INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

3

1945

THE STATE LITERARY PUBLISHING HOUSE
PRINTED IN THE SOVIET UNION

SOVIET WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR COUNTRY'S WAR EFFORT

The historian who chronicles the present war will note with respect the contribution made by Soviet women to their country's war effort.

And in recording Soviet woman's splendid achievements in factory and mill, on the collective farm, in the research laboratory and in the art world, the reason for her prowess in her present truly titanic exploits on behalf of her homeland must not be lost sight of. It was the years of progress, during which the country was transformed with remarkable rapidity into a land of modern industry, a land of chemistry, of engines and aircraft, of daring scientific discoveries, it was in this period that millions of women and girls were trained for every conceivable occupation.

In all fields of economic and cultural endeavour women saw the gates of opportunity open before them. They found that it was quite possible to combine family life and the duties and joys of motherhood with work or study. The thirties saw the appearance of millions of highly trained women workers including famous Stakhanovites in every branch of industry. In the decade or so preceding the war, these women began to train the daughters, wives and mothers who today have replaced their menfolk on the job and set to work under the fiery skies of war.

It was no easy undertaking. Millions of women bade farewell to loved ones, millions of happy families were broken up. First the father, and then the sons left for the front: young couples were separated just when they had started out on life together. Who could comfort all who were parted? Who could tell them when their separation would end and whether they would ever meet again?

...The armoured fascist hordes overran Soviet villages and towns, consigned them to the flames, subjected defenceless civilians to appalling torment and death... Millions of mothers and wives lost their dear ones under the most tragic circumstances. And what boundless agony fell to the lot of many girls, little more than children!

At a Chelyabinsk munitions factory I met a young girl called Vera Ivanova. Although not yet turned sixteen, she had seen and endured more nightmarish horrors and deadly mental anguish than several generations could have experienced in the course of a hundred years. Of this poor child's entire family—parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents (they came of hale and hearty stock)—some three dozen people in all—she was the sole survivor. And her own escape was merely an accident: she had fainted into the ditch and the Germans who murdered her relatives had thought she too was dead. The child made her way somehow to the battle-line, where the Red Army authorities nursed her back to health and saved her from mental breakdown.

Later she started work at a factory. I can see her pale, serious little face before me now. In an incredibly short time this quiet, reserved girl turned ten thousand mortar bombs on her lathe. When people marvelled at her perseverance Vera would reply in her low, firm voice: "I'd like to make a hundred thousand bombs to send over at the Germans, not just ten thousand, for I know the Red Army'll shoot them straight at the target."

Women learnt to master every job going—I emphasize every job, since I am referring to trades formerly considered the sole preserve of men. Take, for example, electric welding. When assembling the body of a tank, the steel parts have to be welded by a special electrode seam. This work must be performed with meticulous precision, as the strength of the armoured vehicle depends on the quality of the seam.

In the early months of the war I had occasion, as a "Pravda" correspondent, to visit many factories turning out weapons for the Red Army. At one of these, I came across an electric welding team of young girls led by a girl just as young called Felixa Grzhibovskaya. The first women in the factory to attempt such work, these seven girls boldly undertook the welding of heavy and medium tank bodies. I saw how skilfully and deftly they coped with this arduous and responsible work, doing fifty, and later a full hundred percent, over their quota. During these years I have been keeping an eye on their work and recently I read in a newspaper how much they had turned out in the past few months. Lined up, the tank bodies this one team has welded, would stretch for over three miles!..

At a smelting mill, one of the oldest in the Urals, I met another young woman. Faina Sharunova. Truly feminine in appearance, of medium height, with blue eyes and sparkling white teeth no one would credit, at first sight, that this woman stands by the huge blast-furnace tower and smelts first-rate iron for Soviet guns. I have looked on at this fiery work, difficult and

responsible enough even for a man. But Faina knows the complex smelting process as perfectly as the poet remembers his lines or the actor senses the finest nuances of his role. She does not make a single superfluous motion, everything she does is calculated and tested out. Sharunova's work has earned the praise (I heard it with my own ears) of so celebrated a master of the smelting art as Ivan Korobov, described by Stalin a few years ago as the father of the "Korobov dynasty". And the praise was not the condescending praise sometimes allowed a youngster: "Not bad for a young 'un." This was the serious, sincere praise accorded an equal. "She's shaping into a fine smelter, Faina is," Korobov said. And, sure enough, a year later Faina Sharunova was a full-fledged smelter, running her own furnace. Now she is passing on her skill and knowledge to other novices, teaching them how to make iron for Soviet guns quickly and well...

2

Even before the war, women's work meant a great deal on the collective farms. Not for nothing did Stalin say that women were a powerful force on the collective farms. But before the war, the farms could organize division of labour. Women took charge of the animals, the dairies, the poultry, and the vegetables. The war, however, changed all this. Millions of strong, healthy men left for the front—and all the cares of the big and prosperous farms fell onto the shoulders of the women. Maria Kozlova, from a Urals collective farm, is a typical figure of these grim days. She is still in her early thirties, sturdy and vigorous, with lively brown eyes set in a round, lightly freckled face. Nothing outstanding in her appearance, there are thousands like her. But in the life of each such woman you will find much that is anything but ordinary, much that is positively heroic, much that calls for titanic strength of spirit. Here is what she told me:

"First the sons left for the front, then the husbands, and finally in 1942 our collective farm manager prepared to leave. Before he went, he gathered us all together, and said: 'Now then, worthy womenfolk, it's to you that I want to appeal. Let's look the facts in the face. It'll be quite a while before we're through with this war against the Germans, curse them! And that means you'll not only have to work like blazes but you'll have to do all the managing yourselves — pretty well everything is in your hands now. But I'll leave with an easy mind if you promise to tackle every difficulty and keep up the farm's reputation.' So, of course, we promised. And it's a fact we really had a good reputation—the corn we delivered to the government was always first-rate and always on time, the papers used to write about us—and as to the life and homes we all had—well, I'd wish everybody the same. So there we were, just us women left, with the old men and the youngsters. They made me manager. The first few days I couldn't sleep or eat for worrying: how were we going to manage with so few hands? We had many a discussion, I can tell you, but eventually decided that we just had to grow more corn than ever before, and stick like glue to our schedules, because the corn would first of all be going to the soldiers that were fighting for us out there... Of course, we had far fewer farm hands now, and these nearly all women. Still, we made up our minds we just had to stick it out, endure whatever hardship might come along and win through. Ploughing in the springtime, we'd make do with a couple of hours' sleep, then got out into the fields again, to the tractors. Well, with the help of just the old folks and the youngsters we got through a hundred acres more ploughing than we had done before the war. That was our gift to the army. Ploughing was hardly over when the hay was ready to be brought in. Same with the corn — that was brought home on the dot too. It's easy to rattle all this now" (she gave a shrewd slightly derisive smile), "but I can't help thinking to myself: how easy it sounds just to talk about it all, but how hard was the actual doing! All spring, summer and autumn we were up before dawn. We worked like furies, to be sure—but underneath, of course, each one's heart was quivering and aching so that it left you no peace day or night—how were the lads getting on out there, were they safe? Each one was waiting for news from husband or son, her heart well-nigh stopping with terror: suppose she lost him? And of course, some did. We'd have a good cry all around, but, pain or no pain, we had to keep going: time wouldn't wait. When the winter came, it found us still breathless with exertion: we could hardly believe we'd come through the year in proper style. Oh, it's been hard, all right, but we have the satisfaction of knowing that we countryside Stakhanovites have performed the duty we owe the soldiers and Stalin."

A name that's become well-known in wartime is that of Dasha Garmash, a tractor driver in Rybnov, Ryazan region. In 1938, Dasha, then a mere girl, finished her tractor course with "excellent!" marks; she liked the feeling of bending the machine to her will, of opening up new tracts of virgin soil... After seeing her husband off to the front, this young woman formed a girls' tractor-driving team, Setting the pace herself, she proved such a good leader that her team is now famous throughout the whole Soviet Union.

In the Vologda region lives Alexandra Lyuskova, famed as a pig-farmer. Her husband and two sons are in the army and at home she has five younger kiddies. The resilience of youth is gone; separation from her loved ones is harder to endure, and raising the children singlehanded is not easy either. Even if she merely worked as well as before the war, that in itself would be commendable, but study her recent achievements.

In 1942, from a single sow, Alexandra Lyuskova secured a progeny of 106 piglets, their total weight being 4,910 kilo-

grams. Over a period of 15 months during 1943—1944, from one sow she raised 128 pedigree pigs, 107 of them of first-class category. And if you consider that the herd under her charge numbers some 400 of this prime stock, think how much first-rate pork the country receives from the one pig-farm managed by Alexandra Lyuskoval

But the reader should not think that these splendid figures were an easy achievement. Nothing of the kind. They're very short-handed these days at the large pig-farm belonging to the "Budyonnovets" kolkhoz in the Vologda region. The manager Alexandra Lyuskova has only three helpers and everything has to be done by their own efforts. They not only tend the pigs but also guard the farm, do their own ploughing, lay in the fodder, haul the firewood — in fact do everything that used to be done by the menfolk.

Unfortunately, in a single article I cannot write of many other women, expert at their jobs: those, for example, who are growing cotton in Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenistan. Famous in Uzbekistan are the cotton-farming brigades of young Saadat Khatamova and Rakhim Ulhodjayeva. In the autumn of 1944, Rakhim's fellow farmers in the "Socialism" collective farm gave her a surprise: those belonging to the farm management carrying the farm's banner before them, visited her in the cotton field and presented her, as champion picker, with a magnificent silk rug.

3

Women have proved the principal agents in rebuilding the collective farms out of the ashes in the ravaged areas once in the German barbarians' clutches. And what wonderful managerial ability, what brilliant organizational talent they have displayed—a veritable reviver of life amid the charred ruins and fields desolated by the German hordes. Picture a cornfield, after the Germans have been here! It's no longer a field, of course, not even land, but a frightful dumping ground of twisted metal. It has to be made anew, this one-time land. And it's the women who are making it. With loving hands they clear the fields of the iron scrap; like our gallant sappers, they scan the soil again and again with their keen eyes to make sure that there isn't a mine hidden somewhere deep down; until at last they can utter the precious words: "Well, now it's fit to be sown." Like some treasure-seeker, they dig up the cherished seed hidden away underground from German eyes and scatter it by hand—yes, by hand, out of a bag slung over the shoulder, like their forefathers, for the Germans seized or wrecked the farm machinery... And the earth, as though obedient to this indomitable energy of regeneration, yields up its fruit, and after all this effort it is no disgrace to receive from the state both help and commendation,

What are the other features so outstanding in this epic of restoration, enacted chiefly by women? The insistence on the quality of work is one remarkable feature. Academician Yakushkin recently wrote about Tatiana Artemyeva, of the "Red October" collective farm in the Moscow region. The Germans razed her village to the ground, until nothing was left on the site but the brick stoves. Undaunted Tatiana Artemyeva set about restoring her collective farm. Organizing the sowing, she insisted, in spite of all difficulties, that the agronomical standards should be rigidly observed—and her section reaped 136 bushels of spring wheat per hectar!

Pondering over all these victories won by women's activities one can not help recalling Stalin's words: "The matchless labour exploits of the Soviet women and of our splendid youth will go down forever in history; for it is they that have borne the brunt of the work in the factories and mills and on the collective and state farms."

4

The education of the youth has also fallen largely onto women's shoulders. I should like particularly to pay tribute to one of the older generation of Soviet schoolteachers—Maria Pavlovna Ivashkevich, Literature mistress at Leningrad's No. 47 school. All through the terrible months of the Leningrad blockade, Maria Pavlovna was present at her school. What a profound love for literature she succeeded in instilling in her young pupils can be gained from an incident occurring during those blockade days. Amidst unbelievable hardships, studies continued at this Leningrad school. One day, after a Luftwaffe raid, Maria Pavlovna was overtaken in the street by one of the older boys—Igor—an excellent pupil. "Let the Germans do their worst—I mean to complete my education all the same, Maria Pavlovna... I was going to ask you to walk around a bit. I've wanted to tell you for a long time some of the things I've been thinking about Shakespeare—if you don't mind that is..." Of course she didn't mind listening to the eager boy, despite the unpropitious circumstances.

After a vicious shelling raid, it was announced that School No. 47 had organized a literary carnival for that evening. This was Maria Pavlovna's idea: she was so anxious to bring a smile to the children's pale, drawn faces, to make them forget the horrors of the blockade, if only for a few brief hours. And at the very moment when the AA-gunners on Leningrad roofs were keeping a particularly sharp look-out, a grand procession paraded in the school hall, stepping to the strains of a Chaikovsky ecossaise, Every imaginable character was represented: the sisters, Tatiana and Olga Larin, from Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin"; Carmen, that demoniac beauty of Mérimé's; Snow Queens, Spanish señoras, Ukrainian maidens... Thanks to this happy idea of Maria Pavlovna's the boys and girls enjoyed real relaxation and came away with spirits refreshed for the trials that still lay ahead...

There is plenty I could say about many of the younger teachers, but I have chosen deliberately one from among the older generation of educational workers: how much youthful spirit is displayed, what indomitable resistance to all the savage enemy's attempts is embodied in their labour!

The contribution women have made to the advancement of science can readily be gauged by the fact that quite a number of women have been honoured in wartime with the high distinction of a Stalin Prize for scientific discoveries.

Highly important, especially now, are the researches of the school headed by Academician Lina Stern, and which are rightly regarded as outstanding achievements of Soviet physiology. Research work over a period of many years has led to the discovery of what is known as the hemato-encephalitic barrier. Nature, to protect the precious kernel of the human being—its brain—has created a special physiological apparatus which keeps out injurious influences. But these barriers also obstruct the penetration of beneficial agents. The fearful diseases of shock and tetanus affect mostly the brain, and the sympathetic nerve centres, on the functioning of which depends the life-tone, the operation of the nervous system and the internal organs. How could the brain be helped to speed up its fight against disease; what would be a quick way of getting the needful drugs past the barriers and to the brain? Lina Stern proposed introducing them direct into the spinal cord fluid in the immediate vicinity of the cerebral ventricles—namely by the shortest possible way. Thanks to these "corrections" to nature, many human lives have already been saved; the life-giving serum can be introduced into the brain ventricles at any ordinary dressing station, right out in the forward lines and with appliances of the simplest kind. Last January the Physiology Institute of the Academy of Sciences and the Second Moscow Institute of Medicine held a conference to discuss the results of the Stern method. Further research and practice show that the method is finding application on a steadily increasing scale; it can be used in ulcer cases, in the treatment of ear ailments, and in many other branches of medicine.

"International Literature" has acquainted its readers before now with the contribution made to the country's war effort by Soviet women artistes. Korchagina-Alexandrovskaya, the veteran actress, at seventy years of age spends much of her time performing for the workers in their clubs, for the miners at the coal pits and for the wounded in hospital. Anna Orochko, an actress of the in-between generation, so to speak, heads the front line section of the Vakhtangov Theatre. Not so long ago I saw their latest production—"Somewhere in Moscow,"—saw the young girls that were acting in it, lively and jolly, just like real soldiers. And in fact, they could claim kinship with the troops for these young actresses have given over 1,000 performances at the front. They have advanced with the Red Army all the way from Voronezh to the Soviet Union's western frontiers. From the remotest of our republics women representing the art of the different Soviet peoples are continuously at the front—Khalima Nassyrova, the famous Uzbek singer; Kuliash Baiseitova from Kirghizia, known as the "southern nightingale", and many, many another.

In these grim and glorious days of war waged in the country's defence, Soviet woman has shown herself worthy of her people.

ANNA KARAVAYEVA

"Peter I" will never be finished now. On February 24th Alexei Tolstoy passed away. This is the greatest loss to Soviet literature since the death of Maxim Gorky.

Alexei Tolstoy wrote for nearly forty years. Russia, her history and her people were invariably the main themes of his writings. His famous trilogy "The Road to Calvary", in which he depicts the great historical turn in the life of Russia in 1917 and 1918, the novel "Peter I" and the dramatic tale "Ivan the Dread" are masterpieces of Russian literature.

By his profound truth, ardent patriotism, faith in humanity and people, Tolstoy carried forward the best traditions of Russian literature.

In recognition of the services this eminent author and distinguished citizen rendered his country, the Soviet people elected him deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. The Order of Lenin and a Stalin Prize were further tokens of appreciation bestowed upon him. Alexei Tolstoy was a member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and one of the leaders of the Union of Soviet Writers. He was also president of the literary section of the All-Union Society for cultural relations with foreign countries.

Ever since the outbreak of war, Tolstoy dedicated himself to the service of his country and people. Works like "Motherland" and several others will remain among the most striking documents of the age affording an insight into the inner meaning of the struggle waged by the freedom-loving peoples.

As member of the Extraordinary State Commission for the investigation of the crimes of the German fascist invaders in our country, the writer took an active part.

Tolstoy worked for many years on his novel "Peter I", the last volume of which was to end up with Peter's victory at Poltava. Only one-third of the book, however, was written before he died.

To the very end of his life Tolstoy exhorted all the freedom-loving nations to hasten the victory over fascism, the victory he had looked forward to so eagerly and to whose achievement he had dedicated the last years of his life.

ALEXEI TOLSTOY

IMPERIAL MAJESTY

(Peter the Great)

Chapter IV[1]

When they reached the knoll on which the watch-tower had just been built Tsar Peter leaped from his horse and scrambled quickly up the ladder—slats of wood nailed across a tree-trunk posed steeply against the structure—and climbed on to the platform at the top. Close behind him came Chambers, Menshikov, Anikita Ivanovich Repnin and, last of all, Peter Matveyevich Apraksin who found his obesity and his bad head for heights a great hindrance: it was no joke for him to climb to such a height, every bit of seventy feet from the ground. Tsar Peter was used to climbing masts and did not even stop to take breath; he pulled a spyglass out of his pocket, set his feet firmly apart and peered into the distance.

Narva was as clearly visible as if it were lying there on a green dish—all the squat towers with their gates and drawbridges, bastions of worked stone jutting out from the city walls, the solid mass of the ancient castle with its round powder tower, the winding streets of the new town, the spires of the churches soaring up to the sky like spikes. On the far side of the river stood eight gloomy towers with leaded roofs, their walls pierced by cannon balls; this was the fortress of Ivangorod, built by Ivan the Dread during the Livonian War.

"That town will be ours!" said Menshikov who was also looking through a spyglass.

"Don't start shouting too soon," Tsar Peter snapped at him through clenched teeth.

Lower down the river from the town, at the point where Peter Matveyevich Apraksin's earthworks stood on the Rosson stream, troops and baggage trains were slowly moving along, scarcely visible in their own dust. Horse and foot crossed the pontoon bridge and took up their positions on the left bank of the river some five versts from the town. White tents soon appeared, smoke rose in the clear, still air, horses were unsaddled and turned loose to graze... to the ringing sound of axes century old pines shook their heads and tumbled to the ground.

"The camp is only protected by the waggons and chevaux-de-frise; won't you order a ditch to be dug and palisades erected?" asked Anikita Ivanovich Repnin. He was a man of caution, intelligent and experienced in the ways of war, brave without rashness, but prepared, should it be necessary in a great cause, to die without hesitation. Although in build and in features he did not look it, he considered his family to be older than that of Tsar Peter; he was shabby-looking and half blind, but his tiny eyes behind the constantly screwed-up lids had a very clever look about them.

"Ditches and palisades won't save the day. We didn't come here to sit behind palisades," growled the Tsar; he turned his spyglass further to the west.

Chambers, who usually started off the day by drinking a full tumbler of vodka to keep his spirits up, cleared his throat:

"We can order the soldiers to sleep with their boots on and their weapons handy... It's a mere bagatelle! If it's true that General Schlippenbach is at Wesenberg you can't expect him here in less than a week..."

"Once before I awaited Swedish help right here... Thanks, we have learned our lesson," answered Tsar Peter in a strange voice.

Menshikov gave a short grunt of a laugh and Chambers shot round in his direction that sharp-featured aquiline visage of his that was hidden beneath an enormous broad-brimmed hat.

"I don't understand..."

"If you think you'll understand..."

Tsar Peter continued gazing eagerly to the west where the sea spread like a sheet of silver in the bright sunlight, not a breath of wind ruffling its mirror-like surface. By dint of hard staring it was possible to make out the form of ships' masts with furled sails close in beside the clearly marked coastline. This was the fleet of the silver-handed Admiral de Prout, idle in the dead calm.

"Mister Bombardier," said Apraksin, holding firmly on to the railing around the frail platform. "Hadn't I every reason to fear such a fleet—fifty ships as you can see for yourself—and such a famous admiral... In truth it was God who saved me. He didn't give him a sea wind."

"What a cargo will be lost!" said Menshikov counting the masts on the skyline

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[1] For the three previous chapters of this novel see "International Literature," No. 11, 1944.—Ed.

with his finger. "His holds must be packed full of stuffed smoked eels, flounder, sprats, Revel ham... And the ham they have in Revel! Good Lord, if you want to eat, then go to Revel! It will all go rotten in this heat and they will have to throw it overboard, by the one-armed devil! Apraksin, Apraksin, sitting by the sea, you land-lubber! Why haven't you got any boats? In a calm like this you could have embarked a company of grenadiers in small boats and de Prout would not be able to get away... The pity of it!"

"A seagull's coming down on the sand!" shouted Tsar Peter suddenly. "Sure enough he's alighting!" His face became pugnacious, his eyes were quite round. "I'll bet anybody ten yefimki there'll be a storm... Who'll take it? Fine sailors you are! Don't groan, Danilych, we'll most likely taste the admiral's ham."

Thrusting his telescope into his jacket he went down from the tower at a run.

"Send one squadron on ahead," he said to Colonel Renn who ran up to help him spring to the ground, "and follow me with the other."

He floundered into the saddle and turned towards Narva. His mount, a tall, bay gelding with a bewhiskered muzzle was a present from Field Marshal Sheremetyev who had captured the animal at Erestfer, supposedly from Schlippenbach himself; the horse plunged forward at a fast trot. The Tsar was not fond of riding and was tossed high out of his saddle as the horse trotted. Alexander Danilovich, on the contrary, was 'warming' up his horse, a milk-white colt that had also been captured from the Swedes; the bright-eyed horse and its rider both seemed to be playing—the animal side-stepped, bounced forward in short gallops across the grass, sat back on its haunches and pawed the air with its black fore hoofs, lunged, bucked and dashed on again, the scarlet cloth of the short cape which Alexander Danilych wore on one shoulder over his steel breastplate flew out behind him and the feather on his hat and the ends of his silk scarf played in the wind they made. It was a glorious day, if a hot one, and in the groves of trees and the now deserted gardens the birds were singing and chirping.

Anikita Ivanovich Repnin, who had been since childhood accustomed to riding Tatar fashion—half side-stepping—jolted along in a big saddle on a small, wiry horse. Apraksin was bathed in sweat from the huge wig he was wearing which to a Russian gave neither comfort nor beauty.

Far ahead a squadron in open order rode through the undergrowth. Behind came the second squadron in formation led by Colonel Renn, a handsome man and a hard drinker who, like General Chambers, was seaking his fortune in the world and had given Tsar Peter his sword and his honour.

Tsar Peter and General Chambers rode stirrup to stirrup and the Tsar pointed out to his companion the ditches and pits, the high earthen ramparts overgrown with coarse grass and shrubs, and the half-rotten stakes sticking up everywhere out of the ground.

"This is where I lost my army," he said shortly. "This is the place where King Charles earned fame and we found our strength. This is where we learned from which end to suck an egg, and buried for ever the dead past which had almost brought us to complete ruin."

He turned away from Chambers. As he looked round he saw nearby a little abandoned hut whose roof had fallen in. He reined in his horse. A wave of anger swept over his round face.

"That same cabin, min Herz," said Menshikov merrily as he rode up. "D'you remember it?"

"I remember..."

Tsar Peter frowned, dug his spurs into his horse's flanks and again began to bounce in his saddle. How could he forget that sleepless night before the defeat? He had sat there in that hut staring at the guttering candle: Alexashka had lain on the felt mat, weeping silently. It had been hard to fight against his own despair and shame, against his helpless rage, and admit that on the next day Charles would inevitably defeat him. It had been hard to decide on that unheard of, unbearable step—to leave his army in such an hour and ride off to Novgorod in a waggon to start everything over again from the beginning. He had to get money, grain and iron. He had to find a way of selling his last shirt to the foreign merchants in order to buy arms. He had to cast cannon and balls, and most important of all he needed men, men and more men! He had to drag the people out of the morass in which they had lain for centuries, prize open their eyes and give them a shove forward—fight, train, teach. He would have to travel thousands of versts through mud and snow... break down, build up anew, find a way out of the European politics. To glance back was enough to scare you—such a terrific mass of work still to be done...

The leading dragoons rode out of the hot shade of the pines into a wide open field under the walls of Narva which rose up on the far side of a water-filled moat. The terrified inhabitants running and screaming, drove their cattle into the town. The fields rapidly emptied, the drawbridge groaned as it rose heavily on its hinges, the gates closed with a crash. Tsar Peter rode his horse to the top of a hill at a walk. Again they all took out their spyglasses and gazed at the high, strong walls with grass growing in the cracks between the stones.

Swedes in helmets and leather jerkins stood on the gate tower. One of them held a yellow banner at arm's length. Another Swede, a man of great height, walked over to the edge of the tower, rested his arms on the battlements and turned his spyglass on the horsemen on the hill, finally coming to rest on the figure of Tsar Peter.

"They're all hefty-looking men, it gives you the shivers just to see them there on the tower," said Apraksin softly to Anikita,

Ivanovich Repnin, as he fanned himself with his hat. "Now you can see, what I had to put up with at the mouth of the Narova when I was alone with only nine guns and all the fleet fell on me. That tall fellow, the one with the spyglass, he's dangerous. Just before you came I met him in the field and wanted to kill him. As if I could..."

"Who's that tall man on the tower?" asked Tsar Peter, hoarsely.

"My Lord, that's General Horn himself, the commandant of Narva."

Apraksin hardly had the name out of his mouth before Alexander Danilovich spurred on his horse and dashed across the field towards the tower... "Fool!" Peter shouted savagely in his wake but the wind whistling in his ears prevented his hearing it. He came to a halt almost at the very gates of the town, tore off his hat, waved it and chanted loudly:

"Hi, you on the tower... Hi, my Lord Commandant... Not wishing to spill Christian blood we offer you honourable terms... Send out an officer with a white flag..."

General Horn put down his spyglass to listen to what was being said by the Russian all dressed up in fine feathers and capering before him on a white horse. He turned to one of the Swedes, apparently an interpreter. His stern, elderly face wrinkled as though he had tasted something sour; he turned towards the battlements and spat in Menshikov's direction.

"That's my answer, you idiot!" he shouted. "Soon you'll get something a bit heavier."

The Swedes on the tower laughed insultingly. There was a flash of fire, a little white cloud arose and a cannon ball whistled through the air over Alexander Danilovich's head.

"Eh-eh-eh!" Anikita Ivanovich Repnin cried in a high-pitched voice from the hill top. "Your shooting's bad. Send your gunners to us, we'll teach them something..."

The men on the hill also laughed. Alexander Danilovich, realizing that in any case he could not escape a sound scolding from Tsar Peter, leaped and capered on his horse, waving his hat and baring his teeth at the Swedes until a second bomb-shell burst right beside him and his horse shied and galloped away from the tower with him.

Tsar Peter continued his rounds of the fortress, counted at least three hundred guns on the walls and then turned towards that memorable little hut, slid down from his horse and, ordering his whole suite to wait, called Menshikov into that same room where four years ago he had accepted shame and disgrace in order to save the Russian state. The last time he was there the room had contained a fine stove but now there was nothing but a heap of burnt bricks and dirty straw on the floor; obviously local herdsmen drove their sheep and goats into the hut for the night. He sat down on the sill of the broken window. Alexashka stood guiltily before him.

"Remember, Danilych, if I see any more of your idiotic tricks, by the living God, I'll flay the hide off you," said the Tsar. "Keep quiet and don't answer... Today you've done yourself a bad turn. I was wondering to whom to give the command of the siege forces, to you or Field Marshal Ogilvie. In a matter of this kind I would prefer one of my own people to a foreigner. You spoilt everything yourself, my dear friend, prancing about like a mountebank on horseback in front of General Horn. Disgraceful! You still can't forget the Moscow market places! You want to play the fool all the time like you do at my table! All Europe is looking at you, you imbecile! Shut up, don't answer me!" He sniffed and filled his pipe. "And secondly, Danilych, I was worried when I looked at those walls. We can't retreat from Narva a second time. Narva forms the key to the whole war. If Charles doesn't understand that, I do. Tomorrow we will draw all our troops so closely around the town that even a bird won't be able to fly out. In a fortnight the siege guns will be here. And then what next? The walls are strong, General Horn is stubborn, and we have Schlippenbach hovering over us. If we mark time here we'll bring Charles and all his army back from Poland. We must take the town quickly and without spilling too much of our own blood. What do you say, Danilych?"

"Some sort of a scheme can be thought up... That stands to reason... But if Field Marshal Ogilvie is going to be in charge, then let him find out what's what from his books. What am I likely to say? Some more nonsense, balderdash, just like a peasant..." Menshikov stood first on one foot then the other, and then raised his eyes: the Tsar's face was calm but sad, such as he had seldom seen it before... Pity wounded Alexashka, like a knife-thrust in his heart. "Min Herz," he whispered frowning, "min Herz, don't worry, give me till this evening; I'll come to your tent with a plan of some sort that I'll think up... Don't you know our people? This isn't 1700... Don't worry, I say, better come back to dinner..."

2

In the big field tent Nartov laid out the drawing instruments, tools, paper and military maps on a folding table just as he had done in the St. Petersburg house. Heat from the sun-baked earth came through the open tent-flap as from a furnace and even if you plugged your ears with resin from the pine trees you could not keep out the sharp, dry cackle of the grasshoppers.

Tsar Peter sat working without his coat, his shirt open at the breast; he was wearing short, loose, knee-length Dutch trousers and slippers on his bare feet. From time to time he got up from the table, went over to one corner of the tent and Nartov poured a jug of cold spring water over his head. During the days he had been on the Narva campaign—as always happened—a mass of urgent matters had accumulated.

Secretary Alexei Vassilievich Makarov, an unpretentious young man, who had been appointed to that post but a short time before, stood at the corner of the table near a pile of papers, handed them one by one to the Tsar, all the time talking in a soft clear voice that was just loud enough to drown the noise of the grasshoppers. "Ukase to Alexei Sidorovich Sinyavin to open commercial baths in Moscow and other towns," and he gently laid a sheet of paper in front of the Tsar with the ukase written in a column down the left side. The Tsar, his eyes running back and forth along the lines of writing, read the ukase, dipped his quill into the ink and in a big, scrawling, almost illegible handwriting, missing out letters in his hurry, wrote on the right-hand side of the paper: "Wherever possible open barbers' shops at the bathhouses to encourage people to shave their beards and also get some good corn cutters."

Makarov placed a new paper before him. "Ukase to Peter Vassilievich Kikin to take control of the fisheries, and water mills throughout the realm..." The Tsar's hand stayed poised over the paper, a blob of ink hanging from the tip of the quill.

"Who drew up the ukase?"

"The ukase was sent from Moscow by the Prince-Caesar for Your Majesty's personal approval..."

"Moscow is full of parasites who sit on windowsills sucking sour gooseberries for want of something better to do, but you can't find people for work that has to be done. All right, we'll try this Kikin, if he's a swindler I'll flog the skin off him—you write and tell the Prince-Caesar that I have my doubts..."

"A report from Lieutenant-Colonel Alexei Brovkin brought by courier from St. Petersburg," continued Makarov. "Tikhon Ivanovich Streshnev sent six peony bushes from Moscow for Your Majesty's Petersburg garden; they arrived safely but the gardener Levonov died before he had time to plant them."

"What? Died?" asked Tsar Peter. "What nonsense is this?"

"He was bathing in the Neva and drowned..."

"Drunk, of course... The good people always die young. And he was a clever gardener, it's a pity. Write..."

The tsar went over to the corner of the tent, water poured over his head, he snorted and continued talking to Makarov who was writing as he stood at the corner of the table.

"To Streshnev. Your peonies arrived safely, only we are sorry you sent so few. Please do not miss any opportunity to send all kinds of flowers from Izmailovo with many sweet smelling ones, canoupe, mint, mignonette... Send a good gardener and his family with him so that he will not get homesick. And for God's sake write and tell me whether Catherine Vassilevskaya, Anissya Tolstaya and others with them at Izmailovo are in good health. Don't forget to write more often about it. Also please inform us how the recruiting of soldiers for the Dragoon Regiments is progressing: make up one regiment as quickly as possible from the best men and send them here..."

He went back to the table, read over what Makarov had written, smiled to himself, and signed it.

"What else? Don't go over everything as it comes, just give me the most important."

"A letter sent by Grigori Dolgorukov from Sokal on the safe arrival of our troops."

"Read it." The Tsar closed his eyes, stretched out his neck and laid his huge, strong hands, covered with scratches, on the table. Dolgorukov wrote that with the arrival of the Russian troops in Sokal King August had again become excessively valiant and wanted to meet King Charles on the battlefield in order, with God's help, to take revenge for the debacle at Klissow in a grand battle. He was being particularly urged on to this madness by his favourites—he now had two of them and his life was full of troubles. With the greatest of difficulty Dmitri Mikhailovich Golitsyn had turned him away from the idea of an immediate meeting with Charles (who in his rapacity wished for nothing better) and shown him the road to Warsaw which Charles had left but poorly defended. God only knew what would come of it all...

Tsar Peter listened patiently to the long letter. He raised his upper lip and the thin line of his moustache, laying bare his teeth. With a jerk of his neck he muttered: "A fine ally!" He took a clean sheet of paper, scratched the back of his head with his thumbnail and began to write a reply to Dolgorukov, his pen hardly able to keep pace with his thoughts.

"...I also remind Your Excellency not to tire in persuading His Majesty King August to abandon his savage and ruinous intentions. He is in a hurry to seek a grand battle, placing his hopes in Fortune, that is luck, but this is in the hands of the Almighty alone. For us mortals it is better to look at what is nearer, here on earth... To put it shortly, a battle royal is a dangerous thing for him, for he can lose everything in an hour. If the grand battle is lost—from which God preserve him, and all of us—His Majesty will not only find himself in trouble from his adversaries but the enraged Poles who did not realize what was good for their country and their birthright will drive him from the throne in disgrace. Why should he lay himself open to such calamities? With regard to what Your Excellency writes about the favourites—there is no cure for this fever... One thing more, try to gain the sympathy of these ladies and form an alliance..."

The tobacco smoke was so thick in the tent that there was no air to breathe. The Tsar signed his letter with a blotchy "Ptr" and went out of his tent into the unbearable heat. From the hill he could see the clouds of dust in the direction of the Narova where the troops and baggage trains were moving out of the camp to take up their positions around the fortress. Tsar Peter passed his hand over the white skin of his chest, his heart was beating hard. Then he turned to gaze in the direction

of the endless mirror-surfaced sea where Admiral de Prout's ships lay idle and invisible, ships that were loaded with enough stores to feed the whole Russian army. Sea, earth and sky were languidly awaiting something; it was as though time itself stood still. Suddenly a whole flock of black birds came flying past the hill towards the woods. Tsar Peter threw back his head; it was true! To the southwest, in a sky that was like a sheet of red-hot iron, faint transparent clouds were rising.

"Makarov!" he shouted. "Do you want to bet me ten yefimki?"

Makarov came running out of the tent—sharp-featured, his skin like parchment from want of sleep, his straight line of a mouth unsmiling; he pulled his purse out of his pocket.

"If it is Your Majesty's pleasure..."

"Go and tell Nartov to bring me my sailor's jacket, sou'wester and sea-boots... And tell him to peg the tent down securely or the wind will carry it away... It's going to be a famous storm."

The sea always fascinated the Tsar and drew him like a magnet. His leather sou'wester pushed on to the back of his head and wearing a wide, loose sea-jacket he rode to the seashore at a fast trot followed by half a squadron of dragoons. (A messenger had also been sent to Apraksin's camp for two guns and the grenadiers.) The sun scorched like a scorpion before its death. Rising columns of dust whirled along the roads; on the sea the wind made wide ruffled stripes on the smooth surface of the waters. Black storm-clouds slipped over the darkening horizon. At last the breath of seaweed and fish was carried landward from the sea. The rising wind began to whistle and roar...

Holding tight to his sou'wester Tsar Peter grinned happily. He jumped down from his horse when he reached the seashore—the sun was flashing for the last time from behind the massing black thunder clouds and the already churning waves took on a glass-like hue. Suddenly it grew dark. The waves rose higher and higher, dashing their spray high into the air. The thunder clouds were lit from end to end by dull flashes as though some giant hand were setting fire to them. A blinding flash of jagged lightning struck the water close by. There was such a crash that the people on the beach cowered back—the heavens came thundering down...

Menshikov, also wearing a sou'wester and a sea-jacket, appeared alongside the Tsar.

"What a storm! That's what I like to see!" Peter shouted to him.

"Min Herz, how shrewd you are..."

"Have you only just realized that?"

"Shall we get what we want?"

"Wait a while, wait..."

They did not have too long to wait. In the glare of the lightning flashes they could see the warships and merchantmen under Admiral de Prout not very far away—the storm had driven them into the shallows near the coastline. They danced on the waves, their bare masts swaying to and fro, tatters of sails fluttering and the high carved sterns with their Neptunes and mermaids rising and falling. It seemed that it required but a little more effort for the storm to sweep the whole convoy ashore.

"Well done, well done!" shouted the Tsar. "Look what he's doing! He's set his top royals, his fore staysails and his mizzen staysails! Now he's setting his trysails! There's an admiral for you! Ei, the devil! Learn from him, Danilych!"

"Okh, he'll get away, he'll get away!" groaned Menshikov.

Either the wind veered slightly or the admiral's skill took the upper hand in the battle against the elements—his vessels, tacking under stormsails, gradually began to disappear beyond the horizon. Three heavily laden barques were still drifting towards the shallows. Creaking, with their rigging groaning and rags of sails flapping in the wind, they ran aground some three hundred paces from the shore. Huge waves broke over them, careened them over, swept across the decks, washing away boats and barrels and bringing down the masts.

"Give them a round fired short, just to frighten them!" Menshikov shouted to the gunners.

The guns barked and the bombshells fell into the water close alongside one of the barques. Pistol shots were fired from the vessels in response. Tsar Peter leaped on to his horse and forced it forward into the water. The grenadiers followed him shouting at the tops of their voices. Menshikov had to dismount, his steed shied at the water, and he too strode forward in the foaming sea, spitting out the salt water and shouting.

"Hi, you on the ships! Jump into the water! Surrender!"

The sight of a horseman amongst the waves and the huge bewhiskered grenadiers marching to board them, up to their chests in water, cursing roundly and waving their smoking grenades must have scared the Swedes. They held out their pistols and cutlasses: "Muscovite, Muscovite—friend!" and made for the shore where they were surrounded by the dragoons. Menshikov with his grenadiers climbed over the carved stern of one of the barques, took the captain as hostage, there and then clapped him playfully on the back and returned him his cutlass.

"Mr. Bombardier," he shouted from the ship, "there's a bit of a stink coming from the holds but the captain says the herrings and salt pork are fit to eat."

3

The troops were drawn around Narva in a horseshoe with the two ends resting on the river above and below the town. On the other side of the river Ivangorod was beleaguered in the same way. They dug trenches, built palisades and put up chevaux-de-frise. The Russian camp was noisy, smoky and dusty. The Swedes watched them gloomily from the high walls. Since the storm which swept away de Prout's fleet they had been particularly savage and fired their cannon even at individual horsemen

who took a short cut across the fields under the menacing bastions.

Tsar Peter ordered the barrels of herrings and salt pork that had been taken from the barques to be brought into camp in full view of the Swedes and behind the waggons decorated with pine branches the soldiers carried a huge, fat man, swathed in seaweed, while at the tops of their voices they shouted an indecent song about Admiral de Prout and General Horn. The barrels were distributed by companies and batteries. The soldiers waving a herring or a piece of fat pork stuck on the ends of their bayonets shouted at the garrison:

"Hi, Swedes, look at the titbits!"

The Swedes could stand it no longer. Trumpets blared, drums rattled, the drawbridge was let down and a squadron of cuirassiers, their heavy warhorses jamming in the gates, their helmeted heads bent low and their broad sabres held between their horses' ears, came galloping heavily towards the Russian trenches. The Russians had to drop their dainties and defend themselves with whatever came to hand, tent-pegs, ramrods or shovels. There was a mêlée with considerable shouting. Then the cuirassiers saw the dragoons bearing down on them from behind and the awesome grenadiers coming out through the palisades: they turned their horses and galloped back, only a few remaining in the fields, besides some riderless horses that galloped about for a long time, the Russian soldiers chasing them.

Apart from such sorties the Swedes did not show any particular uneasiness. General Horn, according to statements made by prisoners, is supposed to have said: "I'm not afraid of the Russians, let them try to storm the town with the help of their St. George, I'll give them something better than they got in 1700." He had grain, powder and shells enough but he depended mostly on Schlippenbach, who awaited reinforcements in order to inflict a crushing defeat on the Russians. Schlippenbach's army lay at Wesenberg on the Revel road as Alexander Danilovich had found out by going out on reconnaissance himself.

The Russian troops were also idle,—all their siege artillery—huge cannon for smashing through the walls and mortars for setting fire to the city—was still on the way from Novgorod, dragging along the impassable roads. Without the heavy guns they could not even consider storming the town.

Nor was the news from Field Marshal Boris Petrovich Sheremetyev too good: he had laid siege to Yuriev, had dug in, built palisades, dug saps to undermine the walls and had begun to hurl bombshells into the town. "Now the Swedes are beginning to give us a lot of trouble," he wrote to Alexander Danilovich in the Narva camp. "Up till now I have not been able to silence the enemy's cannon and mortar fire: they fire volleys from large numbers of cannon, curse them, throw a dozen bombs at a time amongst our batteries and most frequently of all they fire on our baggage trains. We have tried hard, but can't get a prisoner from the town who can tell us anything, except two men who deserted to us, Finns who knew nothing of any importance, although they say that Schlippenbach promises the town speedy relief..."

Schlippenbach was a real thorn in the flesh that had to be removed as quickly as possible. Tsar Peter was giving his whole attention to this. Menshikov had not deceived him when he said he would come in the evening; he came and sent everybody out of the Tsar's tent, even Nartov, and told Peter the plan he had thought up to rob General Horn of any further hope in Schlippenbach. At first the Tsar was angry: "What's this, the ravings of a drunken fit?.." Then he began to pace back and forth in the tent puffing away at his pipe; suddenly he burst out laughing.

"It wouldn't be at all a bad idea to make a fool of the old man."

"Min Herz, we'll make a fool of him, by God!.."

"That 'by God' of yours doesn't cost you much. And if it doesn't come off? You'll have something to answer for, my friend."

"I'll answer for it all right, and it won't be the first time. I've had something to answer for all my life."

"Get on with it."

That same night Lieutenant Pashka Yaguzhinsky drained a stirrup cup and raced hell for leather to Pskov where the army stores were located. In a tremendous hurry he brought back on three-horse waggons everything necessary for the projected enterprise. For two nights in succession the company and battery tailors' shops restitched and remade kaftans, cloaks, officers' sashes and banners and edged the soldiers' cocked hats with white piping. During those short nights two regiments of dragoons, Assafyev's and Gorbov's left secretly, squadron by squadron, followed the Semyonov and Ingermanland regiments with some guns whose green carriages had been repainted yellow, for the Revel road where they took up their positions in a thicket at Tarviegi some ten versts from Narva. All the clothing remade in the tailors' shops was taken to the same thicket. All this was done without attracting the attention of the Swedes.

One fine morning—the 8th of June—there was a sudden burst of activity in the Russian camp under the walls of Narva. Drums beat alarmingly, the huge kettle drums thundered and officers dashed to and fro shouting themselves hoarse. Soldiers came running out of their tents and shelters, buttoned up their kaftans and gaiters, pushed the long hair that hung down below their cocked hats behind their ears and formed up in two lines. The shouting gunners turned their cannon about with their muzzles pointing towards the Revel road. Horsemen drove the herds of transport horses from the fields into the camp behind the rows of carts.

The Swedes on the walls watched the disorder in the Russian camp in amazement. General Horn, bareheaded, climbed the outer staircase of the Gate Tower and

turned his spyglass on the Revel road. From that direction came two cannon shots, a minute later two more; the firing of two guns was repeated six times. The Swedes then realized that this was a signal from the approaching Schlippenbach and immediately answered with a royal salute of twenty-one guns from the Gloria Tower. Bells rang out joyously from all the churches in Narva.

For the first time during the many days of siege a smile was seen on the stern lips of General Horn as he saw Menshikov, the most impudent of all the Russians, decked out in all his glory and capering up and down on his white horse in front of the two lines of Muscovite troops. As though he were an experienced army commander, with a gesture of his marshal's baton he ordered the rear rank to turn and face the fortress and they, like a flock of sheep, ran to the trenches behind the palisades. He raised his horse onto its hind legs and then galloped along the front rank of soldiers still facing the Revel road. The whole manoeuvre was obvious to Horn with the wisdom of his years and many glorious battles: this whippersnapper with his scarlet cloak and ostrich plumes was guilty of an irremediable act of foolishness—he was placing a long drawn-out, thin line of infantry to meet Schlippenbach's iron cuirassiers who would tear them up with cannon balls, hack, trample and destroy them. General Horn drew a deep breath through his hairy nostrils. He had twelve squadrons of cavalry and four battalions of infantry standing behind the closed gates so that immediately Schlippenbach appeared he could hurl himself at the Russians from the rear.

Menshikov, as though in a great hurry to meet his death, for no obvious reason snatched off his hat, and waving it, made all the battalions following his capering horse at the double, shout a loud "Hurrah!" The shouts could be heard on the walls of Narva and again old Horn laughed. Russian horsemen followed by musket shots began to appear from the pinewood towards which Menshikov was heading. At last, from behind all the pine trees came Schlippenbach's companies of guards, a fine sight, marching shoulder to shoulder as though on parade, their bayonetted muskets held before them. The second rank fired over the heads of the front rank as they marched while the third rank loaded the muskets and handed them to those who had fired. The yellow Royal standards, held well aloft, fluttered to the breeze. Old Horn turned from his spyglass for a moment, pulled a linen handkerchief out of a cartridge pouch and passed it across his eyes. "Gods of war!" he muttered.

Menshikov, holding his hat, galloped along the front and halted his battalions. Cannon and two-wheeled ammunition limbers pulled by teams of six horses moved onto his flanks. The Russian gunners were smart and efficient, they had learned something during those past few years. Guns that had been polished till they shone —eight on either flank—turned their muzzles towards the Swedes (the horses had been unhooked and sent away) and immediately spouted masses of solid white smoke, a sure sign of the fine quality of their powder. The Swedes had not advanced more than twenty paces before the guns again barked at them. Old Horn crushed his handkerchief in his hand—such rapid fire was unbelievable. The Swedes halted. What the devil! That was not like Schlippenbach, to be scared of gunfire! Did he intend to send his cuirassiers forward or was he waiting for his artillery? Horn turned his spyglass this way and that in search of Schlippenbach, but the smoke prevented his seeing anything as it spread over the whole battlefield. It even seemed to him that the Swedes wavered under the hail of grapeshot. But he waited... Ha! At last! Swedish guns with their yellow carriages came out of the woods and a mighty conversation began... Then, he saw it quite clearly, Menshikov's ranks were in confusion... Time! Horn turned his wrinkled face from his spyglass to his second-in-command, Colonel Marquart.

"These are my orders," he said, exposing his yellow teeth to the gums. "Open the gates and attack the Russian right flank."

The drawbridges crashed down and squadrons of cuirassiers dashed out of four gates simultaneously with the infantry at the double behind them. Colonel Marquart led the Narva garrison in wedge formation in order to pass through the Russian palisades and chevaux-de-frise and strike Menshikov's flank from the rear, force him towards Schlippenbach and squeeze him tight in an iron grip.

What Horn saw as he watched through his spyglass at first pleased and then astonished him. Marquart's forces rapidly swept aside the Russian chevaux-de-frise without suffering any great losses, charged through the palisades and soon found themselves on the far side of the trenches. The people of Narva, some on foot, some on carts followed them out through the gates in order to plunder the Russian camp. Firing at random Menshikov's battalions suddenly began a movement that was incomprehensible: their right flank which Marquart was attacking with the Narva garrison began hastily withdrawing to their palisades and chevaux-de-frise, while the left flank, which was farthest from the town, began moving with equal rapidity in the direction of Schlippenbach's Swedes as though they intended to surrender. The cannon on both sides suddenly ceased fire. The dashing Marquart suddenly found himself in an empty field in a gap between Menshikov's troops and Schlippenbach's. His squadrons of cuirassiers with their flashing breast-plates began to rein in their horses, formed into a crescent and halted in indecision. The infantry that was following at a run also halted.

"I don't understand! What has happened, the devil take that Marquart!" shouted Horn.

"I don't quite understand it, either, Herr General," answered adjutant Bistrem.

Still more hurriedly turning his spyglass on the Russians, Horn saw that whippersnapper Menshikov gallop at full speed towards the Swedes. Why? To surrender? Recognizing him Marquart and two of his cuirassiers galloped forward to cut him off. Menshikov, however, outraced them and dismounted on the grass-covered hillock near a group of officers, who, judging by their cloaks and their banner with its lion rampant on a yellow field, formed Schlippenbach's staff. But where was Schlippenbach himself? Horn turned his glass on Marquart who had chased Menshikov as far as that same group of officers; he made a strange movement with his arms as though trying to ward off an apparition, trying to turn about but was pulled out of his saddle by some officers who ran up to him. A rider on a huge lop-eared horse rode up the hill and the banner was dipped in his honour. This could be none other than Schlippenbach... Tears clouded old Horn's eyes, but he angrily forced them back and pressed the copper eye-piece of the spyglass more firmly to his eye. The man on the lop-eared horse did not look like Schlippenbach... He looked more like...

"Herr General, treachery!" said Adjutant Bistrem with quick sternness.

"I can see without your help that that is Tsar Peter in Swedish uniform. I realize without your help that they have played a fine trick on me... Order my cuirasse and sword to be brought..." General Horn now abandoned his useless spyglass and ran down the steep staircase of the Gate Tower like a young man.

What happened during the masquerade battle was the same as always happens when a successful trick is played on an army commander. The Preobrazhensky and Ingermanland regiments in Swedish uniforms, Assafyev's and Gorbov's dragoons who had until then remained hidden in the wood now delivered a furious attack on the unfortunate Marquart's Swedes from the other side of Menshikov's battalions; Marquart had handed his sword to Tsar Peter and thrown his brass helmet onto the grass and was standing amongst the Russian officers on the hill, his head bowed in shame and despair so that he could not see the route of his troops who formed at least a third of the garrison of Narva.

For some time, his cuirassiers, covering the infantry, retired in formation in a series of short spurts. When Colonel Renn's dragoons attacked their rear from the direction of the birch grove where they had lain in hiding, a real mêlée began. The firing ceased. The only sounds were the ferocious squeals as the Russians hacked with their heavy sabres, the hoarse cries of the dying Swedes and the crash of sword on cuirasse and helmet. Screaming horses tore at each other with their teeth. The Royal standard fell. Individual horsemen who escaped from that mad mêlée galloped about the fields as though blind, stumbled, waved their arms and fell. All the Russian troops crowded onto the parapets above the trenches like a Shrovetide crowd gathered to watch a bear baiting. The soldiers hooted and danced, threw their cocked hats into the air, screaming: "Bring them down!.."

Very few of the Swedish troops succeeded in fighting their way back to Narva. The only thing General Horn could do was to defend the city gates so that the Russians would not enter the town in their stride. The townspeople who had come out bent on loot were dashing up and down before the city moats in their waggons. The soldiers came out from behind the palisades, in their excitement paying no heed to the firing from the city walls, seized many of the Narva citizens together with their waggons and horses and took them back to camp to be sold to the officers.

That evening there was a merry supper in Menshikov's big tent. They drank Admiral de Prout's fiery rum, ate Revel ham and smoked flounder which few of them had ever seen before, tearing it apart with their hands and ripping off the skin like a stocking. The fish was a bit smelly but it was good. Alexander Danilovich's back was sore from the slaps which he had received from those who drank to his cunning plan. "You just led wise old Horn by the nose. It's your birthday today!" said Tsar Peter, who had been drinking heavily, in his bass voice as he thumped him between the shoulders with a fist like a sledge hammer. "I'll bet you could outdo Ulysses himself in cunning!" screamed Chambers and also thumped the Governor-General on the back. "I can't imagine anybody more cunning than the Russians!"

Constantly interrupting one another, the guests made several attempts at compiling a missive to General Horn awarding him "the Order of the Great Nose." The beginning was not too bad: "To thee, nursemaid of Narva, an old fool who has wetted his breeches, a castrated cat aping a roaring lion..." From then on the drunken ravings of the authors produced such strong language that Secretary Makarov did not know how to put them on paper. Anikita Ivanovich Repnin added his goat-like laugh to the general uproar as long as he thought necessary.

"Peter Alexeyevich," he said to the Tsar, "is it worth while insulting the old man? The battle is not yet over."

The others struck at him and shouted at him. The Tsar took the unfinished letter from Makarov, screwed it up and stuck it in his pocket.

"You had your laugh... that's all..."

He stood up, swayed, seized Makarov by the shoulder, with an effort settled the lax features of his round face into an expression of sternness, stretched out his long neck and, as usual, was master of himself.

"Put an end to the feast!"

He left the tent. Dawn was breaking. The grass was grey with the heavy dew and the smoke from the campfires hung low over it. Tsar Peter drew a big breath of the sweet morning air.

"The time has come!.." Anikita Ivanovich Repnin and Colonel Renn left

the group of officers that was standing behind the Tsar and walked up to him. "Once more I tell you both, I don't want any exaggerated stories of victory and I don't expect to hear any. We have a difficult and bloody battle ahead of us. We must strike and strike so hard that they will never be able to gather their forces again. This is a job for which we must harden our hearts... We must rout and capture all his troops. You may go..."

Anikita Ivanovich Repnin and Colonel Renn bowed low to him and walked away from the tent up to their knees in the thick grass; they walked towards the dark forest where all the participants in yesterday's battle, the dragoons and the infantry regiments, now wearing their own uniform, the infantry loaded on waggons, were awaiting their orders. Today's battle would be no joke, for they were going to surround and destroy Schlippenbach's Army Corps at Wesenberg.

4

"And so, gentlemen, the former King August, whom we considered reduced to complete insignificance, has now obtained help from the Russians and is fast approaching Warsaw," said young King Stanislaw Leszcziski, opening the War Council. The King was greatly fatigued by the state affairs that had been forced on him, and his arrogant, unkindly face was pale almost to blueness under his lowered eyelids; he did not raise his eyes because he was tired and disgusted by the bloated faces of his courtiers and the constant talk of war, money and loans. His thin hand ran over the beads of his rosary. He was dressed in the Polish costume that he hated, but ever since Colonel Arved Horn, nephew of the hero of Narva, and his Swedish garrison had been in Warsaw, the Polish landowners and nobles had hung up their wigs, packed their French kaftans away in tobacco and now walked the streets in their long Polish tunics with the loose sleeves turned back, beaver-skin caps and soft leather boots with clanking spurs, and in place of their rapiers had girded on the heavy Polish sabres worn by their grandfathers.

Warsaw lived merrily and carefree under the sound protection of Arved Horn, and forgave him his arrogance when he forced the Diet to elect as king a not very well born but elegantly brought-up young man. The Swedish officers were vulgar and haughty but in the drinking of wine and mead could not hold their own with the Poles, while at dancing they fell a long way behind such elegant masters of the mazurka as Potocki and Wisznewecki. There was one great misfortune, the money that came from the war-ruined estates was constantly on the decrease, although even this seemed to be of a purely temporary nature: Charles would not dominate Poland for ever, at some time or another he would go east to deal with Tsar Peter.

Quite unexpectedly storm clouds gathered over Warsaw. August had seized the rich city of Lublin without struggle and was moving fast with his noisy Polish cavalry up the left bank of the Vistula towards Warsaw: the ugly, one-eyed Ataman Danila Apostol with the Dnieper Cossacks had crossed to the right bank of the river and was advancing on Praga, a suburb of Warsaw; eleven Russian infantry regiments were clearing Stanislaw's followers out of the provincial towns, had already taken Brest and were also moving on Warsaw; from the west Field Marshal Schulenburg's Saxon Corps was advancing with equal speed, by a clever manoeuvre outwitting King Charles who awaited them on another road.

"May God and the Holy Virgin be my witnesses, I never wished to wear the Polish crown, it was the will of the Diet," said Stanislaw in contemptuous measured tones and without raising his eyes. On the rug at his feet lay a borzoi bitch of purest blood, her head resting on her paws. "In my high office I have experienced nothing but difficulties and unpleasantness. I am prepared to renounce the crown, if the Diet, from motives of caution and common sense, so desire it, in order not to submit Warsaw to the wrath of August. There is no doubt he has good cause to let loose his anger. He is ambitious and stubborn. His ally, Tsar Peter, is still more stubborn and cunning, and they will fight till they achieve their aim, until everybody is finally ruined." He laid his morocco-leather-clad foot on the dog's back and she turned her violet eyes on the king. "I do not claim any rights, I should find the greatest pleasure in leaving for Italy... I admire the exercises at Bologna University..."

Colonel Arved Horn, in his closed-buttened threadbare green tunic, red-faced, a cold angry glint in his eyes, grunted from his seat on a folding stool opposite the King.

"This is not a Council of War but a shameful capitulation..."

Slowly King Stanislaw screwed up his mouth. Cardinal Radziewski, a bitter enemy of August, not listening to the Swede's remark, spoke in that dominating, modestly imperative voice which has been cultivated in the Jesuit colleges since the time of Ignatius de Loyola.

"Your Majesty's desire to withdraw from battle," he said. "is no more than a passing weakness. The flowers of your soul have been bowed down by a raw wind—we are deeply moved... But the crown of a Catholic king differs from a hat in that it can only be removed together with the head. Or a special Bull to that purpose must be issued by his Holiness the Pope. Let us speak with courage of resisting the usurper and enemy of the church, for the Elector August of Saxony is a poor Catholic. We will hear what Colonel Horn has to say."

The Primate, with a swish of ample scarlet robes reflected in detail in the waxed floor, turned heavily towards the Swede and made a motion with his hand as elegant as if he were offering him the greatest dainty. Colonel Horn pushed back his chair, spread his legs clad in rough

jackboots (like all the Swedes he wore a threadbare tunic and heavy, bell-topped boots in imitation of King Charles), and coughed drily to clear his throat.

"I repeat," he said, "a war council must be a council of war and not a discussion on flowers. I shall defend Warsaw to the last man—such is the wish of my King. I have ordered my fusiliers to shoot anybody who passes out through the gates after dusk. I will not allow a single coward to leave Warsaw. I will make even the cowards fight! You make me laugh—we have as many troops as August. The Grand Hetman, Prince Lubomirski, knows that better than I do. You make me laugh—August might surround us! That merely means that he is letting us defeat him piecemeal—in the south are his drunken szlachta cavalry, to the east of Warsaw there is the Ataman Danila Apostol whose Cossacks are lightly armed and will not stand up against Hussars in armour... Field Marshal Schulenburg will meet his doom before he reaches Warsaw, my King is no doubt close behind him. The only significant danger is Prince Golitsyn's eleven Russian regiments, but while they are marching here from Brest we shall destroy August and they will either have to retreat or die. I suggest that Prince Lubomirski gather all the cavalry in Warsaw tonight. I suggest that Your Majesty, at once, before that candle burns down in the socket, order a general levy... May the devil take me if I don't pull all the feathers out of that August's tail!"

Blowing out his blonde moustaches, Arved Horn smiled and sat down. Now even the King raised his eyes to look at the Grand Hetman, Prince Lubomirski, commander of all the Polish and Lithuanian Armies. Throughout the whole conversation he had sat at the King's left hand in a gilded chair, his forehead resting in the palm of his hand so that all that was visible of him was his close-cropped round head with the forelock that appeared to be dusted with pepper and the long thin whiskers that hung from his lips. He seemed to recover consciousness when the silence fell, breathed deeply, straightened his back—he was tall, bony and broad-shouldered— and slowly placed his hand on a diamond-studded dagger thrust into his valuable woven belt. His hooknosed face, lightly touched by smallpox, with its sunken cheeks and inflamed skin tightly drawn over the cheekbones, was so unsociable and proudly morose that the King's eyelids twitched and he bent forward and patted the dog lying at his feet. The Grand Hetman rose slowly to his feet. His long-awaited hour of reckoning had come.

He was the greatest landowner in Poland, his extensive possessions making him more powerful than any king. When he went to the Diet or to church at Czestochow, before and behind his carriage rode five thousand of the szlachta, on horseback, in briczkas, or in carts, all dressed exactly alike in scarlet tunics with blue cuffs on their turned-back sleeves. When summoned for a general levy—campaigns against revolting Ukrainians or against the Tatars—he led three regiments of Hussars in steel cuirasses with wings on their shoulders. As a Piast by blood he considered himself first Pretender to the Polish throne after the overthrow of August. Last year two thirds of the Diet deputies had rattled their sabres and shouted: "We want Lubomirski!" This was not what King Charles wanted, however. He wanted a puppet. Colonel Horn surrounded the stormy Diet with his fusiliers who lit their fuses and insulted the solemnity of the meeting of the Diet with the rattling of their drums. Horn, stamping as though he were knocking nails into the floor with his boots, walked up to the empty royal seat and shouted: "I propose Stanislaw Leszczjski!"

The Grand Hetman hid his wrath. No one anywhere had ever dared sully his honour. This King Charles had done, who probably had less ploughlands and gold vessels than Lubomirski. With a savage, dark look on his face, his finger-nails scratching the hilt of his dagger, he spoke with great ferocity, like a serpent, hissing his consonants:

"Did I hear it or did I imagine it? Did the garrison commandant dare give orders to me, the Grand Hetman, the Prince Lubomirski? Is this a joke? Or impertinence? (The King raised the hand that held the rosary, the cardinal leaned forward in his chair, his flabby, owl-like face trembling, but the Hetman only raised his voice menacingly.) You are awaiting my advice. I have heard you, gentlemen, and I have consulted my conscience... Here is my answer. Our troops are unreliable. If they are to spill their own blood and that of their brothers the heart of every szlachticz must sing with rapture and his head whirl with anger... Perhaps King Stanislaw knows a battle slogan of this kind? I don't know his... 'In the name of God, forward to death for the glory of the Leszczjski?' That won't do. 'In the name of God, forward for the glory of the King of the Swedes?' They'll throw down their swords. I cannot lead the troops. I am no longer Hetman!"

The distorted face of the Hetman was purple to his shaggy eyebrows.

Unable to contain himself he pulled the mace out of his belt, and threw it at the feet of the milksop of a king. The white bitch whined pitifully.

"Treachery!" shouted Horn in a rage.

5

The word "berserk" or one seized with wild frenzy, goes back to very ancient times when it was the custom of northern warriors to intoxicate themselves with agaric. In medieval times the Norsemen gave the name of "berserks" to those who fought frenziedly in battle—they fought in their linen shirts without mail, shield or helm and were so terrible that, according to one legend, for example, twelve berserks the sons of King Canute, sailed alone in their own ship as the Norsemen themselves were afraid of them.

The fit of madness that overtook King

Charles could only be called a berserk fit, so scared and shattered were all the courtiers in his tent at the time, while Baron Pieper scarcely hoped to get out alive. When he received the message by pigeon from the Baroness Kozelska, Charles against the advice of Pieper, Field Marshal Renscheldt and other generals, was unwavering in his vengeful determination to punish August immediately, bring the whole of Poland into submission to Stanislaw Leszcziski, give his troops a good rest and then, next year, in one summer campaign complete the whole eastern war with a brilliant defeat of all Peter's regiments. He was not worried about the fate of Narva and Yuriev; they had reliable garrisons and stout walls, while the gallant Schlippenbach would deal with the Moscovites. Apart from this it hurt the pride of the heir of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar to change his great plans on account of some billet, especially one that came from a decadent courtesan.

The news of the arrival of the Russian reinforcements at Sokal and of August's sudden march on Warsaw under the very nose of Charles (who, like a well-fed lion, was in no hurry to sink his teeth into the doomed Polish King) was brought by the very same szlachticz who at Pan Sobeszcząski's feast had cut through the dish and sausage with his sword. Baron Pieper in his confusion went at dawn to wake the King. Charles was sleeping peacefully on a camp bed, his arms crossed on his breast. The dim light from a little copper lamp fell on his huge hooked nose, on his ascetic sunken cheeks and firmly pressed lips—even in his sleep he wanted to be uncommon. He resembled the stone carving of a knight on a tomb.

At first Baron Pieper placed his faith in the royal cockerel who was due at any moment to crow at the top of his voice. The cockerel, however, had to share the King's monastic existence, and merely fluttered in his cage outside the tent-wall and gave vent to a hoarse noise that sounded something like "eh-he-he."

"Wake up, Your Majesty," whispered Baron Pieper as gently as possible, turning up the light of the lamp. "Your Majesty, there is unpleasant news. (Charles opened his eyes without making any other movement). August has got away from us..."

Onto the bedside rug Charles promptly thrust his legs clad in linen underpants and woollen stockings, and resting on his fists glanced at Pieper. The latter, with all the caution habitual in a courtier, told him of the change that had taken place in August's fortunes.

"My boots and breeches!" enunciated Charles slowly, opening his unblinking eyes ever more terrifyingly—they even began to glitter, or perhaps it was the reflection of the lamp which was beginning to smoke. Pieper dashed out of the tent and returned immediately with Berkenhelm whose wig was clapped on to his head awry. The generals came into the tent. Charles put on his breeches, stretched his legs, drew on his jackboots, buttoned up his tunic, breaking two finger-nails in the process, and only then gave vent to his full fury.

"You spend your time with dirty strumpets, you have become as fat as a Catholic monk!" he barked with cheekbones protruding and teeth chattering at the entirely innocent General Rosen. "Today is your day of shame," he shouted at General Löwenhaupt, turning towards him as though about to strike him with his sword, "you ought to be amongst the lowest ranks in the baggage train of my army! Where is your intelligence service? I get the news later than anybody! I get the most important news, news on which the fate of all Europe depends, from some drunken szlachticz. I hear it from courtesans! I am a laughing stock. I still wonder that the Cossacks haven't dragged me out of my tent in my sleep and taken me to Moscow with a rope round my neck! And as for you, Herre Pieper, I advise you to change the baronial coronet on your coat-of-arms for a dunce's cap! You, eater of snipe, partridge and other game, drunkard and donkey, don't you dare look offended. It would give me great satisfaction to break you on the wheel and quarter you. Where are your spies, I would like to know? Where are your couriers who should have kept me informed of events a day before they occured? Get to hell out of here! I will abandon the army and go into private life. I am disgusted at being your King. You need someone like the fat-bellied King Dagober who wore a beer-mug on his head."

King Charles ripped all the buttons off his tunic. With a crash his jackboot went through a drum. He snatched the wig from Berkenhelm's head and tore it to pieces. Nobody objected as he dashed about the tent amongst the courtiers who backed away from him. When the berserkier fit began to die down Charles folded his hands behind his back, bowed his head and said:

"I order you to sound the alarm immediately. I give you three hours to have the army ready to move, gentlemen. I am going to act. You will learn the details from my order of the day. Leave my tent. Berkenhelm, pen, ink and paper."

6

"This is unbearable... We wait and wait for all eternity. We need greater decision, a good attack and we could spend the night in Warsaw," grumbled Baroness Kozelska glancing out of the carriage window at the countless fires that spread in a huge arc round the invisible city. The Baroness was fatigued to the verge of exhaustion. Her elegant carriage with the golden cupids had been smashed when crossing a stream and she had to move into Pani Anna Sobeszczązka's shaky, uncomfortable and ugly coach. The Baroness was so angry, Pani Anna seemed such an insignificant being to her, that she was even polite to the Polish woman from the backwoods.

"The King's carriage is just ahead of us, but he is not there... What he is thinking even God does not know... No preparations for supper and rest..."

Dragging at the strap the Baroness lowered the carriage window with great difficulty. The warm smell of horse sweat and the rich smoke of the soldiers' field kitchens entered the carriage. The night was filled with the noises of a camping ground—voices calling to each other, interlocked carts crashing and rumbling, shouts, curses, laughter, the stamping of horses and distant firing. The Baroness had grown tired of the joys of camp life and closed the window. Dropping back into her corner of the carriage everything got in her way, her crumpled dress, the burnous she was wearing and the corners of her box—she would just then have enjoyed biting somebody till the blood ran...

"I am afraid we shall find the royal palace plundered and in complete disorder... The Leszczjski family is famous for its cupidity and I know Stanislaw only too well—a miser, mean and avaricious. He left Warsaw with more than a prayer-book in his pocket! I would advise you, my dear, to keep in reserve some private house, that is, of course, if you have any fine acquaintances in Warsaw. Don't count too much on August... My God, what a scoundrel he is!"

Pani Anna enjoyed her talks with the Baroness—this was real high society education. From her early maidenhood, when pretty curves had just become noticeable under her shirt, Pani Anna had dreamt of a life out of the ordinary. She had only to look in the mirror—she was beautiful, not just pretty, she had fire, was clever, sharp, high-spirited and full of energy. Her parents' house was poor, her father an impoverished szlachticz; he made his living at fairs and at the card tables of the rich. He was seldom at home. In his shabby kaftan, tired, humbled, with a crushed look about him he would sit at the window and gaze silently at his poverty-stricken farm. Anna, his only and much-loved daughter, would insist on his telling her his adventures. Her father was at first unwilling, but then he would warm up to his subject and begin boasting of his exploits and his fine acquaintances. As though it were a fairy-tale Anna listened to true and untrue stories of the marvels and luxury of the Princess Wiszniewecki, Potocki, Lubomirski, Czartorijski... When her father sold the last nag on his farm to pay his gambling debts and they had eaten up the last chicken, he betrothed his daughter to the elderly Pan Sobeszcząski: Anna did not protest, realizing that the marriage was a sure step towards the future. The only thing that upset her was the fact that her husband was too much in love with her for his years. She had a kind heart which, however, was fully controlled by her reason.

And now chance had brought her to the very top of the ladder of good fortune. The King had become entangled in her net. Pani Anna did not lose her head like a silly girl; her sharp intellect got busy, she was like a mouse in a corn-bin; everything, however, had to be carefully planned and foreseen. To Pan Sobeszcząski, a loving husband who usually neither saw nor understood anything, she made an announcement in the tenderst tones.

"I have had enough of village stagnation. Joseph, you should be glad for my sake: I want to be the first lady in Warsaw now. Don't worry about anything, make merry and adore me."

There was, however, something else which was more difficult: she had to outwit the Baroness Kozelska and quietly to sink her and lastly, the trickiest business of all, was to get the King firmly entangled and not merely to serve his passing whims.

Feminine beauty was not enough for this, experience was necessary as well. Without wasting any time Pani Anna began to pump the secrets of seduction out of the Baroness.

"Oh no, kind Baroness, in Warsaw I should be content to live in a hovel if only to be near you, like a grey bee hovering round a rose," said Pani Anna, sitting with her legs drawn up in the other corner of the coach and shot a glance at the face of the Baroness who sat with closed eyes: her face was first lit up by the reflection of the camp fires and then lost in the shadows, like the moon disappearing behind clouds. "I am really still only a child. I still tremble when the King speaks to me—I don't want to answer something silly or improper."

The Baroness spoke as though in answer to her own thoughts, sour as vinegar.

"When the King is hungry he eats black bread or **pâté de foie gras** with equal enjoyment. At one roadside inn he got entangled with a pock-marked Cossack woman who ran like lightning across the yard to the cellar and then back to the inn with her jugs. She was a woman and that is all he cares about. The monster! The Baroness Kõnigsmark captivated him by showing her garters as she danced, black velvet ribbons tied in bows on pink stockings..."

"Jesus Maria, and that worked?" whispered Pani Anna.

"He was like a pig when he fell in love with the Russian Boyarynya Volkova; during a ball she changed her dress and her shift several times and he ran to her room and wiped the sweat from his face with her shift. Philip II of France did the same thing in the last century. Philip's affair was a longstanding one but the Boyarynya Volkova, to everybody's satisfaction, slipped away from under August's very nose."

"I'm terribly silly," exclaimed Pani Anna, "but I don't understand what that creature's shift had to do with it?"

"It wasn't the shift but the creature's skin, which had its own peculiar smell. A woman's skin is to her what perfume is to flowers, every child in a convent school knows that... With such a decadent as our beloved King the nose determines sympathies..."

"Oh! Holy Virgin!"

"You have seen the tremendous nose of which he is so proud—he thinks it gives him some resemblance to Henri Quatre... He's always blowing out his nostrils like a gun-dog seeking partridge."

"So that what one needs is perfume, powder from ambergris and aromatic baths? Is that right, kind Baroness?"

"If you have read the 'Odyssey' you will know that the sorceress Circe turned men into swine... Don't pretend to be so naive, my dear... Incidentally, all this is quite disgusting, boring and mean."

The Baroness stopped talking and Pani Anna began to meditate—who, now, had outwitted whom? A horse's jowl, with foam on its black lips appeared at the carriage window. The King had come. He jumped down from the saddle and opened the carriage door—his nostrils were dilated and his huge, vivacious face wore a beaming smile. In the light of a torch held by a horseman he looked magnificent in his light, gilded helmet with the vizor turned up, a magnificent purple mantle thrown across his shoulders. "No, no, nothing foolish," whispered Pani Anna to herself.

"Come on out, ladies," exclaimed the King, merrily, "you shall be present at a historical spectacle."

Pani Anna, with a tiny scream, immediately tumbled out of the carriage.

"My back is broken, which is no doubt what Your Majesty wanted," said the Baroness. "I am not dressed and will remain here to doze off on an empty stomach."

"If you need a litter, I will send one," the King answered sharply.

"A litter? For me?" August was somewhat taken aback by the flashing green fire of her eyes. The Baroness flew out of the carriage like a bombshell, in her peach-coloured burnous and fiery precious stones trembling in her ears, around her neck and on her fingers; her coiffure was disarranged but was none the less pretty for that. "Always at your service." And she tucked her bare arm under his elbow. Once again Pani Anna realized the full extent of this woman's art.

The three of them walked over to the King's carriage where stood a squadron of picked szlachta cavalry, mounted on their horses, white swan's feathers fastened behind the steel shoulder plates of their cuirasses. August and the ladies, the latter beside and a little behind him, sat in armchairs placed on a carpet. Pani Anna's heart was beating fast; it seemed to her that the tall winged horsemen that surrounded them, the light flashing from their cuirasses and helmets, were God's angels sent down to earth to return August's Warsaw palace, his money and his fame to him. She closed her eyes and said a short prayer:

"May the King be like a lamb in my hands..."

With the sound of horses' hoofs in the distance the squadron opened ranks, and out of the darkness appeared the Grand Hetman Lubomirski with his suite, also wearing wings on their shoulders—black swan's feather wings. Riding right up to the King, the Grand Hetman reined back his horse so that his cloak flew open, leaped down onto the carpet from the rearing animal and bent his knee before the King.

"If you can, o King, forgive my treachery..."

His dark, burning eyes were firm, his inflamed face was sombre, his voice broke. He had swallowed his pride. He did not remove his fur cap with its garland of diamonds, only his dry hands trembled...

"My treachery to you was loss of reason. Believe me, not for one hour did I acknowledge Stanislaw as king. Rancour tore at my vitals. I waited... I threw my mace at his feet. I spat and left him. In the palace yard the commandant's soldiers attacked me. Thank God my hand can still wield a sabre: with the blood of the accursed I confirmed my break with Leszcjski. I offer you my life."

As he listened August slowly drew off his mailed gloves. He dropped them on the carpet and his face lit up. He rose, stretched out his hands.

"I believe you, Grand Hetman... From the depths of my heart I forgive and embrace you."

With all his strength he pressed the Hetman's face to his breastplate with its embossed centaurs and nymphs, the work of Italian craftsmen. Holding him pressed in this position rather longer than was necessary, August ordered another chair to be brought. The chair, however, was already there. The Grand Hetman, occasionally touching his bruised cheek, began to tell of the events that had occured in Warsaw since his refusal to come out against August and the Russians.

There was an uproar in Warsaw. The Primate, Cardinal Radziewski who at Lublin Diet last year had publicly sworn allegiance to August and to the liberties of the Rzecz Pospolita on his knees before the crucifix and had a month later in Warsaw kissed the Lutheran testament as a token of his loyalty to King Charles, had demanded, foaming at the mouth, that August be dethroned; he had put forward Prince Lubomirski as a candidate for the throne and immediately on the demand of Arved Horn had betrayed him: this triple traitor had been the first to flee from Warsaw and had managed to take away with him several coffers containing church moneys.

For three days King Stanislaw wandered about the empty palace; on each succeeding morning fewer and fewer courtiers appeared to greet him. Arved Horn did not let him out of his sight—he swore that he would hold Warsaw with his garrison alone. According to the rules of etiquette he could not eat at the royal table, so he had his dinner and supper in an adjoining room where he sat clanking his spurs. In order not to hear the clanking, the King recited aloud Apuleius' latin verses between the courses. On the fourth night he escaped from the palace with his barber and a lackey—he was dressed in a country costume with a false beard stuck on his chin. He rode out of the city gates on a cart with two barrels of tar in which the whole royal treasury was concealed. Arved Horn realized when it was too late that King Stanislaw

—who was a real Leszczjski, apart from reciting Apuleius and killing time by wandering through the empty rooms with his dog had been doing something during these days. Arved Horn tore the hangings from the royal bed and trampled on them, he ran his sword through the palace majordome and shot the officer of the night guard. Nothing could now stop the flight from Warsaw of the leading gentry who were in any way connected with Leszczjski.

August roared with laughter at these tales, banged his fists on the arms of his chair and turned to the ladies. The eyes of the Baroness Kozelska showed nothing but cold contempt but Pani Anna gave vent to a laugh like a silver bell.

"What is your advice, Grand Hetman, the siege or the immediate storming of the city?"

"Of course we must storm it, Your Majesty. Arved Horn's garrison is not large. Warsaw must be taken before King Charles arrives."

"We'll storm it immediately, damn it! A wise counsel." August rattled his iron shoulder-plates in a most war-like manner. "To make sure that the storming will be successful we must feed the troops well, even if only on boiled goose. At a modest estimate that would require five thousand geese. Hmm!" he wrinkled up his nose. "It would also be a good idea to pay their wages. Prince Dmitri Mikhailovich Golitsyn was only able to bring me twenty thousand yefimoks... Small change! Tsar Peter is not very generous with his money, not at all generous! I expected to get the cardinal's and the palace treasury. Stolen!" he screeched, turning red. "I cannot raise indemnities in my own capital!"

Prince Lubomirski listened to all this, looking down at his own feet and said softly:

"My war coffers are not empty... Just give the order..."

"Thank you, I should be glad to take the opportunity," answered August, rather too hurriedly but with all the grace of the court of Versailles. "I need a hundred thousand yefimoks. I will return them after the storming." Brightening up he rose and again embraced the Hetman, cheek to cheek. "Go and rest, Prince. We also need a rest."

The Hetman leaped on to his horse and without looking back disappeared into the darkness. August turned to the ladies.

"Your tiring travels will be rewarded, ladies. Only let me know your wishes. The first of them is the most modest, I imagine you would like supper... Don't think that I have forgotten about your comforts and amusements. Such is the duty of a king, never to forget anything. Please come to my carriage..."

Chapter V

Gabriel Brovkin was making a non-stop race to Moscow in a stumpy, open coach on an iron undercarriage; he had a royal order for three post-horses at each stage of the journey for he was carrying the Tsar's mail and instructions to the Prince-Caesar to hasten the delivery of all kinds of iron goods to Pieterburkh. Andrei Golikov was travelling with him and they had been ordered not to loiter on the way. Loiter indeed! Gabriel's anxious heart flew along the road a hundred yards ahead of the coach. As they reached the tavern at each stage, or, as they were now called, each posting inn, the dust-covered Gabriel would dash up to the porch and bang on the door with the handle of his whip. "Commissar!" he would shout rolling his eyes. "Three horses, at once!" and he would turn on the sleepy coach master whose hat with the piping round the brim was his only badge of office—in the hot weather he went barefoot, in underpants and a long, loose shirt. "A jug of kvas, and see to it that the horses are harnessed by the time I have drunk it."

Andrei Golikov was also in a state of great elation. With clenched teeth he hung on tightly to the rim of the open coach so as to keep his seat and get less hard knocks; his hair was blown back behind him, his nose was thrust forward like the beak of a snipe and he seemed for the first time to have opened his eyes to gaze at the woods with their heat-haze smelling strongly of pine-tar that came floating towards them, at the swampy lakes, surrounded by evil-looking bright green undergrowth and reflecting the sky and the little summery clouds, and the dark torturously winding rivulets from which arose masses of all kinds of game as the coach rattled over the bridges. The bell dangling from the wooden arch that swayed back and forth over the centre horse's neck tolled dolefully its song of a long, endless journey. The coachman drove his horses at full speed, his humped shoulders feeling the whip of his infuriated passenger.

Villages were few and far between, delapidated, depopulated groups of tumble-down log huts, two little holes a couple of spans in width with a bladder stretched over them took the place of windows; over the low doors were narrow sooty openings to let out the smoke. Under a blasted willow there would be a little shrine with a tiny icon so that at least there was something to remind one of God in these otherwise god-forsaken holes. In some of the villages only two or three of the houses were inhabited, the thin roofs of the others had fallen in, the yard gates had collapsed and the whole surrounding ground was choked with nettles. As for the people, go seek them in the dense forests or the devil knows where, away in the north on the Dvina or the Vyg, or else they had fled beyond the Urals or to the lower Don.

"Ugh, what poverty-stricken villages, ugh, how badly the people live!" whispered Golikov and as a sign of sympathy

he placed his long, thick hand on his cheek. Gabriel answered him deliberately:

"The people are few and the realm is so immense that ten years would not be enough to travel round its borders —that's the cause of the poverty; a great deal is taken from everybody. I have been in France... Good Lord, the peasants there shake in the wind... eat grass with sour wine, and that's not all... But when some marquis or the French Dauphin himself goes out shooting he kills game by the cartload. There's poverty, real poverty. It has a different cause, however..."

Golikov did not ask what caused the French peasants to shake in the wind. His was not an enlightened mind and it did not run to causes; with his own eyes, ears and nostrils he had drunk the bitter wine of life and his joys and sorrows were exaggerated to extremes.

When they reached the Valdai Hills the landscape improved—they passed fields with last year's haystacks still there each with a hawk sitting on top of it, the road was well wooded, running at times through dense forests of deciduous trees where one only had to get out of the coach to pick all the berries one needed; and the noises heard in the forest were different, milder and more pleasant to man. The villages were richer-looking, the farmyards had strong gates and the porches were ornamented with carved woodwork. They stopped at a well to water their horses and saw a girl of about sixteen, her hair in a thick plait, on her head a lime-bark crown with blue beads on all its points, such a sweet-looking girl, one wanted to jump out of the coach and kiss her lips. Golikov began to sigh softly. Gabriel, however, paying no attention to a mere village girl, called out to her.

"Hi, what are you standing there bewitched for?" he said. "Can't you see that we have broken a wheel rim. Run and call the blacksmith."

"Yes," she exclaimed softly, threw down her buckets and yoke and ran off across the grass, her pink heels flashing from beneath her long, embroidered, linen shirt. She said something to someone and soon the blacksmith appeared. Anybody would have gasped with pleasure at the sight of such a man; what strength he had! His face with its curly beard had strong features, there was a smile on his lips which seemed to say that he had come to see the foolish wayfarers out of sheer condescension, his mighty chest could have borne the blows of a two-pood weight without suffering any harm; his powerful arms were folded on his leather apron.

"Your wheel rim's broken, is it?" he asked laughingly in a rich bass. "You can see that's Moscow work." Shaking his head he walked round the coach, looked under it, took hold of the back and shook it easily with the passengers sitting in it. "The thing's falling to pieces—on a cart like that all you can do is take firewood to the devil."

Gabriel was angry and began to quarrel... Golikov looked at the blacksmith in admiration—of all the miracles this man was the most astonishing. How could he help but long for paint and brushes and a sweet smelling oaken board to paint on. Everything, everything passed him by in a flash, everything passed into the haze of forgetfulness. Only the painter with his art of recording things on the white surface of his board could put an end to this senseless destruction.

"Well, are you going to take long about it?" asked Gabriel. "Every hour is precious to me. I am travelling on the Tsar's business."

"I can take a long or a short time," answered the blacksmith.

Gabriel looked sternly at his whip, then looked back at the smith.

"Well, how much do you want?"

"How much do you want?" answered the smiling smith. "My work is expensive. If I ask you what it is worth you won't have enough money to pay me. I know you, Gabriel Ivanovich. You came through here in the spring with your brother and spent the night at my place. Forgotten, have you? That brother of yours is a man with some sense. And I know Tsar Peter as well, and he knows me, always turns into the smithy to see me. He's also got some sense. All right, drive into the smithy, we'll try and do something for you."

The smithy stood on the slope of a hill beside the main road, low-built from enormous logs, the roof turfed over and in front three stocks for shoeing horses; all around lay wheels, ploughs and harrows. Standing at the door of the smithy, clad in leather aprons, their curly hair held in place by leather thongs, were the smith's two younger brothers, and his elder brother, a gloomy-looking, tall, clumsy, hammer-man. Unhurriedly, but with an obvious knowledge of his job, the smith set to work. He himself unharnessed the horses, tipped up the coach and removed the wheels and the iron axles.

"Look, both of them cracked—that Moscow blacksmith ought to be cracked over the head with an axle like this."

He threw the two axles into the furnace, piled coal over them and shouted to a younger brother.

"Hi, Vanyusha, blow her up hard—what's worth doing, is worth doing well!"

The brothers set to work. Gabriel leant against the door sucking his pipe while Golikov sat on the high doorstep. They asked several times whether they could help to get the work done more quickly but the smith only waved his hand.

"Sit still and see what the Valdai blacksmiths are like for once."

Vanyusha blew up the fire with his bellows and the crackling and flashing sparks flew to the ceiling. Lit up by the sparks the elder brother stood there still as an idol, his hands folded on the long handle of his forty-pound hammer. The smith turned over the axles in the glowing red furnace.

"If you want to know—our name is Vorobyov," he said all the while smiling into his curly moustaches. "We are farriers, gunsmiths and bell casters... That is one of our sweet-sounding bells on the arch over your shafts. Last year Tsar Peter sat here on the doorstep and asked all sorts of ques-

tions. 'Wait before you start hammering, Kondrati Vorobyov,' he said. 'Listen to me first: why do your bells have such a sweet sound? Why is it that the sword blades you make bend and don't break? Why is it that a Vorobyov pistol shoots twenty paces farther than the others and doesn't miss?' I answered him: 'Your Royal Majesty, Peter Alexeyevich, our bells have a sweet sound because we weigh the copper and tin on scales the way skilled people taught us and then cast them without any bubbles. Our swords bend and don't break because we temper them raspberry red and then harden them in hempseed oil. And our pistols shoot farther and don't miss fire because our father, Stepan Stepanovich, may he rest in the kingdom of heaven, gave us a real good hiding when we were small for everything we did wrong. Bad workmanship, he used to say, is worse than stealing... So that..."

Kondrati took an axle from the furnace with his tongs, placed it on the anvil, brushed off the cindered coating with a besom that smouldered as he used it and then nodded to his elder brother. The latter took a step backward and swinging alternately back and forth, keeping his hammer moving in a circle, began to hammer the axle. Kondrati nodded to one of the young brothers: "Now then, Styopa," and he, using a smaller hammer, began working from the other side of the anvil; the hammers rang like the church bells at Easter. The elder brother brought his big hammer down once with a crash followed by two blows from Stepan's lighter hammer, Kondrati the whole time turning the axle this way and that keeping in time with the big hammer. "Stop!" he shouted and threw the freshly forged axle on to the earthen floor.

"Vanyusha, give us some heat..."

"And then he said to me," continued the blacksmith, wiping the sweat from the back of his head with the palm of his hand: 'Have you heard of Nikita Demidov, the Tula blacksmith, Kondrati Vorobyov? Today he has his own factories in the Urals and his own mines, and he has serfs of his own and his mansion is bigger than mine, and he began, you know, like you people, with nothing. It's time you began to think about big things and not be forever shoeing horses on the highroad... You have no money for building and although I'm short of cash myself I'll give you some. Set up an arsenal in Moscow or better still in Pieterburkh—it's a real paradise there...' And so he told me everything, and I looked at him and he tempted me greatly... 'Oh,' I answered him, 'Your Majesty, Peter Alexeyevich, we live well here on the highroad, and merrily. Our father always told us: "Pancakes won't burst your belly—eat well, sleep soundly and work with a will," and we follow his advice. We have everything we need. In the autumn we brew our beer so strong that the hoops on the barrels crack, and we drink Your Majesty's health and we put on our best gauntlets and go out boxing in the streets for amusement. We don't want to leave this place...' That's how I answered him. He got angry. 'You couldn't have given me a worse answer, Kondrati Vorobyov. Whoever is satisfied with everything and doesn't want to change for more and better will lose everything. Ugh,' he said, 'when will you lazy devils understand that?' He had guessed the riddle."

The blacksmith stopped, frowned and looked down at the floor. His younger brothers looked at him; they, naturally, also wanted to say something about it but they did not dare. He shook his head and smiled to himself.

"He stirs up everybody. Is it we who are lazy? It seems that we are." He turned quickly to the furnace where the second axle was heating up, took it with his tongs and told his brothers to get ready.

In an hour and a half the coach was ready, well put together and light. The girl in the crown made of the inner bark of the lime tree had been hovering around the smithy all the time. At last Kondrati noticed her.

"Mashutka!" She threw back her plait and stood like one rooted to the ground. "Run and fetch the gentlemen a jug of cold milk to drink on the road."

"Sister?" asked Gabriel as he watched her flashing heels. "A fine girl..."

"Is she," said the smith. "It's a pity to give her in marriage yet awhile and at home she's no use, can't weave, can't milk the cows, can't herd the geese. The only thing she can do is model things out of blue clay, playthings—cats riding on dogs, hooked-nosed old hags—just like life, they are. She models birds and animals such as you never saw. The garret is full of that rubbish. Just try and throw them out and there's such a screaming and howling. I've washed my hands of it all..."

"My God, my God," said Golikov softly. "I must see those things as soon as I can!" He opened his eyes wide like one in a holy frenzy and looked at the smith. The smith clapped his hands to his sides and burst out laughing. Vanyusha and Stepan laughed more moderately although both of them would have liked to imitate their brother. The girl in the limebark crown came back with the oven-baked milk.

"Mashka," Kondrati said to her, "this man wants to see your playthings, why, I don't know. Show them to him..."

The girl stopped dead and the jug of milk trembled in her hands.

"Oh, no, I won't show him!" She put the jug down on the grass, turned and, walking like one in her sleep, disappeared behind the smithy. All the brothers thereupon held their sides and laughed till their hair shook on their heads. Only Golikov did not laugh —turning up his nose he looked towards where the girl had disappeared behind the smithy.

"Well, now, Kondrati Stepanovich," said Gabriel, "how much have we got to pay?"

"You want to know what you have to pay?" The blacksmith wiped his eyes, straightened his moustaches and began thoughtfully stroking his beard. "When you see Tsar Peter give him my respects, add what you think fit from yourself and tell

him: Kondrati Vorobyov hopes that he won't be angry with him, that Kondrati Vorobyov is no more foolish than the people in this world. The Tsar will understand my answer..."

2

Beyond the undulating meadowlands, beyond the birch groves, beyond the fields of rye, far beyond the blue woods hung the rainbow; one foot rested on a parting rain cloud and where the other rested on the ground there was a myriad of shining, twinkling sparks.

"D'you see it, Andryushka?"

"Yes."

"Moscow..."

"Gabriel Ivanovich, it's a sort of token. The rainbow lighting up the city for us."

"I don't know why Moscow is so gay today... And you, I suppose, are glad to get to Moscow?"

"Of course, I'm glad and I'm afraid..."

"When we get there we'll go straight to the baths... In the morning I'll hurry to the Prince-Caesar, then I'll take you to Tsarevna Natalia Alexeyevna."

"That's what I'm afraid of..."

"Listen, coachman," said Gabriel, this time in wheedling tones, "faster, as a man I ask you, drive faster..."

The road was sticky after the rain and clots of earth flew from the horse's hoofs. The leaves on the birch-trees sparkled. The wind brought sweet odours with it. Coming from the city were strings of empty carts driven by peasants with an unsold cow or a lame horse tied at the back. They passed a signpost surmounted by an eagle and the distance—thirty-four versts to Moscow. Once again the log cabins along the road were poor and delapidated, some stood side-on to the road, others with their backs to it and behind the grey willows of the cemetery arose the dome of the tiny church with the paint peeling off it. And again a little, bare-bellied boy ran across the road in front of the coach-team tossing his head as though he were a horse. The coachman leaned forward and gave him a cut with the whip across that mosquito bitten part of his anatomy where his legs began—but it didn't worry the boy, he continued skipping about and followed the horses with his big round eyes.

On and on, up hill and down. Away to the right where a brook sparkled amongst the bushes, bearded peasants in long shirts, standing one behind the other, their feet planted well apart, were swinging their scythes in unison as they moved their way across the field. To the left, in the shadows at the fringe of the woods, lay a herd of cattle; the tiny herdsman, whip in hand, was chasing a piebald bullock; behind him, her ears waving above the long grass, ran a clever little dog. Another striped signpost —thirty-one versts. Gabriel groaned.

"Coachman, we've only done three versts..."

The coachman turned towards him a merry face with a turned-up nose that seemed to have been placed between his ruddy cheeks for the sole purpose of dipping into a glass.

"Don't count the versts by the signposts, master, count them by the taverns. You can't believe the posts... Look, this is where we let them go!"

Suddenly he gave a long drawn-out cry —"Oi, oi, oi, horsies!"—threw down his reins and the big-headed horses of various colours galloped on, turned sharply and came to a halt outside a tavern, a long, old log building with a post sticking up high above the gate and a sign, for those who could read consisting of the word "Tavven" in vermillion on an azure ground.

"Master, do what you like, but the horses are dead beat," said the coachman merrily, pulling off his tall felt cap. "Beat me to death if you like but it would be better to order some brandy."

The postmaster, dressed in the old-fashioned costume—a red kaftan with a collar that stood up higher than the bald spot on his head—came out onto the decaying porch; he was subservient and fresh-looking and on a tray he carried three glasses of brandy and three biscuits with poppy seeds to go with it. There was nothing for it, they had to get off the coach and stretch their legs.

They approached Moscow on a wet evening. There seemed no end to the houses set back in their own grounds, the tiny villages, groves of trees, churches and fences. Sometimes the arch over the centre horse caught the branches of the lime-trees showering drops of rain on the passengers. Everywhere light streamed out through curved glass or mica window-panes; beggars still sat on church porches and the blackbirds screeched in the high belfries. The coach wheels rattled over the wood-paved streets. Gabriel seized the driver by the shoulder and showed him the way to turn in the winding side-streets. "There, see where that man's lying alongside the fence—turn into the cul-de-sac opposite. Stop, stop, we're home!" He jumped out of the coach and hammered at a gate that was bound with wrought iron bars like a strong-chest. A furious barking answered his knocking and the famous Brovkin wolf-dogs strained at their chains.

It is a pleasant thing to return to the paternal roof after a long absence. Everything you see is still the same, everything is once again familiar. In the unheated outer room a candle burnt on the window sill, alongside the walls stood a carved bench for petitioners where they could sit quietly waiting till the master sent for them; next came the winter waiting-room heated by two stoves—here the candle, flickering in the draught, stood on the floor; to the left, through a cloth-covered door were the unused Dutch bedrooms for important guests, to the right low-ceilinged, warm chambers, straight ahead—here you begin to get lost in the passages and on the steep staircases that led up and down where there were landings and cupboards, attics, pantries, storerooms... In his father's house there was a particular kind of smell, something

pleasant and comfortable. People were glad that he had come, and spoke and looked at him lovingly, waiting to carry out his wishes.

Gabriel's father, Ivan Artemyich, was not at home but was away on a visit to his textile factories. Gabriel was met by the housekeeper, a corpulent (as she should be), sedate woman with a heavy hand and a rich voice, by the head footman whom Ivan Artemyich himself referred to as Satan and by the major-domo Karla, a man who had recently been engaged from abroad and whose surname nobody was able to pronounce; the last-named was a tall gloomy individual with a heavy-jowled face bloated from idleness and Russian food, a powerful chin and a huge forehead that showed that the man had real brains though he had a disfigurement which brought him to Moscow for a reasonable salary—in place of a nose he wore a black, cone-shaped bag and he spoke with a nasal twang.

"The only thing I want to begin with is a bath," Gabriel told them. "For supper let there be brawn, a beef pie, goose and something else satisfying. In Pieterburkh we got completely exhausted with nothing to eat but stinking salt junk and hardtack."

The housekeeper spread her fat hands and then folded them again. "Jesus Christ, how did you manage to eat hardtack!" The Satanic footman merely said "ai-ai-ai" and waggled his goatee in contrition. The major-domo, who did not understand a word of Russian, stood there like an idol, his huge flat feet placed astride with contemptuous importance and his hands folded behind his back. The housekeeper began to get together clean linen for the bath, talking all the time in her rich voice.

"We'll get well steamed in the bath, eat and drink, and then go to a bed of swan's down, little father, sleep is sweet under the paternal roof. Thank God all misfortunes pass us by. All the Dutch cows have calved, the English sows produced sixteen pigs each—the Prince-Caesar himself came for the pleasure of seeing them. The berries and cherries in the garden are bigger than we have ever seen them before. Paradise! Simply paradise, your father's house. It's empty, though, ach, ach, your father, Ivan Artemyich, wanders about the rooms, the poor man; 'I'm bored, Agapovna,' he says, 'didn't I ought to go back to the factories?' Your father has so much money that he can no longer count it, and if it weren't for Senka—she nodded towards the satanic footman—he would never be able to count it. Our only trouble is with that black-nosed fellow. Nowadays, of course, we must have such a person in our house, all Moscow says that Ivan Artemyich should be given a title. And that Karla sticks a hat with a red feather on his head, stabs his stick into the floor, stamps about everywhere with his big feet —and you can't say anything—he's important. He was the Prussian king's major-domo, until he had his nose bitten off or something. At first we were a bit shy with him, after all he's a foreigner. Ignashka, the stableman, taught him to play the balalaika. Since then he's been tinkling away the whole day, everybody's fed up with him. And the way he eats! He follows me about: "Mother, eat!" He's the biggest fool I've ever seen. Perhaps you have to be in a job like his. On midsummer's day we had a big party, the Tsaritsa Praskovia Fyodorovna was present and without Karla it would have been difficult for us. He put on a kaftan with at least ten pounds of gold braid and fringe on it and doeskin gloves with fingers to them: he took a gold dish and on it a bowl worth a thousand roubles and bending his knee before her handed it to the Tsaritsa. He took another dish and an even better bowl and offered it to the Tsarevna Natalia Alexeyevna."

While the housekeeper was talking, a house-serf, who had been styled "Kammerdiener" ever since the major-domo came, took off Gabriel's dusty kaftan and his vest, unfastened his neckcloth and with a groan began to pull off his jackboots. Gabriel suddenly pulled his leg away from the serf and jumped to his feet.

"Was the Tsarevna in our house? What are you babbling about?"

"She was here, such a beauty, she sat on Ivan Artemyich's right hand, the darling. Everybody was watching her so that they forgot to eat and drink. She had rings on her fingers and bracelets on her dainty arms, her shoulders were as white as a swan's and right above her breast she has a birthmark like a grain of buckwheat, everybody noticed it. Her dress was the colour of flax, lighter than air, with huge bustles at the side, the whole skirt was covered in silk roses and on her head she wore a fire-bird's tail."

Gabriel did not listen any further. He threw a sheepskin jacket over his shoulders and shuffled in his Tatar slippers along the passages and staircases to the bathhouse.

"Agapovna, where is the man that came with me?" he remembered suddenly when he was already in the wet outer chamber of the bath.

The major-domo, it seems, had not allowed Andryushka Golikov to enter the house and he was still sitting in the unhorsed coach in the yard. Incidentally, he was quite happy there alone with his thoughts. The stars shone over the black roofs, there were the smells of the kitchen, the hayloft and the cowshed, it was all very cosy—from somewhere came the faint sweet odour of a lime-tree in full bloom. This made his heart beat wildly. Andryushka leaned back and looked up at the stars. What were these little lights scattered thickly over the dark blue firmament, were they far away and why were they burning there—he did not know and he did not worry about it. He was, however, calm in spirit. What a tiny thing he, Andrei, was, sitting there in that coach. Still he was not so tiny, not at all the sort of thing that old Nektary had

once taught him he was—he did not feel himself to be a humble worm, a pitiful piece of flesh. An animal could probably not have borne that which Andryushka had experienced in his short life—humiliated, beaten, tormented, condemned to die from hunger and cold—and he, like the king of kings, turned his eyes to the stars that light up the universe and heard within himself a secret voice: "Go forth, Andrei, do not lose heart, do not turn aside, soon, soon great joy will be yours, your wonderous strength will come into its own and everything will be possible; you will be so transformed that you will create a world of beauty out of that of the ugly."

Had he listened to such a voice of the devil when he was living with the old man he would have been put in chains for forty days with nothing but a jug of water and would secretly have taken the oil from the sacred lamp to anoint his bleeding wounds. As he thought of all this Andrei smiled benevolently. Past events flashed across his mind—he remembered how some people from the suburbs had beaten him, the king of kings, in a smoky tavern on Varvarka Street and had dragged him out onto the porch by his legs and flung him out onto the dung-stained snow. Why had they beaten him—he had forgotten. It happened during that terrible winter when the Streltsi who had been hanged still dangled from the walls of the Kremlin and the Kitai-Gorod (China-town). At that time Andrei, hungry, with nothing but a coarse, ragged shirt on his bare body wandered dispiritedly and despairingly around the taverns, begging little glasses of brandy from the roisterers and secretly hoping that in the end they would kill him—that was his most ardent desire and he pitied himself till the tears came. In that same tavern he had met the drunken sacristan from the Church of St. Barbara, a man with screwed-up eyes, a double nose and a pigtail that stuck out behind him. He persuaded Andrei to seek heavenly bliss and to go to old Nektary for the mortification of his flesh. "Fools!" whispered Andrei. "Mortify the flesh, when the flesh is often good!" He also recalled quiet evenings in the Palekh village, when the air was filled with golden dust and the cows returned, lowing, to their byres. His mother, a gaunt woman with the shoulders of a man, would go out to the gates—they should have been repaired long before and the farm itself was poor and neglected. Andrei and his brothers, only a year between any two of them, sat on an upturned, wheelless waggon. They waited patiently—with a mother like that they had to be patient! She half-opened the lopsided gates, and kindly Buryonka, who fed them, walked in brushing her broad sides against the lower half of the gates and lowing shortly. Their mother's face was dark, angry and mournful, Buryonka's jowl was warm, the hair of her forehead was curly, her nose moist and her huge eyes were of violet colour; Buryonka would not let them down. She snorted towards the boys and walked over to the well to drink. The mother, seated on a stool, began to milk her there at the well. Hissing and splashing Buryonka's milk flowed into the bucket. The boys sitting on the waggon were still waiting patiently. The mother brought out some jugs and poured the milk in huge streams out of the pail. "Now then, come on," she said unkindly. The first to drink was Andrei who took as much as his stomach would hold, his brothers watching him while he drank, the youngest even heaving a short sigh for he would be the last to drink.

"Hi you, traveller, get out of that coach," and Andrei came to himself again. The kammerdiener, a lad with an angry face, stood before him. "Gabriel Ivanovich wants you to go to the bath to get steamed. You take your shoes off here and throw your kaftan under the coach, and your cap as well... This isn't like the boyars' houses, we don't let people in rags into the house."

Feeling much better after the bath, with towels wound round their necks, Gabriel and Andrei sat down to supper. Agapovna sent the major-domo away to a side room so that they would not feel constrained. Her puffy white hands flew about the table placing tit-bits on their plates, filling the Venetian glasses with the precious home-brewed wines and decoctions that had been brought out on this important occasion. When the candles blazed up Gabriel noticed a picture frame covered with a linen cloth standing on a chair in a corner. Agapovna rested her cheek on her hand.

"I don't know how I can show you that with a stranger in the room. Your sister Sanka sent that from Holland, it arrived on Midsummer's Day. Ivan Artemyich, sonny, would hang it on the wall, then get worried about it, take it down and cover it with a cloth. When she sent it Sanka wrote: "Papa, for God's sake don't be ashamed but hang my portrait on the drawing-room wall, in Europe they hang more than this there, don't be a barbarian..."

Gabriel got up from the table, took a candle and pulled back the cloth from the picture which stood on the chair in the corner. It was a portrait of the Boyarynya Volkova, a woman of untold beauty and untold charm...

"Now, now," said Gabriel, causing the candle-light to fall on the picture. The artist had portrayed Alexandra Ivanovna (Sanka) against a background of the early morning sea, lying in the waves on the back of a dolphin in the costume she was born in, one hand with its pearly nails covering her nakedness and the other holding a bowl of grapes; doves perched on the edge of the bowl pecked at the grapes. To left and right above her head two fat little boys floating feet uppermost in the air were distending their cheeks as they blew into conches. Alexandra Ivanovna's young face with its watery eyes was smiling, the corners of her mouth slyly lifted...

"So that's Sanka for you!" said Gabriel, also more than a little astonished. "They'll be sending you to her in Holland, Andryushka. You watch out that the devil doesn't get you when you are there. Venus, a perfect Venus! You can understand why her ad-

mirers fight over her and some have been killed..."

3

The Prince-Caesar, Protector of Moscow, lived in the huge house of his fathers on Miasnitskaya Street, near Loubyanka Square. The complex of buildings around his courtyard included a church and presbytery, a felt-beating shop, a linen-weaving shop, leather workers' and blacksmiths' shops, stables, cowsheds, sheep-pens, poultry yards and all kinds of warehouses and cellars packed tight with goods, the whole built of logs so thick that a man could not put his arms round them, strong enough to last hundreds of years. The house itself was the same, without any of the fancy ornaments, that the Moscow people had been fond of since the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, plain but strongly built with a shingle roof, moss-covered from age, and tiny windows set high above the ground.

The manners and customs of the house were those of the old days. If anybody, however, was simple-minded enough to be tempted by this and appeared dressed in the old style, with a fur coat down to his heels, with long sleeves and a beard to boot, even if that man were descended from Rurik himself, he would have been chased out of the place to the accompaniment of the scorning laughter of Romodanovsky's servants; his own coat was cut short to the knees, there were clumps of hair on his shaven cheeks while his beard stuck out of his pocket so that it could be placed in his coffin with him in case he might be ashamed to appear shaven before God...

Whenever there was a large party at the Prince-Caesar's house many of those invited prepared for the visit with sighs and lamentations, one had to go but ribald mischief and wanton jokes prevailed at his feasts. There was a trained bear who annoyed the guests by taking to anybody who was garrulous a big glass of peppered vodka and grunted an invitation to drink; if the guest objected and did not want to drink the bear threw down the tray and beat him up badly. The Prince-Caesar merely roared with laughter until his fat belly made the table rock while his jester, clever, evil and ugly, with only one fang in his toothless mouth would shout: "The bear knows which beast he has to beat up."

The Prince-Caesar got up early in the morning and, wearing a dark-coloured linen shirt caught high under his chest with words of a prayer embroidered on his belt and brightly-coloured, soft leather boots, took his place at the short morning service; when the sun's rays penetrated the thick cloud of incense and made the lights of the candles and holy lamps fade and the lively little priest uttered his "Amen" in a jarring voice, the Prince-Caesar fell to his knees on the carpet with a groan, bowed his head to the freshly-washed floor, was lifted up, kissed the cold cross and walked to the dining-room. Seating himself comfortably on a bench, and straightening his black moustache he drank up a bowl of peppered vodka so strong that any but a Russian would have sat for a long time with his mouth open after drinking it down, bit off a piece of salted black bread and ate cold beet-leaf soup, all kinds of jellied foods, pickles, sour cabbage, various kinds of noodles, baked meats—he ate them all like a peasant, without any hurry. The housefolk and the Princess Anastasia Fyodorovna herself, sister of the Tsaritsa Praskovya, sat silently at table, quietly replaced the spoons and took the food from their plates with their fingers. The quails and tame starlings in their cages at the windows began to give voice—one of the starlings even said quite clearly: "Uncle, a little vodka..."

The Prince-Caesar drank a jug of kvas, lingered a little; then got up, went into the outer rooms, making the floor boards creak as he walked; there he was helped into a roomy cloth kaftan, and handed his staff and hat. When his shadow, which could be seen through the dull glass of the covered porch, slowly descended the staircase, all the people who happened to be in the yard nearby ran wherever they could. He passed through the courtyard alone, walking along a bricked pathway. He had a thick neck so that it was difficult for him to turn his head, nevertheless he noticed everything out of the corner of his eye—where everybody had run to, where they were hidden, where there were any small things out of order. He remembered everything. His state affairs were so tremendous, however, that he frequently had no time to take smaller matters in hand. He entered the neighbouring yard of the Preobrazhensky chancellory through an iron gate in the wall. In the long corridors clerks and officials took their caps off their forehead while the sentries sprang to attention.

Prokhor Chicherin, clerk of the Preobrazhensky chancellory, met him at the doors of his office and when the Prince-Caesar sat down at his table under a vaulted ceiling covered in mildew right beneath a small window he began immediately to speak about all the affairs one after another: yesterday four bronze guns and as many well-cast iron guns had arrived from Tula. Where should they now be sent—to the camp at Narva or Yuriev? And yesterday the clothing of the first company of the newly recruited regiment was completed, only the soldiers were still barefooted, shoes without buckles would be ready next week; at the Mansion House the merchants Soplyakov and Smurov were ready to kiss the cross to the effect that they would fulfil the order. Powder, fuses, sacks of bullets and flints in mat bags have been sent to Narva in accordance with the order. The hand grenades could not be sent owing to the fact that the storekeeper, Yeroshka Maximov, had been drunk for two days and would not give the keys of the store to anybody. Efforts were made to take them from him but in a fit of frenzy he attacked the people with a cleaver used for chopping cabbage. What was to be done? Clerk Chicherin spoke of many

similar affairs and finally moving closer in under the arch towards the window he took the secret files (records taken down by junior clerks of interrogations without the laying on of hands and of interrogations under torture) and began to read them. The Prince-Caesar rested his arm heavily on the table and you could not tell whether he was paying attention or dozing although Chicherin knew full well that he heard the substance of what was read.

Under the floor of the abandoned bath-house where the unfrocked priest Grishka was hiding in the courtyard of the Tsarevnas Catherine Alexeyevna and Marya Alexeyevna, a quartosize manuscript book a half a finger's breath in thickness, was found, the clerk Chicherin read in the same monotonous voice which had the sound of dried peas being poured on one's head. "On the first page of the book was written: 'An Inquiry Into All Wisdom.' Lower down on the same page was written: 'In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. There exists a herb by the name of "lungwort" which grows in gullies and around fences, it is quite small, nine leaves on each side, three flowers at the top—red, scarlet and blue—this herb is of great strength—pick it when the moon is young, pound it, boil it and drink it three times—you will see around you water and aerial demons... Say unto them the magic word "nstsdtchndsi" and they will fulfil your desires.'"

The Prince-Caesar breathed deeply and raised his half-lowered eyelids.

"Say that word again distinctly."

Chicherin, scratching his forehead and in angry tones barely managed to get it but of his mouth—"nstsdtchndsi." He looked at the Prince-Caesar, the latter nodded his head and the clerk continued to read.

"O princes and nobles! O tears and lamentations! What is it that is desired? We desire to subdue the present time, the fury of it, may the regular times come once again..."

"So, so, so!" The Prince-Caesar turned in his chair, a smile of understanding appeared and disappeared in his protruding eyes. "So we know what the herb lungwort is. Did the priest Grishka own to the book?"

"Today after the third hour of torture Grishka owned to the book. He bought it, he said, on Kislovka Street from an unknown man for four kopecks and, asked why he hid it under the floor boards in the bath-house, he said because he is weak-minded."

"And did you ask him how the words 'may the regular times come once again' are to be understood?"

"I asked him. He was given five strokes with the whip and answered that he had bought the book for the paper which he wanted to use to bake bread for the host and that he had not read and did not know what was written in it."

"Ach, the rascal, ach, the rascal!" The Prince-Caesar slowly licked his finger and turned over the tattered pages of the book. He read something in a low voice: "'The herb celandine with a reddish-yellow flower: if a man is overfed unto death let him drink it and it will bring out everything from above and below...' A useful herb," said the Prince-Caesar. He ran his thumbnail further along the lines: "'In the book of Cyril it is written—the flatterer will come and tempt you. A sign of his coming is that he will bring the niccotine herb known as tobacco and will order it to be burnt and the smoke of it to be swallowed or will order it to be ground into a powder and sniffed up the nose and instead of singing psalms the people will constantly sniff the powder and sneeze. Another sign—the shaving of beards...' So that's that," the Prince-Caesar closed the book, "come along, clerk, we will ask him who it is wants to subdue the present time. The priest is a smart and clever man. I've known all about this book for a long time, he has been over the half of Moscow with it."

As they went down the narrow, brick staircase eaten away with the damp towards the underground dungeons, Chicherin, as usual, said sorrowfully:

"This dampness comes from out of the earth, the bricks are rotten and you have to be careful or you will fall; we ought to build a new staircase."

"Yes, we should," answered the Prince-Caesar.

Ahead of them went a junior clerk with a candle, also, like his senior, dressed in foreign clothes but badly worn ones; around his neck was hung a copper ink pot, from his torn pocket a bundle of paper stuck out. He placed the candle on an oak table in the low cellar where a number of rats, moving like shadows, ran to the holes in the corners.

"We have a lot of rats here now," said the clerk, "all the time I want to get some arsenic from the pharmacy."

"Yes, you should," answered the Prince-Caesar.

Two animal-like men, bending as they passed under the arches, dragged in the unfrocked priest Grishka; his eyes were rolled up, his beard tangled like wool, his face was greenish in colour and his lower lip was hanging. Was this inability to walk on his own feet genuine? He was placed under a hook with a rope hanging from it, fell softly to the ground and collapsed lifelessly. "He was interrogated without any injury to the limbs," said the clerk softly, "and he walked away from here without help."

For some time the Prince-Caesar looked at the bald patch amongst Grishka's tangled hair.

"It is known," said the Prince-Caesar in a sleepy voice, "that in the year before last at the Church of Elijah the Prophet in Zvenigorod you stole the silver ornaments from the icons and that at the Church of the Annunciation you stole the church cup with money in it and in the same place stole the priest's coat and boots from the altar. You sold the things and drank the money, you were arrested and escaped from the guard and fled to

Moscow where to the present day you have been hiding in the courtyards of various boyars, lastly in the bath-house in the courtyard of the tsarevnas. Do you admit this? Will you answer? No... All right, then. These affairs are only half your trouble..."

The Prince-Caesar stopped. Behind the animal-like men the executioner appeared silently—a kindly-looking man with a face flabby from drink and as pale as wax and a huge mouth that showed red between his flattened moustache and his curly beard.

"It is known," began the Prince-Caesar again, "that you went frequently to the German quarter to visit the nun woman Ulyana, gave her letters and money from certain persons. This woman Ulyana carried the letters to a certain person in the New Maiden Convent. From her she took letters and parcels which you in turn carried to the afore-mentioned persons. Is this true? Do you admit it?"

The clerk leant over the table and whispered something to the Prince-Caesar, his eyes drawing attention to Grishka.

"He is wary, by God, I see it by his ears..."

"You don't admit it? So... You are stubborn... It's a mistake... For us there will be extra trouble and for your body there will be extra torment... All right, now tell me this. Whose houses, exactly, did you visit? To whom, exactly, did you read from this book about the desire to subdue the present time, the fury of it, and about the desire to bring back the regular times?"

The Prince-Caesar seemed to wake up, he raised his brows and his cheeks distended. The executioner walked quietly over to the prostrate Grishka, touched him and shook his head.

"No, Prince Fyodor Yuryevich, today he won't speak. It will only be a waste of time to trouble him. The rack and five blows of the whip have laid him out. It must be put off until tomorrow."

The Prince-Caesar drummed on the table with his fingernails. Silanti, the executioner, however, was a man of experience—if a man was already numb you could chop him in two before you could get the truth out of him. The matter was a very important one: when the unfrocked priest Grishka was arrested the Prince-Caesar had found traces—if it was not an actual conspiracy—at the very least of evil intentions and stubbornness amongst certain Moscow persons who still desired the freedom enjoyed by the boyars under the Tsarevna Sophia who to that day still languished in the New Maiden Convent and wore the black cloak. There was nothing, however, to be done and the Prince-Caesar rose and went up the rotting staircase. The clerk Chicherin remained fussing around Grishka.

4

It was a dull, damp and warm morning. In the side-streets there was a smell of wet wooden fences and of smoke from the chimneys. The horse splashed its way through puddles. Gabriel dismounted outside the Preobrazhensky chancellory but for a long time could not get hold of the officer of the guard.

"Where has the devil got to?" he shouted at the bewhiskered soldier standing at the gates.

"The devil alone knows, he has been here all the time, he must have gone somewhere."

"Then run and find him."

"I cannot go away from here."

"Then let me through the gates."

"Orders are to let nobody pass."

"Then I'll go myself." Gabriel pushed him aside in order to get to the gates but the soldier said:

"If you open the gates I'll put my bayonet through you in accordance with the orders."

Hearing the noise the officer of the guard, who all the time had been in the guard room on the far side of the gate, came out with a tiny, freckled face and shifty eyes. Gabriel immediately turned to him explaining that he had brought the mail from Pieterburkh and that he had to hand it over to Prince Fyodor Yuryevich in person.

"Where can I see the Prince-Caesar? Is he in the chancellory now?"

"I don't know," answered the officer of the guard looking at a big tabby cat that was walking daintily across the wet street. "That cat is from the Prince's house," he said to the soldier, "there has been such a to-do because he got lost and here he is, the hussy..."

The gates suddenly swung open, groaning on their hinges and a carriage came dashing out drawn by a team of four horses in turquoise harness. Gabriel barely had time to jump aside when he saw Romodanovsky looking at him with his lobster eyes through the window of the huge unwieldy, guilded and ornamented carriage on low wheels. Gabriel hurriedly mounted his horse in order to overtake the carriage but the officer of the guard seized the bridle—the devil knows whether he was a nuisance by nature or whether orders forbade anybody overtaking the Prince's coach when he went out.

"Let me go!" Gabriel shouted, madly seizing the other side of the bridle; he drove his spurs into the horse which rose up onto its hind legs, the officer hung in the air for a moment and then fell.

"Turn out the guards! Stop the rascal!" Gabriel heard in the distance as he galloped onto Loubyanka Square.

He did not overtake the carriage, however, spat in disgust, crossed the Neglinka Bridge, and turning into the Kremlin went to the Siberian chancellory. The long low rusty-roofed building of the chancellory which was built during the reign of Boris Godounov stood on the crest of a steep hill higher than the fortress walls with its back to the Moscow River.

There were many people in the outer rooms and in the corridors. They sat or lay on the floor along the walls and through the squeaking doors junior clerks in long kaftans with patched elbows (worn through by rubbing on the table) came running in and out with goose quills be-

hind their ears waving the papers they held in their hands and shouting angrily at the gloomy Siberians who had travelled thousands of versts to get justice done against the voyevoda who was a usurous bribe taker, such as had never been seen since creation—or for various privileges in connection with the iron and gold mines and the fur and fishing trades. An experienced man, after listening quietly to the cursing, would frown kindly and say to the clerk: "Kind sir, you and I ought to go somewhere where we can have a heart to heart talk, to the market eating-house, or wherever else you like." An inexperienced man would walk out, his head hanging low to come back on the following and many more days, spending his time and eating at the hostelries, waiting, worrying the people to death...

The Prince-Caesar was in the Arms Department. Gabriel did not stop to ask whether he could go to him, he pushed his way to the door and when somebody seized him by the kaftan and told him that he could not go in the elbowed him aside and entered. The Prince-Caesar was alone in a stuffy, low-ceilinged room the windows of which were half-closed by shutters, and was wiping his neck with a brightly-coloured handkerchief. A pile of documents, requests and complaints lay on the table beside him. Seeing Gabriel he shook his head reproachfully.

"You're too bold, Ivan Artemyich's son! How do you like that, the lower orders open doors themselves nowadays! What do you want?"

Gabriel handed over the letter. He said that he had been ordered to convey a verbal message to the effect that all iron goods, especially nails, had to be sent to Pieterburkh as soon as possible. The Prince-Caesar, breaking the wax seal, opened the Tsar's letter with his fat fingers and holding it a long way from his eyes began to mumble. Peter wrote:

"Sir! I inform Your Excellency that a wonderful thing happened here at Narva—wise men fooled by the idiots. Before the eyes of the Swedes there was a mountain of pride through which they could not see our scheme... Concerning the whole masquerade battle during which a third of the Narva garrison was killed or taken prisoner you will hear from an eye-witness. Lieutenant of the Guards Yaguzhinsky, who will be with you soon. Concerning the despatch of medicinal herbs to the pharmacy at Pieterburkh, so far not a thing has been sent. Concerning which I have frequently written to Andrei Vinius who every time responded with his "immediately" in the best Moscow style. Concerning which be kind enough to inquire from him why he is treating such an important matter so carelessly, a matter that is worth a thousand times more than his head. Ptr."

The Prince-Caesar read it through and raised that part of the letter which was signed to his lips. He sighed deeply.

"It is stuffy," he said. "Heat, damp... A lot of work. In the course of a day I don't get it half done. And with the assistance that I've got... There are few people who want to work, they all avoid it, slip away. All they want is more money. And why are you all dressed up and wearing a wig? Going to the Tsarevna, are you? She is not in the Palace, she is at Izmailovo. When you see her don't forget that on Petrovka Street in a tavern there is a trained starling in the window that speaks Russian beautifully—all the people who pass stand and listen to it. I heard it myself from the carriage on my way here. It can be bought if the Tsarevna would like it... Go along... On the way tell the clerk Nesterov to send for Andrei Vinius and have him brought to me at once. Here, kiss my hand."

5

In the afternoon it began to rain. Anissya Tolstaya feeling that boredom would set in, started a game of ball in the empty throne room where nobody had been for many years.

Anna and Martha, the Menshikov girls, wanted to play at something, no matter what, and with their ribbons blowing out behind them, their fat arms bare to the elbows stretched out before them, they gave little squeaks as they ran across the creaking floor boards after the ball. Natalia Alexeyevna was in a tearful mood and the game did not brighten her up. When she had been a little tiny girl the sun had always shone through the red, yellow and blue panes of the little windows set high up from the floor making the gilded leather on the walls glisten. The leather had been torn down leaving the bare logs with tow hanging down from the cracks between them. The rain pattered on the roof.

"I don't like Izmailovo palace," she said to Catherine, "It's big, empty and dead. Let's go somewhere where we can sit down quietly."

She placed her hand on Catherine's shoulder and led her downstairs to a little bedroom, also abandoned and forgotten, that had belonged to her late mother, Natalia Kirillovna. Despite the long time that had past there was still a faint smell of incense or perhaps it was musk. To the very end of her life Natalia Kirillovna had been fond of oriental perfumes.

Natalia glanced at the empty bed with its twisted posts and no canopy, at the dull little square mirror on the wall and then turned and pushed open the window. The smell of rain came into the room and they heard it pattering on the leaves of the lilac below the window, on the burdocks and nettles.

"Let's sit down, Katya." They sat down at the open window. "Yes!" sighed Natalia. "Summer is almost over and before you have time to look round it will be autumn. But what is that to you? At nineteen you do not count the days. Let them fly by like birds. But me—do you know how old I am? I am only five years younger than my brother Peter. Count up the years. Mamma was married when she was seventeen and father nearly forty. He was fat, his beard always smelt of peppermint and

he was so often ill. I don't remember much of him. He died of dropsy. Anissya Tolstaya once drank too much homemade wine and told me a lot of secrets. When mother was young she was gay, carefree and fiery... Do you understand? (Natalia looked sadly into Catherine's eyes). The stories that Sophia's hangers-on and boot-lickers told about her... How can you blame her? According to the old testament everything is sin, being a woman is in itself a sin, you are devil, the vessel of the devil, the gates of hell... According to our ideas, the new ideas, a beautiful cupid flies and pierces you with an arrow. After that is there nothing left but to jump into a pond on an autumn night with a stone around your neck? Not the woman, the cupid is guilty! Anissya told me that at that time there lived in Moscow a boyar's son, Mussin-Pushkin, a man of angelic or rather devilish beauty, bold, fiery, a fine horseman and a rake... On the ice of the Moskva River at Shrove tide he challenged all comers to a fist fight. He knocked down everybody there. Mamma went there secretly in a plain carriage to see how brave he was. Then she brought him to the palace as a winesteward. (Natalia Alexeyevna turned her pretty head towards the disordered bed and there was a wrinkle formed between her brows.) Suddenly he was sent to Pustozersk as voyevoda and she never saw him again. But I haven't got even that."

The rain continued to drizzle. It was stifling. Huge trees, hardly visible through the clumps of mist did not resemble Izmailovo pines. The birds remained hidden under the roofs and were neither chirping nor singing. Only one dishevelled crow was flying low over the grey meadow. Catherine's carefree glance followed the crow, she would have liked to have told the Tsarevna that the thief of a crow was flying to the poultry yard and would probably carry off another little yellow chick like he had done the day before. Natalia Alexeyevna rested her elbows on the window sill, her head heavy from the plaits twisted round it, was bowed forward. Catherine glancing at her neck and the little hairs at the nape thought: has nobody really never kissed that? What bad luck! And she sighed faintly.

Natalia, however, heard that sigh, rested her chin in her hands and with an imperative movement of her shoulder said:

"And now tell me about yourself. Only tell me the truth... How many lovers have you had, Catherine?"

Catherine turned her head away.

"Three lovers," she answered in a whisper.

"We know about Alexander Danilovich. But before him? Was Sheremetyev one?"

"No, no!" answered Catherine briskly. "For the Field Marshal I only cooked sweet Esthonian milk soup and did his washing. Oh, I did not like him! I was afraid to cry but I made up my mind that I would light the fire and choke myself in the wood smoke rather than live with him. Alexander Danilovich took me away that same day. I liked him very much. He was jolly and joked with me a lot, we were always laughing. I was not a bit afraid of him."

"Are you afraid of my brother?"

Catherine pressed her lips together, knitted her velvet brows and answered honestly:

"Yes... but I think I shall soon get over being afraid of him."

"And who was your second lover?"

"Oh, Natasha, the second wasn't a lover, he was a Russian soldier, a kind man and I only loved him one night. How could I refuse him anything? He took me away from some terrible men in the fox skin caps who carried curved swords. They dragged me out of a burning house, tore off my dress, beat me with whips because I scratched them and wanted to carry me away across a saddle. He dashed in amongst them, pushed one and then the other out of the way—so strong he was. 'Ach, you,' he said, 'you koumiss-drinkers! How can you insult a girl?' He took me in his arm and carried me to the baggage train... There was no other way in which I could thank him. It was already dark and we lay on the straw..."

Natalia, her nostrils quivering, asked sharply:

"Under a waggon?"

"Yes. He said to me: 'As you please, little girl. It is so sweet when a girl herself embraces you!' That's why I consider him a lover."

"And who was the third?"

"The third was my husband, Johann Rabe," Catherine answered sedately, "a cuirassier from the Marienburg garrison of His Majesty King Charles. I was sixteen years old when Pastor Glück said: 'I have brought you up, Ellen Catherine, and I want to fulfil the promise that I made your late mother. I have found a good husband for you.'"

"Do you remember your father and mother well?" asked Natalia.

"Not well. My father's name was Ivan Skavroshchuk. When he was still young he fled from Lithuania, from Pan Sapega of Minsk, to Esthonia and rented a little farm near Marienburg. There we were born—four brothers, two sisters and I, the youngest. My parents and my eldest brother died from the plague. Pastor Glück took me and was a second father to me. I grew up with him. One sister is living in Revel, the other in Riga, I don't know where my brothers are now, the war separated us."

"Did you love your husband?"

"I did not have time to. Our wedding was on midsummer's day. What a wonderful time that was! We went out to the lake, lit the midsummer's night fires, put on wreaths of flowers and danced while Pastor Glück played the fiddle. We drank beer and roasted little sausages with cardamons in them. A week later Field Marshal Sheremetyev besieged Marienburg. When the Russians broke through the wall I told Johann to flee. He jumped into the lake and swam away and I never saw him again."

"You must forget him."

"I have a lot to forget, but I forget easily," said Catherine and smiled shyly, her cherry eyes full of tears.

"Catherine, you haven't hidden anything from me?"

"How would I dare hide anything from you?" said Catherine warmly and the tears trickled down her peach-like cheeks. "I would remember it and at night I would not sleep and as soon as dawn came I would tell you."

"Still you are fortunate." Natalia rested her cheek in her hand and again stared through the window like a bird staring out of its cage. She spoke with a lump in her throat: "We, Tsarevnas, however much we enjoy ourselves, all go the same way, to the convent. We are not given in marriage and nobody takes us as wives. We can either go shamelessly mad like Mashka and Katka... It was not for nothing that Sophia fought for power like a savage tigress..."

Catherine was about to bend forward and kiss her blue-veined hand that was clenched in sadness, when there suddenly appeared in the meadow a tall man on a lean horse with a wet mane, the rider's cloak was wet and a wet bedraggled feather hung from his hat. Seeing Natalia Alexeyevna he leapt down from the horse, left it and stepped over to the window, bent his knee to the grass and pressed the hat to his breast.

Natalia Alexeyevna jumped up, the heavy plait fell on her neck, her face was flushed, she trembled all over, her eyes sparkled and her lips parted.

"Gabriel!" she said softly. "Is that you? Greetings, my friend. But why are you standing in the rain? Come into the house."

A cart drove in behind Gabriel and beside the driver there sat a sharp-nosed, terrified man who covered himself with a sack to keep off the rain. He immediately took off his hat but did not get down. Gabriel, never once taking his dark eyes off Natalia Alexeyevna, came right over to the lilac.

"May your life be a long one," he said breathlessly. "I have come on the Tsar's business. I have brought with me a skilled painter who has been ordered to paint the portrait of a certain kind personage. The man should be sent abroad to study. That is he, sitting in the cart. May I bring him in?"

6

Anissya Tolstaya sent one servant on horseback to the store-rooms in the Kremlin to get supplies for supper and some sweetmeats. "Yes, and candles, lots of candles!" Another servant rode to the German quarter for musicians. Thick black smoke rose from the kitchen chimneys and the close-cropped cooks' boys chopped away with their knives. Girls with their skirts tucked up ran through the wet grass after chickens. The palace fishermen, grown idle from lack of work, took their creels and nets to the ponds to catch carp no less lazy than themselves that were lying on their sides in the mud.

After the rain a mist arose from the weedy pond, curled across the rotting bridge which nobody used any longer and crept between the trees onto the meadow in front of the palace until the old palace itself was gradually enveloped in mist up to the eaves.

Old people who had been at the palace since the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich sat at the doors of the kitchens, or of the servants houses, watching the flashes of candle light appear and disappear behind the tiny windows of the mist-covered palace and listening to the trampling of feet and roars of laughter. They would not give the old house a chance to rot and wither away in peace, leaving its log walls to the mercy of the weather and its leaky roof to the heavy rains. Gay young people with their new ideas had come to the place... They ran up and down the stairs from the attics to the cellars... Nothing to be found anywhere but cobwebs in the corners and mice sticking their noses out of their holes.

Natalia Alexeyevna was like one possessed. All morning she had been sad but with Gabriel's arrival she had become flushed and merry and had begun to think up all sorts of entertainments so that nobody could sit still for a minute. Anissya Tolstaya did not know which way to turn.

"Today we will have a feast of Balthasar, at supper we will wear fancy costumes."

"Nay, dear, it is still a long time to Christmas. And I don't know, I haven't seen how King Balthasar feasted."

"We will search the palace and look for the strangest things—take everything into the dining hall. Don't be angry with me today, don't be stubborn..."

The old staircases creaked and the rusty hinges of doors long unopened protested raspingly. Then they began to dash about the palace, Natalia Alexeyevna running ahead, holding up the hem of her skirt, behind her Gabriel with a candle, his eyes fixed in fright. The fright had begun long since, when still on his horse, he had seen Natalia at the window, looking so sad with her cheek propped up by her hand. It was like the fairy story that Sanka used to tell them as they lay on the stove, about the Princess of Incomparable Beauty... The Prince Ivan, taller than a tree, reaching up to the clouds, had then ridden by on a horse, under the tiny window, and tore the ring off the white hand of the Princess of Incomparable Beauty...

Andrei Golikov had also been turned dizzy (he had been ordered to take part with the others). Since the evening before when he had seen the portrait of Gabriel's sister lying on a dolphin he did not know whether this was all a reality or a dream. The round-cheeked, fair-haired Menshikov girls put him into such confusion that he almost choked—they were so beautiful and so plump that no pleats and folds of their dresses could conceal the lines of their bodies. They smelt of apples and it was just impossible not to look at them.

In the boxroom they found all sorts of lumber, dresses and hats that people had already forgotten, long ago, wide-cut coats of Byzantine brocade, cloaks, tunics, kaftans, pearl tiaras weighing a pood—all these things the palace maids brought to the dining-hall in armfuls. High up under the very ceiling they saw a tiny door on one of

the staircase landings. Natalia raised herself on tiptoes and threw back her head.

"Suppose he is there."

"Who?" asked Anna and Martha together, in a single terrified voice.

"The house goblin," answered Natalia.

The girls seized their cheeks in their hands but did not turn pale, they merely opened their eyes to the fullest extent. All of them were scared. The old furnace man brought a ladder and placed it against the wall. Gabriel immediately ran up the ladder —he was ready to go anywhere at that moment... He opened the door and disappeared into the darkness. They waited for what seemed a long time and he did not answer from there or make any movement. In a frightened whisper Natalia ordered: "Gabriel, come out!" Then the soles of his boots and the dusty skirts of his kaftan appeared; he came out smothered in cobwebs.

"What did you see there?"

"There's something grey there, seems all hairy, and it seemed that something soft stroked my face..."

They all gasped. On tiptoes they ran from the landing upstairs and only when they arrived at the top did Anna and Martha begin to whimper. Natalia Alexeyevna wanted to play at house goblins. They looked for mysterious doors, cautiously opened cupboards under staircases, looked behind all the stoves—scarcely breathing from terror. At last they succeeded, in a dark corner they saw two green shining eyes burning with the fire of hell. Without realizing what they did they turned and fled. Natalia stumbled and Gabriel caught her firmly, she could even hear his heart beating—slowly, dully, like a man's... She twitched her shoulders. "Let me go!" she said softly.

Then they began to get ready for the feast of Balthasar. The old furnace man, with a yellow beard like a house goblin, a brass cross outside his shirt and wearing new felt boots, again brought the ladder. They hung moth-eaten carpets on the bare log walls of the dining-hall. They took the table away and spread the feast on carpets on the floor; everybody was ordered to eat seated in Babylonian fashion and Gabriel was to be King Balthasar. He was dressed in a brocaded gown, old but still beautiful—crimson with golden griffons—a fur coat on his shoulders such as had been worn a hundred years before and on his head placed a pearl-covered tiara that had belonged to the Tsaritsa grandmother. Natalia Alexeyevna dressed as Semiramis in golden robes, bright coloured kerchiefs twisted over her heavy plaits, she sent her maids to pull the prettiest feathers out of the cocks' tails and stuck them into her turban.

What were Anna and Martha to dress up as? Natalia told them to go behind the door, take off their dresses and petticoats, let down their hair and remain in nothing but their shifts—fine, long shirts of thin linen. Again the maids ran to the ponds, brought back water weeds which were twisted round the necks, arms and hair of the Menshikov girls, while the longest strands were wound round their waists—they became the water nymphs from the Tigris and Euphrates. Catherine was easily dressed as the goddess of fruit and flowers—the Babylonian Astarte or the Greek Flora. The maids ran to the gardens for carrots, parsley, spring onions, peas, unripe pumpkins and apples. Catherine was very excited, her mouth moist, her eyes round with happiness and, no longer timid, laughed as loudly as usual at every little thing, she became a real Flora, girded around with peas and dill, a crown of vegetables on her head and in her hand a basket of gooseberries and red currents.

"Who is the painter to be?" spluttered Natalia. "We have no Ethiopians, let him be the King of the Ethiopians."

There a new miracle began for Andrei Golikov: women's hands—maybe in reality or a dream—women's hands began to pull him about, turn him round, wind silk and brocade around him, and smear his face with soot; they stuffed a split ring into his nostrils and he sat there with it in his nose. It seemed that if the good Lord had given him the wings of an angel he could not have felt himself so blessed. Bowing low the three musicians from the German quarter came in—a fiddler, mouth-organ and flute-player. They were also dressed up after a fashion.

"Now supper! Sit on the cushions, draw up your legs and drink mead and wine out of sea shells..."

Nobody knew exactly how to play the game of Balthasar's feast. They sat down before dishes of food, before lighted candles, looked at one another, smiled, but nobody wanted to eat... Then Natalia Alexeyevna shook her cock's feathers and pursing her lips began to recite from memory the same verses that Gabriel had heard from her on that winter's night in the warmly heated room with the golden vaulted ceiling. The verses told of the Olympian gods who were wounded by Cupid's arrows and compared them with the author, asking how mere mortals can protect themselves against Cupid's attacks when the very gods were vulnerable. Natalia's verse ended with a recommendation to seek joy and sing the praises of Cupid's arrows whose barbs are poisoned with sweet wine.

As Natalia recited her face, under the huge turban, turned pale. She took a sip of wine and then went to dance the polka with Anissya Tolstaya. The musicians did not play loudly but they played so that every sinew in the body trembled and sang.

"Come with Catherine!" shouted Natalia, flashing her eyes at Gabriel.

He jumped to his feet, threw the Balthasar coat off his shoulders—he could dance the clock round if he liked. Catherine's back was warm and yielding to the hand, she was light-footed and as they whirled round bunches of peas and cherries flew from her head and shoulders. Gabriel increased his speed and the musicians increased theirs. Anna and Martha took each other by the hand and whirled around with them. Only Golikov re-

mained seated on the carpet in front of the candles. He could not eat or drink on account of the ring in his nose but this circumstance did not interfere with his bliss. The Tsarevna's verses about the gods of Olympus still rang in his ears to the accompaniment of the flute. For ever floating before his eyes was the naked goddess lying on a dolphin and holding a ball, seduction itself...

Gabriel was simple-minded: he was told to dance the polka with Catherine and he danced not grudging his legs. It sometimes seemed to him that Natalia Alexeyevna's face wore a strange, unhappy smile, without the former sparkle in her eyes; he did not realize that he should long ago have returned Catherine to her place amongst the pumpkins and carrots. Again the Tsarevna's face appeared with her lips pressed tight as though in pain. Suddenly she staggered, stopped and seized hold of Anissya Tolstaya, the turban with the cock feathers fell from her head.

"The Tsarevna is dizzy!" Anissya screamed in a frightened voice and signalled to the musicians to stop playing.

Natalia Alexeyevna broke away from her and dragging her mantle went out of the room. That put an end to the Balthasar feast. Anna and Martha suddenly became ashamed of the fact that they were wearing nothing but their shifts, whispered to each other and ran behind the door. Catherine was scared and sat down in her place and began to pull off the vegetables that decorated her. Gabriel was gloomy, stood over the carpet on which the feast was spread with his legs astride, frowned and blinked at the candles. Anissya went flying out after the Tsarevna but soon returned and caught hold of Gabriel digging her finger nails into his hand.

"Go to her," she whispered, "beat your forehead on the floor, you fool!"

Natalia Alexeyevna stood in the passage just outside the room looking out of an open window at the mist lit up by an invisible moon. Gabriel approached her. He could hear the rain drops falling from the roof onto the leaves below.

"Are you staying in Moscow long?" she asked him without turning round. He did not have time to answer, only gasped for breath. "There's nothing for you to do in Moscow. Go back where you came from tomorrow."

She finished speaking and hunched her shoulders.

"What have I done to make you angry?" was Gabriel's answer. "Good Lord, if you only knew!.. If you only knew!"

Then she turned and brought her face with its eyebrows blackened with soot close up to him.

"I don't want you, do you hear? Go! Go!"

Repeating "go, go!" she raised her hands to push him away but realized that such a huge fellow was not to be pushed away. She dropped her hands onto his shoulders making her Semiramis bracelets clank and bowed her head lower and lower. Gabriel who likewise did not realize what he was doing kissed the warm parting in her hair, his lips scarcely touching her.

"No, no, go, go!.." she repeated.

Translated by George Hanna

NIKOLAI LESKOV

THE CLOTHES-MENDER

It would be foolish to promise everybody new happiness with the New Year, and yet something like this does occasionally happen. Permit me then in this connection to tell you a little episode very much in the Christmas story vein.

During a sojourn in Moscow a long time ago I was kept longer than I had expected and grew very tired of lodging at the inn. A sacristan from one of the court churches, hearing how I complained of my discomfort to my friend, the priest of his church, suggested:

"He'd do better, father, to go to a friend of mine who has an empty room giving on the street."

"What friend is that?" the priest asked.

"It's Vassili Konych."

"Ah, maître tailleur Lepoutant!"

"The very one."

"Well, indeed, that would not be a bad plan."

The priest told me that he knew these people and that the room was an excellent one. To which the sacristan mentioned another advantage:

"And if it should so happen you should tear something, or your trouser-ends should go ragged—it'll be mended so well that no eye could notice it."

Further inquiries, I decided, were superfluous, and I did not even go to inspect the room. I gave the sacristan the key to my chamber at the inn, scribbled a note on my card, asked him to pay my account and to transfer things from there to his friend's. After that I asked him to call for me and conduct me to my quarters.

II

The sacristan did my commissions in a short time and about an hour later called for me at the priest's house.

"Let's go," he said, "your things are all set out and arranged there, and the windows have been opened for you, and the door of the little balcony giving onto the garden has been opened, and my friend and I even had tea on the balcony. It's very nice there," he said, "flowers all round you, and the birds make their nests in the gooseberry-bushes and there's a nightingale singing in a cage under the

window. It's better than being in a country cottage, because there's plenty of green and at the same time the domestic arrangements are all in order, and if a button should come a bit loose or the turn-ups of your trousers wear thin, they'll be mended on the spot."

This sacristan was clean and neat and evidently something of a dandy. He dwelt long on this particular side of my new lodgings' advantages.

The priest himself supported him.

"Yes," said he, "this 'tailleur Lepoutant' is such an artist in this line that you wouldn't find another like him either in Moscow or Petersburg."

"An expert," the sacristan prompted him, as he helped me on with my coat.

Who this Lepoutant was, I did not quite grasp and, moreover, it did not concern me.

III

We went there on foot.

The sacristan assured me that it was not worthwhile to take a cab, since it was only "a little promenade of a couple of steps."

Actually it proved to be a good half-hour's walk, but the sacristan wanted to take this "promenade" very likely for the purpose of showing off his cane with the purple silk tassel.

The locality where Lepoutant's house was turned out to be down towards Yausa, on the other bank of the Moskva River. I cannot now remember the name of the parish or the sidestreet. It was not even a street but a winding alley and had something of the look of an ancient churchyard about it. A church stood there, and around it ran a driveway in which stood six or seven houses, all very small, drab, and wooden with the exception of one that had a brick half-storey. This was the largest and most presentable, and across the whole front was nailed a big iron sign which bore in large gilt letters on a black ground the misspelt words: "Maitr taileur Lepoutant."

This was evidently my lodging but it seemed queer to me that my landlord, whose name was plain Vassili Konych, should call himself "Maitr taileur Lepoutant." When the priest had called him this, I had thought it was simply a joke and paid no attention to it, but now when I saw the signboard I had to change my mind. The affair must have been done in all seriousness. So I asked my guide about it.

"Is Vassili Konych a Russian or a Frenchman?"

The sacristan was quite astonished and, at first, seemed not to understand my question; then he replied:

"Whatever do you mean? How could he be a Frenchman—he's pure Russian! Even the clothes he makes for people are real Russian—sleeveless coats and the like, but he's famous all over Moscow for his mending: it's wonderful what a lot of old clothes have come from his hands looking as good as new."

"But still, he must be of French origin, isn't he?" I persisted.

The sacristan again showed his astonishment:

"No, why should he be of French origin? He's the right local breed, a Russian, and he takes in my children, and we who follow a religious calling all belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Why do you imagine that he belongs to the French nation?"

"He has a French name on his signboard."

"Oh, that! That's nothing! It's only a sign. And then it's only the main signboard that's in French, down at the gate there's another in Russian and that's nearer the truth."

I looked round and sure enough at the gate I saw a signboard with a picture of a peasant's overcoat and a sleeveless coat and two black waist-coats with silver buttons shining like stars through the gloom.

The sign below said:

"Costumes made, Russian styles and clergymen's. Turning and mending a speciality."

The name of the maker of "costumes, turning and mending a speciality" was not given, only the initials "V. L."

IV

The premises and their owner proved to be far beyond the praise and descriptions I had heard, so that I felt at home at once and soon became fond of my good host Vassili Konych. It was not long before we fell into the habit of taking tea together, and talking over one thing and another. It so happened that once as we were sitting over our tea on the balcony, the talk turned on the theme of the vanity of all things under the sun and of our unwearying inclination to work for every vanity. Then it was that we reached the subject of Lepoutant.

I do not remember how exactly it came about, only that it reached the point where Vassili Konych wanted to tell me the queer story of how and why he first appeared "under a French heading."

This has some slight connection with social customs and literature though it was written on a signboard.

Konych began his story simply but in a very interesting way.

"My name, sir," he said, "is not Lepoutant at all, it's something else, but fate itself placed me under a French heading."

V

"I'm a real native Moscow man, from the poorest people. Our grandfather used to sell inner soles for boots to elderly respectable folks among the old Believers sect out at the Rogozhsk gates. An excellent man he was, like a saint, grey as a hare, and supported himself by his own labour to the day of his death. He used to buy felt, cut it into pieces the size of boot-soles, tack them together in pairs with a bit of thread and hawk them among "the Christians." And he'd sing soft and gentle-like: "Soles, new soles, who needs new soles?" He would tramp all over Moscow and, though his whole stock was

worth a couple of kopecks, as you might say, still it kept him in food. My father was a tailor after the old style. He made coats for the strictest of the Old Believers. They were made with three pleats and he taught me his trade. As for me, I had a knack for mending from the time I was a youngster. My cutting is none too fancy, I always liked mending better. I practised and taught myself till I could mend a thing in a prominent spot so well that nobody would notice it.

"So the old folks told my father:

" 'That lad has a talent given by God, and where there's talent there'll be good fortune, too.'

"And that is the way it turned out, but as you know you need the meekest patience to wait for all good fortune. Two great trials came upon me. First my parents died, leaving me alone when I was very young; the second was that the room where I was living caught fire one Christmas Eve when I was out at church, and all my workshop was burned down: my iron and my forms and customers' clothes I'd taken to mend. Trouble came on me that time but as it happened this was the first step towards my good fortune.

VI

"A customer of mine, whose furlined cloak had been burned in the fire at my place, came to me and said to me:

" 'It's a big loss—this of mine, and it's hard to be left just the holiday-time without my cloak, but I can see there's nothing to be got from you who have nothing. You're in more need of help yourself. If you're a sensible lad, I'll put you in the way of a good thing, only on the understanding that in time you'll pay me back.'

" 'If God but wills it so, I'll be only too glad: and I'll count it my first duty to pay my debt,' I told him.

"He told me to put on my clothes and then he took me to the under-barman at the inn opposite the commander-in-chief's house.

" 'Here you are,' he said to the man, 'here's that same foreman tailor I told you about who'll be very useful for your trade maybe.'

"The trade in that place was that I had to press the clothes of all the visitors who had got their things creased and crumpled in their valises and do any mending that was necessary.

"The under-barman gave me a job to try me out, and satisfied that it was well done, told me to stay on.

" 'Now what with it's being Christmastime,' says he, 'and plenty of gentry coming here drinking and roistering, and what with the New Year and Epiphany coming after it, there's sure to be even more rampaging, so you'd better stay.'

"So we agreed on it.

"The one who had brought me there told me:

" 'Look now, here's your chance to turn a nice penny. Only listen to him (he meant the under-barman) as if he was your pastor. God ordains his pastor to guard us.'

"They let me have a corner by the window in the corridor and so I set to work. Many were the people I mended for, beyond counting, in fact, and it would be a sin to complain, because I mended my own affairs well, I may say; there was a terrible lot to do and they paid well. The common folks didn't put up there, only the big gentry who liked to be on the same spot as the commander-in-chief, with their windows facing his.

"They paid particularly well for fine-drawn work and darning in cases where some garment they wanted to put on at once was damaged. There were times when it was on my conscience—the hole would be no bigger than a ten-kopeck piece and they'd pay me gold for it.

"Less than a chervonets[1] they never paid for mending a hole. But naturally they demanded a work of art for this; it had to be as close as though one drop of water ran into another and you couldn't distinguish them; the thing had to be very fine drawn.

"I received a third part of every sum they paid for my work: one third went to the under-barman, the other to the servants who waited on the visitors in their rooms and helped them unpack and clean their clothes. The whole business depended on them because they would crumple the clothes, and brush them and pick holes in them, so that was why they had to have two-thirds of the pay and I only one. But even that share was enough to allow me to leave my corner in the corridor and take a quieter room for myself in the yard and the year after the under-barman's sister came from the village and I married her. She is my wife, this same woman you see here, and she's lived to old age respected by all, and maybe it was thanks to her that God sent us good fortune. The way I married was this; the under-barman, he says to me: 'She's an orphan and you ought to make her happy and then through her you'll have some great good luck.' And she said the same herself: 'I'm lucky,' she told me, 'and God will give you something through me.' And all of a sudden, as if it was actually through her, the most surprising thing happened.

VII

"Christmas came round again and soon it was New Year's Eve; I was sitting at home mending something and was just thinking of finishing my work and going to bed when the room servant ran in and said:

" 'Come quick, a terrible big ace has just put up in Number One, he must have cuffed nearly everybody all round already and whoever he hits he gives a chervonets and he wants you to go over right now.'

" 'What does he want of me?' I asked him.

" 'When he was dressing for the ball, he found at the very last moment a hole burned in the front of his dress coat. He beat the man who had brushed his clothes

[1] Ten roubles in gold.—Ed.

and then he gave him three chervonets. Come as quick as you can, he's that mad he looks like all kinds of beasts in one.'

"I only shook my head because I knew too well how they spoil the visitors' clothes on purpose so as to make a profit out of the work. But anyhow I put on my cloak and went out to see this ace who looked like all kinds of beasts in one.

"The pay would certainly be good because Number One room in any hotel is regarded as only for aces, and none but the richest could afford it.

"For Number One room in this inn of ours they charged, at present prices, fifteen roubles a day, and in those days, when they counted by bills, it was fifty-two roubles and fifty kopecks. So whoever took that room was called an ace.

"The one they brought me to now was frightening to look at, his height was something enormous and his face dark and wild, so that he did actually look something like all the beasts in one.

" 'You,' he growls at me, 'can you mend a hole well enough for it never to be noticed?'

" 'It depends what kind of a thing it is. If it's stuff with a nap on it, it can be very well done, but if its shiny satin or moiré—silk material, I wouldn't take it on,' I tell him.

" 'Moiré yourself,' says he to me, 'only yesterday some scoundrel sitting behind me, I suppose, burned a hole in my dress-coat with his cigar. Here look at it and tell me what you think.'

"I looked at it and said:

" 'This could be mended very well.'

" 'And how long would it take?'

" 'It'll be ready in an hour's time.'

" 'Do it then,' he said, 'and if you do it well, it'll mean you'll get money in plenty and if you do it badly it'll mean that I'll knock your head on a barrel. Go and ask people how I beat the fellows about here, and know that I'll beat you ten times as hard.'

VIII

"I went home to my mending, not very pleased about it, because you can't always be sure of how it will turn out before you have done it; the nap of some cloth lies better than others, and then again if the stuff is harsh, it's hard to give it a nap so that the place won't be noticed.

"I did the mending well but I didn't take it back myself because this customer's ways weren't at all to my liking. This kind of work is trickey and no matter how well you may do it, anybody who wants to can find fault with it and it's easy enough to get into trouble.

"I sent my wife with the coat to her brother the under-barman and warned her to come home as quick as she could. As soon as she was home again, we bolted the door and went to bed.

"Next morning I got up and spent the day as usual: I was sitting at my work, waiting to see what they would come to tell me was due to me from the big ace —money in plenty or a knock on the head.

"All of a sudden, when it was getting on for two o'clock, the gentleman's servant turns up and says:

" 'The gentleman from Number One is asking for you.'

" 'I wouldn't go for anything,' I tell him.

" 'And why not?'

" 'Because—I won't go and that's all about it. I'd rather let my work go for nothing than see him.'

" 'There's no need for you to be so terrified of him,' the servant says. 'He's downright pleased with you and he wore the coat at the New Year's ball and nobody noticed the hole in it. And now there's company to breakfast wishing him a Happy New Year, and they've had plenty to drink. They started to talk about your work and made bets as who would find the hole, and nobody found it. Now they've lost their bets and they're drinking toasts to your Russian art and they want to have a look at you. Go quick, it's through this that new happiness is waiting for you in the New Year.'

"And my wife took it up and kept saying:

" 'Go now, go, my heart tells me that this is where our new happiness will start.'

"So I did as they bid me and went.

IX

"There must have been ten people or so in the room when I got there and they had all had a good deal to drink. And as soon as I went in they handed me a glass of wine and said:

" 'Come along, drink with us to your Russian art in which you can bring credit to our nation.' And a whole lot more stuff of this kind that the job wasn't worth.

"As you may imagine, I thanked them and bowed to them and drank two glasses to Russia and their health, but more than that I said I wouldn't take. I can't drink sweet wine, I said, because I'm not worthy of a company such as was here.

"But the terrible gentleman in Number One says:

" 'Let me tell you, brother, you're an ass and a fool, you're just cattle—you don't know your own value, and how much you deserve for talents like yours. You helped me at New Year to change the whole course of my life because yesterday I declared myself to my chosen bride who comes of a grand family and I won her consent. My wedding is to be the next big holiday.'

" 'I wish you and your future wife perfect happiness in your marriage,' I said.

" 'Drink to it, then,' he says.

"I couldn't very well refuse, so I drank their health, and then I asked him to let me go.

" 'Very well,' he said, 'only tell me where you live and your name and surname. I want to be your benefactor.'

"Then I told him:

" 'I'm called Vassili, and my father was Konon, and my surname is Laputin. My

workshop's hard by the inn, it has a little signboard with 'Laputin' on it."

"As I was telling him all this, I didn't notice at first that all the guests were tittering at my words and then laughed fit to split their sides. All of a sudden the gentleman I had mended the coat for, without rhyme or reason, gave me a cuff over the ear, first over one, then over the other, till I could hardly stand on my legs. Then he pushed me towards the door and threw me across the threshold.

"I couldn't make head or tail of anything, so I ran home as fast as my legs would carry me.

"When I got there my wife asked me:

" 'Now tell me quick, Vassinka, how my luck has served you?'

" 'Don't go poking into the ins and outs of this, Mashenka, but I'll tell you this much—that if things are to go on any further like this, it would be better if we never had your luck at all. That gentleman hit me, if you want to know, my angel.'

"I gave her a fright and she wanted to know the why and the wherefore and all about it and naturally I couldn't tell her because I knew no more than she did.

"But while we were talking things over, there came a knocking and a tramping and a clattering in our lobby, and who should come in but my 'benefactor' from Number One room!

"We jumped up, my wife and I, and stared at him. He was red in the face with his inward feelings and all the wine he had drunk and in one hand he held the yardman's axe with the long helve and in the other a board smashed to bits—my poor signboard which had my humble trade on it and my name: 'Laputin. Old Clothes Mended and Turned.'

X

"In comes the gentleman with the bits of broken board in his hand and throws them straight into the stove. 'Put on your coat,' he says to me, 'you're coming in my carriage with me, I'm going to make your fortune for you. If you don't come I'll knock you and your wife and all your belongings to pieces like these boards.'

"I thought to myself that the best thing to do instead of trying to argue with this rake, was to get him out of the house as quick as I could before he did my wife any harm.

"I pulled on my clothes and said to my wife:

" 'Give me your blessing, Mashenka!' and off I went. We drove to Bronnaya Street where the well-known broker Prokhor Ivanych lived, and the gentleman asked him:

" 'What kind of houses are there for sale and in what districts, at, say, twenty-five to thirty thousand roubles or a bit over?' He meant in bank-notes at that time, of course. 'Only, the kind of house I want must be ready to go into this very minute,' he said.

"The broker took a notebook out of the cupboard, put on his spectacles, and turned the pages, first one and then another.

" 'There's a house—just what you want in every respect, but you'll have to give a little more for it.'

" 'I can give a little more.'

" 'You'd have to give up to thirty-five thousand.'

" 'I'd agree to that.'

" 'Then,' says the broker, 'we can close the deal in an hour and the house can be occupied tomorrow, because the deacon that used to live there choked himself with a chicken-bone at a christening and died of it and that's the reason nobody lives in it now.'

"Well, the house he was talking about was the very one you and I are sitting in now. Folks said the deacon's ghost walked in it of a night a-choking of himself with the chicken-bone, but that's all stuff and nonsense and never a one ever saw a sight of him here. My wife and I came into it the very next day because the gentleman had the title-deeds made out as a gift to us. And the third day he came back with six or seven workmen and they brought a ladder and this same signboard that says I am a French tailor. They came here and nailed it up and went away again. Then the gentleman said to me:

" 'My only instruction to you is this—never dare to change this signboard and always answer to this name.' And all of a sudden he shouts:

" 'Lepoutant!'

" 'What can I do for you?' I answer him.

" 'Well done!' he says. 'Now here are another thousand roubles to buy your spoons and saucers with. But bear in mind, Lepoutant—respect my orders and you'll be respected yourself, but otherwise... Lord save you, if you start calling yourself by your old name and it comes to my ears... in the first place as an introduction I'll beat you all over, and in the second place, the law returns the gift to the giver. But if you do everything according to my wishes, all you have to do is explain what you need and you'll have it from me.'

"At that I thanked him and said I had no wishes whatsoever and could think of nothing, save that would he be so good, as to tell me what was the meaning of all this and for what I had been given this house?

"But this he would not tell me.

" 'There's no need for you to know that,' he said, 'only remember that from now on you're called Lepoutant and that's your name in my title-deeds. Keep that name: it'll be profitable to you.'

XI

"So we settled down to keep house there and everything went well with us and we regarded it as my wife's good luck, because we couldn't learn the real reason for a long time from anybody. Till one day two gentlemen who were passing by our house stopped and came in.

" 'What can we do for you?' my wife asked.

" 'We want to see Monsieur Lepoutant himself,' they said.

"When I came out they looked at each other and laughed and then started to talk to me in French.

"I said I was sorry I didn't understand French.

" 'And have you had that signboard up for a long time?' they asked me then.

"I told them how long.

" 'That's right then. We remember you, we've seen you before. You mended a coat in a most amazing way for a gentleman going to a ball and got into some trouble with him in the hotel afterwards.'

" 'Quite right,' I said, 'such a thing did happen, but I am grateful to that gentleman and it's all because of him that I started to live, but I know neither his name nor his surname because all that was kept from me.'

"They told me his name and added that his surname was Laputin.

" 'What—Laputin?'

" 'Why, yes, Laputin. Do you mean to say you never found out the reason why he did so much for you? It was so that his name shouldn't be up on that signboard.'

" 'Fancy that, and we couldn't understand it at all till now. We got the benefit of it but we were in the dark about it.'

" 'However, that hasn't helped him at all,' my visitors went on, 'he got into fresh trouble again yesterday.' And then they told me a story that made me very sorry for the man who had been my namesake.

XII

"This Laputin's wife to whom he had proposed in the mended dress coat was still more touchy than her husband and worshipped grandeur. Neither of them had anything to boast of in the way of family connections, but their fathers had grown rich in business and wanted to know nobody except what's called the 'quality.' In those days our commander-in-chief in Moscow was Count Zakrevsky, who, they say, came from the Polish landed gentry himself. The real nobility like Prince Serguei Mikhailovich Golitsyn thought little enough of him; but others were glad to be received by him. The man who had my old name, and his wife were dying to have that honour. They couldn't manage it for a long time, God knows why. But at last our Laputin found a chance to oblige the Count in some way or other and the Count said:

" 'Come and see me, brother, I'll give orders for you to be received, only tell me your surname, so as I won't forget.'

"Our man said that his name was Laputin.

" 'Laputin?' the Count said, 'Laputin... wait, wait now, Laputin? I seem to remember something. Laputin... That's someone's name.'

" 'Quite right, your Excellency, it's my name.'

" 'Yes, yes, brother, it's your name, that's true, only I seem to remember something... that there was another Laputin? Perhaps your father was Laputin?'

"Our gentleman agreed, his father's name had been Laputin.

" 'Yes, there's something I seem to remember... I remember... Laputin. Very likely it may be your father. I have a very good memory: come and see me tomorrow, Laputin; I'll give orders for you to be received, Laputin.'

"Our Laputin was beside himself with delight and drove there the very next day.

XIII

"But though Count Zakrevsky had boasted of his good memory, he neglected that time to say anything to his household about receiving Laputin.

"Now Laputin rushed there, and said to the porter:

" 'I want to see the Count.'

"But the porter wouldn't let him in.

" 'I haven't had orders to admit anyone,' he said.

"The gentleman tried all manner of ways to talk him over. 'I haven't come on my own accord, but on the Count's invitation,' he told him. But the porter showed no feeling about anything.

" 'I have no orders to admit anyone, but if you want to see him on business, you go round to the office.'

" 'I am not here on business,' Laputin says, highly offended. 'I'm here as a personal acquaintance; the Count must surely have told you my name, and you've got it mixed up.'

" 'No, the Count didn't tell me any name yesterday,' the porter says.

" 'I can't believe it: you must have just forgotten the name—Laputin, it was.'

" 'No, for I never forget anything and this name I couldn't have forgotten, because I'm Laputin myself.'

"At that our gentleman flew into a rage.

" 'What do you mean by that—you're Laputin, indeed! Who taught you to call yourself that?'

"To this the porter says:

" 'Nobody ever taught me, because it's our natural name, and there's no end to the Laputins in Moscow, only the rest of them are of no consequence; I myself am the only one of them all that got to be somebody in the world.'

"While they were arguing there, the Count himself came downstairs, and he said:

" 'Now I come to think of it, it must be him I remember, he's Laputin, and he's a rascal too. And you call another time. I'm too busy just at present. Good-day.'

"Well, it goes without saying what kind of meeting could there be after that?"

XIV

"Maître tailleur Lepoutant" told me this story with regretful modesty, adding by way of an ending that next day as he was coming home with some work along the boulevard he met this same Laputin of the anecdote, the man he had every reason to regard as his benefactor.

"There he was, sitting on a bench, looking very down in the mouth. I wanted to pass by, but as soon as he caught sight of me, he called out:

" 'Good-day, monsieur Lepoutant! How are you getting on?'

" 'By God's grace and yours—very well indeed. And how might you feel, sir?'

" 'Couldn't be worse: a very nasty affair happened yesterday.'

" 'I heard about it,' I said, 'and I was glad that at least you didn't touch him.'

" 'Touch him,' he said, 'that's out of the question because he isn't a man of free labour and industry, but is employed by the Count as one of his rascally servants. But what I would like to know is: who bribed him to do me such a bad turn?'

Then, in his simplicity, Vassili Konych tried to comfort his benefactor.

" 'Don't think anybody put him up to these things, sir,' I said, 'it's true there are an awful lot of Laputins and many of them are very honest folks, like for instance my late grandfather who used to sell inner soles for boots all over Moscow.'

"At that he brought his stick across my back... I ran off as fast as I could and from that day to this I never set eyes on him. I only heard tell that he went away with his wife abroad to France, and that he went bankrupt there and died. She set up a tombstone to him, and funnily enough they say it had the same name as mine on my signboard. So that after all we turned out to be namesakes again."

XV

When Vassili Konych had concluded his story I asked him why he did not change his signboard now and put up his own rightful Russian name?

"But why, sir, should I upset the things my new luck started from? And I might do harm to the neighbourhood, too, that way."

"How could it do the neighbourhood any harm?"

"Why don't you see? This French name of mine, though everybody knows it's only a signboard, still it's brought our neighbourhood another position altogether, and the neighbours make a very different profit on their houses nowadays, I can tell you."

Thus, Vassili Konych remained a Frenchman for the benefit of the humdrum folks round about him in this out-of-the-way corner of Moscow, while his noble namesake rotted, without being of use to anyone, under a pseudonym in the cemetery of Père Lachaise.

Translated by Anthony Wixley

Neutral Switzerland

by the Kukryniksy

"NIGHT OVER BELGRADE"

Before the war, Doussya Zhelyabova worked on the arc-lamps in a cinema studio. According to the cameraman's instructions she directed the blinding beam now on the floor, now on the scenery, now on the made-up face of the actor.

Doussya had been working there for eight years. Her lamp had followed Lyubov Orlova fleeing after the train, pressing a Negro child to her bosom; Cherkassov, leading the Russian regiments against Livonians, brandishing his huge sword, and Shchukin[1]—so like Lenin in his make-up that people would stop in amazement when they suddenly met him in a corridor—making a speech from a tribune built up in the set.

Doussya knew all the actors personally, and at home she treasured endless stills from the films on which she had worked.

Then the war began. The studio was evacuated. For a long time, interminably long it seemed, Doussya accompanied the huge lighting equipment in a lorry far, far into the rear, into Central Asia. And there, in a large town, the truck came to a standstill, and went no further.

The studio was temporarily housed in one of the narrow lanes of the old town, crowded inconvenient premises never intended for film work.

It was a difficult time. Continual bad news from the front, each report more disquieting than the last. There was light only for a few hours during the night, and that not every night, because power was needed for the armament works which had also been evacuated here.

No big pictures were attempted, all they made were short fighting episodes, each only a few reels long.

Hardly anyone knew how to film war scenes properly, yet it was just war films that everyone wanted to work upon, and every film was full of firing, running, and men dying.

There was nothing in the town that they needed for such work—no tanks to go to the front, no aeroplanes to come from there, no German helmets, uniforms, or weapons, because at that time not so many German prisoners had been taken. And finally there was no wood to heat the set, and those actors not on at the moment would crowd round Doussya's lamp and try to warm their frozen hands a little.

Nearly all the men who had been working the arc-lamps had gone to the front. Doussya would come back to the hostel in the morning, lie down without undressing and closing her eyes, think long and painful thoughts.

More and more often it seemed to her —especially when reports from the front were bad—that what she and the others were doing here was utterly useless and unnecessary, and that the only job worth doing was there, at the front, where most of her comrades from her department had gone.

One day, in the spring of 1942, she went to the recruiting office and volunteered for active service.

When she came to say good-bye to the people in the studio, the director of the picture on which she had been working, a stout noisy man with a habit of shouting and cursing, suddenly looked sadly at her. But all he said was:

"A pity, a pity!"

He raised no objections. He looked at her again, and added:

"I asked to be sent to the front, too, but they wouldn't take me, said I was needed more for this."

He nodded towards a corner of the set, where the entrance to some house with a signboard in a foreign language had been set up.

A picture was being shot dealing with the underground struggle against the Germans in the occupied countries of Western Europe.

In her present mood, such a picture seemed to Doussya particularly futile.

"What do we want with Western Europe," she thought, "when the Germans have taken Kharkov?"

And looking regretfully at the director, for the last time she quietly held out her hand, her fingers pressed together as usual and said good-bye.

Dark, silent night brooded over Belgrade. That morning the last Germans hiding in the attics had been killed. The fighting had moved away beyond the Danube and the Sava, and the silence seemed strange after seven days of deafening battle.

The general in command of the infantry division which had taken the southern part of the town was passionately fond of music; it was even strange to see it in a man of his age and position. As a boy, he had sung for some years in a church choir, and it might well be that his love for song had originated at that time. Be that as it may, everyone in the regiment who had a good voice and knew how to use it had a special place in the general's memory, he knew them by name, kept them on a special list and did every-

[1] The author refers here to the actors performing title-roles in three Soviet films: "The Circus," "Alexander Nevsky" and "Lenin in October."—Ed.

thing to keep them out of harm's way—as far as was possible here, where it was neither the front nor army headquarters, but simply an infantry division.

Loftily ignoring all rules and regulations, and the absence of any order to that effect in the division, the general organized a small musical company, whose members were listed as stretcher-bearers, remaining behind the lines when things were quiet, and carrying the wounded from the field during battles.

Belgrade was taken, and as usually happens with the infantry, they were to push on without stopping in the morning, northwards, beyond the Danube.

But the general wanted to mark this day in some way, and remembering his choir, he decided to give a concert in the People's Theatre—the largest undamaged theatre in the town—on the night before the advance.

As always happens in such cases, the news spread quickly, and by evening even more guests had gathered in the spacious theatre than had been expected. There were large numbers of Yugoslav officers and partisans, a member of the Army Council came, and someone from the political department of that front; there were two generals from the tank corps, several correspondents, and even a commissary colonel from the main captured material department—that same colonel with whom the general only that morning had had such an acrimonious conversation that one would have thought they would avoid each other for the rest of their lives.

The night was very dark and very silent. That may have been why the animation at the theatre entrance was especially noticeable.

One after another, light cars and jeeps drew up before the theatre, chauffeurs called out to each other, doors banged and tommy-gunners walked here and there, the white circles from their pocket torches moving erratically over the pavement.

Doussya Zhelyabova was wandering about the stage behind the lowered curtain, with the other members of the company, deciding where so and so should stand, where the accordion players' seats should be placed, and how the piano should be moved so as not to interfere with the swift Russian dancing.

Everyone was tense and nervous—first of all they were tired from several sleepless nights of battle; then they were in a strange town; but the main thing was that during the previous day's fighting the best dancer, Sergeant Larikov, had been wounded. Not only that, but Olya Solomina, who sang lyrics, had been killed.

Doussya had found her place in the musical company only three months previously and then only by chance. One evening at the battalion where she was first-aid instructor, she had been singing one of the "Suffering" series, so popular in her own district, Samara, when the general came by. He heard her, made her come to his headquarters and repeat the song, and two days later gave orders for her to be enrolled in the ensemble.

Her usual numbers were mournful Volga chants and other folk songs, accompanied by an accordion. But today, as a result of Olya Solomina's death, Doussya would have to sing her numbers as well.

She was sad when she thought of Olya, and alarmed about how she was going to sing her songs. Unable to contain herself as she heard the noise from the auditorium, she went up to the curtain, moved it aside a little and peered through the crack.

There were many familiar faces in the auditorium, but still more unfamiliar ones. The green tunics of the Yugoslav partisans filled three quarters of the space. In the very front row were several Yugoslav priests sitting side by side in their black cowls and cassocks, with large crosses on their breasts.

The Red Army men sat in silence. Their faces were weary with the week-long battle, but they patiently waited for the show to begin, without breaking the silence.

At last the curtains parted. The first two numbers were "Moonlight" and a Liszt prelude, on two accordions. Then there were dances by nearly the whole of the company. Doussya was to close the first part with her folk songs followed by the ones she was to give instead of Olya Solomina.

Doussya could see how her comrades' numbers were going. The whole audience applauded, and kept making all the performers bow again and again, as though determined to show no preference.

When she came forward, Doussya was quite calm. She knew that everything would go well. She began with her Volga chant to an accordion, followed by two other folk-songs. These she sang merrily, and from the corner of an eye she could see the Yugoslav priests in the front row smiling after each one and applauding loudly, their long black sleeves dangling over their wrists.

But nevertheless, as the moment approached when she would sing Olya's numbers she became sadder and more agitated.

And now the moment had arrived. The first song began with the words:

"Why are you sad, dear sailor lad...
Your accordion wails and moans."

This had been the song which Olya had sung particularly well, with great feeling.

And suddenly Doussya felt that she simply could not sing it. She looked desperately round the auditorium, and for the first time, realized vividly that this was a foreign country, that this was Belgrade, that the theatre was two-third filled with Yugoslavs, people speaking a language similar, but all the same different from her own.

It may have been this sudden feeling that she was abroad that recalled to her mind the cold lot in the Central Asian town and the director's face as he said: "They said I was needed more for this," the setting of an entrance with a sign

board in a foreign language, and the words of the theme song which the whole studio had been singing that month.

And quite unexpectedly for herself and for her comrades, for the whole theatre, Doussya stepped forward and closing her eyes, began softly singing the song that had suddenly returned to her memory:

"The silent night came over Belgrade
after the burning day.
Remember how brightly it flashed,
The lightning of furious battle.
Remember the year of horror
And the black machines in the sky.
Hold your breath and listen!
Do you hear the night singing?
Singing angrily: "Lead us into battle!
Prepare for the hour of vengeance!
Death for death! Blood for blood!
Into battle, ye Slavs! The dawn is ahead!"

She sang the first verse, the second, eyes closed, forgetting the audience, never thinking of the words. Before her she could see the cold winter days of the first war year and the distant Central-Asian town, the newspapers with the communiqués: "After hard fighting our forces withdrew from..." The unheated sets, in which at that time—God, how long ago!—at that very time, when the newspapers held these terrible words, a picture was being shot of the distant town in which she was now singing that song.

"Whoever could have imagined or known at that time that in three years we would be in this same town? Who could have guessed it or foreseen it?" thought Doussya. And the reply to her own question came to her: "Yes, yes, strange as it may be, there was. Somebody knew, and thought, and guessed, and foresaw. And the director was not allowed to go to the front, but was told to shoot this picture. There was somebody who foresaw this too, just as he foresaw a thousand other things, both large and small. It must be so, because otherwise all that has happened in these years would have been impossible."

She ended her song, opened her eyes. The audience was silent, as though under a spell.

And then something happened that Doussya had never before seen. People began clapping, they clapped harder and harder, they began to shout something and one after another to stand up, and still the thunder of hands continued, the whole audience standing, applauding. And she knew well enough that they would never let her go without repeating the song.

With a kind of childishly helpless gesture, she raised her hands to the roaring auditorium. And an obedient silence fell, just as unexpectedly and suddenly as the storm had risen.

Standing before the silent auditorium, Doussya suddenly wanted to say something of what she had just been feeling before repeating the song. She took a step forward.

"That song," she said, "is from a film about your Belgrade. We shot that picture three years ago, a long, long way from here, in Central Asia, when we were evacuated. It was very cold then, and things were difficult, bad. And the Germans had taken Kharkov. They were near Moscow. But all the same, we shot that picture. I was working in the cinema studio then, too."

She was filled with a sudden confusion as she involuntarily mentioned herself, stepped back and said uncertainly:

"Well—now I'll sing it again."

And began the song for the second time.

On the large stage of the People's Theatre in Belgrade stood a small, plain girl in a military tunic and rough worn jackboots; she sang in an uncertain voice, sometimes ringing, sometimes breaking, the song "Night over Belgrade."

And people wept in the theatre, people who had been partisans for three and a half years, waking and sleeping with death on their right hand. When I recall it now, I fancy that she did not sing very well. But people wept.

And that's the whole of the story.

No, there's one thing more. When our films are sent to Yugoslavia, the picture "Night Over Belgrade" must certainly be included. It may not be very well made, but it embodies the strength of hope and the gift of prophecy. And that touches the human heart as much as the loftiest art.

CONSTANTINE SIMONOV

MARIA

It is hard to see a man's tears. But to see them on the weathered face of an old soldier, seamed with lines, deeply etched as though cut out with a nail, is ten times harder.

And they were bitter tears that welled out of the eyes of Senior Corporal Nikolai Zavikhvost, when he told us about the Russian girl who had served in his battalion for two and a half years and had saved his life.

"Very well, I'll tell you all I know," he said. "And as for what I don't know, they'll fill it in." And he jerked his head towards the other Cossacks all from his own district, who were sheltering in the bottom of the trench from the piercing wind which tossed handfuls of icy dust onto our heads.

"She was called Maria. Of course she had a surname too, comrade Shevchuk, and a title—she was sergeant-major in the medical corps. But none of us ever called her anything but Maria. That was because she was always so kind and concerned about us, always ready to help in any way; she would have a kind thought for everybody, a pleasant word. After a long march, for instance, or after a battle, when even the men could hardly hold up,

let alone a girl like her, she'd still be on her feet, running from campfire to campfire, from dugout to dugout, talking to the men and taking an interest in everything. She had time for everything and everybody.

"When she came into the dugout it was just as if the sun had come out. She'd ask one of the ten men if he'd heard from his wife, or help another to write home —she'd a knack of finding the right word, something warm and affectionate—or else she'd find a button to sew onto somebody's coat. There was one fellow, a sort of Gipsy, always unshaved, so she gave him a razor...

"As for her own work—giving first aid during battles and getting the wounded away under fire, well, I can tell you that in two and a half years of war I've never seen another nurse like Maria. Even if the whole place was like a furnace, she'd still dash into the midst of it, bandage the wounded and get them out of the battle. She got over a hundred men out that way. I was one of them.

"I remember the third time I was wounded," continued Zavikhvost. "I was waiting to be taken to the field dressing station. My wound was burning till I could have yelled with it. I lay there gritting my teeth, when Maria came up to me and said: 'Tell me, for pity's sake, isn't it a little easier?' And then I asked her where she was from, whether from Moscow? 'No,' she said, 'I'm from Odessa.' And when she thought of her home town she flushed all over like a little girl. Later she told us about her father, a metal worker, about herself, that she had finished high school at sixteen, and had planned to study agronomy, specializing in horticulture. She was particularly fond of gardens and orchards, she said. But then came the war, the Rumanians approached Odessa, and she volunteered to learn nursing. She had to leave her orchards. At first she was terrified of blood, it made her head swim. But then she saw so much of it that there wasn't a nurse with us who was cooler and pluckier than Maria.

"Here is one thing that happened to her in Odessa. A marine lieutenant, a real hero, led his platoon to attack the Rumanian trenches alone. They were all over him like wasps when you kick over the nest. But our men came up to help and the Rumanians were flung back. The lieutenant had fallen, he was covered with wounds. Maria got to him and began dragging him away, and he kept tearing himself from her, trying to get back to the battle. Then he collapsed. 'Put me down, nurse,' he said. 'I'm dying.' She put him down on the grass with his head supported on her knees, she could see there was nothing she could do for him. Then suddenly he asked her: 'Kiss me, nurse. No girl's ever kissed me yet.' Maria kissed his chilling lips. She could hear him whispering. He wanted to tell her something. She bent down with her ear close to his lips. 'Tell the lads not to forget me,' whispered the sailor. And Maria told us that whenever she was afraid, or felt things getting too much for her, she would remember that heroic lieutenant and his last words."

Zavikhvost was silent for a moment, sighed heavily and continued:

"She left Odessa with the last steamer, when the last stretcher had been carried on board. And she was taken from Sevastopol on a submarine—she'd been busy all the time getting the wounded away. Then she came to our unit and went with us from Kerch to the Carpathian foothills. She was away from us only twice when she was wounded, and every time she would come back to us from the field hospital. Of course we thought the world of her. There'd be a battle going on, a hellish din and the whole world going up in smoke and fire, and everybody pressed to the bottom of the trench, but Maria'd jump out and crawl along like a lizard. And before you had time to look round she'd be back with a wounded man...

"...We were fighting right here in these parts, and those were tough battles, believe me. Five times that day we rose to attack and five times we fell back again, the fire was so heavy. The Germans had every blade of grass under fire, as you might say, and there wasn't a scrap of cover, you could see a beetle three miles off. Well, the Germans beat back our fifth attack, and then we saw one of our Cossacks, that one there, right on no man's land. He was lying prone, and when there was a lull in the artillery fire, you could hear him groaning. Suddenly Maria jumped over the breastwork and was crawling over to him. The battalion commander himself shouted to her to come back. But she was already near the wounded man hastily dressing his wound."

"I was sure my last hour had come," said a blackbrowed Cossack in a high tenor voice. "Who could help me when the earth was shaking with explosions and it was like the devil's cauldron all around me. Suddenly I felt somebody tearing off my shirt and freeing my wound. I thought I must be raving. Opened my eyes and there was Maria! 'Does it hurt? Stick it out, lad, I'll get a bandage on in a second, then it'll be easier.' But the Germans had seen her and were trying to get her. 'Let me alone,' I said, 'get back, I haven't a chance anyway, save yourself at least.' But she shook her head and went on bandaging me. 'That's not fair!' she said, and I could see I'd offended her. Then she said: 'Hold me round the neck.' She raised me and started carrying me. She hadn't gone five steps when I felt her sit down, then she lay down and carefully lowered me onto the ground. I could see blood flowing from her tunic. She went as pale as your shirt and whispered to me: 'Good-bye, pal, I'm dying. If you get through, tell the boys not to forget me.' Then she drooped like a young birch and was silent."

The Cossack jumped up suddenly and turning away in confusion, held up his face to the icy, stinging wind.

"From the trench we saw how that dog of a German sniper killed our Maria beside the wounded man," said Zavikhvost quickly. "And then you should have seen us! The whole battalion was over the breastworks without waiting for any command. 'For Maria!' someone shouted, and we all took it up. 'For Maria!' And we raced across the open field, across mines, through the barbed wire, and in a moment we were in the German trenches giving them a good taste of our knives. And ever since then, whenever I see a live German I always have the feeling that he's the one that killed our Maria. And however many of them I kill I can't be easy in my mind—maybe that sniper's still alive?"

And that was when I saw two big, transparent tears rolling down the old soldier's lined face.

By the little Polish hamlet Dombrova Velki, in the front area, they showed me a small grave with a tiny fence round it, and a gold star. I read: "Sergeant-Major Maria Shevchuk of the Medical Corps." And beneath the oval glass was a pretty delicate girl's face with curls escaping from under the Kuban hat and tender, merry eyes...

BORIS POLEVOY

DOUNYA BESSMERTNAYA

Lukya had one daughter, one only daughter, a splendid girl, Dounya.

Dounya was the best brigade leader in her collective farm. It was her brigade that was the first in the whole Kiev district to get four hundred centners of potatoes from the hectare.

"That's not enough! We can get more!" said Dounya, and began stubbornly searching for the secret of big harvests. She tried experiments at home, on her own vegetable plot. She ploughed the land in the autumn, manured it, and then early in the spring smoked the plants to protect them from the late frosts. From every plant she got about two kilograms of splendid potatoes.

One evening, when her little daughter Anyuta was asleep, Dounya sat down with pencil and paper to calculate. "Ten thousand square metres to the hectare," she reckoned. "I'll have four plants to the metre. Each one will give me over a kilogram and a half. That means 650 centners to the hectare." She boldly promised the collective farm to do it.

In 1939 Dounya kept her word: she got 650 centners of potatoes to the hectare. The fame of the young Stakhanovite spread through the whole Kiev district. Her mother was beaming with pride, her husband likewise. Letters came to her from all parts of the Ukraine and collective farmers arrived from other villages to consult with her.

Then the war broke out, and Dounya's husband went to the front.

Nearer and nearer came the enemy to the village of Bolshaya Dymerka. They were there before Dounya had time to get away. Dounya had nothing to do with them, she would not look at them, refused to understand their language and would not work for them? She hid herself in cellars, in barns, in attics. The people helped her and were silent about her whereabouts.

More than eight months passed in this way. Then the partisans blew up the railway bridge and the track near the neighbouring railway station of Brovary. The Gestapo came and arrested seven people in Dounya's village.

Dounya was the eighth. There was one traitor who gave her up to the Germans. They found her in the attic. Her old mother carried little Anyuta out of the cottage. Dounya picked up her child and went away with her in her arms.

Lukya ran to the Gestapo to see her daughter, to bring her something to eat. But the German soldiers stopped the old woman, blocked her way with their rifle butts.

"You can't go in there, go home, your daughter'll come back in an hour."

The mother went home. Two hours passed, three—she could never remember how long it was. Then a neighbour came running in, her face pale and tearstained.

"Don't wait for your daughter any more. The murderers have hanged our Dounya!"

Without a word, the old woman fell to the ground.

This is what had happened. The Germans had driven all the people onto the square, outside the building of the village Soviet where they had put up eight gallows. The people were horrified at what they saw. Some cried out, some tried to run away, but the German police had surrounded the square and would allow nobody to break through that circle of death.

A lorry drove up with the arrested people. They climbed out and walked to the gallows—ten paces. The last ten paces of their lives.

Calm and proud, her child in her arms, Dounya went to the place of execution. Her gaze firm, she looked ahead—at the people, the clear sky, and the houses of her native village. She came up to the gallows, glanced around her, and bowed in four directions.

"Farewell, my Ukraine, farewell, light of day!"

She mounted the scaffold, and turned to the people.

"Farewell, good people! Wait. Right and Truth will come back again. Stalin will come back again!"

When the executioner began to bind Dounya's hands, little Anyuta burst into tears. The executioner snatched her away and threw her into the crowd...

Till evening the bodies swayed from the gallows. Till evening Dounya's red blouse flamed over the square.

Over two years have passed since that time.

And today, in the village of Bolshaya Dymerka, there is a girl, Pasha Yarmolenko, whose name the collective farmers have come to link with that of Dounya.

The Germans carried off Pasha to slavery in Germany where many a time the girl wished herself dead, out of the bitter life she led there. Her friends told her how to boil tobacco and drink the water so as to make herself ill. She ruined her health and the Germans sent her home as useless. In the old days Pasha had been a merry girl, always laughing, but it was a very different Pasha who returned to the village. At first it seemed as though her health was wrecked for ever. But home is the best medicine, they say, and Pasha gradually recovered.

At about that time the Red Army were driving the Germans westward. The Germans had burned nearly all the houses when they left, they had driven off the cattle, had plundered all that they could lay hands on. But the land was awaiting the hand of its rightful owners, it had to be sown and the collective farmers began making preparations for the spring.

Pasha Yarmolenko was appointed brigade leader—to grow potatoes on the section that had formerly been Dounya's. She picked the best girls she could find and set to work.

That was how the famous brigade, named after Dounya, originated in Bolshaya Dymerka in the spring of 1944.

The brigade set to work with a will. The girls picked the best potatoes for seed. They cleared the wild, bushy growth of weeds from their four and a half hectare section and smoked the young plants in the early spring—in short, they did all that Dounya had taught the collective farmers. Nothing was too hard for them, no effort too great. And they had their reward—the brigade gathered 769 centners to the hectare—such a crop had never been gathered in the whole Kiev district!

Today the whole Ukraine rings with the fame of the brigade named after Dounya Bessmertnaya.

LYDIA KOMPANIETS

MANSHUK THE HERO

Have you ever heard how the Kazakh people describe their heroes of olden times? His breast was like a cliff, they say, his eye was as piercing as the eagle's, in battle he was as irresistible as a mountain torrent, and his soldier's honour was as pure and white as the snowy crest of Ala-Tau.

And now look at this girl. See the softness and tenderness in her face, the warmth and affection in her eyes. And she has been given a name as tender and affectionate—Manshuk. That is not really her name, she was called Mancia. But one day when she was still a child her mother called her by the pet name of Manshuk, and the name stuck to her. How in the world, one might think, could this girl ever be a hero? But Manshuk Mametova is a Hero of the Soviet Union.

Listen to the story of how the simple Kazakh girl became a hero, like those of whom her people tell in song and legend.

In a distant steppe settlement a daughter was born in the Zhensigali family. The yurta, or skin tent, became still more crowded, for this was the fifth child. She learned to sit a horse almost before she could walk, and when the spring sunshine warmed the steppes, the mother seated her on soft skins piled on top of the folded tent on a camel's back and there she sat, swaying and holding tightly to the ropes, looking all around her at the broad steppe and the high mountains. During the long winter evenings, when the wind howled over the steppe, and the dogs huddled shivering at the sides of the yurta which was filled with acrid smoke from a smouldering fire of dried dung, the little girl would listen to her grandmother's stories. Her eyes would burn in her swarthy face as the old woman told her about the magic horse who covered a six months' journey in six leaps.

One day a woman entered the yurta.

"Good-day!" she said.

"Good-day!" replied the mistress of the yurta, rising from the skins.

The woman opened the bag she was carrying and drew out a doll which she handed to the little girl. Then she seated Manshuk on her knee and began telling her all about the distant city where people did not live in yurtas made of skins, but in houses built of stone.

This woman, who had large, kind eyes and a soft, quiet voice, was Amina Mametova, Manshuk's aunt, and she and the little girl at once became very fond of each other. The child followed her about everywhere, never left her, and after her departure was inconsolable for a long time.

When Manshuk was five years old, Amina took her away to the city, and from that time on, she became the child's real mother. The parents died not long afterwards, and Manshuk transferred all her affection to her adopted mother.

It was here, in Alma-Ata, that Manshuk spent her childhood, and here that she went to school. Manshuk's friends loved her for her kind, affectionate nature, her merry, silvery laughter and the way she mastered her studies, letting no difficulties daunt her. The Pioneers[1] often went

[1] The Soviet children's organization.

for excursions into the mountains; and there, lying on the grass beside the campfire, they would always ask Manshuk to "sing something" and she would repeat the old Kazakh folk songs which she had heard from her grandmother. She sang well, and the other children would ask for song after song.

But of all her friends, the closest was her mother—for so she now regarded Amina Mametova. Amina's praise was her best reward—and such praise was sparingly given. If Manshuk began talking about something which she had done well, her mother would reply:

"Anybody would have done the same."

But if her mother said: "That was well done, daughter," then Manshuk would be in the seventh heaven.

Years passed. Manshuk grew up somewhat fragile-looking, but actually strong and healthy. She finished school and went to study at a medical school, at the same time working in the office of the Council of People's Commissars of the Republic. Her studies, her activities in the Young Communist League, and gay excursions into the mountains with her friends filled her life to overflowing.

Sometimes Amina would look at the girl, unobserved, and think: "Manshuk's grown up a pretty girl, isn't it time for the "Sinsu" and "Kyztanysu"[1]?

But Manshuk's fate was to be a different one.

Spring that year seemed to be more lovely than ever. Manshuk walked home along the quiet streets of Alma-Ata. Night had fallen. And have you any idea of how lovely the nights are in Kazakhstan? Manshuk walked along, head thrown back, looking into the diamond-studded black velvet of the sky. That day she had been told that she was to go to Moscow to take part in the physical culture parade. Moscow... How many happy dreams, how many magic pictures, how many secret hopes Manshuk had woven around that city, so far away and yet so near and dear! And now today she had been told: "You are to go to Moscow." Here was happiness!

Now the days flew by ever more swiftly, like a mountain torrent nearing the valley. Those to take part in the parade were busy training, the day of departure was drawing near.

But instead of that happy day, a very different one dawned—the black day of war. Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The enemy bombarded Sevastopol, Odessa, Kiev. The enemy threatened Moscow.

Manshuk ran to the Young Communist Committee. She did not know why she was going there, but felt that she must see her comrades, she could not wait. Not a moment must now be wasted.

Tense, stern wartime days began. The furious, bitter fighting was going on thousands of kilometres from Alma-Ata, but every day its harsh breath fanned the city. The first trainload of evacuees arrived. Old people, women, children climbed wearily out of the coaches. They seemed to carry with them the smoke of burning buildings, they brought a nostalgia for their demolished hearths and their eyes still seemed to stare with the terror of the day when the Germans had bombed and machine-gunned them from the air.

That night Manshuk could not sleep for a long time. She knew that she could never forget that station platform or the people who had filled it. On that day she had gazed into the heart of human grief and suffering.

"What are you doing, Manshuk? How can you sit here quietly when people are suffering so terribly? Don't you know who has caused this grief? Is there no Kazakh blood in your veins, calling for vengeance on the enemy for your ravaged land?"

Manshuk listened to this voice of her conscience, of her love for people. And she decided to go to the front, cost what it might, and there fight the Germans...

In the morning Manshuk said to her mother:

"You must understand me, dear Apa,[1] I can't just sit here. I'm not a child, I must go to the front..."

"But you're not a man, Manshuk," said her mother, fear and pride in her adopted daughter struggling in her heart. "Why should you go to fight, you can help the soldiers here. You know, my daughter, how dear you are to me, why do you want to cause me grief?"

"Ah, Apa, isn't it you who taught me that grief is the sea; if you sink in it, you drown; but risk is the boat which will carry you over it. I must go to the front..."

And Manshuk finally got to the front. She heard bursting shells, time after time, air battles raged over her head and she saw men still boiling from the heat of battle. But despite all her insistent applications to be sent to an infantry unit, Manshuk was kept as clerk at headquarters.

"Work here for the present, get used to war conditions, and then we'll see," she was told.

She obeyed, but she was determined in her heart to have her own way. She could have been a nurse, a telephone or wireless operator but that was not what she wanted. To destroy the Germans with her own hands—that was her dream.

"I want to be a machine-gunner, and I shall," she told herself obstinately.

Manshuk began learning the technique of the machine-gun with all the enthusiasm and determination inherent in her. And at last her dream came true. Manshuk became a crack marksman, she was transferred to an infantry battalion, where she soon rose to senior sergeant. This was on the Kalinin front.

And then the routine of the front began for her. Manshuk was never parted from her machine-gun, it was like some close friend to her, and she tended it like a living being, keeping it cleaned, polished and in excellent order. She herself was

[1] Songs which Kazakh girls sing leaving their homes on marriage.

[1] Apa—mother.

always smart, and astonished her comrades by her endurance and ability to surmount the difficulties of life at the front.

Just as in her schooldays, here too Manshuk was a general favourite. Her silvery laughter, merry jokes and kind words warmed and beautified the grim life of the soldiers.

Sometimes during a lull, the men would gather around Manshuk and she would tell them about the wide steppes, so far away, and the freshness of the mountain heights and the sweet heart of that land, Alma-Ata.

It happens in wartime that people already used to the thought of death, as a mountaineer becomes used to the air of great heights, suddenly realize its presence. In such moments depression can overcome the fainter-hearted. Manshuk understood this well, and one day when she heard the men talking about death, she said:

"Would you like me to tell you one of our Kazakh legends, from the time of the Golden Horde?"[1]

Moving closer, Manshuk's comrades prepared to listen.

"Long, long ago there lived a man by the name of Korkyt. And Korkyt could not reconcile himself to the swift passage of a man's life. So he decided to fight death. For this purpose he resolved to go away, to leave all human beings. But wherever he went, he saw death. In the forest the tree, rotting and falling, spoke to him of death; on the steppes the feather-grass burning in the sun told of the same thing, and even the mighty mountains predicted their coming dissolution. Then from a tree Korkyt carved the first wooden kobyz[2], strung it and began to play. He put all his soul into the melody, and the marvellous sounds from his strings rang through the whole world, filled men's ears and enchanted them. Ever since then Korkyt's music and his kobyz have roamed the world, and his name has become immortal in the strings of the kobyz.

"So you see," Manshuk ended her story, "as long as Korkyt thought only of death and kept apart from people, there was nothing but grief and melancholy all around him. But when he took the wood from the tree—that same tree that can rot—and made a kobyz from it, then he returned to people and became immortal, because life always conquers death."

Not only by her words, by her actions as well the affirmed the all-conquering right of life. In her first battle Manshuk unflinchingly repulsed a German attack, allowing the enemy to come up close and then mowing them down in dozens with her machine-gun. This won her the affection and respect of all the men.

...The Red Army offensive began. They were fighting for Nevel. By that time Manshuk had become a hardened, experienced soldier with a tempered will and a manly heart.

It was a cold morning. A thick, milky fog hung over the lake. The battle waxed hotter. The Germans were clinging to every bush, every hillock; time after time they counter-attacked. But always Manshuk's machine-gun mowed them down and they staggered back again.

It would be hard to say what were Manshuk's thoughts at that time; most probably her mind was filled with the one idea—to help the unit advance. That commanding height had to be taken, cost what it might. Its capture would decide the outcome of the battle. The Germans knew that as well as she did, and had dropped a curtain of fire in front of it. The intensity of the fighting reached its climax. And in that moment a girl's figure dashed forward, long plaits streaming behind her. It was Manshuk Mametova.

The Germans saw the girl and opened furious mortar fire on her position. An explosion overturned the machine-gun. Manshuk's head was covered with streaming blood...

Manshuk was lying on the cold, damp ground. It seemed to her that her distant childhood had returned, that she was lying on the crisp green grass of the steppe, with bees and insects humming around her... And somewhere a mountain torrent was roaring. Only—why did the green grass over there suddenly move, begin to crawl?.. Could grass crawl?.. Manshuk raised herself a little, and a searing pain shot through her head. Perhaps it was the pain that made everything look green? And what was it that was roaring, was it really a mountain stream?.. Perhaps it was...

Suddenly Manshuk's eyes cleared and she understood everything. The green grass crawling towards her were Germans, and it was not a stream she heard roaring in her native mountains, but Germans shouting.

Manshuk gathered up the last of her strength. Fury deadened her pain. She waited; let them come nearer. She could hear the beating of her heart.

Seizing her machine-gun, Manshuk dragged it out to an open position and opened fire on the Germans. The enemy chain fell back, while Manshuk fired round after round, clearing the way for our men.

...Even in death, Manshuk's fingers were still pressing the trigger of the machine-gun.

If ever you should happen to be in Nevel, you will see a street named after the Kazakh machine-gunner, Hero of the Soviet Union Manshuk Mametova.

And if you are ever in Alma-Ata, be sure and go to Proletarskaya Street. It is smothered in green, day and night poplars and apricot trees rustle and water splashes in irrigation channels. On that street there stands a small white house with a green roof and a large porch. And as you pass that house number 19—remember that it was here that the girl hero Manshuk lived, from here that she went to the war.

OLGA CHECHOTKINA

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[1] The Mongolian invaders who overran nearly the whole of Russia in the 13th century. Their rule was finally broken by Ivan the Dread.

[2] A Kazakh musical instrument.

MEN OF OUR TIME

A GREAT CITIZEN

Serguei Mironovich Kirov, a pupil of Lenin and Stalin, was among the earliest and more outstanding organizers and leaders in the work of building up the economy of the land of Soviets.

Serguei Kostrikov (Kirov) was born in 1886 in the town of Urzhum in Vyatka Gubernia (now Kirov Region). When but four years old, he lost both his parents and was brought up by his grandmother. He attended school in Urzhum where he gained excellent reports. He was no stranger to want and privation throughout this early period of his life.

In 1904, Kirov graduated the Kazan Technical School. He took an active part in the first Russian revolution during the years 1905 to 1907 and was several times arrested and exiled for his revolutionary work. Nothing, however, could break his iron will and he remained true to his revolutionary principles to the end of his life.

In 1917, Kirov led the struggle of the peoples of the North Caucasus for the establishment of Soviet power. During the Civil War he organized the heroic defence of Astrakhan. He helped defeat the army of the reactionary tsarist General Denikin and to establish Soviet power in the North Caucasus and the Transcaucasus Regions.

Before the Civil War was fully over, Kirov was engaged in one of the most important sections of the national economy—the rebuilding of the country's oil industry at Baku. The misrule of the servants of tsarism and the calamities which the World War I inflicted on Russia brought the country to the brink of catastrophe. When Kirov arrived at Baku in 1921 he found the oil fields and the factories in ruins. There were no skilled workers and no managers who could be trusted. Kirov, however, was undaunted by such difficulties.

The country needed oil and oil it would obtain.

Kirov began by gathering forces, selecting skilled workers, technicians, engineers and oil specialists. During the difficult years of the Civil War many workers had returned to their villages, changed their trades and found other work.

Kirov was able to interest people in his ideas and inspire them to selfless work for the purpose of strengthening the Soviet state.

In order to develop the oil industry it was not enough merely to restore the pre-war level of oil output—the output of petroleum had to be increased. Under Kirov's leadership, the oil industry adopted improved methods, including the extensive employment of the latest achievements of American technology. In addition to mobilizing the country's own resources, Kirov raised the question of importing the necessary equipment from America. For this purpose he dispatched his specialists and leading workers to that country and very soon, thanks to the new methods employed, the U.S.S.R. enjoyed the benefit of the output of rich, new oil fields.

On many occasions the resistance of older people who favoured established routine had to be overcome, to say nothing of the sabotage perpetrated by people hostile to the Soviet state. Kirov called conferences of experienced specialists, leading mechanics and old established workers, listened to their advice and carefully summarized the experience gained in the best oil fields and by the best specialists. He himself kept pace with the latest technical ideas envolved throughout the whole world and demanded that all his workers did likewise.

Amongst the great services rendered by Kirov was his organization of geological survey of new sources of oil in the Baku Region. Some of the older Baku specialists had a "theory" that the soil and the oil resources of Apsheron Peninsula were worked out. Kirov conducted a merciless struggle against the partisans of this "theory" and under the leadership of specialists, organized the survey of new regions, greatly extending the "useful zone" and wresting from the sea rich deposits of oil lying at no great depth below the seabed.

Kirov's work did much towards enabling the Soviet Union to fulfil the first five-year plan for oil output in two and a half years. By 1935, the Baku oil fields provided the workers' and peasants' state with nineteen and a half million tons of oil instead of the seven million tons obtained by the "oil kings" in 1913.

The Volga seemed to be obeying Kirov's orders when it carried the black gold northwards from the Caspian to rebuild the industry, transport and agriculture of the whole country.

While in Baku, Kirov showed that he was a great statesman. He played an important part in building up the Soviet state in the Transcaucasus and worked together with Joseph Stalin to establish the Transcaucasian Federation of Soviet Republics. Kirov was a firm friend of the Transcaucasian peoples, especially those of Azerbaijan, and he made a first-class study of the economic and cultural needs of those peoples striving to build up a new way of life. He took great care to promote to leading posts in the republic the most talented and capable of the Azerbaijanians, in every way helping them acquire technical and scientific knowledge. For the first time in Azerbaijan, fourteen higher schools and a hundred technical schools were organized with a total student body of more than twenty-five thousand young men and women. Many important state and economic workers were trained by Kirov.

The restoration and the beginning of the reconstruction of the most important branch of Azerbaijan industry naturally led to the establishment of many other factories—engineering, oil-refining, transport, textile, food-packing concerns and plants manufacturing equipment for the oil industry. The building of new industrial concerns required a large contingent of new workers, the construction of large numbers of workers' houses, and the improvement and replanning of the towns, first and foremost of the workers' districts.

Kirov ensured that all this work was carried on strictly according to plan and with complete harmony between all branches of the huge industry of Azerbaijan.

Kirov paid particular attention to the rural districts of Azerbaijan. During the first phase of collective farm organization Kirov achieved a considerable increase in productivity and an increase in the harvest output; new crops were introduced and the cotton plantations were extended; the irrigation schemes carried out produced good results in opening up new or previously neglected lands.

To help reorganize the farms, Kirov constantly dispatched leading workers and representatives of the intelligentsia to the rural districts. In the schools organized under Soviet power he trained peasants as agronomists, doctors, zootechnicians, veterinary surgeons and teachers for the villages. This work brought radical changes in village life, created a new contingent of intellectuals from amongst the people and completely changed the cultural aspect of Azerbaijan.

In February 1926 Serguei Kirov was put in charge of Leningrad Region and simultaneously was entrusted with the leadership of the whole northwestern area, a district of extreme economic importance to the whole country. Here again, as in Baku, Kirov appealed to the chief source of strength in the Soviet state, to the masses of workers and peasants. He explained to them the aims and significance of the industrialization of the country.

In addition to expanding the iron and steel industry, the industrialization of the country meant increasing, and reorganizing the heavy machine-building industry and making the country economically independent, relieving it of the necessity of importing from abroad those complicated machines formerly not produced in Russia. In carrying out its policy of industrialization this formed one of the basic tasks of the Soviet state.

Kirov himself was an innovator and did everything possible to encourage initiative, inventions and rationalization suggestions on the part of the workers and engineers and with swift, revolutionary methods ensured that all useful suggestions were put into effect, a fact which served to inspire the authors of these.

The work of Leningrad research institutions in the first three years of the First Five-Year Plan period resulted in enterprises in the metallurgical, chemical, electrotechnical and other branches of industry launching out with the production of over two hundred new items which had never been manufactured anywhere in prerevolutionary Russia; each of these new items produced by the Leningraders was mastered with the active help of Serguei Kirov.

By the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan for the building up of the national economy of the U.S.S.R., Leningrad was already manufacturing machinery for the country's newly built factories. Leningrad turned out the first Soviet blooming-mill, the first turbine and the first tractor. Under Kirov's guidance, Leningrad industry mastered the production of ten-ton electric furnaces of the "Miguet" type and produced them for the Dniepropetrovsk Aluminium Combine. These furnaces proved better and cheaper than those made by firms abroad and saved the country a large expenditure of gold currency.

In pre-revolutionary days, Leningrad industry had far from sufficient fuel and electric power at its disposal. The city either had to import expensive coal from abroad or haul it from the Donets Basin.

The Volkhov hydro-electric power station only began functioning in December 1926, and its output was insufficient for the rapidly growing industry. One of Kirov's tasks, therefore, involved the search for new fuel supplies and the construction of new power stations.

Immediately following the opening of the Volkhov station, the foundations of a new one were laid on the River Svir.

On Kirov's initiative the world's northernmost power stations were built on the Niva and Touloma Rivers. Leningrad was the first place where such locally found fuels as peat and combustible shale were studied and widely adopted for industrial and communal use.

It was formerly believed that Murmansk Region did not contain any minerals. Kirov gave the Leningrad research institutions, the scientists and the workers of the region the task of developing surveying activities. He took part in the work of organizing special geological survey parties. In Murmansk Region and on the Kola Peninsula large deposits of shale, iron ore, copper, wolfram, gold, lead, mercury and bauxite were found; the Kola Peninsula served as a supply base for the Volkhov Aluminium Plant, the first in the Soviet Union.

In the distant, uninhabited Khibin tundra, inexhaustible deposits of valuable chemical raw material—appatite and nepheline—were found and a large industrial city was built and named after Kirov.

Kirov fully realized the importance of the White Sea—Baltic Canal and his work ensured its rapid construction. The longest canal in the world (227 kilometres), it reduces the distance between the White and the Baltic seas by four thousand kilometres and was built in twenty months.

Under Kirov's leadership Leningrad industry completed the first Five-Year Plan in three years during which period the leading heavy industries fulfilled their plan by 142%. Leningrad's share of the country's industry rose from 10% in 1928 to 15% in 1932.

As in Azerbaijan, Kirov brought about a radical improvement in agriculture. Making use of all the advantages of the collective farm system, Kirov smashed all the old conceptions concerning the Leningrad villages, put them on the road to higher production and converted Leningrad Region from a consuming into a producing area. No more than 12% of the land in the region was so far under cultivation and wheat, the most valuable grain crop, was not sown at all. The region lived at the expense of other parts of the country.

To ensure a sufficient grain and food supply for Leningrad and its region, Kirov proposed a programme for the cultivation of new lands and the extension of the cultivated area by working virgin soil and introducing new and more valuable crops. As a result, wheat was gathered from 450,000 acres of Leningrad Region in 1934, a region where this crop had never before been sown.

Kirov also encouraged farming in the far-northern Khibin tundra where the people began to grow their own cucumbers, tomatoes and melons in enormous greenhouses. Fresh vegetables once and for all put an end to the threat of scurvy.

Kirov was able to combine the broad Russian revolutionary swing with American business methods. He fought against even the slightest tendency to vacillation and complacency, everywhere and all times demanding the strictest discipline. The chief method be used was that of selfcriticism.

He was never satisfied with present achievements and could not only criticize shortcomings in the work but was also able to eliminate them.

Kirov was brilliant as the people's orator, a supporter and leader in matters of genuine democracy, for all the working people, against tyranny and exploitation.

As in a mirror, the main characteristics of Kirov, the man, were reflected in his labour and dealings with the working people. Whether he was fighting against the autocracy in the most secret underground conditions or during the storm of tsarism in 1917; whether he was leading regiments against foreign interventionists and counter-revolutionary tsarist generals or organizing the masses of the people for the rapid restoration of ruined economy and the strengthening of the defence potential of the Soviet state, in all places and at all times Kirov was guided by one sacred principle—the principle of struggle for the benefit of mankind and for the bright future of humanity.

In this lay his great strength. For this reason the working people of town and village understood, respected and loved him. For this reason, too, he was hated by the enemies of the people at whose hand this great citizen of the Soviet Union met his death on December 1st, 1934.

The name of Serguei Mironovich Kirov has been inscribed in letters of gold in the annals of the achievements, defence and construction of the Soviet state.

CONSTANTINE KASRADZE

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT CHILDREN

A CHILDREN'S MONTHLY

Do you remember the day when you carefully closed the book read independently from beginning to end for the first time in your life? Of course, you do! It is sometimes still recalled with pride even by those whose own children have already lived through this bright and happy day. Yes, bright, even if a monotonous autumn drizzle continued throughout the night and the whole of the following day, even if the howling wind scurried across the roof and swept the road, driving flurries of snow before it... To you it will always remain one of the brightest days of your life.

Try to imagine such moments. You gaze in silence at the cover, spellbound, still unable to wrest yourself free from the world of the heroes. In your mind you are already speculating as to what lies in store for you in the second, third or tenth book. Suddenly the shrill, persistent ringing of a bell breaks the stillness. You tremble and listen in tense expectation—who can it be? Your name is called and you run headlong into the front-room where a bewhiskered postman after fussing around awhile in his bulging mailbag, hands you a large thin book with a bright, colourful cover. With bated breath you take it from him and still unable to believe your own eyes, hasten back to your favourite corner.

You open the book, and lo!.. It is full of pictures, verses, fairy-tales, riddles. And all this is called "Murzilka," "magazine for school-children of junior grades." "And now that you've learned to read," says mother, "you'll receive this magazine every month."

Every month a treat of twenty printed pages, each more thrilling than the last! And no one to tell you: "You mustn't touch!" because it is your very own magazine; it is for you that these stories are written, for you that these pictures are painted, for you—these puzzles and instructions how to make toys for New Years trees or to build a tiny tank from cardboard. It is for you and for your little friends that one of Moscow's biggest printshops issues 100,000 copies of this magazine every month. This is something to be proud of, especially if you are three times younger than the magazine itself. Indeed, "Murzilka," this most popular of children's magazines, has already rounded out its twentieth year. Fortunately it possesses the wonderful quality of never growing old, not even of growing up! And that is why it is the most constant companion of its seven- to ten-year-old readers.

As proof of all this, pick up any issue of "Murzilka" at random and glance through its contents. Here, for example, is the September issue. September, as you know, is quite an ordinary month so far as adults are concerned, but for junior grade pupils it is a very significant one. For the seven-year-olds it means school days for the first time. Neither are the nine-year-old "old-timers" less agitated returning to school after the summer vacations. Can "Murzilka," their constant friend, ignore this event?

On no account. It would never commit such a blunder, as its very cover shows —depicting a bright class room, decorated with flowers, concentrated, attentive faces of little girls drinking in every word of their teacher. Now open the magazine. Printed on the front page is a letter in verse by the popular children's poet Samuel Marshak. It is a letter to a soldier in which the poet pledges, on behalf of his son, that the latter will be as successful at school as his father is at the front. The best story in the issue is entitled "Pimen at School" in which Lev Uspensky, forty-five-year-old writer and constant contributor to the magazine, recalls an amusing incident from his childhood.

At the age of six he received as a present a raven with a broken wing called Pimen. It was an ordinary black raven only differing from other ravens in that it could speak even better than a parrot. And not only words specially taught it, but others overheard accidentally and repeated over and over again. The raven became very attached to the boy and followed him like a shadow. A year later his mother took the boy to school for the entrance exams. Suddenly in the midst of the oral exams Pimen's sarcastic voice rang out from the windowsill: "It's a lie! It's all wrong!" The class was dumbfounded. But Pimen was not at all embarrassed; he perched himself on the teacher's desk and after every reply uttered: "Crikey, how good!" or his favourite: "All wrong!" And listening to the teacher, suddenly imitated his voice, explaining in an approving tone to the delight of the whole class: "Good, very good, splendid!"

Friendship is the theme of another story, but this time a friendship of a different kind, tested time and time again and strengthened in all the experiences lived through beneath droning enemy planes and the whizzing bullets at front-line aerodrome. The story entitled after one of its

heroes, an ordinary puppy called Kait, is published in this issue (see p. 53).

The bird and animal world, the whole fascinating world of nature has a permanent place in "Murzilka" in the form of numerous stories, poems and fairy-tales. There is also a special section called "Forest Newspaper" which is made up as an independent publication and deals with the dwellers of forest, field and water. You will look in vain for any mention of people in this "Forest Newspaper." Even the names of the months differ from what men call them: July is called "Squeakers' Month," September is the "Month of Flocks," October—the "Month of Parting with the Country." Numerous small items, letters and telegrams from all parts of the country bring information about the life of nature. Many interesting revelations await the children in this section.

Do you know, for instance, that not only birds, but also small mammals, as, for example, bats migrate from North to South in the autumn?

Although all the birds migrate in flocks, the cuckoo is the last to fly all alone, and yet it finds its way to faraway Africa, where its grandfathers and greatgrandfathers wintered before it, and whence the cuckoo tribe migrated to our zone many milleniums ago.

And do you know that baby whales born somewhere in the South seas follow their mothers on a distant swim to the Arctic or Pacific Oceans, thousands of kilometres distant?

Very few probably know that tiny gadflies, found in abundance in the taiga, can drive a huge elk to seek refuge in the water. There he stays, keeping only his nose above the surface to breathe. These flies sting and penetrate the thick skin to lay their eggs underneath. When the larva appear they riddle the elk's skin like a sieve.

And here is a story by a war correspondent of the "Forest Newspapers," describing the conduct of animals in the zone of military operations. The author describes several incidents witnessed by him on the Leningrad front and explains the many mysterious explosions in the mine fields. With the advent of spring, without consulting the army command, the rodents began to burrow their trenches, and angrily tumbling into unexpected obstacles, perished in great numbers from the exploding mines. But it was the fox that frequently aroused the envy of many a professional sapper. Not one of them ever struck a mine; it can smell them out and carefully skirts them. The hare is not so clever: frightened by a shot it will run in terror without stopping to choose its road, and of course, explodes many a mine.

"Murzilka" does not confine its attention to the animal world. Since it is published for the future citizens of their country, they already want to know all about the history of the country, about its past and the people who left an indelible imprint for future posterity. That is why, from time to time, "Murzilka" carries stories, legends and fairy-tales relating to the past of Russia. Among the numerous fairy-tales composed by the people about Russian folk heroes, there is one of Nikita Kozhemyaka who triumphed in mortal combat over the terrible monster —the Winged Serpent, the terror of the Southern Dnieper steppes. Many legends are current among the people also about Ilya Muromets (Ilya of Murom). One of these, describing the victory scored by Ilya Muromets over the Mongol horde, is also published in "Murzilka."

Last year, two anniversaries—that of Anton Chekhov and Ivan Krylov, both famous Russian writers, were marked throughout the country. The readers of "Murzilka" read about them with great pleasure in their magazine.

There is a section in the magazine called "Please Come to the Blackboard!" It contains all kinds of interesting puzzles. For example, there is a picture showing a country cottage with a nurse sitting on a bench nearby and children playing around her. There is also a river in the picture, a field and a train moving in the distance... You are asked to mention at least twenty objects in the picture beginning with the letter "n." If you can mention twenty, you receive a "5" (equivalent to an "excellent" mark). If you can give more than twenty names you receive a certificate of merit and those able to submit twenty-five names beginning with the letter "n" will see their names on the honour roll in a future issue.

How wonderful when you have learned to read yourself to be able to please your little sister by reading aloud to her! Maybe, however, she is still unable to appreciate the stories and poems which are of so much interest to you. Your true comrade "Murzilka" has seen to this too. Every issue allocates two special pages to the "little ones," including small stories, delightful nursery rhymes, colourful simple pictures.

In general, the magazine is full of pictures, for "Murzilka" has outstanding children's artists among its contributors, such as Kanevsky, Charushin, Lebedev, etc. Cooperating with many children's writers and poets, they produce a magazine which has justly won the affection of all Soviet children.

HELEN ROMANOVA

NIKOLAI CHUKOVSKY

KAIT

He was not particularly handsome, of course. His coat was rough and shaggy, one ear cocked while the other hung limply, and he had a funny sideways run—the tracks of his hind legs are at least two centimetres to the right of his forepaws. What breed was he? Breed, indeed! There is certainly no one breed under the sun which would own him, though there are certainly five or six which he might claim. No, he is not handsome. But all the same, it must not be forgotten that he can claim sixty-eight combat flights since the beginning of the war! True, he flew only as a passenger, but a model passenger.

Kait grew up on the aerodrome among the aircraft, and he was as accustomed to them as a collie to his flock. He had not the slightest fear of the roar and racket of the engines and knew exactly how to behave—to move out of the way when a plane was landing in order to avoid the wheels, and where to stand when one was taking off so that the wind of the propellers would not sweep him from his feet.

There were a great many automobiles on the aerodrome, and he loved to ride in them. When the airmen went off to their machines in light lorries he would race alongside barking until somebody took him in. But best of all he loved to go hunting woodcocks in a light car.

Kait's ancestors had certainly taken part in many hunts, but surely none of them had ever hunted as Kait did. How many people know anything about hunting from a car! But at our aerodrome this form of hunting was the most popular.

It was Kait's master, Captain Kozhich, who had been the first to think of it. Small in stature, tough and angular, with black eyes and a foppish black moustache, he would stand on the wing of the car, holding a revolver. Kozhich's friend, Captain Morozov of the engineers, would take his place at the wheel. Kait climbed in beside Morozov, and they would race over the huge bare aerodrome, through the tall unmowed September grass.

I don't know why there were so many woodcocks at the aerodrome that year. Perhaps because nobody hunted them here, in the frontline area. Or it may be that the incessant rumble of the furious battles had driven them from their accustomed forests and fields and forced them to change their grounds to the near rear, where we were. They would wander through the grass in whole flocks, heavy, well-fed and lazy.

As soon as he saw a woodcock, Morozov would steer straight for it. Kait would prick his sharp left ear. Captain Kozhich would raise his revolver awkwardly and lazily. This awkward, lazy movement was merely an affectation,—Captain Kozhich prided himself on being the best shot in the division. He would raise his arm clumsily, screw up his black eyes, and a sharp shot would ring out. The woodcocks would rise unwillingly and the colourful flock would flap over the grass, except for the one bird lying still. Morozov would jam on the brakes.

Then it was Kait's turn. Morozov would open the door and Kait would jump out and make for the bird with long bounds, tail streaming out behind him. But when he was within three or four paces of it, he would stop suddenly and crouch, body pressed close to the ground. Slowly he would crawl along on his belly, just as though the woodcock might still take flight. Then one spring, and he would carefully pick up the bird trying not to lose a single feather of it.

Carrying it in his mouth, he would race back to the car and lie down in the grass in front of Kozhich, looking into his eyes, waving a bushy tail. There was no slavish adoration in his eyes, rather they seemed to say with a kind of friendly mischief: "We're good pals and I'm pleased to pay you this small token of my regard." Kozhich would bend down, pick up the bird and pat Kait on the head.

Kait and Kozhich were inseparable. If you saw Kait anywhere about, bushy plume erect and waving, that meant that the next moment Kozhich would appear with his small-featured amusing face and his black moustache. If Kozhich visited his technicians or mechanics in a dugout, the next moment there would be a scratch at the door, it would open and Kait would enter and sniff round all the legs in turn. If Kozhich was playing chess, Kait would sit beside him on the floor without moving, however long the game lasted, his tail thumping the floor loudly at intervals.

Kait's ability to wait patiently was amazing, especially in view of his boundless flow of energy, his ability to get excited about every trifle. He could spend the whole day racing after sparrows without the faintest hope of catching one of them. If he saw a little black mouse—and there were many of them on the aerodrome—Kait would make such a wild dash for it that more often than not he would roll head over heels. Of course, the mouse would take the chance to disappear into its hole, whereupon Kait would burrow frantically after it with paws and nose, then lose all control of himself and leap around in a frenzy. When Kait was waiting for Kozhich to take off in his plane, however, he became quite another dog. Then there was not a sparrow or mouse alive that had the power to distract his attention.

When Kozhich, in helmet and goggles, looking quite different from the usual Kozhich, took his place in his plane, Kait would come up to say good-bye to him. He would scrape Kozhich's knee with his forepaws, and the latter would

stoop down and pat his head. Then Kait would lie down in the grass, the propellers would race, a fierce wind would sweep the grass and the aircraft would race across the aerodrome towards the blue forest and take off. And Kait would never take his eyes from that one plane—the one which Kozhich was flying. One could always tell by Kait's lifted muzzle in which direction Kozhich's barely visible plane was to be found.

But then the aircraft would disappear into the distance, too far for even Kait's keen eye to follow, and the dog would settle himself down to wait. Other planes taking off and landing could not distract his attention—he would barely vouchsafe them one bored, fleeting glance.

Hours would pass, the sun would rise higher and higher in the empty heavens, the heat would beat down, but still Kait would be waiting. The technicians would bring their dinner to the runway, offer him some, but he refused everything—not even rich borshch, made navy style, could tempt him. The sun would begin to near the horizon, and still he would be waiting. Then, at last, aircraft would appear above the serrated top of the distant forest.

Kait would rise, his left ear cocked. His whole body would be tense, ready to set off at top speed. Even to an experienced eye, the aircraft were identical in the air, but Kait would immediately recognize Kozhich's machine by some means known only to himself. And barely would its wheels touch the ground at the far end of the aerodrome, when Kait would set off like an arrow from a bow, racing at top speed to meet it. Then he would run back alongside the plane until it had taxied to the runway. When Kozhich stood up, raising his goggles, Kait would be frantic with joy—yelping and jumping almost up to the cabin. Taking off his helmet, Kozhich would alight, whereupon Kait would almost knock him off his feet in his frenzy of welcome, leaping up and trying to lick his face.

2

Captain Kozhich was so inseparable from Kait that many people were amazed when they heard him say he had no love for dogs.

But those who had been in the battalion with him since the beginning of the war knew that Kait was not his dog at all; he had belonged to Senior Lieutenant Mankov.

There were not so many people left in the regiment who had known Senior Lieutenant Mankov, but there was not one who had not heard about him. Even the youngest flier who had only the other day arrived from the training course could have told you about Senior Lieutenant Mankov and his last battle. And of Captain Kozhich they said respectfully:

"He was Mankov's best friend!"

Yet it would have been difficult to find two men more utterly unlike than Kozhich and Mankov. There was not a single point of resemblance between them—in appearance, character or habits. Kozhich was small, swarthy, black-haired, with slender, delicate hands. Mankov was tall and powerfully built, with straw-coloured hair and a fleshy, high-coloured face, and huge fists. Kozhich had a witty, caustic tongue, and could entertain people with his jests. Mankov was kindly and not much of a talker. Kozhich was ambitious and wanted to be first in everything—at marksmanship, swimming, at figure flying, at chess and in battle. Mankov was utterly indifferent to fame, and although he usually found himself in the first place, it seemed to happen naturally, without any effort. To tell the truth, the friendship between Kozhich and Mankov was founded on rivalry. Kozhich bent all his efforts to overtake and beat Mankov but it was rarely that he succeeded.

Even now people remember the hard-fought chess battles between the two of them. Kozhich could beat anybody in the regiment—except Mankov. When they played, everyone would crowd around to watch—it was amusing to see how Kozhich would be carried away with the game, excited and angry by turns. In general Kozhich was a noisy player; usually he showed the greatest self-confidence, boasted of his moves, laughed at his opponent and tried to frighten him. But all his attempts broke down against Mankov's unconquerable benevolence. Mankov would play quietly, calmly, silently, and it was just this that drove Kozhich frantic. Feeling the imminence of defeat, Kozhich would shout that Mankov's castle was not standing where it should, or that Mankov had purposely placed him too near the stove so that his brain would not work, or that he had moved the wrong pawn because of the darkness in the dugout, and should not be made to give it up. But it was Mankov's shaggy puppy, little Kait, that used particularly to irritate Kozhich in these moments as he ran about under their feet. Kozhich swore that the wretched puppy hindered him from thinking, and when he lost, would blame Kait for it.

In general, Kozhich did not share Mankov's love for animals, and would snort scornfully when the latter showed him some raven with a broken wing that he had picked up on the aerodrome, or a hedgehog which he had carried in from the forest in his blue sidecap, or his tame squirrel. That squirrel was so fond of Mankov that it would take a run and leap up on him as though he were a tree trunk, and sit upon his shoulder when he went for a walk. Kozhich could have reconciled himself to the raven, the hedgehog or the squirrel—it really was sometimes interesting to watch them, but what Mankov could see in his shaggy puppy was more than Kozhich could make out.

Of course, Kozhich had willy-nilly to reconcile himself to the constant presence of the puppy, because he himself was inseparable from Mankov and Mankov was inseparable from Kait. They slept three in the dugout—Kozhich, Mankov and Kait. They bathed together in the river near the aerodrome—Kozhich, Mankov and Kait. They even dined together—Kozhich and

Mankov at the table and Kait under it. But Kozhich never condescended to stroke Kait, and Kait never dared to jump up and lick Kozhich's face.

And Kozhich found Mankov's habit of taking Kait up with him for his flights utterly insane.

3

The regiment was operating against communications in the enemy rear. It was grinding work—five or six flights in twenty-four hours, day and night, with only the shortest intervals for food and sleep. You'd land, crawl out of the cabin, lie down on the grass in your flying togs beside the plane and take good deep breaths while the ground crew placed fresh bombs on the machine. Before you'd had time for a rest and a smoke you'd be off again, to the west, right into the ruddy evening glow, where the whole sky was pricked out with the stars of flack.

The squadron leader was killed, and Kozhich was appointed to replace him. Now he led the formation into battle, he was the first to take off and all the other planes would follow his lead and form up in the air.

Mankov's place was to Kozhich's right. He kept his place best of any in the formation. Whenever Kozhich looked to the right he would always see Mankov's plane at exactly the same distance, as though the two machines were fastened together by an invisible thread.

It was a sultry day, with clouds so low they almost swept the ground. Forests set ablaze by German artillery fire were burning all around, their smoke hanging in the damp air, concealing the distance. A perfect day for bombing the railway bridge three hundred kilometres in the German rear, the main bridge for the whole German front. Nowhere else had the enemy as many AA batteries as at this bridge, and it was guarded by two fighter regiments into the bargain. An attack on the bridge had to be a surprise one, if it was to succeed, and this was the most suitable day to steal up unobserved.

The formation rose and dived into the fog. They had to fly blind, relying on their instruments as in night flying. Steamy clouds, gigantic, slow-moving, with sudden rifts, surrounded Kozhich on all sides. Very often he was unable to see even his own wings, let alone the other planes of his formation. In such moments he was uneasy and waited tensely for the moment when it might clear a little. He wanted to see all his comrades, he was responsible for each one of them. And first of all, Mankov's plane would loom up out of the mist, still on his right, in the same spot. And Kozhich would feel a wave of contentment, and watch with an easier mind as the outlines of the other planes gradually emerged from the mist, following him in wedge-shaped formation.

In this way they covered the greater part of the route. Only about fifteen or twenty minutes flying still remained to bring them to the target, when Kozhich noticed that the rifts between the clouds were filled with a pearly light. It was the sun's rays penetrating through the fog, and Kozhich realized that the layer of cloud which hid the earth from him—and him from the earth—was thinning.

Suddenly the clouds ended, and all six aircraft suddenly shot out into a clear expanse of blue sky.

Kozhich had not expected this nasty surprise; and frankly, for a moment he was taken aback. To cover almost the whole long flight so well hidden, and then at the very end, when only ten minutes flight remained to the bridge, to find themselves clearly visible to the enemy! But he could not hide in the clouds again, return without having achieved anything! And Kozhich led his formation on.

The Germans had the whole area well guarded, and observation posts were everywhere. In the transparent air of this excellent flying weather the Soviet aircraft stood out clearly. Flack immediately got to work, right and left. Threatening explosions filled the air, smoke stained the sky, but Kozhich's formation kept on its course. When the flack came uncomfortably close, Kozhich would unexpectedly swing to one side or the other, confusing the German gunners' aim. Flack did not worry him very much. "They won't get us," he thought. If only he could get to the bridge before the Messerschmitts rose!

And at that instant they appeared, as though in answer to his thought. They were flying in pairs, appearing suddenly in the air and growing rapidly in size—first one pair, then two, four, six. They hesitated a little, faced with the tight formation of Soviet aircraft. But the bridge was already near, they had no time to waste, and rushed to the attack from above, below and behind.

Battle was joined, a battle that went so fast that Kozhich was quite unable to follow all its details. The tracer streams, dull in the sunlight, crossed each other, were extinguished and spurted again. His gunner radio-operator and his navigator were pumping lead from machine-guns, so were the other gunner-radio-operators and navigators. The Messerschmitts also were firing, and twice he heard bullets rapping against his fuselage. But all he could think about was that he must get to the bridge; already he could see below him the winding ribbon of the river, gleaming like nickel in the sunshine.

One Messerschmitt circled, went into a spin, slipped sideways and disappeared far below into the darkness of the forest, and still Kozhich was leading his formation, an iron horseshoe in the sky. Every other second he would glance at the planes to right and left of him, and each time first to the right.

Suddenly he saw a burst of black smoke break from Mankov's machine. They had already come to the river, were flying above it, fighting off the enemy. The smoke was so thick as sometimes to conceal Mankov's aircraft altogether. It followed him, a dirty black ribbon in the transparent air.

Surely the plane would fall at any moment now. But no, it did not fall. It flew on as before, that staunch machine, never

swerving from its place in the formation, and even firing through the enveloping smoke. Kozhich's heart contracted. Forward, forward! Already he could clearly distinguish the railway bridge, a thin line spanning the river. They would have to come down, to hit the bridge from such a height would be almost impossible. The whole formation lost height, Mankov's plane with it, trailing its smoke cloud as it descended. In his flaming plane Mankov flew on Kozhich's right, refusing to abandon his place in the formation.

Kozhich was ready to strike when at last Mankov's machine left the formation, and headed earthwards, an aerial furnace. But still this mass of flame and smoke continued to make for the bridge. Mankov's will held firm to the last instant. He crashed on the bridge, his bombs exploded, and when the huge cloud of smoke drifted away, Kozhich saw that there was no more bridge.

4

And what about Kait? Was he on Mankov's plane, did he perish together with his master?

That was what Kozhich thought, when he returned to the aerodrome and did not find Kait on the runway. But the technicians told him that this time Mankov had not taken the dog with him; and Kait had waited until the aircraft returned to the airfield. But when he saw that only five planes landed, instead of six, and that Mankov's machine was not among them, he suddenly turned and ran away into a far corner of the airfield where the alders had not yet been uprooted and hid himself in the bushes.

For four days Kait did not come back, and nobody saw anything of him. But on the night of the fifth day Kozhich heard a long drawn-out whine as he lay in his dugout. He threw on a trench-coat and went out. Something soft and warm touched his legs in the darkness.

"Kait!"

Kozhich stooped down and stroked the dog. Kait jumped up and licked his face as he had been accustomed to do with Mankov.

Ever since then, they have been inseparable.

Translated by Eve Manning

Drawing by Peter Alyakrinsky

THE MIRROR

(A Korean Story)

It happened a long time ago.

One day a peasant had to go to market in the city. And there he bought himself the queerest kind of thing. There was no use to be had out of it at all. You couldn't eat from it, and you couldn't drink from it. Goodness only knew what it was for. Made of glass or of silver—you couldn't tell what.

But if you looked into it you would see a person there, if you smiled, he would smile too, if you grimaced at him, he would give you as good back again. Just like a living person, the only thing was that he could not talk. And that queer thing had as queer a name—mirror.

The peasant returned home and showed his mirror to nobody. He did it well away,

and only took it out occasionally, to amuse himself.

But his wife noticed that her husband was hiding something from her, that he would look stealthily at something and smile. And her curiosity was aroused.

One day she picked her time when her husband was away from home, and got the mirror out of its hiding place. She looked into it and gasped — there was a lovely girl looking at her out of the mirror; a girl with merry eyes and rosy cheeks, wearing a necklace of coloured stones—just exactly like her own.

The wife flushed bright red with anger.

"So that's who it is he looks and looks at as though he could never have enough of it. Seems he's got tired of me already."

And she was so angry and miserable that she began to cry at the sight of the pretty girl in the mirror.

At this moment her husband's mother came home.

"What are you crying about?" she asked the young wife.

"And how can I help crying?" asked the girl. "When my husband doesn't want to look at me any more? As soon as I turn my back, he's spending all his time looking at some pretty girl or other."

The mother-in-law was amazed on hearing these words.

"I can't understand what you mean. Who does he look at? There's not another pretty girl in the village besides yourself."

"Well, here she is, look," said the young wife, and held out the mirror.

The old woman looked into the mirror —and sure enough, there was a woman looking out at her—but such an old woman, such an ugly old woman! Grey hair, toothless, wrinkled. The mother-in-low burst out laughing.

"Is that what you call a pretty girl?" she asked. "That pock-marked old woman? You could set that sort of pretty girl in the garden for a scarcrow. Take a better look."

The young wife looked again, and began to cry more than ever.

"I can see you're just laughing at me," she said. "Look how young and rosy she is. And the pretty beads she's wearing!"

The old woman snatched the mirror away from her, looked into it and had to burst out laughing.

"There's a fine young girl for you—must be nearly seventy. And where are the beads you keep talking about? She's all wrinkled and has folds hanging down her neck, that's true. And then you rave about her necklaces."

At this moment the father-in-law came home and saw that something was wrong —noise, high words, the young wife in tears, the old woman laughing.

He began asking them what had happened, and they showed him that amazing mirror.

Drawing by Helen Rodionova

The old man looked and spat in disgust.

"You're both a pair of fools." he said. "Can't tell a man from a woman. Look properly."

But facts are more than words. The wife looked—and there was the pretty girl looking at her. The mother-in-law looked—and there was an old woman squinting at her. The father-in-law looked—and an old man was laughing at him.

"Take a better look—when have you seen a woman with a beard?" cried the old man.

"And when's a pretty girl had wrinkles all over her face?" cried the mother-in-law.

"And since when have men started wearing beads?" cried the wife.

They argued and they argued, but they just couldn't work it out.

While they were all talking, the neighbour's boy came running in. He saw the mirror, and wanted to look into it too. So he took a look, and opened his eyes in amazement. There was some strange boy looking at him, staring with all his eyes just as though he were amazed or frightened at something. And in his hand he was holding a shell, the very same the boy had only just found on the shore.

"Eh, you so-and-so! How dare you take my shell? Take that!"

He swung his arm and hit the mirror with all his strength. And the mirror fell onto the ground and broke into a thousand pieces.

And since the mirror was broken there was nothing left to argue about, nothing more to talk about, and so that's the end of the story.

Translated by Eve Manning

AT THE ROUND TABLE UNDER THE CUCKOO CLOCK

The sixteenth broadcast of "Our Guests" was somewhat different from the preceding ones. It was a New Year's broadcast, and that is why, as soon as the familiar traditional call of the Cuckoo had died down over the ether, our listeners heard in place of the usual greeting of the chairman, the merry bass of the most important New Year guest of all—Grandfather Frost. After a jovial conversation with the Chairman of the Round Table, who came a bit late, Grandfather Frost proceeded to announce the guests. The first guest, Lieutenant-General Morozov, head of a military training institution, wished the radio audience a happy New Year and spoke about the Suvorov schools where the sons of many of our heroes who perished at the front are training to become officers. Dmitri Kabalevsky, the well-known Soviet composer, and the author of the popular opera "Master of Clamecy" (after "Colas Breugnon" by Romain Rolland), then had a chat with the young guests telling them about his work in the Central Children's Theatre, which recently held a prémière of "The Town of Master Craftsmen." The composer played on the piano two of his musical selections from this play. Accompanied by the author, George Abramov sang Kabalevsky's new song "Old King Cole," the words of which had been written by the poet Marshak after an English song. The composer offered his new song as a New Year gift to the guests of the Round Table.

Then Grandfather Frost introduced Professor Mikhailov, the famous astronomer, who revealed the secrets of the heavens and said that, according to the stars, the year 1945 had in store for us much that is new and interesting, and expressed the wish that we might spend this year under a lucky star. And then the seal of the New Year's Calendar was solemnly broken at the microphone.

This amusing lesson in astronomy was followed by a scene from Marshak's play "Twelve Months" played with much humour by pupils of the Central House of Art Education for Children. This play will soon be presented by a regular company at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Grandfather Frost announced that another guest had arrived with some sort of an instrument in his hand resembling a telescope or spy-glass. It turned out to be a flute. And the visitor was Professor Platonov, a famous flutist of the Moscow Academy of Music. He told us the curious history of the flute beginning with the ancient Greek pipe of Pan, the Egyptian "sebi" and the Hindu hasaree which was played not with the mouth but with the nose... Then the Professor's flute spoke for itself, and we heard a wonderful melody by Lyadov and Tadjik dances played with great skill.

Envious of the Professor's success, Grandfather Frost tried to imitate the tunes on his ice-whistle but nothing came of it. So he sang us a jolly New Year's song instead.

At this point a guest arrived who was immediately given a vociferous welcome. He was none other than Mikhail Zharov, the popular cinema actor. He explained that he had very nearly come too late because of his innumerable pressing invitations to New Year's parties all through the school holidays. He gave his reasons in humorous verses which he composed impromptu. Upon request of the guests he told many funny stories about his work in the cinema; how as a boy he had been a super in a historical film where the role of Tsar Ivan the Dread was played by the famous Russian singer, Fyodor Chaliapin. During the filming of the picture Zharov, who was riding a huge, restive horse, nearly ran down Chaliapin, owing to his inexperience as a horseman. Much later, however, the actor fully mastered the art of riding, for in the famous film "Peter I," Zharov, who plays the part of Prince Menshikov, one of the Tsar's retinue, gallops skilfully at the head of his dragoons into the attack. Zharov told us that he had just played in the new film about Ivan the Dread made by the famous director Serguei Eisenstein. In this film he plays the part of the bodyguard Malyuta Skuratov. In conclusion the actor recited a fragment from a new poem by the young poetess Natalia Konchalovskaya, about Moscow in the days of Ivan the Dread.

The next to come to the microphone was one of the guests, Massalitinov, leader of a folk choir of Voronezh region. Massalitinov stated that during the war, when the Germans were still running amok in some of the towns of Voronezh Region, patriotic peasants had formed a folk choir which preserved all the traditions of old Russian folk musik. The choir then sang with remarkable skill and feeling the plaintive song "The Danube," and the comic song "The Fables."

Then came the moment for the disclosure of the identity of Grandfather Frost, who was staging a "fable" of his own. When his long, white beard was removed, we recognized Ossip Abdulov, one of the most popular radio-actors. Having wished them a happy and victorious New Year, I took my leave till our next gathering, a month hence, at the Round Table under the Cuckoo Clock.

LEV KASSIL,
Chairman of the Round Table

BOOKS AND WRITERS

NIKOLAI LESKOV

Nikolai Leskov, the fiftieth anniversary of whose death falls at the beginning of 1945, was a remarkably gifted and original writer who fully deserved the place Maxim Gorky accorded him among the "giants of Russian literature." "As an artist of the written word," Gorky wrote, "Leskov deserves to stand beside the great creators of Russian literature, such as Leo Tolstoy, Gogol, Turgenev and Goncharov. In its power and beauty his talent is very little inferior to that of any of these creators of the holy scripture of the Russian land, while in the width of his range of life, the depth of his understanding of life's everyday enigmas, and his exhaustive knowledge of the great Russian language, he not infrequently excels his forerunners and fellow-writers."

Leskov devoted thirty-five years, 1860 to 1895, to literature. Though the path he followed in art and ideas was beset with difficulties and complexities, he remains, in the best and greater part of what he has written, a classic, an essentially Russian writer, a profound and penetrating scholar of Russian life.

The son of a small landowner in the Orel gubernia, he was born on February 16th, 1831. Life on the estate, in close proximity to the serf village, left impressions of savage tyranny and oppression, scenes of horrifying poverty, people hungry and cowed. "I was a child during the famine of 1840—a dreadful year because of the horrors that took place then. Yet I remember something of it, much more, in fact, than I heard from my elders." His younger brother's nurse, a former serf-actress in Count Kamensky's family, had a very strong influence on him. The stories he heard from her were, as he expressed it, "sometimes like the sweet mead to the sour jelly of life, sometimes the useful mustard to its greasy swinishness." In his early childhood he acquired a taste for tales by those around him, and he stored them carefully in his memory and preserved them all his life. The premature death of his father, a man of an original turn of mind and not without intellectual interests, prevented the future writer from finishing his high-school education. "Left fatherless at the age of sixteen, I was helpless. This put an end to my schooling: after that I was selftaught," he wrote in his autobiography. Then began his life as an office employee.

In 1849 Leskov left Orel for Kiev to stay with his uncle, Professor Serguei Alferyev. The Kiev period had a strong influence upon the formation of Leskov's personality and upon his creative work. The picturesque old city, the craddle of the Russian state and of its ancient art, attracted him to the history of his people, to archeology, art and particularly to the icon-painting of the past. In later years he was to study various styles of Russian icon-painting, the Novgorod, Moscow and Stroganov schools, and to know the work of the two foremost representatives of that art, Andrei Rublyov and Simon Ushakov, and "islands" of folk-art such as the village of Palekh.

His wide range of aesthetic interests extended to other fields—Russian folklore, prints, jewellery, stone cutting and polishing. And his interest in these subjects undoubtedly had an effect on his writing.

But his most absorbing interest was life itself. It is doubtful if any of the classical Russian writers of the pre-Gorky period travelled so much about the country, or observed its life and customs so closely, as Leskov. A life of travel contributed to the formation of the future writer, provided him with a store of knowledge about people, countries and manners.

Soon after his arrival in Kiev, he gave up his post in a government office to enter the office of a distant relation, a Russianized Englishman, Alexander Scott, who was partner in the well-known English firm of Scott and Wilkins, and manager of the Naryshkin and Perovsky estates. Leskov's work took him all over the country, especially the Volga steppe districts. These journeys, made by rough cart, gig, or sailing vessel, with the inevitable stops, delays and chance encounters, provided him with an abundant supply of impressions, which were recorded in his books. In after years, when he had made his name as a writer and book collector, he remained ardently in favour of travel as a means of helping a writer to know his native land and his countrymen. No wonder he persistently advised young writers "to leave St. Petersburg and obtain an appointment in the Ussuri Region, in Siberia, in the southern steppes, to lay in a store of experience and reflections on life." After he had moved to St. Petersburg at the beginning of the sixties, he set out, as correspondent of a newspaper, on a long journey through the Western Ukraine, Bohemia and Poland, to study the culture of the western Slavs and in particular their literature. Then his way led to Paris. The impressions gained from the Louvre and its collection of masterpieces had a marked influence on his writing.

His journalistic experience influenced his work as a writer of fiction in the sixties. The first years he wrote much on

the serf-peasantry—"Drought," "Sarcasm," "The Life of a Peasant Woman." The latter was the most important of these stories, dealing with the theme which became typical of Leskov's later works—the tragic fate of the individual under the feudal serf-system. Aptly enough, he used in the title the Russian word "zhitie," which is applied to the lives of saints and martyrs.

About the middle of the sixties Leskov began to take his subjects from Russian merchant life. It was then that he wrote "The Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District," "The Warrior-woman," and the play "The Spendthrift." In "Lady Macbeth," which is the story of the love of a merchant's young wife for his clerk, the main features of his work are defined: his remarkable skill in short-story composition, the absorbing plot, the vigorous character-drawing, and finally, that manner of story-telling which is seen at its best in such works as "The Pictured Angel," "The Enchanted Wanderer," and "Levsha" ("Left-handed").

In his only play, "The Spendthrift," Leskov aims at portraying "modern morals and trends among the merchants." The leading character, Firs Knyazev, who is a clever, cruel and predatory businessman, has no scruples in resorting to foul means in his struggle with the young merchant Ivan Molchanov, and succeeds in getting him placed under guardianship and then confined in an asylum.

This is the period when Leskov wrote as a theatre critic. His articles on contemporary plays reveal his thorough knowledge of the stage and its actors and repertoires.

It was only when he published his long novel "Cathedral Folk" that his feet were set firmly on the broad path of Russian classical literature. Typical of his mature work was his choice of virtuous people for his leading characters. His heroes—drawn from the clergy—in "Cathedral Folk" are somewhat unusual: Tuberosov, independent, strong-spirited; Achilla in whom "a thousand lives live," and the mild Zachariah. Perhaps nowhere else has Leskov's feeling risen to such heights as in his depiction of the lives of these somewhat freakish "good people" of the old town, their patriarchal simplicity and humanity, here contrasted in the course of the novel's development with the heartlessness of the world of society and the higher ranks of the clergy.

After this he wrote some remarkable works, including "The Enchanted Wanderer" and "On the Edge of the World," both of which have been translated into English, "The Pictured Angel" and other stories. "Leskov's literary work now becomes vivid painting or, to be exact, icon-painting," Gorky wrote of him. "He seems to have set himself the task of animating and encouraging a Russia worn out with slavery, too late to live."

In every story the reader is made aware that Leskov is thinking mainly about the fate of Russia and not of the individual. In the best of these, "The Enchanted Wanderer," the ex-serf Ivan Flyagin is treated in this generalized way; in him the author reproduces—with full awareness of what he is doing—a favourite character in folklore, the peasant's son, the valiant Ilya Muromets, whom he endows with the best and most striking features of his countrymen. It is significant that the original title of this story was "Telemachus of the Black-Soil Region." No matter where he is flung by his destiny in the course of his wanderings about Russia's boundless spaces, Ivan remains true to his own broad, humane, integrated and artistic nature. In each of his deeds this master of life displays superb artistry and a finely-developed mind. His own explanation is always that he "has a natural turn for this particular thing." Through all his full and varied life he retains a deep-rooted love of his country and fellow-countrymen. He expresses these feelings in his own way, concluding his story with an allusion to the "inner voice" which calls on him to protest and with the words that he "had no other desire but to die for the people."

In another story written about this time, "The Pictured Angel," Leskov enlarges on his favourite theme of folk art. The sectarian stonemasons who are building a bridge over the Dnieper appear not only as members of a non-conformist religious sect persecuted by tsarist officials, but first and foremost as craftsmen with a keen appreciation of the ancient Russian art of icon-painting, the traditions of which they follow. The work of Sevastian, a master of this art, amazes the English engineer. "Here are figures the size of a pin, yet all their animation and movements are plain to be seen."

His fellow countrymen's talent is a constantly-recurring theme in Leskov's stories. We meet his rather freakish heroes, his "artistic souls," masters in their own field, craftsmen who turn the most ordinary trades into fine art, in the stories he wrote in the eighties. To these belong Laputin in "The Clothes-Mender" printed in this issue of our magazine (see p. 33) and the old stone-cutter and polisher in the story "The Alexandrite" who was, the author says, "a great master of his craft, an artist, not merely a craftsman," and the serf-actress in "The Toupee Artist," and finally "Levsha," the lefthanded artisan, well-known now to many readers. In the wonderful tale of "The Lefthanded Tula Artisan and His Steel Flea," written in 1881, the author painstakingly and lovingly draws the portrait of a self-taught, gifted Russian devoted to his country. He excels in skill the best of the English mechanics but will not agree to remain in foreign parts and is anxious to return home. There in his beautiful but enslaved land neither honour nor wealth await him. Authority is haughty, aloof deaf, and does not care for plain people like Levsha. Yet the thought that troubles him most of all when he is dying is that his secret must at all costs be passed to the tsar for the benefit of the country and the people.

In many stories about "righteous men" Leskov gives another aspect of the folk-hero theme. "Undying Golovan" is a variation on "The Enchanted Wanderer" with the same emphasis on immense physical strength and gentle nature. This is no longer a giant or warrior, but a man of the people, a man with a purpose, who sacrifices himself without a moment's hesitation for the sake of the suffering peasants during the plague. Hearing of this noble deed, the people understood that he did it to save them. And they called him "undying" because he was a man above the ordinary, a man who did not fear death.

Prominent in Leskov's work in the eighties are the legends on ancient Russian themes in which he places human love, joy and beauty of life in the foreground. Their heroes are good, pure-hearted people guided by the feeling of love and charity.

In unforgettable portraits of the Russian "bogatyr" Ivan Severyanovich, in "The Enchanted Wanderer," in the gifted inventor Levsha and the legendary Golovan, Leskov reveals and draws with a firmer touch the main essentials of Russian character.

In the light of these righteous or good heroes the stories in which Leskov depicts what is antagonistic to the Russian nature acquire particular interest. In works as "Iron Will," "The Alexandrite," "Man from Kolyvan," Leskov, following the traditions of Russian literature, derides the repulsive traits of Germans bred under Prussianism: their exaggerated opinion of themselves, insolence, banality and cruelty, their plans for conquest and claims to domination. In the introduction to this story the relator, an old man named Fyodor Vochnev develops the idea of the Russian people's historic invincibility. "I am neither praising nor blaming my countrymen, I am only saying that they will stand up for themselves." He illustrates his remarks by a story of an engineer brought from Germany. This man "intended to seize a great deal in Russia" and become a master of others "with the aid of his iron will," but in the end acquired only a ridiculous reputation and an inglorious death.

The satirical note prevails in Leskov's work, beginning with an article written in the seventies: "Laughter and Grief," but developing fully only in the eighties and nineties. The increasing frequency of exposure-themes, and the sharpening of his criticism cannot be understood apart from the general political and spiritual atmosphere of these times. Any writer who was independent and enlightened in his views could not but write against the reaction or, as Leskov called it prudently, "the backward movement."

The main target of his satire was "official church-going."

Typical in this connection are his "Details of Clerical Life," exposing the practices and life of the clergy, and in particular his "Diary of an Unknown Man" and "Hares Forfeit," a satirical tale written shortly before his death.

Towards the end of the seventies refers his acquaintance with Leo Tolstoy, an acquaintance which was to prove so important for his life and work. "There is no one on earth dearer to me than he," Leskov wrote on November 4th, 1887, and in a letter to Vladimir Chertkov on October 25th, 1887, Tolstoy remarks: "Leskov was here—what a clever, original man he is!" Leskov, who looked up to Tolstoy as a writer and thinker, saw in him support for his own ideas in the struggle with Russian society and church bureaucracy. "I am going where my own guiding lamp leads me, but I love to confirm myself in you and then I become still more resolute and serene." He regarded it his principal mission to subject all the most obscure aspects of life to unsparing criticism.

About this time he wrote several scathing stories: "The Dancers," "The Improviser," "The Cattle-pen," "Administrative Grace" and "A Winter Day" which touch on some of the most urgent questions of the day. He exposes those who stand out for the continuance of the serf-village with its old-fashioned methods of cultivation and its way of living, and is no less severe in "The Cattle-pen" in his criticism of St. Petersburg salons where ignorance and obscurantism were to be found amongst the higest circles.

In "The Dancers" Leskov contrasts society balls with the famine; in "A Winter Day" he exposes the St. Petersburg circle in which a spy from the secret police was invariably one of the guests.

"Administrative Grace" has a more strongly-marked political tone. With mordant sarcasm Leskov describes the activities of the tsarist secret police. Their victim in this case is a professor to whom "administrative grace" was vouchsafed, that is, a suicide was staged and he was quietly and efficiently removed from the face of the earth.

In these works, which were written at the end of the eighties and nineties, Leskov is seen as an original and outstanding satirical writer, whose work has a trenchant and merciless sting.

He is known in the history of Russian and of the world literature, too—for most of his best work has been translated into foreign languages—as the author of "The Enchanted Wanderer," "The Pictured Angel," "The Clothes-Mender," "The Sentry" and other stories. All these display his mastery of the narrative art and his original writing talent.

Amongst his works all forms of narrative prose are to be found, from the long novel and chronicles to the "small" genre. This shows the writer's flexibility in composition and craftsmanship but perhaps he attained his highest skill in the short story.

Maxim Gorky wrote: "Leskov was also a wizard of the word, but his writing was not plastic: he narrated, and in this art se had no equal." With his exhaustive knowledge of an the riches of

the Russian tongue, he was a master of spoken Russian. His language is quaint and colourful, inimitable and expressive. He assimilated and fused the most widely-differing elements, drawn from familiarity with various social groups. "After all, I collected this language word by word, remembered sayings and separate expressions caught in flight, heard in a crowd, aboard boats, in recruiting-offices and monasteries. Work on this language for as many years as I have done!" he said. He also had an excellent knowledge of the old language of documents and of the conventional official language in which petitions, minutes, investigations were couched and which he acquired while he was working in the criminal court. He strove to bring book language nearer to colloquial speech, to enrich his own language-media, and took an interest in what is known as folk-etymology, that is, the re-interpretation of words with the aid of kindred idea-analogies.

But folk-etymology only partially determined Leskov's work as an innovator. Tolstoy said of him that "he knew the language marvellously, to the pitch where he could play tricks with it," and equipped with his exhaustive knowledge, Leskov endeavoured to attain great expressiveness by means of artistic transformation and "condensation" of colloquial speech. Leo Tolstoy well understood this "immoderacy in language" as a peculiarity of Leskov's talent. "It was," he wrote, "in itself a virtue, and not a shortcoming—this exuberance of imagery, colours, characteristic expression which intoxicates and fascinates you."

Leskov had learned to perfection how to use the common speech to reveal the character of a man. More than once he emphasizes the point that "the fixing of the writer's voice lies in the ability to control the voice and speech of his hero and not go off from alto into bass. This is the fixing of the writer's abilities, and their development is a question not only of talent but also of infinite labour." Most of Leskov's works take the form of narrative, that is the author employs the method of telling the story in the first person, preserving his characteristic manner of speaking. The hero of "The Enchanted Wanderer," Ivan Severyanovich, who tells the story, is a former serf; he has done and seen much during his wanderings about the Russian land and in the end comes to the cell of a recluse. His speech, which is based on the common speech of the people, is rich in imagery and colour and stratified by the various professions in which he has been engaged. In "The Pictured Angel," the language of the old peasant stonemason, who is extremely well-read in the sectarian doctrines and interpretations of the scriptures, is amazingly well-conveyed. The woman who tells the story in the "Night-bird" is not seen or described, but her language itself gives the picture of a familiar type of the lower middle-class.

As has been said, Leskov was a master of the narrative in the first person but in the works that are told in the author's person, he has attained superb skill in narrative and language. In "The Sentry" he is seen as the master of a severe and sparing prose.

In connection with the variety in Leskov's language system, one cannot but notice his treatment, especially in the legends "Ragamuffin Pamfili" and "Sorrow," of what is called rhythmic prose, that is prose-speech, arranged to a certain degree according to the rules of verse. By this means he gave his style a musical quality. The variety of his facility in language was closely bound up with the resources of the popular tongue and determined the effect which Leskov had and has today upon Russian literature. A writer with an abundance of themes, images and methods, a true master of the language, Leskov is deservedly attracting more and more attention in wide circles, not only of Russian but also of foreign readers.

VALENTINA GÈBEL

MAXIM RYLSKY

A Latin adage says:

"Orators are made, poets are born."

One of the leading poets of the Soviet Ukraine, Maxim Rylsky, holds a place of honour in the country as a prominent public figure, a people's spokesman and a scholar. He heads the Ukraine's Union of Soviet Writers. He is a member of the Academy of Sciences, the director of the Folklore Institute. He is an impassioned publicist in the Soviet people's Patriotic War.

Such is Rylsky the "orator."

He made himself an orator, a citizen. But a poet he was born. He is one of those true artists whose perception of the surrounding world is poetical, who see it always through the prism of their creative faculty.

In his early poems, Rylsky views the world through the glass of world literature, his yardstick is the wisdom of books, the ideas drawn from the manifold phenomena of world culture, from the finest works of the great artists of the past. This makes the work of the young Rylsky akin to that of French poets of the Parnassus school. It is from them, too, that

he inherits his striving to conceal his own personality behind the images of the past.

First and foremost in that past Rylsky sees its inspired heroes, the embodiment of tireless creative energy, the fighters for a better world. Such is his conception of Leonardo da Vinci, and of Michaelangelo, that "fighter untiring with matter, with man, and with himself."

The same thing is true of Beethoven, who "would the earth have blown up to give joy to the children of the earth," and of Prometheus, rending the corroding fetters of the old world order.

Rylsky started writing very early. In fact he was only sixteen when he brought out his first book, "On Islands White." That was in 1910.

He is fifty this month, and has been thirty-five years in literature. In one of his latest poems, Rylsky says:

> Racing life's left fifty years behind it,
> Youthful ardour's surely out of place.
> But for me—I would start life all over again.
> And—I honestly confess it—never end.

He is quite right when he speaks of "youthful ardour." Paradoxical as it may seem, the Rylsky of this war is younger than the boy poet Rylsky who appeared on the scene in those bitter early days when, in tsarist Russia, Ukrainian literature was persecuted and oppressed.

The son of Thaddeus Rylsky, the well-known Ukrainian democrat, Rylsky naturally could not accept the state of affairs prevailing at the time. On the other hand, he did not feel himself equal to combating it, and so his youthful poems speak of proud solitude, of philosophic contemplation and communion with nature.

Yet even in those days when he held himself aloof from actuality, Maxim Rylsky was never the dispassionate artist, and never made the ivory tower a matter of principle, as the Parnassus poets did.

He was no mere indifferent onlooker at the breaking up of the old world. He did not judge that world as did Themis of old, with sword and blindfold eyes, but with wide open eyes. He saw the men of the old regime, the gentlemen finishing their cigars, and their coffee and liqueurs, while the footsteps of the avengers sounded on the staircase.

Everything had combined to fit him for such a perception of the world: the impressions of his childhood, and the training he received in one of Kiev's most progressive schools, the democratic milieu in which his youth was spent.

His first books of verse—"On Islands White." "Beneath the Autumn Stars" and "Distance Blue"—are coloured with romantic contemplation. Yet Rylsky was a born realist, who saw unvarnished the violence and oppression of the old world in all its stark ugliness.

Then the Revolution came. The rotten structure of tsarism crumbled, and the people emerged onto the free highroad of life and creative activity.

And together with all the best and most progressive among the Ukrainian writers Maxim Rylsky turned to the heroism of the battle for the new life and the moulding of the new man. He was at home with these themes because of his democratic outlook and his love for his native Ukraine, where a new culture, socialist in content and national in form, was unfolding in freedom.

2

Alike in his narrative poems and lyric fragments Rylsky reveals depth of thought. He has pondered much over the historical evolution of the Ukrainian people, over their struggle for social and national liberation.

His long narrative poem, "Marina," is the fruit of these reflections. The tale of a young Ukrainian serf girl, it is a broad realistic canvas showing the life of two worlds—those of the peasant serf and the landed nobility.

Painting the life of the nobles in 19th century Ukraine, Rylsky brings before his readers a gallery of Ukrainian and Polish landlords. They are cruel and grasping, though some may rant about freedom. There is Ludwig Szemyslowski, a wealthy Pole with a liking for serf girls and fast horses. Or his son Heinrich, callous and selfish, for all his high-flown talk about democracy. Or Medynsky, a "romantic" who yearns for the free Cossack Ukraine of bygone days and bleeds his peasants white.

The poet's irony is biting indeed as he unmasks the moral turpitude of these creatures, concealed by a veneer of decorum.

His portrayal of the serfs is tender and lyrical. Marina, the central figure of his

tale, is a young peasant girl, gentle and lovely. Marina loves Mark, her fearless friend. But her lot is a hard one. She is abducted by Medynsky; he, in turn, loses her at cards to Zametelsky, another of the landed gentry, who wants to make the beautiful girl an actress in his household theatre.

Marina never surrenders. Together with her friend Mark, she avenges her own wrongs and those of her people.

Very powerful in Rylsky's poem is the description of the peasant rebellion. Sympathy with the people in revolt, deep affection for them and loathing for their oppressors lend "Marina" remarkable force. The author's lyrical digressions, on the other hand, make a natural bridge from the images of the past to the sentiments and views of the Soviet man and woman, building a world of liberty and happiness in place of the superseded world of slavery.

This new world of liberty and happiness takes shape before the poet's eyes: his verse portrays the transformation of his native land.

This he does in his book "Kiev." Rylsky knows every stone of the capital, has done since his childhood days.

There he entered on his life as a writer in the days when noble buildings were being erected by "starvelings, ground down by toil, perishing as they build."

Here, too, he lived to see other days, when the city was transfigured, endowed with a second youth by the free creative effort of the new man.

And in this book the poet's love of nature also becomes invested with new meaning.

At the outset of his literary career, he fled to nature to escape the depressing social realities: now he finds nature doubly beautiful as the embodiment of the fullness of life and as material for creative human endeavour.

3

Rylsky's poetry is permeated with love for his native land. The subject is for the poet a deeply personal, intimate one.

This feeling of love for his Ukraine became especially poignant in the black days when the hordes of Hitler overran it. Love for the Ukraine is wedded to love for the other Soviet nationalities, and particularly for the Russian people, for their culture, for Moscow, their time-honoured capital, now become "the heart of the nations, the reason of the earth, the home of the fearless and the free."

To Rylsky the motherland means above all the people who inhabit it, united in their community of interests and aspirations. But it also means the land itself, beauteous and bountiful.

Rylsky is thrilled to see the life of Soviet men and women growing happier, to see the social and the personal harmoniously merging, and the creative spirit manifested in all the humdrum details of everyday life.

Rylsky's buoyant optimism was sorely tried in the grim ordeal of this war. The enemy overran the Ukraine. The poet had to forsake his native Kiev; he had to live and know his homeland martyred, her villages and towns razed by fire, her defenceless civilians massacred.

And in these years of ordeal, Rylsky's voice rang out clear and strong.

His poetry mirrored the anguish of the people, but it mirrored, too, their wrath and will to fight and win.

The mighty feeling of love for the homeland spoke in his writings in all its manifold variety of shades.

Rylsky the poet and Rylsky the citizen merged in one. Rylsky wrote flaming poetry and impassioned articles. His theme was still the same: the greatness of the Ukraine's deathless people, battling by the side of the other Soviet nationalities for the honour and independence of their country.

In the dark days when his native land was drenched in blood, Rylsky proclaimed it would live:

And that today she stands with anguish crowned
Is but a sign she'll be to joy reborn.

The earnest of that is its past history and its bond in the present with its sister nationalities of the entire Soviet land, its bond also with the progressive forces of humanity battling against fascist barbarism the world over.

Long before the war broke out, the amity of our peoples was a favourite topic of Rylsky's. A fervent patriot in love with his boundless Soviet motherland, the Ukrainian poet extolled again and again the joy of common labour and creative endeavour in the united and harmonious Soviet commonwealth.

A good illustration is his poem "A Friendship." In old St. Petersburg Taras Shevchenko, the great Ukrainian poet, meets Alridge, the Negro tragedian. Alridge knows neither Russian nor Ukrainian, Shevchenko no English; yet the two become fast friends. They are drawn together by their common yearning for liberty.

In these times of battle against the invader, the note of friendship among the freedom-loving nations sounds more vibrantly than ever. In Rylsky's 1943 book of poems, "The Lay of the Motherland," which won the poet the Stalin Prize, are many lines on the single battle spirit of the peoples marching against fascism:

Armenia's, Georgia's sons with us stand welded.
Their way the Kremlin lights remote.
And through mist the voice of Byron answers
The noble lines Shevchenko wrote.

Rylsky calls on the peoples on the banks of the dark Dnieper, the silver Volga and the blue Danube to drain the "cup of friendship" in this fight for old national cultures and a bright future for the human race.

Coming victory is the keynote of his brilliant „Lay of the Motherland." This

lay of his native land under the enemy yoke was written with Rylsky's life-blood. He sang the land of the Ukraine, its glorious history, its great men.

The Ukrainian people, like the entire Soviet people, is immortal—such is the main theme of the "Lay of the Motherland" and of many of Rylsky's journalist articles of 1941—1943.

"Man dies—the people are deathless"—Rylsky echoes this saying from an old Ukrainian play, and in our time the words are charged with special meaning and significance.

Rylsky's latest collection of poems, "The Burning Bush" came out quite recently.

Developments have vindicated the faith in victory expressed all through his wartime writings. The Ukraine is free, and the work of rehabilitation is surging already throughout its expanses.

And the poet, extraordinarily sensitive to every breath of life, met this stage in the history of his native land with verses extolling the victors, led by Stalin's will.

Today rejoicing—then endeavour
In beauty all surpassing.
To our brothers, to the people free,
Friends, let us raise our glasses.

In these years of war, Rylsky's work has grown still more manifold and varied. His collections of poetry and his publicist writings alike mirror the noble spirit of the citizen-poet, voicing the finest sentiments and aspirations of his people.

An interesting piece is "Thirst," a longer poem, written in these past few years, presenting successively pictures of the Ukraine in the distant and the recent past. After the gloomy images of pre-revolutionary days comes the tale of the meeting between the fair maiden Ukraine and October, the personification of liberty and happiness.

All at once, the epic is superseded by the lyrical, by an intimate, realistically drawn picture. The poet himself, with his wife and son, is before us, in a little garden in early spring. The cry of the geese, those harbingers of spring, reaches our ears.

Into this intimate strain, breaks a cry of horror: the blooming garden is a desert, the home a prison, wrath and anger swell the lines.

But rising in epic majesty over all is the image of the great Mother, rallying her sons for battle. The poem concludes with a lyrical monologue affirming faith in the happy future of the homeland.

In this poem the lyrical and the epic are brilliantly combined.

Rylsky is a delicate lyrical writer, he follows the minutest vibrations of the spirit; but at the same time he is a tribune of his people, whose voice sounds far beyond the borders of his country. His letter to Canadian Ukrainians, for example, struck a ready answering chord in the hearts of our friends abroad. In poetic form, the letter speaks of the aims of this war of liberation, of the common goal of the freedom-loving nations. In Rylsky's own words, he "spanned with the rainbow of friendship" the gulf between the two continents. And from the Canadian Ukrainian came a stirring reply, a reply that was a message of salutation to the Ukrainian poet and to the Soviet people, in whose ranks he is fighting with his keen pen for the happiness of mankind.

Spread out fanwise before me on my desk lie twenty-five verse collections by Maxim Rylsky—a worthy monument to his thirty-five years' literary work.

What a wealth of lyric thought the books contain, what a multiplicity of forms! From the Rylsky of the early days to the citizen-poet, the political tribune, leads a road, straight, but hard.

He had much to learn before he became himself a teacher of life and poetry. He learnt from the Ukrainian classics, from Shevchenko and Franko, from Pushkin and Lermontov, the titans of Russian poetry, from the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, from the 19th-century poets of England and France.

He is direct and straightforward in everything he writes—from the "Song of Stalin," known and loved throughout the Soviet land, to complex pieces like "Thirst" and "Excursion into Youth."

Rylsky's poetry is invariably charged with clear and mature ideas. His thinking is always humane. His thoughts are ever of Man—with a capital M—of Man bold and creative, a true citizen of his land.

The road Rylsky has travelled lies mapped before us, its direction—plain to see—a direction that makes the work of Maxim Rylsky an outstanding factor in our country's cultural life.

ALEXANDER DEUTSCH

NEW BOOKS

A very valuable book has been issued by the Literary State Publishing House under the title of "Rodina" (Homeland). This is practically the first attempt to collect in one volume extracts from prose and poetry together with writings on political and social questions by prominent authors of all the republics comprising the Soviet Union and dealing with the theme of the motherland.

Love of country and hatred of the foreign invader has always been a distinguishing trait of the genuine writer. The homeland has nurtured his talent and its folk songs are echoed in his art. Great events in the life of his people afforded

him inspiration and any danger that threatened his home converted him into a fighting champion. Similarly, love of country is the traditional theme of folklore and the national heroic epic sings of the deeds of its intrepid warriors, defenders of the country, and denounces all cowards and traitors.

In the "Rodina" collection, Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Lettish, Esthonian and Karelo-Finnish literatures are all represented. Its pages resound with the voices of the poets and prose-writers of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Tataria, Bashkiria. Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Turkmenian and Tadjiks speak through the songs of their native bards. The collection concludes with excerpts from the works of Jewish writers.

The various literatures are given in chronological order, from the time of their inception to the present day. The Russian section, for example, opens with extracts from "The Lay of Igor's March" belonging to the end of the 12th century and ends with verses by Mayakovsky, calling to the defence of the Soviet country and bidding us speak with the fascists at the bayonet point in the language of conflagrations, with bullets for words.

The same section contains extracts from the works of Lomonosov, Gogol, Tolstoy and other writers which depict them to have been not only outstanding national literary figures but also devoted patriots for whom the destinies of their homeland outweighed all other interests.

The Lithuanian section opens with extracts from the "Missives of the Great Dukes Gediminos and Vitaustas" who lived in the 14th century and ends with the works of Ludas Gira, a contemporary writer. A similar arrangement is observed in the other sections.

It is characteristic that the motif of a number of the selected extracts reflects the struggle against the German danger, since, beginning with the Teutonic Order and up to the hitlerite hordes, there emanated from the banks of the Elbe and the Oder the mortal menace to the freedom and independence of the people inhabiting what is now the Soviet Union. And it is therefore no mere chance to find this motif permeating the thoughts of men so utterly different in every other respect as, let us say, Lomonosov, the illustrious Russian man of letters and science of the 18th century, and Ilya Chavchavadze, the Georgian 19th-century writer.

To give so vivid and extensive a selection of patriotic pronouncements from the pens of the writers of the multi-peopled U.S.S.R. and these in the latest translations, was certainly no easy task. The compilers and translators are to be congratulated on their united efforts in presenting so successfully both an interesting and useful volume.

A thin volume of verse by Yemelian Bukov, the Moldavian poet, has been issued by the same Publishing House entitled "Spring on the Dniester." The Russian reader can now acquaint himself more fully with the works of this poet whose individual poems have already appeared in Russian translations in Soviet papers and magazines. His writings are dedicated to his native Moldavia, to the beauties peculiar to her natural scenery, the hard joyless life of her people bowed beneath the yoke of the Rumanian enslavers. Many of the poems bear the imprint of the influence of the "doyn"—folk poetry and folk songs.

Yemelian Bukov began writing over ten years ago, the first collection of poems by the twenty-three-year-old poet appearing in 1932. The progressive outlook of his verses and the poet's yearnings for freedom led to the confiscation of the volume. His subsequent works were published and circulated in Moldavia illegally and it was not until the formation of the Moldavian Soviet Republic that the poet could think and write untrammelled. During the war years against the German invasion a number of anti-fascist poems have come from his pen.

Bukov is also known as a translator of the works of Russian writers into Moldavian.

A new monthly magazine "Dnieper," devoted to literary, artistic and social-political events, has recently been issued in Kiev. The first number coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Young Communist League of the Ukraine.

As far back as the Civil War, the youth of the Ukraine had crowned their names with the halo of heroism. The Young Communists of Kiev who perished at Tripolye in unequal combat against a band of counter-revolutionists: the devoted young underground workers of Odessa, Kherson, Kremenchug, Nikolayev—these were the pride of their Ukraine. And in the years of construction that followed, Ukrainian youth were again at their fighting posts. Krivonoss, Demchenko, Anguelina, Semivoloss—these names are household words. The years of the Patriotic War have seen about one hundred and fifty Ukrainian Young Communists awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, including A. Molodchiy, L. Pavlichenko, A. Perepelitsa, M. Baida. A deathless glory crowns the epic heroes of the Krasnodon.

The Ukrainian youths and girls will figure in many a war book, unwritten although their native poets are already singing their valour on the pages of the new magazine. Here is Pavlo Tychina's poem "Ring Out, Our Glory!", Vladimir Sossyura's "Ukrainian Komsomol" and Maxim Rylsky's "Girl of the Anti-Aircraft Crew."

Somewhat unusual is the story of Platon Voronko's "Partisan Songs." Before their appearance on the pages of "Dnieper" they had been sung to an accordion accompaniment by men taking part in valiant raids launched by partisan detachments united under the command of Sidor Kovpak. Their author, a young poet, commander of a partisan column and formerly a student of the Moscow Literary Institute together with his men sang these

songs, far in the rear of the German lines. The songs are characteristically popular, founded on native Ukrainian melodies.

The magazine also carries a cycle of new verses entitled "Forest Dwellings" by Ivan Nekhoda, the soldier-poet whose fame has spread beyond the borders of the Ukraine. He writes of the war waged amid the forests of Russia, of the advance to the West. Ivan Nekhoda is a fine lyrist possessing the faculty of investing essentially political themes with a profoundly personal approach.

Worthy of note is "The Soldiers," a cycle of new verses by Peter Doroshko, and a short poem "Dnipro" by M. Stelmakh, significant in theme and containing only nine lines. "When Ivan Morozenko," it runs, "approached the Dnieper, he waited neither for ferry, nor boat, but, just stooping down, took a draught of the waters pure and swift, and swam off breasting the waves. And the icy stream grew warmer and it seemed as if the waves abated and the seething whirl of water calmed down while the banks, moving towards each other, closed in. And why was that?" the poet asks. And then the answer: "The Dnieper had recognized her son." The Russian translation is by Natalia Konchalovskaya.

In the "People's Talent" section we find songs composed by Ukrainian men and women who languished in German captivity in Cologne and Frankfurt. They speak of heartbreaking toil in a strange land and of their faith in liberation.

The reader will find specimens of Ukrainian prose in a story by Donchenko entitled: "The Heart of an Eagle," in "An Ordinary Girl" by Shian, in Sklyarenko's "The Two Captains," in "Ever Thine" by Bedzik and in Petlevanny's "Carpathian Legend." In the Ukrainian literature poetry plays a dominant role. Modern Ukrainian prose loses its vigour before the vivid creativeness of the poems—a truth borne out by the pages of "Dnieper". Most of the stories deal with war themes, but against the military background the lives of men and women are sketched but superficially.

"Ukrainian Soviet Literature in the Days of the Patriotic War," an article by Andrei Malyshko, is based on a stenographic record of an address delivered by the poet at the Plenum of the Ukrainian Writers' Association held last June. Naturally the essay does not lay claim to be an exhaustive analysis of Ukrainian literature in wartime. The author speaks mainly of the soldier writers. But there are, nevertheless, not a few interesting observations and valuable appreciations of individual features in the literary life of the Ukraine.

Some of the articles prove interesting for their informational character, such as: "On the Field of Korsun" by D. Kossarik, and V. Dyadichenko's "Rout of the Swedes at Poltava."

The new magazine may be considered an outstanding event in the literary life of the Ukraine.

The history of Russian expeditions in the Pacific belongs to the undeservedly forgotten pages in the history of the Russian people. And yet the number of such expeditions plying from Russia to Alaska and the islands of the Pacific Ocean towards the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries may be numbered by the score. In the waters of the vast oceanic spaces, then as yet unexplored lying between Asia and America, the Russian flag was a constant and customary sight. The thrilling epic of Russian exploration in Alaska, Oregon and California has not yet been fully investigated by Soviet or American historians. For this reason, the collection of material entitled "Russian Discoveries in the Pacific Ocean and North-America in the 18th and 19th Centuries", issued by the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Publishing House comes just at the appropriate moment. The book is edited by Academician Krachkovsky, the famous orientalist.

As the preface justly notes, the work of a complete elaboration of material bearing on the histories of Alaska, California and the north-west coastline of America can be accomplished only by the associated efforts of Soviet and American historians. After the appearance in America of the widely-known works of Bancroft, Wagner, Golder and Kerner, and of Okun in the U.S.S.R., this new volume publishes a number of documents that have never as yet appeared in print. Part I gives earlier documents connected with voyages of the Russian traders Glotov, Ponomaryov, Lazarev, Vassilutinsky and others who discovered a number of islands belonging to the Aleutian group as long ago as the middle of the 18th century. Part II is devoted to documents dating from 1785 to 1790 and relating to the activities of a company of merchant sailors headed by Golikov and Shelekhov, the latter gaining for himself the sobriquet of "The Russian Columbus" from the poet Derzhavin; and in the last part of the book—the part which has the greatest interest for the general reader, we find the "Notes." Published for the first time these form an intensely curious item—a work from the pen of Korobitsyn, a clerk of the Russo-American Company and member of a round-the-world expedition launched in 1803 on the "Neva" and commanded by Captain Lissyansky, a gifted Russian sailor. Korobitsyn visited the islands now known as Marquesas, Easter Island, Hawaii, Sitka and Canton, keeping records of his intelligent and valuable observations on the life and customs of the natives.

From the State Publishing House of the Defence Industry comes "A History of Air-Navigation and Aviation in the U.S.S.R." up to the year 1914, a bulky volume recording the past aviation activities of the Russian people. Compiled from archive material and the evidence of contemporaries, it contains a great deal of information now published for the first time. Over twenty thousand documents, draughts and designs had to be studied and dozens of people

investigated before the book could be compiled. There are over three hundred illustrations.

As you read this monumental work there rises before your eyes an imposing picture of many years' research and effort of Russian technical thought creating remarkable ideas and inventions far ahead of their times. We learn that Mozhaisky had designed, built, and tried out a plane twenty years before the one constructed by the brothers Wright; that Kibalchich, who died in 1891 and Tsiolkovsky (1857—1935) were the first in the world to evolve the principle of a reactive motor for flying machines; that Arkhangelsky, Tretessky, Tsiolkovsky and Kostovich designed dirigibles remarkable for their day, and attempted to build them; we learn that in their research work, Zhukovsky (died 1921) and Chaplygin (died 1942) laid the firm foundations of aerodynamics, and that Sikorsky, Grigorovich, Gakkel and other designers created original planes superior in quality to those of foreign designers.

In this way Russian priority can be established in many important fields of air navigation and aviation and one's thoughts dwell on the bitter and tragic fate of the pre-revolutionary inventor who rarely met with support or approval of his conceptions. Most illustrative in this respect is the resolution of a certain war minister enshrined on Chernushenko's design of a dirigible: "Is the man sane?" it runs. "Have him up before a commitee to be questioned."

The book shows that Russian aviation has a glorious past and that airmen and designers had worthy forbears. It is to be hoped that these interesting researches will be continued.

"Soviet Calendar 1945," published by Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, is something to be picked up as soon as you see it at your booksellers. It is perhaps as fine a bit of printing and binding as has been put out anywhere during the war. As for the contents, the publishers and editors may well be proud of their handiwork.

The title, incidentally, is a misnomer. The present publication is a calendar, of course, inasmuch as it takes you through the 365 days of the year and introduces you to the salient dates in the history, past and current, of the Soviet Union. But it is also much more than that.

It is a portrait gallery of the heroes and military and political leaders to whom the Soviet peoples — and whole world, for that matter — owe the fact that the U.S.S.R. was able to stem the Wehrmacht in its drive for world conquest, turn the ascendance of hitlerite Germany into decline and lay the foundations for the joint action of the Allied armies in the East and the West to deal the death blow to fascism. It is a handbook of the Soviet Union, and as such it reveals some of the sources whence the U.S.S.R. has derived its tremendous strength in this war. It throws light on the U.S.S.R.'s industrial might, the strength inherent in its planned system of economy which made it possible to tap the country's material and human resources with utmost efficacy, and the moral and political unity of the many nationalities making up the Soviet Union, a unity arising from the identity of their interests. It is also a guide to a better understanding of the U.S.S.R.'s history.

The wealth of factual data and the variety of fields covered make the Calendar a worthwile addition to any reference library.

This should not be taken to mean that "Soviet Calendar 1945" is the highest achievement in book publishing. For one thing, the English ought to be brushed up a bit, particularly to eliminate obvious Russianisms and stiffness of language that have crept in, most likely, in translation. Not that these digressions bother the reader very much. Without them many of the brief articles would make far easier reading, however.

Although the printers have done a job that would do any publishing house honour, even in normal peacetime conditions, the book is a bit too cumbersome to handle. Most readers prefer to do their reading matter in perfect comfort, but you cannot relax while reading the Soviet Calendar. Merely to hold open the leaves, particularly toward the end of the thickish book, calls for unnecessary effort which a simpler get up would have eliminated. You just don't want to take the title at its face value and tear the leaves out day by day consigning them to the wastepaper basket after a cursory glance. You will want to read it carefully and then store it away on your bookshelf to be taken down for that bit of information you may need later on.

Again, regarding the Calendar as a reference work rather than a reminder of the march of time, one would like to see it supplied with an index.

"Soviet Calendar 1945," planned for circulation outside the Soviet Union, is undoubtedly one of those bridges of good will that make for still greater understanding among the freedom-loving nations who are now sacrificing so much to win the war, and will thus help to lay the foundations for the durable peace in a world without fascism for which we all are fighting today.

VASSILI SURIKOV

In the 19th century the art of historical painting acquires a new aspect in sharp contrast at once with the conventional academic as with the arbitrary interpretation of history. It was not till the 19th century, the age of decisive stride in historical knowledge, that historical truth begins to be demanded of this department of painting. It becomes one of the main intellectual needs of the age to have a life-like presentation of bygone times and of the events and personages of a nation's history—and this need was met by historical dramas and novels and by the truthful historical picture —something almost unknown to preceding centuries.

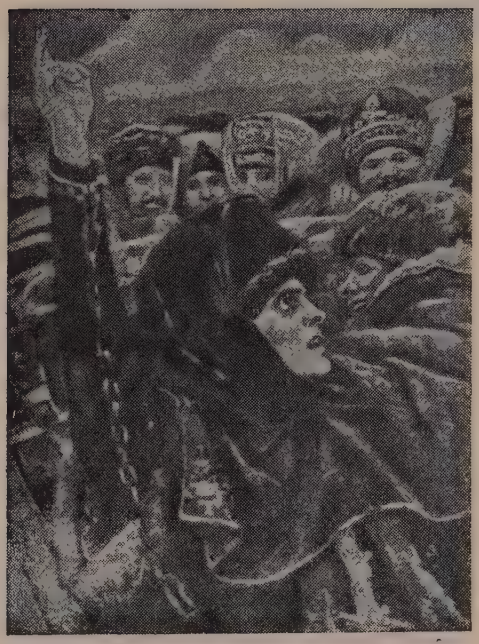
Vassili Surikov is one of the outstanding representatives of this new genre of painting. He stands apart from the numerous painters who treated the historical picture as an entertaining story, or a simple illustration of facts, or as a mere spectacle of quaint costume and setting. His place, and a very dignified one, is among the great romanticists of history such as Gros, Géricault, Delacroix, Rodin. In presenting a simple event Surikov recreates an epoch.

This Russian painter is distinguished by a rare simpleness of purpose. His mind is wholly focussed on a few large themes linked together by the idea of the moral greatness of the Russian people. On each one he worked for years, never allowing his thought to stray from the object contemplated. Almost everything that came from his brush in the period of his creative efflorescence (1878—1900) was in one way or another bound up with his great canvases of that period. Like the author of "War and Peace," Surikov conceives history, not through the prism of beautiful legends, but as something very real and near to his mind. To him historical events are an object of personal emotion and even of visions, now tragic, now radiantly aglow. "When I was painting 'The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsi,'" he told Maximilian Voloshin, the poet. "I used to be visited by fearful dreams; I was afraid of the nights; every night I dreamt of executions... I looked on the Moscow churches as on living people—I would question them: 'You are living witnesses,' I said, 'you have seen it all'—the Tsars in their vestments and the Tsarevnas.' It was walls I questioned, not books. But it was not in words that they spoke to me."

The future picture was always rising whole in Surikov's imagination in moments of sudden illumination. Then would follow insistent searchings for the most efficient means of composition. And further came the search for models answering to the artist's preconceived idea of his characters. He would literally catch them in the street. He would undertake long journeys in quest of local colour, or rather in quest of the living impressions that would enable him to transmute into reality the images conceived in his brain.

The interest in the history of his country had in part been nurtured in Surikov by the environment of his childhood and youth passed in the Siberian town of Krasnoyarsk. His father was a captain of Cossack troops, whose ancestors, Don Cossacks, had in the 16th century participated in the conquest of Siberia by Yermak, and in the 17th, in the Krasnoyarsk revolt against the tsarist "voyevodas" (governors). The traditions of the freedom-loving Siberian Cossacks were cherished in the Surikov family and all his life he was proud of his origin. The customs and ways of life had preserved a certain imprint of the 17th century. Surikov grew up among people who had a love for the old times, who were honest and simple in the patriarchal way and stubborn and austere withal, distinguished by the bold fearlessness that was inherent in their Cossack blood. Surikov was not put to it to invent the heroes for his pictures—he met them in the flesh in his everyday life.

In the Academy of Arts Surikov was a student in the period when the "realism of the idea" in Russian painting was in its effervescence. Together with Repin he is one of the prominent representatives of this tendency inspired by the revolutionary democratic ideas of the Russian seventies. Themes of wide popular movements that spread throughout the country in the 17th to the 18th centuries enjoyed particular popularity in the Russian art of the period. We know only two artists, however, whose works on these themes, reflecting the emancipatory ideas of the seventies, were made for all time, and they were Surikov and Mussorgsky, that great Russian composer. Like Repin, Surikov is head and shoulders above his school. Like certain other of its representatives he threw off the obsolete rulings of academic composition and sought first and foremost for the truth of life. For him, too, art is no mere "delight in beauty" but service to social ideas. As a painter he was more exacting in his demands than his brothers of the brush. The Titians, Veronese and particularly the Tintorettos he had seen in Venice were indelibly stamped in his memory. And on the other hand, Surikov followed up the discoveries of the French impressionists, though applying them in a broad-



Vassili Surikov. Part of the picture "Boyarynya Morozova"

er manner than they had done in their landscapes. A convinced adherent of the "plein air", "out of door painting", he makes numerous sketches to his "Boyarynya Morozova" in the open. This picture with the exceptional richness of its colouring, its exquisite rendering of the winter light and frosty air was a revelation in art to his contemporaries.

Surikov is a real Russian painter, not only possessing the specifically national feeling for the destiny of man and the history of his own people, but gifted, moreover, with that popular insight into the spirit of other peoples of which Dostoyevsky spoke with such eloquence in his speech on Pushkin.

"The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsi" (1878—1881), Surikov's first picture, displays to the full the gifts of the tragic poet, who delineated in such masterly fashion great concourses of people shaken by varying emotions. Through the dull haze of the winter dawn emerges the mournful and motley crowd of men and women of all ages who thronged the Red Square on that memorable morning of 1698, a day that meant death to the Streltsi who had revolted against the innovations introduced into Russia by Peter I. Unswervingly staunch, despising death—so are they shown in Surikov's picture. And yet what a turmoil of emotions was sweeping their hearts in those last moments of their lives! Their carts have brought their mothers, wives and children to the place of the execution. And you seem to hear their sobbing, their wails and lamentations, so eloquent are their woebegone postures. The presence of their near and dear ones insufferably heightens the suspense of those intervening hours. The executions have not yet begun, the scaffolds are empty. Surikov is endowed in a marked degree with the sense of measure so important in the portrayal of scenes of this nature. "All the time I had the thought that there must be a calm pervading it all. I was afraid of arousing in the spectator feelings of distress. Not a drop of blood have I shown: the execution has not yet begun. But the blood and the execution I lived through within myself. It was the solemnity of the last minutes I wanted to convey and not the execution."

How majestic is the figure of the conqueror! What implacable purposeful force of the man of genius you can sense in the proudly upright bearing of the rider. What Surikov has embodied in Peter is not the unbridled might of the autocrat, but historical necessity, the inevitable triumph of progressive factors over the old outworn order of Russian life, represented by the mutinous Streltsi. The tragic conflict of two world-outlooks is presented with irresistible impartiality although the victims of the clash have the heartfelt sympathies of the artist, and their suffering and staunchness stirring him to the depths, what is conveyed to the spectator.

"Menshikov at Beryozov" (1883), Surikov's next picture, shows one of Peter's followers at a tragic stage of his life. Virtually the ruler of Russia, he tries after Peter's death to marry his daughter to Peter's youthful successor, an act which brought about the downfall of the erstwhile favourite. He ends his days in Siberian exile, this upstart favourite of fortune, this "potentate invested with semi-power" as Pushkin characterized him. The low-ceilinged hut with its sordid apartments; the dim light and the cold; the frosted window that lends an aspect of such hopelessness to the scene... The shivering girls wrapped in their fur coats, their frailty setting off the manly figure of their father which looks huge by contrast in the crowded narrow izba. The image of the exiled favourite is depicted with amazing depth and forcefulness. It is instinct with will-power, breadth of vision and the pride of a real offspring of Peter's brood. You see the inward struggle of a man who vainly tries to reconcile himself to his tragic fate. Not only a whole biography is consummated in this figure, — Surikov concentrates in it an entire epoch of favourites and coups d'Etat and pronounces severe judgement thereon.

In the eighties, years of political reaction, Surikov is stirred by themes bearing on the struggle of the Russian people for freedom. He is at work on "The Krasnoyarsk Plots" and "Pugachov." They never emerged from the sketch phase though and it is hardly probable they would ever have seen the light of day under the political conditions existing at that time.

He succeeded, however, in elaborating this same theme, although in a somewhat indirect manner in "Boyarynya Morozova," his masterpiece (1881—1887).

And what is it he shows us? On the one hand, the heroine, the champion of the Old Church piety shaken by the reforms launched by the Patriarch Nikon. She is

Theodosia Morozova, an adherent of the Old Faith, one of those who tried to reverse the wheel of history, fighting against the new tendencies in the life of the Church and State. But on the other hand, the Old Faith was also a movement of the down-trodden lower classes directed under the screen of religious controversy against tsarist despotism and serfdom.

Morozova, a member of the aristocracy, standing close to the family of the Tsar, openly revolts against the dictates of Tsar and Patriarch, courageously enduring torture and ending her life in an underground dungeon in the year 1675. To form an appreciation of her historical role we have to call to mind the position of a woman in those feudal times. The defiance put up by militant women like Morozova, fighting though they were for the old, nevertheless agitated the foundations of the old system. And that was why Surikov saw in Morozova the precurser of the daring Russian women—revolutionaries of the seventies and eighties of last century—those fighters for social justice and rights for women. This explains in part the artist's interest in Morozova's fate, although the import of the picture is of course a wider one, telling of the heroism of the Russian woman and the moral strength of the Russian people.

In his childhood Surikov, like the little boy in the picture, had on one occasion run after a sledge carrying off to execution a political prisoner who had killed his warder. "He came out of the gate all pale," the artist told in after years, "and he kept crying out: 'You must do as I have done!'"

And it may be that "Boyarynya Morozova," a picture born of a living impression, surviving time, makes of us witnesses and even participants of a far-off event. We are gripped by the mighty dynamism. The movement of the sledge, the traces of the runners in the snow, the figure of the boy, running, and of Morozova's woman companion draw our mental gaze deep into this vision of old Moscow. The sledges part the crowd, as a boat cuts sea-waves, leaving whirling tumult behind itself. The crowd is roused to excitement by the beauty of Morozova's face, ablaze with fury, white as marble, by her gesture at once commanding and appealing, by her whole figure, tense and vibrant like a taut string.

How different the reactions of the crowd to this gesture of revolt! Here (to the left) are her enemies: the priest, smiling maliciously, and his friend. By means of a skilful foreshortening Surikov had moved into the foreground a few expressive figures of Morozova's adherents, the rest—more indifferent spectators—are semi-suggestions. Thirty figures in all on the canvas, but the superb composition conveys the impression of a dense mass of humanity, thousands strong. What amazing contrast within the group of Morozova's friends: abject poverty and smug wealth, the almost unearthly beauty of the boyar-maidens, the icon-like sublimity of some of the men's faces beside the hideousness such as the figure of the yurodivyi (a weak-minded devotee). How rich the colours in the vividly-patterned vestments embodying the splendour of ancient Russian art; how delicately harmonized the bold concord of tones—red, purple, dark-blue, gold and yellowish-grey and what a magnificent contrast to the gorgeousness of the crowd is Morozova's black figure against the white snow flecked with blue shadows. Every face is tense with life, each one personifying a biography, a human fate; and to write of them, of this pilgrim, of the Streltsi, the fanatic, the boyar-maidens, the nun, the aged mendicant-woman, the Tatar and many, many others would be to write a long historical tale. For the aggregate of these types so ably portrayed of men and women of all conditions gives an illuminating picture of the spiritual life of Russia in the 17th century.

The huge canvas breathing romantic exaltation, creative wisdom and profound observation is rightly considered as the acme of Russian art of the 19th century.

In one respect, and that an essential one, however, Surikov has in his "Subjection of Siberia" (1895) attained something still greater in respect of dramatic action. For the painter of historical subjects it is always a point of great importance to pre-

Vassili Surikov. Menshikov at Beryozov

sent not some isolated moment, but a number of episodes taking place at different times and combining to form the one dramatic event. A picture of this nature is in its way a theatrical presentation. But the specific character of composition in painting demands that the separate scenes form a unity making it appear that they are concurrent as the picture will not otherwise create the impression of an entire whole. This effect is achieved by the art of a judicious grouping of the figures in space.

"The Subjection of Siberia" is one of the best examples of the way in which this difficult task may be solved. The action is developed in three consecutive vistas receding into the background. In the foreground we see Yermak's Cossacks calm and confident in victory, making a decisive onslaught; a rifle-volley is fired. Further back is the still staunch resistance of a detachment of Tatar warriors. Overcoming their fears of unfamiliar firearms, their faces distorted with fury, they are trying to drive the enemy off with a cloud of arrows. But the hinder ranks are stricken with terror, and it is in vain that shamans standing on the high bank of the river are making efforts to ward off disaster by incantation. Taking flight, the Tatar cavalry is galloping off to the town just visible in the distance. We have a picture where the movement of masses is so directed and the parts so arranged in receding vistas as to enable the spectator to survey the progress of the battle and see its outcome.

Here Surikov is the dispassionate historian. He has enshrined in his painting the golden deed of his ancestors—a handful of valiant men who ventured to penetrate into the depths of an unknown savage land and engage huge enemy hordes in fighting. His Cossacks are men of iron will, faithful to soldierly duty, restrained and dignified. There is no outward show, no dash; rather does one sense an ascetic austerity in the finely chiselled features, reminding one of the beauty of the Russian warriors on ancient icons. Men welded together, impelled by a single aim—as such did Surikov envisage these defenders and builders of the Russian state. This is the end of the age-old struggle with the Eastern nomads waged by the Russian people who, for two hundred and fifty years, had borne the Mongolian yoke; this is the crest of the counter-tide, rushing tumultuously from the West, the decisive moment in the creation of a great multinational state. "I wanted to show the meeting of two elements," Surikov said in explanation of his picture. The Russian element in his presentations inspires dread, but it is not cruel; not a destructive, but a constructive force, and the other, the Mongolian force, is revealed in its real historical significance. These warriors, fighting with the courage of despair, revive in one's memory the heroes of Mongolian epic. In their massive bronze-coloured faces, their vigorous agile bodies garbed in vividly patterned robes, their slanting piercing eyes of the hunter Surikov has stamped the manly handsomeness of the Mongolian type.

The colouring of the picture is remarkable —massive and full, sustained in tints of golden grey. Unforgettable is the boat thronged river—wide, turgidly yellow, overcast with dove-blue haze: the high russet-coloured slope; dark silhouettes of the riders against the silvery sky. Like the types and figures of the men you feel the natural scenery to be genuinely Siberian, unrepeatable in any other latitudes.

Another picture amazing in its penetration into the heart of local colour is "Suvorov's March Through the Alps" (1899). To have painted this gloomy gorge, this wall of rock shutting off the sky, this dark-blue glacier, Surikov travelled on foot right along the route of Suvorov's army. Like the heroes he depicted he clambered up the glaciated steeps, descended into chasms that he might himself go through the hardships of that unparalleled campaign. His picture is a memorial to the courage of the Russian soldier, to his contempt for death. To show up the heroism of these men, inhabitants of lowlands, who are conquering the nature of the awe-inspiring mountain heights, Surikov reveals the inner struggle in the veteran who is making the sign of the cross, in the soldier who has fallen and muffled up his face in his cloak, in the tremendous strain endured by the men descending the dizzy slopes. And what a contrast to them the group of young soldiers who are laughing back at Suvorov's joke! Raising himself to an upright position on his horse he is encouraging the passing soldiers. The septuagenarian general is marvellously portrayed. Near and accessible to the mass of the soldiers, insignificant in appearance, he yet embodies under these awful conditions an indomitable strength of spirit.

In the year 1907, Surikov completed "Stepan Razin." Sitting in a boat afloat on the wide expanses of the Volga, Razin, the fighter for the people's freedom, lost in painful thought, listening to the Cossacks' songs is an interesting conception. But the realization of the conception is considerably below the preceding pictures.

In the last ten years of his life Surikov painted many landscapes, sunny and vivid in colour, of Spain, Italy and the Caucasus.

Michail Nesterov, the outstanding Russian painter, gave a very apt appreciation of Surikov's art. "He has told the terrible tales of past years," says Nesterov, "he has shown the heroes of old; has given to humanity in the images he painted the soul of the Russian people. How near to our hearts are these glorious images in their many-sidedness and their passionate transports!"

ALEXANDER ROMM

In the last decade or two before the war, some remarkable works were written in all musical genres by Ukrainian composers.

Boris Lyatoshinsky wrote two operas — "The Golden Hoop," after the historical novel by Ivan Franko, "Shchors," on the life of the famous Civil War leader, two cantatas—"Testament," "Ceremonial Cantata," two symphonies, an overture on Ukrainian folk-themes. "Fantastic March" for the orchestra, three string quartettes, a piano trio, a violin sonata, two sonatas and a cycle of pieces for the piano, many vocal pieces, brass-band marches, and the music to various films and theatre productions.

Lev Revutsky wrote two symphonies, of which the second won a Stalin Prize in 1941, a piano concerto and a number of piano and vocal pieces. Many Ukrainian folksongs were arranged by him.

Victor Kossenko, who died when he was at the height of his powers in 1938, left a symphony and a heroic overture for the orchestra, a violin and a piano concerto, piano trios, three sonatas for the piano, one for the violin and one for the 'cello. He was the author of many piano and vocal pieces.

Michael Verikovsky, known principally by his songs, shortly before the war composed an opera, "The Cossack Captain," on the story by Taras Shevchenko.

Matvey Gozenpood wrote two symphonies, three piano concertos, some chamber music, several piano pieces and songs.

Philip Koz'sky, Julius Meytus, Andrei Vilinsky and Leonid Gourov produced some good work in various genres.

Serguei Dobrovolsky's popular songs must be mentioned.

To this list might be added the researches in music by Dmitri Revutsky, Nikolai Grinchenko and Abram Gozenpood. Thousands of Ukrainian folk songs were collected by the Folklore Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Science. Proof of the development of Ukrainian musical culture under Soviet rule was to be seen in the new opera houses set up, new schools of music, concert organizations, orchestras and choruses, and new music publishing houses.

In the last few years the musicians of the Ukraine have kept up their creative and educational work in spite of the inevitable wartime difficulties. That the heroic struggle of the people has been an unfailing source of inspiration to musicians is seen from the music written during the war by Ukrainian composers.

Boris Lyatoshinsky wrote in 1942—1943 a piano quintette and trio, string quartette, two piano suites, two cycles of songs, and arranged for solo and chorus about a hundred Ukrainian folk songs. He also composed, in the rough, his third symphony.

Lyatoshinsky certainly cannot be accused of a narrow understanding of the war theme. Though these compositions are not spectacular battle-scenes, they are stirring pictures of our time and its people. They bring out the moral beauty of the people who are fighting for ideals of liberty and humanity.

Of Lyatoshinsky's two piano suites, the Shevchenko suite is the better.

These are leaves from the composer's diary, obviously for 1942. The key to each of the three movements is the epigraph taken in each case from Shevchenko.

The national character of Lyatoshinsky's work is very marked in his songs and piano pieces which have the intonations and melodic expressions found in Ukrainian folk songs. The same may be said of other works by this composer: his instrumental chamber music, "Ukrainian Quintette," the second piano trio and fourth string quartette.

Sometimes Lyatoshinsky includes fragments from folk melodies and achieves in these instances a unity of intonations in the whole. He preserves, though, his own individuality to the full. The intonations of the Ukrainian folk melos and Lyatoshinsky's piano sonatas seem poles apart and it would appear to be impossible for the composer to apply in a natural way his own harmonic language to the intonations heard in his new works. Yet he has done this.

His second trio, written in 1942, demonstrated effectively that the Ukrainian melos could be woven into the most complex harmonic texture without losing its peculiar characteristics.

The first movement of the trio forms an epic introduction, restrained and laconic, to the dramatic ballad which is built on an Ukrainian song. This narrative part is superseded by a pastoral elegiac intermezzo, the central episode of which is dynamic and striking.

In the fourth and last movement, the theme is a popular Ukrainian song, elaborated at considerable length in eleven variations and a coda built on monumental chords reminiscent of Borodin.

Lyatoshinsky's trio has no programme, but its outlines can be divined: it is a narrative of the heroic past, describing the breadth and grandeur of the Ukrainian land and arousing her sons to noble deeds.

Of a different quality is the music of the "Ukrainian Quintette" written for piano, two violins, viola and 'cello. This quintette was the composer's next work. He completed it the same year, 1942.

The tension of the crucial battle in which the blood of heroes has been shed is felt in many of the compositions written about this time. Lyatoshinsky's quintette is charged with the tragic exaltation of the combat, with the mortal conflict, the struggle and its losses and sacrifices, the tears of human suffering, the pride and gladness of hard-won victory.

The quintette is monumental in scale; the Ukrainian intonation fully justifies its name though direct "quotations" from folk music are few. In the first movement, the epic strain of the exposition is followed

by dramatic episodes of great poignancy.

After the lyrical opening of the second movement there are sombre and reminiscent strains that recur in the succeeding movements. They sound like a grim and bitter dirge.

The turbulent scherzo that forms the third movement calls to mind a "danse macabre," an orgy of diabolical forces; at the very end against this background comes a choral melody from the second movement which serves as a powerful contrast.

The fourth movement is the emotional synthesis of the whole, buoyant and confident. Once more the sombre theme of the second movement recurs — a reminder of the fallen heroes in the days of universal exultation in victory.

The trio and quintette may be classed among the finest pieces of Soviet chamber music.

Lyatoshinsky is the author of some vocal music. A lyrical cycle for which he used poems by Vladimir Sosyura, and Maxim Rylsky's two songs: "Dawn" and "Lullaby." This "Lullaby" has also been set to music by other Ukrainian composers. Rylsky's melodious "Lay of Mother-Ukraine" has been set to music by Verikovsky for bass and piano. The recitative strain of this song has its origin in the old ballads sung by the people's bards, and the piano accompaniment which accentuates this trait, closely resembles folk-music in texture.

The anguish and anger aroused by the martyrdom of the Ukraine are heard in Julius Meytus' ballad "And Maidens Brought Us no Flower," to words by Ivan Nekhoda.

Notable among Verikovsky's works are also his cantata, "Wrath of the Slavs," and "The Monk"—a song for bass and orchestra, to Shevchenko's words.

An undoubted success, Verikovsky's opera "The Hired Woman," is finding appreciative audiences in several of the Ukrainian opera houses. The libretto is after Shevchenko. In this opera the composer's feeling for melody is finely displayed, and he shows his command of vocal music.

When one reads Shevchenko, one often has the impression that it is folk poetry. Verikovsky displays in many respects an affinity with folk song. This may also be said of some other Ukrainian composers, and is the outcome, not only of the poetic charm of the Ukrainian songs, but also of the work done in studying and assimilating them. Even in wartime, when the subjects chosen are all connected with the war, these composers have worked on arrangements of numerous folk songs. Though these songs may have no bearing on the war, their richness and variety speak of the spiritual vitality of Ukrainian people and their contribution to culture. A large new cycle of Ukrainian folk songs has been arranged in these latter years by Lev Revutsky, who has done much in the field of mass singing. Of the latter I should like to mention "For Our Country" and Revutsky's remarkably dynamic and expressive "Cavalry Song". His "Song of Stalin" has the broad fluency and plastic expressiveness of the Ukrainian melos.

One of the best songs written in the early months of the war was the "Marching Song" by Serguei Dobrovolsky, a master of unusual talent, whose untimely death has been felt by the younger generation of Ukrainian composers as a great loss.

A toccata of considerable length stands out among his piano pieces not only for the brilliancy of the piano score (the composer was a fine pianist) but for the depth of the underlying idea.

In a brief review like the present it is difficult to describe what is undoubtedly one of the front-rank works of Ukrainian music—Andrei Shtogarenko's symphonic cantata "My Ukraine." The words are by Rylsky and Malyshko. It is a monumental cycle for chorus, soloists and a full orchestra. The first part of the cantata—"Beloved, Arise,"—is a call to arms. The people's war is pictured in the parts that follow, in the lovely lyrical "Lullaby" for female voices, solo and orchestra. A mother bending over her baby's cradle tells of his father's valorous deeds, the swift-moving "Partisan Song" (for male chorus and orchestra) and the noble finale. The score of the cantata shows the composer's command of orchestra and chorus. This cantata expresses the bond between Ukrainian music and the musical culture of Russia (in this case, Moussorgsky's music), a bond established in the 17th and 18th centuries and cemented in the compositions of Lyssenko (who was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov's) and Kossenko, Revutsky, Lyatoshinsky and the other contemporary Ukrainian composers.

Shtogarenko is the author of many fighting songs, outstanding among which is his powerful "Song of the Partisans" and his Slav chorus.

Among Philip Kozitsky's works, let me single out his opera "For the Homeland" written on Bashkirian themes; three fine songs are the "Song of the 30th Regiment" for a chorus with piano accompaniment, the "AA-Gunners," a marching song without accompaniment, and the beautiful "Song of Goulya Korolyova"—a girl-heroine who laid down her life for her country.

The songs of Constantine Dankevich are not always up to the same level in expressiveness and artistic finish and are often marred by erratic improvization and occasionally stereotyped intonations and harmonies.

Matvey Gozenpood has also been working hard these war years. Noteworthy among his recent instrumental pieces is the fourth string quartette, in four movements. His "Ceremonial March" is the most outstanding of this composer's symphonic works.

Julius Meytus has written in addition to two beautifully orchestrated suites—the fourth and fifth—various pieces based on Turkmen folk melodies.

Other Ukrainian composers have been writing on Russian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Armenian, Uzbek, Turkmen and Daghestan themes and the music of the Ukraine is a striking illustration of the unity of the people of the U.S.S.R.

The wartime development of Soviet art

can only be reviewed as a whole in the future. This also applies to the work of the Ukrainian composers. Material is not available for a complete survey, and many of the works are still in manuscript. The Ukrainian State Publishing House and State Music Publishers have printed about two hundred pieces in every genre written by Ukrainian composers during the war.

IGOR BOELZA,
Professor

"THERE WAS ONCE A LITTLE GIRL"

There was once a little girl... A dear little creature—pensive and bright-eyed—a daughter of a large and glorious city washed by a broad river in whose waters were mirrored splendid palaces and bridges and marble ships carved on stately columns. Her father was away fighting for his country, defending the city where he had left behind him his wife and little daughter Anastasia. The town was beleaguered by the enemy, strangling in the cruel noose of a blockade. The little girl saw the men and women about her getting weaker and weaker; her mother wasting away day by day; the scanty allowance of bread diminishing... No letters from Father... And the child is seized with tormenting unchildlike fears. But she bears up bravely. She will not give in, any more than the great frozen city snow-bound by relentless blizzards, will surrender to the foe.

It was getting harder and harder to hold out... There were posters all over the walls —they were crying out for all to hear: "The enemy is at the gates of Leningrad!" And the enemy was hammering the city with his machine-guns, destroying its houses with bombs, killing grown-ups and children, leaving them orphans. But the Germans were powerless to kill the loving kindness that dwells in human hearts. Indefatigably, by day and by night the Young Communists of Leningrad helped their fellow townsfolk to cope with the hardships of that winter of siege, encouraging those whose strength was failing, fetching water from the Neva, nursing the sick, going to fetch them the precious portion of rationed bread. And when the girls, worn out to the point of exhaustion, had lain down to snatch a few moments of sleep, news would come in of a house blown up by a shell, or an incendiary bomb hitting a hospital. And up they would start again at the first call, going out into the bitter frost, into the snow-bound streets of their city.

When Anastasia's mother dies the little girl is not left out in the streets. She is taken into a Children's Home. And there she meets Katia, her favourite playmate, her former companion in childish games and quarrels and reconciliations.

The town has held out through the awful winter. And the longed-for spring has come; the ice on the Neva is breaking up, and men and women are coming out into the

Still from the film "There Was Once a Little Girl"

open to warm themselves in the sunshine and clear away the mountains of drifted snow from the streets of their city. And even the old maple-tree crushed by a nazi shell is putting forth a delicate green shoot.

The enemy is still trying to sow death and destruction in the city, dropping bombs of delayed action, one of which—all but killing the two small friends—gives Anastasia a nasty wound. But the brave young daughter of Leningrad, fragile and delicate to look at as the tender shoot of the old maple, remains alive. And her father, back from the front, bends over the bandaged head of his daughter. And the two converse in low voices—talking of their great grief, of the dead mother, of all they have been through, of the future that lies before them. And then comes an important statement—telling in huge headlines the glorious news that the enemy has been driven away from Leningrad. And the two little friends Anastasia and Katia skip and dance for joy at the sparkling lights of the salvos reflected in the majestic mirror of the Neva.

It was a great and noble task that confronted scenario writer Vladimir Nedobrovo and producer Victor Eissymont who have told in the film "There Was Once a Little Girl" of the days of the Leningrad blockade, of the courage of simple men and women, of the agonies and staunchness of a great city. The events are still fresh in our minds. And every sequence of the picture burns itself into our hearts with pain and smouldering wrath.

There are no fine words. The grief does not cry out loud. The agony is silent, nor is the enemy, who has doomed the city to destruction and millions of its inhabitants to a lingering death from starvation, shown in the picture itself. The bestial image is imprinted in the posters covering the walls of the city. But the whole film, restrained and dignified, almost documentally exact, is a cry of agony, recounting one of the most horrible of all the crimes of fascism.

The principal roles are played by children. The tale of Anastasia's sufferings is told with stirring sincerity by nine year-old Nina Ivanova. Natalia Zashchipina, aged five, is wilful and arch and changeable in turn as little Katia. The slightest false note in such a film would be intolerable.

Producer Victor Eissymont and director Vladimir Sukhobokov have shown artistic tact, never burdening the small performers with tasks beyond their powers, allowing the youngsters to follow the promptings of their natures, and unerringly creating the background best suited to their individual gifts. Here and there, it is true, one can just detect the guiding hand of the producer stressing an emotion, or bringing out some childish tone of voice or feeling. Such moments, however, are rare. Throughout the story we delight in the spontaneity and simple charm of the two little friends. This simplicity could only have been attained as a result of patient and inspired labour.

Was it, perhaps, that he was carried away by the work with his youthful artists that the producer gives less attention to the adult players? It is true, of course, that in the scenario, too, the figures of the grown-up characters are somewhat paler than those of the children, to whom after all the film is dedicated. Be that as it may, however, one cannot help wishing the mother (Ada Voitsik) would abandon—were it only now and again—the plaintive key she uses so invariably from the very outset of the story, or that the good Head of the Tenement House Office were not quite so unalterably and touchingly good.

The episode of the dream is deeply touching. The child falls asleep in the bomb shelter during an air-raid. She dreams of a prettily decked out New Years Tree and Grandfather Frost handing her a gorgeous envelope "From Father at the Front to Anastasia." These sequences are poetical—permeated with a child's yearning wishes, but rendered without any sloppy sentiment. And then... the lights fade out—one smoking candle is left. The child wakes up in the bomb shelter.

The film has been released during the season when brightly decked trees—real ones—are shining in the schools, theatres and clubs throughout our land. The Leningrad salvoes have died down. The front has shifted far to the west; the Baltic area is cleared of the enemy, and our guns are roaring on Prussian soil. And as the pictures of the little girl of Leningrad and the staunch men and women of the heroic city pass before our eyes, you feel the great burning hatred within you rising with renewed vigour—hatred against that enemy who must now be crushed completely... And with Anastasia's father you find yourself saying: "They will pay for everything!"

LEV KASSIL

NEWS AND VIEWS

"An officer reared under the Soviet system has the traits characteristic of the man of the age of socialism. To depict such traits—an image of the Soviet individual, is one of the functions of our literature." Such was the opening theme of Leo Subbotsky, the literary critic, in a three-days' debate on "The Soviet Officer in the Literature of 1944," that took place in Moscow Writers' Club.

This debate aroused considerable interest. Besides writers, many army men were present, among them the Kazakh Colonel Bourjan Momysh-Uly who figures as the main character in Alexander Beck's novels "The Panfilov Division" and "The Volokolamsk Highway."[1]

Chief attention was centred around Constantine Simonov's novel "Days and Nights"[2] and Beck's "The Volokolamsk Highway."

The setting of Simonov's novel is the heroic defence of Stalingrad. Dealing with a single battalion and its commander, Captain Saburov, the author portrays the men who fought in and helped to win this greatest battle in the history of war. Beck's book is set during the days of the battle of Moscow at the end of 1941, in which the Red Army dealt Hitler his first big rebuff, routing the German forces.

The speakers dwelt on two closely interrelated themes: the Soviet officer in reality and his portrayal in literature. The first topic was dealt with in particular detail by Colonel Momysh-Uly, who spoke of the Soviet officer in action, of the features that should characterize this. He enlarged the ideas already known to the readers of Beck's two books, which are written in the first person as a sort of descriptive monologue, or, as Momysh-Uly put it, "a book with living and speaking material."

Victor Pertsov, a well-known critic, said of "The Volokolamsk Highway": "It puts me in mind of what Stanislavsky says about the actor's creative mood. Stanislavsky has some remarkable pages on the actor's art of sinking himself completely in the right mood before he makes his appearance since this helps him to throw himself into his part. It seems to me that Beck's principal character and those around him similarly initiate us into the secret of the creative mood of the victor. I was struck very forcibly by the passage where he speaks of the instinct of self-preservation as the instinct of attack. It helped me to grasp the method of defensive action, which in the early months of the war proved decisive."

"Officers are made on the battlefield." Such was the theme of Lieutenant-General Ignatyev, author of the well-known memoirs "Fifty Years with the Colours"; "...And just as the war of 1812 brought in its train a period of high achievement for the Russian officer, so the present great Patriotic War has undoubtedly determined the characteristic type of Soviet fighting officer for many years to come."

The poet Nikolai Tikhonov dwelt in detail on the different types of officers produced by different ages. "The Red Army officer of this war is not the officer of World War I," he remarked. "We know we have battalion and even regimental commanders who at the outbreak of war were mere privates knowing next to nothing about military science. The war has proved an academy for these, a veritable school of warfare. War, grim and complex, has endowed them with the qualities of the new, Soviet type of officer. The Red Army today is as differently equipped from the old army as heaven is from earth. There are branches of the service that can only be officered by men of education and resourcefulness, men with initiative and will-power, Such men were lacking before... The new and higher art of generalship born in our country has beaten the vaunted German military academicians." At another point in his speech, Tikhonov said: "The officer evolves from the soldier."

How well has Soviet literature succeeded in mirroring the Soviet officer type? Practically all the speakers agreed that Beck's book gives a vivid picture of a firm, resolute officer, that, to quote Subbotsky, "it reveals to us the officer's mental processes on the scene of action, acquaints us with the way he develops in battle, and helps us to grasp what the art of commanding troops really means." But Subbotsky and many other speakers remarked that it was a pity that "the principal character in the book is rather one-sidedly portrayed—the author is mainly interested in his military aspect. This is of course very important, but what the reader seeks in literature is an all-round human being."

Certain other shortcomings in Beck's delineation were also noted: some degree of aloofness from the soldier mass, and an over-emphasis on the officer's part in operations. To quote the author, Victor Shklovsky, Beck's "hero stands alone and overshadows all the other characters;" "the vast experience of the army as a whole is very nearly attributed to this one individual." Recalling Tolstoy's "War and Peace," Shklovsky stated: "All through Russian literature, the Russian officer is shown as a modest individual, for battles and war are fought not only by its leaders, but by the people. It was not Andrei Bolkonsky that defeated Napoleon, but Tushin and Timokhin."

On the whole, the audience shared the opinion voiced by Subbotsky when he said:

[1] Several chapters from "The Panfilov Division" were printed in our issue No. 10 for 1943, and from "The Volokolamsk Highway" in No. 4 for 1944.

[2] See our No. 4 for 1944.

"Some of the details in the book conflict with its main outlook—the endeavour to give a true picture of the battle of Moscow," but "Beck has succeeded in portraying the mind of the average Soviet officer, fighting battles under the severe handicaps of the first stage of the war. This officer is a strong, enterprising commander, who keenly feels his responsibility for the job entrusted to him, and is just as exacting with himself as with his subordinates. He ponders deeply over every detail of his actions in the field, striving for the fullest possible effect and ever mindful of General Panfilov's instruction—never to waste men. Daring coupled with sober calculation, endeavour to divine and anticipate the enemy's plans, to strike at him continually—these traits, instilled by Panfilov into his officers, are vividly shown by Beck."

Simonov's "Days and Nights," written in the traditional manner of the novel, is interesting because, to quote Subbotsky, "it gives a cross-section of the minds of Soviet officers, from a battalion commander to the commanding officers of large formation; it helps the reader to grasp the system of direction of the troops in action." ..."What Simonov has succeeded in doing is to show the officer's work in war as ordinary daily effort; and he brings it home very keenly that this continual effort consists of real deeds of valours, that heroism has become the standard of the Soviet officer's conduct."

"'Days and Nights' emanates a new spirit," said Alexander Leites, the critic. "It brings without romantic embellishment the everyday impressions of a man who took part in the seventy days fighting in this city of world renown."

Unlike Beck, Simonov sets out to portray the Soviet officer not only in the field, but in private life as well, as a human individual. He has not, however, been wholly successful in his attempt to depict a full-blooded, artistically unified, picture. "'Days and Nights,'" said Tikhonov, "was written hard on the heels of the events described, from the author's living impressions. He was the first to publish a book on the fighting in Stalingrad while all around were still being produced only front line dispatches and the like." And speakers in the debate traced the book's shortcomings to this source. "The characters are individual enough"; "They have been named but not described," it was explained.

As Tikhonov summed up, "Simonov has only just made the sketch for a future canvas about Stalingrad. He has only outlined the figures of the Soviet fighting men, for whom Stalingrad was merely a leaf in their book of battle, the first stage on their long road to Berlin."

But a beginning has been made. Beck's and Simonov's books point the way to the further development of this theme in Soviet literature. Captain Saburov, Simonov's leading character, says: "After the war all of us, in a measure, one way or another, will be teachers of history." And books like Beck's "The Volokolamsk Highway" and Simonov's "Days and Nights" will certainly provide a useful and important source material for a study of the war and an understanding of the Soviet officer of our time.

The Soviet Government has invariably devoted the greatest attention to the activities of its Public Health institutions. At the beginning of the war these consisted of two hundred and thirteen scientific research institutes, seventy laboratories engaged in scientific work and seventy-two medical institutes staffed by some twenty-five thousand research specialists. By this time the necessity to set up a single centre of medical science was urgent. This idea had been entertained years ago by Maxim Gorky who on many occasions had discussed the question with leading members of the Soviet medical profession.

In the summer of 1944, the decision to found an Academy of Medical Sciences of the U.S.S.R. was adopted by the Soviet Government.

The constituent session held at Moscow was attended by many prominent Soviet medical workers. Numerous speeches and papers dealt with the main problems confronting the Academy. Nikolai Burdenko, the famous Russian scientist and Hero of Socialist Labour, who during this war holds the post of Chief Surgeon of the Red Army, was unanimously elected President of the Academy.

The estate of Abramtsevo, situated in one of the most picturesque localities outside Moscow, has just seen its hundredth anniversary.

Ever since the year 1844 this beautiful country seat has been a favourite haunt of many gifted representatives of Russian letters, drama and painting. Its first owner was the famous writer Serguei Aksakov (1791—1859) who extended a warm welcome to the scholars, writers and artists who visited him, often for months at a time. Among these was the famous actor, Mikhail Shchepkin. It was here that Nikolai Gogol, another favoured guest, read to his friends extracts from his new work, Part II of "Dead Souls." In 1854 Abramtsevo numbered Ivan Turgenev among its guests.

The estate later came into the hands of Savva Mamontov, who gathered around him in his beautiful home a group of outstanding Russian painters. Ilya Repin lived and worked here for three years, engaged on the sketches for his "Ivan the Dread," "Wonder Working Icon" and "Dnieper Cossacks." It was also at Abramtsevo, that Victor Vasnetsov, inspired by the surrounding scenery painted his "Alionushka" and "The Three Knights." Valentine Serov's "Girl with the Peaches" first saw the light at Abramtsevo, the artist being at that time only twenty-three. In more recent years a number of other remarkable works have been created there by Isaac Levitan, Michael Nesterov, Michael Vrubel, Mark Antokolsky and others.

By the eighties of the last century, Abramtsevo was recognized as a prominent centre of Russian art. The artists who lived and worked there were ardent admirers of national folk art and were engaged in profound studies of ancient Russian paint-

ing, architecture, wood-carving, ornament and embroidery. Quite frequently theatrical shows were organized with such Russian stage figures as Constantine Stanislavsky and Fyodor Chaliapin taking part in the performances.

Abramtsevo's artistic traditions are alive to this day. In 1932 a painters' settlement and studios were built in its vicinity where prominent Soviet artists draw inspiration, from the beautiful natural surroundings.

In the Lenin State Library of the U.S.S.R. many thousands of hand-written ancient manuscripts and books are preserved. Among these are five large-size volumes in old leather bindings from the private collection of Tsar Ivan the Dread.

The latter was the possessor of what for those times was accounted a vast library. During the so-called "Times of Unrest" which followed upon the death of Ivan the Dread the books of his private collection entirely disappeared and it was not until comparatively recent times that five volumes from their number were discovered. They are in good preservation, the leaves barely yellowed by time. The drawings are admirably executed by the best artists of the 16th century and are remarkable for the freshness and vividness of their colouring.

The yellowed page of old parchment rustles as it is turned by a careful hand and in the even, delicately-traced lines is revealed the life of bygone ages.

"...And the brave Vardan, accompanied by his valiant retinue performed many a deed of heroism and reaped the glory of a hero's death. And the battle lasted till late into the evening and many were overtaken by death and the bodies fell to earth like young trees cut down."

Thus in calm and dignified words does Yegishé, the famous historian, relate the story of the great battle. Fifteen centuries ago the people of Armenia headed by general Vardan Mamikonyan rose in arms against the foe, and on the field of Avarai sacrified their lives in the cause of Armenia's culture and independence.

Among such priceless treasures of the Yerevan Matenadaran—the deposition of Armenian manuscripts—are to be found the works of Armenian thinkers of ancient and medieval times—of Moses Khorenski, Yegishé, Ananius Shirakatsi, Amirdovlat, Oganes Sarkavag and many others, and of Frick, Nerses Shnorali and Narekatsi, the poets of Armenia's Middle Ages—as well as translations of Aristotle, Plato and Zeno, the Greek philosophers.

The Matenadaran was founded some seven hundred years ago and throughout the ages has accumulated in its treasure-stores manuscripts preserved in various Armenian monasteries and in private collections.

The manuscripts were rescued from under the ruins of monasteries and temples and the ashes of conflagrations and solicitously preserved through epoches of national calamities for future generations. But many of them were destroyed by ignorant and barbarous conquerors. The last occasion of this nature was in the year 1795, when the depository of manuscripts at the Ejmiadsin Monastery suffered heavily during the invasion of the Persian Aga Mahmed Khan.

At the present time the Matenadaran, which has added to its main Ejmiadsin store the manuscripts of many more monasteries and libraries, now numbers as many as nine thousand manuscripts which is double the 1914 figure and is now the largest depository of Armenian manuscripts in the world. Other collections are to be found in the British Museum, in the Louvre and in the museums of Vienna and Venice. One of the richest is the Jerusalem collection with its four thousand manuscripts. The most ancient manuscript in the Matenadaran collection dates from the year 886.

The Matenadaran is the national pride of Armenia. Profound studies of the manuscripts were begun after the year 1920—and more especially since 1939, after the removal of the Matenadaran to Yerevan.

In it is preserved the history not only of Armenia but also of many other peoples of the Near East. There are manuscripts in the Arabian, Iran, Turkish and other languages while several Russian manuscripts are also included among their number.

New documents have been added to the great collection since the beginning of the war—a Bible of the 12th century; the original manuscript of a literary collection of the 14th century which includes the works of secular and sacred writers and poets of Armenia of the 10th—14th centuries.

Another treasure is Zeno's "On Nature," which has been preserved only in the Armenian translation. There are many other translations of medieval European and Russian writers.

Apart from the manuscripts there is also a highly valuable collection of two hundred thousand archive documents dating from the 10th to the 20th centuries. These include letters inscribed by Armenian philosophers, churchmen and statesmen, decrees of many Tsars and some diplomatic correspondence. The Matenadaran library of printed books is also very extensive and of great historical interest. Among such treasures is the first Armenian book published in 1512.

For four days the last round of gymnasts of the U.S.S.R. contended in Moscow for the title of absolute champion of U.S.S.R. for 1944. Taking part in the various competitions were sixteen men and the same number of women.

Among the men the finish was marked by a stubborn fight between Nikolai Sery, the absolute champion for gymnastics for 1943, and Vladimir Belyakov, a young Moscow sportsman. Faultless execution of free movements gained the victory for Vladimir Belyakov, the 1943 champion being half a point behind the winner.

By the second day it had become evident that Galina Urbanovich, the absolute champion of the country for 1943, had every chance of keeping her title. And so it turned out. Outstripping several serious

rivals. Galina Urbanovich gained 110 points, out of a possible 120, emerging once more the gymnastics champion of the country.

The fables of the famous Russian poet, Ivan Krylov, have invariably attracted the attention of artists. In the various editions of the fables may be traced the developement over more than a hundred years of Russian black-and-white book illustrations. Some are real masterpieces, as for example the complete two-volume edition of the fables containing admirable engravings by the now almost forgotten artist Alexander Sapozhnikov (1795—1855); or the two daintily set-up booklets of drawings by George Narbut, the talented Ukrainian black-and-white artist (1886—1920).

The works of Krylov have also been illustrated by several foreign artists, among them the well-known English black-and-white artist Arthur Boyd Houghton (1836—1875).

Of particular interest among the newest illustrated editions of Krylov's fables is a volume now under preparation by the Moscow Literary State Publishing House. The book contains twenty-five selected fables illustrated by twenty-five artists. The pictures are now on show and are exceptionally interesting. Most expressive is the drawing accompanying the fable of the "Three Peasants" by Serguei Guerassimov, one of our prominent painters, "The Quartette" is illustrated by the famous Kukryniksy trio; most original too are the drawings by Dmitri Moor, a cartoonist and poster artist of the older generation and also those by the talented Aminodav Kanevsky and Mendel Gorshmann. There are also some brilliant wood-cuts by Vladimir Favorsky. Conspicuous among the work of more mature artists are the engravings by

George Yecheistov. Illustration to Krylov's fable "The Cat and the Pike"

Andrei Goncharov who so successfully illustrated Smollet's "Peregrine Pickle," and those by George Yecheistov who is at the present moment engaged on a series of engravings for Byron's "Don Juan." Outstanding among the younger men are Fyodor Konstantinov who has illustrated Chaucer and several of Shakespeare's plays, and Vladimir Domogadsky.

Serguei Gerassimov. Illustration to Krylov's fable "Three Peasants"

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No. 4, Vol. XI April 1945

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