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THE RETURN TO LIFE

When Andrei Vitol recovered consciousness, he felt as though he had become a kind of stump buried deep in the ground. He could not raise his arms, and one leg, probably in plaster of Paris, felt like wood. The last thing he could remember was Smilga's shout: "Look out, a shell!" But the warning had evidently come too late. Vitol had felt a sudden hard blow, and after that, everything was vague and misty.

The doctors on their morning rounds gathered about his bed. The chief surgeon asked how the patient was feeling, but Vitol did not know what reply to make. The doctor then said something in Latin to those with him, and though he did not understand the words, Vitol somehow guessed that it was about his arms. What was the matter with them, why was it that he could not feel them? The blood flew to his head.

"Tell me, doctor, what is the matter with my arms?" he asked the words tumbling over each other in his haste and excitement.

"Now don't you worry, my friend." The doctor was smiling but the smile struck Vitol as artificial. "You're doing fine. You've lost a lot of blood, but after the transfusion everything goes all right. You'll go ahead quickly now. Tough fellows, soldiers!" he laughed again and moved on to the next patient.

Vitol calmed down, and soon fell asleep. He was awakened by a clatter of dishes as the nurses brought the dinners round. When the soup had been served and handed round the little nurse whom the others called Anya came to his bed with a plate, tied a napkin round his neck and smiled into his eyes:

"Now I'm going to feed you," she said.

She spooned the soup into his mouth as though he were a baby. Vitol felt awkward and uncomfortable. It seemed to him as though everyone were looking at him, laughing at him.

"Perhaps I can try myself, nurse?" He made an attempt to raise his right hand but Anya shook her head.

"No, you mustn't. Your arms must get right first. Do you find it so unpleasant, then, to have me feeding you?" She assumed an offended air and then suddenly laughed gaily.

But somehow the nurse's gaiety did not please Andrei. Her burst of laughter reminded him of something in the distant past—the way his mother had tried to distract his attention when he was a child, and had fallen and hurt himself. Suddenly Vitol stopped eating and looked straight into Anya's eyes.

"Tell me, nurse, what is the matter with my arms? Don't hide anything, you don't need to." His voice trembled and broke.

"I can't go on repeating the same thing over and over," said Anya, slightly taken aback. "Well, you have arm-wounds... You'd better eat your soup, before it gets cold. And there are others waiting for me," she added nervously.

"Thank you, I don't want any more..." Vitol turned his face to the wall. "Go and look after the others."

"Oh, don't act like that, Comrade Vitol," said Anya, almost imploringly. "I can sit here with you till evening if necessary. Now come along, please do eat, otherwise the doctor'll be angry that I couldn't feed you."

Vitol felt confused. After all, why was he behaving like a naughty child and delaying the nurse. "We'll see when we get there," as they had said when he and Smilga had set out on patrol. And now this phrase seemed to have a special meaning for him—how good it is still to be able to hope. "We'll see when we get there." He turned resolutely back and finished his soup.

Anya wiped his lips and asked him if he would like to smoke. Vitol nodded and watched how awkwardly she rolled a cigarette, which she then screwed into a holder and placed between his lips. His neighbour, a small man with an eastern cast of features, watched curiously while Vitol drew on the cigarette, sometimes pulling too hard.

"Take it away, Anya," Vitol hissed between his teeth. "I can't smoke this way."

Anya straightened his pillow and smiled.

"If you need anything, tell Comrade Bekmukhamedov," she said. "He'll ring and then I'll come."

Anya went away. It seemed to Vitol as though the girl swayed slightly, as thougt ridding herself of some great burden. His neighbour followed her with shining eyes.

"A lovely girl," he nodded towards the door as Anya closed it after her. "I shall marry her when the war ends."

"Hey, is it a harem you're thinking of setting up, Bekmukhamedov?" half-jokingly, half-angrily asked a tall young man sitting by his bed which was next to the Uzbek's. "Not long ago it was Tanya you were going to marry, then you took a fancy to Olya."

"I liked Tanya, and then when I saw Olga, I liked her. And now I like Anya best of all," said Bekmukhamedov, smiling slyly.

"How is that possible?" said the other, getting excited. "Today one, tomorrow another..."

"When you see a tulip, you think it's the most beautiful flower there is. When you see a lily, then you haven't another thought for the tulip. And then when you go down into the valley and see the rose smiling at you, you forget the lily," Bekmukhamedov teased the tall fellow.

"But Anya's not one of your flowers. Don't you dare to look on her that way."

"But you like looking at Anya yourself," said the Uzbek, not to be silenced. "You know, women like a strong hand, and mine are the stronger. Let's try grips. Whoever has the strongest fingers has the right to look at Anya."

The tall man reddened, but seeing that heads were raised around him unwillingly accepted the challenge.

"Go to it, Vlassov!" came voices from the ward. "Anya's worth it!"

"Don't, Vlassov," said another voice in a reasoning tone. "You shouldn't get excited."

The two men had already gripped hands.

"Bekmukhamedov!" sounded the same voice again. "Why are you starting this fool business? You know he's had contusion."

The Usbek's nostrils were trembling.

"Very well," he said, loosening his grip. "You can look at Anya. I like Olya."

But Vlassov, now quite worked up, insisted on finishing the trial of strength.

"A bargain's a bargain," he hissed through his teeth. "You'll learn what a smith's fingers are like, even if I have contusion."

He gave a strong tug to Bekmukhamedov's hand. Vitol's bed was behind him, and Vlassov turned sharply on his heel to avoid it. Probably the corner of the quilt was trailing on the floor, and in the heat of the struggle Vlassov must have stepped on it. Vitol felt it slide from him and mechanically tried to seize it, but his hands did not obey him. He looked down at them. Then all the blood in his body seemed to rush to his head.

After all the fighting he had seen, he had come to consider himself a hardened soldier, ready to meet any trial with fortitude; but now, when in place of his arms he saw bandaged stumps, his heart seemed to stop beating and the walls swam before his eyes.

"What have you done!" he heard an excited voice, which seemed to come from somewhere a long way off. "The doctor specially asked that he should not be told..."

When Vitol opened his eyes, he felt as though he had been unconscious for a long, long time, but glancing at the people around him, he realized that only a few seconds had passed. Vlassov was still standing in the same awkward position beside the bed, and the light of irritation in his eyes had given place to a look of consternation and confusion. He stood motionless for a moment, then suddenly his face began to work with suppressed sobs; he took a step towards his own bed, then suddenly swung round and fell to the ground beside that of Vitol. His whole body was shaking and twitching convulsively.

"Call the doctor!" somebody cried, and Bekmukhamedov pressed the bell.

Anya entered, quiet and smiling, but as she saw Vlassov writhing on the floor, she paled and rushed to him.

"Vlassik, my dear!" she said, taking him in her strong young arms and trying to hold him quiet. "Why are you getting excited again like this? Come, I'll put you to bed." She gripped him under the arms, but had not the strength to raise him.

"Help me, somebody!" called the girl. "I've got to quieten him down."

Two convalescents helped her to raise Vlassov, get him onto his bed and cover him up, and then the nurse sat down on the edge of it, and took Vlassov's still convulsively jerking hands into a firm grip.

"Vlassik, my poor boy, calm down!" said Anya. "How excitable and unrestrained you are!"

There was deep silence in the ward, as everybody watched the efforts of this little girl to calm the storm raging through Vlassov's damaged nerves.

"Does she love that man?" thought Vitol, seeing the expression of sincere pain and suffering on her face.

Bekmukhamedov stirred and pulled his quilt over his head.

"What's the matter with him? Jealousy or a guilty conscience?" Vitol asked himself, listening to the heavy, uneven breathing of the Uzbek.

His eyes slowly wandered round the ward. Some were lying down, others standing with lowered heads. He understood —they were all moved by this womanly tenderness and sympathy.

Vitol groaned softly. Absorbed in Vlassov, he had for the moment forgotten his own trouble, which custom had not yet made familiar. Nobody else had time to think about him, and there he lay, without a quilt, the stumps of his arms lying parallel with his body, looking like broken wings. What would Erna say when she saw what he was now—a cripple for the rest of his life! The rest of his life... The rest of his life... The words beat on his brain in a dull, unending refrain. His mind refused to conceive of a future life—without hands. He had lost them forever. What was he now? Just a broken remnant of a man, useless, no good to anybody...

"You're doing fine. You'll go ahead quickly now..." The doctor's words that morning—what were they but mockery, plain indifference, jeering at a man who had lost everything, even the right to call himself a man? 'Tough fellows, soldiers.' Of course, when you've sewn up a torn body and made a heart start beating again, you feel yourself a god, breathing life into dead mater. But have you the right to do it—that's something you never think to ask. You poured fresh blood into my veins before I knew of my misfortune or had the chance to protest, you concealed it from me and forbade others to speak about it. Had you possessed one drop of understanding or human feeling, you would not have been in such a hurry, you would have let life and death fight it out for this shattered remnant of the 'paragon of nature'. Of course it is obvious that I can't expect you to give me poison, or kill me by some other means, but to delay a little with that transfusion—that at least your conscience might have permitted. Where shall I go now—where? A cripple, a burden to myself, to society, to Erna... Erna, my darling, it would be better a hundred times if you had received a death notification, than this way..."

He could not keep a grip on himself, a hoarse groan burst from him. The Uzbek jerked his quilt from his head, leaned over towards him and whispered:

"Chin up, Comrade. A soldier doesn't whine. Here..." he turned to a lad whose nose was mutilated. "Cover him up, so that Anya doesn't see. It'll upset her. We behaved badly, very badly. Vlassov mustn't be irritated and you mustn't be excited. And Anya will weep, for all. Anya—she is a good girl and she weeps for everyone. She is not used to it. And how can one pair of eyes weep for all? My mother weeps for me, your wife for you. Have you a wife?" he whispered, stooping down close to Vitol.

"Yes," said the latter mechanically.

"Oi, boi-oi!" The Uzbek shook his head in sympathy. "And young, beautiful?"

"Young or old, it makes no difference now," said Vitol, feeling some irritation at his neighbour's curiosity.

The latter looked at him hard, understood, and lay back on his pillow. Then suddenly he struck himself on the forehead.

"Suleiman, Suleiman, when will you learn to talk to people!" he reproved himself.

Vitol sensed movement among the patients, all eyes were turned in one direction. Raising his head, he saw Anya. Smiling happily, the girl had laid her finger on her lips, and was pointing to Vlassov. He was sound asleep.

Cautiously, she tiptoed between the beds: Vitol saw that all the men smiled at her and involuntarily he smiled himself. What a good thing that Bekmukhamedov had thought to cover his arms, otherwise Anya would have been grieved. Everyone should bear his own troubles, grit his teeth and stick it, like some painful abcess, waiting for it to come to a head, burst, and heal leaving a deep scar, or else... Vitol did not want to follow out his thought to the end. Why be in a hurry? There was time enough. He wouldn't be discharged from hospital till his stumps had healed, doctors and nurses would stand there by his bed driving away death.

As she passed, Anya asked Vitol how he was feeling.

"Quite all right, thank you, nurse," he answered calmly, thinking at the same time that when one is lacerated with suffering's sharp claws, it is good to don a mask of indifference and gaiety. Man dislikes grief as much as physical pain, it is unpleasant to see the torment of a neighbour. And although grief longs for solitude, seeks a secluded corner to wrestle with fate far from witnesses, nevertheless everybody in the depths of his heart longs to have a friend beside him, or simply some kindly person, to stretch out a hand in a difficult moment and say: "Don't give in, hold up, you can stand it all!" And for this reason, so as not to drive other people away, one tries to conceal one's grief behind a smile, and he who succeeds is thought a strong man.

"Well, all right, then." He suddenly scowled. "To smile through your tears —that one can learn; but that's not everything, and it's not the main thing."

Not to let yourself go to pieces, to overcome that fixed aversion to living at all—that was what would take heroism, even more than on the battle-field.

"Heroism!" He felt himself ridiculous. "Can one call it heroism to want to live? In that case what a hero every man must be—every insect, for that matter, because they all want to live. The will to live is a primitive instinct, and isn't it merely a hypocrisy to crown it with the laurels of heroism? It's quite another question that a man must decide—is he still good for anything, is he necessary to anybody? But what use can a hulk like myself be, not even able to put a bit of bread in my own mouth! To satisfy my will to live means giving a healthy person the job of tending me, someone who will have to feed me, follow my every step, carry out my every whim, while I play the hero, the strong man, assuming airs as much as to say: 'See what a man I am! Lost everything and still want to live!' No, Andrei Vitol, you can't deceive yourself, better stop trying.

"But am I trying, then?" He laughed bitterly. "I really don't want to live—am I fit to go on living? To vegetate, to be dependent on society or on my family—yes, that's right... Erna, little Lauma... what pleasure will they have out of the return of such a husband and father? Better they should never know what road I took when I went, without a backward glance at my home. For some time Erna will wait, hover between hope and despair, mourn and weep, but the

years, like water sweep everything away in their path, even the memory of a loved one. Life takes thoughts into new channels, she will have to worry about bringing up Lauma, perhaps she may meet somebody whom she can take to share her life. She's still young..."

How cruelly this thought pierced his heart! Erna might come to love another and her life would go on as though he had never existed. Lauma would call this other man by the beautiful name of "Daddy"—after all, children quickly forget those whom they no longer see.

The patient with the mutilated nose came up to Vitol's bed. He hesitated a little as though unable to make up his mind to speak, then seated himself diffidently on the edge of the bed.

"Comrade," he said in a muffled, rasping voice. He was evidently wanting to say a great deal, to speak very seriously, but feared to obtrude himself. It is difficult to plunge straight into words of consolation. "I know what you have been thinking about this last half-hour. Many of us here have had the same thought. I myself... But just a minute, we don't know each other yet. My name's Sidorin, yours I know. Before the war I was an actor. I was, but I shall never be one again. My nose could be put right, but my voice'll never come back again... The stage is not such an easy matter as many people think. They say a snake suffers agonies when it changes its skin. I always compare an actor with a snake. Each part makes him throw off his usual skin and transform himself into the figure the playwright has created. And anybody who cannot do this, and simply acts as himself every evening, is no true artist. It was a long time before I mastered the real art. I wanted to say good bye to the stage, but gradually the doors to the secret treasure began to open to me.

"Then the war began. I had recited many beautiful poems about my country, proposed toasts to it, but it was only when Comrade Molotov announced the German attack that the word 'country' became so immeasurably close and all-embracing. Before my eyes rose all the Soviet towns and cities which I had seen in reality or in photographs. I went to the recruiting office and volunteered. I couldn't help it. I notified the theatre from my unit, otherwise they would have tried to get me an exemption. And never for a moment have I regretted my decision.

"During lulls, when I was lying in my dugout, I often thought what magnificent plays there would be after the war, telling of the heroism which we could hardly realize just now. I did so want to live, I was already visualizing the grandeur of the figures which would appear before the public in the future.

"But that damned shell shattered my face and my dreams with it. For the first weeks after I was wounded I didn't want to live any longer. I begged the doctor not to waste his efforts treating me, because I could very well be buried the way I was. But he wouldn't listen to me. 'Never mind, that'll pass. You can still live without being on the stage.' I began to refuse to eat, and then he ticked me off with a vengeance. 'You're too used to posing,' he said. 'The country is in danger, let us hasten to save it!'—and he struck such an attitude and mimicked an actor so perfectly that I even felt a twinge of professional envy. He just simply laughed me out of it all! 'Even in war you're still an actor!' he said.

"His words offended me and I turned to go away, but he caught me by the arm and stopped me. 'Comrade Sidorin,' he said, 'has it never entered your head that there is other work you can do? You volunteered to help save your country. I suppose that that was your sincere, ardent desire, and not just an impulsive wish to play the hero. You have seen the piles of ruins, all that is left in the districts you were ready to give your life for? To me, a doctor, the country seems like a wounded body, and to sew it up, heal it, bring it back to life again —isn't that just as noble and lofty a task as fighting the enemy? For this very many doctors will be needed, and you can be one of them. Drop all this thinking about death, it's sheer egoism. Do you imagine you're the only man who can't go back to his old work? What if they all start thinking the way you've been doing? You need a bit more self-control and faith in yourself, Comrade Sidorin. The enemy would be delighted to know that he had managed to lay our land waste, mutilate our people and break their will. But we shall not give him that pleasure.' Yes, they were a very effective medicine, those words of the doctor's."

"But they aren't much help to me," laughed Vitol bitterly. "I can't take a hand in the great work of restoring the country, for the simple reason that I haven't one left."

Sidorin was confused.

"Ye-e-es," he said. "Your case is a very difficult one. But as long as a man is still alive he always has the chance to choose—even death if he wants. So don't be in a hurry to decide when and how you're going to die. Self-murder is murder just the same, and you know by law, a premeditated murder is always punished more seriously than one committed in 'passion'," he added, trying to joke.

"It's another thought that torments me," said Vitol gloomily. "You say yourself that after the war everyone will have to take a hand in reconstruction. Isn't it my duty to get myself out of the way, even if only for the sake of freeing for useful work the hands which would otherwise be occupied in tending me?"

"Do you know, it's only now, when I've got through my own inner crisis that I realize what a good thing it is when a man doesn't have the physical possibility to make away with himself in a moment of despair. Time is a great philosopher, and always shows you a way out of the labyrinth you're wandering in. I can't tell

you just where your use will lie, but I'm sure that it's not only hands that'll be wanted for this great work of reconstruction. Brains too will be wanted. I don't know your profession..."

"Master builder."

"Well, in that case, I don't know what you're worrying about! After the war they'll be combing the country for people like you," said Sidorin in delight. "When I leave the hospital I'm going to enter college, come what may; I'll become an engineer and we'll work together."

Vitol shook his head dubiously.

Supper was brought. Anya came over to Vitol carrying a plate of cereal. He meekly allowed her to feed him. The girl was thoughtful and every now and then glanced over at the sleeping Vlassov.

"Probably she loves him, all the same," again the thought came into Vitol's head. "'Women like a strong hand', Bekmukhamedov had said... Strong hands! Hands! Hands! If only I had even one hand left... No, neither words, nor the 'great philosopher'—time—can give me new hands. To have other people waiting on me, day after day, all my life..."

The bread stuck in his throat. He signed to Anya that he wanted no more, and after swallowing the last piece with difficulty, asked for a smoke.

Tobacco always calmed him. Soon weariness conquered thought and he fell sleepy. Thinking gets you nowhere...

When Vitol awakened, he could see the dull grey light of the dawn outside his window. A dismal, foggy morning. "That's what all my life will be like if I don't have the courage to get out of it," thought Vitol. Neither joy nor sorrow would be able to make his heart beat... A good thing that Erna did not know his address, yet, and he did not know where she and little Lauma were either, for that matter. Somebody had seen them in a refugee train, but where it had been going to he had not known. When he was still in the reserves Vitol had written to the Information Bureau, but had left for the front before any reply had come. So he had not been able to find them. How often he had envied his comrades reading and re-reading their letters from home every free moment! But all the same, it was better as it was. Perhaps he would have been unable to resist the temptation to write to her, and it would have looked as though he were whining for sympathy.

The ward began to stir, convalescents went out to wash, some of the men began rolling themselves cigarettes. Sidorin brought one to Vitol.

After the ward had been tidied, and the doctors had made their rounds, some of the men played dominoes, while others buried themselves in books or read the papers. Vitol felt very dismal—even to read the paper was more than he could manage. How was he to pass the dull, dreary hours?

He saw Sidorin continually break off his reading and glance nervously at the door. Bekmukhamedov had also noticed it, and whispered to Vitol:

"Expecting a letter. From his wife. Doesn't write often. Ai-ai—a bad wife! Your wife—is she good?"

This naive question took Vitol somewhat aback, but he liked the swarthy soldier.

"It isn't the custom here to praise our wives, Bekmukhamedov," answered Vitol evasively.

"But why shouldn't you praise a good wife? You should praise a good wife, and condemn a bad one."

"My wife and I lived as only a husband and wife can live. Then the war began. Now I don't know where she is, and she doesn't know where I am."

"Anya'll find her!" cried Bekmukhamedov gaily, and clapped Vitol on the shoulder. "She'll know how to find her... She writes letters for anybody who can't. She found Sidorin's wife. That bad wife! Your wife is a good wife. Anya'll find her. Your wife will write you a letter and you will be happy."

"No, Bekmukhamedov," said Vitol in alarm. "I don't want her found, better for her not to know."

"What a queer man you are! You don't praise your wife, you don't want to find her. Are all your people like that?" The Uzbek's eyes were screwed up in disapproval.

Anya brought in the post. There was no letter for Sidorin, and all afternoon he lay on his bed, a newspaper over his head.

With silent steps evening stole up to the window. When a nurse switched on the light, Sidorin angrily threw off his newspaper, rose, took a cigarette and went out. There were deep lines etched on his face.

Next day there was a very unusual event in the ward. The silent Petrov, who had lost a hand, had a visitor—his wife, from a collective farm in the neighbouring region. She came running into the ward, laughing and rosy-cheeked, with a tightly stuffed sack in one hand and a bottle of milk in the other. She greeted everybody in a fresh ringing voice, saw her husband and cried gaily:

"Well, Vanya you didn't expect a visitor, did you?"

Petrov was so taken aback that his eyes nearly started out of his head, and he stood there opening and shutting his mouth like a fish.

"Well, this beats all, Dunyasha," he gasped at last. "How did you get here?"

"How? Without a ticket and without a pass!" And she laughed loudly. Then she put the sack and bottle down beside the bed, hugged her husband and gave him three resounding kisses on both cheeks.

"Eh, it was a business, it was," she rattled on. "They wouldn't give me a ticket, not for anything they wouldn't, and kept on at me for a pass. 'What do you want to go for?' they said. And 'What do you need a pass for?' I told them. 'I'm going to see my husband.' 'Can't give you a ticket,' they told me.

'Go and get a permit.' Well, I started asking folks about it all and they told me I'd have to wait weeks and weeks, then I'd get some sort of a bit of paper... And there I was with my cakes all baked, and the milk would be going sour. So I just waited till the train came—it was night—climbed up onto the platform at the end, and then slipped along into the coach. And that's how I got here! Well, when are we going home, Vanya?" she broke off to ask.

"Dunno... They've promised to let me out in a few days. My arm's healed."

"Oh, mercy, my head's all in a whirl, I quite forgot the cakes!" She quickly untied the sack and began pulling them out. "Here, have some... Where's your mug? I'll pour you out some milk."

After feasting her eyes on her Vanya, the visitor glanced round the rest of the men. All were watching the happy couple without any feeling of constraint, like children.

"Mercy on us, what's the matter with me!" she suddenly started up. "I ought to think of offering things round first, and then look after my own man. I'm all upside down with this war. And then it's so long since I've seen him..." she added, as though apologizing. She took out a cake and handed it to Sidorin, who was sitting on his bed, next to her.

Sidorin was taken aback and at first did not want to take it.

Dunya was offended.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" she said. "Fought together with my Vanya, and now you don't want to take a cake? Why d'ye think I made such a heap? D'ye think he can eat'em all up himself?"

Sidorin hastened to take the cake, and Dunyasha shared out the rest. The men had only just had dinner and nobody was particularly anxious to eat, but all made the effort.

When Dunyasha handed a cake to Vitol, he instinctively tried to raise his hand, but a sharp pain reminded him of the misfortune which he still sometimes forgot. He thanked her and asked her to lay it on the bedside table.

"What's the matter with you, are you still bad?" asked Dunyasha sympathetically.

"No," smiled Vitol. "It's just that I forgot to bring my hands away with me from the field."

"Dear God, have you lost both of them?" cried the visitor. "Then it's worse still for you than for my Vanya. And you should have seen the letter he wrote me. 'I don't know what's going to happen, Dunyasha,' he wrote, 'you'll not be wanting to love a cripple.' Just think, of all the things!"

At first Dunyasha's chatter alone had filled the ward, but gradually the patients began to join in the talk. It was impossible to help liking this simple, unaffected woman. She was like a fresh breeze blowing away the cobwebs, bringing an invigorating feeling of confidence into all hearts, bursting open doors and windows and sweeping away the stuffy atmosphere of doubts and fears. Even Sidorin laughed and joked, and asked Dunyasha to tell them all again how she had got there without a pass.

"A good wife," said Bekmukhamedov, when Dunyasha went away after promising to come again the next day. "All soldiers' wives should be like that," he added, after a moment's silence.

In the evening Sidorin seated himself on Vitol's bed, his back to Bekmukhamedov. The carefree expression had disappeared from his face. Vitol saw that he was labouring under the burden of some thought which he had no longer the strength to combat alone.

"Come on, out with it, Sidorin," said Vitol smiling. "We can do without the preamble."

"Yes, you're right, better drop preambles," Sidorin agreed. "Actually, I ought to get things clear myself. But you know, when a man keeps on and on stumbling along doubts and fears, bogged down in them, he begins to see a pit in every tuft. Scared to take a step for fear of going down. There, you see, there's a bit of a preamble after all," he added, with a nervous laugh.

There was a short silence.

"I'm waiting for a letter from my wife," he said at last. "I wrote that she must tell me without any beating about the bush, did she want me to come back to her or not? There was something I didn't like about her last letter, something artificial. If you don't mind, I'd like to read it to you."

Vitol nodded silently.

"'Dear Nikolai,'" Sidorin began, and suddenly broke off. "You'd think that the beginning settled all doubts. But it's just that beginning that jars on me. Formerly her letters began quite differently."

"How suspicious he is!" thought Vitol.

"Well, let it be 'dear Nikolai'," Sidorin continued. "'What you tell me of your condition has upset me terribly. Your stage career is definitely ended. To tell the truth, I can't imagine what you will do. Oh, how I hate this detestable war! I've been through some dangerous moments, too. I was evacuated to this provincial town with the theatre. They gave me work in the ticket office. I'm bored to tears. The whole place is deadly boring. If it weren't for your friend Timofeyev, who looks after me a little, I don't know how I'd have got through this evacuation time. Just imagine, so many people have come here that I have to live in a dormitory. Timofeyev has a room to himself, it's true, and Irene and I—the prompter, you remember—we go and drink tea with him. He's playing your roles just now, and after every first night he uses such language about the critics that Irene and I have to stop our ears. All the same, the summer's been quite bearable. There's a river here and we've bathed and got quite brown.

"'Isn't there any hope of restoring your face and voice? I can't imagine life with-

out the theatre. You are intending to enter college, but that means more long years of that dull, grey life we'd only just got out of. Timofeyev dreams of getting a car after the war. He's promised to take me on a trip to the Caucasus. In general, his head's full of all kinds of plans for the future. Irene and I laugh ourselves sick listening to him...' And that's all that's worth reading."

Sidorin's eyes flew over the closing lines and then turned to Vitol with a question in them.

Yes, it was true, every line of this woman's letter was artificial. Her husband was nothing but a means to a well-fed, comfortable life. Now that he would not be able to provide it for some time she had already found a more promising substitute.

"Well, say something, can't you!" cried Sidorin, his voice shaking. "What do you think? Is it worth while waiting for an answer at all? Maybe the answer's clear as it is?"

"It's still too early to despair." Vitol did not want to deprive his comrade of the last hope. "Weak people lose their bearings when they find themselves in difficulties. Then afterwards it all passes over."

"Yes, yes, that's it!" cried Sidorin gladly. "That's how I see it too. She's very spoilt. First her mother spoiled her, then I did; and she's very beautiful as well, used to success and to being petted, and made much of. The only thing I can't understand is how she can stand being with that ass Timofeyev."

"Simply for lack of anyone better," said Vitol, though he himself felt the weakness of his argument.

"Yes, it's hard for her to find the kind of company she wants there."

Sidorin's face had cleared as he folded up the letter, smoothing it caressingly.

"I shouldn't have deceived him," thought Vitol, when Sidorin returned to his own bed. "Although—who can tell—maybe I should. Hospital life's dreary enough as it is."

In the morning old Golumbayev wakened the ward with his usual shouts of "Air! Air!" Some of the men growled angrily, but they opened the windows all the same. The old Kazakh sat up in bed feeling around with his hands, seeking the sunshine.

"Why is it so dark?" he groaned. "And such a long time..." He shifted his bandage, slid a finger under it and cried: "No! No! I've no eyes! Curse them, they've stolen my eyes!"

What could anybody say to him, what words of consolation could be found? Everyone of them had had his own terrible moment of discovery—that he was disabled.

"How shall I get to Kazakhstan?" cried Golumbayev. "My eyes! My eyes! Just to see my own country once more—I'd give all my life for that. I don't need it!"

"Pipe down, Golumbayev," said Bekmukhamedov. "There's plenty have had a tough break. Vitol's lost both hands,—have you ever heard him complaining?"

The Kazakh lay down on his bed and stayed there all day, not uttering a word.

Vitol was taken to have his bandages changed. For some seconds the chief surgeon seemed to be hesitating to raise the sheet which covered the wounded man.

"I suppose he's preparing a dose of soothing syrup," thought Vitol, pulling an ironical grimace.

"Do you know the nature of your wound?" asked Anatoli Nikolayevich, taking up a corner of the sheet.

"Yes, I do," Vitol replied calmly.

"Have you thought what you are going to do when you are discharged?" The doctor shot the question directly at him, without wasting words.

"I'll find some sort of work. If there's nothing better, I can hire myself out as a scarecrow," laughed Vitol bitterly.

There was reproof in the glance the doctor turned upon him.

"Such gloomy jokes are rather out of place."

"I'm rather out of place myself among human beings." Vitol took a perverse pleasure in irritating the doctor.

But Anatoli Nikolayevich did not continue the conversation. Finishing the bandaging, he told the orderly to take the wounded man back to the ward. Vitol was rather hurt by this indifference on the doctor's part.

"To find occupation for a man without hands—that's not your headache," he growled. "Though after all, isn't it all the same to a doctor, what a wounded man does after he's discharged? With people coming and going all the time, he hasn't the time to worry about what's going to happen to each one afterwards. His job is to save what can still be saved, and that he's done brilliantly."

Vitol felt himself overcome by a complete indifference and apathy.

The days dragged on monotonously and slowly, on leaden feet. In order to pass the endless hours, Vitol tried to read. Raising the knee of his sound leg, he asked for a newspaper or a book to be propped up against it. At first he found it irksome having to wait for somebody to turn the page, though for that matter, Bekmukhamedov always did it willingly as soon as he merely looked at him.

More than a month had passed since Sidorin had read his wife's letter to Vitol. All this time he had been impatiently awaiting the post. One day, at long last, Anya came in with the letters and handed one to Sidorin with a meaning smile. He snatched it from her, glanced over the envelope, and then suddenly reddened. Vitol saw how his hands were trembling as he tore open the envelope. With avid haste his eyes flew over the small handwriting. Suddenly he paled, his hand closed over the sheet with a convulsive grip and remained suspended in the air. For a long time afterwards Sidorin lay there with closed eyes, motionless, only his chest rising and falling unevenly.

"The swine!" he cried out suddenly, and jerked up from the bed. "While I'm at the front, he plays my roles and runs around with my wife. You wait. I'll smash up your nose for you, and then we'll see whom she'll choose!"

Bekmukhamedov sat up on his bed.

"Comrade," he said to Sidorin. "You should not cry for a bad wife. A bad wife you should drive out of the house. You should not envy a bad friend. A bad friend you should despise."

"He should be shot like a dog, that's what," roared Sidorin. "Just think of it! I go to the front, leave everything—my wife, my work, my future. I could have stopped there with the theatre too, and been evacuated to a safe place. Though no, what am I saying—that was just what I couldn't do, couldn't have brought myself to it. And while I'm away he's amusing himself by playing the Don Juan just for boredom."

"Sidorin," Vitol called to him, and the latter came up to his bed. "Give me a smoke, and let's talk it over."

Sidorin got out cigarettes, and Vitol saw how nervously he puffed at his.

"You didn't expect an answer like that?" he asked uncertainly, not quite knowing how to begin. "Maybe you've misunderstood?" And Vitol looked at Sidorin searchingly.

"Misunderstood?" repeated Sidorin, at a loss. "Wasn't the last letter clear enough? You saw it yourself, you were only trying to console me. Sugaring the pill. Oh, I'm not blaming you; after all, it was the medicine I asked you for. She didn't write to me after the evacuation, though she knew my address. I kept inventing all kinds of reasons for her silence. I thought that maybe she was having a hard time and didn't know how to lie convincingly about it. Then I was wounded and landed here. So then I told myself that she didn't know my new address and was still writing to the front. Then Anya helped me to find out her address, but it was precious little good I got out of it. Better if I'd not known," Sidorin concluded distractedly and ran out into the corridor, leaving the door open.

"If I had such a false friend, I'd give him the bad wife myself, make him a present of her," came Bekmukhamedov's voice, unexpectedly breaking the general silence. "Not all wives are like that. There are wives like Dunyasha. Good wives."

Sidorin returned to the ward. His eyes searched the floor, and seeing the letter, he picked it up, carefully smoothed it out and lay down on his bed. Who can follow the workings of the human heart!

Next day Anatoli Nikolayevich came up to Golumbayev.

"Our ways must part now," he said cautiously. "We have done all that we can, but the Germans have torn out your eyes by the roots. Here we are powerless."

"My sons will avenge my eyes. My eldest son is at the front, the second will soon be eighteen. I have strong sons." There was a ring of paternal pride in the Kazakh's voice.

"Now we must talk about your future life. When the war ends, then of course your sons can support you, but all the same you'd soon get tired of living without work. What did you do before the war?"

"I grew apples. And what apples! Rosy, transparent, the sun shone right through them! It's only in Kazakhstan that you can find such apples. When you don't need to sew up arms and legs any more, then come and stay with me. We have a wonderful country. Beautiful! You won't forget it so soon. You will tell your children about the hospitality of blind Golumbayev."

"Thank you, I shall certainly come," smiled the doctor. "Well, I'm sure you'd be dull with nothing to do. Your hands are sound and need work. We can send you to a disabled men's home, and there you can learn a trade."

"A trade? What sort of a trade can I take up?" And Golumbayev shook his head sadly.

"Well, basket-making, for instance. Your sons will grow apples, and you'll make baskets for them."

"Yes, we need baskets. For the apples we need baskets, many baskets."

"There you are, you see, you'll learn to weave baskets. We'll send you off to Kazakhstan, you'll spend some time in the disabled men's home and return home a skilled weaver," said the doctor, and rose to leave.

"Kazakhstan! I shall go to Kazakhstan!" Golumbayev was as delighted as a child. "I need only breathe the air of my country to know it. I can stretch out my hand and feel—here is the beginning of Kazakhstan!"

Happy Golumbayev! He can feel his country even though he cannot see it. Tears rose in Vitol's eyes. "To see Latvia once more! Latvia! What lovelier name could there be, what lovelier country! Riga! Your lights shone in the eyes of the troops the day when the Latvian unit first entered the fight, and the enemy trembled and fled. Through the haze of battle we saw your shady gardens, your lime and chestnut lined streets. The Dvina poured its silver through the moonlight night, and its waves murmured as they fled towards the sea. Once more to see the Latvian fields, to breathe again the perfume of its meadows, sweet as honey, to plunge into the cool waters of its blue lakes! But no. Let strong, handsome men walk that earth, and not cripples such as I am."

"Eh, you're getting sentimental, Andrei Vitol!" he said, driving an obstinate autumn fly from his forehead.

The power of movement had returned to his arms, and Vitol was supposed to do various exercises, but he was obstinate, and made the instructor angry. The plaster had been taken off his leg, the bone had knitted, but matter was still draining from the wound which prevented him from walking. He tried to convince himself

that he was indifferent to it all, but in the depths of his own heart he did not believe it. His indifference had become something superficial, alien, and when he spoke about it, it left a bad taste in his mouth.

It was already late. Even Sidorin, who usually cried out in his dreams, was sound asleep. Very soon now he was to be discharged from hospital. His shattered jaw prevented him from returning to the front, and he had applied to enter college.

In the morning he rose, calm and balanced.

"He's come out on top," thought Vitol, when Sidorin sat down on the edge of his bed.

"I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself, Vitol, the way I went to pieces," he said, his eyes fixed on the wall. "Now I've thought it all out, got right down to the roots of it. Let them go. Let them live as they want. If that's the way it was, then they're just about fit for each other. Just listen to this"—and he took the letter out of his pocket. "'I'm horrified at your intention to enter college, just desperate. All my best years will pass for ever. I think you can understand me, and won't be angry with Timofeyev, who has supported me all this time both materially and morally. So you see I feel I owe him a debt that I can never repay...' What a screaming lack of logic!" laughed Sidorin. "When it's a case of myself, she doesn't care a button for what she owes me, but when it's Timofeyev, then it's another matter. Anyhow, I'm very grateful to her for her frankness. To accept any sacrifice just because she owes it —no, thank you very much! We soldiers don't need any of that sort of thing! If our ways aren't the same, then good-bye, and that's all there is to it! And folks like Timofeyev aren't in love with long journeys—they like to sit tight and snug, surrounded by every comfort and convenience, and steer very clear of hard work and difficulties."

"Yes, that's right," Vitol observed thoughtfully. "She doesn't want to renounce a few years of comfort, and you were ready to give your life."

"All that doesn't concern me any more," said Sidorin, his eyes fixed on some far distance. "This is a time when the wheat is sifted from the chaff, and at least I shall always know that I'm not winnowed away with the rubbish."

For a long time Vitol lay thinking about Erna. Where was she now? How was she living, what was she doing? In January little Lauma would be six years old. Would she know him when she saw him? Saw him... the words flashed through his mind quite involuntarily... What was this, was his resolution weakening? No, it wasn't, so far he had brought no appeal against his stern decision before his own judgement, not reversed it.

But all the same... Why not make an effort to learn where Erna was? Ask Anya to find out her address, making her promise on no account to write her anything whatsoever. Tell her even, that he himself was thinking how best to tell her the sad news, and would dictate a letter later. The longing to know Erna's address suddenly seized upon him with such strength that he asked Bekmukhamedov to call Anya.

Sidorin came to say good-bye to Vitol.

"Chin up, lad," he said, placing an affectionate arm round Vitol's shoulders. "After the war I'll challenge you to a competition—you'll reconstruct Riga, and I Leningrad. And both cities have got to be even better than they were before." He embraced his comrade warmly and looked hard into his eyes. "I shall write to you," he said firmly, and added after a moment's pause: "After all, I've nobody else to write to."

Vlassov had to be taken to the psychiatric ward. In the surgery he had had another seizure. He began insisting on being sent to the front, and when the doctor tried to persuade him to wait a little until he should recover completely, he went into a frenzy and collapsed.

Anya came into the ward to take Vlassov's bedding. She changed the mattress and spread clean sheets. Vitol called her.

"Well, Anya," he said when the girl came over to him. "They've taken your friend away. You'll be feeling sad now."

"There's a new group coming," Anya replied. "All serious cases. Those are the only ones we get here. I suppose they think that if anybody can save them, Anatoli Nikolayevich will."

"But you won't have Vlassik any more," Vitol teased her.

Anya reddened.

"Ah, that's what you're after! But it's always the most unhappy ones that I'm fond of. I know they need me most."

The orderlies began bringing the wounded, and Anya ran to help them. On Vlassov's bed they laid a man swathed in bandages from head to foot. It was evident that the lightest touch was agony to him; he showed wonderful pluck, but do what he would, an occasional muffled groan burst from between his tightly gritted teeth. A man who had lost both legs was brought to Sidorin's bed, and near to him—a man with a damaged larynx who was given paper and pencil to write down anything he needed.

The new arrivals in the ward brought with them the scorching breath of the battle-field. Everyone felt vividly that the war was still raging with the same ferocity, the only thing was, that they had left the main battle, and now had to struggle each one with his own suffering, seeking out the roads and footpaths that would take him back to life again.

The man swathed in bandages groaned every now and then. Even his eyes were covered, and it was impossible to tell whether his groaning was conscious, wrung from him by his pain, or whether he was delirious. Anya told the other men that this was Matyushenko, a tankman, who had been trapped in his burning tank during the offensive on the Voronezh front.

One day soon after, Anya nodded and winked slyly at Vitol, when she brought in the dinners. His heart leaped—had she some news of Erna? Her address maybe? If only she'd hurry up with serving dinner,—she seemed to be taking extra long about it.

"Probably doing it purposely, to tease me," thought Vitol. "Well, she'll not manage it. What do I need with the address? I shan't write all the same."

At last Anya came up to him, laid his plate on the bedside table and pulled a post-card out of her pocket.

"Erna Vitol"— this was all he could decipher in his agitation.

"What a fool I am, what a fool!" he told himself, trying to calm his own excitement. "Well, what's there here to jump about?" he frowned, in an attempt to influence his own feelings. "Grand news, an armless hulk's found his wife!" He was flaying himself in an attempt to crush the joy flooding him from just the sight of those two words: "Erna Vitol".

Well, and what next? Nothing—that was definite. He had wanted to know his wife's address—here it was. And that was all.

Anya spread a napkin. He had to have dinner. But somehow, the first mouthful seemed utterly tasteless. He turned it over and over, trying to make up his mind to swallow it. He would have liked to refuse his dinner, but then Anya and Bekmukhamedov would have started worrying and questioning him why he did not want to eat, what had upset him.

At last, however, Anya finished pushing the spoon into his mouth, swept away the crumbs from the napkin and rolled him a cigarette. Then she began straightening his pillow and quilt. What a long time she was taking!

"Comrade Vitol," said the girl, after a silence. "In the evening I shall have some time free, you can dictate a letter to your wife."

"I don't think I will, yet awhile," he replied, trying to speak calmly. "I'll think it over first. I've got time enough."

The girl still stood there for a moment, but evidently could not make up her mind to speak further, and began clearing away the dishes. Vitol sighed with relief when she went away.

It seemed that Erna was living on a collective farm. But what was she doing there, how was she living? Difficult to guess that from the meagre lines of the card. Lauma was with her. But was Erna able to provide herself and the child with all they needed? Food, of course, she'd get from the farm, but they would need footwear and clothes, she'd hardly been able to take anything with her from home. She'd need money and...

His heart leaped. He could send Erna his savings. A pretty large sum had accumulated, and he was provided for, he needed nothing. It was the end of December now, and Lauma's birthday would be in January. What if he sent the money as a birthday present?

Yes, but then Erna would know his address and write to him. Didn't it work out that all the same, he was trying to find a way to return to them? Send the money in a false name and give some other address? Anya, for instance, could send it and write her that a certain Vitol who had been in the hospital had left her the money when he was moved on to another town and asked her to find out his wife's address. Yes, that was a good idea.

In the morning he asked Anya to fill in a money order form. The girl wrote the sum and the address, but when Vitol dictated her an invented sender's address, she suddenly put the pen down and stood up.

"You do as you like," she said, her eyes flashing. "But not by my hand. Maybe it's easier when you say it. Words are wind, they say, but what's written's there for good."

"You needn't if you don't want to," said Vitol obstinately. "Somebody else'll write it for me. Maybe you'll do me a favour, Bekmukhamedov?"

"Suleiman's always ready to help a friend," and the Uzbek took up the pen readily, dipped it in the ink, tried the point on a scrap of paper and began writing the address on the money order, He wrote slowly, carefully forming each letter, every now and then smiling and writing the address on the money order.

It flashed through Vitol's mind that this upholder of good wives might take it into his head to write according to his own ideas. But as soon as the form was filled in, Bekmukhamedov hastily pushed it over to Anya, who took the money from the bed side table and swiftly disappeared.

It was clear enough that Bekmukhamedov had tricked him. Vitol wanted to be angry, to call Anya back, to stop what had been written, but his annoyance melted like snow in spring time. Bekmukhamedov had tricked him, but he could not be angry with him.

The next week Vitol was allowed to get up. At first he could only take a few steps. The other men had made their first attempts to walk with the help of a stick but this was denied Vitol. Within two more days, however, he could already go as far as Matyushenko's bed.

"Eh, you old war horse!" said the tankman, shaking his head. "They've made a pretty mess of you, those swine! You can't even give them one back for it now. Well, never mind, just let me get back to my machine, and I'll flatten out a few more for you! Sometimes I get so mad that my blood seems to seethe in my veins. What harm did we ever do them that they came at us? Not enough space, indeed! They just don't want to work, that's all. They'll have to be made to—those that are left... Let them build up all that they've spoilt... Then they won't have time to whine about wanting more space. What does Anatoli Nikolayevich want to keep me hanging round here for?" he continued with a grimace of disgust. "Does he want me to grow ar-

mour as well as skin?" He fell silent, then started singing the song "Three tankmen" under his breath.

"And what'll you do when you leave hospital?" Vitol asked Bekmukhamedov, coming up to his bed.

"Yes, Suleiman, that's right, tell us what you're planning for the future," Matyushenko backed him up.

"You'll all laugh," sighed the Uzbek, dropping his eyes.

"What for? What crazy idea's biting you now? There's no work on earth that deserves to be laughed at," said the tankman.

"I used to be a shepherd, took the flock out onto the mountains in summer. You've never been in the Uzbek mountains? No? Beautiful mountains! Nobody has ever yet found words to tell the beauty of our mountains. I tried it. Often I could not sleep at night, and then it seemed as though somebody were whispering in my ear. I repeated the words and it came out as poems. Poems about the mountains and about the most beautiful country in the world. In the winter I told them to the teacher. 'Good, Suleiman,' he said. 'But you have not yet found your own volce. All of us have always seen Uzbekistan like that. You need to show it as nobody has ever seen it. Then you will be a poet.' I was sorry and upset. I went up into the mountains. I looked at the flowers and rejoiced. How lovely, I thought, is Uzbekistan. But that is what everybody says who goes up into the mountains. Then I was sent to the front. Here there were no Uzbek mountains and sunshine. But it was just there that I saw Uzbekistan. Saw it with my own eyes. Saw it as nobody has ever seen it, who has not fought for Uzbekistan in the Leningrad swamps. I wrote poems, many poems, they are here in my satchel. When I come to Tashkent, I shall show them to a poet. Comrade Alimjan has seen them, and he got angry. 'You tear the heart out of me,' he cried. And then the next day he asked me to read them again. 'When you read them,' he said, 'I see my country. I breathe its air.' On my crutches I cannot go up the mountains, of course, but now the mountains come to me."

Bekmukhamedov fell silent, his black eyes burning. Vitol returned to his bed with firm steps. His body was already answering better to his will. The next day he would be able to take a walk in the corridor. For, some reason this seemed terribly important. If only he had had just one hand left—yes, then he would not have cursed his fate. In a few months he would have to leave the hospital, and then there was only the disabled men's home awaiting him. Matyushenko would return to the front, Bekmukhamedov would write poems, and only he would be left with nothing to do. Sidorin would begin building new Soviet towns, and fine buildings would rise out of the piles of ruins now cumbering the land. He too could have taken part in this work, if only... And all his ponderings always ended with the same thought: if only he had hands. The words seemed to hem him in like the walls of a cage, against which he beat like a bird struggling for its freedom. Could it really be that technique, so efficient in inventing engines for the destruction of human life, could not supply a disabled man with good, useful limbs?

When Anya brought breakfast round in the morning, she set his plate down on the bedside table with the words: "Here's yours," and went away. He stared after her indignantly. What was wrong with her now? Did she expect him to lick it up from the plate like a cat?

But he did not have to wonder long. Anatoli Nikolayevich came into the ward.

"Well, here you are, my friend," he said, turning to Vitol. "From today on, you're going to do everything for yourself. You've been spoilt long enough." Pulling a piece of bandage out of his pocket, he took up the spoon and sat down beside Vitol. "We're going to make your arm a little longer," he explained. "When you can feed yourself, the food'll taste quite different."

Vitol let him fasten the spoon to his stump, and made an attempt to scrape up some of the mashed potatoes. It was awkward getting it to his mouth, but all the same, after a few failures, he managed it. After that, it went better. Evidently, that day he really had been given a rather tastier breakfast than usual to stimulate his appetite, so that he would not give up trying to master the art so longed for by tiny children, wanting to rid themselves of intrusive adult hands. He remembered how he used to get angry with his little girl when she would not let them feed her, but tried to snatch the spoon from her mother, saying: "Me! Me!"

Anatoli Nikolayevich stayed there, sitting on the edge of his bed, and every now and then nodding to encourage him. When the plate was empty, he untied the spoon.

"Now let your arm rest a little, then we'll have a writing lesson."

Vitol felt himself reddening. Would he really be able to write, then? Damn that doctor, why couldn't he have told him that before! Vitol looked reproachfully at Anatoli Nikolayevich.

"Well," said the latter, rightly interpreting his gaze. "So I'm the scapegoat again, eh?" He was silent for a moment, then resumed in a more serious tone: "At first, I admit I didn't do much to comfort you, as I do others. But admit it, you snarled at me good and plenty, yourself. I remember your words: 'Hire myself out as a scarecrow!' Now, I'm a very patient man, but then I did get angry. When they bring you in to us, torn and mutilated, I always feel that here is a man to whom I owe a debt. Every honest Soviet man feels that way. However we work and strive here in the rear, whatever we may do, it's all nothing to compare with what you're

doing. You take your lives in your hands, against bullet and grenade. And here you come and say that all you're good for is to be a scarecrow! As much as to say, we, noble fellows, have given everything and we want nothing in return. Now, own up, that was the sort of thing you were feeling?"

"Well, maybe yes," Vitol smiled sheepishly. "After all, what else could I think?"

"Good. We can get on, then. Well, I wrote to Moscow, to the institute for artificial limbs. I said nothing to you until I got a reply. I didn't know how many there were on the waiting list, and when your turn would come. But you're in luck. In a month you'll go to Moscow and be fitted out with hands."

Anatoli Nikolayevich watched to see the effect of his words. Vitol's eyes widened and glowed.

"And shall I be able to move them?" he asked incredulously, "Then, I shall be something like a man again?"

"Not something like, but the real thing. The main thing is to make up your mind to do everything yourself, without any nurse. That's all that's needed. To give you new hands of flesh and bone—that's beyond us so far."

"But this is enough for me," said Vitol, turning on the doctor a gaze bright with gratitude.

"And now for a few exercises. We'll see how the writing goes."

With a tremendous effort Vital traced his first letters. They were far too large and awkward like those of a child. "Never mind," he consoled himself. "You can make out what it's meant to be. It'll get better in time." He kept on tracing letter after letter, feeling that he could never tire of it. He forgot the doctor sitting there beside him, exchanging meaning smiles with the Uzbek. When one page was finished. Anatoli Nikolayevich asked to look at it.

"Enough for today," he said.

Vitol stood up, blinking. Surely it was a dream! He had eaten his breakfast without help, he had been writing, and he was promised hands.

Now the days passed swiftly and happily. Vitol himself felt that he was better company. He visited his comrades in their beds and discussed the news from the front with them. Wherever he turned, the talk was all of Stalingrad. Every morning they listened with strained attention to the communiqué of the Soviet Information Bureau, sometimes going over to look at the map with its line of red flags in the large hall. Matyushenko could not stay quiet in his bed, every half-hour he would be running out to look for the doctor, returning gloomy after a fruitless search.

"After all, he did promise to let me go one of these days," said the tankist, packing his things for the fifth time. "There's only one small patch left on my chest now, you can look for yourself." He opened his shirt and invited everybody to examine the healed wounds which they had already seen dozens of times within the past few days. "It doesn't even hurt, not a bit, even if you press on it. Here, try it," he would turn almost imploringly to his neighbour.

In the evening he at last managed to catch Anatoli Nikolayevich, whereupon, as eye-witnesses recounted later, Matyushenko followed on his heels until he managed to corner him in an angle of the corridor from which there was no retreat. And there the doctor promised to order his discharge papers immediately.

Early in the morning Matyushenko awakened the ward with song, but nobody cursed him for it. In any case, the wireless was due to start up soon.

"Hey, lads, give me the accounts you have to settle with the Germans!" Matyushenko announced proudly after breakfast.

"Carve them up! So that they don't rise again!" was Kryzhovnikov's request.

"And if they do," added Bekmukhamedov, raising himself, "then let them be dragged home on crutches. They won't be able to climb mountains then, either. Let them crawl along the valleys."

Matyushenko took his departure.

At nights Vitol could not get to sleep. His thoughts were back in his native Riga. What would it be like after the war? Dark shadows were brooding over its busy streets, so vivid in his memory, over the rows of houses and the gardens smothered with flowers and trees which he had left... The picture changes as on the screen, one after the other he saw piles of ruins, broken trees, houses without windows, making him think of eyeless beggars. Like a mutilated human being they looked out reproachfully and people blushed for shame at having been unable to protect them.

The birth of a house, the whole process of its creation had always fascinated him. The lines of the building are formed in the imagination, transferred to paper, and every detail worked out carefully and exactly. What a joy it is to witness the growth of the building! And when it is finished, when all the rubbish is cleared away, one feels a wave of pride and happiness. There it is, man's castle in the air realized in brick and mortar!

He recalled his student years at evening classes. As he wandered about the streets, Vitol would examine the large stone houses and the wooden cottages, and it seemed to him as though each one had its own personality. One would be sitting proudly on its foundations as though on a throne; another, beside it, had decked itself with a rash of balconies, cornices, and glaring paint like a woman whose fashionable ambitions have outstripped her taste; a third, broad, thickset, recalled some well-fed burgher's wife; a fourth would have a heavy, severe first storey, topped by a second added to it in some quite different style, looking like some old countrywoman who has donned over her homespun skirt a lace blouse her daughter sent from town.

An endless chain of houses—modest, luxurious, attractive, or ugly and barrack-like—and each one carried the imprint of its creator's fantasy, rich or poor. In his mind's eye Vitol would reconstruct all these houses; more, he could picture whole new streets built according to a single harmonious plan, and squares with their wealth of foliage.

And now, when so many towns would have to be built anew, his dreams might come true. And as in the days of his early youth, he could see before him houses, whole districts of splendid buildings occupying the places of the former huts. He walked through the fine, comfortable, spacious rooms, his searching glance ranging around to see if there were not something to be added, altered or improved.

One evening a new thought struck him —what if he tried to sketch a house? He was immediately possessed by such a burning impatience that had the light sufficed, he would have started at once.

Next day Vitol made the attempt, but found straight lines beyond his power. The houses looked like drunken students staggering along the pavement. He smiled and began practising straight lines, vertical, horizontal and slanting, right and left.

Vitol was so absorbed in his drawing that he never saw Anya enter. She took a letter out of her pocket with a frightened, guilty look in his direction. Vitol recognized the handwriting at a glance, "I am just like Sidorin," he told himself, trying to quieten his excitement—and failing completely. He could feel the muscles of his face trembling as he asked Anya to open the envelope. But she had already disappeared. "When did she manage to slip out?" he thought in surprise and turned to Bekmukhamedov. With an expressionless, indifferent face, as though no thought of the sender even entered his head, the Uzbek opened the envelope and laid the sheet on Vitol's knees. A second sheet slipped out, smaller than the first, and this he laid on top.

Queer, who had written such large, carefully traced printed characters?

"Daddy, I can write in ink now," he read. Lauma, that little chicken, writing already! "Come home to us. I shall love you without hands just as much. I will feed you. I know how to feed people. I feed my doll every day. Mummy bought me honey with the money you sent. I like drawing houses and people. And I always draw the nazis ugly. With tails. And I make Hitler with horns. I draw you with hands. Dolly lost a hand too, but Mummy sewed it on.

Lauma."

Winking the moisture from his eyes, he read his wife's letter, drank it in, absorbed every word. They seemed to run like quicksilver through his veins. He felt that his Erna was the same as she had always been.

They were expecting him at home! Him, without hands, mutilated, completely disabled! She did not even know about Anatoli Nikolayevich's promise, but all the same she was not afraid of their future life together, which could only bring difficulties and the thousand trivial duties demanded by his helplessness, calling for endless devotion and self-sacrifice.

He had returned, returned to life and his home! He no longer felt any wish to hide his joy. Turning to Bekmukhamedov he cried:

"You are a real pal!"

Translated by Eve Manning

ALEXANDER ISBAKH

MUSIC

(From "Campaign Stories")

He had come up to us unperceived and stopped, changing from one foot to another. His face was haggard and deeply lined. His grey hair hung in long strands over the high forehead.

"What d'you want, old 'un?" Sergeant Shilo asked gruffly, laying aside the earpieces of his mine-detector. The grey-haired man gave a wry laugh.

"You detect mines, don't you, comrades?" he asked in a low, husky voice.

"That happens to be our main speciality," the sergeant replied. He liked, on occasion, to adopt a high-flown style.

"I have a request to make. The School of Music is in the next street, the former School of Music, I should say," he corrected himself. "The Germans blasted it and spoiled all the instruments. But miracles do happen and one piano—the finest of them all—a concert grand, has remained untouched. I beg you to find out whether it may not contain some sort of surprise. Pardon me for troubling you."

"And who may you be, citizen?" asked Lieutenant Gromov, who had just entered, and peered inquisitively into the old man's tired eyes.

"I'm a water-carrier," the man replied with another mirthless laugh. "You will wonder, perhaps, why a water-carrier should be concerned about the fate of a piano?

I'll explain that later. Now we must go and save the instrument before it's too late."

He was not entreating now—he was insisting. The lieutenant made a sign and we started off on our unexpected errand. Sergeant Shilo was muttering something into his thick moustache. We had just made a long and difficult march. We were dead-tired and riddled through and through with dust. Only that morning we had extracted two hundred and twenty-seven mines and were on the point of getting a badly-needed rest; of washing off at long last the grime of the road. And now... The old grey-haired man walked on in front and we were going with him to salvage a concert grand.

The Music School building was half demolished. All the rooms contained smashed-up mutilated pianos—uprights and grands. Some of them had survived the explosion, but vandal hands had hacked the strings and crippled the key-boards. A great axe, such as butchers use to hack up carcasses, had remained stuck in the body of one of the instruments.

In a spacious room with a caved-in ceiling stood a brown piano. It was whole except that on the polished lid a great spidery swastika had been carved into the wood.

"Here it is," the water-carrier said. "Look it over, will you, please?"

"This might be a take-in," Shilo whispered to me. "That old chap looks a bit suspicious."

But the man inspired a feeling of confidence in me—one which would have been difficult to explain, and I waved the sergeant aside.

We carefully searched and sounded the piano as an experienced physician might examine a sick man. We tested each string, tried the smallest screw. The old man was watching our every movement with visible agitation. When the strings gave forth a wailing sound as we tapped at them he would start nervously with outstretched arms.

The piano was as sound as a bell. We had done our job conscientiously and no doubts remained.

"It's quite all right, granddad," the lieutenant said. "From a sapper's point of view, at any rate, it's in prime condition. What a musician might say however..." he caught himself up short. "But what connection can you, a water-carrier, have with this piano?"

The man shook his head.

"You call me grandfather," he said. "I am only thirty years old. I am a composer. A professor of music. I did not want to play for them. You understand me?... I hid myself on the outskirts of the town. I became a water-carrier."

Our miners pressed round the musician regarding him with curious eyes. I threw a look of triumph at Sergeant Shilo.

Going up to the piano he raised the lid and ran his fingers caressingly over the keys. He turned his head towards us.

"I haven't been near a piano for three years," he said, as if excusing himself. "But I'll try."

One of us,—I think it was Sergeant Shilo,—moved a wooden block towards the pianist. He sat down and ran his fingers over the keys.

We stood round him, worn out and covered with the dust of a hundred roads. We forgot our weariness. We had never heard such music before. The sounds floated through the room. They broke through the rifts in the ceiling, ascending to the sky, moaning, complaining, protesting, menacing. You heard the clanging of chains and the song of birds and the turmoil of war. And then they all fused into one triumphant sunlit melody —a paean of deliverance.

We did not notice that the composer had stopped playing; we were enthralled by the music. He rose from his improvised seat and throwing back the grey hair from his forehead, regarded us with a smile, his breath coming in short gasps.

The first to recover himself was Lieutenant Gromov.

"Thank you, dear comrade," he said in low, penetrating tones.

He could say no more. What else was there to say?

And we went off, continuing our way along the roads of war and carrying in our hearts the image of the wonderful composer and the inspired strains of his music.

THE PIPE

Our battalion commander, Shutov, never smoked himself and did not like others to smoke in his presence. He would never, it is true, reprimand a man for a cigarette —whether manufactured or home-rolled, but if anyone produced a pipe, the wry expression on the captain's face would be sufficient for the delinquent to repent of his intention and shove the offending article back into his pocket.

What a diversity of pipes there were in our battalion! Long English pipes; pipes twisted into intricate curves; pipes carved into wolves' heads, to say nothing of the homely clay variety. We did try once or twice to tempt the captain into a smoke, and on one occasion even offered him a gorgeous trophy pipe with an amber mouthpiece, but he was adamant. Flatly refused to accept the gift and was in a bad humour for the rest of the evening.

We had been on the march for three weeks on end and were aching with fa-

tigue. How good it was during the short hours of a halt to stretch at full length on the grass, take a deep pull or two at cigarette or pipe and gazing up at a star twinkling high away up in the heavens, dream of the time when we should have smashed the Germans for good and all.

We were smashing them properly as it was. Our division had liberated one hundred and ninety-three villages and three towns. Stalin had twice conveyed to us his personal gratitude and salutes had thundered forth in our honour in dear old remote Moscow.

Near the village of Krasny Bor the Germans held us up for a whole day. Two of our attacks failed. The third time the captain led us into action himself. Breaking through the enemy lines he dashed forward, tommy-gun in hand.

The captain's forehead had been grazed by a splinter. Beneath the snowy bandage his eyes gleamed forth, wonderfully young.

When we had taken Krasny Bor and dug in, the captain disappeared. Making our way to the edge of the village we approached the school building. The sight that presented itself to our eyes made us gasp with the unexpectedness of it. Sitting there, near the fence, by the side of a little wizened old man, was our captain—smoking a pipe! A small, well-seasoned, plain pipe. He was greedily inhaling the fumes and the expression on his face was one of rapture.

We, officers, surrounded the captain. He understood our mute question.

"Boys," he said gently,—and many of us really were young enough to be his sons,—"it's like this, you see. Three years ago we were withdrawing along this very road. You haven't been through that. You've never felt the bitterness of retreat. Here, in the village of Krasny Bor, near this very fence I met the school watchman. I asked him for a light. He tried long and silently to extract a spark from an oldfashioned lighter. Hurry up!' I said impatiently.

"'You seem in a hurry,' he said regarding me severely from under a pair of bushy eyebrows. 'Scurrying off from the Germans, are you, young man?'

"Never have I lived through a moment of greater shame and bitterness.

"'Father,' I said to him, 'we're coming back. Here's my pledge (the idea had come upon me quite suddenly): I shall leave my pipe here with you. I'll never touch another but I'll come back for it, father. You will meet me and give me a light—to smoke this same pipe...' And now I've returned... And I've found my pipe. Is that right, Father?"

Across the old man's wizened face flitted a bright smile. Just flitted and was lost in the thick beard.

"Well, comrades," the captain said, "why don't you have a smoke—with all those wonderful pipes of yours?"

He inhaled deeply and his face vanished behind a cloud of dense tobacco smoke.

Translated by Elisabeth Rosenblum

RASSUL RZA

FROM LIEUTENANT BAIRAM'S DIARY

The strongpoint which the regiment was holding was only two kilometres from the village of K. Nevertheless, we were advised not to go there in the daytime.

The front has its own laws. Here, not only every order, but every piece of advice is important. Sometimes an apparently insignificant action can have important results.

We were told: "Don't go during the day," so that meant that we had to wait till evening.

As dusk fell, the wind began to lessen and soon dropped altogether. A blanket of thick clouds mantled the sky.

We were shown the direction which would bring us to the observation post —it was near a village cleared of the Germans two days previously.

The rumble of long-distance artillery never ceased. It was pitch-dark, you couldn't see your hand before your face. We slipped along in absolute silence.

The Germans have no liking for night battles; they keep sending up a nervous succession of rockets all night long, illuminating the whole district. For an instant a faint glow would light up our path. It was rather reminiscent of that phosphorescent glow which comes from rotting wood in a forest. But the rockets had one unpleasant side—you always felt as though they were searching for you personally, and the very next moment would descend on your head. But that feeling lasts only for an instant, then the rocket dies out, darkness engulfs its last reddish glow, and a still thicker blackness seems to weigh down upon the earth, as though the door to a lighted room had been slammed and you were left outside.

"It looks as though we've lost our way," said my comrade. "The German advance posts are quite near."

Again the black curtain was rent by a blinding streak. We hugged the ground. Then the fiery ball descending upon us was extinguished.

"Here, take this," said my comrade, handing me something. It was a field telephone line.

Like hungry wolves, the Germans were clinging to every inch of conquered land. They would lay large numbers of mines in the places from which the Red Army battering ram was driving them out. They were pig-headed in their stubbornness—the blind, hopeless stubbornness of the criminal who knows well that the death sentence is inevitable.

We should have been at our destination long ago, but at the front, roads have a habit of extending themselves indefinitely.

At last we were stopped by a shout: "Halt! Who goes there?"

We gave the password, and were conducted to the regimental field-dressing station, set up in a dugout. The doctor raised his head for a second to greet us, and then went on writing. The candle flame wavered and swayed with his breathing, casting strange, dancing shadows on the walls.

Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the dim light. I could already distinguish every feature of the old doctor's face, stern, almost angry, and that of the fair-haired nurse.

At first the dugout had seemed low and dark. Now it was as though its walls had receded and the ceiling soared upward. Somebody was lying on a pallet bed in the corner, and when the doctor raised his head from his writing, the light fell upon the face of the man lying there. It was white as the papers on the table, and the chest was bandaged.

At last the doctor stopped writing. Learning that we had lost our way, he reproved us for setting out when we did not know the road.

"Go with the orderly, he'll take you to the right place," he ended.

I felt interested in the wounded man. He was a lieutenant and looked about twenty-six or twenty-seven. While we were talking to the doctor, he opened his eyes. Seeing me he stirred and tried to speak, but was evidently unable to do so owing to pain and weakness.

The doctor could not tell us much about him.

"The lieutenant was brought here three or four hours ago. Attention urgently needed. We did everything we could. Whether he'll live or not, I can't say," he added, lowering his voice. "It's very difficult to say anything definitely. A serious case. He's lost a lot of blood. We've just got to trust in the stamina of a youthful organism. Such cases usually don't hold out for more than an hour or two, and he was wounded more than six hours ago. We'll see..."

The old doctor kept his eyes fixed on the candle flame, as though hoping it would answer his doubts. There was absolute silence in the dugout, broken only by the distant rumble of guns.

"A pity if he dies," the doctor continued, as though thinking aloud. "Such a gallant lad! It was his unit that took the village V. today. The lieutenant went on ahead of everybody. Though he was wounded twice, he never left the field. At the edge of the village, to the left, enemy tommy-gunners surrounded him and twelve other Red Army men. Our men broke out of the ring, leaving twenty-nine enemy dead behind them. This man you see here killed ten nazis himself. Then, with blood pouring from him, he bayoneted two more..."

A groan from the wounded man interrupted the doctor. He rose and approached the pallet. The lieutenant said something softly, and the doctor called me. I came over to him. The lieutenant gestured toward his haversack. I opened it, and saw an exercise book inside.

Breathing with difficulty, the wounded man said in a slow dragging voice:

"Comrade Rza, take that book."

How in the world did he know my name?

I took the exercise book, opened it and started, not believing my own eyes. A coincidence? No, no, that was impossible. But how did he come to be here?

The lieutenant saw my amazement and confusion. A weak smile flickered on his pale lips.

"Recognized me?" asked Bairam and closed his eyes again. But his lips still moved, and I bent over him to hear better.

"That's my diary," he said in a broken whisper. "If I die, continue it. Print it if you like. When the war ends, send that diary to my son."

The doctor picked up his hand, and began to count his pulse. The old man's brows drew together in a frown. A little later he dropped the hand and rose. I asked him nothing more.

"If only..." he began, but did not finish his sentence. It was clear enough what he wanted to say.

Soon afterwards we took our leave and went. I read the diary. The lieutenant had not kept it regularly. Sometimes there were undated entries.

Bairam and I had been at school together, and even then he had been fond of literature. He used to write poems and stories, but later on he took up mathematics.

FROM THE DIARY

(Undated)

My little son! It will be a long time before you read these lines. Just a short time ago you were four years old, and I was able to take you in my arms and give you my birthday congratulations.

Our country has called upon us to wage war with a treacherous enemy. And so we had to part. Now we are separated by vast expanses, snow-capped moun-

tains, thick forests, and the tossing waves of the Black Sea. When I left, you put your little arms round my neck.

"Go and come home again soon," you told me.

Many a time in your short life you have seen me off on journeys—to Moscow, Kiev, Erivan, Tbilissi. And wherever I was going your loving little heart knew that I should return. You knew that wherever my peaceful, safe path might lie, I should be in our own land. And later, laughing and merry, I would return to our Baku.

And that time, too we parted as we always did. You did not cry, you did not once say: "Don't go away, Daddy."

And now I am at the front.

Little son! The day will come when flowers will grow again on this earth, torn and wounded by shells. The rumble of war will pass away. The roar of bloody battle like the crash of an earthquake will be silenced. It may be that some day you will read these lines. Your father cherished and protected your happiness. It was for the future of millions of children like you that he shed his blood.

And now listen. I shall tell you all that I am seeing.

Yesterday I went to a little place called Ganly Kalafa. When the Germans occupied Kerch, they shot seven thousand people. A gully several kilometres long was filled with the bodies. Among them I saw that of a mother with a baby held close in her arms. The child was wrapped in a blanket covered with bright yellow flowers. Not long before they had both been killed the mother must have wrapped it up warmly, so that it should not catch cold. She had held the baby to her so closely as she died that it was impossible to separate them. This horrifying, blood-stained page of hideous crime made me think of you. I left you so that we should never again be parted. I left you that you might never be a slave of the Germans.

A little while ago I saw a child of ten or eleven years old, a little black-headed Jewish girl. There was a world of deep, bitter suffering in her mournful black eyes. She was looking for her mother. Together with her, I began searching among the bodies for Sara's mother—that was the little girl's name.

The unhappy child's agitation infected me. For two days already she had been coming here; she searched for her mother with unflinching obstinacy, and at the same time feared to find her.

"Comrade Lieutenant, I want to find her, but I'm afraid to. What will she be like? My poor mummy!"

Sara's voice trembled. But she did not cry. That little girl bore her terrible grief with courage and fortitude. Her eyes were blazing with a rage and vengeance that was stronger than her sorrow.

Suddenly Sara fell to her knees with a terrible cry. An arm could be seen protruding from beneath the snow. She had known her mother at once by that one arm. Sara covered the long-fingered hand with kisses. We cleared the snow away from the body. How like Sara was this woman, whose face bore the traces of the torture that had preceded death!

We buried Sara's mother in a common grave at the village of Bagrovo. The winter wind sobbed and wailed through the naked boughs.

In the evening I returned to Kerch. Tomorrow I shall go on further with my unit. Sara told me how it was she had been left alive. Now it is night. Snow is falling. Tomorrow if I have time I shall write Sara's story.

January 12th

It is ten days now since I wrote anything in my diary. These ten days have passed like a confused dream. We are driving the Germans to the west. Yesterday we drove them out of the railway station called Eddiguyu—that means Seven Wells. A queer name, for there's not a drop of water to be found here. We melt snow and drink it. They say that the name was given for a joke. Once upon a time seven wells were dug where this station now stands, but there was no water in any of them.

The Germans are retreating in such a hurry that they have no time to bury their dead. The road is littered with the bodies of men and horses. Yesterday they tried to blow up a bridge after they had passed it; three enemy bombers came over, but all the bombs fell far from the bridge. Our artillerymen brought one of them down, my horse Jeiran was killed by shell splinters. A pity!

I caught that horse after a battle three days after we had landed on the Crimean coast. It was running about the fields covered with bloody foam, and its neighing sounded like sobbing. I spoke to it and petted it and persuaded it to let me catch it, then I stroked its forehead and neck. The poor animal's eyes were like those of a man nearly crazy with horror. I thought of my mare Karagyoz, left at home in the village. She used to nuzzle into my chest and then gaze at me in just the same way. Karagyoz was a sorrel, too, but this one did not have the spot on his forehead, shaped like a birch leaf. I called my horse Jeiran. Later on he got so fond of me that when he heard my voice a long way off he would begin to paw the ground. And I became very fond of him, too.

Two days ago Jeiran took a Rumanian prisoner. This was how it happened.

In the evening the captain sent for me.

"You are to go on reconnoissance," he said.

We had to reconnoitre a village which the morning's fighting had left between our positions and the enemy's. The night was very dark and the frozen ground crunched under my horse's hoofs. Before reaching the village I dismounted and led Jeiran to a bomb crater.

As soon as my eyes were accustomed to the darkness, I crawled ahead through the road-side ditch. Sometime I shall write about all that happened to me, but now I want to tell about Jeiran.

Before morning I had done my job, and set off to return to my unit. I came to the place where I had left Jeiran, but the bomb crater was empty. Jeiran had been taken away. I searched all around with a grenade ready in my hand, but no Jeiran. The sky began to lighten, only over my head it was still cloudy. It was impossible to stay here any longer. I quickened my pace, and when I arrived at my unit it was still dark.

"My poor Jeiran," I thought, "into whose hands have you fallen?" I blamed myself for taking just that horse. Were there no others in the unit? But there was nothing to be done about it. Jeiran had disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

When I arrived at my unit, I went and reported on my reconnoissance.

"And where is your Jeiran?" the commander asked me suddenly.

I had not expected this question. The commander had not seen me when I had left, he did not know which horse I had taken. Why was he asking me about Jeiran?

"I've lost him," I answered unwillingly, and caught a strange smile on the commander's face.

Of course, it is unforgivable to lose a horse, but if the commander had known under what circumstances I had lost Jeiran he would not have smiled so ironically. He did not suspect that my heart was bleeding as though I had lost some dear friend.

And then suddenly I heard a whinny outside the window. It went through me like an electric shock. That was my Jeiran! The commander saw my face change. Now he was not smiling, but laughing. Everything swam before my eyes, I could not imagine how this strange incident was going to end. The horse neighed again.

"May I go, Sir?" I said, turning to the commander.

"Don't get excited," he said dropping his hand on my shoulder. "That's your Jeiran neighing! During the night he brought us excellent information. Bring in the prisoner," he ordered.

In half-an-hour all was clear. The Rumanian prisoner explained how it had all happened. During the night the Rumanians, too, had sent their scouts into the same village where I had been. One of them—the same who was now a prisoner—had happened to stumble upon Jeiran. He crept carefully up to the horse, hoping to use him without his comrades knowing anything about it, and be the first to report the result of the patrol. When he jumped on the horse's back, Jeiran snorted and reared, to throw off the stranger, but the Rumanian clung to his mane. Then Jeiran galloped off at top speed and brought the Rumanian to our unit. His eyes were starting out of his head with fright. The sentry stopped Jeiran and brought this strange "tongue" to the commander.

January 16th

Midnight. And here I am talking of anything and everything like a garrulous old woman. It is cold in the dugout. I warm my fingers over the tiny flame of an oil lamp.

I shall never forget Jeiran's death. After the bomb explosion, thick impenetrable smoke covered everything all around. When it dispersed, fragments of stone and earth were still raining down. Then I saw Jeiran. He had fallen forward onto his front legs and the blood flowing from his chest had formed a pool on the ground. I rushed to the horse. There was mortal agony in his big black eyes. He stretched out his neck and his trembling lips seemed to be imploring me for aid.

There was such a deep, poignant suffering in his neighing that I involuntarily took his head in my arms. Tears were running down my face. The nazi vultures who had killed him had flown away, hiding themselves in the clouds.

"He's fallen, he's fallen!" I heard voices calling, and raising my head, I saw one of the air bandits coming down, trailing clouds of flame and smoke. There was a terrible roar, and the aircraft exploded as it hit the ground.

January 18th

Today our battalion has been attacking. In the evening there were over a hundred nazi dead on the field. We have taken a height N. and are going ahead.

During the last fighting, for some reason I could see before me once again the picture of little Sara, whose mother had been tortured and killed by the nazi butchers. Tomorrow if I have time I shall write you what happened to Sara. It's horribly cold... I'll pull my greatcoat over my head and try to go to sleep.

January 31st

My wound is healing. Today for the first time I am writing with my right hand. Probably those who have recovered their sight feel the same happiness. I had thought I would have to spend two months in hospital, but it's only a fortnight since I was wounded, and already I can flex and extend my arm. Today I am even writing a little in my diary. And I'm already on good terms with doctors, although formerly I didn't like them.

As far back as I can remember I had never been to a doctor. But while I have been in hospital I have changed my mind about them. Now doctors seem to me nearly the best people on this earth. And our professor! The way that man performs operations—so calm, so firm and decided! Yesterday he allowed me to be present at

one. I saw the professor sewing up a captain who had had six wounds in an air battle with two of the vultures... No, that was not just a doctor, he was a skilled jeweller or sculptor! Under my very eyes there took place something like a miracle. If people who had never seen the professor at work could have seen him then, they would not have recognized that transformed face... The thick white brows were drawn together, the features strangely stern. Generally his fingers tremble slightly when he is rolling a cigarette or turning the pages of a book. But during the operation they moved swiftly and surely, like the mechanism of some precision instrument.

The wounded captain lay there, gritting his teeth. People who have never been at the front can hardly conceive of such self-control. Not one word, not even the faintest groan betrayed his suffering. Only his eyes reddened.

One after another, the professor probed for the splinters and removed them, and then sewed up the torn tissues. And only after the operation was ended and the patient was bandaged he suddenly looked directly into the pale features of the gallant fighter. He could not tear his gaze away from the captain's reddened eyes. Then, raising his hands to his throat, the professor began to pull at the neck of his overall as though it were choking him, preventing him from breathing. With his left hand he tried to get something out of his overall pocket, but now his hand was trembling again. The old man, hard as he tried, could not put his hand into his pocket. The professor bent down and kissed the captain's damp brow. Then, ashamed at this expression of tenderness, the old man turned swiftly and went to the window. I looked at the captain. His face, changed and sharpened by the suffering he had undergone, bore an expression of calm and gratitude.

When the wounded man had been carried away to the ward, I went up to the professor. Tears were rolling slowly down the old man's face and disappearing in his beard. The silvery frost patterns on the window glass were melting under the warmth of human breath. The weak light of a winter sun fell through the circle of clear glass onto the professor's hand. The tremendous strength embodied in this skilled hand!

He did not conceal his tears from me. As though alone, heeding nobody and nothing, he stared fixedly at the chimneys of the Voikov factory, which were just beginning to smoke.

January 31st. Night

The professor came to me in the evening. He examined my arm and was quite satisfied with it. But for some reason he lingered, and seemed reluctant to go. I could see that he was looking for some person to whom he could unburden himself. Outside the window was the quiet, blue evening. And just as before the old man stood looking out. A ship's siren wailed from the sea. In the deep silence I heard his story—it was as though he were not talking to me at all, but to himself.

The years may pass, but I think I shall always be able to hear as clearly as now every word of this sad story, all its details, every intonation of the voice. At first the old man spoke very slowly and softly; sometimes he would stop, clear his throat and then start again. But gradually a note of rage and hatred filled his voice, it became stronger, louder, harder.

"Now the sun has sunk," said the old man, "it will soon be evening, and then night, the long winter night. The war has been going on for more than seven months already. They wanted to leave me in Baku. But I didn't agree. I asked to be sent here. Afrassiab was here too, on the Crimean front. He was my first and only child. The day when Afrassiab's mother gave him to me, she herself left me and this world. At first I hated my own child who had parted me from my Vassilé.

"My sister took him away, and for six months I never saw the boy. Yes, and I had no wish to see him. Then one day when I came home from work, I found my sister in my study. A child was sitting on her knee. His soft curly hair was tied with a ribbon. He greeted me with an innocent childish smile of unthinking, unreasoning merriment. And then for some reason the corners of his mouth went down and he began to cry.

"From that day I could never part with Afrassiab. Every time I looked at him I remembered his mother. I was devoted to my son, I brought him up and educated him. In 1939 he finished the Military Academy. He became an airman. And with the first day of the war he left for the front. I received several letters from his unit commander. He praised Afrassiab and thanked me for bringing up such a son.

"I did not want to stay in Baku, I could not rest there when my boy was in danger. I came here. Several times I have tried to see Afrassiab, but in vain. Every time I came to the aerodrome it turned out that he was on an operational flight. It was impossible to stay there and wait for him. Once I saw an aircraft with the Red Star fighting nine enemy bombers above Kerch. Our airman shot down two of the vultures, and the others made off. When I learned that this gallant pilot was my son Afrassiab, my heart seemed to stop beating. So that was how my son was living—every second he was looking death in the face, fighting a cunning, merciless pack...

"And then there came a night like this one. I was summoned to an urgent case that had just been brought in to the aerodrome—a seriously wounded pilot.

I heard the doctor's report and ordered the wounded man to be brought into the operating theatre at once.

"His face was covered with white gauze. There were seven wounds in the chest and the abdomen. One of the bullets, a dum-dum, had entered the right side and passed out at the back, leaving a huge, gaping wound. I started to operate. But I did not finish it. The wounded man's pulse gradually slackened, and at last the heart stopped. My hand stopped at the same time. I took the gauze from his face. It was only in the morning that I recovered consciousness. The airman who had died under my hands was my own son."

It is deep night. The professor went long ago. But I can still hear his voice. The immeasurable grief of this dauntless, courageous old man!..

February 2nd

Today is a great day. The professor has promised that I shall soon be fit for active service again.

And another joy: Sara came to see me. In reply to my last letter she searched me out and came. Now she is living with a partisan woman. I introduced Sara to the professor. Let the old man and the child become friends—only the grief of the orphan can equal that of a father who has lost his son...

Translated by Eve Manning

LEONID PERVOMAYSKY

THE COSSACK WOMAN

The village was taken in a night battle. In the deepening dusk the battalion edged up close to the German positions and went into action at once. The Germans had occupied heights immediately before the village, and actually it was for them rather than for the village hidden behind that the battle raged. The capture of these hills was no easy matter: girded as they were with barbed wire and strongly fortified, they were a serious barrier in the path of our advancing troops.

The approaches to the heights were along open, snow-mantled steppe land, making the battalion's task still more difficult. But it achieved the impossible. The men crawled over the snow in white camouflage overalls, their machine-guns wrapped in strips of torn sheets or bandages. Under cover of a curtain of fire, the sappers made their way right up to the barbed-wire entanglements and fastened long wires to the stakes driven into the ground. Then tractors hidden in a slight hollow nearby were fastened to the other end of the wires. They started up, and the whole barbed wire entanglements began to slide away from the hills, opening the path for the infantry. Hand to hand fighting raged along the height, bayonets flashed, stabbed and tore, rifle and revolver butts crashed down on steel helmets, for ammunition had run out and nobody knew where to get fresh supplies. For that matter, shooting was impossible in such a mêlée.

The Red Army men dragged the Germans out of the blindages and rolled with them in the snow, clasped in a deadly embrace. All night the fighting continued, but by dawn the heights were clear of Germans. And then our men saw that the village for which they had been fighting no longer existed.

Captain Varfolomei Chereda, battalion commander, had seen a great deal during the war. There was nothing new for him in ruined towns and burned villages. But in all his previous experience, even after the most devastating artillery fire, after the worst bombing, the most vicious and wanton incendiarism, some traces had remained of former life, be it shattered buildings, beams and bricks, or still smoking ashes dancing in the breeze. But here there was nothing at all. The village existed only on the map in the captain's map case. Actually there was nothing but bare snow-covered earth. The only thing to be seen were broken palings thrusting through the snow here and there, and heaps of charred straw or reed thatching torn from roofs flying about. On the site of one house, whose foundations were still intact, the skeleton of a sewing machine stood on the level clay floor, its black tracery of wrought iron etched against the light. It was the last and only sign that once upon a time this had been a scene of human life, with its everyday preoccupations about housing, clothing and food.

Captain Chereda stood there in this desert. He had just passed through the German trenches and blindages, and had a very good idea of how it was that this village which his battalion had captured in the night battle, had disappeared from the face of the earth.

The Germans had intended to spend the winter here. The village offered every convenience for living, but they preferred something else, something more in keeping with the savage nature of these conquerors who were always fearful of

their safety. They rounded up Red Army war prisoners and those of the inhabitants who had not succeeded in making their escape and ordered them to construct dugouts beside the cottages while on the heights before the village they set up their defences. The Germans pulled down the houses and used the beams to make thick roofs to their rat-holes. They removed the windows and frames from the houses and placed them in their underground blindages. Here also they took the beds, cupboards, iron stoves, wash boilers, brightly coloured patchwork quilts and children's bicycles. They had caves dug in the valley beyond the village for stores, stables, garages and a power station. And all this was constructed from the Cossacks' property. The stones from the school building, the beams from the cottages, or the collective-farm barns—all this the Germans used in the construction of their underground town, and then surrounded it with barbed wire. From rat-hole to rat-hole, from dugout to blindage, from underground power station to underground hospital there ran numerous passages and communication trenches. The Germans were afraid to stand at their full height on this land which they proudly claimed to have conquered.

And the people?.. Pitiful the fate of those whose homes had been destroyed. Over the whole of this waste, not a soul was to be seen; only the large ravens, cawing angrily, sometimes flapped slowly and heavily overhead.

"But perhaps there is still somebody left, some survivor?" said Captain Chereda, thinking aloud, and as though in answer there was a movement in a pile of straw in the courtyard, where the captain was standing, then a plank rose, held up by a thin hand in a red glove with torn fingers followed by a head wrapped in fragments of a grey army blanket instead of a shawl. A second later a woman was standing before the captain, a woman who in spite of everything could still be recognized as a real Cossack, an inhabitant of these sometime rich and free steppes. With such youthful burning eyes, she could not be called old, but youth was denied by the sharp lines which criss-crossed her forehead and laid deep folds around the thin, firmly closed lips and beneath the eyes, and by the wisps of grey hair hanging from beneath the rags which served her as a shawl.

The Cossack woman stood there by the cellar, hesitating, undecided. She was plainly startled when the captain, controlling his involuntary shiver, turned to her.

"What's the matter?" cried Captain Chereda, seeing the woman shrink back, evidently making for her hiding place again.

The woman swayed as she heard his voice. He was just in time to catch her as she fell. The men came running up to see the only person left in the village, to talk to her, ask her about everything... But it was quite some time before the Cossack woman was in a condition to tell them anything.

Her eyes were dry, but her voice was choked and broken as though she were stifling sobs that threatened to burst her bosom.

2

The Cossack woman was named Praskovya. She had been twenty-nine when her husband, the combine-operator Stepan Frolkov, had joined the army, leaving her with two children, Lyonka and Varyusha.

"Look after the house, the farm and the livestock," he told her when saying goodbye. "But first and foremost, the children..."

She went with her husband to the edge of the village. The war was far off—thousands of versts, and what it was all about, she did not understand very clearly. Her most definite feeling was that it was a great misfortune—the grain stood there unreaped, and the best workers were gone. That autumn Praskovya had to work pretty hard both on the collective farm and at her own homestead. The war came nearer and nearer. Herds of cattle and tractors from the Ukraine came along the mainroad past the village. Cows suffering from foot and mouth disease would step gingerly through the dust with their bleeding hooves. Carts were piled high with the refugees' goods and chattels, topped by black-eyed children just like her own Lyonka and Varyusha.

The winter seemed to be one continual waiting for a letter from Stepan. The first came in the spring. He had been seriously wounded in the winter fighting at Lozovaya, but his strong body had resisted death. He was going straight back to the front from the hospital, he wrote, and dreamed of becoming a sniper—to be sure of getting his German every time.

Praskovya never did understand how it was that suddenly German guns were rumbling by the village itself. It stood in the midst of the steppe like an island rising from the boundless sea. Standing on the hills before it, one seemed to see over half the globe. Late at night Praskovya fell asleep to the sound of gunfire, lying with the children on the floor beside the wall for greater safety. In the morning the Germans were already masters of the village.

The Frolkov house was commandeered for German staff headquarters—it was a new one, the best in the village. All the collective farmers had cooperated in building it for Stepan Frolkov as the best combine-operator. It had meant a great deal of work, but very great gladness too. And now Praskovya was driven out of this house to live with her children in the summer kitchen—a tiny building thatched with reeds, almost completely filled up by the large stove with its cooking range and the wash boilers. She was not allowed to take anything with her from the

house. She put Lyonka and Varyusha to bed in the flour bin, covered them with rags, and herself lay on the earthen floor by the door.

Bitter days followed. Praskovya was not allowed to enter her house, but standing on the threshold of the summer kitchen she could see all her things being carried out—the new sewing machine which she had bought in Stalingrad before the war; Stepan's bicycle with the well-filled triangular tool-bag fastened behind the saddle; the gramophone with all her favourite records; the trunk with the family's best clothes—in short everything that had been gathered together through the years of work on the collective farm... And all that was carried out of the house disappeared for ever. Praskovya looked on in silence. She was silent when the cow was taken from the shed and the sheep killed. She had not yet reached the stage of protest, and to plead she was too proud.

With the coming of autumn, things became still worse. Together with the other people, Praskovya was forced to pull down the village buildings. First came the school and the collective-farm barns, then the people's homes. The Germans showed what they wanted done. Excavations were made on the hills for blindages, trenches were dug and stones, beams and planks carried up there. Praskovya's distress as she saw the destruction of other homes gradually changed to a dim unreasoning hope that perhaps, somehow, her nest would remain undamaged... Many houses had already been torn down, many families had taken shelter in the cellars, but her house was still standing in the ravaged village, clean, new, rejoicing the eye with its big bright windows, its grey tiled roof and the high porch with its carved woodwork.

"They'll never tear down such a fine house," thought Praskovya, and the hope gladdened her heart. "That's why the officers chose it—the officers won't live underground."

But looking at her neighbours, to those whom misfortune had already struck, she felt somehow guilty.

"You wait, Praskovya," said old Kossukhin, who was working beside her, digging a trench on the hill behind the village. "Your turn'll come yet."

"But maybe they'll pass me by," said Praskovya incautiously, tossing a big spadeful of earth to one side.

"Fools feed on hopes!" said Kossukhin angrily. "You stupid woman!.. The Germans have come to destroy everything we have, it's the truth I'm telling you. Or are you thinking to buy yourself off some other way?"

Praskovya flared up.

"I can look after my own honour too," she said softly and then still more softly and firmly: "And I won't have my place smashed, if they kill me for it."

Old Kossukhin waved his hand.

"I've lived longer than you, but I'm not wanting to die yet awhile. And when they smashed my place I kept mum."

The next day they pulled down the home of a widow called Ilyichikha. It was an old cottage, low built, looking as though it had grown into the ground, but Ilyichikha had spent the whole of her hard life in it and it was hard to see it go. She fell on her knees, wept, pleaded, speaking Russian in a loud voice as though she thought the Germans would understand her better for that. They kicked her aside and she fell across the threshold, then sprang up and began feeling her way along the clay walls of her home, like a blind woman, caressing them with her gnarled fingers as she wailed:

"My own dear walls, my bright windows!.. I won't let them break you... Eh, eh, where shall I lay my old head, where shall I go, a poor widow, all alone in the world..."

It was terrible to see and hear her. All stood motionless, frozen to the spot by this picture of uttermost despair. Nobody saw the German take out his revolver from its holster. The shot rang out dry and sharp. Ilyichikha slid to the ground, her fingers clinging to the wall, the nails leaving long scratches in the plaster...

Praskovya Frolkova was one of those who saw it all, for the Germans had rounded her up to help pull down Ilyichikha's house. She stood there by the fence, covering her face with her shawl so that none might see the tears running down her face... It was her own fate which she could see, though hers would be still more bitter. If she clung to her home, the Germans would shoot her, and the children would be left helpless orphans, without father or mother. But Stepan had told her: "First and foremost, look after the children..."

"I shan't try to stop them," Praskovya thought. "Let them pull it down..."

And when a few days later misfortune knocked at Praskovya's door, the neighbours stared in amazement at the cheerful way she broke down her own new home, as though filled with a lust for destruction. Laughing and calling to the others, she tossed down the tile from the roof, tore the doors off their hinges and dragged the heavy beams away.

"Cheer up, neighbours! It's not some stranger's house we're pulling down, it's our own, our own roof... Tired, lass? Eh, what a poor weakly thing!"

Old Kossukhin to whom the Germans had given a job requiring care—taking out the windows without breaking the glass—could only shake his head. He couldn't make anything of folks these days, that he couldn't. First they were ready to die for their homes, and then they suddenly wanted nothing better than to help the destroyers.

Praskovya's eyes were dry, but sometimes her laughing mouth would twist and then close firmly to hide the trembl-

ing lips. Nobody guessed what it cost her to control herself when a German clapped her on the back with his broad hand, shouting:

"Fine girl! Gut!"

Then they made her pull the boiler out of the stove in the summer kitchen. It would not pass through the narrow door, so the kitchen was torn down.

The cold autumn rains had already begun. Praskovya and the children went to live in the cellar, where they descended by a shaky ladder after lifting the boards which served as both door and roof. She brought several piles of rushes and straw, and covered them with rags—Lyonka's and Varyusha's bed was ready. In the corner she made a stove out of stones. Some broken rusty water pipes were lying about on the empty space where the school had once stood; Praskovya collected them and put together some sort of a chimney through which a great deal of heat escaped, but little smoke. She kept the fire going with what was left of her house. But all that could be endured. The main thing was that she had Lyonka and Varyusha with her. She was silent, never wept, even smiled at the Germans. At night, sitting in the cellar and throwing dry chips into the stove, she would listen to her children's quiet breathing and tell herself:

"I'll look after our little ones—Stepan will come, he'll see I've taken care of them."

She never doubted that Stepan would come some day. She was quite sure that the German rule would not last long. It was an evil visitation that had to be endured. And then life would be as it had been,—no, not the same, everything would be still better when the Germans were driven out and Stepan returned home.

The children shivered and clung to each other for warmth. When they turned over in their sleep, the dry straw rustled under them... The only joy left to her, all her hopes for happiness in the future were bound up in these two little flaxen-headed kiddies—ragged, always hungry, but still preserving that miraculous capacity of childhood to forget all troubles in laughter and play... It was for their sake, to keep life in them that she had crept like a she-wolf into this damp hole; it was for their sake that she washed clothes for the German soldiers; for their sake that she swallowed her tears and endured degradation and insult.

"Never mind, Stepan'll pay them back for everything!"

But children are always children, however harsh and joyless their childhood. Like little sponges their minds took in all that they saw and heard, everything that went on around them. And this terrible world filled with battle and human suffering was reflected in their minds with childish ardour and purity.

Clear autumn days began, with pale sun-filled skies and that rare silence of nature which belongs only to dusk and to the time of fading leaves. Praskovya let the children come out of the cellar to play, impressing it on them sternly that they were not to make a noise and not to go near the blindage.

There were no Germans nearby except the sentry standing by the officers' blindage, and one of the officers who understood Russian and spoke it with an unpleasant nasal accent; he was sitting on a chopping block sucking his pipe.

Absent-mindedly the German let his gaze wander over the little Cossack children playing nearby. Possibly, some dim, distant memories stirred in his mind—he could no longer recall them with human distinctness, they swam hazily through the thick bloodstained haze which was ever before him, clouding his brain. Nevertheless, the sight of the playing children wakened and stirred something in the alcohol-dulled memory of the German. He began to listen to the chatter of the two little Russians. They were a good distance away, but their shrill childish voices rang out distinctly in the silent autumn air. Their prattle began to be interesting. The German shook off his lethargy.

"You'll be a German, and I'll be the Red Army," Lyonka, the boy, was urging his little sister Varyusha.

But she shook her head obstinately and looked frightened.

"Why must I be a German? I don't want to..."

Lyonka pressed his forehead to hers.

"We'll fight and see who wins," he said in a penetrating distinct whisper that carried to the listener. Varyusha hesitated.

"You'll win, you're stronger."

"And the Red Army's strong too," said Lyonka with conviction. "Our Daddy's there."

This argument finally convinced Varyusha. The brother and sister began a rough and tumble. The struggle lasted long with varying success, but at last Lyonka began to get the better; already it was not Varyusha he saw, but a real German, that same red-headed German who had ordered them to live in the cellar where they used to keep the barrels of pickled cabbage and cucumbers, instead of in their own home... A rage, no longer childish, filled him, he gave his sister a box on the ear, threw her down and knelt on her stomach.

The two shots ringing out in the courtyard brought Praskovya out of the cellar. Her children were lying side by side in a pool of blood. The German, sitting in his old attitude, was fastening up his holster. Praskovya walked up to him, her lips white and trembling.

"What for?" she asked softly, as though that were really the only thing that interested her, as though it were not a question of death or of her own children. There was neither fear nor pleading in her dry, burning eyes. They were bent

on the German in a direct, commanding gaze.

"They play wrong," he barked. "Ze girl vas German and let herself be beat... besiegen. Unmöglich... dat no gut."

Not a tear did she shed, although her heart was bleeding; she did not spit in his face, although her seething feelings demanded an outlet. Her Cossack will held her fury in bounds. The German took this for submission, and she was allowed to bury the children. She dug a grave near the cellar and marked the place with stones taken from it.

The cold weather began, but still she lived on in her cellar. The first snow fell, and her hair turned white. Now she had only the one thought: "Stepan will pay them for everything..."

3

All her thought now was for Stepan and of the terrible vengeance which he would exact from the Germans for the destruction of their home and the death of their children.

She could see him marching along the snowy roads, his rifle slung on his back, grenades at his belt, in the ranks of soldiers like himself, tall, bold, gallant warriors. At other times she would imagine him crawling over the battle-field, under the fire of German artillery and machine-guns.

"Lord, save him from any deadly bullet," she would whisper urgently as she lay motionless at night on her bed of rushes, in the thick darkness of her hole. "They have put me alive in a grave..."

She would see Stepan going into the attack. He ran, his rifle at the ready, his mouth open, she could even hear his voice. He ran shouting "Hurrah!" and the Germans fell back in terror before him... Many raised their hands, but he did not spare them.

"Don't spare them, Stepan... They didn't spare our children..."

Much more she saw in her lonely dreams, and in her waking hours. Her whole life was one of waiting and expectation. When aircraft bearing the red star on their wings flew over the village she would follow them with her eyes, seeing them as heralds of liberation. The first time she saw the Germans looking worried, her heart beat faster with joy. Guns were already thundering in the east, beyond the hills... it seemed to her that their voices said: "Soon, soon!.."

The Germans drove all the people from the village. The women wept as they took leave of their fields... they had nothing left except this land, a cherished reminder of life as it had been. The Germans drove them on with rifle butts, flogged them, but ever their faces were turned back eastward... The children trudged through the snow with their little bare feet. Old men stared gloomily down at the road, not raising their eyes to the guards driving them along. Old Kossukhin, the collective-farm miller, went as far as the hills—a windmill had stood there, the pride of his life—looked at the overturned millstones, sat down and said:

"Kill me if you like, but I'm not going any further."

They bayoneted him.

But this time too Praskovya Frolkova did not weep, and they left her there in the village, thinking that she was mad and could do no harm.

"Never mind," she thought, "our men are close now... Stepan will come and then I can weep, let out all my sorrow."

And Stepan came. She saw him when she came out of the cellar in the morning. He was standing there in the snow, in the middle of the yard, before the German blindage made of the beams from their home. He had no cap or belt, the buttons were torn off his greatcoat, and he was supporting his wounded right arm with his left. Behind him stood a German with a tommy-gun, while another sat in front on a folding stool of hollow rods, sucking his pipe and staring at Stepan under his heavy, drooping red lids.

"Stepan!" Praskovya's lips wanted to call, but her voice died in her throat. Their eyes met, and he recognized this ragged, grey-haired, aged woman as her who had been his beloved wife, so gay, so full of the joy of life; and his eyes ordered her:

"Be silent! Whatever you are thinking now, whatever you may see, whatever you may still have to suffer—be silent. This is the way it's happened—a thousand to one chance. We won't whine about it. Don't think that they got me easily. I'm no coward, or traitor either. They wanted a 'tongue'[1]. You know in such a case they stop at nothing... I came there at night so as to start my hunt at dawn. In the darkness it was only with grenades I could fight my way out. Then they wounded me in the right arm, and it hung there like a rope, I couldn't move it. Then they beat me up and bound me... You can see they've brought me here at the rope's end. What's that the officer's looking at? It's a newspaper, they took it from my pocket... No getting away from that—my portrait's on the first page. Yes, it was I who killed a hundred and thirty Germans. They stood between me and you, I had to destroy them..."

"Stepan!" cried her eyes. "You see that they've destroyed our home. Why don't you ask what they've done with Lyonka and Varyusha? I didn't save them."

"Be quiet, be quiet, that's not your fault. I've seen the same in other villages and towns. A pity I killed so few of these wild beasts... What are they going to do to me? Don't you know that yourself?"

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[1] A prisoner taken for the purpose of gaining information.

"I shall die together with you."

"No, you must go on living, to tell the people all about it. Go away, it will be easier for me... They're going to start killing me now!"

"It's all the same, my heart is dead, Stepan. I must die with you!"

"No, ours will be coming soon... Goodbye!"

Yes, there were many things that they said to each other in that instant when their eyes met. And then again she heard a shot ring out dully over her cellar.

Her heart seemed to turn to stone. If she had any tears left her suffering would have burned them out of her. She had become harder than flint. In losing all, she had gained one thing—an unbending spirit, smelted by grief.

Looking at her, Captain Varfolomei Chereda, in whose company Stepan Frolkov had served, understood this very well.

"And what are you going to do now... how do you mean to live?" he asked the woman.

"I'm coming with you," Praskovya replied simply.

Captain Chereda looked at the men surrounding him and the Cossack woman in a dense circle. Their eyes were alight with feeling—one could not call it tenderness, for steel cannot be tender; it was rather that sister of tenderness, a difficult, human love.

"Shall we take her?" asked the captain, turning to his men.

"We'll take Stepan's wife... She'll cook for us... Take her!" the men chorused approvingly.

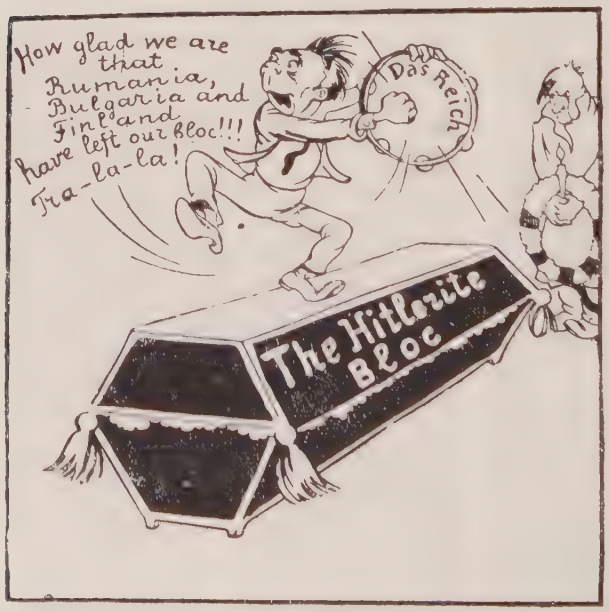
But Praskovya shook her head.

"I'll take a rifle," she said distinctly, in a quiet but authoritative voice that compelled the instinctive acquiescence of all. "A rifle for me. I've done enough cooking. It's something else I'm wanting..."

And then something happened that Captain Chereda could never forget. One of his men gaily took off his wadded jacket and threw it over Praskovya's shoulders. Another helped to take off the ragged fragments of blanket she was wearing as a shawl, while a third clapped his own cap with earlaps on her head... Somebody else strapped his belt round her waist with a joke. And there she stood, slender and invested with a new beauty, her grey hair straying out from under her cap, while her youthful eyes laughed and wept, and the tears ran down her dark cheeks. She did not trouble to wipe them away... A world that she had found again rose before her through her tears, as through a mist... And a moment later she was striding along with these stern and gentle men, whispering soundlessly:

"Stepan... my children, my dear ones..."

Translated by Eve Manning



The Fool at the Funeral. Merry memorial service in Berlin. *Drawing by Vassili Fomichov*

Goebbels' paper "Das Reich" assures its readers that the withdrawal of Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland from the hitlerite bloc holds a number of advantages for Germany.

(Newspaper report)

THE SECOND ECHELON

Following hard on the heels of the Red Army, as it clears the invaders from the Homeland, come groups of young rehabilitation workers. They are a sort of second army echelon. They raise cities from the dust, they help the local population erase the scars of war. Under their eager hands motionless machines, cold furnaces and derelict mines revive, the wheels begin to turn, stepping up war production so as to accelerate the destruction of the foe.

Girls and boys, anything from fourteen to seventeen, work wonders. Skilled hands to train them are practically non-existent; materials and even tools are minus factors, and yet they help to revive industry in times so short as to be absolutely breath-taking.

Here are some incidents and facts telling about their marvelous work, work which will form the subject of legend and story for future generations.

1. A CIRCUS NUMBER

It was the autumn of 1943 in Yenakievo, a small town in the Donets basin. Until the war, the town's life had revolved around its iron and steel works.

During the twenty-two months the Germans and Italians were in the saddle they made no attempt to revive the town's industry since they felt their domination to be extremely shaky. For a long time the front ran only two or three miles from the town. When the invaders pulled out they wrecked, burned or blasted all that had managed to survive.

The town again became Russian. But the works were lifeless, the jagged ends of concrete pillars and walls gazed forlornly at the open sky. Rust-red rolling-mills, blast-furnaces choked with congealed iron, heaps of brick rubble, not a roof intact, and mountains of corroding contorted metal that was once precise mechanism responsive to man's guiding hand—this was the picture of the Yenakievo Iron and Steel Works in October, 1943.

To restore it came Youth Column No. 9 formed in Tbilissi from yesterday's trainees of a railway school and former waifs, launching out into life from orphanages. Neither the youngsters from the school nor the orphanages had ever set eyes on a blast-furnace in operation. More than that, not even the foremen who came with them, experienced railwaymen, had ever worked at an iron and steel plant. But no other forces being available at the moment, the column, working under a very few veteran furnace men, had to get down to the job in this liberated town of restoring the plant so unfamiliar to them.

Foreman Kolt's group of young fitters tackled the rolling mills. There were neither blue-prints nor parts, nor yet machines to make the parts. But there was a schedule—"aggregate 550" had to be put into commission in a month.

At every step difficulties arose which threatened to upset the whole show, and which seemed insuperable. It was here that the former waifs and strays came to the fore—their early life of hazard in city streets had taught them initiative and they found the answer to all the conundrums arising on the job. Ingenuity filled the gaps in knowledge.

Still, there came the day when no amount of resource or ingenuity could help. An enormous fly wheel for setting a pendulum saw in motion had to be raised sixteen feet. It could only be done with a block and pulleys worked by a steel chain. The young fitters made the block themselves but there was no chain.

At least ten days were required to forge the chain but how could ten days be spent on a mere chain when the whole job had to be completed in a month?

In the next shop, in ruins of course, there was just such a chain dangling a hundred feet above the ground near the severed end of a roof support. The chain almost touched the floor. It could not be broken off short and there was no ordinary means of detaching it from above.

Only one solution was possible: somebody must swarm up the chain, clamber onto and seat himself astride the roof girder and crack the chain free from its fastening with a heavy hammer.

And then? Well, whoever ventured on such a circus trick would have to do a tight-rope walk along the girder to the wall where the mangled remnants of a ladder were still perched precariously in place. The distance from the chain to the wall was some fifteen to eighteen steps. But remember, this must be traversed a hundred feet above the ground along a beam no more than four inches wide.

But there were neither tight-rope walkers nor suicides among the fitters!

And all the time the chain hung in that dead shop, just brushing the heads of the taller lads, as if mocking them

Just when everybody was finally convinced that the idea of the chain must be dropped, that, despite its proximity, it was just as remote as a star in the sky, Andrei Sheldyshev stepped from the group of sorely taxed youngsters.

He had joined the column from a Tbi-

lissi Children's Home. He was frail, freckled and shy, although shy is hardly the right word. When the foreman gave him a job he would blush like a girl and if he had to reply tears started from his eyes and his voice choked and sounded hoarse. With the lads at times, though, he was a thorn in the flesh.

He stepped forward, he flung his thick padded jacket to the ground, sat on it and began removing his shoes—all without a word. All around regarded him in amazement. Then he tightened his metal-plated uniform belt, tried the security of the hammer and chisel thrust into it, spat on his grimed hands, jumped, clutched the chain and went up hand over fist like a regular tar. As the chain swung to and fro his body curved like a lizard's.

Everyone gasped and for a second stood rooted to the spot.

"You're crazy!" yelled Kolt the foreman, the faculty of speech suddenly returning. "Look slick, down you come! You'll maim yourself!"

A concerted chorus of "Come down; your nuts!" from the lads seconded the foreman.

But Andrei was already well up the chain. Easily hauling himself up with every movement of his hands and helping out neatly with his bare feet he reached the very top. All watched with bated breath as with one hand he clutched the rod to which the chain was fixed and with the other tried the firmness of the girder and then swung his leg over its narrow width.

Only then did he glance down at his speechless comrades. A perky smile wreathed his face.

"Voilà!" he yelled, imitating a circus acrobat, and made a grand gesture.

Then he drew his hammer from his belt and began hacking off the chain. Amid the surrounding ruins that chain alone seemed to have retained its former stability. "Clang, clang, clang," rang the hammer on the metal. Minute after minute passed by. They seemed like hours. Andrei's face was crimson, his veins distended.

The fourth and then the fifth minute passed. In silence absolute, broken only by the clanging of the hammer, the boy's ringing voice suddenly cut the air:

"Look out!"

Into the ring formed instantaneously at the shout the ninety-foot chain slumped with a mighty thud.

It lay on the ground in a flattened heap, conquered and submissive, but nobody bothered about it at that moment.

"Quiet now!" came Andrei's command from above. "Don't call me, not a murmur, or I'll just tumble down..."

He cautiously rose to his knees, slipped the hammer back in his belt, still more carefully stood up and started his journey along the four-inch girder, looking straight ahead like a tight-rope walker. He went neither fast nor slow—just the right pacé but to all below it seemed as if he were walking for an unbearably long time; that deadly journey seemed endless. And everyone felt that he wanted to stretch out a hand to that slight freckled lad, but no one dared to stir nor even breathe for that matter.

When two yards or so from the wall Andrei could stand the strain of careful progress no longer, and broke into a run, with outstretched hands. He finally clutched and hugged the rafter terminating his journey.

A sigh of relief swept through the shop like a puff of wind. Meanwhile the boy was coming down, dropping in swift jerks over the missing rungs of the ladder and then when he came to the end still high above the ground, he jumped into thirty pairs of hands that received their burden like some priceless jewel.

No sooner had he reached the ground, however, than he became his usual, painfully shy self. And when on the morrow he read in the town newspaper: "Young Patriot's Perilous Circus Turn. Fitters Improver Andrei Sheldyshev Speeds Start of Rolling Mill by Ten Days", and when, by order of the director, he was given public commendation, and when finally, some days later he was handed a nice little sum by way of a prize—he was embarrassed to the point of tears and did not know what to do with his scarred, toil-worn hands.

With the money he stood treat to his fitters' group, he visited the market, drove dubious bargains with the vendors of bacon and eggs, pastries and fruit and had a rare gathering in the dormitory. He even invited the column's girls, but they did not come because they were still sore at the nickname given them—"Miladies".

2. "MILADIES"

They acquired this epithet because their arms were weak, the hammer in their hands struck uncertainly and clumsily. Of the column of five hundred only eighty were girls and most were detailed to the trades of joiner and turner. Besides being the ruling of the column chief, Engineer Sarkissyan, after conflabbing with the foremen, it was also the girls' own wish. Very few of them yearned to become fitters.

Still, "Miladies" was a bit thick, and the girls were in high dudgeon.

The lads—all those fourteen- and fifteen-year-old harumscarum madcaps—were still at the age when attention to the fair sex is regarded as a shameful lack of spirit and calls down the caustic ridicule of friends. Even the best, the most level-headed lads wouldn't want to lag behind their comrades when in the evening, with piercing whistles or soul-shrivelling caterwauls they tore by a knot of girls homeward bound from the factory. Still less would they dare be first in accepting the "Miladies" as fitters on an equal footing.

Among the few wishing to become fitters was Katya Ossanova. She had the reputation of being the most difficult girl in the whole column. Conceited, lazy, free

with her tongue—she managed to have five or six "bust-ups" with her friends and the foreman every day. She stopped at nothing, feared nothing and respected nobody.

The column contained no saints among their number. All the youngsters had been rubbed the wrong way by war-time conditions. But even the most reckless boys gasped at some of the things Katya did. It was whispered that foreman Romanov, with tears in his eyes, had begged the column chief to relieve him of Katya Ossanova.

"She's not a girl but a pain in the neck!" was the general plaint.

That was the reputation Katya brought with her to foreman Kolt's fitters' group. It happened that on that very day Kolt had to detail a number of fitters to assemble a certain machine. Its depressing remnants lay in the yard some three hundred and fifty yards from the shop.

The open sky, a keen piercing wind, the youngsters in thin and worn overcoats—Kolt took stock of all these factors. He knew, too, that with numbed hands the girls and boys would have to scrape the snow, ice and rust from the machine parts...

Kolt called Ossanova, who had crossed the threshold of the rolling shop for the first time that day. As a matter of fact the threshold was a pleasant fiction, and not only the threshold. Just as abstract was the conception of the very shop whose walls and roof existed only in the recollection of the plant veterans. This machine, too, was rather problematical. It had to be assembled though many vital parts were missing, without blue-prints and without even decent fitters who had to be trained right there on the job. What sort of a fitter indeed could you make of this obstreperous, unruly girl who regarded the world as a camp of enemies leagued against her!

"Katyusha," said Kolt with unexpected mildness (using the endearing form of the name), "do you want to help me?"

Katya's brows raised in astonishment. She gave a suspicious sniff and by force of habit was on the point of saying something extremely rude, when Kolt continued:

"I know you want to. So... Well you know we are a sort of second army echelon. The speed of our army's advance depends quite a bit on how soon we set this machine working. I need somebody with plenty of pluck for the job. I'm making you team leader."

"Me?"

Katya even fell back a step. Kolt pretended to notice nothing and went on serenely:

"I'm giving you Raya Dashkova, and Nadya Yurchenko..."

Katya's eyes sparkled—Dashkova and Yurchenko were known as the best behaved and most diligent girls in the column. Their example had invariably been cited to Katya and she had been told times without number that she would never be a patch on them. And now she was being made their leader!

Kolt continued with the same serenity:

"I shan't be coming around till the evening. It's a long way to the shop from here, I shall have no time to see what you're doing. I'm trusting you..."

They were standing at the machine. The wind came in angry gusts, tugging at Katya's short jacket. Katya recalled how yesterday and the day before she had demonstratively thrown up much easier work than this. Pointing to her hands blue with cold, she had demanded:

"Give us warm working clothes first and then you can ask us to do the job!"

As if answering her thoughts Kolt said:

"Light a bonfire so as to warm your hands—but no standing about, mind you! By evening the chain must be cleaned."

With that he went off.

Katya turned to Nadya Yurchenko and Raya Dashkova who were regarding her in silence. For the first time she felt something like embarrassment.

"Let's start," she said half questioningly, looking at the girls. Then as she felt her usual bad temper take hold of her, she pulled viciously at the chain.

"Don't stand there staring at me! Start a fire, and no nonsense!"

Kolt returned at half past four. There, polished till it shone, free of mud, rust and snow, lay the interminable chain, restored by the girls' weak hands. Not far off the last embers of the dying fire were softly glowing. Katya was squatting on her heels thawing her hands in the warm ashes. As the foreman approached she jumped up gaily and stood to attention:

"Vassili Petrovich, your assignment has been fully carried out!"

Kolt, concealing his jubilation, slowly went over their work.

"Thanks, leader, well done!" he said soberly, and solemnly shook Katya's blue hand, rough and cracked by the frost.

The next morning, on one of the concrete pillars still standing in the shop, appeared a huge notice which attracted general attention. Here it is:

> L i g h t n i n g!!!
>
> "Katya Ossanova, who lead a girls' team in cleaning an interminable chain completed her yesterday's assignment in exemplary style. In quota fulfilment she outstripped all the boys' teams in the rolling shop."

The boys on reading the news regarded each other with amazement and chagrin:

"Katya?! A team leader?! Her?!"

But it was that very same Katya.

That is how the girls forged into the limelight. A fortnight later, Katya Ossanova whirled into the joiner's shop to her old foreman Romanov. Waving a packet of notes under his nose she trilled in triumph:

"Four hundred roubles! There's lazybones Ossanova for you! When did you see earnings like this?"

Four hundred roubles in two weeks!—at that time not even the most skilled or diligent young fitters in the column were making anything like that.

Four hundred roubles in a pay packet earned general respect. The boys were ready to admit that Katya was "one of the gang". But here the girls dealt another blow. Kolt took Nadya Yurchenko from Katya's team and sent her with Lyuba Chernokolova and Masha Mekhova "as experienced ones" to clean and polish the shaft cranks of a steam engine.

A team of boys under Sasha Bossak was restoring the engine. This team was performing wonders. To jump ahead a little in our story, these boys in three days finished a job which adult skilled fitters working in ordinary times and under normal conditions would have reckoned to finish in twelve or thirteen days. They opened up and overhauled the cylinders, scraped the valves, assembled the circular saws and cleaned and secured the frame. The boys were each turning out 1000% of their quota. They wasted not a second although they, like the rest, had to work under the open sky, warming their hands at a bonfire.

But since they had no time to polish the shaft cranks, the foreman Kolt sent them the three girls under Nadya Yurchenko.

The boys met them with cold distrust.

"Remember," Sasha Bossak told them in sepulchral tones, "this isn't a dance hall," and turned his back.

"Light a fire, girls!" cried Nadya, imitating Katya Ossanova's debut and paying no heed either to the boys or their severe leader.

A fire was lighted near every shaft. Again the wind swirled and raged while heavy damp snowflakes descended on them like a wet blanket. The girls set to work with scrapers, grinding away and polishing those infernal cranks, utterly regardless of the weather.

Cranks!

Yurchenko admitted later:

"We'd never seen those shafts or the cranks. The foreman bowled along and said: 'Go to Bossak's lads and polish the cranks.' We were sure that they were something small and rather delicate. Then we arrived and saw... Every crank was half a metre in diameter! The sweat froze on our faces!"

Foreman Kolt did not forget to mention that freezing sweat at the next day's five minute conference, a regular institution every morning before the shift began. He was grudging with praise, that's why the youngsters tried hard to gain it. Returning to the dormitory after work they would snap at each other:

"What, I can't beat your record? Just wait till tomorrow, you'll see!..."

When Bossak's boys and the girls finished restoring the steam engine on the third day, Kolt saw his group go home together for the first time. He could not believe his eyes: the girls were in the middle and none of the lads either whistled, caterwauled or yelled scornfully: "Miladies!" No, they were a friendly bunch, walking along calmly, discussing the job done and recalling with obvious satisfaction the teasers they had overcome.

Afraid of scaring them, Kolt slackened his pace, following someway behind. All stopped at the girls' dormitory, finishing the talk in hand. Then Sasha Bossak took the lead, touched his cap, and shook hands with the three girls in turn. One after another the rest of the lads performed the same ceremony, solemnly and with a businesslike air, shaking the girl's roughened and scratched hands.

Kolt realized that peace had been signed, "Miladies" was a term of the past. From today on, according to unwritten boyish law, the girls were accepted on an equal footing into the family of young restorers of the Yenakievo Plant.

3. COMRADESHIP

The first of the restored blast-furnaces was called No. 6 before the war. Now it was called the "Youth League" furnace. The new name had dual significance: firstly it had been restored by young folk, chiefly Youth Leaguers, and secondly the job had been done at breathtaking speed, dubbed the "Youth League" pace.

It was during the restoration of the blast-furnace that the name of Pavel Boot, a young water-system fitter, first resounded through the plant. He was a team-leader and soon his group had set the standard for initiative, discipline and thorough good work.

Where had Boot's lads not worked? At all three blast-furnaces, the rolling-mills, the ore-hoists, the trolley system—there had not been a single job at the plant in which they had not had a hand.

At first they were nine strong, then later dropped to seven in number. Two lads were transferred to help other teams. All were born in 1927 and hailed from different areas, yet they gathered at the plant for a common cause and without fuss or dispute resolved to do the job in style. Not only Pavel Boot, but all of them had sharply differed from the rest of the lads, even in the train on the way. They had a certain soberness, a touch of military alertness in their bearing. To some extent their fine appearance was helped by their excellent woollen uniforms presented to them in their trade school as a reward for good work. All seven had managed to preserve these during a year of war-time travels. Unlike many, they had not exchanged them at long train stops for tempting tomatoes or roast fowls.

They were called the "Youth League" brigade although Pavel Boot alone was a member. Very soon, however, all seven joined the League. They lived together, worked together and soon became fast friends.

Their sense of comradeship helped the work. Not one had the slightest apprehension that any member of the team might let down his fellows, fail to turn up at work, find himself a more congenial job, or evade helping his neighbour so as to rest himself.

When they first arrived at the blast-furnace it seemed to them that they had come to a huge neglected cemetery. Everything around was lifeless—rubbish heaps, the rusted carcass of the immense cold furnace. First of all ground had to be cleared to instal the hoists. No gauntlets, no shovels, no wheel-barrows—nothing at all. And, in addition, it was the end of October and they would have to work in the open.

With lengths of pipe, steel wedges and sledge-hammers, they separated the twisted parts, welded solidly together by the explosion, and cleared the ground. Below, where the pig-iron is now poured into the ladles, stood a railway platform. With their bare hands they tipped onto this all wreckage and rubbish. The lads' vocabulary was too limited to convey how hard a job it had been. When afterwards questioned as to the toughness of their task, they merely glanced at each other, shrugged their shoulders and said:

"Oh, it was just the usual thing!"

They were about right: overcoming insurmountable difficulties was the usual thing for them.

After clearing the site they began to work at their real trade. Carrying out the instructions of a veteran mill foreman, unaided by blue-print or sketch, and without the necessary tools, they fixed up the involved water system of the furnace. They repaired the filters. The thin wire netting had rusted, its minute interstices were choked up with petrified soil, brick-dust and rubbish. They blew it clear with steam, which condensed on the lads and then froze, encasing them in ice.

The end of the month showed that Boot's team had taken the lead in the group and that this group headed the column. Pavel was summoned to a team-leaders' parley held in the unfurnished and, at that time, uninviting "Red Corner", a sort of club-room. The chairman solemnly announced:

"We present the Red Banner to our best team."

Pavel had a fleeting vision of himself as a commander of a guards division receiving a heavy velvet banner with gilded spearhead and bushy tassels and fringe. Once at the cinema he had seen a battle-scarred commander go down on one knee and reverently kiss the hem of the banner. Pavel's brow puckered...

"Should I kiss it or not? Should I kneel?"

And then the chairman tendered him a tiny red flag, the kind kiddies wave on May 1st. The column didn't even possess a banner.

Pavel felt ashamed of his vain imaginings, ashamed for the coming ordeal with the lads. What could he do with a frippery toy like this? Far from hanging it in the place of honour he fought shy of even showing it to the team. The lads would laugh!..

At noon on December 22nd they blew in the "Youth League" furnace.

On the eve of that event Boot and his mates forced compressed air through the pipes, showering questions on their foreman. He was old Andrei Ivanovich Skiba, a veteran installation expert, genial and talkative.

"Andrei Ivanovich, will it work?"

"Has everything been mounted right, Andrei Ivanovich?"

The pipes were connected for about twenty minutes. The excitement rose: would it work or wouldn't it?

The furnace was blown in. None of them had seen a blast-furnace in operation before. What was molten pig-iron like?

Forgetting everything else on earth they waited for the iron. Wild horses could not have dragged them from the furnace.

The iron was smelting. And while that miracle was taking place inside that great cumbersome furnace they had restored, they seemed themselves to weld into a homogeneous whole. They were no longer Felix Starobykhovsky and Alexei Smirnov, Constantine Sladkov and Pavel Boot, separate individuals. There was simply one team—one heart and one spirit, seven pairs of hands and eyes glued upon the furnace.

"It's coming, it's coming!" somebody shouted and all seven, as one man, dashed towards the ladle, then pulled up spellbound, staggered by the weird sight, by that fiery cascade, that embodiment of power, that tropical heat beating upon them. It was not yet pig-iron, though, but slag. And like all who see their first smelting, they mistook the slag for the real iron.

Still, the furnace had been blown in, it had yielded a smelt, it was making iron, it was functioning. It seemed to all seven lads that they could visualize through the brickwork all the complex inter-operation of the machinery set in motion by their hands.

At the end of the shift, exactly at 5 p.m., a celebration meeting began in the old factory grounds, churned up and trampled in battle. Kononenko, assistant mechanic of the blast-furnace shop, pulled and hustled to the fore the seven "culprits" responsible for the celebration. Earlier in the day they had to bully Pavel, the team leader, into the idea of making a speech. Colouring up to the eyes he had finally consented. But now the boys were embarrassed and hid behind the backs of the few adults present...

One after another more units were put into commission—two blast and several open-hearth furnaces as well as rolling-mills—and everywhere the seven inseparable fitters managed to have their finger in the pie. "Seven lads all in make one single machine" was what they were jokingly called.

They really felt themselves to be a single machine, welded together by a staunch sense of comradeship.

If an interesting book reached their room it was a matter of course for each to read it in turn, or all together aloud. If one thought of buying a new shirt all took part in the purchase, weighing up points of colour, material and price. Letters from relatives were unfailingly read to the whole team wherever they might come from—Leningrad, the village of Stoudyonoye, Chkalov region; from Stavropol to Pavel Boot or from Yaroslavl Region to Sasha Shamrayev. All these were inconspicuous but indubitable signs of friendship. Not long ago, however, their friendship was put to the test in a very abrupt manner.

The incident occurred at the third blast-furnace—the fourth to be restored but since it was numbered three before the war it retained this figure from force of habit.

As usual Boot's team worked on the water system. Now they laboured entirely on their own; old man Skiba had left them long ago. Indeed, they no longer stood in need of his guidance. Each of them could sketch the plan of the piping with his eyes shut.

The furnace repairs were nearing completion. Each was at his job. One was up above among the firebars, another was busy down below—it's hard to recall now just where each lad was. Everything was quite peaceful and normal, when...

They did not immediately realize what had happened. Something crashed and roared, the air suddenly became dark and dense as from an explosion, bricks came tumbling down, the pipes twisted around, the furnace groaned, screeched and cracked. The furnace sank on its foundations and developed a list.

Pavel was thrown several yards into the air and fell heavily into a pit crushing under him two persons already there. "It's the end!" was the sole thought that flashed through his mind. The next instant he neither thought nor felt.

He came to his senses when the dust began to clear and was astonished to be still alive, uninjured, not even very much bruised, that his legs and arms were whole and that his head, though ringing, had not a single crack. His knees knocked together as Pavel rose to his feet and took in the scene. All around, swathed in clouds of reddish brick-dust slowly settling, was once more the same picture of chaos which the lads had seen when they first arrived at the derelict works. The old furnace had not stood up to its trials and had settled.

At that moment Pavel thought not of the furnace but of his mates. What had happened to them? The first name he recalled was that of Alexei Smirnov—he had been working underneath on the side on which the furnace had craned over.

Forgetting his bruises and scratches Pavel rushed to the spot where he thought Smirnov must be. He had to scramble over heaps of twisted metal and bricks. Inside the furnace somebody was groaning, calling for help. None of his fellows could be there but nevertheless he could not pass by. Pavel looked in and saw two adult workers. They were not badly hurt, but could not emerge unaided. Pavel helped them and went on. As if from a distance came the cry: "Pavel, Pavel!"

He recognized Constantine Sladkov's voice. From somewhere unknown, Smirnov turned up safe and sound. Pavel, worried most of all precisely about him, only nodded:

"D'you hear, Alec?"

As if in answer came the cry:

"Pavel!"

The voice was weak and muffled. At last Pavel guessed its source. He saw a heavy slab of stone which had crashed on the spot where the hot steam pipes ran.

Where did they find the strength to shift the slab? They've no idea. Later, out of curiosity, five of them tried but could not budge it. But under the stress of the moment the two managed to shift it. Constantine was lying pressed back on to the hot pipes and groaning faintly. The slab had broken both his legs. The lads lifted him up and carried him away.

Gradually other members of Pavel's team turned up. Excepting Constantine, all had got off with nothing more than shock and bruises. Suddenly Pavel started:

"Where's Felix Starobykhovsky?"

They looked at each other. True enough, where was Felix?

"He wasn't here, he'd gone off to No. 1 to turn off the steam," somebody recalled.

"Yes, but the pipes are still hot. He couldn't have turned them off."

The words were hardly out of Pavel's mouth when somebody came running towards them, waving his arms and shouting:

"Boot, Boot, come here quick! One of your fellows got it bad. The steam's scalded him!"

Pavel rushed to No. 1. As he went, the probable explanation of the accident flashed through his head—when the third furnace had begun to settle, the steam-pipe, linking furnaces one and three, had snapped...

The safety valve had blown off and scalded Felix's face and chest. Pavel wanted to break down and weep from pity, but then he felt the responsibility vested in him in a new way and that checked his tears.

"It's nothing much," he said with forced cheeriness. "Scalded a bit, nothing more..."

Sladkov and Starobykhovsky were sent off to hospital.

In the evening Pavel was asked to take new workers into the team.

"No, we'll manage without," he said shortly, paused and then added: "We'll wait for our own pair..."

He spoke for all of them, on his own responsibility, having had no time to talk it over with the team. Still he felt it a kind of disloyalty to "take strangers",

"not to wait for his own chaps" and he was sure the rest would think the same. And he had not erred in his decision. The lads not only did the work of the absent pair, but walked into town a couple of miles every day to the hospital, taking their "wounded" a pot of jam, cakes or tarts bought at the market. Constantine and Felix were comfortable in the hospital where it was clean and quiet, and where good attention was available. The lads however found innumerable faults with the hospital, mostly imaginary, and maintained that the "casualties" would recover much quicker at home; by home they meant their dormitory, a spacious room, windows of which were hung with fancy muslin curtains, the walls a dazzling white relieved by placards from the travelling office of "Komsomolskaya Pravda", the youth newspaper, and comfortable spring beds and stools made by the girls in the joiner's shop. No, there could be no comparison—home of course was miles better! And the "casualties" themselves were dreaming of home.

The team besieged the doctor.

"But who will look after them there?" objected the doctor. "Who, for instance, will bring them their dinner?"

"Why, the team of course!" replied Pavel indignantly.

At last Constantine and Felix were discharged. There was little transport available in the plant or the town; the few lorries were at a premium and horses there were none.

The lads persuaded local folk to lend them two handcarts, the kind of vehicle that had appeared during the occupation and on which the starving population had loaded their scanty belongings and gone off to the country to find food in exchange for them. The boys put mattresses and blankets on the carts and pushed their fine "carriages" all the way to the hospital.

"The coach is ready, the horses harnessed!" announced Pavel with a sweeping gesture and without moving a muscle of his face.

He was the first to hitch himself to the cart somewhat overladen with Sladkov and his crutches. Felix was placed on the other despite his tearful protests that his legs were whole and that he could walk.

The triumphant procession passed through the town from one end to the other—Boot's team was taking home its "wounded".

A surprise awaited the "casualties" in the dormitory: beside their beds stood two brand-new lockers, on which stood jam jars holding flowers. On the wall between the two beds hung the rich folds of a red banner which the team were sturdily holding against all competition.

The day had long passed since Pavel Boot had been handed the child's toy flag at the team-leaders' meeting. Now the banner was of silk, fringed with dark gold, and had ample, bushy tassels. The team won it from month to month and by implicit consent it had always hung over the team-leader's bed as an expression of the general respect in which he was held.

But on this happy day, when the two comrades returned from hospital, it was for them, for those who had suffered at their posts, for them, for whom all the rest had worked for a month, that the team showed this token of affection and esteem.

OLGA ZIV

A JOURNEY TO "THE LAND OF THE FUTURE"

In 1913, travelling along the Yenissei, Fridtjof Nansen, the arctic explorer, made the following entry in his diary:

"You are aware of standing on the threshold of a mighty land, embracing a huge expanse from the wild tundras in the north to the deserts of Mongolia in the south."

The famous Norwegian was enraptured with the inexhaustible wealth of Siberia and termed this region "the Land of the Future".

"The Land of the Future"! Here it lies, spread beneath the wing of our plane which is swiftly speeding ever northward. We are now some fifteen hundred kilometres distant from the great Trans-Siberian Railway and are winging our way above the mighty silvery band of the Yenissei River which through mountain ranges and infinite stretches of dark-green carpeted taiga, carries its waters into the Arctic Ocean.

Our destination is Norilsk—a large industrial centre built up in recent years almost on the 70th parallel. Rich beds of ore and coal were discovered here. By means of the great scope and daring of the enterprise shown by the Soviet people these arctic regions were opened up and made to serve man's needs. Within a short period this zone of eternal frost and the midnight sun had its factories and plants, coal and ore mines and a complete new town had sprung up.

We are still a good distance from Norilsk. Igarka, the most important port on the north Yenissei, recedes beneath us. Igarka, which is navigable for large ocean-going vessels, is Siberia's timber export centre. Before the war first class pinewood was shipped from Igarka to London, North Africa and to many other ports of the globe.

Our plane veers and changes its course due east. The dense forests are now replaced by tundra, dotted with innumerable lakes. Snow still lies here and there. The yellow ball of the sun which in these latitudes never leaves the sky throughout the summer, still fails to thaw out the

soil which has frozen deep in the course of thousands of years. Not a sign of human life, not a wisp of smoke denoting a hunter's bonfire, no single trace of a fishing boat on the river or lakes—only the tundra, stretching stark and monotonous as far as the eye can reach.

Mountains suddenly loom in the distance, their peaks enveloped in clouds. Soon, at the foothills, we sight yellow, brown and bluish smoke belching from factory chimneys. The plane circles over the landing field and I catch a glimpse of the straight streets of the town carrying motor traffic, the railway station with the silver lines of its steel tracks, the green rectangle of the Norilsk sports stadium, the red brick blocks of factories and plants —in a nutshell, a typical industrial landscape.

Three minutes later, after a tiresome flight of many hours, my companions and I are glad to disembark from the Douglas and tread solid earth again. We are in Norilsk.

I shall not bore readers with a long and tedious description of how Norilsk ore is turned into nickel. Instead, I prefer to talk of the people themselves, of the daily life of the constructors, ore and coal miners, and the metallurgists of this new arctic industrial centre. To supply the front with metal these men are waging an offensive on nature—not to destroy but to alter and harness it. They are turning this Land of the Future into the Land of Today.

So here are a few first-hand sketches. They have no continuity for they are just everyday sidelights taken at random from the life of this industrial town situated at the 70th parallel, an islet of progress amid the boundless expanses of the untamed tundra, six thousand kilometres from Moscow.

Ore miner Semyon Shmoilov, a huge, kindly fellow known to everyone in Norilsk as "Uncle Syoma", is unloading crates and cases of cargo. These have made a long and arduous journey from the shores of England. To unload as much seaborne freight as possible during the brief arctic summer the various inhabitants of Norilsk give a hand after work in the railway warehouses and depots. This accounts for ore miner Shmoilov being here.

Unpacking one of the cases Uncle Syoma found a large placard inside with the drawing of a hand proferring an aeroplane. Under it, in big letters, was the following inscription: "From the British people. For victory! We are with you." And signed: "Packed by Ernest Clayton, Halifax, England. Good luck, Russia!"

Uncle Syoma, highly delighted with his find, was soon surrounded by a crowd of people. The poster gave rise to much talk. This greeting, penned by the hand of a friendly Englishman was greatly appreciated by these workers of the arctic railway.

Later I saw copies of this same poster in different factory shops and workmen's clubs. It served as a reminder that the Russians' titanic fight against hitlerite tyranny finds a warm response in the hearts of many friends abroad.

I don't know whether Ernest Clayton of Halifax will read these lines, but if any of my readers should by chance meet him, please tell him that the first man to get his poster was a noted worker of Norilsk. Please tell Mr. Clayton that ore miner Semyon Shmoilov turned out eighteen months' production in six months, forging ahead of all his comrades. In six months, Shmoilov earned 33,338 rubles—roughly the wages an average ore miner would earn in twenty months.

Uncle Syoma is very sorry that he's no hand at drawing pictures. He would have liked to have sent Mr. Clayton a poster showing an ingot of nickel with its weight flattening Hitler and crushing him to the ground...

A spacious, well-lit room, its walls lined with shelved cabinets containing mineral specimens. Maps and charts of geological sections give a decorative touch to this study-room.

In charge here is Alexander Vorontsov—chief geologist of Norilsk—an expert and skilled judge of ores and a great enthusiast of arctic latitudes. He is clean-shaven and neatly clad in a well-tailored lounge suit of light grey. I recalled my first meeting with Vorontsov—eight years ago, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Eight years ago, I found a bearded and weary-looking man wearing a jacket of reindeer hide and rough, heavy knee-boots.

"As you can see," he laughingly remarks at our second meeting, "I have made myself thoroughly at home in the Arctic. I had the honour of once prospecting the very ores on which our industrial centre has now been built up. Wild horses couldn't drag me from here now..."

Gazing at this vigorous man, I envy him with all my heart. A good geologist is a blend of rover and scientist, of dreamer and mathematician. Vorontsov has criss-crossed the whole tundra, travelling with dog and reindeer teams; he has slept under canvas and in the tent-dwellings of Nentsi; he has roamed gorges and scaled mountain ridges uncharted on the maps. He searched and he found, and now at 41 years of age he knows the joy of seeing his labours bear fruit, of metal being extracted from the ores he himself discovered and prospected.

"The war has no doubt sharply reduced the scale of geological prospecting and confined it to the needs of today's requirements only?" I ventured to suggest.

"You're wrong there," my interlocutor retorts. "Here are the itineraries of the geological parties under my charge," he says, leading me to a map hanging on the

wall. "Thousands of men have gone out to the tundra, by plane, with reindeer teams and on motor-sleds. These parties are mapping out geological sections and well-boring. In their field laboratories they examine and test mineral and rock specimens found in this corner of Siberia. Our quest for oil is having successful results. The prospects of post-war shipping in arctic seas is urging us to search for deposits of suitable coal along the coast. It is precisely during these war days that my associates and I are finishing a monograph on 'Geology and the Useful Minerals and Rocks of the Yenissei-Lena Area'. Science and practice are advancing side by side to the accompaniment of thundering guns!"

Charted on this wall map are scores of coloured rings, triangles and squares—denoting the various mineral deposits, many of which are being already worked.

I wager that none of you have ever attended a football match at three o'clock in the morning with the sun shining bright on the soccer field!

Well, I enjoyed this experience. The teams of the day-shifts of the Norilsk miners and metal workers were having a training match. Since the sun doesn't set even at night why not enjoy your leisure midnight hours by engaging in your favourite sport?

And sports and athletics are favourite hobbies in Norilsk. With their own hands the local sportsmen rooted and levelled a slice of tundra to serve as their stadium, a job which involved turning up two thousand cubic metres of earth. It was well worth the effort for now they have their own soccer field, and tennis, volley- and basket-ball courts. On Sundays, whole families come here—the younger generation having a good time on the fields and courts, their elders sedately sitting and looking on or passing the time in small-chat on the benches around the bubbling fountain.

Norilsk is a town of striking contrasts. In the street I met two fellows engrossed in conversation as they paced along. One wore flannels and a white shirt with open collars, the other—a woolen sweater. One swung a tennis racket in his hand, the other had a pair of skis slung over his shoulder. In twenty minutes the skier will cover the uphill journey from summer to winter, for the heights around Norilsk abound in firm snow while lakes lie in the foothills where the kiddies can paddle and bathe to their heart's content. But beware of diving! The sun warms only the upper layer of the water and down below the swimmer is instantly gripped with cramp owing to the icy water.

Unfortunately, this diversity in the sports season which may suggest to our readers that they compare Norilsk with America's famous Sunny Valley, lasts only two months. But even through the long arctic night Norilsk townsfolk are not bored. They have a fine indoor winter sports hall. Football players change over to ice-hockey, and as for the ski and ice-skaters—the world is theirs.

Gathering cucumbers

One old doctor told me that the real cause of scurvy—which for so long had been the scourge of the Arctic—is human laziness and the preference to idle around in a horizontal position rather than be up and doing in the vertical state. He declared he would undertake to cure any scurvy sufferer without administering any vitamin C, by the simplest means—a daily dose of sports. And I must say that the robust looks of Norilsk oldtimers who after their working day never forsake their skis and the ice rink bear out the old doctor's theory.

In Norilsk one sees the practical solution of the problem of arctic farming.

The agricultural expert Nikolai Yevsky, a retired officer, now director of the local auxiliary farm, meets me at the threshold of his office.

"All done in wartime," with a sweep of his arm and a ring of pride in his voice.

Painstakingly cultivated fields of cabbage and potatoes, scores of roofed and frame forcing-beds. A herd of Dutch pedigree cattle returning from pasture. One might think that some time-machine had suddenly transported him from the Arctic to a spot, let us say, near Moscow.

We make a round of inspection of this arctic farm, and I jot down some figures. This year, three hundred and fifty acres were sown. No less than twenty-four different crops are being raised on this soil of eternal frost. Last year the yield per acre was from eight to fourteen tons of cabbage, from three and a half to six tons of potatoes and from four to five tons of radish. Some of the cabbage heads—the locally grown variety "Glory"—tipped the scales at seventeen and a half lbs.

"There's a guest from the U.S.A.," re-

marked Yevsky, pointing to a cabbage field.

Last April bags of seeds arrived from overseas. These bags carried special tags with the words: "Not guaranteed for points north of the 63rd parallel." The firm that raised these seeds was afraid to guarantee crops if planted in places far north. But Yevsky was able to give this guarantee now, when these American seeds would soon grow into sizeable heads of cabbage.

How comes it that the frontiers of farming have been pushed so far north?

"It is quite easy to prove theoretically that cabbage cannot grow in our latitudes," said Yevsky. "Even in the best of seasons we have no more than ninety warm days in the year, and cabbage needs a hundred and forty or fifty to ripen. But this deficit is covered by the heat and light from the fifty warm and sunny nights. And if each cabbage is planted in the poor tundra soil in a peat-manure pot it will have an ample supply of nutriment. But, of course, good care and attention is also needed."

And in this way, the Arctic now raises its own homegrown vegetables, a venture which proved not only possible, but also profitable. Last year the Norilsk farm netted a clear profit of 1,015,000 rubles.

...The curtain slowly rises. The majestic strains of the British National Anthem echoes through the spacious hall. Then the orchestra strikes up the American and Soviet National Anthems.

I sit snug in a comfortable seat in the auditorium of the Norilsk Engineers' and Technicians' Club, and tonight's entertainment is a "Three Flag Concert".

The first half of the programme is devoted to Russian music. The second part is opened by the engineer Kokorev, who sings, first in Russian and then in English, "Annie Laurie", the Scottish ballad written by Lady John Scott. Then Elena Gorelova, an office employee, sings "To the Maypole Haste Away", an old English folksong of the times of Queen Elizabeth.

One after another the various performers appear on the stage and bow to the applause awarded their turn. Then a jazz band appears with an actor dressed up as George, from "Let George Do It". He sings a well-known song from this popular film. Then follow American and old English songs, and the soldier's song "We'll Hang out Our Washing on the Siegfried Line".

How warmly the audience applauds! Indeed, thousands of kilometres present no obstacle to a good song. Today, Scottish ballads are sung in the Arctic, while Russian folksongs are heard in Manchester and Detroit.

A few days later this same stage was occupied by guests from the tundra, who had arrived at Norilsk on reindeer sledges for sundry goods and supplies. Vassili Tynka sang an endless and ever-changing song of everything he saw around him. All the songs of the Sakha tribe are composed in this way. The guests then performed the "Kheiro"—an ancient dance of the reindeer drivers.

This is the third time a professional theatrical season has been opened in the Norilsk Miners' Club. The repertory includes plays by Ostrovsky, Calderon and Goldoni.

When the guns fire a victory salute in Moscow, in Norilsk it is almost tomorrow morning. The thunder of Moscow cannons is instantly caught up by sirens and factory whistles which pierce the boundless tundra with the glory of Soviet arms. This has already became a tradition these days. The Central Heating Station sounds its siren, factory whistles join in, together with the toot of locomotives. And men cease work for a few minutes, to resume their jobs with redoubled energy when the salute is over. Thousands of miles distant the metal they have produced and worked with such labour and effort is fighting the enemy. It has been shaped into armaments and has become a formidable weapon. In the strong hands of the soldiers it is the metal of victory.

GEORGE KUBLITSKY

Ice hockey in May

IN GERMAN SLAVERY

This story was told to our soldiers by a seventee-year-old girl, Lyuba Karassyova, in a liberated village whence she had escaped after many months of German slavery. She had hidden in the village in expectation of the Red Army's arrival.

Here is her simple and unadorned account of what she had to undergo in Germany.

I

Our troops are at the gates of Germany. Behind these gates thousands of Soviet people languish in slavery. Some of them perhaps can already hear the boom of our cannon. The hour of liberation is near and for the prisoner every minute seems an eternity. I was one of these prisoners and I want to reveal what is happening in one small corner of the gloom that is German servitude.

But let me get a grip on myself, pull myself together and try to make my story coherent.

My name is Lyuba. My surname Karassyova. I was brought up in a children's home because as a child my mother lost me. That happened when I was three years old. I was travelling in a train with my mother. I awoke during the night. The lights were on in the car. I got up and walked barefoot along the corridor. I wanted to hide and then make my mother look for me. The door was open. I climbed down the steps and slipped off. It was very dark and the train started to pull off. House after house on big rattling wheels a whole street of them with narrow windows swept past me, carrying my mother away.

That is all I can remember of that fateful night. Mother never succeeded in finding me though I gave my correct surname when they picked me up at the station.

I spent thirteen years in the children's home. As I grew up I found orphanhood more difficult to bear and one day I wrote to some well-known people, asking them to help me find my mother.

One day one of my schoolmates handed me a letter and a photo fell of the envelope. I looked at the unfamiliar face and guessed it was Aunt Natasha, whom I remembered by name but on the back of the photo were the words: "To my darling little daughter".

My mother was ill in bed. She wrote that she would come for me as soon as her health permitted. But that very evening my friends accompanied me to the train and I said good-bye to them for ever. I was so very happy it made me feel a little awkward.

In the morning I was at my mother's bedside.

The two years that followed seemed one endless holiday to me, although life wasn't so very easy for us.

Then came the war.

One morning, in midsummer I opened the window and humming a tune began to sweep the floor. Suddenly my mother came in from the kitchen and through blue lips whispered:

"Don't sing! How can you? They are in the city."

I knew that "they" meant the Germans. Something terrible had happened which I refused to and could not believe. I was at a loss what to do next. Was there any need to continue sweeping the floor?

Uncertainty and dismay never deserted our home after that.

Foreign rule was imposed upon the town; a foreign language was spoken in the streets and foreign soldiers did what they pleased in our little garden. In the evenings I would sit on the edge of mother's bed and we would whisper together for a long time, discussing everything we had seen and heard during the day. Gradually one danger loomed above all others: they would send me off to Germany.

I remember the departure of the first group of prisoners. The Germans had a band playing at the station but the crying of my unfortunate friends could be heard even above the noise of the brass instruments.

Only the healthy were sent to Germany and a new branch of medicine was born—the art of inoculating, to foster swellings, jaundice and even tuberculosis.

At first we bribed our way out. Dishes, linen, gradually everything went to the police. Our small house grew empty and dark spots appeared on the walls where furniture had stood or pictures hung. But we hardly noticed this because we were expecting greater and more pressing misfortunes.

In the beginning of the second year the Germans announced a general mobilization of four age groups. Guards and watchdogs surrounded the mobilization bureaux.

I hid in the cellar and mother told the authorities that I had disappeared. I spent the days in the company of rats and mice and they were the only witnesses of my tears. Time moved slowly. Every rustle made me strain my ears; I kept imagining that mother was groaning.

Unexpectedly the Germans announced that in the autumn the school would be open and that students would be exempt from mobilization. I learned of this in the evening when I came up from the cellar. Mother said that I wasn't to dare even dream of going to school because it was all a lie, and I agreed with her, but from that moment I mechanically counted the days left until the beginning of the school term.

The day came. As usual I left mother at dawn and went down to the cellar. But I did not go to the corner and sit on the bench. I stood near the door and counted the minutes by my heart-beats. I

felt that something was going to happen.

There was a knock at the door. The police again! I heard mother walk across the room. She walked along the edge of the room, probably leaning against the wall for she had become very weak. Abrupt, insulting words in German reached my ears. Then my mother cried out. Surely they had not struck her?

At last the door shut again. I waited for my mother to go back to her bed but she did not move. I counted six hundred heart-beats and then lifted the trap-door and climbed out of the cellar. Mother was lying on the steps leading to the door. She was unconscious. I lifted her, dragged her to her bed and moistened her temples with cold water. She began to feel better, and her faint gave way to a deep sleep.

It was half past eight. Why am I hiding? Am I making things any easier for mother? On the contrary, I'm only making her put up with the insults of these beasts. Wouldn't it be better if I tried my luck and went to school?

Promptly at nine I was on the familiar school staircase and met my girl-friends of the ninth and tenth classes. At 9.05 German guards were at the door. Immediately after this a doctor appeared and all of us were put through a degrading examination. We were told that in accordance with certain laws and decrees we would be sent off to Germany.

We spent the night in the school; it was our last lesson: we learned to hate.

At dawn we were led to the station.

The train was already there. We were thrown into freight cars and somebody on the outside started to board the little window. The girls took turns scrambling up the wall to the second window to take a parting look at the people who had gathered to see us off.

I did not want to go near the window. But at the last minute something moved me. I grasped the beam on the wall of the car and looked out—and immediately recognized my mother standing on a pile of coal dust and searching the train with unhappy eyes. Two of our neighbours were holding her up.

I called out:

"Mama, mother dear, don't let them take me! Mama, save me!" and something else, but I can't remember what.

The board was already nailed on and the train pulled out, but I continued to cling to the wall and to cry.

2

Picture a stuffy car, with the doors shut, the small windows boarded and too crowded for everybody to sit down at once. Picture too that every hour takes you farther away from everything that is near and dear to you. On the outside, on the wall of our car, the German inscription "Live cargo" was chalked in yellow.

In the evening the train stopped at a deserted station in the forest and we were taken out for a walk. While we walked back and forth along the tracks watched by the guards, some German soldiers came out of the forest and laughing and winking at our guards, began to look us over. One of them beckoned to me with his finger. I walked quickly past him. He caught up to me and grabbed my arm. He muttered something and pushed a piece of bread into my mouth. I hit him over the hand, the bread fell to the grass and the German bent down to pick it up. I broke away from him, returned to the train and hid among my girl-friends.

The German rushed about looking for me, but he was too late: the commandant gave the whistle and we were herded back into the cars.

There were sixty-two girls and ten boys in our car. When the train started Vladimir, one of the boys, came up to me and said that I was dressed too smartly.

As a matter of fact I was wearing a nice dress; I had put it on for the opening of school. I began to wipe the dust off the walls of the car and smear it on my dress and on my face and hands.

"That's very becoming," said Vladimir.

We were like imprisoned animals—thin, dirty and fearfully hiding in corners. Yet only recently we had been human beings!

Vladimir came from Kamenets-Podolsk. Twice he had escaped on the way to Germany and now he was being sent off a third time. We all considered him a hero. He told us how to make our way across forests, how to cross roads unnoticed and in which villages to ask for bread. He gave us his address and asked us to write him and let him know how each one fared. At night, when the train was passing through a forest, he said:

"Now is the best time to escape. Jump off through a window while the train is moving." We walked up to the window. "One should always have tools along." He pulled some pincers and a hammer from his bosom and quickly began loosening the boards. Then he went over to the other side of the car and opened another window.

"And now, boys, get ready!" he said to his comrades.

The train was moving between the steep banks of a deep hollow. Then the embankment came into view and it grew lighter. Vladimir ordered: "Out you go!" and thrusting his head and shoulders out of the window, raised himself on his hands and jumped out. There was a shot, then another, followed by whistles from the engine, and the train came to a sharp standstill. Our guards jumped aboard and counted us. Five of the boys had disappeared. For some time the guards wandered around in the darkness with flashlights. There was another shot. Later we learned that they had found one of the boys; he had been wounded by the first round of shots and they killed him, but we never found out which of the five was the victim.

Through Lwow and Cracow we reached the German town of Gronau and were taken to the Russian slave labour exchange. Here we were registered, photographed, had our finger-prints taken, and were given a bit of cloth with the word "Ost" to wear on our breasts.

The camp in Gronau cannot be called a slave market for the sole reason that slaves were not sold there but were given gratis in whole groups to German factories.

I was put to work in a porcelain factory, in the dish department. From morning to night I stood near a tub of boiling acid in which I dipped the dishes. My friends told me that the vapour of this acid was dangerous for the lungs. Indeed, it was not long before I developed a chronic cough. The German women in this department worked shorter hours and were given special food.

Now, in addition to the "Ost" sign we all wore a number. First these were iron badges worn on the breast, then the administration found it more convenient to write these numbers in large figures on our backs. The minute you tarried the inspector took down your number. And when at noon, tired enough to drop, you got into the queue for your turnip soup and when you were already stretching out your tin bowl for your share, somebody suddenly shouted in German:

"No dinner for number 19! Get moving!"

We lived in a gloomy three-story building with cement floors in huge barrack-like rooms, slept on wooden benches without mattresses. At 3.30 a. m. we were awakened by a policeman's whistle. After washing the German wardress gave us a piece of bread that had to last us the whole day. Then we were formed into columns and marched off to work under police escort.

Half a year passed.

One night the factories near Gronau were attacked from the air. I will never forget how our guards dashed around in search of shelter, how they stumbled and how they crawled on all fours, forgetting all about their whistles. I decided to flee. Hiding myself under a pile of refuse in the court yard, near the high fence, I listened with delight to the hum of aeroplane motors. The number of planes above increased and finally bombs hissed through the air. There was a deafening roar, the earth swayed with explosions. I decided that my time had come and I climbed over the fence.

I don't know whether the sentries noticed me or whether they shot.

All night I made my way through empty fields close to the road where fire-engines were poking about.

I spent the next day in a cement pipe under a road and at night continued on my way. But it was clear that escape was impossible as I had made no preparations and was not even following any definite direction.

When I was caught I said that I had fled because I had been frightened by the bombing and not knowing the German language had been wandering about ever since. I was taken to the town of L. to a one-storeyed stone building with a cellar guarded by sentries: it was the police building.

I had learned some German and heard one guard say to another:

"This Russian's feet itch, but she'll get rid of that itch here."

Nobody questioned me. I was ordered to walk down some stone steps into the cellar. An iron door was opened in front of me. Behind it in the semi-darkness I could distinguish the gleam of water. I was pushed forward and tripping over the threshold I nearly fell in.

I looked around me. The gloomy square-shaped room was covered with water. On the left there was a high window with a dusty pane covered with iron bars. Under it stood a group of people with the "Ost" sign on their clothing. I would have recognized them as Russians even without the sign. Just as I, they stood knee-deep in water. There were five of them—four girls and one boy.

"Will I be called up for examination?" I asked.

The boy looked at me pityingly:

"Your first time here?" he asked.

"Yes."

He told me not to stand in the middle of the room because I would still need my strength. I walked up and stood next to them, leaning my back against the wall. The boy said that I would have to stand in the water for twenty-four hours. The first time anybody came here they had to stand for twenty-four hours. The second time, forty-eight hours. For a third escape—seventy-two hours. And if one survived this then the fourth escape was punished by shooting.

"I have been standing here thirty-six hours and have another thirty-six to do," he concluded with, what seemed to me, pride in his voice. He added that all these punishments were for individual attempts. Anyone suspected of participating in a secret organization was handed over to the Gestapo and sent to Oświęcim.

"Where is that?" I asked.

He said that Oświęcim was a town not far off; previously it had belonged to Poland and now the Germans had set up a terrible camp there, to which not only Russians but Poles as well were sent. Nobody had ever returned from there and it was known that many had been burned alive in the camp's electric furnaces.

From that day the shadow of that city hung over me.

3

Everything was covered by water in the cellar, but one could stand on the narrow slanting window sill holding onto the bars. If the guard caught sight of you he would open the window and prod you

through the bars with a long stick driving you back into the water.

I would never have believed it, but now I know from my own experience, that one can stand in cold water for twenty-four hours. My feet felt cold only at the very beginning, then they went numb, but my whole body became chilled, I was nauseous and dizzy.

There was almost no conversation for we could not think. But when any of the girls began to cry the rest sang, because we would not have the Germans hear us cry. The name of the boy who had stood in the water for forty-eight hours and who still had to stand there for twenty-four more was Fyodor Zhuravlyov, from Rostov. He had moved the hot-water pipe aside and written with a nail on the wall: "Russians were tortured here. We stood knee deep in water." The pipe was moved back to hide this inscription.

"When our troops come to L.," he said, "the sappers inspecting this building will read these words and know how we were tortured."

When I was taken out of the cellar and warmed up a little, I thought that the torture in the cold would leave no traces. But then I fell ill, my hole hody was sore, I have been suffering from rheumatism ever since. But, what is most important, my will had received a blow. From that day I noticed a kind of dull apathy in my behaviour. I began to talk less and less frequently.

The thought that I would remain a prisoner forever was more terrible than any torture.

The writing of post-cards was the only thing that cheered me during the next few months, which I spent at a camp. We were permitted to send two a month. They were given to the camp-führer and since he crossed out anything he didn't like, I wrote only that I was alive and well, that I was in the same place and that I anxiously awaited an answer. And added: "Much love, my dearest mother..." Once I sent a post-card to Vladimir, addressed to Kamenets-Podolsk, but received no reply.

Mama wrote every time that she was getting better. But once she added that she felt so much better she could sit up in bed without holding on to a towel, and I understood from this that her health was deteriorating.

I answered her immediately but as I had already sent two post-eards that month this third one was returned to me. Then I managed to drop a letter into the post-box in the factory settlement, but the letter was sent back to the camp and by way of punishment I was denied correspondence for a whole month.

I remember how I went up to the second floor, lay down on the bare boards and began to count to a thousand. I reached a thousand, which meant that fifteen minutes had passed. And I had a whole month to wait!

Nevertheless, the month passed and on the first day of the following month, upon returning from work I dashed to the office. But it was Saturday and the nasty red-headed German, the same woman who handed out bread in the mornings, was leaving. She said that she had no intention of staying over because of me. She seemed to remember a letter for me. Yes, she thought it was from my mother. An ordinary letter: mother wrote that she had bought a chicken. But, perhaps, it was somebody else's mother that had bought a chicken and mine had died. There were two post-cards and it was really too much to expect her to remember the doings of these Russian families.

On Monday morning I got my post-card at last. Our neighbour wrote that my mother had died.

It was a terrible blow and I completely lost my bearings. I could not understand the reason for my existence, why the sun set and rose, why the shrill whistle sounded in the mornings.

My work began to deteriorate. The foremen and guards kicked me and beat me with a stick. When this didn't help, they sent me back to the slave labour-exchange in Dachau and from there I was shipped further west with the first group that left for digging work. But I never reached my destination.

I lost my reason. I remember only one station along the road and a telegraph post which seemed to threaten me. I was frightened and tried to hide, but was dragged out. The engine hissed getting ready to leave. I was afraid of the engine, afraid of the ominously silent cars. I cried and tried to break away.

I don't remember what followed. Days, weeks and perhaps months left no traces in my memory and then once again faint signs of life appeared and I seemed to see everything through a frosted glass.

I was living on some kind of empty lot, in a two-storeyed house, inhabited by mute shadows. Hundreds of people, men and women, lay on the floor or in the yard, on piles of refuse and rubble. Their sunken eyes were open but they saw nothing. Every day a wide cart drawn by an old horse came to the yard. It carried five or six coffins and into them we put those who had died that day. The next morning the coffins appeared again. They were the same coffins. The bodies were taken in them only as far as the common pit into which they were thrown.

I cannot swear that I noticed all this during my illness. My reason returned to me and I left this death camp. I learned many of the details later.

This camp for sick Russians is located in a village of the Komotau district, Sudetan region. There are about six hundred prisoners there, all of them doomed to death. The camp is always overcrowded. New ones are constantly sent to take the places of those who die. Tuberculose patients predominate. Next come the crip-

ples, many of whom maimed themselves on purpose. Most of the prisoners are only partly in their right senses and regularly swell the ranks of the completely deranged of whom there is also quite a number.

There were girls here from Krasnodar, Smolensk and the Leningrad region. One of them asked me to post a letter to her relatives. In it she wrote: "Don't expect to see me alive, mother. I shall die here." Of course, she has died long ago. When I saw her she could hardly lift her head and the weak who could not work were given no food at all.

Of the other prisoners I remember a thin, lanky man, called Samoylov. It was said that he was an engineer. Like myself he was suffering from apathy and never spoke to anyone.

Such was life in the "Russisches Lager."

It was a lucky accident that saved me from it.

4

But before telling about this "accident" I want to say that in spite of the strictest control and every possible restriction we, prisoners, maintained contact with one another and helped to keep up each other's spirits. We learned to deceive the censors and in our letters referred to the English and American airmen who bombed Germany as "visitors". Thank heaven—we would write—our masters are having a merry time: yesterday they had visitors at night and today during the day.

Nor was this all. We ran all sorts of risks, visited one another, making our way from one camp to another.

And so, during my stay at the camp when I had lost all contact with the outside world and was simply waiting to be put away in a coffin and taken to the burial pit, I was found by my friend Vera Petrovskaya, a Leningrad school-girl, caught by the Germans in a country-home near Pskov.

We had been taken to Western Germany in the same train. When I lost my reason and was removed from the train Vera found out where I was being sent and several months later brought me a letter here from Vladimir. It had been sent to her by another friend of ours from the porcelain factory.

I did not recognize Vera. Or to be more exact, I remembered that her name was Vera and that I had seen her before but it was all the same to me and I asked her indifferently why she had come.

She handed me the letter and forced me to read it. I understood every word but nothing interested me. Then Vera said:

"Vladimir is alive."

I nodded my head.

"He is in Russia, at home." said Vera. "He has sent a letter from home. He is free, they didn't catch him."

Later Vera told me that suddenly my face, the thin horrible face of a person doomed to death, wrinkled and tears sprang to my eyes. I ran from the garden where we were working and made for the road, where, hiding behind some old boards, I re-read Vladimir's letter a second time and then a third. It stunned me and no longer was I indifferent to what was going on.

Vladimir began by saying that his dream had come true—he was doing the work for the sake of which he had parted from us. I understood. He had escaped in order to join the partisans. He wrote that he was working hard and successfully and that at least twenty Germans could confirm this. He wrote further that the main departments of his factory were farther east and that there work was going on full swing night and day. There was reason to believe that these departments would soon move to a spot familiar to me as well. He concluded with the words: "Everybody should help our cause—and you over there should take advantage of every opportunity and learn to use tools."

My nervous exhilaration was so great that I understood everything.

Vladimir was alive, he had not been killed that night when the train stopped and there was a shot in the dark. He was free, he had killed twenty Germans. In the winter, at the time of his writing the Red Army was already approaching Vinnitsa. My country had not been trampled by the German jackboot, she was squaring her shoulders and fighting back. Perhaps I was fated to see better days. I must live!

I said good-bye to Vera, hid the letter and returned to work.

In midsummer an agent of the labour-exchange came to the camp and picked out those of us who were still able to work. I did my best to get into the class A group. Speaking at the top of my weak voice, I told the German that I had always lived in the country, could reap and tend the animals. He believed me. A group was being chosen for agricultural work and soon a crowded freight car had brought me back to the Czechoslovak border.

By this time my derangement was almost gone. All my thoughts were about Russia, about home and my people. And these thoughts saved me. Just as a magnet attracts iron shavings, memories of my homeland constantly attracted my thoughts. Alone or together with the other girls I often recalled towns and fields, winter and summer, night and day at home; how cool was the grass against one's cheek, how pleasant to lie under the shady bushes or in the lush meadow; how our sleds would fly downhill, raising a whirlwind of snow...

These thoughts accompanied me everywhere. And, although around were scenes of hunger, murder and death, I could distinguish more clearly the underground struggle waged by our people against those

who kept us in slavery. I learned of hundreds of successful and unsuccessful flights undertaken from Germany, I learned that the hand of a prisoner often stopped a factory machine or blew up a store-house. I was told of one incident which I will always remember although I don't know exactly where it happened.

During a British air-raid on one German town, our boys, who worked on defence construction, captured an AA battery. They quickly did away with the German crew and opened AA gun fire on the town though they knew that this meant certain death for them. Of course they were caught and killed, but they had valiantly avenged themselves and others.

I was now the slave of a rich German woman, one Anna Beigel, in the town of Zorau.

Frau Beigel lived in the centre of the town. She was very rich and besides me, another girl from the Ukraine called Marussya, worked for her. Our life followed a strict routine. We went to bed at 12.30 and at 4 o'clock our mistress awakened us. When we failed to jump up like automatons she would heap abuse on us and beat us. I washed floors, swept the yard, worked in the fields, tended four cows, or to be more exact led them to the meadows.

A factory nearby had closed down and the workers were dispatched to repair roads. There were many Czechs among them. One of them, a grey-whiskered old man, came up one day and started to talk to me. He asked me how many years I had studied in school. We drifted into conversation.

The Czech said:

"Russia will be victorious. The Russian forces will come here."

He told me about the Red Army's victories and many other things about what was happening in Russia.

From that day on every time the road-workers had a break, I sat down on a pile of stones and the Czech would come over and tell me the latest news. Once I asked him where he got his information and, after hesitating, he replied that he listened in to the Moscow radio, but warned me that it was punishable by death and I promised never, never to betray him.

I didn't know then how dear I would have to pay for keeping this secret.

Everything I learned from the Czech I told Marussya when we retired to our small room at night, and to the other girls in the field.

One day my mistress sent for me when I was tending the cows. A policeman was waiting for me in the yard.

I was taken to the Gestapo. In a square-shaped room, behind a table, sat the examiner. He ordered me to get up on a bench near the wall. When I did so, a policeman came up, twisted my arms behind my back and tied them to a ring in the wall. Then the examiner walked up and reading a newspaper, not even looking at me, kicked the bench away from under me.

I screamed. My bound hands jerked upwards and it was insufferably painful. I couldn't stand up and the tips of my toes barely reached the floor. I bent my body forward and remained in that position.

Some time had passed; the Gestapo man asked me through whom I received my news about Russia. I knew the name and address of the old Czech. I was so grateful to him for his faith in my country that no torture on earth could have forced me to betray him. In half an hour—or perhaps it was an hour—blood rushed from my throat and nose and I fainted. I was lowered to the floor, given a chance to come to and lifted onto the rack once more.

But the Gestapo got nothing out of me, and together with another ten prisoners I was taken to the railway-line. We walked most of the night and at dawn reached a little station where, on a vacant lot, a huge crowd of prisoners stood in the rain wet to the skin. We were delivered up to the guards and were soon lost in the crowd like drops in the ocean. There was a train on the tracks but our departure was postponed for some reason.

I remember somebody near began to curse the Germans for this senseless waiting. A railway-man who was passing by stopped and said in Polish:

"The Russian pan ought to be pleased. The train has been cancelled, you won't be sent off today."

There were many Poles in that district and we had all learned to talk some Polish.

We asked where they had intended to take us. Perhaps to Oświęcim.

"Worse. To Belżec," answered the railway-man.

"What's that?"

The railway-man shook his head. But we told him that we were Russians and wanted to know the truth. And so he told us that Belżec was a death factory. As soon as the train comes to the station the Polish staff goes off duty and Germans in black uniforms take over and drive the train into the camp. In half an hour the train returns completely empty. According to rumours, the prisoners are killed by electric current. They are forced to undress and driven into a long barrack-like room, built like a shower bath. High tension wires are laid along the floor. The bodies are flung into pits five—six metres in depth, dug by excavators.

We were not sent off that day and were housed on the second floor of a two-storeyed prison situated in a small wood near the station.

In the night through the open cells of the packed prison building came word that some of our people were about to escape.

I was excited too, and felt stronger than I had for a long time. I pushed my way to the window. The prison was encircled

by a fence that almost reached the second floor. The top ridge of the fence, covered with barbed wire, was clearly visible by the light of the moon at a distance of four or five metres. Below in brightly-coloured booths stood the sentries with their rifles at the ready. Escape seemed impossible, but all the same I decided to rush my way into the corridor. There I saw some loose boards and a brilliant idea struck me. Yes, it was possible to escape from this prison.

5

Our boys tore out two boards from the corridor floor and dragged them into the cell. One end of the boards rested on the window sill. Then somebody said that the strictest order was to be maintained; anyone frightened by the sentries and interfering with his comrades would be thrown off. I don't remember exactly who it was that said this, but the order swept through the room like a wind and everyone agreed. Then the leaders threw open both windows and flung the boards, like a ladder, from the sill to the fence across the deep court yard where the German sentries paced back and forth. The top of the fence was only a little lower than our windows, so the slant was not very steep.

We, prisoners in Germany, people doomed to a speedy death, ran one after another along the swaying boards to freedom. Could the firing of the sentries stop us? The wounded who fell from the boards attacked the sentries. Shouts of "hurrah" and rifle shots resounded through the night and we knew that some of our men had already seized arms. I was lifted up onto the window sill by the moving tide and ran across the three metres above the precipice, three metres separating freedom from sure death. The gun-fire lit up my face. The girl ahead of me slipped and nearly fell, I held her up and we jumped off the fence still holding hands. In the next twenty-four hours a brief but warm friendship sprang up between us.

And so, we were free, but not quite for after all we were still in Germany.

The girl whom I had helped was a Polish girl from near Troppau. Her name was Maryssya. She took me to her house and gave me her best dresses and also procured for me a nazi "labour front" badge. Knowing that the police would come after her she couldn't remain at home, but she couldn't come with me either, for she did not want to leave her mother. I understood and said:

"Well, if you can't escape to the Russians, the Russians will come and save you here."

We embraced like sisters and parted.

I knew that the Czechs and Slovaks would always help a Russian, so I decided to go through their country. I got to Grätz railway station, and after a few hours in the train found myself in a small clean town with pretty houses and empty shop-windows. The people in the streets spoke German for the Czech language was forbidden. However, nobody answered my questions. The citizens shrugged their shoulders and walked away from me.

Night fell. The streets were deserted. A belated woman carrying a child walked quickly along the road, her thick wooden shoes knocking sharply against the asphalt. I caught up to her. The woman was whispering something in Czech to her daughter. I said to her timidly in her own language:

"What heartless people you are here,—nobody wants to help a stranger!"

The woman measured me with a scornful glance and red with indignation answered sharply:

"The young lady would do well to look at herself in the mirror."

I recalled immediately that I was wearing the "labour front" badge and, throwing caution aside, covered it with my hand and said:

"You are a poor judge of people. I am a Russian."

Confusion appeared on the woman's face. She stood there, not knowing what to answer. At last she proposed that I follow her quietly to her home.

And so I found myself with the family of a Czech, a locomotive engineer. Neighbours came in to have a look at me. We talked about Russia and the conversation lasted until long after midnight. I answered innumerable questions about our life and myself learned the latest news of the war. It was good news. Our forces had already taken Vinnitsa. I was asked whether the Russians would reach Grätz, whether they would last out that long. I answered that they would. Once again I felt that I was a daughter of my people. My hosts collected thirty marks for me. They laughed for a long time when I said that I had intended to go to Russia through their city.

"But you have come to a dead-end, trains don't go any further from here," they told me.

The next day I went through Troppau again. This time I had detailed instructions for the rest of my journey. My route lay through Ratibor and Kattowitz. I travelled in a car for Germans. I pretended to be ill, I even bound up my head as though my teeth ached. But I was on my guard all the time, trying to make up my mind whether it was better to sit or to stand, to look out of this window or the next.

I had a ticket to Cracow but I got off at the little stop to avoid document inspection. Ahead was the border between Germany and the so-called Polish government-general. A cold March rain was falling and I was chilled to the bone. I looked with envy at the stockers throwing shovel after shovel full of coal into the furnace.

Finally I selected a suitable person and asked the way to the village of Goryunitsy.

I had to spend the night in a Polish

village for I had been told that the best time to cross the border was before dawn.

In the morning there was fog. I walked from landmark to landmark barely discerning them in the mist and frequently wandering off my path. I groped through a pine forest and a ravine. When I scrambled out of the ravine dawn was breaking. Two yards away I saw a motionless silhouette. I was ready to run back but came to my senses in time and saw that it was not a man. It was a frontier post.

I tore the German badge from my dress and threw it into the dirt with pleasure. Germany was now left behind.

For a long time I walked towards the east, hiding from the Germans. The hope of seeing my country once more filled me with strength.

Illness forced me to stop at the very edge of Soviet territory, in a little hut with a single square window, under a roof overgrown with lichen.

I had caught cold while crossing the German border at Cracow. Pneumonia set in but for a long time I continued to walk from village to village finding shelter among the Polish peasants whenever my strength left me and then continuing on my way.

But at last illness brought me down. I lay for over a week unconscious and when consciousness returned the far-off thunder of artillery was audible and at night flashes of lightning lit up the horizon. I had to wait until the fighting passed me, and I remained in this hospitable cottage where I was called daughter and where nobody could have recognized that I was a fugitive.

I remember how on a clear day in July a German plane caught fire in the air and crashed down not far from our hut. For some reason it seemed to me that our troops were very near and throwing all caution to the winds I walked eastwards. I ascended a small hill, crossed the hollow and ascended another hill but the sound of battle did not come any nearer. I returned home. In the morning, awakened by explosions nearby, I looked out of the window. In front of our house, bending down and in single file, Germans were running by. "So it won't be so soon, then," I thought, disappointed.

A few minutes later came the hum of a motor outside the window, but this time I didn't look out. And suddenly the door opened and over the threshold walked one of our lads covered with dust from head to foot, tired and hoarse, but still our Russian lad, and he said as simply as though he had dropped in to visit his neighbours:

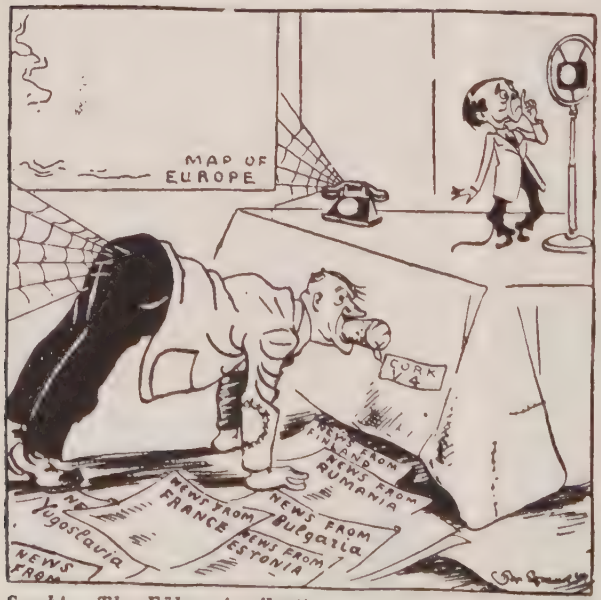
"Anybody at home?"

Afraid for him, I whispered to him to hide, and told him that there were Germans here. But he only smiled and answered that I was frightening him in vain, that there were no Germans around at all.

Our tanks were already moving along the road.

That whole day and the whole of the next day and the whole day after that I watched our forces march by and could not see enough of them. For it is not every person and not every generation that is destined to see such a sight.

SERGUEI KRUSHINSKY



Ssssh!.. The Führer is silent!
A new German "secret weapon" in action.

"For many months the Führer has been silent. This crushes the spirit of our enemies."
("Hamburger Fremdenblatt")

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

BOOKS AND WRITERS

A NOVEL ON THE DEFENCE OF PORT-ARTHUR

On the subject of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 to 1905 quite a goodly array of books have already been written, the number of novels alone amounting to at least a dozen. In the majority of these it is the heroic defence of Port-Arthur which occupies the central place. As a rule, however, these works do not go beyond a mere recounting, and in rare cases, an assessing of isolated facts; in not one do we find any insight into the historical significance of the Port-Arthur events. Alexander Stepanov's book is the first attempt, which we may truly consider a successful one, at giving an all-round picture of that heroic struggle. Its value is all the greater because the author was himself an eye-witness of the siege of Port-Arthur, though too young at the time to take an active part in its defence.

In February 1904, without any previous declaration of war, Japan unexpectedly made an assault on the Russian fortress Port-Arthur, and from the very outset it became apparent that the tsarist government was not only completely unprepared for war, but also utterly incapable of pursuing it. In control of the region and the military command of the land and naval forces were men ignorant to the verge of criminality; straight-laced upholders of a narrow routine, absolutely incapable of commanding armies. Several of them were direct aiders and abettors of the Japaneses.

Certain foreign commentators of that time hastened to evaluate the defeat of the tsarist autocracy as a sign of the weakness of the Russian people. With ill-concealed glee the German "Frankfurter Zeitung", in reporting the fall of Port-Arthur, wrote that it marked the downfall of the moral force of a mighty empire, the dimmed prestige of a young race that had not yet had time to attain to its full development.

Such a pronouncement, greatly as it undoubtedly rejoiced the heart of the German commentator, had nothing in common with the actual state of affairs. The results of the Japanese war were evidence of nothing else than the abject impotence of the then existing rulers of Russia. Lenin, in sizing up the situaton at the time, wrote that it was not the Russian people but the autocracy that had suffered ignominious defeat. "The people of Russia," he said, "had gained by the defeat of the autocracy. The capitulation of Port-Arthur is the prologue to the capitulation of tsarism. The war is not ended by a long way, but each further step of its progress is swelling the tremendous ferment and indignation of the Russian people and approaching the hour of a new great war, the war of the people against the autocracy..."

History has confirmed the correctness of Lenin's deductions. The days of the 1905 revolution saw the Russian people rising up in arms to fight against tsarism.

The Russo-Japanese war itself, lost as it was by the tsarist government, abounded in examples of valour and skill on the part of the Russian soldiers and the progressive sections of its officer class. These examples bore evidence of the existence of powerful forces within the people, striving for deliverance and activity. An instance of this was the defence of Port-Arthur.

"The siege of the fortress lasted for three hundred and thirty-two days. During that time the Japanese lost one hundred and twelve thousand men: the Russians, only twenty-six thousand. The defence fortress, poorly armed as it was, inadequately equipped and headed by a traitor as commandant nevertheless showed the mettle of the Russian soldier and officer," such are the concluding words of Stepanov's historical narration.

The book cannot be called a novel in the usual acceptation of the word. The author himself refers to it as a historical narrative.

It is a genre which made its appearance in Soviet fiction not so long ago—a genre initiated by Serguei Sergueyev-Tsensky in his "The Ordeal of Sevastopol", a book dedicated to the defence of Sevastopol in the years 1854 to 1855.

The success and popularity enjoyed by this new form may be explained by the lively interest of the reading public in the history of their own country, an interest still further enhanced in the war years. It is a distinguishing feature of the new genre that historical events are not presented as a background to the story, but constitute its fundamental content. They are given in consecutive and detailed narrative based on historic documentation, the heroes being, for the most part, real personages. The fictitious elements are indissolubly linked up with the actual development of events. In evoking the reader's interest in the private destinies of his heroes—rank-and-file participants in the makings of history—the author aims at a realistic revelation of the inner meaning of events.

It is to this type of narrative that Stepanov's book belongs. The amount of historical material commanded by the author is indeed tremendous. Throughout the imposing bulk of the volume the story proceeds with an easy swing; the mass of personages does not weary the reader, since they are all—even the minor characters—living men and women, the portrayal of whose individual traits and des-

tinies prevents one's interest from flagging.

The story of ensign Zvonaryov and Varya, the daughter of general Byely, of Lieutenant Boreiko and Olga, a young school-teacher, are an integral part of the epic fight for Port-Arthur.

Accompanying Stepanov's heroes to the front-lines, to their trenches and batteries, the reader makes the acquaintance of officers and men: of the dashing scout Blokhin; of the Jew, Zayats, an artillery man; of modest young Yartsev with his engrossing love of poetry, and many others. We sense the atmosphere of the fight for the Russian fortress, the varying moods of Port-Arthur's defenders, the patriotic spirit of the masses.

Concurrently, we get a harrowing picture of the mental paucity of the creatures and nominees of tsarism who were in charge of the defence—the obtruseness, the cynicism and spirit of intrigue that reigned supreme in these circles and coteries.

In the days when the Russian soldiers and sailors of Port-Arthur were heroically withstanding the Japanese onslaught, the Grand Duke Cyril, in the company of his august brother, Boris, indulged in riotous orgies, demoralizing the officers by his dissolute ways. To receive a decoration as speedily as possible and be off and away from Port-Arthur was the thought uppermost in the mind of Grand Duke Cyril in the days of the grim battles beneath the walls of the fortress. "Don't care a damn for the whole show," he would declare quite openly. "I'll get my cross and be off to Petersburg, and the rest of you can stay here and do as you like!"

Stessel, the traitor-commandant of the fortress, dull-witted and narrow-minded to a degree, is portrayed with particular vividness—he and the traitors who form his immediate circle, the Germans Fock and Reiss. It is on Stessel that depends, if not the general progress of the defence, at least the fate of separate operations, and invariably we see him doing the wrong thing, against the rulings of common sense, thwarting the cause of Russia.

An outsider, alien in spirit to the people, he has by no mere chance come to be surrounded by men of his own ilk, German and cosmopolitan adventurers.

Here is a typical utterance, showing the real nature of one of them, Fock:

"Wish this confounded war would end so I might send in my resignation and go somewhere far away!"

"And where would you like to go, it's not a secret of course?"

"Oh, abroad, to Southern Germany. We Focks are from Thuringia. What I'd like is to buy a little place in the country and live there in peace to the end of my days, in my own fatherland."

And this is a conversation that takes place in the forward positions, a few steps away from Russian soldiers, subordinates to Fock, men ready for deeds of valour and self-sacrifice! Fock is Stessel's right hand; they are birds of a feather, and in the close circle of their environment they act in concert, despising the people and the cause entrusted them. Their actions and their flagrantly pernicious orders call forth the indignation of honest officers, such as Byely and Kondratenko. There are some excellent chapters devoted to Admiral Makarov, a talented sailor and scholar, a man sprung from the people's midst. Makarov's arrival at Port-Arthur was an occasion of genuine rejoicing in the hearts of its defenders. He sized up the situation admirably; he had come to Port-Arthur with a brilliant plan for a naval war and promptly undertook a series of energetic measures for active defence. The author has ably revealed the tragedy of a gifted admiral compelled to adapt himself to the vacuous directives of the Grand Duke Cyril, Vice-Regent Alexeyev and other high personages, and to see with a sinking heart his plans frustrated as the war dragged on to its appalling end.

"Throw up the whole thing and resign," was the thought that would at times obtrude itself in the admiral's mind.

But he knew that behind the score of fools and blackguards in the shapes of dukes grand and small, of generals and admirals, were the multi-millioned people of Russia, flesh of his flesh, and never for a moment did he lose the feeling of intimacy with them.

Another unforgettable figure is General Kondratenko. Little attention has yet been paid in literature to this remarkable soldier. The more then is it to be appreciated that Stepanov has collected considerable material bearing on his personality and allotted him a role of generous proportions in his book. With greater clarity than many another, Kondratenko understood the importance of a coordination of all the armed forces. The traditional Russian spirit of mutual assistance and fighting comradeship that arose spontaneously in the course of the war he did his best to support and develop. In the place of senseless drill and goose-stepping he aimed at teaching his men to realize their duty as soldiers, he tried to explain the situation to them, striving to arouse in them a spirit of initiative.

The early, senseless death of Makarov interrupted the reorganization of the fleet upon which he had embarked. Had he remained alive the Port-Arthur epic would have taken its place side by side with the epic of Sevastopol. Memories of those eventful days were still fresh in men's minds. Some of the participants of Sevastopol might even have been found at Port-Arthur. Admiral Nakhimov, the hero of Sevastopol had become reincarnated, as it were, in Makarov; a man of the same simplicity and as solicitous for the needs of others as Nakhimov himself, The people were the same as on the Malakhov

mound at Sevastopol and on the field of Borodino.

The author has an indisputable aptitude for portraying battle scenes, both on sea and land. In laconic but expressive language he tells of the sinking of the destroyer "Steregushchi" (The Watcher) which, in unequal combat with the Japanese, lost her whole crew in wounded and killed.

"Armed with rifles, bayonets fixed, the Japanese sailors, cautiously looking around, ascended the deck containing only the wounded and bodies of the dead. Only after a careful search of the deck, having made sure of his safety, did the Japanese officer risk pulling down her flag and replacing it by his own. Loud cries of "Banzai!" sounded from all the Japanese ships. But at that moment Sitkin, covered with blood, raised himself from the ground and tearing down the Japanese flag fell overboard holding it in his hand. With angry outcries a Japanese fired several shots at the wounded sailor struggling against the sea waves. The Japanese, emboldened by success, scattered all over the boat, a nearby Japanese cruiser was on the point of taking the "Steregushchi" in tow, when suddenly the destroyer began to sink. Scared at the unexpectedness of the disaster, the Japanese rushed into the hold hoping to find and plug the leak in the hull. The hold proved to be securely locked. From behind the partition came the unmistakable sounds of voices talking in Russian. All efforts of the Japanese to smash the partition proved unavailing.

" 'Listen, you slant-eyed devils, you understand plain Russian, don't you? Let there be no mistake about this... The "Steregushchi" isn't going to sail under the Japanese flag. We're going down to the bottom of the sea together with her, but we aren't going to disgrace the Russian fleet.'

"The rapid submerging of the boat made the Japanese hasten to save their lives and get away taking care to cut the towline."

In a series of life-like images that linger in the memory Stepanov has succeeded in embodying the indomitable staunchness and wisdom of the people. Therein lies the main merit of the book.

Historical personages are intermixed with the author's own creations, but in each of them typical traits are apparent. Many deeds are recounted—deeds not performed by order of the command but in the darkness of night sorties and skirmishes.

In the beleaguered fortress, artillerymen surrounded on all sides by enemy infantry boldly dashed into attack with the first weapon that came to hand, forcing the Japanese to retreat.

Two pages—no more—are devoted to the death of Makarov. With the same reserve are recounted the battle of Kin-jho and many other episodes of which everyone who wants to grasp the significance of the Port-Arthur events should take cognizance. Economy of expression has not prevented the author from illuminating the fundamental background of the picture nor from building up clear-cut living images and vivid details in each episode—a truly great achievement.

The duel between the two armies—on the one side the Japanese, well-clothed and well-fed, with secure rears and led by experienced generals, efficiently armed and with established supremacy on the seas; on the other, the Russian army, cut off from its bases, having lost faith in the tsarist government, abandoned to its fate—in this duel the spirit of the Russian army stands forth in all its glory.

The resistance offered to the Japanese onslaught was so serious as to wear down utterly the forces of the enemy and place him in a precarious position.

In his "Diplomatic Commentaries", Isii, the Japanese diplomatist, has described the condition in which Japan emerged from the war. He speaks of that country's exhaustion; of the economic and moral crash averted only by the folly of tsarist diplomacy.

Stepanov's book gives an epic picture of one of the great events in Russian military history. The aspect of the theme, the carefully elaborated conception have been conducive to an appropriate handling of the principal characters and images.

The reader will find in this book an edifying example of soldierly valour displayed under the most unfavourable circumstances and will pay his tribute of esteem and admiration to the heroic defenders of Port-Arthur.

ALEXANDER MAKAROV

ALEXANDER HERZEN

There were few people in the XIX century who occupied such an important place both in public life and in the literary world as Alexander Herzen. He was one of the first Russian thinkers to gain fame in the West and his works were read with equal interest both in Russia and abroad.

"I tell you quite frankly that I consider you one of the best writers in our language," the French historian Michelet wrote to Herzen. Victor Hugo considered Herzen to be a writer whose works "inculcated hatred for despotism in the reader and in this way helped crush the monster". "There is no greater heart or more noble brain than those of Alexander Herzen," wrote Hugo. Amongst Herzen's friends and amongst those who had a high opinion of him were Garibaldi, Mazzini,

Louis Blanc, Carlyle, Louis Kossuth and many other outstanding statesmen and thinkers of the West.

Herzen, the natural son of an aristocrat Yakovlev, was born in Moscow in 1812, a few months before Napoleon's army entered the ancient Russian capital. His boyhood was spent in an atmosphere filled with reminiscences of the National War of 1812. "Tales of the fire of Moscow, of the battle of Borodino, of Berezina, of the taking of Paris were my cradle-songs, my nursery stories, my 'Iliad' and my 'Odyssey'," Herzen wrote later in his "My Past and Thoughts". The young Herzen came to the conclusion that the real conqueror of the hitherto undefeated Emperor of France was none other than the Russian people who took up arms to defend their country.

Herzen could not reconcile himself to the idea that a people whose great spiritual strength had become so apparent in the war of 1812 should still be compelled to bear the burden of the tsarist autocracy. The whole historical situation, therefore, strengthened in Herzen the conviction that the abolition of serfdom and the overthrow of the autocracy that supported it were the chief historical tasks with which Russia was faced. The freedom-loving verses of Pushkin, Ryleyev and other poets, large numbers of which were circulated in Russian society in manuscript form, gave support to young Herzen's revolutionary temperament.

The insurrection of December 14th, 1825, was of great significance in his life and determined the whole of his future activity. To use Herzen's own words, the thunder of the guns on the Senate Square in St. Petersburg[1] "dissipated the childish dream of my soul". Throughout the whole of his life Herzen retained a memory of the Decembrists as heroic fighters whose example was one to be followed. The defeat of the insurrectionists and the hanging of the five Decembrists who were sentenced to death caused the thirteen-year-old lad great pain. It became his life's dream to follow in the footsteps of those who had died for freedom.

Herzen's revolutionary ideas became the more profound as he made the acquaintance of Nikolai Ogaryov, a man of his own age, a talented poet and journalist who became his lifelong friend and fellow-fighter. The young friends swore to devote their lives to the struggle for the liberation of the Russian people; throughout their lives they remained implacable enemies of despotism and the enslavement of some people by others.

Herzen and Ogaryov were convinced that the improvement of the condition of the working people, the chief task of mankind of that time, could not be accomplished without a complete overhaul of the whole social and political order. The way to bring about this change of affairs was not always clear to Herzen any more than it was clear to the Utopian socialists of Western Europe. This did not prevent Herzen from possessing sincere and ardent sympathies for the working people, a desire to work for the improvement of their position and faith in the fact that the future belonged to those who toil.

During their undergraduate days at Moscow University Herzen and Ogaryov devoted themselves to revolutionary activities and gathered a group of similarly minded students around them. Shortly after graduating from the university the friends paid for their activity with many years of exile.

Far from breaking Herzen this punishment served to strengthen him as a revolutionary. When he came into contact with life in a dull province he saw still more clearly what the tsarist autocracy had to offer the Russian people; he himself experienced the brutality of the tsarist officials. In his "Notes of a Young Man" and in his memories "My Past and Thoughts" he gave a brilliant description of the extortion and embezzlement practised by the Tsar's satraps. The trials and tribulations which he experienced while living in the provinces drove Herzen to the brink of desperation. "Wrath was eating into my heart," he said, "it was a feeling that I was without rights, was helpless and in the position of a captive animal that is tormented by a small street boy who realizes that the tiger's strength is insufficient to break through the bars of the cage." Any idea of conciliation or the rejection of struggle was quite foreign to Herzen. "I do not understand the meaning of resignation when I am slapped in the face," he wrote, "I love my anger..."

Herzen's patriotism was free of any kind of racial intolerance and national blustering. "Exclusive patriotism," he said, "must be considered a crime and not a virtue." "Love of your own does not mean hatred of others." "We are above the niceties of zoological classifications," wrote Herzen, "and are completely indifferent to the question of racial purity which does not prevent us from being wholly Slavs." He came out in defence of the rights of those "pariah races which the humane democracy of Europe could only refer to in insultingly contemptuous tones". Herzen was of the opinion that there is no "people which has earned the right to call itself the host of the elect". He therefore condemned national oppression and all attempts to establish the supremacy of one nation over others.

Throughout his life Herzen called on his fellow countrymen to get to know other peoples and to acquire positive elements of their culture and not to erect a Chinese wall around themselves. "Our patriotism includes a conception of mankind as a whole, and not only includes it," wrote Herzen, "but gives it first place." Herzen

[1] The encounter between the Decembrists and the Tsar's troops took place on the Senate Square in St. Petersburg.

had a very high opinion of the ability of the Russians to acquire the culture of others and to promote the progress of all mankind.

In his writings he frequently pointed out the existence of "two Russias" with nothing in common between them. "In Russia," he wrote, "the people are higher than the Tsar; higher than the official personages, the oppressors, are the unfortunate and the suffering; apart from the Russia of the Winter Palace there is the Russia of the serfs, the Russia of the mines." Herzen admitted that in its time tsarism had played a positive role in the history of Russia but this, in his opinion, did not justify the further existence of the autocratic tsarist regime. "One cannot love such things as Moscow tsarism or Petersburg imperialism," wrote Herzen. "They can be explained, in them is to be found the elements of a different future but we must get rid of them in the same way as we get rid of diapers as we grow older." In other words Russia had outgrown the political forms which she still retained. It was the duty of people who understood the tasks which confronted the country to do everything possible to overthrow the autocracy and establish a way of life which would give the people the opportunity to decide their own fate independently and put an end to the dependence of the masses of working people on the privileged classes.

In reply to obscurantists who referred to his expressions of hatred for tsarism as "slander" on the Russia of his day, Herzen wrote: "We have serfdom before our eyes and yet we are accused of slander; is it possible to see this picture of the serf, plundered by the aristocracy and the government, almost sold by weight like meat, disgraced by flogging and outlawed, and not be followed by it day and night, as if it were an indictment gnawing at the conscience."

When Herzen was in Naples in 1848, under the cloudless Mediterranean sky, he read Dmitri Grigorovich's novel "Anton the Miserable", a book which was widely discussed at the time; it describes the misfortunes that overtook a peasant who had grown indignant at the abuses of the agent. Grigorovich's novel made a tremendous impression on Herzen. "I experienced qualms of conscience," wrote Herzen about "Anton the Miserable." "I was ashamed of being where I was. The serf, prematurely worn out, poor, kind, gentle and innocent but nevertheless wandering about Siberia with his legs chained, followed on my heels amongst the wonderful people with whom I lived."

Herzen's loyalty to the people, his great pity for the giant held in shackles by feudalism, like his faith in the historic mission of the people is characteristic of the patriotism of progressive Russian people.

Russia's backwardness and her lack of culture, the brutality, extortion and embezzlement that were rife made Herzen so indignant that he could not speak calmly of the regime existing in the Tsar's empire. "This Russia calls forth hatred and disgust. When you see Russia you burn with that same degrading, poisonous shame that a loving son feels when he sees his drunken mother carousing in a brothel."

Herzen regarded the people as opposed to the feudals and bureaucrats; by the people he meant, firstly, the peasantry and then all other sections of the Russian population who were oppressed by the ruling class.

He prophesied an important role for the Russian people in the future history of mankind based mainly on the fact that the age-old burden which lay on the Russian people had not been able to distort their high physical, moral and mental qualities. Herzen pointed out that a penetrating mind, manly beauty and determination in the achievement of an aim were distinguishing features of the Russian peasant. In the history of the Russian people their "determined efforts to build up an independent and strong state" are clearly seen.

"A handful of Cossacks and a few hundred homeless peasants," Herzen wrote of the Russians in Siberia, "crossed oceans of ice and snow and everywhere from Perm to the Pacific Ocean, wherever groups of them settled in the frozen steppe that nature herself had forgotten life sprang up anew, the fields were covered with corn and herds were pastured." It was in this grand epoch that that "inner strength which had so astoundingly supported the Russian people under the yoke of the Mongol hordes and the German bureaucrats" appeared; it blazed up at its best in moments of serious danger, at the time of the XVII century Polish intervention and during the National War of 1812. Napoleon "raised the whole people against himself and they took up arms resolutely, pursued him across Europe and captured Paris".

At the time of the Mongol invasion and in Napoleonic times the Russians defended other countries as well as themselves from enslavement. Such a people no doubt have a great future before them. This was Herzen's firm conviction which became particularly strong after he got to know the people not only from books but from personal contact while in Western Europe and had experienced both the great hope and profound disappointment which the revolution of 1848 and its defeat brought to him. The failure of this revolution, the bloody June days in Paris, complacency of the triumphant "ready money", the appearance of the unscrupulous adventurer Napoleon III and his astounding successes were all observed by Herzen with pain and with wrath. The most profound of his writings are those devoted to an analysis of these events.

These experiences strengthened Herzen's convictions of the historical role of the Russian people. "Faith in Russia saved me when I was on the brink of moral ruin,"

wrote Herzen analysing his gloomy moods after the European events of 1848-1849.

Herzen did not regard the struggle which the Russian people had to conduct against difficult natural conditions and against foreign invaders as being the only guarantee of a great future; he also believed this to be true because the Russian people had managed to retain the village commune as a form of society and the commune, in Herzen's eyes, corresponded to the social structure which the West-European Utopian socialists who were his contemporaries dreamed of. Herzen, of course, was wrong in over-estimating the significance of the village commune. It is a mistake, however, which demonstrates his love for the people and has its origin in his conviction of the necessity of setting up a social system which would exclude all possibility of the exploiting of the labouring majority by the privileged minority.

Far from regarding his exile as a reason for ceasing the struggle he had begun against tsarist despotism, he made it the chief object of his life. "I remain here," he wrote in 1849, "not only because I do not want to don the shackles when I cross the frontier but because I want to work. I can live without doing anything in any place; here I have nothing but **our** cause." Herzen resolved to develop his activities in two directions both of which he considered equally important from the standpoint of the interests of the Russian people. On the one hand he intended to occupy himself with revolutionary propaganda for Russia and on the other hand to introduce the Russian people to West-European public opinion, for in the West the most fantastic conceptions of the Russians were in circulation.

For the first of these two tasks Herzen, it will be remembered, organized the "Free Russian Printshop" in London. "We wanted to become Russia's protest," he wrote later, looking back on his past activity, "we wanted to become her cry of liberation and her cry of pain, we wanted to expose the scoundrels who were holding up her successes and ruining the people; we put them in the pillory, we made them ridiculous for we wanted to represent not only the vengeance of the Russian but also his irony."

Herzen's publications played an important part in the history of Russian society.

The journal "Kolokol" (The Bell) which Herzen published for ten years (1857—1867) had a significance all of its own. The journal tried to become the organ of all those elements in Russian society that were opposed to the government of the Tsar and adopted a programme of tireless struggle against the oppression of the bureaucrats and landlords. As formulated by Herzen this programme of reforms included the liberation of the peasantry from serfdom, the abolition of the censor and the abolition of corporal punishment. The informative nature of "Kolokol" did as much to make it popular in Russia as the brilliant literary talent of its publisher and the extremely clear-cut, militant character of its contents.

Herzen and his friends were acquainted with all the twists and turns of the politics of the tsarist government and all the secrets of the ministries in St. Petersburg. This was to be explained by the fact that at that time there were people in all sections of Russian society who had sympathies with "Kolokol" and helped the exiled Herzen continue his struggle for the liberation of the Russian people. Amongst "Kolokol's" correspondents we find people from all walks of life—professors and students, literati and people who had never before taken up a pen, landowners and army officers and government officials from petty clerks to people holding high office in the administration. Thanks to the unstinted collaboration of patriots and friends of the people there were no secrets in Russia of which "Kolokol" was not informed.

This explained the journal's unparalleled influence. "Kolokol" became a powerful political force in Russia, a force which made all enemies of liberty in Russia and all those whose consciences were not clear tremble in their shoes. People who, on account of their high office, had no conception of any kind of control over their actions by the press or public opinion, began to fear the journal.

"Kolokol" was widely distributed in Russia, reaching the farthest corners of the country, and everywhere it made people think, gave them qualms of conscience, was a protest against evil ways of life: it served to increase the number of those who were discontented with the feudal, bureaucratic regime and had a tremendous revolutionizing influence on its readers. Herzen had every right to be proud of his journal as an undertaking of great historical importance.

The second task which Herzen undertook when he resolved to stay abroad was to influence public opinion in Western Europe where people had almost no idea whatever of Russia and the Russians. "It is time to introduce Russia to Europe," he wrote. "Europe does not know us... We will tell her about that mighty and unknown people who have calmly formed a state of sixty millions and who have grown so strong and so astonishingly well."

This also Herzen may consider as having done. Even though he did not succeed in dispersing all the prejudice against Russia which had accumulated in the West he certainly made a big hole in it. He did not fail to reply to every slanderous attack on the Russian people which appeared in the West-European press.

This was a wonderful service which Herzen performed for his country and he had every right to consider his whole work as a continual "defence of Russia and the Russians against enemies without

and within". The great work for the benefit of his country which Herzen performed whilst he was abroad filled him with justifiable pride but nevertheless his isolation from Russia affected him painfully. A man who was fully acquainted with all the scientific and cultural achievements of the Europe of his day, a man whom progressive representatives of West-European society acclaimed and respected, a man who was keenly interested in all the political, social, scientific and art events of Europe,—Herzen lived entirely with the thoughts of his country and his people. Life in exile did not come easy to him. "Actually we do not live here but at home..." he wrote. "With every year and every new event we are farther and farther removed from the environment in which our activity has condemned us to live... We remain outside Russia only because the free word is impossible there and we believe in the necessity of saying that word. Life abroad is not for us... it is a great sacrifice which we are making for the sake of the cause."

Characteristic of the progressive Russian is Herzen's attitude to various West-European countries. The countries which he most hated were the two most powerful Germanic states of the time, Austria and Prussia. Why did Herzen hate them? Mainly because they were the bulwark of autocracy and reaction in Western Europe. In view of the harmful role which the notorious "Holy Alliance" had played in Russia's politics, Herzen protested very forcibly against the attempts of Russian tsarism to effect a rapprochement with Prussia and Austria in order to strengthen the position of reactionary elements in Russia. Herzen, in response to the baiting of Russia by German publicists, wrote: "In the publicists of modern Germany you can recognize the petty-bourgeois brothers of the Livonian Knights who, in the XVI century, would not allow doctors to enter Russia."

Herzen's enmity for the Germans was to be explained, too, by the harmful role which they, in his opinion, had played in the history of Russia and which they still played through the Russian bureaucrats. In the "Russian Germans" Herzen saw one of the chief pillars of reaction in Russia. He pointed out on many occasions that the German aristocracy of the Baltic were the most faithful and loyal servants of the tsarist throne.

The way in which Austria and Prussia oppressed the Slav peoples under their rule also influenced Herzen in his attitude towards the Germans. Herzen knew how widespread was the opinion amongst the Germans that the Slavs were a "lower race", an opinion that was used to cover up Germany's predatory plans. Herzen knew that the leaders of Prussia dreamed of establishing the rule of their country over other nations. Herzen was indignant at these impudent claims and never for a moment admitted the possibility of the Hohenzollern kingdom achieving world domination. "I don't believe that the fate of the world would remain long in the hands of the Germans and of the Hohenzollerns," he wrote. "It would be impossible, it is contrary to human conception and contrary to historical aesthetics."

In speaking of his own patriotism Herzen showed that "hatred for the Germans" was an inseparable element of it. Does this mean that Herzen was the enemy of the Germans as a nation, or that he denied the contribution which the Germans had made to world culture? It certainly does not; he greatly appreciated the work of Schiller, Goethe, Lessing and Heine but being quite foreign to all ideas of national intolerance as far as the Germans were concerned, he condemned them for that resigned submission which turned them into obedient tools in the hands of their rapacious rulers. He could not help but see that the rulers of Germany were making every possible use of the German people to further their own predatory policy for the enslavement and oppression of other nations.

Herzen saw that sooner or later Russia would have to fight German invaders in order to protect her own frontiers and he regarded England as Russia's natural ally. Herzen lived in England for a number of years, knew the country well and highly assessed its people. In the years of reaction Herzen noted with approval the social system prevailing in England as compared with that of other countries where terror ran wild after the failure of the revolution of 1848. He insisted on the necessity of the political rapprochement of England and Russia.

Herzen's attitude towards the Polish problem, seen clearly at the time of the 1863 insurrection, is very typical of him. Protesting decisively against tsarism's brutal suppression of the Polish insurrection Herzen considered that this protest gave him "the right to the gratitude of Russia". Russia acknowledged this right through the great founder of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Lenin.

In his efforts to strengthen Russian-Polish friendship Herzen acknowledged Poland's right to national independence and assisted the Poles in their struggle for liberty both in word and in deed. At the same time he fought against the desires of the Polish nationalists to include in the future Poland territories that were inhabited by Ukrainians and Byelorussians. In his opinion the Ukrainians had exactly the same right to independence as the Poles had.

Not only the Poles but all other peoples who were defending their independence won Herzen's sympathies. He was particularly sympathetic towards the Italians in their struggle against Austrian oppression. He had great respect for Garibaldi and his exploits. Mazzini, Safii, Orsini and other prominent Italian revolutionaries were fast friends of his. In his memories "My Past and Thoughts" Herzen des-

cribes them very feelingly, stressing their profound love for their country and their loyalty to the cause of liberation.

Herzen had equally strong sympathies with the French people. To him France was the country from which the ideas of liberty and equality had spread throughout the whole world. "The name of Paris is closely associated with all the finest hopes of mankind," wrote Herzen. The June days of 1848 when the streets of Paris ran red with the blood of the workers who had arisen in revolt to defend their own vital interests were, therefore, days of great sorrow for Herzen. He hated and despised the adventurist Louis Bonaparte who took power into his unclean hands and declared himself Emperor. Herzen loved the French people and saw in France a country of revolutionary traditions which were dear to him as a fighter for social justice and a man active in the field of culture.

As we have seen Herzen's road in life was determined by his own understanding of real patriotism. From the days of his youth Herzen resolved to devote his life to the struggle against absolutism and serfdom in order to liberate the Russian people. "Since my youth I have devoted my life to her (Russia.—B.K.), I worked for her as well as I could throughout my youth and for twenty years abroad I have continued that work," wrote Herzen.

Herzen did not live to see the liberation of Russia. But he had no cause to regret the path of life he had chosen. His life was not wasted. His revolutionary work had a tremendous historical significance. This is what Lenin had in mind when he wrote of Herzen: "... unbounded loyalty to the revolution and revolutionary appeals to the people are never wasted even when decades lie between the sowing and the reaping."

BORIS KOZMIN

ON THE "UNTRANSLATABILITY" OF THE RUSSIAN POETS

"The Times Literary Supplement" of January 15th, 1944, published an article, which asked: "Why are the great Russian poets, in point of fact, so little familiar to the educated English?" In the author's opinion, the reason for this lies in translation. And not the individual shortcomings of existing translations are what matters; among them we can find real masterpieces. The author of this article goes much further. He is of the opinion that the best works of Russian poetry are altogether impossible to translate. "The best Russian poetry," says he, "is the least translatable, or at any rate the least translatable into the undisciplined, emotionally associative and epithet-strewn structure of the English tongue." And Pushkin is mentioned as an example which has become in its way "classic".

The author goes on to speak of "the melancholy and repetitive dogma that Pushkin is untranslatable". As the author reminds us, this was particularly evident during the Pushkin centenary celebrations in 1937. I recollect that people wrote about this in England and in the United States, saying that the main obstacle to an understanding of Pushkin was his translations (see, for instance, "Centennial Essays for Pushkin", Harvard University Press, 1937).

What is wrong here? In the first place, I take the liberty of disagreeing with the thesis of the untranslatability of Pushkin. This thesis is at least opposed by the fact that as a whole, the English translations of Pushkin—or else I am very much mistaken—are being slowly but surely perfected. From this point of view,—research on the history of English translations of Russian poets made by an English or American critic, would be highly interesting both for the English speaking world and for us. In my opinion, such research would only confirm my optimistic belief. In the second place, it very frequently happens that "untranslatability" is only apparent. Professor George Rappal Noyes, whom we know from his interesting collection of "Masterpieces of the Russian Drama", wrote in the above mentioned booklet, published by the Harvard University Press: "Like Horace's odes, most of Pushkin's work becomes commonplace in translation. His love songs, rendered into English, are as dead as those of Burns would be in Russian.

But, as it so happened, the last few years have witnessed the appearance of Samuel Marshak's wonderful translations from Burns and today we may say with full certainty that Burns, while remaining a Scotsman, has at last spoken in Russian.

What is the reason for Marshak's success? I think that the explanation lies not only in his talent. In translating Burns, Marshak permitted himself a greater range of freedom than usual. He found the exact angle at which he could depart from the original. In this case, however paradoxial it may sound, departure means approach. I think that it is impossible to speak of exact translations in general. Each individual case has its own individual solution. In translating, for instance, Daniel Defoe, you have to become a protocolist; when translating Charles Dickens, one has to be an improvisator to a great degree. Reading the English translations of the Russian poets, it seemed to me that on the whole the translators all too

frequently try to keep to the original. I would very much like to know the opinion of our readers on this subject.

Several other problems can here be put forward. The struggle against word for word translations, against mere mechanical copying, should also be extended to the sphere of poetry. For instance, the English iambic tetrametre is not always equivalent to the Russian iambic tetrametre. I am firmly convinced that "Eugene Onegin" would have lost far less in translation if it had been translated in pentametre form—that is, in the metre of Byron's "Don Juan". Why not try?

I have been lecturing on the subject of literary translations for over fifteen years. I know from practice, how important it is for the translator to compare the style of the author he is translating with that of authors in the language into which he is translating. When translating, for instance, Dickens into Russian, it is helpful to read Gogol before starting work. I think, an exchange of opinions of translators on this question would be very useful. Let us say, for instance, that when translating Fielding, the Russian translator thinks of Pushkin's novels. Does the English or American translator of Pushkin's novels likewise think of Fielding, or does he think of some other author? Such an exchange of opinions would not only be helpful in finding a correct "compass" for translating the great writers, but would also deepen and enrich the understanding of these authors.

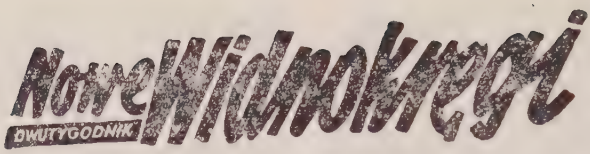
But let me go on to the main subject. In "The Times Literary Supplement" we read the following: "It is beyond question that the genius of Russian poetry, as of the Greek, is in its structural precision and harmony; that Russian poetry in its descent from the golden age of Pushkin retains its highest and most characteristic form in the lightness and exactitude of its lyrical utterance."

Apart from our disagreement with the term "descent of Russian poetry"—inasmuch as Blok and Mayakovsky, for instance, are not the result of a descent from the golden age of Pushkin, but present phenomena original and on an altogether different plan—one more thing should be added to the above-mentioned extremely interesting definition of the peculiarities of Russian poetry and, in particular, of Pushkin's style: and this is the accuracy in the choice of words which form the corresponding associations. How many times have I noted that we Russians, who know Pushkin almost from our cradle, are still unappreciative of all the shades of meaning in his words. Do those translating Pushkin into English themselves grasp all the shades of Pushkin? The poet-translator does not have to be a linguist, but thorough and accurate **understanding** of the original is absolutely necessary. Not, of course, to "photograph" the original in his translation. The artist, before commencing to paint a portrait, has to study his original attentively. One has to know, in order to win the right to free translation. I have made a modest attempt to help our translators in this sense and am now engaged in translating Shakespeare into Russian, in prose, with many linguistic explanations, without pretending to any literary merit. I have already translated "Othello" and have just finished "Hamlet". Is anyone in England and America doing similar work as regards the Russian classics?

It is no easier to translate Shakespeare into Russian than it is to translate Pushkin into English. During the last few years, we have devoted much attention to questions of translating Shakespeare into Russian. And now we can say that certain passages of Shakespeare which had hitherto been considered untranslatable, are not only "translatable", but have already been translated. True, it took much labour to accomplish this (for instance, in the space of something over a century about forty different translations have been made of "Hamlet").

The development of literary translations and, in particular, of poetical translations, is by no means an unimportant factor in the cultural rapprochement of the liberty-loving countries. As regards the English poets, we are doing considerable work. And not only in the sense of creating new translations, but also in studying these translations and also in seeking many by-paths which, in the long run, lead to the same end. Here I have in mind the literary translation of English poetry in prose (as Prosper Mérimée translated Pushkin into French prose), as well as linguistic or, to be more exact, semantic translations (of which I have already spoken), striving towards a maximum accuracy and universal interpretation of the meaning of the original. In the fire of the enthusiasm of this labour will be burnt without a trace that word which at first sight seemed correct and convincing—that incorrect word—"untranslatable".

MICHAEL MOROZOV



The magazine "Nowe Widnokręgi" ("New Horizons") was founded in March 1941. The editors, headed by Wanda Wasilewska, succeeded in bringing together a large group of outstanding Polish critics and poets from Warsaw, Cracow and other Polish literary centres, most of whom settled in Lwow after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. In that first period of its existence the "Nowe Widnokręgi" became the centre of Polish literary activity in the Soviet Union.

The attack of Hitler's armies on the Soviet Union interrupted the activity of the magazine. Lwow was captured by the Hitlerites. Polish literature sustained heavy losses. Many writers did not manage to leave Lwow and fell into the hands of the Gestapo. The renowned Polish writer Boy-Żeleński, unsurpassed translator of Rabelais, Balzac and Proust, whose brilliant articles had regularly appeared in the "Nowe Widnokręgi", died a martyr's death in a German concentration camp. Professor Juljusz Kleiner, the authoress Halina Górska, the gifted poet Mieczysław Jastrun, the novelist Adolf Rudnicki, and many others found themselves trapped in German-occupied Lwow.

The "Nowe Widnokręgi" reappeared as a political and literary fortnightly in May 1942. Until the spring of 1943, when the Union of Polish Patriots began to publish its weekly organ "Wolna Polska," the "Nowe Widnokręgi" was the sole tribune of Polish democratic thought in the U.S.S.R. It became the rallying point of a group of Polish publicists and writers animated by one common thought and one sentiment—to fight for the liberation of Poland from the hitlerite yoke.

The magazine covers a wide range of subjects, touches on numerous questions. But everything that appears in its pages is permeated with the idea of the liberation of Poland, with the idea of a new, free, democratic Poland.

Poland languishing under the yoke of the German occupation, Poland suffering, but not vanquished, holds first place in the subject matter of the magazine. The "Nowe Widnokręgi" picks up every report that comes from the other side of the front-line. A considerable amount of material has been supplied by prisoners of war—Poles forcibly pressed into the German army, who have come over in large numbers to the side of the Red Army. An important source of material has been the underground press which makes its way by various routes across the frontline. And, lastly, in recent months, there have been numerous correspondents' reports from the regions liberated by the Red Army. Prisoners who have managed to escape from behind the barbed-wire entanglements of German concentration camps tell about the hell which the Hitlerites have instituted in those death camps. From month to month and from year to year grows the terrible record of hitlerite crimes: wholesale executions, round-ups in streets, villages razed to the ground, mass murder of the Jewish population, "No Poles admitted"—signs on doors of restaurants or moving-picture houses, humiliations, insults to human dignity. From the multitude of facts emerges the appalling picture of a tormented country, of a crucified nation.

"By reducing the Poles at every step to the role of pariahs," writes the "Nowe Widnokręgi," "the invaders want to break their will, crush their human and national dignity, inculcate upon them the psychology of slaves and turn them into an obedient tool. The Hitlerites are out to transform the Polish people into a formless ethnographic mass, into human dust."

But the unvanquished people refuse to be trampled underfoot. The soldiers of underground Poland carry on the fight. German executioners are felled by the bullets of the people's avengers. German trains roll down embankments. Whole rural districts are controlled by partisans, and no German dares venture there. The last Jews heroically defend themselves in their blazing ghettoes.

This is the reality of the life that "Nowe Widnokręgi" reflects in its pages.

The "Nowe Widnokręgi" advocates the idea of Polish armed action both inside the country and beyond its borders. The magazine scorns the idea that "on the great front others will bring about Germany's defeat, while we may sit and do nothing, because it is not the business of Poles to worry about victory." The keynote of the magazine is the thesis "that freedom does not come of itself, that it must be achieved by action, by persistent srtuggle, that the sacrifices made in this holy fight for liberty are never wasted—they yield a hundredfold harvest in the future life of the nation." From this tribune Wanda Wasilewska made her impassioned appeal to Poles to fight their way to Poland by the shortest route—through the Ukraine and Byelorussia, and Poles in the U.S.S.R. responded to that appeal.

The initiative of the great writer and patriot became embodied in life thanks to the support and assistance of the Soviet Union. The First Tadeusz Kościuszko Division was organized and before long it expanded into the Polish Army in the U.S.S.R. That army has remained true to its slogan. It fought its way to Poland, and today, on Polish soil, it is fighting

for the complete liberation of the country. The "Nowe Widnokręgi", too, has contributed to this achievement.

It is not for nothing that the First Polish Division in the U.S.S.R. is named after Tadeusz Kościuszko. When Kościuszko organized the armed forces of the Republic a hundred and fifty years ago, he organized them as an army relying on the people and serving the people. It is this tradition that the "Nowe Widnokręgi" has consistently advocated, contrasting it with the doctrine of Józef Pilsudski whose followers turned the former Polish Army into a force opposed to the people, into a tool of dictatorship that imposed its rule on the nation.

The ideological face of the "Nowe Widnokręgi" is vividly revealed in its political articles, among which stand out the articles of the noted antifascist leader and political thinker Alfred Lampe, who died in December 1943. His articles are distinguished by their cogency and breadth of vision. They project the picture of a new Poland, a Poland free and democratic, in which the people is the true master of its destiny, in which a consistent agrarian reform will provide the peasant with land and put an end to his misery. Lampe's excellently documented articles show that it was this misery of the peasantry that lay at the root of the weakness of the Polish state. The new Poland of social and economical progress will bring prosperity to the broad masses of the people and become the real homeland of all its citizens, irrespective of race, nationality or creed.

The "Nowe Widnokręgi" champions the principle that a nation which oppresses other nations cannot itself be free. It represents the viewpoint of all progressive Poles in regard to the foundations of an independent Poland. Free Poland wants no foreign territory—Ukrainian, Byelorussian or Lithuanian. But Poland must recover the Polish lands that were wrested from her by the Germans. To Poland's fold must return Polish Silesia, traditionally Polish Pomorze and East-Prussia—that germanized colony of the Reich, the den of the predatory Prussian junkers, the Damocles' sword threateningly suspended over Poland from the North. Poland must receive a wide and lasting access to the Baltic Sea; for the Baltic is Poland's lungs, a window into the world, the requisite of sovereignty. Poland will build up a fortified wall between herself and her aggressive neighbour in the West, while at the same time spanning the frontier in the East with a bridge of friendship and alliance. In an alliance with Slav peoples, above all with the greatest Slav Power—the Soviet Union —and in friendly cooperation with the great democracies of the West, the "Nowe Widnokręgi" sees the guarantee of Poland's security and enduring independence.

This picture of Poland as a stronghold of democracy, freedom and progress, of a Poland that has resolutely broken with the heritage of reaction which has so fatally weighed on the destinies of the Polish people, is further supplemented by the polemical articles of Stefan Jędrychowski, the unconventional essays of Jerzy Borejsza, the historical essays of Roman Werfel and Żanna Korman, the trenchant feuilletons of Jerzy Pański.

Polish publicists and writers who have studied the Soviet Union, interpret "New Russia" to their readers, teli them of the people which, after casting off the fetters of tsardom, has straightened its back and is revealing inexhaustible sources of creative energy. The "Nowe Widnokręgi" has consistently exposed and combatted the anti-Soviet intrigues of the reactionary Polish cliques and adventurers that are responsible for the disaster of September 1939.

The poetry and prose of the "Nowe Widnokręgi" is rooted in the reality of our times. Their dominant note is struggle, the call to action, to vengeance against the enemy, the mobilization of hate, and faith in victory.

There is a call to action in every story and address of Wanda Wasilewska, a writer whose entire life and work are inseparably bound up with the fight of the Polish people for freedom.

Such is her short, but meaningful, story "Peter and Tatyana," which deals with Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms, with the joint struggle of Polish and Russian soldiers against the common enemy. In her short novel "The Rainbow," which has appeared also in an English translation, in the numerous stories about the Ukrainian countryside, the Red Army and partisans, we see the writer's faith in the inexhaustible strength of the people fighting for its own way of life against the German invader. Her works are permeated with the love of freedom and a sublime hate of the enemy.

From pain and anguish for the suffering homeland spring the poems of Adam Ważyk, a poet who, under the impact of the war, has performed a significant evolution from necessarily limited aesthetic experiments to poetry which has become a weapon of struggle. Ważyk's poetic skill has become more mature, his form stricter, his words more expressive. His warm, always somewhat bitter lyricism is pervaded with the pain of loss, with grief for the humiliation of man by the forces of evil which fascism has fostered and unleashed.

Nostalgia for the native town, for home, street, familiar surroundings, pervades the subtle poetry of Elżbieta Szemplińska.

The poet and soldier Lucjan Szenwald, an excellent translator of Shelley, was perhaps the best virtuoso of form among the younger generation of Polish poets in the U.S.S.R. At the same time he was among the most popular singers of Polish democracy. His recent tragic death in an automobile accident is an irreparable loss to Polish poetry.

Jerzy Putrament, poet and prose-writer,

has grown in stature in recent years, as shown by a number of his works that appeared in the "Nowe Widnokręgi." Particularly noteworthy is his poem "Departure," portraying a Polish soldier who, after years of wandering, returns to his homeland with arms in hand, as well as his short story "Sacred Bullet," depicting the emotions of a man witnessing a hitlerite execution in Poland.

The "Nowe Widnokręgi" does not confine itself to the works of Polish writers living in the U.S.S.R. In its pages we also find new verses by Juljan Tuwim, perhaps the greatest contemporary Polish poet, who is now living in emigration in America. His powerful "Prayer," from the poem "Polish Flowers," represents the fullest poetical expression of the ideological credo of the "Nowe Widnokręgi."

The magazine has also printed verse by Stanisław Baliński, Antoni Słonimski, Władysław Broniewski and other emigré Polish poets living in London.

The ideological and literary achievement of the "Nowe Widnokręgi" in the three years and more of its existence testifies to the vitality of Polish creative thought in the hospitable atmosphere of the Soviet Union. It is a substantial contribution to the culture of regenerated Poland.

TADEUSZ ZABLUDOWSKI

NEW BOOKS

World literature has, on countless occasions, celebrated the centenary of the birth of famous writers and poets, but never has any hundredth anniversary been marked during the life of its subject. In the near future such an unique event in history is due in the Soviet Union. Two years from now, the national bard of Kazakhstan, Jamboul, the singer and poet, will attain his hundredth year. Despite his great age Jamboul is still full of vigour and creative power. His songs sung in his low, ageing voice to the soft and melodious accompaniment of a two-stringed domra, echo and re-echo through the vast expanses of the Soviet Union, inspiring fighters of the fraternal peoples in their war to the death against the nazi invaders.

A collection "Songs of War" and "Songs of the National War" by Jamboul have been published simultaneously in Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan and in the Russian translation in Moscow. This small volume contains all Jamboul's songs which through the newspapers and over the radio have rung out as a clarion-call since the very first days of war. Although only twenty-seven in all, these song-poems mark the most vital events in the course of the war. The collection opens with "In the Hour When Stalin Calls" which was inspired by Joseph Stalin's historical radio address. On that day the aged bard happened to be far away in the alpine meadows, but upon learning that Stalin would broadcast, he saddled his horse and rode post-haste back to his native village swiftly pressing on through mountainous roads and precarious trails. Surrounded by his kith and kin, highly agitated, the aged Jamboul stood listening to Stalin's inspiring words. And that same night the minstrel sang his first song of the war, which was broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Mount, my sons, and hear my song,
The spirit of Stalin wings my words.

When the nazi invaders approached the walls of Leningrad, Jamboul addressed the inhabitants of the besieged city with a battle song: "Leningraders, Children of Mine". The words of this song were printed and posted up on the streets of the beleaguered city then being savagely bombarded by German howitzers. In this song Jamboul recorded the invincibility of Leningrad and prophesied that "the foe would perish at the gates of the city and Leningrad would conquer". When, in the days of October, the nazi armies confidently pushed closer to Moscow, Jamboul composed his song "Moscow", in which he voiced the love of all the Soviet peoples for their capital.

All for Moscow, all we must give—
This is our sacred charge.
When dawn lights the sky, I mount and ride
My years forgotten, a youth again.
Stirrups ring as I race like the wind
Calling on all who know my name
To rise for Moscow! To rise and fight!

When, a few weeks later, the Germans were routed at Moscow, Jamboul sang of the heroic defenders of Moscow, the men of the Kazakhstan Eighth Division under Major General Panfilov.

It is not only of the heroes of the battle-front that Jamboul sings. He also voices the heroic efforts of the women on the homefront in his song "Women Workers of Our Fields".

The last items in this collection are addressed to Jamboul's own son, Aldagai, a fighter in the Red Army. These open with the father's behest to his son to crush the enemies of his motherland.

Aldagai distinguished himself in action at Stalingrad, and the father, proud of his son's battle-deeds, responded with the song "Answer to My Son":

I sing of your deeds in the battle's roar,
I sing of your fighting comrades true.

In action at Sinelnikovo, in the Donbass, Aldagai and three of his companions engaged a number of enemy tanks. Aldagai was killed by a shell splinter. A

delegation came to Kazakhstan to break the sad tidings to the aged father. Jamboul donned in holiday attire—silk gown and embroidered skullcap—welcomed his guests. After general greetings, stroking his beard. Jamboul asked whether it was happy news they brought. His visitors exchanged glances and remained silent. Jamboul invited them to supper. Regaling his guests, he took down the domra from the wall and entertained them with a song of the heroic deeds at the front. To his visitors' question: "And if your son were such a hero?" the old bard put his domra aside and reaching for his wallet, showed them the newspaper clipping telling of his son's former exploit. Gently smoothing out the paper, he asked: "Is this not heroism?"

"And were your son to die heroically, like others of our heroes?" he was asked.

And then silence reigned as one of the visitors read the announcement of the death of young Aldagai. The aged bard voicelessly moved his lips, and tears rolled down from his eyes. Then he reached for the domra and sang a simple and touching song "On the Death of My Son". And it is with this song that Jamboul's book of "Songs of War" closes.

Klavdya, the heroine of Nadezhda Chertova's book of the same name ("Soviet Writer" Publishing House) is the youngest daughter in the family of Sukhov, an old railway worker.

Her life is no bed of roses; her parents are constantly quarelling, the father being miserly and despotic. Klavdya's two brothers left home when they were still young lads, having quarelled with their father, while her sisters, after marriage, also break away from their parents. Her neighbours consider Klavdya to be a pitiable unfortunate, and one doomed to solitude. But Klavdya herself feels firmly established in the world and in her hometown. Her lively, charming spirit is captivated by Pavel, a young man sent to work at the local railway station. Their love grows and matures during the memorable summer days of 1941. Upon their separation, when Pavel is drafted into the Red Army, the two young people become engaged.

Klavdya's hometown is situated not far from the borders. The author gives a vivid description of the first days of the war—mobilization, men and equipment leaving for the front, air alerts, and finally, the evacuation of the population. It was during these trying days that Klavdya's spiritual strength and moral energy stand her in good stead. She spares no efforts in working for her country's defence, and stays right on until the arrival of the Germans. Immediately the nazis begin terrorizing the town, looting and murdering the civilian population. Among the victims is Klavdya's father.

Klavdya refuses to hide but, awaiting her chance, with her mother's assistance, she joins the partisans.

The story ends at this point, but so convincingly does the author portray this girl that readers envisage her further road—the road of a courageous partisan, fearless and resourceful in battle.

The State Literary Publishing House, Moscow, have issued a book entitled "Bulgarian Folk Poetry", comprising translations of Bulgarian folk songs.

These songs show a great richness and variety, but the mythological and heroic compositions which form the main feature of this book, unquestionably display the most artistic merit.

The mythological songs, amply represented in this book, reflect the life of Bulgarians in ancient days—the patriarchal existence of farmers, their labour and recreation, their family relations and, of course, the poetic world of elemental spirits, magic serpents and other supernatural creatures born of their naive imaginations.

The ancient dwellers of Bulgaria pictured hunger, need, sorrow and grief as such creatures.

A survival of these imaginary beings is to be found in the famous Bulgarian folk songs telling of the plague—"The Black Gypsy" who stalks the country, choosing the youngest and most beautiful as her victims. In several of these ancient songs, the Black Plague is sometimes vested with such strength and force that even the gods are powerless against her, as, for example, in the poem "The Black Plague Is Here".

In the verses about the old knights of valour one finds the story of the Turkish conquest and the Bulgarians' struggle against the foreign invaders. History here is closely interwoven with fantasy. The national heroes and the people's enemies are presented in mythological form. The two knights, Marko and Yankula, have their historic prototypes in the famous chieftains of the XIV and XV centuries—Marko Kulashi and Yan Humiadi. But in this song, the historic heroes are endowed with supernatural powers: Marko's steed is a six-winged creature; at the critical moment of his duel with the Turkish heathen knight, Marko's sworn sister—a supernatural being—comes to her brother's aid ("Kralevich Marko and Musa Kesejia"); the dying Marko is succoured by the sun, moon and mountain eagles ("The Death of Marko the Knight"); Yankula is the possessor of a magic sword which cuts through iron and rock ("Yankula"). The foe or the foreign conqueror is often pictured as a fabulous Black Arab giant, or a sorcerer with three hearts, each of which must be pierced by the hero ("Mikhalche the Swineherd" "Kralevich Marko and Musa Kesejia").

Different are the songs of the younger knights, heroes of less remote days. Here these valiants no longer resort to supernatural powers when fighting the foe or rescueing maidens whom the Turks have taken captive and are driving into slavery ("Stoyan and the Captive Maidens"); or when a woman captive tells her young

son to wreak vengeance on the enemy of her people ("Through the Woods Went a Turk"); or when young peasants destroy the evildoers who plunder and oppress the poor ("Song of the Twin Brothers"). Here readers find the traces of genuine history and reality.

But the best songs in the book are the numerous and well selected Hoiduk (partisan) songs. These tell of the people's avengers—the partisan detachments which were active in Bulgaria practically until the XIX century.

These poems, which reflect the Bulgarians' four century struggle for national liberties, combine the finest aspects of heroic epic with touching lyrical poesy.

The Hoiduks—Stoyan, Indje, Margo and others are loyal in companionship and love, yet withal, cool-headed and calculating in action. Their small groups of eighteen to twenty strong make sorties on towns and villages, dealing justice and retribution to the foreign invaders and their henchmen—judges, police and zaptiah. The Hoiduks are ardently loved by their people, they help them in their struggle against the foe, give them shelter and supply them with food. These Hoiduk songs also tell of heroic women. This is in keeping since quite often the partisan detachments were headed by women warriors ("Mircho and Boina" and "Todorka"). But even when women took no part as fighter or chieftain they always remained the warriors' loyal helpmates.

The mother, sister or wife of a Hoiduk were adepts at misleading the foe, setting him on a wrong track and, by feminine cunning, luring him into a trap ("Todorka and Zaptiah" and "Clenche the Orphan").

This splendid book perpetuates the finest and most heroic traditions and themes of Bulgarian folk life.

Zoltan Weinberger's book, "Sixteen Years in Prison", recently issued by the Young Guard Publishers, represents pages from the diary kept by this captive of Hungarian fascism during the sixteen years he spent in prison. He was a young man of twenty-two when he was flung into a solitary cell. He left prison only in 1940, thanks to the interference of the Soviet Union. Written in simple and artless style, this is a most readable book. It pictures the ghastly brutality of the fascist rulers of Hungary. Weinberger tells of the tortures and sufferings to which he was subjected at the hands of Hungarian "justice", their favourite methods of "legal procedure". He portrays a gallery of "representatives" of this "justice" whose instruments are the whip and the club.

The diary entries Weinberger made in prison form a thrilling document of human courage and nobility. No tortures could break his will; no brutalities could force any information from his lips, though the most "refined" methods of "interrogation" were used on him.

Weinberger and his colleagues never ceased their struggle even while in prison At their trial they stood forth not as the accused, but as the accusers, with a scathing indictment of the Hungarian fascist regime. They frequently resorted to long hunger strikes in protest against the club-law practised by the prison administration.

The author speaks with particular warmth and respect of his elder comrade, Matias Rákosi, the well-known anti-fascist, who was imprisoned and released at the same time as Weinberger.

According to the latter, both he and Rákosi would have undoubtedly been sentenced to death were it not for the powerful public campaign launched in their defence—a vivid demonstration of international solidarity of progressive forces and, in particular, the active participation of Henri Barbusse.

Since 1940, Weinberger has been living in the Soviet Union where, after sixteen long years of captivity in Hungary, he was reunited with his wife and son, frequently mentioned in his prison diary.

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT BY

THE GRAND RELAY

Here are three books. Ten years lie between the first and the third, just published. And thousands of miles separate their authors. But don't suppose that we are referring to three authors of three books: the number of collaborators reaches a far more imposing figure—over two hundred, as a matter of fact. And scarcely half of them have ever met. But the seventy thousand printings of their books are avidly read and re-read by children all over the Soviet Union.

But we had better drop intriguing arithmetics and riddles...

Eleven years ago, at the literary circle at a secondary school in Irkutsk, in remote Siberia, one of the members—Sonia, aged thirteen—suggested that their circle should write a book about the life of their Pioneer Detachment, an idea unanimously adopted by all thirty members of the circle.

With the assistance of their circle leader, Ivan Molchanov-Sibirsky, a poet, these youthful literary enthusiasts planned their future book, selecting and classifying its separate chapters, and then took up their pens.

"It was uphill work," the authors confess in their preface. "Judge for yourself what sort of writers we were when we made such grammatical blunders that Uncle Ivan sometimes went as red as our pioneer's necktie on reading our stuff."

In the evening, after lessons, they would all get together to discuss and correct what had been written, and there was many a heated debate and argument. The authors were bound by strict rules—to write nothing but the truth. Not a single word or fact of invention or imagination, and the one or two ventures at embellishment met with a concerted repulse.

Exactly twelve months after that memorable meet of the literary circle the manuscript of a book called "The Snub-nose Centre" was in the hands of Irkutsk typesetters. Previous to this it had been through the hands of Maxim Gorky—the greatest friend and helper of Soviet children in many of the latter's undertakings. To this pioneers' book about themselves, the great and experienced Russian writer responded with a serious letter. Approving the book by and large, Gorky cautioned its young authors against vanity and conceit, against boastfulness and mutual envy. In the terse lines of his letter, Gorky taught the children to be more exacting towards themselves, to be more attentive to life and people, to respect labour.

"The Snub-nose Centre" was written ten years ago. Much of it sounds strange, and even funny, to the pioneers of 1944.

It was still a very small microcosm in which the characters and authors of "The Snub-nose Centre" lived. But the ball had been set rolling, the Grand Relay was launched, and covered its first lap.

A year after "The Snub-nose Centre" was published, Maxim Gorky, who was staying at his country house in the Crimea, received a letter bearing the stamp of Igarka—a town in the sub-arctic regions. It was written by two thousand schoolchildren of one of the biggest northern ports in Siberia. They wrote to him about their life and their city, and, in conclusion, told him they had conceived the idea of writing a book about the life and studies of children in Igarka, way up in the sub-arctic. They set forth their questions and problems in a most businesslike manner, anticipating Gorky's advice and directives. To what extent should they follow the example of the Irkutsk authors of "The Snub-nose Centre"? How should they classify the chapters? Should they describe all the Igarka schools, or just one?

Gorky replied with a detailed and lengthy letter explaining how best to organize work on their contemplated book, also giving them a rough outline of its plan. Printed copies of his letter, done at the local print shop, were sent to all the schools in Igarka. Every pupil read and re-read what Gorky wrote about daring and responsibility, about loving work and the joy of acquiring knowledge.

Thus, early in 1936 was conceived the "Gorkian" book about the life of children in the sub-arctic. The "blueprint" was discussed in every school, and each wanted to write of his or her favourite subject or hobby. Some wanted to write about dogs, others of aerosleds they had designed and made themselves, others of work in the port of Igarka. Among the budding authors were found hunters, fishermen, travellers and engineers... Joint work on the book brought the children into closer companionship. Every outing in the woods or on the river, every squirrel hunting expedition or cedar-nut picking party furnished fresh material for their book. Weeks turned into months. Wishing to compare their

experiences with children of other cities, the Igarka youngsters sent telegrams to eleven towns asking for information about the climate and nature there and how the children spent the month of May. They also sent a telegram to Romain Rolland, in Switzerland.

In June 1936, Igarka heard the sad news of the death of Maxim Gorky. His young friends were terribly upset, and some felt like dropping the whole idea: "What's the use of writing when there's no one to be interested in our book?"

It was during these very days that replies to their telegrams began coming in. From Kharkov and Sverdlovsk, from Cheboksary and Odessa came letters, each with the invariable question: when will the book about Igarka be finished? From Romain Rolland in faraway Switzerland came a cordial letter to "my dear little polar bear cubs". "Work well and never feel downhearted in the face of obstacles," Rolland wrote. "Difficulties are made to be overcome, so that, in overcoming them, you grow stronger."

The writing of "We're From Igarka" took twice as long as the book by the Irkutsk "snub-noses". Nothing surprising. Here there were different aims, grander scope and higher self-demands in their work, for this was not about the life of one school or one Pioneer Detachment about which the Igarkians were writing. The microcosm here was being expanded, to present readers with the panorama of a whole city. And not only a panorama, but also the story of the making and moulding of this remote northern port.

From all corners of the country to the remote River Yenissei—which was destined soon to harbour ships flying the flags of all nations—came builders of the future great port, arriving singly and in families. Many of the hundred and forty authors of "We're From Igarka" saw the great new lumber mills, the magnificent buildings, the theatres and schools spring up on what had once been wild and deserted land on the bank of this mighty Siberian river. The long sunless months of the arctic winter and the heavy toil of erecting buildings on eternally frozen soil made the youngsters all the more appreciative of the brief nightless summer here and of the meagre generosity of nature in the North. And they developed a singular love for their city which, before their very eyes, was created by the efforts of their elders, and sometimes with their own hands too.

This feeling of love permeates their book. Its wealth of facts, keen observation, diversity of content and its painstaking polish make "We're From Igarka" a thrilling book both for children and adults. It tells of the plant and animal world and the freak climate of the sub-arctic regions, describes the place, the city and port of Igarka occupies in the country's economics and gives an extensive profile of the Igarkian people. All this is presented in a spontaneous and direct style through entertaining minor incidents and episodes told by Soviet children—active participants in the life around them.

Thousands of visitors to the Soviet Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York had the opportunity of seeing this book.

The second lap of the Grand Relay is covered. What ground lies ahead now?

Here is the story of the third lap.

In 1940 the young pioneers of Sverdlovsk, the centre of the Urals, addressed all school-children of that region with a proposal to cooperate in writing a joint book about the rich and interesting territory in which they lived.

No easy task, as the Urals comprises three regions—Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Molotov, a territory including hundreds of towns, tens of thousands of collective farms, villages and settlements. "The Snub-nose Centre" told of one Pioneer Detachment numbering thirty children. "We're From Igarka", describing a whole city, was the fruit of the efforts of two thousand children. And in the Urals were six thou-

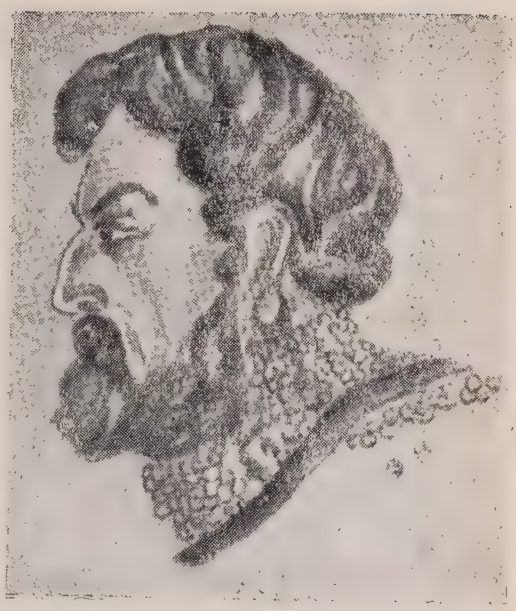
sand schools, embracing a veritable army of one million pupils.

But the youngsters were enthusiastic at the idea of writing their own book, and news of this undertaking spread like wildfire throughout the Urals. To Sverdlovsk came a flood of letters, sometimes numbering two hundred a day. Strange were the roads taken by many of these letters—by reindeer-team to nearest railway station, by air-mail, and sometimes even per carrier-pigeon. Bags of letters from co-authors of the future book. And when school vacations came, hundreds of children travelled to Sverdlovsk, to "talk things over personally". The book's "blueprint" gradually took shape and its authors commissioned. Then began the hunt for interesting material. The pen of the first relay started from Irkutsk six years ago was taken over by able young hands in Sverdlovsk and the Urals.

"Once it is necessary for our book, it must be done!" declared the youngsters. Nothing could daunt them—neither the dense, roadless and uncharted taiga jungle-woods, nor the perilous rapids of stormy mountain streams, nor the ruthless onslaughts of swarms of bloodthirsty mosquitoes.

Shamil Kamalov, a Bashkirian boy of thirteen, decided to write a story about the favourite hero of numerous Bashkirian legends—Salavat Yulayev, the companion-in-arms of Yemelyan Pugachov, who led the rebellion in 1773—1774. All he knew of Yulayev was confined to his reading. Then one summer's day, young Shamil set out from home on a long hike. He spent two months afoot, visiting places associated with Salavat Yulayev. "I've been on the road for over a month now," he wrote from some small Bashkirian village, "and have worn out one pair of shoes already. But I'm as brown as a berry and am having a most interesting and splendid vacation. The oldtimers tell me thrilling stories." On returning home Shamil wrote a strikingly picturesque account of Salavat Yulayev, the hero of the Bashkirian people.

But it was not Shamil alone who was fired by the remote past of the hoary Urals. From here and there, the youngsters gradually collected the popular legends handed down from generation to generation and preserved in the memory of oldtimers. A whole chapter of this book, entitled "The Urals—Earth of Gold", is called "True Stories of Bygone Days". One such story, describing why this region is called the Urals, will be found on page 62. A thrilling account written by two fourteen-year-old boys relates the saga of olden times of how, during the reign of Ivan-the-Dread, a troop of bold men led by their renowned chieftain Yermak defeated the doughty knights of Talgat and Poludnitsa on the banks of the Tagil and conquered the rich lands of the Urals. Another youngster, Vladimir Guilev, writes the story of Miklusha, the mountain



Salavat Yulayev. Drawn by B. Pletnyov

boy who discovered the miracle-stone—alexandrite, which has the remarkable property of changing its colour. Vladimir, who made a trip in the South Urals and visited the Zlatoust works, where the famous blade steel is made, also wrote a fascinating story called "The Secret of Sword Steel".

The popular legends of bygone centuries are enchantingly poetical, but the pictures unfolded to the attentive observer by the mountains of today's Urals are even more fascinating, and the succeeding chapters of this book tell of present-day happenings.

From the rich deposite of potassium salts in Solikamsk, where the reserves are treble the rest of the world's resources, readers are transported to the workings of red bauxites—the Kingdom of Fire—where everything: houses, trees and roads are coated in a film of bauxite, and seem to ripple in flames under the bright sunbeams.

A few pages further on we learn that from bauxites come one of the lightest metals known—aluminium. A story written jointly by four children, entitled "The Water-Miner" describes the marveliously simple way of obtaining copper from mine waters. The amusing adventures of two boys, seated at a bonfire, acquaints readers with the "magic" properties of black mica, which swells when heated and changes to a bright gold colour, making it an indispensable decoration for Xmas trees.

The story "Mineral Flax" relates the story of the discovery and mining of asbestos—the fibre possessing miraculous fire, acid and alkali-proof qualities.

There are also tales of how people first

heard of that rare metal—platinum—and learned how to mine it; of how, through the centuries, craftsmen perfected the art of cutting emeralds, amethysts and other gems.

And, as a summary of all these stories of the countless wealth of "The Earth of Gold", a vivid description of one of the biggest museums in the world is given—one known as the Precious-Stone Natural Preserve, founded in 1920, at Lenin's initiative, in the mountains of Ilmen. More than one hundred and twenty different minerals have been discovered in this unique open-air museum, which is a miniature reproduction of the Urals.

The closing chapters of the book bear such alluring titles as: "A Thrilling Life", "In the Land of Adventures" and "Animal Trails". Young Urals folk describe their hikes in the mountains, along the rivers and through hidden trails.

Thirteen-year-old Vladimir Moshkov writes a humorous tale about the pranks of his tame baby owl. His feathered fledgeling was under the impression that all chickens existed solely as his provender and so antagonized all the old women poultry keepers. Having quarrelled with his friend over the latter's favourite pigeon, which went the same way as the chickens—Vladimir eventually had to coop up his inveterate mischief-maker.

Every outing held forth promise of endless adventures and thrilling finds, and what a truly wonderful time the youngsters had in those happy summer days of 1940, when war's harsh breath had not yet touched their childish hearts!

Though the names of the authors of "The Urals—Earth of Gold" also appeared in print for the first time, and though they were of the same age as the "snub-noses" of Irkutsk and the "polar bear cubs" of Igarka, one senses they have gained the same concrete experience in authorship as the pioneers of Irkutsk and Igarka did in writing their books. More colourful and richer in language, this book of the Urals is of far wider scope than its two predecessors. Besides its literary merits, it has the advantages of profuse illustrations, also made by the children themselves. These include photographs, paintings, drawings and even sculptures. And they all testify to the fact that the children not only love their "Earth of Gold", but also know it intimately.

Much has changed now in this region, with the Urals taking on its shoulders the tremendous responsibility of supplying the front with the formidable weapons of victory. And the young authors of "The Urals—Earth of Gold" too have vastly changed during these war years.

When the long hoped for day of victory dawns, the world will learn how many thousands of tons of metal Urals children collected with their own hands, how many extra shells and mortars the Red Army received thanks to their efforts. One thing however we can say now—that these figures will be very substantial indeed. Guarantee of this is that feeling of love for their country which speaks in every line, in every word of that collective work "The Urals—Earth of Gold".

HELEN ROMANOVA

At the coal face. Sculpture by O. Posokhin, eighth grade pupil

GOLDEN EARTH

(A Urals Folk Tale)

It happened long ago; so long ago that even the most aged are all confused about the time; perhaps a thousand or even more years ago. Our mountains, called the Urals, had already become old, and stone, you know, lives a long time.

But Legend lives even longer. Everything may die—Man and forests and mountains. But Legend never dies, never disappears. It lives forever. And it has brought us an old, old tale about how our mountains came to be called the Urals.

At the foot of the high and craggy mountains lived a tribe of primitive people. They lived in freedom, wore animal skins and knew no wars. They roamed the mountains with their herds of goats and sheep, hunted in the forests, but had no interest in the mountains and never sought what was hidden within them.

One day a son was born to a shepherdess of this tribe. He was so beautiful and graceful that people came to see and admire him. At last there came an aged man, the eldest of the tribe. He gazed long at the boy and then said:

"Yes, the signs are all there. It is he. Legend has it that the boy would be fair-haired, beautiful and graceful from childhood. And the mother would call him Ur, meaning earth."

"So be it," said the mother. "My son shall be called Ur, meaning earth."

"Legend further has it," continued the aged man, "that the boy would be fair and beautiful. But he shall find happiness, not on earth, but in it."

"Will my son die?" cried the mother in grief.

"No, Legend does not speak of death. Legend says that the youth will wait until the Golden Maiden, who sleeps in the mountains, awakens."

"And who is this Golden Maiden?" exclaimed the mother in perplexity.

"No one has ever seen her, she is still asleep, her time has not yet come."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Legend does not say," replied the aged man. "We do not know the meaning of the word 'golden'. Others will learn it, and it is they who will see whether she is beautiful."

With these words the aged man laid beside Ur's cradle a pipe, a bow and several arrows, and departed.

The boy grew up. He was tall and supple, and a lock of hair, bright as gold, and curly as the fur of a lamb, lay on his forehead. He hung around his neck his pipe, clear and melodious, slung his bow and arrows on his back, and went out to pasture the sheep and goats.

Early one morning when Ur as usual was playing on his pipe, and the trees of the forest were rustling and the herd grazing nearby, a mighty eagle, king of the birds, rose from the highest peak and, folding his wings, dropped like a stone among the herd. The eagle seized a lamb in its claws and flew upwards to his nest.

Jumping up, the shepherd dropped his pipe, tightened the strings of his bow and sent an arrow after the eagle. The son of Earth aimed true, and the arrow pierced the eagle's neck. Gathering its last

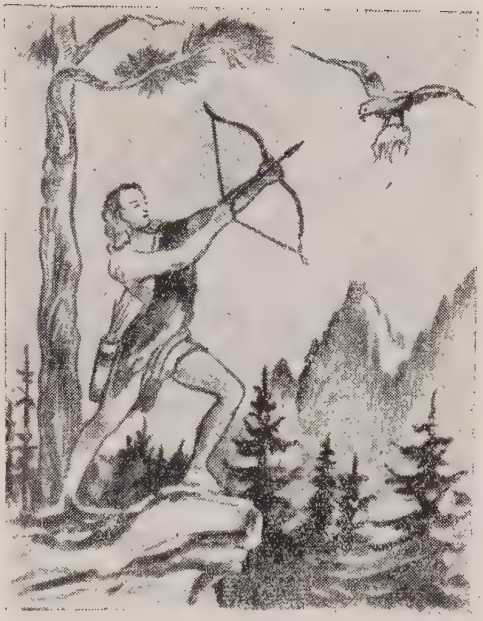


Illustration by A. Baladanov

strength, the wounded monarch of the air reached the peak of the mountain and fell dead among the sharp crags.

Ur rushed up the mountain to recover the eagle's prey. The ascent proved difficult, but when he reached the top, he saw a maiden weeping bitterly near the slain eagle. The shepherd stood still in surprise wondering how the maiden got here.

"Who are you and why do you weep?" he asked.

The maiden raised her head and only then did Ur see that her hair was not ordinary hair, but strands of the finest, most brilliant stuff he had ever seen. She was dressed all in bright yellow, and was dazzling to behold.

"I am the Golden Maiden!" she replied wrathfully. "How dare you slay my messengers?"

"The eagle carried off a lamb..."

"You are telling an untruth, stranger! He flew off to find among the people a youth whom I await. I ordered my messenger to bring him to me. His name is Ur. Have you heard of him?"

"Your messenger has brought him to you," replied the youth.

"It is you, then?" exclaimed the Maiden. "Come with me and I will show you the riches of the Earth, which my father and I have been safeguarding for the people."

Ur hesitated.

"Are you afraid? Know then, that you shall not leave, just as I cannot leave. We shall live a long time in the mountains, guarding the people's treasure."

"Why not turn it over to the people?" he asked. "There, far below in the valley

live my people. Let us reveal to them the wealth of the mountains and go and live among them."

"No, the time is not ripe. These people are happy without knowing the secret treasures of the mountains. Many long years will pass before man learns the truth about Earth, until he understands the value of this wealth. And then men will come one by one to seek it in the mountains. It is for us to guard the mountain treasures against them."

"But why? If it belongs to them..."

"The earth's treasures belong to all the people and not to a few select. And that time is still far off and when the time comes we shall open before the people all the treasures of the mountains. Now, let us go!"

They went into the mountains, and the Maiden showed Ur the treasures that she had been guarding until the happy time would come. The youth saw magnificent palaces made of shining stone as yellow as the Maiden's hair, rivers of precious multicoloured stones stretching below. Their path was illuminated by smouldering forests crushed by stone and earth.

"This too is precious," said the Maiden pointing to the incandescent coal. "But Man does not know of it yet. Look, there is where my father passed!"

A vein of yellow stone zigzagged like lightning through the mountain.

"My father is the Yellow Dragon, the Big Trailer, and wherever he passes, he leaves a golden trail behind."

"And what is gold? Why are you called Golden?" asked the youth.

"Gold is a rare stone. I do not know how Man will call it later when he finds it. I am made of it."

"I shall stay here with you to guard the treasures of the people. Give me a piece of that stone and let us return to the slain eagle."

On the crag near the dead bird, the youth fixed the bit of stone to the point of his arrow, tightened the string of the bow and sent the arrow down as a message to his people. Then, taking a last look at the sun, he disappeared into the mountains forever.

When Ur's arrow was brought to the aged man, he said:

"This yellow stone is a token of the Golden Maiden. The youth has remained with her. In the tongue of our people this stone will be known as 'Al'. Such is the behest of the Legend."

Since then the mountains have been called the Urals—or "Golden Earth."

And the sentinels of its wealth were never seen again. They say that Ur and the Golden Maiden still live in our mountains, helping men to discover such wealth in them as gold, coal, ores, and precious stones. Veteran prospectors say that long ago, some of the poor had allegedly caught a glimpse of the couple, had received some treasures from their hands.

Vigilantly did Ur and the Golden Maiden guard the mountains' treasures. And only now when the time has come at last, is this wealth being generously revealed.

PYOTR PSHENICHNIKOV

AT THE ROUND TABLE UNDER THE CUCKOO CLOCK

The Friends of the Round Table met at the microphone for the thirteenth time on October 1st. On that day our Cuckoo announced the beginning of the school year for senior classes as well as for institutions of higher learning.

Some of the biggest Soviet scientists met Moscow's schoolchildren at the Round Table. The opening speech was made by Hero of the Soviet Union, Senior Lieutenant Morozov, who was with the gallant men who forced the Dnieper a year ago. Lieutenant Morozov gave a brief account of the fight and congratulated the schoolchildren on their return to school. Then, taking advantage of the microphone, he sent greetings over the air to his little daughter who on that day was also trotting to school far away in the Altai Mountain Region.

Then our little pioneer guests and their teachers, from the Moscow School No. 20, spoke about their work. This school had won the Challenge Banner, the gift of the famous Stalingrad Guards mortar-men. The boys of this school had, despite the difficulties of war-time, organized a shoe repair shop and made nice shoes for the younger children. They had even knitted warm sweaters for them. Their carpentry shops had turned out several thousand cartridge cases which were sent to the front, and they helped a nearby factory to unload hundreds of carloads of materials. During the summer, they had done good work on the fields. The school has its own ensemble of singers and musicians which gives performances in hospitals for the wounded. They performed for us an old sailor-song on the accordion, and the chorus, led by a boy of twelve, sang jolly folk songs.

Ivan Meshchaninov, the well-known Soviet linguist, one of the speakers at the Round Table, said that he was starting on his "fifty-first academic year" that day. The Academician spoke of the richness of the languages of the Soviet peoples. Many of them, he said, had never had a written language before, but today they could boast of their own literature, schools and scientists. He dwelt on the beauty,

expressiveness and melodiousness of the Russian language, and stressed the importance of learning not only one's native tongue but foreign languages as well.

The next to speak at the Round Table was Professor Alexander Goldenweiser, of the Moscow Academy of Music—a veteran musician, who had trained a whole generation of outstanding Soviet pianists. The Professor, who for years had been a personal friend of Leo Tolstoy, recalled his talks with the great Russian writer and, at the request of the guests, played the same selections from Chopin and Mozart he had played for Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana.

The young guests of the Round Table gave a hearty welcome to Mark Bernes, the popular cinema actor, who played in "The Man with a Gun", "Two Buddies", "Fighter-Plane", etc. Bernes gave a comic monologue from a film and sang the popular songs "Cloud Over the City" and "Letter to Moscow". The Round Table gathering concluded with a comic number. A song was rendered by a group of three voices, two boys and a girl, accompanied by a jazz orchestra. But in the end it turned out that it was one person singing the song, imitating all the jazz instruments and cleverly changing voices.

When our time was up, we wished our listeners success during the coming school year and said good-bye till the next meeting, a month from now, around the Round Table.

LEO KASSIL
Chairman of the Round Table

Latest bulletin: the Führer is reported to be suffering from congestion.

Drawing by Vassili Fomichov

ARTS

SHAKESPEARE AND RUSSIAN MUSIC

Russian Shakespeariana is rich and varied in all its domains, including the musical contributions. Much valuable information relating to the works of Russian composers on Shakespearian themes may be gained from a brilliant study on this subject written by the late professor Ivan Sollertinsky of the Leningrad Academy of Music, entitled "Shakespeare and World Music" (in a collection published in Leningrad in 1939, on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth). Several reviews of Russian musical Shakespeariana are also to be found in the jubilee number of the "Russian Music Journal" which appeared on the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death (No. 15-16, April 10-17, 1916), and in an article "Russian Music and Shakespeare" by H. G. Sear ("The Musical Times", No. 1213, March 1944, pp. 78—83).

It would be an error of judgement to think that all compositions founded on Shakespeare's works were of equal merit; this attitude holds good not only regarding Russian music but also that of other countries, many of the scores written to one or another of Shakespeare's plays being merely an accompaniment illustrating the events of the plot. On the other hand, we have a number of valuable musical contributions made by Russian composers on Shakespearian themes. From the earliest works of Russian composers I can mention the beautiful "Ophelia's Song" written by Alexander Varlamov (it is necessary to note here that a well-known song published under the same title was written by Serguei Vassilenko to the words of Alexander Blok).

The first important Russian work was Balakirev's music to "King Lear". The composer was engaged on this during the years 1858—1861 tackling his work with an enthusiasm evident from his letters.

Balakirev during this period was greatly helped by advice and material given him by Vladimir Stassov, the noted critic and art connoisseur who rendered such valuable service to Russian art and Russian composers.

He forwarded Balakirev a number of English airs including songs sung in Shakespeare's time. This material and the words of advice proffered by the critic proved very useful to Balakirev in the course of his work. Thus, for example, in the entr'act before the third act (Lear and the jester on the heath during the storm) the theme of the music is based on the actual melody sung by the jester during the performance of the tragedy in Shakespeare's lifetime. It is interesting to note that in a letter to Stassov telling him that his music to "King Lear" was nearing completion, Balakirev wrote: "There will be something of you in it also. I have always found in you a great kinship with Lear. You have the same lofty, straightforward and untamed (virginal) nature." It is not surprising, therefore, that in the "de-luxe" edition of the full "King Lear" score, the musical text should be preceded by a page bearing the inscription in golden letters: "Dedicated to Vladimir Vassilyevich Stassov by Mili Balakirev."

The score of "King Lear" written for full symphonic orchestra (attaining in the procession, for example, enormous dimensions) consists of an overture and separate numbers including four entr'acts. In this music, admirably fitting in, as it does, with the stage presentation, Balakirev did not aim at merely illustrating the performance, but strove for a complete symphonic development. Eloquent testimony of this is contained in a well-known passage from his letter to Chaikovsky:

"First the Maestoso introduction, then something mystical (Kent's prophecy). The introduction fades to make way for the tumultuous Allegro—this is Lear himself—the lion, worsted, but still strong. The characters of Regan and Goneril are episodic. Finally the second theme—the gentle, tender-hearted Cordelia. In the middle section the storm appears; Lear and the jester on the heath, then a repetition of the Allegro—Lear's spirit crushed by the heartlessness of Regan and Goneril, and the overture ends in harmonics slowly dying away (Lear over the body of Cordelia). Next follows a repetition of Kent's prophecy fulfilled, and then death—calm, solemn death."

It was Balakirev who suggested to Chaikovsky the subject of his first Shakespearian score. Professor Nikolai Kashkin describing in his "Reminiscences of Chaikovsky" (Moscow, 1896) his walks in the company of Balakirev and Chaikovsky, says: "I remember during one such walk M. A. (Balakirev) suggesting to Chaikovsky the plan of an overture to 'Romeo and Juliet'. In my mind at least," he writes, "this recollection is bound up with the memory of a delicious May day—forest verdure and great pines amongst which we three were roaming."

Further on, Kashkin, narrating the subject of the symphonic composition as proposed by Balakirev, remarks that the lat-

ter "himself was apparently carried away by the idea for he expounded the plan with such clarity and force of detail as if the overture already existed and was perfectly familiar to him." Balakirev's fervour communicated itself to Chaikovsky to such a degree that at one time Chaikovsky even intended to write an opera on the same subject. Soon afterwards, the well-known "Fantasia-overture" (as Chaikovsky entitled his symphonic poems) dealing with the theme proposed by Balakirev, made its appearance.

In Moscow, on March 4th, 1870, Nikolai Rubinstein conducted the première performance of "Romeo and Juliet" from the first version which, incidentally, has remained unpublished to this same day. The following year, Chaikovsky published a second version, which he dedicated to Balakirev, and ten years later, a third. Shortly before his death, Chaikovsky began to compose a duet for soprano and tenor on the same subject which was afterwards completed by Taneyev. The very fact that there are three versions of the score of "Romeo and Juliet" is evidence of the unusual care Chaikovsky lavished on his Shakespearian first-born. Here is Professor Kashkin's evidence concerning the revising of the score:

"It was probably in the spring of 1870 that M. A. Balakirev witnessed the performance which he himself had prompted. Some sections of the overture did not meet with his approval and he insisted on their being altered to which request the composer complied in the summer of 1871. The changes were considerable and in parts essential; in the first place, the introduction to the overture was written anew; a funeral march originally placed at the end was dispensed with and replaced by the existing finale; and lastly, changes were made here and there in the instrumentation. Years later, Chaikovsky again made certain alterations in 'Romeo and Juliet', this time confining himself to shortening certain portions of superfluous length."

Thus appeared the first works by Russian composers on Shakespearian themes.

Chaikovsky's "Poem" has entered the world repertoire of music and its merits are too well-known to be enlarged on here. Suffice it to say that although, in the main, both Balakirev and Chaikovsky followed the plot in the tragedies, what we actually have before us is not programme music, but a synthetic revelation of a complex and beautiful world of the feelings of Shakespeare's heroes. Hence the emotional expressiveness of "King Lear" and "Romeo and Juliet".

Soon after the publication of "Romeo and Juliet" Chaikovsky once more turned his thoughts to Shakespeare. The subject and programme of the new composition were suggested by Vladimir Stassov. This time the play under contemplation was not a tragedy, it was "The Tempest".

In August 1873, during the course of ten days, Chaikovsky ("with little effort, as if impelled by some supernatural force", as he himself admitted, in a letter to von Meck) wrote his "Tempest", a symphonic fantasia, dedicated—need it be said—to Stassov, and first performed in the same year under the baton of Nikolai Rubinstein.

Here is the theme for the Fantasia as proposed by Stassov: "The sea. The magician Prospero sends Ariel, a spirit obedient to his will, to produce a tempest which wrecks the ship bearing Fernando. A fairy island. The first timid flutterings of love in Miranda and Fernando. Ariel, Caliban. The lovers submitting to the triumphant lure of passion. Prospero casts off the magic influence and leaves the island. The sea."

This programme has found sublime realization in Chaikovsky's score in which the scenic episodes form a picturesque background, setting off the play of human emotions. From Chaikovsky's letters we gather that he set particular store on this work. Incidentally it may be noted that "The Tempest" is the only one of Chaikovsky's symphonic compositions conceived in a spirit of optimistic vitality, in direct contrast to his "Fate", "Romeo", "Manfred" and "Francesca". Is this perhaps the reason why "The Tempest" was so dear to the heart of the author of the "Symphonie Pathétique", who spoke of himself as "a man who passionately loves life and as passionately hates death".

I should like, in this connection, to tell a story relating to the last years of the composer's life and which has hitherto remained unpublished.

A few years ago, in Kiev, I happened to come across a letter from Chaikovsky, preserved in an envelope, the upper part of which had been cut out with the obvious purpose of concealing the name of the addressee. I give the text of this letter which was sent by Chaikovsky from Klin, where he was living at the time, to St. Petersburg. The stamp on the envelope bears the date: June 2nd, 1891.

"Dear Sir," the letter runs, "the method of composing ballet music is as follows: A subject is chosen and the administration of the theatre proceed to draw up a programme conformable with the means at its disposal. The ballet-master then proceeds to schedule a detailed plan of the scenes and dances indicating exactly not only the rhythm and character of the music, but also the actual number of bars. Not until then does the composer proceed to the composition of the music. And so, if you wish 'The Tempest' to be staged, let us say, in the Imperial Petersburg Theatre, you must address yourself to Vsevolozhsky, the director, and the ballet-master Petitpas. Quite likely in the event of your programme being accepted I shall be asked to write the music for it, although I consider the subject of 'The Tempest' too imposing and profound a one for ballet. I really cannot imagine Miranda and Ferdinand making the regulation twirls, leaps and pirouettes, etc. I here-

with return the programme of the ballet.

With profound respect, I have the honour to subscribe myself

P. Chaikovsky."

The contents of this somewhat curious letter go to show the author's reverent attitude to the theme of "The Tempest". In no way averse to ballet music, Chaikovsky preferred to base it on fantastic subjects. But in the fantasy of "The Tempest" he glimpsed a depth of human emotion and a sublime poem of pure love and happiness.

During the last years of his life Chaikovsky turned once again to the images created by Shakespeare. "Hamlet"—a symphonic poem, or a fantasia-overture, to use his own name for it—was composed in the year 1888 and dedicated to Edward Grieg. It was performed in the same year at St. Petersburg, under the direction of the author himself. This was followed in 1891 by a full orchestral score of the tragedy, consisting of sixteen numbers, instrumental and vocal, including two songs for Ophelia and one for the grave-digger. Thus the images of Hamlet received their fullest expression in Chaikovsky's music.

Not long before his death, in the summer of 1890, Anton Rubinstein, inspired by the characters in another of Shakespeare's plays, composed one of his finest works—the symphonic overture to "Anthony and Cleopatra".

Another musician who wrote a score for the same tragedy was Nikolai Klenovsky, a disciple of Chaikovsky and a gifted composer and conductor who accomplished a great deal in the field of theatre music.

A not very successful opera on the same subject was written in the late nineties by Serguei Yuferov.

Pursuing the chronological order of the compositions we must here mention Arensky's music to "The Tempest", consisting of seventeen comparatively short numbers, including several vocal ones (three songs for Ariel). The score bears the impress of a master hand, the poetically expressive entr'acts to acts II and III being particularly striking. Nevertheless Arensky's music did not stay long on the symphonic stage probably due, in the main, to its being merely an accompaniment to the scenic action.

Of the symphonic poems on Shakespearian subjects that appeared in the beginning of the XX century mention must be made of a colourful score, "Macbeth", by the composer Nikolai Cherepnin. The central interest lies in the scene in the witches' cave (act IV of the tragedy). This is one of the composer's finest works, displaying to full advantage his masterly command of orchestration.

Next come a number of vocal compositions on various texts from Shakespeare; viz. a cycle by Michael Ippolitov-Ivanov: "Ten of Shakespeare's Sonnets" and the "Song of Oberon" (from "Midsummer Night's Dream") by Fyodor Akimov. Incidental music was also written for certain stage performances of Shakespeare's plays, which in the main proved of no particular interest. Among these latter works, however, one or two may be pointed out that in my opinion have undeservedly suffered neglect, such as Nikolai Sokolov's charming music to "A Winter's Tale". This consists of an introduction, several symphonic entr'acts and separate episodes.

Turning to Russian music composed after the October Revolution we find the interest in Shakespeare steadily growing. This tendency is manifested not only in the considerable number of compositions but in the variety of musical genres, among which even opera is represented; I have in mind "The Twins" based on "Twelfth Night" by Alexander Shenshin, a gifted composer, lately deceased.

Only quite recently work was commenced on a comic opera, "The Taming of the Shrew" by Vissarion Shebalin, who not very long ago wrote a brilliant score to a production of "Hamlet". What a source of inspiration this subject has proved in Russian music—classical as well as modern! All the various approaches to Hamlet's tragedy have found their reflection in music. We recall to mind Shostakovich's music for a "Hamlet" production at the Vakhtangov Theatre which has entered the symphonic repertoire in the form of an orchestral suite—music, which in congruence with the general conception of the production, stands on the boundary line of tragic-grotesque and bears traits unmistakably expressionistic.

Another musician attracted by "Hamlet" is Serguei Prokofiev, whose music has attained a high degree of expressiveness. Incidentally, his fourth gavotte for pianoforte is little else than the pantomime enacted by the wandering players occurring in the score of "Hamlet". This goes far to explain the tragic shadows of the middle section of the gavotte, coinciding with the scene of the poisoning.

World fame has been won by Prokofiev's ballet "Romeo and Juliet", and not only the theatrical presentation but also the orchestral suites and a cycle of piano pieces. The composer aimed at no conventional style, but, on the contrary, availing himself of every modern device of expressiveness, has created a choreographic music endowed with all the lofty characters of genuine symphonism—endowed first and foremost with that quality of humanism which emanated from the pages of Shakespeare's immortal tragedy. And that is why these orchestral suites, even when heard apart from their stage settings, have the power of stirring the heart with deep emotion.

It is in the music to "Romeo and Juliet" that Prokofiev's lyrical gifts developed and came to maturity and it is not too much to say that in the slow movement of his 7th Sonata is felt a living tie with the musical delineation of Friar Laurence. In this Shakespearian subject, Prokofiev has

grasped the essential element—the nobility of the humanistic conception.

Speaking of Shakespearian themes in ballet, mention should be made of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" by Victor Oransky produced in Moscow last season. The choreographically expressive music permeated with the joy of life contributed in no small measure to the success of the production the central place being occupied by the magnificent figure of Falstaff.

Neither Oransky, let it be said, nor Tikhon Khrennikov in his popular music to "Much Ado About Nothing" set themselves any particular conventional tasks and yet, both scores are heard with the liveliest satisfaction.

A strong impression is produced by "Othello and Desdemona", a choreographic scene by Alexander Krein first performed by Olga Lepeshinskaya and Peter Gussev in 1942. If the composer called his "Salome" a "poem of passion", this scene might surely be entitled a "poem of love", since its tragic epilogue reveals the culminating point of Othello's ecstatic love for Desdemona. Throughout the whole scene the music is fraught with a richness of ornamentation and poignant harmonies hardly compatible with the usually accepted idea of ballet music. Krein, however, just like Prokofiev, thinks of the choreographic embodiment of Shakespearian subjects only in terms of the symphonic mode.

Among works for the piano, apart from Prokofiev's compositions which are virtually transcriptions of symphonic ballet episodes, of more than usual appeal are two dances by Leonid Polovinkin: "Ariel", a gavotte, and "Miranda", a saraband. They are fragments from a larger work contemplated on the subject of "The Tempest", which, judging by these fragments, promises to be a most vivid creation.

Dmitri Shostakovich, who has recently written a cycle of songs to the words of English poets, included in his work the text of the 66th sonnet of Shakespeare which he dedicated to Professor Sollertinsky, a great friend of the composer, now deceased. This song is remarkable for its concentration and pathetic expressiveness.

To round off the present enumeration I will permit myself to mention a song of my own composition, recently written to the text of Shakespeare's 73rd sonnet ("That time of year thou mayst in me behold").

Galina Ulanova and K. Sergueyev in the title roles in "Romeo and Juliet" ballet at the Kirov Theatre, Leningrad

The works of our composers on Shakespearian themes enjoy great popularity in the Soviet Union. On September 13th, 1942, during the days of the Leningrad blockade, at a concert given by the pianist Alexander Kamensky, the first part of the programme was devoted to Shakespeare's works expressed in pianoforte music. And the Leningraders came to listen to this music, sensing with particular force what is so close to us in Shakespeare's art—the strength of his acclamation of life, his manliness, his wisdom.

Professor IGOR BOELZA

ART OF THE SOVIET FAR NORTH

How many of my readers, I wonder, have ever heard of the Dolgans, the Chukchi, the Lamutes, the Yakuts, the Nentsi, the Evenki or the Koryaks? And of those who by chance may have heard of them, how many know anything of their art?

In old Russia these tribes would roam the Siberian tundra and the taiga, oppressed, exploited nomads, even more oppressed and exploited than the other peoples ground down under tsarist rule. They were fair game for every hireling of the tsar, every trader who came their way and gave them nicknames insulting to their national self-respect. The Nentsi for instance, they dubbed "Samoyeds".

But now these peoples have settled down on the shores of the Yenissei River, in the Baikal and other districts of Siberia, in the Far East and in the Buryat-Mongolian and Yakut Soviet Republics. Their nomad days are now a thing of the past,

and their industrial development is proceeding at a speed unprecedented. With practically no intermediate stage they have leaped from the most primitive way of life —hunting, fishing and cattle-breeding—into a socialist community.

Their richly ornamented objects of daily use have always been treasured and sought after by collectors and art-lovers throughout Russia.

Yet hardly anyone took the trouble to study the art of these despised peoples. Indeed, who among the old Russian authorities ever thought of taking it seriously?

But there were a few who did take an interest in these peoples. Political exiles, banished by the tsarist government to Siberia, awakened the national and social feelings of these outcasts and in return the Nentsi, Evenki and other Far-Northern peoples helped many a political exile regain his freedom. The Civil War found courageous, confident representatives of these peoples in the ranks of the Red partisans.

One recalls all this when examining the works of students learning painting and sculpture in the experimental workshops of the Leningrad Northern Peoples' Institute. These are not the works of professional artists, but of future engineers, agronomists and political workers who have mastered the elements of art in their spare time, in addition to their ordinary studies.

Their pictures and sculptures delight the eye with their clarity of conception and spacious composition, the purity of their style and highly developed feeling for rhythm, but above all by their artistic unspoilt naiveté.

But what is it that strikes one most forcibly in all this?

The most striking fact is that these men and women of the Soviet North, hungry for knowledge, make their way to Leningrad, and those who show artistic talent receive training in drawing, painting and sculpture. Their teachers see to it that they are not led astray by trivialities devoid of style and character, by cheap imitations of European art, work that is alien to them, but that they engage in art that is rooted in their own national peculiarities and culture—for it is only in this culture that their art can really take root and flourish.

The teachers are Russians—Russian teachers making every effort to see that the Evenki should paint as Evenki, the Nentsi as Nentsi, the Dolgans as Dolgans. A correct pedagogic method? Undoubtedly. For this is the only way in which the national spirit of the artist can be brought out and developed. And the results of their efforts, unspoilt and pure in style, furnish concrete and practical proof of the correctness of the method employed in their training. There is a certain similarity in style but that is only natural in the art of peoples who for the most part are related to one another. Yet most of the paintings differ in style not only individually, but also nationally.

There is yet another aspect, however, of this pedagogic method. It is only in a fraternal union of peoples that the method described is at all feasible. It can be suc-

A Fishing Collective Farm

By K. Pachka

Reindeer Mother and Calf *By K. Kichigin*

cessful when antagonism between peoples has become a thing of the past, when each nation enjoys its due meed of respect and none is held in contempt.

As has already been pointed out, we are here dealing with an art of high aesthetic quality born at a primitive stage in the general cultural development of these northern peoples.

It would be a mistake to regard from a narrow European standpoint an art which is not only national, but peculiarly Asiatic, and which both in tradition and development has followed its own peculiar laws. Nor would it be correct to demand of it anatomic correctness of proportion and observance of the laws of perspective according to Euclid. The great Asiatic schools of painting—the classical Chinese, Indian and Iranian—have in their thousand-year-old history developed a form of perspective quite distinct from Euclid's.

Anybody condemning the particular art of perspective employed in the landscape of Kile Pachka, who belongs to the Gold tribe, as "unskilled" and "incorrect" would be wide of the mark. The Golds live close to China, on the Manchurian border. Thus, as a result of continental and national peculiarities, Kile Pachka's pictorial construction and understanding of perspective reveal a definitely Chinese influence (one must here take into consideration an intertwining of European and Asiatic influences). In Pachka's picture we see the Chinese conception of perspective, where objects are shown not one behind the other, receding into the distance, but one rising above the other. To pass by the peculiar aesthetic charm of this picture would mean to confess that you were hopelessly caught in the toils of formal European convention. Judging the picture by European standards, you miss the fineness of its rhythm of line, the crystal clarity of the drawing, the large-scale and at the same time infinitely delicate portrayal of nature in this extensive landscape with its tiny human figures.

Of human and comparative anatomy these artists know little, but they need no study of its skeletal structure to give anatomically correct depictions of their favourite animal, the reindeer. They work instinctively, basing themselves on daily observations which enable them to reproduce anatomical proportions correctly, as was the case, for that matter, with the cliff drawings of the paleolithic cave-dwellers. In general, in all these drawings animals occupy a more prominent place than human beings, just as they did with the paleolithic hunter, and the presentment, it should be noticed, is always an ultra-concrete one —the hunter's booty or the domestic animal according to the occupations of the people to whom the artist belongs.

The art of these students has no other scientific foundation save that of folk art in general. But whereas in the case of the cave-dweller it was magic that served to stimulate artistic development—a picture of an animal he had killed being supposed to bring the hunter success, magic thus being invoked to help solve problems of food and clothing—with the students of the Leningrad Institute it is the sheer joy of creative effort that inspires their work.

Their pictures are based on the primitive living conditions of hunting and animal husbandry. The primitive economy of the past, now replaced by collectivization, explains the similarity of certain of their characteristics of form and content with those in the art of prehistoric and primitive peoples (paleolithic art, Negro art, etc.). Here, too, we see, though only faintly, a similarity between their art and that of the child, since in their artistic development children reflect the past stages of human development.

The art of these peoples is not based on direct observations or a direct pictorial or sculptural reproduction of nature; it is rather the sum of firmly imprinted memory pictures, from earlier observation and experience welded into pictorial form, the origin of which reaches far back into the

artist's childhood. And in these translucent and brilliantly crystallized juvenile memories the social childhood is reflected in a most attractive and charming manner.

The fixation of these memories in picture or sculpture shows the greatest sharpness and exactitude of realistic observation when the main objects are animals, and on the other hand, it becomes more dreamlike, more unreal, when depicting trees, mountains, rivers, lakes and human figures, while the undiminished clarity and crystal transparency of the pictorial idea and composition lend them a quality essentially their own. The great unity of nature dominates the entire composition and every detail is subordinate to it. Within this rhythmic multiplicity of the dominent unity, the individual features of the scenery appear in extremely simplified and almost schematically impersonal form. There can be no question of the details being true to life, and the observer, often steeping himself in such a picture, will be no whit surprised to find a lemon-coloured sky suddenly casting an emerald green reflection in a stream, such as one might see in a dream. Here we find the non-naturalistic features of an art that is thoroughly realistic in its depiction of animals and the hunt.

The dominant figure in this art is the reindeer, and the sculptor gives him a sweeping clarity of form. One need only observe the sculpture "Reindeer Mother and Calf", by the Koryak Kichigin. What tenderness, what almost human kindliness is expressed by this animal mother with her young! These artists have learned to understand the reindeer and its ways; more, they even seem to regard the world with the eyes of the reindeer.

The combination of the monumental with a deep intimacy, which is attained by great artists only at a high stage of proficiency, is here often attained with the greatest facility. Take for instance "A Herd of Reindeer", a water-colour by the Tungus woman artist Yeromina. In her picture, the compositional harmony of animal and landscape has found a brilliant solution. The landscape flows rhythmically, delightfully, with its contrasts of large and small, like a repetition of the reindeer herd.

It is remarkable how compositional contrasts are achieved by the juxtaposition of symmetrical composition with elements of assymmetry. The inter-play of the lines of mountains, hills and river form a powerful rhythmic unity. The reindeer are moving in the opposite direction to the mountains, the hills and the river. The similarity of form of trees, mountains, hills and animals form a pictorial element which is expressed by a tangible rhythm and spacious composition. The monumental effect of the whole originates in the simplest elements of colour and form which caress the eye as music the ear, while at the same time the double colour-contrast of black with white (chiaroscuro) and golden-brown with blue (warm and cold) enriches the picture's harmony and melody. The fascination of the colouring is attained by an extreme

A Herd of Reindeer — *By I. Yeromina*

of reserve and a carefully balanced colour composition. The pure, clear and simple harmonies of colour and form are a delight to the eye.

Yeromin, the husband of the artist mentioned above conveys the deadly terror of a reindeer attacked by a wolf. In the drama of this fight for life, the antlers of the doomed reindeer seem to be drooping with anguish.

The relation of these "primitives" to nature is deep and innate. Here the conception of nature as one great unity has not yet been dismembered by a social division of labour. This art has preserved that natural element which present-day fully developed European artists can regain only after overcoming many hindrances. The art of these primitive peoples is far from being as primitive as it might seem at first glance.

ALFRED DURUS

WITH A FRONT-LINE THEATRE

We are off to the front! As our lorry races down the highway it raises veritable clouds of dust that seem to envelop us and the fields, forests and villages that fly by on either side. Dodges, Willys'es, ZIS'es, tanks, armoured cars and lorries join us in the race, their inscriptions "To the West!" glistening in the sun.

There are twenty-two of us and our official title is "The Front-line Branch of the State Maly Theatre."

We are seated on benches, on hay or on cases containing our stage-settings. Five hours, ten and then fifteen fly by as we travel along. I glance around at my fellow-travellers and notice their hair turning slightly grey from the dust until it is completely so. Next their faces darken, grow purplish and then blacken till only their eyes are visible.

It begins to rain. We all pitch in and pull up our canvas roof.

After many hours of this kind of shaking-up our Studebäker begins to look like a vehicle coming direct from the devil's.

And then the manager announces:

"Unit 'X'! Our concert begins in an hour."

And all memories of dust, rain, heat and cold and the bombed shell-torn roads are forgotten. One little minute—and Cinderella is already a princess. Off come the heavy covers of our theatrical trunks, out come the colourful costumes and up go the bright settings. And our audience crowds eagerly around the entrance.

Noisely, the theatre, like a glittering and fantastic fan, is thrown open.

I can't recognize my fellow-travellers any more. Here comes the actor Vladimir Shornikov, all spruced up and shaven, with a flower in his lapel. For the life of me I can't imagine where he has managed to hide it. He bows and introduces himself as master of ceremonies.

Simultaneously with his appearance on the stage, Alexander Nefedov draws out his accordion to its full extent, saying: "Play, my fighting, front-line companion!" Others in our company are the actresses Klavdia Kalininskaya and Maria Mukhanova whose performances of French comedy have yet to be equalled by any Parisian. Here too is Olga Malysheva in the play "Guilty Without Guilt" where she gives such an excellent portrayal of the young Otradina in the first act that one finds it hard to believe, she will portray a woman twenty years older in the next act or that she has just covered two hundred kilometres of front-line roads to get here.

From what source do the actors gain such living force? Maybe because they feel at home on the stage anywhere, be it in Moscow or here, on the banks of the river San. Or perhaps the same blood flows in their veins as activated their ancestors at the time of the covered-waggon which travelled through cities and villages with the carpets that served them as stage...

Our trunks are packed and settings rolled up. "To your horses!" comes the joking command. Trofim sets the motor going. And once again dust, scenes of battle on either side and the slender figures of girl traffic-regulators waving their little flags above their heads. And so on until dusk. Where shall we spend the night? In a trench, an open field, a tent in the forest, on the floor of a deserted house or in a stable covered with sweet-smelling hay?...

A front-line actor can live under the most difficult of conditions; there is nothing heroic about that. What is heroic is that he can act under trying circumstances.

The officers in charge of the units before whom we perform are usually very apologetic because the only place they can offer us for our theatre site is a beautiful virgin forest or a fine clearing. But the theatre's brigadier, the actor Vladimir Torsky, who manages somehow to emerge spick-and-span out of every occasion and very much the cosmopilitan, assures them that he is quite satisfied with what they have to offer and that getting close to nature, in the words of Constantine Stanislavsky, is the aim of all true art.

The usual method of setting up our theatre in the centre of a forest is to clear a huge square in front of the hastily constructed stage. This space, which immediately becomes crammed to capacity, serves as the orchestra stalls. On three sides the square is surrounded by lorries crowded with men, forming the theatre's balconies. The rest of the audience make themselves comfortable high up on the branches of

nearby trees and there you have the gallery. The sun shines overhead as brightly as the chandeliers in the Bolshoi Theatre. There is animated conversation in the audience, just as in Moscow at a gala performance when acquaintances meet, for here too everybody knows everybody else. The exhilarating atmosphere of a première is in the air and I feel somewhat as though already in action...

While the audience gathers, back-stage preparations are made for the play "Guilty Without Guilt". Make-up man Fyodor Evdokimov thrusts his curling-tongs into the bonfire where the flat-iron is also being heated. In the dressing room, surrounded by heather and black-berries, actresses and actors are busy with their make-up. Serguei Alexeyev, the theatre's art director, threads his way among them, inspecting each separately and saying:

"Don't forget, you've a very important audience today!"

He makes this unfailing comment before every concert. Once he said it because officers of the front command were in the audience; on another occasion when the regimental command was present, a third time for a Guards unit, the fourth for an order-bearing unit, a fifth time when the audience was composed of airmen, a sixth time for tankists and a seventh time when infantrymen made up the audience.

To complete the picture I ought to give some idea of the military background. But the words: "The concert was held to an accompaniment of shell-fire" have been written so often that I don't want to repeat them. All the same I would like to tell you about one incident.

It happened on the western bank of the Vistula at the very edge of the front. One evening as our search-light appeared in the sky the ray of another enemy search-light cut across its path. Both beams searched the skies, merged for an instant and once more separated. And our concert proceeded under this continual criss-crossing of rays.

Just when things on the stage were getting really interesting, Messerschmitts came over on a bombing raid. The audience broke into cries of "Messers, Messers!", and many raised their heads towards the sky. The actors feeling that the situation was in their hands realized it was up to them to set the audience, who were their guests, the tone of behaviour. They concentrated heart and soul on their acting and by their intensive efforts forced their audience also to become absorbed in the stage happenings. The voices in the audience died down and nobody else raised his head, although the "Messers" continued to drone overhead.

What can one say of our audience? Their fearlessness has become legendary.

I remember one performance where a small shack served as scenery and the auditorium was a green meadow crowded with men. A horseman suddenly rode into the centre of this crowd. He dropped his reins and stared, enchanted, at the stage. This sight tickled my fancy. He laughed so hard at every joke that his horse fell back on its haunches, then recovered its former position, but with one eye anxiously trained on the stage and the other on its rider.

Laughter is just as necessary in this place as air and water. The theatre here is synonymous with laughter. "Will it be funny?" everybody asks and just try and tell them it won't! It sometimes happens that someone in the audience misses a good bit of repartee because he is still laughing at the last joke. This upsets him terribly, so he "takes himself in hand", tries to control his mirth, get in all the jokes and have a real good laugh when the performance is over. Even before the curtain rises a broad grin, such as can be seen in Moscow at a very amusing play, appears on all faces, although here the performance has not even begun.

In one hospital a wounded colonel was carried in on a stretcher to witness our show. He laughed madly waving his arms. The doctor was the only one who didn't laugh. He sat beside the wounded man and tried to restrain him:

"It's bad for you to laugh!"

"Bad for you!" shouted the colonel through his laughter.

There was one wounded man I shall never forget. He was in a field hospital on the bank of the Vistula. I couldn't see whether he was young or handsome because his face and chest were bandaged. He sat there, erect in his armchair and gazed before him with stern, unmoving eyes, his lips compressed. Everybody around laughed, applauded and was merry but he only grew more stern. He looked like someone from another life, gazing on a world to which he did not belong, with fierce and stubborn hostility.

We sometimes meet others like him—men who have been mutilated by fire, who have lost their limbs, who have been crippled... These people are afraid to look into their future lives, or at their future participation in the life of mankind. Such men have a fierce internal struggle before their will to live wells up again. Our motherland, their friends and dear ones are straining every effort and devoting careful attention to awaken this desire in them once more. Not the least important factor in this respect has been art itself.

I couldn't tear my eyes from the face of this tankist. One merry comedy followed another. Five in all were shown that day but he never altered. And only at the very end when I had lost all hope I noticed with an unusual stirring of the breast, that the expression on his face had become less frozen, that his eyes had grown softer and he began to glance round him, for the first time perhaps with friendliness and good will. He seemed to see for the first time the laughing people around him, the chestnut tree at his side and the thick forest in the distance. At the sight of all

these, a vague, far-off, momentary smile lit up his face. And I told myself that if the theatre which I had accompanied throughout its whole journey had done nothing more than this—returned this man to life by its art and activities—then great honour and praise to it!

We have performed dozens of comedies and have staged the play "Guilty Without Guilt" by Alexander Ostrovsky just as often. It is the drama of a small-town actress who is forced to give up her son to be reared by others. All her life she yearns to see him but meets him only after twenty years and she fails to recognize him at first, when on tour and already famous, she arrives at the city where he has grown up.

While still in Moscow we were already doubtful as to whether such a "tearful" drama as "Guilty Without Guilt" would be popular at the front and whether it would not be better to put on only comedies there: our first visit to the front seemed to confirm this opinion. Once a young lieutenant came to see our performance direct from the front-line. He ran up to us with a pleased expression on his face and immediately asked: "Is it going to be funny?" He was told what he was about to see and, believe me, he was more than disappointed, he got quite angry. "We have plenty of drama here, why do you want to bring us more from the rear?" However he decided to stay and once the performance started, remained to the very end.

There was no need to watch the stage, his face expressed everything that was happening there. Whenever Murov, the seducer of the play's heroine Kruchinina, appeared on the stage, he half-turned away and only occasionally stole a glance at him from under darkened brows. When Kruchinina was visited in her hotel by the actor Neznamov, a stranger to her, the lieutenant urgently asked me: "Is that her son?" with such an expression on his face as though his very life hung in the balance. I hastened to answer and a smile lit up his countenance. "I knew it," he said to me in a whisper. "I felt it."

The curtain went down and he applauded loud and long. He murmured to himself: "God, that was good, very good!.." And this referred not only to the acting but even more to the blissful, fine feelings possessing his heart.

"Tell me," he asked, "are they order-bearers? I would gladly give them half of mine."

I glanced at his breast and came to the conclusion that half would probably do for the whole theatre. All the same I reminded him of what he had said about the drama.

"I? I said that?" he fumed. "Nothing of the sort! I? What nonsense!.."

Another time we were performing at a bombers' aerodrome. The planes around droned so that the theatre hummed like a beehive. The whole regiment was in the audience, all the officers, all the order-bearers. Yes, those were warriors and men, pilots, the best of the best, soldiers who had gone through the fiercest battles, fearless, merciless, relentless and I felt, utterly case-hardened as a result. But even here, as I watched them carefully I noticed every single one wiping away a furtive tear. The regimental commander sat next to me. He saw the fluttering handkerchiefs all around but was determined to "hold out". It wasn't easy. He bit his lips, coughed, rubbed his nose, but didn't "surrender." An unexpected voice from behind stopped this useless struggle.

It was a very young lieutenant with a Hero's star.

"Comrade Colonel, don't be shy, go ahead and cry. Look," he said and burst out laughing, "I've been having a good old blub myself."

The colonel laughed back but the tears rolled down his cheeks. This man, who had sat so silent, suddenly became eloquent. He told us that though recently he had lost four of his best friends yet he hadn't cried. But now... "This story," he said, searching for the right words, "you understand... well, it just hits the spot!" The drama of a woman who searches for her son and then finds him unexpectedly so close to her is probably one of the most insignificant seen by this colonel. But this story was a godsend to him, for the noble sentiments that art inspires can heal the scars left on the soul of man by the sufferings of war.

I want to give another example. An old soldier with a close cropped grey head sat immobile throughout the whole of the four acts, pressing his tommy-gun to his breast. He ignored the intervals and kept his eyes glued to the stage. When asked if he had enjoyed the performance, he answered: "Tears cleanse." Yes, such tears do not weaken but cleanse and steel one for future trials. And this story of mother love which moved these stern hearts inspired and strengthened the noble ideals in whose defence these men bear arms.

Three kilometres from the front-line, which very often resembles world's end are people who have been for weeks engaged in battle, who have not washed or once taken off their boots. They see the announcement of the theatre's arrival—a little white square of paper glued to the bark of a tree. The words which they cannot tear their eyes from and which they touch in turn are: "From Moscow". "Moscow", they say to one another. The opening item, in which the master of ceremonies says to his audience: "Comrades, regards to you from Moscow," has always the greatest success.

...Once again we pack our trunks and jump into the lorry. Russian songs sung somewhere in the distant darkening fields drift through the air to us here, a long way from home. They seem especially near and dear to us at such moments.

JOSEF YUZOVSKY

During the German air-raids on Moscow in the summer of 1941, an enemy bomb wrecked the building of the Central Puppet Theatre. The company set off on what proved to be long wanderings throughout the length and breadth of the Union. Headed by Serguei Obraztsov, the Moscow puppet folk visited the Volga, the Urals, different localities in Siberia and made several journeys to the front. It was under the trying conditions of "nomad" life that a new production, "The Deer-King", a fairy-tale by Carlo Gozzi, was prepared. In 1944, the theatre returned to Moscow and performances were resumed in a building thoroughly repaired and beautifully appointed. "The Deer-King" made his appearance behind the footlights for the first time on a Russian stage. It had fallen to the lot of the puppet actors on a puppet-stage to resuscitate the romantic entrancing images of Carlo Gozzi. The airy lightness of the fairy-tale, its poetry, its fantastic lyricism have been skilfully and intelligently handled. The characteristics of the dramatis personae are sharply delineated and expressively portrayed. One forgets these are puppets,—you are in a world of living men and women, separated from you by the fantasies of fairy land. One of the oldest puppet players, Eugene Speransky is particularly good as Truffaldin, the bird-snarer. The producers are S. Obraztsov and V. Gromov; the whole spectacle is fresh, witty and ingenious.

Living somewhere in Moscow there is a girl, Anna Smirnova by name, who saved the life of Red Army Lieutenant Melnikov on the battle-field. Coming to Moscow for twenty-four hours' leave, the lieutenant is determined to find the young lady and tender his thanks in person. The trouble is that at the inquiry bureau he is given dozens of addresses of Anna Smirnova; just too bad that this name should happen to be one of the commonest in Russia. Off starts the lieutenant on his difficult quest. A series of amusing situations occur. We see our young soldier in all kinds of homes and among all sorts of people. He meets with the warmest welcome, lively sympathy, and all wish to help him in his embarrassing position... but not one of the Anna Smirnovas presented is the right one. At long last much to the audience's delight the lieutenant finds the girl who has saved his life.

Such is the simple plot of "Somewhere in Moscow", a new play by Vladimir Mass and Michael Chervinsky, staged at the front-line branch of the Vakhtangov Theatre. The performance by the group of young actors is pleasant and animated and is a great success with army audiences.

Theatrical life has again come into its own in the towns of the liberated Ukraine. Five opera-houses, seventy-three dramatic theatres and four musical comedy play-houses, not to mention the several children's theatres have all resumed work. The Kiev Opera-House has opened the season with a new opera "Naimychka" (The Hired Help) by the composer Veriklivsky. At the Dramatic Theatre, the anniversary of the Ukrainian capital's liberation was marked by a performance of "Khreshchaty Yar" by Lyubomir Dmiterko. The heroic epic of the fight for the Ukraine stirs the hearts of both actors and spectators many of whom have been personal participants in this struggle. The Kiev Theatre of Musical Comedy has opened the season with "Jiroflé-Jirofla". The theatres of Kharkov, Dniepropetrovsk, Zaporozhie, Stalino and Lvov are opening with new productions.

Boris Pasternak, the prominent Soviet poet, has finished translating into Russian two Shakespearian tragedies—"Othello" and "Anthony and Cleopatra". The reading by the poet himself of the "Othello" translation received enthusiastic approval from a large audience of theatrical people and Shakespearian scholars in the Shakespeare Hall of the All-Russian Theatrical Association. The hand of a master is clearly evident, too, in the translation of "Anthony and Cleopatra" which has been published by the State Literary Publishing House as a separate volume.

More and more plays by Russian and foreign playwrights are being translated into the Kazakh language and included in the repertoire of the Kazakh Soviet Republic theatres. Nikolai Gogol, Alexander Griboyedov, Alexander Ostrovsky, Maxim Gorky, are names figuring with increasing frequency on the playbills of Kazakh theatres. Translations of "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Romeo and Juliet" are the latest additions to this list of dramatic works.

The personality of Ivan the Dread and his role in the creation and consolidation of the Russian state have of recent years been the object of the greatest interest to both writers and dramatists. The theatrical season of 1944-1945 has ushered in two plays with Tsar Ivan as the central figure: "The Great Tsar" by Vladimir Solovyov and Alexei Tolstoy's "The Eagle and His Mate", the première of which met with outstanding success on the stage of the Dramatic Theatre at Kemerovo, one of the big industrial centres of the Soviet Union. The latter production, staged by the Vakhtangov Theatre, was favourably reviewed in the Moscow press.

"A Month in the Country", a play by Ivan Turgenev, is playing at the Moscow Theatre of the Lenin Komsomol.

A play entitled "Soldiers of Stalingrad" by Nikolai Virta, a well-known Soviet playwright, is being performed in the reconstructed premises of the Voronezh Theatre.

"Stalingraders", a play by Yuri Chepurin, an eyewitness and participant in the heroic defence of Stalingrad, is included in the repertoire of the Dramatic Theatre of Krasnoyarsk.

The Kuibyshev Opera-House opened its season with Chaikovsky's famous opera "Eugene Oneguin".

Some five hundred works, representing eighty painters, sculptors and black-and-white artists of Soviet Armenia are on show at the exhibition of Armenian artists in Moscow.

Entering the halls of the building, you find yourself in a sparkling, sunlit joyous world. True to the traditions of its people the art of Armenia is instinct with a characteristic feeling for colour, replete with a decorative brilliance.

The place of honour is accupied by the works of the veteran Armenian artist, Martiros Saryan. An essay on the art of this painter was printed in No. 10 of our magazine. To this maestro Armenia's young artists owe a debt of profound gratitude. The decorative style of his art finds further development in the paintings of the two sister-artists, Mariam and Yeran Aslamazyan, who have sent a number of still-lifes, landscapes and subject pictures. Great versatility of technique is shown by Mger Abegyan, who excells in reproducing the nature of Armenia. He has forwarded a number of etchings on war themes — austere and permeated with a restrained wrath.

Exhibiting for the first time in Moscow is Ovanes Zardaryan, a young painter combining a modest simplicity with broad decorativeness. Conspicuous among the exhibits are the works of Eduard Issabekyan, another of the younger painters. His canvases possess warm, vivid colour and the drawing is tense and impetuous. His "Execution of a Woman Partisan" and "David-Bek" attract the eye with their powerful themes.

Faithfulness to the traditions of old Armenian art is the distinguishing characteristic of Akop Kodjoyan, a veteran among Armenian artists. Here is the acme of the exquisite conventional mode in the style of the Armenian or Iranian miniature. Gabriel Gyurdjyan, another master of the older generation, is represented by several peacefully contemplative landscapes of Armenia in a lyrical vein.

The exhibition contains many modern sculptures. Side by side with those practised masters, Ara Sarkissyan, Grigori Kepinov, Suren Stepanyan, is some fine work created by the youth. Most of the sculptures (compositions and portraits) are devoted to themes of the National War.

The exhibition is eloquent testimony of the serious progress made by creative art in modern Armenia.

An exhibition of the works of three venerable Soviet artists, Mikhail Avilov, Gueorgui Savitsky and Vassili Meshkov, is on view in the halls of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

The centre of attention is occupied by a large historical canvas from the brush of Avilov presenting the fight of the Russian warrior Peresvet with Chelibey, the Tatar knight. This is an historical episode which preceded the famous battle fought between the warriors of Dmitri Donskoy and the Tatars on the field of Kulikovo (1380). The picture is impressive in the boldness of its conception, its dynamic movement, the depth and forcefulness of imagery, the breadth, firmness and harmony of its style. These enormous figures of the riders on their rearing steeds, grappling in mortal combat, somehow cling to one's memory. Avilov's other paintings are, as it were, supplementary and explanatory to this, his principal work. His "Cavalry Charge", a modern composition, is well worth inspection.

The themes of Savitsky's compositions are extremely varied, embracing the epoch of Pushkin, the modern collective farm, life in Kirghizia and war episodes. The genres range from illustrations of books to huge panneaux; from posters to large canvases. "The Conquerors" is a painting full of profound satirical force. Amidst the ruins of Stalingrad, some German soldiers, clad in tatters are seen hacking pieces of flesh from the carcases of dead horses to be cooked for dinner in a kettle over a fire of piled up books... Besides a few subject pictures, e. g. "The Son", "The Fallen Friend", "The People's Avengers", there is a series of landscape sketches, dedicated to the old Russian town of Penza, where the author spent his childhood and which he recently visited after a lapse of many years.

A love of Russian scenery, especially the autumn landscape, is the dominant note in the paintings of Meshkov, one of the oldest of Soviet painters. His landscapes are indubitably master-pieces, the finest among them being "The Ferry", "Going Home", "Moscow Outskirt" — all permeated with profound feeling.

Different as is the art of the three participants of the exhibition, yet there are certain unifying features.

Foremost among these similarities are the organic ties binding them to the best traditions of Russian art in form and contact — in the very source of creativeness. All three masters have always been, and consistently remain, realists. Another unifying trait is that two of the number, Avilov and Savitsky, have produced battle-

pieces, portraying the struggle of the Russian people for their freedom and independence, while the third, Meshkov, inclines to the landscape of war representing the land on which the people of Russia have fought in the past and are still fighting.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, Soviet cinema audiences had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the first experimental efforts of Semyon Ivanov, the inventor of the dimensional film. The first stereo-film entitled "The Concert" was shown in one of Moscow's cinemas. Stormy applause broke out when from the screen white-winged birds appeared to come fluttering into the hall, girls seemed to be throwing bouquets of flowers to the audience and the waves of the inrushing tide threatened to flood the auditorium.

Semyon Ivanov has untiringly continued through the war years to work on the improvement of his invention. The first stereo-cinema screen was a structure compounded of 30,000 of the finest copper wires. The latest design is constructed of 36,000 wires laid over a reflective pearly surface, a device enhancing the clearness and vividness of the image by some 50 to 100%.

The new film "On the Trail of the Enemy", single episodes from which have already been shown in the experimental hall of Ivanov's laboratory, was not shot in the special conditions of a pavilion, but from nature — in places where the German invaders had only recently been expelled. It is wonderful what convincing force the newsreel attains in conditions of the stereo-cinema. On the screen are the suburbs of Leningrad—Pushkin, Petrodvorets, Pulkovo. The iron beams of the frame work of burnt palaces seem to hang suspended over the hall; the tops of charred trees are swaying right over the heads of the audience. The liaison men setting up telegraph leads seem to be stretching the long wires from the very hall where you are sitting. How strong is the impression of the demolished fountains at Petrodvorets juxtaposed with the old stereo-shots showing them in all the sparkling beauty of their play!

The next number scheduled for shooting by Soviet stereo-cameramen is a full-length feature film based on Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe".

"The Entry of the Red Army into Bucharest" is the title of a documentary film now being shown on Soviet screens. Tanks and infantry are seen passing through the streets of Bucharest its inhabitants welcoming the Red Army. A series of stills show the depredations wrought by the Germans before leaving the city.

A thousand performances conducted for servicemen at the front-lines have been given by mechanic Sergeant Favorsky. The first film shown by him to pilots three years ago was in the area of Rostov-on-Don. The thousandth performance was held on the territory of Rumania.

"You will see a page from the history of the National War, a page from the history of the struggle waged by Leningrad, proud, stoical Leningrad..."

These are the opening words of the play "At the Walls of Leningrad" by Vsevolod Vishnevsky, a vivid spectacle illustrating the heroic epic of the city's defence. It is the story of three days in the life of a marine detachment, one of those that held back the enemy onslaught at the walls of Leningrad.

Before your eyes a panorama of the majestic city is unrolled against which a warship is silhouetted. Strong gusts of wind lash the waves. A sailor comes out onto the embankment and relates the events of September 1941. The curtain rises. On the stage appear the heroes of his story, the deeds of valour they have performed... A detachment is hastily formed of the crews of warships and workmen-volunteers marching to the defence of their city.

The two subsequent acts represent the sector of the front where the detachment is fighting the enemy. War unites the people by firmer bonds. Under the influence of comrades inured to campaigning, raw recruits develop into intrepid soldiers. Cowards and traitors reap the reward they deserve.

The author of the play, an eye-witness and participator in the defence, was formerly a sailor himself, familiar with the vicissitudes of a sailor's life, knowing and loving the men of the sea. This is the reason why the images he has created are so vivid, so unforgettable.

"At the Walls of Leningrad" is being performed on the stage of the Baltic Fleet Theatre. Fourteen years ago merely an amateur Red Fleet ensemble, it is now a large professional theatre closely linked with the Baltic Fleet. Listed in its repertoire are plays by Russian and world-famous authors—Ostrovsky, Shakespeare, Goldoni—and works by modern playwrights. But the greatest favourites are plays reflecting the life of the fleet, its heroic traditions and the prowess and selfless devotion of its men. And it is along these lines that Vsevolod Vishnevsky has created "At the Walls of Leningrad". The theatre is familiar with the life it is portraying; its actors have met these seamen in battle and on the march, under bombardment and artillery fire. Hence the sincerity of feeling, the harmony of the author's conception with the interpretation given by both producers and actors, a unity which is an outstanding characteristic of the productions of the Baltic Fleet Theatre.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Scientific problems to be studied within the next few years are being discussed at the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. The Presidium, under the chairmanship of the President of the Academy, Vladimir Komarov, heard a paper by Academician Ivan Meshchaninov giving the proposed plan of work for the Literature and Language Department. Among the immediate tasks confronting Soviet philologists is the compilation of comparative grammars of several languages. Books of this class for the Iranian, Turkish, Mongolian and Caucasian groups of languages are already under way. Research work on the documents of ancient Russian literature, viz. treaties between the Russians and the Greeks, "Russkaya Pravda", the works of Vladimir Monomakh, the Laurentian Chronicle, etc. is being contemplated. An extensive study of the literatures of the peoples inhabiting the Eastern region of the U.S.S.R. has been planned. Taking part in the discussion were prominent Soviet scholars, including Academician Vladimir Obraztsov, Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, Vyacheslav Volgin and others.

Special meetings of the Academy Presidium are devoted to the discussion of plans for the Physico-Mathematical and Chemical Departments.

Twenty-five years ago the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic was founded.

During the years of its existence, the Academy has developed into a large association of scientific research institutes. There are four departments: Social Sciences, Physico-Chemical and Mathematical Sciences, Biological and Technical. The departments comprise twenty-three institutes and other scientific bodies. Attached to the Academy is a library containing some five million volumes.

The activities of the Academy are intimately linked up with the life of the Ukraine; the investigation of the country's productive forces, its electric-power resources, the rationalization of industry and agriculture—all have been considerably advanced by the Academy's labours in these provinces. In the first days of the war, the Academy, together with its numerous affiliations, was evacuated to Ufa, capital of Bashkiria, where its members continued their work, adjusting their efforts to the needs of war-time. Not a few technical problems of extreme importance to war industry were solved as, for example, certain new methods of electric welding, which while diminishing the weight of Soviet tanks, substantially enhance their durability. Credit is due to the Institute of Clinical Physiology where a great deal has been accomplished in the field of blood transfusion, preparation of anti-reticular cytotoxic serum, etc.

The works of Ivan Krylov, author of Russia's classic fables, are famous throughout the world.

As far as the sixties of last century, Academician Athanasius Bychkov established in his book, "Translations of Krylov's Fables into Foreign Languages", that Krylov's works had been translated into English, French, German, Italian, Danish, Hebrew, Yiddish, Finnish, Polish, Czech, Arabian and Armenian. Towards the end of the XIX century, Peter Draganov, the bibliographer, produced evidence of new translations of Krylov's fables into yet nine more languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Rumanian, Serbian, Slovenian, Georgian, Ukrainian, Greek and Turkish.

In the hundred years from 1817 to 1917, Krylov's works appeared in thirty-six languages, twelve of which belonged to the peoples inhabiting Russia. Under Soviet power, the fables have been translated into seventeen more languages, including Turkmenian, Komi-Zyryan, Oirotian and others.

In the English translation, Krylov's fables first appeared in Edinburgh, in 1821, mainly in magazines and anthologies. In 1834, a book by Talvy devoted to the literature of the Slavonic peoples was published in the U.S.A. Here the author speaks of Krylov as being the "favourite of a nation". In the latter half of the XIX century separate editions of Krylov's fables were published in England, France and America.

The 175th anniversary of the birth of the Ukrainian writer Ivan Kotlyarevsky, author of the parody on Virgil's poem, the "Aeneid", was duly marked throughout the Ukraine. In this parody first published in St. Petersburg in 1798, are depicted in humorous styles the life and manners of Ukrainian society during the XVIII century. Written in the Ukrainian language it became very popular and was widely read. It exerted no inconsiderable influence on the development of Ukrainian literature. The libretto of the comic opera "Natalka Poltavka" written by the same author in 1818 has been a perennial favourite for over a hundred years and is to be found in the repertoires of many Ukrainian and Russian theatres.

The anniversary was further marked by a festive meeting of the Ukrainian Aca-

demy of Sciences. During the concert, excerpts were read from the "Aeneid" and several scenes performed from "Natalka Poltavka".

At the All-Russian Theatrical Association a reading was given by Vassili Levik who acquainted the audience with his translations of the poems of West-European poets. Levik stands in the foremost ranks of Soviet translators. The range of his art is very great for he translates with equal ease from English, French or German. Romance, pure lyricism, biting satire —he conveys them all with a high degree of effectiveness. We cannot but admire the way in which he tackles texts that offer the utmost difficulty to the translator, overcoming these difficulties and achieving an equivalent meaning and poetic expression.

Levik read his translations of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Browning's poem "How They Brought the Good News From Ghent to Aix" (both works which have hitherto been considered by many poets to be untranslatable), as well as verses by Keats, Shelley and Heine. The second part of the evening was devoted to a cycle of translations from Ronsard.

Strange to say,—Levik, with his excellent command and delicate understanding of verse, has never come forward as a poet in his own right, preferring to devote his talents entirely to the work of translation.

One hundred and twenty schools of higher learning have been reestablished in Soviet towns liberated from the German invader. The Universities of Rostov-on-Don and Novocherkassk have resumed their activities.

At the present moment in this, the fourth year of war, twenty-one institutes of higher learning are working once more in Leningrad freed from the German blockade. Regular studies have also been resumed in many other institutes, including Polytechnic, the Chemico-Technological, the Mining, the Electrotechnical and the Finance and Economic Institutes, where lectures and classes in practical subjects are conducted by some two thousand professors and instructors.

In liberated Odessa, after a three years' interval, the doors of the Public Library have been thrown open to the public. During the hundred odd years of its existence (it was founded in 1829), the library has accumulated some two million books, ranging from ancient manuscripts and rare volumes of the greatest antiquity to the latest Soviet editions. In August 1941, it proved impossible to evacuate these precious volumes from the beleaguered city and they were threatened with destruction. Thanks to the devotion and resourcefulness of the staff, a portion of the books were saved from looting and burning.

The library, which has been restored and replenished, is now again open to the public.

In the factories and works of Stalingrad, now been started again, special rooms for mothers have been fitted up—"Welfare Rooms for Mothers" as they are called. Here during intervals of work and after working hours the women can wash, nurse their infants, receive advice or read books and pamphlets on the care of children, etc.

One million four hundred thousand roubles have been given by the actors and actresses of the Maly, Moscow's oldest dramatic theatre, towards the Army Defence Fund. This donation was used to construct a squadron of fighting planes which was subsequently handed over to the military unit commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union, Shinkarenko. The presentation ceremony was celebrated at a festive gathering of the Maly Theatre company headed by artists Alexandra Yablochkina, Varvara Ryjova, Prov Sadovsky and others. At the end of the meeting the planes took off, heading for the front.

The name of Vladimir Mayakovsky was inscribed on the side of a new powerful tank as it left the conveyer of the Kirov works.

The machine was built with the money given by Vladimir Yakhontov, the well-known actor. An improvised meeting was held on the factory's tankodrome where the workers surrounded the formidable machine, from the turret of which Vladimir Yakhontov delivered some of Mayakovsky's fighting verses.

Lydia Ruslanova, famed for her performances of Russian folk songs, has purchased a mortar battery and presented it to the N. Guards Mortar Regiment.

Editor-in-chief: HELEN STASSOVA

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