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THREE YEARS

With tenderness and condescension, like a mother who recalls her girlish day-dreams, we recall June 21st, 1941. We didn't know then what was ahead and if a magician had shown us the future who would have believed him? Vassya, with his ruddy childish face, was tormented by the question: what was more interesting—history or linguistics? The chairman of the "Lenin's Behest" collective farm dreamt of winning a prize at the Agricultural Exhibition. In the Park of Culture the accordion strummed roguishly and firework rockets traced words of happiness in the skies. "Let's go to Gurzuf," said the young schoolteacher Bobrov to Olga. "By August the construction will be finished," was the architect Chebuyev's last thought before he fell into slumber. In the play *Mashenka* the old professor muttered that somewhere a war was going on but he was working, and the audience applauded. There was jealousy—she had smiled at another. There was worry—'twas hard to rent a summer-cottage. There was guessing—what would July be like, fine or rainy.

Let us recall everything. Man needs his memories as a tree its roots. That Sunday Moscow awoke carefree with summer singing in its veins. Her thoughts were on lilac and woods and lazy rest under the blue sky.

But in Kaunas women and children were already in the hangman's grip. And frontier-guards were already dying on the emerald-green grass. . . The radio blared: "Citizens. . ."

They had been making ready for a long time. Every step had been thought out. Müller was going to Kiev. Schulz was going to Leningrad. Quatschke was in a hurry to get to Moscow. There were millions of them, violent and arrogant. They kicked their heels like impatient horses. Professors of Jena, Heidelberg and Bonn had lectured to them about the palaces of St. Petersburg, about the properties of Russia's black soil, about the ancient route to India and about the Urals' natural wealth. They stood before our borders, Prussians, Saxons, Bavarians, Würtembergers, Badeners; Wilhelms, Hanses, Kurts, Karls, Herberts, Adolphs, Alfreds, Fritzes; students, swineherds, chemists, beer-brewers, clerks, barons, philosophers, thiefs, lawyers, travelling salesmen and policemen. Among them was Schramke who in Paris had stolen eight watches. There was Stolz who had raped fifteen Polish women and Heinz who had climbed to the top of the Acropolis and broken off a finger from the hand of the marble goddess "for a keepsake".

They had long prepared for this day. Lund had graduated six-months courses for agricultural directors. He was called sonderführer and knew by heart how many eggs each chicken should lay. Schirke was unterbannführer and was taught how to crush children under tanks. General Schmidt had carefully elaborated a plan of how to take Kazan in a pincer movement. They had guide-books which said: "The Russians are an inferior race created to obey." They had little dictionaries with the phrases: "Give me the cow. Stand against the wall. Lie down with me. Dig a grave." They had compasses to prevent them from getting lost in the Siberian taigas. They had maps to go straight through to Iran. They had bags and spacious stomachs. They had powerful tanks, diving bombers, trench mortars and the machines of the whole of Europe. They had oberführers, sturmbannführers, rottenführers, standartenführers, scharführers, staffelführers, gruppenführers and they had a führer, a super-führer, a corporal who had spat at Europe from the Eiffel Tower, captured a dozen states, a sleuth whom Chamberlain respectfully addressed as "gentleman". They had everything. Came the shortest night of the year and they jauntily moved ahead.

It is said that three years is not

three centuries. But we have, it seems, lived through hundreds of years. The faces of men and fields have become covered with wrinkles. Ashes are in the hair and on the earth. How many near and dear ones have we lost in these three years! The chairman of the "Lenin's Behest" collective farm was killed while defending Leningrad. The school-teacher Bobrov fell at Stalingrad; his Olga, a liaison officer, is now in Rumania. The architect Chebuyev is in command of a sapper battalion; he was twice wounded and distinguished himself in the crossing of the Dnieper. Vassya is neither a historian nor a linguist, he is a scout. The author of the play *Mashenka*[1] was killed by a bomb. The people in the rear have learned to know the rockets of air-raids and other rockets, those of victory. The summer-cottages have been burned. Mothers have cried their eyes out. There is guessing—what will July be like? Where will we go into the offensive?

Grief is greedy and grief is generous: it takes much and gives much. Let us be relentless with ourselves and recall our losses. Many that were pure, brave and noble, perished. Our victories did not fall from the skies, they arose from the earth and are drenched in the blood of our best sons. The old folk know how they cherished their children, how they fretted when their boy had the measles and how they grudged themselves the last to make it easier for their son. For nine months a woman bears her child, gives birth to it in pain and raises it in anxiety. The child is taught to walk, then to talk, he is taught spelling, grammar, arithmetic, history with its reigning princes and Merovingians, geography and cosmography; he is shown the roots of trees and the roots of words, soil and subsoil, lunar eclipses and dialectics. He has read hundreds of books. He had lived twenty years. He has just reached the age when one falls in love, travels, creates. And then a tiny scrap of metal had cut his life short.

We built our country in the sweat of our brow. We were proud of our Stalingrad, Voronezh, the schools of Orel, the universities of Kursk, the sky-scrapers of Kharkov, and the hospitals of Minsk. Life in those days was like life in a new apartment. It smelt of paint, plaster and varnish. "Desert zone is the achievement of the military genius of Germany," wrote a German officer to a friend. They have razed to the ground and mutilated hundreds of our cities. They have turned to ashes the labour of generations.

A man treasures his grandfather's portrait, his father's letters and his mother's knick-knacks. A people treasures its past. The Germans destroyed ancient Novgorod, the monuments of Chernigov and Pskov, museums and libraries.

They have darkened our childhood. They murdered children, buried them alive, drowned, burned, poisoned them in gas-waggons, threw them into wells, pinned them on bayonets, hanged them and crushed them under tanks. And those who survived are no longer children. Too early have they seen what even adults should never see.

They have robbed us of our dreams, our trust and our good-nature. They have forced us to recoil from our peaceful happiness and reverently kiss our weapons. They have shown us such baseness, such vileness and such savagery that we have become wise to the point of silence. It is not easy for us to live with this wisdom, it is like a stone. They have been the cause of much evil but there is no statistician alive who could measure this evil or express the tears, blood and grief in the dry language of figures.

A child holds a piece of clay in his hand. But in order that the clay may become a pitcher it must be tempered. Ships are tarred to keep them from leaking. Steel is cooled. Our hearts have been tempered and tarred, they have been hardened by the cold of hatred.

Of a mature genius it is said: "He has achieved childish simplicity." An inaccurate definition! There is the simplicity of the beginning and there is another simplicity, that of understanding and wisdom. Between the two a whole life frequently lies. Who knows how far we have advanced in these three years? On mined fields we have learned what we could never have learned from books. Life turned out to be more complicated and yet simpler. Now we can all differentiate real beauty from tawdry

[1] Afinogenov, a noted Soviet playwright, was killed during a Moscow air-raid in November 1941.—*Ed.*

flashiness, big feelings from big words. We have become more stern and grim. Even the most hardened soldier smiles when he sees a child, the spring and cherry blossoms. He understands life's true value, but the hundreds of foolish joys and petty problems that troubled him three years ago now bring only a condescending smile to his lips. Then he thought happiness was an electric bulb, you twist it and it lights up. Now he knows that happiness flows from the heart like fire from flint. He has walked along trodden paths, he has learned to love brushwood, he has learned to love the most difficult things in life. He has learned that words are conditional and blood viscous. About a man it is said that he has grown up or matured. About our people we will say: they have become greater.

There is a link between the finest spiritual feelings of every soldier fighting on the front and the official communiqués on what's going on at the front. There is a link between the heartfelt experience of Sergeant Ivanov and the banners of his regiment that earned the title "guardists". There is a link between the fate of Vassya who wanted to become a linguist and has recently dragged a German major to his unit and the road along which our armies passed from the Volga to the Pruth. "Take to the left," corrects the lieutenant, directing fire upon himself. He does not seek death but neither does he fear it; he has learned that death is as much a part of life as suffering, as blossoming meadows, as batteries, as girls, as youth and as his motherland. He did not go in for philosophy when on the march. He spoke of distances, of German "Messers", of letters, of cabbage-soup and of hundreds of other details. But he became a true philosopher: he comprehended life.

What did we lack? We had high ideals and the richest country, talent and opportunity. We lacked one thing: maturity and experience. In all things it is not only the plan that matters but its execution. Everything that annoyed and worried us before the war was connected with imperfect execution. In battle the people learned to carry out their plans. If the gun-layer made a mistake, if the sniper were too hasty, if the tankman tarried, if the soldier didn't put his whole heart into winning victory, the battle would be lost. I know of many captains and majors who began the war as privates. I will take the liberty of saying that our people now wears a Marshal's Star. We have done more in three years than can be done in three centuries and it is only for that reason that the army which retreated in the summer of 1941 became the army which is knocking on Germany's gates.

Before the war the world knew little of us. The fascist plague already raged but blind democrats organized "cordons sanitaires" because they feared not this plague but the people who had dared to outstrip others on the path of social progress. Europe was threatened by a great blackout but its foolish shepherds hid their heads from the light.

I have read many books dedicated to our country which were published abroad in pre-war years. They contained many picturesque anecdotes but little historical perspective. They had neither a sense of proportion nor any foresight. The foreigners were only too ready to stress our bad roads, crowded apartments and the clothes made by the Moscow garment factories. All this was true—the bad roads, the apartment crisis and the poorly-cut clothes: but taken all together it was a lie, for these details prevented the authors from seeing the whole, from seeing a country that was growing fabulously, from understanding that we lived on scaffolding, that to dress two hundred million people was more difficult than to dress two hundred thousand, that our people had learned to study, that it had become the master of its state and that besides household utensils it had to think of cannons because its next-door-neighbours were fascists. We were portrayed as a "colossus with clay feet".

Three years ago that simile captivated the Germans and forced some Anglo-Saxons to sigh contritely. The first months of the war seemed to affirm this slander; from afar the world did not see that while we were retreating we were not giving in, that while undergoing great ordeals our country was growing stronger, that our factories, which had moved to the East, had increased their production manifold and that our soldiers, with blisters on their feet and indignation in their hearts, had only one thought in mind—the offensive. Now the world sees the Soviet Republic in its true

light. The colossus turned out to have strong feet. It would seem that we should be weakened after three years of the bloodiest warfare, but not even during our most resplendent epochs, when Voltaire flattered Catherine and when Napoleon was defeated, did Russia stand before the world as powerful as she does today. We were the first soldiers of resistance and now it is clear to everyone that we will be the first to forge victory.

The heads of German army veterans are chock full of geographic names. They have covered the globe. Where have they not been? Were they tourists they could say: "We got what we were after." But they are not tourists, they are conquerors. A fat lot of good it does them to have been in Elista, in Kalinin, in Essentuki, in Egypt, in Tunisia and in Palermo! Some got away, others remained. There are inscriptions on German crosses from Vladikavkaz to Bayeux and from Karelia to El-Alamein. It reads like an address-book of pre-war Germany. And at their backs are the ruins of German cities. Is this what they dreamed of? When they came to us they exclaimed: "We want Lebensraum." Now they sullenly declare: "We are defending German territory." They marched to kill. They were killed. They marched to destroy the world. Their homes are destroyed. Where were they going? To Sibefia? To India? And here they are in exactly the same places where three years ago they prepared for their great march. . .

We know that Germany is not yet vanquished, that her divisions can still fight, that her factories still manufacture armaments, but the outcome is clear to everyone now. This war was conceived by the Germans as a series of conquests. Since they now speak about defence that means they have lost the war. In 1940 the British were able to steadfastly await invasion. They knew they were defending their island, their rights and their liberty. When the Germans were on the Volga we did not lose our spirits. We were defending Russian soil and our Soviet state. The German soldiers cannot have that noble conviction which in trouble allows one to maintain his courage, for no one attacked Germany. Now we are marching to the west and our Allies to the east, as prosecutors and judges. Insult turns the most peaceful man into a hero, but a criminal, when he sees the arm of justice, trembles. It is impossible to be brave with a picklock in your pocket and the blood of children on your hands.

A year ago the Germans did not understand the full significance of Stalingrad. They hoped still to win out with Tigers and Ferdinands. They prepared for an offensive on the Kursk bend. This offensive was short and it was Germany's last. After this there was the Dnieper, the Dniester, Mga, the Pruth, Korsun, Tarnopol and Rumania. Now the Germans morosely wonder where the next blow will fall. Viborg reminded them once again that the days of decisive attack have come.

On the eve of the third anniversary of the war large-scale military operations were begun in the west. I do not mean to underrate the merits of the valorous Anglo-American forces in the least when I say that the Red Army made it easier for the Allies to carry out their difficult task and that the liberation of the Ukraine helped in liberation of Normandy. Now nothing will save Hitler from encirclement, neither his "pilotless planes" nor his chirruping Goebbelses. The Anglo-American forces are completing the Cotentin operation which will be followed by great battles. The French army on the home front is harassing the occupationists' rear. That is only the beginning but how close that beginning is to the end!

I do not say that the final battle will be easy. Before us is no abstract "German people" but a most real multi-millioned gang of murderers. The German people? We cannot see them! Perhaps following the example of the "magic carpet" and the "magic tablecloth", they have taken to wearing the "invisible cap". We can see the obergruppenführers, the whooping corporals, the obtuse Fritzes, the metal-workers who make bullets, the peasants domineering over Ukrainian or Polish slave-women, the millions of Germans bound by the desire to protect each other. They still believe if not in victory at least in some loophole, they expect the odds to be evened and to put off the draw for twenty years. The last minutes will be difficult but after having seen the Germans at Khimki [1],

[1] A small town near Moscow.—*Ed.*

after the hungry Leningrad winter, after the stones of Stalingrad, nothing will stop Russia. If the Germans will threaten we will smile. For we were the ones to beat those first Germans and we will beat the last as well. If they try to whimper we will answer: Moscow does not trust tears. We will come to Berlin. That was predetermined on June 22nd, 1941, at that very hour when the Germans attacked us.

When the army is led by calculation, ambition or greed the soldier sometimes stops and says: enough! We are driven to the west by other sentiments—by righteous anger. We have seen so much calculated cruelty, so much baseness that we ask ourselves: can one live after this? Our country has seen invaders: and there were many among them who were bandits and thieves; they were ne'erdo-wells who had found themselves in foreign regiments. Peter drank to the conquered Swedes. When they came to Paris, the Russian Cossacks caressed the children of Napoleon's soldiers. Can there be any comparison between the Hitlerites and Charles' Swedes or Bonaparte's Frenchmen? Deliberately, calmly, and efficiently the Germans perpetrated their inhuman crimes. For them there is no pardon: one can pardon only a human being, but not a robot, not the gas-waggon experts, not the bath-house murderers who poisoned women with gas. One can forgive for oneself but not for children. In Mariupol on October 20th, 1941, the Germans led several thousand people to execution. The doomed were ordered to undress and tiny Vladimir, not knowing what awaited him, cried: "Mama, are we going to bathe?" Who will dare to pardon them for Vladimir?

The Germans turned the Simeiz Observatory into a stable. They turned the platform where astronomers followed the course of planets into an outhouse. Astronomers, poets, human beings, we must destroy the fascists.

Are we speaking of revenge? No, we don't want to smash the telescopes of Jena. We don't want to burn the home of Goethe. We don't want to smear the lips of German children with hydrocyanic acid. We want one thing: to purge the world of criminals. We want to put a straight-jacket on Germany. We want to come to them so that they may never come to us. We want the Germans to remember 1944 as a terrible year. In this way we will save not only our children, not only our country but the whole of mankind, its ideals, its cradles, its relics and its orchards.

We have been suffering for three years and only a madman could speak of joy. Involuntarily we recall the last pre-war day. We will never see that life again: we have become different. After victory we will create a new and surely better life. But just as a grown-up cannot forget his childhood we shall never forget our pre-war dreams. We shall not forget, too, that terrible morning of June 22nd, 1941. In the list of German atrocities that June night will figure prominently.

I don't know just when we will enter Berlin—whether it will be hot that day, whether autumn rain will be falling or an icy wind will be blowing from the Baltic; but I do know that when we will pass through the long monotonous streets of the German capital we will recall that June morning and the life which was severed in two. There, on Kurfürstendamm, on Unter den Linden, on Potsdammerplatz will end the greatest tragedy of all times, which began on June 22nd, 1941. There, breaking our sword over Germany's head, we will say: never again!

June 22nd, 1944.

ILYA EHRENBURG

ANNE KARAVAYEVA

LIGHTS

"Comrades, our forces are numberless."
(*J. Stalin*, Radio broadcast, July 3rd, 1941)

At the Lessogorsk Plant

The door opened and a man of medium height, about forty years of age, appeared on the threshold of the wooden house. With a swift movement he pulled down his plain seaman's tunic and pushing his sailor cap forward onto his forehead, moved with elastic steps towards the rather battered-looking black car awaiting him.

"New construction site," he briefly told the chauffeur, and leaning back, filled his pipe. Swaying slightly with the movement of the machine, he settled down like a man enjoying a moment's respite. Yet all the time his small brown eyes were taking in literally everything with restrained eagerness—the late August early morning, the wide thoroughfare, the other cars passing by, the houses of the factory settlement, the distant blue crests of the Ural peaks resembling petrified sea waves, and the smoking factory chimneys.

As he puffed at his pipe, Dimitri Nikitich Plastunov let his eyes wander over the smoking panorama of the factory.

"Eh, those Demidovs!" he growled, emitting a cloud of strong aromatic smoke. "Such sensible, enterprising fellows, yet they built their factory in a valley, crowded in by the mountains, as though afraid it might expand after their day."

"It's true, we're cramped on the factory site," his companion Kulkov agreed.

"And nothing but patchwork, just patchwork," said Dimitri Nikitich, regarding the low, smoky buildings still standing from the Demidov times, and the tall new blocks of the past fifteen years pushing in between them. Then he turned his eyes to the mountain, to the left slopes running down to the river bank, which were cleft from top to bottom. "Not such a bad job hacking a whole corner off that antediluvian loaf, eh, Kulkov?"

"Couldn't have been better, Dimitri Nikitich," replied Kulkov, a smile spreading over his whole broad, pock-marked face.

The car halted before an extensive excavation, the foundations of a new factory wing.

"Here's the place," said a grey-headed giant in a leather jacket, in his weighty bass, and stamped his huge foot, like that of a caryatide, so that the heel of his hunting boot was driven into the soft earth. "Here's the boundary between shop number four and number eight."

"We'll just check up," said a tall thin man in a grey hat. From his pocket he pulled out a shiny covered notebook, but barely had he opened it when the morning wind, as though in mockery, tore the loose leaf from his hands. The thin man caught it, spread the book on his knees, and began searching with his finger the neat lines and columns of figures written in a small precise hand.

With some amusement and evident impatience, the grey-headed man looked down from his mighty height at the engineer's slender back and grey hat.

"What on earth is there to ponder over, Comrade Nazaryev?" he growled, shrugging his broad shoulders. "It's clear without any reckonings that the border line should be here—you can trust my eye."

Nazaryev straightened up and thrust the notebook into his pocket.

"There's no eye on earth that can replace mathematics, Comrade Permyakov," he replied with a thoughtful, slightly ironic smile.

Permyakov drew his shaggy brows together, but at that moment he met

the piercing gaze of Dimitri Nikitich's bright round eyes.

"Punctuality is an excellent thing," said Dimitri Nikitich pleasantly, a smile exposing his white teeth. "Here we are just as appointed. Let's have your ideas, Comrade Director," he said, turning to Permyakov, and a short businesslike conference began, one of those "snap meetings on the spot", which had been introduced the first day Dimitri Nikitich Plastunov, Communist Party organizer, had appeared at the factory.

After half an hour's discussion, every yard of the excavation had been dealt with and transferred to the plans in Nikolai Petrovich Nazaryev's roomy notebook.

As he was about to leave, Plastunov turned to Permyakov:

"Are you going to the factory, Mikhail Vassilyevich?"

"Yes."

"Then let's go together," said the Party organizer gaily. "And by the way, I think you wanted to speak to me, Mikhail Vassilyevich?"

"Quite right, I did," growled Permyakov rather gloomily.

He walked along silently for a few seconds, looking at the Party organizer from under his brows, as though trying to guess just how Dimitri Nikitich would regard what he wanted to say. But Plastunov walked along, puffing serenely at his pipe, apparently unaware of the doubts troubling the director.

"Dimitri Nikitich, how old are you and Nikolai Petrovich?" asked Mikhail Vassilyevich at last, rather awkward, then coughed into his heavy fist.

"I'm thirty-eight, and so is Nikolai Petrovich."

"And I'm fifty-six. . . When you both were born, I'd already been working for some years. . . You were both lads at home when I was fighting Kolchak's troops in the Civil War and helping to liberate the Urals. This factory is my factory," and he deliberately emphasized the words, "I have been running it for seventeen years... and I'm used to feeling that I'm the chief. . . I'm not a boy, who can exist without any understanding of things."

"And just what is it you don't understand, Mikhail Vassilyevich?"

"Just this: who is the director of this factory, I or Nikolai Petrovich? You know, very often people are at a loss as to whom they should come for instructions—to him or to me. . ."

"But you know, Mikhail Vassilyevich—the general guidance of the production work is your affair while Nikolai Petrovich is responsible for the new construction, including the branch of the railway. We considered that Nikolai Petrovich, being a younger man, should naturally be assigned those duties which entail more walking and travelling about, and constant visits to the construction site."

"That's right," agreed Mikhail Vassilyevich, but with unabated gloom. "But all the same, people are used to thinking of some one person as being—well, first, don't you see?"

"Ah, so that's where the shoe pinches!" And Plastunov smiled quietly.

"Dimitri Nikitich, our work here, you know, is very complicated and important. . ."

"Important! That's just it!" Plastunov suddenly cried gaily. "When all these terrible times are over, history won't only deal with the battles fought at the front, but with the way victory was organized here in the rear."

"Quite right, that's just how it is, of course. . . only I, Dimitri Nikitich, am a very ordinary sort of man, and I like to get my proper share of respect."

"But has anybody deprived you of it?"

"I'm used to feeling that I'm chief here in Lessogorsk. I'm not a young man, after all, and I know my own worth. I've always been equal to my job. Sergo Ordjonikidze himself summoned me to Moscow to discuss things. Perhaps you think I'm raising the question out of ill humour," he began again, his voice trembling with offended dignity. "But this matter means life itself to me."

"That's just how it should be. And here's where we see eye to eye, Mikhail Vassilyevich. Just why are we living here together? We may have our worries, disorganization, even serious troubles, but way and above all that is the chief aim of our lives—turn out tanks and more tanks as quickly as possible—isn't that correct? It doesn't matter where this one sits, if the concert was well staged. . . Aren't I right?" And with a strength unexpected for a man of his small stature, Plastunov gripped Per-

myakov's huge hairy hand. "Well, here we are. I've got to hurry, I've booked a telephone call to Moscow. Good-bye, Mikhail Vassilyevich."

Permyakov looked after the agile fast disappearing figure in the seaman's tunic. "All the same, he didn't answer my question," he thought, and felt still greater chagrin, both with himself and the Party organizer for ever broaching the subject.

Permyakov felt a little better when he arrived home in the evening—even in these days he still preferred to dine at home. It was good to know that whenever he returned, the shining white dinner service would be laid out ready in the crowded, low-ceilinged little dining-room, and the yellow horn-handled knives and forks accurately crossed. He knew that on seeing him his wife, Varvara Sergeyevna, would say as usual: "I've been expecting you for a long time." However busy or worried he might be, he knew that his heart would be lightened by the very sight of the ordered peace of his home. For he loved his "own house" which he had inherited from his father, loved it as simply and sincerely as his wife, with whom he had lived for nearly thirty years. He had no hankerings after an apartment in even the largest of the pre-war factory houses. And Varvara Sergeyevna had announced decidedly that she did not intend to exchange her "own house" for any other place. "The new apartments may be smart enough," she said, "but you can't do any real housekeeping in them." Here, at home, she had everything to hand—the orchard with its dozens of raspberry and black-currant bushes, the vegetable garden, the little yard with its ice house, shed and dog kennel. The latter housed its fourth successive occupant, a shaggy beast named Beauty, friendly to his own people, but with a freely expressed dislike for strangers.

Permyakov found his wife standing on the porch, holding a watering can.

"I've been expecting you for a long time," she said in her soft, even voice. "Do you want dinner at once, or will you wait while I water the garden?"

"Finish your watering," answered Permyakov. He entered the kitchen to wash, then sat down by the window to smoke a cigarette.

Through the window he had a view of thick green plots: Varvara Sergeyevna's garden was coming along excellently. She had already watered the cabbages which looked fine.

Permyakov smiled tenderly as he looked at the closely twisted plaits of chestnut hair coiled on his wife's neck. She had done her hair that same way since the first day of her married life, thirty years ago. Other wives might cut their hair or wave it, but his Varvara Sergeyevna cared nothing for changes of fashion; she liked the old accustomed ways. It was this trait that had first attracted the twenty-seven-year-old Mikhail Vassilyevich, who had made her acquaintance while doing illegal party work. She had been the daughter of a forester, a widower, and with the naive authority of a seventeen-year-old had looked after her absent-minded father who was eternally busy with journeys and the peasants' conflicts with the authorities—he was their constant defender. Party affairs brought Mikhail Vassilyevich to the Ural forest village, where he was directed to the forester's cottage. Here everything sparkled with cleanliness and he was strongly attracted by the tall, well-built girl with her chestnut braids and rosy cheeks, glowing with life and so pleasant and sensible to talk with. Permyakov never for an instant had reason to regret choosing her for his life's companion. She was not only a faithful wife, she was also a constant refuge. She concealed him from both the tsarist police and Kolchak's soldiers, assisted his comrades, and carried out all kinds of assignments with the greatest skill. It never entered the head of any of his persecutors to suspect this unassuming, housewifely dame surrounded with children, and always occupied with the hard task of making two ends meet. She never complained, but convinced that the job entrusted to her was important for large number of people, she could tackle the matter as though it were her lifework, assigned to her from the day of her birth.

As they sat down to dinner, Permyakov asked if there were any letters from the boys at the front.

"But it's only three days since we had one from Vassya, from the Kalinin front," his wife reminded him.

"Ye-e-s, yes, that's true. Nothing from Victor?"

"He'll write," said Varvara Sergeyevna briefly.

Her sharp eye had quickly discerned that Mikhail Vassilyevich was worried about something, but as usual, she asked no questions. If he said nothing of his own accord, he had his own reasons for it.

"The soup isn't too salt?" she asked as she changed the plates.

"No, it's very good."

"I made a brawn yesterday—would you like some? I can get it from the larder."

"Brawn? Well, all right."

"Something's on his mind," she thought, quite convinced of it now. He hardly did more than turn the brawn over and over on his plate. That troubled her. Unobtrusively following his glum looks, she pushed a glass of tea and the ashtray closer to him, nevertheless he made no attempt to smoke. He simply sat there, drumming on the table with his fingers, his massive head with its thick mop of grey hair lowered.

A woman's ringing voice suddenly sounded from the street:

"Ah, glad to see you, Klavdia Ivanovna! It looks as though my trouble is really clearing up a little."

This was Dimitri Nikitich Plastunov's sick wife, who had met Klavdia Ivanovna, the factory doctor.

"There she is, as ill as can be, but all the same she can be gay," suddenly Permyakov gave a wry smile and drummed on the table still harder, "while I've got health enough for two and the black dog sitting on my chest. . ."

And telling his wife of his conversation with Dimitri Nikitich, Permyakov ended with what was "sitting on his chest":

"For them, these people who've only just come, it's easy enough to lay down the law—this is how it should be, and that must be done. Take our Dimitri Nikitich. . . He lived in Leningrad. He knows metal, of course, but he's a naval man after all, and was working all the time on ship-building. I respect Plastunov highly, he's heart and soul in the job. But all the same, if you get down to brass tacks, how's he got where he is? He hasn't my experience, and after all, how could he? He belongs to the sea, I to the mountains. And you should see the way he regards our factory. Like an old button on a new jacket."

"You don't say!" gasped Varvara Sergeyevna indignantly.

Permyakov was pacing up and down the room with his heavy steps.

Varvara Sergeyevna, fully understanding and sharing his feelings, tried in her own way to remove some of his depression.

"Why, good gracious!" she cried suddenly, choosing her minute and clapping her hands together. "I almost forgot to show you the currants!"

"The currants? Why, what about them?"

"What about them?" she caught him up, noting with quiet satisfaction the success of her ruse. "The big bush is full from top to bottom. . . and the berries, you should see them, I've never seen such big ones! Come and look at them!"

"Well, if you like," he smiled. "If you're so anxious to show them to me, I'll come and look at your currants before I go back to the factory."

Varvara Sergeyevna walked ahead of her husband so that he should not see her beaming with satisfaction.

Open-hearth furnace No. 2 was being repaired. Sergei Lanskikh and Alexander Nechporuk, who worked the furnace in shifts, were determined to complete the repairs in record time, and barely left the shop. In the early morning they would go to the new shops which were still being built and make their way straight to their furnace. After several hours work, covered with brick dust, dirty and dripping with sweat, they would go for a drink. Opposite them they could hear the roar of furnace No. 1; the steel, seething in its stone ladles, lighted up the whole shop and filled the air with its whistling and hissing.

"It's the very devil hanging around the furnace when all its inwards are scattered around," said Nechporuk gloomily, and drained another glass at a gulp.

"Why worry, every inside needs looking after," Lanskikh contradicted calmly. "It'll be repaired, and we'll fill it full of steel again."

"Why, do you call that a furnace?" Nechporuk continued jeeringly. "It's not a furnace, it's just a sickness, as our smelters in Ukraine would say."

They went home together.

"I don't feel any too gay myself, and here's my wife gone to pieces completely. Does nothing but howl from morning till night."

"What for? She's young and strong," said Lanskikh in surprise.

"She just doesn't like it here in the Urals. The sunshine isn't like it is in the south, and the wind's not right, and there's no gardens, and she finds the people dour. . . She keeps crying for Rostov and her ruined village and her mother. She's all to pieces, cries, complains, there's no living with her. . . All the time she keeps thinking of how the enemy's running amock in our parts, she even dreams about all sorts of horrors. . ."

"Can't you do anything to calm her down?"

"I try everything, though Lord knows I feel bad enough myself. There's an idea keeps nagging me although I tell you it's a bad thought. Of course I've never been to any university, but I understand what life is. Now just try to explain why such a life as we had is suddenly turned all upside down? The way I, Nechporuk, lived—well, I could wish all my friends nothing better: I was respected—never a celebration but I was called to the presidium. I went to the Crimea and the Caucasus for my holidays, wandered along the seashore with my Marya, with the palms rustling over us. Eh, what's the good of talking about it all? And suddenly—it's all gone, and all we've got now is sorrow—and what sorrow!—for all our honest toil! Wait a bit, don't interrupt me. When I remember our life before the war, then comes that black thought of mine." Nechporuk shook his curly black head and struck himself on the chest. "We didn't live right, wise as we were! . . We should have been preparing harder for this war years ahead!"

"We did prepare."

"Eh, but not properly, Sergei, no! We had exhibitions, we built health and holiday resorts, fine houses and all that sort of thing, when we should have been building more tanks, tanks, tanks!"

"And that's your 'black thought'?" smiled Lanskikh calmly.

"That's it." Nechporuk was somewhat confused. "Isn't it enough?"

"And what we did was just what was necessary for life, while you, brother, have mixed everything all up together," and there was an ironic amusement in Lanskikh's voice.

"Mixed it all up?" repeated Nechporuk, hurt. "And what have I mixed up—eh?"

"Everything," said Lanskikh resolutely. "You start on about exhibitions and apartments and all the rest of it but you never give a thought to what they were all for. If our country had to build tanks, we had to get some kind of industry going, eh?"

"Well, of course."

"You agree? Good. And when we built new factories, we had also to consider where and how the workers and engineers were to live. No, Alexander, life was organized the right way. . ."

"H'm," growled Nechporuk, "you're good at twisting things around. . ."

"That's just what I can't do," laughed Lanskikh, "it's just that we live in times which made you think, you see. But here I am at home," he interrupted himself, and entered the two-storey house with its balconies, one of those built for the old factory some years before the war.

Nechporuk continued on his way alone, filled with a sort of vague dissatisfaction.

Booty

As far back as he could remember, Yuri Kostromin had always found his father and mother very different. His mother warmed and brightened life, her kindly though sometimes impatient hands fed him, dressed him, checked him, occasionally slapped him, carried him to bed and wakened him in the morning. Life was exciting with her—rather to much so, sometimes, when she was angry. But everything to do with his father was always interesting: and like this hearty man with the athletic figure, everything was simple and decided. His long bony hands guided the red and blue pencil like a magician's wand—the straight, broken, curved, or wavy lines ran along the white ground, always alive and always promising something. The tube of thick draughtsman's

paper, like a fat white candle, would unroll obediently and seem to melt in his father's strong hands.

Yuri was very fond of his father's favourite expression: "We'll transform this," even before he understood what it meant.

"Here's how we'll transform this," his father would say in a businesslike tone, as though somehow rolling it round on his tongue, and something would change on the white sheet.

When there was nobody in the study, Yuri would carefully take the working pencil, thick as an umbrella, from its yellowed marble vase, settle himself down somewhere with a scrap of paper, and pretending to be his father, would growl delightedly: "M-m-yes! . . That's how we'll transform this!"

When his father went on business journeys he would take Yuri, a thin, bright-eyed high-school boy, along with him. The lad learned to know many places in the huge land of Russia—all those spots where his father, the designer, equipped factory blocks. For each such journey he had to "pay a tax" to his mother, as his father jokingly put it. She had an ambitious dream—she wanted her lively, clever son, with wavy hair like hers, to be a violinist like his grandfather. When he was seven years old she dressed him in a velvet suit with a broad lace collar, and scraped money together for a music teacher. He obediently practised on his violin, but whenever he had the chance, he would slip away to his father's study and play with pencil and paper, growling happily: "We'll transform this!"

When he set out on one of his usual journeys, accompanied by his son, the father would wink and tell him:

"Good, scrape away, scrape away, keep her happy!"

The "tax" or "bribe" for every such journey was for the lad to learn "a nice tune" on his violin, at his mother's request. And that was how Yuri's musical repertoire came into being. The dark-red leather violin case with the instrument lying inside it as though in a coffin would accompany him on all his trips.

"We'll transform things," Yuri would always recall these words when he saw a new shop going up somewhere in the depths of factory territory. What his father had traced on the white drawing paper came to life on earth—the factory walls, stair wells, roomy shops, steel structures. First of all Yuri would make the acquaintance of the navvies, stone cutters, carpenters and plasterers. But the most interesting people for him were the factory workers themselves. Yuri indefatigably watched all day as the machinery gradually filled the shop, and finally, under the hands of the workers, who knew everything and could do everything, the machines would begin their accurate, complicated life.

The mother always dreamed of seeing her son, slender and handsome in a dress suit, his arm drawing the bow across the strings in graceful sweeps. But the father's death cut across all her plans.

Yuri's father died suddenly in 1916 of heart trouble. This took place in winter, during the "dead season", when the designer's family was living on the summer's earnings. Yuri was fifteen at the time, and in the sixth class at school. Now he became the support of the family. His "working class friends", as his mother had called them, came to his aid in this difficult moment, and a turner friend found him employment at an armaments works in Samara. In due course, Yuri left Samara with a workers' battalion in 1918, and with them captured the town from the white-guards. After this, the factory sent him to Moscow to study in a machine-building institute. And several years later, when setting up new lathes at his factory in Kiev, he would repeat, as though quoting his father's prophetic words: "That's how we'll transform this!"

In moments of intense concentration, he would scrape out on his grandfather's sacred violin the score or so of melodies that comprised his repertoire.

"There's your music for you!" groaned his mother.

"It's the kind I need, it helps me to concentrate. . . Let me be, Mother!"

For they both liked their own way.

At the factory he made friends with a young woman who was head of the laboratory. She was attractive, sensible and energetic, with a cheerful, merry nature. She had grown up with the factory, and was familiar with technique—so there developed the most promising "compatibility"—a common working interest. "She may be a chemist, but she's

a fine lass," Yuri's mother said with deep satisfaction. At work, too, that happy year 1940 witnessed great achievements. The USSR-I medium tank passed its trial run through three republics without a single hitch, and was given a place in the May Day parade on the Red Square, Moscow.

Kostromin never forgot the mingled triumph and apprehension with which he watched the tanks rumbling over the asphalt. He immediately recognized his own machine in one of the first ranks. He glanced at the tribune on the Lenin Mausoleum and saw Stalin standing there, in his severely simple greatcoat buttoned up to the neck. He saw how Stalin approached close to the marble balustrade, his eyes fixed on the green tank which had come almost level with the Mausoleum. The designer felt himself going hot and cold. For an instant he closed his eyes, and when he opened them again, he saw that Stalin was standing half-turned from him, following the first rows of tanks with his eyes.

The new tank series went into production, and at the end of this happy year, a son was born, the very image of his mother. There was only one cloud in the sky, but one that only troubled Kostromin's old mother. The young wife still kept up her sports, which roused her mother-in-law's disapproval. She considered "all this wild, risky sport", as she put it, harmful for a nursing mother.

In May 1941, after setting up a new swimming record, Yuri's wife came home slightly feverish. "The weather changed," she defended herself guiltily, "but I couldn't bear to call off!"

But the young mother developed pneumonia and though everything was done for her, she died on the tenth day.

She was buried on one sunny morning at the beginning of June, and Yuri felt that the sight of the blue sky and the sunshine, the roses in the shop windows, was more than he could bear.

For some days he existed in a kind of torpor, which was dispelled early Sunday morning, June 22nd, when fascist bombs exploded over Kiev. And everything that he had known, lived, breathed and suffered before that day retired into the background before the great calamity which had fallen on his country.

By July 1941, Kostromin was already at the Lessogorsk Plant. After the lindens of Kiev, where he had lived for two happy years, after the blue expanses of the Dnieper, the old Lessogorsk Plant and the cramped Tapyn river which was unnavigable, struck him as dismal and depressing.

For that matter, during those first few days many southerners felt as though they were "sitting in a draught"; the surroundings were harsh and grim, the weather unpleasant, while as for the Lessogorsk Plant itself—the less said about that the better. A little later, however, they looked at things rather differently, for not everything at Lessogorsk was antiquated.

The war had checked the reconstruction of Lessogorsk . "It's harder to make an old man young again than for a young one to grow up," said the old-timers at Lessogorsk. "Look at these youngsters growing up all around us!" And they were right—for a few years had seen the growth of such giants as Magnitogorsk and the Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant, and in 1933 Lessogorsk had sent a delegation of workers and engineers for the opening ceremony at Uralmashstroy, the "factory of factories". They had also sent their delegations to the Tagil Coach-Building Works, the Stalmost Factory, the Krasnouralsk Copper Combine, the Berezniki Combine, and many another new factory and plant. And the higher the new constructive life flamed in the Urals, the oftener the Lessogorsk people asked each other: "When is our turn coming?"

When the Lessogorsk reconstruction actually did begin, it proceeded at a measured pace, without any particularly record-breaking achievements. As one thing was completed, another would be started. Taking it all round, this was a pretty typical factory, just like many territorial drawbacks and inconveniences, a heritage, as one might say, of the historical development of Urals industry. Mikhail Vassilyevich realized that the rejuvenation of such old factories is naturally a difficult matter and for that reason, never insisted on record time limits, making it first interest to see that everything was strong and reliable.

Gradually the factory acquired a new forge and casting shop for which it had no cause to blush even before the newest plant. In the machine shops, splendid

lathes appeared—planers large and small, as well as several milling, boring and turning machines of the very latest construction.

Time and again Mikhail Vassilyevich was offered the post of director at one of the new factories, but he invariably refused. It was not only that he was used to his "ordinary" Lessogorsk Plant, but in his own way—the Permyakov way—he loved it with all his heart. First of all, the factory had honourably fulfilled all the government assignments of no small importance; secondly, it was one of the old homes of Ural industry.

Among the Lessogorsk workers were hundreds of splendid workmen, old and young, who prided themselves on their inherited skill, their "working dynasty". All of them could name their ancestors who had worked there since the days of the Demidov blacksmiths, and some even further back—from the times of Ivan the Dread and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. These were people who were accustomed to people's respect, who knew their own value and expected others to know it too.

The machines brought from the south had already been installed several days in their new home, and were functioning, driven by the same power as all the other Lessogorsk lathes, but the people had not yet shaken down together. Mikhail Vassilyevich Permyakov, director of the Lessogorsk Plant, walked about silent and gloomy. Experienced in the guidance of technique and production, he realized that naturally all this complicated machinery should be set up by those workers who had come to the Urals from the new southern factories. But being very human also, he could not suppress an unpleasant feeling on seeing how all these new planning and equipping experts, although they consulted him and kept him informed, nevertheless took their main instructions from their own chief, Nikolai Petrovich Nazaryev, formerly director of the Klenov Factory in the Kiev district. He took a particular dislike to this "mathematician", as he dubbed Nazaryev in his own mind. He disliked everything about him—the supple movements of his tall thin form, the habit of screwing up his eyes, the way the corners of his mouth turned up when he smiled, his cough, even his soft grey hat—"here's a dandy come to the works!" But it was his stubborn emphasis on "mathematics" that annoyed Permyakov most of all, his insistence on figures, on verifying everything, comparing, planning, drawing conclusions and all the rest of it. Permyakov looked on all this as petty, as captious fault-finding. He knew the Lessogorsk Plant like the palm of his own hand and all its innumerable affairs he himself had initiated and brought to a successful issue guided by his own eye, instinct and habit.

Day after day he watched Nazaryev breaking down all the accustomed life of the Lessogorsk Plant—and all this with a calm, incontrovertible assurance. There was literally not one lathe, not one spot of the works territory which escaped his amazingly keen attention. Not a day passed on which Nazaryev did not change something in the established order of things, which had seemed so permanent and durable. First of all he would "bring to Permyakov's notice" that the lathes were set up too far apart, that the space between each work place resembled "a boulevard". A few days later he not only received a plan for the new arrangement of the shop, but several hundred more yards of space were available. "But where in the world has it come from?" he asked incredulously. "What about all the nooks and crannies since the Demidov times?" Nazaryev answered with a smile, and with the aid of those same mathematics proved irrefutably how everything could be quickly changed, where and how windows and corridors could be made, and Permyakov had to admit to himself that again Nazaryev had found the best solution.

But the main blow was still to come, and it descended on his head like an avalanche. Nazaryev was appointed assistant director. Nikita Andreich Kuzmin, his former assistant, had died in August 1941. Permyakov had regretted him keenly, for they had worked harmoniously together. So far Mikhail Vassilyevich had not applied for a new assistant, preferring to take his time choosing "the most suitable" among his engineers and economists. And now like a bolt from the blue—Nazaryev! Day in and day out he would have to meet him, talk with him, discuss plans with him and listen to his criticisms. "Well, I shall

just have to stand it, for the sake of the work," he decided with a sigh, pulling himself together as though shouldering some heavy burden.

One day when talking to Plastunov, the director complained of Nazaryev "tiresome persistences". The Party organizer heard all he had to say, then said firmly: "My dear fellow, the thing that matters isn't the sort of character you have or Nazaryev has—far from it! The thing that matters is for the two factories to shake down and work well together. And a factory isn't just a collection of machinery, a factory is first of all—personnel."

Gradually the new factory which had arrived from the south settled down perceptibly into the old Lessogorsk works, as if into a case which did not yet quite fit. Many of the Lessogorsk old-timers understood the situation and reconciled themselves to the change in their conditions. It couldn't be helped, one just had to crowd a little closer. Matvei Temlyakov, the famous founder, hospitably offered to share his light, comfortable apartment in a new factory house with the foundryman Sakulenko's family; Ivan Stepanovich Lossev, a descendant of the first Demidov smiths, invited the designer Kostromin with his mother and son to "come here and be neighbourly", while Stepan Danilovich Nevyantsev, a moulder known for his skill throughout the factory and further, invited Nikolai Petrovich Nazaryev to "make himself at home" with him.

Kostromin rose early one fine morning at the beginning of October; he wished to check the calculations he had ordered from the designing office while his head was still fresh. His little Seryozha, now a year old, was sound asleep, breathing deeply, in the long travelling basket the open lid of which was fastened to the handle of the door leading to the adjoining room. The big downy cushion, pressed into this unusual bed, received the little body in its soft embrace. "Growing up without a mother," thought Kostromin, and for a moment gave himself up to memory's hopeless sweetness. He sighed, and once more looked at his sleeping son with eager and passionate adoration, unobserved by anybody at this early hour.

The morning breeze blew open the window. It was a wonderfully fine day, quite warm, although already the tenth of October. Involuntarily Kostromin looked out. Far away on the horizon, like the spreading waves of a petrified sea, the Urals stretched north and south beneath a fringe of fleecy, rosy clouds. The lower slopes were covered with a dark, almost black mantle of forest, and it was only where the Tapyn rolled leasurely along between golden meadows and russet hills that the eye was gladdened by the rich bright autumn colours. Golden birches blazed, and flaming patches of scarlet, purple and orange sang the swan song of the maples, aspen groves and limes. In some places there would be a mantle of green firs while nearby a wealth of spruce clothed the hilly shores on the Tapyn. In the little square just opposite Kostromin's window, a young mountain ash swayed in the breeze, studded with clusters of berries like scarlet earrings, and casting its yellow leaves in all directions.

Kostromin recalled the Volga forests and his childish delight when his father took him out hunting. The Ural forest was the very brother of those well-remembered woods.

Suddenly he remembered—today, before beginning work, the examination of a captured German tank was to take place. It was already half past seven. Seryozha turned over and suddenly sat up, rosy and tousled, like an angry gnome. Kostromin kissed him, laughing, and calling: "Mother, Seryozha's awake!" swiftly left the room.

Yura Pankov, a tall, thin lad with a fine, straight-nosed profile, ran along the settlement street, springing across the puddles, and shouting in a voice breaking with excitement:

"There's a tank at the plant gate! A German tank!"

A grey-headed old woman in big round spectacles thrust her head out of the ground floor window of a new factory house.

"Heavens above, what are you running about for, shouting like the town crier?" she said angrily. "What German tank are you raving about?"

Yura halted, pressing his hand to his heart as though his news was bursting out of him.

"It's true, honest it is, Granny Taissya; it's a German tank, a booty tank

with skull and crossbones. . . Come and see for yourself. . ."

And so the booty tank began its new lifeless existence. Slowly, like the movement of a ship, the factory gates opened before the tractor which was towing the dead tank into the factory grounds.

With its shattered treads rumbling and scraping, the fascist tank waddled along. Its open mouth, with the tongue lolling above it, seemed to be baying furiously and helplessly into the sunny blue sky. The lower manhole with its door half torn away was like an empty eye-socket fiercely surveying the factory buildings and the long lines of people passing to and fro between the gate and the shops—the morning shifts were replacing the night workers.

Mátvei Temlyakov, a local man, and Nikifor Sakulenko, from Dniepropetrovsk way, foundrymen working the same shift, were as usual walking along together to work.

"Why do you keep turning round, Nikifor Pavlych?" asked Matvei, looking ironically from under his shaggy grey brows at the tank crawling past. "Don't you like that thing?"

Sakulenko sunk his head between his broad shoulders, and his thick set figure seemed to become even stockier.

"I saw those things, man, when they were spitting fire, when they were making for our town and our work," Sakulenko replied in a muffled voice, and his broad fleshy face with the soft spreading moustache became furrowed as though with pain. "And may you never see the day when your factory's on fire, when your own home's left for swine to root in!"

Tractors towed the German tank past the store sheds. The road there led to a swampy waste, and a new stocky log house, its square windows twinkling merrily. This was the experimental station, which had been built that autumn on the tank testing ground. It had been prepared for the near future, when the Lessogorsk Plant, reinforced by new shops, would be turning out not only turrets and bodies, but whole tanks, ready to leave the conveyor for action.

Four men were standing beside the house, watching the captured machine, swaying and staggering like a huge armoured toad, approaching them.

"The last stretch of a blood-stained path," said Nikolai Petrovich.

"Yes, the last," Mikhail Vassilyevich agreed. "Barely moving on its last legs."

"Staggers along like a drunken bully," remarked Plastunov, puffing at his pipe.

The designer Kostromin put on his spectacles as he saw the tank, and fixed his eyes on the approaching machine like an anatomist on a body which he is about to dissect. It was he who had suggested getting a German tank for the factory—one straight from battle, for he wanted to study the enemy machine "as it really is". And he was accustomed to see reality in what was closer in point of time. He chose his moment well—one might safely assume that the enemy had brought up his best and latest machines against Moscow. What was the German technique like at this particular moment of the offensive, what were their latest achievements just now?

This meeting with an enemy tank meant a great deal for his work as designer of a new tank series. He would examine it down to the last screw, penetrate the intricate, many-sided conception of its construction down to the last detail, learn the secrets of its might in order to work out an adequate reply to it. And that reply was to be a new series of medium tanks of such power, manoeuvrability and fire potentiality as had never been known before.

Kostromin shook his head and straightened his shoulders with a sigh. The tractors drew up and stopped. Kulkov, Plastunov's chauffeur, sprang out, an angry frown on his round, habitually good-humoured face, and wiped his forehead with a deep breath of relief.

"That's enough for the bastard. . ."

The four men walked silently round the machine, then as though moved by one single impulse, looked at its turret.

"Ye-e-es," Permyakov ground out through his teeth. "Foul."

"And how much of this foulness is crawling about over Russia!" Nikolai Petrovich replied in the same tone, then suddenly, with a heat unusual for him, he cried: "Oh, to start getting our tanks off the conveyor!"

"We'll start them all right," Permyakov caught him up decidedly.

"All ready for a snap meeting here?" asked Plastunov, his laughing glance

passing to and fro between Permyakov and Nazaryev, who had just found a common language and point of view, without themselves noticing it.

Kostromin made notes on the examination of the enemy tank. Now Permyakov, now Nazaryev would call out some detail of its mechanism, supplementing and filling in each other's observations. Plastunov stood silent, following attentively all that was happening, while apparently giving his full attention to the way his seaman's pipe was drawing.

When all the rest had gone, Kostromin remained for a tête-à-tête with the dead enemy steel. Leisurely, without the slightest haste, he wiped down all the remaining parts of the mechanism, carefully examined every nut and bolt, every pipe and spring. The clean finish of the work pleased him. There were some small adjustments, too, which took his fancy in the gun mounting. "Damn good!" he grunted, "but not good enough, all the same!"

"Yuri Mikhailovich! Are you here?" somebody's clear tenor called suddenly and there was a knocking on the side of the tank. Swift steps rang over its deck, and youthful merry laughter reached Kostromin, crouching in the depth of the tank. "Glad to met you, Yuri Mikhailovich!"

"Ah, good day, Artyom Ivanovich!" Kostromin greeted the other as he emerged, still making swift notes in his book. He clambered out of the turret and glanced absent-mindedly at Artyom Sboyev, a young man but already a skilled workman, with a handsome profile and wavy hair lying close like a cap over his broad white forehead.

"I couldn't wait, Yuri Mikhailovich, I ran here to have a look at the Hun," Artyom began in his leisurely Urals speach. Thrusting his hands into his overalls pockets, Artyom began walking round and round the tank, looking at it seriously.

"M'yes, now I shall have an idea of their machines."

Kostromin jerked out a sudden angry laugh.

"Do you know what I discovered there, Artyom Ivanovich? Their tanks have petrol engines. . . can you beat it?"

"Petrol? But that's for automobile construction, Yuri Mikhailovich?" said Artyom in surprise.

"And their designers took this engine from automobile construction," said Kostromin, still laughing.

"H'm. . . Queer! Our tanks run on Diesel engines burning cheap fuel and oil, which doesn't catch fire. . ."

"And the Germans, who invented the Diesel, have pushed petrol engines into their machines to explode. That's why our tank-fighters set so many German tanks alight on the battle-field! This way the Germans'll soon have to get rid of all their tanks like so many bundles of old rags."

"Interesting! But all the same, Yuri Mikhailovich, I can't imagine that the Germans are weak technically?"

"O-o-oh, not a bit of it, Artyom! The reason is that these painstaking Germans didn't want to spend money on the more expensive Diesel engines. Why should they? They hoped to blitz clean through to the Urals, they reckoned on a short war. I don't know the name of the German who designed that tank, but its petrol engine shows me plainly enough that his ideas were all muddled up with Goebbels' nonsense!"

After Artyom Sboyev had gone, Kostromin remained sitting on the porch, surrendering to a pleasant feeling of tiredness. "I must be getting old," he thought wearily, and suddenly heard the sound of a song sung in parts. It was one of those old tunes of which there were so many in Lessogorsk, where the people knew how to sing them. It rang out particularly pure and clear over the distance. And in this solemn, rather plaintive melody, there was something distinctive, something characteristically Russian. And it also revived some long familiar emotion, almost forgotten in this Russian man, emerging from the dead depths of the enemy tank, who now sat and enjoyed the notes of this song. It brought back tales heard in his far-off childhood and still carried dimly in his memory.

There was one youthful, ringing voice that rang out triumphantly above the well modulated chorus. A minute later, the last sound died in the blue distance, and the same ringing voice said laughingly:

"Well, girls, I'd better go and show myself at home, all the same!"

After a few moments a girl of medium height emerged from behind a pile of

stones, wearing a grey coat and blue hat with a white feather. She was carrying a small suitcase.

"Heavier than I thought," she muttered in some disgust, and turning, suddenly saw Kostromin.

"Allow me to carry it for you," he offered, his eyes involuntarily lingering in the blue depths of hers. He reached out for the suitcase, but the girl refused sharply:

"No need, I can carry it myself."

"Excuse me, but it would be a queer thing if I, a man, walked along beside you and let you carry such a weight. Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Kostromin. I'm designer at the factory, I came here to examine the captured tank."

"Ah, so that's it. And I'm Tatyana Losseva," she said, thawing immediately.

"Not Ivan Stepanovich's daughter?"

"Yes, why?"

"Then I have the pleasure of living in your home. You've been away somewhere?"

"Yes, Aunt Grunya was very ill, and both her sons are at the front. She's better now."

"Allow me to take your suitcase, all the same?"

"We-e-ell, all right, thank you."

They continued on their way together.

"I heard you say that you hadn't yet been home. How was it that you came here first of all?"

Reluctantly she explained:

"When I got out of the bus I saw everybody hurrying along to the tank."

They walked in silence for some time.

"How old are you?" asked Kostromin with a smile.

"Nineteen—why?"

"You're not working yet?"

"Not yet. I only finished high school the year before last, and I've been studying as a daughtsman for two years."

"You don't say so? Then you could work—well, you could come into our designing office. . . Think it over."

"Very well, I will," she agreed.

They had arrived at the factory gates. As he took her slender warm hand, Kostromin thought: "And she's no idea how lovely she is!" and for some reason he felt stirred and rather sad.

A Tale of Youth

Tanya Losseva had a visitor, her friend Vera Anossova. Petite, with coquettish curly brown hair, Vera was all "sweet curves and dimples". At this moment she was sitting on a humpty near the divan where Tanya was reclining. Every now and then her full red lips would curve into a smile. She seemed almost too healthy and lively in comparison with the pale, silent Tanya.

When all the factory news had been discussed, Vera, unable to contain herself any longer, announced that she had "the most wonderful news".

"Artyom Sboyev says he loves me. . . Think of it, Tanya!"

"And you?"

"Why, I've been in love with him for half a year!" and Vera gave a little squeal of happiness.

"Yes, I can see that Artyom's the only sun in your sky just now!"

"Why now! You're meaning I ran after the boys when we were at school! . . But that only happened twice, no worse than everybody else. Quite the usual thing!" This with a wilful gesture of the plump hands with their red varnished nails. She was silent for an offended instant, then laughed gaily. "What's the offs, anyway? I can't fill my head with high-falutin ideas like you!"

"I've no high-falutin ideas."

"Then why do you sit there as though you'd swallowed a poker?"

"Oh, no special reason," Tanya said apathetically.

Vera suddenly jumped onto the sofa and rubbed her curly head against Tanya's shoulder.

"Listen, Tanya, I know whom you're thinking of! It's Sergei Pankov! . . Aha, now you're blushing!"

"N-nothing of the sort!"

"Oh, it's all right, my dear, you can't hoodwink me! Zina Nevyantseva's told me all about it!"

"Why, what is there for her to tell you?"

"What happened yesterday! 'I saw Tanya Losseva getting out of the bus,' she said, 'and helping Sergei Pankov so ca-a-arefully. . .' Well, what about that?"

"Why, of course I did. What's there

special about that? He's wounded in the shoulder and arm."

"Oh, yes, we know all about that! We know you're a born nurse!"

"I've always treated him as a good comrade."

"Oh, you have, have you? Now I'll settle you for good. Remember in 1940 when Sergei was going to the tank school and came to say good-bye to you. . ."

"Ye-e-s, I believe he did come. . ."

"You believe he did! Yes, and he waited for you so long, sat and sat there, till he nearly missed the bus."

"Yes, I remember—there was something. . ."

"And I told you at the time: 'Listen, Tanya,' I said, 'if anybody was head over ears in love with me like that, even if he were the ugliest man going, I'd at least pay a little attention to him; you don't get someone in love with you like that every day!' And you answered: 'Sergei's awfully plain and uninteresting, sort of neutral, and awkward! . .' No, don't shake your head. . . But it didn't take Zina Nevyantseva long to notice that this same 'plain, uninteresting' Sergei was wearing the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner. There's your awkward, neutral fellow for you! It doesn't look as if he was like that at the front!"

"That's enough! Drop it!" Tanya suddenly flared up. She jumped off the sofa, walked about the little room and stopped in front of the mirror. Her cheeks were burning. She twisted her knot of fair hair tighter, powdered her nose and at last turned back to Vera.

"See what a champion Sergei Pankov's found!" said Tanya angrily. "But don't you get the idea into your head that it's because of the Orders that I helped him, that I just go by a person's looks." With a ring in her voice she cried: "Suddenly—suddenly I was so sorry for him, so sorry! And when we reached the bus stop and I suddenly saw that German tank, it flashed through my mind—those are what Sergei's been fighting. . ."

"So Sergei's been telling you about it?"

"Of course. The bus journey lasts almost an hour."

"Talk of the devil! There's Sergei Pankov himself coming to see you, of course!"

Tanya went to the window. A fine snow was drifting through the air. Sergei Pankov was crossing the square. With his good hand he pulled his fur cap further down on his forehead, and stooping slightly, advanced in the teeth of the wind. Tanya thought that in his short padded jacket his shoulders looked broader, and his stride had become longer and firmer.

"Well, I'll disappear!" said Vera gaily. She took Tanya by her shoulders and shook her, saying slyly: "I wish you a happy ending!"

Sergei was already standing at the door looking at Tanya.

"How do, Tanya," he said, smiling, and pressed her fingers carefully with his left hand. "My hand's cold—I forgot my glove," he added in some confusion and for some reason blew upon his red, wind-roughened palm.

He stood very erect despite his wounded arm. His thin, wind-tanned face had a new expression of reserve combined with determination; his light eyes, "a muddy blue", as Tanya ironically described them formerly, at times seemed icy, while his bass voice, hoarse with cold, sounded resolute and firm. Everything about him was new, unexpected, and denoted strength. But Tanya noticed the dark circles under his eyes which spoke of recent suffering, and his hollow cheeks still had a waxen hue under their tan. Tanya felt somehow ashamed of her ridiculous pity.

"Maybe. . . you're busy? . ."

But Tanya interrupted him anxiously:

"No, of course not, what makes you think that?"

Tanya's mother, Natalya Andreyevna appeared and interrupted them, simply and decidedly:

"Now, no more ceremony. Like children who've not seen each other for a long time you start getting shy and awkward. Sit down, Sergei, and have a bit of dinner with us. Now, you're a soldier,—I'm sure, you'd like a drink."

"Well, I wouldn't say no, if everybody else joins in. . . let's drink to our meeting!" and he threw a shy, happy glance at Tanya from under his wiry brows.

Natalya Andreyevna pushed the glass with its dull gold pattern over to Sergei.

"Here's wishing you every happiness," said Tanya. Their glasses rang softly.

"Good!" he said, wiping his lips and looked through the faintly violet crystal.

"Good!" he repeated, this time with a note of decision in his voice. "Believe me, when I'm recovered and get back to the front, how I shall remember this moment. . ."

"Eh, deary me! . . Easy to talk of the front, but when you're there—why, I go cold at the mere thought of it, I declare!" And Natalya Andreyevna screwed up her eyes as though trying to picture it. "Tell me, Sergei, aren't you ever afraid?"

"Of course I am, Natalya Andreyevna, everyone is."

"Well—and what do you do then?"

"Oh, you get used to it," he replied simply, smiling. "You just get used to it like getting used to your job."

After Sergei had told them some details about life at the front, Natalya Andreyevna asked:

"So you've seen a lot of Germans, Sergei? Close up?"

"Close enough. I've gone right over them, and sometimes had them just about on top of me."

"How was that?"

"Well, it certainly was rather unusual. My tank was advancing in a line with Major Kvashin's. We were getting on fine, when suddenly I saw Kvashin's machine slew round and halt. And the Germans were all round. A couple of dozen tommy-gunners rushed up and began crawling all over the tank like a swarm of locusts. I'd barely said to our fellows: 'We've got to help him out!' when my tank was damaged too. The devil was in it! I peared out through the slip and saw Germans all round us, and a swarm more running up to join those round Kvashin's machine. I could hear German boots trampling on my tank, clambering over the turret, knocking on the plating and shouting: 'Russ, surrender!' But there was the tank stuck fast as though frozen in; the guns had stalled and we couldn't get at them through the walls. As for Kvashin's machine, it made you sick to see them crawling all over it. . . Then I shouted: 'Machine-guns! Aim at that tank opposite!' We gave them a good dose of lead, and they dropped off Kvashin's tank like autumn leaves in a wind. . ."

"And you? What about the Germans stamping around on your machine?" Tanya felt her shyness disappear. "What happened to you?"

"What happened to me?" he repeated her question, halting in his narrative, and seeing for the first time how that sweet, kind face could brighten up. "What happened to me?" he repeated again, and laughed. "Oh, I was all right. We fired, and Kvashin sent us some messages as well—started peppering the Germans on our tank with his machine-guns too! And that was how we finished the business."

"An awful business!" Tanya caught him up, and there was a stern look of censure on her face. "Here we are sitting drinking from crystal glasses, under a silk shaded lamp, and there. . ."

"And there one fights the enemy," Sergei caught her up in his turn gently, but insistently.

Sergei followed Natalya Andreyevna with his eyes as she went out of the room on some housewifely affair, then carefully covered Tanya's fingers with his big hand.

"You know, Tanya, it's only we, servicemen, who really know how to value all that the war has torn us away from. It's simply splendid."

"What's splendid?" asked Tanya, still sternly.

"Why, everything—our Lessogorsk Plant, its organization. . . this room, you and I here. . ."

His face brightened, a mischievous smile lightened his face.

"And so, for that reason, beg you. . . don't frown any more."

It was only now that she fully realized how much Sergei Pankov had changed. The awkward, lanky youth had been left somewhere far away, as though he had been some dream figure. Quite another person was now sitting here beside her.

"What's the matter, Tanya?"

"Oh, Sergei, I suddenly felt. . . you've seen so much, lived through so much already, and I. . ."

"Well, naturally I've lived more than you. After all, I'm four years older. I remember when I was six and you were only two, even then you used to tease me, called me: 'Nasty boy! Nasty boy!'"

"No, did I really?"

"It's a fact! And then you started tormenting me in every possible way. . . What I always liked was your way of giving orders, your strong will—in a word, a definite, decided character."

"Liked!" thought Tanya in chagrin.

It seemed to her that Sergei took leave of her very indifferently, almost with a certain relief.

Tanya cried all night, something which had never happened to her before. She cried, though she herself could not have said why. In the morning she rose pale, hollow-eyed. At midday Sergei arrived. Casting one glance at her white, tired face, he announced with decision:

"Enough moods and humours, Tanya! I'll not allow any more of it. Get your coat on and come out for a walk. Look at the snow outside!"

They walked along admiring the white-clad streets, which now looked so broad and elegant under their gleaming mantle of swansdown. The snow gently lay on rooftops and the fences, upon the trees bordering the square. The night frost had hardened the road, and the ruts left by wheels stretched ahead in winding blue bands. The azure sky above seemed infinite and the sun hung low and pale near the horizon, bordered by soft clouds.

"Ah, it's fine!" And Sergei took off his cap, baring his forehead to the wind. "Splendid weather, eh, Tanya?"

They had already left far behind the last street of the factory settlement with its small low houses, carved gates, sheds and gardens.

"Here's the State Farm," said Sergei. "And the fine weather's completely disappeared on our way as though it had never been."

"Yes, it's changed all right, and just feel this wind!" Tanya added.

"Oh dear, you must be frozen!"

"Not a bit!" Tanya laughed. "I love these wide, open spaces!"

"I see you do. Your very voice is quite different now. . . Listen, Tanya, why have you been tormenting me these past two days?"

"I—tormenting you?" said the girl in sudden confusion, while a hot wave of joy seemed to engulf her. And suddenly, with a sure instinct, as though moving with certainty towards a new phase of her life, Tanya realized that she must tell him everything "really and truly". She talked freely and felt her heart lighten.

The snow was whirling and circling over the white fields, and the storm was approaching the road. A sudden strong gust of wind caught them full in the face. Sergei's padded jacket flew open and the empty sleeve slipped from his wounded shoulder.

"Oh, confound the idiotic thing!" he said, feeling awkward, as he tried with his good arm to pull it back into place again.

"Wait a minute, let me help you," Tanya cried suddenly, and pulling off her gloves she threw it expertly over his shoulder. "Let me fasten up the collar. . . you'll be warmer, and it won't fly open again. . ." Her fingers touched his neck, cold and firm like marble "Heavens, you're as cold as ice! Wait a bit, while I fix the hook and eye. That's got it. Not too tight?"

"It feels fine!"

"And warmer now?"

"You've warmed me so that wind and frost seem the finest things in the world. . ."

"So you think it's only in the wind and frost. . ." she began, and choked with a sweet confusion and happiness. In all this white expanse with its whirling wind-driven snow, the only thing visible was Sergei's ardent eyes waiting for her.

"Not only in the frost. . ." he caught up her last words as though joking, but his face, tight with expectation and happiness, expressed so much that Tanya burst out with one breath:

"Believe that I was always the same way with you as now, and always will be!"

With a muffled cry Sergei caught her hand and pressed the palm to his lips, to his eyes. Then, with a swift, hungry movement, he clasped her to his breast, as though afraid of losing her.

"Children, children, you'll be blown right away standing here!" cried a merry voice behind them.

A pair of felt boots swung down over the side of a lorry, and a little old man wearing a white rabbit-skin cap and sheepskin coat with a bright-coloured belt stood stamping cheerily in front of Sergei and Tanya.

"Come along, come along, my children, jump up into the lorry and I'll drive you home!" the old man suggested.

"Grand-dad Timofei, the trunkmaker!" cried Tanya and Sergei simultaneously, in glad surprise. It was as though they were taking part in a fairy-tale which had been part of their childhood, and had never faded.

Grand-dad Timofei, the trunk- and toy-maker, the story-teller was the favourite of the Lessogorsk children.

When the lorry started, Sergei jerked his head back at the pile of boxes among which the little old man was almost hidden.

"I see you're making boxes of another kind now, Grand dad?"

"I'm making this kind—nothing else to be done. Time was when a bride wouldn't be married without one of my trunks, but now I'm a war-time brigade leader."

Winking with a quaint mixture of crossness and slyness, he started singing loudly, swaying with the jolting of the machine.

The wind whistled its wild song in their ears, and Timofei, the trunkmaker, sang with it, rambling and piping like a kindly gnome. Tanya sat pressed close to Sergei and it seemed to her that her childhood's fairy-tale of Timofei, the trunkmaker, with his fiery beard and rambling song had merged into real life, with its wind and whirling snow stinging her face and Sergei's with a thousand fine needles. Her heart contracted with a sweet pain, as though the future itself was greeting their love with this stimulating freshness.

Two days after Tanya had started work in the designing office, that same evening Kostromin told his mother that this girl "simply takes everything in her stride".

"An amazingly capable girl! Today I thought I'd go and see how she worked, and you know, Mother, it was quite pleasant to watch her. . ."

"Yes, I'm sure it was," said his mother ironically.

"No, really, Mother."

"Eh, dear boy, I understand quite well. Of course you had to look at her. She's so lovely, you just couldn't help it. Only, Yuri, that beautiful girl's going to marry a tankist any day now."

"A tankist?" cried Yuri Mikhailovich with interest. "And he's here? Listen, Mother, I've just got to meet him."

And a little later, round the Lossev's ample samovar, lively talk was going on between Yuri Mikhailovich and Sergei Pankov.

"At the moment, the Germans reckoning on a 'Blitzkrieg', have designed their tanks on that basis."

"Quite correct," laughed Sergei. "They only took into consideration the might of their own shells and forgot the force of resistance against them. . . German exactness omitted that detail."

"Yes, yes!" cried Yuri Mikhailovich, animatedly, and wiped his glasses in satisfaction. "You've hit the nail on the head there, Comrade Captain! Shell and resistance—that's just what it is!"

"What I mean is that the Germans did not reckon on the resistance of the men behind our armour," and with a gesture Sergei indicated the low armoured ceiling of a tank.

"Our aim is to protect our tankists as much as possible when they are fighting the enemy," said Kostromin.

"And for that—keep an eye on the Germans!" Ivan Stepanovich cut in grimly, shaking a dark, steel-like finger. He had just come from the shop after completing urgent repairs to one of the old hammers. The work had been carried out according to the "recipe" of the skilled forge-worker Ivan Stepanovich himself, and his own brigade. The result had been excellent. Now Ivan Stepanovich was resting and drinking tea. Leisurely he drained glass after glass, wiping his forehead with a large blue-spotted handkerchief, and occasionally throwing in a remark.

"We here in the Urals know the Germans of old!" Ivan Stepanovich continued. His shaggy eyebrows seemed to bristle at the mere recollection. "Before the revolution, here in Lessogorsk, at the Sauvalov works, and at Perm there used to be German managers. At Perm where I stayed with relations, the place was lousy with German managers. We workers had bosses over us of all kinds, but we never had a worse set of villains than those same Germans. And here in the Urals too, our folks squared accounts with those Germans. Remember the song Nekrassov made about the German who fell down the pit? When he yelled for help, the Russians just filled in the hole with their enemy underneath. That's what Nekrassov wrote about it!" Ivan Stepanovich concluded solemnly. "Keep an eye on the Germans!"

"Keep an eye on them! Absolutely right, Ivan Stepanovich," Kostromin caught him up. "But I'm not letting you go, Sergei Alexeyevich, till I hear your criticism of our tanks!"

"Well," smiled Sergei, "we're both

agreeable about that! We frontliners have the greatest affection and respect for your medium tanks, but naturally, we have some remarks to make about them."

Then the conversation between the designer and the tankist became, as Ivan Stepanovich whispered to his wife, "doubly technical". Ivan Stepanovich raised his bushy brows significantly, and was careful to put his glass down silently in the saucer so as not to disturb their discussion. At last, however, he could contain himself no longer, and seizing a favourable moment, inserted his "fatherly word":

"Say what you like, our Russian skill never gets stale or weary with the years. Take our Lossev family, for instance: they say it existed in the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and that Nefyod Lossev started working here as a blacksmith. My own great-great-grandfather, the blacksmith Andrei Lossev received his ruble wage from Tsar Peter I. . . And we've all been foundrymen or smiths, and how many we've produced war weapons! Andrei Lossev made the bolts for Peter's cannon, and I, Ivan Lossev, am forging parts for the very heart of tanks. And my sons, both of them skilled foundrymen, are working in Molotov, making tanks, too—making weapons!"

"Why, you're quite a dynasty, you Lossevs," said Kostromin with a friendly wink at Ivan Stepanovich. "A real working dynasty."

"Certainly, if you delve down among us, we're history!" said Ivan Stepanovich laughing and proud, and suddenly caught himself up: "Excuse me, though, I'm disturbing you."

He sat silent, listening and not interrupting. His dark fingers played with the twisted ends of his fair, greying moustache, a sure sign that Ivan Stepanovich was very deep in thought.

When Kostromin left, the young people went into Tanya's room.

Sergei put his arm round her shoulders.

"You've been thinking about something—I could see it when Kostromin and I were talking about tanks. You were quite changed. . . What's the matter?"

"Oh, it's nothing. . . All sorts of things come into one's head."

"Well, what was it?"

"You were mentioning a lot of technical names—'petrol tank', 'observation slit', 'gear box'. . ."

"Well, and so. . .?"

"And suddenly it came over me—all these meant death, death!"

"So that's what it is! Death, dearest, there's no time to think of that out there. A soldier's life can be summed up in one phrase: 'You, the enemy, want to kill me, but you won't because I'll kill you first! . .' And I can assure you that I have every intention of living!"

He pressed her closely to him, kissed her, and added:

"And what can death do to me there, if you're right here in my heart?"

When parting soon afterwards, Tanya went to the door to see him off. The dim lamplight fell upon Sergei's face. As Tanya helped him draw his jacket over the wounded shoulder and fastened up the collar, the unforgettable blue snow clouds seemed to sweep before them.

She sat for a long time at her window, looking sadly out into the wet blackness of the night. The weather had changed, and again there was the usual thaw with the October winds and rain. But Tanya could still see the whirling blue of the snowstorm. And, like a fairy-tale, the drumming of the rain on her window seemed to change into the rambling song of the strange old man Timofei, the trunkmaker.

The Copper Giant

Kostromin, who had been summoned to Moscow just before the November holiday, flew back on the morning of November 15th, and met Plastunov in the dinner hour.

"Don't look at me like that, Dimitri Nikitich! I'm as yellow as a fakir. I know. This morning we got into some choppy weather, but on the whole, we had a splendid trip." And Kostromin's hollow face lightened up in a smile.

Plastunov had never before seen him so lively and talkative. He had a great deal to tell about Moscow, grim, intersected by barricades, of the Moscow people, but mainly of his meeting with "some big chiefs".

As Plastunov had expected, Yuri

Mikhailovich had returned with important instructions which he wished to communicate immediately to the administration of the Lessogorsk Plant.

That evening, in Permyakov's study, after Kostromin had delivered his report, the Lessogorsk Plant's working plan was finally laid down. The tank conveyor was to start operations with definite instructions that the first column of Lessogorsk tanks was to leave the station of the new branch railway not later than March 15th.

Long after midnight the lights were still burning in the director's office. The strong tea cooled in the glasses.

"Well, here's all our forces roughly reckoned up. On March 15th our tanks will set off for the front—that's a matter of honour. Now we have to get all the details worked out," said Permyakov, and shook his massive head gloomily. And there was some cause for gloom, although every now and then he would throw in a hopeful—"maybe we'll manage somehow". He was worried by the condition of one of the plant's most important items—the power press.

At that time such presses had been an innovation in the Urals, but some years later, when the Lessogorsk Plant was carrying out important government assignments, they were already back numbers. In fact, the Lessogorsk mechanics led by Artyom Sboyev, the seeker for "new technical roads", had not only revealed the secret German technique but all its skilfully concealed weaknesses, including the worst—the huge copper cylinder of the press turned out to be not forged, as it should be, but moulded. For this reason, the press was always carefully watched, various improvements made, and repairs carried out without delay. Yet despite all this, nobody trusted the copper giant.

Artyom had a well-developed "feeling for machinery", as he himself put it. It was not for nothing that he was known in the factory as the "machinery surgeon in chief". From his practical work in the factory he knew every lathe and construction there—all their peculiarities. Nobody in Lessogorsk Plant had ever heard of anything beyond Artyom's knowledge or prowess. His "diagnoses" were never disputed, for never once had he been known to make a mistake.

Entering the press shop in the morning, Mikhail Vassilyevich listened with relief to the heavy panting of the copper giant. On the platform above the steps leading to the underground section of the press the director met Artyom.

"Well, how are things, Artyom Ivanych?" asked Permyakov, nodding at the huge arch of the press on its copper columns.

"Oh, all right so far," drawled Artyom reluctantly, wiping his oily hands on a bunch of waste. "But say what you like, Mikhail Vassilyevch, I feel in my bones it won't go long without capital repairs!"

"Oh, don't put the wind up me, Artyom Ivanych," said Mikhail Vassilyevich in gloomy jest. "You know yourself that that would be a catastrophe now!"

A telephone call from Nazaryev apprised Mikhail Vassilyevich that the main power press had "balked". His phrase, "the press has balked completely" seemed almost insulting to Permyakov in its curtness. "As though a part of one's heart were torn out, and this actor comes along and tells you so in a couple of words."

On his way to the press shop, Permyakov felt certain that Nazaryev would only have given a few formal instructions, or even done nothing at all actually worth while. But once within the shop, Permyakov saw immediately that everything had been done correctly—and strangely enough, this irritated him still more. At that moment he could not even be sure which feeling was uppermost—worry about the accident to the press or irritation against Nazaryev.

The inert press rose in the centre of the shop like a huge uninhabited cliff, and not far off, on the iron floor, lay a piece of metal, twisted as though in a cramp—the last tank part over which the copper giant had "balked".

Artyom Sboyev's famous brigade were all in their places like seamen during a storm—on the architrave, the cylinder steps, and those leading to the underground passage. Everywhere people were tapping, examining, as though it were a huge body whose breath was failing.

Artyom, gloomy but sure and swift in his movements as usual, was everywhere at once—ordering, noting, reckoning, nodding to himself, and sometimes seeming like one possessed.

"Well, what did I tell you?" said

Artyom, meeting the director. "I knew he'd let us down, and he has!"

He pointed with a gesture full of hatred at the black arch of the motionless press, then said in the dull voice in which one speaks of a dead person whom the living cannot forgive for the ill he has done:

"The cylinders burst! And as though they'd fixed it up between them—both of them at once! One, two, and they're gone! It's clear enough, of course—that lousy German firm sent us fascist agents, and they set them up so that they would break down just when there was a war! . . Ah, devil take 'em! . . They aimed far, those snakes, but we're not rabbits, we shan't wait in the bushes to be shot!"

It wasn't the first time Artyom had let off steam in this way, so that today all he had to do was to repeat in a swift monotone all his former convictions and the prophecies which had come true word for word!

"I shall need twenty or thirty of those—what d'ye call 'em—emergency wives and daughters for extra work. I'll undertake to teach them what to do, and I'll not only cut down the days, but the hours it'll take to do this."

"Right! Get on whith it!" Mikhail Vassilyevich approved curtly.

He rang up home from his office to warn Varvara Sergeyevna to come to the press-shop at the hour fixed, when the "emergency workers", the workers' wives and daughters, were to assist in repairing the copper giant.

Dusk was already falling when Varvara Sergeyevna left the dark porch of her house. Beauty, thrusting his shaggy face out of the kennel, barked in astonishment—his mistress as a rule never went out after dusk.

"Now, now," said Varvara Sergeyevna, throwing him a bone, "guard the house, don't let strangers in."

She looked round her small yard, sighed, locked the door and went out of the gate. At the street corner, the elderly woman glanced back. The house where she had lived for thirty years with its white shutters and carved fretwork seemed to be looking after her, as her whole life did also, the life which had known only the warmth of those walls and the light of the lamps up to this present day. Varvara Sergeyevna stood for a moment or two, then settled her round, dark-grey lambskin hat firmly on her head and walked on into the teeth of the icy wind.

She found her bearings in the shop much more quickly than she had expected—that, of course, was because she felt her presence here absolutely essential. Beside the green shelter, the foreman gathered all the "emergency workers".

"You talk to them first," Artyom suggested to her.

"Very well," she agreed calmly, although there was a youthful tremor within her. "I've made up my mind, so I'd better take the plunge," she told herself, and taking off her dark grey hat, she stood up.

"Comrades," she began, "you all know why we are here, and so it seems to me there is no need to say much. Let's all try to pick up quickly what we're shown, and work with a will so as to earn the thanks of our country." She stopped and for some reason bowed. "That's all I have to say."

After that Artyom spoke with mingled ardour and detail. He dealt swiftly with the deceptive mouled cylinders, and of the German plans. Then with a sudden, swift step forward, he stood before the press.

"But we. . ." Throwing up his head still higher, with a metallic ring in his voice, he continued: "We've got to the bottom of it all, and you'll see, comrades, how we'll set that giant on his legs again!" And with a sudden enthusiastic gesture he added: "We'll make a real man of him!"

There was laughter and applause from the benches by the shelter. Artyom could hear Vera Anossova's chirping laugh ("good for you, my darling, I'll kiss you for coming to help us!") and cried:

"And we've found cy-y-ylinders!"

He set down astride a stool and told his hearers that he had found some forged cylinders among the evacuated material.

"You should see them, folks, and whaa-t cylinders!" he said, almost singing the words, and quite forgetting the stony businesslike face he had been at such pains to assume five minutes previously. "I knew our trade mark at once—we've made plenty such pairs for the new factories in the South—and don't worry, these forged cylinders, our Soviet cylinders, will make the Huns green and blue!

Well, comrades, let's start. Please go and get overalls, and here's your instructor. . . Hi! Igor!"

"Coming!"

Some hours later, Igor met Artyom as he mounted the stairs.

"Well, how's it going?" Artyom asked glumly. "How are our new workers making out?"

"Not bad, they're trying hard enough," Igor replied, with an important air. "They'll make good."

Artyom asked him one or two more questions and began examining the dark ceiling of the shop.

"What are you so thoughtful about, Artyom Ivanych?"

"Plenty to be thoughtful about in our position," Artyom jerked out. "Look up above—there's a crane for you!"

"Well, what about it?"

"But I see something else. The German experts considered that crane too. To get the cylinders out, we have to remove the traverse, don't we?"

"Well, of course, that's obvious."

"And it weighs four hundred tons, while our crane can take only two hundred. Understand?"

"Clear enough. . . They reckoned that in a war the cylinders would burst and they couldn't be changed. It's plain as a pikestaff."

"Well, think of my position and the brigade's. We're repair workers, we're supposed to be able to do everything. Founders, milling-machine operators, smelters can say: 'Excuse me, but this or that isn't my job, I don't know anything about it.' But a repair worker has to know everything—smelting, soldering, cutting, polishing, even designing."

Artyom smoothed his hair—such thick hair that it would not lie down.

"I've got an idea," Igor suddenly whispered in his ear.

"Well?" Artyom whispered back.

"You understand, there's nothing about it in technology, it's just our Russian shrewdness. It suddenly occurred to me: why remove the upper part from above? D'ye get me?"

"Exactly!" whispered Artyom.

"The upper part can be taken off from below. . . like this. . . after all, we raise stones from below. See the idea?"

The wedding of Sergei Pankov and Tanya Lozseva was fixed for the end of November. At Tanya's request the marriage was to be a very quiet one, with only relatives and close friends invited. Natalya Andreyevna was somewhat annoyed by this decision.

"We're not as poor as all that, thank goodness! We can still find something to put on the table! Katerina was married properly—with plenty of feasting and merrymaking. . . But you, Tanya, act as though you wanted to make a fast-day of it! What next! I suppose you don't want any dancing, and the guests are only to stay a short time. A regular fast-day, I tell you, and not a wedding!"

"Mama, please don't take on so. Sergei and I both want it that way."

Tanya was not being quite truthful. Yet even to Sergei she would not admit her hankering for a wedding as splendid as her sister's. But the more she longed for this, the more obstinately she resisted her inclination. Her intense happiness made her superstitious. She felt that such joy must be paid for. It was as though she were gambling desperately against the unseen fate and trying to safeguard herself beforehand, depriving herself of all merrymaking, or new frocks, warning all her relations that nobody should bring presents "under any conditions whatever". She would barely consent to having wine at the wedding supper.

"You've gone quite crazy, girl!" cried Natalya Andreyevna angrily. "Enough of your whims and fancies!"

And although guests were few, the wedding was eventually celebrated "with all due form and ceremony", as Matvei Temlyakov announced after several glasses of wine.

Artyom and Vera were expected to supper, but had not yet arrived. Natalya Andreyevna laid the table and set out the appetisers, "just to go on with", she said.

The young couple's health had been drunk several times and the guests had already tried all the salted, smoked and pickled viands testifying to the housewifely skill of Natalya Andreyevna, but still Artyom and Vera did not arrive. Suddenly Artyom rang up from the shop to speak to Sergei.

"Artyom, we're waiting supper for you—where've you been all this time?"

"Supper won't run away, my dear bridegroom, but time has to be caught

by the short hairs in war-time. I suggest you first come to the shop. I want you to see how we're going to raise the cylinders—we've mastered our copper giant!"

"What, already?"

"Yes, and two days ahead of the given period. And when we mount the cylinders be sure we'll cut off another two days. Come along, we're about to set up the cylinders, and then we'll tackle your wedding supper."

Thousands of lamps illuminated the press shop, and as though by unanimous consent the brilliant light seemed to have brought with it a deep silence unbroken by the scores of people present. The final preparations were being made for raising the cylinders. Artyom, busy and preoccupied, although neat and smart as usual was giving a few last-minute instructions in a low voice; alert and agile as a lad, he seemed to be everywhere at once, particularly at the very moment and place where most needed.

"See what times we're living in. Did we ever think that we'd find ourselves in the workshop on our wedding day?"

And Sergei pressed Tanya's fingers quietly. Yesterday the doctor had permitted him to remove the bandages from his shoulder and arm, and now, at this moment, Tanya could feel how his strength was returning. The powerful light of the factory lamps clearly showed how much Sergei had improved. The wax pallor of his cheeks had disappeared, and his eyes observed all around him with the attentive, sharp enquiry of a military man.

Tanya felt that Sergei could always see her, even when looking elsewhere. She felt as though he were part of herself and sensed unmistakably that he had the same feeling with regard to herself. She was amazed at all she had unearthed in both herself and him, but at the same time could not imagine anything different. She recalled the whole of that day—the happy, restless sleep, the early awakening, the festive bustle at home, her mother alternately scolding and petting her, Sergei's arrival, then the snow-covered streets and the frosty sunshine—and finally, the office where they had signed the marriage register. The registrar had been a funny-looking little old man who had somehow reminded her of Timofei, the trunkmaker—and again she seemed to be living in her childhood's fairy-tale. At home, Natalya Andreyevna sent them to polish up the dishes and the tea things "so as not to be in people's way". They managed to break an antique glass and Natalya Andreyevna threatened them with a teacloth, but afterwards she laughed and even seemed pleased—to break something at a wedding is lucky!

Resembling sleeping giants two huge empty cylinders lay on their beds of sand, wreathed around with thick chains like boa-constrictors. A whistle shrilled and at this signal dozens of people dashed to the attack as though they had awaited this moment all their lives. Instantly work was seething around the cylinders. The fresh pinewood floor blocks creaked under the mighty weight of the first cylinder, splinters flew, the cold metal seemed to be raging at the disturbance to its repose. But the people worked on implacably—not for nothing were they the famous brigade of Artyom Sboyev.

Suddenly there was the groaning of metal, chains clanked, and the copper column rose to the level of the people's heads. It stayed there, swaying heavily, as though threatening in silent wrath to descend and crush everything around it with its sombre blind strength.

With a dull screech the cylinder rose and sloped upward while the chains wreathed around it slipped down. "Now!" The thought jerked through Igor's mind like a flash, and he threw his club forward. Pulling on it, he could barely keep his feet, but immediately felt a lightening of the weight. The chain became taut from the other side. It was already tight around the metal, fastened to the crane hook, tensed like a hawser, and the copper cylinder swayed and left the ground. All fell back before it, as it advanced, tall, erect, subjugated, silent. It moved forward, a reliable forged cylinder, returning to its own roof where it had been made by the hands of skilled Soviet workmen.

And the people returning it to life gazed at that silent victorious route as though they could not quite believe that it was the work of their own hands.

Wiping the sweat from his forehead,

Artyom winked at Tanya and Sergei.

"Well, please favour me with your opinion?" he whispered.

"Good for you!" Sergei replied and suddenly bowed right and left. And the people around, realizing that this tall Guardsman with the two orders was thanking them for their work so swiftly and well done, smiled and bowed in reply.

Slowly, with dignity, the copper column moved towards its location, and the short, slight Artyom, like a general in an interval between battles, told his listeners:

"When that rascally firm foisted their stuff on us, I at once questioned: 'Honoured sirs!' I asked. 'How much time will it take if, say, this machine has to be regulated?' Then the chief of those Germans pursed up his lips with a 'M-m-m!'"

Artyom's expressive face mimicked that of the German chief.

"'Oh, young man, regulating—that would take three little weeks.' Not so bad, eh? 'And if the press needs capital repairs?' I asked him. 'Oh, young man, that cannot happen—our presses last for ever!' 'But all the same, suppose it did?' I insisted. 'M-m-m, well, repairs—that would involve four little months.' Four months! That's what they were after! And here we've changed the cylinders in nine days, and renewed plenty of other things too at the same time; and now the main job's done, the rest won't take four days for my brigade's promised to finish it in two! Total —twelve days to put our copper giant on its feet again. . . Aha! Understand?"

Artyom raised his whistle to his lips and its shrill note resounded through the shop. Hardly had the cylinder halted, at the place where people were awaiting it, when skilful hands guided it to its new iron nest. Metal clanged and screeched against metal, the chains fell with a crash, the crane moved away.

"Fine!" Artyom shouted. "The giant's got one of its legs now, he'll have the other one too in a minute!"

When the second cylinder had been raised and placed alongside the first, Tanya remarked to Artyom:

"It seemed to go much faster this time, amazingly quickly!"

"The second time's always easier!" laughed Artyom, and taking out his handkerchief, wiped his streaming face.

For Tanya, the next ten days flew past like a dream. When she and Sergei walked onto the station platform she felt as though it really had been a dream—her love, the wedding, her happiness. The only reality left was the swirling snow of the December morning, the biting wind, the bustle of the station and the waiting for the train which was to carry Sergei westward.

Sergei himself had gone to find out when the train was due, and Tanya remained standing by the station fence. Resting her shoulders against the snow-covered cross-bar, she stood motionless. She was overcome with a bitter feeling of helplessness before the inevitable. She could not bear to think of tomorrow, when she would be without Sergei.

"How shall I bear it, how shall I?" she thought weakly, bitting her lips.

"The train's left Mokhovka already," said Sergei's voice in her ear. "It'll be here in ten minutes."

"What? Already?" she exclaimed in fright, and suddenly leaning against his shoulder began crying quietly.

"What's this, my darling, what's this?" he whispered, pressing her arm. Tanya's heart was shaken with a sweet tremour at his look. "But you know we've always been prepared for anything. We realize how one has to love in these days. . . We know, don't we?"

"Yes," she sighed.

When the train drew in, Tanya was seized with a sudden panic that she had not time for the main thing she wanted to say to him. And when it left the station, and she ran after it to the end of the platform, choking, still feeling Sergei's last kiss on her lips, she knew with certainty that there was some unforgettable words that she had failed to tell him.

The plant's bus hooted angrily.

Tanya looked once more at the grey plums of smoke hanging somewhere over the forest and walked unsteadily to the bus.

Elena Borissovna died quietly and quite unexpectedly even for those who were well aware of the seriousness of her condition. Both Plastunov and Permyakov, who felt the utmost compassion for her, thought that, though drooping physically and in spirit, she'd "get better sometime or other".

That day Plastunov came home late and found everything in confusion. With the help of some other women Varvara Sergeyevna was busy beside the dead body. An old attendant from the factory hospital was sobbing and repeating again and again:

"And when she died, my little dove, I never heard a thing! 'Dashenka,' she said, 'I'd like to sleep a little, and you have a sleep too.' I dropped off then, and she. . . she's fast asleep for evermore."

Looking at Plastunov, the woman fell silent. He was standing there as though stunned, his gaze fixed on the cold face of his dead wife. It seemed as though at last, after all her suffering and sleepless nights, she had fallen into a deep sweet sleep.

Throughout the night Dimitri Nikitich sat there beside his wife, recalling the fourteen years of their life together, every detail of it, from the first time he met her on a mild spring day sweetened by the gentle sea breeze that only Leningrad knows, up to the last words and looks she had given him.

Five days later, sitting in his factory office, Dimitri Nikitich was writing a letter to his brother, a front-line major in the air force. When he had finished, he searched his pocket for his pipe. Barely had he carried a match to it, however, when the telephone rang. Raising the receiver, he heard Mikhail Vassilyevich's voice, broken and jerky—a sure sign that something had upset him.

"Dimitri Nikitich, are you soon going home?"

"No, Mikhail Vassilyevich, I shall probably stay the night here—it's nearly two o'clock."

"Then I'll come to you there. . . it's urgent, can't wait till morning. Have you any objection?"

"No, please come."

The director strode into the room, but when he had half-crossed it he turned, banged the door to and turned the key noisily, then with furious, sweeping movements removed his cap and coat and hung them up on the coatrack by the door. He took Plastunov's hand in his cold, hard grip, and then jerked out:

"There's something I want to discuss. . ."

Mikhail Vassilyevich coughed resoundingly, frowned and continued:

"Why has Nazaryev just left to report to the Regional Committee?"

"He was summoned by them."

"Did they send for him particularly? Who can confirm that?"

"I can, since I took the message myself."

"So-o. . . For the first time in all my life somebody else has reported to the Regional Committee!"

"Why 'somebody'? He's your assistant on the new construction."

"Oh, all right. . . assistant. . ."

Permyakov rose heavily from his chair and strode up and down the room, stamping his huge felt boots.

"With my former assistant, who died, it was different; we understood each other through and through. There was never a thought dividing the work. I've stood being jostled and pushed around long enough. I've had enough of it!"

"So what do you suggest?" asked Plastunov.

Permyakov lowered his head like a bull about to charge and sat down in an armchair.

"Let them give me another assistant, Dimitri Nikitich!"

"So that's it," smiled Plastunov. "Nothing doing, Mikhail Vassilyevich!"

Plastunov put a match to his pipe, blew the smoke out unhurriedly, and looking sternly over the director's broad shoulders, he repeated still more decidedly:

"Nothing doing! . . The fulfilment of the state plan—a war-time plan, let me emphasize!—demands just that division of responsibilities we have at present."

Two days later Nazaryev returned. The director was informed by telephone that his assistant wished to see him, but for various reasons they had not met even on the second day.

"Let him make his official report about his visit at the meeting," thought Permyakov angrily, and finally decided that "there was no hurry" to meet Nazaryev. He suddenly felt that he wanted to sit at home, even if only for a moment. But nobody answered the door bell. "The mistress of the house is out," he thought, opening the door with his key. The dining-room looked cold and uncomfortable, although the stove was warm when he laid his hand upon it on entering, according to his usual habit.

There was a note for him lying on the table: "The soup is in the thermos, and a pie under the sofa cushions."

"That means she won't be in very soon. Shall I have dinner without waiting?" thought Permyakov, but in the same instant he heard footsteps in the porch.

"Varya!" he called gladly and went to meet her. But it was Nazaryev who appeared in the doorway, slender and thin even in his thick winter coat. His high black astrakhan cap made his hollow face look longer and paler than ever.

"You. . ." Permyakov, taken aback, was suddenly filled with hatred for that tall cap, that face, that smile parting the thin shaved lips.

"Excuse me, but I decided to report to you at home," Nazaryev began.

"Why have you come here?" shouted the director. "You steal off to the Regional Committee, report instead of me. . . easy enough to climb in and drive the machine when it's all ready and running!"

He stamped his foot furiously, choking with offended dignity.

"It's my sacred right personally, personally, do you understand? and not through all sorts of assistants, to report to the Party, and you. . . you. . ."

"Misha! Misha!" his wife's voice rang out suddenly. Mikhail Vassilyevich felt a cool hand on his forehead, and as though coming to himself after a seizure, let his heavy gaze wander round the room. Nazaryev was no longer there.

"Misha, what's the matter? Why, I hardly recognize you!" said Varvara Sergeyevna, stroking his cheeks. "Here, have a cigarette."

And in his wife's voice, even in the movement of her hand as she held out a match for him, Permyakov sensed a pity and condemnation that humiliated him. He drew the tobacco smoke in greedily, deep into his lungs.

"Why on earth did you fly out at him like that?" asked Varvara Sergeyevna. She was sitting opposite him, a dear, accustomed figure, but for the first time in her life her face was troubled and pained on his account.

As though something had thawed within him, Permyakov began to speak, and the sound of his own words seemed to hurt him. First of all he had been irritated by all that was new and unfamiliar in everyone of Nazaryev's arrangements. And then Permyakov had felt that Nazaryev, although he did not show it outwardly, regard the Lessogorsk Plant rather patronizingly. In a word, Mikhail Vassilyevich just could not understand his assistant or what the latter was aiming at. True, no fault could be found with his arrangements, but the director had already acquired the habit of suspecting that his assistant was trying to "go over his head", nevertheless. For good or ill, Mikhail Vassilyevich, from the time of his underground activities was accustomed to "see through people": this one was reliable, another not, and he liked to know just exactly why. And for this, it was necessary to weigh a man's merits and defects. First of all he would look for defects, for a man always hides his worst faults more deeply and cleverly. So, of course, Nazaryev was hiding his—his ambition, his desire for power. And the less the director understood him, the more obstinately the thought nagged at him—naturally such a highly qualified man as Nazaryev would want to come first and this being so, he would not be inclined to have any very great liking for the man who stood in his way.

A letter from Nazaryev awaited Permyakov in his factory office.

"The trying and unpleasant scene between us was no fault of mine," Nazaryev wrote. "And in general, I feel myself in no way to blame before you. I had no time to inform you I am leaving, since I had to hurry to catch the train. I assure you as a Communist and a Soviet engineer, that nowhere and in no way have I undermined your authority or your leading position. I have been surprised by your open enmity and your suspicions based on extraneous considerations and circumstances. I have never yet been influenced by such considerations and certainly do not intend to begin now. For this reason I cannot

comply with your wish, expressed when you were not yourself, that I step aside. In the interest of the work, I am prepared to agree to any combination which would make it possible for both you and myself to do our duty, without being distracted by extraneous considerations."

Permyakov shrugged his shoulders in perplexity, unable to conceive of any "combination" which would fill the requirements. But the strange part of it was that now he could think about Nazaryev more calmly. He even remembered how startled Nazaryev had been; how he had crimsoned in bewilderment at the insults—naturally he had not expected such an outburst.

"After all, did I expect it myself?" Mikhail Vassilyevich asked himself time and again during the night. There seemed to be a constriction round his chest and his head ached, although usually his splendid physique knew neither ache nor pain.

Permyakov tossed and turned all night, smoking innumerable cigarettes, and rose in the morning with a heavy head.

The construction workers of the open-hearth furnace appealed to the youth of the Lessogorsk Plant and the whole district to assist in finishing the job, so as to meet 1942 with a big smelt in the new furnaces. Articles appeared in the plant paper and the local organ with appeals from the Lessogorsk Communist Youth League to the district organizations, and to their comrades and friends.

As throughout the factory, Artyom Sboyev, Igor Chuvilev and others, the "backbone of the shop", welcomed the newcomers joyfully. These novices were taught various trades including many "time-saving tricks", as Artyom laughingly called them. He himself undertook "in the shortest period to prepare a whole brigade of fitters, electricians and assemblers". In his articles for the plant's newspapers, he described in detail the successful outcome in collecting and training the new forces at the time when the copper giant had been raised.

Artyom's marriage to Vera had been celebrated after the work on the press was completed, "wedged in between two shifts", as Vera put it.

As Tanya was returning home from work two days later, she met Vera on the street, wearing a new grey winter coat, her nose hidden behind a smart muff.

"I just can't have enough of my freedom today!" she told Tanya, laughing.

"You're working night shift?"

"No shift at all!" Vera threw out gaily. "I've left the factory. . . What do I want with the wretched place?"

"What do you mean?" said Tanya, astounded. "You've a regular job that you were trained for."

"Well, and what about it? I settled things with the shop foreman last night."

And with a glance Vera showed just how she had settled things.

"'Oh,' I told him, 'this work's too much for me. I'm all in, I'm getting quite ill over it, yes, and my mother's ill to. . . my brother's at the front, there's nobody to look after her or give her a glass of water if she's thirsty. . .'"

She stopped short suddenly, seeing the angry gaze bent upon her.

"You—have you any idea what a dirty trick you're playing?" said Tanya indignantly.

"Oh, I'm just sick at the lot of you!" cried Vera, losing her temper, and winding the cord round her finger, began swinging the muff violently to and fro. "I'm no saint nor hypocrite; I went into the shop so as not to lose Artyom, and I certainly succeeded there."

"You nasty little rotter! I always knew you were a feather-brain, but I didn't expect this of you!"

Vera began swinging her muff again, odnding stubbornly.

"I never pretended to be better than I am, I always said I'm just an ordinary sort of a girl. . ."

"And you think life's just ordinary, just now?" Tanya flared. "We've got to live. . ."—she paused and sought for the right word—"we've got to live as part of the common life, of our country's life; anything else is shameful, foul!"

It was already a fortnight since Sergei had left. Tanya had received several cards which he had sent from the train and had long awaited a further letter. She realized that letters from the front would not come so quickly, but nevertheless, she was counting the days. She herself wrote daily, exposing all her thoughts, her longing for him, describing everything of interest, the books she read, the cinema and her skiing. One day she remembered that Sergei had told her that for front-

liners even the weather at home is interesting, so she told him about that too. She was sure that her letters would reach Sergei, that his answering thought would leap to meet her words.

Tanya sat down at her table and wondered if it were worth while writing to him of Vera's disgraceful conduct. Through the door she heard her mother's glad voice:

"There's a letter for you, Tanya."

The letter, written in pencil on squared paper—a leaf torn from a notebook—seemed to carry within itself something of the twilight and cramped feeling of a front-line blindage. The lines slanted, crowding one another till they met, and in one place the sharp pencil point had driven a hole in the paper as though Sergei had hurried, fearing to be interrupted.

"Our tank platoon covered a unit of ours which was regrouping, and we held up the enemy's attack for a pretty long time. The Germans outnumbered us five times over, but they had to be dealt with whatever happened. Things were pretty hot. First of all they approached from the flank. We let them come close and then let them have it point blank! Four nazi machines took fire. Then they rushed at us from the flank, at full speed, but imagine, they had no idea that in the forest, behind the spruce, we had placed several reserve tanks on both sides, and these calmly waited and didn't give themselves away. Stood there quiet as possible and trained their guns on the Germans. We disabled three tanks, set another on fire, and then the Germans began to crawl along the edge of the forest, hoping to catch us in pincers. That was when our reserves caught them and gave them a warm welcome. It was a sight to gladden a tankist: on both sides nazi tanks were blazing like torches, and the crews were trying to climb out the best they could while we were getting our sights on them; and there in the middle two sound tanks rushing about not knowing which way to turn. One of them made straight for me, so I let it come close and then settled it our way, the Urals way, gave it such a dose that the turret flew off and the treads were smashed to fragments. The other tank was settled by my comrade, Nikolai Kvashin—the Siberian you remember. I told you about him, he's swell in tank battles! During this whole time we destroyed ten German tanks. Good enough, we're learning how to fight, Tanya!

"Both as historians in civil life and as fighters Kvashin and I couldn't help analysing the affair. . . Oh, what volumes could be written about Russian courage in this war!

"Don't expect such long letters as this from me very often— today Kvashin and I are resting up after our work, lying here as though in a rest home!

"My own love, don't worry, I am getting your letters! The last two arrived an hour before we got orders to go out on the assignment I've just described. I read those two dear letters. . . My darling, if you only knew all what your love means to me!"

Natalya Andreyevna had already opened the door more than once, but Tanya heard nothing—she was writing to Sergei:

". . . In short, our office at once took up this disgraceful business. They sent for me too, today. Artyom looked terrible—he had never expected such frivolity from Vera and it hurt him frightfully. As for her, she carried on abominably, did not seem to think she had done anything wrong and kept repeating 'And if the war lasts another two or three years, is nobody to have any life at all, then?' and so on.

"You remember, Sergei, how I started working in the designing office quite by chance? I tried hard there, but I had no pleasure in the job—I had started learning draughtsmanship after leaving school just by accident—taken up the first thing that came to hand. I didn't think seriously about life at that time, I just had ideas and fancies.

"Vera wants to pass this terrible time in petty frivolities; but after all, she's an adult woman and later she herself will see that she's dancing on the edge of a precipice. No, I have no right to live easily! I shall choose the most difficult path that life demands, and if I can carry out the job really well, I shall feel that although there can be no happiness without you, at least I am living honestly. That is what I resolved at the meeting, and am only waiting for the right moment to say so. Vera insisted with pig-headed obstinacy—and it sounded so stupid and shameless—that

she, if you please, simply wants 'personal happiness'. I couldn't contain myself, I broke in and said: 'Just look at your husband—he's the most unhappy man on earth at this moment!' Later I said to him: 'Artyom, you need people, tomorrow morning I'm coming to the brigade you're training to assist the open-hearth furnace builders.' Vera overtook me on the street and started accusing me of 'purposely trying to spoil' her love, because I haven't my husband with me and similar nonsense. I told her that she is the one who is spoiling her own happy love, because she doesn't understand the kind of man her husband is. At the end of our rather irate conversation I asked her if she imagined she could hold a man's love with bright eyes and pink cheeks alone? Aren't there plenty of other girls with prettier eyes and colouring? It hurts when a person disappoints you so—Vera and I have been friends since our school days.

"It's late now. The window is covered with frost patterns, there's wind and frost outside. That wind howls in the chimney and my heart pains me. What are you doing just now, my darling, my only love? Although it's gone eleven here, where you are it's only ten o'clock. Today there was a wonderful communiqué again, and I'm hoping for another tomorrow. Where is your tank raging now, Sergei? Remember that I'm always with you, always. . ."

The test smelt in the new furnace had been fixed for December 28th.

Mikhail Vassilyevich was walking around, admiring the new shop. The bright frosty light shone down through the glass dome in the huge ceiling. And the glass, the metal parts, the columns, the iron sheeting on the floor, the stairways which seemed to have frozen in graceful flight—all were new and spotless with a spaciousness and an air of quiet expectation, despite the hugeness of it all. Everything was awaiting the spark that would give it life, awaiting the fire with its all-powerful, creative might.

In times past, Permyakov had come alone in just the same way, to greet the new foundry and forge. Today's little ceremony of greeting fulfilled a custom dear to his heart, but now he felt a change. In pre-war days, the shops had owed their existence exclusively to him. He, Mikhail Permyakov, had chosen the place for the shop partitions, he had ordered the disposition of all the machinery, he knew the origin of every screw, every yard of piping, and at that particular period the people themselves were all a part of his life. But now he felt himself the master of a large, somewhat unfamiliar house, where guests had gathered whom he was meeting for the first time.

The huge ranks of new furnaces, and many parts of their equipment, had been made not only by Lessogorsk people, but by those others who had come from the South with the huge eastward flow of evacuated works.

At the far end of the spacious flight of stairs, Mikhail Permyakov suddenly saw the familiar slender figure of Nazaryev, whom he had lately tried to avoid. And now suddenly, those trying days struck Permyakov as senseless. "As though I'd neglected a hangnail," he laughed at himself. The blue dome, the sunshine, the spacious new shop—all seemed to infuse new strength into him like a fresh breeze. And this strength created by their collective labour emanated everywhere, brightened everything, in comparison with which everything else seemed ephemeral, colourless.

Nazaryev came onto the bridge and looked down over the broad expanse of the shop as though from a mountain peak. Preparations for the first smelt were already coming to an end. The huge, many-ton ladle slowly approached the trough of furnace No. 1, and—again according to his old habit—Permyakov also wanted to test the working of this mechanism. Nazaryev's presence on the bridge even struck the director as very timely. "Two heads are better than one," he thought. The director approached the bridge from the other side and as Nazaryev caught sight of him both removed their caps and bowed.

"Works well!" with a nod Nazaryev approved the progress of the huge ladle, and Permyakov cast a confident, satisfied glance at the approaching giant.

"Pla-a-aces!" Nechporuk shouted in a stentorian voice, and Nazaryev's slight head movement said as plainly as any words: "There's a voice for you!" Permyakov nodded with a smile and followed Nazaryev onto the broad platform

before the furnace in which flames were already roaring.

The furnace had come to life, soon the steel would begin to boil—this was all that interested Nechporuk. He gave a signal—time to take a test. The glowing scoop emptied onto the iron plates of the floor. A spray of steel sparks rang, flew upward in a fiery fountain. The milky white plate on the floor turned a dusky red. Nechporuk bent down, inhaled the dry heat of new steel and decided with that special instinct of a smelter that the new furnace would give excellent metal for tank plating.

"What do you want?" he roughly asked Lanskikh, who had just approached.

"I came to look at the new furnace," the latter replied calmly, his lazy, unhurried gaze fixed on the open mouth of the furnace.

Nechporuk called jealously to his assistant:

"Clo-o-ose it!"

"Furnace is going well," said Lanskikh in satisfaction, and added casually: "No need to hurry it."

Nechporuk ground his teeth again.

"You have your method and I have mine. Our ways just don't mix!"

"Yes, I'm one of the careful ones," smiled Lanskikh.

"Well, and I'm one of the dashing ones!" Nechporuk threw out at him chaliengingly, and left the furnace.

"Let her o-u-ut!" he called angrily.

He always looked upon the steel as a kind of living, menacing element the secret of whose taming could only be achieved by the special breed of resolute men, in love with the metal, desperately venturesome—such as he considered smelters to be. Releasing the steel had bewitched him from his early youth, and still excited him like a fairy-tale come true.

And now the steel was running in white streams into the sections of the huge ladle. A golden-red dawn flooded the shop, glowing streams of metal sent thousands of sparks flying upward like a flock of flashing golden birds to be extinguished in the glowing frosty sky of the fire-lit shop. And Nechporuk stood there on the bridge, visible to all, like the master and creator of this fiercely flaming steel.

When the last heavy drops had fallen in the cauldron, it suddenly seemed to Nechporuk that there was less than he had expected, and his heart sank.

"Pour out!" he ordered gloomily.

The director and his assistant were walking along the road side by side.

The snow crunched under foot, and like gold dust tiny bright stars studded the heavens. The yellow glow of the evening's fire hung over the new open-hearth shop.

After Plastunov had gone, Permyakov suddenly asked:

"Excuse me, Nikolai Petrovich, but tell me, please, did you say anything—well, accidentally, perhaps—to Plastunov about our. . . our unpleasant talk?"

"No," answered Nazaryev simply. "Nothing at all."

Mikhail Vassilyevich even coughed with relief.

"So. . . so Plastunov knows absolutely nothing about it?"

"Nothing."

Permyakov walked on a few steps, actually feeling his shoulders straightening, then he suddenly confessed:

"And I thought. . . It seems you can bottle up your feelings till they explode. . ."

Nikolai Petrovich was silent for a few minutes, then added with the usual ironical yet stern smile in his voice:

"It's all to the good if even at that cost, you now understand my real feelings and intentions—good for everybody. Anyhow—let's consider the incident closed."

"Yes! . . It won't occur again," said Mikhail Vassilyevich decidedly, and for the first time took Nazaryev's hand in a firm grip.

By the end of the shift the result was available of Nechporuk's first smelt in the new furnace: 14.7 tons to the square metre.

"So that's how we've outstripped them!" hissed Vassili Luzin, the first assistant, and there was intense chagrin on his dry face with its impudent, turned-up nose.

"I felt it in my bones!" said Nechporuk through his teeth. "The devil himself brought him creeping upon us!"

And he ran out into the frost, his coat thrown over one shoulder.

Nechporuk found Lanskikh near the foreman's office and shouted at him:

"You put me off! . . You. . ."

But Lanskikh entered the office without taking any notice of him.

"Why don't you answer?" sputtered Nechporuk.

"When you've cooled down a bit, come to me and we'll have a proper talk."

After the failure with the new furnace "Sasha-from-Rostov-way" was particularly anxious to learn Lanskikh's great "secret" which Nechporuk had failed to probe.

Next day he was again reminded of it when he smelted 14.9 tons.

"I've come to you on business," Nechporuk announced, almost before he had time to sit down in the chair Lanskikh drew up for him in the latter's large, airy room. "My word! what a lot of books you've got!" he added, trying to cover up his awkwardness. "Fine! A whole library!"

Now that he had thoroughly calmed down, Nechporuk was once more his usual kindly, expansive, pleasant-looking self.

"Eh, lad, splendid!" he said almost affectionately, looking through the shining glass at the many-coloured book-backs. "'Le-nin', 'Sta-lin'," he read, for some reason syllable by syllable. "'Push-kin', 'Gor-ky'."

Nechporuk read some more names from the book covers, which conveyed nothing to him, and swiftly lost interest in Lanskikh's library.

"Why, you've got a map!" said Nechporuk in fresh surprise. "And what a lot of flags stuck in!"

"Why, of course! That shows the progress of our offensive. I advise you to get one like it."

"Yes, I should," Nechporuk agreed. "You know, I'm not such a great one for books; at school I was always better with handicrafts of all kinds."

"Yes, but you know, mate, books often help your hands a lot," Lanskikh caught him up weightily.

"You're right there," said Nechporuk, who was trying to conceal a certain shyness and confusion at the sight of a way of living so far removed from his own.

Nechporuk had always thought that "workers all live the same way, like brothers", like he and his Mariika lived, for instance, before the war. He felt that everything in life was clear and plain for a working man—if you've got a trade, well, work at it, do your best. But Lanskikh had a great deal in his life which he had never considered.

Lanskikh's wife, the head of a kindergarten, quickly laid the table for tea and then went off to work.

"Got his own sort of wife too," noted Nechporuk. He had never been Lanskikh's guest before, and had never noticed any difference between his mate and himself. He had even considered that living here in "out of the way" Lessogorsk, Lanskikh would naturally have seen and known less than he. And suddenly everything turned out just the opposite.

The two mates soon turned to the main subject of discussion.

"I know we're not a bit alike," said Nechporuk with his usual frankness. "And that's just it. . . you're quiet and careful, I'm hot and like taking risks. . . one furnace, and two natures! . . Get in each other's way—that's what it is!"

"Well, and what if we are different?" smiled Lanskikh. "You're a queer fellow and no mistake. What sort of a life would it be if people were all like peas in a pod?"

"I'm talking about work!"

"And so am I. Eh, Sasha. . . If it's just a case of our having different natures, that should even help the work. Yes, I mean it! I make you jump and you make me jump—and there's all the more steel poured onto the fascists' heads!" And Lanskikh winked slyly at his mate.

"We'll cram the Hitlerites' throats full with our steel!" cried Nechporuk. "What do you say—all I want is to give the front more steel!"

Lanskikh was sitting down again, quiet, attentive, and the languid gaze of his blue eyes seemed almost sleepy. Nechporuk felt a sudden wave of annoyance.

"I went all out to beat you, and then—just a flop! I've never yet made a record that you couldn't beat! What's your secret?"

Lanskikh laughed, and raised his heavy eyelids.

"That's soon explained." And Lanskikh went on to describe just why he was known as the "careful" smelter.

For fifteen years Nechporuk had been smelting steel, and thought he knew all

about its "nature", and now, according to Lanskikh, it seemed as if this same "nature" still had secrets concealed. Lanskikh had collected several interesting items, and even kept a diary of the smelts.

When talking about his work, Lanskikh seemed a different man. His heavy eyelids no longer drooped, his eyes alternately glowed with deep earnestness and flashed knowingly; his smile expressed wisdom and a kind of special pleased determination and understanding. But although all this was unexpectedly interesting, nevertheless Nechporuk did not feel that he was grasping that great and important "secret" which had driven him to Lanskikh.

"You're fine at talking about her," he said admiringly, referring to the steel, of which he always spoke as though it were some demanding but beloved goddess. "She likes it when people try their damndest for her—but all the same, that's not the real secret, that's mere trifles!"

"Well, and what about it?" laughed Lanskikh. "You're expecting some great 'secret' from me, but there isn't any!"

Lanskikh spread his hands out in a sweeping gesture and repeated:

"There isn't any! . . And there can't be, think it out for yourself! I look at it this way: skill isn't a door with a standard lock—get a key and you're in. No, mate, you have to search and neglect nothing, nothing!"

"Oh, to the devil with it!" And Nechporuk suddenly thrust his fingers through his tight curls. "That's you all over—just one idea after another. But I'm all for boldness. . ."

"Boldness is good," said Lanskikh quickly. "That's what I like very much about you. . . But you, too, must work quickly and efficiently, so that everything around you moves with the same swing."

He rose suddenly, approached his mate and looked him straight in the eye.

"The thing is, that it's not only our records which count in our open-hearth shop."

"What then, devil take you?"

"Just this—that you, the main lightning workers, should become kind of shop leaders, and bring everyone else up to your standard."

"You mean that every kind of person" —and Nechporuk snorted scornfully— "should be able to attain the same records as you or me? You're raving! Why have records at all, then?"

"That's just it—what's the idea of having records if side by side with you there's somebody working any old way, barely getting along any old bow—like Alexei Makovkin or Sergei Zhuravlyov, or Nikolai Bochkov, or others like them? All their work is below average, and their bad output just about neutralizes our good records. Do you know that we didn't fulfil the November plan in our shop?"

"Thanks for nothing!" and Nechporuk made a mock bow. "What's this, good people? It seems that lousy fumblers like Alexei Makovkin or Nikolai Bochkov are barely able to drag along at the tail and yet I've got to share my fame with them?"

"They're still inexperienced smelters, Nechporuk," Lanskikh demurred.

"Then let them get on with it themselves!"

And Nechporuk left Lanskikh, slamming the door violently behind him.

The smelt turned out even better than usual. Nechporuk reported 15.3 tons. Next day he learned that Lanskikh's figures were down to 14.8.

"Messing around with Alexei," Nechporuk told himself. But although he was a half a ton ahead, he did not feel the usual satisfaction. He took stolen glances at his neighbours, then unable to hold out any longer, found some excuse to pass along the whole shop. Beside Makovkin's furnace Nechporuk saw Polev and Tushkanov. "Come to control Alexei's work!" he thought. "Why don't they find somebody worth while worrying about? . ." And he spat contemptuously. Everybody knew that Alexei, despite his twenty-four years, was already a confirmed drunkard, and a "miserable fellow" as he himself said. The docile, weak-willed young fellow had married a bouncing forty-year-old widow with a swarm of children, who kept him chained to her with plentiful supplies of moonshine which she herself made.

"I'd like to see any hussy tie me to her apron strings," thought Nechporuk angrily. "So why, good people, should I take a drunkard on my hump?"

But he could not avoid noticing that today Alexei was sober—that meant that this "lightning smelter school" had made a big effort with him.

During the dinner hour Nechporuk saw that Vassili Polev and Semyon Tushkanov sat down to table with Alexei, laughing over something, and patting him on the back. And as though for spite, today there was nobody at Nechporuk's table, nobody even came up for a light. But around Alexei's table there was a merry crowd. Not wishing to listen to all the talk, Nechporuk rattled his spoon and noisily drank his soup, which was cold and too salty.

At the end of the shift he saw Plastunov and the director enter the shop. They stopped beside Alexei, then went on to Nikolai Bochkov's furnace. Nechporuk watched jealously while the inefficient Alexei Makovkin replied to Plastunov, in shy satisfaction, nodded his head and related something. Usually the director, and Plastunov too, would have come along to him, but today they went off in another direction. Nechporuk's ears burned like a schoolboy's and he felt somehow awkward in his movements.

When he saw Lanskikh at the end of the shift, he was at boiling point.

"Why do you pass by without a word?"

"I like that! And who was it slammed the door?"

"Well, what about it?"

But not another word could he find to say—the truth was too much for him. As though in a dream when he left the shower baths he suddenly turned back to his cupboard, again put on his overalls and entered the shop.

"What's up?" asked Lanskikh, but seeing the expression on his face, gave an understanding glance in reply.

"Who's on today's list for control?" asked Nechporuk in a voice of authority.

"Take a look at Sergei Zhuravlyov," Lanskikh advised him quietly.

It was late in the evening when Nechporuk returned home, and Mariika met him angrily. One of their usual quarrels was imminent, beginning first of all in low tones, and then shouting at the tops of their voices. Eventually the end would come in a flood of tears from Mariika and: "Even if you don't love me any more, you needn't deceive me!"

But today, instead of all kinds of exhortations, Nechporuk cut her short with a gesture.

"Find out just why a man's at the shop all day."

"Well, why?"

"Because. . . eh, we've been pulling up the worst fellows who've been letting down our plan of work, we've set them going till they're running like an express. Ho! Ho! Alexei's got 101 per cent plan fulfilment, Nikolai 98.8, and Sergei 102 per cent. They never imagined such figures in their wildest dreams, but we've just made them get them. And now our shop's going to fulfil its plan, and by New Year won't we make them sit up!"

And at the New Year Nechporuk really did "make them sit up".

"Get a move on, work quicker than devils shovelling in hell!" he told his brigade threateningly. He had the furnace filled before anybody else, and listening to the deep voice of the metal he felt that today the steel seemed to rumble with a special note, without splashing—it hummed with a deep singing note, then whistled, chirped like a flock of spring nightingales on his own Don.

That day everybody stopped at his furnace and at night Lanskikh visited his shift.

"How's things?" he asked as usual.

"15.4 tons."

"Congratulations," said Lanskikh simply and wrung his mate's hand.

"You might at least envy me, you obstinate devil!" snorted Nechporuk good-naturedly. "It's my smelt, after all!"

"Yours or mine, it's all the same—ours!" answered Lanskikh.

"Happy New Year!" he said to Nechporuk sincerely.

The Golden Roof

On awakening, the first thing always to catch the eye of Mikhail Vassilyevich was the wall carpet depicting a sharp-prowed boat and a fisherman casting his net. This morning Mikhail Vassilyevich woke with a start as though stabbed by a piercing look from the plush fisherman's eyes. They seemed alive with ferocious heat; they burned, rolled like balls, as though in some

kind of inexplicable game. Permyakov's thoughts seemed to be drowning in the sea which looked as if about to flow out of its frame. It foamed higher and higher, and the fisherman with his rolling eyes was swaying somewhere on the crest of an unbearably bright blue wave. It rose, roared and suddenly broke over Mikhail Vassilyevich. "I'm delirious," he managed to think, and everything faded away.

Later he saw Varvara Sergeyevna beside him with a glass of tea in her hand.

"Drink a little, Mishenka."

Mikhail Vassilyevich swallowed twice.

"It's cold," he decided foggily.

"Why, the tea's quite hot," said Varvara Sergeyevna. "You're ill, Mishenka!"

He heard nothing more. He was on fire. The wave broke over him again.

"Take away the wall carpet!" he asked through the fog.

"We'll take it down, we'll take it down," said Varvara Sergeyevna hastily.

Somebody standing at the head of the bed assisted her.

"Well, and how do you feel, Mikhail Vassilyevich?" and the director recognized the long-nosed old man with silver side whiskers as the head doctor of the Lessogorsk hospital.

When he came to himself it was day. The whiteness of the wall met his gaze, but now coolness and tranquillity seemed to emanate from it. Mikhail Vassilyevich, as though to recognize them, looked at his bony, yellow hands. He moved the fingers, and their weakness alarmed and annoyed him.

"Varya!" he called, and Varvara Sergeyevna entered the room.

"How did you sleep, Mishenka?"

"I don't remember. How many days have I been like this. . . ill?"

"Eleven days."

"Elev. . . what's the matter with me? Deuce take it, always been as strong as a horse. . . and now what's happened to me?"

"Why, it's nothing much, Misha. Just a chill, and now you're getting better. But you mustn't talk much yet."

The telephone rang in the dining-room. Varvara Sergeyevna went out to answer it.

"Who rang up?" asked Permyakov when she returned.

"Nikolai Petrovich was asking after you. He wanted to come today, but I told him not until tomorrow."

"Why only tomorrow?" asked Mikhail Vassilyevich, upset. His head was heavy, but his memory was working energetically, and the very noise of the factory itself seemed to be in his ears. The director was horrified to think how long he had been away from the works; what was happening there without him?

"Oh, the factory's still going strong," Varvara Sergeyevna soothed him. "Nikolai Petrovich is looking after everything there."

"Nikolai Petrovich is looking after everything—so that's how it is," Permyakov repeated to himself with an echo of his old pain. But the thought of the factory reviving with his returning consciousness rushed forward like a horseman, tired, hungry but impatient. And his anxiety to see Nazaryev and learn everything about the factory was so great that Mikhail Vassilyevich felt seriously angry with his wife for not sending for Nazaryev at once.

In the evening his fever returned to be followed by a deep sleep.

"Oh, why doesn't he come?" Mikhail Vassilyevich fretted in the morning. "Ring him up at the factory, Varya!"

"I've rung up already but they said he had gone to see the new branch line."

"May I come in?" It was Nazaryev's voice at last from the door-way.

"Come in, come in! Please do!" cried the director excitedly. He saw Nazaryev enter the dining-room, and barely had his tall, thin form crossed the threshold when Mikhail Vassilyevich had stretched out his hand to him.

He made Nazaryev sit down beside the bed, although the latter protested that "he was cold coming in from the frost".

"What frost are you talking about?" laughed Mikhail Vassilyevich in excitement. "I can feel the heat of the factory coming from you like a furnace itself! Well, tell me everything, everything!"

Nazaryev had brought a great of news from the shops and the new construction.

"What's that? The old open-hearth

shop altered already?" said Mikhail Vassilyevich in amazement.

"Yes, we've given it a new job. We broke down the wall and joined it with the machine shop, and now there's room for all the equipment. You can well say that now we've got a splendid machine shop! One of the most important stages of the conveyor movement. Look here!"

Nazaryev took out his thick notebook which not so long previously had been a source of so much irritation to Permyakov, and sketched in the plan of the water system. Every line and figure of his diagrams, like a glowing drop of metal denoting the strength and quality of the smelt, showed in laconic, concentrated terms the movement of life, which hour by hour was moving confidently forward, bringing nearer the time fixed in Stalin's order.

After Nazaryev had gone, as the director lay there turning over all the factory news, it suddenly occurred to him how quickly everything had gone ahead. Of course, the preparations for the water system had been going on for several months, but all the same. . . and here one simple, direct thought seemed to pierce his heart: had Nazaryev been able to do so much just because there had been nobody to interfere with his arrangements, because he had not to consider the feelings of, say, Mikhail Vassilyevich? Never before had "his" factory carried out any big undertaking without him.

Two days later, when Nazaryev visited him again, this time with Plastunov, the director could not refrain from a bitter joke.

"I fancy you're quite enjoying working without an old fool like me. . . eh?"

Nazaryev gave him a long look.

"It would be more correct to say that we're working easily now because you and I together, Mikhail Vassilyevich, had already done a great deal before."

"Quite right, quite right," Plastunov caught him up. "We have united all that was 'southern' and 'Urals'", and he purposely emphasized the two words. "We have merged the two, as though we had the soil of a new alloy."

"And on it a new Lessogorsk factory is being born," Mikhail Vassilyevich added, and for some reason sighed.

When they had gone, Mikhail Vassilyevich lay silent for a long time, stretched out under the blanket, and feeling a pleasant fatigue, as though he really had spent all this time in the shop.

"Varya!" he called his wife impatiently. "What the devil has been the matter with me?"

"The matter?" repeated Varvara Sergeyevna slowly. "Pneumonia."

When Mikhail Vassilyevich, at the end of January, found himself in the sweeping expanse of the completely altered shop, he felt almost intoxicated with the freshness of the impression. The two-hundred-year-old walls from Demidov's time had been cleared away like rotten boards. The machine shop, built at the end of the nineties, had been joined to the old Demidov shop, and now seemed tremendous. And the Demidov shop now unrecognizable without its ancient furnaces, white-washed and orderly, looked as though it had been built purposely to house dozens of lathes. A month ago they had been frozen in the crowded factory stores, but now they were humming, chirping, screeching and tapping in a businesslike fashion as though they had stood there for a century. Everything was arranged with one object in view—to allow a path for the future current. Everything showed that it was to pass just here, and although as yet there was no conveyor crawling past those lathes, large, medium size and small, the path cut the shop like an arrow from end to end.

"Mikhail Vassilyevich!" Nazaryev's voice sounded behind him. He advanced, smiling shyly and extended his hand. "Well? What do you think of it all?"

"What do you suppose?" and Mikhail Vassilyevich smiled in some confusion.

Permyakov decided to go with Nazaryev to the branch line that was under construction. As they walked along the forest path to the new sector where a clearing was being made, Mikhail Vassilyevich, listening to Nazaryev, involuntarily compared him with his late assistant Kuzmin and had to laugh. Could Kuzmin ever have done even one quarter of what Nazaryev had achieved? Of course not. Kuzmin had not possessed either Nazaryev's knowledge or his initiative.

It was only now that he had really learned to value Nazaryev both as technician and as a man and comrade. He could no longer imagine himself with any other assistant—no, no, it was just the engineer Nazaryev, with his extensive technical experience, his calculations, his forbearance, his quiet voice, whom Mikhail Vassilyevich needed.

At home, Mikhail Vassilyevich's appetite rejoiced Varvara Sergeyevna's heart. He praised the dinner, joked and laughed. Then, as usual, he sat down by the window, lighted a cigarette and drew his wife closer to him.

"I've discovered a man, Mother, who's more valuable than gold!"

Mikhail Vassilyevich felt himself being shaken by the shoulder.

"Misha, Misha!" It was Varvara Sergeyevna waking him. "You're wanted on the telephone!"

Over the wire he could hear the voice of Nazaryev, evidently in haste.

"Mikhail Vassilyevich, in an hour or so I shall be flying to Moscow and want to see you first if I may."

"How's that, to Moscow?"

As he entered the dining-room, Nazaryev set down his modest slightly battered leather suitcase by the door.

"How's this happened so suddenly?" asked the director angrily.

"Quite an unexpected affair," began Nazaryev. "The Commissariat has summoned me to Moscow in connection with the restoration of the Klenov Factory."

"H-m. . . And how long will you have to be there, in Moscow?"

"I can't say at all. As soon as I know anything definite, I'll 'phone you at once. I've just came now to shake hands and tell you about all the jobs I shall have to leave, so to speak, half done. . ."

Laconic and exact as always, Nikolai Petrovich told the director all he had been doing in the factory and on the new construction, all of which Mikhail Vassilyevich would have to look after alone.

"Well, I think that's all," concluded Nazaryev. "Let's hope we meet again soon!"

"I hope you're not thinking of deserting the Urals altogether, Nikolai Petrovich," Permyakov joked somewhat awkwardly.

"Why, what makes you think that?" said Nazaryev with a serious smile. "The Urals is now my second home. . ."

Time passed, but Nikolai Petrovich did not return. One morning he rang through to say that his return to Lessogorsk was to be postponed for an indefinite period. Nazaryev's call found the director in Plastunov's office. After laying down the receiver, Plastunov looked enquiringly at the director.

"Well, what about it, Mikhail Vassilyevich? It looks as though you'll have to think about a new assistant, or the work will suffer."

"Yes, yes, it looks like it," agreed Permyakov gloomily.

Dimitri Nikitich emitted a cloud of smoke that rose lazily, and then, as though thinking aloud, he said:

"What about the engineer Terbenyov? What do you think about him? He seems to me a capable fellow, one with initiative. . . and a Urals man, too."

"That's all the same to me," said Permyakov still more gloomily. "After Nikolai Petrovich anyone else will seem to me—h'm—not just what I'm needing."

He was silent, lit his cigarette from Plastunov's pipe, frowned, and said slowly and weightily:

"What lessons one has to learn in life, Dimitri Nikitich!"

"Why, what have you in mind?" said the Party organizer, as though not guessing the director's thought.

"Why, it's this. . . you can come to know a man too late. And then another time a useless, lazy bit of trash catches your eye for some reason. . ."

"And you take them for pure gold. . ."

"Yes. . . and then the real, big side of a man you miss. . ."

"Never mind, Mikhail Vassilyevich, never mind. . . Better late than never. Well, then—shall we make it Terbenyov?"

"I know Terbenyov well. . . I had even thought of him then—last autumn. Very well. I've nothing against Terbenyov. . ."

"A letter for you, daughter!" said Tanya's mother, meeting her gaily. "Somebody brought it!"

Tanya snatched the envelope, only wanting to go and lock herself in her

room to be alone with it, as she always did—but suddenly her eye caught an unknown writing on the envelope. She gave a little soft cry, tore open the envelope and read the letter in one breath:

"Dear Tatyana Ivanovna, I am not acquainted with you personally, but Sergei has told me a great deal about you. Gather up all your courage, all your strength! Your husband, Sergei Alexeyevich Pankov, died the death of the brave on January 20th, 1942. I saw his tank catch fire from a fascist shell. That evening Sergei did not return. I did not find him in the field hospital either. Sergei and I had made an agreement that if anything happened to one of us, the other was to inform his family. I have been sent home to Siberia on long leave after a serious wound. I shall be passing through your station, and there I shall leave this letter. Take courage, dear Tatyana Ivanovna! Your loss is irretrievable, but remember that your husband fought proudly and fearlessly against the savage enemy of our country and sold his life dearly—in that battle he burned two enemy tanks and killed plenty of the Hitler swine! Remember that he loved you very dearly!

Yours sincerely,

Nikolai Kvashin."

The letter fell from Tanya's hand. A cold chill encompassed her as though some furious wind had blown open the door, letting in the black night.

"Why don't you put out the light?" asked her mother, looking into Tanya's room.

Tanya had spent the whole night with her letters and now she could not tear herself away from them. These postcards and checked leaves from the notebook covered with Sergei's small, neat handwriting seemed to hold within themselves that part of his life which no power on earth could take from Tanya, his wife.

Looking intently at every letter, Tanya could see in her mind's eye his large, warm hand tracing them, then folding the sheets and placing them in the envelope. And as he had once written, he had seen in his mind's eye this little room with the bright-coloured divan where they liked to sit in the evenings. There was the large blue plush cushion with the embroidered sunflowers which Tanya had always placed under his elbow when his shoulder and arm were healing. Here was the bookshelf they had "hung over for hours", as Natalya Andreyevna had said jokingly. Here they had read their favourite books aloud, argued, joked, pretended to be angry, accusing each other of various "philosophical errors". Sergei, for instance, could find nothing attractive in Hans Andersen's fairy-tales, while Tanya had loved them from her childhood days.

When she came home from the factory, Tanya would shut herself up in her room, jealously guarding the sanctity of this sacred world of memory. If any of her family entered, she would look at them impatiently, as much as to say: "Go away, I want to be alone!"

One day when Tanya came home from the factory there was a letter from Sergei waiting her. She snatched it up and read it, eagerly drinking in his every word, breath, thought, and wish, which this blessed letter brought her.

Coming home from the factory she would think: "Today there'll be the letter written on the 14th." Faint with suspense, she would ask her mother: "Any letters?" and the mother would answer gloomily: "Yes, there's one."

Tanya would shut herself up in her own world and read and re-read the letter, forcing herself to forget that the hand which had penned all these words of love was no more.

"Tomorrow there'll be the letter of the 17th, and then two or three more. . . and that'll be all," she thought.

And she actually did receive four more letters, the last one dated January 20th. It was very short, filling only one side of a sheet from the notebook.

"Tanya, my darling, my beloved! I have received all your letters, don't worry. We have orders to attack in half an hour. We are going further and further westward. We at the front are working day and night, clearing our land. Tell all our people at Lessogorsk that they, the Urals armament workers, must help us with the same ardour with which we are thrashing the Germans! It is now five o'clock in the morning. My comrade, my joy, what happiness it is to know that I have you!

Your Sergei."

Tanya already knew the letter by heart, but nevertheless she read again

and again under her breath: "what happiness it is to know that I have you!" And now there would be no more letters—not one more!

It was the first of February. There would be no more letters. In the blindage where Sergei had written to her by the light of a primitive lamp, some other tank commander was writing to his wife or his mother. No, there would be no more letters. All was over.

One day on her way home from work Tanya literally bumped up against Vera, who was waiting for her at the entrance.

"Tanya, my dear, how you've changed! . . If you only knew how I feel for you! Now you will be able to understand me better, now that you're suffering yourself! One's personal life is the main thing, after all! . . It's the strongest thing in one. People are ready enough to talk about trampling it down like some old clout, they all say that one must give up 'one's own, personal, petty interests', but if you take their own personal happiness away from them they get pale and thin, and go about looking like a limp, wet rag, as though they can't bear the light of day. . . and their work just falls from their hands!"

The last words she cried out almost triumphantly, as though Tanya's pale face and hollow eyes gave her courage.

"And the main thing, it's disgusting the way they all play the hero!"

"Who's 'playing the hero'?" asked Tanya sharply. The perfume of eau de Cologne coming from Vera's rosy cheeks, the ringlets, the muff with its pompons—the whole get-up of this young, blooming woman suddenly seemed to Tanya something artificial and offensive. "Please don't think that if I'm in trouble that will make me sympathize with your. . . your. . ."

Tanya could not find the word, her breath caught in her throat, and with an angry gesture she ran off to her own entrance.

"Well—as you please—I can do without you all right," Vera muttered and kicked a lump of snow. There was nowhere she wanted to go, it almost seemed to her that she even had no home.

"Dear heaven!" she whispered to herself. "Can it really be that everything's so horrible just because I left the shop?"

That evening, at supper, Ivan Stepanovich described the Stakhanovites' meeting.

"Tomorrow, free day, we're going to have a big voskresnik [1]. Things'll hum. Coming?"

"Of course I am."

"Meet at seven sharp."

When Tanya, Ivan Stepanovich and Kostromin left the house, there were people wherever one looked. It seemed as though not roads and pavements connected the blocks of houses, but this huge stream of people.

Tanya found herself in a brigade bringing up cement and sand, obeying the orders of the stone-cutters' foreman, who shouted at the voluntary helpers and hustled them about without the least ceremony. Tanya worked as she always did, swiftly and carefully, but without feeling any pleasure in it, as though in a dream. But the speed of the work, the voices and songs, the sunshine and sparkling snowdrifts, the snow crunching under her feet, the familiar faces, the blue and golden air, and the seething activity around her seemed to thaw her a little. A slight colour rose in her cheeks, she felt hot and wanted to throw her jacket open.

At the dinner hour large numbers of people gathered in the brick shed, warmed by the stoves boiling the mortar.

Listening intently, Plastunov shook his head.

"The wind's rising," he said, "let's hope there isn't going to be a blizzard. . . we certainly don't need one just at present!"

Seeing the director, he drew him aside.

While the people were eating and warming themselves, a band played marches and songs, and when it stopped for a rest, Plastunov approached the director and Kostromin, even more worried than the first time:

"It's raging outside! The weather may upset all our plans! What about pepping the folks up a bit? Seems to me the time's ripe for a short meeting."

And they began to discuss who was to speak.

As she listened to the howling of the wind, Tanya remembered that sparkling blue snowstorm which had greeted her love. All those first days of her short, agitated love suddenly seemed to pass

[1] From the word "voskressenye"—Sunday. Voluntary work done on Sundays on some urgent job.

before her eyes. She hastily unfastened her jacket, took her handkerchief from the pocket of her blouse and wiped her eyes.

"You've dropped something," said Plastunov, pointing to the floor.

"Thanks," said Tanya absent-mindedly, then stooping down, gave a little cry. Plastunov turned.

"What's the matter, Tatyana Ivanovna?"

"I almost lost. . . it's my husband's last letter," whispered Tanya, white-lipped.

"Oh, dreadful to lose that!" said Plastunov.

"Just think," she said with sudden animation, pressing the treasured relic to her lips. "He—Sergei—in this letter he wrote about our Lessogorsk people as well."

"About the Lessogorsk people?" said Plastunov, pricking up his ears. "What did he say—I don't suppose it's a secret?"

Tanya repeated what Sergei had said about the Lessogorsk people.

"Such a splendid message should be passed on," said Plastunov seriously. "I would like you to speak at the meeting."

When Permyakov, as chairman, gave the floor to "Tatyana Ivanovna Pankova, wife of a front-line hero", Tanya climbed rather tremulously onto the pile of bricks and looked at the crowd of expectant faces with a confusion mounting to fright. But suddenly those lines Sergei had written flashed again through her mind. "Tell them. . ." And she said with a great simplicity:

"My husband, Sergei Pankov, a guardsman, a tank captain, wrote me in his last letter. . ." She unfolded the paper, and her lips trembled. Dozens of eyes were fixed on her. "Here are his words: 'Tell all our people at Lessogorsk that they, our Urals armament workers, must help us with the same ardour with which we are thrashing the Germans. . .' Comrades. . ."

For a moment Tanya paused. The wind was roaring against the walls of the shed. In this raging blizzard Tanya had read Sergei's last words, and they must not fail, these last words before his death.

"Comrades!" Tanya called in a ringing, commanding voice. "Remember that these were the words my husband wrote to the people of Lessogorsk just before his death! I. . ." (again her lips trembled, and she bit them till the blood came) "I bring you his last behest—and I shall be the first to carry it out! Let the wind and the frost be ten times as bad, I promise to carry out the plan of work, to stand as firmly as my husband did. . . and shame on anybody who leaves, who lets the front down. . . We will stand firm! We're stronger than any wind and frost! I will carry out my promise!"

Tears were running down her face as she descended into the crowd.

When the people left the shed after the meeting, the blizzard was raging still more fiercely. White snow-drifts rose into the sky and fell again stinging the face like a thousand needles.

"Come on. . . run!" cried Tanya, and lowering her head, she charged through the whirling snow, the frost and wind.

She could no longer count how many times her hands had been racked with pain, how many times she had been unable to catch her breath, how many times she had been blinded by the flying snow which seared her face and froze her hair and cheeks. She was filled with that calm, cold rage of which Sergei had told her. As she hurried about, carrying material, handing it up, assisting in every way she could, she found time to stamp her feet, rub her nose, cheeks and knees, swing her arms like a cabman, or swiftly wipe her eyes.

Then the snow thinned, the hurricane died down and the frost broke.

"That's the limit!" laughed Tanya angrily. "Disgusting! As soon as everything's done, the weather decides to improve!"

"Now don't start getting angry, Tatyana Ivanovna," broke in Kostromin's voice merrily. "You can go home with an easy mind—you've carried out your part of the voskresnik with honour!"

Fermenting of New Wine

It was a warm day in February when the branch line was opened. Already in the morning everybody knew that the first train was to pass along it from the main line bringing a load of charges which were needed for the Lessogorsk furnaces. Dozens of trucks were to follow loaded with metal scrap—parts of captured tanks.

It was twenty kilometres to the main line. People from all the nearby villages and settlements were lining the track, to greet the first train. Suddenly there was a shout from a lively lad who had clambered up a spruce-tree like a squirrel:

"It's coming! It's coming!"

A black plume of smoke rose above the shaggy forest, then the high body of the locomotive appeared. A piercing whistle rang through the air, and the people lining the embankment laughed in response.

Rumbling weightily, the heavy train rolled along the new rails. Everything was clearly to be seen in the merciless sunshine: the gaping holes in the thick armour plating, mutilated interiors of the German tanks, the shattered turrets, the gaping manholes, the torn treads.

When the train with its booty metal drew up at the platform, not far from the new open-hearth shop, the dinner hour was just beginning. The first to run up was Vassili Luzin, just as he had left the furnace, hot and dirty.

"Ho-ho! That's fine—going to burn up the Germans!" he shouted in huge delight.

Some days later a general meeting was held at the factory to celebrate the opening of the new assembly shop. The Party organizer letting his eyes wander over the faces of the people gathered there, said in a quiet voice:

"Dear comrades, people of our splendid Lessogorsk Plant! Let us recall for a moment the blackest days of our history which we lived through not so very long ago—and which did not daunt us! As long as the war continues, difficult days may return, there will still be a great deal of suffering and blood, there are still sacrifices ahead of us, but they will not daunt us! We are people of a special kind,—armament workers supplying our gallant men at the front; we shall see the day of victory, and many of us, looking back over the path of war which we have traversed, will ask ourselves: after all this, is there anything on earth which can frighten us? No, nothing!"

When the applause died down after Plastunov's speech, a stir was seen in the packed crowd of people—way was being made for somebody to come to the tribune, and the words could be heard: "A wounded man, let the wounded man through!"

A tall man in a military tunic, the left sleeve thrust into his pocket, was making his way to the tribune. His face showed evidences of frost-bite. When he mounted the tribune and took off his cap, it could be seen that his hair was snowy white, only the thick brows on his face stood out a golden brown. Suddenly Yura Pankov's shrill childish voice rang out:

"Sergei!"

Zina Nevyantseva came running into the shop, dripping with perspiration and barely able to speak. She threw herself on Tanya's neck.

"Come to the meeting at once!" she gasped. "Your Sergei's come. . . He's on the tribune, going to speak, going to tell us how he burned the German tank and how he escaped afterwards. . . Tanya! . . Heavens, she's going! . . . Mercy, what have I done! Girls, get some water, water! . . Here, drink this, Tanya, dear! Drink it—that's better. Well, now we're all right again—no one ever dies of happiness! Come along!"

"The fascist shell burned my tank, but in place of that one, we here in Lessogorsk are going to make a thousand first-class machines!"

"We'll make them!" the shout thundered through the shop.

"We shall destroy the Huns. They spit bullets and shells, they mutilate our bodies" (he lightly touched his empty sleeve) "but they can't mutilate the spirit of our Russian, Soviet man! That's fixed and unchangeable, it's tempered like steel, the spirit of a Soviet fighting man! . . And so I've returned to my own Lessogorsk, to the powerful furnace of toil, but I have not come to rest, I have come to work together with you. I can no longer fight in a tank, but I shall never leave the battle as long as my heart beats. The command has appointed me receiving agent for tanks and the commander of trains conveying tanks to the front. . ."

Tanya was coming. She could see nothing but that white head, that thin, almost unrecognizable face. She never could remember who led her along, who helped her climb up. But she was beside

him on the tribune, and losing herself in the deep blue gaze of his eyes.

On March 10th, 1942, five days before the set period the first trainload of Lessogorsk tanks left for the front. Evening was drawing in. The day had been warm with sunshine and a thaw, and this first spring brightness and mildness seemed to make the air dance and filled the lofty, rosy heavens.

A meeting had been held, farewell words said, and the driver was peering out of the window, alert and soldierly.

"Well!" said Mikhail Vassilyevich. "Everything's ready. Let her go!"

The train started.

"Bon voyage!"

Caps flew up into the air, handkerchiefs fluttered. The band started up a march.

Tanya and Sergei were standing on the platform of the first truck; behind them were dozens of platform trucks under whose canvas stood the new tanks, looking like the craggy Lessogorsk hills. They seemed to be standing to attention, these powerful medium tanks. The muzzles of their guns pointed westward, like arms reaching out to strike in merciless vengeance.

The last houses of the settlement flashed past, and the factory was left behind. The train was now passing through the forest. Darkness was already gathering in its depths, the sky deepened. Sombre grey clouds drifted up from the west. A sharp, misty breeze came to meet them. Over the darkening snow a ragged mist curled, merging with the smoke of the locomotive. The sky lowered still more, the forest was filled with an intense blackness as though sunshine had never penetrated its black depths.

Suddenly a bright light flashed ahead through the darkness, the lamps illuminated the whole of the Lessogorsk branch line. Running ahead, they seemed to call to life a few early stars shining through the mist. Blue shadows played over the snow, and the mighty boles of ancient spruce stood out against the darkness of the forest. Brighter and brighter shone the stars, while the lights, pushing forward, led the train further and further on its way to the front, further and further westward to the place where the Lessogorsk branch joined the great main line

Translated by Eve Manning

Sverdlovsk—Moscow,
June 1942—Septembre 1943.

Drawing by V. Fomichov

THE HITLERITE CLIQUE THAT DREAMED OF DEVOURING THE WORLD REMIND US OF THE FROG IN AESOP'S FABLES

"... So he puffed himself up, once, twice, and again, and went still swelling on in important emulation, till in the end—spite of the cautions of his brother flogs—he burst himself."

Aesop, "The Frog and tho Ox".

ETERNALLY FROZEN SOIL

The train from Vladivostok is westbound for Moscow. Before reaching Chita the railway turns south where it winds its way amongst the bottomless morasses that form part of this region of untouched forests and mineral resources. The train leaves the taiga belt and cuts across the Siberian plain, but the unmistakable scent of the pine forests again enters the train windows after it passes Sverdlovsk.

As we look at this stern and majestic sweep of virgin forests it is difficult to believe that for thousands of miles to the north, to the west and even to the south all this vegetation covers a layer of frozen ground and ice that never melts. Between the Mezen and Pechora rivers the eternally frozen soil lies under a thin stratum of active live soil. Here it is gradually being overcome by the warm, damp breath of the Gulf Stream. On the lower reaches of the Ob and the eastern sector of the Yenissei Basin, however, it is not only the drill of the miner that strikes into frozen soil but the gardener's spade frequently rings against it. Eternally frozen soil is found throughout Siberia, right along the Eurasian continent, and includes the Angara, Lake Baikal, the Lena and all its tributaries, the Indigirka and the Kolyma—the last two rivers flow along a bed of ice in winter and summer although they are flanked by excellent forests on either bank. The water of the lakes fills icy bowls. In the tundras the frozen soil occurs in strata of unknown thickness. The greatest known depth to which soil is frozen was discovered by Soviet explorers in Northern Yakutia at Kozhevnikov Bay where it is over 1,700 feet thick. If we exclude the ice cap of Greenland and the Antarctic this is a record figure for the whole world. Farther to the north the ground is frozen beneath the seabed. . .

The first reports made by Russian travellers concerning eternally frozen soil covered with forests were regarded during the last century as stories as true as those of Sindbad the Sailor. "How can one seriously believe that pines would send out their mighty roots into the ice that cuts short the life of all vegetation? Keep such yarns out of science!" said the pedants even at the beginning of the XIX century, for they had overlooked the wonderful fact of the adaptation of the living organism to the most difficult conditions of existence. It seems that as a result of natural selection the trees in the eternally frozen regions have "learned" to send out their roots horizontally along the surface and not vertically into the ground. This makes them less stable and they fall easier victims to the wind (the northern parts of the taiga are therefore obstructed by numerous fallen trees) but until such times as the tree is overthrown by a storm it lives and stretches up to the heavens.

The Siberian taiga and the jungles of the eastern Maritime Region and the Ussuri Region, which bear no resemblance to the taiga, are the children of our era except for a few archaisms such as the spotted deer and the "jen-shen", the root of life. However, a yard below the surface of the earth, the ice age has not yet ended in these parts. This is explained by the fact that the upper layers on the earth's surface work like a time retarding machine. They are poor conductors of heat so that their "heat inertia" is very great. Variations in temperature at the surface take an extremely long time to penetrate into the earth. When at the Leningrad latitude people are out walking in their summer clothes the coldest day of the year has just reached a point some ten feet below them. Under the soil it is still January. The hottest July day reaches that depth in September.

Some investigators regard eternally frozen soil as being the retarded reflection of the climatic changes of a century and not of a year. The warm centuries have not entered the depths of the frozen soil. The approach of the warm epoch can already be felt in the soil of the northern

sections of the European part of the Soviet Union. In the Asiatic North with its long snowless winter and short days the temperature balance is still in favour of the cold.

The study of the temperature of the frozen soil strata at various depths throughout its whole area enabled Mikhail Sumgin, one of the leading Soviet specialists on this subject, to plot "temperature regions" in the frozen soil. Despite the severity and great length of the winter season the temperature at a depth of thirty to forty feet is comparatively high.

The regular study of eternally frozen soil has led Soviet specialists to a large number of generalizations, the most important amongst them being Sumgin's theory of the degradation of eternally frozen soil in modern times. In Mezen, for example, investigators have shown that since the middle of last century up to the present time the edge of the frozen belt has moved a hundred kilometres to the north, that is, it has moved northward at the rate of a kilometre a year. It is therefore to be assumed that the eternally frozen soil is in a period of regression in the Mezen region. There is no doubt that this new period is taking the place of the period of transgression when the frozen soil moved farther and farther southward; consequently we see here periodic oscillations similar to those of the sea but on a geological scale.

Today, in the Soviet country a new force is taking part in the game of the elemental forces of nature, that of the all-conquering organized labour of man.

Over areas that would contain France several times over, amongst the white spots of still unsurveyed territory mineral deposits of astonishing richness have been discovered. To the east and southeast of Lake Baikal, in the metal bearing belt of the Baikal fold, there are zinc, lead, tin and the rare elements. The coal of Irkutsk is a valuable chemical raw material. Salt and oil, the gold bearing provinces that have already been surveyed, and the new deposits of the Vitim-Olekma system and the Barguzin taiga—these are but a few of the riches that lie hidden in the eternally frozen soil.

Man's right to this virgin district would be established, it seems, by such simple things as comfortable houses and powerful railways. These things, however, are not simple to build in this region.

The railway engineers who forty-five years ago directed the construction of the Transbaikal Railway from their parlour-cars were inclined to regard the frozen soil in the same way as they would regard ice on the Nevsky Prospekt in St. Petersburg, something for the scavenger to deal with rather than the engineer. They thought it was a curious phenomenon, a subject for witticisms on the question of ready-made ice-buckets for champagne. The curious phenomenon, however, soon showed its real elemental nature. Newly erected buildings began to collapse and sink into liquid mud. The frozen earth warmed by the foundations of the inhabited houses, thawed to a considerable depth. When the foundations began to freeze again in the winter all the cracks in them were filled with thousands of crystals which until then had been free to crush rocks, to move boulders in the mountains and which now began to turn the foundations of the houses into frozen dust. This is but one of the reasons why the buildings of former years present such a pitiful picture of leaning walls, missing corners and broken-down fences.

A classical example of the deformation of buildings erected on a foundation of eternally frozen soil is to be seen in the workshops of the former Transbaikal Railway in the town of Chita. The workshops were completed in 1898 from good quality material in accordances with all the rules of the builder's art. Before two years had passed the deformation of the buildings began as the soil below them started to thaw. The deformation continued for about ten years until the soil was thawed right through, whereupon the workshops became stable in form. This, however, was one of the fortunate cases. One of the first engineers to build under the conditions obtaining where the soil is eternally frozen was Nikolai Bogdanov, whose book *Buildings on Eternally Frozen Soil* was published in St. Petersburg in 1912. "Embankments collapsed," he wrote, "buildings settled, walls parted company with the buildings, credits were demanded for their repair and for the building of new sections which in their turn began to collapse." At this time the phenomenon of eternally frozen soil was not being studied by the scientist and the engineer, and Bogdanov

This house is built on eternally frozen ground. The ice beneath has melted, the water risen through the floor, filled the building and poured from the windows

had to admit that "nobody had thought of the necessity of working out the best methods of building and types of construction best adapted to local conditions in order to remove the very cause of the chronic expenses due to insufficient knowledge of the conditions obtaining".

The strength of the frozen soil which at times is greater than the pressure exerted on their foundations by the New York skyscrapers was only fully appreciated in Soviet times when reconstruction of the Baikal-Amur main railway line across the frozen soil zone was undertaken and when the experimental "pile dwellings" of Igarka and other young towns of the Soviet North were built. These new constructions are an astounding example of creative science. They testify to the splendid work of the explorers who preceded the builders and who are now carrying on scientific work in the Institute for the Study of Frozen Soil of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. by working up the experience gained in the field.

The planned study of frozen soil on a national scale began in the U.S.S.R. in 1930 when, on the initiative of Academician Vladimir Vernadsky and the greatest authority on the subject Sumgin (who died in 1942), a commission, which I had the honour and the pleasure of heading, was formed to study eternally frozen soil. In 1936 the Commission became a Committee and in 1939 it grew into the Institute for the Study of Frozen Soil[1]. This Institute is a scientific centre for the study of eternally frozen soil and the seasonal freezing of soils and subsoils. The work follows a well thought out plan which is closely connected with real-life problems. Theory was placed at the service of practice and in turn became enriched by the experience gained practically. This circumstance determined the organization of the Institute and its division into two parts, the department for the general study of frozen soil and the department of engineering in frozen country. The Institute's workers include a large number of engineers. The Institute laboratory, apart from its main work of studying the physical and mechanical properties of the subsoil, also works on problems set by the engineering department of the Institute.

At the present time the Institute maintains four stations in the eternally frozen regions—at Igarka, Yakutsk, Anadyr and Vorkuta (in the Autonomous Republic of the Komi, a tiny northern people). These stations study the frozen soil under natural conditions and test in practice that which has been done in the laboratory. In addition, they render assistance to local bodies and survey building sites within the locality they cover.

A few practical examples of how the struggle against the eternally frozen soil is carried on will give a better idea of the work that has been done by the Academy's stations than a mere list of the subjects studied.

Everyone of us in his childhood days has filled a bottle with water, placed it outside in the frost and waited with bated breath for the bottle to burst. In the North this innocent experiment is carried out on a grand scale, the water

[1] The Institute now bears the name of the author of this article, Academician V. A. Obruchev.—*Ed*

being that of the lakes. Here the sealed vessel is formed by the rivers with their beds of ice or by an area covered by huge hummocks. The subsoil water cuts itself underground passages and, reaching the frozen soil, finds itself in a trap. Above is the thick armour created by the severe continental winter; below, more icy armour that has been built up during centuries. The water has one way out and it finds that way. It flows under the foundations of the new buildings that have so carelessly employed their warmth to thaw a passage for the water. When the water breaks through to the surface it is often instantaneously frozen into fantastic cascades; this is an indication that the temperature of the water was already below freezing point while flowing through its underground corridors. The high pressure did not permit the water to freeze, but once it escaped from its prison it immediately turned into hard crystal. The frozen waterfalls coming from the windows of houses are one of the forms of eternal frost.

In the European parts of the U.S.S.R. scientists work chiefly to do away with eternal frost. They are trying to drive it into the Arctic Ocean or as deeply as possible into the ground, destroying it by every means at their disposal. The means, incidentally, are many.

According to the above-mentioned theory propounded by the Soviet scholar Sumgin, the "cold reserves" which give rise to the eternally frozen soil are giving out on their western boundaries. Only a slightly favourable balance on the side of heat in its continuous struggle against ice is required for the eternally frozen soil to surrender and to begin to thaw over large areas. Even in the tundra, in order to make the eternal frost recede deep into the ground all that is necessary is to remove the moss from the surface and lay bare the black soil. Moss is the loyal ally of eternal frost; it absorbs all the dew during the night, is constantly drinking moisture from the soil and during the day the sun's rays compel it to give up a portion of this moisture. The greater part of the energy in the rays of the sun is used up in evaporating the water accumulated in the moss, almost nothing remaining to warm up the soil. The frozen soil, therefore, moves without hindrance almost as far as the multicoloured carpet of lichens which covers it. In the winter the moss is frozen through and immediately becomes a heat conductor permitting the exit of terrestrial heat with the same ease as it previously prevented heat from reaching the earth. The frost, therefore, aided by the moss, reigns supreme throughout the whole thickness of the soil. Freed of the moss the earth is warmed up by the sun, the frost recedes into the depths of the earth and its place is taken by joyfully gurgling streams that have been set free.

Frost and water are the bitterest of enemies. This fact is used by a third party—by man—to set the two hostile elements at each other and make them both work for him.

There are many cases in which water is of help to man. The mighty stream from the hydromonitor, for example, washes away and crushes lumps of frozen gold-bearing earth that would be difficult to crush by other means.

At the same time water is a treacherous enemy. When the first cold comes on it creeps up to the roads and railways and suddenly rises up from under the road or railway forming a mound of heaving. It is a hill filled with water. It is liable to explode at any moment like a mine and hurl blocks of ice the size of a house in all directions. The explanation of this is that the road, which has no covering of snow, freezes to a particularly great depth forming a ribbon which bars the way to the streams flowing deep down in the frozen soil. The road becomes a dam behind which a subglacial lake forms whose waters are almost freezing. There comes a moment when the compressed water bursts through to the surface where it makes a "slide" on the road on which horses fall, where sledges and trucks get iced up like an aircraft in a cyclone and where the ice builds itself up storey by storey.

The Soviet scientist Nester Tolstikhin classified subglacial waters lying below the eternally frozen region and produced a detailed characteristic of them; Sumgin evolved a theory of the formation of the hummocks which he expressed mathematically.

In the region of the headwaters of the Indigirka, the Kolyma, and the Yana, ice caps have been discovered over an area covering almost a million square

kilometres. On the River Moma, a tributary of the Indigirka, an ice hummock twenty-six kilometres long, between five and seven kilometres wide and about four metres thick has been found. This hummock contains between six and seven hundred million cubic metres of ice. Another Soviet scholar, Andrei Chekotillo, called this district "the region of great ice hummocks".

One of the gigantic hummocks of this region—on the River Kyra, also in the Indigirka basin—with an ice content of thirty-nine million cubic metres, was investigated by Pyotr Shvetsov and Victor Sedov, workers of the Institute. They established the fact that the hummock was formed under the frozen soil layer which had apparently come to the surface at this point through tectonic fissures in the frozen layer which here has a thickness of 800 to 950 feet.

The formation of injurious ice hummocks in this region is combated with the aid of. . . frost! Parallel to the road which traps the water and which is in danger of being buried under ice hummocks, a defence dam is built. Perhaps "built" is not quite the right word for it, for all the building work that is done is the digging of a ditch which is kept free of snow. After this the frost itself begins to work. It penetrates more deeply into the earth that has been cleared of snow so that right along this strip the subsoil is frozen to a greater depth and holds back the water from the road just as well as the dams of the Zuider Zee protect the regained lands of Holland from the sea.

Paradoxical as it may seem in some places the cold is the ally of the farmer. Ploughshares turning up the new fields in the region of eternal frost often strike blocks of ice when they bite into the thawed soil. This does not disturb the farmer however. Without this stratum of underground ice the fields in many places would become desert land. This sounds like nonsense but every child in this strange country knows the value of the ice "screen" as it is called. The screen keeps the subsoil water near the surface, condenses evaporation and thus enables plants to live. The hot, rainless summers of the Asiatic North bring a dryness of the atmosphere which is five times more terrible than the droughts of California where artificial rain is used to save the crops. Will the soil dry if the eternally frozen stratum is allowed to recede too deep? If the ice screen is allowed to recede how far should it go? These are some of the questions with which the Academy's Stations for the Study of Eternally Frozen Soil have to deal.

If you were to ask the inhabitants of Northern Asia whether we should warm up the frozen soil and abolish it whatever happens—a question which is invariably answered by "yes" in the Chuiskaya Valley and the western foothills of the Polar Urals—the answer you would receive might be quite different.

Inhabitants of the Yenissei taiga, or Kolyma or even of the Amur district would tell you straight out not to interfere with the frozen soil. The conquest of the frozen soil in these parts is a matter of patiently adapting it and of adapting yourself to it, of preventing it from doing damage and of retaining it as a foundation for buildings and railway lines. In some places it must be preserved like "the whale" on which all solid ground stands!

Survey has shown that there are regions as big as whole countries which rest on frozen water like floating islands. One of the objects of investigation is a remarkable geographical formation which lies deep down in the continental earth and melts at the temperature of a summer day; this is ice dug out from under the ground. Its face suffers erosion from rivers more quickly than granite. Ice islands and the ice banks of rivers are washed away to the sea by dozens of metres a year. There are places where the sun's rays reach the open ground, overcome the eternal frost and score a Pyrrhic victory, leaving behind a monument in the shape of a string of lakes filling in the holes. As soon as the excavated ice near the surface thaws the soil settles down and yesterday's plain becomes a valley filled to the brim with water. Only the tops of the tallest trees stand out above the water. Sometimes whole settlements are in the beds of future lakes. This was how the story of the miraculous city of Kitezh arose, in which the bells of the legendary city are still supposed to ring from the depths of a bottomless lake, the story which forms the basis

of many folk tales and of the music of some Russian composers.

This is why the conquerors of the North, when they arrive at those places where the cold prevents the formation of swamps, are wont to say that if there had been no eternal frost they would have had to invent it for these parts. It does not prevent trees from growing and it holds up the roofs of mine galleries without the use of props. Coal is blasted but with ammonal and the frozen earth retains the arched roofs of this new type of building in perfect shape.

We may now say that eternally frozen subsoil has ceased to be a hindrance to the builder. It is no longer a question of whether skyscrapers or huge factories can be built here; they can be built and built to last. The question today is how can they be built most profitably. The modern engineer, on the basis of a survey and the data provided by an investigation of the frozen soil has to decide whether he is going to employ the principle of retaining the earth in its frozen state or of thawing it. Measures have then to be adopted according to the choice made of these two contradictory alternatives.

The measures that must be taken are to be found in the publications of the Institute for the Study of Frozen Soil. The Institute has worked out practical methods of using the free forces of nature to combat her. The generally accepted system of foundations is that of separate supports worked out by Nikolai Tsytovich. There are even laws regulating building construction in the eternally frozen regions. "Technical Instruction for Surveying, Designing and Building Railways in the Eternally Frozen Districts", issued in 1941, is a monument to the great work done by Soviet scholars in this field; it is a summary of their experiences.

Just before the war the Institute advanced the idea of establishing artificial beds of long-standing, if not eternal, frost in the form of ice cellars; the idea, widely adopted in practice, was elaborated by Engineer Mikhail Krylov, one of the Institute's workers. The ice cellars are covered with an insulating layer of cheap and easily obtainable material such as sawdust, moss, peat, slag, pine-needles etc., and will last for many years. This has been proved by the experience gained in employing several dozen such cellars of 100 to 500 tons volume at various places in the U.S.S.R. By the employment of the simplest forms of refrigeration these ice cellars can be maintained at a temperature of 1° C. below zero, and if necessary at even lower temperatures. The most effective are those used for the storage of potatoes and other vegetables. Vegetables do not freeze at a temperature of 1° C. below zero, but the biological processes are checked so that the loss through storage is negligible. The maintenance of these ice cellars is very simple: the places which have thawed are repaired and the addition of ice is made during the winter with the aid of natural cold, thus causing no interruption in their use. The building of ice cellars has a great future before it in the U.S.S.R., a considerable part of which has long unchanging winters.

Durable artificial freezing is also used by Soviet engineers for the construction of defensive works. Amongst the works of this nature mention may be made of the protection of the 600 yard dam of a large Moscow reservoir; the dam is protected from bombs by a two-metre thick layer of ice insulated during the warm weather by fir branches. On the Leningrad front fortifications were built of frozen soil without the addition of water; water was impossible to obtain and it was replaced in the building jobs by thawed clayey soil containing natural moisture. By these works the Soviet scholars studying eternal frost have contributed their share to the struggle against the German invaders.

Research in the sphere of eternal frost provides science with a number of new and varied problems to solve.

The quite new, northern, branch of agrometeorology shows that with the aid of eternal frost the "microclimate" may be very flexibly regulated, that is twenty inches under the surface of the earth the weather may be changed and perfected irrespective of what is going on in the whole troposphere. In the eternally frozen region the "microclimate" changes from hill to hill and from slope to slope. Conditions now exist for tomatoes to ripen where oats formerly perished. The ploughed lands of the eternally frozen districts of Eastern Siberia, Yaku-

tia and the Far East produce harvests larger than those of the Ukraine.

Those studying the eternal frost in these parts should be followed by soil scientists. At the present time they are devoting their attention to the role of mother soils in the soil formation. The eternal frost is placing before them the grand task of experimenting "in reverse": all the soil processes go on here in a thin isolated layer of the so-called "active" soil. The study of this layer is full of promise for the future of soil science.

The biologist is faced with many unsolved problems in the eternally frozen regions. It is interesting to watch the way in which warm-blooded animals build winter burrows on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. How do they manage to maintain a positive temperature in the eternally frozen subsoil? Do they select islands of thawed ground for their hibernation or did nature solve the problem of anabiosis in warm-blooded animals before man did?

Will not the archaeologist find whole encampments of primitive man in the eternally frozen soil, perhaps not man in the shape of a couple of pitiful bones where great scholarship and scientific thought together with the gift of fantasy is required to imagine the original, but man that has been as completely preserved as the mammoth which he hunted?

In the calm and persistent labour of the Soviet scholars and engineers who conquer the eternal frost by the most delicate methods, armed with weapons provided by physics and the progressive science of agriculture, a splendid morrow is being born for the Soviet North.

VLADIMIR OBRUCHEV,
Academician

HIS COMMANDER

It was a frosty night in February. I searched for a long time among the ruins of the burnt city for Major Vazhdayev, whose battalion had been one of the first to penetrate the city. I walked past still smouldering brick walls, through the snow, blackened in places by gunpowder, and reddened in others by the glow of fires, and looked into demolished houses. Finally I found the major in a ruined chapel. Surrounded by his comrades, he was sitting on a ground-sheet, which had been spread on the snow.

I heard a cautioning voice behind me and, turning around saw an elderly soldier in a black, smoke-stained fur jacket.

"Is it our commander you wish to see?" he asked quietly putting his hand up to his cap.

"Yes, Major Vazhdayev," I replied. "Are you his orderly?"

"Yes, Sergeant Yevstakhiev is the name. Excuse me, but, you see, the major has just had a great blow. . . his wife's been killed. So if you could possibly wait a little. . ."

The sergeant once more put his hand to his cap. His small kindly eyes looked questioningly into mine.

"O.K.," I said, "I'll wait." And I sat down on a stone.

A house was blazing across the way. By its glare I could clearly see the group of officers around Vazhdayev, as well as the major himself. I noticed that his face was no longer young and very tired, and that he was looking way off into space, over the heads of his companions.

Meanwhile the sergeant sat down on the snow by my side with the remark:

"Yes, that's how it is!"

"Who was the major's wife?" I asked.

"A liaison-agent in the regiment. When our men took the city, the divisional commander awarded her an order for bravery. We searched for her and found her body not long ago. The major and I returned from the funeral half an hour ago. She was little, but she sure was brave. I myself dug her grave. . ."

I noticed that his voice was trembling.

"And my major," continued the sergeant after a moment's silence, "is a remarkably brave man. . ."

Yevstakhiev looked at me steadily as if to assure himself that I believed him. Then he sighed, shook his head, and went on:

"Again I've been thinking, what can I do to help him? If I were a close friend of his, or a brother, say. . . But, as

it is, what consolation can I offer him? Words alone can't help much. And everything had been going along so well! Our battalion was the first to break into the city. Of course I was constantly at the major's side, but he was always getting ahead of me. And now, when we might have been celebrating, this thing had to happen. . ."

I did not know how Major Vazhdayev was taking his grief, but I felt that the sorrow of this man with the small, kindly eyes was boundless. His words showed sincere love for his commander.

"Have you been with the major long?" I asked.

"All through the war!" came the quick reply. "Almost three years now. Do you know, he once saved my life. It happened in the Sinyavin swamps. He was a captain then, in command of a company. We jumped into a trench and a bullet put my tommy-gun out of order. And there was a Fritz making for me with his dagger. The captain rushed between us. Fritz attacked him wounding him in the arm. But by that time I managed to give the dog what was coming to him. . ."

At that moment Vazhdayev rose, some of the other officers also stood up, and I approached the major. The sergeant followed me, whispering:

"Please don't upset him, don't ask him about his wife!"

The major and I spoke of many things that evening. The battalion was stationed in the city for the night, and we put up in the basement of a house to which the sergeant had brought some straw. Vazhdayev told me among other things that he had formerly been an agronomist, and after a while he himself broached the subject of his wife's death.

"You probably know of it," he remarked in conclusion. "I saw you talking with Mom, who must have told you all about it."

I gathered that "Mom" was the major's nickname for the sergeant.

We turned in.

"Of course," I heard the major say, "he has brought me some straw. Please lie down in my place. I shall not sleep."

I did so. A little later I became aware of the figure of the orderly near the major as he sat leaning on his elbow over his dispatch-case.

"You should be getting some sleep, Comrade Major," he whispered. "We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow."

Waking up during the night I saw that the major had fallen asleep and was covered with the sergeant's fur jacket, while Yevstakhiev, his greatcoat thrown over him, lay with his arms folded under his head, watching the first streaks of dawn faintly appearing in the east.

I had occasion to visit Vazhdayev's battalion again in May. This time it was stationed in a gloomy, marshy spot, near the Baltic border. Last year's grass was yellow underfoot, and the howling of the cold wind added to the dreariness of the scene. The battalion was making ready for battle.

Major Vazhdayev was at the command post in a tiny dugout. "Mom", whom I recognized immediately, was with him. The sergeant was baling water out of the dugout when I entered, and he greeted me like an old friend. When Vazhdayev left the room for a moment, the sergeant said:

"The major forbade me to speak about the death of his wife to anyone of the officers or men who did not know about it. For a long time I wondered why he wanted to make a secret of it. But then I realized what it was." He looked at me knowingly, and went on: "He doesn't want the soldiers to think that it is mostly for his personal sorrow that he is taking revenge against the Germans. He wants to be the same as the rest. And another thing," the sergeant moved a little closer, "the reason he was able to take it as he did was because his character is like a steel spring, and because of his utmost faith in our victory which is the only thing he lives for."

He was about to say something more but the major returned and Yevstakhiev resumed his work.

During the several hours I spent with the major I observed the orderly very attentively. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of almost motherly love for his commander. His love and devotion had won him the sympathy of all who knew him. I noticed that the officers and men addressed him with the greatest respect. The major himself spoke to him with a sort of exaggerated abruptness as though ashamed of revealing his tender feeling for the man. But

when we were left alone, Vazhdayev told me:

"He is like my own brother. No man could have a more devoted friend. When the war ends, I shall not let him go away from me, we shall share the future together. . ."

That evening the fighting waxed furious. Again and again Vazhdayev sent his orderly with assignments to the companies and platoons. And on his return, Yevstakhiev gave detailed reports like the experienced soldier he was.

Towards night the situation grew worse. Communications were severed and time and again the sergeant fulfilled the duties of runner.

It was already dawn when I saw Yevstakhiev again. The battalion had carried out its assignment and captured fresh positions. The sergeant had been wounded in the fighting. I was told that he had stayed close to his commander and had been wounded by the bullet of a German sniper, evidently meant for the major.

Four soldiers came along slowly carrying the sergeant on a ground-sheet. The major walked behind them, his own tommy-gun on his chest, and another, the sergeant's, in his hand. The face of the wounded man was black with soot. A lorry stood on the road, and to this the soldiers carried the sergeant. The major came up to them.

"Well, how are things, Sergei?" asked Vazhdayev.

"Mm. . . nothing much," replied the sergeant, "just an ordinary wound."

"Get better quickly, don't loll about too long," said the major in that abrupt tone of his. But then his voice broke. "It's going to be hard without you!" he added.

The driver got the motor running. The soldiers raised their burden in order to lay him on the stretcher.

"Comrade Major, Nikolai Konstantinovich," said the sergeant quietly, "would you come nearer a moment. . ."

The major bent over him. I did not hear what "Mom" said, but I saw the major kiss his orderly, then straighten up, turn sharply, and walk quickly towards his dugout.

A. CHAKOVSKY

PUTTING A GOOD FACE ON IT

Some German papers speak of the "long-awaited" allied invasion. Let's hope they like it now they've got it!

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

BOOKS AND WRITERS

"WAR AND PEACE" BY LEO TOLSTOY

In the history of literature and culture of the mind, the name of Leo Tolstoy holds a very special place. None of the great artists of the written word possessed such a combined strength of great creative gifts with high moral instinct. In him we have a most brilliant embodiment of the splendid traditions of Russian literature handed down from the ancient folk epic—a tradition of an art in which aesthetics were inseparable from ethics and standards of personal conduct were determined by considerations of public welfare.

Almost at the outset of his literary work, Tolstoy declared that the real hero of his books was truth itself—a hero whom he loved wholeheartedly.

Perhaps Tolstoy, like no other writer, has been able to depict the true world of man and nature. For this reason his craftsmanship possesses to the highest degree the quality he regarded as being the most essential in art—the power to influence the reader so that he keenly feels and lives through the author's own emotional experiences.

In these days, during fierce battles with the enemy, this infectious force of Leo Tolstoy's writings on war and especially his novel *War and Peace*, is very strongly felt.

From early youth until old age war stirred him deeply.

It is notable here that Tolstoy, notwithstanding his censorious attitude to war, showed, as none had hitherto shown, the spiritual nature, the greatness and valour of the true heroes of the war, those who, with no thought of self, sacrificed all for the benefit of their native land and their people. As a true patriot, he rejoiced in the Russian troops' successes and grieved over their losses. During the Crimean war of 1854—55 at his own request he was transferred from the Danube army which was fighting the Turks to Sevastopol—"most of all from patriotism" as he wrote in a letter to his brother.

Before his arrival there, he entered in his diary thoughts about "the great moral force of the Russian people", "the feeling of ardent love for country" which was already displayed by the defenders of Sevastopol. When he himself became one of them he wrote to his brother: "The spirit of the troops is beyond all description. There has not been so much heroism since the time of ancient Greece. When Kornilov reviewed the troops he said instead of the usual greeting: 'Would you die if need be, boys?' and the troops shouted: 'We'll die, your excellency, hurrah!' This was not done for effect, it was plain to be seen on every face that the words were not uttered in jest, and 22,000 had already kept that promise. . ." The words, paraphrased slightly, are repeated in his *Sevastopol Tales* where for the first time he gave a true account of war, depicting it, as he himself says, "not with its orderly, beautiful and brilliant ranks, its music and beating drums, its waving banners, its generals on prancing horses, but war in its real aspect of blood, suffering and death." The principal thing he noticed in Sevastopol's defenders was their steadfastness, their heroism and the spiritual grandeur of the soldier defending his country calmly, self-sacrificingly and without boasting. In the story *Sevastopol in December* where he speaks of "the shy feeling of love for country which lies deep in the soul of the Russian man" he wrote: "You will understand clearly and you will imagine those people whom you have seen just now as the heroes who in those trying days did not fall but rose in spirit and prepared with enjoyment to die—not for the city but for the country. Long will this epic of Sevastopol, the hero of which was the Russian people, leave splendid traces in Russia."

Affronted and stung as he was by the military fiasco at Sevastopol, Tolstoy's patriotic sentiments sought satisfaction

in Russia's historic past and the glorious deeds of her people. Then it was that *War and Peace*, the epic that may rightly be called an epic of Russian military valour and moral strength, was first conceived.

The true hero of the novel is the Russian people, defending their native land against the invaders, against Napoleon as yet unvanquished and crowned with the laurels of military victories, and against armies seasoned in warfare. Russia's war against foreign invaders is depicted here as a people's war. Its victorious culmination and the inglorious fate of Napoleon's invasion are conceived with the clear-sightedness of the historian and the realistic artist as the outcome of the patriotic impulse of the masses. The author has shown with convincing power that for Russia 1812, like all people's wars, was not a war of invasion, but a just war. The Russians have lifted "the cudgel of the people's war", which "pinned down the French until the whole invasion perished". "The latent heat of patriotism" raised people of all strata of Russian society; hatred of the enemy was felt to an equal extent by the merchant Ferapontov and Prince Andrey Bolkonsky (who had at first admired Napoleon's generalship) and by those daring spirits who joined partisan detachments and dealt the enemy forces blow after blow from the rear.

Bolkonsky was firmly convinced that Borodino must end in a victory for the Russians since that victory was influenced and depended upon the feeling for country which was alive in himself, in Captain Timohin and in every Russian soldier. He foresaw that the issue of Borodino would be favourable to the Russians, because he observed the determination to win in the Russian soldiers even before the battle. This faith in the triumph of Russian arms he imparted to Pierre Bezuhov, who, on the eve of the battle, noticed how the soldiers' grim and impressive faces glowed with "a new light"; and at the very height of the battle, "as though in an advancing thunder-cloud, the faces of these men flashed out more and more often, brighter and brighter (in defiance of what was happening), illumined by the lightning of a hidden but increasing flame". Pierre understood the main thing that brought them to victory: "They do not talk, but act."

According to Tolstoy, the battle of Borodino was above all a moral victory for the Russian people. Though they had lost half their number, the Russians stood fast, as threatening at the end of the battle as at the beginning. The French understood the moral superiority of their adversaries, understood, too, that they themselves were morally exhausted. This predetermined their defeat. Now that they had reached Moscow, the French army was inevitably doomed to perish after the mortal wound it had received at Borodino. The fact that the people left Moscow, Tolstoy was convinced, resulted from "the latent heat of patriotism" that impelled them to relinquish everything, travelling only with the few belongings they could carry. They left all their possessions and their affairs behind. They went because "to Russians the question whether they would be comfortable or not under the government of the French in Moscow could never occur. To be under the government of the French was out of the question: it was worse than anything"; and because the people of Moscow left the city "the grand event came to pass that is the highest glory of the Russian people".

The strength of the people's spirit brought forth leaders who carried out their will in their deeds. Kutuzov was one such leader in the war of 1812. Tolstoy says of him: "The source of this extraordinary intuition into the significance of contemporary events lay in the purity and fervour of patriotic feeling in his heart. It was their recognition of this feeling in him that led the people in such a strange manner to pick him out, an old man out of favour, as the chosen leader of the national war, against the will of the Tsar."

Kutuzov always held that the battle of Borodino was a victory for the Russian troops and that this victory brought in its wake the catastrophe that overtook Napoleon's army. He knew this because he clearly understood the moral superiority of Russian troops over the French. When, at Barclay de Tolly's orders, General Wolzogen reported to Kutuzov that all their positional points at Borodino were in enemy hands, that they could not be recovered, that our

troops were on the run and it was impossible to halt them, Kutuzov shouted in indignation: "'How. . . how dare you! . . How dare you, Sir, tell *me* that? You know nothing about it. Tell General Barclay from me that his information is incorrect, and that I, the commander-in-chief, know more of the course of the battle than he does.' Wolzogen would have made some protest, but Kutuzov interrupted him: 'The enemy has been repulsed on the left and defeated on the right flank. . . Kindly return to General Barclay and inform him of my unhesitating intention to attack the French tomorrow. . . Repulsed at all points, for which I thank God and our brave men, the enemy is defeated, and tomorrow we will drive him out of the holy land of Russia."

His instinct did not deceive Kutuzov. At that moment General Rayevsky, who had been in the very thick of the fight, drove up to him and reported that our troops were holding their positions firmly while the French would not dare to attack again. Kutuzov had an order made out on the next day's offensive (which proved impossible for strategic considerations) and said that the troops must be warned of the coming attack. The commander-in-chief's order immediately became known in the army, the worn-out men were comforted and took heart once more. The very significance of the order raised the spirits of the troops, because Kutuzov's words were inspired by feelings "that lay deep in the heart of the commander-in-chief, and deep in the heart of every Russian".

Kutuzov surrendered Moscow to Napoleon in order to save Russia, firmly convinced that its surrender did not mean the surrender of the Russian army. When he learned later that Napoleon had left Moscow, the news overwhelmed him: he wept for joy that Russia was saved.

Anticipating Tolstoy, Pushkin displayed an amazingly profound understanding of Kutuzov's importance as a commander in the National War of 1812. "Kutuzov alone," he wrote, "could suggest the battle of Borodino; Kutuzov alone could surrender Moscow to the enemy; Kutuzov alone could remain in that state of wise, active inactivity, lulling Napoleon during the fire of Moscow and biding the fateful moment: for Kutuzov alone was invested with the people's trust, which he justified so wonderfully." There could be no better definition than the words "wise, active inactivity", of the whole essence of Kutuzov's tactics and strategy which were displayed in the battles outside Moscow, and were so penetratingly understood by Tolstoy.

In appearance Kutuzov is as unimpressive and as far removed from the usual pattern of a great general as Napoleon is decorative and makes for calculated effect in his actions and speeches. Unlike Napoleon there is not a suggestion of pose about Kutuzov. "Kutuzov never talked of 'forty centuries looking down from the Pyramids', of the sacrifices he was making for the fatherland, or what he meant to do or had done. He did not as a rule talk about himself, played no sort of part, always seemed the plainest and most ordinary man, and said the plainest and most ordinary things."

The artistic effect achieved by Tolstoy when he shows Kutuzov at Fili, just before Moscow's surrender, is tremendous. Even the conditions under which the council of war is held harmonize with the personality of Kutuzov himself. With the commander-in-chief at their head, the Russian generals assemble round the deal table in a peasant's cottage and their subsequent proceedings are witnessed, not by forty centuries gazing from the Egyptian Pyramids, but by a six-year-old peasant girl, Malasha, who has timidly retired to the high stove-shelf. Her sympathies are all with "Grandad" Kutuzov who had not omitted to caress her and give her a sugar-lump while he was having tea. Naturally, she is wholly on his side in the arguments that ensue between "Grandad" and the "Longcoat one" as she silently dubbs General Bennigsen.

Compared to Kutuzov, not only Bennigsen, but anyone of the German generals participating in the war of 1812, seems a pygmy, a dull-witted mediocrity. The restricted, self-opinionated German in his military capacity is most clearly depicted in Tolstoy's General Pfuhl, the ill-starred organizer of the fortified camp at Drissa which proved entirely unsuitable for purposes of warfare. Tolstoy says of Pfuhl that he "was one of those hopelessly, immutably

conceited men, ready to face martyrdom for their own ideas, conceited as only Germans can be". Comparing the nature of self-opinionatedness in various nationalities, he writes: ". . . it is only a German's conceit that is based on an abstract idea—science, that is, the supposed possession of absolute truth". Tolstoy's dislike of Germans was particularly apparent in his drawing of the russified German officer Berg, a dull and insignificant climber, a lackey at heart; this character arouses more antipathy in the reader than any other in the novel.

As is well-known, *War and Peace* contains Tolstoy's philosophical views on the historical process and the role of the individual in history,—views that subsequently became one of the sources of his teaching on "non-resistance". In this particular novel he could point out contradictions in his analysis of the commander's role and the elemental factor in war, or the idealization of passivity, embodied by Platon Karatayev. But the idea of Tolstoy the artist, Tolstoy the psychologist, is nowhere dimmed. Thus Karatayev and the ideas associated with him do not obscure the portrait of the Russian peasantry. It is shown not as a passive but as an active historical force, moved by the will for victory over its foe, lifting "the cudgel of the people's war".

The spiritual power which was revealed by the Russian people during the National War of 1812, which was embodied in Kutuzov's work and thanks to which Russia emerged the victor from the clash with Napoleon's army, is evident in Andrey Bolkonsky, Pierre Bezuhov, Natasha Rostova and various other characters in *War and Peace*. At the most critical moments in their lives they turn to the truth embodied in the people, and display the magnificent simplicity that they find in close contact with the elemental, with the people's feeling for their country. Even Andrey Bolkonsky, an aristocrat to the core, feels drawn to those close in contact with the people, rather than to his own aristocratic circle. His work at headquarters, where the officers are society men, goes against the grain. He prefers to be in action, side by side with the great body of soldiers; and there he meets his death.

A deep insight into the secret places of the soul, a keen awareness of nature, unusual freshness and directness of perception—all these have made *War and Peace* a work of genuine realistic art. The critic and philosopher Nikolai Strakhov, to whose judgements Tolstoy paid great attention, wrote of *War and Peace*: "What a colossus and what harmony! No other literature has ever given us anything of the kind. Thousands of people, thousands of scenes, all possible spheres of state and private life, history, war, all the memorable movements in life, from the cry of the newborn infant to the last flash of feeling in a dying man, all the joys and sorrows within man's scope, all possible states of mind—from the feeling of the thief who has robbed his comrade of his money, to the highest stirrings of heroism and thoughts of inner enlightenment—all these are to be found in this picture. . . There has as yet been no other such miracle in the world, and moreover, it is a miracle achieved by the simplest means."

The essential feature of *War and Peace* is that the war theme of the novel is closely interwoven with a broad presentation of the life of the 1812 period. The events of the battle-field are closely woven with many aspects of everyday life. The characters of the novel stand out in a subtle composition of the most contradictory feelings, moods and actions; and thus is attained that all-embracing psychological synthesis which discloses the organic unity of people's conduct at the front and in the rear, or as Tolstoy expresses it, in war and peace.

In our own day, this novel is one of the most popular and best-loved works in Russia. Its pages are eagerly devoured by millions of Soviet readers, both at the front and in the rear. To the people whose thoughts are all turned on the speedy liberation of their country from the detested enemy, this book, which reflects the national character of past Russian battles for liberation, is dearer now than ever. Tolstoy's comprehension of the Russian people's soul during the hardest trials is a spiritual support to his countrymen and aids them to defend their heritage.

And not only on Soviet soil which, by exerting themselves to the utmost, Soviet people have freed from foreign

invasion, does Tolstoy's great epic strike a new note: there is plenty of evidence that in England and America *War and Peace* is being more widely read than ever before. New editions are being issued in huge numbers, but the demand is so great that it is not always easy to obtain a copy. Critics, writers, journalists, public men in the countries friendly to Russia are discussing this novel. In England it has been adapted for the radio; in America for the screen. The *Times* quotes a letter from a subscriber who says that he has read this book five times during the past year and turns to it whenever the situation at the front becomes particularly tense. He writes that he has never failed to draw from Leo Tolstoy's immortal work quiet of mind and confidence in victory. Thus the patriotism of the great Russian writer raises the spirit not only of his own fellow-countrymen but also of friends abroad.

Yasnaya Polyana, where Tolstoy lived the greater part of his life and where he is buried, was temporarily captured by the Germans. When these vandals wrecked and desecrated the place so dear to everyone, several prominent English writers and journalists made indignant protests in the press against the German barbarity. One of them, Tomlinson, said Tolstoy's name is as well-known in England as in Russia. He and Chekhov enjoy the respect and love of English authors, more deeply perhaps than the Russians themselves imagine. In his opinion Russia's poets and authors are people of the same scale as those belonging to the Shakespearean epoch and the English people realize this.

There is no doubt that in the English people's high estimate of Russian literature, a significant part is played by their attitude to the author of *War and Peace*.

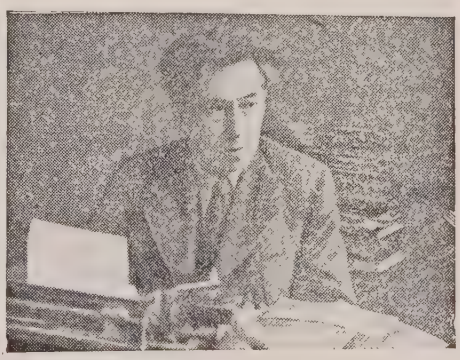
NIKOLAI GUDZIY

ILYA EHRENBURG

In two respects Ilya Ehrenburg occupies a special position in modern Russian literature.

First, as a writer Ehrenburg has not only a Russian but West-European background. He was born and bred in Moscow but a considerable part of his writing years were spent in Western Europe, mostly in France. Ehrenburg passionately loves and understands Russia, but he has the same love and understanding for the French and Czechs which has led many critics to believe that Ehrenburg should be considered more a West-European writer than a Russian writer. The Great National War was the real test. When Russia was confronted with great trials it became clear to everyone that Ehrenburg was a Russian writer in the true sense of the word. And the greater the danger became the stronger did the Russian in him stand out. As no other man, Ehrenburg became the symbol of wartime Russia in her soldier's greatcoat. He became Russia's trumpet heralding to the world her thoughts and feelings. But at the same time Ehrenburg continued to understand and love Europe. Incidentally, here it must be stated that at present Ehrenburg does not love all Europe, he loves Europe minus Germany. That is an important point in understanding the character of this writer.

Second, at heart Ehrenburg is a fighter and warrior. He belongs to that class of "knights of the spirit" whom Heine described more than a hundred years ago. His readers have not made up their minds finally, even yet, as to whether Ehrenburg is an artist or a publicist. What a question! Of course Ehrenburg is an



artist. Our reason for claiming this is not only because he is a novelist and the author of *The Fall of Paris*. Read any of his works. In a few words and strokes of the pen he can paint a picture that you see clearly before you, he can describe a character that is unforgettable. That is the secret of the artist.

But Ehrenburg is more than an artist. He is a fighter. He is a son of his generation, sensitive to all the pain and happiness of his age. He has a great warm heart and a deep passionate belief, a belief in definite political and social ideals. His belief is an active and impulsive one and for it he is ready to fight to the last drop of blood. That is why Ehrenburg cannot remain aloof from the great storm of our times, seclude himself in his own world and work laboriously at the perfection of artistic characters. Ehrenburg is too engrossed in the struggle, too ardent and impatient. He

has not the time to think about the fine lace and bright feathers of purely artistic work. With open visor he has thrown himself into the raging battle. The stark realities of today are breaking into his spiritual laboratory and demand an immediate answer. And so the political journalist in Ehrenburg is being born.

Nevertheless the voice of the artist has not been silenced. All this adds up to an unusual and, at first sight, contradictory result. But in Ehrenburg these elements harmonize to excellent literary effect. Often his short articles in the press read like poetry in prose-form. Such a combination is original and out of common. It, too, plays an important part in understanding the writer.

The character of Ehrenburg's writing became, of course, clear in past years, especially in the early years after the first world war. Nevertheless it was only during the present war that Ehrenburg's work attained complete perfection. Ehrenburg has established unbreakable ties between his writings and that great struggle which the forces of world progress are waging now against the dark forces of world reaction, especially with that great heroic struggle which the 200-million people of the Soviet Union have been waging and will pursue to final victory.

It goes without saying that everything Ehrenburg has written in the last three or four years far surpasses in significance, direct effect and historic importance what he wrote in the past. And when one compares Ehrenburg's works of the period immediately following the war of 1914—1918 with his writing in our times the tremendous political and artistic progress that the author has made becomes evident. The basic reason for his development can inevitably be found in the tremendous all-round progress which the Soviet country has made during the last 20—25 years.

Ehrenburg's caustic pen is at present inspired by two feelings—great hatred and great love. Great hatred for that embodiment of all reaction which is German nazism today, and great love for those forces of progress struggling against hitlerite tyranny in every country, and nowhere so bitterly as in Ehrenburg's fatherland. To illustrate I will quote a few extracts from Ehrenburg's book *War* recently published in Moscow, which is a collection of his articles for 1942—1943.

"We are fighting," wrote Ehrenburg in May 1942, "not against human beings but against robots who look human but in whom nothing human remains. Our hatred for them is stronger because outwardly they look like humans, because they can laugh, because they can stroke a horse or a dog, because in their diaries they go in for self-analysis and because they masquerade as men and as cultured Europeans."

He continues further:

"How can one talk of ideals to bandits? Their ideal is a piece of lard, an earring torn out with the flesh, a jacket taken from a murdered child. They have no cultural heritage. From the past they have taken only technique which they apply for the destruction of people. From the past they have taken only superstition, instruments of torture and the darkness of the years of the plague. Their souls have became callous? That's a lie. They have no souls. They are one-celled scum, microbes, soulless creatures armed with automatics and mine-throwers."

Reading the diary of a dead German student who finds philosophical explanations for all the horrors perpetrated by the Germans in Russia, Ehrenburg exclaims:

"One is amazed at the mental degradation of these scientific barbarians. To justify the tortures they commit they need philosophical quotations. Standing in the shadow of the gallows they go in for psychoanalysis. It makes one want to put two bullets through a Fritz-philosopher: one because he tortured a Russian child and another because, having killed the child, he quoted Plato."

Such extracts could be quoted endlessly but it is hardly necessary. Ehrenburg's feelings for the hitlerite Germans are more than clear. And indeed no less clear are his feelings for Hitler's lackeys in Europe of whom there are no small number. Here, for example, are several quotations on Pétain and Laval:

"Alexander Dumas," writes Ehrenburg, "once said about a 70-year-old coquette: 'She will never become the mistress of a Rumanian boyar or a Marseilles sharper. Innocence has its shield—age.' But Pétain has proved that one can become a prostitute in his nineties, be tempted by wordly riches with one foot in the grave and sell one's soul an hour before death..."

This is about Laval:

"A hundred and fifty years have passed since France saw the gallows. But all the same I think that Pierre Laval will be accorded this special honour. For his sake certain outlived things will be resurrected. It would be difficult to shoot him, he doesn't even look like a spy. He is just Laval, the Judas of our century. But the aspens can grow in peace. Pierre Laval is not a fool, he will never hang himself. He will be dragged from under the last German bed. The last German pfennig will be taken from him. And then he will be hung from a Parisian lamp-post with a snow-white cravat like a noose round his neck (Laval always wears a white tie).".

"'Laval on a lamp-post!', sing Parisian children. Though he will, of course, not shine when he is hung, France and all of Europe will become the brighter for it."

This great hatred did not come easily to Ehrenburg, and it is not hatred for the sake of hatred. This hatred came to Ehrenburg like it did to the whole Soviet people, through immeasurable suffering.

"We have paid for it," he writes, "with cities and districts and hundreds of thousands of human lives. . . We understood that we could never share the earth with the fascists. We understood that there was no room for compromise or for negociations, that it was a question of life or death. . . Our hatred for the Hitlerites was born of love, love for our motherland, for man and mankind. Therein lies the strength of our hatred. Therein lies its justification."

The great hatred in Ehrenburg's breast is counterposed by great love. And in the first

place, great love for his fatherland, for the Soviet country.

"Have you ever seen a mighty spreading tree?" wrote Ehrenburg in August 1942, when the Germans were madly tearing their way to Stalingrad. "It was a tiny tree. It is old now. Older than you. Its core is belted by rings. Each ring is a year and the rings are innumerable. That mighty tree is our Russia. Her history began with disunited tribes, with her first military deeds and first manuscripts. She became a great power. In peace-time each one has his taiga, his gun, his chisel, his plow or his book. When the hour of great trial approaches, it no longer becomes a question of personal destiny but of the destiny of Russia."

In those grim days Ehrenburg wrote about his country: "A battle is in progress for the torch of Russian culture, for Pushkin's poetry, for the Ukrainian songs, for our books, our museums and our schools. How many centuries of effort were needed for the Russia of huts and forests to create a Leningrad of granite! None but a great people could have given birth to a Leo Tolstoy. None but a great people could have started a new era on October 25th." (The date meant here is November 7th, i.e., the day of the Socialist revolution when the Soviet state was founded.—*I. M.*)

And when this passionately loved motherland was gravely threatened, when the German hordes tore further and further into the Don steppes and foothills of the Caucasus, Ehrenburg wrote inspired, immortal words which penetrated to the heart of every fighter at the front:

"Fighter of the South, stand firm and you will hold back the Hun!" wrote Ehrenburg on July 29th, 1942. "Stand firm and death will retreat before you! Tell your comrade: 'Stand firm!' Tell your friend: 'We will not move!' Answer your motherland: 'I am here at my post!' Kill the Hun! A Hun killed on the right bank of the Don will not cross to the left. A Hun drowned in the Don will not make for the Kuban. Kill, however and wherever you can! Stand firm and kill! Kill and stand firm!"

In another article, *The Time Has Come!*, published during those trying days, Ehrenburg wrote to the army:

"Fighter, not only your company goes into battle with you. With you march the whole army and the whole people. With you march the fallen heroes, the soldiers who blocked the enemy's way last summer and who beat back the enemy last winter. With you march into battle the twenty-eight guardsmen. With you march the fragile girl Tanya and the bold marines of Sevastopol. With you march the great dead. You will not disgrace them. With you march your ancestors who built Russia. With you march the soldiers of 1812 who beat back the invincible Napoleon. With you march your children, your mother and your wife. They give you their blessing. You will win for your mother a peaceful old age, for your wife, the joy of reunion and for your children, happiness. Fighter, with you marches Russia. She marches at your side. Listen to her winged steps. She will raise your spirits with an encouraging word when you go into attack. She will support you if you falter. She will embrace you if you are victorious."

It is difficult to over-estimate the significance of such words in those grim days. They inspired countless numbers of fighters to struggle, sufferings and self-sacrifice, but what was most important, to battle for the defeat of the enemy and for victory. And when finally there came to Stalingrad the great day which Stalin had so persistently and brilliantly prepared, that day which became the turning point in the war, Ehrenburg wrote:

"Every evening when the radio broadcasts 'the Latest News' we seem to hear the faint sound of footsteps. That is the Red Army marching. That is history marching. 'Forward!' repeat the warriors. The country, proud of its Army, is counting its trophies. But the soldiers have no time to count: the soldiers are on the offensive."

As great as is Ehrenburg's love for his native land, it does not hide the rest of the world from his view. On the contrary. "As every great love," writes Ehrenburg, "patriotism broadens one's outlook. A true patriot loves the whole world."

And Ehrenburg truly loves the whole world or, to be more exact, the progressive forces of the world. The 1944 New Year issue of *Red Star* daily contained a big article by Ehrenburg entitled *On the Threshold*, in which this trait of the writer's character was particularly evident.

"In an ancient mystery-play," says Ehrenburg, "demons try to smother the roosters before dawn. They hope that the sun, not being awakened by the roosters' crowing, will oversleep. In their superstitious fear the Germans are searching for the last bearers of the light. . . What is more terrible in these demons—their cruelty or their stupidity? They can kill all the roosters on earth but this will not keep back the sun for a minute. We survived 1943. Europe survived it. The hour before dawn always seems the darkest. The demons have had their hour. And now? . . Now day is breaking. . . In 1943 Europe arose from her death-bed. She rose not for a feast and not for work but for struggle."

Vividly describing further the regeneration of prostrate France, the heroic struggle in Yugoslavia, the partisan movement in Norway and Greece and the assassination of German occupationists in Denmark, Ehrenburg writes:

"Why did Europe find her path? Why in the very depth of night did the as yet invisible but inevitable dawn shine through? What do the roosters crow? What do the poets sing? Who inspires the partisans? We can say without conceit or hypocrisy—Russia, her sacrifices, her blood and her victories. 1943 began with Stalingrad and ended with the offensive on Vitebsk and Berdichev. I will leave it to the military reviewers to measure the distance covered from Vladikavkas to Kherson and from Voronezh to Korosten. I want to speak of something else. There are hundreds of kilometres but there is one step that divides glory from death and death from glory. In 1943 Russia made that step and predetermined the outcome of the war."

Ehrenburg concludes as follows:

"1944—we are yet unaccustomed to those

figures. But I can see them engraved in granite and marble—the year of victory. That is our oath and the oath of all mankind. The earth yearns for grain and the heart yearns for happiness. In the Paris Louvre there was a statue, especially beautiful, the Nike (victory) of Samothrace. Its head was broken off. But the victory had wings. She flew and there was so much beauty in her flight that visitors to the hall where the statue stood could not bring themselves to leave but would for hours admire this creation of the human spirit. We cannot see the face of victory but as we stand on the eve of the new year we are stunned by her greatness. Do you hear the rustle of wings? It won't be long now. . ."

These words were written almost half a year before the invasion of Northern France by the Allied forces. Now, when the Anglo-American armies are fighting in France and the Red Army, in harmony with them, is inflicting heavy blows on the enemy in Eastern Europe these words take on special significance. Of course many struggles, difficulties, sacrifices and blood still lie ahead but all the same one can repeat Ehrenburg's words: "It won't be long now."

And when at last victory crowns Allied banners and people sum up the results of the Second World War, they will have to note the fact that the artist-publicist Ehrenburg at a critical moment for his country and for all of mankind stood at his post and devoted all his strength, his heart, brain and talent to the destruction of the fascist beast. This recognition will be the best reward Ehrenburg will ask in the present and in the future.

IVAN MAISKY

NEW BOOKS

Men of Great Purpose is the title of Sergei Markov's book published by the Soviet Writer Publishing House.

In vivid and artistic style the author describes the life of two famous Russian scientists and explorers—Nikolai Przhevalsky and Nikolai Miklukha-Maklai.

Przhevalsky is widely known as the most outstanding explorer of Central Asia. His four expeditions undertaken between 1870—1885 contributed to geographical science a wealth of material shedding light on Eastern Mongolia, Northern Tibet, Eastern Tien-Shan and other vast regions of Central Asia almost entirely unexplored before him. At the end of the last century travelling to Tibet was considered dangerous for a European, and only few explorers dared to venture it.

Przhevalsky was a traveller by calling. The son of a modest retired infantry officer, born in a remote Russian hamlet, Nikolai Przhevalsky ever since his boyhood dreamed of hunting expeditions to the heart of Africa, to the as yet unexplored sources of the White Nile. This lust for travel did not leave him in his student days at the Academy of the General Staff, it persisted in his later years when he became a teacher of history and geography in an officers' school in Warsaw. He resigned from the school, secured an appointment to go to the Ussuri Region where he undertook the study of this interesting and hitherto little known part of Russia.

This was a prelude to his expeditions through Mongolia and Tibet.

No less interesting than the biography of Przhevalsky is that of his contemporary, traveller and explorer of Oceania, Miklukha-Maklai. This "Tamo-Russ" ("Russian man", as the Papuans called him) was born in a village near the small town of Borovichi, Novgorod guberniya. From there Miklukha-Maklai started out on his career as a globe-trotter. St. Petersburg University was followed by a commission abroad for further study, independent exploration of the fauna of coral reefs by the Red Sea shore—these were the landmarks preceding the life's work of this remarkable scientist, his expedition to Oceania.

Miklukha-Maklai spent a long time among the Papuans in New Guinea. He lived under a roof of palm-leaves with the Russian flag hoisted over it. At first the Papuans met the foreign intruder with unconcealed hostility, but Maklai ultimately won over the islanders by his courage, kindness, compassion and humaneness.

Markov describes the life of the Russian explorer during his sojourn there, his meetings and relations with the native population. He stresses the humaneness of Miklukha-Maklai who came to these primitive people of Oceania not with a gun and alcohol, but with good will and a compassionate word, with a desire to study the people without prejudice and without the idea of the superiority of one race over another.

The friendship between "Tamo-Russ" and the Papuans represents a glorious and instructive page in the annals of world culture. In 1878, when Germany seized North-Eastern Guinea, Maklai, already on his death-bed, sent a telegram to Otto Bismarck, which was the wrathful cry of a noble brave heart: "The natives of Maklai's shore protest against their being joined to Germany."

Vyacheslav Shishkov's *Prokhindei*, recently published by the Soviet Writer Publishing House, is a historical novel dealing with the period of the Pugachov uprising (XVIII century).

Prokhindei, second guild merchant, Ostafi Dolgopolov, imposter and swindler, a native of Rzhev, is not a fictitious character. He is a historic personality and mention of him may be found in various state documents of the XVIII century. Memoirs of a contemporary and chance accomplice of Dolgopolov's biggest adventure—the expedition to capture Pugachov, have come down to our days. These memoirs belong to the pen of Major Runich who also figures in Shishkov's new book.

Prokhindei is closely connected with the monumental novel *Pugachov* by the same author. The new book deals with one episode only of the popular movement of the XVIII

century led by Pugachov, the "muzhik tsar" as he was called. The author, however, makes use of the episode for a broad treatment of the historic and social relationships of the period. The adventures of the imposter and swindler who made his appearance in those turbulent times, who started his career in Pugachov's cart, advanced as far as Empress Catherine's palace and ended his life in a penitentiary, are presented against the background of Russia's political and social life at the end of the XVIII century.

In a style slightly reminiscent of old tales Shishkov relates the adventures of Dolgopolov to whose lot it fell to become an eyewitness of the remarkable events of his time. A purveyor of oats for the tsarist studs during the lifetime of Catherine II's predecessor—Tsar Peter III, the merchant Dolgopolov at one time sold oats to the tsar on credit. The tsar died before his debt had been paid. On learning of the "resurrection" of Tsar Peter III (Pugachov posed as Peter III), Dolgopolov decided to make his way there to collect the money. However, when he beheld the "muzhik tsar", he contrived to gain capital by "identifying" him. Subsequently, having learned from one of Pugachov's associates—the Cossack Perfilyev, that the latter had been sent by Catherine to seize the imposter but instead went over to the side of Pugachov, Dolgopolov resolved to make profit by this as well. He wrote a letter to the Empress in the name of Perfilyev and some 124 nonexisting Cossacks offering to betray Pugachov for the sum of 3,000 gold rubles, Prokhindei succeeded in deceiving everybody, the Empress and the highest dignitaries of the Russian Empire. After swindling the "commission" sent to capture Pugachov, Dolgopolov fled. He was caught, flogged and sentenced to penal servitude.

In the course of his adventures Dolgopolov came across people from all walks of life. Shishkov depicts people typical of the period: members of the tsarist administration, the voyevodas, nobility, military caste, merchants, sectarians, the clergy, peasantry, Cossacks and the so-called "alien-born"—the Bashkirians, Tartars, etc.

The remarkable language, the lively and fascinating plot hold the reader's interest throughout.

Among the books most popular with Soviet children are those of Arkadi Haidar, a talented writer who died a hero's death in the battle for the Ukraine in 1941, where he served as correspondent of the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

Haidar's stories, *School, Distant Countries, Military Secret, Blue Cup, The Drummer's Fate, Chuk and Gheck,* and lastly, his famous *Timur and His Team,* have all won favour with children and adolescents, with all those who look at the world with keen eyes eager to know and understand it.

Haidar saw in every young man a soldier of his country and his works fostered the children's loyalty to one's duty, love of life, desire for perfection in the struggle for a better world. He knew how to imbue his readers with the romanticism of this struggle.

The Children's Publishing House has just brought out a volume of Haidar's selected works.

The charm of the stories lies in the treatment of the material, in the manner in which the author talks to his readers: seriously, honestly, and straightforwardly. Haidar has his own way of pointing to "the most important thing" in life; he is not afraid of difficult themes which would fit in poorly in the traditional framework of the old children's literature. Having experienced many hardships in life, he freely speaks of them in his books.

This can be seen best in *The Drummer's Fate,* a story about a young pioneer who became the drummer of his pioneer detachment. The boy's father who was found guilty of some abuse of his office received merited punishment. The boy remained alone. At first he had a very hard time. He succumbed to bad influence and swerved from the right track.

But in the country where man is friend to man, where life is built on the principles of humaneness, justice and reason, the boy did not perish; people came to his aid, they restored his childhood and brought him happiness. The father who later atoned for his guilt by selfless labour came back to the boy.

Chuk and Gheck is a book for the very young. It is a masterfully written, fascinating story about two brothers Chuk and Gheck, about their father, a member of a geological expedition to the tall Blue Mountains in the Far North, about their trip to him and their adventures. The story portrays people of deep feelings and courage, people who can win their way to the hearts of the children.

The Blue Cup is a story that appeals both to children and adults. The youngster will be fascinated by the story of the adventures that befell the father and his daughter on their journey; he will admire their friendship; the adult will divine the deep undercurrent under the smooth surface of relationships painted by the writer: lack of harmony in the family, bitter love, longing for happiness.

Timur and His Team is a book which has won merited fame both in the U.S.S.R. and abroad. More than in any other book Haidar's talent and creative power have found expression in the story of the young pioneer, Timur, in his deep concern for the defenders of his country, his splendid boyish generosity manifested not in word, but in deed. Timur invented a very fascinating form of aid to the Red Army. Without disclosing their identity he and his pals rendered effective help to many families of those whose fathers and brothers were fighting at the front-line.

Haidar succeeded in surrounding the activities of his little hero with such a halo of fascinating mystery and charm that Timur soon had a great many followers all over the country. Thousands of Soviet school children recognized themselves in Timur.

Arkadi Haidar has shown the children a simple and good way of putting into practice their sincere affection for the defenders of their native land.

ILYA REPIN

We publish below excerpts from the reminiscences of the Russian writer Kornei Chukovsky, telling of his personal meetings with Repin, and giving episodes from the life of this splendid artist, the centenary of whose birth the Soviet Union celebrated in August.

PREFACE

A man is overtaken by disaster. He is shaken by tremendous emotions such as he has never before experienced—emotions far surpassing the ordinary limits of human psychology. These were the overpowering emotions that Ilya Repin loved to portray.

His Sophia, for instance, in his picture "Tsarevna Sophia" at the very moment of disaster, when her whole world is toppling about her, simply stands silently, stares mutely before her, but nevertheless this pose, which might be called an ordinary one, is the supreme expression of despair, anger and a flaming spirit that even death cannot quench. She does not give vent to curses or dash to and fro in her prison cell, cramped as the grave—she simply stands silent, and here we see the artist's hatred for superficial effect—Repin's national greatness.

Repin would not have been a Russian genius had he not remained simple and natural, a stranger to all kind of mannerism and high-flown expressions.

His sketch "Refusal of Confession", showing a condemned man, is also free from all vestige of rhetoric, or stage gesture. The condemned man is simply sitting on the bed, wrapped in a convict's gown and as though to prevent himself from any temptation to pompous gesture, Repin has concealed the man's hands in sleeves, denying himself what one would think to be the most effective means for expressing human feeling.

Nevertheless, it is thanks just to this absence of superficial effect that a tremendous feeling is expressed here with the true force innate to Repin—the feeling of searing contempt for the foe, and the moral triumph over tyranny and death.

In his article on Serov, Repin praises an especial, hidden, timid, unobtrusive heroism innate in the Russian spirit. This fundamental national quality, which is expressed in Russian art by a stern rejection of all melodramatic falsity, is one of the main characteristics of Repin's pictures, of their deep feeling.

The depictive powers of his paintings are so great that without resorting to any kind of melodramatic gestures, he makes every braid of hair, every fold of drapery express the most complicated emotions of the personage portrayed. It is not for nothing that in so many of his canvases and drawings people are shown from the back, for many of his "backs" speak far more forcefully than other artists' faces. The back of the old mother in "Unexpected Return" is a model of expressive force—here we have doubt and hope, an anxious strained gaze and the fear of being mistaken, and the deep moving voice of a mother's love which is beginning to sound. And to think that all this throbbing force of contradictory and swiftly changing human feelings is expressed in the bent figure of which not even the face is visible. We see the same thing in the picture "The State Council": not only the faces but even the napes and backs of the statesmen betray the secrets of each one.

In general, for Repin there is nothing more interesting, important and valuable than human character, human individuality, and in this too he is a real Russian artist, a representative of his people who have contributed to world culture with the psychological novels and tales of Lermontov, Tolstoy, Turgenev Dostoyevsky and Chekhov.

In each of his best pictures Repin always introduced such a wealth of broad, deep feeling that even subjects of apparently minor purport, which with any other artist would have remained secondary in feeling, acquired truly noble proportions under his brush. His "Dnieper Cossacks", for instance, is much more than a group of laughter-convulsed Dnieper Cossacks, it is a synthesis of cossackry, the quintessence of a broad period of Ukrainian history.

And one will hardly find in the whole of Russian pictorial art a broader generalization of old Russia in all its multiform aspects than Repin's "Church Procession in Kursk Province", which with another artist would probably have remained a merely genre scene.

And Repin's "Volga Haulers of Barges" is far from being merely a representation of dozen or so ragged, emaciated men clustered on the Volga bank,—it is a poem of a great people and of that joy of life which sooner or later they will win.

"Yes, the Russian people are under the yoke," this picture plainly says, "they are tormented throughout their cruel history; look at these hopelessly miserable men, and see their unquenchable spiritual force, what rudiments they have for a splendid future."

The titanic scale of Repin's work is to be seen also in the quantity of his drawings, studies, sketches, pictures and portraits. When a Repin jubilee exhibition was opened in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in Leningrad, it seemed impossible that one man alone could have filled these huge halls with his creations.

And all his work, from the first picture to

Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Stassov and Ilya Repin in Penates, Repin's country-house

the last, was dedicated to the glory of Russia. Repin paid homage to Russian music with his portraits of Mikhail Glinka, Modest Mussorgsky, Alexander Borodin, Alexander Glazunov, Anatoli Lyadov and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Russian literature inspired his portraits of Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, Vladimir Stassov, Ivan Aksakov, Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreyev, Vladimir Korolenko and many others. Russian art is represented among Repin's works by a whole portrait gallery—Vassili Surikov, Ivan Shishkin, Ivan Kramskoy, Victor Vasnetsov, Arkhip Quinji, Nikolai Gué, Valentin Serov and others. To Russian science he devoted his portraits of Ivan Sechenov, Dimitri Mendelyeev, Ivan Pavlov, Vladimir Bekhterev; Russian surgery inspired his portraits of Nikolai Pirogov and Eugene Pavlov—the last-named showing the great surgeon performing an operation. In a word, the finest people Russia has known are immortalized by his brush.

And in whatever foreign lands he travelled or sojourned—as a creator, an artist, he always remained in Russia. It was when living in Paris that he painted his "Sadko" glorifying the simple Russian maid whom the Novgorod guest preferred to all foreign beauties cavalcading before him.

After arriving in Dresden, he painted with enthusiasm his portrait of Vladimir Stassov, a champion of Russian national art.

When Repin, as a young man, first found himself far from his country, he informed the Academy of Arts: "I have more Russian subjects in my mind; I do not think that I shall spend much time here. One must study our Russia" (1873).

But of course it is not merely a matter of subjects. The style of his art, severely simple and exact, eschewing decorative prettiness, generously filled with stormy emotions of anger, compassion, love of man is the native style of Russian art. And in his speech of November 6th, 1941, Stalin expressed our conviction, the conviction of all Soviet people, when he included Repin among those immortals who are the glory of Russia.

EXCESSIVE IN LOVE AND ANGER

Intemperance in gesture and word was characteristic of Repin's conduct. It was sufficient to see him with some second-rate writer, musician or actor in order to understand the extent of his tendency toward excessive enthusiasm about people: "A poet of genius! What a genius!" and suchlike ejaculations.

In general it was only talent that attracted him in people, and for him the word "incapable" was the greatest condemnation.

"The woman who undertook to cook for us turned out to be disgracefully incapable," he wrote in his reminiscence of a trip along the Volga.

I liked reading aloud to him; he would listen with the greatest attention, not missing so much as a comma, and bursting into exclamations at especially thrilling places.

When his memoirs were being printed, the typesetters found that they had not sufficient exclamation marks. In his letters, especially the later ones, there were exclamation marks practically on every line—sometimes three or four at once.

The very first chapter in his book was headed:

"My Raptures". This is how he described his musical raptures:

"I longed to jump, shout, laugh, cry, race wildly along the road. Ah, music! It has always penetrated to my very bones!"

Further on, in the same article, he described the raptures of his first love affair:

"I was in love to the roots of my hair! . ." "An inner fire scorched me. . . I was stupefied, I burned and chocked!"

Repin's ability to delight in other people's talents was combined with a great—I almost said unnatural—modesty.

In his letters to me he always referred to himself disdainfully:

"Industrious mediocrity, leading to many mistakes."

"My picture is still on the easel, and I, eternally dissatisfied with my own mediocrity, spur on my old nag Rosinante in chase of thorough-bred racehorses."

"Of course, an old nag cannot be trained (even with long years of work) to be a racehorse, and there is no sorcery that will help there."

In one of his intimate letters he admitted:

"I cannot even copy anything of my own; everything of mine always seems to me so bad that it is stupid to repeat it."

He spoke of his picture "Pushkin on the Shore of the Black Sea", which he painted together with Aivazovsky, in literally the following words:

"Aivazovsky has painted a wonderful sea. . . And all I could do was to daub a figure of sorts there."

I remember that when I first became acquainted with him, it was this characteristic that surprised me most of all. This artist of legendary fame, acknowledged as a genius in his lifetime, was not only not spoiled by fame, but always felt himself to be a failure, or, as he liked to put it, "paltry and insignificant".

"A buyer has just been to see me," he related. "I dissuaded him. It's a trashy picture, not worth purchasing. So he went away again. . ."

"You are a close and constant witness of my great effort and strain in painting my untalented pictures," he wrote me not long before his death.

At first, I remember, this amazed me so much that I felt there must be something assumed about it. But later on, when I learned to know him better, I saw that the bitter feeling of his own lack of success, his "lack of talent" was linked with the very process of his daily work. Every picture he achieved with such intense effort and labour, he changed, repainted every inch of it so many times, or started it all over again from the beginning, at the same time demanding of himself such peaks of perfection as to be impossible of fulfilment even with his gifts, that in actual fact there were periods when he scorned and despised himself for his lack of ability to carry out what he desired.

"When I arrived, I saw that all my bad, unsuccessful pictures had become still worse!" he wrote to his pupil, Veryovkina, complaining that in his studio he felt "disappointment, despair and all of the 'splendours' of our work which make one want to hang oneself. . ."

So wonderful was the picture he wanted to paint, that in comparison with it the one standing on his easel really was a failure. "Unhappy is he whose demands of himself exceed his means—there is neither harmony nor happiness," he wrote to Veryovkina in 1894.

This "divine dissatisfaction" is a trait only of genius. It tormented Gogol, Belinsky, Tolstoy and Nekrassov, but it is unknown to petty, restricted talent.

It was notable that Repin was gentle, yielding and even humble with everybody unless his sacred convictions were touched. But in defending his principles he would be insistent to rudeness, and express himself in the most sharp and decided manner.

Everybody knows how warmly he loved Vladimir Stassov but as soon as he dissented with him on a point of principle in the evaluation of art, he wrote to him as follows:

"Please do not think that I am making any sort of pretence, that I shall again seek your company, far from it. I even request you—I am always frank with you—not to trouble me further with your letters. I hope never to see you again. What is the use?

"With my sincere and deep respects,
I. Repin."

Such was Repin when it was a matter of principle. Where then were his gentle, submissive gestures, his complaints of his own deficiencies, mediocrity!

Several times when the matter concerned ideas dear to him he wrote very sharp, trenchant letters to me also.

As a rule he met with the most ardent enthusiasm every opinion, every piece of work where he could see the slightest gleam of merit. Here, for instance, is a characteristic extract from one of his letters to me—mainly on the articles I was writing at the time:

"If I were a young and beautiful woman, I would throw myself on your neck and kiss you to unconsciousness."

I quote these lines without any embarrassment, for I know that when thousands of Repin's letters to thousands of different people are collected, the majority of his correspondents will turn out in his words to be "people of human beauty and talent".

All this enthusiasm was sincere, although people who did not know Repin often found some affectation in it. I admit that at first I thought his enthusiasm whipped up. It was some time before I realized that Repin was thoroughly sincere in everyone of his exclamations.

The Izdebsky Salon, an exhibition of formalist art, was opened in Petersburg. This same Izdebsky, a man sprightly and overpolite almost to the point of pertness, wearing a stiffly starched dicky, invited Repin to the opening of his exhibition, when visiting him in Finland. Repin bowed, thanked him, accompanied him to the gate and again bowed with his hand on his heart. When he arrived at the exhibition, Izdebsky, his starched dicky gleaming, met him on the stairs and began to shower him with courtesies, while Repin again bowed with his hand on his heart and spoke pleasantly to him.

Then he entered the gallery, walked up to one of the pictures, to another, looked round, on all sides and shouted at the whole exhibi-

tion: "Svoloch!" [1] He stamped and gesticulated as though itching to destroy everything around him.

Izdebsky dashed towards the infuriated Repin who in a frenzy could only shout such exclamations as "pigmy", "dauber", "castrate", "lackey", "menial" and this hurricane of words blew Izdebsky off his feet like a fly before the wind.

REPIN AT WORK

All this intemperance of passion he vested in his art.

Barely had he awakened in the morning, than he ran to the studio and worked there till he was exhausted. His industry was something unheard-of, he was even somewhat ashamed of his incredible passion for work which made him devote all his strength and energy to the huge canvases surrounding him in the studio, without laying down his brush from sunrise to sunset.

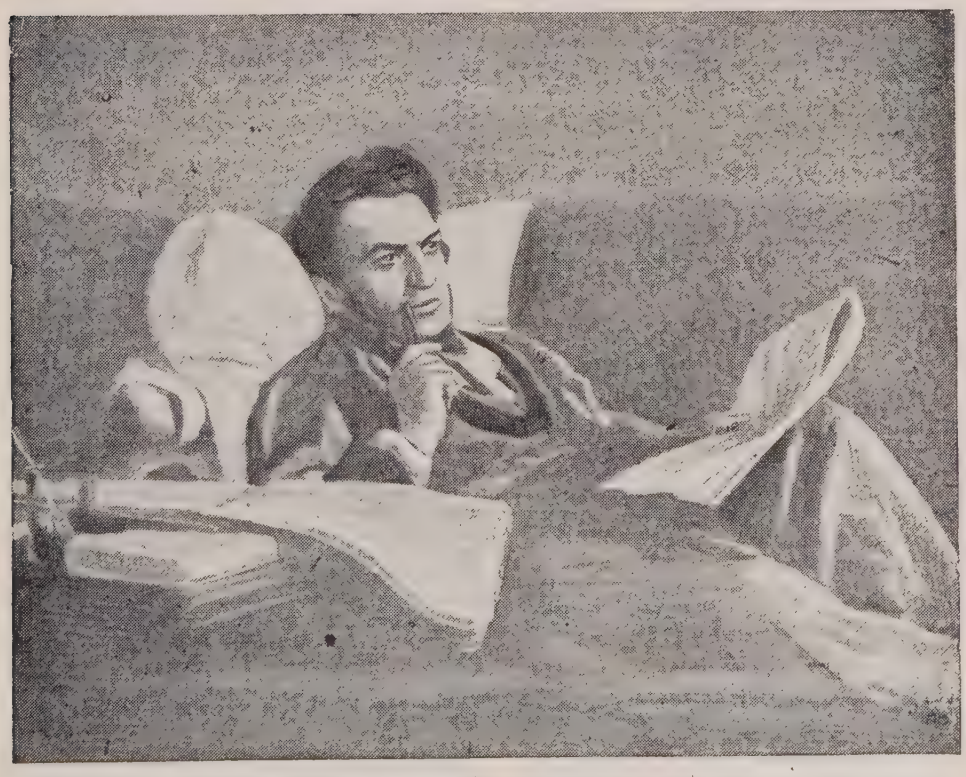
I was a constant visitor to that studio for many years, and I can testify that he racked himself (with labour to fainting point, that every picture he repainted from beginning to end nine and ten times, that frequently when he was creating some work or other he would be seized with such despair, such a bitter lack of faith in his own powers, that in one day he would destroy a whole picture which he had created through many years of work, and the next day begin once more, as he put it, to turn the whole thing upside down.

"The whole process (of work) of a self-taught artist passed before your eyes," he wrote me not long before his death. "I have concealed nothing from you. You are a living witness to the number of times I repainted my pictures."

When I first made his acquaintance I saw a picture "Pushkin by the Neva" on his easel, on which he was working at the time. And when I visited him not long before his death, after the Revolution of 1917, the same picture was standing on the same easel. For twenty years he had tormented himself with it, he had painted at least a hundred Pushkins, first with one position of the head, then with another, one standing by the river in the evening, another in the morning, one in one costume, the next in another, one with an elegiac smile, another with a pathetic smile and one felt that there were still many years of work ahead on this "unsuccessful" picture.

Around him there were dozens of canvasses, and I knew that if each one contained, say, eight figures, actually there were eighty or even eight times eighty. In the "Black Sea Cossack Free Troops", the "Wonder-working Icon", and "Pushkin at an Examination", I myself saw him make so many changes in

[1] A spicy Russian expletive, in this sense meaning "villainous" or even something stronger.



Mikhail Glinka composing the opera "Ruslan and Ludmila"

By Ilya Repin. 1887

the faces, with continual variations, that the number would have supplied the population for a district town.

When his right arm began to wither from exhaustion and age, and he could no longer hold his brush, he immediately started learning to paint with the left, so as not to lose a minute. When senility prevented him from holding his palette, he held it slung round his neck like a stone, with a contrivance of string, and worked with this stone from morning to night. At whatever time one might enter his dark, cramped, low room, beneath his studio, one could always hear the sound of his tottering footsteps. That meant that after every stroke he moved to look at his canvas; his paintings were meant to be viewed from afar, and he had to test them at a distance. So he walked several miles a day in front of every picture, and only stopped when he was numbed with exhaustion.

At times it seemed to me that by his passion for art, he could overcome not only old age but even death itself. When I visited him in Finland in 1925, I saw plainly that this man with one foot in the grave kept himself alive by his superhuman work, that it was only by this that he lived. And when death came quite near, he wrote me a letter where he gaily thanked departing life for that happiness in work which it had lavished on him right to the grave.

Here is the letter:

"I would like to be buried in my own garden, in the place marked, be buried and a tree planted on the grave. According to the words of an experienced Finn, there's no need for a box, that is to say, a coffin. . . There is no time for delay! Take today, for instance. I wakened so dizzy that I could barely wash and dress myself. I had to support myself, holding on to the stove, the cupboard and other articles of furniture in order to keep my feet.

"Yes, it is time to think of the grave, for Vesuvius is far and I could no longer crawl to the crater. It would be pleasant to rid all my near of the cost of a funeral. It is a dreary and dull business. . .

"Please do not think that I am depressed about my approaching death. On the contrary—I am *gay*—even in the last of my letters to you, my dear friend. . .

"I will tell you what now holds my interest in my departing life, what holds my attention.

"First of all I have not dropped my art. All my last thoughts are of *IT*, and I admit that I have given all my work to my pictures. I think it must be more than six months now I have been working (why keep it secret longer?) on my picture 'Hopak', dedicated to the memory of Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky. What a pity I shall be unable to finish it! And others and others—all on living, lively subjects. . .

"I want no alterations in the garden. I shall soon be digging a grave. A pity that I cannot do it with my own hands, my remnants of strength are not sufficient, and probably it would not be allowed. But it is a nice place, under the Chuguyev Hill. You have not forgotten it?

Your Ilya Repin."

Even in these last words, when Repin was at the point of death, when it seemed that he would drop to dust at a breath, there is the same determined industry and the same indomitable passion. With one foot in the grave, he was painting a large scale canvas dedicated to the happiness of youth, to merry dancing and laughter.

What then was this man like in the full tide of his strength, when his "Church Procession" was standing on one easel, "Unexpected Return" on another, "Ivan the Dread and His Son Ivan" on a third, "Confession Before Execution" on a fourth, a portrait of Stassov on a fifth, a portrait of Garshin on a sixth, and on the seventh, still a secret from all, his "Dnieper Cossacks"; at the time when Kramskoy wrote of him: "It is as though he suddenly lost his temper, takes fire, seizes his palette and brush and begins to paint on his canvas like a man obsessed. There is not one of us can do what he is doing now."

This obsession, this passionate storm of creation, this insatiable eagerness for human bodies, human faces, eyes, hair, for human poses and gestures, for all "the objects in an objective world", this excessive love for all tangible, visible flesh which he reproduced on his canvases with endless enjoyment, giving it such expression and, I might say, loud sound that every canvas and every portrait seemed to shout from the rooftops—it was all this mighty temperamental creativeness that made him a great realist.

This was no passionless copyist of nature, he depicted it triumphantly, thankfully and tenderly, and many times have I seen the voluptuous, avid expression with which he looked at what he was painting.

And one notable thing: he himself told me that more often than not, when he was painting a portrait, for the time being he would fall in love with his subject, he would have a tenfold feeling of benevolence to him and a kind of especial, submissive tenderness; and I think that this arose from that same passionate love with which he regarded every subject of his art.

Many remember his love for Kanin, the barge-hauler whom he saw by the Volga.

"I walked along beside Kanin," he related in his memoirs, "never taking my eyes from him. And all the time I liked him more and more. I fell passionately in love with every trait of his character and every shade of his skin and hemp shirt. What a warmth in this colouring!"

It was just his ability to delight in nature not only as a combination of certain lines and colours, but first and foremost as a character which unfolded before him in all its being just in the period when he was in love with it, that made Repin a great psychological portrait-painter.

But of course, the pure love of an artist for lines, colours, forms was innate in him to a tremendous degree.

I remember once in the winter at Kuokkala, when I was in his garden, I saw that on the white snow one of Repin's dogs had left a narrow, deep yellow pool. Without noticing myself what I was doing, I began to dig up the snow around it with the toe of my boot so as to cover up this unpleasant patch. . .

Suddenly Repin groaned as though in deep suffering:

"What are you doing! What are you doing! For three days I've been coming here to admire this deep amber tone. . . And you. . ."

And he looked at me with the deepest reproach, just as though I had destroyed some valuable work of art before his eyes.

One day he told me how he fell in love with the sun. It was as though for the first time he had seen it in the country in the early morning. Before his eyes swam circles, green, red, blue, and these circles he reproduced on canvas, so as to convey with exactitude the enchantment of the rising sun. I once reminded him of this study, and he sent me a letter where he wrote, among other things:

"It was not a 'study', but a picture of sun-circles in one's eyes, that I painted all that summer in Zdravnevo, I don't remember the year. Every cloudless day I ran at sunrise to the bank of the Western Dvina, thirty paces from my home. I eagerly drank in the tone of the sky and the rosy feathery clouds over the sun, this unfortunately seldom repeated itself; and furthermore, the Dvina, shrunk in the course of the summer, the rapids just opposite, and the forest beyond the river. One day in Moscow I happened to see it (this picture) on the wall. It was in a fine massive frame and I myself admired it; and the little circles began dancing before my eyes again—green, red, blue. . ."

When he was already old, the doctors forbade him to work continually, without resting, and ordered him not to take pencil or brush in his hand on Sundays. This was hard for him. Every Sunday he came to visit me, and I, obeying his doctors, hid from him all my pencils and even pens. For an hour, two, he submissively bore this deprivation, but it was enough for one of my "picturesque" guests to enter the room, it was enough for me to light the hanging lamp whose rays fell upon those present—and Repin would look round longing for a pencil or a pen. Finding nothing, he took a cigarette stump from the ashtray, dipped it in the inkwell and began drawing on any odd piece of paper he could find.

He used the cigarette end like a brush, and the ink patches gave the impression of paintings. When I looked at these ink patches, made with a soft and spongy cigarette stump, I was always delighted with their refinement of tone, and I recalled the words of a critic hostile to Repin: "There is one sphere in which Repin's gifts are almost incomparable and it is that of tonal definition. The accuracy and lightness with which he depicts the light gradations of colouring depending on its situation in space is perhaps the best feature of Repin's talent."

Once he dashed off a portrait of a woman who was not remarkable in any way. In this portrait, the patches, with their touch of genius, thanks to their great tonal variety appeared to show the most varied colours, miraculously reproducing the texture of her dress, the slight coarsening of her aging skin, and her thin chestnut hair.

But Repin's force did not lie in the automatic reproduction of what he saw. It lay in his unsurpassed ability to express a person's

Beggar *By Ilya Repin*

psychological essence with every fold of clothing, the slightest turn of the head, the slightest curve of the little finger.

How many figures there are in his "Church Procession", and although they are all pressed into a packed crowd crawling along the sultry road, smothered in a smoke screen of dust, nevertheless there is not one figure among them whose personality does not stand out, who does not express his innate individuality by his walk, his style of hairdressing, his gestures, at the same time supporting the main idea of the picture as a whole. The affectation of the foppish deacon coquettishly swinging his censor, the innate humility of the lean, half-witted pilgrims, the beefy, sweating, rich farmer marching with monumental solidity beside the icon, the dignified and withal unassuming submissiveness, the mincing gait of two pious women devoutly carrying the empty wooden icon case, the woman landowner, swollen up like a louse, pacing along in all her glory, short-legged and sweating—there is only one man who could have depicted all these with such expression and that is Leo Tolstoy. It was only he who could find words to describe each of these people, so complicated and definite are their characteristics as shown by Repin's brush.

In its composition this picture stands above anything else I have ever seen, for despite its bold relief and the definiteness of its various figures, not one of them projects from the whole. All these various gaits, beards, stomachs, low foreheads, banners, whips and greasy heads of hair harmonize and merge naturally into one single mass such as can be seen nowhere else, in no other picture. Beside this rendering of a crowd, almost every other seems false. This is the non plus ultra of realistic truth. And the tone graduations are so exact and right that if one looks at this

procession for ten minutes, it becomes stereoscopic to the point of illusion and the background seems to retreat far into the distance, at least a quarter of a verst.

And never shall I understand by what means he achieved the effect that the whole procession is moving as though at the cinema. Even the horsemen are moving, although their horses are not visible, only the bodies emerging from the crowd; but these bodies are swaying evenly, each one with its own rhythm.

I can imagine the joy with which Repin painted these hundreds of figures. One feels that if it had been possible he could have made this crowd extend for not a quarter of a verst, but for twenty or forty versts, without satisfying the appetite of his artistry.

In general this appetite was stupendous.

Travelling with him in a train or a tram, one could see him examining everybody sitting there before him with the curiosity of a foreigner strange to our country and painting their portraits in his mind's eyes. This examination was a creative pleasure for him. "My best pictures have never been painted," he said.

And wherever he might go—be it to a small eating house or to the opera—he took his sketch-book with him and at the slightest opportunity, sometimes in wind or frost, jotted down what caught his eye.

For him, drawing was as much a necessity as breathing, because although his big pictures cost him tremendous effort, drawing from nature was intrinsic to his very existence, such as eating or sleeping. And there could hardly be a happier man on earth than Repin when, with a few swift and invariably successful pencil strokes, he sketched in a human head. At such times his eyes held such a look of happiness as though he had waited all his life to reproduce just that face.

He kept all his old sketch-books, so that by the time he was old they made a whole library, filling several book cases, which he showed to practically nobody.

When as a token of especial favour he allowed me to look through these sketch-books in 1915, I saw a new Repin who put in the shade even that Repin whom I knew from his pictures.

The very strokes of his pencil, the very lines—iron-hard when he was depicting iron, velvet-soft when he was showing velvet, giving the very essence of every substance enchanted me with their superb art.

In these touches one could see the real Repin—apparently yielding, apparently submissive, apparently unsure of himself, apparently weak-willed, but actually an irresistible force.

In his drawings there was not one laconic line, all were attenuated and it might seem weak, but they were dead on the mark, and whatever his pencil seized upon, he pinned down on the leaves of his sketch-book with all its individual qualities, all its fundamental unpretentiousness.

For "Dnieper Cossacks" alone Repin had several hundred sketches—the quintessence of Ukrainian life of that time, and it seemed to me that even the very strokes were Ukrainian—soft, musical, lyrical. In their skill, their plasticity, their expressiveness they seemed to me much better than the "Dnieper Cossacks" itself, but when I tried to hint at this, Repin frowned angrily. He considered these studies of no independent worth, he saw in them only material for the picture he was planning. He even felt rather awkward about having so many of them, although he liked to repeat that what is called inspiration is actually the reward of hard work.

"In the ninth decade of my efforts," he wrote me not long before his death, "I have come to the conclusion that I need to work a very, very long time on the subject (to seek, change and repaint, not grudging any work) and then in the end, I stumbled on some unexpected gifts and only then feel myself that this is a jewel. . . something rare, something that has never been. . ."

REPIN IN EVERYDAY LIFE.—HIS CONVICTIONS

His whole manner of living was in conformity with his great industry. He had a theory that if he allowed himself any luxury, his creative vigour would be enfeebled. Continually he had before his eyes the bitter fate of Kramskoy, who lured by late-achieved comforts and a gentleman's life, never finished painting one of his best pictures; for this reason he kept an iron hand upon himself, never for a moment allowing himself to become a "spoiled child of fame". Not only would he allow himself no carriage, it was seldom he took a cab, usually travelling by electric or horse tram. He went on foot a great deal.

When he left Kuokkala for a visit to St. Petersburg, he would eat not in restaurants but in cheap eating houses. He himself kept his room clean and in order, he himself, as far as he was able, heated the stove and he cleaned his own palette. And although he dearly loved the expensive China tea, he made the cheap sorts do for everyday, using the good tea only for holidays when he had visitors. If he received a parcel fastened up with string, he would not save time by cutting it, but would slowly and patiently untie the knots so as to save it.

Was he parsimonious? In Kuokkala he made the acquaintance of a writer who had been banished from Petersburg and who was in great want. He gave me a new hundred ruble note and said:

"Give it to him. . . Mundstuck [1]. . . Tell him it's an advance from the publishers."

This writer was nicknamed "Mundstuck" because incessant smoking always made him reek of nicotine. And if he is alive and well to this day, it is solely thanks to those "advances from the publishers", which Repin used to give him at that time. But supplicants and beggars he loathed with the hatred of a hard-working man, and drove them away with scorn.

He had the greatest respect for every kind of physical work and so far as his strength allowed, spent some time every day digging the garden, sawing or chopping wood.

Repin always slept in the open air on his balcony, even in January and February. He was neat and tidy to the point of fussiness. And if he had borrowed from you eight

[1] Cigarette-holder.—*Tr.*

kopecks, for instance, he would walk three kilometres in the rain to return the loan.

Repin considered it his duty to reply to all the letters which he received no matter from whom and spent several hours on this occupation every evening. Reading books and newspaper was one of his daily habits and every book was an event for him. The variety of his literary interests even surpassed that of a professional writer. This variety came out in many of his letters to me.

"I am reading Korolenko," he wrote to me in the eighty-third year of his life. "What a work of genius is his *Shadows*!"

Here is an extract from another letter:

"The other day Yura gave me Grabar's *Vrubel* to read. A lovely thing—wise, interesting and even artistically written."

And in a third letter:

"I have started reading Lunacharsky—and I am surprised that he is criticized. There is a great deal that is very interesting in his *Critical Studies*, particularly about Gorky."

I remember with what excitement he read Chernyshevsky's *Letters from Siberia*. At one time he even wanted to paint a picture entitled "The Execution of Chernyshevsky", and collected material for it. It is very possible that his admiration for Chernyshevsky dated from his youth, from the sixties, when his mental character formed. He particularly valued *What Is to Be Done?* and knew several of its pages by heart—particularly "Vera Pavlovna's Dream". Even in his declining years he wrote: "Not long ago in Chernyshevsky's letters, I imagined all the real horror of the Russian genius buried alive in him."

In general, the streak of radicalism of the sixties and seventies remaining from his student days and expressed in his best pictures also showed itself in his last days.

In 1925, when he was already living in emigration, two volumes of Pobedonostsev's correspondence appeared in print, in which among other things Pobedonostsev in a letter to the tsar spoke with great hostility of Repin's "Ivan the Dread and His Son Ivan". I copied this letter and sent it to Repin in Finland.

Repin replied immediately:

"Pobedonostsev's lines were not worth even copying. It is not the first time I see what petty policeman he is. And as for Alexander III—a born ass. The disaster they were preparing for themselves is growing more and more defined."

I remember how pleased he was about the audacious monument which Trubetskoy set up in the capital to Alexander III. "Quite true! Quite true! A fat-buttocked swashbuckler!" cried Repin. "That's him exactly, that's all his tsardom!" and despite the baiting of the Black-Hundred press, he ardently sung the praises of this caricature of the "peace-maker tsar".

"I congratulate myself, all Russia and all our descendants on the genius of this work of art," he said in one of his speeches of greeting to Trubetskoy.

And here was his attitude to Nikolai II after the Peace of Portsmouth:

"Now the revolting barbarian is wriggling and playing the injured innocent: the serfish menials he has stupefied did not support him sufficiently. If they had rushed to their deaths with more enthusiasm for the glory of His Autocratic Copper he would not be looking a fool today. He would be perching on a high throne over all the East and the West."

The very idea of monarchy was always hateful to Repin:

". . . What idiocy it is—autocracy! How unnatural and dangerous is this invention of savage man, how loathsome in its results!"

Even in the eighties, the very height of reaction, when it seemed that the spirit of the sixties was buried and forgotten, Repin loudly announced himself to be "a man of the sixties":

"I cannot occupy myself with direct creation (i.e., art for art's sake). To make carpets of my pictures, with languishing eyes, fountains of lace, to busy myself with fashions, in a word to mix in every way divine gifts with heathen ones, to blow hither and thither with every wind of the times. . . no, I am a man of the sixties, a backward man, for me the ideals of Gogol, Belinsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy have not died. . . The life around me stirs me too much, it gives me no peace, demands a place on the canvas. Reality is too outrageous for me to be able with a quiet conscience to draw patterns—I will leave that to well-brought-up young ladies."

In this splendid letter lies the key to all of Repin's creative work—that hatred for the "outrageous Russian actuality" which at one time fired Belinsky and a pleiad of his successors.

Repin's streak of radicalism of the sixties and seventies also came out later, during the World War I, although, naturally, he, like all of us, was deceived at first by its mendacious liberal slogans.

I remember one Sunday I invited my guests to reply to the question: what they expected from the war, and all of them wrote, one after the other: "I expect the complete defeat of the Teutons", "I am convinced that Berlin will be ours" and so on, after the same style. But Repin, in contrast to all of them, wrote: "I expect a federative German republic!"

When pressed for an explanation, he pulled an inkwell closer and immediately drew a small picture, which I have to this day. It showed the victorious German workers carting Wilhelm out on barrow, that is to say it prophetically expressed a confidence, which at that time seemed fantastic, that the final result of the war would be the victory of the proletariat over the old regime.

After the October Revolution I lost sight of Repin for a long time. During the revolution Kuokkala became foreign soil, and he was cut off from his country.

KORNEI CHUKOVSKY

SHAKESPEARE IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS

In 1939, on the occasion of the three hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare, the All-Russian Theatre Society in Moscow called a Shakespearean conference to which were invited a number of stage producers of Shakespeare plays.

The object was to mark this Shakespeare anniversary by establishing closer contact between leading stage workers and Shakespeare scholars.

The conference was opened by the President of the Society, Alexandra Yablochkina, of the Moscow Maly Theatre, the oldest actress in the U.S.S.R. The first speaker was Solomon Mikhoels, director and leading actor of the Jewish Theatre, Moscow. In a long speech Mikhoels spoke of his interpretation of King Lear, and made, among other things, a striking remark. He said that at the beginning of this tragedy Lear—before whom no obstacles seem to stand in the way of any of his wishes—is nevertheless a man inwardly chained, inwardly unfree; at the close of the tragedy when, with hands tied, he is led off to prison and addresses Cordelia with the words:

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage. . .

Lear is a man who has found inner freedom.

And since then this theme—the theme of inward changes of a character in the course of the action developing in Shakespearean drama—has become one of the chief subjects of joint discussion for producers and Shakespeare scholars in the preparatory period for the staging of Shakespearean plays. This cooperation gave us the opportunity of seeing on the stage of the Bolshoy Drama Theatre in Leningrad in 1941 the remarkable transformation of Edgar (*King Lear* produced by Grigori Kozintsev—one of the leading Soviet film directors, whose love for Shakespeare and Priestley's plays won him over to the legitimate drama). At the beginning of the performance Edgar appears before us as a fop and a fantastico. "What hast thou been?" Lear asks of him, to which Edgar replies: "A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress's heart. . ." But later this dandy appears before us in a hovel, as "poor Tom", wrapped in a blanket. He has, however, descended to these dark streams of life in order, at the end of this tragedy, to arise as a knight of shining countenance, the bearer of truth and the worthy ruler of a kingdom. At the opening of the tragedy we see Gloucester as kindly, garrulous and jovial. Who would have thought that this man would have his eyes gouged out and that with his bloody empty sockets he would gaze deep into the very core of life? Gloucester was blind when he had eyes, and gained sight when he was blinded. . . The most brilliant interpretation of Shakespearean roles will not satisfy us today unless the actor and producer bring out the development of the character in their interpretation. And this, to a large degree, is to the merit of the annual Shakespearean conferences held in the U.S.S.R. Thus, from the very outset, these Shakespearean conferences pursued not only theoretical aims but also had the object of giving practical assistance to the stage.

One of the most interesting reports made at the First Conference was that by the talented producer Alexei Popov, of the Central Red Army Theatre in Moscow, who spoke of his methods of working with actors in staging Shakespearean plays. An actor, say, is rehearsing the role of Tranio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Popov does not speak to the actor of the Italian "comedy of masks", but urges

72 *"A Midsummer-Night's Dream" at the Mikoyan Young Spectator's Theatre in Erivan*

him to invent Tranio's biography, and the impersonator gives free reign to his fantasy as to what Tranio's family had been, what its members were like, how they lived in a little cottage by the sea, and so on. The actor thus learns to regard Tranio not as a stage personage, not as a mask, but as a living man, for in Shakespeare's works Popov primarily aims at unfolding that living truth for which the Russian stage has such a passion.

At the First Shakespearean Conference the writer of these lines read a paper on "The Basic Features of Shakespeare's Dramaturgy".

Of the reports read at the Second Conference, in 1940, special mention should be made of that by Prof. Alexander Smirnov on the last plays written by Shakespeare *(Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest)*. The speaker asserted that the departure from realism towards romantic colourfulness and symbolism in Shakespeare's last plays is not the result of escape from or passive reconciliation with reality but a new phase in the struggle for humanistic ideals, a struggle which never ceased in the creations of the great dramatist.

This theme was amplified by Vladimir Uzin in an interesting paper on *The Winter's Tale*. In Uzin's opinion, the essence of the denouement in *The Winter's Tale* is not in the reconciliation between Leontes and Hermione, nor in the re-establishment of "initial harmony", but in the triumph of the younger generation (Florizel and Perdita). The theme of Shakespeare's last plays is this faith in the young generation, in the future destiny of mankind.

The 1941 Conference was largely devoted to questions of Russian translations of Shakespeare. The discussion gave rise to heated debates which led to the conclusion that translations should not copy Shakespeare: they should aim at the spirit rather than the letter. This outlined the path which, among other poets-translators, was chosen by Boris Pasternak who, in the past three years, has made new translations of *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* (Pasternak is at present completing his translation of *Othello*) and by Samuel Marshak in his brilliant translations of the songs of the Fool from *King Lear*.

As already mentioned, both stage workers and Shakespeare scholars participated in the conferences, thus building a bridge between the practical work of the stage and Shakespeare scholarship, a bridge linking two banks which hitherto had known too little of each other.

The author of these lines will never forget the memorable Fourth Shakespearean Conference. This was in 1942, when the Germans still stood not far from the gates of Moscow. None of the evacuated Moscow theatres had as yet returned to the capital. Despite these very trying days, the hall where the Shakespearean Conference was held was packed. The next annual conference, in 1943, was held under better circumstances. The main theme of these two conferences was the problem of Shakespearean humanism. In the light of the events which Soviet people were living through they sensed more clearly than ever in the creative work of the great dramatist the theme of struggle against the dark world of evil and crime, a theme not of contemplative but, so to speak, of active humanism. For it is not only scholarship and the stage which teach one to understand Shakespeare, but also life itself.

Last year, 1943, witnessed an interesting event in the theatre life of the U.S.S.R. The newly founded Armenian Theatre Society in Erivan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, addressed the All-Russian Theatre Society, its older sister institution, with a proposal that the Sixth Annual Shakespearean Conference be convened in Erivan instead of Moscow. This suggestion was agreed to and in 1944 from Moscow to Erivan went a delegation comprising Prof. Alexei Jivelegov, the well-known historian of the Renaissance, the theatre authority George Goyan, the stage critic Josef Yuzovsky, the bibliographist Artavaz Agambekian and the author of these lines. After a long journey the delegation arrived at Erivan, nestling at the foothills of Mt. Ararát. Besides the Muscovites at the Sixth Conference there were also present a Georgian delegation headed by Prof. Akaki Pagava, the actor Akaki Vassadze—noted for his remarkable performance of Iago at the Rust'veli Theatre in Tbilissi—and Alexander Takaishvili, who staged a most interesting production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Young Spectator's Theatre in Tbilissi, and also a delegation from Azerbaijan which included Prof. Michael Rafili, Ph. D. Philology, and the actress Merzia Hanum, known for her excellent performance as Lady Macbeth. The presence of all these delegations added particular purport to this Shakespearean event in Erivan. Quite naturally, these days turned out not only a holiday of scholarship and Armenian stage art but also a demonstration of the heart-felt and unshakable friendship between the peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union.

The bard of Avon enjoys tremendous popularity in Armenia, a popularity which has been growing and cementing for many decades. Armenians pay homage to their celebrated actor of the XIX century, Petros Adamian, whose performance of Hamlet was ranked by exacting Russian stage critics even higher than those of Rossi and Salvini. Equal homage is paid to the memory of the best Armenian translators of Shakespeare's works as to the authors of classics of Armenian literature. The leading Armenian actors of today—Vagram Papazian, Vagarsh Vagarshian, Rafya Narsesian and Gurgen Janibekian—regularly appear in Shakespearean roles. Vagarshian's son, a young artist, told the author of this article, that when a child he thought Shakespeare was an Armenian, having so often heard his name mentioned at home. The author was also told of cases when parents christened their child with the far from Armenian name of William, in honour of the bard of Avon. The great esteem accorded Shakespeare in Armenia is seen in many instances—in the fact, for example, that *Hamlet* has been translated into Armenian seven times, and *Othello* six.

The author visited Erivan ten years ago. And when arriving in the Armenian capital in 1944 he failed to recognize the city. The

Vagarsh Vagarshyan as Hamlet. Staged by the Sundukian Dramatic Theatre

town was embellished with many new buildings erected by the remarkable Armenian architect Alexander Tamanian and his school. Looking at these buildings, the spectator appreciates that in the past ten years Armenia has come to comprehend clearly its own national style in art. The visitor will find signs of this style at every step: in the painting by Armenian artists displayed in the local, and excellent, museum of painting. And should one visit the talented painter Ervand Kochar, whose works, so the author of these lines was told, had been shown in Paris alongside with those of Picasso, one will find that he has now dropped his former manner of painting and has done the illustrations for the ancient Armenian epic poem *David of Sasun*, and is now drawing in gouache mighty human figures against the background of mountain landscapes. His is now a vigorous, virile and monumental style the roots of which spring from the majestic monuments of ancient Armenian architecture. And, as the young historian of the Armenian stage, Suren Arutyunian, rightly pointed out in his paper at the Conference the love shown by the Armenian stage and Armenian spectators for the monumental forms of Shakespeare dramas is no chance occurrence.

The Erivan Theatre named after Gabriel Sundukian—the famous Armenian dramatist—could not accommodate the throngs of people who wished to be present at the opening of the Sixth U.S.S.R. Shakespearean Conference. On the stage beneath a huge portrait of Shakespeare, stood the table at which sat the Presidium, and the speaker's rostrum, from which members of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, professors of the Erivan University, delegation members and leading Armenian actors greeted the conference.

Next day the author of this article opened the series of reports with his paper "Shakespeare in the Soviet Union". That same day the conference heard a paper by Prof. Jivelegov: "The Figure of Man in the Renaissance Era".

The following day the representative of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian S.S.R., Honoured Arts Worker Leon Kalantar, read a paper: "Shakespeare on the Armenian Stage in the Pre-Soviet Period". The first Shakespeare productions on the Armenian stage date from the middle of the past century and the struggle which sprang up in those years around Shakespeare—his recognition by some and the criticism of his works by others—had a truly amazing resemblance to the similar disputes that were witnessed in Russia and France, for instance, in the opening decades of the XIX century, during the period of clash between romanticism and classicism.

A brilliant and absorbing paper was read by the young historian of the Armenian stage, Suren Arutyunian, already mentioned above, on the subject: "Shakespeare on the Armenian Stage in the Soviet Period". This circumstantial report took two and a half hours to deliver, and from first to last the whole audience which crowded the hall listened with great interest.

Among the other papers read at the Sixth Conference special mention should be made of that by the young stage scholar Sarkis Meliksetian on the great Armenian actor of the XIX century Petros Adamian. This paper formed a most valuable contribution to the history of the stage. From the viewpoint of Shakespearean criticism, the paper by Prof. Gayk Gulikevkhian: "Shakespeare as Appraised by Armenian Stage and Literary Critics", and that on the theory of translations by Vagram Terzibashian: "Shakespeare in Armenian Translations" were especially interesting.

Finally, for the general study of Shakespeare art, of exceptional interest, in the author's opinion, was the paper: "The Prin-

ıiple of Shakespeare's Poetics in Music", by Arshak Adamian, a professor on the theory of aesthetics. Through a fine and profound analysis of Chaikovsky's suite to *Romeo and Juliet*, Prof. Adamian showed the significance of Chaikovsky as a singular and remarkable interpreter of Shakespeare.

Although special problems touching Shakespeare's text were not on the agenda of this conference, that does not mean that they are neglected by Armenian Shakespeare scholars. One need only spend a few minutes at the performance, say, of *Hamlet*, in the Sundukian Theatre in Erivan to be convinced that many remarks by the latest commentators—Dover Wilson, for example—have been taken into account by the Armenian stage.

For the first time in the history of Shakespearean conferences in the Soviet Union, the series of papers, which occupied nine days and were listened to by a crowded hall, were accompanied by a grand Shakespeare theatre festival. Spectators had the opportunity of seeing two performances of *Hamlet*, three of *Othello*, a most pleasant performance of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* at the Young Spectator's Theatre in Erivan and a sparkling and fascinating presentation of *Twelfth Night* at the State Armenian Drama Theatre in Leninakan. This festival was a demonstration of flourishing stagecraft in Armenia.

The author has already spoken of the style of modern Armenian art. It seems therefore no mere chance that the Armenian actor Vagarsh Vagarshian—that brilliant stage master who with equal force and expression plays in Shakespearean roles, in the title role in Maxim Gorky's *Yegor Bulychov* and in national Armenian plays—creates the image of such a vigorous, manly and energetic Hamlet.

In his interpretation of Othello Hrachya Nersesian gives reign to his mighty temperament. Another feature characteristic of the Armenian stage is conveyed by Gurgen Janibekian in his thoughtfully and subtly elaborated interpretation of Hamlet and Othello.

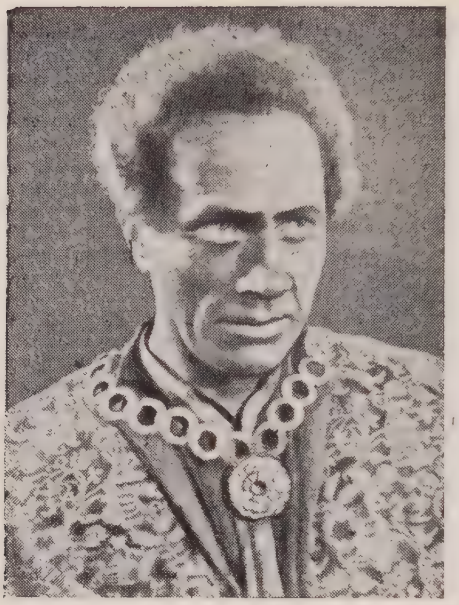
Besides plays in Armenian, the festival also included a performance of *Othello* in Azerbaijanian by the local collective- and state-farm travelling Azerbaijan theatre. A very pleasing performance of *Othello* was given by the young Azerbaijan actor and playwright Ali Zeinal. His movements have an inimitable eastern grace, his lyricism is singularly profound and mellow. *Othello* was translated into Azerbaijanian several years ago by the well-known Azerbaijan dramatist, the late Jafar Jabarly, who translated some of Othello's monologues in rhyme. In the slow, lilting enunciation of Zeinal, some of these soliloquies are exceptionally melodious, recalling to the mind of the listener the lines of Omar Khayyam in Fitzgerald's translation.

For one day the conference went to Leninakan, the second largest city in Armenia. At the stations en route, where there were district theatres, the representatives of the Moscow, Georgian and Azerbaijan delegations were met by the local actors and actresses clad in national costumes. In keeping with the traditions of hospitality in Armenia, they offered the guests large trays piled with wines and eatables. And time and again these minor details eloquently reminded the visitors of the firm friendship between the peoples of the Soviet Union, a friendship which finds expression at every step, in large and small things, and through the Shakespearean Conference too.

In Leninakan the present author gave a report, after which he was presented by the city authorities with a pair of shoes with the inscription: "So that you visit us more often." A touching expression of goodwill and welcome, it was typical of the subtle and singular native humour of Armenians, instances of which could be found at every step, about which volumes could be written and of which we shall here give another example relating to the charming performance of *Twelfth Night* in Leninakan. The back-drop in this production represents a gallery and boxes in which sit dummies dressed in the costumes of Elizabethian England. The spectators seemed to be present at a performance in the Globe Theatre. During the last interval these dolls were replaced by live people, and at the end of the play the "dummies" unexpectedly burst into applause. A stage-manager's trick, an external and unneccessary effect, the layman may declare. But the idea pursued here by the talented producer Vartan Ajemian was something entirely different, something which easily "got over" to Armenian spectators. The author asked one of the spectators what the idea was of having these dummies, to which came the immediate reply: "Why, to show that even dummies applaud Shakespeare!"

When the conference and festival was over the delegates motored out to the environs of Erivan where they visited the majestic ruins of the ancient temple in Svartnots—fragments of grey stone surrounded by fields covered with red poppies and with a magnificent alpine landscape girdled by snow-capped mountain peaks—the two Ararats—Minor and Major—on the one side, and the Alagöz on the other. The delegates travelled past endless vineyards and prosperous wine-making collective farms. They visited Echmiadsin, residence of the Armenian Catholicos—head of the Armenian Church. While roaming around, in the very shadow of the walls of the ancient cathedral, the author of these lines came across a rather unusual tombstone. The gilt lettering on the stone had been practically erased by the passage of time, but by straining one's eyes, it could be seen that the inscription was in English. The Catholicos' private secretary satisfied the author's natural curiosity, explaining that in the thirties of XIX century, en route to Teheran, an Englishman by the name of Macdonald, bound on a diplomatic commission, stopped here for a while. He was so enchanted by the wonderful natural scenery that in his will he asked that he should be buried here. Macdonald died in Teheran and his remains were brought here and interred by the wall of the ancient cathedral.

Filled with unforgettable impressions, the visitors left Erivan. Together with the two remarkable actors Vagarsh Vagarshian and Gurgen Janibekian, who represented the Armenian delegation, the visitors travelled to Tbilissi where they were welcomed by a



Akaki Khorava as Othello

second Shakespearean festival. In the capital of the Georgian S.S.R. they were shown *The Taming of the Shrew* at the theatre named after Marjanishvili who, in his time, had been producer at the Moscow Art Theatre and one of the leading figures in the Georgian stage world; *Romeo and Juliet* at the Tbilissi Young Spectator's Theatre, staged by Alexander Takaishvili and, finally, *Othello* in the Rust'veli Theatre.

How vivaciously and gaily the Georgian actors play *The Taming of the Shrew*! How fleetly, as though in a dance, Tranio moves, how unconstrained his laughter, how ringingly he sings! And on the stage of the Young Spectator's Theatre—how agitated is the impatient and withal naive little Juliet who anxiously awaits her Romeo. . . Who but these actors of sunny Georgia are born to play Shakespeare!

At the Rust'veli Theatre a rare treat awaited the author of these lines, who, for the first time, had the fortune of seeing Akaki Khorava in the role of Othello. Without any exaggeration, this truly grandiose image is a figure to be seen only in dreams.

Picture to yourself a colossus—rather of the Ethiopian type than Arab, clad in a dark blue tunic of silk lightly touched with gold embroidery and magnificently draping his mighty body. His movements are restrained, but behind this restraint, behind the quick, light twist of his head, the barely noticeable gesture of his hand, the instantaneous play of his suddenly alarmed, wide-gazing eyes there rages a veritable storm. For in order to be able to play restrainedly one has to have passion which needs to be held in restraint... Before us is a man who has seen

. . . antres vast and desarts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven.

He is illuminated by the golden sun of love for Desdemona. The sun is the "cosmos" of his stormy nature. And when this sun grows darkened "then chaos is come again". Just before the fatal scene, when he is about to enter the chamber where Desdemona sleeps, Khorava-Othello discards all his jewellery—his rings, necklace and wrist-band—as though discarding the beams of light and plunging into black night. And it is only at the end of the tragedy when Othello learns of Desdemona's innocence, that the golden rays of light seem to bathe him again in their radiance. It is not a mere return to his initial state, as this is now a wiser and more exalted Othello than that of the beginning of the tragedy.

Those who constantly work on the study of Shakespeare sometimes find the sceptical question creeping into their hearts: can the stage, even in its supremest achievements, convey the grandiose "monumentality" of Shakespeare? Is Shakespeare perhaps more significant in reading than on the stage? Khorava's performance gives a definite reply to this question: yes, the theatre *can* convey this "monumentality" and even transcend that image which arises in our imagination when reading Shakespeare. Khorava's interpretation of Othello is a genuine triumph of stagecraft.

At present this great Georgian actor is contemplating the role of King Lear. And the author of this article is sure that he will give just as superb an interpretation of King Lear, as Oedipus Rex in Sophocles' tragedy—a role to which he constantly refers during friendly conversations.

Tbilissi is one of the most beautiful cities of the Soviet Union and an important cultural centre where the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian S.S.R., the Tbilissi University and a number of other schools of higher learning are to be found. Tbilissi has a fine Theatrical Institute. It was natural, that during his sojourn in this city, the author had occasion to give many lectures and read a number of papers. The popularity enjoyed by Shakespeare in Tbilissi is truly tremendous. Any public lecture on the great dramatist will easily draw a thousand listeners.

The next and final lap in the outward journey of the Moscow delegation was the trip to Baku, capital of the Azerbaijan S.S.R. Here the author became wholly engrossed in work at the Azerbaijan University, where there is a special seminary on Shakespeare, led by Prof. Mudrov. Here the author made the acquaintance of two young scholars who are writing theses on the subject of "Euphemisms in Shakespeare's Texts" and "Marlowe".

In Baku the guests had the opportunity of being present at two notable cultural events—the inauguration of the Azerbaijan Theatre Society (there now being four theatre societies in the Soviet Union—the All-Russian, the Tajik, Armenian and Azerbaijanian) and the opening of the Jafar Jabarly Theatre Museum, one of the best-appointed in the U.S.S.R.

The author returned to Moscow filled with vivid impressions and unforgettable recollections of the active and vital cultural life of Soviet Transcaucasus.

MICHAEL MOROZOV

Moscow actors performing in the front-line troupe of the State Academic Maly Theatre reached Sevastopol together with regular Red Army units a day after the city was freed. Their first performance was staged in a cinema which had escaped destruction and which had only recently been de-mined. They were eagerly watched by a crowded house of marines, soldiers and airmen, the liberators of the city, whose names have become symbolic of unprecedented valour, endurance and heroism.

The artists of the Uzbek circus recently arrived on tour in Moscow. The circus art in Uzbekistan is profoundly national. From time immemorial, no national holiday or festivity in Uzbekistan was ever complete without its circus performances. In the market-places of old Tashkent, Samarkand, Kokand, Khiva, in the kishlaks and auls [1] circus clowns—"kyzykchi", as they are called—vied with each other in wit and jokes; ropewalkers, conjurors and acrobats demonstrated their skill and trick, riders on spirited horses galloped round the circus arena...

During the war, the best artists of the Uzbek National Circus in Tashkent were invited to form a permanent circus troupe, which now comprises more than one hundred performers of the most various circus types. The troupe is directed by Tashkenbai Igamberdyev, the oldest and most celebrated rope-walker in Uzbekistan.

A theatrical programme was specially drawn up by the Uzbek circus troupe for the Moscow audience. The arena of the circus has been turned into the market square of an eastern city. You can hear the strains of the Uzbek national musical instruments—of the karnai, surnai and the tambourine. The market square with its crowd of actors is now like a symphony of sound and movement and a hundred bright colours.

In Frunze, the capital of the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic, the première of Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* enjoyed great success.

On June 1st, the Soviet Union commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Vassili Polenov, one of the most outstanding realist artists in the second half of the XIX century.

Polenov, who combined the talents of a brilliant painter, a social worker and a splendid teacher, will be immortal in the history of Russian art. He was never one to confine himself to his study; on the contrary he was eager to study life around him. His interest in people and nature was ever fresh and he constantly searched for new trends in painting.

The appearance of his pictures "Grandmother's Orchard", "A Moscow Court-Yard", "The Willow Pond", "Summer", painted upon his return from abroad, at the exhibitions of 1879 and 1882 were landmarks in the history of Russian painting. By the use of what appeared at first glance simple and unadorned themes the artist was able to find motifs of profound poetic quality and embody them on canvas with real skill.

In 1881—1882 he undertook work on a huge opus called "Who of us has not sinned?" (renamed later "Christ and the Sinner") and travelled to Greece, Syria and Palestine from whence he returned with a series of eastern studies. The painting "Christ and the Sinner" was completed in 1887.

Polenov was always willing to share his knowledge with young artists and in the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture he trained many outstanding artists. Among his pupils were Korovin, Levitan, Golovin, Arkhipov and our contemporaries—Baksheyev, Meshkov and Byalynitsky-Birulya. In his reminiscences about his teacher, Baksheyev says: "Whatever knowlegde I possess in the sphere of painting I owe to Vassili Polenov."

Characteristic of Polenov's work was constant search for true Russian motifs and the national trend in his painting. He would travel through villages collecting samples of the people's art. He participated actively in the well-known "Abramtsevo" circle where, at the Savva Mamontov's estate seventy kilometres from Moscow, such famous artists as Ilya Repin, Victor and Apollinari Vasnetsov, Valentin Serov, Konstantin Korovin, Mikhail Nesterov and Mikhail Vrubel gathered. In the studios on this estate one can find excellent specimens of Russian art. Here too these artists would often organize amateur musical evenings in which Fyodor Shalyapin and Constantine Stanislavsky took part.

Polenov had his heart set on founding a people's theatre and in 1910 it was on his initiative that a section of the workers' and people's theatre began to function under the auspices of the Society of People's Universities. The artist devoted much of his time to sketches for stage settings and decorations for amateur dramatic societies. In 1915 it was his funds that enabled the People's Theatre (which later became "The V. D. Polenov State Institution of Theatrical Instruction") to come into being.

Polenov preserved his youthful enthusiasm and warm love for art, for his people and for the beauties of his country's nature until he was quite old.

The Soviet Government appraised Polenov's work very highly. In 1924 the old artist was one of the first in the country to be awarded the title of People's Artist of the Republic.

The anniversary of Polenov's birth was commemorated by a memorial meeting at the Union of Soviet Artists and by numerous articles in the Soviet press.

An exhibition of the works of the water-colour painter Nikolai Chernyshov has been opened in Moscow. The theme of his paintings is the eastern city Samarkand with its minarets, the mausoleums of Shah and Zinda and the huge colourfully-ornamented gates of Gour-Amir. The age-old architecture, ornamented walls, graceful minarets and fragile cupolas so excellently portrayed in the Uzbek art of the XIV and XV centuries are made immortal in Chernyshov's water-colours.

His brilliant studies bring the city to life in its various moods. We see it in the light

[1] Asian for village.—*Ed.*

of the moon, in blue twilight, burning under the scorching summer sun and in a clear day of late autumn against a background of turquoise sky. Of great interest is the series of water-colours called "Streets of the Eastern Quarter" where the rays of the sun seem to stealthily make their way into the narrow winding streets, fall on the silent walls of the little houses, lift the fretworked wooden columns out of the semi-gloom and play on the bright costumes of the rare passers-by. . . Chernyshov's water-colours portray a city of the ancient East as seen through the eyes of a modern artist.

The 140th anniversary of the birth of the great Russian composer Mikhail Glinka was commemorated at a scientific conference of the All-Russian Theatre Society.

In his opening address, Stalin Prize winner Academician Boris Assafyev gave a short outline of Glinka's life. "The Russian folk-song," said Assafyev, "was the soul of Glinka's art. Glinka was a Russian composer and a Russian man in the full and finest sense of the word. The greatness of his genius is felt ever more strongly in our times."

Professor Igor Boelza spoke on the subject "Glinka—the Founder of Russian Classical Music". Other lectures delivered at the conference included "Glinka and the Russian School of Opera" and "Glinka and the Russian Vocal School".

The conference heard Glinka's rarely performed sonata for viola and pianoforte and the third part of a recently discovered quartet.

In honour of this anniversary the Moscow Radio broadcast a series of concerts which included excerpts from Glinka's operas *Ivan Sussanin* and *Ruslan and Ludmila* and some of the best pieces of the composer's chamber-music.

The big radio concert, broadcast all over the country in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the death of Friedrich Smetana, the Czech composer, included some of his finest works—selections from the opera *Prussians in Czechia* written eighty years ago and calling on the people to take up arms against the German invaders. Dmitri Shostakovich made the opening address at the concert.

The new electrical-music instruments *emiriton* and *electara*, designed in Leningrad by A. A. Ivanov and Andrei Rimsky-Korsakov, grandson of the Russian composer, were demonstrated in the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire.

Emiriton is an entirely new type of musical instrument. Sound is produced in it by electric vibrations. The vast diapason of the emiriton (more than six octaves) and the fullness of its timbre open up great possibilities for the transposition of existing musical compositions.

The emiriton performer plays on a horizontal finger-board with eight fingers. No physical exertion is required to produce sound. The continuity of the finger-board (the absence of tempering and claviatures) compel the player to concentrate on intonation and vibration as with string instruments. A professional musician can learn to play the emiriton in a very short time. The comparative ease with which one can master the emiriton has undoubtedly evoked much interest in it on the part of amateur musicians. "With the present development of harmony and orchestration," says the director of the Moscow State Conservatoire, composer Vissarion Shebalin, "this new possibility of writing quartet music of the most varying timbre and vast diapason is really a find for the composer."

The electara (abbrev. for electric guitar) fundamentally differs from the emiriton. It is an electrical six-string Spanish guitar without a sound-board. The music of the electara is drawn out and melodious, calling to mind sometimes an organ and at others a brass instrument. The instrument needs no special instruction: once one has become accustomed to the foot pedal any guitarist can play it.

In the spring of 1941, just before the outbreak of the war, some of Leningrad's outstanding musicians arranged an ensemble of emiritons. But the war interferred with this work. Now a special class in electrical music has been organized in the Moscow State Conservatoire where students and fellows of the Conservatoire study under the guidance of the inventor A. A. Ivanov.

A new full-length documentary film *Mongolia* is now showing on the screens of the U.S.S.R. This is an interesting cinema-sketch which unfolds before the audience the history, life and customs of the nationalities of the Mongolian Peoples's Republic. One can see the picturesque landscape of the country, its tremendous riches and age-old monuments. The film shows how in the twenty-three years which have passed since the founding of the free Mongolian People's Republic the country's economy has developed, culture flourished, beautiful cities and villages have sprung up and a generation of fine people educated.

Several shots in the film are devoted to the friendship of the Mongolian people with the Soviet Union, which has become particularly strong during the National War. Here one sees also the preparation of gifts for the front by the working people of Mongolia. The population sends splendid horses, food and footwear to the Red Army. And the audience is shown also the receipt of these gifts by the brave Soviet warriors.

The scenario, like the producing and filming are excellent and every bit of this work was done by Mongolia's young film industry.

NEWS AND VIEWS

There is an ancient Georgian song, which goes:

Mountain nurtured valiant hero,
Faithful weapons never sheathing,
You delight to rush in danger,
To your stout heart, fear's a stranger.

And it seems that these words find their echo in the poems of Severian Iskiani, the modern Georgian poet who recently met a heroic death on the field of battle, and who wrote:

I do not wish, unruffled, far from battle
To serve my pen and be a fireside poet. . .

As one of Georgia's best poets of today, Simon Chikovani puts it, "Georgian writers have taken their place in the ranks of the defenders of the Caucasus and their voices have mingled with the clang of Soviet arms".

I am guarding the land of my sires,

exclaims Irakli Abashidze, another modern Georgian poet.

The clear strong voice of Georgian verse rang loud in Moscow at the evenings given by the Georgian writers who arrived in the capital of the Soviet Union with their "creative reports". The Writers' Club organized several interesting evenings devoted to recitals of Georgian literature, commencing with the great classic of the XII century—Shota Rust'veli and ending with the youngest of our modern Georgian poets and novelists. These recitals were a brilliant confirmation of the fact that Georgian literature represents an unbroken chain in Georgian history, and of its close affinity with the Georgian people.

Boris Pasternak, Ilya Selvinsky, Sergei Shervinsky, Sergei Spassky and many other Russian poets read their excellent Russian translations of some of the best Georgian poets, including: David Guramishvili (XVIII century) who was an ardent advocate of a fighting alliance with Georgia's powerful neighbour, Russia, and with the fraternal Ukrainian people; romantic Vakhtang Orbeliani (XIX century) who even at that time had already praised the union of Georgia and Russia; and Nikoloz Baratashvili, another prominent poet.

At this evening the poems of that lover of freedom, Akaki Tsereteli, of Ilia Chavchavadze and flaming Vazha Pshavela, whose voice was described by Chikovani as "resembling the cry of an eagle", were also read.

The evening of modern Georgian poetry developed into a real parade of talents. One of the Georgian writers said: "A real dynasty of poets dominates Georgia's literature today." One after another the Georgian poets—Grigol Abashidze, Alio Mashashvili, Ilo Mosashvili, Galaktion Tabidze, Simon Chikovani and many others, each followed by his translator, recited their poetry, and we were now witness to a double contest of talents.

Here for instance, Selvinsky read his translation of Alio Mashashvili's poem *Gori*. His voice, now ringing out in thunder, now sinking to tones soft as velvet, conveyed the solemn atmosphere which reigned over the little house where Stalin was born when the peoples of Caucasus gathered and took the oath to fight fascism to its very end.

In contrast, Shervinsky read the sentimental lyrical verses of Ilo Mosashvili from the cycle *His Letter*. These lyrics, also devoted to the war, paint but another picture—they describe the hopes and fears of those in the rear; their anxiety for the fate of their near and dear ones fighting at the front, and also their faith in final victory. The voice of the poet-translator rings out tenderly when he comes to the lines:

I can tell the reason why you've
Donned those garments gay and festive.

Suddenly, however, the war rings out, like the blow of a sword. "The Georgian sword kills the jackal," reads Vera Zvyagintseva, in her low, rich voice; she recites her translation of the verses of Irakli Abashidze, whose poems about the heroic Georgian warriors have made him famous. Everyone in Georgia, both great and small, knows his *Captain Bukhaidze* by heart, and the people have made a song of his poem.

Grigol Abashidze's poem, *Banners*—in which the heroic traditions of the Georgian people are most vividly expressed—rings out like an ancient legend.

He also wrote one of the best poems of the National War period—*Invincible Caucasus*. Its opening, which plunges us into the grim atmosphere of war, is most striking: a stag, bounding along the mountains, hits a mine and is blown up. This is meant to represent nature mutilated by fascism. Immediately afterwards, the poet, in sharp contrast, shifts the scene of action to the city, where the sound of battle has a different ring. Here, Abashidze describes a night scene, the blackout, the anxious waiting for the alert and the life of people chained by war.

The word "motherland" has taken on a new significance in war-time. This is excellently expressed in the passionate, yet solemn verses of Galaktion Tabidze, entitled *My Native Soil* and *My Motherland Is My Life*, published in booklets.

This motherland, which is Soviet Georgia, he identifies with the Soviet Union as a whole. And it is not for nothing that, anticipating the day of final victory, Simon Chikovani, in his vivid optimistic poem—*To My Moscow Friends*—turns to Moscow first of all:

One happy day we'll meet in Moscow once again,
And our reunion celebrate in joyful strains.

This reunion of friends has already taken place, even before the end of the war. Is not this a true sign of approaching victory?

Alexei Tolstoy's recital, at the Writers' Club, of several of the newly completed chap-

ters of the third volume of his novel, *Peter I* was an event in the literary life of Moscow. The Writers' Club was humming and the hall was overcrowded. Apart from the interest which the novel has for the reader, the audience was anxious to listen to the masterly reading of the author. Alexei Tolstoy excels in the art of reading; his voice is full of rich intonations and he brilliantly individualizes the speech of his heroes without any trace of theatrical pathos or strain.

The first three chapters of this new volume describe the events of 1704: the building of the new city of Petersburg, new life and customs in the newly organized state, new people and the complicated international situation of the time.

The scene shifts from Moscow to Petersburg, from Charles XII of Sweden to the court of King August of Poland.

Every shade of the various characters and situations is vividly portrayed. Female characters breathe a special charm of their own, especially Peter's sister, the Tsarevna Natalya, a young beauty who reminds one of Diana, the Goddess of the Chase. An ardent supporter of her brother's innovations, a champion of education and civilization, she conceives the idea of organizing a theatre in one of the palace chambers and teaches her maids-in-waiting refined ways and "politesse".

In sharp contrast, we are shown Peter's two elder sisters—rather coarse and uncultured. It is with inimitable humour that the author describes their visit to the Dutch ambassador, made with the express purpose of... enquiring for the address of the sweetmeats seller!

Tolstoy's picture of Catherine, Peter's future wife, reminds one of the best portraits of the old Dutch masters, so vivid is the description of her healthy, voluptuous beauty.

Suddenly, you are startled by the laughter and coquettish voice of the King of Poland's favourite, and once more one can but wonder at what variety of colours Tolstoy is master of.

He reads willingly, at length and with feeling. Coming to the end of one chapter, he asks: "Shall I continue?" and the unanimous reply thunders: "Yes, yes, please give us some more!"

His recitation lasted until nearly midnight, and the audience, as it made its way home, carried with it the feeling that Russian Soviet literature had been enriched by a new masterpiece.

At one of the last meetings of the Bibliological Section of the Union of Soviet Writers an interesting incident in Anton Chekhov's creative work was brought up for discussion—the story of his little-known play *Tatyana Repina*.

At the close of the eighties of the last century the Russian book publisher Alexei Suvorin wrote a four-act play entitled *Tatyana Repina* which was shortly afterwards staged in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The plot of the play was founded on an incident from real life—the suicide of a provincial actress. Chekhov who was a close friend of Suvorin, helped the latter with advice and suggestions and was particularly interested in the Moscow production of this play. The "first-night" of *Tatyana Repina* was given at the Maly Theatre on January 17th, 1889. The cast included the best actors of the Maly Theatre, the title role being played by the celebrated Russian tragedienne Maria Yermolova. The audience was astounded by her unsurpassable acting which evoked tears and hysterics in the suicide scene. Other leading Russian actors performing in this play were Alexander Yuzhin and Alexander Lensky.

Tatyana Repina was a tremendous success and Chekhov wrote about it in his letters to Suvorin in St. Petersburg. In these letters, however, there is a distinct note of dissatisfaction with the theatre critics of those days, writing for whom, to use Chekhov's figurative expression, was tantamount to "offering a man flowers to smell when he has a cold in his head".

That same year Suvorin gave Chekhov a small French dictionary the need of which he happened to mention to Suvorin. Touched by this mark of attention, the novelist promised to reciprocate with another gift which turned out to be a "one-act drama" bearing the same title as Suvorin's play—*Tatyana Repina*. The author's brother, Mikhail Chekhov, states: "He wrote it at one sitting, attributing no literary importance to it whatever." In the accompanying letter to Suvorin, Chekhov wrote: "I am sending you the cheap and useless little gift I promised... Don't show it to anyone else and, after you have read it, throw it into the fire." (March 6th, 1889.)

Suvorin, however, disregarded the author's wishes. He had two copies of this play printed in his own printing shop and sent one of them to Chekhov. The play was printed without censorship, on MS rights. Chekhov's copy remained intact among the novelist's papers which were zealously preserved by his sister, Maryà Chekhova and it was only thirty-four years later that it was published for the first time.

In content, Chekhov's *Tatyana Repina* can be said to complete the subject of Suvorin's play, which broke off with the scene where the foresaken woman commits suicide. Chekhov's play—in which the same characters take part—is a denouement to the fate of the two remaining heroes—the man because of whom Tatyana Repina poisoned herself, and his sweetheart. Chekhov's drama gives the scene of their marriage.

Tatyana Repina—a one-act drama—was, of course, merely a literary jest on the part of Anton Chekhov, but it sparkles with the genius to be later so forcefully displayed in *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*, which initiated a new epoch in the development of Russian drama.

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