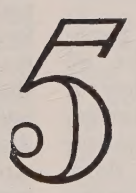
INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE



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EVERY DAY

Colonel Yaroslavtsev was returning home.

He had left the train at the station, climbed the hill road with the straight lines of burnt poplars, and now another five minutes' walk would bring him to his home.

A fine rain was spattering the wet snow and the black puddles; everywhere there was a smell of wet charred timber, and black streams trickled down the dead boles of the poplars.

From the top of the hill the whole town could be seen, pitted by the black ulcers of yesterday's fires.

...Defence centre, of course, somewhere in those houses by the square, no good advancing by way of the boulevard, flanking on the right would mean becoming entangled in a network of narrow side-streets; best way—straight down to the river bank. Mortars there. Houses too high for guns, they'd get in the way; the guns behind the station, on the little hill... Why, why was all that going through his head? Involuntarily, without his being aware of it, his mind was running in its usual groove, solving the usual problems, although this was nothing more than his own town which did not need to be either stormed or surrounded by fortifications, because nine days previously it had been taken from the Germans by our units from another sector of the front. And he himself had come here on leave, on a difficult enough mission. Alone.

And that was strange, too—to know that he was alone. When the colonel said: "I shall start to flank here to the left", he was used to the feeling that this meant that thousands of men would start flanking to the left, not to mention guns, motor-vehicles and tanks. When he said: "Good, I'll entrench here and hang on", then "here" men with the most variegated implements, faces, ages would start to "entrench". Thousands of men and thousands of names, biographies, professions, for whom at this moment the most important thing in life had become to dig in here, to hang on and not let themselves be shifted... He was accustomed to think of himself in terms of his division. And just as a man knows his own height and the weight he can heave up onto his back and carry, in the same way he could feel physically, without glancing at the map, the length of the front line he, that is to say his division, occupied, and the depth to which it extended. And he would feel a physical access of strength when he received reinforcements, while some supply column lagging behind on the march would make him awake with a dull uneasiness, like a nagging tooth-ache.

And now, when he said to himself: "I must get out of the train", or "I must go and look for somebody from the town council", or something of the same kind, it meant that one man would leave the train and go along the street to look for the street and house, so as to make these difficult, hopeless applications for information. He was doing it for himself and it concerned nobody else. Only himself...

A tall building had collapsed just where he had to turn the corner beside the well-known baker's shop, and quite unexpectedly he saw his own house, where he had lived with Sasha all those last years before the war. It stood there untouched, at least outwardly, except

that there seemed to be no glass in the windows. But he was in no mood for a detailed examination, and pushed open the door, entered the hall and began to mount the stairs.

Behind his back, he heard the familiar creaking of the spring which swung the open door to again.

The door of his apartment had become somewhat older in these two and a half years, but nevertheless, it was the same door. Exactly the same as all the other doors in the house, that is to say, made of the same wood and painted the same colour, but for him it was quite different, a door he would have known among hundreds of others. Only the handle was off, and a hole gaped where the yale lock used to be. A bent nail was hammered in to hold the door shut.

On the wall, beside the bell, were small pencilled letters: "Back in a minute." Sasha had written this three years previously, when she was expecting him to return home, and had been worried because she had to go out and lock the apartment for a short time and feared he would come in her absence. But he had arrived late at night, mounted the stairs, seen these words and read them then for the first time. He had barely touched the bell when Sasha had thrown open the door and stood there, blocking the entrance, not greeting him and not moving, just standing there silent, looking into his face with an expectant half-smile. Then she had slowly moved backwards one step, two, while her smile brightened, and when he had crossed the threshold she had silently flung her arms round his neck...

And now he stood before this same door repeating to himself over and over: "Here is my home. This is our home. I'm just going to see our home." But he couldn't quite believe it.

With an effort he moved back the nail, thrust his finger into the hole where the lock had been, and the door silently, slowly opened of itself. Unhurriedly he entered the apartment, rubbing his finger over the spot where the head of the nail had left a mark.

Three strange iron bedsteads stood separately in the middle of the room. The wind, blowing gustily through the broken window, scattered some flocks about the floor. A bottle of paste with a German label stood on the window sill beside a toothbrush almost denuded of bristles and covered with the same paste. On the wall, a small, unfamiliar mirror, spotted with damp, was fixed between three big nails.

Thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking around as though at some strange place, the colonel slowly went through the whole of his apartment. Apart from the wallpapers, there seemed to be nothing left of the place where he and Sasha had once lived. It differed in no way from other apartments which by some chance had escaped being demolished in other towns which he had entered recently.

The old shelves still hung in the kitchen, covered with brick dust from a hole in the ceiling. He stopped and took from the shelf an empty jar which had been pushed into a corner. A white porcelain jar with a black lid. He knew it well. So this was still left. He remembered how this jar had stood on Sasha's dressing table, among others, and he had found it wisest to leave all these jars severely alone, because he was so terribly careless and might knock one down and break it, and all these things were very important. To get the greasepaint off at night, for instance, after the show.

Mechanically he blew the dust from the lid, then began polishing it with his glove until it shone. Suddenly he realized that he was standing here in the middle of the kitchen polishing an abandoned porcelain jar and made a gesture as though to throw it away, but checked himself, put it back on the shelf and went to the door.

In the corridor, by the door, his eyes, now accustomed to the semi-darkness, sought the spot where the telephone had hung in the old days. But there was only the mark left by the wire and the square patch of wallpaper, a different paper from that in the rest of the corridor. It had been the old paper which Sasha had not liked, although he had once thought it an excellent paper; all the same, one fine day when he came home he had bumped up against a painter's ladder, and seen strips of new bright blue paper spread out on the floor, while Sasha's face had peeped out at him with a laughably guilty expression from behind the back of the paperhanger who had taken possession

of the house. The remains of this paper still hung in blue tatters on the wall.

Was it possible that once in this empty, dark corridor, with the wind blowing down it, there had once been life, domestic warmth, domestic smells of food cooking in the kitchen, the clatter of dishes being placed on the table, the ringing telephone, the splashing of hot water from the bathroom, muffled music from the radio in the other room? . .

He was standing on the very spot where he had always stood to telephone, and suddenly he saw right before him barely visible patterns scratched in the paint of the door, crooked crosses and circles. Sasha had been in the habit of scratching the paint with her finger nail when she had stood telephoning for a long time, and he himself, when standing at the instrument, had always involuntarily kept his eyes on these patterns, had studied the exact place of each of them, forgetting them again afterwards.

And now he stood there, gazing at a simple pattern of half-erased scratches, a heavy, apprehensive agitation gripping him still more strongly. He would never have believed that he could still remember every detail of this pattern, etched in his memory with the exactitude of a photograph. Here were all the familiar patterns, but in the middle a new circle had been scratched, linking several figures, so that the whole thing was like the sun as drawn by a child. Nothing surprising in that, for that matter. She had lived here, telephoned, and no doubt stood on this very spot, in frowning concentration, her lower lip pushed slightly forward, in a habitual expression, scratching patterns as usual with her finger nail.

And this circle, mechanically scratched when telephoning, was all, absolutely all, that he knew of Sasha from the moment when the war had begun. . .

The colonel stood motionless for a little while longer. Everything was silent, so silent that the ticking of his wristwatch and the rain dripping in through the broken window were audible.

Slowly he raised his hand and rubbed his face hard with the palm.

"Sasha!" he said involuntarily, in a barely audible whisper and felt at once that he had better not repeat his wife's name, that the best thing he could do was to turn round and go as quickly as possible; and without looking round he went deliberately out, closing the door behind him and twisting the nail to its former position, then very carefully drawing on his gloves went gloomily into the street.

It was already evening when the colonel, after finding the address he had been given, opened the smoke-blackened door, from which steep, worn steps led straight into a dark cellar.

A Russian stove gleemed dimly below, and beside it a girl was bending down washing clothes with rhythmic movements that swayed the long Russian washtub balanced on a short rickety bench. Beside her the red flame of a paraffin lamp smoked on a stool. When the colonel opened the door the flame quivered and swayed in the draught, and a thin spiral of black greasy smoke wavered up to the ceiling.

Without stopping her work, the girl turned her head, looking over her shoulder and frowning in irritation.

"Tolka, is it you?"

The colonel felt his way down with some difficulty, testing with his feet for the low steps, supporting himself with his hand on the jamb of the door; he looked in and then stooped to enter the cellar.

"I'm looking for Masha, Masha Lyubavina. Are you Masha?"

The girl carefully took the lamp from the stool, and steadily, so as not to extinguish it, raised it over her head. The colonel saw her face, young enough, but sick with weariness, the corners of the mouth drooping sadly.

"You can call me that," she answered slowly, and moved the lamp so as to see him better.

"That's what the chairman called you, that's why I asked. He sent me to you."

"The chairman?" the girl asked inimically. "Why did he send you here for nothing? I don't know anything about it all. Why does he send folks here for nothing?"

Her irritation increased with every word, and as she put the lamp back on the stool the tiny flame suddenly went

out, leaving the cellar in complete darkness.

"Now, there you are!" her voice in the darkness expressed the height of exasperation, almost an angry satisfaction at her mishap. "And I've no matches."

"I've got some," said the colonel, "I'll leave them for you, here, take them."

He struck a match and she held the wick out to it.

"Take the whole box," the colonel offered, as he carefully lighted the charred wick.

"No, you just light it. That's enough," said the girl, still hostile.

"I'm disturbing you? You were busy washing, weren't you?"

"A fine washing! Everything's rotted away. Nothing but rags," said the girl bitterly. "Well, ask me what the chairman sent you for. You'll have to stand, better not sit down, or you'll get dirty. . . Don't imagine that this is where we used to live before."

"I quite understand," said the colonel soothingly. "I've seen all this plenty of times."

"Yes, that's right," said the girl in a kind of unwilling agreement. "And what did you come for, then?"

"The chairman told me that you were with my wife." He paused and hesitated a moment before saying the name. "Yaroslavtseva, Sasha. She used to play at the theatre here. Eh?"

"Yes, I know she was in the theatre. Why tell me that?" the girl interrupted him. "Well, what about it? The theatre was evacuated when the Germans came near. You know that?"

"Yes."

"But your Sasha with some of their players had just formed a troup to perform at the front a little before all that. Well, that troup didn't get back to the town."

"I know that, too."

"Well, then, you know it all. Of course, it's right that I saw your Sasha afterwards. I lived in the same dugout with her, in the bog under the Germans. They drove us off to the peat fields. You want me to tell you about that? But what's there to tell? You're a soldier yourself, Major. You've seen it all with your own eyes, you know how it is. . ."

With the greatest unwillingness, almost as though in spite of herself, she continued in an indifferent tone, without the slightest trace of expression:

". . . Of course, we were all barefoot, and without clothes, and they made our lives a misery, but all the same there out in the bog they were a little more careful, not like here in town. . . There's no need to tell you all about that. Sasha worked there with us. She didn't let them know about the theatre. We worked together for two months. And she seemed to be all right, you might say. Of course, she was little. They called her the little boy. But she worked all right. Only afterwards, her side began to hurt. One night I woke up and heard her crying. I asked her what she was crying for, and she said her side hurt. I told her: 'Never mind, don't cry, maybe this'll all end somehow soon.' I wanted to get up and go to her, but somehow, I don't remember how, I fell asleep again. We were half dead. . . Well, that's all I can tell you. I don't know any more. Soon after that I managed to hide when we were working and right up to the liberation I tramped the villages, hid myself, did any odd jobs I could find, sewing for the women."

"When was all this?" asked the colonel.

"Well, you can reckon it up. It's eight months back. That means it was in March, isn't that right? . . I told all that to the chairman. What does he want to send people here to me for, when I don't know anything for certain myself?"

"Never mind. Thank you all the same. Because I can't find out anything else at all, I came on leave specially to find out."

"What are you thanking me for?" the girl mumbled, with her usual sullenness. "You'd do better to find her herself, instead of listening to all my talk. Who knows, you may still meet her again."

"So she was ill when you saw her last?"

"No, of course not. I told you her side was hurting her. But she was still working. Is that what you call being ill? No, she wasn't ill."

"Here, take the matches," repeated the colonel.

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Why do you bother? Well, put them down."

Suddenly a new thought seemed to strike her, and she raised her eyes and looked at the colonel without any particular curiosity, but as though she had just seen him for the first time.

"So you, Comrade Major. . . though I see you're not a major, a colonel? So you're Sasha's husband? . . That's right, Sasha told me her husband was at the war. . . So that's it."

She looked at him, trying either to remember something or to picture something. Then, tired of the effort, she turned away indifferently.

"Well, that'll do. The water's cold, and I've got to finish my washing."

When he had turned and was on the point of going out, the girl called him undecidedly:

"Listen, I've just remembered. Only don't blame me afterwards if nothing comes of it. Yesterday somebody said that those who are coming back from the peat fields usually go along the Khudoyarovo road. Do you know the Khudoyarovo road? It starts from the grain silo. Only don't blame me afterwards if it's no good."

He had long left the town, walking along the edge of the washed-away road. For several days the rain had fallen in a fine, wind-driven, slanting drizzle, changing every now and then to a heavy cold shower, stopping for a little while and then again trickling drearily down the scorched rafters of demolished houses and lonely chimneys standing up among the waste of wrecked homes. And now this later autumn rain was again pattering over the soaked earth, letting down a thick curtain before the landscape.

He stepped out briskly, hearing nothing but the dripping of the rain, seeing nothing but the monotonous ribbon of road slowly unwinding before him. Dusk was falling when he heard the sound of water splashing under tires behind him and automobile springs complaining under the strain of the rutty road.

The driver slowed down as he saw the colonel's raised hand.

The men sitting with their heads under the canvas cover of the lorry looked out, greeted the colonel and hospitably held up a corner of the canvas, under which everything was quite dry. The colonel only covered his shoulders with it, continuing to watch the road.

"What is the nearest village?"

"Here it is. Suvologi. But there's nothing but stove pipes there."

"And the next?" asked the colonel.

"The next is Ryadnova. That's four kilometres. You should cover your head, Comrade Colonel, it's quite dry underneath. . . Well, here's Suvologi. Lively spot."

The lorry slowed down and halted.

"Are you stopping here?" the colonel asked the driver.

"No, no, stay where you are, please, Comrade Colonel, we'll be going on directly."

"And what are you going to do here?"

"Well, it's this way," the driver excused himself. "It's the boys. We pass here every day, and they've got used to it, the little devils."

The lorry was standing in the middle of a waste; through the rainy mist the worn corner of a wattled fence could be seen enclosing an empty space and an ample Russian stove on the bare earth, several paces from the birches.

The driver looked out of his cabin, peered round and shouted impatiently:

"Hey, you there!"

"We're here, we're here!" a child's voice replied, and a boy with some old tins in his hands came out from behind the stove.

"Have you gone deaf, or what?" the driver greeted him angrily. "Do I have to wait for you?"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," said the boy, trotting along on his fussy little legs.

One of the men, leaning out from under the cover, reached down holding a mess-tin.

"Still alive?" he asked.

"We're alive now all right," mumbled the boy, taking the mess-tin in a businesslike way, and placing two empty tins on the road, pressed them down into the sticky mud and began carefull pouring the soup into them.

"Hurry up, hurry up," said the driver evidently embarrassed by the colonel's presence. "And don't leave all the thick part."

"I'll get that out with a little stick,"

said the boy and began scraping out the oatmeal which had settled down on the bottom. "That's all." He closed the lid and handed the mess-tin back to the man, looking expectantly upwards.

There was a laugh in the lorry.

"Oh, you like to have it with bread?" laughed the man, who had handed him the mess-tin, winking.

"What do you think?" replied the boy, pretending offence, but smiling a tired smile.

"Come on, get on with it," said the driver to the men impatiently.

"Yes, we're getting it," came the reply from the body of the lorry, where the men were fussing about under the cover.

The boy carefully took his tins and put them aside, further from the lorry.

"There they are, living in their ruined village, and they won't go away for anything," the driver explained to the colonel. "Well, and so your people haven't yet come back?"

"N-no," the boy replied unwillingly. "If there are any of ours left, they're far away, they haven't had time to get here yet. The Germans drove them all off to the peat fields. And you know where that is? You don't get back from there so quickly."

"Why? Is it a hard road from there?" asked the colonel quickly. "It isn't so far, is it? Hasn't anybody managed to get back from there yet?"

The boy indicated some direction over to the side with an indifferent jerk of his head.

"There are some kind of women over there, they say, who're coming from the peat fields. But they're from some other fields. They sent ours a long way off. They won't be back from there in a hurry."

"Where are the women?" asked the colonel.

"Thank you," said the boy quickly, taking the bits of broken bread wrapped in torn newspaper which the men handed him as carefully as though they were of glass.

"We're off!" shouted the driver, slamming the cabin door. The starter buzzed, and with a sudden decision the colonel grasped the side of the lorry and vaulted down to the ground, waving his hand to the departing machine.

The boy had taken a tin in each hand and holding the bread under his arm, was walking away from the road with careful steps.

"Where are those women, did you say?" asked the colonel overtaking him.

Carefully watching the full tins, so as not to spill their contents, the boy, without raising his eyes, again indicated a direction with his head.

"Over there, by the smithy. Sat down to rest, I guess."

From somewhere under the stove two more boys with tins crawled out, still smaller than the first.

Paying no attention to the colonel, they set their tins down on the ground, squatted on their heels, got out a metal spoon without a handle, and began dividing the soup into three equal portions with the most concentrated attention, loudly counting each spoonful.

The colonel turned hesitatingly in the direction indicated by the boy and soon heard the sound of voices. At the end of the street he saw a tall black-clad woman coming in his direction. She strode ahead of the others, whose voices he had heard, and stopped unwillingly when he asked her if they were coming from the peat fields.

While he was speaking, the other women came up and ranged themselves in a semi-circle, looking at the colonel.

"From the peat fields, you say?" the first woman asked him, turning her bony face with its high cheekbones. "We're not from any peat fields. No. We're from hell. Do you know what that means? That's where we're from."

"That'll do, that'll do," said an elderly woman reprovingly. "Answer properly. Yes, Comrade Colonel, we are. We're coming from the peat fields, the German ones, of course. But we ourselves, we're from the town, we're going back there."

The colonel now directed his attention to this woman, named his wife, and asked if they knew anything about her.

Although he had not directed his question to her, the bony-faced woman quickly replied:

"Who? Yaroslavtseva? . . Eh, dear soul, we can't remember what our own names were in the old days, let alone others'."

"Yaroslavtseva?" repeated the elderly woman softly, and evidently sorry that with the best will in the world she could

not help him. "I don't know anything about her. None of you have heard of her, have you, girls?" she asked turning to the others.

Nobody replied, only one grey-haired old woman began frowning painfully, blinking and mumbling something, trying to recollect. All turned to her. But then she fell silent again, stopped frowning and stared quietly at the road. The elderly woman twitched her sleeve.

"Well, come on, Prokofyeva, try to remember, why give up? You hear me?"

Prokofyeva raised her eyes from the road and asked:

"What name did you say?"

Several voices repeated it for her.

"Aha!" said Prokofyeva quickly. "She was little, wasn't she?"

"Yes, yes," the colonel caught her up. "Sasha, little."

"I see, I see," said Prokofyeva with feverish haste, her face twisting painfully, biting her lips and frowning. "And that was. . . Sasha?"

"Don't be in a hurry, take your time, don't get flustered," said the woman, pulling her sleeve, but Prokofyeva continued muttering, more and more incoherently, and finally said quite distinctly:

"No, not small. Why small? . . I don't remember. Why do you ask me?"

The tall bony-faced woman made a gesture of disappointment.

"Well, that's all you'll get out of her. Why do you talk to her? Her memory's gone. She may remember in an hour, and maybe after a year. And probably she knows nothing anyway."

The elderly woman gave her a dissatisfied reproving look, but agreed.

"It's right what she says. Good-bye, Comrade Colonel. We must keep on all night."

When they were already fifty paces away, one of the women turned and called something indistinguishable, deadened by the sound of the rain, and waved her hand.

The colonel went to the end of the empty village street in the blue dusk and on a common by the side of the road saw a tiny hut, with a fire burning beside it on the bare earth. Through the falling raindrops he could see figures moving beside the fire.

As he approached, the colonel saw a woman squatting on her heels, feeding with sticks a fire laid on broken bricks, under the smoke-blacked mess-tins placed one on top of the other.

At the sound of his footsteps another woman gathering chips under the smithy roof raised her head and then stood erect; and he saw a woman, no longer young, wearing torn men's boots and a loose faded singlet with gaping burnt holes. She raised her eyes to him and without understanding anything, he was suddenly overcome by a feeling of helplessness and terror that now something was going to happen, something which he could not help and for which he was to blame: there were those eyes in front of him, and suddenly the woman clutched at her head and swayed forward, but took no step, only stood where she was; and it was then that the realization came to him, like a stab in the heart, that those were Sashas' eyes, that this was Sasha, Sasha, Sasha standing before him, young, merry Sasha, whom he had seen the last time laughing on the brightly lighted stage—it was she standing there, bent, carefully clutching to her bosom a bundle of wet chips with hands scorched and covered with dirt. He went up to her, and stretching out her arms she seized and clung to him, rather than embraced him, gasping, choking, trying in vain to say something with trembling lips.

There was a stir among the women. Somebody approached, looked and went away. A girl, clad in rags like all the others, with childish-looking light brows and lashes came up to the woman sitting feeding the fire with chips, and said in excited tones:

"Have you heard? Sasha's husband's turned up. Yes, really. What do you think of that, eh?"

The woman sitting at the fire quickly raised her head, and cried in amazed joy:

"No, not really! Where is he?"

"Why, gracious, there they are, standing right there."

"Well, of all the things!" cried the woman by the home-made stove; seizing her friend's hand to help herself to her feet, she hurriedly rose, brushing down her skirt and stumbling in her haste, surprise and gladness.

Hand in hand they came close to the colonel and silently watched the two of them, with a kind of dreamy smile

of happiness, as though admiring them. Then, unable to contain themselves they came still closer and one on either side put their arms round Sasha, who was standing sobbing and gasping, her head buried in her husband's shoulder.

"What are you trembling like that for, little silly?" The woman laid her hand tenderly on Sasha's neck and suddenly, in quite a different tone, uneasily, she repeated: "Why are you again trembling?"

She bent down and whispered something right into Sasha's ear; Sasha replied: "Yes," and the colonel felt her hand release its cramped grip of his greatcoat; then Sasha moved away, supporting herself on the girl's shoulder.

The girl turned her pale face to the colonel.

"It's all right," she said in friendly tones. "It'll soon pass, and then she'll come back to you. Don't follow us, go a little way off."

Stooping, supported by her friend, Sasha disappeared in the dark rectangle of the smithy door, hung with two bast mats.

"So you're Sasha's husband?" said a woman standing beside the colonel, evidently anxious to talk. The colonel could not see her face in the gathering darkness, but her voice was surprisingly feeble, a little cracked, but nevertheless musical and soothing.

"Why did they take her away, do you know?" asked the colonel at a loss.

"She had a turn. . . oh, it's nothing, it's nothing to worry about now. She'll lie down a bit, calm down and then she'll be better. . . Oh, my fire's going out!"

She hastily left him and squatted on her heels before the flame wavering up from the bricks, poking it with a stick and carefully laying fresh chips.

"And to think of you finding us like this!" she continued smiling, as she stirred the fire. "Such luck! Sasha and I were just afraid even to think of you. And there you meet us right here on the road."

"You were all together there?" asked the colonel. "At the fields, eh?"

"Why, of course. We're friends. We were there, at the peat fields. We cut peat for the Germans, cut and cut and dried and dried, and then we set it on fire in nine places. We were afraid it wouldn't catch fire, but it caught so that we thought we'd not get away ourselves. . ." She shook her head and laughed quietly. "We had to run through the burning peat. We couldn't make out anything for the smoke. We ran off zigzagging through the bog. . . Mercy on us! We walked and walked, and got more and more lost. . . Do you know how many days we've been walking?"

"No," said the colonel, and sat down by the woman on a pile of bricks, the better to watch the door of the smithy.

"Just think—twelve days. . . We weren't in such a good way to start off with, and now we can hardly stand on our feet. We wanted to get out onto the road, but we were scared. And then when we made up our minds, just as if for spite, we couldn't find it. We were lost. And then one night when we weren't specially looking for the road we suddenly stumbled on it. We stopped by the side and listened. And we were so scared we nearly ran back to the swamp again. A lorry passed, then another; that was yesterday. There'd be a whirr of wheels and that was all, and hard as we tried we couldn't tell whether they were ours or the Germans'. Then we heard another coming along, and there were men singing in it, and Lord love us, if it wasn't a Russian song, it was our boys!"

"How did you know that it was our soldiers?" asked the colonel, smiling involuntarily at the woman's gladness as she recalled it. "It might have been prisoners, or people being taken off. . ."

"Of course not," smiled the woman. "How could it be prisoners? We could hear them singing with all their might. . . And now we've come nearly all the way to the town and had to stop for the night, and there's one of us very ill, too, Kashtantseva, she's called." Glancing at the door, she lowered her voice. "We don't think she'll live. No, of course, she won't. If only we could get her to the town!"

"Listen. . . what's your name? . . Elizaveta? . . And your patronymic? . . Elizaveta Makarovna, won't you go in there and see how she is?"

The woman nodded willingly and raising the bast matting disappeared through the doorway.

The colonel followed her and holding

the matting said into the darkness of the smithy:

"Sasha, take my greatcoat, you must be cold."

There was a whispering in the darkness, and somebody's voice replied:

"No, she doesn't want it, she isn't cold. . . We've covered her up."

"How do you mean, she's not cold? . . She was shivering all over."

"She doesn't need it. It wasn't because of that," replied Elizaveta Makarovna's voice.

As he stood there by the door of the dark smithy, it was not so much of Sasha's changed face that the colonel was thinking as of her eyes, and that dreadful, baggy singlet with its dirt and burnt patches, which he had noticed first of all. With a feeling of unendurable shame he thought of his stout top-boots, his clean collar, his handkerchief smelling of eau de Cologne and the warm woollen underwear he was wearing. He knew that Sasha would not take his greatcoat for anything in the world. Then he swiftly went behind a corner of the smithy, hastily threw off his greatcoat and uniform, pulled over his head the soft woollen singlet filled with the warmth of his body, swiftly dressed again and fastened up the buttons, holding the singlet under his arm.

"Don't go in there," said Elizaveta, looking at him in the darkness. "Our sick woman's in there. She's very bad. She'll not even get as far as the town. We left two on the road. This'll be the third. Things always go in threes. Don't go in there."

"Then give Sasha my singlet. Here it is."

"Singlet? Give it here, we'll put it on her. Eh, how warm it is!"

There was a sound of movement and laughter from Sasha's direction, then Elizaveta came out, laughing.

"Here comes the bride. We're just dressing her."

The rain, which all this time had been alternately pouring down, lessening, and again beating on the roof, now really began to clear off. The moon peeped out through the thick clouds, surrounded by a misty aureole, and the street became lighter.

Sasha came out of the smithy, accompanied by Ulya, the light-browed girl. Her hair was tidy and somebody else's shawl covered her shoulders.

She paused timidly in the doorway, her uneasy eyes fixed expectantly on the colonel, biting her lip and smiling. He went to meet her, and suddenly her smile brightened, and she said reproachfully, referring to what had just happened:

"You didn't recognize me. . . No, you didn't!"

While he had been talking to the girls and taking off his singlet, he still had not been able to realize what had happened, he had as it were postponed the moment when everything would become clear. And it was only now that he was suddenly shaken through and through by a terrible agitation, his breath caught, and he realized that this was Sasha standing before him. He had his wife again, he was not alone any more. She stood there, holding somebody else's shawl to her throat so that he should not see her rags. She stood there small and helpless as he knew her, but she had gone through torments of which he knew nothing, and he was standing in front of her well-fed and healthy, in a clean collar and with that damned perfume of eau de Cologne into the bargain.

But no, that wasn't what mattered, the main thing was that burning feeling that he was a culprit before her, the urgent debt which now seemed to scorch him with an unendurable flame. At this minute a distant memory flashed through his mind. They had been returning home at dusk in the Moscow suburban electric train; he had gone on ahead to get the tickets and Sasha had remained alone on the platform. As he returned he had heard her give a surprised, indignant cry, and seen a drunk man who had struck her on the chest as he swayed past. He remembered the spasm of rage which had seized him. He had grasped the drunk by the collar and shaken him till his own fingers were numb, but luckily the man had cried out in a voice weak and faltering with fright, and his rage had left him. In the train he and Sasha had laughed at that voice, but nevertheless he could not forgive himself for not having been beside her when the man had jostled her. And now he had not been beside her for two whole years. For two years he had not been able to come to her aid

when she had been tortured and humiliated. He had not heard her cry out, had not been able to protect her. He had not been able to feed her when she had cried from hunger, or cover her when she had been cold.

He suddenly realized that they had been standing silently before each other for a long time.

"He's alive," said Sasha in a half-whisper, as if saying it to herself. "Anyway, it happened. . . happened. . . as if in a dream. . ."

"What happened?" involuntarily changing his voice to half-whisper, asked the colonel.

"A wonder. . . only think what a wonder it is, what has happened to us."

"Is this really a wonder? It happens every day. Lately we have become accustomed to see such things. When we are moving forward, at every tenth kilometre, in almost every new village such wonders seem to have been awaiting us."

"Is this true? Do you meet so many happy people nowadays?"

"Of course, many. I say, almost every day."

"Every day," stumbled Sasha, "that's good there are so many."

Sasha raised herself on tiptoe and with her roughened, trembling finger timidly touched his face. Dropping her head, with a short sigh, barely audible, almost a sob, she again not so much embraced him as seized him, pressed herself to him and, luxuriously rubbed her cheek against the wool of his great-coat. Barely audible was her whisper:

"Like a dream. . ."

At dawn the colonel stopped a half-empty three-ton lorry on the road and went to wake the women.

Hugging themselves from the cold, half awake, they hastily came out of the smithy, asking each other excitedly about the lorry. There were five of them in all.

"And that one—the one who was ill? Kashtantseva? Where is she?" asked the colonel.

The women looked at each other and Elizaveta said slowly, and as though reluctantly:

"Yes, we must take her with us."

"What is there to hesitate about? You can't desert her," said the colonel, unpleasantly surprised.

"Of course we won't desert her. We'll bring her along at once. Only ask the driver not to go without us."

"Bring her, I'll help you. And the driver'll wait for you. He promised me."

"She's quite light, we can do it ourselves," said Sasha and went back through the door with Ulya.

"A nice thing," said the colonel, "a sick woman and you want to carry her yourselves. You'll only shake her."

Sasha stopped in surprise, turning her tired, almost sleepy-looking face, with its heavy swollen features.

"But, Seryozha, she's dead. She died during the night. We just want to bury her in the town. She did so want to get there and she was so near. . . No, don't you come in here," shaking her head as she saw that her husband wanted nevertheless to enter and help them. "We'll do it ourselves. It's all right. Don't worry. We're used to it."

She and Ulya simultaneously stooped down, skilfully grasped the body, raised it from the ground and carried it with smooth, even steps, like people accustomed to working together.

Kashtantseva was laid on the floor of the lorry, and when the machine started, and began to shake and sway, Elizaveta Makarovna placed hay under the dead woman's head and herself sat down beside the body, carefully holding the head and from time to time re-arranging the torn shawl which covered the dead face.

Splashing through the puddles left by yesterday's rain, the lorry sped along the road. The mists of dawn dispersed in low drifting patches. The light increased.

The colonel noticed that all the women were eating small pieces of chocolate, nibbling it in tiny fragments, whispering together and looking at him. That meant that Sasha had divided with all of them the remains of a cake of chocolate which he had slipped into her hand, and which she had put away, saying: "I'll eat it later."

Suddenly Ulya, who had been gazing eagerly forward all the time, cried out:

"Oh, girls, look, our town!"

There was a general stir as all the women rose hastily, and holding each

other in order not to lose their balance, crowded together, staring ahead.

As she stood and stared with the others, Sasha, without turning, held out her hand to him, to show that she had not forgotten him. The colonel took it by the wrist, and pressed it warmly and carefully, and suddenly felt under his fingers a hardened lump, and began fingering it cautiously. With a slight start Sasha turned swiftly, frowning and drew her arm further into the sleeve. Meeting his tense, alarmed gaze, she smiled kindly, almost condescendingly.

"That's from boils. It's nothing. We all had them," and seeing that this did not calm him and thinking that he had not heard her properly through the noise, she shook her head. "It doesn't hurt, really it doesn't. . . It doesn't hurt any more now. . ."

One of the women gave a sharp exclamation and all heads turned to the right, where the first high part of the town was visible round the bend.

Nobody said anything else, the women just stood there looking ahead, swaying with the jolting lorry and holding each other. Suddenly the colonel, raising his head in surprise, heard a week, vibrating sound; it increased, swelled. It was the women singing, quietly, in voices long unaccustomed to song. Only Elizaveta Makarovna, who could see nothing from where she was sitting, threw her head back and silently watched the faces of her friends as they sang. But after a moment the colonel heard her weak cracked voice join in with the others. She sang with the rest of the women, sitting there on the floor and carefully supporting Kashtantseva's swaying head.

In the evening, Ulya and Elizaveta Makarovna stood excitedly among the scanty people on the half-dark platform scorched along its edges, beside the train which was ready to start. They stood close to the coach, their heads raised smiling at Sasha, who, smiling and excited as they, stood on the top step of the coach, looking down at them.

The colonel was still standing on the platform beside the girls, but Sasha was afraid that he would be left behind if the train started unexpectedly.

"I'll write at once," Sasha called down, "as soon as we arrive. And I'll write and tell you everything, how we travelled, where we stopped, everything, everything. . ."

"And about your health," called Ulya.

"And my health. But you must reply at once, remember, otherwise I shall know nothing about you at all."

The engine, which had stood silent for a long time, suddenly came to life and hissed furiously. Sasha, startled, called her husband to get into the train quickly and grasped the rail, but suddenly with desperate determination, ran down the steps and hastily embraced Ulya, who rushed to meet her.

"Oh, girls, you little sillies! . . Oh, chickens!" said Elizaveta laughing, in a singsong voice. "What do you want to cry for? After everything, you start crying, eh?"

Sasha turned, laughing and sobbing.

"And what about me?" said Elizaveta chidingly, embracing Sasha and patting her shoulder.

As the train jerked forward, trembled from end to end and halted again for a moment before really moving off and the air rang with the noise of people calling to the friends they were seeing off and the rattling of buffers, Elizaveta Makarovna suddenly pressed the colonel's hand in both of hers and said something in his ear.

"What's that?" he asked her, not hearing, and preparing to spring onto the steps.

"The doctor—take her to the doctor at once. . ."

The colonel nodded, jumped into the already moving train and stood on the steps beside Sasha. Looking back and motioning with her head into the darkness, she took his arm and after a moment sighed:

"You know, we've promised never to forget each other. What fine girls they are, aren't they?"

During the night the train had left the front-line area and was now peacefully rattling its way further and further to the north-east.

Without knowing what had wakened him, the colonel sat up with a jerk, supporting himself on his elbow and listening uneasily.

The dawn was faintly lightening the rain-spattered glass of the coach windows. Above the monotonous rumbling of the wheels could be heard the regular slum-

berous breathing of many people lying in various positions on the sleeping shelves of the uncushioned coach, and quite near at hand, a hurried, indistinct whisper:

"I'm getting up. . . I'm getting up, getting up. . . I'm coming. . ."

Her face, pale, tense, tormented, Sasha was sitting on her shelf, hastily muttering in a frightened voice, swaying and evidently trying to get up and throw off the greatcoat with which he had covered her legs.

The colonel cautiously laid his hand on her shoulder and began calming her in a half-whisper:

"There's no need for you to get up. . . Sleep, little one, sleep. . . All that's over now, it's all past. We're together again now. We're together," he repeated again and again in various ways, and little by little Sasha stopped muttering and swaying and at last lay motionless and half-asleep, listening to him. Then with a tired sigh she opened her eyes and whispered apologetically:

"I thought that I had to get up. Did I wake you?"

"Lie there quietly and sleep. There's no need to get up. Nobody will wake you."

"I was dreaming," Sasha repeated sleepily, her glance taking in the shelves with their load of sleeping people and the suitcases and sacks shaking with the movement of the train. "I dreamed that all this was a dream. I'm glad I woke up. It's true, everybody's asleep. Now I'll go to sleep again too. Goodness, how warm it is!"

She leaned back on the bundle under her head, lent by a neighbour, and drew the greatcoat over her.

After a little while the colonel looked into her face and she looked back at him with wide open eyes, smiling happily.

"Since you're not asleep either let's look out of the window together. Shall we?" Sasha suggested in a whisper.

He sat down beside her, helped her to sit up and drew back the curtain from the window

Sasha did not like him to look into her face now and would fidget uneasily, feeling his gaze upon her, while her fingers seemed somehow of themselves to reach out and begin to rub her forehead restlessly, sliding lower and lower so as to cover her face.

Although only two days had passed since they had found each other again, it seemed to him now that Sasha had not changed at all. She was still not quite like a grown-up woman, despite the lines etched on her forehead, the roughening of her formerly tender skin, and the corners of her mouth dragged down as though by an invisible weight. . . Yes, she had aged without ever having properly grown up. She was like a little girl who had grown old. The colonel was not very good at putting such thoughts into words, but he wanted to explain to her that for him, she was a hundred times better and more beautiful than during the very best of the old days.

While he was wondering how to tell her, he noticed that her hand had already reached her forehead, shielding it from his eyes. He took it and gently pulled it down, holding it in his, and Sasha submitted unwillingly, turning away slightly, as though to look around her.

"Everybody's asleep," she said, smiling at her own thoughts. "The whole coach full. A whole coach full of happy people. If you were to tell them that, how surprised they would be! There's so much they lack, after all, so many things happen the way they don't want. They never guess how happy they are. I never knew it either. But here there's nobody wishes them ill, nobody's on the watch to catch them. The air around them is kindly. . . Oh, I know, they'll jostle each other getting out of the train, maybe they'll quarrel and swear at each other. But that's just because it's very crowded and they're all in a hurry, isn't it? For instance, if it's cold in the coach, that's just because there's no wood. Or the conductor's lazy, and you have to complain. But nobody does it on purpose to make you suffer from cold. And that's the main thing. After all, if you stumble over a root in the forest, it'll hurt, it may raise a bump, but that's all. But if somebody comes up to you and can strike you, is free to strike you on the head with a twig, just a thin twig, so that it doesn't hurt at all, all the same you want to kill him, or else die yourself, as though he'd poured poison into you."

She stopped, out of breath.

Forcing the impossible, hideous words through his teeth with an effort, the colonel asked:

"Did they. . . beat. . . you too?"

"We snapped our fingers at all that,"

said Sasha in a hoarse whisper, with suppressed rage. "Anyhow, they didn't kill us. They took everything from us and thought that now we weren't people any more. At first, it's true, we kept on trying to hide and save some of our things. But we couldn't save anything. Then we began thinking how to huddle up, hunch ourselves, so as to save at least our lives. And we saw that the more you tried to hide, the more surely they would find you. And then something happened to us. We began not to worry about it all. We began to share the last we had with each other. We learned to stand by each other. We became good to each other. But why am I telling you all this? You know it all better than I. I keep trying to tell you the main thing about myself and never find that main thing. It's probably just that I'm so tired. . . We'll look out of the window later, that'll be better and now I'll lie down again, shall I?"

She laid her head down on the bundle and snuggled down, creeping deeper into the warmth under the greatcoat.

"Give me your hand here," Sasha drew it to her, placed her cheek on the warm palm and closed her eyes.

A little while later she touched his wrist with her fingers at the fastening of his watch strap and began stroking it lightly, barely touching it.

"What's the matter?" The colonel bent nearer to her, catching something like shy, smothered laughter.

"I shan't tell you. . . I shan't tell anybody," said Sasha as she lay there smiling with closed eyes.

"Tell me, I won't tell," said the colonel, smiling in his turn.

"I shall have to find myself some old man now. . ."

"What old man?"

"I don't know—somebody quiet, polite, with a stick."

"What do you want him for?"

"What for? For a husband."

"And what about me?"

"You, indeed! I'm no good for you now. You're still young and I've got terribly old, why I have some sort of attacks. What do you want me for? No, I'll have to find myself an old man now."

"Well, find yourself one, and I'll beat him up."

Sasha laughed gaily and opened her eyes.

"But he'll be old. How can you fight him?"

"Then don't let him poke his nose in where he has no business."

"But he won't be poking it in, on the contrary, it's I who'll be getting him to marry me, since I'm too old for you."

The colonel stopped laughing.

"You've been tormented and you're sick, but you've not changed at all, it's amazing, not a scrap. But even if you really had changed, it would make no difference to me. It seems as if all that doesn't matter to me now. I thought that I loved you dearly before, but now my former love seems like something temporary and one-sided in comparison with what it is now. After what we've been through. . ."

"Well, what?" repeated Sasha, listening with undisguised enjoyment.

"After that, complexion and colouring doesn't matter."

"No, complexion and colouring always matters," sighed Sasha.

"Perhaps for you."

"Yes, for me."

"You'll rest and recuperate, and everything'll be all right."

"Do you really think so?" asked Sasha doubtfully, looking earnestly into his face.

"Nothing to think about. I know it. I've seen plenty of people much worse than you."

"No, you're just saying it to cheer me up. But perhaps when I rest and go to the doctor, this pain will really go."

"Do you often have these attacks?" asked the colonel casually. "How did they start?"

Sasha screwed up her face in dissatisfaction.

"Why, no, not very often. It's only recently. I was always quite well. I never had anything the matter with me. And maybe I shan't be ill now if we go to a good doctor at once. Maybe I'll go to a professor, what do you say? . . Kashtantseva,—you remember her?—all the time she dreamed of going to the town and seeing a professor. . ."

"And what was wrong with her?" asked the colonel without any particular interest.

Sasha was silent as though unwilling to recollect something.

"She had attacks. . . Only hers began much earlier than mine. And then she was quite old. That makes a big difference, doesn't it?"

When the train with its darkened windows drew up before the dimly lighted station platform, they were almost the last passengers to leave it, and walked slowly to the exit, some little distance behind the already thinning crowd.

Along the roads there were the numerous coloured points of light signals, bright, but shedding no light, while in front, the dark rectangles of houses stood out vaguely against the sky, without a light of any kind showing. This was a big district centre, the nearest to the front line, which the Germans had tried to reach a year previously, but without managing to take it.

"Look," said Sasha, "how light it is. How many lights there are. . . The Germans haven't been here, have they?"

"No, of course not, they didn't get within a hundred kilometres. . . Does this seem light to you? I can't see anything under my feet."

"No, it's light," Sasha repeated. "It's a rest to the eyes. It's dark underfoot, but all the same the darkness doesn't smother one, because there's something to look at. Such pretty lights. . ."

Sasha wanted to ring up the theatre where she had worked before the war, right from the station. After the evacuation they had gone on playing here in the town, in the Palace of Culture. But the colonel, feeling how heavily Sasha was leaning on his arm as she walked, insisted on their first of all going to a hotel to find a place to live in. There'd be plenty of time afterwards to get in touch with her friends.

The hotel smelled of damp plaster, the floor had been badly swept and under a dull lamp with a dusty shade sat some kind of hotel clerk behind the barrier, who knew nothing and wanted to know nothing. He did not even know where to find the reception clerk, who should know everything. And when at last the other clerk came, it appeared that he, too, knew only one thing with any certainty, and that was, that there were no rooms free, and even if there was one they would have to go somewhere and bring a paper from some place that was already closed and would not be open until the next day.

Sasha was sitting in an armchair covered with cold oilcloth in a corner of the vestibule, smiling soothingly and encouragingly at the colonel every time he looked at her during his fruitless conversation with the reception clerk.

"It's all right," said the colonel. "We'll soon settle all this, don't worry."

"I'm quite all right here," said Sasha. "I'm not worrying a bit. Of course it'll be settled."

The colonel, after trying to ring up the theatre for a long time, suddenly hastily beckoned to Sasha.

She quickly went to him, in excited anticipation, ready with a joyful cry at the sound of the first familiar voice, and asked for Kastrovsky, their old friend. But it seemed that Kastrovsky was on the stage and could not possibly come to the telephone. Then Sasha mentioned one or two other actors, but it appeared that all of them were either engaged or not in the theatre, and at last the person at the other end refused to reply to any further questions without knowing who was asking. Twice Sasha said: "That doesn't matter. . . it doesn't matter who I am," smiling in anticipation of the effect when at last she told her name, because she had been very popular in the theatre, and everybody had known her. At last she gave her name, then her face fell, she gave a long-drawn-out "A-a-a-h!" and hung up in some confusion. Shrugging her shoulders apologetically she explained to her husband:

"He doesn't know me at all. I think it's someone new. . ."

The colonel saw that she was terribly confused and hurt at not having been recognized, and feeling how Sasha's disappointment and chagrin was mounting with every minute, began ringing up one of his friends from the front, Colonel Kanonirov, whom he had reason to think was staying in some hotel in the town.

He was standing there in the tele-

phone booth, repeating and repeating the name of Kanonirov distinctly, almost syllable by syllable, when the glass doors leading to the restaurant were flung open and two officers came out into the vestibule, their heels ringing on the linoleum. The older one had a high-coloured animated face with small, lively eyes, a large forehead and a round head. The second was quite young, very erect, reserved and serious but a light-coloured tuft of hair standing up on the back of his head gave him a boyish look. He walked, not exactly behind the older officer, but not quite beside him, in the correct position for a model adjutant. And an adjutant he was.

Sasha saw the older officer stop opposite the telephone booth, tilt his head on one side and listen, his brows rising in surprise; then he opened the door and thrusting his head within cried angrily:

"Here I am, at your service," and as Sasha's husband turned, both of them laughed gaily and began shaking hands vigorously.

Smiling, the young adjutant awaited his turn, stepped forward smartly and clicking his heels, shook Colonel Yaroslavtsev's hand and immediately stepped back again.

All three of them began talking, standing there by the telephone booth. Sasha saw the older officer's merry little eyes searching, then coming to rest on her, and immediately he crossed the vestibule with his firm step, still smiling gaily while at the same time his raised brows and wide flung hands expressed his surprise.

"Why are you sitting here?" he called reprovingly, as he approached. "Allow me to introduce myself: Colonel Kanonirov. I always told him that he'd find you. I knew it. You have no idea how glad I am! You'd never believe. . ."—he stopped, and half-embraced Sasha's shoulders, caught her hand and kissed it—"terribly glad! This is a great holiday. We've got to celebrate. But why are you sitting here? Come up to my room now, we'll arrange everything at once. Have you any luggage? I'll help you. None? Then never mind. Luggage doesn't matter. We'll get luggage. The main thing is that you're found. You'd never believe how glad I am! And the best of all is, that I always told him so."

With a questioning look at her husband, Sasha allowed Kanonirov to take her arm and lead her towards the broad, semicircular stairway. On the way Colonel Kanonirov leaned over the barrier to the reception clerk and asked gaily, in a low voice:

"So there are no rooms, aren't there? In that case, please note, Colonel Yaroslavtsev and his wife will live in my room, and I'm leaving tomorrow in any case. I shall spend the night with my adjutant."

With self-confident indifference the reception clerk replied that this could not be allowed. When a room was vacated, the key had to be given up and then it would be settled by the administration who was to have it.

Kanonirov, about to go on further, raised his brows in surprise and looked at the clerk without the slightest sign of irritation, rather with an expression of lively interest.

"So it's really impossible? Absolutely impossible?" he said lowering his voice, and in such a confiding and benevoleng tone that the clerk, who was preparint for the usual argument, suddenly reddened and frowned, flicking over the pages of his book.

"So Colonel Yaroslavtsev, who has come from the front, will stay all night in the entrance. And his wife too," said Kanonirov slowly, simply and thoughtfully, addressing himself to no one in particular, and lowering his voice still more, as though not to disgrace anybody publicly.

"Well, what business is that of mine?" growled the clerk, his face hidden in the book.

"Wait a bit. You're in charge here?" asked Kanonirov in a pleased tone, as though he had just made some unexpected discovery.

"Yes, I'm in charge," replied the clerk from behind his book, turning round to look somewhere under the counter, trying with might and main to steel himself and find his usual grounds for a disagreeable argument, but finally drowning in the current of confidence and benevolence emanating from Colonel Kanonirov.

"Then you can do everything to make it all right for people without breaking

any rules. You look after all the formalities here while we go and settle in. Now this is quite another kind of talk, while before—dear, dear. . . ." And he shook a reproving finger as though at somebody whom he and the clerk together had just sternly condemned.

All four began mounting the broad carpeted staircase, and in a huge gold-framed mirror Sasha could see Colonel Kanonirov respectfully holding her arm, and then she herself, in an old padded jacket with the wadding coming out of the holes in the elbows, and somebody else's dirty village shoes.

Colonel Kanonirov's room at first sight looked clean, bare and empty. But almost before they were in the door the colonel was helping Sasha off with her jacket with one hand and switching on the electric heater with the other, moving an armchair forward for her, directing the stream of warm air to her feet; then still stooping, without giving himself time to straighten up, he called to the adjutant:

"Senya, what are you thinking about? Where's the sausage?"

The adjutant swiftly stooped and pulled out a heavy, concealed bundle, thumped the hard sausage on the table and pulling the paper off it, replied cheerily:

"The sausage is all present and correct, Comrade Colonel. . ."

"In that case why is it so impolite as to be present uncut?"

"The sausage is just being cut. The tins are being opened."

Sasha's smiling eyes travelled from one to the other. She liked Colonel Kanonirov with the big forehead, filling the room with his feverish activity.

"A long time. Slow. You're a lazy worker! I don't know what I shall do with you, lieutenant," shouted the colonel, and the next moment whispered to Sasha, with a glance at the adjutant: "To tell the truth, he's a splendid fellow, you know. Fiery. Gold! . . Well, gone to sleep again there, lieutenant!"

After she had warmed her feet at the stove, Sasha went into the bathroom to wash. Water poured from the tap into the white porcelain basin, first cold, then warmish, and finally almost hot. Sasha immersed her cold arms almost to the elbow in the hot rushing stream, slowly turning them with a sigh of enjoyment.

Tea glasses were ringing in the next room, armchairs were being moved and the kind, energetic voice of Colonel Kanonirov sounded continually, firing questions at her husband. There was a knock at the door and Sasha, who could not make up her mind to take her arms from under the comforting stream of water, heard in the doorway the excited voice of Kastrovsky.

"Colonel, my dear fellow. . . but where is she?" The words penetrated to her ears through the door, above the sound of the rushing water.

Breathless with joy and impatience, Sasha without waiting to dry her hands, pushed open the door with her elbow and Kastrovsky, turning, dropped the suitcase which he was holding, and stooping—he was a tall man—rushed to embrace Sasha.

Laughing and stroking his hair, Sasha for some reason kept repeating:

"But wait, wait, my hands are all wet. . ." while with those same wet hands she continued to stroke his head, swiftly, with firm strokes, as though to soothe him.

At last Kastrovsky straightened up, clearing his throat and frowning angrily:

"Forgive me. . . but you see, we thought. . . we were obliged to conclude that Sasha. . . oh well, to the devil with all that now, what we fools thought! . . Excuse me, I haven't greeted anybody else. . ."

The table was already laid, the things set out symmetrically with masculine precision.

The suitcase which Kastrovsky had brought with him belonged to Sasha; it had been taken away when the theatre was evacuated together with several other things picked at random, mainly not of the most essential.

Sasha threw up the lid and her nostrils took in the familiar perfume. She knelt down and began carefully unfolding her old frocks with her roughened, cracked hands, all of them too bright and thin to put on now. Finally she chose an old dress, though she felt rather awkward in it, and threw an old knitted shawl over her shoulders. When she took the place prepared for her at the end of the table, Colonel Ka-

nonirov demanded that she herself should pour out the tea and drank eight glasses, one with cognac, the next without, all the time expressing his delight that at last he could drink his tea in real "home conditions". Twice he solemnly led the talk to some river crossing, for which he would be indebted to Colonel Yaroslavtsev for the rest of his life, and however much the latter tried to pass it off, both times he warmly shook his hand across the table and by the end of the evening had exchanged addresses and sealed a firm friendship with Kastrovsky.

Sasha's eyes were closing of themselves. She felt that never had she been so warm and comfortable; her head was spinning a little from the light and the noise. She sat there half-dozing in her armchair, holding her husband's left hand in hers. . .

They separated late, and gaily. Kastrovsky proposed the final toast: "We shall see the sky covered with diamonds," and Colonel Kanonirov shouted loudly: "That's as true as you live," and glancing at Sasha's weary face, began to tiptoe out, looking round and gesturing as he went. The others also left hastily, also on tiptoe, closing the door carefully behind them.

Sasha waved to them sleepily, smiling, and after a little while, murmured something inaudible still smiling.

"What's that?" asked her husband.

She pointed to the table, where she had already found time to lay out her own runner from the suitcase. On the runner were one or two hairpins, a round mirror, a box of cigarettes, and beside a tiny scent bottle ticked the colonel's large wristwatch which he had taken off.

"See, we have our home together again now, haven't we? Here's our home. Isn't that right?"

The next day Sasha was visited by an elderly and very irritable-looking professor.

He spent a long time in the entrance shaking the snow from his fur coat. Then, entering the room, talking rapidly and paying hardly any attention to Sasha, he started frowning in dissatisfaction and wiping his wet beard with a handkerchief, puffing as he did so.

"Is it wet snow falling?" asked Sasha apologetically, feeling awkward at having sent for such a busy and irritable man for a trifle.

"It certainly is," said the professor disapprovingly and even accusingly, as though the snow were falling especially along the road to their room and Sasha and her husband were wholly and entirely to blame for all its wetness.

Still occupied with his beard, the professor began walking about the room, touched the radiator with an appearance of the most captious distrust, then screwing up one eye and placing his hands behind his back, began critically looking at a sufficiently bad picture hanging over the divan, and it was only after putting his handkerchief back into his pocket that he seemed to recollect why he was here, sat down on the bed beside Sasha, took her hand and asked: "Well, and what have we here?" his tone showing very clearly that "we" could not possibly have anything worthy of attention, and after beginning to examine Sasha again pointed vengefully to the picture:

"All out, all out, the perspective. . . absolutely all out. . ."

After a moment he said: "Well, there you are," as much as to say: "I told you so," and added: "You'll have to stay in bed."

"Oh, professor, right in bed? All day?" cried Sasha in chagrin. "It would be horrid to stay in bed, especially now."

"All day," repeated the professor mechanically, carefully pressing her abdomen with a resilient movement and frowning in dissatisfaction. "So. . . all day. . ."—he moved his fingers gently finding just the most painful point, somewhere deep inside. . .—"all day." He turned away swiftly, straightened up and threw the quilt over the part he had tested, and as he removed his hand realized for the first time just what he was repeating and asked indignantly:

"What do you mean by all day? You'll have to go to hospital. You can't stay in bed here. You must have an X-ray, we must carry out all the necessary tests and then we'll see. What do you mean by all day?"

The colonel, standing somewhat aside, was looking in helpless faith at this man who had only just come in and

was already disposing of their lives. Sasha saw his tense face and screwed up one eye at him comically over the professor's shoulder, then asked innocently:

"But tell me, professor, what about my work? What if I have to work? For instance, what about the peat?"

"Don't you understand what I'm talking about? I'm talking about the hospital. What has peat got to do with that?"

"But if I must work all the same?"

"If you have to jump out of the window, I can't help that. . . the result would be exactly the same. What do you mean, have to? I'll write you a certificate and I'd like to see the fool who'd dare to say a word about any peat."

Sasha smiled, glancing at her husband.

"How simple it all is! A certificate? No, thanks, I don't think I need one now, professor; I was just remembering things. . ."

They tried not to think about it but all the same they thought of it all the time.

They tried not to talk about it and for that very reason each one thought of it more and more, until they were thinking of nothing else all the time.

At last the very waiting became worse than the thing they were so wishing to put away from them, and then they ceased to resist and realized that the unpleasant professor had been right.

One more day they could wait. They could wait two, or even three, but all the same, after that it would be necessary to go to the hospital, and perhaps to have an operation.

Each day passed, swaying as though on unsteady wheels.

Sometimes one of Sasha's attacks would start, always unexpectedly. Gasping slightly, she would say quickly: "It's nothing, it's nothing," and her smile would disappear as she hastily turned her face to the wall. The pain was severe, and the spoon would rattle against the side of the glass as powder was swiftly sifted in, and this powder was the only thing that could be given her, and it helped scarcely at all.

Then it would pass and she would feel quite all right, except for weariness and a dull, expectant fear of this hostile thing that would come to life, increase and suddenly quieten down of itself, deep within her.

And the days slid by, those days which still remained, one more, and now the very last, and there had been no miracle, the illness was no better and there was a final end of all those vain hopes, that foolish obstinacy which would spring to life at a chance difference of one point on the thermometer.

The last evening came, the eve of the day on which Sasha would have to leave her home, as she insisted on calling their little hotel room, to go into the hospital and there await an operation.

Colonel Yaroslavtsev had gone out for a little while, and after hurrying home as usual, entered the open door of their room swiftly, his steps inaudible on the soft carpet.

The first thing that met his eyes was the empty divan with its thrown back coverlet and rumpled sheets. Sasha, who had not risen for several days, was now standing there in her best evening dress and supporting herself with her hand on the dressing table, smoothing her forehead with her hand, her face close to the mirror.

She turned swiftly at the creak of the opening door with a low cry of surprise:

"It's you? . . That's splendid, I was afraid that just today you'd be held up somewhere and be late."

"Why have you got up?" said the colonel in alarm. "Sasha, you don't know. . ."

"I know," Sasha interrupted him. "I know it all. We're going to the theatre."

"Sasha!" said the colonel, startled, laying his hand imploringly on his breast, but Sasha did not even allow him to finish.

"I know that it's terribly foolish to want what I want and I should always try to want something I don't want at all. I know it all and all the same I don't want to lie there on the divan and stare at the ceiling: I can't look at it any more! I've counted every crack on it—and I want to go to the theatre, oh how I want to go! Now don't argue, please don't argue with me today, this last evening let me have my way!"

"No, no," said the colonel, almost fearfully, "I can't. How can you go?"

"I feel very well, I have the tickets, it'll be very good for me, there's nothing alarming about it, and don't argue, I beg you," said Sasha, speaking very quickly and beginning to get excited, smiling, urging, with a flush of impatience coming on her cheeks. "Don't argue, I beg you. . . I beg you. . ."

She pulled her frock to rights, turning from side to side. Raising her head and wrinkling her nose comically, she added with almost condescending fastidiousness:

"How thi-i-n I've got! Not fit to be seen, am I?"

"You really have gone crazy! What time is this for theatres? You're ill. It's even bad for you to go up and down stairs."

Sasha had become quite calm, and was now leisurely putting on her hat before the mirror.

"No, very good for me."

"But why, why?"

"I feel that it is. . . When I was a child Daddy always told me that the human organism itself could always distinguish what was harmful and what was good for it. . ." She laughed again. "It distinguishes, and then always chooses something harmful, eh? . . For instance, nobody likes spinach which is so good for you, and everyone likes smoked sausage. . ."

She chattered on, without giving the colonel a chance to say a word.

It was true that he had not seen her so happy and gay for a long time, not during the whole of their new life together, since they had met at the forge. He looked at her happily, bewildered, pleased and alarmed at the same time, finding only one and the same thing to say:

"But it's silly! You should see for yourself that you can't. It's just silly!"

He kept repeating "silly" and "you can't" while realizing perfectly well that it was vain talk, that he could not refuse, and indeed, had he the right to refuse?

It was not far to the theatre, and they went there on foot. After coming out of the hotel entrance, they crossed the road and stopped on the other side. Sasha stopped her husband with her hand on his arm. They stood there for a little while, turning and looking at the building they had left. The colonel saw that Sasha's eyes were looking for the windows of their room. She found them and stood silently looking at them, as though impressing them on her memory.

"This is where we lived," said Sasha softly.

"And we're still living here," the colonel corrected her.

"Yes, of course. . ." Sasha agreed wearily, as though thinking of something else, and arm in arm they went slowly on.

Sasha liked the streets. She liked the crowds on the pavements, the noise, the shop signs, the newspapers behind glass, the posters announcing concerts, and even two rosy-cheeked dolls admiring each other in the hairdresser's window.

"How interesting it is in the street! It seems as though it had never been so interesting before. And you didn't want to let me come out."

People were busy on the roof of a high building, stooping dangerously over the edge, preparing to clean off the snow, while down below, a small, stout woman in a yardman's coat was waving her arms fussily, sweeping the passers-by from the pavement, warning them of the danger.

Here too Sasha asked her husband to stop, and they waited until the first huge square of snow cut by the spade slowly separated from the edge of the roof, seemed to hang in the air and then with growing speed rushed downwards past the windows of all six floors and crashed to earth, scattering snowy dust. The air was filled with the perfume of fresh snow. The colour came into Sasha's cheeks and with shining eyes she looked up into her husband's face.

"Well, and we're out for a jaunt together again, aren't we?" she whispered, pressing his arm. "We're together again, aren't we together again?"

"We're together. Of course, we're together," the colonel smiled back at her.

He walked beside her, carefully holding her elbow to him and thinking of a talk he had with her the previous day, thinking of it all the time.

The well-known usher, with his starched collar and pince-nez like those of

a doctor, whom Sasha had never thought particularly pleasant before, rushed to meet her in the vestibule, pushing people to right and left, and first of all pressed her hand warmly, then suddenly caught it and kissed it, reddening as he did so, and dropping several programmes from the bundle he was carrying. With his key he opened the special stage box for theatre people and left them, fussily waving his programmes, looking behind him and smiling.

A little breathless from the walk, Sasha entered the well-known box and after looking around in some excitement sat down in the corner behind the curtain, where she was invisible from the auditorium.

They were in the last stage box, from which they could see two electricians in overalls in the wings, dragging a wire along, and placing a projector with coloured lights. One of them, whose light hair was cut to a brush on top, was crawling about on all fours, arranging the thick wire encased in sacking. With the greatest enjoyment Sasha looked at this familiar picture of preparations for the play.

The electrician stood up and brushed the dust from his knees, then throwing back his head, and screwing up his eyes, began examining something on the ceiling. He was just turning away when his glance chanced to fall upon the stage box and he saw Sasha. He bowed quickly, ducking his flaxen head energetically, bent and touched the wire, and immediately straightening up again, turned and grinned at Sasha, seeing that she was still looking at him. Then he touched his mate on the shoulder and the latter, coming forward, began searching out Sasha with his eyes. It took him some time to find her, while Sasha sat there laughing, finding all this very funny; the flaxen-headed electrician laughed with her, and, when the other man at last saw her he laughed as well and bowed; the two men said something to each other, busied themselves about the projector a little while longer—just for the sake of appearances—and then swiftly disappeared.

A moment later the head electrician came out to the projector, touched some wires in a preoccupied manner and as though by chance, glanced casually upward, bowed to Sasha in a friendly manner and as he turned to go collided with Misha, the assistant stage manager who had run there in a hurry, waving his arms, bowing, rumpling his curly head and expressing his surprise and delight.

By now the news of Sasha's presence had spread through the theatre, and actors and actresses not on the stage during the first act began coming one after another to the box.

The colonel went and sat on the narrow velvet divan in the entry. After a little while Kastrovsky came and sat down beside him. He took the offered cigarette from the colonel's case in silence.

They could hear Sasha surrounded by actors, laughing near them behind the curtains of the box.

"Colonel," asked Kastrovsky softly, "then. . . there won't be. . . an. . ."—he could not bring himself to pronounce the dreaded word "operation".

"Of course, why not?"

"Then. . . she's no better?"

The colonel drew on his cigarette and shrugged his shoulders reluctantly, without answering; Kastrovsky's spirits dropped, and he sat there, head hanging, his elbows supported on his knees, holding his dead cigarette.

"She was always so full of life and spirits," muttered Kastrovsky between his teeth. "Why did this have to happen to her?"

"What can one say?" said the colonel. "It just happened to her.—Is she the only one? . ."

Kastrovsky brushed the ash from his knees, stood up and went, with a warm handclasp for the colonel, who stayed to finish his cigarette there along in the little entry where, besides the little sofa, there was only a rockety table with an ash-tray on it in front of a scratched and dimmed looking-glass.

The stifled hum of low voices could be heard from the auditorium, which was now gradually filling. The orchestra began tuning up.

The conversation which the colonel had been striving to banish from his mind all day now returned with double vividness, he could remember it word for word.

It had been early in the morning, at the professor's home. The professor was not yet up and he had had to wait for him in the anteroom, which had reindeer horns and a picture "Bear Cubs in the Forest", on the wall. Then it appeared that the professor had to go out and had not a single minute to spare, so they talked while he drank tea. It was evident that he had no taste for the conversation; he gave as much attention to buttering his bread and choosing a lump of sugar from the bowl as though he were being disturbed in the most important work.

"We haven't second sight. . . no, we haven't second sight," said the professor, smoothing the butter over his bread and examining the result critically from all sides. "No, we cannot prophesy. Medicine is not a matter of five fives are twenty-five. Nature is not like mathematics."

The colonel had to interrupt him, to tell him that he himself knew all about nature and that sort of thing, and that all he wanted was the professor's opinion. Then the professor began delving and searching in the sugar bowl with as much meticulous care as though it were filled with stones, with only two or three pieces of real sugar at the very bottom of a heap of rubbish. At the same time he began a long lecture on the importance of not neglecting the illness which he had diagnosed in Sasha. The colonel rose and thanked him, and as he had evidently not become angry or taken offence, the professor felt awkward about talking to him as one would to a child (for he always talked to his patients and their relatives as though they were children) and asked:

"What is it that you want?"

"I want to know in two words," said the colonel, "your estimate of her condition. Only please don't try to find some way of putting me off. If this is a question I must not ask then I will go away without troubling you further."

This was not the kind of talk to which the professor was accustomed. He said: "Well, you see. . ." but suddenly reddened and shouted:

"I can't tell you in one word."

"Perhaps you can just tell me whether you find it serious or not so serious?"

"We don't put things so baldly," the professor was beginning again, but then looked the colonel straight in the eyes and said suddenly: "Serious."

"Very serious?" asked the colonel.

"Serious," repeated the professor. "A month or two earlier we could have put her right without any operation, but now. . ."

The noise in the auditorium suddenly increased. Seats flapped hastily down, then all conversation ceased and the lights were lowered. There were some last hasty movements along the rows, then everything was silent.

The lofty dark curtain, lighted from below, parted in gigantic folds and swept into the semi-darkness of the wings.

The colonel entered the box and sat down beside his wife, who was now alone.

There was a faint sound from the crowded theatre of breathing, rustling and expectant movement.

The orchestra softly played the overture. Sasha closed her eyes and listened. The music carried a feeling of expectancy, she listened to it and felt the same old stirrings of excitement and anticipation. Long ago, even in her childhood and then many times afterwards, she had listened to similar music; then the whole of life, all its expectations, lay ahead of her, and now, when she had already lived through so much, and was so weary, she was again listening, and again eager, expectant, so foolish. . . A slight draught came from the curtain as it rose with a faint rustle and the colonel, turning, saw that Sasha was crying silently with wide open eyes.

"There, you see," he said in chagrin. "We shouldn't have come."

"No, it's nothing," said Sasha, "I won't any more."

"But why?"

"Truly, I don't know. . . I think it's because there they are playing, and all I can do now is to sit and watch others doing my work. Why has it been taken away from me? It's not fair. Tomorrow I shall be in the hospital, in some horrible dressing gown, probably, and they'll be on the stage again and some Zhuravlyova will be wearing my dress and my golden wig, and repeating my words, playing my role. And I shall be in the hospital."

"You'll be in the hospital so as to get well again. And it won't be for long. And waiting is always the worst. Afterwards things don't look half so bad."

But Sasha had already heard the same thing many times in all variations, and she paid no attention. But looking at the stage, she leaned her head against the partition and looked up at the chain of hanging lights.

"Seryozha," she said softly, "but what is there left for us? We give them the best of our strength, day by day, our whole lives are for them, for other people, for the public, and then at last you can't work any more, and the curtain rises all the same, and it's very good that it is so. I understand all that, I know that it must be that way, and it is good that it is so, because, after all, it is for everybody. . . But what is there left for me?"

She spoke softly, almost as though talking to herself, and there was no chagrin in her voice, only perplexity.

"They love you. Think how many people love you."

Sasha looked down into the semi-darkness of the stalls.

"They?"

"They too."

"And what do you think, if I were to get up and call to them, now when things are so bad with me, and ask them not to go away till morning, to stop here with me,—would they stay with me because I can't bear to be alone?"

"Many of those who know you would certainly stay."

"I'm talking foolishly, don't listen to me," sighed Sasha and carefully wiped her eyes with a corner of her handkerchief.

The stage was bathed in sunlight, under a cloudless blue sky. In the background, beyond the pointed roofs of an old town, mountain tops could be seen.

Sasha became calmer, now she had eyes only for the stage. The colonel sat beside her, thinking that they had hardly ever sat in the theatre side by side. Always he had sat alone, and Sasha had been on the stage.

"Now my entrance is coming! . . Now! . ." whispered Sasha again touching his hand. "That's my dress, you see it? I should be playing in it. . . What's the matter with her—why's she jumping so soon; here she ought to be dull, sleepy, she doesn't know anything yet about what's going to happen to her later. . . What she's going to do in the second act I can't imagine. . ."

She leaned back in disgust and was silent.

"Do you feel bad?" asked the colonel.

"It's not that. Oh, what wouldn't I give to play just three more parts, and then. . ."

"You'll play twenty more."

"You really mean it?"

"It's absurd even to doubt it."

"It's true, I do feel well today, somehow. A kind of lightness. . . Well, not even three. One! One last farewell role, then I wouldn't want anything more. And the main thing is, it's only now that I really know how. I never knew before, but now I know. Just to try it, only once more. . ."

A little later the colonel felt Sasha draw her hand away. She rose, saying: "Stay here," and went out.

The colonel waited for a while, watching the stage, then it occurred to him that he should have heard Sasha opening the door if she had gone right out. He carefully moved his chair aside, and parting the curtains looked into the entry.

In the dim light of a blue lamp he saw Sasha. She was standing with her head bent down, breathing heavily through her teeth, hunched together, her left hand pressed to her side, supporting herself with her right hand on the rickety table. An ash-tray had overturned and Sasha's fingers were covered with tobacco ash.

"I don't want anything," she said hoarsely. "Only don't look at me," and she turned her contorted face to the wall.

An attack was coming, short but agonizing.

First there came from somewhere or other a long, dragging warning of impending danger.

This warning in the depths of her being increased with every heartbeat, then suddenly Sasha felt that this was no longer a warning, but pain, pulsing and growing, filling her whole consciousness, her whole being, and now there was nothing in her but pain, and nothing around her but pain.

With a helpless fear she felt around

her the damp smell of upturned earth, and the clay-like moisture of the peat, and saw the beams of the dugout low down over her head, covered with a pale shimmer of velvet mould; she heard Elizaveta's hasty soothing whisper and the frightened, sympathetic sighs of the girls crowding round her.

That had been the first time it had happened to her. It was a distant memory and was filled with pain, that same accursed pain. . .

Then the burning, tearing pain began to go away somewhere, to die down, and suddenly disappeared entirely, and her whole body felt such a blessed relief, a kind of cool calm, almost happiness.

Sasha opened her eyes and found herself in her room; over her was the well-known ceiling with its pattern of tiny rough cracks. Sasha felt quite well again now, and she asked the colonel to help her into the armchair where she could look out of the window, although the misty glass, with its heavy dark curtain drawn back, gave a view only of two light spots on the street: a short stretch of pavement, a tiny patch of snow, a fat stone pillar beside the gate with a tiny white cap of snow, and the shadowy forms of passers-by, some flitting hastily past, others drifting slowly, crossing the light patch in ones and twos. Sasha's head was spinning, and she reclined, leaning against the colonel, her eyes half closed, her shoulder resting against her husband's arm.

Just as in the theatre, she wanted to be close to people—and now it calmed her somehow to see that patch of street with the passers-by and the occasional cars, and she only feared that it would all end too soon—the street would empty, become quiet, and again she would be seized by this new, previously unknown longing for people, for crowds of people.

It was already late, and the street inevitably emptied. Fewer and fewer people were passing, the street noises were dying down.

For the second time the colonel begged her to lie down and rest.

"No, I'm not going to sleep. This is my last night at home with you, and to waste it in sleeping! I'm not so crazy! I wouldn't sleep for anything." She thought for a moment and added uncertainly: "But you lie down, please do, you need to rest."

The colonel smiled, gently pressed her palm to his cheek and held it there for a little while, rocking her gently.

After a little while, Sasha drew her hand away and with a quiet sigh of content put her arms around his neck, and they sat in silence.

"How good it would be to live a long time, so long that one was tired and didn't especially want anything more! Wouldn't it? We'd both be old, o-o-old!" said Sasha slowly and dreamily, smiling a very little. "We'd like living so much, but all the same we'd be tired. We'd go and live in the forest, and we'd go for walks together, arm in arm. We'd be such nice old people with rosy cheeks. . . I'd like to see what you'd be like as an old man!" She added quoting a line from a well-known comedy: "You'd be such a hale old man!"

"You don't need to imagine it, I'm an old man now."

"Then I'm an old woman."

"Are you, indeed! You look like it!"

"No, but look," Sasha stretched out her hands. "You see? Blue veins on my hands, like old people have."

"Everybody has those."

"But all the same, we're getting on."

"Yes, I suppose we are."

"Queer, isn't it? You don't notice it happening. You're so used to being young, always young, and suddenly it's gone. Everything changed. Something's happened, although you didn't notice it yourself. And you have to get used to it, to not being young any more. You don't understand how it's happened. At first you don't believe it. You keep on hoping that it's not quite gone. Maybe it's like a kind of illness and you can still recover. You do so want to recover, but you can't. . . Have you felt that way too?"

"I believe I have felt something like it, but I don't think so very much about it. Although I did think of it, of course."

After a long silence the colonel said suddenly:

"We've never talked properly of all that. . . of what happened to you there."

"Yes," said Sasha quickly. "And it's better not to talk about it. It was nothing in particular. I was like all the others, and lived as they did. But I

would like to tell you about the girls, only it would take a long time and I can't just now. Only promise me one thing, that if you ever meet them, help them all you can. They are closer to me than anybody else except you. There are those two you know. . . Now don't frown, what are you thinking about?"

"Why, of the simplest things. They tormented you all there, and we were far away. We couldn't come to help you. I sometimes imagined such an impossible piece of luck, as that in some village which my men captured with a swift blow from the flank, I should suddenly find you. Somehow I always thought of you as being in the country. Of course, there were some who knew that I had no news of my wife. . . and sometimes there would be somebody who would tell me casually or phone me, and say: 'You know, Comrade Colonel, we've rescued a large group of people from the Germans, maybe you'd like to see them?'"

"And you went to look?"

"I must admit that whenever I could I went. Old people would pass me, and children, women, girls, and I would look and look to see if there wasn't someone not very tall, and my heart would almost stop beating, although I knew that such a coincidence was almost impossible. . ."

"Did you rescue many?"

"Yes, a great many. But all the same it is few, still too few. There's still a big debt owing."

White flakes were slowly, lazily sailing past the window in the darkness outside. It was snowing.

"Snow," said Sasha, as pleased as though meeting some old friend, and was silent for a long time, never taking her eyes from the window. "When the snowflakes sail past your window, you'll remember this evening?"

"When the snow falls, I remember that you were cold and I did not warm you."

Again they were silent, and suddenly Sasha, forgetting, said in a different tone:

"And what will you do with my letters?"

"I shan't do anything with them. What nonsense are you talking?" answered the colonel roughly, dissatisfaction in his tone—he had no desire to understand the question.

"You'd better burn them all afterwards."

"Again, again the same old talk, Sasha! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"No, I didn't mean anything. . . I'm not so terribly frightened. There are much worse things. Suppose we ourselves had changed, stopped being ourselves. That happens to people sometimes. . . I've seen it. That's terrible, because that means you've lost everything that your whole life has given you, all the years, and you stand there with empty hands, holding nothing but a tiny today, which will soon be yesterday too. But we're happy. We'd love each other so much if only we had time. . . But there's no time. There's none left. But that doesn't matter, we can still be together for a little while and that's something good. I'm almost ashamed to think how lucky we are. How many people there are who dream of such happiness as they might dream of a miracle! And here we are together. . . We're together!" She took his large warm hand and pressing it to her bosom, rocked to and fro like a child, smiling and repeating to herself: "We're together, we're together. . ."

Then she began speaking again, barely audibly, hurriedly:

"I haven't done so much for you. Oh, how little I've done in my life! Not only done, but in general there's been so little. Stars. We've never even looked enough at the stars. We can't have lived the right way, all the same, eh? Why have we so often put off everything good till tomorrow? . . There's Kostya we haven't seen for so many years—just because he was in another town. And he's such a splendid fellow. Our very best friend. . . What do you say, shall we send for him? Let's have him here. Or is it too late, perhaps?"

"Why too late? Let's send for him."

"We can send him a telegram, can't we?"

"Good, let's send a telegram."

"How many hours does a telegram take? Do you know?"

"I dont' know exactly. But it goes very fast. We can send an express telegram."

"Yes. Express. Will an express telegram arrive in time? I think it should.

Because it won't be at once. I shall probably have to lie there for some time."

"Of course. Naturally."

"And then you'll come to see me together. You'll still have time."

"Splendid. We'll come together."

"Why are you falling in with all my foolishness? Kostya's at the front too. Why do you do it? . . I must be really very, very ill, then. I'm terribly ill. No, don't say anything, I know that I'm very, very bad. . ."

She swallowed her tears and suddenly caught his arm excitedly.

"And what if we don't go to the hospital tomorrow? You can telephone them in the morning and then we'll still be together, tomorrow and the day after. . . Nothing terrible will happen. . . I shall have one or two attacks to stand, I can bear them, truly I can, but that will give us two whole days more. . . or let's go away altogether. You apply for an extension of your leave and we'll go away from here and then suddenly I'll begin to get better and everything will pass away of itself, and in a year's time, or in a few years, we'll remember how we sat here today and suffered. And it'll all be past, everything bad will be behind us, and the trees will rustle, as they did before, and we shall listen to them again and things will be quiet and happy for everybody and there'll be nothing terrible and we shall have so much time in front of us,—well, perhaps not so much, but we shan't know how much—and it will seem a lot and I shall have nothing hurting me and I shall forget how it can hurt. Or let something hurt me, only somewhere else. I do so want to rest from this pain, if it could only be some other pain at least. . ."

He listened attentively to her, without replying, bending over her, holding her carefully in his arms, his elbows supported on the window sill.

"It's not fair that I have to have this operation. The professor said that even a month ago I could have done without it. It's not fair, for after all, I've seen so very little of life. Isn't that right? How many years we've been living together, and have I had enough of your love? No. . . Others can, somehow. . . But in all these years I've never begun to love you less. I couldn't, not a bit."

Her voice would sometimes die away sleepily, then become livelier again and she raised herself restlessly in her husband's arms with rising agitation, then suddenly saw that he was looking into her face and a swift, faint, apologetic shadow of Sasha's former teasing smile flitted over her face.

The dim silhouettes of familiar everyday objects began to be distinguishable in the thick darkness of the room. The first sunless hour of day was dawning.

Slowly an even, white light spread unwarmed by the glow of the sun.

"The dawn," said Sasha suddenly with surprise and chagrin. "Dawn already. Why have we never noticed how lovely the dawn is? In all my life I've only seen the dawn seven or eight times. In all my life! Why? There was always something to do—something very important which had to be done at once. And now all those important things are gone long ago, I can't even remember what they were, but I remember the dawn. And I always thought, so silly I was, that I still had time enough to see it as much as I wanted. . . And we always wanted to go to the Altai in every spring when the mountains are covered with tiny tulips and wild roses—it's so lovely there. . . I'm not angry that you'll very soon be able to see it all, and I shan't,—truly I'm not angry. I want you to be happy, though you'll not be quite happy, will you?"

The colonel could have told her that they would be happy together, or some other kindly lie. But he said simply:

"No, I shall never be quite happy again."

Sasha smiled sadly and sleepily.

"Remember only that I loved you very much." She rubbed her cheek sleepily against his shoulder, settled herself more comfo tably and he saw that she was falling asleep.

He sat there for some time without moving, listening to her even b eathing. The window w s al eady quite light, and the colonel, tensing h s a m so as not to move the elbow, cautiously stooped and saw, quite close to him, her face, flushed with the sun's fi st rays, swollen with weeping, aged, but dea ly loved.

It was quite early when Sasha wakened and open d her eyes in the strange room. Beside her, she could hear some sleeper's heavy breathing.

Silence reigned over the whole building except for a soft, uneven tapping from somewhere far off, probably from another floor.

There was a faint, unfamiliar odour—from the blanket, Sasha surmised: it smelt of something between disinfectant and warm wool. She drew her arms out from under it and pushed it away from her chin. The sheet was coarse and equally unfamiliar.

Sasha saw her arm. Emerging from the short sleeve of the hospital nightgown it looked very pitiful and miserable. And only now Sasha remembered that this was the day for the operation, that after the previous day's attack they had decided to operate in the morning, without waiting any longer.

It occurred to her that she should draw her arm back under the blanket, but it required such an effort, that she left it outside and lay there for a long time motionless, calmly stretched out and calmly, if a little hazily, thinking of her husband, herself, the girls and the theatre.

Everything was still very quiet. Once somebody passed softly along the corridor and a dim shadow slid past the ground glass.

The faint tapping had now come much nearer, and was accompanied by a brushing sound. Sasha guessed that somebody was sweeping the stairs and began to listen, noticing how the brush knocking against the steps came nearer and nearer.

Then she imperceptibly dozed off again and when she awoke there was no more tapping to be heard, but a number of fresh noises all around—the neighbouring beds creaked, a glass rang against its saucer, and quiet voices and footsteps could be heard from the corridor.

Sasha remembered the glass and immediately realized that she had been thirsty for a long time. She carefully turned over on her side and supporting herself on her elbow took a mug of water from her night table.

A yellow-faced woman was looking at her intently, silently from the next bed. Sasha also looked at her in silence, and tried to drink, but after the first sip felt that it was impossible, and turned, seeing that the doctor had stopped beside her bed. Smiling in friendly fashion, he turned from side to side, sounded her heart, listening with his stethoscope, and after sliding his watch back into his pocket, proposed that they begin to operate at once, without waiting any longer.

"But just a minute," said Sasha. "Is it really ten o'clock?"

"No, it's not ten yet. But isn't it better to get all unpleasant things over earlier in the morning? I think it is! To get rid of it and have it behind you. That's the way!"

"You're probably afraid of another attack? Yes? And that's why you're in a hurry?"

"Why, are we in a hurry then? We can wait if you wish. But the professor also thinks it better not to wait."

"No, why should we wait? all the more so, if the professor. . ." said Sasha. "I don't want to be capricious. . . Only I want to know, all the same, what time it is now?"

She raised herself hastily and took from the night table a heavy man's watch with a twenty-four hour dial. This was her husband's watch. The last time he had been with her in the hospital, and the time had come for him to go, Sasha had held his hand repeating again and again: "Now go, go now quickly, you see everybody's gone. . . go!" but at the same time could not bring herself to release it; then she had asked him to leave her something of his, and he had eagerly, gladly, hastily unfastened the strap, and for a long time after he had gone she had held the warm, heavy watch in both hands under her pillow, and during the night, when the light had been turned off, she had cried, pressing it to her face, and soon afterwards another attack had begun, so that she had barely had time to lay it down. . .

Now this watch said ten minutes past eight.

"But what difference does it make?" asked the doctor, stooping over the watch which Sasha was holding.

"N-no, of course, what difference does it make?" replied Sasha, feeling her mouth go dry. "But yesterday they said at ten. . . and at about ten my husband may drop in to see me for a moment. . . and then what will happen? I shan't be able to see him."

"All the better that you won't see him. You'll not be so upset."

"That's nonsense, I shan't be upset. I'm not being capricious, doctor, but

what will happen? He'll come and I shan't be here."

"Well, and what of it? The colonel will come, and we shall report to him at once: 'Allow me to report that everything is done and in order!'"

He laughed, patting Sasha's knee, at the same time looking around him like a man who had a great deal to do.

"Really?" asked Sasha doubtfully, trying to catch his eye. "When he comes, you'll tell him that everything's over? You'll come out yourself, so that he doesn't worry?"

"Why, my dear girl, of course, I'll come out and report, everything will be all right. Well, what about it? Shall we go? Straight away, one, two and the plunge, eh?"

"Very well, doctor," said Sasha, "let's go."

"Splendid!" cried the doctor cheerfully, and in the same moment he had forgotten Sasha and paying no more attention to her had sat down in a businesslike manner at the next bed.

Sasha was transferred to a wheeled stretcher and an orderly in a white overall and white cap wheeled her along the corridor. Her yellow-faced neighbour, leaning forward, looked after her eagerly, in silence. At the last minute Sasha managed to see from the side her deserted bed with the night table, and her heart smote her as she left this semi-familiar corner to which nevertheless she had become accustomed in these few days, and which she feared and regretted leaving. She felt that somehow, there was something of home here, there were her flowers on the table, her eau de Cologne in the cupboard, the embroidered napkin from home, her comb and two books. Here she had slept and wakened, he had come to her here, smiled and held her hands helplessly, so awkward in his white overall, his big hands projecting far beyond its sleeves.

Now it was empty, even the blanket was gone. There was only the hollow where she had lain and the rumpled sheet.

The operating theatre was filled with a white light. Only the lower half of the window, or rather the glass wall, was of ground glass, the remainder was transparent, and Sasha could see the branches of a tree and an unfinished wall of white brick.

Although it was quite light, electric lights were burning.

Sasha lay on something hard, and without turning her head waited for them to start doing things to her. From the corner came the chuckling of water and a slight ring of metal, as though knives or spoons were being put on a brass tray after washing up.

"What have you there?" the professor asked Sasha.

She half-opened her hand apologetically, but without releasing what she was holding.

"What do you want the watch for? Put it down, it won't get lost."

"I know, professor, it's not that at all. . . Please. . . take it."

She opened her fingers reluctantly and stretched out her hand to him, palm upward.

"Take it, Sonya," said the professor, without touching the watch.

The watch was taken away.

"Now we start repairs," said the professor. "You're not frightened?"

"No, I'm not frightened. I'm sure it's going to be better."

"Good girl. That's the style!"

"And if everything goes all right, there'll be a scar left?"

"A scar? . . Oh, that's what you're worrying about? There'll be a scar. A trifling one. Like a big scratch."

At this moment they brought her something white.

"Is that the mask? Just a moment, professor," said Sasha hurriedly. "I wanted you to tell—wait a moment, comrade—I wanted you to tell my husband. . ."

"You'll tell him it all yourself after the operation," said the professor simply and heartily.

Sasha cast a swift look at him, preparing to smile, but saw that the professor was already not looking at her at all but evidently at the place on her abdomen where he was preparing to operate.

She was silent, screwing up her eyes.

"Breathe deeply," said someone beside her. Sasha's fingers quietly grasped the sheet. With an effort she breathed in something stifling that softly mounted to her head, and continued talking.

The professor listened to her, looking into her face with an expression of attention, patient expectation.

"Tell him that it's nothing. . . tell him. . . no, that would take too long. . . just tell him that all the same, it has been very good. . ."

The professor listened, somewhat surprised, his head a little to one side.

"What has been good?"

"Life!" said Sasha and was silent for a minute. Then her fingers slowly, as though reluctantly, released the folds of the sheet.

A little later she sighed sharply and said half-intelligibly:

"I feel like. . ." and was silent, leaving the sentence unfinished.

Without looking round, the professor reached out behind him and took the shining nickel instrument from the nurse's hand, looked frowningly round at the people in white overalls standing about him, intently following the movement of his hands. Having seen that everything was in order, he once more bent down and without paying any more attention to anybody, without a glance at anybody, made a long, bow-shaped cut on the white skin.

Fearing to come too early, the colonel walked unhurriedly along the broad asphalt path between the hospital buildings.

It was a dull, gloomy day.

Several wounded men in dressing gowns were walking up and down the path. One of them was smoking stealthily, leaning against a tree. Another watched him, smiling and looking sideways.

One very high, semi-circular fanlight was illuminated from within by powerful electric lights.

The smoker said something to his companion which the colonel did not catch.

The doorkeeper greeted the colonel as an old acquaintance and gave him an overall. He walked along the corridor and there met a girl of fourteen from Sasha's ward. She smiled at him in greeting and told him that Sasha had already been taken for the operation. At this moment the sister on duty came up to him and told him that it was true, the operation was already going on, and led the colonel to the library to wait.

"It won't be long now—sit down."

"Thanks," said the colonel. "Is it far way—where she is now?"

"Right here. At the end of the corridor. Sit down here a little while."

Left to himself, the colonel paced the room.

Mechanically he read the titles of the books.

On the second shelf he could see several placards behind glass: a coloured "Scheme of the Digestive System", behind which the beginning of the title of the next one was visible: "Simp. . ." and on the second line: "Semi-lu. . ."

Then he went to the door and waited for the sister in charge to pass. It was not very long before she approached with another sister.

"What do you think, will it take much longer?"

"No, it probably won't be much longer now," answered the sister.

"How long does such an operation take as a rule?"

"That's difficult to say. It depends."

"I understand, of course, but it'll soon be eleven, that means it's been going on for about an hour."

"Well, and what if it has? That's nothing out of the ordinary," said the sister, shrugging her shoulders, and went to answer the telephone which had just rung from somewhere through a door.

Then the colonel turned to the other nurse, who had stopped, but was about to go away.

"Did you notice at what time they started?" he asked.

"First thing in the morning."

"When in the morning? Ten o'clock? But it wasn't yet ten when I came."

"Why at ten? In the morning. At eight as usual. But you needn't worry."

"I'm not worrying. But do operations take as long as that?"

"Why not? They sometimes take longer. There's nothing unusual about that."

"Longer? I didn't know. I just didn't think that it could be like that."

He turned back into the library and again started pacing to and fro, from corner to corner. Stopped and read over the titles of the books.

Again tried to guess the end of the inscription: "Simp. . . Semi-lu. . ." and at the same moment forgot about it and went away, and a moment later again caught himself trying to read: "Simp. . . Semi-lu. . ." He felt that he detested this cupboard and the plan of

the digestive tract and the inscription. Again he went to the door and began waiting for somebody to come along the corridor. But nobody came.

It was already nearly midday. It was impossible that the operation could still be going on. Perhaps he had been sitting there in the library and they had simply forgotten all about him? . . . Of course, they had just forgotten him. Perhaps it was not their department and they had no news. Of course, that was it. Strange that he had not thought of it before.

He went out into the corridor. Several women in dressing gowns were walking up and down or standing by the windows.

A nurse passed carrying a trayful of plates.

An orderly rolled an empty wheeled stretcher up and stood it in a corner behind the door.

At the very end of the long corridor the sister in charge appeared. She was walking slowly, and the colonel waited for her to see him, and start, realizing that she had forgotten him, forgotten to tell him that the operation was over. But she approached and even appeared about to pass him.

"Well, what about it?"

"What about it? Everything's all right. It's not finished yet. It's a difficult operation, you know."

"Are you sure that the operation is still going on?"

"I've just come from there. Of course, I'm sure."

The colonel was left alone once more, looking towards the end of the corridor. Suddenly he recalled that the word which he had not properly heard when passing the smoker had been "operating theatre". That semi-circular, lighted window at the end of the corridor belonged to the operating theatre. He had passed it and Sasha had been there already, and now he was standing here, his hands hanging, and could do nothing, while they were doing something to her in there. . .

At last people in overalls appeared in the corridor. They came less than half way along it and stopped, talking with the doctor sitting behind a small white table.

Once or twice, it seemed to the colonel that they were looking at him, but they continued their animated talk in low tones.

Suddenly he saw two people in white overalls coming straight towards him. When they came closer, he recognized one of them as the professor. They approached, and shook hands with the colonel one after the other.

"Come, let us sit down," said the professor, and they entered the library and sat down side by side, all three of them, on chairs standing by the wall.

"You see, I never hid the truth from you," said the professor. "We have been putting up a fight for three and a half hours. We did all that was in human power and completed the operation, we took every possible measure, but all the same the heart did not hold out. The heart was stout and fought for a long time. But you know, colonel, one year such as she had lived through kills as surely as a machine-gun round. . ."

The colonel rose.

"She did not suffer?"

"No, of course not—you understand, she had an anaesthetic. Everything possible was done. . ."

"I know that. Thank you, professor," said the colonel, and took both his hands in a firm grasp.

The two men followed him from the library and stood still looking after him as he went along the corridor, pulling the tight white overall from his shoulders.

Again the colonel passed along the same path, between the garden seats. Now there was no light burning in the operating theatre.

He thought how happy he had been, all the same, when he had come this way several hours previously. He had been going to her. At least, he had thought he was. And now he was not even coming from her. He was simply leaving a strange, unfamiliar place. Going neither to her, nor from her.

He passed through the gate and stood still on the pavement, not knowing where to go. He reckoned that he still had four more days' leave.

The place was badly lighted. The watchman who opened the door showed the direction with a gesture and himself remained some distance away.

The colonel approached, stretched out his hand, turned back a corner of the yellowish sheet covering the face, and saw that this was already not her, not Sasha, although it had some connection with her. It was something very pitiful and unfamiliar, faintly reminiscent of her, something which he wanted to help, but knew that it was impossible. Something he wanted to cherish, but it was unattainable.

He realized fully where he was standing, remembered on which side to find the door by which he had entered and where the watchman was standing waiting for him, but nevertheless at this moment with the same clarity he saw himself in quite a different place, many months before, walking beside an endless anti-tank trench, only just uncovered. He had walked along, his head turned to the left, and the long, uneven row of dead faces swam before his eyes. For almost half a kilometre the trench extended, but at last he had come to the end of it and seen that last of all a woman was lying, her face covered by the elbow of her arm, which was thrown back, palm upward. And now it seemed to him that he was standing looking into the face of that last woman in the row. And it was the face of Sasha.

Just an hour before the train was due to leave, he again entered his room, felt for the switch in the darkness and turned on the light.

It was then that he noticed that he was still holding a parcel which the sister had given him as he was leaving the hospital muttering: "Take it, it's her things. . ." During the day the paper had torn, and from underneath it he could see Sasha's familiar embroidered napkin. Without examining the parcel, he laid it in the suitcase, and looked around the room. The armchair was still standing there, half-turned to the window, so that she could look out into the street. The blanket covered the divan. It was a short divan, but it had just fitted her. The cracks on the ceiling. He gazed slowly round once more, standing there holding the suitcase, before finally leaving the room. Then he put the suitcase down and stopped staring intently. Yes, on that very spot just opposite the eyes of anybody lying on the divan were two crooked crosses awkwardly scratched on the wall with something sharp, a needle perhaps, and a small oval which at first had evidently been quite uneven, and then had been smoothed with several more scratches. . . Probably when she had been unable to sleep and in pain, she had lain there quietly, so as not to waken him, and scratched these crosses. . .

He lifted the suitcase, and with his head stubbornly bent forward, went out without turning back.

Even in the train, when night had fallen, the feeling of having a tightly coiled spring somewhere inside never left him. It was a familiar feeling, although he had never before had it so strongly. He knew both from his own experience and that of others, what it was. It was a terrible inner pressure. It is a force filling one, that wants to burst its way out, even though the spring breaks. But that must not be allowed. Now the spring must keep the watch ticking evenly. And the passengers travelling in the same compartment with him saw a colonel no longer young, calm and leisurely in his movements, but disinclined for conversation.

He lay there for a long time in the darkness on his upper berth, hands folded behind his head, eyes wide open.

Then he remembered that the unopened parcel still lay in the suitcase. He felt around for it, then went out into the corridor where a light was burning, to examine it.

The corridor was empty except for a military man who had taken the train at the same station and was sitting on a folding chair, asleep, leaning against the wall.

The napkin was an old one, some of the threads had come out of the corner, and it was embroidered unevenly with some crooked childish pattern. At some time Sasha had tried to embroider, but evidently had not sufficient patience.

From the middle of the parcel he pulled out his watch, still going, from the time when she had wound it. With the watch in his hand he went out onto the platform between the carriages. Here the noise of the racing wheels was much more audible. There was the iron rattle of a chain end dragging under the coach. Sparks from the engine flew upwards into the darkness and died out in mid-

flight. Snow-covered bushes by the track were faintly visible. Bright stars sparkled in the black sky.

He remembered a time when he was still a boy and had lost himself, had spent the night in the forest, crying from cold and fright. Then the stars had swum and merged into a long thread of trembling rays, and the skin around his eyes had felt dry and constricted in the wind. But now the stars were clear and distinct.

He was still holding the watch, and remembering it, he imagined this watch on Sasha's wrist, her little wrist, just where he had seen the rough, red scar for the first time. The coach was rocking from side to side. He stood there, legs apart, head bent stubbornly forward, as though against the wind. The sound of the train changed as it entered the forest. The stars winked and twinkled somewhere not far away, over the serrated tops of the trees. He stared at them for a long time unblinkingly and little by little, long, damp rays reached out from them to all sides, his eyes burned. Slowly he raised his arm, leaned against the door jamb and reluctantly, as though surrendering to a greater force, bent his head and pressed his forehead against his bent elbow.

A long time must have passed before the train drew in at a station almost invisible in the darkness, and halted there.

Two men, bent double under the sacks they were carrying, were shouting to each other in alarm, running along the train.

A lantern swam leisurely across the track, swaying with the steps of the man carrying it.

A door of a lighted-up house opened into the darkness and shut again to let out a man with an unbuttoned fur-cap.

Then the immobile coaches came to life again, jerked, clanked, the chain began rattling again and the train drew out.

The colonel felt that the movement seemed somehow to ease his inner oppression. Every kilometre was bringing him nearer to the front, to his accustomed life, now the only one possible for him—the life of his division. Of course, this was not such a lively front, where one might forget everything. He knew what it was like. His division was stationed in a forest, on the edge of a huge swamp. Here everything was quiet, and a long time must pass before the day when the crimson rockets would soar over the serrated forest to herald the offensive—perhaps months, months of patient detailed work, inconspicuous work, work of the future day, but necessary, like the ticking of a watch. . .

The officer who had been sleeping in the corridor came out into the entry and asked for a light. Sleepy but conversational he drew on his cigarette and stretched himself, groaning.

"My back's broken, I think. But I slept quite decently, all the same. But why can't you sleep, Comrade Colonel? Thinking?"

"I've slept enough," said the colonel. "I'm tired of lying there."

"It's habit," said the officer instructively. "To sleep according to circumstances. That's clear."

They smoked in silence, standing side by side in the noisy, swaying darkness.

"It looks as if it's getting light," the officer began again. "The most depressing time, you know. That's when all sorts of thoughts come into one's head. I always remember all kinds of unpleasant things then. One hears of so many amazing things that happen to people in our times, doesn't one?"

"What kind of things in particular?" said the colonel, shrugging his shoulders. "It seems to me that they're all very simple."

The officer shook his head in dissent.

"It may seem so at the first glance, that they're simple, when they happened to other people. But if you delve deeper, think more about them, you may find it hard to understand. For instance, here you were standing alone in the darkness, smoking. You were remembering something special, weren't you?"

Colonel Yaroslavtsev leisurely smoked the last fragment of his cigarette and threw it away, opened the door and slammed it to again. A faint grey light was already spreading over the fields. He shook his head as though ridding himself of something which threatened to crush him.

"Remembering? No. Just the same sort of thing, an ordinary story. The sort of thing one hears every day. The Germans killed a man's wife. That's all."

Translated by Eve Manning

REPORT TO HEADQUARTERS

"Permit me to report, Herr General, that the evacuation of our unit from the Crimea is complete."

Drawing by Y. Kesh

THE ODESSA-BUCHAREST LINE

The Rumanian flight from occupied Soviet districts is assuming a mass scale.

(Extract from a newspaper report).

THE RUMANIAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE DNIESTER REGIONS TAKES HURRIED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Drawing by V. Fomichov

PARA-TROOPS

Lieutenant-Colonel of the Guards Sidorchuk made his hundred-and-twenty-sixth parachute landing on the Right-bank Ukraine behind the German lines. The heavy aircraft crossed the front-line in the darkness of night. A sea of flashing fire glowed above the German forward lines, coloured flares, tracer-bullets and anti-aircraft shells raising a great, high wall. The sky hummed with the roar of aeroplane motors.

Sidorchuk was on No. 19. Darkness and silence reigned inside the plane. The para-troopers, belted with their parachutes, sat closely crowded. Hefty, well-trained fellows, everyone of them. Each carried a well-packed knapsack. Everything strictly weighed and calculated to the ounce—stock of food rations, full water-flask, sub-machine-gun or carbine, ammunition. Their pockets were filled with hand-grenades and cartridges. Together with the parachute all this made a pretty heavy weight, and it was no easy job to rise from their places and make the two or three steps to the wideflung doors of the plane.

Lieutenant Nizkikh, the adjutant, was first to sale out. Then the figure of the lieutenant-colonel appeared at the doors. His head was bent low—the fierce wind almost sweeping him off his feet. Sidorchuk edged through the doors, shoulder first, and instantly pushed off into space. For a fraction of a second he was stunned, then he automatically pulled the rip-cord.

Everything was O.K. He plummetted downwards, aware that to his right and left his men and officers were also descending earthward, swaying beneath the umbrellas of their 'chutes. Time was counted in seconds, and yet he determined the direction of the wind. The earth was hidden from sight, blanketed by a mist. But he instinctively felt that he was about to touch firm ground.

Sidorchuk drew himself up on the straps in order to soften the blow as he hit ground. His legs slightly bent up at the knees and slipped sideways. The momentum dragged him along the hard earth. The noise in his ears gradually died away. He checked the exact time and then removed his straps and rolled up his parachute. He felt hot and unbuttoned his fur-lined para-trooper jacket. When jumping, he had by force of habit gripped his cap in his teeth, but the wind had torn it away. He smoothed down his tousled hair and set about feeling whether all his belongings were in order. Everything was O.K.—field kit, map-case, mauser, P.P.S. (Shaposhnikov sub-machine-gun), hand-grenades. He pricked his ears—shots rang out from somewhere ahead. So he had landed on the right spot—behind the Germans. By the hum of engines he guessed that the para-troopers were still landing. The strong wind worried him. The confounded wind had scattered his 'chutists far and wide, making assemblage more difficult.

Guided by the azimuth, he headed for the mustering point. On leaving the ravines he suddenly caught sight of a man, three steps away from him. Was it one of his own men, or a German? The man was moving quickly, in short spurts, now merging with the earth, now gliding from tree to tree. Obviously one of his own men, proceeding according to all the rules and regulations of para-troop service. Striding forward, Sidorchuk called out. The man stopped dead in his tracks, the lock of his gun clicked, and then he peremptorily called out:

"Step closer!"

Lieutenant-colonel Sidorchuk came nearer. To play safe he moved the levelled bayonet to one side.

"Ten!" he said, at the same time bringing his flashlight into play.

"Fifteen!" the trooper replied with the counter-password, as he stiffly drew

to attention before Sidorchuk. Both were pleased at finding each other.

"Two—that's as good as troops," the lieutenant-colonel jestingly exclaimed.

Sidorchuk always maintained that a para-trooper should have the soul of a Guardsman, by which he meant physical strength and stamina, staunchness and a constant reserve of morale. A fighter's senses become highly sharpened with the enemy all around him. Everything for which he had been trained under peaceful conditions becomes subjected to the most rigid of tests—military knowledge, boldness of action, the ability to find his bearings and quickly to solve any combat task. Everything unusual must become usual. Thought and action must be simultaneous and in time.

By morning the kernel of the landing party had already mustered in the woods, behind the Germans backs. They were to act in the depth of the enemy's defence. German artillery batteries were stationed all around the forest, and the air shook with the thunder of guns. Huge puffs of shell-bursts could be clearly discerned—our long-range artillery was sending a plentiful stream of shells from across the left bank of the Dnieper. German armoured cars and speedy staff machines snooped back and forth along the road.

Choosing six of his best men, Sidorchuk set out on reconnoissance. Hiding behind the shrubs, they moved out of the forest to some haystacks which stood blackening on the fields. From there they had a good view of a small Ukrainian town in the distance. Climbing a haystack, Sidorchuk made a thorough examination of the terrain, checking up his findings with the map. One of the para-troopers warned the lieutenant-colonel that they had been spotted. Indeed, two German soldiers rose from a roadside ditch and stopped an armoured car and self-propelled gun which happened to be passing. Waving their arms, they pointed to the haystack. A moment later the armoured car swerved around, followed by the self-propelled gun, which also sharply steered round and at top speed, both vehicles raced back along the road. There was no point in running across the open field. Some disused trenches stood about twenty metres away from the haystack. These were our trenches of 1941. With his scouts, the officer crawled up to the trenches, climbed in, and rested their sub-machine-guns on the parapet.

The entire stretch of road on which the armoured car and self-propelled gun were moving was within Sidorchuk's field of vision. Beyond the haystack it dipped into a small hollow and then, turning and twisting, ran on into the woods. The two German vehicles descended into the hollow.

"Don't fire without command," Sidorchuk cautioned the scouts.

The self-propelled gun—of the open type—appeared from behind the haystack, heading in a bee-line for the trench. Its full crew sat behind the armour-plated shield, the officer—an Oberleutnant—was standing up, attentively peering into the distance.

"Let them come nearer," Sidorchuk said in clipped tone, without turning his head. His finger was pressed to the trigger of his sub-machine-gun. The gun was moving down on the trench, and at that instant the eyes of Sidorchuk and the Oberleutnant met for the fraction of a second. The German officer called out something in an imperative tone and quickly throwing up his pistol, he fired. Unfortunately, the shot was well aimed: the trooper standing near Sidorchuk fell dead. At this moment the lieutenant-colonel fired and the nazi officer toppled out of his seat.

The self-propelled gun had drawn too close to the scouts, and the trench which they had occupied was in no man's land. The German driver reversed his engine. But Sidorchuk at once gave the command: "Fire!" Practically the whole enemy gun crew was wiped out. Leaping from the trench, the scouts dashed towards the gun, but just then, the German armoured car, which had hidden behind the haystack, opened a raking machine-gun fire. There was no sense in engaging them, and making a quick dash, the scouts reached the shrubbery.

While the men were unpacking the quilted bags containing the machine-guns, anti-tank guns and ammunition, Sidorchuk was standing near the radio station. As yet their long-range radio

station had not turned up at the mustering point. But there was no time to wait, and Sidorchuk found a way out of the situation. He gave orders to the radio-operator to try to get into contact with the left bank by means of a less powerful radio station. Its wave-length could reach only that left-bank radio band which did not know the landing-party's signal call and whose signal calls the landing-party did not know.

Through the air, across the forward line, flashed the radio waves. The sensitive ear of Yakov Baliashvili the R.O. caught fragments of Russian and German. The forward-line radio stations would now speak in clear text, and now switch over to cipher. The battle being fought at the banks of the Dnieper was being directed and corrected by radio crews. In this chaos of sounds now and again was heard the voice of Baliashvili: "I'm Eye-One." He tuned in to five short-wave stations, five radio waves, and as he tuned in he sent out his call "I'm Eye-One," asking for an answer.

At noon one of the men brought him a steaming hot mess-tin of porridge, and while manipulating the spoon with his left hand, his right hand kept on tapping out the morse signals of his password. All five radio stations were busy with work of their own. The fighting was growing hotter, and nobody seemed to care about this "Eye" who might turn out to be an enemy station which had deliberately tuned in to our wave-length. Baliashvili persistently and methodically went on tapping into the air, working on the wave-band which apparently belonged to our artillery unit. He heard the voice of a girl radio operator transmitting digit orders. His importunate "I'm Eye-One" evidently plagued the girl R.O. She suddenly switched over to unciphered speech and angrily told Baliashvili to stop nagging her. Baliashvili was overjoyed.

"Please, re-transmit that 'Eye-One' is calling."

They arranged at what hour they were to meet in the air again. The R.O. said to Sidorchuk:

"A fine girl! Knows her job!"

At the appointed hour Baliashvili tuned in to the familiar station:

"Genotsvaleh!" he addressed the girl in his native Georgian tongue. "Hello, my dear! . . ."

The lieutenant-colonel gave his name-call—"I'm 115." But his words weren't taken on trust, and he was quizzed with three questions:

"Who's your neighbour?"

To which he replied:

"Major of the Guards Fofanov."

"Where do you know Fofanov from?"

"From army service in the Far East."

"Where did you see him last, where were the circumstances, who was with him?"

And Sidorchuk remembered that he had met Fofanov at a front-line zone railway station, had dropped in to his saloon-coach, and that Lieutenant-Colonel Ratner happened to be with him.

"And we had a glass of vodka each. . ." he added.

"O.K.," Ratner replied—for it was he at the other end; and then he added: "Hello, '115'!"

Sidorchuk heaved a sigh of relief. Contact had been established with the left bank. Now he could set about his combat assignment with his mind at peace. It was a complicated task: to make a detailed reconnoissance of the enemy's fortification works and then, after the pre-arranged signal, to launch a blow at the German rear, to facilitate our advancing troops in forcing the Dnieper.

The first thing was to lay hands on a "tongue"—no easy job, as the Germans, alarmed by the appearance of the landing party, of which rumours were rife all over the place, kept strictly to the roads in large groups. When passing near shrubbery or woods they would open blind sub-machine-gun fire. At night not a German was to be found anywhere. Scouts officer Ogleznev then resolved to tackle the job in daylight. He resorted to a simple stroke of stratagem: the para-troopers cut a German telephone cable running from staff H.Q. to the forward line. The trick worked: two signals men soon appeared at the spot where the wires had been cut. One German was killed; the other was taken alive. But he proved to be a blockhead, and knew nothing of the situation.

Time was pressing. They needed information on a considerable scale. Here's where they badly felt the absence of Zyuzyun—the officer in command of

reconnoissance, a past master at trapping "tongues". But there had been no word from Zyuzyun ever since the night the para-troop unit had landed; he failed to turn up at the mustering point. Where could he be? Maybe he was shot while descending? Or perhaps the wind had carried him far to one side? If he was still alive he would be sure to show up.

The next scouting assignment was headed by Major Bluvstein. Entrenched by the roadside, the para-troopers lay patiently waiting. They let pass unmolested tanks, self-propelled guns, armoured cars, groups of soldiers, field-kitchens, waggons. What they were out for was a German staff car. And when one finally appeared on the road—a camouflaged motor-vehicle—the para-troopers boldly blocked its path. In the car they found just what Sidorchuk wanted: the required maps and documents giving the exact location of military units were in the brief-cases of the German officers. One of the latest army orders given by Hitler enjoining the German troops to render the Dnieper line unassailable was among the papers. All these documents were deciphered that same night. By then the high-powered radio station had also arrived and the information was sent across to the left bank on a reliable wave-length.

Sidorchuk's para-troops were not alone on this land which was still occupied by the Germans. In the woods, in the villages and hamlets—everywhere they found good friends among the local population, among those who had hidden from the Germans and had joined the partisans. Very soon the partisans from some distant villages sent Sidorchuk word that there were two 'chutists in the Pozharsky detachment operating near the railway. One of these para-troopers was described as a tall and broad-shouldered young man, who handled a dagger with great skill.

"That's Tunguska," said the lieutenant-colonel with a smile.

Indeed, it was Zyuzyun and Tunguska. Later, on arriving in the woods, they told the lieutenant-colonel the story of their landing. They both baled out from the same plane, and were carried by the wind far off to one side. Tunguska landed right on the platform of a large railway station. He stabbed the two sentries and disappeared in the darkness of the fields. Here he was sheltered by an old peasant.

"What parts d'ye come from?" the peasant asked him.

"From the skies, Grandpa," the 'chutist answered goodnaturedly.

The old man led him to the partisans, and here he found Senior Lieutenant Zyuzyun and several more scouts. The partisans did not want to let the senior lieutenant go, and asked him, as a Red Army officer, to head a combat operation which they had planned, promising, the meanwhile, to discover the whereabouts of Sidorchuk.

The operation in question was most alluring—a raid on the railway station. The partisan detachment included troopers familiar with railway work—a locomotive driver, a dispatcher and switchmen. Early in the morning the partisans set out on the raid and captured the station. Trains going in one or the other direction passed here every hour. Zyuzyun ordered the incoming switches at the bend of the tracks to be blown up first, after which a locomotive was brought out of the yards and sent full-speed into these wrecked switches, thus effectively blocking the tracks. One of the partisans, a railwayman, took over the duties of station-master.

"Train No. 523 is on the approach tracks," he reported to Zyuzyun.

"Open the semaphore!"

The locomotive's whistle could be heard in the distance. The train was coming nearer and nearer. Then it leaped into sight from beyond the bend and at top-speed crashed into the engine standing motionless on the wrecked switches. The cars telescoped into each other and toppled over to one side.

Exactly one hour later the thing was repeated, this time with a train heading in the other direction. For six hours Zyuzyun attended to the traffic at this station—six German trains went flying off the tracks, putting the whole line out of commission for several days.

This was a most skilfully done job, but Sidorchuk needed Zyuzyun for other important tasks.

In a short while the woods where the para-troops had mustered were turned into a camp fortified according to all

the rules and regulations of defence. The Germans dared not set foot in the forest. The para-trooper scouts were always out on assignment. They brought back to Sidorchuk the two Verizub brothers, from Yablonki village, who supplied detailed information about the enemy garrisons in two big villages. Sidorchuk conceived a plan for his next operation.

It was decided to isolate and surround both these garrisons.

The two villages stood a few kilometres from each other. In one village was located the rear services of a German army corps, in the other, the staff H.Q. of an enemy unit and an N.C.O. field training school. Lieutenant-Colonel Sidorchuk resolved to deliver a simultaneous blow against both garrisons. Alarmed by the presence of the para-troops, the Germans were very vigilant. It was therefore important to combine speed and daring of action with great precaution and, above all, with the greatest secrecy.

Sidorchuk entrusted this combat task to three officers—Petrossyan, Bluvstein and Mikhailov.

With the fall of night Petrossyan set up his machine-gun batteries at the edge of the woods. The assault groups headed by Bluvstein and Mikhailov made a detour a ound the villages and took up their initial position for attack from the opposite side. The heavy machine-guns were to open up at three o'clock. Stationed to face the villages head-on, they were to divert the Germans' attention.

Despite his outward composure, Sidorchuk could not remain seated in his trench that night. He climbed out and took stock of the surroundings. Just the sort of night needed for such a sortie: dark, with a few stars dotted about the sky. The lieutenant-colonel heard the pleasant voice of Baliashvili:

"Three a.m.—zero hour!"

A few more moments of silence, and the heavy machine-guns went into action. Sidorchuk pulled his cap off his head and breathed deep of the fresh night air.

Petrossyan had started. Hearing the rattle of machine-guns, Bluvstein and Mikhailov led their men into attack. The para-troopers boldly burst into both villages. In one village dozens of vehicles loaded with munitions and other goods stood on the central square, solitary sentries guarding the trucks. The German sentinels' main defence line was in the southern outskirt of the village, where their attention was being diverted by the misleading fire of our machine-guns. Plying their daggers, the para-troopers removed the German sentries one by one.

"Grenades!" Bluvstein commanded.

The para-troopers began flinging grenades into the drivers' cabins of the trucks. Explosion followed explosion. By five a.m. the German garrison was wiped out. Over sixty large transport vehicles were wrecked, part of them totally consumed by flames together with their loads. The streets were strewn with enemy dead—around smashed guns, near the burning dumps and by the gaunt skeletons of trucks which had been blown up and burned out.

Meanwhile Mikhailov was finishing his raid on the second village. Here the para-troopers had crept up to the building housing the German staff and sent a shower of grenades flying into the windows. The soldiers of the N.C.O. training school were dashing blindly around the village in their underwear, making a good target in the darkness. The special trophy group of para-troopers were already busy in the training school's arsenal, loading sub-machine- and machine-guns. Then Mikhailov fired a green rocket. The assignment had been fulfilled, and the para-troops now withdrew to the woods unobserved, the two Verizub brothers accompanying them.

Sidorchuk continued to hold the Germans in a state of fear and high tension. He gave the enemy's immediate rearlines not a moment's peace. The para-troops operated behind the Germans who were entrenched in their strongpoints and trenches on the right bank of the Dnieper. And the main thing was—they could not be caught, they were as elusive as the wind. The Germans had to divert part of their forces from the forward lines and call up special S.S. detachments from reserve units to fight this Russian landing party. It was only after they had mustered considerable forces that they dared penetrate into the woods where the para-troops were stationed.

Sidorchuk was ready for this, as his men had spent the time in thoroughly training for all-round defence of the

camp. In some sectors the defence lines were terraced. Several eminences in the woods occupied by the para-troops were belted with trenches and machine-gun nests from the foot to the top. All the approaches were under the range of machine-gun crossfire. The reliability of this defence was soon tested in battle.

Early in the morning, having straddled the roads, the Germans launched a concentric advance, under cover of mortar fire. The first attack was driven against the line held by the men commanded by Lieutenant Kussok. Meeting heavy fire, the Germans rolled back, leaving about fifty dead behind.

"Here's where the thing starts," Sidorchuk warned the officer.

This proved to be so, and the nazis repeated their attack an hour later. They came from all sides. The para-troops were greatly helped by skilfully arranged machine-gun fire. The feeder-men inserted one cartridge belt after another. But the enemy continued to attack, and some of the machine-gun crews spent as many as fifteen cartridge belts. Again the Germans were sent rolling back. From their trenches the para-troops heard hoarse German cries:

"Schnaps!"

The S.S.-men were all spent; and were demanding liquor. Only alcohol could give them the courage to go over the top and launch into battle once more. A few minutes later the drunken Germans came rushing on again with wild cries, sub-machine-guns pressed up against their stomachs.

"Come on, give them some 'Schnaps'!" Petrossyan called out to his machine-gunners.

The whole forest shook with the din of battle, the incessant gunfire deafening the men. Sidorchuk went round the defence lines, cheering up his men and demanding that they hold out till the evening. The sun was still high in the sky. After the fourth attack several groups of enemy soldiers succeeded in reaching the lower trenches of the terraced defence. It was then that Sidorchuk sent his reserves into action, and the situation was soon restored.

Dusk was falling when the Germans opened their fifth attack. And again the para-troopers held their ground. Fearing night in the woods, the nazis withdrew.

At dawn our scouts combed the forest. The Germans were stationed in a field, and surrounded the para-troops from all sides. The approaches to the eminences were strewn with German dead: the scouts counted about a thousand of them. Many of the corpses wore S.S. badges, and some medals and chevrons "For the Crimea", "For the 1941 Winter Campaign", "For Five Attacks". These had been soldiers of the picked nazi troops.

The scouts saw fresh German reinforcements being brought up to the woods. On one road alone they counted about eighty trucks carrying infantry. There was no sense in waiting for a second storming, the forest camp might turn into a deathtrap. Sidorchuk therefore ordered his troops to prepare for marching. They had to be quick and leave while the Germans were engaged in accumulating fresh forces.

Lieutenant-colonel Sidorchuk and his troops now stood impatiently waiting for darkness to fall. As usual, light transport planes arrived that evening from the left bank, with munitions and supplies. They circled above the woods waiting for the signal lights. But this time no guiding flares were lit. Sidorchuk resolved to lead his men out of the woods, under cover of the roaring planes, and unobserved by the enemy. The Verizub brothers, who knew every trail in the forest, acted as guides. The men put their guns, radio stations, ammunition and remnants of food on their shoulders. A heavy load. Weary and footsore, in small groups they seeped by the German pickets and assembled in a wide hollow a few kilometres from the forest. Sidorchuk sat on a boulder, waiting for the men to assemble. Late that night he gave the order to march. The column moved silently, as though gliding through the darkness. The head of the column had long since passed and disappeared behind a bend of the road, and still the men were marching on. In the darkness Sidorchuk rather divined than discerned the figures of his company and battalion commanders. At last the rearguard detachment passed by.

That night the para-troops made a twenty-five-kilometre march across open country and encamped in another forest. Next morning they heard the thun-

der of gunfire in the distance. The Germans were shelling the former camp of the 'chute-troops with heavy preparatory artillery fire before the decisive storming. But no one was in the woods.

The para-troops continued their work—raiding nearby German communication lines, nazi garrisons, staff H.Q. and reserve units. Waiting for the left bank to signal him the final blow from behind the German lines, S dorchuk made several more marches and set up camp in a big forest adjacent to the Dnieper. The masters in these woods were Palekha—Secretary of the District Party Committee, and Ivashchenko—commander of a partisan detachment.

Everyone in the woods and villages of this big district of the Ukraine knew Palekha. The partisans had the greatest respect and esteem for him and called him "the Old Man". Of medium height, weak in health, this grey-bearded bolshevik was the heart and soul of this partisan-land. The nazi police and S.S.-men constantly hunted for "the Old Man". They put a price of half a million rubles on his grey head. In peasant garb, his smile hidden in his flowing beard, he calmly tramped from village to village in his district, where everyone knew him and where he knew everyone, instilling people with faith in the coming victory.

The invaders thought that the whole of this rich district was obedient to their will. But actually, it was to the will of "the Old Man" to whom every man, woman and child here was obedient. Palekha exerted tremendous influence on everyone. Old and young, grandfathers and grand-mothers, young men and women—all came to seek his advice and he would welcome them wherever he happened to be—in a mud-hut, in a dugout or in a forest shack. Their conversations centred on one subject—the struggle against the invaders.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sidorchuk met Palekha at Grandfathers' Hill, in the woods. Having just recovered from pneumonia Palekha had an emaciated look and was wracked by a cough. Only his dark eyes, cheerfully sparkling with life, spoke of his ever youthful soul.

The nearer the advancing Red Army approached his district, the oftener our guns were heard thundering on the Dnieper—the livelier grew "the Old Man". His concerns increased in range. The people's property—grain, electric power stations, flour mills, schools—everything had to be safeguarded.

"The Old Man" gladly placed his forest at the disposal of Sidorchuk and his 'chute-troops. After their gruelling night marches Sidorchuk gave his men a short rest to regain strength and put themselves and their arms in good shape. On one of the big roads the para-troops had recaptured a herd of cattle being driven off by the Germans. Petrossyan had seized a number of German field kitchens—complete with hot food. But they still needed rations for nine hundred peasant families who had sought shelter in the woods from the Germans.

With a sly grin Palekha confided to S dorchuk that he knew of a German—the chief of a supply dump—who was always ready to give anything demanded of him, only that his own life be spared. "The Old Man's" partisans had already had dealings with this German. Soon a train of peasant carts headed by Zyuzyun, Tunguska and a number of partisans set out for the German warehouses.

The warehouses stood a couple of hundred metres away from a nazi sapper battalion. It was dark when the carts drove up to it. One of the partisans "introduced" Zyuzyun to the chief. The German quaked with fear; he knew that no battalions could save him from the partisans and he handed over the keys of the warehouses. Tunguska remained with the German, holding his dagger at readiness.

The carts were quickly loaded. Zyuzyun then returned the keys to the German, telling him that he would soon be back for another supply of provisions.

Transport planes soon began arriving above the para-troops' new bivouac, dropping bags of munitions and food on a specially marked field. The pilots circled low over the signal lights and, muffling the noise of their engines, cried out to their friends:

"Hope to meet you soon!"

The thunder of gunfire swelled stronger every day. One night Major Dergachov arrived at "the Old Man's" forest by plane, bringing from the left bank orders to advance.

The Svyatoslav Tower reached

above the trees of the wood, commanding a view of the whole vicinity. Surrounded by age-old pines, this ancient structure buoyantly towered on high. War's black wing had touched its walls too: the Germans had dynamited the tower, in fear that it might serve the partisans as an observation post. Wrecked though it was, it still stood proudly towering above the woods and villages, above the Dnieper with its slowly flaming leaden waters.

A singular kind of war council was held at the foot of Svyatoslav Tower. Lieutenant-Colonel Sidorchuk read out the order brought by the liaison officer and his own decision for battle. From this forest they were to deliver a blow against the Germans from the rear, and break through to the Dnieper. At the hour designated by the Red Army command the para-troops and Ivashchenko's partisans were to crack up the enemy's defence from inside, seize a bridge-head on the right bank of the Dnieper and facilitate the forcing of the river by the units of the N. formation.

At the ruins of the old tower above the Dnieper Sidorchuk gave his combat orders. A big Ukrainian village lay in the centre of the sector of German defence where the blow was to be aimed, the junction of two German units being here. To right and left from the village ran front-line roads to two other strongpoints of the enemy defence lines. The German trenches and artillery positions could be clearly seen from the hill in the woods.

"Krotov, Mikhailov!" Sidorchuk called two of his officers. "You'll have the flanks, Krotov to drive on the left, Mikhailov on the right. Your task is to smash up the key point of the enemy's defence. Bluvstein and Voronin will push on the centre, pincering the village on either side. Our rear will be covered by Ivashchenko's partisans. . ."

Sidorchuk applied his well-tested method in this decisive battle as well: he put a pincer grip on each key point of the German resistance upsetting at the same time their defence from within along a wide front.

The attack, swift and sudden, started exactly at midnight. The commanders soon reported to Sidorchuk that the Germans had been caught napping and were backing towards the Dnieper, to their first line of defence. But the lieutenant-colonel showed more than a restrained attitude towards this initial success. He knew that the Germans would strain every effort to restore the situation. And he proved right. At 3 a.m., having recovered from the first blow, the Germans launched into counter-attacks. At the same time, our fighters forcing the Dnieper from the other side, began to appear on the right bank. But as they were still in small numbers, the Germans sent the greater part of their forces against the para-troops. Krotov, on the left flank, found things particularly hard; the enemy had brought up tanks and motorized infantry here from outside, along the front-line road.

Captain Krotov, a former Baltic sailor, was by no means dismayed when, in turn, the Germans began streaming around his troops. Sidorchuk knew that Krotov was being hard pressed: he had driven a deep wedge into the German defence and bore the brunt of the blow of the nazis' first counter-attack. But for the time being Krotov gave no word. He had sent in a terse combat report: "Am holding the captured line, repelling attacks of heavy tank and infantry forces." Tearing a leaf from his notebook, Lieutenant-Colonel Sidorchuk scribbled him two words in reply:

"Hold on!"

Next morning Krotov sent word that the situation was getting more serious. Krotov's forces were melting away. His para-troopers had dug into the earth and were holding on.

Knowing Krotov's obstinacy, Sidorchuk decided to summon him to the command post.

"Think you'll still be able to hold out?" he asked, after Krotov had reported his losses and the forces he still had.

"The men need a meal," was his reply. He looked at Sidorchuk with inflamed eyes. His features had grown peaked. He kept standing as he spoke. The lieutenant-colonel asked the captain to be seated, shifting an empty ammunition box towards him. Krotov thanked him, but remained standing. He felt that were he to sit down now no force on earth could make him rise to his feet again—his shoulders seemed to be weighed down with lead. Krotov

slowly turned, and with a heavy, dragging tread walked out. He returned to his lines. Sidorchuk sent him some reserves—a platoon of scouts, headed by Tunguska. These reinforcements arrived in the nick of time—the wings of the German flanks were closing in, the nazi tanks advancing head-on.

While returning from Voronin and passing through Krotov's lines, Sidorchuk heard the cry of the para-troops as they went into attack:

"For Captain Krotov!"

His heart missed a beat: "Krotov's killed!" But the captain was alive. He had been wounded in the chest and stomach by a mortar shell, and Sidorchuk saw him being removed from the battlefield on a cart.

The cart passed by the lieutenant-colonel.

"I suppose I'm done for," the wounded man exclaimed in a voice of distress, as he recognized Sidorchuk.

"Nonsense, old boy!" Sidorchuk said, as he bent over him and took his hands in his own. "You'll be up and about again in no time!"

Captain Krotov saw the Dnieper from the ambulance plane which bore him to the base hospital. The line his battalion had captured played a vital part in the general operations. On that frightful misty morning, when Krotov's battalion, bleeding with wounds, drove a wedge into the German rear, a Red Army rifle regiment had forced the Dnieper and reached the right bank, practically without firing a single shot.

The German defence was successfully breached. Through the narrow strip cleared of Germans on the right bank streamed an endless flow of Red Army infantry units. Utterly worn out, Sidorchuk could hardly stand on his feet. A radio message, just received from the left bank, was handed to him. He read it three times. The Red Army command congratulated the para-troops on their successful operation.

"Yes, the Dnieper is now ours again!" Sidorchuk happily thought. Fingers interlinked, he stretched his arms above his head, cracking his knuckles in pleasant anticipation of a brief respite, of a long needed nap. But he was neither to rest nor to sleep. No sooner had they reached the Dnieper than the para-troopers received orders to turn back and, through "the Old Man's" forest, again head for the German rearline. They were to hang on to the enemy's flank and ensure the continued advance of the Red Army divisions which had crossed the Dnieper.

All night long the para-troops marched southward, along the forest trails. Now Petrossyan was in command on the flank. His combat assignment was to capture a big German strongpoint. Dusk was falling when the para-troops emerged on the fringe of the woods, adjacent to the village in question. The Germans could be seen digging trenches and preparing for defence. After the river-bank line, everything here was comparatively quiet.

"And we'll set about it quietly too," Petrossyan decided.

When night descended and the Germans, tired out by their trench digging, settled down to sleep, the para-troops noiselessly entered the village. Tunguska worked well that night with his favourite weapon—the dagger. Bursting into the huts, he gripped hold of the sleepy German inmates stabbing them to death.

The whole operation was over by morning. The large German garrison was totally wiped out. Petrossyan collected the documents, army orders and maps he had captured from the enemy and together with a jingling bag containing 160 nazi medals and orders taken from the dead Germans, sent it all off with Tunguska to the lieutenant-colonel at staff H.Q.

The boom of gunfire and the distant rumble of tank motors could be heard away to the left of Petrossyan.

"That's Voronin's family!" Petrossyan remarked, this being the name by which Senior Lieutenant Voronin's detachment was always referred to among the para-troops. Here, behind the German lines, Voronin fought together with his wife—Galina, a junior lieutenant, who served as the detachment's interpreter. These two brave fighters made a very loving couple. On the night of landing they both baled out from the same plane. They were lucky to find each other right after they had landed. Galina Voronina bore her full share of the hardships of combat life behind the enemy lines. A quiet and

modest young woman, her behaviour always inspired the para-troopers. Galina was in the forward chain when the 'chutists broke through the German lines. Before the very eyes of her husband she was wounded in the legs. Voronin bid her a hasty good-bye on the battlefield and led his men on.

Like Petrossyan, he too had wiped out a German strongpoint that night. Next morning the Germans sent an armoured train and tanks against his detachment. All that Voronin's detachment had at the time was one anti-tank rifle, handled by Junior Sergeant Kondratyev, a Siberian, a born huntsman, who knew how to stalk game. He had made thorough preparations arranging several reserve trenches. Now he stood waiting for the oncoming enemy tanks with the same eager composure with which he used to stalk game in his native taiga in Siberia.

He did not have to wait long: Gaizov, who sat cross-legged on the trench parapet, suddenly jumped down into the trench.

"How many?" Kondratyev asked him.

Gaizov answered that he had counted fifteen machines in the enemy tank column.

"A big bagful!" Kondratyev observed.

Taking careful aim, he set fire to the leading "Panther". Lugging the heavy rifle, Kondratyev and Gaizov then dashed off to another trench, from where he planted a bullet into an armoured car, also setting it alight. His third shot, which immediately followed, hit a medium tank, which likewise burst into flames. The German tanks stood jammed on the narrow road like an alarmed flock of sheep. Their guns poked aimlessly in all directions. Kondratyev cooly took his choice of targets.

He was covered in sweat, and Gaizov handed him the water flask. Then they wormed their way to a third trench, from where Kondratyev fired two more well-placed shots. Just then the Germans spotted him and opened fire. Badly wounded, Gaizov slid down heavily to the bottom of the trench.

From his observation post Voronin saw a drab speckled "Tiger" head for Kondratyev's trench and begin flat-ironing it. He sent word to Sidorchuk that gun-crew commander Kondratyev had been killed in action, after bravely repulsing the enemy's tank attack. But Kondratyev was alive.

"Six," he later reported to Voronin, "a bag of six."

Petrossyan found things no easier than Voronin. The Germans were trying to cut him off from his neighbours. Petrossyan had occupied an advantageous position in the village, which lay spread over a wide area. And though German armoured cars were already speeding through some of the village streets the defence key point was in Petrossyan's hands. The Germans had surrounded him on all sides. But he had already received a message from Sidorchuk that rifle units were coming up to reinforce him.

Just when the battle reached its crucial point, and Petrossyan's ammunition was almost spent, an infantry officer arrived. He told Petrossyan that he came with orders to help the 'chutists. He took out a map from his kit and held it out before Petrossyan. Petrossyan curiously looked at the infantry officer who asked to be given details of the situation.

"Details of the situation!?" cried out Petrossyan. "Look... the enemy's here, and here... and here. Is the situation clear to you now? Get going and help!"

And the infantry got going. The defence keypoint onto which Petrossyan had hung tooth and nail turned into a jumping board for a deployed flanking advance of the division.

Sidorchuk received new combat orders. He effected a flanking detour of Palekha's native town—that same town about which Palekha had told him so many interesting things.

"Maybe you'll drop in and visit us?" said "the Old Man".

Sidorchuk shook his head, with a smile: orders are orders. According to an old Russian custom before departure, everyone present seated himself. Then they all rose to their feet as one man. Everyone had much work to do. Palekha was to return to his war-ravaged and fire-razed town, its charred ruins still smoking, and to set about rehabilitating it. Sidorchuk was heading westward.

"Promise me, son," said "the Old Man" as he fondly drew Lieutenant-Colonel Sidorchuk towards him, "promise me, Prokopi, that you'll come to see us when the war's over. We'll stroll through the woods again, and visit Svyatoslav Tower. . . "

His voice broke with agitation as he added:

"And you'll be chief of our garrison. Chief of the garrison of the finest town!"

Sidorchuk promised to visit him together with his para-troopers.

Seated in a dugout covered in snowdrifts, in another forest, Sidorchuk summoned his officers. The whole battle trail of the para-troops was clearly charted out on a big map hanging on the wall.

"Comrades officers," said the lieutenant-colonel, as he took a pointer in his hand, "we shall now analyse our last combat operation."

He carefully analysed each battle fought by the para-troops and pointed out mistakes and particularly successful operations.

The dugout was lighted by an accumulator lamp. The officers were seated, closely crowded, as they had sat, not long ago, in the great planes, waiting for signals: "Ready!" "Go! . ."

B. GALIN,
N. DENISSOV

Translated by Moss Muscatt

THE TOILERS OF WAR

A tank battle may last an hour or several days, developing into an engagement resembling an engagement between squadrons at sea.

A damaged tank does not sink or crumble like a ship going to the bottom. An immobilized tank must be finished off with stubborn artillery fire.

Soviet tank crews never abandon their damaged machines but fight on to the last shell; and if the turret is jammed they aim the guns by turning the whole bulk of the tank.

Watchful eyes follow our tankmen through the smoke of battle, and if a tank is damaged recovery crews are immediately sent to its rescue.

The work of tank recovery units is coupled with titanic labour and daring valour.

Hundreds of tanks salvaged by these units and dragged to safety from under fire, have been repaired and sent back to the field.

Lieutenant Salamatin's tank, first to break into a village, drove its nose into the wall of a barn and kept up fire at German self-propelled guns until the barn was set ablaze. Smothered in burning splinters the tank hurled itself upon the self-propelled guns which were already in retreat along the highway.

In his ardour Salamatin rushed onto a bridge over a narrow muddy river. The bridge collapsed, the tank crashed through it and came to a standstill with its nose in the air like a rearing horse.

Removing the machine-gun the tankmen dug in near the tank to defend it.

Night came and went. Two of the crew were killed, Salamatin himself was wounded.

At daybreak Sergeant Yegor Kosciuszko's tank recovery section crept up to the tankmen. Inspecting the machine they began to dig. They dug under the tank until the ground holding it up in front was levelled and the tank was restored to a horizontal position. The tankmen returned to the tank and opened fire from its gun.

But the tank began to sink into the mire and its gun was soon obliged to cease firing, pinned to the ground.

The tankmen returned to the dugouts and took to their tommy-guns.

At a distance of some hundred metres from the tank, Kosciuszko, with six of his men, were busily digging an ordinary village well right in the centre of the village; the logs from a ruined hut were used for its superstructure.

The mortal combat of the tankmen presented a striking contrast to the

apparently peaceful occupation of Kósciuszko's men.

Their job finished, Kosciuszko's men dragged a telegraph pole to the well, sawed it in two, made a cable fast around the two pieces and lowering them into the well filled it in with earth. The loose end of the cable was put through a block fastened to the rear hooks of the tank and then to the steel hooks of a caterpillar tractor.

The Germans took a gun across to the left bank in an effort to finish off the tank, but the steep banks of the river made it impossible for them to fire over open sights: the shells struck the ground, their splinters clanging and recoiled from the tank's armour.

Kosciuszko climbed onto the tractor and started it up. The steel cable rose from the ground, humming from the tension. Whenever splinters touched the cables they reverberated like a gigantic harp.

With beams across their shoulders Kosciuszko's men crowded around the tank. The tank shook and crept forward splintering the logs, forcing the men to seek shelter from the wooden splinters which scattered like shell fragments.

No sooner was the tank dragged onto the bank than it made a thrust for the German gun, smashed it, and rolled on to the west.

Kosciuszko's men rolled up the cable, placed it on a tractor with their tools. Gathering some splinters they began to prepare a meal—dinner and breakfast in one for during two days' hard labour they had not paused for food.

During supper Kosciuszko relaxed for the first time and words coming from his lips no longer resembled an order:

"By golly, I wish I had a mandoline, I'm in that sort of a mood. I feel as if I had just dragged my sweetheart or some other beautiful girl from this river."

"Fine lady," retorted Yevtukhov. "She's breaking the Germans' bones now."

"I know for a fact the Hun couldn't cope with our job," joined in Garbuz, formerly a stevedore in Novorossiisk. "They're too soft for that. Last week, for example, we dragged away a "Tiger" of theirs. The Germans had laid boards all round it and fussed around with cables too, but could do nothing. After messing about for some time, they left it and went away. Then we got to work and in twenty-four hours we pulled it out like a cork from a bottle of beer."

On a cold night with a biting wind blowing I again met Kosciuszko's crew on the bank of another river. And this is what I saw.

Standing right near the water in his underclothes, soaked to the skin was Garbuz impatiently waiting for Kosciuszko to give him his ration of vodka. Gulping it down, Garbuz uttered an exclamation of delight, smelled his finger and picking up a sapper's spade entered the river pushing aside the floating ice. Then he dived and for a long time his head did not appear above water.

Looking at the streaming water Kosciuszko said angrily:

"We have wasted four hours here and can't get her nose out. She bumped into the bank at full speed and stuck her horns in deep."

"Come on now, get warm," he cried as Garbuz reappeared on the surface, "it's my turn,"—and he began to undress there on the bank.

It was snowing. The ground crunched underfoot. Shivering from the cold I went to a tractor some distance away to get warm at its radiator.

The wet air shook with the roar of artillery. Now and again orange flashes cast a glow on the ice and black fissure. They faded leaving us in the gloom and rustling snow.

Garbuz came over. He'd had another drink and was in a happy frame of mind.

"Three days ago," he said loudly, "we stole a 'Panther' from the Hun. That was some fun! A scout came and told us there was a German 'Panther' in the gully and the mechanic with it. Tying a cable to my leg I crawled forward. The mud was awful. As I crawled I suddenly began to wonder at myself. After all, beg your pardon, I'm forty-five and have got four kids, and there I was playing hide and seek, digging my nose into the ground. So I crept up to the German tank. The Germans were hard at work nearby, banging wrenches and swearing in their own lingo. I began tying the cable to the hooks, cautiously of course for fear of being overheard. So I tied it according to all rules. You know, I've got very strong fingers. If I once say how-do-you-do to somebody

he will remember it to the end of his life. So we hitched two tractors onto it and started them up. But what happened then was simply frightful. We thought we'd lose the way in the dark, but the German guns made the place so light that there was no hiding from it. They pounded away from guns and mortars—naturally, they got sore at us dragging away such a valuable thing right from under their noses. They knocked down one of the tractor drivers, wounded another. "So that's the kind you are!" I thought, and I ordered ropes to be tied to the gas controls of the tractors and the tractor drivers to crawl beside them controlling them by pulling the ropes. After that we had no more losses in men. But there was an unpleasant incident when a splinter broke the cable. It seemed our whole scheme had failed and after we had spent so much fuel too. So I crawled back to look for the damage. I found it. But just as I began to tie a beautiful bow in it two Fritzes leaped from the darkness and came straight at me. One of them I sent flying with a kick in his belly as if he were a football, but I wrestled with the second one just as if it'd been in a circus. I did not get him alive though—I'd surely have got a medal or order for it. I had a screw driver in my pocket and I fixed him with that. I hurriedly tied the cable and cried: 'Get going!' But I could barely stand up. So I climbed on top of the 'Panther', and lay there panting—after all you must remember my age, and then my head was bleeding heavily. So, that's how we brought the 'Panther' away from the Germans. And it's almost in perfect condition. There's a minor detail missing, but we'll get it from some damaged machine."

"Garbuz!" Kosciuszko's voice came from the direction of the river. "Bring the cable!"

Garbuz picked up the heavy end of the steel cable and ran towards the river.

At midday four tractors hitched to it in line ahead, dragged the tank from the river bottom.

One day, travelling over the roads of war I saw a long, wide and deeply ploughed furrow. It passed across the front-line narrowing down somewhere in the west.

I asked my companion for an explanation.

"That's probably the trail of a tank dragged by the tank recovery unit," he explained calmly. "Hard job it is. Just ask the tankmen, they'll tell you how many machines were saved thanks to their effort."

Before my eyes arose visions of this labour. Frequently both German and Russian tractors were simultaneously hitched onto the same tank, each pulling in different directions. Hand to hand clashes frequently took place near the tensely drawn cables to prevent their being cut. It was the side with the greater endurance and skill that always triumphed. Have not our people won fame through the endurance and skill of their matchless working people?

VADIM KOZHEVNIKOV

ALEXANDER ZVEZDIN

In real life men of heroic deeds often prove to be outwardly rather nondescript. And there would therefore be nothing surprising had the renowned steel-smelter, Alexander Zvezdin, Hero of Socialist Labour, suddenly turned out to be wholly inconspicuous.

But in this case there was no such contradiction.

"There he is, by the open-hearth furnace, on the extreme left," said the shop superintendent, and a huge giant of a man towered before me.

Standing almost seven feet in his socks, this famous steel-smelter has powerfully developed biceps and big, strong hands. Later, when seated at the table in the workshop office, I could make a closer examination of his high, fair forehead, his broad, winning smile which is characteristic of physically very strong people with usually kind natures. But this

was later. Just now I saw Zvezdin and a group of his helpmates, taming his open-hearth furnace. Yes—taming it. It turned out that a hole had formed in the furnace bottom. The slag may have been to blame or perhaps an over-heavy piece of pig-iron; whatever the cause—the furnace refused to work properly.

Dropping his crow-bar to pick up a shovel piled with dolomite, Zvezdin gave a wordless command to his team. A swift upswing of arms—and the heavy furnace door was opened. Into the gaping red-hot fiery muzzle of the furnace the steel-smelter flung the contents of his shovel, and the furnace belched forth a blast of white, glittering sparks which darted out in a cascade.

Then came the turn for the "scraper"—a slender metal rod over twelve feet long, with a block attached to the end which pumps the molten metal out of the hole. However, before pushing it into the furnace, the heavy rod first has to be bent. This took but a few seconds: one of Zvezdin's helpmates braced the scraper on the metal tiles of the floor while Zvezdin leapt at it with a bull-dog grip until it bent to the required angle. The next instant the smelter inserted the scraper into the furnace aperture and with strong movements began manipulating the furnace bottom.

This was successively repeated at each of the three furnace apertures. Through his dark goggles Zvezdin peered into the muzzle of the furnace. Its walls radiated a steady white light—everything was now O.K.

Zvezdin swallowed down water in great gulps. It was only then, by his sweat-matted hair and pallid face that one was able to judge of the efforts these past ten minutes had cost him. No, this was not exhaustion. It was the tensing of all the spiritual and physical powers of Man, who had emerged conqueror in a hard-fought struggle.

Alexander Zvezdin belongs to no family of hereditary steel-smelters. He is a Cossack, hailing from the heart of Cossack-land—the Kuban, where he spent the first twenty-eight years of his life in Nikolayevskoye village, Uspensky District, tilling the soil. Thirteen years ago he left his village, according to him, by sheer chance alone.

"It was my sister who came from Rostov

Alexander Zvezdin

to spend her vacation with us, who advised me to train as a mechanic at Rostov. That's how I came to the cross-road," Zvezdin told me. "My family wasn't very large—my wife, and two kiddies—a son and daughter. It didn't take us long to pack up and, like true Cossacks—we all left together—lock, stock and barrel."

Twenty-eight-year-old Zvezdin felt that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that he had to come to work as an unskilled labourer at the factory. To be sure, he was out after something bigger which actually came his way one day, in the shape of an advertisement announcing enrolment in eleven-month courses for training metal workers for one of the new engineering plants being built at that time in the Moscow Region. This is Zvezdin's thirteenth year in this particular plant.

"For a couple of weeks I gave a hand to the assembly workers," Zvezdin recalled, "and then I went for two months' practice to the "Hammer and Sickle" Works, under the steel-smelter Chesnokov. Open-hearth furnace No. 1 was set going at our plant in the autumn, and I was given the job of second workmate, Bodreyev being No. 1."

When the second open-hearth furnace was launched at the plant, Bodreyev

was transferred to it as steel-smelter; Zvezdin became first workmate at No. 1 furnace. Twelve months later he was a smelter. To this day he speaks with the warmest gratitude of the Ossetian, Akhpolat Bodreyev, and of his "boss" of those days—steel-smelter, Phillip Ignatov.

"Where are they now? Do you write to each other?"

"What for?" Zvezdin asked in surprise, then added: "Why, they're both here, in our shop. I suppose we'll all grow grey together. Even molten steel can't part us, let alone water!"

Here indeed is real friendship. All three speak of each other—as masters of their trade should—with the greatest respect and esteem, when the conversation centres on their comrades—and very charily and unwillingly, when their own person is the subject of conversation.

Zvezdin, who has won the highest title the Soviet country confers upon its workers—Hero of Socialist Labour—says of himself:

"In the main I've got the knack of steel-smelting, but of course, I hope to do still better in the future."

"And Bodreyev?"

"Bodreyev? Now, there's a real, top-class smelter for you! Why, I was still a mere No. 2 workmate when Akhpolat Bodreyev was already doing really big things!"

Zvezdin has all the trade terminology of steel-smelting pat, he knows all the formulas and calculations necessary, but he always speaks of the Martin open-hearth furnace—named after its inventor, Pierre Martin the French metallurgist—in an intimate, friendly and respectful way—calling it simply "Martyn", as though he were speaking of a living person, a steel-smelter like himself, but a first-rate steel-smelter.

The furnaces here are fifteen-tonners. But Zvezdin has full faith in his "Martyn" and is not afraid of loading it with a super-charge of two or three tons.

"An extra couple of tons make no difference to 'him'," he says. "If Martyn's well tended he's like india-rubber."

But increasing the charge is by no means the only way of raising its metal yield. Zvezdin's able hands and firm will not only conquer space, but also time. He first reduced the set standard of five hours by thirty minutes, and then cut the time down to four hours, thus supplying two smelts in his eight-hour shift.

Were you to ask the shop superintendent what were the main features in the work of this steel-smelter, what, in the final run, accounts for his successes, his reply would be:

"Discipline and accuracy are Zvezdin's salient features."

Very ordinary sounding and even common-place words. Strictly speaking, these properties are essential in any and every kind of work. But the discipline and accuracy of this steel-smelter is discipline and accuracy squared and cubed.

Never for a moment must the condition of the furnace bottom, its walls, its vaults, escape the attention of the steel-smelter. Its duration of service, its efficiency, its staying powers—everything depends on the careful attention it receives. And the charging? A difference of only ten degrees in the temperature of the metal may in some cases result in spoilage of the whole smelt. This is where accuracy and precision, traits with which Zvezdin is richly endowed, are needed. These inherent features never fail him—be it after eight, or should the job require it, after sixteen hours of work. During the war days aren't measured by solar hours. To win a few more minutes in the speed of smelting Zvezdin is ready to work all night, and the next day and night without a break. He is like the armour-piercing rifleman, who remains watchfully vigilant for days and nights, waiting for that precious moment when his well-aimed bullet will set fire to the German tank; like the sharpshooter who for hours on end patiently keeps his eyes glued to the enemy's forward line, for that fleeting second when his bullet will reach his target. It is in this labour that is war—whether it be in the trenches, in the partisan ambush, or in tending the open-hearth furnace.

And even the sixteenth hour of work, should it happen to find Zvezdin still at his furnace, sees him disciplined, spruce and vigilant as ever. And only once—so he himself confesses—only once did he feel the blood throb hot in

his temples, as if it had somehow thickened, and for a moment a mist spread before his eyes. This was on the day when, arriving at the plant, he learned from his comrades that the high title of Hero of Socialist Labour had been conferred on him.

"And this here 'Martyn' was more than super-charged with happiness that day," he said, pointing to his heart. "And my big Martyn, too, didn't let me down that day—it worked like a hero!"

At the exit from the shop stands a big pile of fresh large mouldings of definite shape.

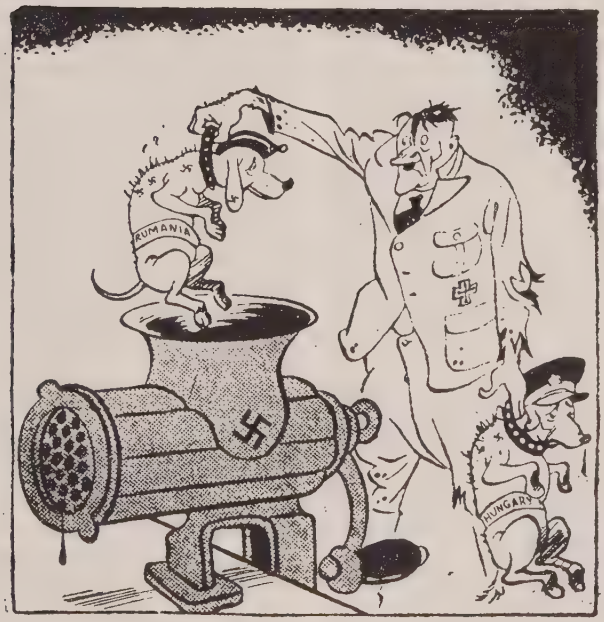
"Think they'll do?" Zvezdin smilingly asks. "For Hitler, I mean—as little gifts dropped from the sky!?"

And he answered his own question:

"Yes, they certainly will do. And how! . . We've got "Easter eggs" to be dropped from the sky twice this size. . . Also made by my Martyn. . ."

M. PHILIPPOV

HARD TIMES



The Hitler's dogs in the service of their boss

Drawn by Boris Yefimov

SHOLOKHOV IN WAR DAYS

Sholokhov made his literary debut as the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. This monumental work has often been called the "Cossack epic". As a matter of fact, this definition, historically speaking, is too narrow, for what we have before us is a national folk epic. *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Sholokhov's later work, *The Soil Upturned*, acquaint us with the Russian people—soldiers and builders—who are entering the new historical era ushered in by the Revolution, the Civil War and collective farming. Sholokhov portrayed the national character as it appeared to him in the twenties and thirties of this century amid the complex social and personal conflicts, through the medium of the activities of the new, Soviet people and the dramas of the outlived social circle.

As a master of the epic novel, and particularly as a portrayer of the soldier, Sholokhov is perhaps the man best equipped to delve deeply into the vast theme presented by the present war.

This is borne out by two of Sholokhov's most recent novels: *Hate* and *They Fought for Their Country*. The latter is a long novel which has as yet appeared only in parts. Sholokhov presents us with a new phase in the development of the national character, in the make-up of the Soviet individual as a soldier in the war of liberation now being waged against Hitlerism.

The novel *Hate* already discloses this aim—to portray the inner world of the fighting Russian, of the Soviet individual, as linked up with country and as he enters into combat with the hated enemy who has invaded Soviet territory. This peaceful individual, capable of such unbounded love for his land, now learns to detest the enemy with a hatred befitting a Hitlerite, a fascist. The novel *Hate* shows us such love and such hatred, and the lofty ideals fostering them.

After describing an encounter with the enemy so fierce and bloody, that it would seem to sap the entire spiritual and physical strength of his heroes, Sholokhov draws breath, as it were, and suddenly switches over to a description of the calm majesty and deep tranquility of Russian nature. This appears not merely as an established literary modus, but in expression of definite traits in the Russian character. This is no German sentimentalism, such as rests idly in the waistcoat pocket of ravishers and murderers to be used as required, but an organic unity of soul with the beauty and peace of his native land, which is being defiled by the enemy.

Such a passage occurs in *Hate*:

"I have seen a huge tract of woodland," writes Sholokhov, "cut down by our artillery fire. . . Under the felled trunks of the pines lay German dead, their mangled bodies rotting among the living green of fern and bracken; and all the resinous fragrance of shell-splintered pine was powerless to drown that stiflingly sickly, pungent stench of decaying bodies. . . Silently, majestically, death held sway in that clearing, made and ploughed up by our shells; solitary, in the very middle of it, stood a brave silver birch that had survived by some miracle and the wind swayed its splinter-scratched boughs, and whispered in the young, glazed and gluey leaves.

". . . The young signaller just ahead of me touched the tree trunk lightly and asked with sincere and affectionate astonishment:

"'How did you manage to come through it, my sweet?'"

Such is Sholokhov's hero. He hates the enemy and is ruthless about destroying the foe in battle, but his soul does not become hardened and his eyes are open to the beauty of the world around him.

The hero of this tale, Lieutenant Gerassimov describes the attitude of his

men towards captured Germans at the beginning of the war:

"I remember it clearly, as if it had only just happened. They were brought in looking frightened and pale. My men had cooled down already by then, and each brought the prisoners what he could spare: a mess-tin of cabbage soup, a bit of tobacco or a fag, some gave them tea. And they clapped them on the back and called them 'camerad'. 'What are you fighting for, camerad?'—and all that sort of thing."

But when our men saw what unprincipled swine confronted them, they realized that these were not people but "foul beasts blind with fury", and their good nature vanished. Nor could it have been otherwise. The Germans outrage all that is dear to the Russian people. They experience no moral restraints: neither a child's defencelessness, nor a woman's honour, nor respect for old age deter them. Only force and smashing rebuffs can stop them,—only fear can sober them. It is not long before the Russian soldier described in *Hate* realizes this. Big-hearted and humane, he becomes merciless, wreaking vengeance on the Germans for their gangster methods of warfare. His hatred is fed and strengthened not only on the battlefield but wherever German banditry subjects defenceless victims to terrible sufferings, be it in a German concentration camp for Soviet war prisoners or some peaceful little village ravaged by the Germans.

Although Lieutenant Gerassimov has seen and experienced a great deal, never can he forget the little girl killed by the Germans:

"She must have been on the way to school when the Germans caught her, dragged her into a kitchen- garden, raped and then killed her. There she lay among the crushed potato tops, a little slip of a girl, a mere child, with her schoolbooks lying all around, bespattered with her blood."

Terrible were these schoolbooks smeared with blood!

Once Gerassimov and his men came across a spot where the Germans had executed Red Army men whom they had taken prisoner.

"You've most likely been in a butcher shop, haven't you?" asked Gerassimov. "Well, that'll give you an idea of what this place looked like. . . The trunks of the bodies clotted with blood hung from the boughs of the trees growing in the gully. The hands and feet had been hacked off; and half the skin was flayed off. . . At the bottom of the gully . . . was just a pile of slaughtered flesh hacked into big pieces!"

In the concentration camp from which Gerassimov escaped, severely wounded Red Army men had been locked up in a stable. They lay about on manure piles, suffocating from the stench.

"The wounds of most of them were crawling with maggots, and those of the wounded who were able to do so dug out these maggots with their finger-nails and sticks. . . Beside them lay a pile of dead prisoners that no one had time to clear away."

The Germans were exterminating every living thing, drenching the soil of the Russian people with blood. Death was creeping over Gerassimov's native land. The fascists had decided to exterminate the nation, to erase the Russian state from the map.

Sholokhov has succeeded in showing us this frightful truth about the nature of the German campaign with consummate artistry and great force of conviction. Here we learn Sholokhov's strength as a psychologist able to penetrate the soul of Man at war. Peace-loving, humane and good-natured, Gerassimov now becomes a formidable, ruthless and passionate avenger under the influence of the inhuman trials he goes through. Sholokhov tells us that Gerassimov cannot look calmly at a living German. He begins to tremble with a fever of hate—a feeling aroused by all that Gerassimov had seen and pondered over. Although only thirty-two, his hair was already white at the temples.

"And so pure was that hoary whiteness won through great suffering that the white thread of the spider's web clinging to his trench cap was lost against the gleaming white temple, where I could not distinguish it try as I might."

Suffering had lent a crystal purity not only to Gerassimov's temples but also to his hate. His great love of mankind culminated in just as great a hate for the barbaric Germans. For him there was no living with them on earth.

Sholokhov's new and as yet unfinished novel *They Fought for Their Country*, as

far as one can judge by the excerpts already published, promises to be an outstanding event in Soviet literature.

The writer takes an important stage in the history of the war, its turning point, the end of the retreat and, to all appearances, the Battle of Stalingrad. The novel begins with a description of the retreat of a certain Red Army regiment towards the Don. All that has remained of the regiment is a company of one hundred and seventeen well-grown, strong men. This is no smashed military unit, however, but a regiment that has retained its banner, its discipline and its will to fight, while the men themselves are seething with righteous hatred and staunch in their great loyalty to their native land.

Almost as soon as they reach the river, even before managing to rest a few hours, this company-regiment again takes up a defence position and once more battles with a heroism and persistance surpassing human imagination against an enemy force as numberless as a swarm of locusts.

The descriptions of these battles depicted with a majestic simplicity resembling a Renaissance fresco, prompt the reader to guess at the Stalingrad "miracle". Despite the fact that the men fight with the utmost valour they are forced to retreat, yet neither the men themselves nor the population are reconciled for a single moment to this.

An old village woman flies out passionately at Pyotr Lopakhin, one of the heroes of the novel:

"You've taken it on yourselves to fight; well then, fight, you rascals, like you should, and don't go dragging the enemy after you across the whole country, don't disgrace your old mother in front of everybody!"

Lopakhin himself, in talking to another character, Nikolai Streltsov, says the very same thing just as vigorously:

"Fight better. . . Hang on to every hillock on your territory, learn to thrash the enemy so that he rattles with the death rattle. And if you can't do that, don't be sore. . . if the population gives you dir t looks. . . You and I, mister, haven't learned yet how to fight as we should, we're not sufficiently fighting mad. When we learn to pitch into a fight so that we're foaming at the mouth with rage, then the Germans will turn back to the west, get me?"

At the present moment it is particularly clear that the enemy has "turned back to the west" so quickly largely due to the people's will to victory, to their determination to overcome the great difficulties unavoidable in the phase of the war described by Sholokhov.

Sholokhov affirms that in such a people, difficulties and setbacks arouse a spirit of vehement resistance and not distraught inertia. German slavery cannot exist in a land where a seventy-year-old woman speaks in such a way about the honour and dignity of her country.

In the splendid description of the battle for the river crossing, the episode of the commander's death is particularly vivid. When the remnants of the shattered regiment launch a counter-attack against the dense lines of Germans and drive them back, a shell splinter severs the commander's hand. Holding the bloody stump aloft like some ghastly banner of vengeance he runs another few score steps, streaming with blood, before he falls dead. . . Is this not a detail worthy of a heroic fresco?

Only true inner conviction can rouse a man to such a feat. With rare penetration, Sholokhov is able to observe the soul of the fighter who displays this great spiritual freedom.

While describing seemingly ordinary military episodes, the everyday routine of a soldier, Sholokhov shows how profoundly, both in large and small matters, the men of the Red Army differ from the German military machine chiefly activated by the desire for rich pickings and the instinct of savage adventures who clubb themselves the "higher race". The two types are personified by the drunken German officer who advances towards the Soviet defence zone, swinging a stick, and the Russian tankbuster Pyotr Lopakhin, who is so petrified with hate that he does not even notice the hail of bullets from the dive bomber churning up the ground around him. This unwavering and overwhelming rage makes Lopakhin emerge the victor in his duel with the formidable but soulless German machine. Only after the plane he had brought down crashes to earth does Lopakhin recover from the rage and wrath of battle.

"With trembling hands Lopakhin hastily rolled himself a cigarette and, sinking exhaustedly and somehow nervelessly to the bottom of the trench, avidly inhaled two or three puffs at once.

"'I thought he was getting away, damn him!' he said more calmly, but still speaking slowly as a result of his agitation."

The adventurist, plunderer and professional aggressor is not capable of such lofty spiritual strength having no source from which to derive it. The other human emotion capable of reaching the same degree of spiritual intensity as hate, is that of love. In Lopakhin these two emotions are fused in one. It is this that makes him a typical exponent of the spirit of the Red Army.

The character who is described most clearly in the excerpts already published is the miner and tankbuster Pyotr Lopakhin. It is not yet evident in the novel what his fate will be, but in him are already expressed the traits characteristic of the Russian fighting man: liveliness, irony, broadmindedness, the ability to concentrate all his spiritual and physical powers in action at a moment's notice, and a courage nourished by a conscious hatred of the enemy. To Lopakhin, every nazi he encounters in battle is a personal enemy. He feels that the man who stepped onto his country gun in hand, must perish. When Lopakhin sets fire to a German tank he angrily turns on his comrade who is slow in opening fire on the enemy crew jumping out of the burning machine:

"'. . . Are you waiting until they start surrending?!' Lopakhin shouted at him with mad fury. 'I don't need captured Germans on my territory, I need them here dead. . .'"

Sholokhov depicts other Soviet and profoundly national Russian traits in this character. The rank-and-file soldier feels that his land has no questions that do not concern him. He is equally interested in the commanding ability of a general and why a cook is sitting in a ditch at the forward position. Everyone while carrying out his duty must do it enthusiastically and intelligently, thus helping all the others. For a general to be a good commander, the men must fight well and the cook must feed the men. While doing his own job, each individual considers the whole and is equally responsible for the course of the war. This outlook is characteristic of the citizen of a truly democratic country. It is the outlook of a free, proud and broad-minded being. It is just here that he differs from the pedantic, dull-witted unthinking German landsknecht. Lopakhin brings a reasoning, understanding mind to everything going on about him. With merciless realism he judges the people with whom he comes into contact and analyses the course of events. In this lies his vast superiority over the enemy. It is this that constitutes the source of initiative in action, of heroism and of that vast hatred for the nazis which moves him to such exploits.

Besides Pyotr Lopakhin, two other characters are very vividly portrayed: Nikolai Streltsov and Ivan Zvyagintsev. The former is constantly pondering over the course of the war, endeavouring to fathom and forecast events, while the latter gives expression to the hard lot of the soldier in war. It is as yet difficult to foresee the fate of these characters. We know that Nikolai Streltsov, who strikes up the kind of wartime friendship with Lopakhin such as protect one from loneliness, fear and death alike, returns to the front from the hospital after having been wounded and severely shell-shocked. As for Ivan Zvyagintsev, he has either been killed or severely wounded, most likely the latter.

Lopakhin, Streltsov, Zvyagintsev, all show from remarkably varying aspects how profoundly the war of the Soviet people against the Germans is a war of the people themselves.

All their thoughts and emotions are caught up in the war as in a flame. With a directness and force that is most convincing Sholokhov shows this in everyone of their acts, in all their conversations. The war pulses within their every vein like a second heart. That is why their patriotism is neither noisy nor showy but as organic a part of them as breathing itself.

The reading public is impatiently awaiting the continuation of Sholokhov's novel.

BORIS DAIREDZHIEV

VISSARION BELINSKY

Vissarion Belinsky, the great Russian critic, was born in 1810 in the family of a provincial doctor. Belinsky always recalled his childhood and youth with the bitterest of feelings. He grew up in joyless surroundings feeling himself a stranger to his family. His father, an exceedingly vulgar and cruel man, subjected the lad to every possible humiliation. His mother was as ambitious as she was ignorant. The situation in the district school was no better, his only pleasure was in his books. Left to his own resources the boy read avidly whatever came into his hands and in this way got to know all the Russian and translated literature of his time.

He tirelessly copied out the works of the poets of XVIII and XIX centuries, cried over sentimental novels, "imposed upon himself the sacred duty of wandering through the fields by the light of the moon with downcast mien", he composed ballads in the romantic style, regarding himself a serious rival to Zhukovsky [1]. He retained his passionate interest in literature during the years at the gymnasium. One of the teachers of the Penza Gymnasium, which Belinsky attended in 1825, relates: "It sometimes happened that I went out into the suburbs with the boys. Then Belinsky would stick to me the whole time questioning me about Goethe, Walter Scott, Byron, Pushkin, about romanticism and about everything that troubled our young hearts in those days." He lived his own life, experienced privations, moved from one miserable lodging to another and as before gave himself up to the reading of his favourite books.

In the autumn of 1829, before he had completed his course at the gymnasium, he set out for Moscow and entered the Department of Literature of the Moscow University, having collected the necessary funds with great difficulty. The course here could not give him much. Moscow University was still far from its renaissance which began only at the end of the thirties. Belinsky obtained far greater benefit from his student comrades. He joined a university literary circle whose members read their own compositions and translations, discussed current literary work and analysed the university lectures. In the exciting discussions which were then going on about classicism and romanticism, young Belinsky, who was a zealous protagonist of romanticism, displayed exceptional fervour. It seemed as though he would have been ready to challenge everybody to battle who disagreed with his convictions. He was bitter and merciless in his persecution of everything that savoured of sectarianism, rhetoric and hypocrisy in literature.

Dmitri Kalinin, a tragedy written by Belinsky in 1831, was weak enough from a literary point of view but contained sharp tirades against serfdom.

The professors who examined the tragedy as censors found it "immoral", "unworthy of the university", and before long the author of *Dmitri Kalinin* was expelled from the university on the excuse that he had not made sufficient progress and that his talents were "limited".

After leaving the university Belinsky was forced to take up translation and petty literary work in order to gain a livelihood. Wishing to improve his affairs he bought Paul de Kock's novel *La Laitière de Montfermeil* and sat up night after night translating it with the greatest difficulty, in the hope of earning a few hundred roubles. "Again fortune played a cruel joke on me," Belinsky wrote to his parents, "the newspapers announced another translation of that very same book." It was only in 1834 that Belinsky's situation showed a comparative improvement. He made the acquaintance of N. Nadezhdin, the publisher of the *Telescope* magazine who offered him a job. At first Nadezhdin gave Belinsky work as a translator but later, sensing his real literary talent, offered him the criticism section of the *Telescope*.

In this section, in 1834, Belinsky's

[1] V. A. Zhukovsky (1788—1852), a distinguished Russian poet, romanticist and translator, teacher of Pushkin.

first famous article, *Literary Dreams*, appeared. This debut made Belinsky's name known. In *Literary Dreams* he gave a brilliant historical review, summarized results and outlined the prospects for the further development of Russian literature; the basis of Belinsky's critical judgement was the philosophical-aesthetic outlook he had acquired from Stankevich's [1] famous circle, with which the author was at that time in close contact.

This circle included the youth of the Moscow University in the thirties and was steeped in an atmosphere of profound interest in philosophical questions. Young Belinsky with his eternal thirst for a philosophical understanding of the world was at that time attracted by the German philosopher Schelling. He tried to examine the "whole boundless world" in the light of Schelling's idealism and pantheism. This was but the beginning of an intricate and difficult road in search of truth which Belinsky followed throughout his short life.

It was only for a comparatively short period that Belinsky was under the influence of philosophical quietism; conformism, which led to "conciliation with reality", with the serf regime of the Russia of Nicholas I, was too great a contradiction to his turbulent nature.

In the general development of Belinsky's world outlook there is a tremendous difference between the *Literary Dreams* period and the more mature years when he, having overcome his one-sided interpretation of Hegel, became a convinced protagonist of the ideals of liberation. This, however, does not mean that Belinsky had become "carefree" in respect of philosophy in general. "Although he had abandoned his one-sided understanding of Hegel he did not abandon this philosophy as a whole," wrote Herzen. "On the contrary it was the staring point of his lively concise and original combination of philosophical and revolutionary ideas."

And, indeed, in his very first articles, coloured as they were by the strong influence of Schelling and Hegel, the living thoughts of the fighter-critic, the passionate publicist, the revolu-

[1] N. V. Stankevich (1813—1840), a close friend of Belinsky, was the leader of the Moscow circle of the University students in the thirties. In addition to Stankevich and Belinsky, other famous writers joined the circle at various times: I. S. Aksakov (1823—1886), a noted publicist, writer and public figure, M. A. Bakunin (1814—1876), a prominent publicist and anarchist, an ideologist of the left wing of the Russian Narodniks (in the thirties and forties Bakunin was a close friend of Belinsky), I. S. Turgenev, T. N. Granovsky (1813—1855), an eminent historian and public figure of the forties and Professor of the Department of World History at the Moscow University.

Belinsky on His Death Bed *Painted by S. Naumov*
Sitting by the bed are N. Nekrassov and I. Panayev, his friends, Russian writers. In the next room, a gendarme who has come with a search warrant

tionary democrat throbbed under the idealistic outer shell.

As early as in his *Literary Dreams* his admirable qualities as a critic became apparent, qualities which were extensively developed later.

In this article Belinsky traced the whole course of development of Russian literature from the time of Peter the Great to the thirties of the XIX century, at the same time producing a fine example of concrete literary analysis.

This enabled Belinsky in his first article to outline the evolution of literary tendencies, to show the way in which they were interwoven and to give a correct place to such of Pushkin's predecessors as Derzhavin [1], Karamzin [2], Zhukovsky and others.

This article of the twenty-three-year-old Belinsky created some kind of a sensation in literary spheres. His bold repudiation of antiquated conceptions, stagnating authorities and false reputations aroused a storm of discontent against the militant commoner amongst the literary conservatives. Belinsky spared nobody's pride for the sake of truth. He made no reservations, used no hyperboles, tendencious and guilded phrases. His next articles *Gogol's Novels*, on Koltsov's poems, on *Hamlet*, on Lermontov's *Hero of Our Times*, and others, served to increase Belinsky's fame. Everyone of them was a real event in the literary world of those days.

Belinsky was the first and the best interpreter of the works of the greatest Russian writers. In Apollon Grigoryev's [3] figurative definition "Belinsky's name like ivy has become entwined with the three poetic wreaths, the three great and glorious names, Pushkin, Gogol and Lermontov, and they have become to such a degree interwoven that when speaking of them as of the source of the modern literary movement one is constantly confronted with the necessity of speaking of him also."

In his *Literary Dreams* Belinsky wrote: "The period of Pushkin was marked by an intense movement towards life. In the course of those ten years we refelt, rethought and relived the whole mental life of Europe. . . Pushkin was the perfect expression of his time. . ."

In Pushkin Belinsky saw the synthesis of all Russian literature which, in the critic's opinion, was in the pre-Pushkin period not the expression of the "self-consciousness of the people", of the "spirit of the people" but merely served the interests of the small top layer of society. "There were no creative forces in Russia either national or Russian. No other poet had such a strong, many-sided and fruitful influence on Russian literature. Pushkin overthrew the illegal rule of French pseudo-classicism in Russia, extended the sources of our poetry, directed it towards the national elements of life, produced countless new forms, was the first to connect poetry with Russian life and Russian contemporaneity, he enriched the language with ideas and recreated it."

In Belinsky's extensive review of the whole of Pushkin's poetic heritage contained in his eleven famous articles on the poet he showed the living links between his poetry and past and present Russian literature, showed the significance and ideas of the whole of his work and defined the individual nature of that work.

Belinsky's view on Gogol's works were just as profound and penetrating. In his article *On the Russian Novel and Gogol's Novels* (1835) he was bold enough to state decisively that the still unknown Gogol was the founder of a new "post-Pushkin period" in Russian literature and to give him first place amongst contemporary writers. Belinsky was immediately able to define the nature of the strength and peculiarities of Gogol's work. "This is the poesy of reality, the poesy of real life. . . simplicity of invention, the whole truth of life, the spirit of the people, originality. . . comic relief with profound feelings of sadness and gloom."

Noting the crude representation of Gogol as an "amusing writer", Belinsky went, in great detail, into the question of the peculiarities of his realism. "He does not flatter life, nor does he slander it: he is glad to put on view everything

[1] G. R. Derzhavin (1743—1816), a noted Russian poet and public figure during Catherine's reign.

[2] N. M. Karamzin (1766—1826), a writer and historian. Author of a *History of the Russian State*. Karamzin was one of the innovators of the so-called sentimental genre in Russian literature.

[3] A. A. Grigoryev (1822—1864), a literary critic and poet.

that is beautiful and human but at the same time does not in the least hide life's ugliness. In both cases he is absolutely true to life."

Contemporaries said that Gogol had been made "a happy man" by Belinsky's article and paid particular attention to the definition given in the article of the quality of truth in creative work.

The ability possessed by Belinsky to determine unerringly the character of the future work of a writer on the basis of the first samples of his work is seen in his estimation of Lermontov's first work in which the critic saw Lermontov as a worthy successor to Pushkin. As early as 1838, after having read *A Song About Tsar Ivan Vassilyevich, His Young Bodyguard and the Valiant Merchant, Kalashnikov*, Belinsky greeted in Lermontov "a strong and original talent". Later, after moving to St. Petersburg at the end of 1839, Belinsky again worked on the subject of Lermontov.

The St. Petersburg period was Belinsky's period of maturity as a revolutionary thinker and a critic. He subjected all the "accepted" truths to a severe criticism and was ready "like Marat", as he himself expressed it, to struggle against tyranny.

In the St. Petersburg period Belinsky's conception of the aims and subjects of art underwent a radical change. In the light of these new views of life and art Belinsky examined Lermontov's work and placed him amongst those poets who "dissatisfied with the already completed cycle of life carry in their hearts an anticipation of its future ideal: such was the greatest representative of this class of poets, Byron, and our Lermontov belong to the same class". . .

With the exception of Belinsky none of the critics, contemporary with Lermontov, gave so true an estimation of his creative originality or definition of his place in history: "Lermontov's poetry is a completely new link in the chain of the historical development of our society. . . Pushkin was the poet of the inner feelings of the soul; Lermontov is the poet of the merciless thoughts of truth."

As time went on Belinsky was the first to welcome in the literary field such writers as Turgenev, Goncharov, Grigorovich, Nekrassov and Dostoyevsky. He explained and prophesied the direction of their development which made Russian literature of the second half of the XIX century the greatest in the world.

Owing to Belinsky's tendency towards the comparative method of evaluating literary works, parallels between Russian and western literature are to be found in almost all his articles and reviews; he often employed all the rich variety of western literature for comparison with the works of Russian writers. Although Belinsky wrote very few articles which were devoted especially to the western writers the Russian reader found in his articles a clear conception both of the main stages of the development of the chief European literatures and of the nature of the works of individual writers.

In addition to such outstanding figures as Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Voltaire and others, observations on whose works are scattered throughout many of Belinsky's articles, the whole of western literature during the first half of XIX century is in some way or another analysed by him. The significance of the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, the revolutionary strength of the romanticism of Byron, the greatness of the popular poetry of Béranger, the purposefulness of the social novels of Dickens and George Sand—all these were analysed in Belinsky's articles and reviews.

It is therefore not astonishing that the youth of Moscow and St. Petersburg eagerly awaited the 25th of each month for the appearance of the magazine for which Belinsky wrote. Students literally tore fresh numbers of the journal from each others' hands in the cafés: "Is there an article by Belinsky?" "Yes," and the article at once aroused deep sympathy and heated discussions.

In the Russia of those days where social and political activity was an impossibility, literary questions, as Herzen put it, became questions of life itself. Literature acquired a universal significance. In addition to solving its own problems literature had to take on its own shoulders tasks which should have been performed by philosophy, pamphleteering and science; this gave rise to that exceptional love, unknown to most countries, of the Russian reading

public for their literature, as the only tribune from which the Russian reader of that time could hear the voice of truth. Belinsky was not only the founder of Russian literary criticism; his name is also written in letters of gold in the history of the liberation movement in Russia and in the history of social thought. "The forerunner of Russian social-democracy", as Lenin defined his role, combined in himself the qualities of a litterateur, philosopher, propagandist and fighter. This was as keenly felt by his friends as by his enemies; by his contemporaries as by the future generations of his readers. It was not for nothing that one of Belinsky's literary opponents called him the "barricade fighter", who, "in the absence of revolts in the streets substituted revolts in magazines". And it was not for nothing that the nickname of "raging Vissarion", which his friends gave him, stuck to him for all time.

Chernyshevsky, the successor and follower of Belinsky, wrote: "We do not know whether his nature was intended only for critical activities or not: a nature of genius is at home in many fields, it functions in that field which is the most extensive and fruitful under the given circumstances. We believe that in England this man would have been a parliamentary orator, in the Germany of that time he would have been a philosopher, in France a publicist and in Russia he became the author of articles on Pushkin."

We feel that these words express pity that the rich, many-sided nature of Belinsky was involuntarily compelled to confine itself to the sphere of literary questions. Belinsky himself often said to his friends: "If you knew what a torture it is to keep saying one and the same thing. . . not to dare to go outside certain fixed lines—just art and art."

In disclosing the secret of Belinsky's influence over his contemporaries, Chernyshevsky said that love for the good of his country was greater than his passion as a critic. "This idea is the keynote of all his work. It is the secret of his power."

"He knew the power of only one idea, of one but great passion." (Lermontov.)

This passion is service to one's country, to the people and to the future.

Belinsky's criticism was the banner of the realism which was widely developed in Russian literature in the XIX century. The aesthetic principles which Belinsky worked out, his teachings on form [1], on the typical in literature [2], his rejection of false tendencies in art which we would now call formalism and naturalism, his defence of the true art which is close to the people, his struggle for the ideological in literature and for close bonds between literature and society—all have retained their real significance to the present day.

NIKOLAI BOGOSLOVSKY

[1] "The poet must show and not prove, he must think in forms and pictures and not in syllogisms and dilemmas."

[2] "When there is nothing typical in a story or novel, however thoroughly everything may have been described from life, the reader will not find there any artistic truth."

THE POETRY OF JULJAN TUWIM

Juljan Tuwim's verse is well-known both in his native Poland and abroad. His twenty-five years' work have greatly enriched Polish poetry in all genre from the intimate lyric to political satire. The poet is now at the height of his power and there is every reason to believe that a new stage in the work of the mature master is beginning.

Since Tuwim first began to write, his work has been the living embodiment of that tragedy which was the lot of the best of the Polish intellectuals and from which Tuwim himself probably suffered a great deal.

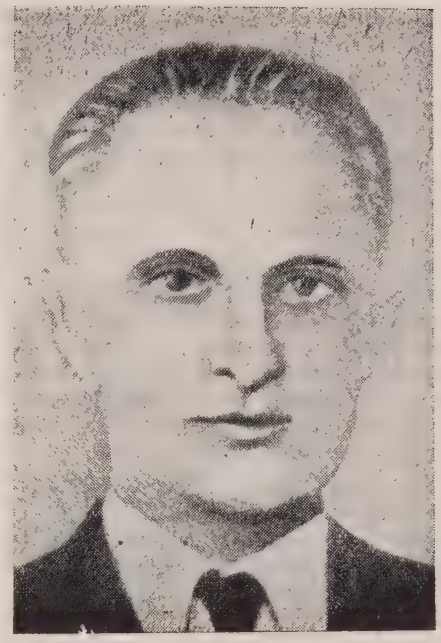
His first poem *Spring (Wiosna)*, which he wrote in 1918, was the cause of a sharp attack from those members of Polish society who preserved the old reactionary traditions. With the keen sight of a poet, Juljan Tuwim saw clearly the vices that surrounded him. With destructive sarcasm he ridiculed the *petit-bourgeois*, his narrow-mindedness and self-satisfaction. He wrote contemptuously of those who maintained:

"Who wants an Aeolian harp? A bass and two fiddles in a pub—that'll do for us, Polish."

The despair and hopelessness which he saw arround him became, to a considerable degree, his lot also, and many a time in his poems he called on death as the only liberation from pain and sorrow. "Shut up the memory, for the storm is coming. . . Close life! Open death!" he wrote in his *Storm or Love (Burza czy miłość)*; in his poem *Haircut (Strzyzenie)* we read: "I shall not go because I need a haircut before I go and who ever heard of a dead man sitting before a mirror?"

As is often the case with poets who witness the tragic events of history we hear in Tuwim's sombre songs, in the stern self-abnegation and dissatisfaction with himself, a challenge to death and not compromise with it, a challenge to the storm and not fear of it. Juljan Tuwim differed from those who wallowed hopelessly in the mud of prosaic life and from those who sought peace in a flight from life and from themselves; at all stages of his career he showed a striving to get out of the narrow streets where the philistine "apothecary's muse" ruled, to get out on "to the broad highway where there are stormy thoughts and noisy crowds", to stand "in the wind of the whole world" — *I Shout (Krzyczę)*. The impossibility of hiding from the real disturbances and storm of life, the poet expressed with the lyrical feeling and irony typical of him in his poem *Distant Tiger (Daleki tygrys)*. It is good to sit in a room with tightly closed shutters, to drink tea and to smoke and not to hear the bloodthirsty tiger prowling through the distant jungle, trampling down everything in his way. There are moments, however, when the eyes of the bloodthirsty tiger blaze in the silence of the tightly closed room and his savage roar makes itself heard; then you tremble and turn pale.

Perhaps it was in such minutes when the "distant tiger" stood before him as a real threat to all that which mankind had created, respected and preserved through the centuries, that Juljan Tuwim wrote his best works. We recall such poems as *May Day (Pierwszy maja)* permeated with the spirit of struggle, or the lyrical and moving *Blind (Ślepcy)*, or the *To a Simple Man (Do prostego człowieka)* written in the plain language of the people.



Here we would like to say something about Tuwim's translations. Thanks to him the liberty-loving verses of Pushkin sound majestic in the Polish language. He introduces the rebel Rambaud to the Polish reader. Tuwim reproduced great works as they were in the original. His translations of *The Lay of Igor's March*, Pushkin's lyrics and the *Bronze Horseman*, Mayakovsky's *Cloud in Trousers*, the poems of Bryussov, Pasternak and Balmont brought fully justified fame to Tuwim as a translator. His translation of the *Bronze Horseman* earned him the Pen Club prize.

His wavering between the tranquillity of his own sheltered corner and the "wind of the whole world", between the storm of life and the forgetfulness of death was undoubtedly the outward sign of a deep inner conflict. It is interesting to note that Vladimir Mayakovsky, after a passing acquaintance with Juljan Tuwim felt that this conflict could be a source of fertility. "Tuwim," wrote Mayakovsky, "apparently very capable, restless and anxious that he might not be understood properly, has written, and perhaps even now wants to write, real works of struggle, is evidently greatly handicapped by the Polish official taste." Mayakovsky wrote

further that "he (Tuwim) would apparently like to write things like *Cloud in Trousers*", that "he did not need and did not want to write for variety", that "Tuwim needed a certain amount of storm and a certain amount of livening up. . ."

The storm which swept over his country and which still continues to shake the whole world brought about a sharp change in his mood, in his world outlook and in his comprehension of his mission as a writer. In the days of battles which are deciding the fate of generations, Juljan Tuwim has a clear conception of the role of the people in the struggle for the liberation of the nations.

In the newspaper *Wolna Polska*, the organ of the League of Polish Patriots in the U.S.S.R., an article was recently published under the headline *The Voice of Juljan Tuwim.*

"In peacetime Poland," said the article, "Juljan Tuwim was known as a poet who was easily swayed by the events of the day, who instinctively reacted to tendencies in public life. He was never a public figure and was never in the public eye. The historical storm has been a test for writers living in exile. Those of them who were possessed of life and feeling had to seek in themselves a tradition, the first great tradition of the last century, the tradition of combining literary and public activities."

The newspaper records with satisfaction that Juljan Tuwim discovered the inner strength which enabled him to follow in the glorious traditions of the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. The newspaper writes of the splendid public work which he is doing, his speeches in New York, Chicago, Detroit and other industrial centres of the U.S.A.

When a statement made by leading public men, published in the U.S.A., appeared with the announcement that the Polish nation desired to live a democratic form of life and to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with the Soviet Union, Juljan Tuwim's signature was on the document.

In a telegram sent to the Soviet Union shortly after Hitler's treacherous attack on the U.S.S.R., Tuwim greeted the Soviet people, seeing in their steadfastness the guarantee of the liberation of humanity from the menace of fascism.

When speaking to American workers about heroic Stalingrad Juljan Tuwim with great emotion recalled an old Polish song: "every house shall be our fortress". He spoke in praise of the ruins of the victorious Volga city, ruins which demand vengeance, and he called for solidarity in the struggle against the common enemy in the name of the "revolution of truth against lies, freedom against tyranny, justice against injustice, heart against fist, in a word, democracy against fascism".

Juljan Tuwim spoke to the American workers about his native land, about his native town of Lodz: "My poor Lodz! If the clouds of smoke over the town today tell us that it is working, then curse that labour, and glory to the airmen who are destroying those factories with their bombs! It is a terrible feeling to dream of destroying a town you love, but if the enemy's grave is to be found beneath its ruins then let it be destroyed!"

The voice of Juljan Tuwim is the voice of a patriot who has heard the call of his country in the days of trouble.

This is the victory won by Tuwim the poet. Tuwim, in the words of Mayakovsky, always wanted to write "real works of struggle". He did not, however, always possess sufficient inner clarity and conviction to liberate his yearning and sceptical muse, to bring him nearer to his great predecessors in Polish poetry.

Juljan Tuwim dreamt of the "wind of the whole world". The historical storm which has swept across the world brought him into this wind and subjected the strength of his spirit to a test. Juljan Tuwim has withstood this test and there is no doubt that the speeches of the poet-patriot, calling his people to battle, will be followed by new works.

The *Chicago Sun* reported that according to Tuwim himself for a year he has been working on a long poem *Flowers of Poland (Kwiaty Polskie)*. We only know fragments of this poem. The poet who once wrote that "my house is the four walls of a verse" has now seen how "the great eyes of events gleam through the thick mesh of verses". He draws the picture of a great Poland such as she should be when reborn after victory, he wants the fire which has destroyed the riches of his country to be a cleansing fire. He wants the way of life in his renaiscent country to be built up on

the foundations of genuine human justice. He demands that we go to the future new Poland "across Tatras of German dead, through a Baltic of foul enemy blood"; to go in the hope that friends will come to meet us from the towns that are filled with crosses.

Juljan Tuwim has entered into the second half-century of his life and the second quarter-century of his career as a new poet, a poet such as he wanted to be but could not become in a Poland debased by the corrupt regime of the Sosnkowskis and Raczkiewicz's.

The compilers of the booklet of Tuwim's poems, published in Moscow by the League of Polish Patriots in the U.S.S.R. are to be congratulated. This little booklet gives one an excellent idea of the high level of Juljan Tuwim's poetry and helps one understand the intricate path he has travelled.

Here we find Tuwim's best works, those in which the poet's confusion of emotions have found expression: his doubts and alarms, his faint hopes and bitter disappointments, his disbelief and scepticism, his insatiable thirst for joy and happiness. An extensive cycle of poems tells of the difficult and desperately gloomy life of the small man in Poland in the twenties and thirties—*Need (Nędza)*, *The Poor Man's Night (Noc ubogiego czlowieka)*, *Verses of Dying Hope (Wiersz o umarlej nadziei)*, *The Search (Rewizja)*, *The Funeral (Pogrzeb)* and others. The reader can feel the profound irony and sarcasm of the poet in the poems *The Dancing Socrates (Sokrates tańczący)*, *Inmates (Mieszkańcy)*, *The Flute-Player (Flecista)* and the *Hunchback (Garbus)*. A call to struggle against the social system prevailing in Poland is heard in the poems *On the Death of Narutowicz (Pogrzeb prezydenta Narutowicza)*, *Before Paris (Przed Paryżem)*, *The Decade (Dziesięciolecie)*.

Perhaps the most expressive in form and at the same time the simplest and warmest poems are those which come of the new feeling for his native land which permeates all Tuwim's latest works. Such, for example, are his poems *Memories (Przypomnienie)* or *Journeyings (Podróż)*; it is impossible not to be moved by the lines: "And return I must for I lied when I said the whole world is my homeland. My homeland is that sad courtyard where I have not been for so many years."

In the short poem *The Lesson (Lekcja)* Tuwim's typical irony has taken on new power—it is filled with the wrath of a patriot against the evil, age-old enemy of his people. The poet addresses a Polish child and tells him to learn the fine Polish language from a new A.B.C. book. In this book there are new pictures: in front of the houses there are coffins large and small, a huge graveyard with black crosses sticking up out of the dirty snow. And, recalling the Polish children killed by the Germans, Tuwim concludes in his satiric wrath: "Proclaim the songs of the Warsaw children to the whole world."

The fragment of the poem *Flowers of Poland* which bears the title *Prayer (Modlitwa)* is written in a style which is new to Tuwim, the style of journalistic poetry which has its own traditions in Polish literature. In passionate lines he expresses the hopes of the Poles who desire, after the war, to build up a new genuinely independent life under the banner of liberty, on the basis of a real democracy. "Let us sweep out our own house," says the poet, "clear it of rubble, ruins and rubbish, clear it of the sins and vices of the accursed". He prays that his country, when it arises from the dead, may be ruled by good and wise people strong in their wisdom and goodness. He asks that his people, when they stand on their feet, should raise their horny fists so that the working people in town and village should be given the fruits of their labours. He calls down the wrath and punishment of God on the heads of the arrogant fools, the haughty fanfarons, on those who have raised the sword of injustice for the sake of their own cupidity. He prays that those "who stand between the Germans and the new nation of a hundred peoples should be given good-neighbourly frontiers in the east and a bottomless abyss in the west". He wants the Polish word, cunningly distorted by the adventurists, to have its meaning and truthfulness returned: "Let freedom mean nothing but freedom and justice nothing but justice." These lines are a forecast of excellent progress in the work of this master of Polish poetry who combines his poetic quest with the strivings and hopes of his people.

MARK ZHIVOV

The title of M. Nikitin's book: *Partisan Warfare in the Leningrad Region* (State Political Publishers, Moscow) speaks for itself.

This book largely consists of documents, partisan leaflets and excerpts from newspapers published by partisan detachments. The first part of this book, entitled *The Enemy on Our Soil* describes the brutal "new order" introduced by the invaders and the bloody tortures and violence to which they subject Soviet people.

In one village the Germans try to force the district forest inspector Matveyev to cooperate with them and to betray Soviet people. Matveyev flatly refuses to turn traitor and the hangmen subject him to unspeakable tortures. Despite this Matveyev did not consent to treachery, and the nazis buried their victim alive.

Naumova, the wife of a collective-farm chairman was also subjected to inhuman tortures on refusing to turn traitor to her people. The nazi Huns tore Naumova's finger-nails out and seared her body with hot irons, but this patriotic Russian woman remained staunch and the Germans finally shot her.

The chapter *People's Avengers* describes some brave partisan. One of them, Kharchenko, saw action during the Finnish war, when he bravely fought against the bands of Mannerheim. He was decorated with the Order of Lenin. In this war he distinguished himself in action too. When a unit of Germans, 450 strong, tried to surround the partisans, Kharchenko drove them off with well aimed machine-gun fire.

There were hundreds of women amongst the partisans.

The Leningrad region newspaper *Sovietsky Partisan* publishes a story about the courageous patriot Nadya S. and her heroic deeds. "Before the war," the paper writes, "Nadya S. was the principal of a school in one of the districts of the Leningrad region. When war broke out and this district was invaded by the nazis, Nadya joined the partisans. Strong, robust and full of life, she was very active behind the enemy lines. Nadya covered about eight hundred kilometres on skis and on foot. During the fighting she proved to be a good shot and attended her wounded comrades. Once, in fulfilling a combat assignment, she swam across a river while the ice was moving. Another time she carried a wounded commander and his arms from the field of battle under hurricane enemy fire."

The concluding chapter of this book gives a brief summary of the partisans' fight and their skilful coordination with the regular units of the Red Army.

The State Literary Publishing House has brought out a book of verses by the Byelorussian poet Arkadi Kuleshov, entitled *The Brigade's Banner*.

This slim little book reveals the refreshing talent of its author. *The Brigade's Banner* is the title of his first poem. The hero of the poem is the author himself, and the subject is the path he has trodden since the outbreak of the war. Imbued with all the romanticism of battle, this work is written in the form of a singular diary.

The booklet opens with a picture of Minsk, war-ravaged and engulfed in flames. Single lines are printed in bold type, giving them the effect of being headings, yet they are intrinsically woven into the texture of the whole work.

What did thinges say to me,
When I contemplated departure,

runs the first of these title-lines. The poet bids farewell to his home and hearth, to the toys and playthings left behind by his children, who had left the day before; he takes leave of the streets of his native city and vows:

Nowhere, never shall I miss the road,
I shall return, I shall return.

Step by step he describes the path along which he fought, how he enlisted in the Red Army, the front, fighting, nazi encirclement behind the enemy lines from where—through mortal dangers—he makes his way back to his own people. Of the whole brigade only three are left alive, but with them they have their battle banner unsullied.

The poem contains some highly dramatic passages. One of the three comrades could not stand up to the endless hardships and privations, lost spirit and when passing not far from his native village he stealthily escaped to his home. His comrades found him and he was sentenced to death as a deserter.

The words in which the poet speaks of this are full of depth and stirring in their simplicity. He too would like to return home, but

Easy is the road to your native village,
But uneasy the heart that sits at the table...

It is not easy to be unarmed under the yoke of hateful enemy. And the poet firmly resolves:

Nay, not in such manner will I return home,
With new steel helmet and bayonet I'll return.
Not as a tramp, nor as a beggar,
But as master I'll cross my threshold.

And so it came to pass. All the logical development of the poem leads to the victorious outcome; the poet tells how the brigade of Soviet fighters enters his native village.

And in thought, entering his native village together with Kuleshov, one imagines this scene of the tens of thousands of Soviet villages returned to their country, and *The Brigade's Banner* rises as a symbol of the honour and glory of the whole Red Army.

Other verses in this collected volume include: *The Ballad of the Four Hostages*, *The Common Grave* and *A Letter from Captivity*, all of which might be regarded as fragments of one poem, for one theme is common to all.

The State Political Publishers have issued a collection of documents on the atrocities of the German authorities in the temporarily occupied Soviet territories—*Documents Accuse*, No. I.

This book is an indictment. Each page tells the story of unheard-of misdeeds practised

by the nazi invaders. It gives nothing but facts and actual documents: excerpts from official orders issued by the German command, affidavits signed and affirmed by eyewitnesses of the monstrous crimes of the German Huns, photographs of demolished Soviet towns and villages, photographic copies of the testimony of victims of the nazi terror... Without embellishment or lyrical description, in the language of incontrovertible facts and original documents, this book completely reveals the repugnant moral features of the modern German army.

Making a mockery of all the laws and customs generally accepted among civilized nations and of all international conventions signed by the representatives of Germany herself, the nazi hangmen kill unarmed war prisoners, wipe out the civilian population in towns and villages, wantonly destroy army hospitals and cultural institutions, demolish churches and historical monuments, forcibly drive off the population to compulsory labour in Germany.

And this is only a mere fraction of the documents in the possession of Soviet authorities referring to the period from the outbreak of the war to March 1942.

The book opens with the two notes sent by V. Molotov, People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., to the Ambassadors and Ministers of all countries with which the U.S.S.R. maintains diplomatic relations. The first note, dated April 27th, 1942, concerns the monstrous crimes, atrocities and acts of violence perpetrated by the nazi invaders in the occupied Soviet areas and the responsibility of the German government and military command for these crimes. The second note, of January 6th, 1943, concerned the wholesale looting and robbing of the population and the monstrou atrocities perpetrated by the German authorities on Soviet areas seized by them.

Following these two notes, the book is divided into five chapters: I. Looting of the population by the nazi invaders. Wanton destruction of Soviet towns and villages; II. Establishment of a slave regime in the occupied areas of the U.S.S.R. and the driving off of civilians into "war prison"; III. Destruction of the national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. who have fallen under the yoke of German invasion; IV. Atrocities and acts of violence perpetrated on the civilian population in occupied Soviet areas; V. The killing of Soviet war prisoners by the nazi troops.

The material published irrefutably proves that the atrocities of the Hitlerites are not just the chance misdeeds of individual military units or commanders but are the result of a detailed and elaborated system worked out in advance.

This book reprints photographic copies of the notorious order issued by Feldmarshal General Reichenau, entitled *The Behaviour of Troops in the East*, where, word for word, the following phrase occurs: "... no historic or artistic valuables in the East have any significance attached to them."

"For your personal glory you must kill exactly one hundred Russians—this is the most just ratio: one German equals one hundred Russians. You have no heart or nerves—they are not needed in war. Stamp out all pity and compassion in your heart, kill all Russians, all Soviet people, don't hesitate if you see before you an old man or woman, a girl or a boy—kill," runs the address (Memobook) of the German command to its soldiers, a copy of which was found on the dead body of Leutnant Gustav Ziegel, of Frankfurt-on-Maine.

The book publishes dreadful photographs of the wanton destruction in Mozhaisk, Naro-Fominsk, Kalinin and other towns, and of people being driven off into German slavery.

The numerous affidavits quoted in the book that were drawn up and signed in liberated towns by the inhabitants who escaped from the hands of the Germans are of great interest. Soviet people consider it their patriotic duty to help the state in determining the extent and nature of the disaster wrought by the nazis. Each such affidavit tells the tale of the unspeakable sufferings of Soviet people under the yoke of the invaders.

In conclusion, the book gives the text of the protest submitted by the President of the Soviet Red Cross S. Kolesnikov to the International Red Cross in Geneva in connection with the systematic attacks by nazi air pirates on Red Cross trains and hospital ships. This note of protest is supplemented by the testimony given by Soviet medical workers, doctors and nurses.

Historic subjects, in preference to everyday-life themes, form a distinctive feature of Czech folk tales and legends. The reason of this is to be sought in the historical destiny of the Czech people, who had to defend their national existence in a constant hard struggle against that age-old enemy of the Slavonic peoples—the German invaders. Its glorious historic traditions helped the freedom-loving Czech people to preserve their spirit and faith in ultimate victory in those dark days when they felt themselves hemmed in as in a besieged fortress, and in those still bitterer times when they were enslaved for centuries on end.

Czech folklore has always served as a valuable store-house for these traditions. There is hardly a single Czech legend or tale which does not speak of the behests of freedom, labour, courage in battle and human dignity. And it is of this that Alois Iracek speaks in his book *Old Tales of the Czech People* (Russian translation, State Literary Publishing House, Moscow, 1943).

On being asked why he eats from an iron ploughshare, the folk-tale hero Przemysl replies:

"Respect iron. In peace-time you plough the fields with it, in times of trouble you defend yourselves against your foe with it."

And when asked why he takes his bast shoes with him when he is going away to commence his reign as a prince, Przemysl says:

"To you and your children my behest is that you treasure these bast shoes so that they remind you of past days. Let my descendants remember who they are by birth. Let them dwell in fear of God, nor oppress those placed under their care, nor be blinded by pride, for all men are equal."

This motif runs like a red thread through all the tales, and as many of these legends sprang up in the days when Czechia was under the bondage of German pillagers, these national

ideals were projected into the future, and the tales often acquired the nature of prophecy. They foretold of great disasters but invariably expressed unshakeable belief in the victory of the just cause and the triumph of the ideals of freedom and peaceful labour.

Some of these prophecies can be applied almost word to word to the trials and tribulations which have fallen on the Czech people in our days. "Into the land harassed by disaster and discord, there bursts the foe," runs one of the legends *(The Prophecy of Sybil)*. "A river of blood will flow from the capital to the hill of Blanik. In the path of this torrent will lie a dried up pond. The blood will fill this pond and pour over the dam. Cries, groans and the thunder of guns will be heard for twenty-four miles around." But not for long will the foe be jubilant. The day will come when he will flee for his life. "The pond of blood will run dry again. And those who remain alive will embrace each other. . ." This is supplemented by another legend *(The Prophecy of the Blind Youth)*: "Many Czechs will die in battle, but those who remain alive will be strong in faith and mighty in spirit. . . The foe will never overcome them."

The same belief in the invincible strength of righteousness and peaceful labour imbues legends which, at first glance, would seem to deal with other subjects—the traditions of old Prague, for example. This is why they all represent links in the single, mighty national chain.

Alois Iracek is one of the leading Czech writers of the close of the XIX and beginning of the XX century. He is the best Czech prose writer of his days, and the founder of a new type of historical narrative in Czech literature.

This famous Czech writer has done a very meritorious service in collecting and working up these tales and legends. In the preface to this book Prof. Nejedly writes:

"Iracek has embodied these folk-tales in highly artistic literary form. Every chapter of this book is written in its own specific style. The tales of ancient Czechs are presented in the patriarchal manner, the stories of warriors ring forth in war-like tones, the prophecies of the future are given in a poignant style, filled with faith in the people's future.

"This book was most successful amongst Czech readers. It was read by children and adults, by the populace and by men of learning, and they all drew consolation in this wellspring of artless folk wisdom. In today's sufferings of the Czech people the ancient tales and legends of their forebears strengthen their belief in a better and happier future."

Publication of this book in Russian is but one of the many facts testifying to the ever growing spiritual ties between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia.

BOOKS IN ENGLISH

"MR. WINKLE GOES TO WAR"*

Theodore Pratt's book, written with warmth and humour, was read with interest by the Soviet reader.

The story of Winkle, this forty-four-year-old American man married and childless, is thoroughly up-to-date. In depicting Winkle, Pratt wanted to show why the war against fascism is the vital concern of every American.

"Wilbert Winkle (who operates the Fixit Shop, first married selectee) in the thirty-six to forty-five draft-age group to be called, is killing these enemies of his country. He is anxious to defend the four freedoms. It's worth any sacrifice, if need be, his very life." (P.185.)

This is the thought running through Winkle's head as he peppers the enemy with his machine-gun.

Here are some more of his thoughts in this critical, decisive moment of his life:

"Mr. Winkle wished that it was not he who had been placed in this position. He wanted, fervently, for it to be another man, a fighter, a killer, a younger, a different, a better man than he. It flashed through his mind that it had been a mistake to draft and make a soldier out of a mouse. He felt guilty at not having resigned from the Army. A different man here now, in his place, would have known what to do." (P. 180.)

This extract from Pratt's book is characteristic of the author's style throughout. Pratt sees events through the prism of a humour inherent in his hero. Winkle regards himself ironically. He sees in himself a man very far removed from a hero. And now the time has come when Winkle feels himself a lion. He engages the enemy in unequal combat. And he emerges the victor. . .

The road to Winkle's exploit, referred to in a speech by the President of the United States, is depicted very faithfully and convincingly in Pratt's book. Here there is nothing forced or strained. The reader believes in Pratt and his hero Winkle. And this is not only because the book deals with actual events and living people, but also because the whole story about Winkle is permeated with lively humour.

"Are you afraid?" the officer asks him, and Winkle replies sincerely: "Yes!"

The officer praises him for his frankness, saying that he should never believe anyone who asserts that he has never felt fear. . .

The scene of the medical examination, when Winkle stands naked with a number round his neck is filled with the same delightful humour. . .

And finally, the same kindly humour marks Winkle's attitude to his wife Emy, to whom he remains religiously faithful even when in the army.

Pratt's humour is not only a literary manner, one feels in it the author's attitude to his great theme. Pratt knows how great is the duty of every honest person in this war against all the forces of evil and violence. Pratt wants all his fellow-countrymen to carry this war through to complete victory with that same whole-heartedness and the same simple heroism which distinguishes Winkle and his chum Tinker.

These are the features of the book which fetter the attention of the reader.

Winkle is the average man, the man in the street, he is one of millions of Americans, our allies in the great common struggle.

* *Mr. Winkle Goes to War*, by Theodore Pratt. Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York.

And in Mr. Winkle we see a real comrade-in-arms in our common cause, a comrade-in-arms who fulfils his duty in our common struggle against Hitler, against all the forces of violence and evil. . .

Mr. Winkle Goes to War is the name Theodore Pratt has given his excellent book. But it gives more than its title promises. It tells how Mr. Winkle wages war, how he is conquering, how he wants to push on the war to swift and complete victory. . .

"THEY CAME AS FRIENDS"

The Day Will Come is the name Tor Myklebost has given to the last part of his book *They Came As Friends*, a book on the heroic resistance put up by the people of Norway against hitlerite violence. The star of liberation is rising over Norway, as over all the blood-stained, tormented but unsubdued Europe.

The great victories of the Red Army, the menacing armadas of England and America ready for the invasion, are filling the hearts of three million Norwegians with hope.

This hope lends an iron strength to the hand of the Norwegian patriot, when he kills an invader or Quislingite in the silence of the night, or in the dusk pushes an illegal newspaper into the letter box on Quisling's door.

It is with such an episode that the Norwegian journalist's book of Norway's fight for freedom and independence concludes. The unknown patriot, one of thousands, under the very eyes of the vigilant guard, leaves on the threshold of Quisling's castle that which this despicable hitlerite lackey fears more than death—the free word of Norway. . .

And Myklebost has given not a few such vivid episodes in his book.

Here is a square in a Norwegian town. It is crowded with people shouting:

"We want to see the Führer! We want to see the Führer!"

Quisling appears on the balcony. His face is wreathed in self-satisfied smiles. He makes a gracious gesture of greeting. But suddenly a menacing cry rings through the square:

"Traitor! Traitor! Traitor! . ."

April 9th, 1941—the first anniversary of the German seizure of Norway. Two o'clock in the afternoon. . . Norway is like a dead land. Empty streets. Empty trams. Empty shops. Empty schools. Blinds down. No children's voices in the yards and squares. The people of Norway hold a half-hour of mourning—and not only mourning, but also a demonstration of their determination not to submit to the Germans, not to surrender, to hold out until Norway is free again. . .

September 25th, 1942. The second anniversary of Quisling's appointment as so-called prime minister of Norway. The great hall of the Oslo University is crowded. On the tribune is Quisling, and in the front row Terboven, the hitlerite representative, Rediess, the head of the Gestapo, and Falkenhorst, commander of the German forces.

Quisling speaks of the "new order", of civilization, of Europe. . . There is the howl of sirens, the roar of explosions. Quisling's tongue freezes in the middle of a sentence. . . Silence in the hall. And then the noise of overturned armchairs, the stamping of feet. . . All are flying to the shelter—led by Terboven and Quisling. . . But the streets of Oslo are filled with an excited crowd. . . In that hour the town is cleared of Quislingites as though the blasts of bombs had swept them away. . . The Gestapo building is on fire, shattered by bombs. . . And over the streets and squares of Oslo rings out the great Norwegian national anthem, in honour of liberty, in honour of victory. . .

These are isolated episodes of that struggle which a dauntless people, three million strong, are waging against Hitler Germany. In this struggle there is great ingenuity and cleverness shown, one eloquent example of which should not be omitted.

In a small Norwegian town the Germans demanded the surrender of hostages, in view of the continual acts of sabotage in the town. That same morning the urban authorities handed in a list of twenty-five names. And that same night a German ship was sunk in the harbour. The Germans seized the hostages and led them away. And the town breathed a sigh of relief, for the list contained all the foul traitors, the Quislingites, who with their treachery had stained the honour of the little Norwegian town. . .

Hitler gave Quisling instructions to make of Norway "a model country" of the fascist "new order". . . But Norway and the Norwegians replied with a decisive "No!"

Let hitlerite propaganda, in fear of the pending catastrophe, continue its impudent and cowardly assertions that Germany has never had any intention of ruling over other peoples and countries. This compulsory camouflage is to be explained in no small degree by the failure which has attended all the hitlerite efforts to enslave the freedom-loving Norwegian people.

PRINTER'S ERRORS

Page 16, line 29: benevoleng—should read: benevolent
Page 16, line 30: preparint—should read: preparing
Page 52, line 54: dir t—should read: dirty
Page 63, line 41: monstrou—should read: monstrous
Page 63, line 42: authors—should read: author-
Page 67, line 61: afterward—should read: afterwards
Page 68, line 5: lhe—should read: the
Page 68, line 6: tength—should read: length
Page 76, line 19: Shemakha of—should read: of Shemakha

IN MEMORIAM

ALEXANDER POPE

(1688—1744)

Two centuries have passed since the death of Alexander Pope, the greatest poet of English Enlightenment. His *Rape of the Lock*, *Essay on Man* and *Essay on Criticism* in their time enjoyed wide popularity not only in his own country but also abroad, Russia included.

The XVIII century Russian literature was most closely connected with French culture, and Russian intellectual circles were far less conversant with the ideas and artistic works of English Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, English men of letters of Pope's times were fairly popular in Russia. Professor N. Popovsky—a pupil of the Russian poet and scientist, Mikhail Lomonossov—translated into Russian the *Essay on Man*. This book was published in Moscow in 1757, and ran into several editions. It should be mentioned that Popovsky's translation was rather free, and was further distorted by the touching up it received from Bishop Ambrose and the censors. True, the main theme of the "philosophy of optimism", consistently pursued in Pope's poem: "the laws of the world are eternal and immutable" is preserved in the Russian version. This theme was vested with the sense of "immutability of the world", i.e. primarily—the social forms of monarchic Russia. However, the affirmation of the deists that God created the world but no longer interferes in the affairs appeared heretical to the orthodox Russian censors.

Russian translations of extracts from Pope's other works were included in Gerbel's book *English Poets—Their Biographies and Personages* (Moscow, 1875).

We find an interesting appraisal of Alexander Pope's works in Russian literary criticism. The poet is discussed against the general historical background of his own days, when the feudal aristocracy was already weakening and the royal power was subordinate to the bourgeois parliaments. But the English bourgeoisie were not yet strong enough to continue the struggle against the aristocracy, and therefore preserved its alliance with the landed gentry.

It was under such complicated circumstances that Pope's poetic powers developed. Of bourgeois stock himself, in his works he emerged as the guardian of aristocratic traditions. Russian critics (Lunacharsky and others) considered him the latest exponent of English classicism. Although Pope frequently defended the principles of classicism theoretically, in practice he failed to adhere to the strict canons of these forms. In his poem *The Rape of the Lock* Pope patently violated the principles he had set forth: in solemn metre the poet speaks of the most mundane events.

The late N. Storozhenko, professor of the Moscow University, in an essay devoted to Pope, highly appraised the "incomparable verses" of the poet, referring to them as "the peak of perfection".

Approaching Pope's writings with scientific objectivity, Storozhenko pointed out that by the end of the XIX century much had grown obsolete for the general reader and that his works had become the domain of historians of literature. Nevertheless, Storozhenko stated that Pope remains the most brilliant exponent of the classical school of poetry, having advanced its forms of expression to artistic perfection. It should be remembered, however, that his literary activities projected many fertile seeds into the future. The basic principle of this theory—that the critic should direct main attention not to the particular aspects of a work but to its artistic integrity—became the guiding motive of all Lessing's critique; Pope's views on the necessity of studying theatregoers of Shakespeare's days in order to arrive at a true appreciation of Shakespeare formed the foundation of so-called realistic Shakespearean literary criticism; and finally, the critic Taine applied Pope's productive ideas on the predomination of Passion in man by diligently seeking out the master faculty (faculté maîtresse) in each writer.

The unfailing interest of Russia in ancient poetry was reflected in the recognition of Pope as a singular translator of Homer. In his *Encyclopaedia of Foreign Writers* the Russian literateur M. Kharlamov wrote: "In this rhymed 'Iliad'—its each line embellished—there is nothing natural, nothing simple; the ancient Greek patriarch Homer appears as a noted Englishman, and, what is more, arrayed in the latest French mode."

The same features of artificiality and mannerism introduced into Homerian simplicity are noted by Storozhenko, who emphasizes that "in our times such a style of translation would have probably ruined the work, but in Pope's days it was the main reason for his success".

In criticizing Pope's works and when speaking of the shortcomings of his poetry, chiefly defined by the demands of classical aesthetics contemporaneous with Pope, Russian historians of literature pay homage to his magnificent poetic diction which—to use the expression given by one of these investigators—is "profundity and soberness of thoughts framed in gold".

A. D.

WILLIAM BECKFORD

(1760—1844)

If one might compare the literature of a rich and fruitful age to a flower-bed containing a diversity of colours and fragrance pleasing to the senses, then in the rich plot of XIX century English literature, William Beckford would emerge proud and solitary as an orchid. This poet who was born in the second half of the XVIII century, died a hundred years ago, with the reputation—to quote Byron—on being "England's richest son", a martyr, a great eccentric and a rake.

He merged life with art, and from his personal experiences aimed at creating works of art imbued with unbridled flights of fantasy. Beckford's travels in Europe, his endless carousals and love intrigues gave rise to the most incredible rumours, while the legend of the glamorous luxury of his family estate at Fonthill Abbey was a byword throughout Europe.

The literary heritage of this gifted and—in his own singular way—attractive "lord of life" is very small indeed. He is known in the history of letters mainly as the author of the "Arabian tale" *Vathek*. The latter work was written by Beckford in French, and in the XIX century ran into twenty editions in England and France.

The French edition of *Vathek* was known in Russia at the beginning of the XIX century, the poet Pushkin having this book in his private library.

A Russian translation of *Vathek the Caliph* appeared in 1913 with a detailed critical and biographical essay by P. Muratov. This edition contains two photographs of William Beckford and a picture of Fonthill Abbey.

Although there are no special works on William Beckford in Russian literary criticism, historians of letters have not entirely ignored this "forerunner of English romanticism".

An analysis of *Vathek* discloses that Beckford, in describing the vicissitudes of his hero's fate, perceives all tangible worldly possessions —power, riches, beauty—through the prism of tragic cognition, feeling that man's reason and emotions are powerless before the omnipotent evil filling the world. We appraise Beckford as a romanticist-aristocrat to whom the indignation of such revolutionary romanticists as Byron and Shelley was something alien. Yet many elements of Beckford's work were later amplified by Byron and other English French and Russian poets of that day. And to this must be added also the theme of "Satanism", the passion for Oriental exotics, the preaching of proud aloofness and disillusionment.

A. D.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE

(1769—1830)

Sir Thomas Lawrence, last of that famous group of English portrait-painters who flourished during the latter half of the XVIII century, was born at Bristol, in the month of May, 175 years ago.

His childhood was spent at Devizes, where his father kept an eating house. Lawrence showed his unusual gifts at an early age; and his success was responsible for his parents changing their place of abode, at first to Oxford and then to Bath. At this fashionable watering-place his portraits were in great demand, and soon brought him a large clientèle of well-known people.

In 1787 he went up to London and entered the Royal Academy as a student.

His portrait of Miss Farren, painted in 1790, made his name. Its exquisite colouring, its simplicity, the unlaboured grace of the composition, the brilliant technique, made it one of his most outstanding works and placed him at once in the front rank of his contemporaries. Executed in the traditions of English portraiture of the XVIII century, it has something in common with Sir Joshua Reynolds' portraits of women, but in the approach to the model, the treatment of the sitter's inner self, certain new traits appear that afterward became characteristic of Lawrence as a portrait-painter.

In 1792 he was appointed first painter to the King and two years later was elected a member of the Academy. Commissions for portraits poured in on every hand; important officials, society beauties, politicians, noted writers and actors were delighted to pose for the young artist.

The portrait of Miss Barrett ("Pinkie") is a masterpiece both from the standpoint of the marvellous lightness and temperament displayed in its execution, and for its peculiarly poetic quality.

It should be pointed out here, however, that though it was his portraits of women that brought him renown, his portraits of men are much more significant and have greater depth. Fine and expressive are the portraits of J. Ph. Curran, a prominent figure in politics, of John Moore and Warren Hastings.

The year 1814 marked a new and important phase in Lawrence's work; now for the first time the painter travelled to the Continent. In Paris he made the acquaintance of the contemporary French masters and studied the pictures in the Louvre. It was about this time that he was commissioned to paint the men who won the victory over Napoleon. This series of portraits was intended for the special gallery that was to be opened in Windsor Castle to commemorate Waterloo. A large and responsible task, it was begun by Lawrence in London in 1815. In connection with it, he made a journey abroad in 1818, visiting Rome, Vienna and Aachen, where most of his sitters were attending the congress at that time. Most of the portraits for this special gallery may be regarded as his best works. The Russian diplomats Uvarov and Chernyshov are among them. Taken as a whole this series forms a memorial of great historic and artistic interest. There is no doubt that his influence played a part in the institution of the Gallery of Heroes of the Patriotic War in the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, and some foundation exists for the theory that he was responsible for the

Lady Raglan

selection of the English artist Dawe for the work.

Lawrence was at the height of his power during the last decade of his life. To this period belong the brilliant portraits that trace the whole course of development of this genre in the XIX century, and also a large number of pictures of children painted with real tenderness and conveying their living grace and delicacy as in the charming group of the two Calmady children.

When Lawrence died in 1830, his pupils, followers and imitators were very numerous. Not one of them possessed the master's talent. At a later period his art and technique, which during his lifetime had gained him general recognition and a European reputation, underwent a more exacting evaluation. The explanation of this is to be sought in the unevenness of his work. Capable of painting portraits with the true master's touch, he could at the same time turn out shallow, though effective, society portraits. It was inevitable that since the artist was inundated with commissions, he should feel indifferent to many of his models. And it must not be forgotten that many of those portraits that bear his signature were almost entirely painted by his assistants. This injured his reputation. His own work, Miss Farren, "Pinkie", Mrs. Siddons, Pius VII, the sculptor Canova, display his consummate mastery and it is not to be wondered at that Delacroix admired his work so much. Finally his feeling for the decorative should be noted, and the extraordinary variety in his range of composition. Each portrait is entirely different and there is no repetition. He is rightly placed among the great XVIII century portrait-painters who marked an epoch in the development of European portraiture of modern times.

Though paintings by Lawrence in the museums of the U.S.S.R. are few, they nevertheless enable us to form a definite conception of his art.

These are Lady Raglan, Metternich, Princess D. H. Lieven and Prince M. Vorontsov—in the Hermitage, Leningrad; Alexander I, Princess E. K. Vorontsova and Sally Siddons in lhe Pictorial Arts Museum, Moscow. The half-tength of Lady Raglan, a young society beauty, evidently belongs to the years 1806—1808. The impulsive pose of the model darting out, as it were, from the depths of the picture, was a favourite with Lawrence at the outset of his career. Very interesting is the sketch of Metternich, made for the portrait in the Windsor Castle gallery. It is a fine piece of work both in execution and in the penetration and conviction with which the famous diplomat is portrayed. As far as expressiveness and individuality of features are concerned, it is far finer than the finished portrait, where all the peculiarities of this clever, cunning countenance with its sardonic smile, have been smoothed away.

The paintings of the Princesses Lieven and Vorontsova are in pencil and red chalk on canvas with a prepared ground of white paint.

Lawrence began his career with pencil portraits and remained true to this genre all his life; he even sketched in his paintings first with pencil on canvas, before he used colour. Both the before mentioned feminine portraits in our Soviet galleries are exquisite and may be placed among the best of the artist's drawings of his mature period.

The young Prince Vorontsov, with his easy, haughty pose against a lowering sky, is a splendid example of Lawrence's later style; the austere, restrained colour scheme keeps throughout to dark and neutral tones.

In this simply-treated and at the same time romantic painting of the young general, Lawrence has given us a vivid portrait in an aureole of its own peculiar heroic quality. Painted in 1821, this portrait harks back to the portraits of the heroes of 1812 painted by Dawe about this time in St. Petersburg.

The Alexander I portrait was a repetition of that in Windsor Castle. It is much duller and more official than the very effective Vorontsov, but is an interesting combination of black, red and grey. A direct contrast is the smaller and more intimate "Sally Siddons". The sitter was the famous actress' daughter, at one time affianced to Lawrence. The youthful features bear a resemblance to her mother's, the serious, concentrated expression reminds one of "Pinkie" painted in 1795.

Sally Siddons is painted with the inspired and vital freshness that is present in all Lawrence's portraits of people who were close friends of his and interested him.

His influence on contemporary Russian masters has not been sufficiently investigated. At all events the English trend is clearly felt in the works of that remarkable Russian portrait-painter Kiprensky. It is evident that he knew the portraits of the Vorontsovs and Alexander I. Many of Lawrence's works must have been known to him from engravings in the Stroganov collections. Here he used to copy the works of foreign schools. He was in Rome when Lawrence visited it in 1818; therefore he must have witnessed the English artist's triumph and seen his portraits of Canova, Pius VII and others.

IRINA KUZNETSOVA

ARTS

KUTUZOV ON THE SCREEN

The new film *Kutuzov*, released by "Mosfilm", is extremely stirring and impressive. Its main attribute is the historically true and veracious portrayal of Field Marshal Kutuzov.

Kutuzov was an amazing personality. To begin with he had astonishing talent, he was a first-class general and a brilliant diplomat.

Kutuzov understood people, summed up a man after a couple of words and placed him in the appropriate pigeon-hole. Suvorov's famous comment on Kutuzov: "He's wily, wily! He's clever, clever! Nobody can get the better of him!" defines the outstanding quality of Kutuzov's mental make-up with striking penetration.

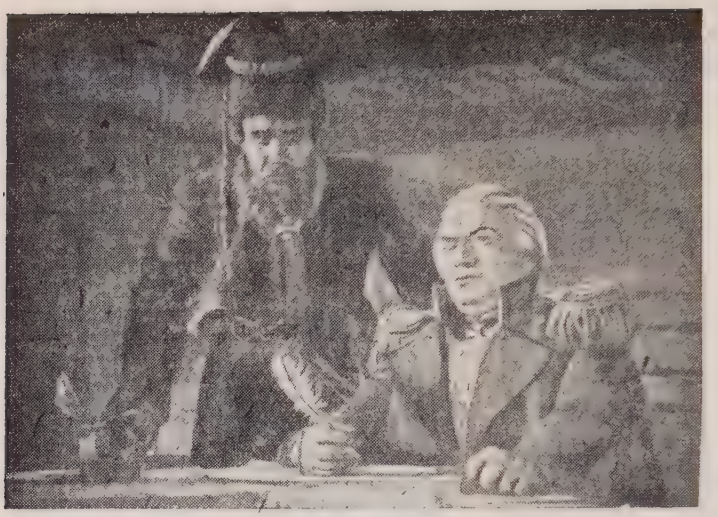
Kutuzov possessed the vast clear mind of a statesman, his mental range embraced Russia and Europe, the conflict on land and sea, he was farseeing and able to set himself strictly concrete aims within the bounds of possibility. At the same time he possessed an excellent knowledge of the passions, ambitions and moods of the people whom he either came in contact with or crossed swords with.

When in the spring of 1812 it was essential to end the war with Turkey with as few concessions as possible, and release the army threatened by the invasion of Napoleon, it was Kutuzov who was sent to Bucharest. Things panned out not only without any sacrifices on the part of Russia, but to the astonishment of all Europe, Kutuzov came away with brilliant results: Bessarabia was left to Russia—this was one of Kutuzov's immortal services to the Russian people. When the formidable invasion of the world conqueror began, a man was required whom the whole Russian people, the whole army trusted, Kutuzov was again called upon—Kutuzov, hated by the court but loved by Russia.

The scenario writer, V. Solovyov, and the producer V. Petrov portray Kutuzov, that worthy follower of Suvorov, first and foremost as a sagacious and talented strategist.

In episode after episode the film reveals Kutuzov's military genius. Kutuzov is shown true to life, as a truly powerful military leader. From his headquarters he directs the battle of Borodino. At the most critical moment of the day, when Napoleon is almost ready to give way to the supplications of his

A still from the film. Napoleon in the Kremlin



A still from the film

Kutuzov and Platov

marshals and send his guards against the unyielding Russians—Kutuzov, with unperturbed coolness and brilliant judgement determines the moment at which to send in his reserves. He saves the Russian army from the threatened danger by sending Uvarov and Platov, to the enemy's surprise, into Napoleon's rear. Uvarov and Platov are repulsed but they have done their job: the emperor is rattled. Napoleon dares not send in his last reserves, his guards.

The film well conveys the tenseness of the critical situation.

Before the onlooker is that same Kutuzov who was the first to appraise Borodino as a great moral victory for Russia over the invading aggressor. Kutuzov's keen judgement and sagacity, his ability to see a long way ahead, emerges with unusual clarity in that immediate, proud and true appraisal of the military and political results of the great battle. Further on the onlooker once more realizes the strategic talent of the great Russian general—this is the start of the brilliant march to Tarutino preceded by the superbly planned and executed disorientation of the French, whom Kutuzov so skilfully directed onto the Ryazan road onto which he himself had no intentions of moving his army. The remarkable general is seen to full advantage when he orders his men to die rather than let Napoleon through from Maloyaroslavets to Kaluga. He knew that this would send Napoleon's army along the devastated Smolensk road where doom awaited it. Thus, both at the critical moment of the battle of Borodino, and especially by his flanking march on Tarutino and the battle at Maloyaroslavets, Kutuzov upset Napoleon's plans and forced his will on Napoleon's.

Kutuzov is played by A. Dikiy, who has made an excellent job of a very difficult part. Dikiy has convincingly portrayed the general's great exertion of will while maintaining outward calm. The onlooker constantly feels what that coolness and calm cost old Kutuzov. In the scene reenacting the military council at Fili he utters the historic words: "I order retreat." In his intonation you clearly feel that for him Moscow is *Moscow* and not "just a position" as it is for General Barclay-de-Tolly.

In his portrayal A. Dikiy subtly but expressively brings out Kutuzov's great strength of will, shows him as a true general who at a time of heavy trial for the army and the country did not hesitate to accept full responsibility for military decisions of the utmost gravity.

Love for Russia, pain for Russia, pride for Russia were perhaps the only emotion of this seemingly ever emotionless man.

Kutuzov unwaveringly travelled his own road and won victory because the entire people, the entire army, were with him.

In the film we see the army's strong affection for its field marshal, see his humane attitude to the soldier whom Kutuzov understood and knew inside out. At the same time Kutuzov is shown as an exacting general, a stickler for order and discipline.

The authors of the film have shaded in the noble side of Kutuzov's character: his contempt for intrigues, for careerists and intriguers of the Benigsen type.

N. Okhlopkov, People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R., has given a striking portrayal of General Barclay-de-Tolly. The unemotional figure of this Scotsman, his sharp clipped speech with its foreign accent, accords with his dry and contemplative nature. He fails to take into consideration one of the decisive conditions of victory—the army's spirit, so profoundly and sensitively felt by Kutuzov.

The last talk with Barclay shows the greatness and wisdom of Kutuzov as a military leader and politician, who unlike the honest but limited Barclay, correctly appraised the historic significance of the Battle of Borodino for the entire course of the war.

"But indeed the battle wasn't lost," says the field marshal to Barclay, "because the army's spirit wasn't broken. And we retreated not by Napoleon's will but by our own. And the

victors were we, not they, as the spirit of the Russian army wasn't broken. . . And you, pardon an old man, have not understood that."

General Bagration, ardent son of Georgia, great Russian patriot and able general is played with zeal by S. Zakariadze.

S. Mezhinsky is convincing as Napoleon. His make-up is good and very like the original.

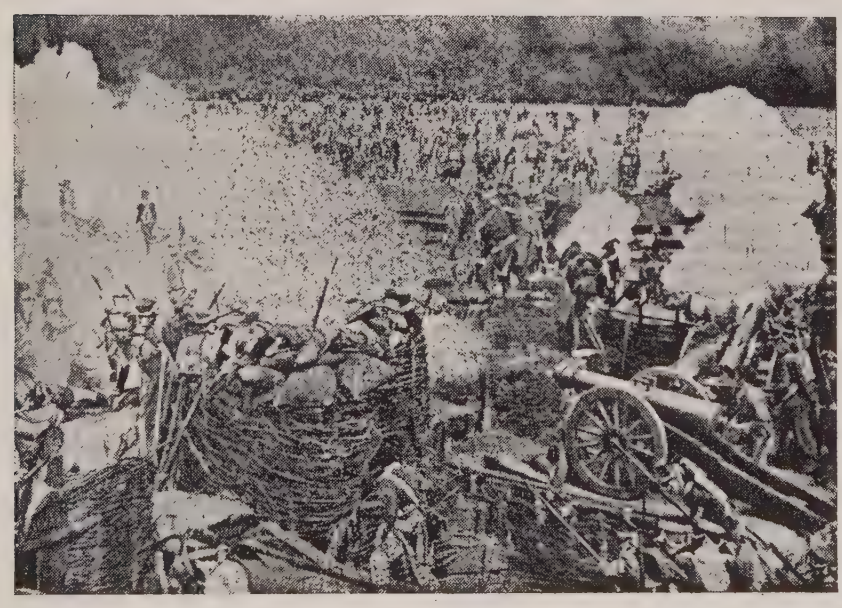
In some of the other parts good acting is done by I. Skuratov, as the old soldier Zhestyannikov, M. Pugovkin, as the young soldier Fedya, E. Kaluzhsky, as Napoleon's Marshal Bertier, and G. Terekhov, as Loriston.

Praise is merited by the masterly presentation of V. Petrov, the producer. He has made a particular success of such scenes as the Battle of Borodino, the dashing charge of Platov's Cossacks, the fire of Moscow, and the retreat and flight of the French army from Russia (the plunder of Smolensk stores by the retreating French and the crossing of the Beresina river).

In carrying out his ideas the producer was well supported by all the studio workers. Special mention must be made of the excellent work done by cameraman M. Guindin. V. Yegorov, scene artist, shows a profound knowledge of the period and excellent taste in sets of old Moscow, the Kremlin chambers and so on. By his music the composer Yuri Shaporin considerably enhanced the emotional effect of the film.

The film *Kutuzov* is a big and moving artistic effort: it harmonizes with many of our emotional experiences of today. We are shown in vivid episodes and characters the epic of the National War of 1812, when Russia found the strength to withstand the first half of the war and vanquish the mighty conqueror in the second.

E. TARLE



A battle scene at Borodino. A still from the film

"EMERGENCY LAW"

Emergency Law, a comedy by the Tur brothers and L. Sheinin is having a successful run at the Moscow Theatre of Satire.

The plot is rather unpretentious, about an honest book-keeper Sinitsyn, the credulous and easy-going director of a cannery, Trubnikov, and a most calculating and far seeing villain, Klembovsky. The rather crude but highly realistic comic qualities of the play are based mainly on the extraordinary calculativeness of Klembovsky.

At the head of the sales department of the cannery, Klembovsky promotes a number of shady deals in allotting government stores of rationed foods and, in course of time, prospers mightily. He lives lavishly, his "personal" stores of goods and food are enormous and his resources in bonds and valuables increase steadily. The glaring flagrance of such a life must, of course, be provided with a system of dependable alibis, and it is in this that Klembovsky's magnificent "far-sightedness" comes to the fore.

He starts out by fabricating his autobiography. According to this biography he is a veteran of the Civil War, a dashing cavalryman in his day who was wounded time and again in the performance of his duties. If one were to believe him, he chafes under the inaction he is confined to in the rear, but the administration refuses to release him, rejecting all his pleads with: "You are indispensable to us, Klembovsky!"

Klembovsky accounts for his apparently inexhaustible finances by explaining that he has won thousands and thousands of rubles in government bond drawings. One would find it difficult to disbelieve this explanation; for after every drawing Klembovsky is careful to display to his friends and neighbours (whether they like it or not) the lucky winning bonds, and they are forced to the conclusion that he is one of those upon whom Dame Fortune showers her favours. The truth of the matter is that Klembovsky purchases these bonds from their holders, paying them the face value of the bond plus the winning; even adding slightly to the total. Klembovsky's request to let him have the lucky bond always rouses no little wonder at first. But he explains it away by presenting himself as actuated by his own particular superstition that urges him to come in touch in some way with the good fortune of others. He implores them to humour this little weakness of his, and they finally agree. The bond in his possession, he is now in a position to show it to neighbours and friends, afterwards of course cashing in on the bond, and getting his money back.

Klembovsky is firmly convinced that the deals he puts through are even more subtle. He has made himself an expert in both criminal and civil law and in the Emergency Law on the theft of socialist property. He has acquired this knowledge so as to be able to guard against any possible slip-ups in his tricky affairs. If by any chance his chicanery should be disclosed, he imagines he can always pass the buck to someone else and do it on good legal grounds too.

But in putting through one of his usual deals, Klembovsky does actually slip up. An honest man, book-keeper Sinitsyn, works at Klembovsky's office and comes to be his next-door neighbour. The enfeebled old man not only refuses to furnish a blind for the sharp practice of Klembovsky and his son-in-law, the director of the cannery, Trubnikov, but gives evidence against them to the district attorney.

This was an accident Klembovsky had not bargained for. The play, by the way, points out most convincingly that this is really not at all accidental. There are many more honest people than there are tricksters; one meets men of integrity everywhere. Events developed in a precisely similar manner in the court case in Moscow which furnished the material for the play *Emergency Law*.

Vladimir Khenkin, the popular Moscow comedian plays the part of Klembovsky.

He is screamingly funny when he stands amazed at the legal depths of his own tricks and when he expounds the lofty principles of the sharper for the edification of his worthy spouse. His machine-gun speech is inimitable; it smacks of the vulgar accents of the street and at the same time something more serious—the heedless rashness and nervous haste of the rogue who has no firm belief in his short-lived prosperity.

No matter how rare or difficult it is to get the goods he is asked about, Klembovsky invariably rolls up his eyes and after a suitable pause states: "I think I can arrange that little matter for you" or "Go to such and such a place and tell them that Klembovsky sent you."

His pet phrase: "It would be difficult even for me to outlive execution" calls forth peals of laughter from the audience.

Khenkin puts everything into his character and gives the richest colouring to his assurance and confidence. But at the same time he ridicules him, even while "putting him across" to the audience. Other Moscow theatres who insist upon the "inner justification" of all characters would call this a violation of the rules of their art. But this is, of course, fully in accord with the spirit of a play of this kind showing the actions of this bandit of the rear during such a war as the present one.

The actress Barabanova strikes a similar chord in her role as Klembovsky's wife: a giddy, ridiculous doll who is a dangerous creature of prey notwithstanding. She robs Klembovsky systematically during the period of his prosperity, and naturally, will have nothing to do with him once he is brought low. She employs much of Klembovsky's art in doing this—and with the same efficacy.

Lepko, who plays the part of Klembovsky's lawyer at the trial puts excellent vivacity into the role. He becomes so enamoured of his own eloquence that he continually forgets his defendent. Klembovsky is caught in the mesh of his own art again.

It need hardly be said that the play is a hit and that it is next to impossible to buy a ticket.

LEONID BOROVOY

The Governors of Germany

Hitler and His Pack, a new album of cartoons by the well-known artist Boris Yefimov has been recently issued by the Art Publishing House.

Each caricature drawn by the talented artist hits the nail on the head, unmasking the "theory" and practice of fascism, and puts the Berlin robber band and its European accomplices into the stocks.

Newspaper cartoonists have little time to wait for inspiration. Late in the evening or during the night important information is received and in the morning, caricatured by the artist, it becomes the property of millions of readers.

The speed with which ideas are conceived and graphically interpreted requires intense creative concentration, a keen political feeling and general knowledge. Of the many artists devoting themselves to cartoon drawings, few have so firmly and organically linked their creative life with newspaper work as Boris Yefimov. Yefimov is perhaps the only artist who has worked on a newspaper day in day out for a period of twenty-five years.

Everything, beginning with the composition of the drawing and ending with the witty, laconic Yefimov caption, shows the artist's extraordinary talent, his inexhaustible imagination and ability to create unforgettable figures.

A German prisoner admitted that after seeing a leaflet in which Goebbels was depicted as a long-tailed rat he always thought of Goebbels whenever he saw a real rat and vice versa, whenever he saw a portrait of Goebbels he thought of a rat. This is a vivid example of the deadly power of Yefimov's satire.

Yefimov's small newspaper cartoons compare favourably with long articles as far as political content is concerned. His caricatures are easily understood. The most complicated political situation becomes clear and comprehensible when presented by Yefimov in cartoon form.

This new album is a summary of Yefimov's daily journalistic work for a period covering the years 1942-43. In the seven sections of the album are to be found a gallery of the loathsome portraits of Hitler, Göring, Goebbels Himmler, Ribbentrop, Ley, Rosenberg,

giving, so to speak, the "anatomy and pathology" of fascism. "Their Portraits", "Their Ideology", "Co-prisoners" (the latter is a play in words in Russian: soyuznik means ally, and souznik means co-prisoner), "The New Order", "Blitzkrieg", "Their Mood", "Their Prospects", are the titles of the sections. In each section the artist impressively shows the various stages of the bloody path of fascism—from delirious dreams of conquering the world to the final assemblage of the "new order"—misrulers gathered in a large iron cage in which the entire hitlerite pack is being led to the merciless court of the people. In a masterly manner the artist reveals the baseness of the fascist obscurants and their monstrous race theory.

Outstanding is the section dedicated to the defeat of the fascist hordes near Moscow and Stalingrad. Such cartoons as "Making themselves at home. . .", "Whose claws are sharper?", "Break on the Volga", "The Lesson of Stalingrad", are unforgettable. Yefimov's talent is especially vivid here.

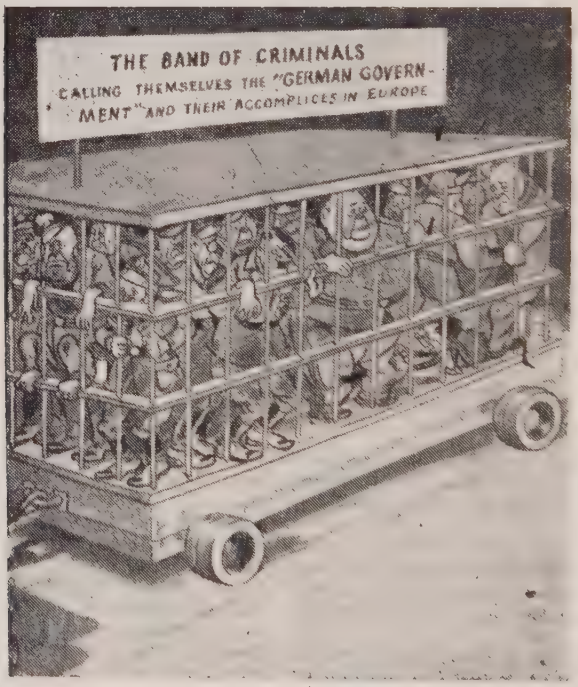
Page by page the author leads the reader through the fascist hell, showing the hitlerite sadism, the infamous fascist demagogy, the disgraceful collapse of the political strategic plans of the German commanding staff.

The pole stuck into the filthy grave of fascism serves as an excellent "finis" to the album.

The high artistic quality of the printing should be noted.

Hitler and His Pack is a valuable contribution to the treasury of Soviet cartoons.

KUKRYNIKSY



They reached their point of destination

The centenary of Rimsky-Korsakov was celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the country. This general, warm response showed the deep and organic link between the composer and his country, his people.

Rimsky-Korsakov is not only a composer whose works of genius enriched the national music, he was also an expression of the best hopes of his people, an artist who was able to give the fullest expression to all the variegated characteristics of his people—their heroism, their epic might, their boundless lyricism and humour, the richness of fantasy, the vividness of forms, their innate realism and, first and foremost, their living optimism.

Rimsky-Korsakov had a far-reaching and very important influence on Russian art and culture. As Dmitri Kabalevsky, the Soviet composer, wrote in *Pravda*, "Rimsky-Korsakov's works have become so much a part of our life, of our very consciousness, that we cannot imagine Russian art, Russian culture without him". I. Boelza in an article in *Izvestia* called Rimsky-Korsakov "an ardent patriot, a composer of genius, a great teacher and scientist, a conductor and public worker, who throughout his life held high the banner of Russian culture, a charming and sensitive man, a tireless worker".

The musical critic Gorodinsky gave an interesting characteristic of the composer in the newspaper *Literature and Art*:

"It is with profound amazement that today we examine the creative activity of this artist of genius. The traces of his intensive work can be found everywhere where music sounds. A great master of colour, of orchestration, a composer of the most varied genres of music, the founder and theoretician of Russian academic music and the teacher of all Russian—and a good many foreign—subverters of all academic rules, a sober realist who could soar to the heights of fantasy, the founder of a pedagogical course in harmony and the creator of *Kashchei the Immortal*—in its own way giving a lead along lines overthrowing the strict style of harmony. . . What is this? Contradiction, a double line, an absence of coherence? No. It is the many-sidedness of genius."

It is sufficient to open any newspaper that appeared on the day of the centenary to see how the country celebrated the occasion.

The Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. marked the date by a decree stating that a full academic collection of Rimsky-Korsakov's works was to be published as well as an illustrated album on his life and work. In Leningrad, so closely connected with the composer's life and work a memorial is to be set up, and the Leningrad State Conservatoire, bound up indivisibly with Rimsky-Korsakov's pedagogical work, is to be named after the composer.

In Tikhvin, Rimsky-Korsakov's birthplace, a Rimsky-Korsakov museum is to be opened in the house where he received his first childish impressions, where he listened to the music of the church bells and drew pictures, dreaming of the sea which he had never seen.

The decree of the Council of People's Commissars also provides for a Rimsky-Korsakov scholarship in the Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev and Sverdlovsk Conservatoires. The Azerbaijan Council of People's Commissars has also instituted three Rimsky-Korsakov scholarships for gifted students.

In Kuibyshev, the Opera, Ballet and Musical Comedy Theatre staged *The Snow Maiden*, while in Vladivostok a number of concerts of Rimsky-Korsakov's works were organized. In addition, a large number of jubilee concerts were given in army units. More than this, the newspapers report Rimsky-Korsakov concerts on ships sailing the Pacific and the Baltic.

In Moscow, the jubilee week opened with a celebration meeting in the Bolshoy Theatre. Khrapchenko, chairman of the Committee on Arts attached to the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., emphasized in his speech Rimsky-Korsakov's influence on the development of music not only among the Russian people, but also among the other fraternal peoples of the U.S.S.R. and the educational value of his work. Professor Ossovsky, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., a pupil of the composer, spoke on "Rimsky-Korsakov and Russian culture". The composer's son, M. N. Rimsky-Korsakov, gave reminiscences of his father, and the composer Aram Khachaturyan spoke on behalf of the Union of Composers.

The meeting closed with the performance of the final act of *The Snow Maiden*, one of the best-known of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas. The brilliant hymn to Yarilo, the Sun god, rang out with fresh force, confirming human joy and the beauty of life.

A jubilee concert also took place in the Large Hall of the Conservatoire, and contained the symphonic suite *Antar*. Even in this early work, which anticipates the brilliant symphonic colouring of *Scheherezade*, the listener is captivated by the splendour of the East, the strange rhythm of oriental music and the originality of oriental dances.

The "Princes' March" from the opera *Mlada* which followed *Antar*, with its wealth of sound attained by means of a small number of instruments, the fascination of its rhythmical phrasing, showed Rimsky-Korsakov's unsurpassed symphonic mastery, while the prelude-cantata *From Homer* (the meeting between Odysseus and Nausicaa, memories of the land of the Hellenes, filled with pictures of the Odessa coast) transports the listener into another world.

The concert concluded with the *Spanish Capriccio* familiar all over the world, a work about which Chaikovsky wrote to Rimsky-Korsakov: "I must say that your *Spanish Capriccio* is a colossal instrumental chef-d'oeuvre and you have every right to consider yourself the greatest of all modern masters."

From this concert programme alone one may perceive the many-sidedness of the great composer's gifts and creative interests.

Oriental themes, the original folklore of western Slavdom (*Mlada*), the sharp dynamic movements of Spain, the Hellenic classic—all combined organically in the genius of his creative work.

In one of the concerts held later in the Large Hall of the Conservatoire, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Pianoforte Concerto* was interpreted by Professor Lev Oborin of the Moscow Conservatoire. During the same concert, the audience listened to the "Resurrection" overture, a work very seldom played, *The Great Easter Festival Overture* thoroughly folk in character, based on old folk themes, with the pure Russian uneven rhythms, and a most happy use of the bells. The singer, Deborah Pantofel-Nechetskaya sung the *Snow Maiden's* aria, one of the most lyrical and moving pieces of Russian music, and the aria of the queen Shemakha of from the opera *The Golden Cockerel*.

In the Chaikovsky Hall, a concert conducted by Degtyarenko included *Scheherezade* and "Three Miracles" from *The Tale of the Tsar Saltan*. Many Russians retain vivid impressions of these works from childhood days, and they have left an unfadingly bright imprint on opera literature, like childhood itself.

A concert given by Knarik Grigoryan, People's Artist of Soviet Azerbaijan, in the Small Hall of the Conservatoire, was devoted to Rimsky-Korsakov's romances. The beauty of Russian nature, the contemplative wisdom and deep lyricism of the artist found their highest expression in these pieces. It is hard to imagine Russian vocal literature deprived of such treasures as the romances *The Flying Rows of Clouds Are Thinning, The Shades of Night Lay on the Georgian Hills, It Is not the Wind Blowing from the Heights*, and others.

The Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre marked the jubilee with a new production of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Tsar's Bride*, on a theme taken from the days of Ivan the Dread.

There were three broadcast programmes which featured almost all Rimsky-Korsakov's outstanding opera and symphonic compositions—a rich heritage, including fifteen operas and about the same number of symphonies.

In these days bringing victory to progressive mankind in the fight against fascism, the music of Rimsky-Korsakov breathing faith in life, strengthens our confidence "that," as academician B. Assafyev said in *Literature and Art*, "the dark forces of the gloomy kingdom of Kashchei will disappear, that the earth will always be green, that grain will always grow and the Snow Maiden's cornflowers always bloom, the rivers will shine silver and man will forever rejoice in his labour, his creation, and in them feel the beauty of life."

The Tobacco Captain, a comic opera by the composer V. Shcherbachov, libretto by the poet N. Aduyev, has had its première in the Moscow Theatre of Musical Comedy. A young nobleman is sent to Paris by Peter the Great to learn seamanship. The indolent squire's serf-servant goes through the course with him and is given the rank of captain on his return to Russia. This historical anecdote used by the authors of *The Tobasso Captain* reflects in a novel way the typical features of the epoch of Russia's transformation under Peter, who valued people not for blue blood but for their actual merits.

Music from Shcherbachov's suite *Peter* ("The Bells", "March" and so on) and from the film *Peter I* (based on A. Tolstoy's novel) is well used in the comic opera.

I. Rappoport's stage direction and the decorations of A. Samokhvalov have helped the company to give an enjoyable and lively performance.

It was an evening of Soviet music. One would like to add of the first part: "Leningrad" music, implying by the word all that tragic and proud meaning that has become associated with it in our days. Yuri Kogurov, Bogdanov-Berezovsky, Adelaide Gurina, Orest Evlakhov—are names of composers little known to Moscow audiences, the names of people who carried their art through the grim days of the blockade.

The works played that night have not yet been published. They were played by the pianist Professor Yudina of the Moscow Conservatoire from manuscript. It was not by chance that Professor Yudina was the performer. She has spent many years in Leningrad and has formed life-long ties with the city and its musicians.

Kogurov's "Adagio" is concentrated and austere, severe but not sombre.

Bogdanov-Berezovsky's "Fantasia" brings to us the tense pulsation of the front-line city. Brief, expectant hushes are broken by bursts pregnant with menace, they gather force and then again recede.

The second part brought variety to the concert—music bright, full of colour and movement. It was a waltz from an opera being written by Prokofieff inspired by Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

The waltz was followed by the contre-danse and Mephisto-Waltz to the film *Lermontov*—brilliant and incisive, like all Prokofieff's music.

The concert concluded with Shostakovich's "Second Pianoforte Sonate", a work well up to the composer's high standard.

S. Prokofieff has written a new cantata: "The Ballad of an Unknown Boy", with words by the poet P. Antokolsky.

A jolly sun-tanned youngster in a running vest, stole into a certain Soviet town under nazi occupation. He found his mother and sister dead—murdered by the Germans. The lad shed no tears—revenge was what he sought. When the nazis left the empty, looted and burnt-out town, the boy kept track of the German headquarters' car carrying the generals and blew it up with a grenade.

This was the theme of S. Prokofieff's new work, first performed this spring in the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire by a symphony orchestra, soloists and two choirs.

Moscow has heard for the first time *Sound, the Trumpet* by the English composer Henry Purcell, adapted for organ and brass instruments by Sir Henry Wood, one of Britain's leading conductors. His adaptation brings out with artistic fullness the characteristic features of Purcell's monumental "Voluntary", an

organ prelude in the traditional style of the time.

Great success attended the performance of the romantic "Introduction" and "Allegro" by Edward Elgar, one of the founders of the new school of English music. This piece, composed in the nineties, is remarkable for its high level of workmanship and well developed polyphony. The intricate quartet was well performed by A. Berlin, K. Smirnov, A. Trakhtenberg and L. Berezovsky.

Moscow musical circles celebrated the 75th birthday of Sir Henry Wood, that great organizer of music, by holding an evening devoted to his fruitful activities.

Among speakers were V. Kemenov, Chairman of VOKS, Mr. Balfour, the British Minister, S. Prokofieff, the composer, and Professors K. Kuznetsov and I. Boelza, music research workers. A. Alexandrov, the composer, read jubilee greetings on behalf of Soviet musicians.

Musicians have a keen regard for Sir Henry Wood, for his vigorous and tireless propagation of music among the masses. The "Promenade-Concerts" launched by him fifty years ago and still running to this day contain in their programmes many works of world repute. The Promenade-Concerts of the first year (1895) featured works by Chaikovsky whose superb mastery of the symphonic form was so finely understood and revealed by Sir Henry Wood. At the beginning of the twenties, Sir Henry Wood included in his concerts the works of modern Soviet composers: N. Myaskovsky, S. Prokofieff, D. Shostakovich.

A new Soviet film *David-Bek*, produced by A. Bek-Nazarov, has been released. The leading hero is a statesman and military leader of Armenia, who led the struggle of the Armenian people against foreign invaders in the XVIII century.

. . . The towns and villages of prosperous Armenia are in flames. Acrid smoke creeps over the mountain sides. The inhabitants of the freedom-loving country, with ropes round their necks, drag their feet along the roads—they are captives.

The film begins on an anxious and sad note. Armenia is menaced by a powerful enemy. The country is torn by the enmity among the feudal princes. But ever stronger among the people grows the thirst for unity, the will to struggle.

Enslaved Armenia turns to its mighty neighbour, Russia; she stretches a brotherly hand to help the Armenian people. Peter the Great gives the Armenian warriors arms and sends Bombardier Kassyanov, his favourite, to teach the Armenians how to cast guns and use them. Peter gives to the Armenian Consulate the name of the commander who might lead the national struggle against the Persians.

And on the screen appears David-Bek.

Old and young gather beneath David-Bek's standard. Girls strip off their jewels and ornaments and give them to the cause of liberation.

The Persians' main bulwark in Armenia is the impregnable fortress of Zèvu. Aslamaz Khan, the Persian chief, entrenches himself here. At first David-Bek's troops fail in the furious assault of the fortress. A long and hard

A still from the film "David-Bek"

struggle lies ahead. David-Bek's path is crossed by the Armenian Prince Frangyul, a traitor, who betrays the Armenian leader's plans to the Persian satrap. Frangyul forces his daughter Gayaney into marriage with the Persian so as to gain the foreigner's favour.

But David-Bek sees through his plans in time. He succeeds in splitting the Persian forces and striking a sudden and terrible blow at them.

But the fortress of Zevu stands impregnable as before. For six days and nights it was stormed by David Bek's troops. The Armenians propel high siege towers to its walls and, covered by their shields, scramble up the steep ladders with superhuman determination. The enemy showers them with stones and arrows, flings them off the walls. Only on the seventh day does David-Bek succeed by a cunning move in enticing the Persians out of the fortress and compelling them to accept battle in the open field. Here David-Bek and his men are victorious. The Persians flee, Aslamaz Khan falls to a keen sabre, Frangyul the traitor grovels for mercy.

At the fortress walls the youthful Prince Mansur is stricken by an arrow that pierces his breastplate.

Dying he entreats David-Bek:

"Let me be borne into the fortress; I promised my grandfather to enter it alive or dead!"

G. Nersessyan, as David-Bek, has given an excellent portrayal of a national leader. D. Malyan and A. Avetissyan, Armenian actors, and the Russian actor B. Yershov, in the part of Peter I, act well.

In recent years "Cinema concerts" bringing to the screen the best Soviet concert artists have won popularity.

This spring the cinema concert *To the Strains of the Dombres* was released. It portrays artists of Kazakhstan. The action of the film is not confined to the stage but carries the spectator to the expanses of the Kazakhstan steppes, to the snow-covered peaks of the mountain ranges. These are not just backgrounds, not mere landscapes. The action begun on the stage develops in these new settings. The onlooker drinks in the environment in which the unique art of the Kazakh people is born and thrives, in which the national bards improvise their ballads and the dancers their movements. Fragments from new Kazakh operas are happily woven into the programme.

Under A. Alexandrov and S. Yutkevich a Theatre of Film Actors is being organized in Moscow. The aim of this theatre is to raise the qualifications of film actors. The theatre troupe is being formed from amongst actors of various art-cinema studios of the U.S.S.R.

In combat the fate of the future we settle
The summit of glory for country we gain.
Giant

A poster by N. Zhukov and V. Klimashin

NEWS AND VIEWS

A meeting of Slav fighting men took place in Moscow under the auspices of the All-Slav Committee. Gathered at the meeting were representatives of the Red Army and Navy, the Polish Corps (now the Polish Army) and Czechoslovak Army units and the Yugoslav Army unit in the U.S.S.R. Men, officers and generals came from all fronts of the struggle against the German invaders, the age-old enemy of Slavdom.

Opening the meeting, Lieutenant-General Gundorov, Chairman of the All-Slav Committee dwelt upon the brilliant victories over Hitler's troops with which the Red Army had celebrated its 26th anniversary. Hearty applause greeted General Gundorov's statement that the world was following with pride and admiration the operations of the Yugoslav Army of National Liberation, the lorious deeds of the partisans of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the actions fought by the Polish Corps and the Czechoslovak units on the Soviet-German front.

"We can envisage the future of our homeland," said General Berling, Commander of the 1st Polish Corps in the U..S.S.R., "only in conjunction with the constant support of the Soviet Union, only in friendship and fraternal alliance with the Slav peoples."

General L. Svoboda, Commander of the Czechoslovak Brigade in the U.S.S.R., in his speech made the following stirring cal to the Czechoslovak people:

"To arms, organize partisan columns throughout the country, hit hard at the German invaders and their Hàcha agents, destroy German war industry, munitions and transport. Your only path is the path of country-wide revolt against the invader!"

Hero of the Soviet Union G. Polovchenya, a Byelorussian, described the self-sacrificing struggle of Byelorussia's finest sons against the occupationists.

A warm welcome was accorded Captain M. Perishich, a Serb fighting with the Yugoslav unit in the U.S.S.R.

"In my home country," he said, "the guns of the national liberation war thunder victory through the mountain valleys. The path taken by Marshal Tito is the right path and the only path for the Yugoslav people."

Major F. Kubsz, a Catholic priest, Chaplain of the 1st Polish Army Corps said:

"Our own Polish people! Soon our flag will fly once more over Warsaw and our ardent prayers will freely pour forth in our sacred shrines. Muster all forces to hasten that coveted hour! Help the approaching Red Army,—our saviour!"

A. Molodchy, an Ukrainian, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, spoke of the anguish and suffering of the Ukrainian people, of the nazis' barbarous destruction of Ukrainian culture. A. Molodchy's speech rang with pride for his people, who, arms in hand, are waging a relentless struggle against the nazis.

Lieut. Gen. Gundorov is signing the resolution addressed to the Slav peoples the world over. From left to right: Lieut. Col. Messić, General Berling, Lieut. Col. of the Guards Polovchenya, Ferdinand Kozovsky, a Bulgarian public figure, and General Svoboda

On behalf of his officers and men Lieutenant-Colonel M. Messić, Commander of the Yugoslav unit in the U.S.S.R. pledged to fight the German invader to the last drop of blood.

The meeting sent greetings to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Marshal of the Soviet Union Stalin, Mr. Winston Churchill, British Prime minister, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, Dr. Beneš, President of the Czechoslovak Republic and Marshal I. Broz-Tito, Commander-in-Chief of the Yugoslav Army of National Liberation. Many greetings were received by the meeting from Slav organzations in the U.S.S.R., Great Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada and Uruguay.

In conclusion the meeting adopted a resolution to call all the Slav peoples the world over to unity in the struggle against German fascism.

Gamzat Padas, a popular poet of Soviet Daghestan has completed fifty years of literary work.

Until the Revolution Gamzat wrote chiefly as a satirist.

After the Revolution his main theme was the contrast between the old and the new life of Daghestan. Gamzat Padas became a crusader of Russian culture and of its significance for the development of Daghestan.

The war has brought renewed energy to the sixty-seven-year-old poet, who is writing poems and fables and has more than once appeared at the microphone.

The bathing season openned in Odessa on the Black Sea coast
Drawing by N. Dolgorukov

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