of ruins. In its place there once stood a flourishing Soviet hamlet. The Germans pillaged it and then razed it to the ground. We are flying over a Russian village. Oh, if one could only shout down words of love and encouragement we would surely shout: "Don't lose heart, dear ones, be brave! Your hour of liberation is nigh."

Even if the sound of our voices does not reach those below they will hear the roar of the Soviet engine and in it hear the voice of the Fatherland...

We wing our way over big forests which shelter the partisans. The pilot turns his head and points down. . . The plane circles and then prepares to land.

In the darkness and flickering light of the camp fire figures are seen moving swiftly back and forth, somebody firmly grips our hands,

further off a group of men surround the pilot, while yet another group loses no time unloading the plane's precious cargo—tommy-guns and ammunition.

"Greetings, dear ones from the Mainland! . ."

And then, a few minutes later again the hum of the plane's engine. The wounded are placed on board, the plane takes off, circles over the landing field in farewell and heads for the Mainland.

Walking along a narrow forest path through brushwood and marshland we move toward the camp talking animatedly, answering a dozen and one questions. We look searchingly into the faces of our companions, listen attentively to the sound of their slightly excited speech... Partisan Land. People who for the past two years have not emerged from the encirclement of the hated enemy. People's avengers. The terror of the German occupationists. What are they like?

COURAGE

...It all happened suddenly. Moving along a narrow forest path Maxim was returning to the camp with a group of scouts. It was a clear summer evening, the faint rustling of the luxurious foliage overhead being the only sound to break the silence. And then something thundered under Maxim's feet. He did not immediately realize what had happened. All he saw was how the scouts instantly dropped flat to the ground, how pieces of earth went flying into the air, lit up by thin tongues of flame... And then a sharp pain in the leg threw him to the ground and kept him pinned to it.

"A mine... wounded in the leg..."—the thought chilled his heart. From the expression in the eyes of his comrades who came running up to him he guessedt hat he was right, but still he clung to some forlorn hope. Looking down at his leg he was overcome by a terrible weakness; the pain was overpowering and Maxim lost consciousness.

When next he opened his eyes he found that he was lying on a stretcher made by the scouts out of the boughs of trees. The pain in the leg was excruciating.

The camp was still another ten or twelve kilometres away, a distance which had to be covered through forest brushwood. There were five scouts: four of them carried the stretcher while the fifth one went on ahead clearing a passage through the brushwood and pushing aside the branches of trees. Turning off the road the partisans were immediately enveloped in the dusk of twilight. They moved forward silently, engrossed with the one thought of reaching the camp as soon as possible—there Maxim could get medical treatment.

The deeper they moved into the forest the denser it grew. Maxim was lying with his face toward the sky, but he did not see it. Overhead the branches of trees swayed gently, and every now and again blue patches of sky flushed with the rosy glow of sunset would flash between the branches. More than anything else Maxim longed to see the sky, a wide open sky stretching from one end of the earth to the other, dotted with fleecy clouds which would occasionally hide the sun.

The tightly bandaged leg had grown numb. He felt as if he had no leg. Instead a dull pain seemed to be gnawing at his heart and sapping his strength.

"Don't think about it... And whatever you do don't lose consciousness for then you may begin to moan. Remember there may be Germans around these parts..."

He tried to think of all sorts of things. His mind turned to the camp: how would the lads

Partisans busy working at a railway line to blow it up

welcome him back? His thoughts carried him to his native village where he had been a teacher before the war. And then he concentrated his mind on what was nearest and dearest to him—the Mainland.

Somewhere far away in a village on the Kama River was Lida. They had studied together in Smolensk.

"Lucky she is not with you now," he heard a voice say next to him.

"Lucky? Did you say it was lucky Lida was not here?"

Maxim even tried to raise himself and see who was the speaker. But a searing pain pushed him back. Who was speaking to him? Not a sound came from the comrades carrying him.

"Oh, I must have been talking to myself... Well, let's just continue. Do you remember that autumn day? Smolensk. The park. The tall maple trees with their broad yellowish-red leaves. The ground covered with a soft carpet of the same yellowish-red leaves... The two of us walking along the river bank with hands tightly clasped and gazing at the town. Why did I not tell you then that you meant everything to me?"

"Cuc-koo... Cuc-koo... Cuc-koo..." rang out loudly from above. Maxim came out of his reverie. In the darkness he saw the figures of his friends. Tired, they continued to carry the stretcher in silence, carefully picking their way.

"A cuckoo... Just let's figure out how much longer I have to live..."

Night gradually descended over the forest and before long it was quite dark. The partisans were moving along a very narrow footpath, and every now and again the stretcher would jolt against a tree trunk, or get entangled in its branches.

"... You left then for the Kama far away from me. And then came the war..."

It was difficult to think. The darkness pressed down on his head like a ball of lead.

"Don't you dare groan," said Maxim to himself.

Suddenly one of the partisans slipped on the wet bole of a birch tree thrown across a bog and his leg sank into the morass. Losing his balance he fell. The stretcher tilted dangerously and Maxim was flung off.

He wanted to scream at the top of his voice, to howl like a wolf. It seemed to him that if he could only do that he would feel better afterwards. Instead, he gritted his teeth, dug his nails into the stretcher and remained silent. Only the cold beads of sweat on his forehead betrayed his agony...

They arrived at the camp at dawn. The camp doctor, Pavel Grigoryevich, immediately set about his duties. We heard his soft Ukrainian speech as he talked to Maxim who lay on a table roughly made out of twigs. Instead of putting on the usual white hospital smock—try to find one in the forest!—the doctor took off his shirt and together with his assistant prepared to amputate the lad's leg. Two other men stood near the wounded boy waving branches to keep off the flies. The medical instruments were set out on a box which formerly held mines. An operation in a partisan forest camp! What surgical skill, firmness, and love for mankind must the doctor have to perform this operation!

Maxim endured it all without letting as much as a groan escape his bloodstained lips.

Fortunately an ambulance plane landed at the camp that night and it took him to the Mainland.

Taking leave of his comrades Maxim smiling weakly said:

"The cuckoo was right after all—I shall still live to show the world a thing or two..."

VASSYA THE PARTISAN

... We were still on the Mainland, getting ready to leave for the partisan camp in a day or two. Early that particular morning through the window of the cottage where we slept came the sound of some one singing. It was a boy's voice just breaking. The tune was a popular partisan song ridiculing the "winter" Huns.

"In the long run," here the singer paused significantly, "we learned that the Führer is a skunk after all..."

The voice was silent for a second only to take up the song with even greater gusto:

"In the long run we learned that the Führer is a skunk after all..."

It was clear that the singer did not know the words of the song, or had forgotten them. But he was dead set on singing.

"That is Vassya K.," said somebody affectionately.

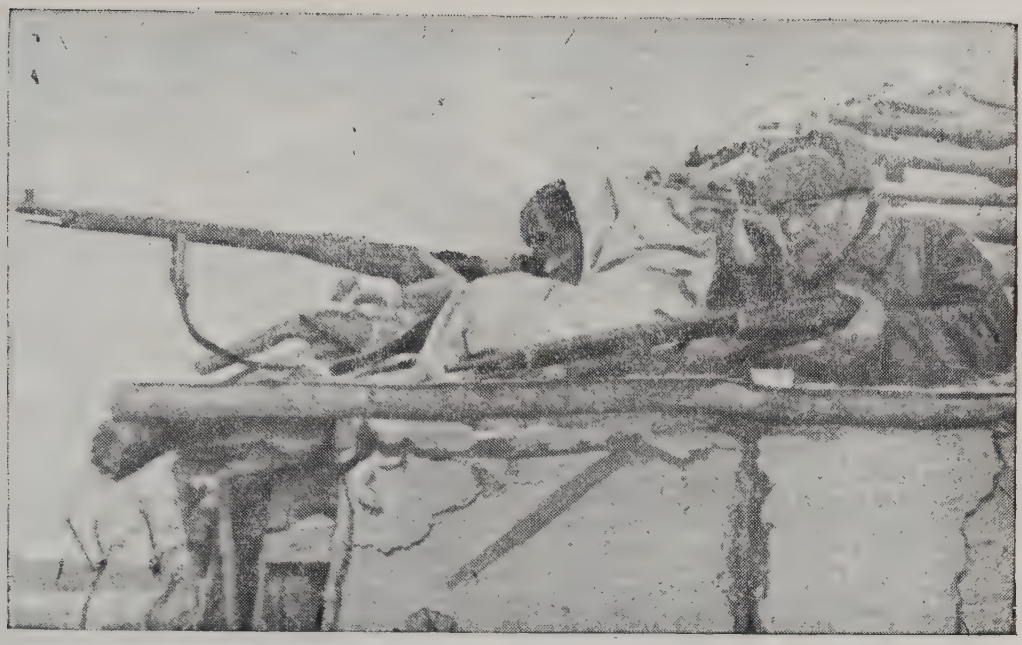
We stepped out of the cottage and saw a small boy, somewhere around the age of fourteen, dressed in a military uniform and wearing boots a size too large for him. His tanned face broke into dimples when he smiled. His hair bleached to the colour of straw by the sun, was combed back and his dark eyebrows were slightly raised as if in surprise. The grey eyes fringed with dark lashes, looked at us with an expression of trust and affection.

This partisan "son" radiated a certain warmth. Maybe it was in his very nature and maybe it was because he was an orphan and called for human affection.

We again met Vassya that same evening. The commissar of the detachment who had come to the Mainland to receive government decorations for his partisans could not make up his mind for a long time where to present Vassya with his medal—here, on the Mainland, or in the camp in the presence of the partisans. The lad, naturally, was going around on tenterhooks. He never failed to bring the conversation round to the question of the medal with the result that the commissar finally decided to let the boy have the pleasure of walking about with his medal here.

We were present at the "ceremony." Vassya stood "at attention" looking at the commissar with shining eyes as the latter pinned the Partisan Medal, first class, to the boy's breast. The small partisan then stepped out of the cottage. We watched him from the window. He stood on the steps of the porch with a slight air of importance, his chest thrown out, looking down askance at the medal, the dream of many of his comrades. Standing thus for a while Vassya then moved down the path with the same air of importance. And then, evidently unable to contain himself any longer, he touched the medal with his hand, after which he went skipping down the road.

Half an hour later we saw him walking



On the South-Western front. Partisans fight side-by-side with the Red Army units to liberate their villages

through the village surrounded by a score of boys who were looking at his medal with envy and respect.

... One day the commander of the detachment had Vassya sent to him. A certain assignment had to be carried out urgently: Vassya had to make his way into his native town and once there get into the burgomaster's office and place a letter on his desk, a letter warning him for the last time that he would not escape the avenging hand of the partisans.

It was quite some time since Vassya had last been in his native town. When German tanks broke into it the boy together with his older brother made for the forests and joined the partisans. He remembered the long line of refugees, the bitter crying of children, the compressed lips on the lined faces of women, German planes circling over the town, the explosion of bombs and the mutilated bodies of the inhabitants. The town was in flames when Vassya passed through its streets the last time.

Upon entering the town now it seemed to him that the pounding of his heart could be heard all around. He looked at the streets through which he so often used to scamper with the other boys. How desolate they were now!

Just ahead of him a beefy German was prodding with the butt of his tommy-gun two old men who could hardly walk Where were they being taken to? As the old men passed him it seemed to Vassya that one of them looked like his school-teacher. He dashed forward and wanted to call out after them but remembered that there were Germans around.

The boy wanted badly to take a look at his home to find out whether it was still there and at the school where he had spent such jolly times with his schoolmates.

But hit was out of the question. He mas not in the town on a pleasure trip. The assignment given by the commander had to be carried out.

There was the burgomaster's office. In front of the door stood a crowd of "applicants," ragged, unfortunate people with emaciated grey faces. How was he to make his way into the building and place the letter on the table?

A policeman came out of the door. Paying no attention to the boy—they were always around the place—he began to chase the crowd away. Taking advantage of this Vassya slipped into the building. His small childish figure sped down the corridor until he came to the door of the burgomaster's office. Feeling for the letter which was in his boot-top, together with a sharp knife which the commissar had given him, Vassya boldly opened the door and stepped into a bright and spacious room. Behind the table in an armchair sprawled the figure of a fat man with bloodshot evil eyes. He was yelling hoarsely and pounding the table with his fist. Two Russian women were pleading with him. Neither he nor the women noticed the boy who was staring at them with wide eyes. The women clung to the feet of the burgomaster sobbing loudly the tears coursing down their cheeks: they were imploring the burgomaster to tell them where the Germans had taken their children. But all that the fat swine of a burgomaster did was to kick them away and yell.

"Now is my chance..." flashed through Vassya's mind.

He bent down to extract the letter from his boot-top; the weeping of the women tugged at his heart. A hot wave like a flame surged through him. He could not analyse his feeling at the moment. All he knew was that in front of him was a fat face with bloodshot evil eyes. The face was on the other side of the table and

he moved toward it. His hand slid down to the boot-top, touched the pointed edge of the envelop but grasped the handle of the knife instead...

Vassya afterwards related that he himself did not know just how he leaped across the table, drove the knife into the fat belly of the burgomaster and then dashed out of the room. All he remembers is that he felt he could have moved mountains at that particular moment.

OLGA CHECHOTKINA

ANKA OF THE TAIGA

The doctor bent over Anka.

"It's going to hurt a bit, but try and stand it. Does that hurt?"

"No."

"And now?"

"No."

"Not going to admit it, are you? And now?"

"Not now either!"

"Good for you!"

Her fair hair was lying in disorder over the pillow, her eyes burned. In the few days after receiving her wound Anka had changed, had become thinner.

Under her pillow was a book of stories by Maxim Gorky, her Young Communist ticket, spotted with dark bloodstains, and a photograph—a lodge in a forest glade, and beside it a broad-shouldered, bearded man. This was Pyotr Yegorovich Chaikovsky, a forester in the Yakutsk preserve, Anka's father. The lodge had been her home. Anka was a true Siberian, born and bred in the taiga. Watching her supple body balancing on the swift skis, her fair plaits flying from under her kerchief, her father would smile fondly into the beard. "A real wife for a man of the taiga," he would murmur. "She's not one of those who can do nothing but trip a waltz on high heels."

Anka rose with the waking forest in the mornings, when the birds were trilling their first sweet notes, and only the nutcracker broke the stillness with a swift confused twittering. Sometimes she would spend the whole day in the forest, returning in the evening. She would jump down from Verny's back and, running into the lodge, place delicate water lilies in the window or bunches of blue and white flowers which are so plentiful in the taiga valleys. The room would seem to be full of colour and brightness as the girl prepared supper from the wild onions she had gathered.

Hunters and gold prospectors often visited Anka's father. But her best friend from amongst them was old Sidor Kuzmich, a former partisan, decorated for his services during the Civil War, who was looked upon with respect throughout the taiga. He brought her presents of skins, taught her arithmetic and would sit for long hours with the girl over her books.

"She's a clever girl," he told her father.

Anka blushed and tossed back her heavy plaits.

"You can't think how interesting it is," she said.

One summer Anka's father suddenly fell ill. He lay on the bed looking very big, beard combed out and breathing heavily.

Foam flecked Verny's bridle and flew in snowy flakes as Anka raced to the district clinic and hammered on the door... But when she returned with the doctor her father was lying there pale, his half open eyes fixed in an unchanging stare. Anka stood by the head of the bed, refusing to believe, repeating in a breaking voice: "Papa! Papa!"

. . . Anka told the new forester that she was leaving for town. She harnessed Verny to a light cart, spread out her furs on it, loaded it with her things and rode off.

That evening there was a soft knock at Sidor Kuzmich's door. He opened it, and was just in time to catch Anka in his arms—tired out, her kerchief all awry.

"I've come to live with you, Kuzmich," she said, bursting into tears. "I've come to stay here always."

Kuzmich opened his eyes very wide, and whistled softly.

"I was just going to Moscow," he said. "Well . . . for that matter . . . we can both go."

The young girl from the taiga was bewildered by what she saw in Moscow. She could never weary of looking in the shop windows or wandering about. The city tired her, but she liked it.

. . . That night she had a pleasant dream. She thought she was back in the taiga, breaking up twigs and making a fire. She saw the smoke curling upwards. It was already late, and a ray of sunshine, reflected from a glass, fell on Anka's face, wakening her. She felt very cheerful as she rose.

Then Kuzmich arrived.

"War," he said curtly. "We're at war with Germany."

On the fifth day he was called up.

"Take me with you," Anka begged softly. "I shan't be afraid."

"I know, but I can't just now," replied Kuzmich.

The old man brought Anka to a hospital, where they were warmly welcomed. Anka was quiet and reserved. It seemed to her that everyone knew Kuzmich was going to the front and they were just taking pity on her because they knew that if they didn't give her work in the hospital she would have nowhere to go.

"Well, so you'll come to work here tomorrow," she was told. "Mind you're not late."

That night Anka slept badly.

"They'll all laugh at me," she thought unhappily. "Look what people there are there!" And suddenly she felt she did not want to go to the hospital. Outside it was raining a steady, depressing drizzle.

The hospital was only just being fitted out, beds and lockers were all being arranged. Anka did every kind of job—washed floors, carried matresses. On the fifth day she was sent for some instruments and on the way lost the money. For a long time she wandered about the town, then came back, pale and upset and sought the head doctor. She suddenld remembered the dog Barboska who had been

run over by a tram in Yakutsk, remembered her old horse Verny, and angrily asked the doctor if she realized what it meant to come to Moscow straight from the taiga, not to know anyone at all and . . . to lose four hundred rubles of hospital funds. Then turning away she pulled angrily at her plait and bit her lips till they bled.

"Now don't start complaining," said the doctor sternly. "I don't want any complaining."

"I'm sorry about the money," Anka replied. "How could I have lost it?"

"Go back to your work. We're sorry about the money, too. Dry your eyes. You'll be wanting the wounded to comfort you next," said the doctor brusquely, but Anka could see a twinkle in her eye.

Soon Anka felt quite at home in the hospital, and when the wounded began coming in, it was not long before they all knew the girl from the taiga.

Anka told them all about Siberia in her ringing young voice, told them about how one must always shoot a squirrel right in the eye and what it was like making one's way through the taiga at night.

"I'm not afraid of anything," she said simply. "I want very much to go to the front."

And they believed her.

Anka worked hard. Often she would not leave the hospital for a week at a time, drousing on her feet.

"Wadding!" said the surgeon.

Anka came with tweezers or bandages in her hand. The surgeon turned, ready with a sharp word, but glancing again at Anka, said in a changed tone:

"That's enough for you! Away with you to bed!"

There seemed no end to the work. Sick and wounded men arrived in an unending stream, groaning, with festering wounds, and each one must have some comforting word to ease the pain of the wounds a little. Anka always found the right word. She knew everything about her wounded boys—knew that Vassili Stepanovich's son had had measles, and there'd been no letter from home for nine days, and that Petya Sergeyev had quarrelled with his sweetheart again, and though it was his fault, somehow or other the girl must come to see him. And when she actually did come, Petya's joy held something for Anka, too.

The wounded called her "Anka of the taiga." And the strength of this little Siberian girl! She would come to the third night shift running and if one asked her if she were tired, she would laugh and reply: "Not a scrap!"

There was one time when Anka extinguished ten incendiary bombs in the hospital attic without saying a word to anybody. The captious surgeon shook his head: "That girl's made of the right stuff," he said.

Every evening a tall pleasant young fellow in air force uniform would come to see Anka. She would run to the doctor who would say, with a wave of the hand:

"Very well, go along but only for an hour."

Silently they would pace up and down the pavement near the hospital, and then she would return, chilled and cross.

"Again nothing to say all the time. I'm not going any more."

The next day the young fellow would come again, and again they would stand by the entrance, shivering with cold, and silent. Once Anka returned to the hospital, her eyes dazed.

"Victor's going to the front tomorrow," she said brushing away the tears, and added swiftly: "You needn't start thinking anything, though . . . I just didn't like parting with him."

Then there came the time when the head surgeon sent for her. She found him sitting there stern and rather solemn. It took only a moment to explain to her what it was all about: a detachment for operations in the rear . . . a nurse needed . . . very dangerous job.

"I'll go," said Anka simply.

. . . They crawled through the sticky unfrozen swamp, waded up to the waist in snowdrifts, rubbed their numb fingers and crawled on further. Anka saw many terrible things here. There were not enough bandages and she would tear clothing into long even strips to bind up the bleeding wounds.

On one expedition into the German rear she met her brother Maxim, a former student at a mining institute, now a tommy-gunner in a paratroop detachment. They crawled along side by side through the liquid mud and could not get through all they had to say, but the water seemed somehow less cold.

. . . Anka stood beside an aeroplane—she had received orders to return to Moscow. The men stood around silently—they found it hard to part with Anka of the taiga who could tackle courageously any kind of job.

Maxim looked proudly at his sister. "These are the kind of girls we have in Siberia!" he thought.

After her return to Moscow, nothing seemed changed. She washed wounds, and went to bed with the dawn . . . Only she seemed to know more people. The families of wounded

men would shower her with invitations, and she was proud and happy to know them all. She went to some family festivity where she would be the centre of kind attentions.

Then came a day when a general visited the hospital. At the meeting Anka was elected to the presidium and as she walked up to the platform all kept time to her steps with their applause. Then the general handed her the medal "For Valour."

When Sidor Kuzmich came home on leave he barely recognized Anka.

"You're quite grown-up now," he said, and added sternly: "Getting to think something of yourself?"

"A little," Anka admitted.

"Not worth it," the old man advised her.

Anka was transferred to other work evacuating the wounded from the field hospitals to Moscow, and soon became familiar with every turn, every rut in the road . . .

The lorry was racing along, the hot dry wind whistling past her ears. Inside someone was groaning. On this occasion it was necessary to cross the line of the front. Bombers were roaring above, bombs fell somewhere behind and the lorry rocked from the blast. Three blinding streaks cut across the road —German searchlights, followed by artillery and mortar barrage. The lorry was caught by the rays. . .

Anka was drawn out from under the wreckage, her overcoat flecked with dark stains, her long plaits dangling. She was wounded in the stomach.

"It doesn't hurt," she said, biting her lips. "I'll get up soon. Call up the wounded, please."

But all who could were standing there at the door, asking anxiously:

"Well, how is she?"

On the tenth day an operation was decided upon. Again and again the surgeon bent over the operating table the veins swelling on his forehead. He sewed up the wound, wiped the perspiration from his face and made a hopeless gesture.

Anka lay in her bed eyes wide open.

Old Lieutenant-Colonel Pavel Vereshchaga came to see her. He had lain six months in Anka's ward with a hip wound and the first time he was allowed to get up he made his way to where Anka lay dying, supporting himself by the walls. And here came blind Vassya Kovreyev whom only the girl from the taiga had been able to soothe, and Victor Tyukhnetov, who had lost an arm—he who had been nicknamed Anka's brother. She opened her eyes still wider and raised herself a little.

"So I'm dying. . . And I shan't see our victory! . . Tell them. . ." but without finishing her sentence she fell back on her pillow.

The doctor sent everybody out of the room...

The coffin stood in the main hall. Flowers. Music. Anka's heavy yellow plaits and clear-cut face. There was nothing brighter and nobler than the face of this Russian girl.

IRINA ILYICHOVA

GERMANY'S ELASTIC DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

BOOKS AND WRITERS

A CRITIC'S NOTES

The readers of *International Literature* are already acquainted with many works of Soviet authors written since the beginning of the war waged by the peoples of the U.S.S.R. against Hitlerism.

These notes are intended as a review of a number of books that have appeared in 1943. Though some of them have already been reviewed by our magazine, the author has nonetheless included them wishing, as far as possible, to give a comprehensive picture of the creative work of Soviet writers during the war.

The review makes no claim at being exhaustive. This would require a special study to show the development of the multinational literature of the Soviet Union since 1941.

In the spring of 1943 Vassili Grossman published his story, *Life*, which was recently printed in our magazine (No. 9 1943). The story won wide popularity though its plot was not new. The story of a besieged unit breaking through the enemy ring was often described by Soviet authors in the early months of the war. Vassili Grossman's main purpose is not to create a novel situation, but to portray definite features of the Russian people, precisely those features which have brought them their victories. Their actions reveal, perhaps more strikingly than anything else, the strength of the Russians' feeling of national dignity. It is the feeling which impels the heavily wounded soldier to reject the help of the enemy, the feeling which finds obnoxious the slightest physical contact with the fascist beasts. Finally, it is the feeling which convinces the people of their superiority over the enemy and gives them courage and hope in the most hopeless situations thereby gaining the victory. "We are unconquerable," says the hero of the story Captain Kostitsyn, the commander of a unit encircled by the Germans, "we have proved it, comrades!" Whence this extraordinary strength of will that over-rides all obstacles? The answer to this question can be supplied by following the development of the characters of the two heroes of the story—Captain Kostitsyn and the old miner, Kozlov.

"There's no getting you down, old 'un," comes in a tone of respect from the Red Army men locked in the pit by the Germans, after hearing the life story of the old miner, Kozlov. Kozlov is one of those Russian workers who, through the centuries, have carried the firm will to fight for the truth to the end, fearing neither sufferings nor death itself. "I have never begrudged anything for the sake of truth," says Kozlov about himself.

In the days of hardship under tsarism he was loyal to his convictions.

"There is no such thing as a hopeless situation," the old revolutionary Kostitsyn taught his son, a future Red Army captain. "Keep on fighting to the end, so long as there's breath in your body." Kostitsyn Junior remembered this behest and remained true to it in the days of struggle against the Hitlerites. The victory of a small group of Red Army men over the German regiment which encircled them is, above all, the victory of spiritual and moral strength over fascist inhumanness.

Other traits in the Russian's character which have come to the fore in the war are shown in the stories of Andrei Platonov. In his story *Where the Sun Sets*, for instance, his heroes see the war above all as something which demands enormous arduous toil. The story has, practically, no plot. Andrei Platonov focuses the attention and feelings of the reader on the thoughts and experiences of his hero. Sapper Ivan Tolokno—an old Urals worker, a "Jack of all trades," the "labourer in the war" clears the road for the Red Army advance westward. Upon his labour depends the tempo of the offensive, often its success and many human lives. To Ivan there is no such thing as superhuman labour. "When face to face with death man is stronger," he says. In him beats the "patient heart which rests on truth."

Ivan is a seasoned, experienced fighter. Escaping the treads of a German tank which passes over his trench, Iyan Tolokno jumps into the panzer from behind. The

tank continues to rumble forward. Ivan is about to blow it up. "No one knows what life holds in store," is the thought that passes through his mind. "This tank was made to crush and destroy, and here it is carrying an enemy sapper. Who knows, after the war it may be ploughing our soil. We will remove its armour and its gun, and that'll be that."

A profound thought is conveyed in these lines. To Ivan, a man of great courage, deeply convinced of the justice of his cause, victory is, first and foremost, associated with labour. Soviet people will make destructive machines work for the well-being of Man.

Boris Gorbatov's *The Taras Family* (A special article on this book is to be published in a forthcoming issue of our magazine) is the story of Russians who have fallen under the German yoke. It is a record of the sufferings which German occupation brings in its wake. But, as distinct from other works on this theme, *The Taras Family* is a story not so much of the enemy and his crimes on Soviet soil, as of the spiritual world of the Soviet people, and the intolerable moral torture they suffer under the German jackboot.

"As yet the German axe had not fallen on the Taras family. None in the family had been killed, or tortured, or exiled, or robbed. No German had as yet set foot in Taras' house. And still life was intolerable. It was impossible to live in this town strangled by the noose of the occupationists. . . None in the family had been killed, but anyone of them might be killed any moment. The Germans could break into the house at night, could grab their victim in broad daylight on the street, could throw him into a freight car and take him to Germany, could, without trial, shoot or, for that matter, release their victim laughing at the sight of a person turning grey under their very eyes. It was a favourite past-time of the Germans. They could do whatever they pleased, and it was worse than if they had simply killed outright. The black shadow of fear loomed and spread over the house of Taras as it did over every other house in the town."

Under such unbearable conditions people must solve the vital question: "How to go on living? What to do?" At first the old factory foreman, Taras, thought of simply "keeping out of the way" of the Germans. "It is no concern of ours," he would often repeat. But it proved impossible "to keep out of the way." And then it became imperative to Taras not to save his life but his soul.

Along with other Russian patriots such as Taras, Boris Gorbatov shows the reader opposite types. Taras' daughter-in-law, Antonina, who openly explains her servility to the Germans by saying that "she does not claim to be a heroine"; the friend of Taras' daughter Nastya, who, to please the occupationists, changes her Russian name Liza to the German Luisa.

"Every person in town sought a way out for himself and for his conscience." The path taken by Liza—Luisa was the path followed by a few miserable creatures who have nothing in common with the Soviet people. The rest of Nastya's friends had either been driven to Germany, or thrown into prison for distributing leaflets, or had joined the partisans. What sustained the spirit of these people? The conviction of the irrefutable justice of their cause. When life became particularly unbearable old Taras called out to his sons who were in the Red Army: "My sons, where are you? Where are you?"

Thus ends the first part of *The Taras Family* which has recently been published. These words undoubtedly are an echo of Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba*. Taras' son, Ostap, is subjected to inhuman torture by the Polish gentry on the streets of Warsaw. The young Cossack endures it all staunchly. It is only when he can no longer suffer the fiendish tortures in silence that Ostap cries out with all his heart: "Father! Where are you? Do you hear me?" "I hear you," rings out the voice of the father striking fear into the hearts of Ostap's tormentors. These words have become the symbol, the sign which our people give to their oppressed brothers, and the guarantee of the liberation from bondage. "There are no such fires, tortures or forces which can break Russian fortitude," wrote Gogol a hundred years ago. *The Taras Family* is eloquent proof that not only has this fortitude not been undermined—on the contrary, it has grown stronger.

Grossman's, Platonov's and Gorbatov's heroes are people whose characters have already been moulded. But heroism is not an "innate" quality. It is the result of the environment in which the younger

generation has grown up, the result of educational work conducted over a long period of time, the result of the influence exercized by society and the family on the character of the youth in the process of formation.

Fyodor Gladkov, the author of the popular novel of 20's *Cement*, was one of the first to write about life in the Soviet rear in the period of war. His latest work, *The Seared Heart*, is a collection of stories about the life and work of the people in the distant Urals, the backbone of the Soviet war industry. In the story *Mother* the author portrays the family of an Urals teacher whose daughter wins immortal fame.

The exploit of Zoe Kosmodemyanskaya, known as the partisan "Tanya," has been frequently described. The fine character of the Russian girl who did not bow to the German fiends and died the death of a martyr and heroine will never fade from the history of the struggle of freedom-loving peoples. In his story *Mother*, Fyodor Gladkov traces the preceding stages leading up to the girl's great exploit—the life of Zoe's family, her childhood, school years, the moulding of her character.

Zoe herself does not appear in the story where she is known as Sonya. It is the mother who relates the story of her daughter's short but happy life and brave death. The reader learns about Zoe's parents, about the home environment, and above all about Zoe's mother, the simple Soviet woman who possessed the secret of bringing up a real human being with an unbending will and capacity of self-sacrifice in times of struggle.

Sonya's mother, Natalya Stepanovna was an experienced teacher, a great favourite with her pupils, one of the best teachers in the town. Her pupils eagerly looked forward to every lesson. She never raised her voice; discipline in her class was of the best, the pupils making excellent progress in their studies.

When her friends asked her about her methods of work, she would smile and reply softly: "Words won't explain it. It is a question of mutual understanding. . . love. . . Without love there can be no understanding. . . Teaching is an art. . . It requires much tenderness. . ."

Sonya's mother aimed to rouse the "feeling of restlessness" in every one of her pupils. "By holding before them as an example the finest and most intrepid people of our country we should endeavour to instill in their minds an idea that will stand before them all their lives. . ." she was fond of saying. In Sonya's life the struggle for truth became the guiding idea. The teacher of her class would often complain to her mother about Sonya's "intrepidity." "Well, you see," her mother would rejoin, "I don't know how you feel about it, but I personally think that truth and intrepidity go hand in hand. . . Sonya has been raised in the spirit of truth and feels keenly about it."

A number of episodes from school and home life of the heroine give the reader a clear-cut conception of Sonya's ethics, of her reactions to events around her. We see before us a girl who does not retreat in the face of difficulties, who does not give way to despair when confronted with what to others would seem insurmountable obstacles. Faced with difficulties Sonya invariably handled them herself. She would even reject the help of her mother with the words: "Mummy, now please don't interfere. You yourself say that one must always finish what one started."

Sonya dreamed of becoming a geologist or chemist. One of her favourite heroines was Marie Curie. Natalya Stepanovna took great joy and pride in her daughter, though she herself understood, and often said to her daughter that "struggle implies suffering, anguish and often self-sacrifice."

When her country was in danger Sonya could not remain at home. She went to the front as a volunteer and her mother could raise no objections. "Don't worry about me, Mother. I shall be able to answer for myself under all circumstances. Rest assured that if need be I shall know how to die. . . I shan't put you to shame, Mother dear. . ."

Thus the writer leads us up to Sonya's exploit, to her heroic death, her last courageous words. When an old peasant woman laments over the "premature death of the girl" Sonya says: "It is never untimely to die for the truth, Granny."

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of such a story as Fyodor Gladkov's *Mother*. It is this kind of lite-

rature which can and is educating Soviet boys and girls.

The "great mother" is what an old Urals worker called Natalya Stepanovna. And the same impression is left in the minds of the reader. She is not the only one. There are many such "great" people in Gladkov's book. In a few words the author depicts his characters—simple, charming people, true citizens of their country. It wouldn't be amiss to say that these Soviet people, like the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies, are worthy of the lofty word "man." Such, for instance, is the worker Zoe whom Natalya Stepanovna meets at one of the Urals plants. Her children were torn to bits by a German bomb. "Grief has burned my heart to a cinder," she says to another suffering mother. We meet such people seared by grief in everyone of the stories which make up the book. Hence its name.

But the people with "seared hearts" have not been broken in spirit. On the contrary, they are capable of inspiring others to great deeds. They are the people who set records in production, who remain at the bench several shifts running, who inspire the rest of the workers to follow their example. The hero in the story *The Seared Heart*, an old Urals foreman, Markelych, loses his son, a tankman, at the front. He saw a village just recaptured from the Germans, saw a young lad, brutally done to death by the Germans. The Hitler cannibals had hanged him on a hook pushed through his lower jaw. . . It was a good-natured, loquacious foreman, fond of a joke, who left for the front with presents for the men. A changed person returned from the front.

Markelych came back possessed by the one thought of revenge. The workers in his department consisted for the most part of young boys and girls. One day the old foreman gathered them together and in simple stirring words told them what he had seen at the front. He deeply stirred the youth, he "fired their hearts." The young workers who come in contact with Markelych pass through a school of hatred and fortitude which imbues them with vigour and strength and spurs them on to keep increasing their daily output. "I am turning out terrible avengers," says Markelych. "Every minute a bullet, every shift a machine-gun."

Also the heroine in *Malka's Happiness* has a "seared heart!" The war has broken up her home. In the munitions plant she entered, it was a point of honour with her not to yield first place to anybody else. The finest episode in the story is how Malka insists on her blood being taken—from heart to heart—for a heavily wounded Red Army man. And just before this, Malka had already given her blood at another donor's station for a wounded man.

After reading Gladkov's book you cannot help but repeat the words of Sonya's mother who, after observing the life of the Soviet people at the front and in the rear, says: "No, such a people can never be vanquished, can never be enslaved or destroyed."

Arkadi Perventsev's novel *The Test* also deals with the work of the Soviet people in the rear.

The transfer of Soviet war industries from the western districts into the deep interior of the country in an unprecedented short space of time is often spoken of abroad as one of the Soviet "miracles." Arkadi Perventsev's novel is devoted to one of these "miracles." He shows that the "miracle" was the result of Soviet organization, of the labour enthusiasm of the masses and the hearty welcome accorded the workers of the evacuated enterprises by the Urals workers. In those days of great stress not only the country but the people too underwent a change.

Take the story of Valya, the wife of the director of an aircrafts plant, Bogdan Dubenko. The war shatters the happy unclouded life of Valya's family. After sending her mother and son into the hinterland, Valya decides to remain with her husband in the war-zone city. She volunteers for work in a hospital and when the tank columns of the nazi army are advancing on the city, she goes to dig trenches, anti-tank ditches, to build blindages and fortifications together with thousands of other citizens. The work is extremely arduous but Valya is not daunted. "I want to contribute my share," she explains to Bogdan. The latter's father, an old foreman, cannot get over his surprise at Valya's transformation. "Good for you," is his remark. "And here I thought that once you start painting your lips and wearing your hair that way you were a lost case." But Valya proves to be a real patriot.

She has had a hard time coping with the arduous work in her native city, but things are far more difficult in the bitter cold of the Urals. Dressed in Russian leather boots and padded trousers, she goes out to unload the equipment of the evacuated plant which has arrived at its new destination. Here she meets evacuated workers, among them youngsters and also the local inhabitants.

What took years to accomplish in peace-time now had to be built up in months and weeks. Their reward for their labour was the opening of the plant on time and the production of still greater numbers of planes for the front.

Valya is the first attempt in Soviet literature to portray the social and mental development of the Soviet woman during the war.

The historical novel has always attracted the attention of Russian writers. Since the beginning of the National War a number of books have been published resurrecting the past of the people, the state and the history of Russian arms.

In 1943 appeared Sergeyev-Tsensky's *The Brussilov Thrust* (a review of which was printed in the preceding issue of our magazine.—*Ed.)*.

S. Golubov's *Bagration* is a book about one of the greatest generals of 1812 who was mortally wounded on the famed battlefield of Borodino. The book is distinguished by great accuracy in the account of the events and by an artistic clarity of the characters. The author shows the dramatic peripetia of the National War of 1812, beginning with the invasion of Russia by Napoleon's armies and ending with the Battle of Borodino and the capture of Moscow. Against this background we see the great men and rank-and-file soldiers of this glorious epoch in which the central character is Bagration, a disciple and comrade-in-arms of Suvorov, a favourite of the army, an active participant in the Battle of Borodino, which was his last.

Those who have read about the war of 1812 are left with a general impression that Prince Bagration was a military leader with a passionate temperament and impetuous courage, a supporter of offensive strategy and tactics. Armed with abundance of material—military documents, correspondence and memoires—S. Golubov has, by force of his artistic intuition, perceived certain new traits in Bagration and given this historical figure a deeper and more profound understanding than has been done hitherto.

Bagration not only possessed amazing courage which Golubov vividly reflects in his description of the Battle of Borodino: he demanded of his commanders and above all of himself, initiative and determination, the ability to beat the numerically superior enemy, readiness to take risks in battle and to be prepared for surprise attacks. This is why Bagration was so impatient to go into battle when Napoleon's army of 400,000 strong crossed the Russian border and the disjointed and numerically weaker Russian army had to withdraw into the depths of Russia. Golubov has succeeded in conveying the sincere and ardent desire of Bagration to stop the self-assured conqueror.

Today, when the subsequent stages and final outcome of the 1812 war are known, we can understand the absolute necessity for the temporary retreat organized by Barclay. We can appreciate the foresight of Kutuzov whose military skill and confidence in the strength of the people helped to carry out the famous plan of the retreat to Moscow which led to the defeat of Napoleon.

But many contemporaries at the time, governed by their patriotic sentiments, failed to see the correctness of this plan and demanded that an immediate battle be fought. Bagration, who was directly affected by the dramatic events of 1812, shared this fallacy.

The merit of Golubov's book lies in the fact that the author has been able to show the deep and noble source of Bagration's strength—his lofty and incorruptible love for his country, for Russia.

Golubov gives a true description of Kutuzov's strategy and tactics. Although Kutuzov appears towards the end of the novel and only episodically we get a good idea of his plans and methods of command which further enhance the individual peculiarities of Bagration. Kutuzov loves his country no less sincerely and passionately than does Bagration. Kutuzov too has ties with the mass of the soldiers. He is also independent and firm. But Kutuzov has traits which give him the advantage over Bagration. He is a master

of military theory. Bagration fails to understand Kutuzov's strategy not only because of his emotional nature, but also because he lacks the necessary profound knowledge and deep understanding of military theoretical problems. He regarded the Battle of Borodino as the decisive battle to save Moscow. Mortally wounded and at death's door Bagration's mind was occupied with one question: had Moscow been saved, did the Battle of Borodino justify itself. And when he learned the fatal news that the city had been given up his remaining strength deserted him.

Such is S. Golubov's literary-historical conception.

Portraying Bagration as a man of great vitality Golubov does not in any way detract from the true facts of history. It is the picture of a noble and passionate warrior and patriot who enjoyed the warm love of the army and who was able to inspire his army in the great struggle for the country

S. Golubov's presentation of the Battle of Borodino is dramatic, vivid and historically true. Bagration's last days and hours are described in deeply stirring terms.

When trying to determine the sentiments of the writer living in our days one involuntarily recalls the words of Mayakovsky. The author of the poem *At the Top of My Voice* saw the greatest reward of the poets living in those stern days when the people were making history, in their weapon, the pen, being identified with the weapon which the soldier of freedom is using to fight against the enemies of freedom.

The Soviet people speak of books such as we have mentioned in this review as "literature which shoots." What greater honour can there be for the writer who wishes to remain loyal to the traditions of great literature than the opportunity to participate in the struggle against the most terrible reaction the history of mankind has ever known?

TIMOFEI ROKOTOV

THE OLD URALS REVIVED

The Soviet Urals not only abound in mineral wealth, timber and fur-bearing animals, but the district is also famous as a country of fairy-tales, songs and legends. The unusual history of the Urals peeps out through the imagery created by the fertile imagination of its people. Numerous legends and tales tell how iron was first mined in the Urals and how the Tula merchant Demidov founded a dynasty of manufacturers who hung like a millstone round the workers' necks for many decades.

A special place in Urals folklore belongs to the so-called "secret tales" which bear, perhaps, the closest relation of all to historical facts. These tales describe the feats of "kind-hearted robbers," a motif well-known to European folklore. In this case they are outlawed Urals workers who take the law into their own hands and return to the poor what has been plundered by "the mighty of this world"—by the cruel rich and their bailifs. Such tales made people hope for a possible deliverance and strengthened their confidence in a happy future when man would be master of his own labour and of all the wealth the earth contains. These tales also include stories of hidden treasures guarded either by a mysterious dragon or by a fantastic woman. Such tales of course, were told "in secret" and only "amongst ourselves." "They can't be told to everyone," says an old Urals story-teller. "One must be wary. They're our secret..." According to old people flogging and hard labour were penalties inflicted for circulating them.

In the "secret tales" reality was blended with fantasy: they abound in such characters as the fearsome dragon—master of a mountain, the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, a woman of marvellous beauty, or a mountain which opened and closed at will. The narrators were not greatly mistaken when they believed their stories real, for they were, in their way, realistic enough. They gave faithful descriptions of the deposits of ore, gold and precious stones. They present life-like portraits of prospectors and foundrymen, make us familiar with the secrets of manufacturing and reveal an excellent knowledge

of the country, its natural resources and its history.

"These are not just tales," old people used to say. "They make you use your head and consider what's what." There have been cases of geologists finding gold veins and deposits of minerals by following these fairy-tales.

You cannot help feeling the charm of their smooth and tuneful language, and the depth of their artistic conception. The wisdom of the people is expressed in every literary genre—story-telling, peotry, satire, everything that Gorky called word-painting.

These "secret tales" contained both the secrets of manufacturing and the secrets of the Russian speech. They formed the foundation of Pavel Bazhov's stories, *The Malachite Casket*, *The Key-Stone* and *Urals Workers' Tales about the Germans*.

He tells us that he first heard the stories from one of the most gifted story-tellers of the Urals, Vassili Khmelin, or simply Granddad Slyshko [1] as the people called him, and "almost half a century later reproduced them from memory." In the introduction to his book Bazhov writes: "Khmelin's stories retold must certainly have lost their significance as folklore. Something has been added by other story-tellers and it is inevitable that a man who retells stories from memory should have added something himself."

Bazhov, of course, is right, and when you start reading the first story, *The Precious Name*, you realize that this is not a collector's raw material which still requires putting into literary form, but is a masterpiece by a powerful artist. This is the way Pushkin, Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Mamin-Sibiryak and other Russian writers have treated folklore. Bazhov works on the same lines; he has fine knowledge of the psychology and ways of life of the people of whom he writes. Like all folklore writers he has a keen ear for the music of the Urals speech and is a connoisseur of local working-class traditions; he tells the tales of the people in a manner all his own. They bear the impress of his imagination, his poetic individuality and his experience of life. He handles the material in the same way as the folklore reciters themselves do, constantly varies the motif, expression, etc.

A careful study of the conceptions and technique of Bazhov's tales shows the reader that the work is his own, based on the rich store of unwritten tales and ballads of the Urals people.

"To learn from the people, drawing freely from their linguistic and poetic riches—that is the true artist's task," says Bazhov. The author of the *Malachite Casket* has spent almost his whole life amongst the simple people. He comes from an old stock of copper smelters and blast-furnace workers, was for many years a village schoolmaster and during the Civil War fought for Soviet power. His book of tales, *The Malachite Casket*, is the result of long intercourse with the people. It is devoted to the sublimity of human toil and depicts the worker as an artist. The rapacious iron-masters of tsarist Russia and their lackeys are contrasted to the patriots of the Russian land, proud and unyielding men, masters of their craft. Like all honest people Bazhov ridicules the wasters who plunder and squander the nation's wealth, a good craftsman has not need of deceit, cunning or wizardry. In the story *Ivanko-Krylatko (Winged Johnny)* Ivan Bushuyev defeats the wily Germans by means of his natural skill and his gift for drawing.

Ivan Bushuyev is the descendant of those craftsmen who would sometimes "make a knife or sword of such rare design that you had only to set eyes on it once to dream of it for many nights." And yet the foreigners took it into their heads to brag of their "German skill" before such artists! The Russians decided to knock this out of the Germans and show them who knew their job best.

A new German came to the works, a "knowing fellow," who was pop-eyed but "could see straight enough." "He knew his tools and was a hard worker, a real craftsman, in fact."

A Russian lad was apprenticed to him, Ivanko, who was "clever in the drawing line." The lad took a good look at the German's work and immediately put his finger on its weak spot: "The German knows how to draw a horse, but there's no life in it." (The German was drawing horses with crowns

[1] Slyshko—from the Russian verb *slyshat*, to listen.

above them on presentation swords.) Ivanko made up his mind to draw a horse at full gallop. "He knew every bone in a horse's body, and it was not for nothing that he had ridden the winner in the Bashkirian spring races."

"Ivan got busy drawing his horse. Over the horse he drew a scroll with the crown on it. Every line was distinct, and the crown on the scroll looked like a Bashkir leaning back on a horse at full gallop. . ."

He transferred the design to a sword and gilded it by his grandfather's secret process. He made a fine job of the horses, their very nostrils breathed life, and the crown did not spoil it a bit, it seemed to belong to the horse. (Here the work of real live art, the poetry of the Russian craftsman is aptly contrasted to the mechanical reproduction of the Germans, with "no smell of life about them.")

Ivanko announced that he was ready for the test and the men flocked in. "Old Bushuyev was the first on the scene. He took a long look at the sabre, slashed the air with it like a Cossack, then like a Bashkir; he tried its strength; but what took his fancy most was the little golden horses. He stared till his eyes watered. The other craftsmen, too, thought highly of Ivan's skill." The Germans raised Cain and Ivan was sacked and fined. He did not submit to his defeat for long, however.

"Soon after, the Tsar's train arrived. It happened that a Cossack general was travelling with them. One of Kutuzov's men he was, whose sword had felled many an enemy soldier and who had taken towns in Germany, too. . . So the Tsar decided to give the old warrior a presentation sword. . . Of course, the Germans had laid out all their work beforehand in the most conspicuous places. One of the craftsmen slipped Ivan's sword in amongst them. The general grabbed it as soon as he saw it." He asked to see the man who had done such work. When Ivan came the general kissed him and said: "This sword is just what a Cossack needs," and "the sword swished through the air so fiercely that the whole of the Tsar's suite turned cold and the Germans broke out into a sweat. . . Later they sent Ivan a reward for his work."

"The Russian cannot walk in the German's dust, and never could!" The story about Ivanko-Krylatko brims over with the people's confidence in their own strength, with the certainty of their victory over those who threaten to seize the riches of the Russian soil and humiliate the Russian people.

The Russian worker-artist occurs in other tales of Bazhov's.

The craftsman Danila (In the *Flower of Stone*) made a vase to a set design. Everybody was delighted with it and wondered how he had done such fine carving without breaking the stone. Danila, however, was not pleased: "It's smooth and finished, the design is clean, the carving is correct and follows the drawing, but where is its beauty? And just look at the stone itself: a fine piece of material!" When Danila heard of the Flower of Stone which could make you "understand beauty" he was filled with a burning desire to see it. He apprenticed himself to the Mistress of the Copper Mountain and worked harder than ever that he might behold the magic of the stone and show it to others.

He attained this, as did other craftsmen who like himself saw the Flower of Stone on the Copper Mountain, and took away with him all its beauty.

The same figure of the artist-craftsman is introduced into the story of the *Malachite Casket*.

Such men make an ally of nature and the Mistress of the Copper Mountain was always ready to protect the Urals workmen in repayment for their desire to create and their self-sacrifice while mastering the secrets of perfect craftsmanship. She also punished the enemies of honest toil. The malicious steward Severyan *(The Steward's Soles)*, for example, was turned into a block of stone. Cruel Kostka paid for his greed with death, and the "rich vein" fell to the lot of the brother he had cheated *(The Dragon's Trail)*. The nobleman's toady also got a lesson from the Mistress of the Copper Mountain for his cupidity.

Bazhov does not confine himself to showing the horrors of the worker's life in the old mills and mines: he gives us pictures of the people struggling against their oppressors. Bazhov's hero is usually a man of creative and courageous spirit, a seeker after beauty and

happiness in life. He cherishes a firm belief that "the time will come when there will be no merchants and not even a memory of the Tsar" and "when people will grow up tall and healthy" (*The Precious Name*).

The original style, the "skilful drawing" and the "boldly chased gold" of the Urals speech will find for Bazhov's tales a place of their own in the golden treasury of Russian literature. Their Russian is brilliant and dazzlingly rich. It reflects the beauty of the legends, traditions and fairy-tales circulating amongst the Urals people since time immemorial. The author makes use of these riches, drawing deeply from the well of a Russian language that is old yet sounds wonderfully fresh when it comes from the lips of his characters. He knows it to perfection, he has a feeling for all the peculiarities of the dialect and uses freely and skilfully all the witticisms, adages and saws met with amongst the miners and factory workers of the Urals. In his stories there are the same epithets and similes that we hear in the tales of the factory workers of that region, with all the diminutives and pet names that are so characteristic of the speech of the simple folk. The influence of folklore makes itself felt in his morphology, phonetics and syntax. Sometimes the reader is impressed not so much by the contents of the tales as by the music of the words.

Bazhov's tales glow with the warmth of love for the region where he was born and bred and which he knows so well. He has assimilated the thoughts and feelings expressed in these folktales and ballads, and himself expresses the thoughts and feelings of the workers of pre-revolutionary Urals. When we read them we feel the poetic continuity between the old-time ballads and the folklore of the Soviet Urals of the present day.

The reading public has shown their appreciation of Bazhov's tales and the Soviet Government awarded him a Stalin Prize.

VICTOR SIDELNIKOV

TURGENEV

Turgenev is one of the most popular authors in our country. An inimitable master of the Russian language, an original and brilliant artist, his works are handed down from generation to generation as examples of Russian realistic literature. As the author of *A Sportsman's Sketches*, the novels *Rudin*, *A House of Gentlefolk*, *On the Eve*, *Fathers and Children*, and brilliant short stories, he has left his mark on Western-European literature, especially on the literature of France.

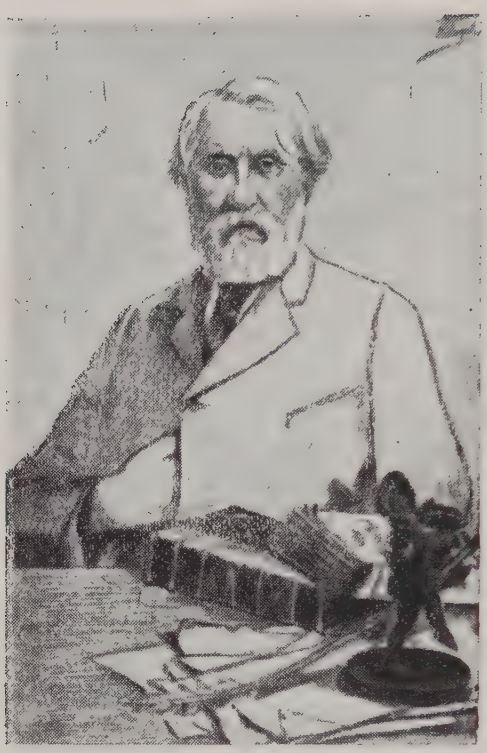
His talent as a writer developed slowly and took form rather late in life. Turgenev did not immediately find his place as a writer; his gifts were many and varied, he was able to concentrate for long periods, was able always to seek new ways but was never content with that which he had already achieved. This latter quality he retained to the end of his life.

Turgenev made his first appearance in print with a critical essay. He then branched out into poetry, and his poems began to appear in journals and in anthologies. Afterwards he remarked that he felt "almost a physical antipathy" for these poems.

In 1843, exactly a hundred years ago, his poem *Parasha* was published; it was given a very sympathetic reception by Belinsky, an extremely strict judge. This was in reality the beginning of forty years of creative work.

Having made a name for himself in the field of poetry, Turgenev gave up writing verse and took to drama and sketches. In this genre he met with even greater success. And still he was not satisfied and began writing the novels which brought him real fame. Turgenev's path to *A Sportsman's Sketches* and thence to the novels which depict the life and strivings of Russian society between 1830 and 1860 was laborious and arduous.

At the time when he was writing his fantastic and imitative poems he was a passionate supporter of the romantic school. In his *Literary and Social Memoirs* he refers to the period when he worked with this "pseudo-majestic" school, "fine-sounding on the exterior, but timid in spirit."



Turgenev. A drawing by Vogel

"The work of that school, seeped in a self-confidence that grew into self-praise, had nothing Russian about it in content," wrote Turgenev. "It was some sort of a verbous decoration noisily and carelessly built-up by 'patriots' who knew nothing about their own country. It roared and thundered, believing itself to be a worthy embellishment for a great state and a great people, although its doom was drawing near."

Turgenev's interest in the pseudo-romantic school was short-lived and he soon rid himself of it and drew nearer to Belinsky, attaching himself to the so-called "natural school" which continued the realistic traditions of Gogol.

Turgenev published a number of critical works in which he ridiculed the rhetorical poetry of the pseudo-romanticists, and counterposed to them the principles of the realistic style, simple and clear, the voice of the people in literature, true to contemporary life. This coincided with the time of his abandonment of poetry for prose, the time when he wrote his immortal *A Sportsman's Sketches*.

A Sportsman's Sketches was an immediate success. The sharpest and most burning question of the day was raised in this work, the question of the rights of serfdom.

The power of his talent, his inner development and the constant perfection of his gifts led him far beyond the bounds of "drawing from nature."

The social meaning of *A Sportsman's Sketches* is best characterized by Turgenev himself: "I could not breathe the same air or live close to that which I hated. . . had to get away from my enemy in order to attack him the more strongly from a distance. To my mind the enemy had a definite form and his name was known: the enemy was—serfdom. In this name I gathered and concentrated everything against which I was resolved to fight to the end—with which I had sworn never to make peace."

Just when the first story from *A Sportsman's Sketches—Hor and Kalinych*—was being published Turgenev went abroad. When he left Russia he thought of dropping his literary work altogether as he was not satisfied with his experiments. The unexpected success of the first of his *Sketches*, however, led him to continue them. On his return to Russia in 1850 he collected his sketches and published them as a separate book. Two years later he was arrested for an article on the death of Gogol and was temporarily interned in his own village of Spasskoye where he was kept under administrative surveillance. The article was quite innocent in content; nevertheless, the chairman of the Censor Committee who wished no popularization of the author of *The Inspector General*, placed a veto on it. Turgenev, however, ignored the veto and published it, an act which placed him in the wrong. Actually the article was only an excuse given for his arrest and banishment, the real reason being the Government's decidedly unfavourable attitude towards Turgenev's literary work.

Even before the publication of *A Sportsman's Sketches* in a separate edition, there were notes in the secret documents of the Censor Committee to the effect that a considerable number of the stories in the book "had a decided tendency to humiliate the landlords." The censor who passed the book was discharged by Nicholas I for "careless performance of his duty."

The book met with a warm response, both in literary circles and amongst the reading public. Despite all the obstacles erected by the censor which forced the author to leave much unsaid, despite omissions, it was greeted by the contemporaries as "battle fire against the landlord system."

These beautiful, artistic and poetic miniatures, permeated with deep feelings of love for his country and the people, demonstrate clearly the monstrous nature of the landlords' oppression and the beauty of the people's soul hiding untold riches in its depths.

The writers' friends compared his stories with Cellini's filigree work, and tried to persuade him to keep to this half-story, half-sketch style of depicting village life which he had so happily originated. Turgenev himself, however, thought differently. Shortly after the publication of *A Sportsman's Sketches* came a new turn in Turgenev's literary path. He decided to abandon his old miniature style and start experimenting on a larger canvas. Turgenev realized that the existing knowledge of peasant life was incomplete and insufficient and that the conditions imposed by the censor prevented a correct description of the Russian peasantry; he realized that "all the details of the simple people's life could not be reproduced in literature." In his novels he put aside the village motif and tried, as he himself said, "to depict faithfully and objectively and to embody in the types handled that which Shakespeare calls 'the body and pressure of time,' and that rapidly changing physiognomy of the cultured section of the Russian people, which was the main object of his observation."

Turgenev did not succeed with his first novel *Two Generations* and did not complete it. However, shortly afterwards he gave the reading public the novels *Rudin* (1856), *A House of Gentlefolk* (1859), *On the Eve* (1860), *Fathers and Children* (1862) to mention some of them. A distinguishing feature of Turgenev's novels was their topical nature and profound social content. The unusual sympathy which the writer had for contemporary life was to be seen in his selection of the most ordinary everyday topics and in his talent for depicting characters which had only begun to develop in society. It was not for nothing that Dobrolyubov wrote of Turgenev that: "He had a rapid grasp of new demands and ideas which appeared in the social consciousness, and, as far as circumstances permitted, usually dealt in his novels with the question which was just coming to the fore and which had already begun vaguely to worry society."

The appearance of each of Turgenev's novels was accompanied by heated discussions and lively disputes amongst the readers, and the contradictory appraisements of the critics. Through all his work from *Rudin* to *Virgin Soil*, Turgenev gave a consistent picture of the progressive changes taking place in the social life of Russia.

Turgenev regarded the novel as an art for depicting life and gave the following estimation of himself:

"I could never invent anything. In order to get anything done I had to spend all my time with people, to be in contact with the living subject. I not only need the character I am depicting with his past and all his surroundings but I need also all the minutest details of his life. That is how I have always written. . . "

In his first two novels he depicted in the characters of Rudin and Lavretsky "superfluous people" from amongst the aristocracy, people who thirsted for action but were incapable of acting. In *On the Eve* and *Fathers and Children* for the first time in Russian literature he presented the "new people": Insarov, the fighter for the liberty of his native Bulgaria, and the commoner-revolutionary Bazarov, who took the place of the aristocratic heroes—the heroes of words but not of deeds.

On the Eve and *Fathers and Children* excited widespread reverberations. The progressive critic, eagerly awaiting the appearance of a new hero, saw in the person of Insarov the prototype of the Russian revolutionary. Analysing the real meaning of the novel, Dobrolyubov spoke about the forthcoming appearance in literature of the "Russian Insarov": "We have not long to wait for him judging by the feverishly painful anxiety with which we are awaiting his appearance. He is a necessity to us, our lives are not worthwhile without him, and each day is but the eve of the next

without any significance in itself. That day will come at last!"

The reactionary critics greeted the novel *On the Eve* with discontent and anger.

The next novel, *Fathers and Children*, raised a storm of furious discussion over a whole decade. The democratic critics regarded it as a satire on the younger generation, who, in Turgenev's novel, were called "nihilists." The reactionary writers, on the contrary, considered that Turgenev had lowered his banners before the democratic opposition.

The results of the change-over from romanticism to the natural school and further from *A Sportsman's Sketches* to the novel, was a clear admission on the part of Turgenev that realism was required in literature without any idealization or romantic frills. *A House of Gentlefolk*, *On the Eve* and *Fathers and Children* are Turgenev's greatest achievements as a novelist.

In an article written by Turgenev about the novel *Fathers and Children* he takes the reader into his literary laboratory and, by means of object lessons, shows him how his creative ideas advance from character to idea, that is, shows him how insistently *life* dictates to him while the novel is being written, how personal sympathies, convictions and tendencies clash with the truth of real life, which must ultimately conquer if the author is talented, honest and has no object other than that of being faithful to the truth. ("The accurate and powerful depiction of the truth and the reality of life is the greatest happiness a writer can know, even if that truth does not coincide with his own sympathies.") Creative objectivism, which Turgenev defended, doubtlessly played a positive role in the struggle against the stilted style of romantic poetry, but when it came up against the purposeful aestheticism of the revolutionary democrats it could have played a contrary role. It is a point of interest that Turgenev himself admitted, if not the mistake, then at least the injustice of an exaggeratedly objective attitude towards the new man, towards Bazarov, the hero of *Fathers and Children*. "The writer in me," said Turgenev, "should have sacrificed himself to the citizen in me which would have prevented the 'reactionary swine' from using the novel for their own ends."

Turgenev admitted that "the question raised was far more important than a matter of artistic license."

In the 60's of the last century, the period of the demarcation of forces in Russian social and political life, Turgenev with his moderate-liberal ideals was left far behind the progressive democrats. As Lenin said, Turgenev "was repelled by the *'moujik'* democracy of Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky." The failure of his novel *Virgin Soil* after his rupture with the democrats is characteristic in this respect. Turgenev had spent so many years away from his native land that he felt it to be a cause of the tragic side of his fate as a writer. "No, you cannot get the real spirit of Russia when you live almost constantly at a great distance from her." "In literary matters I am compelled, like a bear in winter, to suck my own paw: but nothing will come of it," wrote Turgenev in these years, trying to explain to himself and his correspondents the cause of the failure of *Virgin Soil*.

The basis of all Turgenev's best works is realism. His rough drafts and plans show clearly how reality and fiction are interwoven in his novels. The raw material supplied by his own observations from life was subjected to a strict process of selection, everything superfluous was discarded and that which was necessary for the creation of a complete figure was added. His works were created slowly, step by step. Turgenev's great mastery is seen with fine effect in the process of working up his raw material. Out of separate elements of reality he boldly and freely built up a new figure.

The brilliant mosaic, powerful brushwork, faithful pictures, and a flexible language of exceptional power are what distinguish Turgenev's work. He is one of the best stylists in world literature. Turgenev was not inclined to speak about his services to literature but he found it necessary to mention how deeply he felt and jealously protected the purity of the Russian language. He is proud of the fact that the critics who accused him of all manner of things were never able to accuse him of "impurity or incorrectness of language," of "copying what others had written." His language

is really flexible and beautiful in its simplicity and ingenuousness. All forms of rhetoric, bombacity and pretentiousness which distort the riches of nature, natural beauty and the logic and expressiveness of speech are foreign to him.

Turgenev's novels and stories have been translated into many languages and are available to readers the world over.

It is a well-known fact that Turgenev's work and personality exerted great influence over a number of leading French writers: George Sand, Flaubert, Zola, the brothers Goncourt, Daudet, Mérimée and Maupassant.

After Turgenev's story *Relics* had been translated into French, George Sand wrote to him: "Master, we must all come to you to learn." Maupassant used to call himself a pupil of Turgenev's. In one of his letters to Turgenev Flaubert wrote: "What I most admire in your art is the distinguished style which is its supreme quality. You find means of writing truthfully without banality, of being sentimental without being affected, of being humorous without being low. Without seeking to be theatrical you achieve tragic effects by the very finish of your compositions. You have the air of the *'bonhomme'* but you have great strength. 'The lion wearing the fox's skin,' as Montaigne says. . . When one reads your stories one thinks: 'I have experienced that. . .' What psychology! I should need a large number of lines in which to tell you all I think. . ." .

That was in 1869. Long before this, however, the works of the young Turgenev had won him the admiration of the notable people of Europe. Carlyle, for example, stated that he had never read a more moving story than Turgenev's *Mumu*. When the *Diary of a Superfluous Man* was published Guizot expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of the author of this psychological study, which, according to him, "opened up unplumbed depths of the human soul." H. Taine, in his *History of the Revolution* referred to Turgenev's *Living Relics* as an example of the reproduction of the truth of life as understood by the people.

From 1856 onwards, Turgenev lived for a long time abroad and was an active mediator between Russian and West-European literature. He was instrumental in publishing French, English and German translations of Pushkin, Gogol, Krylov, Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Pissemsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin and others. Turgenev himself translated Pushkin and Lermontov into French with the aid of Prosper Mérimée and L. Viardot. He also strove to get the works of Flaubert, Zola, and Maupassant into Russian magazines and popularized in Russia the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe, Heine, Auerbach, Paul de Kock and Cladelle.

In order that these "brilliant colours" should reach the Russian reader, Turgenev himself undertook their translation. It was, as Turgenev himself says, "a labour of love." "I have polished up that piece (*Legend of St. Julian*) very carefully and do not want to leave a single stain. . . This was a tour de force in which the Russian language took the field against the French and was not conquered. . ."

It must be mentioned that the French writers (Flaubert, Zola, Daudet, the Goncourts and Maupassant) with whom Turgenev was most closely connected in the 70's, felt the strong influence of Turgenev, an influence that was generally admitted to be beneficial. The Goncourts' diaries describe "Flaubert's luncheons" with their literary discussions that lasted till dawn. They show Turgenev in these circles as being something in the nature of an arbitrator in question of the understanding both of literature and of the epoch as a whole. It frequently happened that it was Turgenev who "discovered" for them the real meaning of the great works of European literature, in addition to which he helped many people in Western Europe to a better understanding of Russia. Turgenev always introduced simplicity and humanity into an atmosphere that was permeated with a number of abstract aesthetic interests. There is a note made by Goncourt on March 21, 1875, which gives us a picture of Turgenev at Flaubert's, translating *Prometheus* for his friends and analysing *Satyr*, "two works of the young Goethe, showing the highest flight of the imagination. In this translation, where Turgenev tried to picture for us the young life of a world in process of birth, the palpitation of Goethe's words I was struck by the familiarity

and at the same time the boldness of his expression. Great original works, no matter in what language, have never been written in an academic style. . . ."

Flaubert stated that Turgenev "has a thorough knowledge of all literature." The French critic Dumesnil said that "Turgenev was the model which Maupassant set for himself." "Maupassant adopted the aesthetics of Turgenev, which were very like those of Flaubert but rather more 'left,' as they say in politics. It is 'a slice of life,' without frills, without sapient and dramatic combinations, without a too studied style, in a word it stands apart from the poesy of Flaubert and from 'Art for Art's sake.'"

NICHOLAS BOGOSLOVSKY

NEW BOOKS

A biographical essay on Admiral Nakhimov by Academician E. Tarle, author of *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia* and other historical works was recently published by the Navy Publishing House.

Entering the navy as a midshipman at the age of fifteen, Nakhimov, until his death during the defence of Sevastopol in 1855 when he was killed by an enemy bullet, was, in the words of Tarle, "a naval fanatic." He won fame in many a naval engagement, especially in the battle against the Turks at Sinop, but in history Nakhimov is known as one of the leaders and organizers of the defence of Sevastopol.

In his book Tarle cites a number of facts which speak of the great popularity of the admiral among the sailors.

"At the time of the assault a dying sailor lying on the ground near Malakhov Hill cried out to a passing officer: 'Your Honour, I want to ask you something important. It's not for help. . .' The officer approached the wounded man. 'Please tell me, Admiral Nakhimov has not been killed, has he?' 'No!' 'Thank God. I can now die in peace.' These were the last words of the dying man."

The glorious traditions of the defence of Sevastopol in 1855 inspired the heroic defenders of Sevastopol in 1942. The British *Sun* wrote in November 1942, that the present-day Sevastopol is the Sevastopol of Nakhimov. It is not without reason that the Soviet sailors, the defenders of Sevastopol call themselves the "grandsons of Nakhimov."

The publication of E. Tarle's book will satisfy the keen interest of the Soviet reader in those who have brought fame to their country.

The Moscow State Publishing House of Literature has just published A. Kononov's *Sergei Glushkov*, a book which undoubtedly can be regarded as one of the author's best works. The book is written in the form of a Soviet school boy's diary. The narrow world of the school children in a provincial town, their friendship and first awakenings of love are described with great warmth and feeling by the author. The even tenor of life of these boys and girls is sharply changed by the outbreak of the war. Sergei goes to work as a chauffeur. On returning from one of his trips he learns that his native town has been captured by the Germans. Sergei and his comrades organize a partisan detachment. The second part of the book is given up to the activities of this detachment. At last Sergei makes his way to a regular Red Army unit.

Sergei Glushkov who had kept a diary all through makes the following final entry: "We have all changed in these past months. I believe it is high time we were treated as grown-ups. Ahead of us is a long and difficult struggle which will end in our victory. It seems that destiny has chosen our generation to grow up fighting in battle."

This story of a Soviet school boy in the war period will be read with great interest by young and old alike.

The Soviet film about Stalingrad is now being shown in the U.S.A. under the name *The City Which Checked Hitler*.

Vassili Grossman, author of *The People Is Immortal*, has written a series of stories about this heroic and legendary city (published by the "Soviet Writer") under the title *Stalingrad*.

Grossman who was in Stalingrad at the height of the battles succeeded in giving a true portrayal of the men who fought for the Volga fortress.

This is a book about men who withstood the furious onslaught of Hitler's armoured divisions. "The fate of the great war for freedom," wrote Grossman, "is being decided here on the Volga."

Tankmen, infantrymen, workers' battalions from the tractor plant pass before the reader. Tanks go into battle, guns are rolled into position, mortars are stationed for action.

To the future historian writing the Battle of Stalingrad, V. Grossman's stories will be of invaluable help: not only are they historically authentic, they are also psychologically true; they fully impart the atmosphere of events in the great city on the Volga.

From old women encountered in a Volga village the author heard a story about a German general taken prisoner. This general addressing the Red Army men who captured him said: "If we don't take Stalingrad we shall have to return to our borders. Once that happens it means we have lost our footing in Russia." Like every folk tale invented by the people there is more truth in this than in many a true story.

Grossman's stories were written in the most trying days of the Stalingrad epic, and in them the author shows that such a people cannot but be victorious.

Like the documentary film, stories of this

nature become a part of the great canvas of the war.

Eugene Gabrilovich's latest book *At Moscow* deals with one of the most difficult and gravest periods in the Patriotic War, the period between the autumn of 1941 and the spring of 1942, the time when the Red Army checked the enemy at the gates of Moscow, launched its offensive and forced the nazi army to roll back.

Gabrilovich describes a comparatively small part of what took place "at Moscow," but it is an important part, and is based on the facts of the war, and permeated with the tense days of that period.

The story centres around the company of a Siberian infantry division, its commander and men, the divisional commander and the two girls Varya Oknova and Olya, the sister of the company commander. At first both girls are engaged on fortification work in a labour battalion on the outskirts of Moscow. Subsequently the detachment volunteers for service in the army, where Varya and Olya become snipers. Encircled by a big detachment of Germans both girls commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the enemy.

The author focuses the reader's attention mainly on these characters. He shows the sterling qualities of the Red Army men, their thoughts and feelings. It is through the fighting spirit of these men that we acquire an idea of the nature and course of operations outside Moscow in those days.

Soviet critics note that E. Gabrilovich, like many other talented authors, has learned a great deal from the war, and correctly construed his material. However, in many cases the author has failed to give the necessary artistic polish to his material. Some of the characters in his book lack vitality and are far from convincing.

And yet, despite these shortcomings, Gabrilovich portrays the feelings and sentiments with great warmth and veracity. Herein lies the indisputable merit of his book.

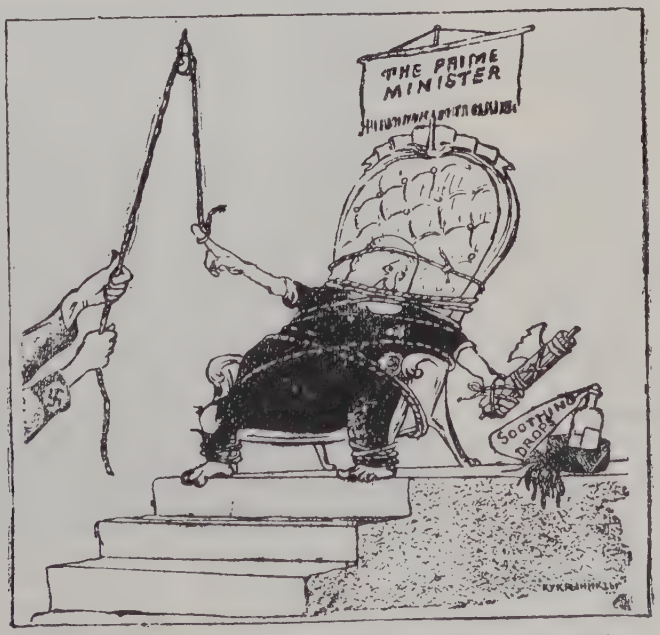
India, recently published by the State Publishing House of Political Literature, is the work of S. Melman of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., and deals with the problem of India's industrial and economic potentialities and their historical development. By sorting extensive material, both facts and statistics, the author traces the present war's influence on the development of India's industry. A considerable section of the book is devoted to the progressive economic growth and state structure in India. A special chapter deals with India's role in the second world war.

L. Argutinskaya's *Blood-Drenched Soil* ("Soviet Writer" Publishing House) is the story of a Soviet nurse who was encircled and then taken prisoner by the Germans. The heroine of the story eventually escapes and after making her way on foot across occupied territory where she sees "a sea of blood, suffering and horrors" to which the Soviet people are subjected by the fascist invaders, she finally crosses the line to the Soviet side.

FIRMLY BOUND TO HIS MINISTERIAL DUTIES

Mussolini who has not abandoned Germany since he was kidnapped suffers from severe attacks of psychological depression and plays the part allotted him most unwillingly.

(Gazette de Lausanne)



Drawing by Kukryniksy

"SUBMARINE T-9"

Many a film has been made about submarines. The fascinating adventure and romance, the unique situations involved in distant voyages attracted the Soviet cinema long before the war. *Submarine T-9*, a new film about submarine sailors fighting in the Great Patriotic War (produced by Alexander Ivanov, scenario by Alexander Stein and the late Johann Zeltser who died prematurately at his post in the Baltic) shows Soviet seamen fighting gallantly for their country.

The audience sees the crew of a Soviet ship in action, a group of Soviet seamen adrift in their steel box amid the elements of sea and war. The youthful commander, old boatswain, watchful navigator, hot-headed torpedo-officer, young seamen recently graduated from a submarine school, and the inevitable cook—they all have different characters, yet come from the same root. The film gives a striking portrait of every member of the crew of the T-9, revealing the specific traits of each.

The T-9 leaves for enemy shores to carry out an assignment. Standing on the bridge, its commander, Captain of the Third Rank Kostrov, peers into the distance. The wireless operator brings a message from headquarters ordering the boat to intercept an enemy convoy, to attack and destroy transports carrying hitlerite troops, tanks, guns and ammunition.

It is a difficult and dangerous job. The enemy transports are sailing under a convoy of warships on the other side of a corridor of impenetrable minefields fringing the enemy coast. To get through and attack the convoy it is necessary either to rise to the surface with the grave risk of hitting a mine and endangering both crew and boat, or submerge to the limit, which in view of the small depth beneath the minefields involves the danger of running aground.

Chibissov, a young torpedo-officer, suggests a break-through on the surface. However, after weighing all the pros and cons, Captain Kostrov decides to attempt to break through undersea. The boat is steering along the course chosen, when the captain spots an enemy transport headed in the same direction. Realizing that the ship is following a secret passage between the minefields, Kostrov orders the submarine to submerge and by means of the listening device to follow the ship's course. Sailing in the wake of the enemy ship the submarine penetrates into the heart of the minefields. Black balls charged with explosives bob back and forth on their mooring cables as the Soviet boat boldly sails past. Only the foaming surf as the periscope is raised for a moment reveals its hazardous route.

The minefields passed, the torpedo apparatus are got ready for attack. The positions are splendid, but Captain Kostrov calls the attack off. Kostrov possesses the patience and will-power of a true submarin captain. To sink this small fry is to reveal the location of the submarine and forfeit the chance of delivering an attack on the convoy. Gathered behind a table in the wardroom the commanders listen to Kostrov explaining his ideas.

While the conference is in progress the ship's observers report that the convoy has been sighted. The crew take up their battle stations. Standing at the periscope Kostrov calmly and skilfully directs the boat towards its firing position. . . A salvo is fired. With the water swirling around them the torpedoes fly straight at the enemy transport. It is seriously damaged and sinks to the bottom. The convoy ships begin to chase the submarine. Depth charges burst around the boat as it submerges. The sixth compartment is hit and water streams into the gap. The crew rapidly get to work and repair the damage.

Once again the submarine is ready for the fray. Its first attack was crowned with success—the sinking of a 16,000 ton transport.

Formally the boat had carried out its assignment. Captain Kostrov could now with clear conscience report to his command that orders had been carried out successfully. But two other enemy transports, of 21,000 tons, carrying troops to the front, had escaped. The audience realizes that Kostrov could not rest until this problem too is solved. And the solution is found: the submarine enters the enemy's base and with uncommon daring torpedoes the ships. It would seem that the captain might now be satisfied. But no. He sank the ships and they will no longer be able to transport a single soldier. But the troops had already disembarked, were already entrained en-route to the front. Alas, a submarine cannot fight a train on land!

It is then that one of the crew suggests to the captain a way out. The captain's mate Palat, the miner Chibissov, boatswain Minayev and Red Navy man Sorokin are detailed ashore. Dressed in diver's outfits they are to make their way to the viaduct across a mountain gorge and blow up the train when it is passing. The charge had been placed. The fatal spark creeps along the fuse. The job is almost finished. But the group of daring men don't think of leaving: "We must make sure that the operation is a success." And true enough. An enemy sentry sees the fuse and with a well-aimed bullet an enemy sniper cuts it. Everything has to be done over again. With a grenade in his hand Chibissov rushes at the viaduct. The sentry tries to knock him down. But before the enemy has time to fire his gun he is hit by a Russian bullet fired by one of Chibissov's comrades. Sacrificing his life Chibissov blows up the viaduct and the train is sent crashing to the bottom.

This assignment carried out, the landing party returns to the submarine, but the boat has been spotted and is pursued. Enemy planes

and destroyers shower it with depth charges. The boat submerges to the bottom. The heroic crew hears the noise of screws made by enemy patrol ships above. There is little air, the men breathe heavily, their strength is waning. When remaining at the bottom any longer seems beyond their endurance the captain orders the boat to rise preferring to die in battle while inflicting further losses on the enemy rather than suffocate at the bottom of the sea.

As if suddenly awakening from a stupor, the whole crew though suffering from the lack of air, take up their battle stations.

The boat rises. But the enemy destroyers and cutters have already been chased away by warships which had come to the relief of the submarine. With a victorious salute they return to port.

This film gives splendid portraits of the people. They form the backbone of the picture. The actor Oleg Zharov gives a faithful and perfectly finished character study of the outwardly calm Soviet officer, Captain Kostrov, a man of exceptionally strong will, discipline and courage.

A daring, hot-heated but at the same time disciplined man is torpedo-officer Chibissov as portrayed by the actor V. Chinkin. An entirely different type of character is that of the experienced boatswain Minayev, an observant soldier, but he too is ready to sacrifice his life for his country if need be. Minayev's character is well reproduced by V. Sharlakhov.

The heroes of the film will long be remembered by the audience. These are the characters of Russian heroes, welded not by formal discipline, but by unwavering faith in victory and iron determination to win this victory which inspires all their deeds. They are the grandsons of Admiral Nakhimov's seamen, brothers of those Black Sea marines who overcame all the obstacles to breakthrough to Novorossiisk in September 1943. Their exploits recall the daring submarine sailors who were honoured with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union in this war.

Much credit is due to the cameramen. The sea stills, scenes shot under water and the models all bear the mark of a high level of cinematographic art. The filmgoer sees huge expanses of water, mine fields, the bottom of the sea, explosions of depth charges, torpedo attacks, the sinking of enemy ships, the huge viaduct blown sky high and the train-crashing to its doom. The most complicated stills reveal remarkable skill of the cameramen and producers. Renkov, an experienced photographer, and his assistants have scored a great success. Very frequently such films betray indeed too clearly the paraphernalia, the "film kitchen," which deprives the film of the spectator's confidence and upsets the style of the picture. The *Submarine T-9* is also technically true to life and as a whole produces a strong impression.

The *Submarine T-9* is a profoundly ideological and truthful film and may be regarded as one of the wartime successes of Soviet cinematography.

D. SIMOV

NEWS AND VIEWS

THE VOICE OF FIGHTING SLAVS

The Sixth Plenary Session of the All-Slav Committee ended recently in Moscow. Speakers revealed the full scope of the selfless struggle conducted by Slav peoples against the hitlerite enslavers.

Vice-Chairman of the All-Slav Committee Božidar Maslaric, a Yugoslav public figure, devoted his report to the struggle of the Yugoslav partisans. Isolated partisan detachments of Yugoslavia, he said, have now grown into the mighty People's Liberation Army. The strength of this army increased recently when five thousand men liberated by the partisans from nazi concentration camps joined its ranks. The partisans are fighting tirelessly for the freedom of their native land; they put war factories out of commission, wreck railway lines, destroy the invaders' manpower. "Dear brothers!" reads the message of greeting to the Yugoslav partisans adopted at the Plenary Session of the All-Slav Committee. "Through the roar of cannons, through the flames and thunder of unprecedented battles we address to you these words of affection and greeting. We are separated by the firing line of fronts. But this has not divided us. We are moved by the same feelings and thoughts, we have the same aim—to rid the world of the hitlerite plague, to bring freedom to the enslaved Slav peoples."

Wanda Wasilewska, Chairman of the Union of Polish Patriots, delivered a report on the tasks of the Union—organization of Poles in the U.S.S.R. for struggle against nazism.

"We Poles, now in Russia," she said, "have been given the opportunity to form a Polish armed corps. One of its divisions, named after Tadeusz Kosciuszko, has already carried out its first combat assignment in crossing the Dnieper at one sector thus initiating the struggle of the Poles on the Soviet-German front."

The session approved the activities of the Union of Polish Patriots directed towards the liberation of Poland and its transformation into a free, independent democratic power. A message of greetings to the officers and men of the First Polish Corps in the U.S.S.R. reads: "Polish warriors! Your exploit will recall to life a Poland new, free and just, occupying a fitting place in the family of world's free peoples..."

Considerable interest was evoked by the speech of Professor Zdenek Nejedly, Vice-Chairman of the All-Slav Committee, who recounted his impressions gained during a visit to the Czechoslovak unit operating on the Soviet-German front. The unit has acquired considerable fighting experience and is successfully carrying out complicated military tasks. The Plenum's message to the Czechoslovak fighters concludes as follows: "The Plenum of the All-Slav Committee wholeheartedly wishes you success in battle and new glory. Looming ahead of you are the towers of golden Prague. Forward, to battle against the enemy!"

Academician Alexei Tolstoy, a member of the Presidium of the All-Slav Committee (back from a visit to Kharkov), cited documents and materials on the monstrous crimes perpetrated by the Hitlerites during the occupation of Kharkov. Thousands of Soviet people, including children, women, and old men, were subjected to savage torture by the Germans.

Hitlerite crimes in occupied Byelorussia were described in a speech by Timothy Gorbunov, member of the All-Slav Committee.

"Traditions of Friendship between the Russian and Bulgarian Peoples" was the subject of a report by Academician Nicholas Derzhavin, a member of the Committee.

Amid great enthusiasm the Plenary Session adopted a number of messages. "The valiant victories of the Red Army," reads one of them, "evoke joy among all the Slav and other freedom-loving peoples. . . The banners of the sacred struggle for liberty of the enslaved peoples of Europe against the German invaders are raised higher and higher. Partisan warfare waged by the Slav and other peoples against the foreign invaders is raging with growing force. . . We, representatives of the Slav peoples of Europe, assure all the Soviet people that we will devote all our strength, our very life, to the cause of the ultimate defeat of the base and treacherous enemy, to the cause of liberation of all Slav territories from the German fascist scum. . ."

Participating in the work of the Plenum were outstanding public figures of the Slav countries. The voice of fighting Slavdom resounded with great force from the platform of the meeting testifying that "the heart of the Slav was tempered in the flame of the great war, by the suffering of the people, in the fire of sacred hatred for the German invaders."

The Plenary Session also adopted an appeal to the Slavs and all freedom-loving peoples to strengthen in every way the struggle against nazism.

MOSLEM ANTI-FASCISTS

Since the first days of the war of the peoples of the Soviet Union against Hitler Germany and its accomplices in Europe, the Moslem clergy of Soviet Central Asia—through their prayers and sermons—have called on all faithful Moslems at the front to spare neither strength nor, if need be, their lives in ruthlessly exterminating the foe. The Moslem clergy appealed to the faithful Moslems working in the hinterland to work with tenfold energy, to supply the front with all that is needed for speedy annihilation of the enemy.

A gathering of representatives of the Moslem clergy and believers in Uzbekistan, Tad-

jikistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizistan and Kazakhstan assembled in Tashkent in October 1943.

Among those assembled was the Mufti of the Central Ecclesiastical Administration of the Moslems, in the town of Ufa—Habd Rahman Rasulev, member of the Ecclesiastical Council of the Central Ecclesiastieal Administration of Moslems — Imam of the Moscow Mosque Muhtasib Halil Rahman Nasr-eddin, Imam of Kirghizistan — Alim Khan Tiura Shakir Hoja, Hoja of Kazakhstan—Muhtasib Habd-ul-Gaffar Shams-eddin, the ecclesiast of Tadjikistan—Mullah Saheh Bobokalan, the ecclesiast of Turkmenistan—Kene Ishan Hidir Quili-ogly, and Murahoja Salih-hoja Halfa Muraris, from Tashkent.

The conference accepted the appeal to the Moslems evoking them to a merciless struggle against the German usurpers. The eighty-two-year-old Ishan Babakhan Abdymajiktkhanov was chosen as President of the Ecclesiastical Administration of the Moslems.

RUSSIAN SCIENTIST OF EIGHTY DECORATED

At the conference of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. tribute was paid to Academician V. A. Obruchev, who had been decorated with the Order of Lenin on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

Academician A. A. Grigoryev and Corresponding Member D. V. Nalivkin, who made addresses on the scientific activities of V. A. Obruchev, talked about his varied and fruitful work in science. Academician Obruchev has done much work on the geological exploration of Siberia. His three-volume work *The Geology of Siberia*—for which he was awarded a Stalin Prize—is a guide to every geologist working in Siberia. His four thousand abstracts and reviews, and over three hundred scientific works would make a complete library for a man of learning.

During the war-time, while in the Urals, Obruchev gave a number of valuable predictions as to the existence of minerals in the North Urals, which were of great assistance to metallurgical enterprises. He has also done much valuable work in research problems relating to eternal frost.

Replying to the speeches and messages of congratulation, Obruchev said:

"This complimentary appreciation of my scientific activity, adjudged worthy of such high award by the Soviet government, and the numerous congratulations offered me on the occasion of my eightieth birthday show that I have not lived my long life uselessly and that I have brought my country what benefit I could. I owe my successes to the pleasure I invariably find in labour. I consider creative work as the essential meaning of life.

"Two thirds of my long life were spent under the rule of old Russia. But in my declining years I lived to see the vitalizing effect of the Socialist Revolution of which I had dreamed in my young days like many other people. I saw the rebirth of my native land where man's labour had at last found its rightful and worthy place. Broad educational measures brought out the native talent of the people, heroes of labour—shock-workers, stakhanovites and inventors. They showed the world the immense importance of free creative endeavour, of work imbued with thought and the desire to bring it to the point of perfection for the good of the country. And this creative endeavour finds every possible encouragement on the part of our government.

"I am sincerely glad to have seen this unprecedented flourishing of science in the new conditions of life and work and that I was able to take an active part in it.

"In my paper read at the recent session of the Academy of Sciences I outlined the role and significance of geology in the successful defence of our country and the work of geologists at the front and in the rear. Geologists have more than done their share in the nation-wide competition of the peoples of our Soviet Union in ensuring victory over the enemy hordes who sought to rob us of our rights and opportunities and reduce us to slaves of the notorious "higher race" of bestial aspect.

"I am happy in the knowledge that despite my age I can still work as before for the good of our dear native land."

AT THE SOVIET WRITERS' CLUB

The green ray—the last ray of the sun as it sinks beyond the sea. Rarely is this colour to be seen, only when there is a particular combination of light, shadow and play of water. Seamen think it a sign of good luck to see the green ray.

The Green Ray is the name of the latest novel from the pen of the well-known Soviet writer, Leonid Sobolev, whose works have frequently appeared in the pages of our magazine.

L. Sobolev recently read some chapters from the first part of his new novel in the warm and friendly atmosphere of the Soviet Writers' Club, and explained how the idea of this work came to him during his stay among the seamen of the Black Sea fleet.

Sobolev admits that his return to the novel form, after a series of short stories, was dictated directly by the wishes of his readers, with whom he maintains close contact. The reader wishes to live with the heroes, to spend some time with them, and not part with them after a passing acquaintanceship. The war and its bitter experiences have made people think deeply about life. Those young in years have become mature in their outlook upon life, and it is not merely entertainment which they expect from literature, but a full and authoritative answer to all questions which move them, including that of "how we should live after the war."

These thoughts also move the main heroes of Sobolev's latest novel. Sobolev tried to show the psychological basis of the gallantry and heroic exploits in which the history of this war is so rich; to show how a raw youth develops into a brave and determined officer; and, more broadly, to follow up all the processes in the life of the Soviet fleet in war-time. This was the theme of the chapters read at the Writers' Club. Speakers remarked that Sobolev's latest novel is one of the best works by the author of *Storm Warning*.

The first chapters of *The Green Ray*, printed serially in the *Krasny Flot*, the naval newspaper, are extremely popular.

The Writers' Club was crowded for a celebration evening on the liberation of Kharkov and the Donbass. M. Rylsky, M. Bazhan, V. Sossyura, Y. Yanovsky, A. Dovzhenko and others read their poems, short stories and excerpts from scenarios, expressing joy at the liberation of their land, and pride in its heroes whose gallant deeds are tearing the German yoke from the necks of the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainian songs were rendered with great feeling by M. Litvinenko-Volgemut, I. Patorzhinsky and K. Laptev, members of the first group of artists to visit liberated Kharkov.

The meeting sent a message of greetings in the name of Soviet writers to the liberators of the second capital of the Ukraine.

RETURN OF MOSCOW THEATRES

After a twenty-two month stay in Kuibyshev, the State Academic Bolshoy Theatre of the U.S.S.R. has returned to Moscow. While in Kuibyshev, the theatre staged nine operas, including *Ivan Sussanin* by Glinka, *Eugene Onegin* by Chaikovsky, *Carmen* by Bizet, and four ballets, including Chaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* and B. Assafyev's *Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. The theatre also performed two new productions—V. Yurovsky's ballet *Scarlet Sails* and Rossini's opera *Wilhelm Tell*. Seven of its different concert companies also gave over a thousand concerts at the front, and hundreds of performances in military hospitals. The theatre has collected 1,900,000 rubles for the Defence Fund by means of special performances given during the artists' free time and by individual contributions.

The theatre building in Moscow, which had suffered during an air raid, has been fully repaired, and the auditorium is now even more magnificent than before. New gilt gleams everywhere, and the seats, boxes and balustrades are covered with red velvet. The painted ceiling depicting the nine Muses led by Apollo has been restored to its original form. The restoration, which necessitated the removal of five coats of paint, revealed the original contours and colours by Titov in 1856. In the centre of the restored ceiling hangs a huge crystal chandelier—ninety years old—consisting of twenty-two thousand pieces, many of which had until the restoration been chipped, broken, or altogether lost. Now all the missing bronze parts have been replaced. Considerable architectural changes have been made in the vestibule and the entrances to the parterre, which now form a promenade leading to the auditorium, glowing with gold and purple.

The interior restoration of the theatre carried out during the war period continued in the grim fall and winter months of 1941, when the fascists were straining all their efforts to get to Moscow, and were subjecting the city to intensive air raids.

In the early autumn of 1943 six theatres returned to the capital after two years of work in various regions of the Soviet Union: in the Urals, in Siberia, on the shores of the Pacific, in the Tatar Republic, in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and in the large industrial cities of the country.

The Mossoviet Theatre, directed by Y. Zavadsky, played in Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan, and in Chimkent, one of the cities of the same republic, its repertoire including plays by A. Ostrovsky and C. Goldoni and modern war plays—*Russians* by C. Simonov, *Front* by A. Korneychuk, and *Invasion* by L. Leonov. The theatre also revived ten of its Moscow productions.

The Moscow Kamerny or Chamber Theatre directed by A. Tairov, played in Barnaul where it produced two new plays—*The Wide Stretching Sea*, written in Leningrad by V. Vishnevsky, V. Alarov and A. Kron, and *To the Last Heartbeat*, a new play by C. Paustovsky. The theatre is also producing *At the Gates of Leningrad*, V. Vishnevsky's latest play.

The Moscow Theatre of the Revolution played in Tashkent, capital of the Uzbek Republic, where it gave its five-hundredth performance of Lope de Vega's *Dog in the Manger*. Its new productions include *Long, Long Ago* by F. Gladkov, and *Front* by A. Korneychuk. N. Okhlopkov, at present working on N. Pogodin's new play *The Boatwoman*, treating of the defence of Stalingrad, has been appointed art director of the theatre.

The Moscow Musical Comedy Theatre played in Prokopyevsk and Stalinsk, in the Kuznetsk Coal Basin, where it produced *The Tobacco Captain*, a new Soviet musical comedy by V. Shcherbachov, *Three Meetings*, and Offenbach's operetta *The Drum-Major's Daughter*.

The Moscow Theatre of Satire has been in eight Siberian towns—Irkutsk, Chita, Komsomolsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Chelyabinsk, Magnitogorsk and Sverdlovsk. During this time it produced *The Moscow Woman*, a comedy by V. Gussev, *The New Adventures of the Brave Soldier Schweik*, by A. Slobodskoy, and *Actress* by A. Faiko. The theatre is now rehearsing Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

The Central Puppet Theatre directed by Honoured Artist of the Republic S. Obraztsov has returned to Moscow after a long absence.

"Our theatre has visited over fifty towns," said S. Obraztsov. "We have played not only on large stages, but in factory clubs, in mines, on ships and at car depots, at railway stations, in houses of culture, in schools and children's homes.

"We did a great deal of work for Red Army units. Our special program for the Red Army men included a satirical operetta *On the Roofs of Berlin*, a skit *The Führer's Dream*, a short play *Listening in to Berlin*, and others. The mobile ensemble of our theatre performed at the front for over eleven months.

"In Moscow the theatre will revive its old plays—*Puss in Boots*, *Aladdin's Lamp*, *The Magic Galoshes*, *At the Pike's Bidding*, *The Gosling*, and will show its new productions—*Christmas Eve* by Gogol, *The Forest Secret* by E. Schwartz; there will also be the first performance of *Stag King* by C. Gozzi.

The Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator performed for children of the Tatar Republic, and then visited the towns of Murom and Kolomna. The theatre has nine new productions to its credit—*Order for the Front* by G. Mdivani, *Alyonushka* by N. Shestakov, *A Far-off Re-*

S. Obraztsov, Director of the Moscow Puppet Theatre, giving performance for the Red Army men at the front

gion by E. Schwartz, and others, intended for children of all ages. The theatre's most recent production is A. Simukov's play *Native Soil.*

The Moscow theatres have returned enriched with fresh impressions and new creative experience.

THE FATHER OF RUSSIAN STAGE REALISM

Soviet theatrical circles have recently commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the death of the great Russian actor M. S. Shchepkin (1788-1863). "He was a great artist both in his gifts and his work. He created truth on the Russian stage," said A. I. Herzen, the well-known Russian revolutionary and publicist, when writing about Shchepkin.

M. S. Shchepkin has been the teacher and unsurpassed example of Russian actors for many generations. It is not for nothing that the Maly Theatre, the scene of his long creative life, is known as "Shchepkin's House." Pushkin had the highest opinion of Shchepkin's stage gifts.

The All-Russian Theatre Society and the Maly Theatre organized a Shchepkin memorial meeting, which included actors, regisseurs, dramatists and dramatic critics. "The great Russian actor regarded his work in the theatre as a noble service to the people. The principles forming the basis of Shchepkin's school are still alive today." This was the gist of all the speeches at the meeting.

A big Shchepkin memorial concert was held at the Chaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow. Scenes from plays in which the great Russian actor performed were staged. The Maly Theatre arranged an exhibition in the foyer illustrating the life and work of the great actor. On display were also Shchepkin's original handwritten notes with an introductory note by A. Pushkin, his correspondence with his friends, and other documents recalling the epoch in which Shchepkin lived and worked.

THE GORKY DRAMA THEATRE IN MOSCOW

The Gorky Drama Theatre has been giving successful performances in Moscow. This theatre, established in the town named after Maxim Gorky, devotes much place in its repertoire to the works of that great Russian writer. This theatre was the first in the Soviet Union to produce shortly before the outbreak of the war Gorky's plays *The Zykovs* and *The Last.* In Moscow it played *Meshchanye* (Middlemen) which has never left its boards for sixteen years, and *The Barbarians.*

The theatre is also presenting a number of Russian and foreign classics including *A Dolls House* by Ibsen, *A Winter's Tale* by Shakespeare, *The Sea Gull* by Chekhov and *A Dream on the Volga* by A. Ostrovsky.

For almost a quarter of a century the director of the theatre has been N. Sobolshchikov-Samarin, a follower of the best traditions of the Russian theatrical art, a man who has devoted fifty years of his life to the stage.

The theatre has presented two modern plays in Moscow—*Invasion* by L. Leonov and *Oleko Dundich* by A. Rzheshevsky and M. Kats.

The Gorky Drama Theatre's performances were warmly welcomed both by Moscow theatregoers and by visitors from the front.

NEW PUPPET THEATRE IN MOSCOW

E. S. Demeni, Honoured Artist of the Republic, a well-known member of the Leningrad Puppet Theatre, is organizing a new puppet

theatre in Moscow. The Leningrad Puppet Theatre, one of the oldest under the Soviet government, was organized by Demeni in Leningrad in 1919. Since its opening, the theatre has presented about a hundred original plays, several of which, as for instance *Gulliver in Lilliput Land*, have had over a thousand performances. In his theatre Demeni combined two groups of doll actors—bibabo and marionettes.

At the beginning of the war the theatre sent a small mobile ensemble—three people and a suitcase of dolls—to the front where it gave over seven hundred performances. The main troupe continued working in Leningrad. The Germans bombed the city, sirens sounded the alert, compulsory intermissions often lasted an hour or more. But then the audience would return from the shelter and the play would continue. . .

The new theatre organized in Moscow by Demeni has a specially equipped building where puppet plays for children and adults are performed with excellent effect.

POSTER EXHIBITION

A large exhibition of posters has been opened at the Moscow Museum of the Revolution, showing works by artists of Moscow, Leningrad, Turkestan, Tadjikistan, Georgia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Turkmenia and other republics of the U.S.S.R. Here one may see all types of poster art, ranging from the "TASS Windows," reproduced in thousands of copies, to hand-painted placards.

In laconic, bold strokes the artists of the different republics, whose works are rich in national colour and imagination, depict the unity of front and rear, show battle episodes, reflect the achievements of the Soviet people and the heroic past of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

The Moscow "TASS Windows" posters are by well-known poster painters including P. Sokolov-Skalya who has contributed excellent posters on historical themes. In the posters by the Kukryniksy, three artists who work together, one feels the continuation of Russian traditions. "Fighting gallantly, attacking desperately—we the grandsons of Suvorov, children of Chapayev," is one of the best posters in the exhibition. V. Koretsky's photo-montage, calling for vengeance against the German invaders, has been printed in millions of copies.

Leningrad artists have chosen for their posters the theme of courage and confidence in victory. Though the enemy is still near to the city of Lenin, "Victory will be ours"—is the theme of the Leningrad artists.

The Uzbek "TASS Windows" are worthy of mention. "Remember, Uzbek fighter!" or "Follow the road westward, warrior!" are fine examples of effective artistic posters.

The exhibition is enjoying a well-deserved popularity.

THE BATTLE OF OREL

Shortly after the report of the German rout at Orel, a new documentary film, *The Battle of Orel*, appeared on the Soviet screen, showing the events on the Soviet-German front between July 5 and August 5, 1943—the period of the collapse of the German summer offensive and the subsequent counter-offensive and historic victories of the Red Army. This film, comprised of pictures taken directly on the field of battle, is much more than an historical record: it gives a clear picture why the Germans lost the summer battles of 1943, and explains the successes of the Red Army.

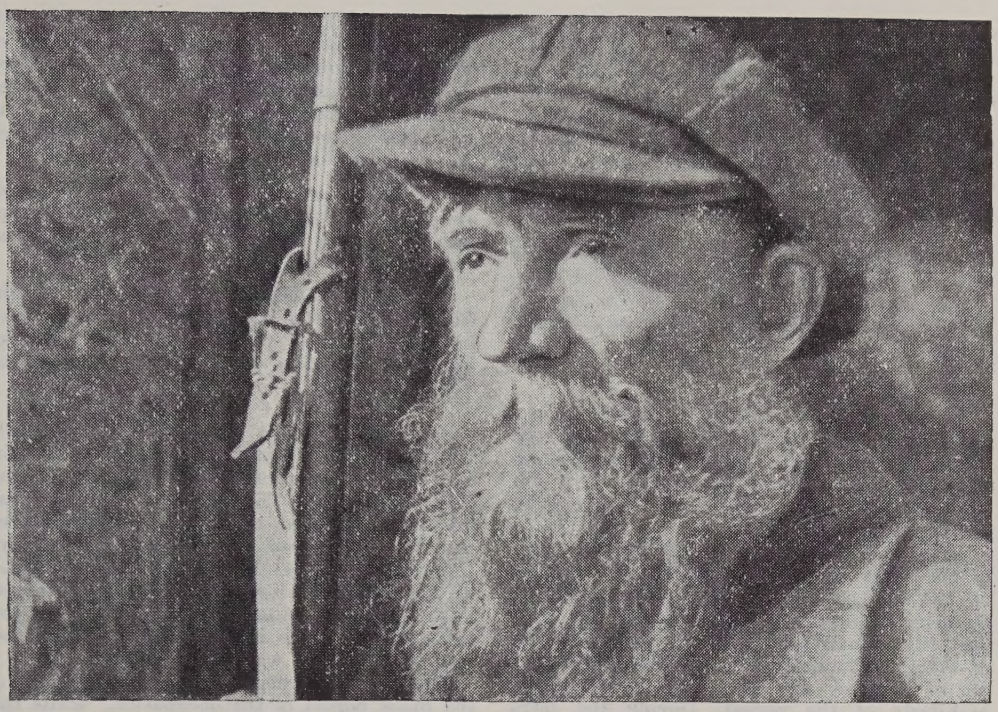
In his review of the new film, printed in *Pravda*, D. Zaslavsky writes: "Individual episodes, following one another in strict continuity, give a general picture which tells the audience not only of the outward appearance of events, but explains their inward significance. This is a documentary story of the courage and heroism of Soviet fighting men, of their military skill and of the talented leadership of their commanders."

The press notes the high skill of the nineteen Soviet photographers who filmed the scenes. "To photograph war is a difficult matter," writes Eugene Kriger, war correspondent of *Izvestia*. "A modern battle is often inaccessible to the photographer. Troops of all kinds tend to be hidden under cover, to dig themselves in underground, to camouflage themselves in forests, ravines, gullies. Even during the most intense fighting it is difficult to see anything but gun flashes and the columns of explosions rising before the trenches. A writer may reproduce the course of events in a battle with words. But a film photographer must record all the doings on the field of battle with his camera, and the chances for doing this are limited. . ."

The photographers who filmed the material for *The Battle of Orel* managed their task brilliantly. The film contains many particularly vivid, successful shots which remain for long in the memory. "The sight of the artillery barrage at night before the advance of the Soviet troops is magnificent. It is a purifying thunder storm pierced with lightning flashes, it is the flashing, thundering reign of the god of war—artillery. It is the wrath of the Russian people embodied in guns." (From the newspaper *Izvestia*.)

The film vividly depicts details of the gigantic conflict. "A group of German tanks attempt to cross the line occupied by a Soviet anti-tank battery. For an instant it seems that nothing could withstand the fire, the power of the German troops. But Soviet tank destroyers take up the gage, they allow the tanks to approach within twenty to thirty yards, and at that short range they place their shots accurately in the most vulnerable parts of the machines. One tank catches fire, it is out of action, then a second, a third. . ." (From the newspaper *Krasnyi Voin*.)

The shots showing the first arrival of Soviet troops in the liberated towns are unforgettable. "The operators, bursting into Orel together with the Red Army units, filmed the joyful meeting of the Soviet officers and Red Army men with the local inhabitants. They photographed the Gestapo prison where Soviet people, men and women, had been tortured. Sick, cripples on crutches, barely able to move, but with faces glowing with joy, these Soviet people come out of the



A still from the film "The People's Avengers"

fascist dungeons to greet their rescuers." (From the newspaper *Trud*.)

Scene after scene, the battle for liberation unfolds before the observer. The German "seasonal" strategy has come to grief. Events have fully justified the characterization, writes *Pravda*, which Stalin gave of German strategy and tactics in February 1943: "Their strategy is defective, because, as a rule, they underrate the strength and potentialities of the enemy and overrate their own strength. Their tactics are stereotyped, because they try to make operations at the front fit in with this or that paragraph of their army regulations."

The new film gives documentary illustration to this statement.

A FILM ABOUT PARTISANS

A new film entitled *The People's Avengers* depicting actual episodes of the life and battles of the Soviet partisans has recently appeared on the Soviet screen.

From the first day of the war Soviet film photographers are recording individual incidents of partisan warfare. Now, on the basis of these first experiments, it was decided to enlarge the scale of photography and create a full-size film.

Seventeen photographers crossed the front and made for the far enemy rear; their task was to record step by step the operations of the partisan detachments, the struggle waged by the people, and the fate of those left in occupied territory. A camera, a supply of film, a couple of grenades, a tommy-gun and a small food supply was all the luggage they took with them. They made their way across the front-line, and travelled many miles on foot with the partisan columns in the Karelian mountains, the forests and swamps of Byelorussia, the steppes of the Ukraine and the Caucasian foothills. Yard by yard, valuable material was collected in the tight rolls of film. About twenty thousand yards of film in all were used in four months, which went to make up the documentary film *The People's Avengers*.

The newspapers rightly note the high quality of the photography and the vivid, moving impression which this film produces upon the audience.

IN BRIEF

Many Soviet composers are now working on state orders for large-scale symphonies. D. Shostakovich has finished his *Eighth Symphony*; A Khachaturyan is finishing his *Second Symphony*, dedicated to the Patriotic War; Y. Shaporin is working on an oratorio entitled *On the Sufferings and Glory of the Russian Land*; S. Prokofiev is finishing his new ballet *Zolushka*; and V. Biely is writing an oratorio, *My Ukraine*.

Following in the footsteps of V. Zhelobinsky, who has completed the opera *Mother* (based on Gorky's novel of the same name), A. Kassyanov has also turned to the great writer's literary heritage. Kassyanov has completed a new opera based on Gorky's *Foma Gordeyev*, which contains much material drawn from folk songs, musical folklore of the Volga region, choruses and dances.

A hitherto unpublished work by Rakhmaninov, "A Russian Boatmen's Song," written during his youth, has been discovered in Mo-

scow. The piece, it is established, was composed in 1891, when the composer was eighteen years of age. The MS contains a humorous dedication by Rakhmaninov to a friend with whom the young student shared a furnished room in Moscow. The melody of the piece is taken from an old Volga song, *Dark Night*. The composition is being published by the State Musical Publishing House.

A. Listopadov submitted a collection of Cossack folk songs to the State Musical Publishing House. The collection consists of five volumes, containing 1,184 original Cossack songs.

A photographic and documentary record has been compiled of the destruction wrought by the Germans at the New-Jerusalem Monastery. The photography was directed by the prominent Soviet architect, Academician A. V. Shchussev.

The New-Jerusalem Monastery was one of the most valuable architectural treasures of the seventeenth century. Generations of Russian architects and artists gave of their best in its construction. After the great fire of 1726, the monastery was restored with the aid of Kazakov and Rastrelli, the two great architects of the period. During the Istra fighting in 1941, Soviet airmen and artillerymen received special orders to spare the monastery in every way. The fascists blew up the monastery building, and left this irreplaceable monument of Russian church history a pile of ruins.

Professor B. S. Spiridonov, of Leningrad, an authority on Leo Tolstoy's works, has prepared for the press a large collection of children's stories by the great Russian writer. The collection will contain 350 stories written in the seventies—the period when Tolstoy was doing pedagogical work among the peasant children. About seven hundred such stories in all have been discovered in the Tolstoy archives, many of them unknown to date. The new collection will contain about a hundred of Tolstoy's unpublished children's tales.

The Soviet government recently decorated the old Russian librarian, I. Bychkov, with the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. Not long ago Bychkov's 85th birthday was celebrated by the Leningrad scientific world.

I. Bychkov, head of the manuscript department of the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library in Leningrad, is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. He has been working at his post for sixty-two years. Bychkov possesses extensive knowledge of ancient Russian manuscripts. Over a hundred works on scientific investigations have come from his pen. It is under him that preparations are being made for the publication of letters and documents of Peter I. The work was started by his father, a prominent Russian historian, director of the Public Library.

The writer I. Novikov, author of a biographical novel on Pushkin and a number of works on Pushkin's art, donated a hundred thousand rubles to the construction of a fighter plane to be called "Alexander Pushkin." This sum was earned by the writer for lectures and reports delivered during the war.

In the summer of 1943, the aeroplane, complete and ready, was handed over to Captain Gorokhov who has over three hundred combat flights to his credit.

Flying the "Alexander Pushkin" Captain Gorokhov has already sent down nine German bombers, four of them in one day, during an air battle over the old Russian town of Spas-Demensk.

An exhibition entitled "A Town in the Black Days of the Occupation" has been opened in Voroshilovgrad, recently liberated from the German fascists. The exhibits are by local artists who together with the rest of the inhabitants experienced their town's tragedy. Before their eyes the Germans robbed and killed peaceful citizens, blew up factories, burned schools, smashed churches, destroyed homes. Some of the drawings were done whilst the fascist troops were still in town.

The first hall displays the works depicting the black period of the occupation, while the second is devoted to the joyous days when the Red Army units had liberated the town.

The All-Slav Committee in Moscow has organized an exhibition of Slav periodicals, including over a hundred Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Serbian, Slovenian, Croatian and other newspapers and magazines published in the United States, England, Australia, Canada and Argentine. The exhibition is dedicated to the 533rd anniversary of the Battle of Grünwald.

The network of theatrical and musical secondary schools in the Soviet Union is being considerably extended. A new musical-pedagogical school is being opened in Moscow, while in Novosibirsk a ten-year school of music has been opened. A number of music schools are also being organized in the national republics—Uzbekistan, Komi and others. In all, music schools are being opened in twenty-nine towns, while new schools of drama are being opened in Novosibirsk, Tashkent, Saratov and Ufa.

The library of the Leningrad branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has opened an interesting books exhibition on the Russian Navy. The exhibits show the history of the Russian Fleet, its part in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, the fighting deeds of the Russian sailors in the war with the Germans in 1914-1918, and finally, the part played by the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet in the present Patriotic War with the hitlerite invaders during the heroic defence of Leningrad. Rare editions of books and albums devoted to the Russian naval leaders Ushakov, Nakhimov and Makarov are to be found at the exhibition.

Editor-in-chief: HELEN STASSOVA

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On the cover: Bogdan Khmelnitsky monument in Kiev

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