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THE TWENTY-SEVENTH RED ARMY ANNIVERSARY

For the fourth time the Red Army celebrates February 23rd, the anniversary of its formation, in the midst of this great Patriotic War. It will meet the present anniversary in the bright rays of the mightiest of victories, on German soil, on the eve of the utter destruction of nazism. And for the Soviet people each of these successive wartime anniversaries of the Red Army has taken the form of a review of their strength, filling their hearts with legitimate pride.

In February 1942, with the Soviet-German war, in its first year, the Red Army could already look back on its first major success. It had halted and smashed the Germans in the Battle of Moscow, had delivered telling blows at Rostov-on-Don and at Tikhvin; and in the course of its winter offensive had pushed them back considerably. The situation, however, remained grave. Leningrad and Sevastopol were besieged; the vast territories of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Baltic republics were for the time being in German hands. But every passing day made it clearer to the world that a force had been born which was capable of blunting the edge of Hitler's vaunted "blitzkrieg" and of putting the German war machine out of gear.

A year went by, and by February 1943, the world thrilled to the news of the titanic Stalingrad operation, unparalleled in the annals of warfare. The rays of the Stalingrad victory illumined the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Soviet armed forces. No one in the anti-hitlerite camp doubted any longer the possibility of final victory over Germany. Stalingrad was the turning point in the war against Hitlerism, not for the Soviet Union alone, but for the world.

By the time the third wartime anniversary came round, the Red Army was battling for the final liberation of the Ukraine. It had already forced the Dnieper, the most formidable water barrier in Eastern Europe. Two thirds of the Soviet territory overrun by the Hitlerites had been liberated. The German generals themselves openly renouncing their offensive strategy, proclaimed the defence of the "European fortress." But the war was still being waged on Soviet soil, the Red Army as yet fighting alone was bearing the brunt of the struggle, and in the camp of the fascists and their avowed and covert friends, there were still those who hissed with venom: "We'll see who'll be top dog yet!"

Now comes the fourth wartime anniversary; the Red Army is twenty-seven years old. And the significance of the year that has passed can hardly be overrated.

The liberation of the occupied Soviet lands has been completed. The Red Army has crossed the Soviet frontiers from the Baltic to the Black sea. It has entered nine foreign countries. It has set foot on the territory of Germany itself. It has not only wrested from Hitler his phantom "conquests" in eastern and south-eastern Europe, but has deprived him of all his allies and satellites. Today the criminal gang that set out to subdue the world stands alone in the war in Europe. And what is particularly good to know is that on this anniversary the Red Army is no longer fighting single-handed: Germany is gripped in a vice, between two fronts. The stricken beast is still squirming and snapping ferociously when it gets the chance; it hopes to stave off the reckoning and mitigate his punishment. But ahead of it lies certain doom.

In 1944 the Soviet people achieved their first and foremost aim in this war—they cleared their land of the invader. And while performing this job, decisive victories were won by the Soviet armies and the armies of the Allies. At the beginning of 1945, the war entered a new phase. The Red Army set about solving its second and last task—that of smashing nazism in its own lair. This phase of the war will end in the utter and final defeat of Hitler Germany.

In 1944 the Red Army appeared before the people of the Soviet Union as the liberator of the whole country. The Red Army draws its strength first and foremost from its intimate bond with the people and the complete identity of interests between the workers, whether of hand or brain, the peasants and the soldiers. In the bitter days of reverses in the field, during the grim retreat of 1941—1942, the Red Army drew on this source for strength to resist the enemy. Volunteers streamed into its ranks, the people's guards marched to meet the enemy, the partisans rose to give battle behind his lines. The war was being waged not only by the army, the regular, uniformed troops; the entire country was in arms hitting back at the enemy.

Now the situation has changed. Partisans need no longer thread their way through the forests; they have long come out to shake the hand of their uniformed brothers. Right along the front, fighting has become the job of the regular soldiers.

But the bonds linking the army and the people have not loosened. On the contrary, the people's actions at every turn express their affection and concern for the fighting man. Soviet men and women are ready to make grave sacrifices, they are consciously

sacrificing material comforts in order to let the front have all it needs. And the Red Army today lacks nothing; what is most important, it has an abundance of first-rate equipment. It has more and better arms than the Germans, and those arms are the people's handiwork. Millions of factory workers have a direct share in their army's battles and victories.

Just see what the attitude in the Soviet Union is to the man in uniform, whether officer or rank-and-filer, and you will realize what this army means to the people. The people consider that the welfare of the men at the front and their families is not merely the government's concern, but their own as well. The modest presents sent to unknown soldiers speak volumes, and so do the handshakes and smiles of friendship which greet the man in khaki. Servicemen in the rear are gladly accorded the minor privileges rendered more precious by the restrictions inevitable in wartime.

But the past year has brought our army into contact with a multitude of new people, with men and women of other countries. As an ally bringing deliverance, the Red Army has entered Poland and Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Norway. It has sent the Germans packing from Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. Magnanimously it has reached out a hand of peace to the people of Finland.

What oceans of foul slander, what filthy fascist propaganda calumnies of the Red Army were poured for years into the ears of the people of the Hitler-enslaved countries! But anyone who takes a look at the underground press of these countries, from partisan handbills to literary magazines, will see that this propaganda failed miserably. Deep in their hearts the people formed a true image of the army of whose deeds the millions heard despite all nazi bans.

Now the people of a number of countries have seen the Red Army on their own soil, and have convinced themselves that their ideas of its moral standards were well-founded, while those who did succumb to the influence of nazi propaganda are compelled to admit that the German horror tales of the Red Army were nothing but an inapt attempt to scare the population of these countries, poison its mind against the Soviet Union and so impede the liberation of the nations from the Hitler yoke.

The attitude towards the Red Army abroad is the result of the actions and conduct of its men. In dozens of documents, published and unpublished, people in Rumania, Bulgaria and other countries draw a contrast between the Red Army and fascist soldiery. It is a fact, they say, that the Germans plundered, while the Russians pay. The Germans were arrogant and brutal; the Russians are civil and friendly. The Germans bragged of their "superiority," and scorned everything non-German; the Russians respect other nationalities and their traditions and way of life. The Germans installed crematoriums to burn innocent victims; the Russians help to rehabilitate schools, universities and clubs. The Germans encouraged violence and club-rule as manifestations of the "true German spirit;" the Russians punish relentlessly any individual who should indulge in acts of violence.

Nor is that all. While making no attempt to impose its political doctrines, the army of the Soviet Union, that most active member of the anti-Hitler coalition, deems it its duty to help the people root out fascism and clear the atmosphere of the liberated countries of nazi pollution. Such measures as the agrarian reform in Poland and Hungary are welcomed not only by the peasantry, but by all sincere anti-fascists, who realize that measures like these strengthen the basis of democracy and thus help to destroy the roots of fascism, which takes its nourishment from reactionary elements.

The past year has scattered the fascist tales about Red Army aims of conquest, it has blasted the notorious "Bolshevization" myth. Not even the greatest innocents in matters political are taken in by such fables today.

Since the criterion of an army's maturity is, first of all, its record in the field, let us see what the past year brought to the Red Army in the way of military achievements?

Between these two February anniversaries, the Red Army throughout 1944, dealt the enemy a series of strategic blows: in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper and in the Crimea, in Karelia and in Byelorussia, at Lvov and on the Vistula, in Rumania, in the Baltic, in Hungary and in Northern Finland. Each of these operations was impressive in scale and consequences, while the scale of some might in themselves be considered equivalent to a whole war. Such, for example, were the battles in which the Germans were smashed in Byelorussia, in Rumania and in the Baltic area. Each of these operations, naturally, had its particular distinguishing points. But there were certain fundamental features common for all of them: determination and clarity of aim, daring and audacity in choice of means, skill and pertinacity in execution. From the military point of view, one can speak of a style common to all of them: the style of decisive operations pursuing the aim of encircling and annihilating the enemy.

But the largest-scale offensives of last year fade before the colossal operations which started on January 12th, 1945. A general offensive was launched, developing from the Baltic to the Danube. Along a gigantic, 1,000 kilometre expanse, the Red Army dealt the enemy a series of such blows that cracked the German frontline defences in a few days. The territory of Western Poland was liberated with lightning speed. The Germans who had considered themselves safe in their own lair, found themselves fugitives.

A year ago, German strategists were still advertizing heir famous "elastic defence," that latest invention at the time. Stalingrad had surely proved once and for all that "elasticity" was notoriously lacking in

modern German strategy and tactics; yet the Hitler propaganda told the world that the German General Staff had at its disposal a special secret recipe for waging defensive operations. This secret, it claimed, enabled the Germans, while retreating, not only to preserve their manpower and equipment, but to keep the initiative in their own hands and even impose their will on their adversary. Such were the German propaganda's attempts to prove on paper the "superiority" of Hitler's vaunted "intuitive" strategy.

But where is the "elastic defence" formula today? Like many other fascist fairy-tales it lies discarded on the scrap-heap of history, and even those who coined the term have very conveniently forgotten all about it. The German defensive tactics this past year might be summed up as "getting caught in traps." The typical decisive feature was not "elastic withdrawal" or "skilful disengagement," but the grinding of German bones in "mincers" big and small.

The twenty-seventh year of the Red Army's existence opened with a series of large-scale encirclements of the Germans in the Ukraine. With the ferocity of a maniac, Hitler clung to the rich Ukrainian lands, and the consequences for the German army were disastrous. In February 1944, ten and a half Wehrmacht divisions were trapped and destroyed in the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky "trap." It took Vatutin and Konev but seventeen days to trap and annihilate 81,000 hitlerite troops. It was a perfect encirclement, executed in its pure form, so to speak: the battle was fought in open country with ample room for unhindered freedom of manoeuvre; and for that manoeuvre both sides commanded powerful mobile forces. The outcome was decided by skill: Soviet encirclement tactics triumphed over German defence ability. The Korsun-Shevchenkovsky "trap" became the classic example of the modern encirclement operation, and Marshal Stalin very aptly described it as a new Stalingrad.

In March, following almost immediately on Korsun, the German forces in the Ukraine were caught in two other big "traps" —in the Nikopol area and in the Snegiryovka-Bereznegovataya. Some ten divisions more—a good 80,000 additional German troops—remained in the fields of the Ukraine as a result. These three encirclements settled the fate of the German defences between the Dnieper and the Southern Bug. The front rolled westward to the Dniester and the Carpathians, and the greater part of the Ukraine was free.

Another "trap" was sprung on the Germans during April and May in the Crimea. In the Crimean peninsula, where the Red Army bottled them up in November 1943, the Germans not only hoped to bide their time in safety; they actually planned to break out. The Crimea was to tie down large Soviet forces, and in addition it was to serve as a springboard for the attempt to recover the Ukraine. That probably was the reason Hitler did not permit his troops to evacuate the Crimea while there was still time. As usual, he paid a heavy price: Tolbukhin's forces smashed through the Crimean Isthmus fortifications, formidable as these were, streamed into the Crimea and drove the remnants of the German divisions into the sea, hoisting the flag of victory over Sevastopol, that city of Russian glory. The armies of Hitler and his satellites shrunk by another 112,000 men.

But the summer of 1944 brought the Germans "traps" of a scale before which even the Crimea tended to pale. In June and July disaster overtook the central group of German armies in Byelorussia.

The brilliantly executed Soviet breakthrough resulted in a number of particular encirclements for the Germans—at Vitebsk, at Orsha, at Bobruisk. All of them merged in one vast "trap" east of Minsk. A German army of half a million was obliterated, another thirty divisions were written off the army lists.

About the same time, in July, several German divisions were caught in the Brody "trap" in the Ukraine.

In August, the storm broke over the Germans in Rumania—just where they least expected a large-scale Soviet offensive. Within a few days, twenty-two divisions were ground to pulp in the Kishinev "pincer" by the forces of Malinovsky and Tolbukhin. The entire Rumanian army was put out of action. The defeat in Rumania, from the standpoint of the number of German troops decimated, was almost the equivalent of the earlier defeat in Byelorussia, and equalled it fully in its consequences: Hitler's "Balkan fortress" crumbled, and the war was transferred rapidly into the heart of south-eastern Europe.

The September-October operations in the Baltic also ended in an encirclement of enormous dimensions. Upwards of thirty divisions were pressed to the sea between Tukums and Liepaja and cut off from East-Prussia. All the Germans' efforts to break out of the Baltic "trap" proved futile. It has been proved beyond question that the fate of Hitler's "invincibles" by now is to get into "traps," but never to get out of them.

Lastly, the arrival of 1945 found the Germans in a "mincer" at Budapest. Ten German and Hungarian divisions, and a number of separate units as well, have, like so many others before them, become the victim of Hitler's strategy—the strategy which Mr. Churchill so aptly described as contributing in no small measure to the United Nations victory.

Such were the main "traps" which the Red Army sprung on the Germans last year. It is certainly the record of an army grown to manhood and maturity. The sum total of these defeats for the Germans is many times that of Stalingrad: in the course of this year, 120 German and satellite divisions were smashed and put out of commission.

In the 1945 January offensive the Germans found themselves in the East-Prussian "mincer"—encircled in Poznan, in Torun and many other places. Once again dozens

of divisions perish; again gigantic cemetries of army equipment!

Clearly, this long succession of encirclements is not the outcome of chance. It is the natural result of specific causes, a fruit of the Red Army's proficiency in the art of warfare, of the Stalin school of military leadership. The 1944—45 operations bear out and strengthen our conception of the Red Army as an army that has learnt to breach any defences the enemy may erect, no matter how formidable. Nor is that all. This army has learnt to manoeuvre so as to place the enemy in the position of maximum difficulty. It is a past master at following up and completing penetrations and turning them into encirclements. And its leaders command the determination, skill and means to crush the enemy after he has been locked in.

The successes scored this past year by the Red Army are being supplemented by a number of brilliant Anglo-American operations in the West.

The net result is that Hitler's Reich is today caught in the grip of mighty "pincers." Being hemmed in on all sides, its resistance only leads to fresh disastrous Wehrmacht losses and to the demolition of the German rear.

Let us hope that the twenty-eighth year of the Red Army's existence will be the year of the last "trap" for the Hitlerites, the year of utter defeat for fascist Germany and of final triumph for the United Nations. And together with the Soviet people, the friends of peace and liberty the world over are confident that in the post-war world the Land of Soviets will occupy a place worthy of the people whose army by its blood saved civilization from fascist barbarism.

Colonel EUGENE BOLTIN

The German paper "Front und Heimat" remarked in a leading article in September 1944 that after Stalingrad the appearance of the war changed

1939 1940 1941

1942 1943 1944

Drawn by Ivan Semyonov

ANATOLE ROUSSOV

THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

The two gaunt birch-trees in front of old Sarapu's house creaked mournfully in the wind: a thick, cold drizzle was falling. From the twiggy branches of the trees hungry jackdaws croaked piteously as they ruffled their wet feathers. The tiled roof gleamed wet and cold. The last leaves were falling from the trees and lay like spots of rust on the grey scale-like tiles. A raw, gusty wind from the Rija Laht, the Gulf of Riga, whistled round the log-built houses, drove wisps of clinging white mist along the ground so that they looked for all the world like a flock of sheep, and ruffled the muddy water in the deep ruts in the dirt road that ran past old Sarapu's house.

The road, looking exactly like a single badly-ploughed furrow, wound its way from the timber mill, from the hills with their shaggy pine-trees. Passing Baron von Achenberg's manor house the road ran into a mist-filled hollow where the wet hovels of the workers' settlement stood huddled against each other at the edge of a dank bog: the huts were roofed with slats that gleamed dismally through the mist.

The road left the hollow for a brown grassy plateau where it looked so shiny and glossy that it seemed to have come out of the water; near the tenant-farmer Sarapu's house the road turned towards the skeleton of an isolated, sinuous, drooping birch-tree. Gusts of wind tousled the birch-tree and as they died down, the tree drooped tiredly, allowing the pliant fingers of its bare branches to hang listlessly. Solicitously, almost tenderly, the swaying branches fondled the arms of a wooden cross that marked the site of a grave; somebody had burnt a laconic inscription on the cross with a piece of hot iron:

"Here in July, 1941, was buried an unknown Russian soldier who died for the liberty of the Esthonians. May his glory and his memory live for ever."

The grave mound was covered with rusty-red withered grass, masses of yellow autumn leaves that surrounded the grave rustled and whispered in the wind and rain.

Beyond the grave the road was lost in the rain and fog until it reached the Narva highway. The fog lay in a thick blanket around a gloomy pine grove beside the highway. A stumpy Opel car, like a shiny, wet, black beetle, crawled out of the pine grove onto the Narva road. The car made slow progress waddling like a duck along the ruts, but where the surface of the road was better, it put on speed. The fans of muddy water that the wheels churned up from the puddles looked like torn and battered flapping black wings, each of their motions filled with evil. The landlord's Opel came to a standstill by the birch-trees with a scream of brakes.

A feeble, hunch-backed old man climbed awkwardly out of the car; the mud squelched under the brown knee boots in which his thin legs were clad.

With his owl's eyes he peered at the cross on the grave and whistled in angry astonishment:

"Pfui doch!"[1]

White chicken's feathers, like crushed butterflies, lay in the mud beside the hunchback: the wind ruffled a pile of tar-smeared hay: yellow birch leaves floated on the water amongst the horse droppings.

Leaning on a thin cane the hunchback bent forward towards the grave and the hump on his back quivered under his thick coat like a living thing; suddenly the wind blew back the unbuttoned skirts of the coat. The hunchback hurriedly grasped the brim of his hat and turned to the chauffeur.

"Rudolph," he said in a cracked voice, "send my tenant here... if he is alive."

A raw-boned man in a rustling oilskin coat climbed hurriedly out of the car; in his shining raincoat he seemed as slimy as burbot. The chauffeur ran along the edge of the road in the direction of the gleaming tiled roof, half way there he turned into a sticky, ploughed field and, cursing softly, made his way to the farmhouse.

He found the tenant on the half-dark porch; the old man was squatting on his haunches working with an axe and smoking his short straight pipe. When the figure of a man blocked the light coming in through the open door he raised his head.

Old Sarapu's flabby cheeks trembled. Blinking confusedly he laid aside the axe and the block of wood he was trimming and stood up slowly and heavily. The pine chips crunched under his feet like biscuits.

With exaggerated mockery the chauffeur raised his check cap.

"Do you recognize me?" he asked in a husky, brisk tenor. His red moustaches waggled: there was something impudent in the chauffeur's behaviour and voice.

"I see, I see, you're feeling cocky, Ka-

[1] An exclamation of indignation.

daka saks[1]," thought Sarapu with aversion, "but it's no good sign if the chicken starts flapping its wings; it's likely it'll soon be in the hawk's claws." Then he smiled.

"How could I help knowing you... You can tell a bird by its feathers, and dung by its smell..."

He saw the chauffeur screw up his sickly, dull eyes angrily, and try to disguise the rage in his face by a pretended nonchalance.

"Listen, cowherd," he snapped out coldly. "The Herr Baron von Achenberg has returned from Germany. The Herr Baron wants to see you. He is waiting by the car..."

The chauffeur gave the old man an evil leer, took a tin-foil-covered packet of cigarettes out of his pocket, took out a Neverburg "Overstoltz" cigarette, snapped open his "pistolette" lighter and lit the cigarette. Blowing the smoke through his nostrils he left the house.

Sarapu went pale—he had always feared this news, and in his mind had always put off the moment when they would meet. Now something broke inside him—some secret hope, the last crumbs of tranquility. The tall, broad-shouldered man stooped as he crossed a threshold that time had worn down as surely as if it had been ground away. With a brief glance through the misty gloom he made out the sinister silhouette of the hunchback, and shuddered...

Stepping heavily behind the chauffeur, Sarapu stared hostilely at his narrow back: water ran down the shining raincoat, it looked as if the coat was slipping off the man as though it was not oilskin, but tar, he thought: another moment and the rain would wash away the black stuff and there before him would be something naked and slimy like a snail. Sarapu spat quietly.

"The Germans surround themselves with the rottenest people..." he said to himself.

He walked with his back bent as though the low heavy sky were pressing him to the earth. Involuntarily, with quiet satisfaction he recalled the Baron von Achenberg's departure.

That was on the third day of the Esthonian Soviet Republic. The people gathered on the estate farm after sunset when the clear summer air had grown cool and the evening breeze blew over the grey dove-coloured hills. There were men and women from the baron's sawmill, old women brought there by curiosity, the ubiquitous juveniles, elderly men who had had a drink or two on the joyous occasion, the whole workers' settlement and the tenant farmers from the vicinity. Even the local mongrels, red, black and white, came tearing to the manor house in a shaggy pack. They met the master's hounds near the stable and halted, the hair bristling on their backs. Then Toompu the mechanic, a man of famed strength and daring, placed four fingers to his lips and whistled so that the windows of the mansion rattled; the wind took up the laughter of the people and the yelping of the dog scrimmage.

The tenant farmer Sarapu and his friend, the joiner Pent, stood apart from the crowd, where the old park began. Sarapu leaned against the moss-grown trunk of a pine-tree; the tree spread its spiky branches above his head, black against the wan evening sky; the first star was shining in the heavens, it appeared to have burst into light amongst the tree's thick foliage, to have got caught amongst the pine needles and to be hanging there twinkling merrily and unhurriedly...

A satisfied smile played on the farmer's lips.

"Look here, men are like sheepskin coats," he said to Pent. "We've lived so many years with all the wool outside: cold ourselves and did not warm others. And now life has turned the coats inside out, pleasanter to the eye and much warmer for ourselves..."

A car drove slowly along the grass-bordered concrete drive; it stopped at the entrance as though stuck in the crowd of people. The mechanic Toompu went over to the car and sat familiarly on the running board: he glanced at the chauffeur over his shoulder and sighed.

"You're not coming back, Rudolph? I see... you aren't... When shall I get a chance to wring your neck, eh? I don't hear what you say, Kadaka saks... You're getting mean with your words, Rudolph, that's not nice of you."

The laughter of the crowd was broken by the engine of the car. The house looked blindly down on the crowd through the dark glass of its windows, the roof with its numerous, pointed-roofed little towers melted into the sky...

Dark figures were supporting the hunchback by the arms...

As the old cripple left the manor house fires were started in the park. A strong but pleasant baritone sang an old Esthonian song, the pines stretched out their branches to the fires as though the times that were past had chilled them, while on the damp grass under the trees the girls danced their jaunty Esthonian "tulyak"...

Toompu stopped near old Sarapu.

"Look what politics does for us!" he said bitingly and spat on the ground. "They've taken the old hunchback away as though he were something valuable..."

Old Sarapu looked at Pent and smiled: all his life his joiner friend had dreamed of making shavings of the baron. Toompu sighed, then walked away among the trees and was lost in the darkness... The damp branches crackled in the bronze flames of the bonfires whose tongues leapt softly into the darkness of night...

Sarapu's recollections brought a pleasant sensation of warmth to his heart. He even began to walk slowly, so anxious was he to retain that sensation.

[1] A name of contempt given to Esthonians who pretend to be Germans.

Glistening raindrops hung from his bushy, snow-white eyebrows; they joined together, quivered for a while and then dropped to the ground, as though the old man's snowy eyebrows were thawing.

Losing the thread of his thoughts the old man sighed and, reaching the road, stopped.

"Guten Tag[1], Sir."

The baron's thin, bloodless lips moved soundlessly and his little head lolled in an ungainly way on his shoulder. The hunchback's glance was as keen as that of a hawk as he took in the old farmer: Sarapu was wearing his grandfather's foxskin cap, ragged and shining black where the hair had worn off; an old sandy-coloured cloth jacket fitted his broad shoulders tightly, there was sawdust on his left boot. Von Achenberg remembered that a year ago Sarapu had said "Ihr Diener"[2], in addressing him, today he said "Guten Tag"...

An unpleasant smile played on the old German's lips and his whining voice rasped like old iron.

"Ich habe Sie seit unglaublich langer Zeit nicht gesehen, Sarapu!"[3]

"Yes, Sir."

"I have come back, Sarapu. It's pleasant to see my land that the glorious German army has given me back..."

The old man stared attentively at the birch-tree, at the soft, grey-green lichen on the patchy, white trunk.

"That's your right, Sir..."

"I am met here by bad weather and unpleasant news, Sarapu..."

As though he understood the baron's anger, old Sarapu made a movement with hands as broad as dock leaves and rugged as pine bark.

"There's a new moon tomorrow, Sir, perhaps the weather may change..."

Old Sarapu had a rich musical voice but the words fell slowly from his lips, like raw dough—there was no sign of good will or sympathy in them.

Baron von Achenberg shrugged his shoulders without raising his head, the coat above his hump gathered up like an empty sack.

"The weather does not interest me in the least. Let the witches of the heaven and earth hold their sabbath. What interests me is—are these my Lofstelle[4] that lie all round us!"

The baron's face was bare, wrinkled and without eyebrows. The baron pressed his lips together and blinked his right eye as he waited.

Old Sarapu's eyes twinkled under his overhanging brows and creases appeared at the corners of his mouth.

"Of course, Sir," he said, "all these Lofstelle belong to you again."

The baron thrust his thin cane sharply into the grave.

"I hope that is not your work on my land."

Sarapu looked attentively at the grave.

"It's nothing to do with me, Sir."

"Today, Sarapu, you will level that grave with the earth and throw the cross into the bog."

The old man raised his brows in astonishment.

"Did you hear me, Sarapu?"

The old man startled by the sharp tones, bowed instinctively.

"Yes, yes," he answered confusedly, "I'll do it..."

The baron shrugged his shoulders and hobbled to the car; he stopped, bent over to the chauffeur and pointed to the other side of the road with his cane; lying in the mud of the ditch was a tangle of rusty barbed wire.

"The remains of the Russian army," he said with a malicious discordant laugh. "Isn't it, Sarapu?"

The laugh bared two stark rows of false teeth that made Sarapu shiver, they were so like the grinning teeth of a corpse.

"You're right, Sir," said Sarapu, "the remains... They're barbed, though..."

The hunchback, still quivering with laughter, turned to the farmer.

"Es ist noch nicht aller Tage Abend, aber das Blatt hat sich gewendet, Sarapu! Auf meine Ehre, wir haben jeder das unsrige! Trau, schau, wem, Sarapu, da liegt der Hund begraben!"[1]

The car door snapped to like the jaw of an animal. Leaving behind it a foxtail of reddish smoke, the car bounced down the road towards the manor house and was soon lost in the fog.

There was a smell of pine tar in the air on the plateau as the wind carried with it the breath of the autumn forest: the farmhouse gate slammed to: the cold hoar frost bit into the immobile figure of the old man. Sarapu sighed deeply, listened a moment to the uneasy soughing wind, and bent over the grave.

"What doings!" he said incomprehensibly.

"Don't get scared," said a calm voice behind him.

Sarapu started and glanced over his shoulder.

"Partisan Toompu?.." he muttered in astonishment.

"Shut up, Papa Sarapu. You don't know me and you haven't seen me..."

Toompu poked a finger between his grey check scarf and his bull neck, pulled at the scarf, jerked his head sideways and breathed deeply with relief.

"I said don't get scared..." he laughed softly. "There's a lot of slush about today and you'll get very dirty if you fall lower than your heel... Now then, don't take offence. I've always been like that. D'you know I paid a visit to my aunt. Yes... she's a strict one, that aunt... I could

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[1] Good day.

[2] At your service.

[3] It's an awful long time since I saw you, Sarapu.

[4] German lands in Esthonia.

[1] The end has not yet come, and things have changed, Sarapu. On my word of honour, we all get what's coming to us. Look out sharply, Sarapu. That's what you have to do!

hardly get away for a day. I hear the Germans miss me around here."

Sarapu shook his head in doubt.

"I don't remember you ever having an aunt before... And the Germans miss you so much that they promise money for you..."

Toompu was astonished but glad. He jumped back.

"That's love for you... You tell them..." he bent towards the old man's ear. "Tell them that Toompu's still alive... by the way..." He stopped suddenly, took a step back and peering keenly at the old man, sighed. "By the way, you don't seem to be either for us or for them."

Sarapu examined the callous on his finger very attentively, bit it, spat and then said:

"The young fight and the old think... What an old man needs, my lad, is quiet."

Toompu thrust his hand into the breast pockets of his jacket.

"You lie, Papa Sarapu," he said sternly. "You live in alarm. You don't know what to do. You don't know where to fit yourself in. To go our way, when you're not used to it, is a bit frightening, and your conscience won't let you go the way the Germans want. You're trying to sit on the fence. Have you forgotten that a good name is worth more than riches?"

The old man contracted his heavy brows gloomily: it was humiliating that a beardless boy, a mere pup who had never worn a white cap (i. e. had never been to a college), should be able to moralize and penetrate into his very soul getting at its innermost recesses. Without trying to hide his chagrin Sarapu coughed angrily.

"How long have your pants been dry, baby? I'am all of three times your age. You couldn't reach the mare's tail when my hide was already tanned with age... Forgotten! And do you know that you can't churn butter or make a coat out of a good name? Life isn't a screw that you can undo and stick in your pocket... They say that when your feet stumble you bang your head. Behind my back there are mouths, behind yours nothing but the wind."

Toompu smiled, then he murmured with bantering good humour:

"Of course God knew who He was sending into the world..."

The old man turned away.

"When you get tired of playing the fool," he said wearily, "you poke your nose in where it doesn't belong and teach your elders..."

Toompu glanced around him.

"Excuse me, Papa Sarapu. All right?" he said seriously. "Don't be angry with me. There's no reason for us to fall out. Yes... By the way, who was in the car? The hunchback?"

"It was he."

"Cursed you, I suppose? Wanted to know what the graveyard was doing there? Eh? Wanted to know who put it there?"

"Something like that..."

"That means the grave will have to go... Well, I'll be off, Papa Sarapu. I'm keeping you out here in the rain, I can't invite you to the house... You forget that you've met me. All right?... Remember one thing, Papa Sarapu, this is war-time, this is the time of justice..."

"Get along, get along, youngster," said Sarapu, gloomily but without anger.

Sarapu's eyes followed Toompu until he disappeared in the fog; then lifting his feet from the sticky mud with great difficulty he made his way to the farmhouse.

On the porch the old man picked up a pinewood chip, scraped the mud off his boots and threw the chip far out away from the porch: he wiped his boots thoroughly on the sacking that served as a mat, and went into the kitchen—the dishes in the little corner sideboard with the stained glass doors tinkled as he walked. There was a smell of smoke and of dry cowhides stretched on frames and hanging from the wooden ceiling. The old fireplace glowed. On a sheet of iron nailed to the floor before the glowing maw of the fireplace the old man's five-year-old grandson was pouring ashes into birch-bark baskets. Martha, the old man's daughter, a thinnish woman of about twenty-four, sat on her heels beside her son, cleaning a saucepan with ashes.

The old man took off his coat and hesitated uncertainly. As though hunting for his pipe he patted himself on the stomach, on the chest, searched the pockets of his knitted waistcoat and then went importantly into the living-room and wandered from corner to corner. The old clock in its dark oak case champed away from its place on the wall, wearily chewing up time; beyond the wide, four-bayed window a low, bare willow, with branches as thin as wire tapped softly and disconsolately at the panes; the tiled white stove gleamed sourly; a little china cow looked up at the old man from the best Sunday table, covered with a coloured knitted cloth; the cow had been a present from Pent; he had brought it from the fair at Vasknarva, about eight years ago...

Sarapu went back to the kitchen, coughed and then with feigned merriment and surprise turned to Martha.

"It seems as though hell is overcrowded with Germans just now," he said. "The devil won't accept the hunchback just yet..."

She replied without raising her head.

"So I heard. I went to the door..."

She began to scrub the pot with a sort of fury, then, tired out, she sighed, straightened her back, and wiped the sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand.

"Why did he send for you?"

Sarapu suddenly laughed softly, shook his head and clapped his dark palms together.

"It's the times. Even little things disturb us... The grave choked him..."

Meeting the keen, curious glance of Martha, Sarapu felt uncomfortable, coughed in his confusion and wiped his wet face with his blue handkerchief.

"He told me to clear away the grave

and throw the cross into the swamp..." he added.

There was a flash of alarm in Martha's light-coloured eyes and the silg, the brooch worn by Esthonian peasant women, sparkled on her breast.

"D'you want to do it?" she asked.

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"What can I do... I'll clear it away..." He tried to speak firmly, calmly and convincingly. "It's all the same to the dead soldier... The cross doesn't press on him and without the cross he won't be any easier... And a nameless grave... That's hardly the place for a grave there by the roadside..."

For a long time the old man tried to draw justifications from his muddled thoughts, but somehow they did not hearten him: he realized this himself and suddenly sighed deeply and noisily. The honest thought that this was an unjust deed soon swallowed up the petty crumbs of words—the old man felt the pity of it eating into him.

"What are you looking at?" he shouted angrily at Martha. "Mind your own business! Nowadays before you can look round they get you... It doesn't suit me to swing in a noose..."

When dusk fell the old man angrily pulled up his trousers, went out onto the porch and got a mica-windowed lantern with a candle stump in it out of the store-room.

"She's a fool," he said to himself. "You have to understand life. Who knows what will happen next? She made eyes as though she had seen a ghost in the churchyard..."

He twisted the lantern round and looked at it but did not go into the shed where the spade was; with a sigh he sat down on the bench in front of the fireplace.

The autumn before, in the twilight hours when there was slush on the ground Sarapu had also sat by the fire whiling away the rainy hours, smoking his pipe and staring into the fire. At that time he involuntarily recalled the evenings of his childhood, his ruddy-faced parents by the fireside, their slowly told, frightful tales of the old days, tales of the treachery of the Livonians; he did not enjoy his memories, his lined face grew hard: he did not like those feelings, for the evil he felt prevented him from looking confidently at the future. He pushed his memories aside and mentally approving of life told himself: "Now you're settled. You have your own land under your feet..."

And now, wretchedly: "Life's a bauble!.." and he spat into the fire.

The old man felt a cold fear creep over his heart like mildew.

"If you look after somebody else's grave you'll dig your own," he thought. "There's no other way..."

It grew darker outside, the kitchen window turned to a glassy blackness; the old man got up, took a thin wood spill, thrust it into the flames and lit his lantern. Sarapu pulled his hat down over his eyes, threw his coat over his shoulders, went out of the kitchen through the other part of the house into the yard.

A patch of trembling light crept across the corner of the yard, first contracting, then expanding, and becoming dimmer again; in the patch of light the wet earth shone and the puddles gleamed blackly. The light fell on the old trough—an old, hollowed-out log—the edges that had been well gnawed by the horses were spotted with bird droppings that showed up white in the light; the log wall around the well, the pump, and the old broken waggon with the front part missing loomed up out of the darkness: at last the yellow patch of light came to a rest on the plank door of the shed, on the beam that jutted out under the thatched roof. Sarapu opened the door, the squelching sound made by his boots in the yard changed to a rustle as he moved amongst the hard, finely cut straw.

From the corner in which lay two old wheels, a torn horsecollar, a rusty bucket and a hoe, Sarapu took his shovel.

The light of the lantern fell onto the courtyard in narrow streaks coming through the cracks between the boards; the wind came from outside through the same cracks, whistled softly, lifting the straw along the walls; the door creaked on its rusty hinges as it swung in the wind.

Sarapu stood in the middle of the shed and looked mournfully into the corner: the horse's stall there was empty now. His ears missed the snorting of the well-fed horse, the juicy crunching of oats between its teeth, the soft inquiring whinny and the dull thud of the hoofs on the straw-covered wooden flooring. When Sarapu came in there was no stirring of life in the shed as there used to be: bats did not fly down from the beams, did not dash into the light of the lantern, softly and hurriedly fluttering their webbed wings; the grey-blue wild doves did not shift uneasily on the cross beams, cooing shortly and sleepily...

The old man's heart was heavy within him: when the German foraging party had taken the grey three-year-old away from the farm it was not he, Sarapu, that had grown poorer, life itself had become poorer; the Germans had drained another drop of blood from the life of the earth. When the Germans ate up his cows it was not he, Sarapu, who had become a pauper, it was the cowshed that was impoverished, another patch of ground had died...

Returning with his gloomy thoughts Sarapu glanced at the dairy in the second, new, part of the house. The darkness trembled and fell away before him like a charred black fabric. The light fell on the white metal pimaniu, the milk churns, was reflected from the nickel bowl of the separator, rats scuttled in the darkness, the light showed up the abandoned butter churn, the oak barrel with the black ribs of the hoops.

The whitewashed walls still retained the smell of milk, curds and cheese although the equipment had become so much useless rubbish.

The farmer left the room despondently, opened the lantern and blew out the light—he seemed to breathe darkness, filling the broad porch with it; then he pushed open the door and went into the kitchen.

Flickering reflections of the fire played on the walls: the wind moaned in the chimney; his little grandson listened to the sound and whispered:

"Tondid (goblin)!"

Outside the foul autumn weather continued. Martha lit a candle and pulled down the sacking blinds. The old man pushed the lantern under a bench and glancing at the shovel in his hand, stood it in a corner near the porch door. He had only now to step over the threshold; but Sarapu lit his pipe, knocked out the tobacco and the ash against the doorpost and began to clean the mouthpiece with a wire. Glancing from under his lowered lids at Martha the old man caught her sidelong glance and her incomprehensible smile—grew red at the effort of restraining his anger, thrust his hands into the sleeves of his jacket and stalked out of the house.

The rainy blustering darkness blinded the old man: the wind filled his mouth with thick wisps of cold clammy mist, gagging him as effectively as rags; gasping, Sarapu made his way to the grave with difficulty.

In the darkness he stumbled over it and stood there for a moment undecidedly. The wind howled savagely in the branches of the birch-tree over his head. Suddenly an invisible flexible branch lashed the old man painfully in the face—he started from the suddenness of it and stumbled backward. A gust of cold wind drove the rain with great force against his chest—it was as though an unseen hand was thrusting him back from the grave. Fear arose in his heart, but the old man pushed it aside.

"Basta (enough)," he said angrily, "you can level it out yourself, sir..."

The howling of the wind drowned his words. He threatened somebody in the darkness and cried out furiously:

"I will not!"

The savage wind immediately tore up his shout and tossed the shreds about in the cold, autumn storm...

II

When Sarapu sat down at the cleanly scrubbed kitchen table, Martha brought him his supper.

The last autumn fly buzzed evilly over the old man's head; then it dashed to the candle, singed its wings, fell on to the table and began to spin frantically round and round; the old man picked it up with smoky, calloused fingers, squashed it and thoughtfully wiped his hand on his trousers.

"You are playing with fire like that fly," he said to himself.

He dipped his bread in the plate of soup, put a piece in his mouth and began to chew it slowly and lazily.

Endel, sitting on his mother's knee, muttered something angry which only he himself could understand; he was eating with a big, heavy spoon, spilled his soup and a drop of moisture remained trembling on his wet chin. All this passed unnoticed by the old man. He was thinking of how soldiers from the manor house would break into the farm the next day, dirtying the floor with their iron-shod boots, they would drag him outside... he would dig his own grave, throwing up the sticky earth with the spade... He probably would not hear the volley. The echo would roll like thunder over the hills... He would lie at the bottom of a damp, narrow pit; bustling ants would raise an alarm and in hurried disorder would crawl out of the grave up earthen walls as soft and spongy as well-matured cheese... This would be the eighth murder in four months...

The old man ate languidly; he asked himself what was the use of his eating today when tomorrow the worms would be eating him. There was a kind of perverse humour in this idea...

The old man felt his legs grow heavier, then breathing became more difficult, every movement of his hand became an effort as though sorrow were winding him in a shroud.

Sarapu stopped eating and for a minute sat motionless. Then he walked over to the blazing fire and sat down beside it. He slowly filled his pipe with black, coarse tobacco, fished a live coal out of the fire, tossed it for a moment on the palm of his hand as though mentally weighing it, laid it on the tobacco in his pipe and blew out a cloud of smoke that screened his face. When the smoke had been drawn into the golden-toothed maw of the fireplace the old man rested his elbow on his knee, his chin in the palm of his hand, and stared thoughtfully at his grandson... The window-panes rattled alarmingly under the driving wind and rain.

"Time to go to bed?" Endel asked his mother.

"Do you think we're going to dance?" she asked him laughingly as she took him from her lap and stood him on the floor.

Endel bent down, scratched his leg and then went over to the old man.

"Am I going to sleep with you?"

Sarapu raised his eyebrows and smiled weakly.

"Why should we sleep together? You have your own little voodi (bed)."

The little boy thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, thought for a while and agreed.

"I have... And you have a big voodi. When I grow up I shall have a big voodi, too, Then a bigger one, and then still bigger. But you won't have one then. You will have a vimnevoodi,[1] won't you?"

The old man's face wilted like a birch-tree in the heat; fussily, he got up. Shivering, as though with the cold, and making many unnecessary movements, he put on his coat and left the house. He was in a fever and his steps were heavy and clumsy.

[1] A last bed, i.e. a coffin.

Sarapu slipped several times but did not fall, merely waved his free hand as though seeking an invisible support in the darkness.

Gusts of wind lashed the old man, hurled the rain at him, whistled angrily in his ear and pushing him rudely in the back howled over his head.

Holding his arm out in front of him Sarapu walked like a blind man; he screened his face from the biting rain—it seemed to him that the wind had laid bare the trees in the forest and was sweeping the spiky autumn pine needles away into the night. In the thick darkness the old man lost the grave.

"What fun!.." muttered Sarapu hoarsely.

He turned sharply back to the road. The road, however, was not where Sarapu expected to find it. Had he believed in devilry he might have thought that this was a trick of the wood spirits, but the old man felt nothing but anger. Suddenly, in the howl and roar of the accursed weather he heard a distinct creaking sound that could only be made by a tree. He rushed in that direction but the storm had deceived him... Again he tried to find the road. He turned and walked into the darkness. After he had gone a few steps the old man realized that he had lost his way.

He felt no fear but his feeling of annoyance had reached the limit. He was cold, wet to the skin and the mud was oozing into his left boot. Sarapu stared into the empty darkness until his eyes hurt him... In that hellish blackness there was nothing but sound. Sarapu ground his teeth and in a fit of rage hurled his spade into the darkness.

Some eight or ten feet away from him the spade struck against a tree with a dull ring. The old man started, held his arms out in front of him and hastened in that direction. Before he had moved three paces he ran into the cross. Then he fell to his knees and crawling in the mud on all fours began hastily to feel over the ground. Involuntarily without knowing it the old man gave himself up entirely to an incomprehensible and callous, malicious joy. Finding the shovel, he got up, walked round the cross, felt for the grave mound with his foot and stuck the spade into the soft earth as easily as if it were butter.

The feeling of anger did not leave the farmer Sarapu; every stroke of the spade was filled with fury but when the iron struck against a buried boulder his thoughts returned to the buried soldier. The old man was upset. This was not superstitious fear, however; Sarapu tried in alarm to smother the feeling, tried not to think of desecration...

Sarapu hurried: he trembled as he began to rock the cross back and forth with desperate determination. As he dragged it to the swamp, Sarapu awaited in fear the moment when he would drop from some weakness that he could not understand. He walked a few dozen paces, then, dropping the cross, staggered to the farmhouse. The darkness, torn and battered by the wind, moaned and wept around him.

III

The storm continued unabated the whole night through; the old man lay with his eyes wide open, listening to its savage howling... The wind whistled down the chimney, glared into the room from the fireplace with the penetrating eye of a single glowing coal.

Several times Endel, on the other side of the partition, awoke and cried out in his thin little treble; Martha was immediately aroused, spoke sleepy soothing words to him and sang softly to him in a sad, childish voice: the song she sang told of how the boy's father was far from home, but still in the homeland, how he was just then sitting with his rifle on his knees under a pine-tree, the night's fighting over. The war would end and father would come back to his son, but in the meantime, she, mother, was with him.

The storm died down suddenly; it seemed that the house had suddenly fallen into some gulf where there was a thick, sticky silence, a silence that weighed heavily on old Sarapu...

At last Martha awoke; she opened the sacking blinds and the dawn light came into the room in a grey fog. The hazy outlines of things appeared in the darkness as though they were hanging in dim space, crowding out the air. The old man felt stifled.

He got up, languidly pulled on his trousers, shirt and knitted vest and sat on the bench by the window.

Patches of woolly white mist trailed across the farmyard. Through the half-fallen fence, between the thin palings black with water, the mist seeped through on to the field. Time, thought the old man, drags across the earth in just such a tired and friendless way.

The old man dropped his eyes, scraped some mud from the knee of his trousers with his big, brown nails and sighed: the day ahead of him had no more to offer than an empty bottle.

He remembered the first days of June... Early morning on the farm, at the time the usual, boring round, like a single coin in a handful of coppers; now, however, in retrospect, it all seemed wonderfully attractive to the old man.

His memory drew him a picture of the dark warmth of the cowshed, the first rays of the sun streaming through the narrow window in the log wall, making a path of sunlight that plunged into the darkness behind the slightly open door; everything came to life under the sun's influence: the steam rose lazily over the freshly dropped dung; the "Dane's" glossy well-fed sides rose and fell regularly, the other cow turned her flat black face to the door and stared with her big moist, intensive eyes, the colour of bottle glass; thick, foamy slaver hung from her soft, damp, pinkish lips; under the roof and forming a ceiling to the cowshed was the hayloft; two blades of dry grass poked down through a crack and hung waving in the rays of the

sun, rays in which millions of tiny motes were floating. The third cow could be heard slowly chewing the cud in a dark corner; a busy brown sparrow darted about under the low ceiling. The air was filled with the aroma of dry dirty hay, and the sharp smell of dung. His daughter brought the milkpails, their handles clattering as she put them down. The "Dane" lowed soft and low. Tucking up her striped skirt Martha said: "Be quiet, Emma," in a voice still rather husky with sleep. Her skilful fingers slid up and down the resilient, pale-rose dugs. A white stream of milk drummed against the bottom of the pail and sang a buzzing, intermittent song: "Day has come... day has come..."

Desperation was added to the old man's longing. He sighed softly, dejectedly watched the mist crawling into the cowshed through the door blown open by the wind; the mist came in little fluffy wisps like the hair lost by a goat.

Sarapu thought up a job for himself in order to get away from these heavy, importunate thoughts; he went to take the cream separator to pieces, and clean it.

The whole morning he sat alone in the dairy, sat on the floor, his bare feet spread apart, with bolts like little iron mushrooms, wide-toothed cog-wheels and spanners all round him. About mid-day the door opened and Martha's frightened face appeared: she came hurriedly to the old man, wiping on her apron hands that were red and wet, apparently from cold water.

"Oh, isake (father)! The baron has come!" she whispered through trembling lips.

The hunchback stood at the door, frowning fastidiously, sniffing at the smell of cabbage soup made from sauerkraut; in the silence he could hear the water boiling in the pot. The baron was wearing a black raincoat with a hood and wide knee boots so that he looked like the wicked dwarf from a fairy-tale. He leant on his thin cane, its extensive handle poking out of his gloved hand—a silver tiger's head which stared straight at his tenant.

"I suppose, Sarapu," said von Achenberg, "that you carried out my wishes and cleared away the grave?"

"Yes, Sir, I cleared it away."

The hunchback laughed and his laugh sounded like somebody shaking up a sack of old iron there on the threshold.

"I want to see for myself. Show me..."

Alarm overtook the old man; there was something about the request that did not ring true.

"If my lord wishes it..." muttered the old man.

He went over to the bed, put on his socks and boots, walked stiffly to the door, took his cap down from the nail, clapped it on his head and was the first to leave the house, pulling on his jacket as he went, forcing his broad shoulders into the old coat.

The baron's car stood opposite the house; Rudolph was sitting on the running board smoking a cigarette and laughing impudently at something or another.

Sarapu looked into the floating wisps of fog and before he had gone thirty yards stopped and turned pale as he saw the grave. Not believing his own eyes he staggered slowly forward.

The grave looked the same as it had the day before, or as it had a week, a month before although the mound was now covered with fresh sods cut from the autumn turf.

Walking over to the birch-tree the old man placed his hand on the cross and licked his dry lips. Behind him he heard the baron's voice:

"What have you got to say, Sarapu?"

The old man turned round.

"I really did what you wanted me to do, Sir..." he grunted. "As God is my witness that's a new grave."

The words choked in the old man's throat and his trembling finger pointed to the mud on the cross and on the turf.

"I can see that myself," shouted the baron. "But graves don't grow in the rain like mushrooms, do they, Sarapu? Who could have been here after you?"

Sarapu slowly shrugged his shoulders.

"That's what I don't know."

The baron snapped his mouth shut and in ominous silence limped to the car.

When the car had disappeared in the fog the old man spoke:

"People did it, my lord... people did it!"

He flinched as though he were confronted by the stern honest faces of those people; his face flushed. He bowed his head and more slowly and heavily than usually went back to the house.

As he entered the room he paused at the door, then leaving lumps of mud on the floor behind him, walked over to the window and without taking off his cap or coat, sat down on the bench. He remained motionless for a long time, his shoulders bowed; he stared unseeingly at the thinning mist. Suddenly the old man raised his eyebrows sharply, he leaned forward and pressed his face against the glass.

For several minutes he watched two men levelling the grave with the ground: a German soldier stood some way off watching the work; four women from the settlement, with faggots of twigs in their hands, were talking amongst themselves as they stood on the road, looking at the grave. The old man turned away from the window, muttering despondently:

"How do you like that?!"

He tugged at the lobe of his right ear, clapped his hands on his knees, then, leaning on them, he got up and walked to the opposite wall. He saw that Martha had taken a wet rag and was wiping up the muddy tracks he had left on the floor. Leaning against the wall he pulled off his boots and removed his cap and coat.

And that was how the tall, gaunt joiner Pent found him.

"Soon the wind will blow from Lake Peipus," he said in a husky voice stepping across the threshold and closing the door.

That meant that it was winter and that there would be snow.

A spark of life appeared in old Sarapu's eyes.

"Vanake (old boy), so you haven't forgotten the decrepit old farmer Sarapu?"

Hiding the cunning in his glance, Pent smiled.

"No, old boy. As soon as I get a bottle of vodka in my pocket I see visions of you in every dark corner."

Sarapu grinned.

"It's devils ought to appear to lanky, clumsy Kalju Pent—the good-for-nothing."

Pent pulled the canvas jacket off his thin shoulders and laughed.

"The devils never come my way, vanake. The devils have all gone to the manor house to celebrate Satan's return."

This made Sarapu smile reservedly. He loved jokes—a good laugh is a cure and at this moment the sincere merriment of his friend was particularly pleasant.

Walking lightly on long legs in old high boots whose tops flapped against his calves, Pent went to the table. He sat on the bench, got out a bottle of vodka and still keeping up a serious mien, pressed a non-existent button on the table.

"Now then, miss," he said and then added, winking at Martha: "you get down under the ground..."

Martha smiled and looked expectantly at her father. He nodded his head approvingly and she went out of the room, across the yard to the cowshop where their store of flour, butter and meat was hidden from the Germans in a cellar.

Pent looked out of the window and then began to speak thoughtfully.

"The snow will be deep this year: in summer the mice built their nests high up in the corn."

Old Sarapu shook his head in sorrowful doubt.

"The mouse, Kalju, did not want to be choked in blood..."

Pent's glance became serious and attentive. For some time they looked at each other in silence, then the joiner took a deep breath and spoke:

"I understand you, old man."

Pent spoke the truth.

It was a long time since that autumn day when they had become friends competing at jalki, the Esthonian tug-of-war game, at a village festival. Many years had passed. The lake in the hollow had become a swamp, the friends had broken spoons at their weddings in accordance with the customs of Esthonia, they had become widowers, had grown grey and now understood each other quite well without words.

Pent put a birch-wood tobacco box on the table, pulled out a yellow clay pipe and began to fill it with tobacco. As the black tobacco crumbs fell on his knees, he watched Sarapu closely.

"D'you know what the mechanic Toompu told me?" Here Pent looked up slyly and laughed. "He said: 'We're more generous with our time than with anything else. Only he will manage everything who uses even an odd minute for a good deed.' Toompu said that with a voice like the pastor's and many people didn't understand him then. When he disappeared from the settlement and they found a disarmed German on the road, I understood him..."

Sarapu, sitting down at the table, thought as he looked at Kalju: "I can see right through you... You were always superficial... You are ready to break your neck even now." Aloud he said, trying to convince his friend:

"Understand, Kalju, I don't take my lead from Toompu. Toompu is a bullock from your herd. He is an artisan, easy-going—gets up and walks off, no hearth or home, no cowshed, no cow's dugs to milk..."

"And no cowhides," added Pent maliciously and coughed into his hand.

"I'm not much of a loud talker, Kalju, but I'm not a calf from this year's breeding and I can think..."

"Don't be a fool," laughed Pent. "What did I say? I said think your thoughts but act at the proper time." He stood up and went over to the fireplace to light his pipe.

"That's just it," said Sarapu over his shoulder. "It's never too late to put a noose round your neck... When we're talking to each other, Kalju, we don't beat about the bush. But at the present time it's best to keep your feelings to yourself..."

He continued talking for a long time selecting the words of a careful, cautious, man. Pent, squatting on his haunches at the fire, smoked and grinned.

Martha returned carrying a tin plate with salt fish, a yellow brick of cheese and a piece of Esthonian vorivorst—blood sausage with meat and cereals; she cut a piece off each of them, carried the aromatic dainties over to the bed where Endel was dropping off to sleep, came back and stood by the wall with her hands folded under her apron.

Pent came to the table and poured some vodka into a tin mug.

"A stone lying on the ground gets kicked the most often..." he said.

"Your thoughts are too hurried—like the sparrows, Kalju. They say that still waters run deep—wait a minute; perhaps we can do something on the quiet... Sit down. Let's drink... May the bones of the unknown soldier rest in peace."

Pent sat down and smiled with obvious doubt.

"Drinking won't help in this case."

Leaning his elbows on the table Sarapu bent towards the joiner.

"And what if you make a cross by midnight tonight?"

Pent understood, rubbed the bowl of his pipe on his cheek, then laid it down.

"Let's drink, vanake..." he said jokingly.

Sarapu leaned back from the table.

"Our business is to live out our lives with a quiet conscience, with justice..." he said rubbing his knees. Looking at Pent he raised his head.

Then Sarapu took up his mug, drank

down the vodka, took a bite out of the cheese and frowned, perhaps on account of the taste of the vodka, or perhaps on account of his own thoughts.

"They're a disgusting people," he said, "they want to do away with human conscience, human justice and everything human. We often say 'dead as the grave,' Kalju, but they are cunning enough to find a spark of life in a grave and even that spark they want to destroy..."

"That's so," said Pent with conviction.

Sarapu raised his finger significantly.

"But you see, Kalju, when that happened I also felt life in that grave, something that I can't put aside. I can't and won't let that hunchback..."

Pent smiled.

"All right. We'll thumb our noses at him."

He lifted his eyes, frowned, and, puffing smoke from his pipe, looked so penetratingly at Sarapu that it seemed as if his mind wanted to take in his whole complex being.

Sarapu, fumbling in his trousers pockets for something, drummed his stockinged feet on the floor.

"I don't know, Kalju," he said, "maybe it's not in your head. Only don't think I want to do anything to the hunchback... Perhaps some other young pup will seek fame that way. I don't want it. We don't need honour because we have clear conscience. That is real human riches, Kalju. Let the hunchback take all my goods and chattels down to the last stick—that won't make a man of him. He'll still be a noxious insect crawling on the earth, nothing more. And what will be left of us if we give up that clear conscience? That soldier in the grave, he remained an honest man. Since then, Kalju, our consciences have been of greater value. We are bound to that Russian soldier by three bonds: his blood and our liberty and land..."

Pent sucked at his pipe and then said with a sigh:

"I don't know, vanake, whether we need a lot of words!... If we were to get together, get some sort of arms and go to the manor house—you could put eight humps on the baron's back and then give him to me to plane down... Then our consciences would be purer than fresh blood."

"And abandon the farm and the children?" Sarapu asked irritably. "Kalju, you want me to be the same as that firebrand Toompu? I have taken root in this earth, Kalju, and the roots hold me fast..."

Kalju Pent dropped his keen glance to the ground.

"Where can I dig up some anger for you? I don't know. You are not angry enough. You wore the hunchback's yoke for half a century. Your withers must be all one big corn. Even if you cut a corn it doesn't hurt... The corns go away if you are angry enough and then you feel what cuts into you, what's painful..."

IV

The midnight darkness was calm, a cold, weary stillness lay over the earth. Occasionally the invisible ravens on the old birch-trees cawed or flapped their wings—there was a sound of alarm in the sleepy cries of the birds. The thin ice crunched under their feet as Pent and Sarapu walked, scaring them and giving them the shivers. Several times before they reached the grave Sarapu wiped the sweat that stood out on his brow from the extreme tension.

They had to do everything by feel: they dug in the cross and, crawling on their knees they built up a mound from frozen clods of earth.

"Forgive me, soldier," whispered Sarapu, getting up and brushing the dirt from his knees.

Kalju Pent did not hear what he said.

"What was that?" he asked.

"I said: 'come on,' Kalju," answered Sarapu and breathed a sigh of relief, "we've done our job..."

Never in his life had old Sarapu felt so easy within his soul; his whole being was jubilant.

"Kalju!" he exclaimed suddenly. "It's still too early for us to go to bed."

Out of the darkness came Pent's low, cautious, restrained voice.

"I think the same, only I don't shout it from the housetops... If they hear us we shall go to sleep earlier than we want to..."

They walked on carefully; only the crunching of the thin ice on the puddles broke the silence; the farm gate creaked softly as though it were sighing for something; a bird that had been awakened cawed in the old birch-tree.

...In the morning when news of the mysterious rebirth of the grave went round all the hovels in the settlement, the wind was blowing from Lake Peipus and there was fine, powdery snow on the ground. At first the wind blew the snow into the ruts and potholes of the road, and it was not until midday that the hills and the road itself were covered with the white mantle. When Baron von Achenberg's car ran past the hovels of the settlement, the vengeful Esthonian women behind their windows laughed after the automobile that had come too late.

"Excellent work!" said von Achenberg touching the cross with his cane and nervously blinking his prominent eyes. "That was made by a craftsman..."

"There are three old men left in the settlement, Sir," said Rudolph fawningly, "amongst them the joiner from your mill, a lanky fellow, thin as a rake..."

"Yes... Well then, you go back, Rudolph. Tell the lieutenant that he must take that craftsman as a hostage. I am going to Sarapu's... Hurry up!"

Waving his cane impatiently the hunchback hobbled to the house of his tenant.

When von Achenberg opened the door, Sarapu was sitting by the white, frost-plushed panes of the window with a tin

bowl on his knees in which he was mixing oatmeal and sour milk—the Esthonian dish known as kamu—but seeing the baron, he got up, bowed and told Martha to give the baron a chair.

The woman brought a chair from the living-room, placed it in the centre of the kitchen and wiped the seat with her clean, neat apron.

The hunchback walked past the chair and stopped in front of the old man, threw back his head and looked at the cowhides stretched on the frames.

"I think you will hand those into my office," he said, "especially as I now know that you are intelligent."

The old man bowed, then said hurriedly: "I pray God that you make no mistake about me..."

The baron nodded condescendingly and laughed his cracked laugh.

"Yes, yes, the Lord will probably grant your prayers... What did you pray to the Lord about when there was Soviet power in Esthonia, Sarapu? How did you live then, Sarapu?"

The old man sighed.

"We always walk with God, Sir..."

"Yes, you do..." said the baron in tones of annoyance, "and some of you go to the grave very often..."

Sarapu's face was the picture of consternation and when he spoke it was in a low voice:

"It appeared again at dawn, Sir..."

"I know," barked the baron, "I am interested in the cause of it."

"It smells of the evil one, Sir," he murmured with a mysterious expression on his face.

It was difficult to hold back a smile: the hunchback's owl-like eyes were popping out of his head. The baron's astonishment was not invented. Then Sarapu's face took on an expression of deep contemplation and he said confidentially:

"It all comes from lack of faith, Sir. The Lord has allowed the devil to joke in order to punish the people..."

The hunchback suppressed an angry outburst, and spoke with venomous calm:

"Mysterious are the ways of the Lord, Sarapu... Mysterious are His works and the goodness of the Almighty is without end... But I do not think that you will cease to be an idi-i-ot by the Lord's will!"

Baron von Achenberg turned sharply on his heel, hobbled quickly to the door, went out and slammed it behind him.

The old man looked at Martha, his eyebrows quivered and he laughed, increasing the wrinkles in his face. Martha listened in astonishment; she was not surprised at the gloomy cunning to which her ear had grown accustomed in his laugh, but what surprised her was the sound of rebellion in that laugh—this was something new.

V

The narrow lane of the settlement, dead and deserted, was curved like the half of a horseshoe. Somewhere in a distant yard a mongrel dog was whining with the cold. Ragged washing hung white on the board fence around the end house; the clothes were stiff from the frost and the frozen snow rattled restlessly against them. Near the fence stood a crooked, half-rotten, wind-beaten post; the wind had already almost torn off the plywood board which was now hanging by the last nail. The hard white powdery snow drove in shuffling gusts across the black letters with which the board was inscribed:

"...In the event of any further attempts to renew the grave of the Russian soldier the hostage will be shot."

The black windows of the workers' hovels glinted dully through the snowstorm. The wind howled mournfully down the street, rattling the doors of the frozen houses.

VI

The consciousness that he could defend justice made old Sarapu happy, but in his talks with himself he could only express a fraction of what he felt; the remainder was incomprehensible, though it intoxicated him like wine. Sarapu however felt some confusion when his intelligence told him: "Whoever jumps down from the cart should stand on the ground and you're still hanging in the air..."

These thoughts damped his pride, his ideas were all jumbled up helplessly in a heap and he felt lost and glum without Kalju Pent.

In his impatience Sarapu went and stood at the door of his house. When he saw the German soldiers digging up the cross and levelling the grave mound he smiled, peered through the snow at the empty road and cursed Kalju mentally.

By evening the joiner had still not come.

Then Sarapu lit a candle stump, went into the other half of the house and began to make a cross. He puffed smoke from his pipe, frowned and hummed a song through his nose—an old song about the bold Kalevipoeg, hero of Esthonian folklore. The flickering light of the candle increased the shadows on the old man's face—it looked tense and angry. When he had finished his work, Sarapu pushed aside the pile of resinous shavings with his foot, squinted at the cross and grunted with satisfaction...

...In the night the fine snow changed to heavy flakes, a mantle of snow lay on the freshly planed arms of the cross, the wind piled up a snowdrift over the mound and it seemed as though the hand of man had never touched the grave.

When Sarapu awoke it was already broad daylight. The old man stood at the window, breathed on the icy glass and looked out through the water-filmed hole he made in the frost: around the birch-trees the wavering indistinct figures of soldiers in greenish greatcoats were flickering about. Sarapu was happy, the bustle at the grave warmed up his heart. When he gave himself up to thought his own mood puzzled him. Sarapu was not consoled by what he had done and did not know what he wanted.

After breakfast he sent Martha for the joiner. He waited for Kalju, waited impatiently, but his daughter came back alone and so quickly that Sarapu was astonished when he saw her at the door. Then his face quivered as he met her glance, distraught and full of horror and felt that the fear was creeping into him. Martha stood still, leaning her shoulder against the lintel, her hands hanging helpless by her side, her yellow hair sticking out from under her kerchief, her blue-grey eyes round and staring, her face pale.

"Well?" he asked in a strange and suddenly husky voice.

She licked her dry lips, flinched and then spoke softly but distinctly:

"They hanged him..."

The old man felt a choking sensation. With an unsteady gait he moved towards the door, pushed it open with groping outstretched arms, crossed the porch, opened the outside door and hurried towards the settlement over the virgin snow. Martha ran after him, insisted on his taking something to wear—he crushed his old fox cap in his hand. Gradually his pace quickened and finally he began to run, breathing heavily and hoarsely.

The settlement street was deserted. The wind careered along by the houses, whirled round the gallows, swayed the corpse of the executed joiner.

Sarapu recoiled. His strength ebbed from him. He stood stock still looking with horror at the dead body. His glance ran over the black letters on the plywood board, for a time they swam before his eyes, then at last they formed words, terrible words, and the old man broke down, sobbing and trembling.

"Kalju... I didn't know..."

Like a lost soul he went up to Pent's body. He put his arms round his legs and pressed close against them, his whole body trembling...

Four Germans appeared from round a corner. Seeing Sarapu they glanced at each other and then went towards him.

A fat German corporal with a wet nose grabbed the old man by the shoulders.

"What are you doing here, farmer?"

Sarapu stepped back and looked dully at the German.

"Is that your sweetheart dangling there?.."

The lewd laughter of the Germans was caught up by a sharp gust of wind. A sombre, ill-boding fire broke out in the old man's eyes.

"Ho, getting your back up, are you? Turn your eyes away!" snapped the corporal. "Pull that ragged old cap over your eyes! Get along home!"

The wind became fiercer, it whirled the snow about in clouds turning day into a turbid twilight. His back bent, old Sarapu staggered away. Covered from head to foot in snow he climbed with difficulty to the top of the hill and from there looked down at the baron's manor house. His eyes glittered strangely. Crushing his cap down on his head he said clearly and distinctly:

"Gentlemen, I'll. . . All right!"

Sarapu walked towards his home but passed it and went to the wrecked grave. For a long time he stood over it as though frozen to the ground. In his mind he talked with the Russian soldier and in the silence of the lonely grave old Sarapu heard the voice of earthly justice. That silence now was full of meaning for him, it seemed to the old man that the whole of devilish Germany, millions of screaming voices could not drown that of the grave of the Russian soldier. . .

The old man did not suspect that he was listening to the wrathful voice of his own hardened and sorrowing heart.

VII

When Sarapu returned to the kitchen his face was black and terrifying. Martha was cooking dinner; she looked sympathetically at her father with tear-filled eyes and sobbed bitterly.

The old man stood there, a strange, concentrated being, then he sat down on his bed and remained motionless until twilight fell.

Martha lit a candle at the fire and looked up in alarm when she heard footsteps on the porch.

The door flew open and two Germans in green greatcoats burst into the room, shedding snow onto the floor.

"We can warm ourselves up," said one of them to the other as he wiped his wet, wind-reddened face, bloated and pock-marked, with his hand. "It will be better to stand on guard one at a time; while one of us is out in the cold the other can sit by the fire."

The second soldier, a small, feeble individual, touched his bandaged throat with his finger.

"Hi, cowherd, welcome your guests," he said in a croaking voice. "And don't tell us you haven't any vodka. We can see by your eyes that you're a boozer."

Sarapu changed suddenly. A fawning smile appeared on his lips.

"If you have time. . ."

"Yes, yes," the first German interrupted him and grinned maliciously. "We intend to catch the jokers... Anyway, that's nothing to do with you. We may be relieved but we have time to drink."

The old man smiled obsequiously:

"Although there is a proverb which says that 'latecomers get nothing but bones,' farmer Sarapu isn't stingy," and he began bustling around the table.

The feeble-looking soldier blew into his fingers for a long time, held them out to the fire, and then took a metal tobacco box and cigarette papers out of his pocket and although he still could not bend his frozen fingers somehow rolled a cigarette with those crab's claws and lit it. Spitting and coughing from the acrid tobacco smoke he walked back to the table where his friend was already seated.

"Come on, cowherd, drink a bit," he said hoarsely as he looked into the mug with

his rabbit's eyes. "I'll see whether it's poison. . ."

Sarapu pretended to be pleased, thanked him and drank it at a gulp.

"Your health, gentlemen!"

"All right," said the first soldier. "Now go away, don't watch us or I'll pull your ear for you."

Old Sarapu bowed, went over to the corner and sat down on a mattress.

His daughter was crouched in a corner; the child with babyish hostility looked at the Germans. The feeble-looking soldier told obscene tales, the other spoke about Bavarian and Strassburg beer, about Moselle. At last they had eaten and drunk everything that was on the table and the pock-marked soldier went out slinging his rifle over his shoulder.

Sarapu bent towards his daughter.

"Take Endel and go to aunt Tuule in the settlement," he whispered. He nodded towards the door that led to the new part of the house. "Get dressed in there and go through the yard. . ."

The German sat down by the fire and threw on some wood. Then his drunken glance fell on the young woman. She noticed it and her movements quickened without her realizing it. She took her clothes and went with Endel to the door; the boy looked round and pulled a face at the German, sticking out his tongue in farewell.

"Little devil!" muttered the soldier huskily. He coughed, turned to the old man and asked: "Where is she going?"

The old man guessed rather than heard the indistinct question.

"She's putting her boy to bed," he answered calmly.

For a time they were both silent but when the door suddenly slammed in the other part of the house the German jumped to his feet.

"You're lying, cowherd! She's gone out! . ."

The old man laughed mirthlessly.

"What do you mean, Sir? I can call her."

The soldier calmed down.

"All right, send her in. . . She can make a bed for me. I can't trust you, though... I'll call her myself..."

The soldier went towards the door but Sarapu barred his way.

"Where are you going, you scraggy fool?" he asked angrily.

The German was astonished; he shrank back, turned grey and began to back away; he could not take his scared glance off the dark, clouded eyes of the old man. Sarapu took him by the throat and banged his head against the wall—the cap fell from the soldier's head and dropped on the floor and the man himself, looking wildly about him, slipped slowly down the wall, choking and trembling.

"You're still green, German," said Sarapu, breathing heavily.

He took some ropes from under the mattress, bound the German with one of them and then stood wrapped in gloomy thoughts over the German's body.

"It would be easy, with an axe," Sarapu said to himself, "But that's like murder..."

The German regained consciousness, wriggled and tried to cry out but his voice was hoarse from his cold and ended up in a pitiful whisper.

The old man looked sombrely into his face.

"What? Don't you feel well?" He spread his hands. "You can have what I've got, you don't have to seek it." And he shook the rope he held in his hand.

Then he sat on the bench and began to make two nooses. The German sobbed, wrinkling up his nose.

"Pray, you scum, if you believe in God," said Sarapu dully. "Pray. Do you feel something coming? . ."

The German's cold, dull eyes widened in fear, he fixed his glance on the old man as he lay slowly and with difficulty squirming his legs.

Without even looking at the German Sarapu made the nooses, put on his cap and taking the German tommy-gun from the corner of the room, went out.

A wild wailing of the storm came from outside—the soldier looked up in alarm, listened and then lay for a long time motionless; suddenly he whimpered, wriggled and tried to move away from the wall. The ropes that held his wrists and ankles would not allow him to move; a wave of fury swept over him and he began to roll and mill like one in a fit. This slackened the ropes on his ankles. He repeated the operation with bestial fury, then, all his strength exhausted, lay still. After a short rest he began to jerk the ropes again but before he had got his feet free Sarapu returned.

The wind came in through the slowly opening door, the flame of the candle flickered, died down and went out as though it had been snuffed out by the darkness. In the dim rosy light of the fire Sarapu strode heavily into the room—points of fire shone in his dark, gleaming eyes.

Staggering and breathing heavily he threw a belt with cartridge pouches onto the bench, laid aside the tommy-gun and rifle and wiped his nose on his sleeve, smearing blood across his cheek; he spat out some thick, dark liquid across the threshold. Sitting down on the bench Sarapu sighed and closed his eyes. At that moment he saw Pent's purplish-blue face and opened his eyes in order to banish the terrible scene. He turned his sharp eyes on the German, rose slowly from the bench and went over to him. In the darkness against the flickering reflections of the fire Sarapu looked like a giant. A piteous fear overcame the soldier.

"Children... I have children..." he whispered huskily. "And a farm... don't... listen... I'll tell you a secret... I have no documents... but I'm a communist... D'you want money, eh?... Listen..."

"Shut up, you tyke," Sarapu advised him quietly. "If you don't I'll untie you and beat you..."

Sarapu bent down, seized the German by the ears, shook him and whispered tensely right into his face:

"I've strung up your bottle companion and you're going up beside him."

He spat angrily into the German's right eye, then, taking the end of the rope, dragged the flabby body out of the house like so much carrion.

Sarapu got stuck in the snow and was quite exhausted by the time he reached the birch-trees. It took him a long time to find the noose in the dark, but at last he got it, dragged the German to his feet.

"Chase after him... others will follow you..." he shouted indistinctly in the noise of the storm.

The old man grunted, lifted up the limp body of the German, thrust his head into the noose, threw him down—a branch creaked for a while... Sarapu wiped his wet hands on his trousers and stepped away with loathing.

So far he had done everything in a silent fit of passion but now he was filled with fury. Throwing all caution to the winds, his voice drowning the storm, he shouted savagely:

"Carrion!.. Soulless fiends!.. I hate you, Germans!.."

A bright light suddenly blinded him. Sarapu shivered and felt his heart sink; before he knew where he was a number of unseen hands clutched him, threw him down in the snow, knocked his cap off and held him tight.

Now the light was playing on the bodies and faces of the hanging Germans, the snowflakes danced in the ray of light as though meshed in it. The light went out and again flashed on in the old man's face.

"Can you beat it!.. Papa Sarapu executing Germans?!" said the voice of the mechanic Toompu.

Blinded by the light and thinking that his ears deceived him, the old man turned his face away.

"As ye sow so shall ye reap," he answered roughly.

The light went out, the old man was suddenly lifted up, somebody's hand patted him on the back.

"That's true, Sarapu," said Toompu. "Whoever is on the side of justice should be in the woods today. Beyond the rotten bog, where the faggots are stacked, you will find some friends. They will thank you for the grave. Better still, come with us now. We pay a visit to the manor house and we'll set the red cock crowing at the sawmill... You won't say now that a rifle's a bad thing, even if it doesn't give any milk."

Sarapu was still sighing and groaning gloomily.

"I can't go yet awhile, boy. I must put up a cross over the grave. Rotten bog, eh? I'll find it. I knew every corner of that forest when your eyes were still seeing things upside down."

The people laughed in the darkness, and Toompu, with a sound of laughter in his voice, said:

"That old man comes from bad stock... All right. Huvasti (good-bye), Papa Sarapu!"

The old man was left alone. The snow whirled along the ground and Sarapu, shivering from the cold and lost in thought left the lone birch-tree.

He went into his house and bolted the door. The fire had died down but he threw on some wood, lit a candle, lit his pipe and sat down at the table.

He listened to the creaking of the old birch-trees; the storm swished and whistled over the tiled roof, the wind beat against the log walls of the house; he seemed to hear things; gusts of wind seemed to carry the sound of frosty bells from the distance, from the very churchyard... He fancied he saw how the storm was raging in the bare fields piling up snow over the frozen logs on the ground, the bare vegetation, trenches filled with ice and shell holes, and the lonely birch-tree tossing and swaying in the wind over the wrecked grave of the unknown Russian soldier...

The dim figure of the dead man arose and came to life before Sarapu's eyes. He appealed to the old man, made him feel a living, imperishable human justice in the mortal remains of the soldier.

"I haven't adopted all the knowledge of the Russians, soldier..." muttered Sarapu, moving in his seat, "not all..."

Again he breathed deeply—the candle flame quivered and crackled, the silent shadows in the corners of the room wavered as though bowing to the old man. He went out and returned with an axe and some pinewood boards.

The old man pushed another bench up to the table and began to knock together a cross. There was the seal of stubbornness and gloomy sadness on his face. He hummed some sort of indistinct melody, lost the tune and began speaking rhythmically and monotonously.

"So... there... it... is... But we shan't sit still on our backsides... That's... what... we... shan't... do... We'll squash them... like worms..."

The candle grease made the candle smoke and flicker in the battered candlestick.

When the cross was ready, the old man straightened his back, snuffed out the candle and left the house taking the cross and the axe with him.

The blizzard had died down. The wind still blew but without its former fury, whining pitiously like a puppy. There was light snow blowing along the ground, rustling and bouncing as it went. To these sounds were added those of hammering as Sarapu knocked the cross into the ground with his axe, his blows disturbing the night and dying away somewhere in the swamp.

When Sarapu had struck the last blow there was a rosy light in the sky; beyond the grove of trees, over the sawmill tongues of fire leapt up to the heavens; the flickering light of the glow from the fire turned the clouds red; the wind carried the dull crackle of rifle fire.

The old man laughed quietly and maliciously.

"Well done, Toompu," Sarapu muttered

through his laughter. "You can be seen a long way off."

The old man shook with loud laughter, then he stopped, frowned and with a firm step went into his house. He opened a chest and took a new cap, gloves, a rough-woollen scarf. His glance fell on his grandson's shirt—Sarapu bent over it, gently stroked it with his coarse hand, turned away and began to dress.

He hung the tommy-gun from his shoulder, grasped the rifle in his huge hairy hand and stood for a long time in the doorway; he recalled the life that he had lived within these walls—many hard, laborious years... There had also been pleasures; Sarapu was ashamed to recall them: the life of the snail was no longer for him.

Thoughtfully Sarapu returned to the dying fire, threw the remains of the birch logs onto it and suddenly, from force of habit, sat down on the bench in the chimney corner. He immediately got up again, however—he was worried at the pitiful, stubborn way these things grew on one. He went to the door, glanced round once more, went out closing the door well behind him.

He walked round the farm buildings, halted and looked in the direction of the grave.

"Good-bye, soldier," he muttered.

"What a grave we'll build you when I come back!" he thought. "Granite and marble!"

Shaking his head angrily, Sarapu looked round him, then strode rapidly across the snow-covered pasture that now gleamed red.

At the edge of the forest he held his breath: before him rose the trees, mysterious and black—the pines whispered dully like the muttering of an angry people... He seemed to see the luscious grass of the pasturage on a fine summer day... The cows wandered about, their bells tinkling... The herdman's flute played merrily...

The phantom sounds died away in the forest; after them went the old man, and was at once swallowed up in the gloom.

The light snow, rose-coloured, swept rustling over the fields, and the heavy clouds, painted red by the reflection of the dawn, huddled in an angry mass in the sky.

Translated by George Hanna

NATAN RYBAK

THE BUTTON

For months he had lived in a tense, quivering expectation of that moment. In the days of furious battles, when his regiment bored through the German defences on the Miuss and day by day the merciless hand of death seemed about to close on him, he never ceased to think of that sacred moment. He would close his eyes for an instant and see before him the little house on the outskirts of the town, the slanting porch, hear Lena's cry of joy and feel Valya's arms round his neck. Sometimes his disturbed fancy would paint other pictures, and a numbing feeling of fear would overcome him. But he resolutely drove away the terrible pictures, cherishing in his heart the quivering, thrilling expectation of a happy meeting. He never spoke about it to anybody, but there was probably not a man in the unit who did not know that the colonel had a wife and a daughter in the little Ukrainian town of Letichev. This aching uncertainty was familiar to many in Colonel Serbichenko's unit, but everybody hoped for the best, although all that they had seen in the liberated towns afforded little foundation for it. However, as Major Sergueyev, the chief of staff, used to say, a man always expects the best, so as to make life easier and happier.

Colonel Serbichenko used to smile at this saying of his chief of staff, but did not contradict him. Folded inside his Party card, the colonel cherished a yellowed photograph of Lena and Valya. They always looked out of it straight into his eyes, and the smile never faded from their lips. When he was pinned down to his bed in hospital, he would look for a long time at the photograph, and they would smile at him encouragingly. "Never mind," they would say. "Never mind, dear, everything'll get better, you see if it doesn't." And he would feel the clouds part, and a warmth fill his heart. And so he lived with them all those years, talking to them, sharing his joys and troubles with them, and listening eagerly to the communiqués and reports for any word of the distant little town of Letichev. But it really was a very little town, and it was never mentioned.

The chief of staff received letters from his wife in far-off Omsk and read them to the colonel. He read him his own replies, too. His wife also wrote to Serbichenko, kind, comforting words, inviting him to come and visit them in Omsk with his wife and daughter after the war. And all the time he continued to think of that moment when he would find himself in the quiet green streets of Letichev, and he would go up to the wicket gate, pass up the narrow path to the porch and knock at the door. But these were dreams, of course, and he realized well enough that he must not count on them too much; perhaps it was something quite different that would be awaiting him, pain and grief.

Months passed, months full of happy events. The Germans were being driven back on all fronts, prisoners were being

taken in thousands. And in these battles, Colonel Serbichenko's unit distinguished itself. There was a great deal to do, and it was rarely that the colonel took the little photograph from between the leaves of his Party card; but the thought of his wife and daughter never left him. On his map the town of Letichev was marked with a red circle, and all the officers in the unit eagerly followed the communiqués from the neighbouring front, where a drive was being made in the direction where Letichev lay on the highroad between two large strongpoints. And on the night when Colonel Serbichenko's unit took Novograd-Volynsk, the Moscow radio broadcast a communiqué in which the dozens of localities taken included Letichev. The panting radio-operator rushed to the colonel and gasped out the joyful news, in his excitement forgetting even to salute. The colonel was at the command point, and artillery fire was roaring all round. He grasped Ivashechkin's hand warmly, gratefully, but the operator stood staring in amazement at the expression of grief on the colonel's face. The unit had taken the town, the Germans were retreating. Letichev was freed—what could be the matter, then? He turned to go, and on the floor, at the side of the room, saw Major Sergueyev, the chief of staff. He was lying full length, with closed eyes, as though resting, but his hands were folded on his breast. A thin black stream of blood traced a line from temple to ear.

That night, to the sound of the rushing wind, Colonel Serbichenko wrote a letter to Omsk—why should he conceal the truth? And in the letter, accurately and laconically, he told how in a difficult moment Sergueyev himself had led the men into the attack and died a hero's death. The words came warm from his heart. He recalled Sergueyev's smiling face before the battle, when he had said: "Take my word for it, today ours are going to take Letichev."

Soon afterwards, Serbichenko received permission from the general to go to Letichev. The paper from army headquarters bore the words: "Permit for Colonel Serbichenko to take four days leave to visit his family in Letichev."

Taking Fomichenko, one of his men, with him in the jeep, the colonel covered the several hundred kilometres, and on a warm May night arrived at Letichev. His hands trembled on the wheel. Without slackening speed, the jeep raced along the straight road to the quiet green corner, the house with the slanting fence. Here was the street. Tall limes bordered it, and cottages glimmered white from the depths of their gardens.

The machine stopped at the familiar fence. With one spring the colonel was at the wicket, looked at the cottage set back in the garden and realized that in this house there was nobody to welcome him. Agitated, he looked round him, saw the empty street lit by the rays of the setting sun, saw that all the houses were ruined, and not a soul was to be seen. He pushed open the wicket and made his way through the rank grass to the porch. The steps had rotted, and when he laid his hand on the balustrade, it came to pieces. He pushed open the door and stood rooted to the spot. Here it was, the familiar dining-room. How many happy days, how many evenings he had spent within these walls! Now, mould and spiders' webs were everywhere. In the other room he saw Valya's bed overturned, the wardrobe broken.

His lips were dry and burning with suffering, green circles swam before his eyes, and his heart contracted in a painful presentiment of something terrible, irrevocable. Yes, it was many months since anyone had lived here. How naive, how foolish he had been to expect that Lena and Valya would meet him here, in this house! Naive and ridiculous! After he had seen the wrecked Kreshchatik in Kiev, the ruins of Belgorod and the ashes of Zhitomir. What grounds had he for hope? But it is a man's nature always to hope for the best, he remembered...

And even now Serbichenko still hoped. He would have to find somebody, talk to them, find out. It was impossible, it could not be that everything was broken off so tragically.

"I'll try to find some people, some of my friends," he told Fomichenko and the driver. "Let's go."

For a long time they wandered through the empty, deserted streets, until at last, by a brick house, they met an old man coming back from fishing. He was completely deaf and could not understand what they wanted. But suddenly he gave a cry, threw up his hands and then flung his arms round the colonel. It was only then that Serbichenko recognized the old man—it was Khvorostov, the geography teacher, Lena's colleague, a frequent visitor at their house.

And on that terrible evening, filled with a crimson light that seemed to come from the blood which had flowed in the town rather than from the rays of the setting sun, Serbichenko heard the ordeal which had overtaken Lena and Valya, learned that just before the retreat, the Germans had driven off all the people in the camp where his wife and daughter had been confined, taken them off somewhere westward.

The old teacher, who had lost his hearing as the result of beatings by the Germans, wept with grief and joy and talked without stopping, while Serbichenko and his companions listened without interrupting him. The colonel felt his heart and soul empty. He remembered the long months of waiting, remembered how he had hugged the dream of a happy meeting. And now a thick wall of uncertainty had risen before him, a terrible wall, which he could neither climb nor break through. This was the end. Nothing more to wait for now. That was what he felt as he took leave of the teacher and as he sat before the wheel on the way back to his unit.

But the next day, when he reported for duty to the general and told him briefly

that he had not found his family, for some reason a faint hope suddenly glimmered in his heart. And as though in support of it, the general said:

"Don't despair. I'm sure that you'll find them. After all, we're right on the Germans' heels, and they haven't time to be thinking about camps."

And Serbichenko began again to believe, hope and wait.

These days held their happy moments for Serbichenko, too. Several times he was mentioned in the communiqués, there were notices in the newspapers about him, his unit was considered one of the best on that front, and the Order of Suvorov, second class, hung on his tunic. Yes, there were happy moments, but there was no peace. The aspect of the war changed, victory was spreading its mighty wings. But there was no calm in his heart and again he waited, patiently and resolutely, and hope, like a constantly welling spring, helped him to live.

In June things were hot. Serbichenko's unit forced the San and straight away took a large German strongpoint. Here they had to halt for some time until the flanks came up with them, and Serbichenko made the little town of Staraya Podlyaska his headquarters. It reminded him somehow of his own Letichev. A German camp for war prisoners was discovered in the forest near Staraya Podlyaska, and when this was reported to Serbichenko, he went there himself. It was just like every other German camp. Hastily filled-in earth was shovelled away, to disclose piles of human bones; in another place they found bodies of women and children which had not yet turned cold. Devilish stoves for cremating the bodies had been set up in a large brick building. The camp guard and the S.S. troops had tried to flee, but had been either wiped out or captured. Several sacks of documents were brought from a shed. Serbichenko gave orders for them to be sorted.

A major who had been captured with other S.S. troops asked for permission to speak to Serbichenko. He could speak fairly good Russian. While waiting for permission to speak, he stood at attention, thumbs to trouser seams. Serbichenko nodded to him.

"Herr Colonel," he said distinctly, "I want to open my heart to you about all that I have seen here. If you will allow me to say so, I find it senseless to hide everything from the Soviet authorities. My name is Bäumler, major in the special service garrison troops."

The German was standing to attention, looking straight into the colonel's eyes. His face was grey, his glasses were not quite straight on his nose, and his tunic was torn on the shoulder. Two iron crosses hung from yellow-black ribbons.

Colonel Serbichenko gave the German a penetrating glance, weighing him up. He had already met several specimens of that breed, and knew their thirst for openhearted frankness, when things went badly for them. And he also knew the worth of their frankness.

"Take the prisoner to headquarters," ordered the colonel, and continued on his way past the grey, rotting barracks. The whole camp was filled with the sickening stench of corpses, while fragments of clothing and footwear lay about everywhere.

"Perhaps they too were tortured here," thought the colonel, involuntarily shuddering at the thought.

Although he tried not to admit it to himself, he had the feeling that here, in this camp, something would happen, that here everything would be cleared up. When he returned to headquarters he found himself unable to go to bed. He said nothing, but everyone understood without a word being spoken.

At dawn Fomichenko came to the colonel.

"Is he asleep?" he asked one of the men.

"Nothing of the sort; not long ago he was sitting on the porch and asking me all about my life. There's been a light in the window all night."

Fomichenko ran onto the porch.

"Good morning, Comrade Colonel. The documents which interest us have not been found," the man reported.

"All documents interest us," said the colonel. "All of them have relatives, people waiting for them just as I'm waiting."

"When do you wish me to bring the prisoner?"

"At ten o'clock," replied the colonel, looking at his watch.

At ten exactly, Rudolf Bäumler took his seat before the colonel. Carefully choosing his words, he said unhurriedly:

"I will conceal nothing from you, Herr Colonel. For over two months I have been working in camp No. 157, one of a group observing the fulfilment of instructions from the Supreme Administration of Ostland. All that I have seen I shall tell you."

"You only observed?"

"Only that, Herr Colonel."

"According to preliminary figures, ten thousand Soviet citizens were slaughtered in your camp."

"Allow me to correct you, Herr Colonel," the German raised himself on his chair. "Twenty-two thousand seven hundred and fifty-three persons. It was done barbarously, savagely, disgracefully," and the German made a gesture of disapproval and closed his eyes.

"Did you take part in the killing?" asked the colonel.

"No, on the word of an officer," cried the German hastily and in considerable excitement. "I only observed, only observed," he repeated.

"What else do you want to say?" asked Serbichenko, barely controlling his disgust.

The German fidgetted on his seat.

"I wanted to tell you, Herr Colonel, of the stoves, the stoves where they burned..." he stammered.

"Were there many children in the camp?" the colonel asked the German, looking hard at his suddenly paling face.

"I don't know, Herr Colonel."

"I don't need you any more," said the colonel and pressed the bell.

The German rose. His hands were trembling. The smart S.S. uniform was creased and awry. In his agitation he began to fasten and unfasten one of the buttons, while the colonel's eyes followed his nervous movements. The next button was missing, he noticed, a gaping rent showing where it had formerly been.

"Take the prisoner away," the colonel told the sentry.

"The usual thing," he thought, when he found himself alone. "Wants to save his own skin." And he gave no more thought to the garrulous German. Picking up his papers, he left the room.

Fomichenko was standing on the porch. He looked at the colonel in helpless confusion, shifting from foot to foot.

"Well, what else is there?" Serbichenko asked.

"Comrade Colonel, Comrade Colonel..." No, he could not say it, he just could not!

"Well?" asked Serbichenko. "What's wrong with you?"

"We've found..." and he paled. "In the well we found a lot of children, and there..."

Not waiting to hear any more, Serbichenko ran to the car.

Soon he was standing beside the well. Children's bodies were lying on the grass. Blue little faces, twisted mouths, open, horror-filled eyes, cramped, distorted arms and legs. And the fifth from the right—Valya. He recognized her at once. She was lying there before him, his daughter, blue and cold, Valya—dead. The colonel sank to his knees. This was how he met her, on foreign soil. He looked at the loved features, distorted in death, and the months and years of waiting, of happiness, passed through his mind.

"Lena!" he asked in his own heart. "And where are you, Lena?"

But now he knew that there was no hope. And Valya was lying there on the grass beside the well, her little fists clenched. He touched them, involuntarily began to loosen the cramped fingers, and as he straightened them, he saw a button from a German uniform in the little palm, with a jagged piece of grey material attached. And in the same second everything was clear to him. It was the captured major himself who with his own hands had pushed Valya into the well; and as she resisted she had clutched at the button and with her last effort torn it from the officer's uniform.

"Bring the prisoner here," the colonel ordered in a quiet, dull voice. And this whisper held more force than any shout.

The man was brought. He halted several paces from the well.

"Nearer," commanded the colonel. The tommy-gunner pushed him forward.

Then the colonel went up to the German and held the button from Valya's hand against his tunic. The June sun was shining brightly and the chestnut branches rustled in the warm steppe breeze. An intense hatred, stronger than death, filled Colonel Serbichenko's heart. This was his daughter's murderer standing there before him. The German, unable to endure the colonel's steely gaze, fell to his knees, howling in a voice filled with animal fear. Trembling with rage, a soldier raised his tommy-gun, but the colonel's stern glance stopped him.

"A bullet's too good for him," he said.

And the German crawled about the earth, his fingers scraping, weeping and howling in craven terror. But the only feeling he aroused was loathing and contempt.

Translated by Eve Manning

SÁNDOR GERGELY

ON THE BRIDGE

The family was sitting at supper in a small shack near the large garage at the edge of the town. Dusk was already falling. The men had put in a hard day's work and now they were wearily spooning up the thin potato soup and disgustedly chewing the crumbly maize bread.

At the head of the table sat old Ferenc Kiraly. He was fifty-six, but his face, his eyes and his tired movements were more like those of a man in the late sixties. Especially during the last few days he had shown signs of breaking up. His wife kept asking him in concern if he were ill... But Kiraly would have none of it. He wasn't ill, he was never ill, it was just that there was so much work just now at the garage. It was wartime, and in wartime people in the rear not only have to work to the limit, but starve to the limit. And that was that!

But in the last two days the old man had lost his appetite too. He really must be ill, thought his wife.

"Why aren't you eating anything? Is the soup bad? Don't you like it?" she asked. "I haven't a bit of fat, nobody has any, the neighbours haven't any either. Nobody has," and she burst into tears.

The two grown-up sons at once bent over their plates and began quickly eating their soup, their spoons rattling as though they wanted to say that they'd never eaten anything so good in their lives. The father

also began to busy himself with the thin liquid, which had one or two pieces of potato floating in it to show what it was meant to be. Comforted, the mother watched them. Not a word was spoken. Only the quiet scraping of the spoons was audible. Then the woman carried out the plates, folded up the tablecloth and retired to her own domain to wash up.

Left to themselves, the men felt they could talk freely, exchange their troubles, their anger and their despair. It was impossible in front of the mother. She would shout it all from the housetops, and bring the police down on them. And today, in wartime, it was twice as bad for people temporarily exempt from military service if it got about that anything of that kind had occurred in the family.

For some days now an agonizing secret had lain heavy on all three of them. It had been at the beginning of the week, at the end of the shift, when the workmen were making their way to the entrance, guarded by a sentry with fixed bayonet. One of the drivers had stopped before old Kiraly and whispered that up on the mountain, the workers and woodcutters of the large sawmill and the neighbouring woods, all of them Hungarians and Ruthenians, had been fighting the gendarmes for some days past.

"Fighting them?" replied Kiraly in surprise. "Why, what's happened?"

"What's happened? Oh, nothing much. Just that three weeks ago somebody wrecked a munitions train. And last week, along the same stretch, a railway bridge blew up when a train loaded with food was passing over it."

"Yes, I heard of that. But what have the woodcutters to do with it, why should that make them fight the gendarmes?"

"Because they're accused of having caused the explosion."

"And they deny it?"

"Well, of course!" And the driver smiled. "But the gendarmes don't believe them. A whole detachment was sent up into the mountains. They were pelted with stones and logs, and then given a dose of bullets."

"Really?" asked the old man, thunderstruck. "But that's disgraceful. If the gendarmes go out after them like that, then it's pretty certain the explosion's their work. There's another thing that shows it," he said thoughtfully. "Yes, it shows they did it if they met the gendarmes with rifles. How did they get them? They've got them from somewhere. Where, then? From the Russians, of course." He shrugged his shoulders and turned to go.

But the driver held him back and told him softly that the leader of the fighting workers and peasants was Miklòs.

"Miklòs? What Miklòs?" asked old Kiraly in surprise.

"Miklòs Kiraly, your son..."

"My son?" The old man turned white as a sheet. "That... that's not possible."

"Oh, yes, it is." The driver leaned towards him and whispered: "I've spoken to him."

"But my Miklòs has been in America or somewhere for two years..."

"He's not in any America, he's there," and he pointed to the other side of the river, where the setting sun threw a red veil over the peaks of the Beskids soaring to the clouds.

The old man told his sons what he had heard while the mother was preparing supper in the kitchen. Like himself, the boys worked as drivers at the garage... For some seconds they sat frozen, staring at their father with horror-struck eyes. It was the younger, the fair-headed, round-cheeked Gyuri, who was the first to recover himself.

"Miklòs? Good God!" he whispered with trembling lips. "Great heavens, what'll become of us now?" And he wrung his hands. "Instead of staying quiet! He must have taken leave of his senses. The madman! That madman! Ghastly! What'll happen to us when they find out about it here? We'll all be taken off. Sure as I sit here! Every single one of us, and all on account of him."

The father looked with disfavour at his son, whose soft, childish face was ashen with fear. From whom had the lad got such a nature? Neither his father nor his mother were like that! And how could one always think only of oneself? Never had he spoken with anything but hatred of the eldest, of Miklòs. Just because he was different. And because he had gone away. What did he want to go away for? If he had stayed here, he would have found work at the garage too... And he would have added his mite to the family income... Yes, this youngest lad was always full of such thoughts. He thought only of the one thing—to earn, to save, to buy a house... But Miklòs was different, quite different. He went out into the world. That was two years ago...

Where had he really gone? To England or America? Many said that he had gone to Russia. The father showed everybody his letters from America, but the talk was not silenced. He was a good, sensible lad, this Miklòs. Only a little hot-headed. And that one, the middle one, Mihály, was quite different again. Calm, quiet, and serious. Now, too, he waited for Gyuri to finish his outcries, then said softly:

"Why are you talking all that nonsense? Miklòs is our brother and a decent fellow. If he's up there in the mountain, and the leader of these..."

"Rebels! Partisans!" Gyuri interrupted him.

"Rebels and partisans if you like, as far as I am concerned! In a word, if he's their leader, that only shows that Miklòs is chosen by many hundred mature men who do not hesitate to give even their lives for an idea... Silence, I'm talking now," he checked Gyuri as the latter was about to interrupt. "In a word, if they've chosen Miklòs as their leader, then we can only be proud of it."

"A gang recognizes him..."

"Don't talk nonsense," his brother headed

him off softly, as Gyuri began to boil over again. "This gang is made up of such men as every decent person would join if he were not so cowardly and intimidated as we are. They have risen against the Germans and the Hungarian lackeys in German hire..."

"Against their fatherland," Gyuri interrupted.

"Nothing of the kind!" and now Mihály boiled over and brought his fist down on the table with a crash.

"Quiet, quiet!" the old man urged them.

Not another word was said about Miklòs and the woodcutters. All of them hoped in their hearts that it was nothing but a false rumour. But today at midday the town garrison had been told to be on the alert, and sentries had been doubled at the garage and the barracks. People were saying in the town that in the Beskids forests the rebels had mopped up the whole infantry battalion sent against them.

This fresh news literally stunned the three, and they waited in a kind of deadly stupor for misfortune to descend upon them. When would it be generally known that Miklòs Kiraly was the leader? For that day would mean the end of them.

The father rose heavily from his place at table and went out into the kitchen. A huge pan stood on the stove filled with water already boiling for the evening washdown. He went up to his wife, watched her bustling about here and there, and suddenly discovered with a kind of shock that his right hand had found its way to her head and was stroking it. She paused in her washing up and raised her face to him.

"What's the matter with you, what's happened?" she asked. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Why, no," said Kiraly, confused. "Why, no... why should anything be wrong—is it so terrible if I stroke your head?" And he gave a forced laugh.

Hasty steps sounded from outside the window. The old man listened, tensely. He returned to the room. As he opened the door, he saw a senior lieutenant standing in front of the table and beside him the garage commandant, a lieutenant in the Landsturm. Two soldiers in steel helmets and fixed bayonets were standing in the doorway.

Old Kiraly greeted the officers quietly.

The commandant of the garage was explaining to the senior lieutenant that the two Kiraly boys and their father were the best drivers in the garage and the whole district, and knew all the roads up to the sawmill like the palm of their hand. They could drive the lorries up blindfold.

The lieutenant was a tall, slender man of about twenty-four. He looked searchingly at the old man and his two sons. Then he asked the father:

"You're a driver too? For how many years?"

"For thirty-five."

"In short, a family of drivers?" smiled the officer.

"Yes, I taught my lads my own trade. I thought I'd teach them to respect the work which fed them."

"Quite right, old boy," nodded the lieutenant. "That's the right spirit! Well, then... Tell me, do you really know the way to the sawmill so well, and those two as well? Do you know all the roads up?"

The blood rushed into the old man's face. He suddenly thought of his rebel son. He was not thinking about the rising itself, but simply about Miklòs, the son whom he loved the most dearly of all. Miklòs would be about the same age as this lieutenant who addressed him so unceremoniously, he, a fifty-six-year-old man, who had been working for forty years and fought to the very last day in the last war.

"Well, what's the matter, why don't you speak?" asked the officer, and turned to the commandant of the garage. "It looks as though they don't know the way after all."

"Yes, we know it," replied Ferene Kiraly hoarsely, and passed his trembling hand over his forehead and the greying hair.

"Stand to attention when you speak to me!" barked the senior lieutenant. "You're a soldier even if you're not in uniform. Everyone is a soldier now... Well, what have you to say? Attention!"

The old man stared amazed at the arrogant lout, who was even a little smaller than himself in stature, and said quietly:

"Twenty-five years ago when I was wounded for the second time at the front, you were not yet..."

He wanted to say: "You were not yet born," but had no chance to finish the sentence; the officer seized him by the collar and drove his fist into the old man's face.

Kiraly staggered, and the two sons sprang towards him. The mother was standing at the kitchen door, paralysed with fright. The soldiers on the threshold snatched their rifles from their shoulders. The commandant of the garage had turned ghastly pale and was staring wide-eyed at the senior lieutenant, who was standing, head erect, in the middle of the room.

"If you haven't learned your lesson yet," he barked, "you're going to learn it now. You'll find out that impudence to your superiors isn't healthy."

He lighted another cigarette and turned carelessly to the two lads.

"We start in two hours. We're taking a heavy load up to the sawmill; you two will drive us."

"What load are we taking?" asked Gyuri.

The officer turned purple and his eyes flashed.

"You... you dare to put questions to me? Remember..." and he advanced on the lad with raised fist. But as he saw the young fellow's submissive expression, he stopped and said, as though continuing his sentence: "Remember, boy, it's not your place to ask questions; you only answer them."

The garage commandant explained humbly that the driver had only asked about the load because the driving speed depended upon it.

"So? The driving speed? Well, that's

another matter. Then listen to me," and the lieutenant came and stood in front of the brothers. "The load consists of soldiers. We are driving up to the sawmill, but not by the usual way, we're taking the old road. So as to come behind the sawmill, in the rear of the partisans. We leave in two hours. None of you leave this room until our departure, and nobody is to enter. And if anything happens on the way, any funny business, you'll make acquaintance with this..." With the last word he pulled out his revolver and stared at the lads with his piercing black eyes. "In a word, we leave in two hours." He turned and left the room without another word.

The mother burst into tears, wiping her eyes and face with her apron. The two sons came and stood in front of their father, as though they had received a command to fall into line. The old man, still pale, stared at them. Then he turned from them without a word, like a person who dislikes being the centre of attention. He went to the window, looked out into the darkness, and whispered:

"Hurry, change your things, the two hours will soon be up."

"I'm not going," said Mihály decidedly.

"What do you mean, you're not going? If you don't obey orders, you'll be stood against the wall," said Gyuri dully.

"Let them shoot me if they want. I'd sooner be shot than... against him..." He was about to name Miklós, but stopped short as he saw his weeping mother by the kitchen door.

"You'll be shot," Gyuri began again.

"Yes, shot. Orders are orders. You can't do anything about it."

"To the sawmill? Bring the soldiers down on them? Against them? Against him?" cried Mihály. Then with a shrug of his shoulders he went to his father, who was still staring out of the window, and from there cried again:

"No, no, I'm not driving up there."

The old man turned, his gaze wandered from his arguing sons to the ceiling and back again. As the quarrel died down, a paralysing feeling of fright shot through him. Now it was his turn, they were awaiting a decision from him, advice, a way out. Agitated, he walked away from the window. He felt that his legs scarcely supported him. His face was burning from the blow. Strange, how shame could crush a man. It seems to crush mind and will. They know well enough what they're about when they strike people. They strike with fists, with sticks, with whips, and they do it not only for the pain their blows give, but because of the shame, the shame... As though this arrogant, puffed-up puppy had known that here, in the Kiraly family, it would take something out of the ordinary to get what he wanted...

He looked again at his two sons, whose eyes were fixed on him tensely. They were expecting advice from him, encouragement.

"There are only two possibilities," he began helplessly. "Either we obey and take the armed load up, or else we refuse..."

"If I don't drive the lorry," Gyuri interrupted him hesitatingly, "yes, if I refuse the job, they'll put somebody else at the wheel who'll take them up. The only difference will be that I'll be put against the wall for refusing to obey orders. And they'll get where they want to be, just the same."

"There's... there might be... something else... another way out," said Mihály softly, then went and shut the kitchen door tightly so that his mother should not hear anything. He returned, and fixing his eyes on his father, he continued:

"We must stop them from going up there."

"That's impossible," Gyuri interrupted nervously.

"No, it isn't."

"Rubbish. How can we stop them? If the troops want to go up to the sawmill, they will. And you think that you're going to stop them? Who do you think you are, then? God almighty?"

Mihály was looking at his father again. The old man was following their argument attentively. He knew the obstinacy of both his sons, their widely contrasting characters. The younger was weak and always submitted to anyone more highly placed. He would run trembling as soon as he even scented an order from above. But perhaps it wasn't even cowardice, but just that he respected his "betters," and wanted to climb to the same heights. And if now he was whining like a dog that fears a thrashing, it was simply because he hated the idea of being stopped on his way up the ladder. The lad was afraid for his own future, and for its sake he was even ready to help when it was a case of dragging his own brother to the gallows... After all, he was still just a lad, not much more than a child, he had not even thought about the road from there to the sawmill... But on the other hand it was true that even if he did not take the wheel, the soldiers would go up all the same, they would go anywhere they wanted. That was true. But how did Mihály think it could be stopped, then?

"My son," the old man began softly, and smiled at Mihály. "Mihály, how do you think, then, you can prevent anybody else..."

"We can't prevent it!" cried Gyuri.

"Yes, we can, we can take the wheel ourselves, so that they don't find another man to take their load of death up to the sawmill."

"I don't understand you," said Gyuri confusedly. "It's all the same whether we drive them up or somebody else, they'll get there just the same."

"It's sixty kilometres before they get there. A lot can happen in sixty kilometres," Mihály replied softly, and looked at his father.

The old man trembled. He saw Mihály's eyes blazing passionately. He understood—on the way the lad would do something... Of course, that was one way out... But what would he do? How would he manage

it? A tired smile appeared on his face as he said to the young fellow:

"Well, then—get on with it! Get washed and changed."

With those words he turned and went into the kitchen.

He placed the washbowl on the chair. On the stove the water was boiling. The two lads stripped to the waist. Gyuri was the first to take his place before the bowl. The old man raised the huge pan from the fire and turned to his younger son. With deep pain the father's sad eyes rested on Gyuri's face. Then... was it because of the steam?.. he stumbled forward blindly with the heavy pan, it slipped from his hands and the boiling water poured over Gyuri's naked arms and chest.

The mother screamed. The lad roared with the horrible pain.

"I... I stumbled," stammered the old man. "Get a lime-water compress on him quick."

He put the pan down on the floor and himself brought the vaseline, cotton wool and bandages. He looked at the raw arms and softly stroked his son's hair and cheeks with a trembling hand, as though pleading for forgiveness.

"Forgive me, Gyuri, don't be angry. It'll soon heal."

His son's pain-contorted face twisted in a smile.

"It's all right, it's all right now," he stammered.

"But all the same, my son, you can't make that difficult journey," said his father. "Of course, you needn't worry about it. Orders are orders, so I'll go."

"You?" said Gyuri in surprise. He could barely suppress a groan as he spoke. But despite the terrible pain of his scalded arms and chest, he smiled heroically. "You? You could never stand such a hard trip."

"No? Just listen to the greenhorn!" his father teased him. Swiftly he stripped off his jacket and shirt, poured fresh cold water into the bowl, added some hot, quickly soaped himself and washed carefully and thoroughly, like a man preparing for some solemn event. By the time he had finished washing, the elder son, Mihály, had already shaved. Now old Kiraly also took up the razor.

The mother led Gyuri into the other room and made him go to bed.

"And so, we're going?" asked Mihály, standing before the washbowl. "We're going up to the sawmill?"

"Yes, we're going up," replied the old man.

A long look passed between father and son.

"We're going up, so that nobody else should take our place at the wheel," Mihály began again after a short pause.

"Yes, just for that reason. So we're going, then..." replied the old man, and a painful smile showed in his eyes and lips. "I know the old road like the palm of my hand. You haven't been there very often, you've always been joy-riding along the new road. But I travelled the old road for ten years, when the new one hadn't been made. Going up the mountain there aren't any difficulties. If you know the curves, you can take them blindfold. It's only on top, when you're over the crest, that the road's open on one side... It's easy enough, up there, to tip over... and from the bridge too. In short, it's dangerous there on top. Look out up there, do just what I do. Follow, my lad, follow me in everything."

"That's no good," Mihály contradicted him. "You say it's dangerous up there on the bridge? The lorry can easily go over? You may be right. But if one's careful, one can jump out in time. You just need to pull the wheel right over, and take a good long jump, get right away from the lorry so that the second, coming along just behind, shouldn't run over anybody who's got away in time... In a word, I'm taking the first."

"Keep your breath to cool your porridge, my place is in front."

"No," Mihály almost shouted, "I'm taking the first."

The old man swayed, a feeling of dizziness overcame him. Then he smiled, like a man who has thought of a good joke.

"All right," he said, "you can take the first, as far as I am concerned."

"Give me your hand on it," the lad said, to be quite sure, and gave his father a firm grip. "In a word, if anything happens up there, you must jump; whatever happens, the lorry can only go down to the right. So you'll jump left. Only keep your eye on me, in front."

The old man wanted to say something more, but the door was flung open and the senior lieutenant entered. Still holding his razor, Kiraly hastened into the room and in military fashion reported the unexpected injury to Gyuri, and that he proposed to take his lad's place. The lieutenant laughed and slapped him on the back.

"See, old 'un, that's the sort of thing I like, a sense of duty. That's quite another matter." And he held out his hand.

Ferene Kiraly dressed himself quickly and then went to his wife. He embraced and kissed her, while she wept quietly and looked at him in fear. She found all this strange and disturbing—the way her husband had stroked her head, and now this farewell kiss—it all confused and frightened her. Her husband never kissed her when he went off to work. This unusual tenderness filled her with an incomprehensible fear.

"Where are you going?" she cried. "Feri, what are you going to do?" Tears choked her whisper.

"Come along, come along," the lieutenant hurried them.

The old man went up to his youngest son and stroked his hair tenderly.

"Forgive me for causing you such pain," he said softly. "Good-bye, my son, and look after your mother."

Never before had the old man spoken with such warmth and tenderness.

"Father..." said Gyuri hoarsely, and jumped up, alarmed.

But the old man had already turned his

back and was leaving the room with firm steps. Mihály followed him. In the doorway he turned once more, he wanted to wave good-bye to his mother and brother, but the lieutenant shouted at him, pushing him out.

It was a dark, starless night. Two huge lorries were standing in the garage yard, filled to overflowing with steel-helmeted soldiers. A staff sergeant-major was sitting in the cabin of the second. Mihály looked at him—he was a broad-shouldered, light-eyed soldier with a large head and coarse features. His huge paws were resting on his knees. Mihály passed on to the first lorry. But he was too late. The old man was already sitting at the wheel.

"My son," said the father, his voice trembling slightly, "follow me in everything. Then everything will go all right."

He leaned out and clapped his son on the shoulder.

"Off you go to your place!" the lieutenant shouted to Mihály.

Mihály stood there for a second as though rooted to the spot. The lieutenant climbed in beside his father. The soldiers were sitting tightly-packed in the body of the huge lorry, their rifles between their knees, the muzzles pointing menacingly upward. There were about fifty of them, and as many in the second. Each lorry carried a machine-gun.

They moved off, soon reached the high-road and rushed ahead at full speed. It was a straight road, but increasing in steepness. Later on, when it began to twist and wind as well, the old man took the wheel with both hands. From time to time he even leaned forward onto it. The lieutenant nodded in satisfaction.

Both windows were open in the driver's cabin, and the fresh mountain air rushed into the huge lorry. Deep silence reigned all around, broken only by the purring of the engines. It was a pitch-dark night. When the time came to leave the asphalt highroad, the old man slowed down. The road narrowed continually, and the sound of the engines came back in a thousand echoes. And in this multiplied sound the old man forgot the soldiers and the officer accompanying him. Swiftly, like a film unrolling, his life passed before him, the many, many happy memories of the past. His wedding day, the birth of his three sons... his promotion at work... For five years now he had actually been head of the garage staff. And the garage commandant? Before the war he had been called the director. A miserable coward. The way he had stood there, without saying a word, and let that clown strike his best worker in the face! He let that happen to his fellow-employee, when he knew that there was no one more faithful... Not a word could he find to say, he was so intimidated. Oh, it's clear enough now that they're all beasts, everyone of them. The workman means nothing to them. He's just there to be spoken to contemptuously, and struck in the face.

"Miklòs... My son... You were right... You were always right when you spoke so angrily of these swine," he growled, and threw a look of hate at the lieutenant.

The officer was sitting there beside the driver, calmly smoking a cigarette.

Now the old man listened, to see what was happening behind him. Mihály's lorry was following at the same speed.

"A capable lad, he'll be an even better driver than his father," he thought proudly, but then a sad smile appeared on his thoughtful face.

"Will he, then? Will he really?"

He sighed. His son's thunderstruck face rose before him. He had wanted to drive the first lorry. The first... What was it he had said? He wanted to take the first, because if anything should happen, if it went off the bridge and one had to jump, the second coming directly behind might run over one. So he had wanted to take the first, because he could jump better, because he was better able to get out of the way of the second...

But is that possible in any case?.. The bridge is very narrow... One would have to leap so as to land at the end of the bridge, on the far side of the drop... But if one failed?.. In any case, it is good that Mihály is in the second machine. That means there's no danger of his being run over by the lorry rushing up behind.

He breathed deeply of the night air... Who could tell what the next moment would bring? Perhaps... perhaps it would have been better to reject the whole business, to make some excuse, never mind what... For instance, that Mihály did not know the district. The garage commandant would surely have understood that it was just a pretext—that they had some reason for avoiding the job. He would surely have let the deception pass. After all, they were his best workers...

But now it was too late for regrets. Perhaps one could have avoided the whole thing. Perhaps! But it would have been stupid to base any hopes on the garage commandant. Not a bad fellow but a coward, a miserable coward. He would have been too afraid of the authorities to cover up any excuses. Though for that matter, it was not simply a case of fear. This usually quiet man could sense that here it was a fight between two opposing interests, the interests of his worker, a poor workman's family, and those of the senior lieutenant or those whom he represented and protected. He felt very clearly that the garage commandant, before the war the director, belonged to the Hitlerites against whom the workers had risen in the mountains. But old Kiraly and his son were drawn to the rebels... No, it was no good. You couldn't count on people like the commandant in a really difficult moment.

He started, pulled himself together with all the strength of his will. The lorry had left the forest. Now the road began to zig-zag. Now he would need to be on the alert. They were already six hundred metres up. Three hundred higher, and the bridge led over the pass. Once they were over it, the road would begin to descend again. In

another forty minutes they would reach the bridge.

If... if the bridge was still standing—the thought suddenly flashed into the old man's head. Perhaps it had been blown up by the partisans. If they have only had a little foresight, they will have done it. Most probably they have dynamited it, for after all, Miklòs is their leader. He would be certain to think of anything like that... Ah, that would be good! If there's no bridge, then we can't go on any further. Then everything will be settled and we shall turn home again.

He was suddenly filled with a joy that made him want to shout and laugh. Of course, everything would work out all right. Miklòs knew that if the bridge was blown up, it would take days to cross the shoulder of the mountain; to travel the hundred kilometres of the long, winding way around. So at least time would be gained... And for that matter, for such a long journey somebody else would have to drive.

The heavy machine sped lightly forward, swinging round the curves under the guidance of Ferene Kiraly's steel fingers. The old man looked ahead and said tensely to the officer:

"Perhaps, Sir, they may have blown up the bridge up there."

"Wha-a-a-t?.. Blown it up? Who?" asked the lieutenant hastily, evidently taken aback.

"I think that possibly the partisans may have done it," the old man repeated hopefully.

The officer sat up with a jerk. He stared ahead, and then clapped the old man on the shoulder.

"Good for you, old 'un, you shall be rewarded for that. I never thought of it. A pretty thing, devil take it! Very well, then we'll go just up to the crest. There we'll stop. From there I'll send someone forward to the bridge to reconnaitre."

Staring ahead, he murmured to himself: "I really ought to have thought of it myself."

The cold night air beat in an icy stream against the old man's brow. He sat there, leaning forward, watching the road. His eyes were almost starting from their sockets. Louder and louder, closer and closer sounded the rushing mountain torrent. Another eight or ten curves, and they would be on the plateau. From there to the bridge was only half a minute's ride.

"My son, my dear Miklòs... you have blown it up, haven't you?" he whispered, and bent right forward as though trying to distinguish the charred remnants of the bridge at the edge of the cleft.

He sounded twice, a soft, warning note. Then he slowed down. Mihály, following on, also jammed on his brakes. Both halted. The lieutenant jumped down and gave an order. A pair of heavy boots stumped threateningly along the road.

The old man also left the driving cabin and stood in front of it. He stretched his stiff joints and listened for the footsteps of the soldier hurrying ahead. But the sound had died away. Then he went slowly back to the second machine and stood beside his son. But the lieutenant was already there too.

"The dog's suspicious! God damn and blast his stinking soul to hell..." he cursed to himself.

Then he stood there motionless, looking quietly into his son's face glimmering in the darkness. A dear, good lad... Of all three, the one most like him, and it was this one who was accompanying him on this dangerous road.

A faint sound of trampling feet announced the return of the scout. The lieutenant called to him. Ferene Kiraly stood motionless by the lorry. About twenty paces further, and the rasping voice of the patrol reported that everything was in order. The bridge was untouched, and nobody about.

Oh, if these fellows had a bit of sense, but of course they had none... If they had any sense, they would have left two men behind, for it might well be that the partisans had only been waiting for the patrol to examine the bridge. And then when the two lorries were rolling confidently over, the bomb would suddenly explode beneath them... That was how it would be. And that was how it must be...

"Drive on!" ordered the lieutenant. "Everything's in order!"

"In order?" asked the old man. "Well, then, that's all right then, if everything's in order."

"Get on with it, then," the officer called impatiently.

"Yes, Sir," replied Kiraly. He opened the door of his son's cabin. "My son, I wanted to say to you..." He stood there for another second, then clicked his heels and even bowed a little to his son.

"Mihály, my son, Mihály..." he called up softly. "Follow me in everything."

"Yes!" replied the son in a hard voice.

He dropped the door handle and the door closed but did not latch.

Now he returned to his own lorry. Slowly he crawled into his place and settled himself on the seat. But the heel of his left shoe was pressed against the door. He drove off. Behind him, Mihály's lorry also began to move. Two more curves... then a hundred metres of straight road... to the bridge. At the first curve he thought of his son Gyuri's scalded arms and chest. Poor lad, it'll be a month before he's fit for work. But that doesn't matter... In a month he'll be able to work again. He's a good worker, he'll always make his way, and he won't leave his mother in the lurch. At the second curve his wife's face rose before him. She had been a dear and true companion to him. For twenty-five years.

In the autumn they would have celebrated their silver wedding. For years they had both grieved that on this twenty-fifth anniversary the family would not all be together... Miklòs was not at home. The family, the little town had been too cramped for him. He was always roaming

through the world. A pity that he knew him so little. Strange, his own son, and he didn't know him. The neighbours, the garage commandant, for instance, he knew as well as he knew himself. But his son, that thoughtful, sensible lad, he knew only from other people's accounts and opinions... What had the lad been after in Spain? He had been fighting. A hundred deaths awaited him, and he was there, he had gone there, although nobody forced him to do so.

He was not yet eighteen when he went. On foot, fleeing over mountains and through forests, forcing his way through as though it were some fabulous El Dorado. He wrote from there once that the people of Spain were fighting for freedom... It was for a foreign people he had gone, people he had never seen and whose language he could not even speak... He had a great and glorious soul, this Miklòs... An arrogant bully like this one would never strike him and get away with it... He turned his face, wet with perspiration, to the lieutenant.

"Listen," he said hoarsely. "Do you know who it is we are going out against?"

"What's that?.. What do you want?" The officer leaned towards him.

"I asked you—who are these partisans?"

"Swine."

"Swine?"

"Of course. There are not only Hungarians and Ruthenians among them, but foreigners too. They came down here in the mountains by parachute."

"Foreigners? And they come here to fight for the freedom of the Hungarian people? As Miklòs went to Spain..."

"What? What's that you're gibbering about? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

Ferene Kiraly sighed. They swung around the narrow curve on to the straight road.

"Miki, my son Miklòs," he said in a loud, commanding tone, "you forgot the bridge..."

He leaned with the whole of his body on the steering wheel. With his left foot he pushed the door slightly open.

"Mihály, Mihály, follow me! Exactly what I do," he shouted with all the force of his lungs. He opened the throttle to its fullest extent and sent the lorry rushing ahead at top speed.

Through the sound of the engine and wheels he heard Mihály's shout of assent... A wave of joy filled his heart. He rejoiced at his son's obedience, and he rejoiced that both of them, father and son, were about to save Miklòs and his comrades from the danger gathering over them.

"Miklòs... my son..." he sighed on the edge of the hideous drop.

The heavy lorry rushed at the bridge. The old man kicked the door wide open. The cold draught poured into the cabin. Ferene Kiraly saw the officer start up in his seat in alarm.

"What's that?.. What's the matter?.. What are you doing?" The words were a scream of horror.

But before the lorry had reached the bridge, the old man swung the wheel round to the right with all his strength at the same instant pulling his right leg out from under the steering column, and prepared to jump. But the huge machine was already tipping... it shot between the bridge and the precipice and crashed down into the depths.

Close behind it, almost colliding with the first, the second lorry rolled down... Mihály shot out of the cabin onto the edge of the road, staggered and fell face downward on the asphalt. He lay motionless for a second, stunned by the fall. Then he rose. Still dazed, he heard the death cry of a hundred throats come up to him from the depths. Then all was still...

The wind gently stirred the tops of the dreaming trees and lifted the ruffled hair of the lad wandering up and down the edge of the road above the precipice, seeking, seeking...

"Father!.. Father!.. Where are you?" he whispered. "Father, are you alive?"

Then he stood erect and began to run, swaying as he went. He hurried over the bridge and disappeared in the direction of the sawmill...

Translated from the German by Eve Manning

DENIS DAVYDOV *

A PARTISAN

(A fragment)

The fight subsides. The gloom of night
Is o'er the Moscow precincts sinking,
Amid Kutuzov's camp a light
Shines, lonely in the distance blinking.
The night with army legions teems,
And over flaming Moscow, spreading,
The glow of fire-tongues blood-red
gleams,
An endless flow of purple shedding.

Along the secret pathways race
Through silent battle-valleys gliding,
Gay riders on their nightly chase,
To distant lairs where foes lie hiding.
Like packs of wolves the horsemen
rove
About the woodlands in the gloaming,
Now watch for rustlings in the grove,
Now noiseless, like the shadows,
roaming.

Their chief is leading at the front,
In dark Caucasian cloak attired,
In shaggy fur-cap; to the hunt
He rides with martial wrath inspired.

Of Moscow, built from snow-white
stone,
The son, who has a warrior's calling,
He thirsts for fight and fame alone,
Ne'er heeding what his fate's
forestalling.

For many a day he knows no rest,
No kin, no tender maiden's glances,
He loves the bloody carnage best,
His Cossacks and his steed that
prances.
This friend o'er hillocks, over streams
His rider bears with speed untiring,
Now heark'ning to a sound he seems,
Now snorting, now the rein desiring.

Anon, the dashing troop careered
On hills, beyond the Nara streaming,
But soon the distant heights they
cleared,
Flashed wildly past, and disappeared...

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

TO HER

In thee, in thee alone I see no guile concealing,
But with an artless soul—a captivating mind,
A playful merriment with moods to dreams confined,
And every word holds thought, and every glance bears feeling.

Translated by Olga Moisseyenko

* Denis Davydov (1784—1830), the poet of the Pushkin's Pleiad. Davydov was an officer in the Hussars and during the Patriotic War of 1812 was a famous commander of partisan troops. In 1814, after Napoleon had been driven out of Russia, Davydov and his detachment of five hundred Cossacks operating far ahead of the regular army forces, swooped down on the city of Dresden. He was immortalized by Leo Tolstoy as the dare-devil partisan Vaska Denissov in "War and Peace."

NEAR AN OLD TOWN

The old town rises on a hill.

Many the battles and campaigns it has witnessed, many the clash of armies beneath its walls. Fighting had gone on for centuries, and those ancient fortress towers could tell many a tale of the gallant deeds of free Cossacks, of siege and storm, of loyalty and honour, of ardent Cossack love and the merciless bullet of their fathers.

If you close your eyes and listen to the sound of firing at night, you might almost think you hear the noise and stir of a Cossack camp, the creaking of the carts, the snorting of dozing horses, while martial drums sound in the distance.

A gun roars in the night, a shell whirs through the air like some huge bird. For a few seconds silence reigns, then the firing starts again in various places and there is the vicious whine of bullets.

The darkness is intense, as though the whole world were covered with a thick black cloud; the muddy snow is dark, and the road engulfed in inky obscurity—a man is invisible two paces away. Who can tell on such a night if it is a friend or enemy tramping through the mud of the road, making his way from cottage to cottage in the half-ruined village, stumbling and cursing?

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Porfiri Turyonok, commander of the second squadron... Don't you see me?"

"A man could take his own wife for a stoker, a night like this! The colonel's expecting you, he's just asked for you for the second time..."

A door opened, a strip of weak light fell across the threshold, and the commander dived into the cottage.

"Look here, Turyonok," said the colonel, a swarthy, crop-headed man who looked like Ostap Bulba, "I've got a big job for you to put through... Will you take it on?"

"Depends on what it is, Comrade Colonel," mumbled Turyonok, blushing and confused, but inwardly pleased and flattered at being entrusted with something important. "Maybe I'm not up to such a big thing?"

The colonel either did not hear his reply or did not wish to hear it. He stood leaning with both hands on the table, where a map was spread out like some fantastic tablecloth.

"You see those two roads, Turyonok? That's all the Germans have, the rest are in our hands. You need to make your way there and capture some prisoner for information purposes—the higher the rank the better. Can you take it on?"

"Why not? The Germans must have plenty of people travelling those roads, especially at night," Turyonok replied, and after thinking for a moment, he added: "Only it's easy to get shelled there... Our artillery's covering those roads, we may get a packet from our own guns. If you could give orders for the artillery to shift their fire onto one road only, then it would be easier..."

The colonel agreed. He found pleasure in looking at the squadron commander's weather-beaten young face, and although everything had already been said, he still detained him for the pleasure of observing the lively energetic play of his eyes, the high colour of his cheeks, the soft, youthful mustache which the young squadron commander every now and then touched with a roughened hand.

"There's an old man I've got," said Turyonok, breaking the silence. "Permit me to take him along as a guide. He knows the district and he's got scores to settle with the Germans."

"He won't let you down?" sighed the colonel, regretting that he really would have to let Turyonok go.

"No, no fear of it, the old 'un's absolutely reliable, I'll stake my head on it."

"All right, get on with it."

Turyonok saluted, went out into the passage and passing the tommy-gunner, dived into the blackness of the night, filled with a stinging wind.

Half an hour later, thirty picked cavalrymen stood before Porfiri Turyonok's table in the cramped cottage room, their tall hats nearly touching the ceiling. Unconsciously copying the colonel's pose, leaning with his hands braced on the table, the commander of the second squadron spoke to his men.

"It's going to be a desperately risky business. Got that clear? You'll be led by me and this old man, he's called Timofei Ivanovich, and my orders to you are to trust him absolutely—he brought four St. Georges home from the last war, although he was in the infantry. Clear?"

The swaying flame from the wick floating in an earthen saucer was becoming dimmed from the breath of many men. All of them looked at the little old man with

a huge white beard sitting on the bench under the ikons. Confused, the old man pulled his fluffy yellowed mustache, sometimes giving a scared glance up at the stove, where a barefoot old woman was sitting, her cheek supported on her hand.

"Eh, the old 'un'd better lead the dead 'uns to the lavatory, and leave this sort of job alone," sighed one of the men noisily, and the others burst out laughing, but were silenced immediately by the commander's displeased voice:

"All right, that'll do! Made enough noise, now—to horse!"

Boots stamped and sabres jangled as the cavalrymen left the cottage.

"And you, Kostyrin," Turyonok baited the soldier who had laughed at the old man, "bring Timofei Ivanovich a good sabre and a rifle, and get a move on..."

Kostyrin understood that this was by way of punishment, saluted and went out. As soon as he had disappeared, the old woman jumped lightly down from the stove to the earthen floor, and paying no more attention to Turyonok as though he had not been there, went up to the old man.

"And where is it ye think ye're going, ye old fool? Just to get yerself laughed at? Pah! Them folks is just making a mock of ye, and I've got to laugh at ye too, ye silly old devil! To show the Germans how ye ride a horse...eh, a fine sight it'll be! Time to be getting ready fer yer last end and want to be off to the wars, ye silly old dodderer!.."

Timofei Ivanovich gave a scared glance at the old woman and blinked as though about to sneeze... Turyonok was already beginning to fear that the termagant might rob him of his guide, when suddenly the latter banged his small fist on the table with a force that made the saucer jump, and shouted in a thin, menacing voice:

"Get back on the stove, woman! This is no matter for your wits!"

The woman was preparing to reply, and probably the old man would have had the worst of it, but at that moment Kostyrin brought the weapons, and Timofei Ivanovich seized the sabre with such a resolute air that his wife collapsed like a pricked balloon. Timofei Ivanovich looked victoriously at Turyonok, quickly donned his sheepskin coat, fastened on the weapons and taking his cap down from a nail, said:

"I'm all ready, son."

They left the cottage, the old woman shouting after them:

"I hope yer horse falls dead under ye, for yer nothing but a plague to me, ye old fool!"

But the commander and the old man were already out of earshot. Horses were brought them, the squadron commander held the stirrup for the guide to mount, then jumped into the saddle and gave the command to start.

They rode in silence, without smoking—those were the orders. Very soon Timofei Ivanovich, leading the way, left the path and led the men along beside dark willows which lashed their faces painfully with their cold, wet twigs. After that they descended a steep slope, with dark hills looming on either side, and soon a deep gulley swallowed the cavalry troop as though they had disappeared under the earth. The sky covered them with an impenetrable blanket. Now they were riding in single file, the back of the man in front barely discernible in the darkness. Sometimes a horse would snort, or some man would cough under cover of his hand. Neither the rattle of a sabre nor any other sound broke the silence.

Oh dark night, impenetrable night! How many thoughts and deeds are concealed under your black pall, what plans are matured by daring minds in the hours when it seems that all life on earth has died away and ceased—and for what gallant exploits the horsemen riding at the bottom of the gulley are preparing! What fills their minds, as they ride, each conscious of the presence of the others, yet at the same time alone with his thoughts? What and whom do they recall, in the embrace of the mournful darkness of the night, these staunch men, wild heads, hot hearts!

Is it of his father that the horseman thinks as he rides through the dark night, or of his mother, or his sweetheart perchance? Does he think of his home, or the glow of a camp fire of long ago, where some quiet glance or softly spoken word from a girl's lips sank into his heart? Long and deep are the thoughts of the horseman swaying rhythmically in his saddle during the long night ride, but of these nocturnal thoughts he does not like to speak.

And Porfiri Turyonok, the young squadron commander, followed the guide at the head of his troop folded in the embrace of his own obscure thoughts; the darkness surrounding him and the raw exhilarating wind were pleasant to him. But especially pleasant was the thought that he was going on an important assignment to that old town of which he had read in his childhood.

He pondered about how he was now riding the old road which had been taken by his glorious forbears, free Cossacks, streaming in from all parts of the Ukraine to the fortress, to camp here, to meet the enemy in furious battle and conquer him by virtue of matchless daring, staunch courage and self-sacrifice. The old town, invisible in the darkness of the night, rose before his eyes with its winding streets, its high fortifications, and in the silence unbroken by a shot, horse's whinney or human voice, he could already hear the gallant music of the morrow's battle...

Suddenly Timofei Ivanovich, riding in front of Turyonok, pulled up, the foremost horses began to back into those behind them and Turyonok gave the order to dismount and lead the animals. The path now led across a swamp, overgrown with tall, dense rushes. The horses stepped cautiously picking their way delicately from hummock to hummock, the thin, untouched ice crackling under their hooves and under the

men's feet like breaking glass. As he led his horse, the squadron commander could feel its warm breath on his face; sometimes the animal would miss its footing, and sigh heavily, like a man wearied by a hard journey, but realizing the necessity to keep on so as to arrive at the appointed place at the time fixed.

The artillery, which all the time previously had been plastering the German-held roads, had long fallen silent, and now the colonel would be sitting at headquarters over his map, awaiting the result of the night patrol. Evidently he was planning some important operation, and it depended on the commander of the second squadron Porfiri Turyonok whether he would possess the necessary information about the enemy. A difficult job, but Porfiri Turyonok would sooner be hacked to mincemeat than fail to carry it out; he wasn't the man to stop half-way!

Stepping carefully aside, Turyonok overtook the leading horse and drew up beside the guide.

"Is it much further?"

Timofei Ivanovich was carefully stepping from hillock to hillock, leading his horse, infallibly picking his way in the darkness.

"Maybe ye think I'm feared of her?" said the guide suddenly, without answering Turyonok's question, and it was a moment before the young cavalryman understood that he was referring to his wife. "I'm not feared of the devil himself, never mind a female!... She's nagged at me for forty years and more, like forty flies biting me, and the only time I got a bit of peace was the four years when I was fighting in the German war..."

"Nags you, does she?" asked Turyonok, laughing inwardly.

"Nags, d'ye say!" Timofei Ivanovich halted suddenly and caught Turyonok's arm. "Got a tongue like a lash, she has, fair flays the skin off me!..."

They were already on firm ground. The guide felt for the stirrup, and mounting heavily, said to Turyonok:

"See that tree—that's dry ground."

However much Turyonok tried to see, let him strain his eyes as he might, he could make out nothing before him but pitch blackness. He expressed his envy of the old man's eyesight, and gave the command to mount. The meadow soon ended, the startling skeletons of torn, leafless willows reared up suddenly before them, and at the same moment the horses' hooves rang out on the highroad.

Immediately a fresh, unusual feeling flooded Porfiri Turyonok. In an instant his dreamy mood of the gulley and the swamp had disappeared, to be replaced by the keen alertness, the pleasant excitement which always came in a moment of danger. He was not alone, behind him were thirty of the best fighters in his squadron, all of them young, as like each other as though they had been picked. Beside him, nudging his stirrup, rode the fearless guide who feared nothing on earth except his old woman, and the result of the enterprise now depended to a great extent on the daring, sagacity and endurance of Turyonok.

The horses' hooves beat out their measured rhythm; the darkness seemed to have lessened, or perhaps it only appeared lighter because of the virgin snow at either side of the road, making it a dark ribbon bordered with white.

Fifty yards away Turyonok saw a column of motor-vehicles which had been drawn up at the side of the road. There was only one thing to do. Turning in the saddle, the commander gave an order under his breath, which was transmitted from one to the other, then, holding in their horses, the men paced carefully past the motionless lorries around which German drivers were fussing, while sentries stood guard. Turyonok and his men could hear the low voices of the Germans, one soldier even ran under the very nose of Turyonok's horse, raising his arm as a shield, as though afraid the animal would snatch off his cap. When the lorries were left behind, they took to a gallop, and very soon the objective of the night patrol was reached.

Sentries appeared out of the darkness and seized the horses' bridles. Without discussion, without stopping to reply to the Germans' cries of alarm, the squadron commander and the guide drew their sabres and slashed from the shoulder. Then the men dragged the bodies into a culvert. Before them glimmered the first houses. Here they alighted. Five men were left to guard the horses, the remainder Turyonok led into the town. And from then onwards everything went with a swing, as though rehearsed beforehand.

Sliding cautiously along the houses, Turyonok stumbled, fell, and discovered a ditch with a thick bundle of wires laid along the bottom. Following them, he came to a small building standing back in a dark courtyard, from which the tapping of telegraph keys could be heard. Before the sentry had time to fire, the men had cut off the yard and the street. Turyonok and Timofei Ivanovich whose beard was askew with excitement, burst into the telegraph exchange, followed by Kostyrin, still chagrined by the recent reproof. He halted at the door and raised both hands grasping grenades. The telegraph operators gaped at them with eyes red from weariness and night work. With deft blows from his rifle butt, Timofei Ivanovich smashed the transmitting apparatuses and cut the wires with his sabre while Turyonok collected sheets of telegrams and stuffed rolls of tape into his pocket.

This was a big success, probably worth more than any living prisoner, but Turyonok could not give up the idea of capturing a German — "the higher the rank the better." This had been the colonel's orders, and he was accustomed to carry out orders with unfailing accuracy.

Shots were ringing out on the street. Turyonok and Timofei Ivanovich ran out into the yard and listened. Panicky firing, uneven and disordered, was sputtering out

on all sides, while rockets went up in the centre of the town...

Turyonok smiled in the darkness, and gripped the guide's shoulder hard. There was not a second to lose. What was keeping Kostyrin back there with the telegraph operators?

The first moments of panic are of advantage to the attacking side, but almost immediately a number of unforeseen dangers may arise, and it is hardly ever possible to plan what is to be done, to guess beforehand where the panic-stricken enemy will go or what he will do.

One after the other, two grenades roared up behind Turyonok and Timofei Ivanovich, there was the crash of breaking glass and at the same moment Kostyrin came running out.

"Ready! All in order in the stable!"

They ran, taking care not to lose sight of each other.

"The lads are doing fine, great work!" growled Turyonok as he jumped a ditch and collided forcibly with a post. He swore loudly and heard with surprise answering curses—it was no post, but a big, strapping German standing in the middle of the road, holding a telephone receiver with the cord dangling, and shouting some kind of disjointed words.

"Here! Come along here!" shouted Turyonok, throwing himself on the German. Kostyrin dashed up, Timofei Ivanovich threw himself under the man's feet and between them they pulled him down, tied him up, and dragged him away with them.

Cavalrymen came running up from all directions, and the men with the horses came running to meet them. The men leaped into the saddles. Turyonok threw his prisoner across the pommel, and with bullets whistling over their heads, the troop raced out of the town and along the road like a tempest.

At dawn Turyonok's troop, full muster, brought their captured senior lieutenant into the village without having lost a man. When they drew up at Timofei Ivanovich's cottage, the old man halted his horse and began to dismount.

"Wait a bit," Turyonok said to him. "Come along to the colonel, there'll certainly be a reward for you..."

The old man scratched his ear with his little finger, then jerking his head towards the dim windows of his cottage, replied in a low voice:

"I've got my own colonel sitting at home there... Look ye, son, don't ye be telling that crotchety female that I cut a German down, she's feared of all that bloody business, but us soldiers, it's our job, it's got to be done."

The morning mist was dispersing, rent and swept away by a fresh breeze. Turyonok looked to the east, where a golden sun was rising, then to the west, where the walls and towers of the old town on the hill were etched against the sky.

"You shall be ours!" Turyonok vowed; then with a smile on his weary face he paced slowly to the colonel's cottage.

LEONID PERVOMAISKY

SLAVIC FRIENDSHIP

It was almost morning when we four Russians decided to go to bed, after spending all night—my first among Yugoslav partisans after baling out in the rear—answering endless questions about Moscow. The colonel, our senior officer, gave the signal by sitting down on the straw covered by material from cargo parachutes, and beginning to strip off his tunic. In doing so he happened to turn it inside out, and I saw with surprise an Order of Lenin with a large hole in the centre, evidently made by a bullet, fastened on the inside, under the breast pocket.

"Not mine," said the colonel, seeing me looking at it. "I'm looking after it, fastened it on so as not to lose it."

He raised himself on the straw, propped himself up against the sacks of swingled hemp which were to serve us as pillows, and after lighting a cigarette, told me the first of the many tales I have heard here. I did not write it down at once, I must admit, but it remained in my memory and I think I can reproduce it pretty accurately.

...The pilot Vladimir Sergueyevich Yerikhonov, an old airman from the civil fleet, was set afire by the Germans not far from Zagreb on the night of his seventy-third flight to the partisans. The machine caught fire and began to fall to pieces in the air. Yerikhonov was the last to bale out. In landing he broke a leg, and when the partisans found him two days later—the only one of the crew who was rescued—he could not take a step without aid. Actually, it was not partisans who found him, but one partisan—Mirko Nikolich, a thirteen-year-old Croatian lad, with two features that distinguished him from all other lads of his age—first, a bronze medal on his breast with the date "1941", showing that Mirko Nikolich had been a partisan for three years already, and secondly, slung over his shoulder by a rope a German tommy-gun which he had used long and effectively.

When he saw the lad with the star on his cap, Yerikhonov laid his revolver on the ground, sighed, and for the first time since the catastrophe swore in relief, covering everything at once—the loss of the plane, his broken leg and the two days' fear of capture.

Mirko Nikolich knew by his helmet that he was an airman, by his uniform that he

was Russian, and by the unnaturally twisted, lifeless leg that he was hurt.

It was a matter of a moment for Mirko to find a way of explaining that he would go for help at once. Yerikhonov nodded in ascent. Actually, it was necessary, without a moment's delay, to run for a horse. But the child still alive in Mirko came to the surface. He dropped to his knee beside Yerikhonov, his eyes fixed on an object that had caught his attention.

On the breast of the Russian airman was a portrait of Lenin—not a doubt of it, it was Lenin. Mirko recognized the face, but for some reason it was very small, round, formed of gold and silver.

"Lenin?" asked Mirko.

"Lenin."

Yerikhonov tried to shift to a more comfortable position and gave an involuntary cry of pain. This reminded Mirko of his duty, and he jumped up, placed his tommy-gun beside Yerikhonov, and raced off.

An hour later the partisans came with a a horse and took Yerikhonov to their camp. It must be admitted that he had arrived at a decidedly awkward moment. For three weeks the Germans had been conducting a large-scale "offensive" here and the partisans had been forced to withdraw further and further into the mountains, changing camp every night. The battalion which had at first been left as a rearguard had long been cut off from all the rest and could count only upon itself.

The third night, after a short battle, the partisans withdrew into the wildest mountain country. The bullock cart which had been carrying Yerikhonov had to be abandoned. He was placed on a horse, and a board fastened at a slant to the right side of the saddle for him to rest his immobile leg, with its broken tibia. In this way he was able to keep the saddle somehow.

Mirko still held his place close to him, but now he walked alongside instead of behind, always on the side of the injured leg, which he shielded, holding aside or breaking off twigs and branches, and sometimes leading the horse by the bridle.

By a kind of tacit consent, the honour of looking after Yerikhonov had been conceded to Mirko. He gave the airman water from his German flask, several times he plucked birds which he managed to shoot and fried them for him over the campfire. When there was nothing to eat at all, he suddenly left Yerikhonov, giving up his place temporarily to another partisan; when he returned, he was carrying a cap in the bottom of which lay a few gnawed scraps of rusks, some tiny bits of dry cheese and two or three fragments of paprika. The partisans had given up to the Russian the last they had, taken from the very bottom of pocket or satchel, where they had been hoarding it against the blackest day of hunger.

Going up to Yerikhonov, Mirko held out the cap to him and suddenly became unusually garrulous. He could feel the airman's suspicious gaze upon him and tried in every way he could to give him no chance to talk, or ask where this food had come from. He showered Yerikhonov with endless questions about Moscow, about the Russian army, and his own flights, and Yerikhonov, who still knew the Croatian language very imperfectly, involuntarily found his attention distracted, as he sought with difficulty for words which the boy could understand. But when it came to the second, third and then the fourth time that Mirko brought the cap to Yerikhonov, the latter pushed it away with his free hand, and without touching the food, asked Mirko to take the horse's bridle and lead it to the battalion commander, Nikole Petrich.

Petrich was a tall, gloomy Belgrade metal-worker; silent at the best of times, the past few days he had said not a word beyond the most necessary commands.

"Where has this food come from?" asked Yerikhonov, riding up to him. "I don't want to be the only one to eat, when the rest are hungry."

Petrich looked into the bottom of the cap, then up at Yerikhonov, and realized that in this case lying was of no use.

"When you dropped us guns, tommy-guns and cartridges it wasn't because you had no use for them yourselves, there in Russia," Petrich put in quietly.

They looked one another in the eye for a moment, then Petrich wrung Yerikhonov's hand and said:

"We're brothers, my dear fellow!"

"But listen, Petrich! . ." Yerikhonov called after him.

Petrich followed the path back to his usual place at the head of the column and thought what a good, stubborn fellow this Russian airman was, and involuntarily putting himself in the other's place, he could easily imagine that he would have protested just as hotly.

Like most of those around him, Petrich spoke rarely and unwillingly of his feelings for the Russians. But in his heart there was hidden a deep, silent love and gratitude. As a matter of fact, both to himself and to the other men this was a thing so much a matter of course, so understood and felt by all, that words were needless.

The next day Mirko shot a fairly large bird with his revolver, sufficient for himself and Yerikhonov for two days.

On the third day, following this conversation, the Germans overtook the remnants of the battalion in a deep gorge almost without outlet. The only hope was to cut straight across unscalable mountain tops and thus, perhaps, find their own people again. But across the mountain tops there was not even a track, and to take a horse was an impossibility. There was still one path leading from the gorge around the mountains, it was true, but it came out onto the plain, which was held by the Germans.

Petrich summoned Mirko and two tommy-gunners.

"You will go with the Russian," he told the tommy-gunners. "Take the path that goes round the mountains." He explained how and where it led, how at first

they would have to turn left, and then, when the way forked, take the right-hand path. "Take him to the nearest village and hide there until he is strong again."

"We shall probably meet the Germans on the way," said one of the tommy-gunners, shaking his head.

"I don't know. I think not. They know that we shan't go that way. In any case, when you leave, we here shall engage in battle. All the Germans in the neighbourhood will make for us. You must save the airman. He's a Russian and an airman." And once more he repeated: "An airman." Then, turning away from them, he led Mirko aside.

"You found the airman, you must get him there safely," and in his voice there was no trace of condescension to Mirko's age. "Well, go along now." Petrich clapped him on the shoulder, turned and went.

Ten minutes later the two tommy-gunners, Mirko and Yerikhonov took the barely perceptible path winding along the mountain side, past the German positions.

When Mirko told Yerikhonov of the way they were to take—neglecting only to mention that Petrich would engage in battle—Yerikhonov nodded and said only: "O.K., Nikolich." And taking his revolver from his holster which had worked round behind him, he put it in his breast pocket.

As was the custom among the partisans, Mirko called Yerikhonov by his first name—Volodya. As for Yerikhonov, he used Mirko's surname—Nikolich—as he was used to addressing his comrades in the air unit while on duty.

Mirko had long been accustomed to this, but now these familiar words—"O.K., Nikolich," sounded unexpectedly sad, just as though they were saying farewell to each other, and with a shudder Mirko thought of the dangers lying ahead.

After they had been travelling half an hour, when the darkness was falling, they suddenly heard firing behind them. At first, it was only tommy-guns, then mortars began to add their voice, faster and more furious, as in a considerable engagement.

Yerikhonov halted his horse and listened. In the semi-darkness Mirko could see his surprised troubled face.

—"Volodya, come on," he said.

"Wait a bit!"

Yerikhonov listened for a long time, then silently turned his horse and began going back. He had understood.

Mirko ran ahead and seized the horse by the bridle.

"Volodya!" he repeated imploringly, seeing by Yerikhonov's eyes that he had realized everything.

Both the tommy-gunners also took their stand in front of Yerikhonov's horse and blocked his way.

"Boys, I'm going back. I've got to fight," cried Yerikhonov in a voice unlike his own, and jerked at the reins. But Mirko and the two tommy-gunners stood there motionless, blocking the path.

The firing grew fiercer. Yerikhonov realized that it was now too late for him to make any difference and that for those men now fighting to save his life, there could be nothing worse, nothing more senseless than his return; nevertheless, this did not make it any easier for him.

"Eh, you don't even let a fellow die with the others," he said, looking at Mirko with chagrin, and then to his own surprise burst into tears for the first time in three years of war.

After this he seemed to lose all interest. Mirko turned his horse and led it by the bridle. Yerikhonov rode in silence, his head gloomily hunched between his shoulders, and not another word did he say the whole night through.

Twice during the night they turned, following Petrich's instructions. The second time Mirko hesitated for a long time; it seemed to him that the path going left was no path but simply the dried-up track of a stream; but after talking it over, they decided that it really was the place where the path forked, and turned right.

At dawn, on climbing a steep slope and emerging suddenly from behind a boulder onto an almost open space, they ran up against some Germans. The main body of the Germans had made for the scene of battle, as Petrich had foreseen, but nevertheless here was a patrol of four left on the path.

It was four to four. But owing to Yerikhonov being on horseback, the Germans had seen them first and were the first to open fire. One tommy-gunner fell immediately without a sound, the other, the one who had disputed with Petrich when they had been setting out, took cover behind a loose heap of stones and with a hoarse shout: "Mirko, get the airman away!" gave his first round. With all his force Mirko struck the horse on the crupper; it turned and began to gallop back the way they had come, but Yerikhonov, jerking the bridle, brought it to a standstill behind a huge stone standing beside the path. Throwing over his sound leg, he began trying to climb off the horse.

"Volodya!" cried Mirko, almost weeping.

But Yerikhonov did not hear him, he pulled his revolver from his breast pocket, and swearing loudly, tried to free his leg and alight. In despair, Mirko seized the bridle and pulled the horse back under cover of the mountainside, together with Yerikhonov. A tommy-gun round rattled against the stones, and Mirko felt rather than saw Yerikhonov slump helplessly over the horse's neck.

"Get the airman away!" came the tommy-gunner's hoarse shout again, between two rounds.

Mirko jumped onto the horse's crupper, seizing the bridle with one hand, the other arm supporting Yerikhonov with a strength beyond his years, and urging on the horse, galloped out from behind the stone and back along the track by which they had come.

The path went downhill. Stumbling, the horse jumped desperately from stone to stone, faster and faster, then bracing its

hoofs, slid down the rubble-covered slope and finally, at a full gallop, quite out of control, raced along the narrow bed of the stream through crackling branches that parted and closed over their heads. For five minutes more they rushed along in this fashion, then the horse began to sink on its side, and Mirko barely had time to slide from the crupper in order to support Yerikhonov as he slumped helplessly down. Thick bushes surrounded them on all sides.

Yerikhonov was lying motionless. Mirko unfastened his belt and pulled up the tunic. The left half of Yerikhonov's chest was covered with blood, and Mirko guessed that he was dead. Had the boy been a little older and more patient, he would have shaken Yerikhonov, listened to his heartbeat, realized that he was alive, and that the two bullets, entering obliquely, had torn the flesh, had made a wound which looked terrible but in actual fact had not even grazed the bone.

But Yerikhonov was in a deep faint. Mirko did not know that in such cases breathing is hardly perceptible, and after shouting despairingly: "Volodya!" three times, he decided that the airman was dead, and sank onto his knees before him, dazed with horror.

With white lips he whispered words inaudible even to himself, remembering with despair Petrich's farewell words to him, and how they must have taken the wrong path during the night.

The loud sound of firing came from behind. Mirko started, jumped up, felt for his tommy-gun which he had completely forgotten during the past few moments, and suddenly, with unexpected calmness, remembered one after the other everything that he now had to do.

Sinking onto his knees once more, he reached over to Yerikhonov's bloodstained tunic and began to unfasten the Order of Lenin from it. The other orders he did not touch—only that one which Yerikhonov had said was the main one. Feeling about on the ground, Mirko found a sharp-pointed twig and running it through his shirt, fastened the order on his own breast, in the same place where Yerikhonov had worn it.

A quarter of an hour later he was at the spot where they had met the Germans. He was crawling along about thirty paces above the path. From above he could see four motionless bodies, and two living Germans one of whom was standing, leaning against a tree, while the second squatted on his haunches.

Mirko took several more steps. Some small stones rattled down under his feet. The first to take alarm was the German leaning against the tree. With a swift movement he reached for his tommy-gun, but Mirko was before him. As a long round rattled out, Mirko, his whole body vibrating together with the tommy-gun pressed to him, saw the German throw up his hands, stagger sideways and fall.

As the second German fired his rifle, Mirko swung up the tommy-gun, again and again pressed the trigger, but heard no sound. And then he realized that in one round he had used up all his bullets.

Without considering what he was doing, without letting his tommy-gun out of his hands, he ran down, right onto the German. The latter fired once more. Throwing away the tommy-gun, his face contorted with pain, Mirko turned and sank into a sitting position. He was wounded in the chest.

And that was how he died with the Order of Lenin on his breast.

"And that's the whole story," said the colonel. "Later on the partisans found the body, and gave the Russian Order to us, Russians, although, to be quite honest, if I had been there I would have buried the lad without taking the Order off. . ."

"And what happened to Yerikhonov?" I asked.

"Oh, he's all right. Flying. Another case of Russian toughness and will-to-live. He came to himself, crawled for five days, and then he was found. After that he was cut up, sewn up and darned."

After a moment's silence, he added:

"He's been flying again for a month now. But never this way, always over Slovenia and Montenegro. I've sent him a message about the Order. He promised to drop in when he's flying this way."

CONSTANTINE SIMONOV

FELLOW TOWNSMAN

The dark streets of that particular Slovakian town were cold and deserted. The dreary autumn evening seemed to intensify the realization that you were abroad, in a friendly but still foreign town, far from your own folk, far from home.

Suddenly, I heard a call in perfect Russian from behind:

"Comrade Major!"

How pleased I was to hear my own tongue! I turned to see a thickset man of medium height, clad in a strange semi-German, semi-Hungarian uniform.

"Sergeant Gorelkin, but now," he smilingly indicated his strange attire, "now Czechoslovakian partisan, as you see. Pardon me for stopping you. I haven't been home for two and a half years. Seeing a Soviet countryman, my chest felt so tight I couldn't restrain myself and so hailed you."

I asked him what he did and where he had lived before the war.

"Foreman at the 'Proletarka' textile mill in Kalinin, lived right in the mill yard, house No. 70 at Glagolchik."

The reply was detailed and exact. Kalinin is my own home town. I, too, had lived, in fact grown up, in the yard of the "Proletarka" mill and knew its every corner. It seems that nowadays you can meet a fellow townsman even this far from home!

We entered a tiny café, sat down at a table in the far corner and my hometowner told me his Odyssey—the Odyssey of a Russian, a Soviet man, who had been taken prisoner, carried far from his country, but even there had not given up the battle against the foe.

Gorelkin removed his green felt hat with its tri-colour and red ribbons to disclose blue jagged scars on his forehead.

"I was wounded and stunned in an attack at Smolensk. When I regained my senses the Germans were already in the forests. They shot the badly wounded but since I could walk they took me prisoner."

Gorelkin tramped to Białystock in a prisoners' column. On the way they were beaten up and died in scores from hunger. The escort shot down stragglers with the utmost indifference.

At Białystock the prisoners were sorted out. Gorelkin's group was dispatched south through Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia to Saloniki to work at extending the port there. The trains were strictly guarded and at stations there was a special escort. But at every station people broke away to fling themselves straight at the machine-guns. This became a means of suicide for men unable to reconcile themselves to the bitterness of captivity.

Gorelkin and a man he had chummed up with, Vassili Kopyto, a Donbas miner, sought no refuge in death. They still hoped to live and fight, dreamed of returning to the Red Army. Vassili thought out a simple but dangerous plan of escape. While the train was moving the prisoners removed the carriage floor boards and threw themselves onto the track below, one after the other: the train passed above them. It was a risky business but worth the goal. Six men in all took the hazard, three fell under the wheels while the other three, including Gorelkin and Kopyto, emerged unharmed. They pushed north through forests and mountains, giving villages and towns a wide berth.

How did they find food, how did they make themselves understood in far off Greece?

"People gave us food in the Slav countries through which we travelled. The words 'Red Army' are understood everywhere. Sometimes you come to a hut, knock at the door, a morose specimen opens it and regards you as a soldier looking at a louse: 'There's a lot of tramps like you around: feed you and then the Germans will shoot me,' his look conveys. But then you jab your finger at your chest and say 'Red Army' and it's a different story straight away: he'll feed you and hide you away for the night. Those words are held in very high regard everywhere nowadays."

And so they had pushed on through Greece, Albania and into Montenegro, travelling by night, hiding in haystacks during the day. Here in the town of Bilecha, their travels nearly ended for they were caught by Italian gendarmes and thrown into a makeshift prison in an empty grain elevator. With them, awaiting the firing squad, were several Yugoslav partisans and many peasants suspected of sympathizing with these.

The friends resolved to escape. At night Constantine Gorelkin fell on the floor, held his stomach and began rolling about screaming as if in agony. The Italian sentries, carrying a lantern, entered to investigate the row. They were knocked on the head with large stones and Vassili Kopyto removed the keys from the gendarme's belt, opened the other rooms in the elevator allowing all the prisoners to flee.

The friends needed no better recommendation. The partisans took them to the mountain detachment where the friends fought for about a year in one of Marshal Tito's units. Vassili Kopyto, the former miner, became the detachment's champion dynamiter. Semyon Agafonov, a third Soviet fugitive, a former electrician at the Ryazan power station, set up a workshop to repair captured weapons with Gorelkin as second in command.

The friends took part in dozens of scraps with the Germans, Italians and Četniks[1]. There in the mountains, Semyon Agafonov died heroically. With a machine-gun he covered the detachment's break-through from an encirclement. He blazed away until the četniks surrounded him, then flung down a grenade, blowing up himself and the četniks rushing at him.

The two comrades left had still not abandoned their intention of making their way back to the Red Army, although at that time it was over three thousand kilometres away. They bade farewell to the partisans and started off.

They passed through Yugoslavia without any particular adventures, traversed all Hungary and there, not far from the Czechoslovak frontier, ran into a Magyar patrol. When Vassili was wounded in the leg, Gorelkin carried him on his back into a forest. There they lived for nearly a month feeding on berries and the fish they managed to catch by hand in a brook and on green maize that took the place of bread. After Vassili's wound had healed they crossed the frontier and once more found themselves in a Slav country where the words "Red Army" again served them as a reliable password and thawed the iciest, most miserly of hearts.

An unforseen circumstance changed their plans. A Slovak village in which they put up for the night had not paid the robber taxes imposed on them by the Tisso Government. A motor column brought a punitive expedition. The gendarmes broke into the cottages, looted everything stowing their plunder into the lorries. They seized some men and drove them into a barn.

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[1] Četniks—pro-fascist troops supporting the German invaders. — Ed.

But reprisals were inflicted on the village square. The peasants grabbed stakes, scythes and pitch-forks and here the army experience of the two Russians stood them in good stead: Vassili and Constantine helped them deliver a surprise attack. The gendarmes were wiped out practically to a man and the arrested released. Half the village left for the mountains where the two Russians formed them into a "Red Army" partisan column—one of the many operating in Czechoslovakia.

Soon the column's renown spread throughout the Erz-Gebirge where the Germans were trying to arrange the mining of iron and copper. The partisans attacked German trains, engineered explosions and disrupted work at the mines.

During the summer Vassili Kopyto, Slovak partisan and Russian Donbas miner met a heroic death in the Erz-Gebirge. The partisans learned that the Germans were bringing in new equipment for a whole factory. Kopyto volunteered to blow up the equipment train. He chose a point where the line swerved around the brink of a precipice. Kopyto stole right up to the track but a sentry on duty a few yards off gave him no opportunity to lay the charge. The train whistled as it came down the incline, the rails drummed, the headlights glared as the train swept round the bend. Kopyto jumped up in full view of the sentry and dashed forward. It was difficult for the partisans watching from behind to see his next move but they heard a terrific explosion that shook the mountains. The next instant the engine and trucks, twisting slowly in the air, crashed into the abyss.

Constantine Gorelkin, my fellow townsman, was now the last of the three men who had escaped from captivity, and he still carried on.

Finishing his tale, my fellow townsman put his lips to a china mug, sipping the pale, sour beer.

BORIS POLEVOY

A PLUCKY GIRL

To look at, she was nothing out of the ordinary—sturdy, very fair-skinned and had sparkling even teeth. The twenty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution marked also her twenty-seventh birthday. Her husband was in the army and she had a child of four. Nevertheless, in her Siberian hometown of Kemerovo, and in the famous coke-chemical works decorated by the Government where she was employed she was always regarded as a girl—the pluckiest in the shop.

She had never made ski-jumps from heights, never gone on night patrols with the partisans, never fought her way through enemy bands, grenade in hand. No, for eight years she had simply worked at the coking shop in the Kemerovo Coke-Chemical Works. Worked with an even rhythm like breathing itself. And her work was the talk of the whole huge combine, it was discussed at town meetings of Stakhanovites. Her name—a very ordinary one, Claudia Snegiryova—is bound up with the shop's entire working method.

Everything, good or bad, has its history. Claudia Snegiryova's fame likewise did not come accidentally.

When, at the outbreak of war, the men gradually left their work to exchange regulator and cleaver for rifle and grenade, women arrived to replace them in the shop, their number increasing day by day. At first they were shy and timid, lacking confidence, and distrustfully regarded the huge, complicated machines. Would they ever learn to master these monsters? Would their eyes ever become accustomed to noting immediately all the electric indicators, the evenness of loading, the course of the transporters, and all the other hundred and one items that a good motorman must know?

It was Claudia Snegiryova who encouraged the newcomers. Not that she spent much time in mere talking. It was just her whole personality—her poise and self-confidence, her capable hands and her sure business-like approach had a wonderful calming effect. Very soon the novices learned that Claudia Snegiryova regularly overfulfilled her norm of output and worked without spoilage. How did she manage it?

If one of them put this question to Claudia herself, she would answer seriously:

"I just put my whole heart into the job."

And this was the truth. She worked under the same conditions as everybody else, but she used her brain, carefully noting every detail, never trusting to any irresponsible "maybe." When she was twice awarded premiums, the whole shop knew she had certainly deserved them. Yes, there was no doubt that she put everything into her job. A fine worker.

And the war still continued. Claudia's husband, a former fitter, moved westward with his infantry unit, clearing a viciously resisting enemy from Russian soil. His splendid letters to Claudia came straight from the heart. Sometimes it happened that for a period no letters arrived. Although Claudia would worry she never allowed this to affect her work. On the contrary many people noticed that at such times her hands seemed to acquire fresh strength.

The day came, Khudyukov, the weighman, was called to the army. Such a job had never yet been tackled by a woman in any coke-chemical combine since it was considered that weighing the coal, carrying the heavy iron sheets, and even the responsibility of such a job were too

much for a woman. But Khudyukov was gone, and no other man was available, so the shift foreman sent for Claudia.

"Maybe you'll try it, Claudia?"

For a moment she stood there thoughtfully, without answering. The job was a difficult one, but the offer showed confidence in her. This was not what made her pause however. In leaving her work as motorman she would have to give up a new idea she had been wanting to try out.

"Are you afraid?" asked the shift foreman, interpreting her hesitation in his own way.

Claudia shook her head. After all, it was hardly likely she would be able to put her idea into practice. And there was nobody to replace the weighman.

"No, I'll take it on," she said.

All the same, she only realized how scared she was when, with trembling hands, she started on her new job. She began uncertainly, hesitatingly, with everybody watching her.

"A plucky girl," said an ironic voice behind her.

The mockery stung Claudia.

"Get a grip on yourself," she told herself. Without turning, she felt the general attention riveted on her movements.

The very first day Snegiryova did the same amount of work as an experienced weighman. Within a week, she, her own hardest critic, was able to say: "I've mastered it."

Then, when she received her third premium, again not a soul throughout the huge shop was against it. "A plucky girl!" said the older workers, this time without any trace of irony.

...The February snowfall in Siberia is no joke. Blizzards rage for days on end, whirling snowclouds envelop town and village, cutting off the field of vision like a curtain. People have been known to freeze to death a couple of yards from their own homes, hopelessly lost. The word "snowdrift" having an ominous sound is on everybody's lips then.

Snowdrifts over the railway lines. One after another, passenger and goods trains helplessly stop dead between stations until the powerful snowplough, or an army of local people with huge wooden shovels, come to their aid.

It was on one such day that work was brought to a halt in the Kemerovo Coke-Chemical Works. A train bringing coal had been snowbound for over three hours. The motormen groaned in idleness. That day Claudia Snegiryova would have been free, according to the schedule, but the previous evening the shift foreman had asked her to replace a motorman who had suddenly fallen ill. Claudia, too, waited in nervous vexation for the arrival of the coal.

With angry disgust she looked at her seven motionless feeders, seven trucks two metres in length, which she should have been serving. It was a long time since she had followed the movement of these trucks being loaded with coal from the bunkers; a long time since she worried over their regular loading and the even feeding of coal to the transporter. She had almost forgotten that at one time she had thought of inaugurating a new method for the motorman's work.

For untold ages, motormen in coking works had used the same method. While three of the seven feeders were being loaded, four would be on their way to the transporter. This they called swinging the coal on four feeders since it was thought by all motormen and engineers that to send more was technically impossible. This would mean overloading, the belts would break, the coal would fall over onto the transporter, and work would be brought to a halt.

But Claudia had a different idea.

She thought it possible to work with five feeders which would ensure the coal being brought to the transporter more evenly. She could not reckon exactly what a fifth feeder would give, and she felt awkward about revealing her idea to the engineers. "They'll laugh at me," she thought. But she wanted terribly to try out her idea.

"Just once!" she thought longingly.

But when she was transferred to work as a weighman, Claudia told herself: "Maybe it's just as well: I was just about going crazy over the feeder."

On this February day when the coking shop was at a standstill because of the snowed-up train, a new wartime coking battery had gone into operation. It had been erected during the hardest days of the war, and under the most difficult conditions. It had been built as part of the victory effort. The extra coke would mean thousands more tons of shells so necessary for the front. But the new battery was starved: the old equipment could not feed the new oven fast enough. And the whole shop where Claudia was working was faced with the problem of how to feed this new oven?

And now the stoppage caused by drifting snow had wreaked havoc with the day's planned output. People stalked about with gloomy faces. There were constant telephone calls from the factory offices to the station.

"Has the snow-plough left? Any news from down the line?"

The train arrived during the afternoon. But it seemed as though on this day nothing would go right. The coal was large and damp. It fell onto the transporter either in heavy, awkward piles, or else refused to move along the feeders. The motormen raged and the workers at the receiving end cursed softly and fluently.

When things went awry in the shop, Claudia always clearly visualized the final result of their efforts. She could hear the reproving voices of the men in the firing line, five thousand kilometres off, demanding more shells, and she mercilessly blamed herself that tomorrow there might not be sufficient of these.

And still the large, damp coal fell in clumps as if to mock her. There was noth-

ing to be done but lessen the load, to change over from four feeders to three. This was what the technical rules recommended, what the motorists themselves always did, and what Claudia herself had had to do in the past.

"Oh!" she groaned in disgust, reaching for the lever.

Then suddenly, as though from some external impulse she switched over to five feeders.

It was a thing unheard-of.

Later, when explaining her action to Terekhov, the chief engineer, she remembered the feeling that mastered her at that moment. Yes, in any case it had been a day of misfortunes, what with the three-hour stoppage and the bad coal quenching any hope of the shop completing its shift quota. The new battery was gaping for its portion, and nothing short of a miracle could supply it.

This was how Claudia interpreted her own boldness to herself later on. But at the moment she only heard the voice of Belyayev, hoarse with rage, as he came running up from the receiving end.

"What d'ye think you're doing?" he bellowed, clenching his fists. "Throw over the switch this moment!"

People related how she dashed ahead of him as though to block his way to the switchboard with her own body. But her voice rang out strangely calm:

"Wait, just see, it'll go more evenly..."

Belyayev cursed, gesticulating wildly.

"Who d'ye think you're teaching? Turn it back!"

But she only shook her head stubbornly. The whole shop was watching them. Belyayev spat, stamped and then suddenly ran to the office at top speed for the shift foreman. They returned more quickly than would have seemed possible. Claudia was watching her five feeders, fascinated. Evenly, rhythmically, they were shaking coal onto the transporter. No more clumps, no more empty spaces. Belyayev wanted to say something, but the shift foreman thrust him a little to one side. For a few seconds he watched the work in silence.

Previously, when the feeders had supplied the transporter unevenly, the workmen had considered the irregularity due to lack of time to level up the coal and lessened the number of feeders. But Snegiryova decided that with the increased speed the coal itself would fall more evenly because of the stronger and swifter shaking, without the aid of the workmen. And events proved that she was right.

He could see it all for himself, but nevertheless for some reason he asked Claudia:

"How many are you working with?"

"Five feeders."

The shift foreman wiped his forehead.

"A bold lass!"

Claudia made no reply. The coal continued to shake onto the transporter swiftly and evenly.

"And we never thought of risking it!" suddenly said the shift foreman, loudly and gaily and then added: "Carry on."

The chief engineer sent for Claudia after work.

"Now I'm for it!" she thought dismally.

She found him almost hidden behind a dense cloud of tobacco smoke. On the table before him lay a report on the day's output.

"For changing the working routine without instructions..." he began in an official tone, but unable to keep it up, he winked at Claudia. "Have you heard?"

She looked at him uncertainly, still uncomprehending.

"Haven't you heard? If there hadn't been the stoppage, we'd have turned out two hundred percent today with your method... Well, because of the stoppage, we only fulfilled the quota."

The chief engineer's eyes were dancing like a boy's. Claudia suddenly felt that her throat was dry. Only now did she realize what a risk she had taken, and felt timorous, terrified in fact, in retrospect.

"You ought to be sent to court for it," the chief engineer continued, "but the trouble is that victors are never sentenced, so they say..."

There was laughter in his voice. But Claudia's retrospective fright did not leave her. The chief engineer regarded her keenly.

"You're a nice one!" he said, guessing her emotions. "Now you're in a blue funk, and they call you a plucky girl!"

His face brightened, and he reached out his hand to her.

"Brave comrade Snegiryova! Sensible girl!"

Several months later the factory was decorated with the Order of Lenin. Orders and medals were also awarded the best engineers and workers; and among their number was Claudia Snegiryova who received the Order of Merit.

After the official celebration in the Red Corner, the women and girls gathered round their friend to congratulate her.

"I've an idea," said the youngest of them, Nina Nichiporuk, beaming all over her face and gazing adoringly at Claudia. "Let's write a letter to the front, to our lads whose places we've taken. Let's tell them about our work here in the rear, and about the pluckiest girl in our shop —Claudia Snegiryova!"

OLGA ZIV

AMID THE ETERNAL SNOWS

Despite the fact that the people are straining their whole endeavour to complete the defeat of the enemy, scientific work dealing with the investigation and study of little-known areas of the country has not halted for a single day. The work of expeditions this last summer to the Central Tien-Shan mountains is described in the diary of Lieutenant Vladimir Ratsek, well-known sportsman, from which the following excerpts are taken.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SNOWS

Where the Kazakhstan sands and steppe cease, mighty mountains soar into the clouds.

The further south and east one goes, the higher their crests, the serrated summits reminding one of the turrets of some old fortress.

Eternal snows and ice shine and sparkle in the sunshine. But its ardent rays added to the hot desert winds can melt only an insignificant part of this icy region. Nevertheless enough is available to serve as the source of abundant rivers. Starting high in the Pamirs and the Tien-Shan mountains, they empty into the Aral Sea, Lake Balkhash, Lake Issyk-Kul and hundreds of other smaller lakes scattered over the huge plains of Central Asia.

The mountains are lofty and not easily scaled. Barely discernable paths, almost overgrown with grass and bushes, lead to them.

Still more difficult is it to reach the ice zone. Here no paths exist at all. The cold is intense, greater even in summer, on the bigger heights than during a cold winter in Central Europe.

In addition there is the rarity of the air to contend with. Climbing steep, almost perpendicular cliffs, the necessity of clinging with one's hands and feet to the tiniest crevice, and of cutting endless ice foot-holds, demands an enormous amount of oxygen, and of this the air holds an insufficient quantity. The higher one goes, the more tormenting this lack of oxygen.

Another continual danger arises from the blinding shroud of crumbling snow, whose smooth, monotonous surface conceals deep cracks and ice fissures. The slightest carelessness may send the climber headlong into the depths.

The Tien-Shan mountains—a Chinese name meaning "Heavenly Mountains"—occupy a large territory in the south-eastern corner of the Soviet Union. They form a system of numerous ranges extending for hundreds of kilometres, the central and western parts situated within the U.S.S.R., while the eastern part is outside its borders, in the Chinese province of Sinkiang.

For untold centuries, the hoary Tien-Shan mountains have been a magnet for bold investigators.

As early as the 14th century, Chinese monks crossed the Tien-Shan mountains. During the latter half of the last century these mountainous regions were energetically explored by Peter Semyonov (renamed Tienshansky in honour of his discoveries), by Nikolai Przhevalsky, Ivan Mushketov, Peter Kozlov, Vsevolod Roborovsky and others. These pioneers discovered new peaks, heights, lakes and rivers.

At the turn of this century, the first large-scale map of the mountains was published. In the ice zone, however, and among the upper heights were many blank spots. Whole ranges were dozens of kilometres out, and the relief was inaccurate. This map was wholly inadequate to satisfy the country's needs. A new, more exact map was needed and the engineer-geodesist Pavel Rapassov was commissioned to survey the Khan-Tengri peak, one of the least-known regions.

It was here, in the kingdom of snow and ice, that our expedition, eleven officers, all topographical experts, and fifty-seven Red Army men, conducted their investigations.

At the beginning of the summer, the military-topographical expedition scaled the heights to uncover their secrets and photograph every kilometre of the mountain region for map-making.

The work was carried on by the combined method of land and air photographs—the first large-scale use of this new method.

READY TO START

Pavel Rapassov, who headed the expedition, unrolled his topographical map, crisscrossed with notes, lines and dots telling in graphical language the plan of attack on the mountain peaks. Each dot on the map represented a station from which cameras mounted together with theodolites would photograph the locality.

On the eve of departure plans were discussed well into the night, possible hitches foreseen and methods of overcoming difficulties. In the dim light of a paraffin lamp, piles of boxes, pack-saddles, rubber sacks, tripods, messtins, folding tables, sleeping sacks and mountain tents were all visible.

The next day we left on our long and difficult journey.

ON THE "SYRTS"

The region south of the crests surrounding Issyk-Kul is known as the "Syrts".

This is a hilly, uninhabited expanse. The sparse, short grass grows there like

pigs' bristles, and there are occasional alpine flowers, including the edelweiss, whose downy covering protects it from the frosts so frequent even in summer.

There are numerous swamps and small lakes. Occasionally a flock of wild duck will rise, and even seagulls take to panic flight over the lakes.

It was here, to this strange, high-lying tundra that our topographical detachment made its way.

Life was replete with difficulties. There was no fuel—it had to be brought across two passes. There was no fodder for the horses—it had to be brought from a base one to two hundred kilometres away.

The old hunter Kirguia Shershen, who had been accustomed for the whole of his long life to the solitude of the valleys, said: "Eh, what a lot of people! Wherever you go, the goats are scared, you can't shoot them, they've become too cunning." In actual fact this hunter had simply been meeting time after time the same topographical caravan wandering from place to place, aiming to do in a few months what a group of officers, military topographers, had once tried to do in four or five years.

Work went on for five long months. People remained continually on the Syrts, many days' journey from the nearest inhabited place, with the unexpected awaiting them on every side.

AVALANCHE

One day Alexander Koksharov and two of his comrades, exhausted after several hours' travel along a difficult path, chose a place under a cliff to pitch their camp for the night. In the mountains darkness falls swiftly. Soon all of them were fast asleep.

During the night a calamity occurred —the falling of an avalanche. The cliff saved them from inevitable disaster, holding back a huge mass of snow. At first, deafened by the roaring of the avalanche, the men could not understand where they were or what was happening. Cliff and snow had formed a kind of cave from which all paths were barred. Koksharov, however, was not only an experienced topographer, but also an old alpinist, and at once realized the danger threatening himself and his comrades. The wet snow, packing down, would swiftly harden and might preserve them for ever in an ice refrigerator.

Feeling their way about, the topographers collected their belongings.

In the heavy darkness, the three prisoners, working in turns, began digging a tunnel through the snow with their knives. They lost count of time as they burrowed through the hard barrier.

Only after two days and nights did they find themselves free again.

THE ROAD OPEN

It fell to the lot of Pavel Grintsov and a group of other men to photograph two large Tien-Shan glaciers—Inylichek and Kaindy. Situated eighteen kilometres from the tongue of Inylichek is an interesting lake which overflows at the end of every summer, finding an outlet somewhere in the mountains.

Nobody had ever succeeded in unravelling this secret of nature.

...At about five o'clock in the morning there was a dull rumbling and the cracking of breaking ice. Following this, water gushed up from the middle of the glacier. A second powerful stream filled the space between the bank and the side of the glacier. Grintsov's group were just returning after completing the photography of the Khan Tengri slopes. The water blocked their path, and they found themselves cut off from the far green slopes.

After unavailing attempts to cross the turbulent stream, they were forced to turn back. They were in a tight corner—their own food was finished, and there was no fodder for the horses.

On the mountain side, about three hundred metres above the glacier, Grintsov noticed a small green area. There he led his caravan, and here they found a flock of wild mountain goats, feeding on the grass but which took to the cliffs immediately.

On the twelfth day, patrols reported that the waters had subsided and that the way was open. By evening the hungry men and animals were at the base camp. The sound of the resinous twigs crackling merrily in the campfire, and the aromatic smell of baking bread comforted their hearts.

THE LAND OF CANYONS

There is a deep gulley, extremely difficult of access, where the river Sary-Jak crosses the Tien-Shan crest. In places its steep sides come so close as almost to touch each other. Only at the end of summer, when the waters are at their lowest, is it possible to travel along this canyon.

It was just this time which Nikolai Gamalyov had fixed for the departure of his large caravan. For a fortnight they crossed crest after crest. Beyond Kara-Bell, the path disappeared. Misty alpine meadows alternated with rocky slopes void of any vegetation. Falls of rock every now and again barred their way, forcing them to forge a path with pick and crowbar. There were days when they had to cross as many as thirty deep streams. Fords were found by the guide Tolkombai Kodjeyarov, who was thoroughly acquainted with this locality.

At night sentries were posted; there were numerous traces of wild beasts all around.

Flocks of wary goats were often met, and then the head of the expedition went hunting, and never returned without meat, which came in very handy—food was no easy problem for the caravan.

On the road to the southern border lay Mai-Bash, considered to be the highest pass

in the Tien-Shan range. Only for one month in the year is it open for pack-animals. The rest of the time the way is blocked by deep snow drifts.

Before they reached the top of the pass, Gamalyov and his companions had trampled down a trench a metre deep in the snow, and traced about a hundred zigzags extending for five to six kilometres. This took them nearly a week. First of all the men would trample down the zigzag track, then the saddle horses would be led over it, and only then would the entire caravan follow. Often the work was interrupted by sudden blizzards. All of them lived in the snow. The thin horses found a meagre forage of sparse grass among the granite.

Beyond the Mai-Bash pass, the gulley became very steep for the caravan, and all instruments and equipment had to be carried by the men themselves. For four and five days at a time Gamalyov would leave the camp with three helpers for field work. Many nights he spent by a camp fire sheltering from the weather among the crags.

THE SECOND GREATEST HEIGHT IN THE U.S.S.R.

While busy with instrumental observations and photography of the regions around the Tyuz Pass, Alexander Koksharov noted an unknown height south of Khan-Tengri, and reported this to the head of the expedition.

The news of the hitherto unknown height was confirmed by the pilots Bogomolov and Arutyunyants, who flew over the crests.

These observations left no doubt that south of Khan-Tengri a height had been discovered only slightly less than the Stalin peak in the Pamirs, the highest point in the U.S.S.R.

Further observations were immediately taken and proved beyond doubt that the peak was higher than Khan-Tengri.

Now, since the work is finished, this height, which rises 7,419 metres above sea level, can be named and the title "Victory" was chosen in honour of the heroic Red Army.

The representatives of numerous scientific investigation organizations were gathered in the office of Colonel Shapaïn, leader of the work. Tables and walls were covered with plans, diagrams, photographs and maps.

Sheets showing the new topographical map of Tien-Shan were arranged separately. Dozens of new heights, passes and glaciers had been explored and inserted in the map.

VLADIMIR RATSEK

SWITZERLAND

Throughout the second World War—"neutral" Switzerland has rendered Germany economic assistance and supplied it with arms.

(*Newspaper report*)

The position taken by the "democratic" government of "neutral" Switzerland during the war.

Drawing by Vassili Fomichov

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT CHILDREN

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

"I'M STILL ALIVE"

It was the first time that he was sent to represent the factory. He had to speak about his work at a small meeting.

"But I don't know much about speaking," he said seriously.

"Go along, go along," they told him. "You're one of our leading people, you tell them in a few words how you turned out five times your quota when you were still a beginner, how you became a mechanic, and all that sort of thing."

The meeting was a short one.

"It's war-time," he said heavily, like an old workman, and there was even a smile among those present when he said in a deep bass: "In my group there are only two of the old workers left—Stepanova and myself. All the rest went to the front or took sick, or died, or were evacuated. Stepanova's older than I am, she's about nineteen or twenty, and I'm fifteen."

He liked the meeting. Very interesting people spoke there who could tell all sorts of exciting things about their work, about the days of the siege, the winter, or dangerous days they had experienced.

He returned thoughtful, taking the road along the river bank. The trees had already put on their spring dress, and the bank was as clean as though it were newly washed. There was nothing about the town to remind one of the gloomy days of winter. He sat down on a bench and began to look about him with pleasure.

All winter he had had no time to think about himself, and now, the meeting and all that he had heard there unloosed a whole flood of memories. He saw himself again in his native village, and his sister carrying a bucket of water, and his brothers—one of them, the youngest, riding a collective farm horse, the other in tunic and spurred topboots: he had come on leave from the army. Now that brother was fighting the Germans. He did not receive any letters from home—they would be working for the country's defence the same way he was—day and night. He remembered his first months in Leningrad in a small workshop, then in the fitters' shop. How amazed he had been the first time he had seen it—the metal shavings spraying out in a glittering stream, the rumble and beat of the lathes, the large, cool shop.

He had taken to it all like a duck to water, his hands seemed to know of themselves what was the right thing to do. He adored his work. He even looked with a kind of amazement at the part forming under his hands. And the fact that it was he who had made it filled him with pride. Not for anything in the world would he have left the shop, gone home to the country like his little friends, been unfaithful to the city. That city—so huge that however much he went about, he saw something new every time. But when the war began he saw it under yet another guise, as though in some terrible film—houses burning in the night, bombs falling, searchlights stabbing the heavens, and the unceasing roar of A.A. guns. He helped to drag a lad out of a cellar, where he had been buried by rubble. A difficult, dangerous job. Here, too, he was operating along with the skilled workman, kind Parfeni Ivanovich, who had given him, Timofei Skobelev, the queer nickname: "Still Alive."

It had happened this way. Parfeni Ivanovich came to the hostel to talk to the lads about themselves and their lives, and Timofei had a sudden fit of tongue-tied shyness. When he was asked: "Well, how's life with you?" instead of saying, as he wished: "Life's fine, thanks," he lost his head and stammered awkwardly: "I'm still alive." Everybody laughed. Later on he became very friendly with Parfeni Ivanovich, and when the latter came into the hostel, he would ask jokingly:

"Well, and how's that—'Still Alive'? Still going on living?"

"He's alive all right," someone would answer, and drag Timofei along to him.

And now he was there on the green seat opposite the blossoming garden, and remembered it all. In the winter the electric current had given out, and the factory had been brought to a standstill. He had dragged barrels of water along between the snowdrifts, eaten horse radish in the dining room, slept under his coat, and pulled down old wooden houses for fuel. Then the factory had started work again, it began making "secret stuff," as they called it, for the front. How Timofei lived through it all was more than he could have said. There was cold and there was hunger, but he stood it all splendidly, and with the first breath of spring he was almost like his old self again.

"Well, how goes it?" Parfeni Ivanovich would ask Timofei, as the older man, muffled to the eyes in his huge scarf, met Timofei with his axe in his hand. "Still alive, brother?"

"Still alive," the lad would answer, his voice hoarse with cold. "What else should I be?"

"Stick it, Cossack, you'll be an ataman yet," said Parfeni Ivanovich, quoting an old proverb.

Whether he was cut out for an ataman or not, one thing was certain—he became the best worker in the whole shop, and had apprentices under him.

All this passed through Timofei's mind in a flash, as he sat there on the green bench. He wearied of his thoughts, crowding through his mind in a many-hued throng. He stopped thinking and began looking at the trees, the river, the passers-by. A strange thing, life! He glanced down at himself—neatly dressed, tidy, working skilfully, never thinking about the time, sometimes not leaving the shop for two days at a time, and as happy as he could be. But some kilometres from the city the Germans were dug in; the air would vibrate with the roar of patrol planes, or suddenly, with inconceivable speed, shells would begin hurtling down.

People passed him in their spring clothes; a lad was fishing. He began looking at the boy.

He was a thin, sharp-nosed lad, wearing a grey jacket. Timofei watched him absent-mindedly at first, but then, when the lad rose, swung his rod onto his shoulder and approached the green bank, whistling, Timofei started as though he had received a blow. The closer the lad came to him, the more clearly Timofei could see a large brown birthmark on his cheek, like a coffee stain.

When the boy had come quite close, Timofei called to him.

"Hey, you with the fish, wait a minute!"

The lad turned, looked Timofei up and down from head to foot.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Come and sit down here for a minute, if you're not in a hurry," said Timofei.

"I'm in no hurry," replied the boy and sat down on the bench.

Timofei looked at him silently. At last the boy got tired of this.

"What d'you think I am a picture?" he said. "Say what you want to say, or else I'm off."

"There's quicksilver for you!" said Timofei. "And I'm a slow thinker."

"Get a move on with your thinking, then."

The boy laughed, and Timofei asked him:

"Where were you living during the winter?"

"Where was I living?" the lad whistled. "There's not so much as a rat living there now. Our house was bombed right out. I was nearly a goner myself."

"That's it, that's it, that was what I was wanting to know," Timofei cried joyfully. "A house with balconies, a four-storey house, right there on that corner..."

"That's right. Why, did you live there too? How do you know?"

"I didn't live there," said Timofei. "What do they call you?"

"Shura Nikitin."

"Tell me, Shura, what are you doing now, at school or what?"

"Mother died, Dad was called up, and I'm living with my aunt. I want to go to work, but I don't know where to go or how to set about it. I'm young yet..."

"How old are you?"

"I'll soon be fifteen."

"Young indeed! Nothing of the sort! Like me to fix you up with a job?"

"You?" Shura asked sceptically, staring at Timofei with all his eyes.

"Who else?" said Timofei grandly. "I'll write you a note straight away to somebody I know."

"And who are you then?"

"I'm a mechanic, brother, and you'll be one too. We don't take any notice of how old a chap is these days. Got through the winter all right?"

"Right enough, as soon as it began to get warm—I can run about, my legs are good enough..."

"Oh, you'll come to work, then. You know the factory by the bridge?"

"I know it."

"That's where I work. I'll just write you that note."

He pulled out a notebook, in which he took an inordinate pride, licked his pencil and wrote in large, straight characters: "Dear Parfeni Ivanovich, can you fix up Shura Nikitin to work alongside me? I'll tell you why later. Or he'll tell you himself."

He handed the note to Shura who glanced at it and said in surprise:

"You've signed it 'Still Alive'! What's all that?"

"That's a secret. Mine and Parfeni Ivanovich's. Don't worry, I'll not let you down. I'll tell you all about it. Only mind you turn up! You will? You're not fooling me?"

"What should I do that for? Of course I'll come. My dad taught me a little of the mechanic's trade. But tell me, why did you stop me? Did you recognize me, or what?"

"I recognized you a bit," said Timofei, suddenly feeling awkward and confused. "I live not so far from here, I've seen you plenty of times..."

"And it seemed to me that I'd seen you before, somewhere," said Shura. "But I can't remember where. Since I was buried under the house, you know, I often have headaches. But I've seen you somewhere, sure as I live..."

"Oh, I expect you have," said Timofei evasively. "We live close together, of course we've seen each other. Well, mind you come!"

And Timofei told him how to find Parfeni Ivanovich.

"I'll come," said Shura as he turned to go, waved his rod and made his way along the river bank.

Timofei looked after him and could not understand why he had not told him where they had met right away. For a moment he had wondered whether it

really was that lad but the name plus the mark on the cheek had proved that it was the same boy.

One winter night, when bombs had been raining down particularly viciously from a dark sky lowering with heavy snowclouds, Timofei's group had been summoned to a house which had only just collapsed. The bomb had fallen in the very centre, and now there was nothing but a fantastic skeleton rearing up into the darkness in a confusion of twisted beams, while people with torches searched and dug among the ruins, seeking those who had been buried.

At first Timofei worked on the upper part of the wreckage, but then he was called down below, and the district staff commissar, looking at him searchingly in the light of a torch, asked if he could get out a lad who had been buried on the lower floor. He went up to the black hole, from which the sound of a weak voice could be heard. For an adult, the passage would be too narrow. Timofei put on his helmet, took a sharp file, a hammer, chisel, axe and pocket torch. Then he crawled into the hole.

He knew only one thing, that he would return with the boy, but all the rest was a question. The ruins began to sink. The commissar gave orders to stop work on top, and everybody came down and crowded round the opening leading to the passage where Timofei had disappeared. They crawled along, the snow crunching under their feet. They spoke quietly, and it was only the commissar with the torch who from time to time shouted down the hole to Timofei.

Step by step, for three hours Timofei crawled along the narrow passage way, tearing himself on broken-off wires, projecting nails and sharp bricks. He made his way to the boy and lying on his back, cleared some of the bricks from off him, freed his arms, gave him water from his flask. But Timofei had no more strength. He flashed his pocket torch all round so as to fix the whole place in his memory and then made his way back. When he crawled out, he was wet with perspiration as though he had been out in the rain.

He rested for a little while and then crawled back again to clear the lad. In this way he worked for six hours, and in the end saved the boy. When he again appeared at the hole, dragging the rescued boy after him, he was too exhausted to say a word. He only heard the roar of welcome from those about him, and heard the voice of somebody who was thumping him on the back:

"There's strength in you all right, son! Good lad!"

He heard that the rescued boy was called Shura Nikitin. But it was only when he was already on a stretcher that he found the strength to go up to him; this was when in the light of a pocket lamp he saw the pale face with the large coffee-coloured mark on the cheek. And that was all he remembered. He had to go on working, there were plenty of others still to be got out. And it was only accidentally through gaps in the wall, that Timofei saw the Red Cross car turn the corner and disappear.

And now, today, Shura Nikitin, strong and healthy again, passed him with a fishing rod. How could Timofei not stop him?

...Some days passed. During the dinner hour Timofei was summoned to the shop office. He had barely entered when he saw Parfeni Ivanovich, smoking a thick home-made cigarette.

When he saw Timofei, Parfeni grinned.

"Still alive, foreman! Here's reinforcements for you..."

Shura Nikitin was standing in the background, hiding behind Parfeni Ivanovich's broad back. But Timofei saw him well enough.

"Thank you, Parfeni Ivanovich," said Timofei. "I'm still alive all right! Reinforcements accepted."

And right there, in front of all the people in the office, Shura said:

"And why didn't you tell me you were Skobelev who saved my life? I didn't know you. Honest, I didn't! I only saw you in the dark that time, and then we've both changed during the winter. You knew me all right, but I didn't know you. You did recognize me there in the street?"

But Timofei felt awkward about saying that he had known him by the brown patch on his cheek. Confused, he mumbled something in reply and left the shop office, followed by Shura and Parfeni Ivanovich.

When they came into the shop and the light cool expanse opened up before them with its shining lathes and sparkling metallic rain, Timofei said to Shura:

"What's passed is done with. But here, pal, we're going to work together!"

And with the gesture of a proud owner, a skilled and experienced workman, he laid his strong little hand on the cold steel of a lathe.

Translated by Eve Manning

MIKHAIL SHOSHIN

STEPAN AND LEVON

Stepan loved horses. When he was a very small boy he was attracted to the stable and used to hang around until the old, gruff and quarreisome goal, Philip, noticed him.

Philip felt that stables were no place for little boys, and shaking his long beard menacingly he would lower his grey head so that his thick, twisted horns stuck out straight before him, and slowly and for-

midably advance upon Stepan. Seeing him, the boy would run out of the stable as fast as his legs could carry him.

When, at thirteen, Stepan began to work in the collective farm and was entrusted with the care of a horse, his heart swelled with pride and joy. He immediately assumed a certain seriousness, and his movements took on an air of importance, a note of equality entered his conversation, and his actions expressed deliberation. Now and again he would run to the stable to look at his horse and groom and feed it.

Old Philip was accustomed to him by this time and no longer annoyed him.

One morning Stepan rose bright and early and quickly began to pull on his clothes, so as to be the first one in the fields where the ploughing was to begin that day.

Noiselessly brigadier Kornei Mokeyich entered the hut and said in a whisper, so as not to disturb the sound sleep of Stepan's little brothers:

"Stepan, you are to plough with Levon. Go and harness him as quickly as you can."

Levon was a bullock of nondescript looks and breed, of the type that is either put in harness or sent to the slaughterhouse.

Mokeyich's words plunged Stepan into an abyss of despair. But he found the strength to ask:

"But why can't I take a horse?"

"For reasons of a higher order, Stepan," replied the brigade leader with puzzling pompousness. "Come now, make it snappy. We must get going."

"I won't work with Levon," said Stepan, a lump rising in his throat.

"We won't quarrel over this, Stepan," replied Mokeyich. "Get Levon and start the manure deliveries."

And the shrewd old man went out of the hut.

"I won't!" shouted Stepan after him. "I won't..." and burst into tears.

"Levon is just as good to work with as a horse," his mother tried to persuade him.

But Stepan's tears flowed on and he was inconsolable. It was only towards eight o'clock in the morning that Stepan, his face all red and tearstained and unable to lift his head as though he were guilty of a crime, came to the stable and with angry gestures harnessed Levon. Half an hour later the bullock was dragging a cart filled with manure, and it seemed to his driver that all the collective farmers were having a good laugh at him. Some girls he met on the road shouted after him:

"Stepan, why haven't you combed your horse's tail this morning?"

That was during the spring ploughing. And all summer long Stepan carried on without taking any pleasure in his work.

Often when they were returning empty from somewhere, he would train Levon to "trot," and would make his pals laugh by saying:

"I'll make a race horse out of you yet."

Occasionally, Levon, who believed in "tit for tat," got his revenge. While plodding along in harness he would suddenly stop and lie down on the road. And come what may, there he would lie till he was ready to get up.

Stepan grew lean and tall during that summer. There was a look of determination about him, and he was apt to pick a quarrel if you teased him. His nose, whose tip was peeling, grew longer, and the boyish roundness of cheek disappeared. As for young Levon, of humble pedigree, in his "shirt" of white with russet spots, it was obvious that good strong blood flowed in his veins, for he stretched out in height and width, and became a massive, powerful animal of imperturbable disposition. He grew a heavy silky coat.

One winter's day, Stepan harnessed Levon and drove off for a load of firewood. It was windy and the air was tinged with a crisp frost. Swirls of snow swept the field and the cold wind penetrated the boy's sheepskin jacket. A roaring noise was heard ahead, and soon, through the whirling flakes, a machine sped towards them. Stepan tugged on the right rein, but Levon had already grasped the situation and swerved off the road. A lorry flew past them and disappeared, plunging the place into an even more oppressive silence. The winter had been a stormy one with lots of snow. When Stepan, after watching the machine drive out of sight, looked back, he saw Levon sunk up to his breast in snow and with him the heavily laden cart. At the sight Stepan's heart stood still and a shiver went down his spine. Evening was drawing on and there was no one in sight on the road. Perhaps another cart would not come along till morning. He urged Levon to move but the animal did not budge.

The boy was beside himself with anxiety.

"This is a fine time for tricks, you fool!" he shouted at Levon and then, in sheer desperation, he began to cry. He suddenly felt so small, lonely and helpless out there in the storm. But he was thinking hard. What could he do to get out of this plight? Perhaps if he unloaded the wood Levon would be able to get back on the road. Then he could load it again. But that would take much time and strength. He could get to work at once of course but he was not sure that this lazybones would appreciate his efforts and move from the spot. A horse would have got out of the drift long ago.

Meanwhile Levon gazed long at the small, pitiful figure of the boy in his yellow sheepskin jacket, and suddenly he snorted so vehemently that Stepan involuntarily leaped aside. With a strong pull Levon half rose on his hind legs, and shook his forelegs free of snow. Then, on his knees, he crawled toward the road, drawing after him the heavily laden cart which left a broad, deep rut in the snow. Breathing hard the animal kept on crawling towards the road. Stepan was so amazed at Levon's intelligence that he just stood there and stared. Why, even a horse would not have hit on such an idea, he thought. It would have tugged and pulled with all its strength but would never have dreamed of crawling out of the snow on its knees.

When he was well out on the road, Levon rose, shook himself hard, and then quietly continued on his way as though nothing unusual had happened.

Stepan's tears had dried by now. He ran forward, seized the animal's head, patted and kissed it, murmuring warm tender words of praise.

From then on they were friends. Stepan began to pay more attention to Levon than he ever did to a horse. He groomed him frequently and fed him well, and always had a kind word for him. And young Levon seemed to gain in power and strength from day to day.

A year later, the chairman of the collective farm had a heart to heart talk with the boy.

"I guess we'll have to put you at the head of a youth transport brigade, Stepan," he said. "You are making the best showing and so you'll have to set an example for other young people to follow. Only see you manage the thing seriously, with discipline, you know."

Stepan nodded in silence.

Now Levon led the train of carts and all the bullocks, oxen and horses matched their speed to his. When the grain deliveries were made, they started on the vegetables and potatoes. This was a cumbersome load and Stepan wanted to speed up the deliveries. One day the woman in charge of the vegetable stores, weighing out potatoes for Stepan, remarked:

"You're taking a lot today, it seems."

"Yes, I've added another cart to my column," he replied.

"Where did you get it?"

"Don't worry about that, and don't delay, please. Or I'll miss first place in spite of the extra cart."

"My! you've learned to talk snappy, haven't you?"

"So would you if you headed a transport brigade for a month and a half and had to deliver four thousand poods."

When she went out to watch them drive away, the woman noticed that Levon was drawing two loaded carts, one attached to the other.

"That kid has a head on his shoulders, all right," she thought in amazement. "And Levon won't let his young friend down. He's strong."

A few minutes later the news flew through the collective farm that Stepan was driving a double load.

One day Stepan was delayed at work and got home later than usual. His mother was now welcoming him home as though he were the master of the house. The steaming samovar stood on the table, and beside it, on a wooden gaily-painted dish, lay a fresh loaf of bread. His mother lingered a bit about serving the cabbage soup. When he had washed and smoothed down his shirt and taken his place at table, she said:

"There's a letter from the front. Read it first. I just can't wait to hear what's in it."

The boy drew the lamp to him and opened the letter.

"To my dear son Stepan," wrote his father. "I kiss every hair of your tousled head. I'm sure, without me, you've got nobody to cut your hair for you. You must go to Grandpa Savva at once and have it cut."

Stepan found himself passing his hand over his hair.

"On my long and distant road, I have seen many boys like you," continued the letter, "but I always think that my Stepan beats them all. And it's true. The collective farm chairman has written me a special letter telling me how well you are working for the good of the country. I want to thank you on behalf of myself as well as the whole Red Army. Pat Levon for me."

The mother, who had been trying hard to restrain herself, began to weep softly. And it suddenly seemed to Stepan that his collar had become too tight for him. Quickly he undid two buttons, got up, and to hide his confusion, hastened to put the letter into a drawer.

Several days later the young people at the collective farm as well as the entire neighbourhood were discussing with admiration the latest news in those parts:

"Have you heard? Stepan Gnevyshev has received a letter with thanks from the whole Red Army!"

Translated by Mary Shnayder

AT THE ROUND TABLE UNDER THE CUCKOO CLOCK

On the morning of December 3rd, impatient listeners were already telephoning the Radio Committee to inquire whether our fifteenth broadcast would take place that day. At the appointed time, the melodious chimes of the antique clock and the cheerful notes of our loyal Cuckoo resounded over the air.

I opened the broadcast with greetings to our correspondents who had written in response to past broadcasts. Among them were many officers and men of our frontline units, fighting on territories of East-Prussia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Two schoolgirls from Kazan writing on behalf of their girl-friend who was fifteen that day and very ill, asked me to wish her many happy returns and a speedy recovery over the radio.

I then asked the guests to be seated at the Round Table. A particularly interesting company were gathered in the Cuckoo's Nest on this day. The first at the microphone was Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimir Yeshurin, a frontline film-operator who

had recently returned from Yugoslavia whither he had courageously flown last summer. He related how he had baled out at night over partisan territory behind enemy lines. The valiant operator described his thrilling parachute jump, his meeting with the partisans and Marshal Tito, the heroic leader of the Yugoslav people, and about his little friend Misha Perovich, a fearless partisan lad. There and then, the Round Table decided to send greetings to the little hero.

Some fine singing followed, the soloists being young guests from the trade-schools. A fourteen-year-old girl, a first-class turner and the possessor of a beautiful voice, sang "The Shepherdess" by Rossini and "The Jolly Miller," an English song of the 16th century. This talented girl attends an English study circle and sang the latter song in English. Another trade-school pupil, a boy of eleven, sang about Moscow with great feeling. Then a tiny girl of four, the daughter of the children's accompanist at the piano, had to be lifted onto a chair in order to reach the microphone. Here she sang, with real understanding and seriousness, a song about a fallen partisan.

The next speaker was Academician Arkadi Mordvinov, chairman of the Committee on Architecture, set up under the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. He was present at the request of our young listeners interested in architecture. The Academician told us about the extensive work that Soviet architects are now doing. Academician Alexei Shchussev, for instance, who planned the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow, is to rehabilitate the ancient Russian city of Novgorod, demolished by the Germans. Academician Boris Yofan, author of the project of the future Palace of Soviets, is working on the restoration of the extensive Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. Academician Karo Alabyan, the architect of the imposing Red Army Theatre in Moscow, is engaged on a plan for the rebuilding of heroic Stalingrad. Academician Mordvinov also told us that girls and boys attending an art vocational school, working under the guidance of specialists, have redecorated the damaged plafond of the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad.

After the piano solos "Fir-Tree Waltz" by Rebikov and "Serenade" by Albeniz, played by the well-known pianist Tatyana Goldfarb, Vassili Lebedev-Kumach, one of the most popular poets, spoke of the heroism of Soviet seamen with whom he had worked in the Navy. Lebedev-Kumach then read some of his poems.

An enthusiastic greeting by all present was given Igor Ilyinsky, one of the Soviet Union's favourite comedy actors. Ilyinsky performs at the Maly Theatre and has also appeared in many films. After some witty back-chat with the chairman, Ilyinsky recited with real skill and humour a fable by the famous Russian satirist Krylov, and some humorous children's verses by Marshak.

The Round Table gathering under the Cuckoo Clock concluded with the song "Labour Reserves" excellently rendered by a chorus of trade-school pupils.

LEV KASSIL,
Chairman of the Round Table

SPANISH MASQUERADE
Hitler sent General Franco a birthday telegram of "hearty good wishes"
(Newspaper report)

Franco neutrality and Franco reality
Drawing by Boris Yefimov

ALEXANDER GRIBOYEDOV

(1795—1829)

"Griboyedov was among the most powerful manifestations of the Russian spirit," Belinsky said. It is true: his power of mind, his striking and vivid gifts, the range of his knowledge and the high level of his work place him in the forefront of Russian literature. He created "Wit Works Woe," unsurpassed as an example of Russian comedy in verse, and he succeeded in combining mordant social satire with genuine psychological drama and deep lyrical feeling. Chatsky, the hero of this comedy, remains to this day one of the most forceful and noble figures in Russian literature; he is endowed, moreover, with traits of an unconquerable intellect and a brilliant gift of eloquence. There is no doubt that he bears the imprint of the author's own personality.

One of the most highly-educated men of his time, Griboyedov studied in three of the faculties of the Moscow University, held a master's degree in arts and law, read for the examinations for the degree of doctor of mathematical and natural sciences, went deeply into Russian history, geography, archeology, oriental philology and Slav culture. He was a brilliant linguist, studied Sanskrit, and had a thorough knowledge of French, German, English, Italian, Arabic, Turkish and Persian.

His life afforded him no opportunity of concentrating his attention on either literature or science, though he had dreamed of these in his youth. While still very young, Griboyedov entered the army, and subsequently the Foreign Office. In 1828, when he was thirty-three years of age, he received the appointment of ambassador-plenipotentiary to Persia.

His diplomacy in the East and his ideas, such as for example the founding of the Russian Trans-Caucasian company, show unusual initiative and breadth of outlook. As one of his contemporaries said of him, Griboyedov alone was worth a whole army at his diplomatic post. An ardent patriot, he placed his country's dignity and greatness above all else.

He was able to preserve his own inner and very complex world intact from the encroachments of the society and court circles of tsarist St. Petersburg with which he was thrown into contact by his position. He was close to the circles of the progressive intelligentsia of the time, was a friend of the writers Ryleyev, Bestuzhev, Küchelbecker[1] and Odoyevsky by whom he was regarded as a freethinker. He shared their conviction that serfdom in Russia should be done away with, that public courts and freedom in the printing of books should be introduced. In 1826 he was cross-examined during the inquiry into the Decembrist Rising.

But the artistic side of Griboyedov's nature was the most vivid. Passionately fond of music; he was an excellent pianist-improvisateur. Some of the outstanding composers of his day, Glinka, Verstovsky, Alyabyev, were his friends. He was interested in the theory of music and took up composition. Two waltzes he wrote have come down to us. He knew a great deal about classical music and loved Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and Weber.

Another passion of his was the theatre. He was an excellent reader and amateur actor. "He could convey without farce or falsity the variety of every person and the shades of every happy expression,"

[1] Ryleyev, Bestuzhev and Küchelbecker participated in the Decembrist Rising, December 14th, 1825.

his friend Bestuzhev wrote. More than once in home theatricals, he played the part of Alceste in Molière's "Misanthrope." He had the greatest admiration for Shakespeare and Racine. Very early in life he tried his hand at vaudeville and society comedies which served as the preparatory school for his great dramatic poem.

This masterpiece of Russian comedy was written by a true poet. "Poesy! I love it passionately!" he wrote in one of his letters. All the greatest poems were familiar to him. Among the poets of his own country he showed a decided preference for Zhukovsky, Batyushkov and Pushkin. Many of the fragmentary poems which he left are trials made when he was preparing for the sparkling and flexible verse in which "Wit Works Woe" is written.

In the conditions of his day Griboyedov's independent mind and brilliant talent found no scope for free development. As Pushkin said, "the ability of a statesman lay unused, the talent of a poet remained unacknowledged," Griboyedov knew from his own experience the full drama of a fine intellect, bound by the oppressive conditions of the "cruel age," and he saw that these same fetters hindered the free unfolding of the vital forces of the Russian people and the state. "It is torment to be a fiery dreamer in a land of eternal snows," he wrote, thinking of that spiritual desert to which tsarism and serfdom were striving to reduce Russia.

The outcome of these personal feelings was his famous comedy.

While still a student he read his fellow-students parts from a long play that he was intending to write, but it was not until 1820, when he was in Tabriz, that he actually settled down to working out his early conception. Living abroad, his thoughts turned to the past, to his native Moscow, its shallow society, his own loneliness and the sense of being lost in it; he found in his own reminiscences excellent material for a play.

The first acts of "Wit Works Woe" were written during the years 1821 to 1823, while he was diplomatic secretary in Tiflis, in Yermolov's time. He lived for some time in the Caucasus and made many friends among the Armenians and Georgians. His wife was the daughter of a Georgian, Prince Alexei Chavchavadze, who was prominent in public affairs and had made a name as a poet of talent. In spring 1823, Griboyedov returned to Moscow on leave. Once more he moved in the old circles, and studied the manners and morals of his contemporaries, but when the summer came, he returned to his friend Begichev's country estate and worked on the last acts of his play. It was not until the summer of 1824, however, when he was in St. Petersburg, that he completed it. Thus he had spent four years of persevering labour on his comedy. The play that this exacting author wrote impresses one by the depth with which the personal and social drama of his time was portrayed and the finish of his poetic style.

It shows us 19th-century Moscow society, its upper circle with its venomous gossip, cynical ambition, hypocrisy, hatred of enlightenment, aloofness from the people. In witty dialogue Griboyedov recorded and branded "the basest features of a bygone day."

As everyone knows, many types in this immortal comedy are drawn from life. The author himself said that he introduced "portraits" into his play and reproduced real people, typifying them in an artistic manner. In Chatsky his contemporaries recognized the author himself and also the still better-known Chaadayev, the philosopher and friend of Pushkin; in Famussov—the author's uncle Alexei Griboyedov, a Moscow bigwig; in the dull narrow Skalozub—Paskevich or Arakcheyev, in the Princess Maria Alexeyevna—the noted Golitsina, mother of Moscow's governor-general. It was a gallery of contemporaries immortalized in stage characters. "Their physiognomies, which give various aspects of Moscow life, are so cleverly caught, so sharply drawn, so happily placed, that involuntarily when one scrutinizes them one recognizes them and laughs," Nadezhdin, a Moscow professor, wrote in 1830. An entire social strata is found in this group-portrait.

The large social picture drawn by Griboyedov was sharply satirical, and, as his contemporaries said, was a true political comedy. This was not satire for satire's sake, nor abuse for the sake of abuse. Echoes of the ideas of the Decembrists' day could be clearly heard in it. Subsequently "Wit Works Woe" was acknowledged the first social comedy in the Russian repertoire because it was closely bound up with the aims and cherished hopes of Russian progressive ideologists of that day and in particular with Russian freethinking youth.

Chatsky, the hero of the comedy, belongs to this wing of Russian youth. That is how he was understood by Herzen, Dostoyevsky, the critic Apollon Grigoryev, the historian Vassili Kluchevsky and others. Herzen wrote: "The melancholy figure of Chatsky, who has retreated into his own irony, who is vibrant with indignation and full of a dreamer's ideals, appears at the last moments of Alexander I reign, on the eve of the rising in St. Isaac's square: this is a Decembrist."

Chatsky's famous monologues with their accusations of the serfowning gentry, the court circles, the bureaucracy, are akin in spirit to the Decembrists' programme, like his defence of national worth, essentially Russian culture and the native tongue. It is not therefore surprising that Dobrolyubov, one of the leaders of the democratic movement of the sixties, declared that in his youth he had wanted to be like Chatsky.

Griboyedov's hero is a true representative of the progressive generation. He defends its right to profound and independent thought, and welcomes the young people of his day who strove "to centre upon learning the mind that thirsted for

knowledge," to study "an art that was creative, lofty and beautiful." Like his creator, Chatsky is a poet, thinker, writer, orator, a fine and gifted representative of the progressive intelligentsia. As the novelist Goncharov aptly observed, Chatsky anticipated the traits found in Belinsky and Herzen. This is a tribune and a fighter.

No less apt was the poet Yakov Polonsky's remark that there were "two woes" in Griboyedov's play: "woe from the mind and woe from love." In the story of Chatsky's interest in Sophia, Griboyedov's lyrical gift is displayed to the full. The lyrical theme grows, as it does in Dante, Shakespeare and Pushkin, assimilating the spiritual wealth of humanistic awareness of the world. All the love lines in the play are superb examples of lyric poetry.

As Apollon Grigoryev, the critic, points out, Chatsky sees in Sophia a woman capable of understanding that the whole world is "dust and vanity" in comparison with the idea of truth and goodness. Pushkin remarked the psychological truth and depth of Chatsky's love drama. It is this that leads to the culmination of the complex train of events and evokes the hero's concluding monologue; in this he pronounces his indignant denunciation of a society which rallied to hunt down a solitary and independent thinker. This is the woe that comes upon the free mind, which feels that its rights are those not only of a man but of mankind.

The theme of Chatsky's struggle brings a tragic pathos into the play and it is not to be wondered at that the writer regarded drama of the highest significance or tragedy his true calling. When he was on his way to the east for the last time he stopped for a few days at his friend Begichev's and in answer to a question about a new comedy, replied: "I am not writing any more comedies, my gaiety has departed, and comedies are no good without gaiety. But I have written a tragedy." He told his friend the plot of his play and read a few scenes from it. Written in free rhymed verse, this play, "Georgian Night," employed the folk-narratives of Georgia. The basic subject is a mother's vengeance for her young son who was given by one prince to another in return for a favourite horse. A contemporary who was present at the reading of the play said: "Had this tragedy been concluded as it was begun, it would have been an ornament not only to Russian but also to European literature." The verses that are preserved to us of this unfinished play are marked by an unusual vigour and are in the style characteristic of oriental tragedy-tales.

No less powerful is the play "1812." Griboyedov took part in the National War of 1812; he joined a volunteer regiment and served in it for three years, during which time he gained the reputation of a dashing cavalryman. It was his intention to unfold in this play the historic picture of the French army's entry into Russia, the taking of Smolensk, the story of Borodino, Napoleon in the Kremlin, the universal mobilizing of the people into militia, the French army's retreat, "winter scenes of the pursuit of the enemy and terrible deaths." The most recent events are introduced in a curious fashion with people from Russia's distant past; Svyatoslav, Vladimir Monomakh, Ivan IV and Peter I awaken in their descendants "zeal for the glory and liberty of their country." The events of 1812 are unfolded by Griboyedov in a people's historic tragedy of extraordinary power. But his conception was not destined to be carried out.

Lastly, we have the plan of Griboyedov's tragedy "Radamist and Zenobia" based on events that took place in Georgia and Armenia at the opening of our era. A court conspiracy is sketched, but has nothing to do with the people. Beside this there is a picture of a popular rising that sweeps everything from its path. Here, too, one senses the immense scale of Griboyedov as a tragedian who never succeeded in embodying it in any work.

Griboyedov was distracted not only by reasons of a private nature indicated above, but also by his government appointment and in particular his life in the East, from expressing his conceptions as a writer. As is well-known, his last sojourn abroad ended tragically. He was killed during a rising provoked by Russia's enemies in Teheran.

From what remains to us of his writing we may judge of how it might have developed, this creative work as dramatist, poet, historian and scholar who dreamed of writing monumental works on the heroic struggle and great deeds of his people. His only complete and extremely original work has secured him forever the love and gratitude of his countrymen. When someone expressed, in Pushkin's presence, their regret that so many of Griboyedov's projects remained unfulfilled, the poet replied: "Griboyedov has done his work. He has already written 'Wit Works Woe'."

Soon it became known abroad. The first English translation appeared in 1857. There are no fewer than four different translations in French. In 1884 a literary and bibliographical work on Griboyedov was published in France by A. Legrin, who knew Russian well. Curiously enough, the play has been translated twice into Italian in our own day. Turkish and Persian translations exist. We will not speak here of the number of translations into the Slav languages, into Polish in particular.

Griboyedov's work and the author's personality called into existence a special literature which has been considerably enriched in Soviet times by the researches and textological discoveries of Professor Piksanov and others. The late Yuri Tynyanov [1], a Soviet novelist, wrote a novel "The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar" about Griboyedov.

The immortal "Wit Works Woe" since 1825 has never left the stage of Russian

[1] See article on Tynyanov by E. Knipovich in "International Literature", No. 10, 1944.

theatres. Many of the lines from this play have become part not only of literature but of the everyday speech of the people. They are those which express Griboyedov's hatred of all forms of obscurantism and his love for "our wise and good people."

A contemporary of his wrote of him: "Never in my life have I seen a man who loved his country as ardently and passionately as Griboyedov loved Russia."

LEONID GROSSMAN

ARKADI KOULESHOV

This Byelorussian poet is still quite young. His first volume of poems, "A Green Garden", was published in 1940. The title is a happy one. The world, as reflected in the consciousness of a country lad, scarce out of his 'teens, in Arkadi Kouleshov's poetry assumed the hues and fragrance of a spring morning, freshly green and sparkling with dew.

His scenes of work and leisure, his spirited dances and love songs give a vivid and novel expression to the lyrical and musical sentiments of the poet's homeland and the life of the Byelorussian peasants so familiar to him. The sense of nature, sharp and fresh, permeates the poems of "A Green Garden." A fisherman stands on a river bank in the morning, fishing-rod in hand. He glances down at the water. At his feet the whole world is extended—the inverted wall of the forest, bushes, reeds, a white cloud gliding over the still surface. The float bobs under, the fisherman jerks the line, the surface breaks into ripples. The world lying at his feet is no more—gone the forest, the bushes, the reeds. Where now is the cloud? "The cloud quivers, alive, in the fisherman's hands."

But there were poems of another kind, too, even in Arkadi Kouleshov's first prewar volume. In these is sensed a premonition of the coming struggle, the consciousness that his free and happy life will have to be defended, arms in hands. In the poem "Morning," an enemy detachment seizes a village boy in a Byelorussian forest and commands him to show them the way to his village and get them out of the forest. The boy determines not to carry out their orders and all his native countryside aids him in leading the enemy further astray—the forest path, the creek, fallen tree-trunks, the scrub. The enemy will never reach his native village. And what will be the boy's fate? His answer to someone he loves is expressive:

"Me? It's the end of me.
And you? Don't you cry."

Arkadi Kouleshov's early lyrics have never been translated into Russian. The war came. On the night of June 22nd, 1941, enemy bombs set ablaze the poet's hometown, Minsk, the capital of Soviet Byelorussia. Kouleshov joined the army and a whole year passed before his voice was again heard, now more mature and virile in expression.

The poem "The Brigade Banner," translated into Russian by the well known poet Mikhail Issakovsky, opens with the fateful June 22nd. A young man, returning from a trip out of town, finds his home empty. His wife and children have fled from the bombing into the countryside. The young husband wishes to hasten to the recruiting office, but cannot tear himself away from his home; the very objects around him seem to be appealing to him, begging him to take them with him, not to leave them to the Germans. The books seem to rustle their pages, pleading that the Germans will toss them into the fire; the wooden horse that used to carry his little son from door to window and back again, wants to be rewarded for its faithful service; the doll that with its wide-open, unsleeping eyes had guarded his baby daughter's slumbers, also begs him not to forsake her; she won't ask for food and drink, the stones won't hurt her feet, "'cause I'm not alive, you see." The whole world of his home, with its dreams, its warmth and cozy comfort, begs for protection. But too late, it can no longer be protected here. The hero leaves the town amid the ruins of collapsing houses and blazing lime and chestnut trees. In a wood near Minsk he finds the recruiting office.

But all this, as they say in Russian folklore, is only the prologue—the tale itself is still to come. The poem proper begins when the brigade in which the hero is fighting has already been practically wiped out after a gallant fight against overwhelming odds.

Of the brigade but three remain.

The poem tells how these three—two Soviet soldiers and their commanding officer—make their way across territory occupied by the Germans to rejoin the Red Army; how they still consider themselves a military unit for they still carry the brigade banner; how they preserve this banner, and how all the people and their whole native countryside help them in their arduous journey.

Kouleshov's poem is one of the best attempts in Soviet poetry to depict the people at war, and a hero sprung from the people and inseparable from them.

Soviet readers are as yet acquainted with very few works by foreign authors dealing with the war of the freedom-loving peoples against fascism. But if we take their war books written before 1939, almost all of them have certain features in common. The heroes of these books and the authors too, for that matter, while adopting an attitude full of sympathy and even admiration towards the militant

people, themselves stand apart, even when dealing with a just war for the people's independence and freedom, as, for example, the war of the Spanish people against fascism in 1936—1938.

In Kouleshov's poem, however, the fighting people and their heroes are an organic whole.

The people, as the poet shows, are full of heroism. It is hard to say where the devotion and gallantry of one individual ends and that of another begins. In Kouleshov's poem, the whole country is fighting, the Red Army man and the peasant girl, the old man and the child... The forest path, the age-old firs, and songs too, are playing their part in the hard, danger-encompassed life of the people at war.

A distinctive feature of Kouleshov's poem is that it gives no direct portrayal of the enemy, or of the looting and violence committed by the Germans in the temporarily occupied areas. But in all the descriptions and imagery of the poem one feels how heavily the intolerable and hateful burden of the German occupation weighs on the shoulders of the people; how grim and joyless life has become... The very reapers in the fields sing how the Germans killed a girl's mother and father because they tried to bring her bread.

In oppressive silence, the collective farmers crowd round the doors of the house where the "German toady" Medvedsky is celebrating his wedding. They are not impressed, for Medvedsky is a very old enemy of theirs. They keep themselves in hand, giving no vent to their hatred, and silently watch Medvedsky's carousals. Suddenly three partisans appear; one word from their commander disguised as a peasant is enough, a single spark thrown into that silent crowd. A shot rings out from the threshold and Medvedsky falls dead. No, these were not passive spectators watching the German flunkey, but people's avengers, only awaiting the signal to act.

The three friends, the three guardians of the brigade's banner, have undertaken no easy task. They know nothing of the position at the front, lying rumours spread by German propaganda are rife in the occupied districts. And these rumours are the cause of the most grievous trial that falls to the lot of this tiny unit of Soviet soldiers. One of their number gives them the slip. Nikita Vorchik is not a traitor in the real sense of the word. He does not betray his comrades or go to work for the Germans, but proves to be "a man without faith." He begins to doubt the final victory of the Soviet people; he leaves his comrades, deserts, and runs home. There he finds his house in ruins, and learns that his wife has hanged herself to avoid being dishonoured by the Germans.

Nikita fails to understand what is clear to others, that the way home, the way to his family and to happiness, is a long, circuitous road. It leads westwards, back through all the territory seized by the enemy and right to his very lair. No matter how great one's longing and anxiety over dear ones, it is only the victor who can return home; without victory there can be neither life, happiness or family.

Nikita Vorchik stands condemned not only by his former friends, but by his country, his people and the fallen comrades of his brigade which continues to exist so long as its banner still flies.

... These are no trees,
That stand silent and stern around,
But men of his own brigade,
Men who have held their ground,
On their faces are earth and sweat
Smeared with blood, the badge of the fight.
And filled with resolve like a threat
They make claim for the fullest might
Of the law against the man who fled,
The man without faith in the right.

And how do the remaining two make out? After many trials including the throttling of a German sentry, they succeed in crossing the frontline and rejoin the Red Army.

About a year later, one winter morning, the brigade, now restored from almost non-existence to their full strength, bearing the same banner which they have saved, enter the very Byelorussian village where the men of the annihilated unit once hid themselves. They are led by the same commander.

In their white snow capes the firm ranks of the Red Army men sweep westward like a storm, like white driving snow, in pursuit of the retreating enemy.

All the poems written by Arkadi Kouleshov during the war years have been distinguished by the same qualities of simplicity, restraint, controlled strength and intense lyrical feeling. Here, in the form of a letter, is the lament of a Soviet girl forcibly carried off to Germany by the fascists ("A Letter from Thraldom"). Then a requiem to Byelorussian soldiers fallen on Russian soil ("At a Common Grave"). And here, finally, is "The Ballad of the Four Hostages," describing how the Byelorussian partisan Minai gave to his country more than his own life; he sacrificed the lives of his little children, who had been taken by the Germans as hostages.

Kouleshov's poems contain not only clear and penetrating thought, impassioned feeling, the ability to understand the present needs and concerns of the people, and an original outlook. There is yet another quality which gives his flexible poems an added charm.

Vladimir Mayakovsky in his article "How to Compose Poetry" gave a description of the processes of poetic creation which we consider to be almost scientific in its detailed accuracy. In this article Mayakovsky states that the real poet can be distinguished from the craftsman or mere imitator by the presence or absence of his own peculiar rhythm, his own poetic

diction. It is in this distinctive rhythm of his, melodious and soul-stirring as a folk-song, that the chief charm of Kouleshov's poetry lies. In no way does it mean that Kouleshov knows no other poetic traditions than those of the folk-song. No, it is quite evident from his poems that he is an able, though modest, scholar of Byelorussian and Russian poetry both modern and classic.

A line of Pushkin's, a line of Lermontov's or rather the echo, almost the veritable intonation of one of their lines, is sometimes heard in Kouleshov's poetry. Kouleshov himself translated "Eugene Onegin," Pushkin's novel in verse, into the Byelorussian language. This translation was destroyed in the ruins of burning Minsk.

It is the experiences of war-time that have brought Arkadi Kouleshov, talented poet and good soldier (thrice decorated), into the foremost ranks of Soviet poetry.

EVGUENIA KNIPOVICH

NEW BOOKS

Alexander Yakovlev is known throughout the length and breadth of the whole Soviet Union not, however, as the author of the book "Tales from Life" recently published by the Children's State Publishing House, but as the inventor of a most highly perfected plane and the one most dreaded by the enemy.

The author of this book is also its hero. Written in unemotional, even matter-of-fact language, it opens up before the reader wide horizons and great possibilities.

It is a book about a very ordinary boy, one with interests similar to other boys of his time. He was keen on all kinds of gadgets and wanted to become an engineer. But what boy at one time or another has not been interested in technique or has not dreamed of becoming an engineer? This boy, however, with his ordinary enthusiasms, was destined to become an extraordinary designer, due to the fact that he lived in an extraordinary age.

While still at school, several boys organized a society of young friends of the air force. "Once, after talking it over, they decided to get hold of a real plane that had been scrapped so as to dismantle it down to the last screw and look it well over."

The plane they found had been badly smashed up, but how many happy hours they spent on assembling and restoring its damaged parts!

Later on, the young lad conceived the idea of constructing a real glider, but for this he needed a workshop, materials and money.

Without a moment's hesitation he turned to the school where he had just passed his final examinations. There he organized a glider circle, and together with his school chums constructed a glider, which he carried off to the glider contest at Koktebel. There he was awarded a prize of two hundred roubles and a certificate for his successful design. His future was decided; he and aviation henceforth were to be inseparable.

The young lad entered the Air Fleet Academy, not as a student, but as a mechanic at its training aerodrome.

"I was not used to the work, and found it difficult," wrote Yakovlev. "Nevertheless, I carried out my duties with great interest."

The reader accompanies the author through the school of life. Yakovlev's first university was an aeroplane dump in a gully and his first factory a workshop for turning out beds.

And the reader experiences no surprise when the bedstead workshop develops into a model aviation plant; this is just what one would expect. The secret of its success lay in the stubborn work and determination that went into it.

"When I built the glider," writes the author, "I was obsessed with the idea of constructing a plane. Then I wanted to build another, still better, then a third... While you're building a plane you think: 'If she will only fly, I'll ask nothing more of life!' But when the plane is finished and is in the air, a new desire takes possession of you, to build another plane that will fly still faster and better."

Yakovlev's book inspires the youth to a passionate enthusiasm for work and the conquest of new heights.

In May, 1942, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, visited London and Washington. The plane in which he made the trip flew a long and dangerous course over enemy territory; it then passed through Arctic latitudes and across the Atlantic Ocean over Canada and America.

One of the navigators of the aircraft, Hero of the Soviet Union Alexander Shtepenko, had written an interesting account of this flight in his book, "Special Assignment," which has been published by the Military Publishing House.

Stories of flights written by journalists and other non-professional airmen usually describe, in more or less expressive terms, flying through dense clouds, the continual roar of the motors, the stars or sun overhead, and compare the joys of flying in good visibility with the alarming experiences of travelling through storm and fog. With Shtepenko, however, the "aerial landscape" plays only a minor role. The aspect that grips the reader's interest is the description of the work of the crew aboard the plane during their flight. For the specialist, such as the navigator—a very responsible member of the crew—every minute in the air was crowded with events

of which the passengers had not the faintest suspicion.

"Dawn was overtaking us, it was impossible to outspeed the approaching day, however much we hurried..."

"The passengers, lulled by the gentle beams of the morning sun, were all fast asleep, their heads resting on each other's shoulders. Only Vyacheslav Molotov was reading with absorbed interest by the light of a small lamp." But the crew, both navigators and pilots, were extremely anxious, for the encroaching dawn was driving from the sky the waning moon and the faintly twinkling point of Arcturus. A few minutes later, the shadow of the plane was travelling over a dense carpet of cloud beneath. The anxiety in the plane increased, the radio-operators worked away at their apparatuses still more feverishly... What was wrong? Why were they all so afraid of the morning sun? The point was that the moon and stars were their only means of orientation. For several hours now the radio beacons had been inaudible and the operators and navigators were making vain efforts to contact them again.

Or take another trying experience in the air, which lasted some hours and kept the crew in a state of great nervous tension. Day was suddenly turned to darkest night—the plane had plunged into a cloud. This happened during the return trip from Washington, somewhere over mid-ocean, where radio-connections are almost non-existent.

It grew cold and damp in the plane, water came streaming down, ice started to form on the wings and the aircraft became clumsy and unwieldy. They had to lose height, descend below the cloud and manoeuvre by guess-work to avoid crashing into the mountains of Greenland. Utter coolness, a combination of exact calculation and deep intuition were needed to steer the plane safely without radio-connections under such conditions.

Pilot Shtepenko's account of their journey makes stirring reading.

By decision of the Government of the U.S.S.R., Ivan Andreyevich Krylov's collected works are to be published in three volumes and will be edited by Demyan Bedny. The first volume contains Krylov's journalistic prose, the second his dramatic works, and the third his fables, poems, letters, official notes, etc.

The first volume which has just been issued, contains his satires and tales, reviews, translations, editorial prefaces and notes written at the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties of the 18th century. In addition to the works published in Krylov's three journals "The Ghost Mail" (1789), "The Spectator" (1792) and "The St. Petersburg Mercury," the first volume also includes material which appeared in Fyodor Tumansky's journal "An Antidote to Dull Care." Ivan Rakhmaninov's "Morning Hours" and from Alexander Shakhovskoi's and Dmitri Yazykov's journal "The Dramatic Herald."

The bulk of the first volume is taken up with "The Ghost Mail" or the correspondence, on scientific, ethical and literary subjects between the Arab philosopher Malikulmulk and the spirits of water, air and the subterranean regions.

Next comes Krylov's journalistic prose printed in "The Spectator" and "The St. Petersburg Mercury." In such works as "Nights" and "The Kaib," Krylov further develops his criticism of the manners and morals of his times occurring in "The Ghost Mail." He espouses the cause of realism in the portrayal of life as against classicism and sentimentality, against courtiodists and honeyed sensibility ("The Kaib").

Of the other material appearing in the first volume of Ivan Krylov's collected works mention should be made of his review of Paul Sumarokov's play "Marfa Possadnitsa or the Conquest of Novgorod." Krylov mercilessly ridiculed the stupid, melodramatic plot, its highflown sentimental style and unconvincing characters.

Simultaneously with this volume a collection of Vissarion Belinsky's articles and recorded opinions about Krylov's art has also been published.

In an article written in 1840, Belinsky defines the place and significance of Krylov as follows: "It is thanks to Krylov that the fable has come into its own in Holy Russia. He is our one, great and genuine writer of fables." And again: "Krylov in his fables gave full and exhaustive expression to a whole aspect of the Russian national spirit. They embody all worldly wisdom, fruit of practical experience, both his own and that handed down from generation to generation."

A third book published to mark the centenary of Ivan Krylov is a short biography of the writer and analysis of his art by Serguei Durylin.

Under the title "On Prussianism" the State Literary Publishing House has issued a small collection of Heinrich Heine's works violently attacking Prussian reaction, stupid nationalism and the "super-German clowns."

It is fully to be expected that the very name of Heine should be hateful to the German fascists; his famous poem "Lorelei" is ascribed in present-day Germany to "an unknown author." His books have been burnt on public bonfires. Even though dead, the great poet still has the power to scare his enemies.

The modern "super-German clowns" are afraid of him because of his passionate hatred of reaction and despotism, of self-satisfied "patriots" and philistines who sucked in the instinct for the knout and slavery with their mother's milk. Heine had a fine capacity for hatred and the stripping off of disguises. He poured out this hatred on the mean and stupid mode of life of the "German Michael" and his "Black-hundred" rulers in wrathful scourging verse and caustic hard-hitting prose. Heine was a complete master of poetic impeachment.

Is Dante's hell to thee unknown,
With its terrible trinary verses?
The man whom the poet there has shut up
Will never escape from his curses.
("Germany" Chap. 27.)

The poet is prepared to consign his enemies not only to a poetic anathema, but also to a torturing death.

"I am a man of very peaceful disposition," he wrote in his "Thoughts and Aphorisms." "My dreams run to no more than a modest cottage with a thatched roof, one possessing a comfortable bed, good food, milk and butter, the freshest of flowers outside my window and a few fine trees before my door, and, if the Lord wanted to make me really happy, six or seven of my enemies hanging from their branches. From my heart I would forgive them before they expired for all the wrongs they had done me in life. Yes, one must forgive one's enemies, but only when they've swung." He sees how dangerous, even if despicable, these enemies are, who have taken up arms against all that is honest and honourable. "These people," we read in the same work, "should be thrashed while they are alive; it is impossible to punish them once they are dead, impossible to brand, dishonour and bring disgrace on their names, for even their names are forgotten."

In one of his letters decrying Prussian reaction he wrote: "My advice is to declare open war to the death on Prussia. With them softness won't get you anywhere." Berlin he called "the capital of the kingdom of lies." He hated not only the Prussian Junkers, the military clique, the smug dull-witted philistines, but also Prussian "science" and learned pedants. "If I'd been an ass, I'd have long ago been made, for instance, Professor Extraordinary of the Bonn University." In his "Travels in the Harz Mountains" he remarks: "The inhabitants of Göttingen may be roughly classified under the heads of student, professor, philistine and brute; but between these four estates there is no clearly marked distinction. The prevailing class are the brutes."

He speaks with contempt and anger of the servility of his contemporaries: "A German resembles a slave . . . slavery is in his very nature, in his soul. It has become part and parcel of his make-up."

Exposing Prussianism, Heine is confident of final victory over the evil. "They are the foes of my country—a pack of reptiles, hypocrites, liars, arrant cowards. They hiss in Berlin, they hiss in Munich. . . But we are crushing the head of the old serpent."

Along with the prose extracts, the collection includes a number of satiric poems, the famous "Silesian Weavers" and the poem "Germany" which is a high-light of Heine's poetic art.

The modern German "supermen" have good reason to fear the name of Heine who wrote in his notes for "Atta Troll" (also included in this volume) how hard it was to award a villain's laurel to a German.

For in my fatherland
Villainy flourishes like the green bay tree.
Too many eager candidates
For filthy laurels all around I see.

How appropriately may the immortal lines from "Germany" be applied to the Aryan blackguards and murderers who have drowned Europe in blood:

Blackguards long since turned to rot
Stinking with historic stench,
Part scoundrel and part carrion,
For final harm a sweltered venom got.

And how aptly does the following apply to the fascist monster:

Snorting plague from its nostrils like a dragon of old
It would poison once more the whole world.

Now, when the sword of the Red Army and those of our Allied troops are dealing this monster its death blow, how forcibly the words of the poet come home to us!

And every worm was a new vampire,
And stank most foully as it died,
When the fateful hand of avenging ire
Sank in its flesh the cleansing blade.

The publication of this book of wrathful accusation is useful and timely. The new and very successful translation of "Germany" is by Vassili Levik.

BOOKS IN ENGLISH

During the whole twenty-nine months of siege, the heroic defence of Leningrad —which has gone down as one of the most glodious pages in the present war—drew the attention of wide circles of the public in all democratic countries throughout the world, and especially in England and the United States. But both these countries had only a vague idea of the real nature of this epic of Leningrad. The brief newspaper and radio reports could not, of course, satisfy the universal interest in the life of Leningrad people and their stubborn resistance to the invaders.

Alexander Werth's book "Leningrad," published by Hamilton Hamish in London —the first book written by a foreign correspondent about this warrior-city—aims, in a certain measure, at filling this gap.

Werth is the author of several books about France—"Twilight of France." "The Last Days of Paris"—and the book "Moscow 41." In his capacity of correspondent of "The Sunday Times" he visited Leningrad in the autumn of 1943, after the city had been liberated from the blockade, but when it was still being bombed and shelled. He was again in Leningrad in February 1944, after the troops of the Leningrad front, having launched a successful offensive, flung the enemy far back from the walls of the city. His book is dedicated "to the workers of the Kirov Plant."

Werth's book tells of the dreadful winter of 1941—1942, when the Hitlerites

attempted to throttle Leningrad by the iron ring of blockade and famine. Werth was not in the city during these ghastly months and in describing the scenes of those days he therefore resorted to as much documental material as possible. He introduces the stories of numerous participants in this historic epic—workmen, Red Army soldiers, women and children. He made detailed notes of his talks with these people and gave them the central place in his book.

In the foreword, the author writes:

"Leningrad holds a peculiar place in the Russian war... It had during those twenty-nine months of blockade and semi-blockade a mass of military, organizational and human problems, peculiar to itself... Leningrad has a large share in Russia's glory, but it has also a human greatness peculiarly its own."

The secret of why Leningrad held out and won lies, in Werth's opinion, in the splendid solidarity and unity between the fighting men defending the city and the city's inhabitants, in the fact that the borderline between front and rear was obliterated, the fact that every Leningrader felt himself to be a fighter.

In the foreword, Werth states:

"In this book I have recorded in detail what I saw and heard, but refrained from drawing too many conclusions. Let the details in their cumulative effect speak for themselves."

The English public will undoubtedly read Werth's "Leningrad" with great interest. Simple, unassuming narrative, lively sketches of the people with whom the author spoke and the abundance of factual material are the merits of this book. Needless to say, it makes no claim to being exhaustive, as volumes would be required to perpetuate the already legendary deeds of Leningrad. But for the reader abroad who up to the present has had to limit himself for information of Leningrad to the scanty items published in newspapers, this book by Werth will prove, not only of interest, but also of benefit.

Werth was an eyewitness of the nazi bombardment of such "military" targets as streetcar stops and cinema theatres. He speaks with indignation of the wanton destruction caused to this beautiful city and its wonderful monuments by the nazi vandals. The author also remarks on the pertinacity and unshaken confidence of the Leningraders who, in the days of terrific barrages, drew up plans and blueprints for the reconstruction of damaged houses, museums and monuments. He visited an architects' bureau where he saw dozens of architects seated at work drawing up designs and plans for magnificent new buildings to be erected on the sites of structures demolished by the nazis.

Among the people with whom Werth spoke were the directors of plants and works (the author, in particular, visited the Kirov Plant), factory girls, Red Army men on the Leningrad front, fliers, teachers and schoolchildren. Each story he heard added another brushstroke to the broad canvas portraying Leningrad in that grim winter of 1941-1942.

Tamara Turunova was "a little girl of fifteen, very pale, thin and delicate... On her little black frock was pinned the green-ribboned medal of Leningrad." To Werth's question whether she would like to leave the Kirov Plant Tamara answered: "I am a Kirov girl, and my father was a Putilov man,[1] and really the worst is over now, so we may as well stick it to the end."

The chapter about children tells of a Leningrad school visited by the author. Werth quotes the conversations he had with the pupils and excerpts from their diaries covering the days of the blockade.

"I felt that these boys had the mind of boys but the character of grown-up men. They had learned hatred at a very early age. They hadn't been taught it, they learned it from life itself! None of the children who continued to go to school died. But several of the teachers did. The last section of the Famine Scrapbook is introduced by a title page with a decorative funeral urn painted on it in purple water-colour. And the text that follows is by Tikhomirov, the headmaster. It is a series of obituary notes of the teachers of the school, who were either killed in the war or who died of hunger. The assistant headmaster was killed in action. Another was 'killed at Kingisepp'. Another teacher died of hunger; so did the teacher of geography."

The chapter "The Mayor of Leningrad Speaks" is a record of the conversation Werth had with the Chairman of the Leningrad Soviet.

In one of the chapters of his book Werth describes his meeting with Leningrad writers. In this chapter he speaks of Tikhonov's poem "Kirov Is With Us"—this "deeply inspired poem," of the "Pulkovo Meridian" by Vera Inber — "that grim tragic poem of the blockade, written in perfectly chiselled lines and a metre as light as the Byronic octave."

In conclusion, the author tells of his second brief visit to Leningrad, which coincided with a new drive of the Leningrad front troops against the enemy. Werth visited places liberated from the Germans and saw the results of their vandalism. "Little more than a heap of ruins is left," he wrote after visiting Pavlovsk and Detskove Selo.

It is impossible for Germany to atone for the crimes she has committed in Leningrad—that is the final impression left on the reader of Werth's book.

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[1] The Kirov Plant was formerly known as the Putilov Plant.

IN MEMORIUM

IVAN CHEMNITZER

The 18th century was a period of extraordinarily rapid development in Russian culture and literature. This was a century of enlightenment, of striving for a new culture and the assertion of national character. The role of literature as the mouthpiece of Russian national consciousness was extremely significant at this period. Naturally, didactic forms of writing predominated, daringly and brilliantly attacking all the social evils of the time, cultural backwardness and abuse of power. Among these forms—satire, comedy, etc. —fables occupy a prominent place. The first representatives of the new Russian literature—Kantemir. Lomonossov and others—began by testing out their powers in this field.

Sumarokov played an important part in the development of the Russian fable, although to a great extent he was only "feeling out" both the content and form of this genre. His fables frequently lack allegory and moral aphorisms, and are usually but a short story in verse. Sumarokov was seeking his verse form, employing for his fables both the trisyllabic and disyllabic metre, and alternating irregular trochee, etc.

Sumarokov succeeded in finding many novel, uncommon situations, filling his fables with lively everyday topics. His path was followed by other Russian poets who extensively developed the fable. The fundamental features of this genre—allegory, the moral ending and the satirical tone—became clearly defined. And its verse form also crystallized into the irregular iambic metre known as free verse.

Among the poets who particularly influenced the development of the Russian fable and who paved the way for the famous Russian fable-writer Krylov, Ivan Chemnitzer occupies his own special and illustrious niche. A friend of many Russian writers, he was particularly intimate with Derzhavin. He was an indefatigable and prolific worker in many spheres of Russian culture. He commenced his career in the army; later he was engaged in scientific work in the mining industry and finally entered the Russian diplomatic service. He was Russian Consul to Smyrna, pursuing Russian interests there very energetically. He confined his literary activities to the fable, leaving all other forms alone. He published a number of fables which were very popular in their time, and which ran to scores of editions during the first half of the 19th century. "The Metaphysician" in which a learned man falls into a pit and is so absorbed in his reasoning that he remains there, was immensely popular.

Chemnitzer's fables are pre-eminently moral in content; social-political themes rarely interest him, in contrast to Sumarokov and, later, Krylov.

His fables, always entertaining and laconic, are distinguished by unexpected endings. As an example, we quote his "Caravan":

A caravan one day
Along the winding road
Did wend its way
'Mongst sundry others, bearing such a load
That when beside the other loads compared
An elephant beside an ant appeared.
No little, common load was this—a giant load
It was that on this road
Did make its way.
But tell me, pray,
Just what
This super-load of loads
Had got?
Only bladders!

Chemnitzer was highly esteemed by his contemporaries and, a month before his untimely end, was elected a member of the Russian Academy. In the history of our literature his work contributed much not only to the perfecting of the fable as a form, but in general to the development of literary Russia.

Professor LEONID TIMOFEYEV

BENITO PEREZ GALDÓS

In 1943, all progressive circles in Spain and in Latin America solemnly celebrated one of the most important dates in the history of the literature of the Spanish-speaking peoples — the centenary of the birth of Benito Perez Galdós—that great Spanish novelist who lived during the latter part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In January 1945, progressive circles of these countries have marked another date connected with the name of Perez Galdós—the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death.

The Russian reader has been acquainted with Galdós for many years. Ivan Turgenev, a coryphaeus of Russian literature, studied the Spanish language through Galdós' books and conducted a friendly correspondence with him. Even prior to the October Revolution Maria Watson, a well-known St. Petersburg translator, had rendered into Russian several of Galdós' nov-

els, including his "Golden Fountain" and "Doña Perfecta." Spanish critics have frequently compared this great writer to Leo Tolstoy because of his role in the development of his native literature. But our interest received a special impetus only after the Revolution, when the State Literary Publishing House in Moscow and Leningrad published a series of his works, including "Saragossa," "Cadiz" and "Juan Martin el Empecinado". The Spanish people's heroic struggle for liberty and independence in 1936—1939 intensified this interest of Soviet readers and students of literature in the works of this novelist.

The ardent struggle which Perez Galdós conducted against obscurantism throughout the entire course of his literary activities earned him the esteem of all circles of progressive mankind. In his finest social novels—"Doña Perfecta," "Gloria," "Fortunata y Jacinta" and others—he openly took up the cudgels for the weak and oppressed. He rebelled against the backward, medieval forms of Spanish society—both in his attacks on the "traditions" of the Spanish family, which is imbued with the spirit of extreme fanaticism and intolerance, as well as against the Spanish clergy's persecution of all progressive thought. Last but not least, he fought against stagnation, caste and racial prejudices. Galdós fearlessly challenged the dark forces of reaction: he openly sympathized with the young Jew, the hero of his novel "Gloria." Nor was Galdós' social drama less imbued with "eternal ideals," progressive for the Spain of his time. His plays, and especially his famous drama—"Electra"—were a daring challenge to the royal-clerical feudal Spain.

Without Perez Galdós, as also without some of his great Spanish contemporaries ("Clarina," by Giner de los Rios and others), the evolution of the "generation of 1898" would have been impossible. Without Galdós, who supported their positive activities and progressive social ideas, their reform in the sphere of art would never have been realized. However much certain individual cultural leaders of this "generation of 1898" (Baroja and others) may have disowned Galdós, this fact is not to be denied. In our days, when the "generation of 1898," deprived of its most prominent members (Unamuno, Valle Inclan, Antonio Machado and others), is ingloriously awaiting its end in the camp of Franco's palace sycophants and spongers, the image of Perez Galdós, who, in spite of all the vicissitudes of fate, remained faithful to his ideals of truth and justice, stands out in all its majesty and brilliance.

But Spain and humanity owe yet another debt to Perez Galdós. Creating his novels during that stormy epoch in the history of the Spanish people, when convulsed by incessant civil wars Spain sought to consolidate her national unity, this novelist was an ardent defender of the patriotic ideal and taught his countrymen to love their country ardently and tenderly. His grand series of historical novels—"National Episodes"—covered nearly the entire 19th century from the commencement of the Napoleonic wars. They drew attention to the very essence of the process of history and, divesting the civil war in Spain of all its chaos and disorder, exposed its sound foundation — the people and the patriotic idea of the defence of their country and the firmness of those movements which always emerge victorious out of the most terrible upheavals. Nor is it surprising that Republican Spain, in her last struggle for liberty and independence, turned her eyes towards the works of her faithful son with a special regard. It is well-known, for instance, that, during the fateful November days of 1936, when Franco's rebel hordes, armed and equipped by the predatory Germany and Italy of Hitler and Mussolini, were approaching Madrid, the "Alliance of Progressive Intellectuals" which united the best representatives of Spanish art, science and letters, included extracts of one of Galdós' most famous "National Episodes" in their many manifestos, appeals and leaflets distributed among the population. This leaflet was distributed to the troops and population defending the "City of Glory" from automobiles. Shortly before the fall of the Spanish Republican regime, the Government had commenced the publication of the first series of Galdós' "National Episodes." But this attempt was not fated to be completed.

And it is in the people's recognition of the novelist's services during the most critical and difficult days of the struggle for Spain, for her independence and liberty, that we must seek the reason for those solemnities surrounding the dates linked with his name.

Franco's Spain, however, persisted in that blind hatred of Perez Galdós which it inherited from the reactionaries and obscurantists of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries. From the very first days of Franco's assumption of power, all his books were condemned to destruction. His novels, which were placed on the "Index Librorum Prohibitorum" of the Burgos Government, were consigned to the flames and burned in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other cities of the Republican zone as soon as these places were captured by the Franco-ites. But, like the phoenix, the works of this famous novelist emerged from the fires of the inquisition, purified, more majestic and still closer linked to the genuine democracy of Spain, to the advanced sections of humanity defending the cause of the Spanish people.

Spanish patriots, who for the most part are now living in emigration, gather new strength from Galdós' books for their imminent struggle for the destruction of our common enemy—reactionary totalitarism.

FYODOR KELYIN

ARTS

VASSILI KACHALOV

It happened long ago, in St. Petersburg. As a slender, fair-haired student, hardly more than a boy, he was pointed out to me as a gifted amateur. A little later, a St. Petersburg critic, a man of uncommon ability and severity of judgement, said to me: "I've been watching a young man acting in your play 'Eternity in an Instant'". (This was one of my first efforts, a slight one-act attempt in verse, written when under Victor Hugo's influence.) "I saw Gorev in this role at the Maly in Moscow" (Gorev was the famous junior lead of those days), "but all the same," he continued, "mark this boy's name: Kachalov. It will resound before he has done."

And it certainly did.

The memory of Kachalov's first appearance at the Art Theatre in Moscow is still very fresh in my mind. There is a story attached to it, too.

Impelled by his passion for the theatre, Kachalov had turned actor straight from the university, and almost immediately he had obtained both recognition and a large salary in the provinces. He played in Kazan, long regarded as a town noted for its high theatrical standards, and scored a tremendous success. Stanislavsky and Nemirovich, the directors of the Art Theatre, hearing of his ability, invited Kachalov to join their company. This was more than a beginner in the theatre could hope for in his wildest dreams; and Kachalov dropped the provinces without thinking twice about it to come to Moscow, to this new theatre that was so unlike all others.

There he was eagerly awaited: enthusiastic reports of his talent and success had preceded him. He was given a friendly welcome, and asked, as a mere matter of form, to demonstrate his ability—to give a kind of private debut though his joining the company was already a settled thing.

Kachalov decided to captivate his audience by demonstrating his range and play two parts in one performance. In one and the same play—Alexei Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan the Dread"—he would give a few of Ivan's scenes and a few of Boris Godunov's. He had scored a success in both parts in the provinces.

But the rehearsals already showed, while the performance confirmed it, that the Art Theatre and Kachalov spoke different languages. Stanislavsky, that innovator of the theatre, was ruthless where art was concerned, and always demanded "truth, truth and truth alone" from it. He entered the young actor's room agitated and distressed and proceeded to explain to him, half-apologetically, that it astonished him how Kachalov could have become infected so quickly and so thoroughly with all the

worst and most provincial traits of the theatre. "You're alien to us, alien," he repeated sorrowfully. "Perhaps in two or three years' time you will get used to us, learn to understand us, accept our ideas; but for the time being, we are strangers."

Nemirovich said the same thing, though in milder terms.

And this was where Kachalov displayed that selfless love of art which, according to Stanislavsky, is the distinguishing characteristic of every genuine artist.

Most actors in his place would probably have returned to the former flattering position in the provinces, and forgotten this unsuccessful debut. Not so Kachalov. He stayed with the Art Theatre. Far from taking umbrage and departing, he was fired by an ardent desire to seek and attain all he had seen in this young theatre. The company were then rehearsing Ostrovsky's "Snow Maiden," a poetical fairy-tale drawn from Russian folklore. Kachalov had not even a walking-on part (it was a theatre where even the leading members were expected to play mutes, on occasion). Nevertheless he did not miss a single rehearsal, not a single remark of Stanislavsky's, or a single suggestion of the producer's. For

two months he listened and digested all he saw and heard. The role of King Berendei defied everyone's ability. After two months, Stanislavsky approached Kachalov, sitting as usual in a dark corner of the house, and said:

"I can't do anything with Berendei. Neither can anybody else. The part might be bewitched. Everybody has had a try at it. You go ahead too."

Kachalov's heart throbbed as it had ceased to do after his "private debut." Then he had possessed self-confidence as a result of his youthful arrogance; now doubt assailed him. But he decided to tackle this role. Rehearsals began. Mounted on an elevation, Kachalov opened the scene. He already knew the lines from start to finish. The scene closed—all were silent. Then, suddenly, Stanislavsky darted towards him, moved and elated crying:

"He's one of us, he's one of us, I say! He's grasped the idea. Isn't he a wonder! Again let's have that scene with Kupava, again! .."

At the end of the rehearsal the same thing occurred again: handclasps and embraces. The whole company gathered round him, and from that day on Kachalov was "one of them," a close and dear comrade, an equal member of the Moscow Art Theatre.

I remember very well the first performance of the "Snow Maiden."

The curtain about to go up on Act two. The halls of King Berendei. The palace is yet not finished: scaffolding everywhere, workmen busy, each at his particular job. King Berendei himself lending a hand: mounted on a platform he is painting a column with phantastic flowers. A venerable old man with locks of silver, in long shimmering robes. Minstrels extolling the king; clowns capering around him; and in the midst of it come Berendei's first words as he addresses the clowns. It's as though a magnificent cello had suddenly sounded amid the medley of music, bustle and buffoonery; or like a flow of velvety golden honey. The voice of Kachalov, which Moscow is hearing for the first time.

I have listened to many magnificent singers in my time—Masini, Battistini, Chaliapin, Sobinov—but Kachalov has no rival regarding the spoken word. His voice conveys strength and tenderness; the heroic mould and a deep secret melancholy...

On the day the "Snow Maiden" was produced, this "ancient sage, the silver-locked Berendei" was just twenty-five years old. Not long after this first appearance, the actor became the Kachalov that Moscow grew to love and loves to this same day, associating him always with what is finest, bravest and most genuine.

It is this sincerity of Kachalov's that is so admirable: there is about him not the least vestige of posing or self-adulation, of that naive admiration of self. His modesty is one of his most distinguished features.

Year after year, I observed Kachalov the actor. Every new part he played was for me an outstanding event.

Anatoli Koni, the judicial authority and at the same time a real connoisseur of art, once said: "A single movement of Kachalov's 'Julius Caesar' is worth more than two lectures on the culture of antiquity."

The role of Julius Caesar was played by Kachalov just after he had discarded the part of the Baron in Gorky's "Lower Depths." No one who has seen Kachalov in this latter role will forget this experience. A creature in rags, with carefully tended hands now shaking with perpetual drinking, and whose one motion when he picks up his cards reveals his whole life story. A lordly French roll of his "r's", a shattered spirit—a fearful specimen of old-time degradation. And then followed Julius Caesar in his purple toga, his every attitude resembling an antique sculpture. I remember, while talking to Kachalov one day, expressing my wonder at the breadth of his range, he replied that to play the roles of Caesar and a vagabond consecutively was easy; to play two different Caesars or two different Barons would prove much more difficult.

In a brief sketch like the present, I cannot discuss all Kachalov's various roles. Their diversity is astounding—you see him as the pale Prince of Denmark, as Kareno, the dreamer, in Hamsun's "At the Kingdom's Gates," or as Chekhov's Tusenbach, that Russian intellectual of the nineties. Among this actor's outstanding achievements is his delineation of Dostoyevsky's characters—Stavrogin in "The Fiends" and Ivan in "The Brothers Karamazov" containing his "colloquy with the devil." Even without knowing the text, no one can doubt for a moment where Ivan himself is speaking and where it is what he calls "his devil." The last time I was greatly stirred by Kachalov's acting was quite recently when I saw him as Chatsky in Griboyedov's "Wit Works Woe."

Rossi, that master tragedian, played Romeo when he was past sixty. He appeared on the stage without make-up as if to stress that he did not wish to appear as a youth, to look young and handsome, but only wanted to reproduce his conception of the part. And he enthralled his audience, who forgave him alike his bald patch and his thickened figure, and saw only the master-actor and his still youthful spirit. With Kachalov it was otherwise. We all knew that he was no longer in his twenties—and yet we believed him young and handsome, believed every word he spoke on the boards. His amazing voice had not changed one whit, there was the same ring in it, the same velvet. I watched the endless curtain-calls, heard the enraptured cries of the young people, and I thought how fortunate this younger generation was to witness such creative talent.

His acting, his every movement, every step he took denoted infinite nobility. Noble—this is indeed the first word that comes to mind upon seeing Kachalov.

When walking one day along one of Moscow's quiet side-streets, I remember seeing Kachalov emerging from his house.

I decided not to call to him and let the inevitable chat about daily trivialities disturb the mood of quiet concentration which I sensed in him. As I watched from afar his elegant figure, with its characteristic rhythmical walk, so youthful still, the thought arose in my mind:

"Kachalov—the man—the acme of nobility and grace."

Seeing him play Chatsky, I summed up: "Kachalov—the actor—the acme of nobility and grace."

Now and then I have regretted that, in common with all the Art Theatre actors, Kachalov has in his life played only some three or four dozen parts, not hundreds, like actors in other companies. His gifts demand diversity of material. Perhaps he needed more upheavals, more tragedy, more struggle to reveal his wealth of talents to the full. For him the theatre is above all the embodiment of an outlook that regards life, even in the humdrum workaday world, as heroic and romantic. As to the splendid daily life of our own place and time, Kachalov sees it shining in all its many colours. He is deeply stirred by the exploits of our Red Army, of our airmen—by the heroism of our Arctic explorers—by the achievements of our gifted youngsters. All this affects him intimately. And there is so much he still hopes to perform on the stage, particularly plays by our new authors. As to the classics, he is working now on the role of Neshchastlivtsev in Ostrovsky's "Forest," and dreams of playing Richard III some day; a character "so repulsive and so fascinating" as he describes him.

Kachalov loves the theatre above all else, and his whole being, without exaggeration, is consecrated to it. What are his other enthusiasms?

His love for nature comes first, a love blended of many different shades and experiences. Long rambles in the woods. Hours spent in solitude on the sea-shore. When he was at the sea-side, everyone knew how he would wait for the moment when the sun sank below the horizon. "There goes the sun!" they would call for his benefit, and Kachalov would drop whatever he was doing—would break off a serious conversation with Stanislavsky about the theatre—and rush to see the great red ball sinking into the waves. While on holiday by a big lake in the summer, he would spend whole days alone in a boat. Getting up early in the morning, he'd find some spot among the bullrushes and lie there for hours on end, gazing up at the sky and drinking in the sounds of nature: fish splashing in the water, ducks beating their wings as they took off, snipe whistling, small birds twittering in the bullrushes until it seemed that the rushes themselves were alive with song. "Bullrush Vassya" they would tease him at home.

Kachalov is fond of animals. He says that many of his fourlegged friends were as dear to him as the two-legged variety Serguei Yessenin, the poet, even wrote some lines to Jim, Kachalov's four-legged companion. Kachalov can spend hours watching animals and their ways, describe them so vividly that one could listen for ever.

I once asked him whether he was fond of music. He smiled his charming, semi-apologetic smile, and replied:

'It affects me very powerfully, but I understand nothing about its technique, you know." And he said this when his voice is music itself, and his reading of poetry brings out all the lyricism in the lines.

Kachalov does not merely make a practice of reading poetry as all our actors do—he enjoys reading, delights in it. He reads with a natural ease, never waiting to be entreated, sometimes he will himself offer to read when he feels he has "real listeners" before him.

One summer we lived at Nikolina Gora, a place of remarkable beauty outside Moscow, by the Moskva River. There was a glorious view from our garden, and Kachalov would frequently come along—calling on the view, not on us at all. We could see his slender figure seated on the bench at the edge of the cliff. Afterwards, over a cup of coffee, we'd request him to read us something.

"Would you like me to?" he would query, his manner meditative and somewhat hesitant. "Well, what shall I read? I'm learning Pushkin just now..."

And he would delight us with the poems of Pushkin.

How well his noble voice suited the harmonious flow of Pushkin's lines! Every pause he made, every rise and fall in his tone enriched the poems and revealed hidden meanings.

This made itself felt with particular force when he read the contemporary poets, who developed metres and established canons of their own. The lines that I had read before in "black and white," in his mouth became clothed with flesh and blood and came to life; it was like the figures in canvases by old-time painters, who would first draw in the framework, and do the clothing afterwards. Kachalov was the man who taught me to understand Mayakovsky.

His reading of prose, as of poetry, is magnificent. Moscow still remembers Kachalov's reading from Tolstoy's "Resurrection." Two readings of his stand out particularly in my mind. A full score of years ago I heard him read at the home of Yermolova, the actress. There was a family festivity in progress, and a company of thirty or so had gathered—mostly actors from the Art and Maly Theatres, a musician or two, and so on. The room was enormous. A lamp with a yellow shade hung over the long table, shedding a soft golden light on Kachalov's finely chiselled face and fair hair. He read from "The Brothers Karamazov." Before our eyes, his fine features were transformed: the play of his muscles, his eyes, made you forget completely that Kachalov stood before you. We saw instead the loathsome visage of old Karamazov. Even his voice was changed, it took on senile, hissing, malicious notes. We all sat

silent, forgetful of our surroundings, hypnotized by his power of insight into another's strange and frightful life.

And then, this year, when we had gathered for a Chekhov memorial, Kachalov read Chekhov's wonderful story, "The Student." His reading stirred into sudden life all that is finest in the human soul, all that lies dormant there in the care and bustle of everyday life. In order to interpret such authorship, it was not enough to be a fine actor: in addition one had to be as fine a man. And I can state with no reservation that this is indeed true of Kachalov.

As a comrade he is above reproach. He is friendly and attentive alike to any theatrical celebrity, to a youthful pupil or any humble stage assistant. Our audiences sense this spirit of kindness and humanity in Kachalov, qualities which endear him to their hearts.

When I see him seated in his blue-papered study, surrounded by the books, pictures and portraits he loves, I always think: how fortunate we are to have a great actor like Kachalov in our midst, to hear his voice, to see the characters he creates, and how good it is to be able to say of him in all sincerity: Kachalov—the man and the actor—is indeed the acme of nobility and grace.

TATYANA SHCHEPKINA-KOUPERNIK

MOSCOW ART EXHIBITIONS

Proof of the fact that the war has produced no slackening in the art life of Moscow is that new exhibitions appear almost every week. The galleries of the Moscow Artists' Association, the Moscow Salon, the Art Workers' House, the Architects' House and the galleries of certain clubs are engaged the whole year round. Even the foyers of theatres are converted into exhibition halls. These exhibitions, of course, all display the work of contemporary artists; in addition there are the jubilee exhibitions of artists of an older generation.

Foremost among these is the exhibition marking simultaneously the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Anna Goloubkina, the noted sculptress who died in 1927, and the tenth anniversary of the founding of the museum that bears her name.

Boy's head. Sculpture by A. Goloubkina

Her work possessed unusual beauty and power of plastic presentation, expressiveness of form, a boldness and depth of conception. The portrayal of her contemporaries was more than an individual portrait; it was the embodiment of the spirit of the epoch. In her book "Something About the Sculptor's Craft," in which she shares her experience with her pupils, the sculptress speaks of "the live modelling-clay" and insists that "the attitude to this medium of expression should be as sensitive and careful as that towards flowers". She felt the living tissue in the clay from which she created works of art that held, in their profound vitality and wealth of feeling, an impressive significance.

Her art reached its maturity in the nineties when the new aesthetic principles in sculpture sharply clashed with naturalism.

The research for new realistic paths in plastics, reflected in her novel and peculiarly characteristic forms, was already apparent in one of her first works, the "Portrait of a Grandfather" (1892). In her figure of "A Man Walking" (1903) with its powerful swinging stride, her contemporaries sensed the strength, the unconquerable will, the impulse that inspired the Russian people on the threshold of the 1905 Revolution. Equally powerful are "The Worker," "The Iron Man," "A Seated Figure" and "A Man Striking a Light." Heavy and rugged as these sculptures are, they glow, as it were, with an inner light.

Goloubkina's portraits of her contemporaries show us people of various social strata: Leo Tolstoy engrossed in his own thoughts, the vigorous and joyous artist Pereplyotchikov, the writer Alexei Tolstoy as a young man, the well-known patron of the arts Savva Morozov, the writers Andrei Bely and Alexei Remizov. An entire scale of spiritual emotions is expressed in all these, and at the same time, a strikingly faithful outward resemblance is conveyed even to the sitters' habitual gestures and bearing.

Particularly is this felt in the portraits of women; the realism of the image, the logic of natural positions is nowhere sacrificed to decorative beauty or form.

Goloubkina loved to do portraits of children; there was never a hint of cloying sentimentality in these portraits. Figures like "The Captives," "A Boy" and "Nina" are memorable for the charm of their naturalness and purity.

Her work forms a bridge between her generation and modern artists. Different though the subjects may be present-day artists draw their strength and significance from the same fount of Russian realistic arts.

Visitors to the war-artists' exhibitions of which there have been several during the last months, may have noticed that sharpness and precision of realistic drawing has here been developed to a principle. But perhaps the most important of all is the feeling of history, characteristic of classic battle-painting in Russia. These pen and pencil sketches, or vivid, bold water-colours of battle-scenes or places at the front are more than mere impressions of a recent event. They are in some measure already pages of history. Such, for example, are the paintings and drawings by Semyon Boim, a marine-painter serving in the Navy, whose recent exhibition scored a great success. Looking at his work, one gains a very clear idea of the grim and selfless struggle of the Baltic Fleet. In "The 'Kirov' Puts out to Sea," a ship is cleaving the chill waters of the Neva on her way to firing-positions. In "The 'Kirov' Opens Fire" the vessel is shelling the enemy: her battle engagement with the Germans in the open sea is shown in the picture "Naval Battle."

The seascapes are painted in a range of grey, blue, light and dark silvery tones that Boim generally uses in his light, bold water-colours. Vessels raise a smoke curtain, pilot sea-patrols, shell enemy positions and return to their bases. The artist finds his own colour-range for each subject, determining the degree of density and lightness, treating his subject in a broad manner or with a sharpness of outline almost similar to that employed in a drawing.

Boim has made an exhaustive study of the colours of the Baltic. Whether it is a stormy sea with a sparkle and a gleam in the waves over which the war-vessels dart; or the fantastic shapes of a camouflaged battleship; or patrol-boats at anchor, reflected in waters glittering in the cold March sunlight—this northern sea that has now become the arena of historic battles is always strikingly, unmistakably recognizable.

A series of studies are devoted to Leningrad alone, the city of the blockade, a twilit city, wounded, seemingly gasping for breath, during those days of intense struggle. Unforgettable are these streets with their gaping wounds, these deserts with snowsprinkled monuments, embankments with anti-aircraft guns looming through

A Slave. Sculpture by A. Goloubkina

the frosty blue evening haze. Little knots of passers-by are few and far between in this desert of ruin and desolation. Hardship and deprivation fill the lives of Leningrad people who have conquered hunger and cold.

As you study water-colours and lithographs of people overtaken by artillery bombardments, schoolchildren killed at a tram-stop by a bursting shell, something of the artist's wrath and emotion is imparted to you.

Boim is designing a series of satirical posters for the Navy. He also draws for the papers and the "fighters' leaflets"; his sketchbook is filled with pictures of Navy notables.

Realism in engraving is represented at the exhibition of Ilya Sokolov's work, arranged in honour of his twenty-five years of work as an artist. The traits we observed in Goloubkina's sculptures are present in Sokolov's lino-cuts. His subjects vary from expressive portraits to the representation of a landscape, scenes from everyday life, toil in the factory or on the farm. His monochrome cuts draw attention not only by their line but also for their skilfully-distributed effects. His "Tea-drinking," "Nude," "The Theatre," "The Shoemaker," "At the Stove" and "The Washerwoman" attract a great deal of attention. Sokolov has won a place for himself as a painter-engraver not only in Soviet art but also amongst engravers abroad. His coloured engravings are a proof that this art form may rival oil-painting in strength and vitality of tone. In the engravings made from four or nine blocks the artist gives a bril-

liant solution of the colour and composition problems. His coloured lino-cuts, for example, "Steel-pouring," "The Electric Hammer," "The Lacemaker," "The Rolling-mill" and the series including "Moscow the Victorious," and "Victory Salutes" show that this engraver has mastered the secrets not only of style but technique as well. The artist, who is at the height of his creative powers, is now engaged on a cycle of war-themes.

We are perfectly justified in saying that Igor Grabar, an artist now in his seventy-third year, is also at the height of his creative powers, and the exhibition of his latest paintings is convincing proof of this. At least half, if not more, of his canvases are of flowers—peonies, delphiniums, roses and lilac. These and landscapes belong to one cycle, showing the tempestuous approach of spring: "The Last Snow," "The First Water," "When Streams Burst Through Ice," "Streams Broaden." This is the spring not only of nature but also of nature's feelings, the melody of the never-aging human heart.

We were deeply impressed last year by a series of portraits done during the first two years of the war by Grabar and shown at his one-man exhibition. And now he has a collection of new works all dated 1944.

The new element in these latest creations, the "discoveries" made in style are the outcome of many years of work, searchings and experience. Grabar's path has its course not yet run, but the path already traversed is obvious in all its stages: it is the path of the Russian national school of painting.

A Red Seaman. Drawing by S. Boim

Grabar's exhibition coincided with another which traces the development of Russian etching and includes a group of enthusiasts who worked in the studio of the late Ignatius Nivinsky. After his death those who were of his school continued to develop their work in this difficult medium. The present exhibition was held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Nivinsky Studio's work.

As is well known, etching allows the artist greater freedom in problems of pictorial effects than any other kind of engraving. In the drawing he makes on copper or zinc covered with a coat of varnish, afterwards to be bitten with acid, the etcher can make his lines as fine as he wishes and give them a variety of tone and colour.

The kernel of the exhibition is the work of Nivinsky's pupils, but there are also exhibits by older etchers who have turned out very important work. For example there is Mathew Dobrov's "Soviet Cavalry Raid on a German Detachment," a very popular etching; Nikolai Sheverdyayev's "Book-Chamber in Flames," 1941, and Ilya Sokolov's "Moscow 1941—1942." Particularly noticeable is the tendency to seek new themes and express them in a new artistic form.

These themes are the present-day architecture of Moscow, battlescenes, army life and the restoration of towns freed from the fascist yoke. There are also portraits. Excellent work has been done by several young artists who have mastered a variety of techniques in etching.

The most recent exhibition is "Masterpieces of Russian Architecture in Paintings and Drawings by Russian Artists." Buildings dating from the 10th and 11th centuries are shown here. The old wooden architecture of Russia is seen in the winter panorama of Rostov-the-Great or Uglich by Vassili Meshkov; the northern Russian village of olden times is reproduced by Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya. The impressive and severe architecture of Pskov and Novgorod of the 11th and 12th centuries provides a conception of ancient Russian styles in all their originality. One wall in the exhibition is given over to pictures by Serguei Gerasimov of the Novgorod churches. As one studies the lines of St. Sophia's Cathedral, built in Novgorod in the 11th century, one is struck anew by the architect's genius in crowning the mass of the building with five cupolas of unusual silhouette and picturesqueness. What exquisite understanding of the proportions the old builders showed in reconstructing and extending the cathedral! But under the picture-frame we read the notice "Ruined by the Germans." The artist painted this picture a few years previous to the war. Now, on revisiting the city, he found only two-thirds of the wall of this splendid building. Anger, contempt for the vandals, determination

not to leave the crimes of the fascist Huns unpunished, are the feelings aroused by this picture and the notice under it. The skeletons of Novgorod's and Pskov's buildings rise like a dismal forest over the sad fields where once the splendid monuments of Russian architecture stood, as seen from Nikolai Chernyshov's pictures. The beauty of the famous 12th-century Church of the Intercession on the River Nerli is conveyed in Fyodor Modorov's picture. This church stood for eight centuries on the high bank of the Nerli not far from the point where formerly it joined the Kliazma. Its architectural perfection, which embodied the finest features of the Vladimir-Suzdal style, and its harmony with its natural surroundings placed it among the finest of the world's architectural monuments.

Another picture is of the Moscow Kremlin, a fortified castle with high machicolated walls, massive towers, cathedrals and palaces. The paintings of Boris Yakovlev and Fyodor Rybchenkov show us the architectural ensemble from the 15th to the 19th century. The famous cathedral of St. Vassili the Blessed in the Red Square in Moscow has been painted by Boris Yakovlev and Pyotr Konchalovsky.

Very beautiful is the architectural ensemble of the 16th and 17th centuries of the Troitsko-Sergiievsky Abbey not far from Moscow, and its beauty is finely recorded in Serguei Pichuguin's pictures.

The architecture of Russian classicism of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, the palaces of St. Petersburg, the wonderful corners of its environs, Moscow's palaces, the impressive monumental form of the buildings designed by the famous Russian architects Vassili Bazhenov and Mathew Kazakov, are all well represented in the pictures at the exhibition.

And how many remarkable buildings are to be found in towns like Kalinin (formerly Tver), Chernigov, Vologda. In fact there is hardly a town in the U.S.S.R. that had not some notable Russian building.

Though this exhibition shows us only an insignificant part of the country's architectural wealth, this in itself is confirmation of the assertion made by Grabar, the artist who knows most about our art, when he called Russia "the country of architects."

LEV VARSHAVSKY

ART NEWS

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre, under the direction of Alexander Tairov, has staged Chekhov's "Sea-Gull." The stage history of this play is intimately linked up with the Moscow Art Theatre—Russia's foremost dramatic playhouse. December 17th, 1898, was the day on which the "Sea-Gull" had its first performance. It was a major event in theatrical life, the date largely determined the creative characteristics and future paths of the Art Theatre.

And now, in staging the "Sea-Gull" almost half a century after this event, Alexander Tairov has approached Chekhov's play in a new, fresh and original way. In the Kamerny Theatre production, the actors appear in modern dress; there are no decorations, no stage scenery: the performance proceeds against the background of curtains. In giving "fragments" of the play, a number of secondary side lines and minor situations are ignored and the interest is focussed upon revealing the central figure of Nina—a young girl with her day dreams, whose unhappy fate so resembles that of a sea-gull wounded by a hunter. The part is played with sincerity, simplicity and profound charm by Alice Koonen—the Adrienna Lecouvreur of the Kamerny Theatre. Never for a moment exaggerating the role of a girl of eighteen —without recourse either to juvenile make-up or rose-coloured frocks, the artiste creates an entrancing image of youthful freshness and first love... The performance is staged against a background of Chaikovsky's music which blends harmoniously with Chekhov's delightful play.

"A Month in the Country," a comedy by Ivan Turgenev in which, in bygone days, the famous Russian actress, Maria Savina, shone unsurpassed, has not appeared in Moscow playhouses for more than a quarter of a century. This year, however, it has been staged by the Moscow Theatre of the Young Communist League.

The spectator finds himself transported into an atmosphere of 19th-century life—a milieu of landed proprietors—elegant, refined, well-bred men and women, hedged in, however, by the fatal ring of their society, and to whom real emotion, a broad outlook and sustained will-power are unknown qualities.

Like a fresh breeze breaking into this human hothouse comes the young, poor student, a purveyor of new ideas, of the daring and spontaneity of youth and realism. But the "month in the country" passes, the student takes his departure and the old life enlivened by his advent, flows once more back along the old channels.

Turgenev's conception has been endowed with a masterly interpretation. The deep, thoughtful, delicate image of Natalia Petrovna, the woman who comes to love the young student, is portrayed by Sofia Guiatsintova, who is also the producer of the play. The role of landowner Rakitin, who is secretly devoted to Natalia Petrovna, is depicted with a noble simplicity by Oleg Froelich, a popular artist at the time of the first Russian films. The remaining parts are taken mostly by the theatre's younger artists who have achieved a good ensemble in this Turgenev revival.

In the vicinity of Kiev, near some hillocks overlooking cross-country roads is a carefully fenced-in field. Everything in these parts bears traces of recent military events: blindages, dugouts, subterranean passages. Here, in November 1943, the H. Q. of Army General Vatutin was situated. He commanded the battle for ousting the Germans from the capital of the Ukraine.

This spot, which has now acquired historical interest, figures in a new play, devoted to the heroic epic of the liberation of Kiev and entitled "Khreshchaty Yar." It is written by the Ukrainian playwright Lyubomir Dmiterko and produced by People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Gnat Yura.

A pitch of dramatic intensity is reached in the scene preceeding the storming of the city. General Vatutin issued his final command. Clearly enunciated come the words:

"We will re-capture Kiev, we will take it before..."

He is interrupted by a liaison-officer:

"Comrade Commander, a call from Moscow."

Vatutin goes to the 'phone.

"Army General Vatutin reporting," he says, and after a pause:

"Yes, Comrade Stalin!"

A hush—the general listening intently.

"Quite so. Quite so. I see. We will do it, Comrade Stalin."

The general puts down the receiver, and turns to those standing around him:

"We will take Kiev," he says, "on the night of November 6th. Today! On the eve of the festival of the Great October Revolution, the news of our victory will resound throughout the world!"

The role of General Vatutin is played by People's Artist Yuri Shumsky.

A new production, "The Strange Gentleman," one of Charles Dickens' earlier compositions, has been prepared by the graduates of the State Institute of Theatrical Art in Moscow. Translated into Russian by Yuri Smirnov, the play has an abundance of lively scenes and interesting situations which, with their flashes of Dickensonian humour, make "The Strange Gentleman" highly valuable and attractive material for the young artists. These future actors have succeeded in presenting an interesting production.

In evading a duel, a certain gentleman finds himself a guest in a wayside inn. And there begins a series of incredible errors and misunderstandings. The acuteness of the ensuing situations is ably combined with the subtle play of psychological nuances.

In the transitions from episode to episode the cinematographical nature of the devices, which in no way runs counter to the style of the play, has been used with pleasing harmony. The scenes transport the audience to old England and possess the true Dickens atmosphere. A number of incidental songs and a happy translation of Charles Kingsley's ballad are the contribution of the poetess Natalia Konchalovskaya.

"The Strange Gentleman" is the second production arranged by the graduates of the Institute. Not very long ago they gave a performance of Chekhov's "Three

Scene from "The Strange Gentleman," produced by the graduates of the State Institute of Theatrical Art

Sisters." Upon graduating, a group of the students are to leave for Taganrog, Chekhov's native town, where they will proceed to organize a dramatic troupe.

The play "Brother and Sister" by the playwright V. Goonia is to be produced at the State Theatre in Sukhumi (Abkhazia).

A theatrical Institute has been opened in Yerevan, capital of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, where actors, producers, and theatrical workers will be trained. Classes have already begun in all the three faculties of the new Institute.

Talented new vocalists are replenishing the cast of the Georgian Theatre of Opera and Ballet named after Z. Paliashvili. Successes are being scored by both Russian and West-European operas, among them being "The Tsar's Bride," "Traviata," "Rigoletto," etc.

The eightieth birthday of the composer Alexander Grechaninov has been marked by Soviet musical circles. His name enjoys wide popularity throughout the U.S.S.R.

Alexander Grechaninov is a disciple of Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1893 he graduated the St. Petersburg Academy of Music and soon afterwards made his debut with a Quartette for string instruments and several choirs, both secular and sacred. In 1897, Grechaninov formed a close and lasting association with Constantine Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, the initiators of the Moscow Art Theatre. He composed the music for two of the theatre's productions: "Snow Maiden" and "Death of Ivan the Dread." In 1901, Grechaninov completed his first opera "Dobrynya Nikitich" which subject he elaborated in association with Vladimir Stassov, the Russian art critic. The première of this opera took place on October 14th, 1903, with Fyodor Chaliapin in the role of Dobrynya, the Russian knight. His second opera, "Sister Beatrice" was written in 1910 and was based on the medieval legend used in Maeterlinck's play of the same name.

By that time Grechaninov had gained world fame. As a composer he is prolific and versatile, the author of a number of exquisite lyrics as well as many large works—symphonies, vocal compositions and chamber ensembles. He has composed a great deal of music for children—work in which he delights.

The composer Rheinhold Glière was an old friend of Grechaninov and, in the early nineties, his fellow worker at the School of Music conducted by the sisters Gniessin. In speaking of Grechaninov he says:

"Grechaninov was always a lover of folk song and an excellent connoisseur not only of Russian, but also of Byelorussian and Tatar vocal art. He is a master of choral music and has created many remarkable works for chorus."

His latest important work is a Cantata entitled "To Victory" written after the Red Army successes at Kursk and Orel in the summer of 1943. When forwarding his score to the Moscow Philharmonic for the first performance, the composer wrote the following words: "I am profoundly confident that the hour of our greatest triumph is approaching."

Very popular with Soviet listeners are the series of concerts of "Composers at the Microphone" which transmit novelties of Soviet music.

Most successful was a broadcast devoted to the compositions of Vissarion Shebalin. The composer began by naming his compositions during the years of the National War, mentioning among his latest works "Russian Overture" for symphonic orchestra, "Symphonic Variations" and two string Quartettes. For one of the latter, based on folk-song themes of the Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Czech and Polish peoples, the composer was awarded a Stalin Prize. In addition, the composer has written a number of songs, orchestral marches and a musical comedy, "The Bridegroom from the Embassy" staged by the Operetta Theatre in the town of Sverdlovsk.

The radio-concert programme contained Shebalin's new Sixth Quartette as well as several songs and symphonic variations based on the Russian folk song, "My Field."

Alexander Krein has written a song cycle with orchestral accompaniment and texts by Ilya Ehrenburg. The composer is at the present moment completing his Second Symphony for full orchestra.

In the streets of Soviet towns one may often meet bright, cheerful youngsters wearing black overcoats with shining buttons and regulation hats. They are pupils of industrial schools, the labour reserves of the Soviet land: future turners, fitters, milling-machine operators... While acquiring proficiency in their respective crafts they do not neglect their general subjects. The future Soviet workman is growing up a cultured person with a fully developed personality. Schools of this type usually possess dramatic circles, choruses, orchestras and dancing classes. The youthful artisans are very keen on art and it is the rule rather than the exception to find gifted readers, dancers and musicians among their ranks.

The final concerts were recently held in Moscow of the All-Union Review of Amateur Art among these trainees of industrial and railway schools—a review which had been proceeding for the past twelve months. Talented youngsters from all parts of the different republics and regions, from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Baskhiria, Buryat-Mongolia assembled in the capital of the U.S.S.R. for this finale.

The concerts in Moscow were an outstanding success. Particularly vivid and colourful was a mass performance by girls and boys dressed in their variegated national costumes and enthusiastically singing the Anthem of the Soviet Union followed

Review of Amateur Art. Marguerite Nemikina and Nina Kudryavtseva dancing the Ukrainian "Hopak"

by the popular "Wide Is My Native Land" A particularly hearty welcome was accorded the artisans arriving from areas liberated from the German invaders.

Once upon a time there was a town called the Free Town of the Master-Craftsmen, which bore on its crest a Lion, a Bear and a Hare. It was famed for its jewellers and watchmakers, gunsmiths and diamond-cutters, its embroiderers in gold and its pastry-makers. And in that town there lived a man who was deformed—a hunchback—but a man of a kindly cheerful nature, Gilbert by name, a street-sweeper by profession, nicknamed Karakol, which means a snail. The town was conquered by foreign invaders and there came to reign over it a wicked and repulsive hunchback, the Duke de Melicorne. This bad man, aided by his secret advisor, the Great Guillaume who possessed a magic sword, so enraged the master craftsmen by his unjust rule and insatiable greed that they rose up in arms and freed their town from the foreign invaders. The wicked Duke was killed and Karakol, the good and jolly hunchback, threw the hump off his back, as had been foretold by Tafaro, the old fortune-teller, and became so handsome that he was now a match for the Beautiful Veronica who had long loved him.

All these things happened in the Free Town of the Master-Craftsmen. Or, perhaps, nothing of the kind ever really happened, and there never was such a town in all the world? But Tamara Gabbe, the writer, has told the story so well, and in such an interesting manner that the youthful spectators believe with perfect faith in Karakol and Veronica, in the Lion and the Bear... And hating the wicked Duke and laughing in derision at Klick-Klack the foolish traitor, they jump up from their seats ready to interfere, to put things right, to defend Karakol.

"The Town of the Master-Craftsmen" is staged at the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow. The play is rich in colour, poetical, witty; altogether a delightful present for the youngsters.

The action of the play, as anyone can see, takes place in days long gone by. The author has woven her story from the motifs of old Flemish fairy-tales. But the character of the play, manly and poetical, full of the ideas of the freedom of labour, of the triumph of good risen in arms—the whole subject matter built up on the struggle waged by men of labour against the foreign usurper—is near to those thoughts and feelings which today fill the spectators.

The play is called "The Town of the Master-Craftsmen," but the sub-title, "A Story of Two Hunchbacks" seems to convey its real essence more exactly.

For it is the story of two hunchbacks—the one, a man of mean and crooked mind burdened with an insatiable malignance as heavy as the hump which burdens his back, his inward hideousness a mirror of his outward deformity. The other is a magnificent hunchback—his physical defect made up for by the beauty of his mind and his great and generous heart. He is the bearer of good. All the beauty of the world—its labour and its songs, all its forests, all the love it contains—nature herself, is open to him.

The animals are his friends. Their appearance, full of threat, is an imposing array, and their dumb evidence in the splendid scene of the trial, saves Karakol's life.

It is no easy thing on the stage to portray ugliness beautifully. This difficult task has been solved with considerable talent by Ivan Voronov. His acting is simple and sincere and he has much charm. He is ugly but not repulsive-looking and the audience filling the hall forgive him his hump as did the inhabitants of the Town of Master-Craftsmen where one and all loved the cheerful street-sweeper.

Mathew Neimann has created in the character of the Duke de Melicorne an image, gloomy and impressive. Zinovi Sazhin is admirable as Klick-Klack, the fool and ne'er-do-well. He plays naturally with the lightness of real comedy and a genuine faith in all the powers that be in the land of fairy-tale. His Klick-Klack is in very truth a fantastic fool!

The producer is Valentine Kolessayev, whose thoughtful work, excellent taste, resourcefulness and deep regard for his audience make themselves felt throughout the performance. The quality of the setting is very good. Too good, perhaps? Some of the

scenes are a little heavy with an impossible slowness that is out of place in a fairy-tale. A fairy-tale should be lighter. A monumental grandeur in one or two scenes lending them a resemblance to old engraving somewhat hampers the movement of the play.

The performance owes much of its success to the artistic setting and the music. Ivan Fedotov's setting and the whole set-up of the play magically transform the small stage of the theatre. The town square, the forest, the castle—all find a place within its modest space.

The music—exquisite, graceful, arch, romantic—is by Dmitri Kabalevsky; delicately in harmony with the images of the play it permeates the whole performance with the breath of poetry.

A memorial tablet has been affixed to the old house in Moscow where Constantine Stanislavsky died six years ago and where he had lived during the last seventeen years of his life. After his death, the side-street in which the house stands was, by a decree of the government, re-named Stanislavsky Street and the house was turned into a museum. The study and other rooms have been fully preserved.

The unveiling of the tablet proved an occasion for bringing together many prominent theatrical people. Ivan Moskvin, Stanislavsky's friend and close associate, and Alexandra Yablochkina, President of the All-Russian Theatrical Society—both venerable artists of Moscow theatres, addressed the gathering. The tablet was unveiled by Stanislavsky's daughter, Olga Knipper-Chekhova and Ivan Moskvin. The slab of granite, affixed to the façade of the house, bears a head of Stanislavsky in bas-relief—the work of the sculptor Sergei Merkurov. The inscription runs: "Here lived, worked and, on August 7th, 1938, died People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Constantine Sergueyevich Stanislavsky, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre."

The Maly Opera Theatre is back in Leningrad once more. On returning to their native town the troupe were given a few weeks' leave, but instead of taking a holiday the members of the personnel promptly set to work restoring the building of their theatre. Artists were converted into masons and carpenters, painters and plasterers. The musicians of the orchestra repaired the waterworks and heating system; the lighting workers put the power installation in order, the roof was repaired by property men and costumers. More than ten thousand square metres of wall were given a coat of oil paint by the actors.

And not till the work was done, did they all turn once more to their respective jobs.

The theatre opened with a performance of the "Tsar's Bride", by Rimsky-Korsakov, an occasion that was greeted by the Leningraders as a real festival.

The third anniversary of the death of Alexander Afinogenov was marked by Moscow's theatrical world. The memorial evening dedicated to the talented playwright

Scene from "The Town of the Master-Craftsmen," produced by the Central Children's Theatr

drew a numerous audience to the House of the Actor.

"Afinogenov wore mufti," Leonid Sobolev said in his address, "but he was the writer, par excellence, of war plays. When the war broke out, Afinogenov was one of the first to see clearly wherein lay the duty of a writer before his country. Always an ardent lover of his homeland, the war did not find him unprepared. Afinogenov was the first to write a war play imbued even at that time, the grim autumn of 1941, with a firm confidence in our final victory. And were he alive now, when the hour of triumph is close at hand, he would surely write the first and the best play celebrating victory."

Ilya Ehrenburg and Lev Kassil spoke of Afinogenov as a fighter and patriot writer. His friends, Boris Pasternak, Serafima Birman and Yuri Zavadsky recounted their reminiscences of the man whose memory they had assembled to honour.

Later in the evening were acted scenes and fragments from some of Afinogenov's plays: "Chudak" ("The Crank"), "Mashenka" and "On the Eve." The gathering concluded with a performance of Chaikovsky's Trio, "To the Memory of a Great Artist" given by David Oistrakh, Leo Oborin and Svyátoslav Knoushevitsky.

A quaint jubilee, the one thousandth performance of "The Daughter of Madame Angot," the comic opera by Charles Lecocq, was marked by the Musical Theatre named after Constantine Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.

The play was first staged in May, 1920, and opened the activities of the Art Theatre Musical Studio then under the direction of Nemirovich-Danchenko. It was he who was responsible for the production of "The Daughter of Madame Angot" which still runs in the original version.

The artistic ensemble, six of whom acted in the première of 1920, received a very warm welcome from a full house.

The theatrical season has opened at Lvov, freed from the Germans. There are two theatres in the town—a dramatic and an operatic, with repertoires containing some of the best works both of classical and modern playwrights and composers. Collaborating in the production are Ukraine's prominent producers, actors and artists.

Work is nearing completion at the Moscow Yermolova Dramatic Theatre on Fletcher's "The Tamer Tamed." People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Nikolai Khmelyov is directing the production.

A new building is being erected by the inhabitants of the town of Kalinin on the site of the Town Theatre which was burnt down by the Germans.

Fifty years have passed since the death of the outstanding Russian composer and pianist, Anton Rubinstein.

More than a hundred years ago, on July 11th, 1839, at a concert held in Moscow a young lad astounded the audience by the brilliance and perfection of his playing. That was the beginning of the artistic career of Anton Rubinstein who later appeared on the concert platforms of many towns in Russia, Europe and America, giving as many as two hundred and fifteen concerts during one tour alone through the United States. Many years ago the young musical critic Alexander Ossovsky, now corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., wrote of Rubinstein's talent: "No other pianist ever possessed such a mighty, poetical, thoughtful and profoundly comprehensive conception of the whole and that titanic embodiment of it in sound which constitutes the distinguishing trait of Rubinstein's executive genius. The culminating point of his successes was reached in the so-called "Historical Concerts" he gave in the years 1885-1886 at St. Petersburg and Moscow and in the European capitals with programmes embracing all the most important masterpieces of pianoforte music.

His opera "The Demon," his "Persian Songs," the Fourth Concerto for pianoforte and orchestra have given him wide fame as a composer.

He contributed greatly to the growth of musical culture in Russia. It was by Anton Rubinstein in association with Vassili Kologrivov and Dmitri Stassov that the St. Petersburg Academy of Music was organized in 1862, the Alma Mater of so many remarkable musicians. One of its first alumnae was Piotr Chaikovsky. Rubinstein was one of the founders of the Russian Musical Society, a body that was to play a role of importance in the musical education of Russia.

The concert performance of Rachmaninov's opera "Francesca da Rimini" was given recently with great success in Moscow. How large is the number of poetical and dramatic works, pictures and sculptures dedicated to the legend of the tragic fate of the beautiful Francesca! The romance of Francesca and Paolo has furnished themes for no fewer than twenty-five operas, as well as a number of cantatas and symphonic works.

Serguei Rachmaninov's contribution was written in the years 1904 and 1905 to the libretto by Modest Chaikovsky, brother of the composer. The dramatic expressiveness of the music holds you in thrall. The lyrical episodes and the scenes of the deaths of the lovers are extraordinarily powerful.

"Francesca da Rimini" was first produced on the stage of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre in 1906 together with Rachmaninov's other opera "The Avaricious Knight," the author himself conducting.

Before the war "Francesca da Rimini" was frequently performed in the U.S.S.R. It has now been revived by the artists and orchestra of the All-Union Radio Committee, with Nikolai Golovanov as musical director and conductor of the performance. The excerpts from Dante's "Divine Comedy" (the Fifth Canto dedicated to Fran-

cesca) are recited by People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Prov Sadovsky.

Concert life in Leningrad is reviving day by day. The Philharmonic is back in town. Its magnificent white-columned hall is open to the public once more. Dmitri Shostakovich's recital was a great success. The composer's name enjoys a popularity all its own in Leningrad. Shostakovich lived through long months of the blockade in the beleaguered city and it was there that was born his Seventh Symphony dedicated to Leningrad.

At the concert, besides his Quintette, two new works were performed: the Second Quartette for string instruments and a Trio for violin, violincello and pianoforte. The first public performance of these compositions took place, by the author's wish, in his native town.

During the German occupation of Czechoslovakia many outstanding representatives of science, letters and art left the country. Arriving in the U.S.S.R., Stefania Petrova, a talented Czech artist, joined the cast of the Moscow Operetta Theatre. She created many striking characters during her association with this theatre which has lasted for more than three years.

When the Red Army together with the Czech people began the liberation of Czechoslovakia from the fascist yoke, Stefania Petrova joined the ranks of the Czechoslovak national corps. The Soviet capital gave her a warm send-off. Her farewell performance attracted many Muscovites.

"I was born in Prague," said Stefania Petrova, "but Moscow has become my second mothertown. I have come to love the Russian people—a fraternal, affable people who have bestowed upon me their care and attention..."

Symphonies and chamber music by modern composers of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were on the programme of the recent festival of Soviet music held in Tbilissi (capital of Georgia).

"The Twenty-Seventh October," a documental film dedicated to Marshal Stalin's report on the anniversary meeting held by the Moscow Soviet of deputies of working people together with Party and social organizations of Moscow on November 6th, 1944, is being successfully shown on the Soviet screen.

The film carries the spectators to the brightly illuminated hall of the Large Kremlin Palace. The film shows Marshal Stalin and his comrades-in-arms entering the hall. As one man the audience rises to greet their leader. The Marshal walks towards the platform, the outlines of his report in his right hand. Mounting the rostrum he begins to speak... Scenes shot in every part of the country during Stalin's speech are flashed on the screen. Sailors, collective farmers, workers and soldiers are listening in. The film concludes with the Anthem of the Soviet Union.

A prominent place in the annals of the Great Patriotic War belongs to newsreel films which reproduce the events of the war with objective precision and faithfulness. The latest addition to the series of documental films is "The Victory in the South," dedicated to the Red Army's operations in August, 1944, which led to the encirclement and defeat of the Jassy-Kishinyov group of the German troops. The skilful and selfless work of the frontline cameramen enables movie-goers to see on the screen the stirring episodes of the historical battle which in less than a fortnight changed the entire course of the war in South-Eastern Europe.

An exhibition of works of art and ancient memorials preserved in Leningrad during the German blockade has been opened in the State Hermitage Museum.

"The Germans shelled the Hermitage long and persistently," said Academician Joseph Orbeli, the director of the museum, at the opening of the exhibition. "But they did not succeed in destroying it. The main collections of the Hermitage were evacuated, and we are now exhibiting the treasures left in Leningrad and preserved thanks to the selflessness of the city's defenders..."

On display in the galleries and halls of the Hermitage are paintings by Flemish and Italian masters of the 17th century, English porcelain, Venetian glass, works of Russian masters of the times of Peter I, Russian arms of the last century, ancient engravings, collections of antique and eastern relics and sculptures.

Lying in the large bright hall is a huge canvas covered with mould through which one can barely discern the outlines of human shapes. It is Matejko's famous picture "The Battle of Grünwald." The picture vanished in 1939 when the Germans broke into Warsaw. Many thought that it had perished. But it was saved; it was removed from the museum to Lublin by Polish patriots. Nothing was heard of this picture for three years, but suddenly rumours got about that it had been preserved. The Germans promised a huge sum to anyone who would reveal its whereabouts. But they never learned it.

When the Red Army liberated Lublin, the four remaining survivers of those who had taken part in the removal of the picture informed the Polish National Liberation Committee of its whereabouts. The picture had been hidden in a shed with a cement floor deep under the ground. Specialists are now taking steps to restore this precious work of art.

NEWS AND VIEWS

VOLTAIRE MEMORIAL SESSION

The lobby of the Moscow Scientists' Club wears an unusual appearance today. Long, baize-covered tables support a multitude of books of every size. From the large Academy of Sciences' library in Leningrad and from several others, numerous editions of Voltaire's works have been brought here, for the Academy is commemorating the 250th anniversary of Voltaire's birth.

The visitors' attention is attracted by a copy of the edition of the famous "Encyclopaedia," rare 18th-century editions, and also the archive documents concerning the election of Voltaire to honorary membership of the Russian Academy of Sciences. A feeling of legitimate pride is engendered by the numerous new editions of Voltaire brought out in our time, by the many Russian translations of his works.

"Voltaire's name is the synonym of Reason, and it is immortal, as the reason of man is," Vladimir Komarov, the President of the Academy, writes in his message to the meeting. "We remember," he continues, "that the great principles of reason, liberty and progress are the fount of all modern civilization, that in them democracy, science and socialism have their roots. And knowing it, we cherish the memory of Voltaire, the apostle of reason and liberty, with gratitude. Fascism has declared war on the lofty and exalted principles which the French Revolution proclaimed, the principles bound up inseparably with Voltaire's name. But reason and knowledge are battling tirelessly against the Hitler plague. Modern science, the offspring of the progressive ideas of Voltaire and his associates, is placing mighty weapons in the hands of the coalition of freedom-loving nations. And among the great names that symbolize progress, democracy and science, names that have become the battle-standards of the anti-fascist war of liberation, the name of Voltaire shines forth with a new lustre."

Vyacheslav Volguin, the Vice President of the Academy, a well-known student of the history of ideas and an authority on France, in his interesting talk gave an appreciation of Voltaire's place in history. "Voltaire," he said, "was assuredly one of the initiators of the great 18th-century movement for enlightenment. To his dying day he was its most active fighter—a fighter against every variety of superstition and prejudice, against all forms of spiritual and physical bondage.

"Different as are our two ages and his outlook and ours, Voltaire's active, militant humanitarianism makes him a live and fascinating personality today. In our time, when the forces of progress and social justice are fighting a battle that has no parallel in history against the forces of reaction and social oppression, Voltaire with his abhorrence of injustice and violence, of servility and hypocrisy, his faith in the triumph of reason and humanity, is especially dear to us. This is the Voltaire who will live," Volguin declared amid unanimous applause.

The next paper, delivered by Professor Militsa Nechkina, touched on Voltaire's interest in Russia and Russian subjects in his works. The speaker's main topic, however, was Russian Voltairianism as a trend in social thought.

Voltaire's works became known in Russia at the same time as in Western Europe and aroused keen interest. He was studied and translated with appreciation.

Pushkin, in his remarkably apt description of Voltaire as "leader of minds and modes," took note of the two Voltairian trends existing in Russia. The correspondence of Catherine the Great with Voltaire—very curious in itself—bears many traces of the superficial, modish Voltairianism, of an attraction exercized by the outward brilliance of Voltaire's writing and his personality rather than by anything deeper. On the other hand, there is reason to speak of Russian Voltairianism as a movement of minds bent on the destruction of the feudal order and the advancement of the country. The vision of destroying the old world had arisen independently in Russia, engendered by the prevailing conditions. The mature application of Voltaire's ideas went to show, first of all, that Russian thought was equipped with all the achievements of European culture. Accordingly, the term of "borrowing ideas" cannot be applied to the progressive social ideology of Russia. Ideas that are organically necessary to an independent social movement are not "borrowed," but brought into being a second time, as it were, by the march of history in the country in question.

Referring to her discoveries among the archives, Professor Nechkina not only shows the influence Voltaire had on the Decembrists: at the same time she demonstrates that the progressive Russian ideology of the first quarter of the 19th century was already beginning to outgrow Voltairianism, to go beyond.

Voltaire had a very great influence on the work of Pushkin and Griboyedov, on shaping the outlook of Herzen and Chernyshevsky. The development of Voltaire's ideas in Russian public life added still further to his importance and renown, perpetuated his name for Russian culture and at the same time demonstrated the high degree of independence evinced by Russian thinkers in interpreting the great philosopher's principles and drawing upon them.

After the general session, there were three joint meetings of the department of history and philosophy and that of literature and languages, at which papers of a more specialized kind were read. Speaking on Voltaire's fiction, Professor Alexander Smirnov remarked that what Voltaire cultivated in classicism was not its "outwardness," not the features it inherited from courtiers and aristocrats, but those which gave it kinship with the Third Estate, and even with the people.

Speaking of Voltaire the historian Eugene Kosminsky, a corresponding member of the Academy, pointed out that Voltaire was not a historian by profession. Historical writings are not the most important part of his work, and in them, too, he remains to a large extent the journalist and literary critic. But the scope of his historical information and interest is enormous. Few men could be named who influenced the science of history as greatly as did Voltaire. For Voltaire, the speaker says, portrayal of the past is above all a weapon in the fight against the still surviving heritage of that past, against the feudal order. Voltaire is at his strongest in historical criticism. That, for him, does not mean a formal criticism of the sources: information about events is examined in the light of the bearing that those events have upon one another, in the light of their possibility.

After two papers by Professor Michael Dynnik and Professor Nikolai Polyansky —"Voltaire the Philosopher" and "Voltaire's Fight for New Law and Lawcourts" —Professor Alexander Andreyev spoke of the philosopher's work on a history of Russia under Peter the Great.

"Voltaire and Newton" was the subject of a paper read by Professor Naum Idelson of Leningrad. Voltaire spent three years in England, between the ages of thirty-two and thirty-five. The fact that during this time he was powerfully influenced by the English social and political order, English philosophy and drama is generally known and natural enough. What is more surprising, Professor Idelson says, is that he took as keen an interest in the state of English physics and mathematics, that, with remarkable intuition and insight, he became a champion of the then comparatively new doctrine of Newton and later on its first exponent in France. Through his contact with Newton's associates, Voltaire the poet, playwright and journalist, became a Newtonian: that is to say, he accepted the philosophy underlying Newton's system.

General interest was attracted by a research paper given by Vladimir Lyublinsky, of the Leningrad Public Library, on Voltaire originals in the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union, Lyublinsky said, has in its possession a very valuable part of the Voltaire archival-literary heritage. Some of the collections, particularly Voltaire's private library, which is in the possession of the Leningrad Public Library, provide highly valuable sources for studying a variety of aspects of Voltaire's life and work. There are many hitherto unknown texts, some of them published for the first time during the past few years and others now ready for the press. Before the Revolution, Lyublinsky went on, even the scientific world had a totally inadequate acquaintance with the Voltaire library, and real research on it only began under the Soviets. Between 1927 and 1941, two American researchers, G. R. Havens and N. L. Torrey, made essential and more exact assortments of the works in this library; Soviet research workers—Derzhavin, Yakubovich, Lyublinsky and others—have used the material in Voltaire's library to work out some particular questions of history, historiography and literature. Lyublinsky spoke of Voltaire's marginal comments on books, widely differing in form and subject. These remarks, expressing Voltaire's spontaneous reactions, were not meant for publication, and therefore their frankness heightens their value.

The proceedings of the Academy's Voltaire session are to be published as a separate volume.

VLADIMIR ALTMAN

Alexander Pushkin once wrote that the principal charm of Walter Scott's novels is that they "acquaint us with the past... not with the stiffness of sentimental novels, nor with the dignity of history, but in a contemporary yet homelike way... Shakespeare, Goethe, Walter Scott... are familiar with the ordinary conditions of life, their language is free from affectations, from theatrical elements even on solemn occasions, for great occasions are familiar to them. It is evident that Walter Scott belongs to the small world of the Kings of England."

These words of Pushkin were repeatedly quoted at a recent discussion on the language of Soviet historical novels which lasted two days in Moscow Writers' Club.

The historical novel figures prominently in Soviet literature of the last few years. The novels "Stepan Razin" by Chaplygin, "Clad in Stone" by Olga Forsh, "The Labours and Days of Lomonossov" by George Storm, three novels by Yuri Tynyanov about Küchelbecker, Griboyedov and Pushkin, Serguei Golubov's "Bagration," Serguei Borodin's "Dmitri Donskoy," to say nothing of Alexei Tolstoy's "Peter I" —are first-class Soviet works.

The discussion revolved around two big reports. Professor Vladimir Vinogradov's report "On Styles of the Russian Classical Historical Novel of the 19th Century" was heard with lively interest. But the main discussion was devoted to the second report delivered by Professor Grigori Vinokur on "Language Problems in the Historical Novel and the Soviet Historical Novel."

The principal questions discussed were: what is to be regarded as stylization, to what extent must the language of the historical novel reproduce the language of the epoch, etc.

The reporter analyzed a vast number of works, dividing them into several principal categories as regards the language: historical novels written in the language understood with difficulty by contemporaries; novels in which the archaic direct speech of the heroes is a kind of incrustation in the general pattern of the work, this sometimes requires a special translation of the archaic expressions which makes reading difficult; and, lastly, novels written, in Pushkin's words, in a "contemporary, homelike way." They, of course, possess both local and historical colour, but so proportionately and pointedly as to convey the real spirit of the epoch and give the modern reader a real picture of the characters in their historical setting. In this category the speaker put, first and foremost, Alexei Tolstoy's "Peter I," Vyacheslav Shishkov's "Yemelyan Pugachov," Serguei Golubov's "Bagration" and several other novels.

It was from this point of view that the writers and critics who took part in the discussion analysed the various works.

An interesting idea was expressed by Nikolai Tikhonov who summed up the discussion: the style and language of the historical novel depend on the aim of the author, he declared. The author may set himself the aim of resurrecting one or another historical event or characters in order to renovate the epoch.

Novels of this kind differ in style and language from those where the picture of the past is subordinated to some general theme which permeates all the works of the author and reveals his general attitude to the world and to the fate of the people. As an example Tikhonov cited Pushkin to whom such a theme was Peter I; Pushkin wrote verses about Peter I, his poem "Poltava," the novel "The Negro of Peter the Great" and scientific essays. Precisely in such a case the author uses a wide range of mediums and artistic phraseology which vividly express his individuality.

An interesting meeting recently took place in the Writers' Club with Paul Bazhov, the famous author and collector of workers' folklore in the Urals.

With his smoke-coloured beard and big clear eyes, Bazhov resembles a good mountain genie. Not in vain had the poet Martynov said that Bazhov lives in a land of fairy-tales, in the fantastic world of Gog and Magog, where beasts drop from the skies and people are imprisoned in the mountain ridges the way to which is known only to the fairy-tale author.

The tales and legends of the Ural mining workers have been in existence for about two hundred years, but it was only recently that this material has been worked up. As distinct from the majority of Russian folklore works whose heroes are chiefly peasants, foresters and fishermen, these stories tell about the workers of the gold-fields, old Urals factory workers, about the prospectors for and polishers of precious and semi-precious stones found in the local mountains.

Bazhov was the first to bring to light this as yet undeveloped folklore. The heroes of his works based on the folk tales are primarily men of labour; they are not looking for chance success; to them labour is the basis of life. In a convincing and graphic way Bazhov shows in the "Mistress of the Copper Mountain," "Stone Flower"[1] and in a number of other tales that labour and true inspiration perform miracles, while in the hands of idlers, parasites and exploiters even pure gold is reduced to dust, to an illusion...

With wonderful modesty Bazhov tells about his work; leaving himself in the shade, he brings to the foreground the people who created these truthful, poetic tales. "It is not hard to make up a fairy-tale," he says, "the most important thing is to have the grain of the people's truth in it." For this purpose he frequently assembled old miners and turning the conversation to the past called to their memory incidents relating to the history of the gold-fields and factories, to get hold, in his own words, of the thread by pulling which he raised the veil over the rich world of folk tales based on reality.

Bazhov who has seen much in his life and who is familiar with the history of Russian gold, of the first Russian gold-fields, is planning to write his memoirs. He is particularly eager to write about the life of children and workers in the Urals at the end of last century, about young apprentices who developed into skilled masters.

A new feature at the Writers' Club are the "Literary Mondays." The first evening's programme was interesting and varied. Seated in a cosy room in front of a fire crackling merrily, the writers met the famous airman, Hero of the Soviet Union, Ilya Mazuruk, recently back from a round-the-world flight.

In twelve days he crossed five seas and oceans following the route Moscow—Siberia—Chukotka—Canada—Southern America; his plane passed over Brazil, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reached the coast of Western Africa; he flew across the Canaries, Casablanca, Tunisia, Tripoli, Bengazi, the Suez Canal, visited Bagdad and returned to Moscow. Like Mr. Fogt from Jules Verne's "80 Days Around the World," Mazuruk gained a whole day at the beginning of his trip by reaching America on the date he left Siberia (where the next day had begun). "I received my salary twice on that day," Mazuruk jested.

During his flight to America on a special Government commission, Mazuruk was able to make a broad acquaintance with various American circles, with American literature and art and he gave a lively account of all this to the gathering.

Mazuruk was followed by Paul Antokolsky who read his new poem "Yaroslavna." This poem gives a general picture of the struggle of all that is progressive, lofty

[1] Published in "International Literature," No. 10, 1943.

and pure against the darkness and brutality of fascism. Yaroslavna, heroine of the remarkable Russian epic of the 11th century, "The Lay of Igor's Regiment," embodies the character of the young Russian heroine of our days.

Then Tikhon Khrennikov, the famous composer, after offering apologies for his "composer's" voice, gave a charming interpretation (to his own accompaniment) of his songs (on Antokolsky's poems), in particular, of those written specially for Bulgakov's play "Don Quixote."

After the music the literary programme was continued: Leonid Sobolev read a chapter from his new novel "Green Ray" of the life of Soviet seamen. This chapter is devoted to the hero's boyhood and adolescence, showing the development of his character, his persistence, will and individual inclinations.

In conclusion, Tatyana Leshchenko, the chamber music singer, sang several old English, French and Russian songs to the accompaniment of a guitarre.

The centenary of the death of Ivan Krylov, that great Russian fable writer, was commemorated at a special meeting held at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Krylov's portrait in a gilt frame was mounted on the stage which was decorated with flowers. The meeting was attended by Moscow factory workers, writers, actors, scientists, Red Army generals and officers and representatives of the diplomatic corps.

Demyan Bedny, author of many fables, opened the anniversary session. A report on Krylov's work was delivered by Nikolai Tikhonov, Chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers.

"Krylov was more than a poet," he said. "He was an enlightener and philosopher who drew on the wisdom of the people..."

Nikolai Tikhonov dwelt in detail on the life and work of Krylov, on his endeavours as a prose-writer and playwright.

"Krylov's fables," Tikhonov declared, "have a contemporary ring today. Does not the frog which, in an effort to match the bull, inflated itself until it burst, resemble fascism?..."

After the report the poets Michael Issakovsky and Vassili Lebedev-Kumach recited poems dedicated by them to the memory of Krylov. Outstanding artists of the Soviet capital took part in the gala concert at the conclusion of the meeting.

Moscow was not the only city to mark the Krylov anniversary.

A memorial meeting was also held at the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in Leningrad.

Delegations from the city gathered at the Necropolis of the Alexander Nevsky Abbey (Leningrad) to place wreaths on Krylov's tomb.

Special meetings to mark the centenary were held in Kiev (Ukraine), Tbilissi (Georgia), Yerevan (Armenia), Vilnius (Lithuania) and other cities of the Soviet Union.

A contest for books for children of different ages was held by the State Publishing House of Children's Literature. The contest aroused wide interest among Soviet writers, poets and artists. The jury was headed by People's Commissar of Education Vladimir Potyomkin and Nikolai Tikhonov, Chairman of the Soviet Writers' Union.

The results of the first round of this contest have now been summed up. Eleven of the ninety-eight manuscripts submitted in the course of six months have been adjudged prizes.

The first prizes for poetry went to Samuel Marshak and Serguei Mikhalkov whose poems enjoy merited popularity among Soviet schoolchildren. Agnia Barto won the second prize, and two third prizes went to Natalya Konchalovskaya and Eugenia Trutneva.

None of the prose writers received the first prize. Second prizes have been awarded to Serguei Grigoryev for the story "Victory of Peace" (about Admiral Makarov's boyhood); to Lev Gumilevsky for "Wings of the Country" (a popular science book tracing the development of Russian aviation); to Lev Kassil for "My Dear Boys" (an adventure story about children during the Patriotic War) and to George Storm for "Fleet Commander Ushakov" (about the famous Russian admiral). A second prize was also awarded Alexander Yakovlev, the noted Soviet aircraft designer, for his auto-biographical "Tales from Life." Valentina Osseyeva received the third prize for the "Magic Word," a book of short stories for children of pre-school age.

The jury also recommended a number of books for publication. Forty-seven books for children have been accepted for publication as a result of the first round.

An exhibition of photographs on the "Youth of Great Britain in Wartime" has been opened at the Moscow Architects' Club.

Mounted in the vast white hall in the centre of the exhibition are the portraits of Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister Winston Churchill decorated with the national flags of both countries.

Distributed along the walls are numerous exhibits and documental photographs. The adorable youngster in his mother's arms in the section "Life Begins" invariably evokes a warm response among the visitors. British children are studying in schools. Photographs show them in the classrooms, studying, and out for a walk. They are shown writing Russian letters on the blackboard, just as Soviet schoolchildren study English.

A prominent place at the exhibition is occupied by a portrait gallery of youthful heroes of Great Britain: airmen, parachutists, para-troops, artillerymen and sailors. Especially successful are the seascapes.

A special section is devoted to the soldiers of the labour front. Owen Chapman, the sixteen-year-old miner, was

photographed as he came out of the mine. His face is covered with coal dust. Eleven-year-old Jimmy West was photographed on the way to the fields. British girls are shown at work in the factory and helping with transport or on A.R.P. duty.

Vladimir Kemenov, Chairman of the VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), Eugene Fyodorov, Chairman of the Soviet Youth Anti-Fascist Committee and the famous Arctic explorer, and Mr. John Balfour, Councellor of the British Embassy in the U.S.S.R., spoke at the opening ceremony.

The exhibition is very popular among Soviet youth who take a profound interest in the life of their friends in Great Britain.

"Vatan" (Country), a 430-page literary almanac, issued in Russian by the State Literary Publishing House of Turkmenia, illustrates in various genres both the present and past of Turkmenian literature.

The almanac opens with a series of patriotic poems by the people's poet Ata Salikh. The section dedicated to contemporary poetry contains new verse by the frontline poets Ishanov, Pomma Nurberdy, Shaali Kekilov, Kh. Shukurov's epic "Djighit," Kara Seytliev's lyrical verse and many others.

Playwrights are represented by B. Kerbabayev's "Brothers", based on contemporary war topics, and prose by excerpts from Ata Kaushutov's novel "Mekhri and Vopa" and a number of short stories.

The large section dedicated to classical literature is made up from works of Turkmenian poets of the 18th and 19th centuries and Baimukhammet Karryiev's series of articles on "Turkmenian Classical Literature."

Extremely interesting is the section devoted to folk art—fairy-tales, songs, proverbs and sayings. Many prominent Russian writers and translators collaborated in translating the work of Turkmenian authors into Russian.

The fate that has befallen many Latvian workers of art during the German occupation period has been learned following the liberation of Riga.

Janis Eizhen, chief artist of the Riga opera house, was brutally murdered by the fascists. Orders were issued for the arrest of Leimanis, director of the Riga Art Theatre. He found refuge in the apartment of a friend. The floor was torn open in one of the rooms and a kind of niche built between two stories. It was in this niche that Leimanis spent many months. The opera tenor Peter Gailis worked as a farm labourer. Many workers of art formed underground anti-fascist groups. One such group, which included the producer O. Kugrens, the actor G. Vilks, the artist O. Urbans and nineteen other members, has been regularly issuing leaflets under the slogan "Death to the German Invaders," and helped civilian and war prisoners.

Before the flight from Riga the Germans destroyed everything they could lay hands on. They blew up the city's finest buildings. The theatres were also menaced with destruction. Nine members of the staff of the opera house, including the singer Alexander Kortans, ballet master Oswald Bernhofs and the librarian Eduard Salmini, barricaded themselves in the theatre building and stayed there for several days and nights. When the Germans set fire to the adjoining post office, they climbed to the roof and prevented the fire from spreading to the theatre.

Restoration is now in full swing in the Latvian capital. The first to open was the circus. Classes are being resumed in the music schools and in the Academy of Arts. Repairs are nearing completion at the Academy of Music. Local cinemas are showing new Soviet films.

Shortly before the present war a museum dedicated to the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz was opened at Novogrudok and the Elisa Orzeszko Literary Museum restored in Grodno.

Numerous excursionists visited the one-storey house of Mickiewicz which had valuable relics on display—the poet's furniture, a remarkable inkwell decorated with pictures of the characters from his works, pictures which adorned his rooms, etc. The museum's library had collections of the poet's works in Polish, Russian, French and many other languages and also essays dedicated to the works of Mickiewicz.

Extremely interesting exhibits were also on display in the Elisa Orzeszko Museum at Grodno, where this popular Polish authoress lived for many years.

The hitlerite vandals depleted the two museums. Rare exhibits have been sent out of the country and the remaining materials blasted and burned. The Government of Soviet Byelorussia has taken steps to restore these museums.

The building for the city circus which was recently completed at Sverdlovsk (Urals) is one of the biggest in the country.

The second volume of the "History of Azerbaijanian Literature" was recently published at Baku. It covers the period from the beginning of the 19th century to our days.

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