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IT HAPPENED IN LENINGRAD

The editorial office was in a train, which stood on a siding near a small town, thirty kilometres from the front. Forest and swamp extended on both sides. In winter we would leave the train and flounder through snowdrifts, in summer we would splash through the bog.

"A wooded, swampy locality"—this was the official description of the place where we were stationed. And we would joke about "life in a wooded, swampy locality," and "love in a wooded, swampy locality." When a competition was announced for a title for our humour column, somebody suggested without any hesitation "humour in a wooded, swampy locality."

There were three of us living in one compartment—Ventsel, Gubin and myself. Gubin wrote poetry, Ventsel and I—prose. We became as used to living in the train as in a dugout. I had a feeling that when the war ended, I would be trying to open the doors at home by pulling them to one side.

Our history began with the Soviet Information Bureau communiqué on the defeat of the German Tikhvin grouping. A new front appeared on the regained territory. On the way there we would often have to stand and wait to let trainloads of troops, arms and munitions pass.

Sitting in the compartment at night we would argue about the direction of the main attack and work out battle plans. Then we would listen to the night TASS[1] reports and fall asleep only when it was nearly morning.

All around us stretched the snow-filled forest. At that time we were unaware that the snow concealed swamps, and dreamed of skiing.

The silence was absolute. The first day after our arrival I saw the Northern Lights, very pale, like the first dawn. To the right of them was the sunrise, looking much more like the Northern Lights as one sees them in pictures.

We felt like deserters living peacefully in our quiet train. Every one of us was longing to get to the front. I had no sooner arrived than I was asking the editor when I could leave. "All in good time," he answered.

We went through a great deal that winter, and learned many lessons—how to go twenty-four hours without sleep, to light a campfire on the snow, to seek out pillboxes in the forest and in snowy plains, to find our way by the map and to avoid mines. We learned to find villages which existed neither on the map nor yet on earth, since they had been burned to the ground and flattened out as though by the treads of some gigantic tank... We learned to appreciate a tiny dugout with an iron stove and to sleep sitting or standing, to sleep either in the driver's cabin of a lorry or in the body, on ice-covered cases of shells, or on spruce boughs piled on snow...

Our troops were advancing along the Moscow—Leningrad railway line. The front extended to a depth of about two stations, a distance which the "Red Arrow[1]" had once covered in an hour and a quarter. Now thousands of armed men, thousands of guns and armoured trains were storming these few dozen kilometres. There were many villages and stations, now of intense importance for us, of which I had never heard before.

For us, the word "Leningrad" was not merely a geographical designation; it had become a slogan. It was the synonym for victory.

There were many Leningraders among us, and occasionally they would receive letters from home. One evening there was a Leningrad letter for Gubin. He read it aloud, spreading it out on his knees, his head lowered.

"... And Zhenya is dead, and Galya is dead; Mummie is still alive, but probably she will soon die too, because she's very bad," Gubin read aloud, and his mouth was drawn to a thin line, as it always was when something had upset him badly, "Can't you send us a few onions?"

I received no letters from Leningrad. I did not know why. In that city lived a woman who meant more to me than anybody else on this earth. We had corresponded constantly before the war, and I had visited her several times a year. She would meet me at the Moscow Station and take my small attaché case from my hands. Our meeting was never noisy or excited, but almost as though we had parted only yesterday. Sometimes we would go to the Narvskaya Zastava where she lived with her mother and her little girl, but oftener to my hotel. We would sit down on the windowsill in front of the open window if it were spring or summer, and look out on St. Isaac's Cathedral and the spacious square. We did not go to the islands or the seashore, we had no use for roundabouts or swings; in fact, we sought no amusements at all. We were quite happy enough to be together.

[1] TASS—the Soviet Telegraph Agency. —Ed.

[1] The Moscow—Leningrad express.

Her name was Lida. I had had no letters from her since December. I had a feeling as though I had been flying through the air all my life and had now fallen to the ground. Everything around me was still flying on its own momentum, but I was held fast to one spot. I wrote letter after letter both to her and to her friends, but there was no answer. I would think: "Tomorrow, well, then, tomorrow again or the day after..." But still no answer came.

I would read over all her old letters, trying to forget their dates, and every time her words sounded different to me. Just to think that I was only four hours' run in the "Red Arrow" from her—and utterly helpless.

When Gubin read his letter I shivered—that had never entered my head. I refused to entertain even for a moment the idea that this could be the reason for her silence. I asked Gubin to let me read the whole of the letter. It contained much that was terrible. I read and re-read the signature—a strange name. That was my only consolation—to remember that this letter had been written by somebody else.

In the evening I sat by the loudspeaker and listened to the music. First I got Chaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. But I twirled the dial until I found foxtrots with their mechanical, metallic rhythm. They helped to stifle thought. Then I went to bed.

One day the editor handed me a sheet of paper and told me that some leaflets had to be written. I read it. It was the order for an offensive signed by the Military Council. I wrote a leaflet to the troops, ending with the words: "Leningrad is awaiting us, forward to Leningrad!" I found it very difficult to write. It is always difficult to write when one's feelings are too deep for words.

I handed in the leaflet to the editor, and he told me that our tanks had crashed through the German defences and begun a raid in the enemy rear.

Next day I decided to go to the artillery firing positions. The guns were half a kilometre from the tank unit headquarters, where I had spent the night. But I never got as far as the guns. And this is how it happened.

At first I walked along, sinking into shellholes and clambering out of them again. There were so many of them that one merged into the other. Whenever a barrage started, and it started every quarter of an hour, I pressed myself to the bottom of the next shellhole. At the first interval I decided to change my "bomb shelter" for a deeper one. Of course, that was a mistake. I realized that some time later when I came to myself in the field dressing station sitting on a bench with my head on the shoulder of a nurse who was stroking my hair.

I had a dim memory of flying somewhere, or else of everything round me taking to flight, or of myself soaring through the air—backwards, that I remembered clearly. Then I had come up sharply against something hard, and everything had merged and melted into nothing. And that was all I could remember.

When I came to myself I could hear the nurse speaking, apparently dictating to somebody:

"Shellshock. No wound. To be evacuated."

Then something rattled on my teeth, I opened my eyes and saw another girl holding a mug to my lips. I swallowed and found that it was brandy; I swallowed again and yet again, and then everything seemed to swim before my eyes and the girl slowly turned till she was hanging head downwards. A feeling of nausea swept over me, and from the formless depths in which I was swaying I heard a voice:

"He mustn't be given brandy...."

The second time I recovered consciousness, I was lying on a sledge, side by side with two other wounded men. The driver was sitting above us, and every now and then as he leaned back he would press against our heads. I threw back the coverlet and looked around me. It was already dark. We were driving very slowly.

Then I heard a voice above me saying:

"And this one, where is he wounded?"

"He's a shellshock case," replied the driver.

Evidently I was the subject of discussion. I tried to raise myself, but at once there was a roaring in my head and a nausea that gripped my very throat. Medical attendants took me under both arms and helped me to stand.

The long tent to which I was brought was bright with electric lamps. Horizontal poles were fixed down its whole length, supporting dozens of stretchers on which men were lying groaning, calling the orderlies, cursing and weeping.

The doctor examined me and sent me to the field hospital. Again I was taken under both arms and led from the ward. It was a silent, star-filled night. There seemed to be a smell of spring in the air, although it was still only January. I felt that I did not want to go anywhere, but just to lie down there, where I was, among the spruce trees, and look up into the sky.

We arrived at the tent, one of the orderlies raised the flap and the other assisted me to enter. The wet flap slapped my face as I entered.

Along either side of the tent stretched long rows of stretchers transformed into beds. All of them were occupied, except for one right at the very entrance. At the far end was a table filled with medicine bottles and jars with various liquids. There was an electric lamp burning above this table, and when I entered two girls with white overalls drawn on over their greatcoats were standing beside it. Two stoves were burning, and it was warm in the tent. A plump girl with a broad, calm face took my medical sheet from the orderly.

"Put him to bed," she said quietly, but loud enough for me to hear.

The orderly turned and began to undress me.

"I can do that myself," I said, and began pulling off my top-boots. The left one came off easily, but when I began on the right, table and stretchers began a mad dance around me, and I heard the girl's voice:

"I told you to undress him, what do you think you're doing?"

...I did not know what time it was when I opened my eyes. The electric lights were burning, and in the tent the air was hot and stuffy. Around me men were groaning, but somehow the groans did not reach my consciousness, they seemed to pass over my head. On the next bed, which was pushed quite close up against mine, a man was lying, completely covered by a blanket—asleep, evidently. One leg was drawn up, with the knee resting on my bed. Carefully I tried to move it away, but the foot was wedged against the other leg which held it where it was.

A nurse came up to me, the same one I had seen before, with the broad, round face. I asked her name and she smiled—that quiet smile which comes and goes without your noticing it—and replied:

"Lyuba."

She brought me an omelette made from egg powder and a white mug of wine.

I asked her to help me move my neighbour's leg from my bed. Lyuba did so.

"Careful, you're hurting him!" I cried.

"No," said Lyuba, "it doesn't hurt him any more."

And suddenly my wine seemed bitter in my mouth.

I handed the mug back to Lyuba and closed my eyes. I opened them again as something touched my leg. Two orderlies were standing beside me, and showed signs of evident confusion as I opened my eyes. They hovered about for a little while, then went to the next bed. With some difficulty, one of them made his way to my neighbour's head and raised him by the shoulders. The other one took up the feet of the corpse, then they carried it out of the ward.

An empty bed was left standing beside me. Lyuba changed the bedding and shook up the pillow. I tried to fall asleep, but found it impossible.

It was evidently late. But that no longer meant anything to me. From the moment when I found myself here, on this bed, time had ceased to have any meaning. I felt I wanted to drink the rest of the wine which I had left in the mug. Lyuba brought me a half-mug of port. Then I began to explore my own head. The skin on the right side had its normal sensitiveness, but on the left side it was numb, without feeling.

The iron stove was red glowing. The heat was unbearable, but it was impossible to get the door opened, as the wounded man next to it protested that he was cold. He was already covered with two greatcoats over the blanket, but still he shivered. I called the orderly and asked him to cover the man with my padded jacket as well.

The man lying two beds away from me vomited continually, and at the same time he was tortured with thirst. He kept asking to drink; he would swallow a few drops and vomit again, then once more try to drink. Lyuba told me that inflammation of peritoneum set in.

This, it appeared, was a ward for abdominal and head cases.

The ward looked much brighter next morning, in the daylight, than it had in the evening. The bed next to me was already occupied. A man was lying asleep, his blanket drawn right over his head. His face was invisible, but I could hear his breathing.

I lay there thinking how badly everything had turned out. Not a line had I handed in to the newspaper. The thought of them sitting there in the newspaper office without material gave me no peace. My only hope was Ventsel...

Lyuba came up and asked how I had slept.

"Splendidly," I replied.

"That's good," smiled Lyuba. "And here's your new neighbour. Another case like yourself — shellshock, only worse. It was only in the morning that he recovered consciousness."

"Where did he get it?"

"I don't know exactly. He's a tankist, I think a tank commander. A shell hit the armour. But I don't really know exactly how it all happened."

Lyuba went away.

A spruce branch was peeping in through the small window in the ceiling. It looked very green in the strong sunlight. The colour was soothing. I felt that I would like to have everything green all around me.

The man in the next bed groaned. At that moment Lyuba entered. She came up to the bed, drew back the blanket, picked up the man's hand and began to count his pulse, her eyes on the wrist watch. I looked at my neighbour's face, and it seemed to me as though he were smiling in his sleep, and the groans were coming from somewhere else. He looked about twenty-five years old.

"Sixty-two," said Lyuba, and covered up the sick man

"What is his name?" I asked.

Lyuba looked at his medical sheet.

"Andryanov, Nikolai Sergeyevich, Junior Lieutenant."

At that moment the doctor entered. He was without his overall, in a fur waistcoat strapped round the waist with a belt. After going over me with his stethoscope, he said:

"Everything in order," and clapped me on the back. His hand was hard and cold.

"Splendid!" he said. "Well, Lyuba, and how's Andryanov?"

"He sleeps the whole time," Lyuba replied. "Pulse sixty-two."

"We'll waken him," said the doctor and shook the lieutenant's shoulder.

Andryanov opened his eyes. I watched his face. First of all it expressed unbounded surprise, then he smiled. His nose seemed to become more snub.

"How're things, Andryanov?" the doctor asked loudly.

The lieutenant's lips opened, but only a broken mooing sound came from them. It seemed to me that this was a surprise for Andryanov himself. The smile disappeared. He raised his hand to his eyes and the corners of his mouth trembled.

"So. so..." said the doctor and looked at Lyuba.

"He was talking during the night," she said softly.

"Can you hear me, Andryanov?" the doctor asked loudly.

The lieutenant nodded quickly. The doctor thrust his hand under his fur waistcoat and drew out a notebook and a pencil.

"Write here how you're feeling."

Andryanov seized the pencil and notebook and wrote something in it.

"Well, well," said the doctor after reading what he had written. "That's very good... And as for your voice — nothing terrible about that, Andryanov. It often happens in cases of concussion. Everything'll soon be all right."

He smiled. Andryanov did the same.

The doctor turned to Lyuba and said something to her in a low tone. Then they both went to the table.

Somebody touched my shoulder. It was Andryanov. He made his queer mooing noise, and pointed to his mouth.

"It's nothing," I said. "It'll pass off. It very often happens." I noticed that I was repeating what the doctor had said, word for word, and added: "The same thing happened to me, and now it's all right again. It'll be all right with you too."

Andryanov shrugged his shoulders, evidently upset, and traced lines with his finger on the quilt as though writing.

Lyuba gave him a pencil and paper. Andryanov wrote something and handed the sheet to me. I read:

"This is a fine thing to happen to my voice. I moo like a cow. What's your unit?"

I replied and handed the sheet back to the lieutenant. A moment later he returned it to me.

"And I'm from a tank unit," he had written. "Have you heard of Gorobets' unit? That's mine. Tank commander. Yesterday evening I was ironing out the Germans. It's boring here. Well, never mind. I'll come out on top."

I laughed, and Andryanov laughed with me, but much more loudly.

The doctor came up to us.

"Lie quietly, Andryanov," he said. "You've got to keep quiet."

Andryanov wrote something and handed it to the doctor.

"You can joke, all right," said the latter, smiling, "but quietly."

Andryanov mooed and smiled back at him.

Soon after that I fell asleep. When I awakened the lights were on in the tent, and Lyuba was bringing round the dinners. Andryanov was already eating his. He looked at me, waved his fork and smiled.

"Food good?" I asked.

The lieutenant nodded and winked at me.

I awakened during the night. Silence reigned in the tent, it was one of those rare moments when nobody was groaning. My eyes fell upon Lyuba. She was making the rounds from bed to bed, listening to the men's breathing. When she came up to me I closed my eyes. Then I felt her straightening my quilt, grasped her hand and opened my eyes again.

"Why aren't you asleep?" said Lyuba softly and her spacious smile illuminated her face.

"I can't. And do you never sleep?"

She freed her hand gently.

"This is my job. And sleeping's yours. Go to sleep, now!"

"I'm not sleepy," I said. "Sit down here with me a little. You've already been round all the other beds. Mine's the last one."

She seated herself obediently.

"Isn't it hard for you here?" I asked.

"It's hard for everybody."

She looked at me with her calm eyes, which always seemed half-closed.

"It would be fine skiing in the forest now," I said. "And then—a warm fire. Where do you come from?"

"I'm from Luga." she said softly.

"And what did you do there, in Luga?"

"I was studying. At a medical school. I wanted to be a doctor."

"Have you a husband?"

"I had. I had everything. Well, time for you to go to sleep now."

She made a move as though to rise, but I again stopped her.

"No, sit here for a little while," I said. "You mean you had everything, husband, home, and now you have nothing... is that the way it is?"

"Well—just about."

"A hard life, yours. Living in the midst of groans and suffering... Never a moment's peace."

"And what do I need that for, peace?" said Lyuba, and her eyelashes trembled a little.

"What for? Why, to forget all that used to be."

"No." She shook her head. "Then I could not live at all. It's they, these wounded men, who keep me going, keep me alive. I see how they cling to life, and I learn to cling to it myself. It takes a lot of strength to live nowadays..."

She passed her hand over the quilt. She had long, tapering fingers.

"There used to be a girl lying here, on your bed. Another case of shellshock. Only afterwards her head wasn't quite right. She would walk about the ward, slowly, like a two-year-old child. She'd walk and walk and keep on singing a song about a gramophone..."

"I know it."

"And in the night she'd wake up screaming: 'They've left behind a wounded man, the bastards!' She'd been a first-aid instructor. She used to get violent at nights. Then she'd call me and say: 'Give me a pencil and paper. I'll write a poem.' I gave it to her and she'd write... Would you like me to show you one of them?"

She went to her table and returned carrying a sheet of paper.

"Here, read this," she said.

I read:

War's a dreadful thing,
Enough to send one mad.
But it will not get me,
And I shall not go mad,
War's a dreadful thing,
What I'll live for, then,
I'll flout it to its face
By living to save men.
Let shells howl and scream,
Let night be hideous day,
I shall keep fear at bay
By living to save men...

"Did she give you those verses?" I asked.

"No. She died. Paralysis and all the rest of it. And I kept the paper to remember her by... I read them over, and things don't seem so hard. It is that way, sometimes."

She looked at me, smiled, and again her eyelashes trembled a little. Then she stroked my hand and rose.

"Now, you go to sleep," she said, putting on a very stern frown. "You must sleep or I shall complain to the doctor."

I lay there trying to recall the verses. There was a sort of frantic insistence in them. Then somebody groaned... I don't remember when I fell asleep.

...Andryanov was still asleep when I awakened. Lyuba had thrown a towel over her shoulder and came up to him carrying a washbowl.

"Now for a wash," she said cheerfully.

But Andryanov still slept. She shook him gently by the shoulder.

"Time to wake up, sleepyhead!" Lyuba held out a piece of soap to Andryanov as he awakened. But the lieutenant did not move to take it.

"Take the soap." said Lyuba.

Hesitatingly, uncertainly, the lieutenant raised his hand and moved his fingers.

"Andryanov!" cried Lyuba, and her voice trembled. "Here's the soap!"

The lieutenant smiled uncertainly and began fumbling over the quilt. He was blind. I saw that Lyuba's hands were trembling, so that the water in the bowl she held slopped over.

".You... can you see me, Andryanov?" Lyuba whispered.

The lieutenant shook his head and passed his hand over his eyes.

Lyuba placed the bowl on the floor and ran out of the tent. A few moments later she returned with the doctor.

"Can you see me, Andryanov?" he asked as he came up to the bed. The lieutenant slowly shook his head. The doctor stooped down and raised Andryanov's lids with his fingers.

...There was a consultation round his bed in the evening. But next morning Andryanov had lost his hearing. Now he lay there, blind, deaf and dumb. I watched him for hours at a time. I noticed that the harder the blow, the noisier and more restless he became. He would smile at somebody, fidget about on his bed, follow some imaginary flickering light with his finger, and moo something, drawing circles on his palm with the fingers of his other hand, imitating a gramophone, raise his hands with thumb and first finger joined to his eyes like spectacles.

Towards evening he turned to me and mooed something, scratching his palm with the first finger of his other hand. I understood that he wanted to write something and placed a pencil in his right hand and a notebook in his left. The lieutenant wrote and handed the notebook back to me. On the page I read the words: "I'll come out on top."

I tore off the sheet and put it under my pillow.

Next morning when I awakened and turned to Andryanov, it seemed to me that tears were glistening on his lowered lashes. I seized his hand in a warm grip. Andryanov opened his unseeing eyes, opened my hand and moved his finger over the palm as though writing. I understood that it was the same words which he had writen in my notebook.

During the day Andryanov became completely paralysed. Now he lay there motionless, sunk in darkness and silence. It was strange to see his hands, those hands which previously had not been still for a moment, lying helplessly there on the thick grey blanket.

The doctor came, shook Andryanov's shoulder and asked: "Well, how goes it?" —although he knew that the lieutenant could hear nothing.

In the evening Andryanov was evacuated. I lay looking at his empty bed.

Now, when Andryanov was no longer there, I seemed to see him more plainly than ever. Dumb, blind, motionless, he seemed to tell me more with every line of his body than if he had had the power of speech, had been able to look at me and drive home his words with gestures.

I understood everything—how he had been able to smash three enemy tanks, and how he had fought death.

It was Sunday evening when I returned to the editorial office from the field hospital. I could hear the dynamo of our power station working, when I was still far off, and felt a pleasure in returning home after being away for so long.

I mounted the steps of the coach and opened the door.

Except for the sound of the dynamo, everything was quiet—the newspaper did not come out on Mondays. I passed along the corridor and opened the door of my compartment. It was empty, and Gubin's and Ventsel's shelves were covered with ground sheets. Evidently they had gone away somewhere on an assignment. I took off my knapsack, unfastened my padded jacket, and saw a letter lying on the small table under the window. I looked at the envelope.

That familiar handwriting! I could see nothing but the letters traced on the envelope. A cold white light came in through the window. I felt as though somebody was calling me from out there, from the emptiness. I picked up the envelope and read the address, or rather addresses, for there were many of them, crossed out by

the postal authorities. The letter had a long journey behind it. "At last! At last!" The words seemed to beat against my temples. I feared to tear open the envelope, I was afraid as I had never been in the shell hole or in the blindage with the tankists.

I raised my head, tore my eyes from those words, tried to calm myself. All around me everything was silent except for the rhythmic throbbing of the dynamo.

Then I tore open the envelope. The letter was undated. I began to read. It had been written in answer to one of my many early ones.

There had been a time when I had asked Lida if it was not terrible there in Leningrad.

"...Somehow or other, I find it hard to distinguish now what is terrible and what is not. I suppose that it was very terrible living a week alone with my dead mother, cooking a gruel from thirty grams of flour right there by her feet on the iron stove and eating it at once with a dull greed.

"I suppose it was terrible to lose the only child...

"But at that time I did not find it terrible, and now I just don't realize what is terrible and what isn't..."

She went on to say that she was still living in the old apartment right near the front line, and that she had written to me several times and posted the letters, but doubted whether I had ever received them, since there were practically no postmen or postwomen in the town.

I read the letter through twice, sitting there in my outdoor jacket, just as I had entered. The melting snow from my felt boots slowly formed a pool on the floor. It seemed to me that everything before me stretched out into a long line leading to some unknown end. I realized that the letter had been written a long time ago, and that perhaps already, at that very moment, she was no longer among the living. Perhaps at the very moment when I was reading she was lying dead. And outside the town they were blowing up the ground to make mass graves. It seemed to me that I could hear the explosion. I listened—heavy artillery was firing, and the sound carried to my compartment.

I began thinking that this was all wrong, that she was alive and that I should most certainly see her again. Why must she, necessarily, die? Not everybody there would die. She would live through it. I imagined I was already there in Leningrad, sitting on my windowsill with her beside me. We were admiring the wonderful white night over the town and arguing about the number of columns St. Isaac's had. We always argued about it when we looked out of the window, but I always forgot to count them when I passed the cathedral. Then she began to disappear, merge into the gleaming white mist, and I could no longer picture her as I had always known her...

In the morning the editor sent for me.

"All right again now?" he asked. "Then pack your things. You're going to Leningrad. As a correspondent. Is that clear?"

I was to leave at midnight with the train, go as far as a certain station, from there hitch-hike a hundred kilometres to the air base and fly the rest of my way. In the evening we gathered in my compartment; Gubin had got some vodka, but I had no desire to drink. It was the first time I had ever refused a drink at the front. I wanted to keep my head clear. Vodka was no good to me at this juncture. I heard it gurgling into the iron mugs. Gubin said something, Ventsel replied, but I did not catch what they were saying.

It was night when I arrived in the vicinity of the airfield. I had some difficulty in finding a place to spend the night. The village where headquarters was located was full up, and I spent a long time going from house to house with my knapsack and bags. After trying eight houses, I found a place—it was only a short, narrow bench in a tiny kitchen. But I was so tired and cold that I fell asleep immediately.

In the morning I went to headquarters. The major greeted me pleasantly enough, looked through my papers, but said that unfortunately he could do very little for me, since the planes flying to and from Leningrad were under the civil aviation authorities. True, their headquarters were in his district, but they were nevertheless directly controlled by Moscow. In short, I ought to go there and talk to them, and if nothing came of it, then he would try to help me.

I went to the civil aviation headquarters, but there, also, disappointment awaited me. I was told that the Leningrad planes come from Moscow already full up and very often did not even land here.

I returned to the major. He advised me to go home and ring him up in the morning.

I returned "home."

I sat down by the window and watched the aircraft flying past. It seemed to me as though they were all on the way to Leningrad. I imagined myself on one of them—I would be in Leningrad in an hour and a half.

I returned to the civil aviation headquarters, but was merely told the same thing that I had heard in the morning. I wandered aimlessly about the village, returned to the cottage before dark and went to bed early.

In the morning I telephoned the major. He told me that he had spoken about me at headquarters, but nobody there knew when there would be a plane.

I did not return to headquarters, but went straight to the airfield to find out when they expected a machine.

The place seemed empty, and it was only when I looked carefully that I saw the fighters camouflaged with branches.

I made my way to the officer on duty, in his dugout. But he had nothing very heartening to tell me. There had been no planes the previous day, and nobody knew whether there would be any that day.

At that moment I heard the roar of engines rapidly approaching. I ran out of the dugout and saw three Douglases circling over the aerodrome. A few moments later they had landed and three airmen were making their way to the dugout.

"Where are they for?" I asked the starter.

"Leningrad," the latter answered. "They're going to refuel and then they'll be off again."

I dived into the dugout. Three airmen in fur overalls were sitting on pallets, smoking, while their machines were being filled up. "In twenty or thirty minutes they'll take off," I thought. I turned to the nearest airman, who was smoking a cigarette, but he shook his head as soon as he knew what it was I wanted. No, he couldn't take a single man. The second man shook his head just as decidedly.

The third, who was smoking a pipe, rose and went out of the dugout. I followed him. As he strode along I noticed that he was wearing dogskin topboots. I overtook him beside the plane.

"Listen," I said. "I'm a correspondent, and I have an important assignment..."

"I heard all about that," said the airman, without taking his pipe from his mouth. I felt ready to strike him for the indifference in his tone.

"But there's one thing you haven't heard," I almost shouted in desperation. "In Leningrad I have somebody—my wife—perhaps she's already dead." I bit my lips. My voice died in my throat.

The airman took his pipe from his mouth and looked at me very hard. Then he said:

"Get in."

I dashed towards the plane, but just as I grasped the handrail, I remembered that my things were back in the village. All was lost. I ran to the airman and told him what was the matter.

"You have half an hour," he said.

I started running towards the village. My chest hurt, my breath came with difficulty, and all the time I was despairingly conscious that I could not make it. I heard a horn behind me, turned and saw a car. I stood in the middle of the road, stopped it, jumped into the driver's cabin and we went on. I implored the driver to take me back to the aerodrome with my things, and he agreed. If he had refused, I think I would have stopped at nothing to make him do it...

When we returned, the engines of the Douglases were already running. I dashed to the end plane. The airman was standing beside the steps, pipe in mouth. One of the Douglases was already in the air, another was just leaving the ground. The driver helped me to drag my things from the lorry. When I was ready to get into the cabin, the airman said in my ears: "I waited two minutes for you." I pressed his hand.

About fifteen soldiers were sitting on long benches along both sides of the cabin. The space in the middle was filled with boxes. In the very centre was a ladder leading to the bubble. Here a machine-gun was fastened, and beneath it a seat for the machine-gunner. Two more machine-guns stood on the benches at the sides.

The airman followed me into the cabin, knocking out his pipe on the way, pulled up the ladder, banged the door and went to the forward part of the machine, divided from the cabin by a partition. Then the engines began to run faster, and the machine rolled over the airfield. The machine-gunner climbed into the bubble and took his place on his revolving seat, his legs in their airmen's boots dangling. I looked out of the window and saw how the snow-covered field raced past us; now we were parting from it slowly, it seemed at first, but within a minute the snow was far below.

I looked at my watch. Now every minute was bringing me two or three kilometres nearer to Leningrad. I wanted to move the hands forward an hour and a half. In that time I would be in Leningrad, if all went well. And I was certain that it would. Looking out of the window, I could sometimes see two fighters beyond the huge wings of the Douglas. We had a fighter cover of four MIG's.

Now we were flying over Lake Ladoga—Leningrad's "road of life." The sky was clear, only on the horizon there were clouds visible. We were flying low, so that I could clearly see the column of lorries down below, and the AA guns along the track. The ice was so close to us that it seemed to me we were racing along it rather than flying.

To the side of the track I saw a fountain of powdery snow rise suddenly. The white surface immediately became black. German artillery was pounding the track. A few moments later we left Ladoga and the plane rose. We had already been in the air for an hour, and were now flying over wooden buildings. The fighters had turned back and left us. I did not notice when we began to lose height. It was only when we were already over the aerodrome that I looked out of the window and saw the starter holding a flag.

We had arrived in Leningrad.

I was the first to leave the aeroplane. I jumped out even before the ladder was lowered. Somebody threw down my duffle bags. I fastened them together, slung them over my shoulder and went along the snow-covered runway. As I passed the starter, he waved his flag at me.

"Well, how is it there on the Mainland?" he shouted.

"OK, they're fighting," I said with a wave of the hand.

"Wait a bit," he cried. "There's a car starting for the city in a moment."

I soon saw a light truck racing along the road, and heard the chains rattling on the wheels. It stopped about ten yards away from me, and before I had even time to raise my hand, the driver poked his head out of the broken window and shouted: "Come on, get a move on!" I seized my bags and ran to the lorry, dragging them along over the snow. One

of the airmen in fur overalls, sitting in the body of the machine, helped me in.

For some kilometres we travelled through flat deserted country, then smashed wooden buildings began to flash past us—in one of them I recognized with difficulty a bus shelter. After a few more kilometres I saw a tram standing at the terminus. I rapped on the roof of the driver's cabin, the lorry stopped, I climbed out and went to the tram.

Dusk was already falling and it was only when I approached it that I realized I had been in too great a hurry. That tram had been standing there for a very long time and there was certainly no chance of it taking me anywhere. The windows were all broken, hoar frost covered the door handles and the trolley ropes, while the lines were deep in snow. I looked at the number nevertheless—No. 9. Time was when that tram used to serve the busiest part of the city.

I lowered my bags onto the snow, and sat down on the steps bitterly regretting my undue haste in leaving the lorry. Darkness was falling swiftly, and it was still six kilometres to the town. AA guns were barking somewhere, but the reports did not sound the same as they did in the field: they merged into a continuous rolling thunder.

I looked towards the town. Leningrad lay there before me, cold and stern. The roofs and cupolas seemed to have been moulded from snow, and above them gleaming fingers of searchlights slid slowly to and fro.

I rose, heaved my bags onto my shoulder and began making my way towards the city. I was anxious to meet somebody and to ask how far it was to town. It was like the feeling one has when going along a forest road near the front; although you know exactly how far it is to your unit, you still want to meet somebody and ask—simply in order to hear a human voice.

It had grown completely dark. For a long time I wandered through deserted streets. The AA firing died down, and I could hear a continuous monotonous beating, as though a woodpecker were sitting in every house. I found out that this was a metronome sounding through loudspeakers, and guessed that it was a signal of some sort. Later on I learned that the slow even beat changed to a swift rhythm during air-raid alerts or bombardments.

I walked for a long time, recognizing the streets with difficulty. They were all deserted, snow-covered, silent... I did not even notice when Liteinaya ended and I found myself at the corner of Nevsky Prospect.

I had been there at night a year previously, and the street, with its double row of milky-white lamps, its windows blazing with light, had been as bright as at midday. You could have read a paper there. Now only the bright stars winked in the distant, cold sky.

I looked at the houses, I wanted to find some link, even the smallest, with the past, with that bright, noisy world now drowned in snow and gloom. I recalled that here, at the corner, there had been a small information bureau where Lida and I had once asked for an address. I crossed the road. The kiosk was still standing there, small and angular, like a sentry. The glass was all broken, and the windows were like empty eye-sockets.

I arrived at the editorial office of the Leningrad front line paper utterly exhausted, and found somebody to take me to the editor's office. In the huge room, its furniture upholstered in black leather, a thin grey man was sitting behind a large table on which a "lightning" lamp was standing. In the corner an iron stove was burning.

I introduced myself and explained my assignment. The editor asked me where I was living, and I told him that I had come straight from the aerodrome.

"Go to the 'Astoria'," he said. "It's cold there, but it's a place to live in. Go straight there and get to bed. Come back in the morning, and we'll get everything settled."

The "Astoria" was quite near. The huge grey stone building looked very gloomy. The windows were piled with sand right up to the top and boarded up. St. Isaac's loomed up in the darkness.

"Well, here we are," I thought. "The wheel has come full circle. That's the window from which we looked out at the cathedral. This square piled with snowdrifts was once a green space..."

I edged through the narrow passage left in the boarded-up doorway. The entry was filled with that peculiar coldness of damp marble. I looked around me. Somewhere far off, a small paraffin lamp winked at me. I went towards it, and saw a woman sitting at a table in a niche. She was wearing a heavy winter coat, her head muffled in a shawl so that the face was invisible. The usual enquiry as to whether there was a room free seemed suddenly incongruous, and I asked instead whether I could stay there for a couple of weeks. She replied slowly, wearily, and her voice, from the depths of the coat and shawl, sounded dull and flat.

I got a room on the second floor, and fumbled my way up in the darkness, guiding myself by the sense of touch. Far along the corridor I saw a reddish point, and heard footsteps ringing on the stone floor. I went towards the light and met a tall man with his coat thrown over his shoulders. He helped me to find my room, and then went swiftly along the corridor, shielding his lamp with his hand.

I opened the door, struck a match and lighted the tiny paraffin lamp. The smoky flame gave practically no light, but I was able to distinguish that I was standing in a large room with a double bed of wood. That was about all I wanted to see at the moment. I sat down in the armchair beside a small table, took a little photograph from my pocket, and stood it up against the inkwell on the table. In the feeble light of the lamp the

dear, familiar face seemed strange to me. Then I went to bed. Quilt and pillow were cold and damp. Shivering, I undressed, crawled under the quilt and threw my coat over me.

But sleep refused to come to me. I lay there thinking how slowly the night dragged by, telling myself that sometime morning would come, and then I would go there, to the Narvskaya Zastava. The silence was profound, it seemed as though I was the only living being in that building, huge as a cathedral and cold as a refrigerator.

I fell asleep, and when I awakened everything was silent and cold—cold as it never is even out of doors, but only in large, high buildings with a great deal of marble and metal.

The thought came to me that after flying over Lake Ladoga I had come into a grim world which I still did not understand. And I felt that not one minute I spent in Leningrad belonged to me personally. Not one impression, not one fact dared I keep from those who had sent me, those on whom depended the fate of people like Lida.

I rose, lighted the lamp, took a pencil and a sheet of paper from my satchel and wrote the title of my first dispatch:

"The plane landed in Leningrad..."

The cold light of winter came in through the window. I dressed hastily and went out. The wind was howling and St. Isaac's was covered with a big cap of snow. I decided whatever happened to go to the Narvskaya Zastava, and turned towards Nevsky Prospect. As I went along Gogol Street, I saw a memorial tablet let into the wall of one of the houses. It read: "In this house Peter Ilyich Chaikovsky lived, and died here October 25th, 1893."

A woman was coming towards me—I saw her when she was still a long way off. I could not distinguish the movement of her steps, they were so small that she seemed to be slowly gliding along the snow. As she approached, I saw that she was pulling something after her. At first I did not realize what it was. Then I saw. She was dragging a board with something long, like a swathed mummy, fastened to it. I met her and passed on. She did not even glance at me as she passed, but stared straight ahead, right through me, through the houses, as though she could see something there in front hidden from me. I looked after her, then went on, and the next time I turned the swathed form was no longer visible, and the woman, a grey shadow, glided slowly past the snowdrifts through the dim light of the dawn.

I came out on the Nevsky Prospect. In the morning it seemed even more deserted.

In the centre, the traces of destruction were not so noticeable. Along the Nevsky Prospect one had to search in order to find a demolished house. But the further I went from the centre, the more houses I saw with shattered walls and gaping stairways. Trams were standing on the streets covered with snow and looking like frozen-in ships.

The windows of cellars were all boarded or bricked up, with tiny peepholes left in the centre. Awkward contraptions looking like huge flat-irons with an aperture in the middle had grown like an ugly rash over many buildings.

Occasionally I would meet a passer-by. They walked slowly, dragging their legs with difficulty. I looked at their faces and frequently met that expression which had struck me so forcibly in the woman I had met that morning—eyes fixed, staring straight ahead, as though they could see through snow and stone. Several times I made up my mind to stop the next person I met and begin a conversation, but the next instant my tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth. For some reason I felt ashamed to drag these people from their silence, and I feared that we would not understand one another.

After two hours walking I arrived at the Narvskaya Zastava. A barrier crossed the snow-covered road, and at either side of the narrow passage-way left in it there stood sentries armed with tommy-guns. I showed my papers and passed through.

I saw the house I was seeking from a long way off. It was surrounded by others exactly like it, and I did not so much recognize it as feel it, guess that this was it. The walls had been riddled by shells and the balconies carried away. Through the gaping walls the staircase was visible. A large sheet of iron had been torn halfway off the roof and bent over probably by a shell; it flapped in the wind, looking like the wings of some huge raven against the whiteness of the snow.

Suddenly terror gripped me. It was only now that I realized how senseless it was to think of looking for anybody here, on the battle-field... But nevertheless I walked on as though hoping for a miracle. There was no miracle, and soon the half demolished, ice-covered house stood before me, with the raven flapping its wings in the cold wind.

I walked on slowly. I had a great reluctance to see the distance between myself and the house diminish. I went towards the house because I was powerless to do anything else, because it drew me, but it was terrible to think that in a few minutes I would be quite close to that tomb of cold stone and snow.

I began thinking that perhaps some of the former residents might be left in the house, somebody who could give me some information about her.

Skirting obstacles and barricades, I approached the house. From near at hand it looked monstrous. I could see the cracks in the walls, and the corner of a cupboard thrusting through a hole. Here had been the door by which I had entered so often. Here had been the asphalt path. As we approached the house, Lida used to hurry ahead and here she would stop, open her handbag and look

for the key... I entered through the gap. Many of the stairs were missing. Where the gap was a large one, boards had been nailed across. Slowly I began to mount the stairs.

A wire stretched above the stairs. Soldiers were lying behind machine-guns at the staircase windows, invisible from outside. From the cellar below the sounds of an accordion were faintly audible, and a woman's voice singing. It was pleasant to hear a woman's voice and a peaceful song. I even felt a little warmer. I mounted higher and higher and at last reached the fourth floor. Here we had usually stopped on the landing and looked out onto the Gulf of Finland. Then we would open the door...

Now there was no door. I entered the room and looked around me. Not a single detail could I find to link me with the past. There was nothing to show that once upon a time, a low plush divan had stood here, covered with cushions she had embroidered herself, and there the writing table with my photograph... Then the thought smote me that here, by the wall, her dead mother had lain, and at the other side of the door her child, and she had gone from the one to the other and wept as she stood on the landing, if she had not yet forgotten how to cry... Then she had wrapped up her mother and fastened her to a board, and walked along like the woman I had seen that morning, with small, gliding steps...

A soldier was sitting with his back to me beside the window, which was camouflaged so as to merge completely with the surrounding wall. In front of him was a stereoscopic periscope, to his right a telephone, tables and maps. I started out of my memories on hearing him say into the receiver: "Listen... Firing to the right of the chimney again... The same figures... Fire..." He fell silent, his eye glued to the glass. A second later I heard a gunshot, and an explosion. At that moment another soldier entered to relieve the first. The latter tore himself away reluctantly, turned, saw me and reported:

"Lance-corporal Kairbekov of the Guards. Kindly tell me who you are."

I smiled at his turn of speech and showed him my papers. Memories were banished. My working day had begun.

"A war correspondent! Splendid! Do you want to talk to me?" he asked. But I had no desire to talk to anybody at the moment. I wanted to stand here for a little while in this room which formerly had held what was half of my life, and then to go and never return.

But Kairbekov had already answered his own question.

"Of course, we'll talk. Here's a packing case, sit down, please... Or better, don't, we'll go down below. My pal's sitting there in the gun emplacement. He's not Russian, either. Kazakh. Mukhtar, he's called. A very interesting man. Come with me, please."

Kairbekov was already out on the landing by this time, evidently never doubting that I would follow him. And that was actually what I did. A few moments later we halted by the door.

"Come in, please," said Kairbekov, diving under a wet flap. I crept in after him.

A soldier was sitting with his back to me by the embrasure, while another, holding a mess-tin between his knees, was eating steaming soup with a wooden spoon.

"Let me introduce you," said Kairbekov. "My friend Mukhtar." He added a few words in Kazakh and two in Russian: "War correspondent." Mukhtar placed the mess-tin on the table and rose. "Corporal Tazhibayev of the Guards," he announced formally, then smiling shyly, asked me if I would like something to eat. I was ashamed to admit it, but at that moment I felt ravenously hungry. Kairbekov rightly took my hesitation for consent, pulled another spoon out of his pocket, wiped it with a piece of newspaper and handed it to me.

"We'll eat first, then talk," said Tazhibayev.

Dusk was falling when I left the gun emplacement, taking with me the life story of Mukhtar Tazhibayev. A fog was rising from the Gulf of Finland, and it seemed as though everything around me—snow and fog—merged into one.

When I got as far as the out-post, I stopped and turned. In the dusk, only the outlines of the house covered with its camouflage net could be seen.

I came home and lighted my lamp. I felt that sleep was impossible, and sat down to write the story of Mukhtar Tazhibayev. And as soon as I had written the first lines, I felt that it was just this that I had been wanting to do.

The metronome ticked on. Everything was quiet in the city, and its pulse beat evenly, sternly. The wind whistled through remnants of tram wires hanging over my head.

It was already two o'clock when I arrived at headquarters. I had some difficulty in finding it—the huge building was completely covered with camouflage netting, and covered with snow as it was, it was no easy matter to distinguish it even close at hand. This building, familiar to everybody from endless descriptions and films, contained the centre, the directing mind, of Leningrad's defence.

In the dim light people crowded round the office, the window where entrance-passes were issued and the telephone booths.

Electric lamps were burning in the corridors. So unaccustomed had my eyes become to electric light that even these dim bulbs seemed to dazzle me. At last I found the department I needed and arranged for communications.

Now I was free and could set out on my search. I decided to try the first address on my list—it was at the other end of the town, but I had made up my mind to find out at least something about Lida that very day.

Dusk was already falling when at last I found the house, so that it was difficult to distinguish the number. I climbed the dark stone staircase to the fourth floor. Everything smelt damp. I lighted a match and saw a long corridor with doors at either side of it stretching ahead of me. I went up to the first of them. A padlock was hanging from it, and beneath it a piece of cardboard bearing a large seal. The number on the door was 36—the very number which I had been seeking.

I stood there for several moments hoping that somebody would come out into the corridor who could tell me about the people who had lived in that room. But nobody emerged and the silence was as intense as though the house were uninhabited.

I could not force myself to open any of those doors. Something seemed to tell me that it was better not to do so. I went outside again and saw a yardman on duty at the entrance of the next house who took me to the chairman of the house administration. There I heard that the Sidorovs from No. 36 had been evacuated the previous autumn.

Everything was clear, and there was no point in prolonging the conversation. Nevertheless, I asked if there was nobody left in the house who had been friendly with the Sidorovs.

"No, I don't know," replied the chairman, shaking his head. "One can't remember everybody. And for that matter, my memory these days is not what it was."

I said no more and left the room.

The yardman was back at his post, standing somnolently by the entry.

"Listen, Comrade," I said, "have you been working here long?"

The man raised his head.

"Five years," he said.

"Do you remember the Sidorovs? The people who lived in No. 36?"

"You mean the family which was evacuated in the autumn?" asked the yardman. "Of course I do! I always brought their wood home for them. And they had a dog... a poodle. It died." He evidently found it pleasant to recall the past.

"You don't happen to remember a girl who used to visit them... Lida? She was very often there. Lida. Not very tall. Don't you remember her?"

The yardman shook his head.

"How can I remember everyone? She may have come here, of course, but you see, you just can't remember all of them."

AA guns were firing in the distance. Blue puffs burst in the sky, and for a moment the snow would seem very transparent and clean, as though formed of separate crystals.

"They're coming over, curse them!" said the yardman softly, and then added in a still lower voice: "How can you hope to find any girl here, Comrade? In all this muddle? There's families scattered all over the country. Where do you think you can find..."

"Yes," I answered, "you're right there. Well, good-bye." I shook hands with him...

The radio was sounding the alert. AA guns drummed unceasingly, and in the intervals I could hear the feverish beat of the metronome.

It was impossible to stand aside from Leningrad and observe it—I felt that it would resent the detached observer, avenge itself upon him, and open its heart only to a friend, a participant in the struggle.

With every day the city's grip upon me increased. I could not sit idle in the "Astoria" for half an hour—every minute when I was not dashing to the telegraph office, writing reports, or hurrying to meet somebody or see something, I was tormented by the thought that I was wasting time.

I would recall that the tens of thousands of soldiers on the Volkhov front, whose job it was to breach the blockade, depended on the front line newspaper for their information as to the situation within the city. And I was the Leningrad correspondent. The day seemed too short to crowd in everything that should be done.

But when I returned home, shaken by all that I had seen during the day and exhausted from all the miles I had walked, I would think again about Lida. I felt that as yet I had taken no decisive step to seek her out.

What was there that I could still do? Only one thread did I hold—the last address written in my notebook. If I failed there, it would mean a clean cut, all trace lost, and I would be no nearer to Lida here in Leningrad than I had been on the banks of the Volkhov.

It took me a little while to summon my resolution and seek out this address—that of Lida's friend, Irina Vakhrusheva. I knew her, the three of us had sometimes spent the evening together when I had visited Leningrad, but I had never liked the girl very much. I found her too noisy, too fond of laughter and antics—it was not for nothing that Lida called her Madcap. But Lida was fond of her, so I put up with Irina to please her. This one address I had was that of the house where she had taken a room. My last hope.

I tried to prepare myself for failure. When I found myself before the large grey granite house, I was afraid. What would I find behind those walls—a padlock and seal, or dead bodies? I walked up and down several times, trying to make up my mind to enter. Then I took myself in hand and ran up the stairs to the second floor as though diving into cold water. I knocked. Everything was quiet. I knocked again, louder. Now shuffling steps sounded from the other side, a bolt was drawn and the door opened. A woman of about fifty stood in the entrance wearing a winter coat, with a shawl drawn over her grey hair.

"Is there anybody from the Voronov family here?" I asked.

"I am Voronova," the woman answered softly.

"You are Voronova?" I repeated, trying to collect my thoughts. Then I came closer to her and told her that I wanted to speak to her. She invited me to enter her room.

I went in, then stopped dead on the threshold. My knees were trembling. I saw nothing—room, furniture, or Voronova herself—only a large portrait hanging opposite the door over a writing table. It was Lida. She was leaning against an iron railing, wearing a light frock, laughing, head thrown back; there she stood, just as I knew her and remembered her.

"What can I do for you?" asked Voronova.

I started and lowered my eyes. I could wait no longer, and pointing at the portrait, I asked:

"Where is that girl now?"

"I don't know exactly," said Voronova. "It's a friend of my tenant."

"Irina Grigoryevna?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Voronova. "Do you know her?"

"Where is Irina Grigoryevna?" I asked, without replying to her question.

"She's living at the factory. She works there and she's living there."

"Where is this factory?"

"Listen, Comrade," said Voronova, "tell me just what it is you want?"

I went and stood quite close to her.

"I am looking for that woman," I said, pointing to the portrait. "She's a very dear friend of mine. I've written to her a hundred times and now I'm searching the whole town for her. Once she gave me the address of Irina Grigoryevna as that of her closest friend. That's all."

"Irina's coming home tomorrow. There are some things I've washed for her. She promised to be here about five o'clock. You come too at the same time."

"Very good," I said. "Thank you. I'll most certainly come."

But I did not go at once. I stood there looking at the portrait until my eyes misted over. Then I dropped my head and realized that it was time to leave.

"Tomorrow at five," I said, and hurried out of the room.

It was half past four when I arrived at the house next day. It was already beginning to darken, but the grey granite building looked light and cheerful to me. I ran quickly up the stairs and knocked. Again Voronova opened the door.

"You're out of luck," she told me, as she entered the room. "My Irina's gone away. Some sort of defence work... She only just had time to write me a note..."

"Where is this work?" I asked.

"How in the world should I know?" cried Voronova. "There's work everywhere these days. She wrote that she'll be back in a week."

"Very good," I replied in a voice that I did not recognize. "I'll come back in a week..."

January 17th.

During the night I had a telephone call from the "Leningrad Pravda." It was a man I knew telling me that in two hours Popkov, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Leningrad Soviet, would meet the press correspondents. Fifteen minutes later I was already stamping through the snow, on my way to Smolny. There I made my way along the endless, dimly lighted corridors, until at last I found Popkov's office.

He was sitting behind a big low table covered with green baize, in the centre of the small room. His face was freshly shaven, but weary, his eyes were red and there were deep black hollows beneath them. He signed to us to sit down in the armchairs standing around, and then in a hoarse voice, without any preliminaries, he began speaking.

"We have been blockaded for five months. By dint of the greatest effort we have managed to stretch out the reserves left us over this period. Food supplies have been brought in only with utmost difficulty. You know all about that. Now, after the Germans' defeat at Tikhvin, there are grounds for hope that getting in food supplies will become somewhat easier..."

Popkov spoke slowly, monotonously as though every word cost him an effort. He said that the main task now was to bring into the city the stores of food which had accumulated at the other side of Lake Ladoga, and to organize the struggle against thieves and looters. Then one of the many telephones shrilled on the table. Popkov lifted the receiver, said: "I'll come immediately," and rose.

"I have been sent for, Comrades," he said. "You will receive a written summary of what I was intending to tell you."

He shook hands with us and left the office. The secretary handed us printed leaflets.

I left Smolny at dead of night. There was a pale light in the sky, and reddish shadows were dancing on the snow.

January 18th.

This morning at the editorial office I was given a telegram from my newspaper. "Hand in material for Lenin days. Urgent," it read. The telegram had arrived the previous day. In order to get the material to the paper on time for the issue, I would have to hand it in no later than the next night.

I went to the Red Army House library and spent the whole day going through material about Lenin's arrival in Petrograd. Towards evening I left, with a pile of notes in my hand and no trace of a definite plan for the article in my head, walked along the Liteinaya, turned into Nevsky and made my way home.

I was extremely hungry. This was a feeling I had experienced with increasing frequency during the past few days. Walking along the Nevsky I tried not to think about food. But the tantalizing shop boards—"Groceries." "Delicatessen," "Hot dogs always ready"—continuously reminded me of it. Suddenly I saw another

announcement—written in pencil upon plain paper: "Hot water here."

I made my way into a small shop where I found a girl in a padded coat selling hot water for ten kopeks a glass. She told me that the Leningrad Soviet had organized the sale of hot water everywhere. I drank two glasses and went on, pleasantly warmed, sunk in thought, and without noticing how I had got there, found myself in the Palace Square.

It was evening, and a grey fog hung over the Neva. Through the mist loomed the ships tied up to the granite-faced banks of the Neva, as though they had their backs to the city they were defending. The huge square was heaped with snow, in some places black from recent explosions. The windows of the Winter Palace were all boarded up—it was strange to see such a tremendous number of boarded-up windows stretching out one after the other. The whole building looked like some gigantic sieve.

I stood there thinking of all that this huge palace had seen in its time... and suddenly the square seemed to come to life, there were thousands of campfires burning on it, and around them were sitting bearded men, seamen girt with machine-gun belts, soldiers with rifles in their hands, in high fur caps with red ribbons sewn in them. A searchlight shot up somewhere, and it seemed to me that it was a beam from the "Aurora" that cut through the skies and fell upon the square... It was as though the pages of history had been turned back, and the distant, glorious days of Petrograd were passing before my eyes... I crossed the square, passed along the river bank and saw the University. I remembered what I had recently read about Lenin, of that early March morning fifty years ago when Vladimir Ilyich had approached this building... I seemed to see Lenin passing with his swift steps into the Shchedrin Library... And suddenly I felt with all my heart, with all my being, that right here, in this city, beats the immortal heart of Ilyich...

It was late when I returned to the "Astoria," but I felt no weariness. I knew what I was going to write for my paper.

January 23rd.

For three days I had written nothing, handed nothing in to the office. Then I got the Leningrad papers for the past week and read them all in one gulp. I met with the most contrary, most paradoxical things from the common-sense point of view. I read that this month only 175 grams of bread daily was to be issued to the population, that the operetta theatre was playing "Bayadera," the Theatre of Drama "A Nest of Gentlefolk," and the Lensoviet Theatre "The Ideal Husband," that fourteen cinemas were open, that the military tribunal had sentenced six persons to death for looting food shops, that the composer Assafyev was working on the musical score for "War and Peace," that the Executive Committee of the Leningrad Soviet had examined the plan for the most urgent restoration work in the city, and issued reprimands for delays in the supply of hot water to the population, that candidates had been proposed for the Stalin Prize and that all kindergartens and nurseries had gone over to day-and-night service...

I read all this, and as I tore myself away from the papers I recalled that this was all in a city gripped in the iron ring of the blockade where every day thousands of people were dying of hunger, and dozens of bombs and shells were raining down, and I felt that I was facing something tremendous, very complex, yet very simple and crystal clear, and that no books, nor anything I had seen was enough to make me understand it fully.

Then I read all that I had written during these days, and coming to the last date, realized that a week had passed.

I wanted so terribly to see Lida, to kiss her and sit with her in silence for a few moments as people do sit when they are weary with long wanderings, and then talk to her, talk endlessly.

It may be that it was because she was the person closest to me, the one I understood best; but I felt that she would be able to tell me all that I did not know, and show me all that without her I could not see. Already she seemed an integral part of the city—its heart, whose beating I would hear if I were near her.

I went to Voronova towards evening. It was Irina Vakhrusheva herself who opened the door to me, but I could not see her in the dim light.

"Give me your hand, Sasha, it's dark here," she said, her voice hoarse with cold. She led me along the corridor and opened the room door.

We stood face to face. She was wearing a buttoned-up padded jacket above which I could see the collar of a military tunic, felt boots and a cap with ear-flaps.

"How do you do, Sasha?" said Irina jerkily, and held out her hand which I took. Then she stood looking straight at me without a word. I could not look away from her eyes. They had always been large, but now they seemed unnaturally big, taking up almost the half of her small face. She continued to look unblinkingly at me, without uttering a sound. The large portrait of Lida hung over us.

"How do you do, Irina? Well, and so we've met again..."

"Yes," said Irina briefly in her hoarse voice. "But as for where Lida is now—I don't know."

I felt a lump in my throat.

"Sit down," said Irina, pointing to the divan. "We worked together at the factory, then she finished a nursing course and went to the army... She doesn't write. And that's all I know about her."

She spoke calmly and her tone seemed to me very hard.

"Tell me, Irina," I said, finding the words with difficulty, "perhaps you know which recruiting office?"

Irina shook her head.

"I know where the office is, but I doubt whether you could find out anything there. Everything happened so quickly... Her mother died, you know, and her child as well, Lida's..."

Her voice seemed to tremble as she spoke the name... She pulled off her cap, and I could see her reddish hair twisted into a knot at the nape of her neck.

"I know," I said, "she wrote me. It was the only letter I received."

"She didn't know where to write," said Irina and looked at the portrait. We sat for some moments in silence.

"I see... Well, tell me something about yourself, Irina... how are you living?"

"Well, I'm living," said Irina curtly.

"Is your husband at the front?"

"I have no husband."

"And your child? I remember you were expecting a baby."

"Yes. I had one," said Irina and dropped her eyes. I was silent.

"You are working at the factory?" I asked.

"Yes. In the shop. Assistant manager," Irina replied.

"I see," I said again, not knowing what to talk about. "And so we've met once more."

"Yes, we've met once more," Irina repeated. "Only she's missing." She looked at the portrait again.

"You've changed a lot, Irina," I said. It burst from me involuntarily, to my own surprise. I should not have said that, I felt, it sounded tactless.

"Changed?" Irina asked me, as though not quite understanding the word. "Yes, I suppose, I have." She rose and pulled on her cap. "Well, excuse me, I've got to get back to the factory."

A feeling of fear swept over me. I seized her hand.

"Wait a moment, Irina," I begged. "It's such a long time since we've seen each other. Wait a bit! Talk to me a bit! And then I'll go..."

I felt her fingers trembling.

"I've got to get to the factory. Come along with me, if you like." Irina invited me. "We live all together there. Lida lived there with us, too."

"Let's go," I said.

Transport, of course, was something that belonged to the old days, and we went on foot through the whole town. At first we walked in silence, and then I began asking Irina questions. I did not ask her about Lida, somehow I could not bring myself to do so, but about how she herself was living. This, I felt, would be a key to Lida's life. Irina answered briefly and with patient simplicity.

It was quite dark when we arrived at the factory. We skirted the workshop, followed a narrow lane and went down into the cellar of the building, a large rectangular room with beds standing along the walls. An anti-mustard-gas suit hung in the corner, the sleeves flung wide, like some huge crucifix. In the centre stood a table and a glowing iron stove. A girl wearing a tunic open at the throat was squatting by the stove looking into the crimson embers, with the flickering light playing over her features. She rose as we entered.

"How're things, Lyolya?" said Irina. "This is the first time I've seen you today. Let me introduce this comrade from the Volkhov front." Lyolya gave me her hand.

The three of us sat down on a bed—Lyolya, Irina and I, while on the other beds sat girls who had been on ARP duty and had come down at the end of their shift. Coffee was boiling on the stove—or rather, a muddy pale-brown liquid that went by that name. Portions of bread were laid out on the table—twelve tiny scraps which one of the girls cut into still smaller pieces and placed on the stove to toast. A pleasant smell filled the air. Then stools appeared from somewhere and we all sat down at the table. The girl who had made the toast poured out coffee into metal mugs and handed a piece of toast to everybody. I also received a mug and a piece that burned my fingers.

Irina was sitting beside me. For some reason I wanted to see her smile. All the time we had been together I had not only heard nothing of the laughter which formerly had so irritated me, I had not even seen her smile. I wanted her to smile here, in this room, with the glowing stove and steaming mugs of coffee, and the toast that burned one's fingers. I was about to say something to her about it when she turned to the girls.

"Well, we'll have supper now, and then we'll tell this comrade about Lida. We'll tell him about how she lived here. He very much wanted to see her, but it just didn't happen that way..."

I was utterly taken aback. I wanted to stop Irina, to tell her that it was quite unnecessary, but at that moment Lyolya cried:

"I'm sleeping in her bed! And before that, our beds stood side by side... We used to talk about all sorts of things. There was a time when I wanted to leave Leningrad, things were already very difficult then. But she persuaded me to stay. I even remember what she said: 'You have one real test in your life,' she said, 'to show what you're made of.' Oh, she gave me a real ticking off, I can tell you! 'The main thing,' she said, 'is to keep a grip on yourself.' I knew that she'd had a pretty bad time herself. Her mother died and her child too... But all the same she stayed in Leningrad. And as you see, I stayed too. And now I'm glad I did..."

"Yes... it seems a long time ago," said her neighbour thoughtfully. "There was the time when two shells fell in the workshop. It was at night. You remember? Lida wasn't on duty at the time, but as soon as she heard the explosion she jumped straight out of bed, stepped into her felt boots, snatched up her jacket and off she rushed to the shop. I ran after her. Remember what it was like there, Irina? The shell had fallen right into the heating apparatus, scattered everything, killed five workers on the spot and the block had crushed another... He was ly-

ing there groaning, and Lida there on her knees beside him, talking to him so calmly and quietly. 'Stick it, dear boy,' she said and kept on stroking his hair. And he was gasping, and his eyes were so terrible, as though they would start from his head, and there was foam on his lips. And she kept on saying the same thing. 'Stick it,' she'd say, 'it all depends on yourself; if you stick it out you'll live...' And when they took the block off him she still kept on telling him: 'Stick it out; if you do, you'll live...' And then she came in here and flung herself face downwards on that bed and cried. I remember I went and sat down beside her and put my arm round her neck. 'You tell other people to stick it,' I said, 'but what about yourself?' And she turned round, her eyes were dry and red, and she said: 'It's easier to tell others than to do it yourself...'"

"That's just how it was," said somebody's deep bass.

I was sitting all the time, head down. Everything swam before my eyes. I seemed to see her here, now, to see her as I had never seen her, in a buttoned-up jacket and cap with ear-flaps. I no longer started every time I heard her name. I could see her fingers on the hair of the gasping man crushed by the iron, and her shaking shoulders on that very bed over there.

I raised my head at the deep man's voice. An old man was standing at the door. He was very tall, and was wearing overalls over his padded jacket, with a shining tool jutting out of the side pocket. He had grey moustaches hanging down on either side of his mouth. I could not see his face in the dim light, and his moustaches looked as though they were hanging straight from the peaked cap pulled low down over his eyes.

Everyone fell silent on hearing his voice, and only Irina said calmly, and it seemed to me with a kind of warmth:

"Is that you, Ivanych? Has anything happened?"

He approached Irina slowly, raising his head and looking at nobody, as people walk who are sure that everybody will give them the right of way. He had already passed me when he silently touched his cap; I did not know for whom the gesture was meant, but involuntarily I rose and greeted him. The old man did not even turn round. Coming up to Irina, he began talking to her in undertones, but everything was audible at the other end of the room. He was talking about some Yevlampi who had died that morning in the watchman's hut at the entrance. "I'll make a coffin," said Ivanych, "and you try to do something about the boards for it..." I saw him go silently to the door, his head still held high. As he came level with myself, he suddenly stopped and said:

"You are interested in Lidia Fyodorovna?"

I started. The question itself was unexpected, and also his suddenly referring to her by name and patronymic, as I had never done either aloud or in my thoughts.

"A very fine person," he added without waiting for my reply.

"Thank you," I said, not knowing what to answer.

"You will thank her."

I did not quite understand what he meant, but I felt awkward about asking. Ivanych was already nearing the door. I could see his broad, somewhat bowed back.

"He's one of our skilled workmen," said Irina.

We were sitting at the large rectangular table. The wood was crackling in the stove. The coffee was all drunk, the toast eaten. And still the girls continued talking, interrupting each other in their eagerness. At first I could not understand why they were all joining so enthusiastically in this "evening of reminiscences," for after all, Lida could not have been equally close to all of them. But after a little while I suddenly solved the riddle, just as in a puzzle picture you look for the hidden face everywhere and can't find it, but once it is discovered, you are unable to understand how you could ever have missed it. In just this way I realized that in talking about Lida they were at the same time telling all about themselves. All twelve girls lived in the one room. Here they slept, from here they went out on duty; on that table they all laid their miniature bread ration which was afterwards divided equally. There was nothing for them to tell each other, each one's life was lived under the eyes of all the others. They had simply merged their twelve lives in one. Lida's life was their life. Her physical absence mattered nothing. But I was somebody new, and in telling me about her, they were talking about themselves.

Then all the girls rose as though at a word of command, and went off to unload a trainful of wood that had just arrived. Irina and I were left alone...

"Well, it's time for you to go," she said. "And I must be getting to the workshop. I'll see you off."

We stopped by the watchman's hut at the entrance, I held out my hand to Irina, and she gripped it and held it.

"There's one thing I've said nothing to you about," she said softly.

"What is that?"

"About yourself. About all the times she spoke of you. And the letters she wrote..." Irina's voice was soft, the hoarseness was gone from it. "But there was nowhere to send them... Oh, if only you'd come a month earlier!.."

I was glad of the darkness that concealed my face.

"Well, what's to be done," I said "Evidently it was not to be... Good-bye..."

"Here, take this," said Irina hastily. I felt some kind of roll thrust into my hands. "Here's everything about myself, about her and about Ivanych. It's all quite true. Well, good-bye."

She went away, her felt boots taking her silently through the snow, and I was

left standing there, holding a thick bundle of papers. Then remembering the main thing, I called after her:

"Which recruiting office?"

"The Kirov district!" came Irina's answering voice out of the darkness.

Late that night I arrived at the "Astoria" and ran up the stairs. I fumbled a long time with the door trying to get the key into the keyhole with my numbed hands. At last I got the door open, lighted the paraffin lamp and opened the roll. It was a thick exercise book covered with small handwriting. I turned to the first page and read:

"I have never kept a diary. I have always been too busy living. A diary is always something belonging to yesterday, and I was always pressing forward to tomorrow. But now I am alone, quite alone. And I have always been used to seeing people around me. Now I feel as though I were alone in this city which I never liked. There's only Lida with me, and her I don't see often..."

The date on the first page was December 31st, 1941.

"Tomorrow is New Year's Day. A year ago at this time we were sitting in my room on Troitskaya—Grigori, Lida and myself. The three of us saw the New Year in together. I raised my glass in a toast to the New Year, 1941, to its being as happy as the old one. Well, my toast did not come true!

"When was it all—my room, Grigori? Is it possible that it is only three hundred and sixty-five days ago? No, not even that, five months ago, a hundred and fifty days ago, I still had it all—the room, light, Grigori...

"Did it all ever really exist? Perhaps it was never really there at all?!

"It is now eight o'clock in the evening. The anti-mustard-gas suit is hanging on the wall. I am sitting alone in the room. Our girls will be back at eleven. We decided to see the New Year in all the same...

"Today the Young Communist League secretary came to me and asked me to write an article for the newspaper... I told her that I couldn't do it. I've forgotten how to hold a pencil. And what should I write about, anyway?

"'What do you mean, what to write about?' said the secretary in surprise. 'You're a Leningrader, aren't you?' 'Well, I've become one,' I said. 'Well, there you are, then,' said the secretary, 'write how you became a Leningrader.'

"I'll write it."

HOW I BECAME A LENINGRADER

"Where shall I begin? I am a Moscow woman, I was born in a large grey house on Krivokolenny Alley, lived there for seventeen years, and went to school in one of the many by-streets of Arbat district. They say that I was always very noisy and merry—I was nicknamed Madcap. I found study very easy—I hardly ever bothered to prepare my lessons, but always answered well.

"I finished school with 'merit' and 'honour' and won a prize—a trip to Leningrad. I remember how I went there in the 'Arrow,' travelling first class—my father paid the difference in the ticket.

"I stayed a fortnight in Leningrad... I did not like the city, there seemed to be too many bridges and columns, as though the town were not standing, but hung suspended in the air.

"The summer slipped by and I had to decide what to do next. I bought a university guide and read it through from cover to cover till my head swam with it all—so many colleges and universities, and all ready to accept me without any entrance examination as an 'honours' scholar. I talked it over with my father, and he insisted on a technical college. The best of these, it turned out, was in Leningrad. There was some consternation over this, but then everybody agreed that after all, Leningrad was on our doorstep, so to speak, only a night's journey away. I got into the train. Dad and Mum came to see me off, all my friends kissed me good-bye, the train started and I stood there with my nose glued to the window, although it was already quite dark.

"I did not want to live in the students' hostel in Leningrad and took a room in an apartment on Troitskaya belonging to Voronova, a widow. It was quite close to the Institute, and what was most important, there was nobody to disturb me when I was working. As I had expected, I entered the Institute without the slightest difficulty.

"I had a neighbour in the apartment where I was living, an old skilled metalworker called Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov. His family consisted of his wife, Pelageya Grigoryevna, and two children—twenty-three-year-old Mikhail and eighteen-year-old Lena. Mikhail was hardly ever at home, he was studying at a college in the suburbs, but Lena worked as an apprentice at the same factory as her father.

"I hardly ever had occasion to speak to Ivanov, and I made no attempt to do so. The tall, rather stooping old man with his long, hanging moustaches and bad-tempered little eyes did not attract me. Many a time I noticed how silence always fell on his arrival home.

"I learned from Voronova and from Pelageya Grigoryevna, who washed for me, that Ivanov was just the sort of worker people like to talk about. He had been at the factory for thirty years, and his father before him for the same period. Then I learned from another neighbour that when he was still an apprentice Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov had been nicknamed 'Three Ivans', and although in the factory there were only about a dozen old men like himself who would have dared take such a liberty now, in the apartment it had stuck, and behind

his back Ivanov was never called anything but 'Three Ivans.'

"Although I did not like this man, he aroused my curiosity, and involuntarily I used to watch him and listen to what went on on the other side of the wall.

"I gradually learned that Ivanov rose at five in the morning and drank tea from a large mug, and that his wife always waited for him to speak first, that he read the newspaper while having his breakfast and that it always had to be neatly folded, that he went to the factory on foot and that they had wanted to give him a car, but he had refused it, saying that for himself it was unnecessary and for his children a demoralizing luxury.

"He would return home in the evening and read a technical magazine in which I was one day surprised to discover three articles signed: 'I. Ivanov, Skilled Worker,'

"One day when I went to Pelageya Grigoryevna to fetch my washing I found Ivanov at home. I was taken aback and wanted to go, but he fixed me with his piercing little eyes under their shaggy brows and said: 'What are you running away for, you've come for something, haven't you?' Then he began asking me who I was and where I came from, and I felt as though I were back at school and up before the examiners. But nothing terrible happened, and after I had been talking to Ivanov for a quarter of an hour or so I thawed, and when he asked if I had been around the city, I replied as I usually did: 'A great many bridges and columns, as though it were not standing, but hung suspended in the air.'

"But on hearing these words, Ivanov's eyes seemed to become still smaller and angrier. He banged on the table with his bony fist and said: 'Humph!.. Hangs, does it! Well, give her her washing, Pelageya!'

"I left, hugging a mountain of washing, offended and not in the least understanding what could have angered this crazy old man. Later on I learned from Pelageya Grigoryevna that there was no greater pleasure for him than to show the city to a new arrival. He could take him along the Lebyazhy Canal, past the Engineers' Castle, along the banks of the Neva and past the formerly gilded Catherine Railings, for the sake of which an enquiring Dutch tourist had once come here in his own yacht. The old man loved Leningrad and liked to call himself a 'Piterets' born and bred.

"After this incident I tried to avoid meeting Ivanov, as I always tried to avoid people with whom I did not feel at ease. Ivanov was staid, slow, silent and stern. I felt that he lived slowly and looked out at the world through screwed-up eyes. But I was still lively and impulsive, always on tiptoe, impatiently waiting for tomorrow, the same Madcap. I decided simply to forget the very existence of my unpleasant neighbour.

"The days slipped by very pleasantly. I was popular among the students at the Institute. I had crowds of friends and was never alone; spent the evenings at theatres or concerts, passed through the first course with ease and entered the second. Many of the boys ran after me, but I never could stand being flirted with and in my heart of hearts was certain that I would fall in love with somebody who did not pursue me with attentions.

"Once, on the second day of the November holidays, I was invited to a party by one of the students. There I met a doctor, ten years older than myself. He was sitting there in the corner of the room like a real bear, hardly dancing with anybody, and for some reason reminded me of a certain tow-headed student, my first admirer. A spirit of contrariness made me want to drag him out of his solitude, and I sat down beside him and began talking. The doctor turned out to be a very interesting man to talk to; he had an ironically condescending manner that was in no way offensive, and very observant eyes. Actually, he was far from handsome—his lips were too thick and his nose too large. In the end I became so absorbed in our conversation that I quite forgot the intention with which I had begun it, and recalled it only when there was a scraping of chairs and a general departure to seak coats and hats.

"We, the doctor and I (his name was Grigori Alexandrovich) also went to the lobby, put on our things and went out into the street.

"The fresh air was very pleasant after the stuffy, smoke-filled atmosphere of the room. A fine November drizzle was falling and the sky was rosy from the illuminations. The tires of cars and buses whirred by pleasantly on the wet asphalt.

"The doctor saw me home and said good-bye, but without even asking when we should meet again. He walked slowly away in the rain, raising the collar of his overcoat, and I stood there in the doorway —to tell the truth very much wanting to call him back; but of course I did not do so.

"On the second, third and even fourth day after our meeting I would catch myself thinking about him, and sometimes it even seemed as though his voice were still ringing in my ears. In the evening I wondered what in the world was the matter with me? I tried to laugh at myself, tried to think about other things and ended by crying. At that moment the bell rang and I went to open the door, wiping my eyes with my fists on the way. I opened the door and saw Grigori Alexandrovich. He asked if he might come in and I was so confused that I almost slammed the door in his face.

"I led the way into the room and we sat down on the sofa. Then I ran out into the kitchen to put the kettle on and bathed my face under the tap to erase all traces of tears. When I returned he was sitting on the divan looking through some magazine or other which he thrust into his pocket as I entered.

"Grigori Alexandrovich said that he had dropped in just on chance, fully realizing

that he might find one of my admirers there, but that he had wanted to see me and had decided to risk it. I could hardly restrain myself from telling him how all these days I had dreamed of meeting him. But I confined myself to saying with a laugh:

"'A good thing you came, anyway, for I was feeling very dull here alone.'

"That evening I told him all about my life and how I had always been called Madcap, and about my first romance, if one could dignify with such a name my acquaintance with the tow-headed student.

"The doctor said very little, but listened attentively to all I had to say. We sat there until midnight, and then I decided to see him part of the way home.

"That time we did arrange for a future meeting, and I ran home singing. The whole world seemed a gay and happy place. I went to bed and slept soundly, dreamlessly, as always.

"We met as we had agreed, and after that we met daily all through the winter. We celebrated the May Day holiday, the two of us together in his room, and I did not go home that night. The next day I did not know myself. Everything around me—the town, the houses and streets—all seemed different. That spring and summer we lived as man and wife, although we each kept our own rooms, and in the autumn, when I entered the semi-final year, Grigori came to live with me in Troitskaya...

"All these months I felt that I was changing. I could always feel Grigori's observant eyes upon me, and I began to think more, turned serious, as they say. I made the acquaintance of a girl called Lida, a designer of patterns for cotton materials, four years older than myself and apparently my very opposite—calm and a little lazy.

"Fewer and fewer people came to see us, and more often than not the three of us would spend the evening together—Grigori, Lida and myself. I knew that Lida had some long-standing romance with a Moscow journalist who often came to Leningrad. One day Lida introduced him to me, and after that the three of us met several times, but from the very first meeting I felt that we were antipathetic to one another.

"With every day I became more and more in love with Grigori, soon he seemed like part of myself, and if he was not there, there was a sort of physical feeling of emptiness.

"When I found that I was pregnant, I wrote to Moscow to ask my mother to come to Leningrad. She agreed and came to live with us—Voronova had already given us another room and herself gone to live on a lower floor at her daughter's.

"Then the time of waiting began, all the fuss and visits to the doctor, and in the summer of 1941 a daughter was born. Grigori insisted that she be called Irina. At about the same time I graduated from the Institute, wrote my thesis and was appointed to the same factory where my neighbour Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov was a skilled worker.

"At the factory I was made shift foreman and I think I worked not so badly, although the main thing in my life was not the factory, but my home, my husband and my family happiness.

"When the radio broadcast Molotov's announcement of the outbreak of war, I was sitting writing a report to the factory director on improvements in the construction of the heating apparatus, and Grigori was sitting opposite me, reading. I looked at him without saying a word. Grigori stood up and held out his hands, but I put them aside saying: 'Don't, don't!'

"That same evening Grigori received his papers and left that night for the front, with barely time to run home for a few minutes first.

"I remember I looked into his eyes as we said good-bye, and then for a long time I walked blindly up and down the room, stumbling against the furniture. After some time I felt very cold, although it was a June night; I closed the window, and huddled into a corner of the couch, shivering. Later on I awoke to hear Baby crying and fed her, but when she dropped off again I seemed to have no strength to rise from the couch, and stayed there for the rest of the night, with the sleeping child in my arms.

"Now my whole life seemed to be concentrated in my daughter. I felt that she was the embodiment of our love, our happiness, our future.

"I was still working at the factory, and was outwardly the same as I had always been; but I began to wonder if I had not laughed too much in my life.

"People kept disappearing from the factory every day. When I said good-bye to anybody at the end of the shift, I never knew if I should see them tomorrow. Vacant places appeared at the lathes, to be filled later by young girls and lads in their teens.

"I saw the factory becoming quieter and quieter, and felt as though the blood were draining from my veins, and as if there were around me nothing but a dead void.

"Then I learned that the factory was to be evacuated to the east, only two shops remaining in the city. The director asked me if I wanted to go. It seemed to me a senseless question—mainly because I could not imagine leaving when Grigori would be writing to my Leningrad address. Besides that, every morning I awoke with the thought that perhaps today Grigori might come on leave for a day or two. I told the director that I did not want to go anywhere, and a few days later was appointed assistant manager of the shops that remained.

"Once I stayed at the factory day and night, organizing the packing and dispatch of the machinery, for the orders were to complete the evacuation in the shortest possible period. But in the evening Ivanov

came to me in the shop and growled that my daughter was ill, he had even sent for the doctor.

"I rushed home. My head was reeling from the sleepless night, there was a bitter taste in my throat and the bright daylight seared my eyes. On arriving home, I found the doctor at my little girl's bedside, together with my mother and Pelageya Grigoryevna. He calmed me, telling me that the worst was already over, and there was no more danger.

"I sat down by the bed and fell right asleep there, awakening only the next evening. I was shivering with cold and my head was aching excruciatingly, but on hearing that Irina was sleeping quietly I hurried back to the factory. As I entered the workshop, my head began to whirl and I fell. When I came to myself I found that I was lying on the bed in the Ivanovs' room, and heard Ivan Ivanovich's voice saying:

"'You should go as well, Pelageya.'

"'I shall stay for the present, Ivan Ivanovich,' she replied quietly, but very firmly.

"I lay there, eyes closed, listening, but not a word more was said.

"I stayed in bed for several days, and when I rose I discovered that my milk had dried up, and Irina had to go over to artificial feeding entirely.

"Now I had to spend the night at the factory oftener and oftener. Looking back on that time, I am sometimes tormented by the dreadful thought that perhaps I did not give Irina all that she should have had. But anybody who lived through it all will understand and forgive me. The baby was my joy, my happiness. She was a part of Grigori. When I looked at her I rejoiced to see how she was growing, and thought how every day was bringing her nearer to a new, happy time. But sometimes it was as though the factory shut out everything else from my consciousness, and I could see nothing beyond its walls.

"True, in the depths of my heart I was living in the hope that this terrible night would come to an end, that the joyful daylight would return, with its brightness, its flowers, and Grigori. Actually, I was living in two worlds—the world of memories, a distant, warm, comfortable world, and the world of today, cold and dark.

"I found myself a room in a cellar on the factory premises where there was nothing to remind me of my room on Troitskaya except my favourite pillow and Grigori's portrait. For that matter I was very seldom there—I spent all my time in the office and often did not go down for twenty-four hours at a time. I began to forget what the city looked like because I never left the factory, contenting myself with constantly telephoning home to learn how Irina was.

"One day I was summoned to the telephone. It was Pelageya Grigoryevna, to tell me that a letter had just come for me from the front... I threw down the receiver without waiting for her even to finish her sentence, and shouted hastily to the shop-manager that I was going away for two or three hours...' It was an autumn evening, I remember. Dusk was falling, settling slowly over the town. A brisk wind was blowing, the trees on the factory boulevard were already bare, and the clouds hung low overhead. I jumped into a rattling tram, and felt for the first time how unaccustomed I was to the city, the trams, and the sky over my head. The blood beat in my temples when I thought of the letter. The tram went very slowly, and I stood there, people crowding against me on all sides, repeating over and over to myself: 'If only he's alive and well... if only he's alive and well...'

"The tram stop was a little way beyond my house, but I jumped off while the tram was still going, rushed up the stairs two at a time and began ringing and pounding on the door.

"Pelageya Grigoryevna opened it, the letter in her hand. I snatched it from her and dashed into my room, tearing the envelope open on the way.

"There were only a few lines. The unit commissar informed me that Grigori Alexandrovich Lebedev, junior army doctor, had been sent to the enemy rear to treat wounded partisans, and had died a hero's death.

"I read the notice through twice, and it seemed queer that I could still see and hear, and that all objects around me became irritatingly tangible. I did not realize immediately what had happened, and even caught myself thinking of other things. Later on, the recollection that at that moment any other thought could have entered my mind nearly drove me crazy. The ceiling seemed to be descending upon me, the walls drew in and everything in the room pressed upon me until terror seized me.

"Slowly, stumbling against the furniture, I passed Pelageya Grigoryevna, went out into the corridor and began descending the stairs without shutting the door behind me. On the staircase walls there was written in huge red letters: 'Be ready to put out incendiary bombs.'

"It was already dark outside, and rain was falling. Several times I collided with passers-by. Now I felt that I wanted to cry, loudly, endlessly. I longed to get to my room as quickly as possible and bury my face in my pillow.

"I meant to go quickly through the workshop and make my way to my own room, but on the way one of the workmen came up to tell me that a group of newcomers had arrived, and the manager wanted me to assign them their places. So that evening there was no time for weeping, and in the end I never did have that cry.

"Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov was to have left with the factory, but he did not go. He considered it flighty for a man of his years to change his place of residence without some very good reason. According to his idea, if civilians were staying in Leningrad

and several shops remained there, then there was no special reason for him to leave the city. I heard him explain this to the director. His daughter left with the factory, his son had been at the front since the first day of the war.

"Ivanov was appointed foreman in the shop where I was assistant manager. At first this was obviously a somewhat unpleasant surprise for him, but later on he adapted himself to the situation, apparently deciding that he, Ivanov, minded his own job, while I kept to mine. I had to place him, a man used to doing skilled work, at the head of a group of young workers making barbed wire for defences. The whole shop was working on it, piles of it lay about the place everywhere, like porcupines. Ivanov became gloomier than ever. I know how dear to him was the skill which he had acquired through long years. Not much ability was required for making barbed wire. Observing him, I saw him raise a bundle and look at it, eyes screwed up, as though wondering where to use his skill. Then he shrugged his shoulders and flung it down on the floor.

"Now that he knew of my sorrow, Ivanov did not come to me with expressions of sympathy, evidently feeling it below his dignity to approach a girl, but he ceased to turn his head aside when I passed.

"It was in the middle of November that the first shell fell in our workshop. It was during the night, and I was asleep downstairs; when I ran up I saw a pile of red dust, a pit in the cement floor and pieces of human flesh and blood-stained fragments of clothing scattered about the whole shop. The next day the stone flooring was taken up and shelters dug. After that the bombardments became more and more frequent and we soon became accustomed to them, as we had to the high explosive bombs.

"Then came winter, and with it, hunger. Now I went home oftener, to take part of my ration to my mother and daughter. It was a joy for me to bring Irina a sweet; later on it became a joy to bring her a piece of bread.

"One day on coming home, I found the room empty. I thought that my mother had probably gone shopping and taken the little girl with her. I sat down on the couch, then noticed a kind of regular knocking coming from the neighbouring room. It seemed to beat against my temples. I tiptoed out into the corridor and looked in at the next door.

"The first thing I saw was Ivanov's broad back. A tiny paraffin lamp burned on the table, and he was hammering some boards.

"I felt I could not stay alone in the cold, dark apartment any longer; softly I approached the door and entered. Ivanov turned and saw me, but said nothing and continued his hammering with accurate, hard blows.

"'What are you making, Ivan Ivanovich?' I asked. Ivanov turned.

"'I asked for time off from the shop to make a coffin,' he said. 'For her.' He jerked his head towards the corner. I peered into the darkness. A bed stood there, and looking more closely I could see that there was something under the coverlet.

"'Ivan Ivanovich!' I cried and went up to him.

"'Now, now...' he said, avoiding me as though in alarm, 'we'll all travel the same road...'

"Later that evening Ivanov and I took the body of Pelageya Grigoryevna to the common grave blown out of the frozen soil with dynamite. We walked silently along the deserted streets under the cold stars. The sledge bearing the coffin slipped easily along over the snow, only a slight pull on the rope was needed. For the whole of the way back we said not a single word...

"It was a little later that the most terrible thing happened. One day when I climbed the stairs to my apartment—I no longer flew up them as I used to do, but went slowly, resting on the landings—I stumbled against something soft at the very door. Terrified, I began knocking, forgetting that I had a key. Then I got a grip on myself, opened the door, lighted the paraffin lamp in the corridor and went out onto the landing. My mother was crouching by the door, leaning against the wall, and the wind was stirring the strands of grey hair on her brow. I think that I screamed, I flung myself on my mother, but she was already cold. Evidently her strength had given out, she had not even been able to open the door and had frozen to death.

"I carried the body into the room and heard the child's crying. I dashed to my little girl, who was crying and beating the air with her fists. I stood there at a loss, not knowing what to do. I was alone in the apartment. In the dimly-lighted room my dead mother was lying on the couch, and my baby was crying with hunger on her bed. I picked up the child and tried to give her the breast, but it was useless. I put her back on the bed and bit my hands cruelly, so as not to faint.

"Then I heard a door open and saw the tall figure of Ivanov on the threshold. With a cry of relief I rushed up and threw my arms round him.

"'Now, now—what's all this,' he said gruffly in the same tone as that other time.

"That night we took mother away in a coffin made of boards from the table. Ivanov pulled the sledge, and I walked along with Irina in my arms. We walked in silence, as we had done before.

"...I came back home with a dead child in my arms. It was only when mounting the stairs that I noticed that she was not breathing. Ivanov was following me, and I said nothing to him. I entered the apartment without even noticing that the door was not locked—I had forgotten to fasten it when I went out. In the room I saw my friend Lida, whom I had not met for three months. She told me that

she had buried her mother and daughter, that now she was quite alone and had come here. We sat for a long time in silence, and then Lida said softly:

"'What are we to do now?'

"When we went out into the frosty air of the street, I noticed that the hand I had bitten was bleeding. I picked up some sort of paper lying on the snow and covered my hand with it. When I arrived at the factory I discovered that it was a small German leaflet calling on the people of Leningrad to surrender. I remember how I read it through carefully, line by line, and then burst out laughing loudly, for the first time during the whole war...

"'What's the matter?' asked Lida.

"I don't remember what I answered. Nothing, I think.

"Lida stayed to work at the factory.

"In the three months when I had not seen her, she had taken a nursing course. We agreed that she should work as nurse in the ARP group at the factory. I had her sleep on my bed—I myself rarely spent the night downstairs.

"Outwardly, Lida had changed very little. True, she had become much thinner, but her ways and habits were the same as they had always been. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that she was different. I don't know why, but she was like a conscience to me. It is difficult to explain it, but she influenced me all the time, approving or condemning all that I did. It seems strange to me now that we rarely talked about those near and dear to us—I of Grigori, she of her Muscovite. It may be that she deliberately avoided any such talk, realizing how much happier she was than I...

"I knew that she was writing to him, and knew that she received no reply. I also wrote letters—into the void; I could not help it, and they stayed there with me, unsent...

"One thing is certain, she helped me to live through that terrible evening.

"She did everything naturally, without effort, and I never knew where the limit of her strength and patience lay.

"Ivanov was very fond of Lida. At first I could not understand the reason, they were so different; then later on I found the clue: the old man loved and respected everything real.

"How we worked! I don't know where I found all my strength. If anybody had told me previously that I could manage a shop I would have thought they were laughing at me. But now... I win people from the clutches of death, I watch each and every one; is his walk firm today, are his hands trembling, wasn't there something suspicious about the way he dozed during the dinner hour?.. I know every one of my workers' family affairs, I scrape together a few crumbs of extra food for those who lose their strength, send those who can't stand the pace to the hospital, bury the dead...

"I have made my shop into a fortress, digging bomb shelters under the cement floor, and barricading the most valuable machinery.

"Sometimes I ask myself where do I find the strength? And strange as it may be, I know that I find it in that very work that demands so much strength... I have realized that work is not an anodyne to escape from the horrors of the present, not a means of forgetfulness. On the contrary, never before have I felt each movement so deliberate, never before have I felt more vividly that with my work I am fighting for our city, for human life, for myself...

"It is a quarter to eleven. In a few moments my girls will be coming. Here is what has come of the Young Communist secretary's request! How does one become a Leningrader? I don't know. And for that matter, what is a Leningrader? That is more than I can say."

On the last page I saw the words:

"Sometimes it seems to me that I have become much, much older and climbed a high mountain whence I can see very far, and where the air is very clear..."

And that was all.

I was about to close the exercise book, when chancing to turn several blank pages, I saw a folded scrap of paper laid between them. I recognized a beloved handwriting, and it seemed as though Lida was calling me.

"Irina and I are sitting here together," I read, "I am writing and she is dictating. The girls are asleep. We have just seen the New Year in. What will it bring?... Just now Irina asked me: 'What are we living for?' and I answered: 'For the sake of happiness.' 'What happiness can there be for us?' she asked, 'when we have lost all that was dearest to us?' But then she thought for a moment and said that after all, there is a special kind of happiness—to endure human sorrow and be strong. And we decided to stick it through, come what might. We shall work... work... and do gymnastics every day... I tell Irina she is dictating nonsense, but she says that after all, nobody will ever read it, it is just for ourselves."

Then I saw a kind of postscript, and reading it, my head whirled and my mouth become dry.

"My dear one! If ever you read these words... How close you have been to me all these black days!.. But perhaps you are no longer in the world, and I am speaking into a void?!"

I read the whole night through, unable to tear myself away. Several pages I read two or three times. It was morning when I finished.

Next day I went to the Kirov recruiting office. At first sight it seemed empty and deserted, but experience had already taught me that in most places of business only one more or less warm room was used. I sought for and found this room and made my application to the officer in charge, a short, grey-headed man.

"Eh, man," he said, on hearing my request that he should find out from the records where Lida had been sent, "how can we find that out now?" There was a note of irritation in his voice. "We were bombed out not long ago, but saved nearly all our papers. And now we're sitting here day and night, trying to get things in order again..."

I felt awkward. I realized that my request, if made officially, could be very exasperating to a man with a big job on hand. Any Leningraders might have thousands of such problems... I told him in as conciliatory manner as possible that I realized the untimeliness of my application, but I was to be in Leningrad for a very short time, and if he could give instructions—for any odd moment...

"Very good," said the officer, and turned to an elderly man with a pointed beard sitting by the door. "Here, Comrade Kozochkin, you will be sorting out the cards, look out for..." He wrote her full name down on a piece of paper and handed it to Kozochkin.

I saw that my fate lay in this man's hands, took leave of the officer and on my way out, paused at Kozochkin's table.

"I would be more than grateful to you, Comrade Kozochkin," I said softly. "You would be doing a very great thing for me..."

Kozochkin elevated his pointed beard.

"Very well," he said, "I'll try. Come back in two days."

January 25th.

Bombings ever since morning. AA barrages, and in the brief intervals of firing, the roar of German aircraft.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the "all-clear" sounded eight hours after the alert. Then shells began howling. The radio announced the beginning of an artillery barrage.

It was horrible to hear the shot, the screams of the shell, and then wait some seconds for the explosion. And it was horrible to know that within a few seconds somebody's life would be extinguished.

At the front all this had seemed different. There people were sitting in trenches and blindages with arms in their hands. They knew that they were fighting, that is, ready to kill or be killed. But here people walked about the streets or lay in bed, and it seemed unnatural to think that now, a second after that screech, walls would rock and crash, a black column of rubble, shattered wood and snow would rise, destruction and death hold sway.

The barrage continued for two hours, and then came a fresh air alert.

That night two correspondents from the central newspapers visited me. They lived a floor lower, and had brought their paraffin lamps. We lighted all three, and the room became comparatively light.

One of them was a tall, hook-nosed man with thick, wildly-waving black hair and brows rising at the outer corners—a real Mephistopheles. He had flown here from Moscow only the previous day. The other was short, stout and fair-headed, with a face that looked as though it had never known any growth of hair. Mephistopheles spoke in a high, piercing voice, and the stout man in a deep bass.

"Well, how're things there on the Volkhov front?" asked the stout man.

I told them all that I knew, then asked him to tell me about Leningrad, but in order, month by month. I wanted to get a clear picture of the siege of the city. The stout man had been there since the beginning of the war. We sat talking until long after midnight.

"I want to go to Ladoga," said Mephistopheles. "I want to go over the whole road and write a couple of sketches." That was how he put it—"a couple of sketches." "What do you say if we go together?"

I replied that I had some other business in the city but that I should most certainly go to Ladoga sometime...

We said good-night, and the correspondents left, taking their lamps with them. The room seemed very dark. I undressed, crawled into bed and covered myself with a mattress on top of the quilt. I had begged it from the hospital up above during the day.

January 28th.

Early this morning I went to the recruiting office. Kozochkin jumped up when he saw me.

"I've found her, found her!" he said excitedly. "Here's her card—look, here it is! She was appointed to the medical post serving on the Ladoga road. That's where to look for her." He smiled. "I spent half the night looking for it, and in the end I found it!"

I felt I wanted to embrace Kozochkin, but contented myself with wringing his hand hard, and then hurried back to the hotel. I did not go to my own room, but knocked at Mephistopheles' door. It was not locked, the correspondent was still asleep in bed, his head under the clothes, his long legs thrust out from beneath his jacket. The paraffin lamp stood on the table. The ceiling was black with soot.

I wakened him and asked when he intended to go to Ladoga. Mephistopheles sat up in bed, tucked his legs under him, blinked and said that he was going the next morning. He had got a car,

"Then I'll come with you," I said.

"Please do," said Mephistopheles politely. We parted until the next morning.

Mephistopheles' real name was Yuri Olshansky. We set off at ten in the morning, I sitting in the body of the truck, and Olshansky, as the man who had procured the machine, in the driver's cabin. Equality soon reigned again, however—about six kilometres from the lake something went wrong with the engine, and the driver announced that it would take four hours' work to put it right. We decided to hitchhike.

Luck favoured us—a truck soon came

rolling along. We succeeded in stopping it, clambered up onto the canvas-covered body filled with rusks and in half an hour found ourselves at Ladoga. But here our luck deserted us, the truck was going no further. We did not despair, however—there were plenty of machines crossing at the time.

We stood there on the shore of the ice-bound lake. A mist hung over it. The smooth, wheel-polished road descended from the shore and disappeared into the milky whiteness. This was the only link between blockaded Leningrad and the mainland. Not for nothing was it called the "road of life."

"Let's go and find headquarters," said my companion. He had already developed a nose for dugouts. We walked along the shore and soon saw the snow-covered dome of one. We entered, trailing a cloud of steam as the frosty outside met the warmth inside, and for a moment could distinguish nothing.

When the mist dispersed, I saw a lieutenant in a fur waistcoat sitting at a table, looking at us enquiringly. We introduced ourselves, and Olshansky said that he wanted to write "a couple of sketches" about the ice road, but the lorry had broken down, and now we did not know how to get any further.

"But what do you want a car for?" said the lieutenant. "Aren't there enough of them crossing anyway? Just walk along the road and look about you all you want; and if you get tired, jump onto the first lorry passing."

Olshansky and I discussed the matter and decided that the lieutenant was right. We would warm up, and then get down onto the road.

"Where's your medical unit?" I asked. The lieutenant smiled.

"There you are, if it's a correspondent, the first question's about the dressing station. Our medical people are on the ice, all of them. They're ready to tackle anything, they are!"

"How can I find them?"

"By the signposts! The whole road's signposted, as though you were walking along Nevsky! Nothing but the traffic lights missing! And there's only one direction—straight ahead..."

After warming up, we left the dugout. Outside, the wind was raging, but without dispersing the fog, which lay in a low blanket pressed down to the ice. Higher up, the air was clear. We walked over the lake, where previously, before the war, people had never walked and practically never sailed. It was a squally, capricious expanse with sudden depths and unexpected shallows. Nobody could ever have foreseen the part it was to play in the fate of besieged Leningrad.

We walked in silence. A huge lorry came rolling along to meet us, its tarpaulin bellying out in the wind like wings. The wind increased, catching up the dry snow in whirling columns and sweeping it over the ice. We jumped onto a passing lorry, travelled for about fifteen kilometres, and then got down frozen to the bone. We ran to warm ourselves, but when at last we wanted to find another lorry, not one was to be seen—as though fate had decided to spite us.

I walked along looking at the signposts—there certainly were plenty of them—until I found one which read: "Dressing station: five kilometres," and saw an arrow indicating the direction.

"Let's get on faster," I said to Olshansky.

It was blowing harder than ever, in sudden gusts with occasional quiet intervals. During one such breathing space we heard the roar of aircraft. I turned and saw a Douglas flying over the ice. High above it was a fighter.

"Only one," said Olshansky, pointing to the fighter. "They usually have a larger cover." It seemed as though there was nothing that man did not know.

The Douglas passed over our heads, and at the same moment Olshansky cried: "Look at that!" and seized my arm. I looked to the side he indicated. In the milky clouds I could distinguish small floating silver specks.

"Those are Messerschmitts," said Olshansky softly, and I did not doubt that he was right. They floated along, now disappearing into the clouds, now emerging into the clear air. We followed their flight with strained attention.

"They haven't seen it!" cried Olshansky. The Douglas was already far away, approaching the barely visible far shore.

"They haven't seen it!" he repeated, and almost before the words had left his mouth I saw three of the specks floating among the clouds suddenly change their course. AA guns barked somewhere, and fluffy balls like dandelion clocks appeared in the air. But the aircraft, making a sharp turn, made for the spot where the Douglas and its accompanying fighter had only just disappeared. Soon the pursuers also vanished in the mist.

"They're after them, the swine!" said Olshansky. "Well, once he's over the land devil a bit they'll be able to find of him, he'll blend with the ground. He'll be right over the forest. If only they don't catch him over the ice. But as for the fighter—he'll be for it."

We stood there staring after the aircraft. Soon there came the roaring of racing engines. Then four planes came into sight. It was clear what was happening—the Germans had attacked our fighter.

After that things happened with lightning swiftness. There was no dogfight with roaring engines and the rattle of machine-guns. There was just one short, sharp shot from a cannon, and one of the planes swooped down from the heights trailing a black column of smoke after it. We saw the distance between machine and ice decreasing every second, heard the sharp crack of breaking ice and saw a column of water rise.

"It's a Hun, it's a Hun!" cried Olshansky confidently.

Then there was a general whirling con-

fusion among the planes still in the sky, making it impossible to distinguish the Germans from ours. Suddenly I saw one of the machines slowly planing down, without any smoke, without the usual tongues of flame.

"That's ours, Olshansky, ours!.." I whispered.

Evidently the engine was damaged. The Germans followed the plane down to the lake, covering it with cannon and machine-gun fire.

Silently, like a glider, the fighter slid downwards over the ice. At last its ski-runners touched the surface and it lay there motionless, white, barely discernible on the snow, not more than a hundred metres from the place where we were standing. The Germans were circling ahead, their engines roaring a song of triumph. I saw the pilot jump out of the cabin and dive under the engine. We ran towards him.

"Lie down!" shouted Olshansky. I flung myself down on the snow and saw two planes swing round and dive at the helpless fighter. They swept over our heads almost touching the snow, I heard a round of machine-gun fire, and saw the spouts of snow and the small pits left, like the tracks of a hare.

"They'll shoot him," whispered Olshansky.

The aircraft swung around and again made for the fighter. After they had passed over our heads for the second time and the spouts of snow had puffed up within a dozen yards of us, I cried: "Let's make for the plane!" and jumped up and ran for my life, Olshansky after me. We had to get there before the Jerries returned. There, at least, we would have some shelter. We managed it. I was the first to arrive and flung myself under the engine, Olshansky tumbling in after me. The pilot was lying on his back, clutching a revolver.

"Easy there, lads," he said hoarsely.

We huddled close together. The aircraft roared overhead. Bullets rattled on the metal above our heads.

There seemed to be no end to it. The planes turned, swept over us hedge-hopping, or rather snow-sweeping, plastering us with cannon and machine-gun fire, raising whirls of snow around us. And each time they passed, there would be just three words from the pilot: "Not a thing!"

At last they flew off. We crawled out from under the engine. I think I never saw a more beautiful sight than those Messerschmitts receding into the distance. The pilot crawled out after us, his fur overalls hanging on him in rags. He stood up, clapped his hand on the engine and said:

"Not a thing! Got us out of that hole! Leningrad made!"

"Are you wounded?" I asked.

"Not a thing!" replied the pilot hoarsely. But I could see a red patch on the snow where he had been lying.

"Have another look," I said, "you don't feel it in the heat of the moment."

The airman slapped himself all over.

"Arms all right, legs all right, and head all right," he said.

"And where's that blood come from?" I asked, pointing to the snow.

"Blood?" The airman looked down at the snow and repeated in perplexity: "Blood?.. Yes, it is blood."

But at that moment I myself saw that his felt boot was red. Evidently he had been hit in the left leg.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the pilot, with a wave of the hand.

"It may be nothing just now, but later on you'll find yourself minus a leg," I cried, "Sit down!"

He seated himself on the snow, and I began pulling off the long felt boot.

"Does that hurt?" I asked. I wanted to know if the bone had been hit.

"Not a scrap," growled the airman. A good deal of congealed blood had collected in the boot. I rolled up the trouserleg. The wound turned out to be a small one. There were bandages in his kit-bag, so I bandaged the leg and wrapped it.

"Now we'll go to the dressing station," I said. "The two of us can get you there. It's three kilometres."

"I'm not going anywhere," replied the airman. "Have you gone crazy—leave the plane? You'd better go and let them send a truck and men to guard it."

"Very well," I said. "Olshansky will stay here." Mephistopheles nodded. "And now we'll get you into the cabin."

We helped him in, and then I set off in the direction of the dressing station.

The icy wind was blowing harder every minute, and it was difficult to keep one's feet on the slippery surface. After about a kilometre I saw a truck, chains rattling, coming to meet me. As it approached, a red cross on the windshield became visible. I raised my hand, and the machine came up with me and slowed down.

"There's a wounded airman over there!" I shouted.

"I know," said a woman's voice from the cabin, and the lorry raced on.

Walking was extremely difficult. A violent, icy wind was raging, sweeping the snow over the track. I made my way through the fog, my felt boots sinking in the drifts, and accumulating snow inside them... I now felt quite easy in my mind about the pilot—within a few minutes the lorry would reach the plane. Evidently the people in the dressing station had seen the plane come down, and had sent out a machine.

I was no longer thinking about the airman, my thoughts were only for Lida. I could no longer contain myself, but kept repeating: "To her, to her..." It seemed to make the walking easier.

At last I saw a large hospital tent standing at one side of the track. It was already dark, and a rosy glow fell on the snow beside the entry—evidently there was a stove burning in the tent. I raised the flap, wet with snow, and entered.

There actually was a small iron stove burning near the entrance, and beyond it I could see people in the semi-darkness sitting on stools. I greeted them, and in

order to be quite sure, began by informing them of the airman.

"We know, we know all about it," said somebody out of the gloom. "A lorry's gone already."

So that was all right.

By now my eyes had become accustomed to the dim light, and I could distinguish the individual people sitting on stools. They were two—an army doctor and his assistant. Both were drinking tea. I introduced myself, and the doctor offered me a mug.

"Come and get warm," he said. "Well, how are things there on the mainland?"

I sipped the hot tea which scalded my lips, and told them about the mainland. Here, on the ice, they were like a link between the mainland and Leningrad, and were equally interested in news from both places.

After that, trying to speak as calmly as possible, I asked if they knew where Lida was working.

"Why, of course," said the doctor calmly, "she's working with us."

I felt as though it was not he who said it—it seemed like my own voice.

"With you?" I repeated.

"With us," replied the doctor. "Or rather, she has been. She left today for the front. Why, you said that you met a lorry? That was the one she left with."

I jumped up.

"But it'll be coming back?"

"Why should it come back? They'll take the airman straight to Leningrad, to hospital..."

I ran out of the tent. A cold stormy wind was whistling over the ice, and the sharp needles of snow stung my face. Somewhere on the track a lorry was panting, from the distance there was the sound of shelling, and everything was dark, quite dark.

"What made you dash out like that?" asked the doctor, when I returned to the tent.

"I left a comrade by the aeroplane," I replied. "I wanted to see if he wasn't coming."

"It would be a job for us to find him now," said the doctor. "We're like the Papaninites on the ice-floe. He's probably gone back to Leningrad with the lorry."

"Yes," I agreed, "probably he has."

It was torture to think that at that very moment Olshansky was sitting beside her in the lorry... Heavens! If only they would begin talking, and Olshansky would tell who had come with him to Ladoga... But there was not very much hope of that. She would probably be sitting in the cabin, and he in the body. When they reached the city, he would knock on the glass, the driver would stop and he would jump out. And that would be that. But perhaps they had put the wounded airman in the cabin? Of course, that was what they would have done, if he was in a condition to sit up. And then she and Olshansky would sit together in the body. And Olshansky was an expansive, talkative sort of fellow...

I sat here thinking: "If only he's started talking to her! They're sitting there in the truck, and he covers her legs with the tarpaulin—isn't that an excuse to begin a conversation? Or perhaps he simply asks her where the lorry is going. After all, he has to write his "couple of sketches" about Ladoga. How could he miss the chance of talking about the track? 'Human interest,' as they call it..."

I felt desperate. It was as though I could hear them talking. Olshansky asking dozens of questions, and her replies, when all I wanted was just a couple of words...

The wind was howling. The canvas tent bellied and swayed, and the ropes fastened to pegs driven into the wooden base hummed like violin strings. There were moments when it seemed as though the wind would overturn the tent, and hurl out people, stools and glowing stove, to lash them with the sharp, stinging snow.

"Giving us a treat!" said the doctor's assistant.

"Go on till morning now," the doctor agreed.

"What will?" I asked. I seemed to have lost the beginning of the conversation.

"The wind—till morning," said the doctor. "Well, shall we have supper?" He rose and extended his arms, stretching every joint. He was a very tall man, with a black beard, unevenly cut. It was difficult to guess his age, though I got the impression that he was still quite young.

Nobody said a word in reply, and the howling of the wind dominated the tent. The doctor went to the stove, squatted on his heels in front of it and began stirring the embers.

"I think we should have supper," said the doctor. "What do you say?" and he turned to me. I said that I was not hungry.

"Nonsense," he growled. "Correspondents are always hungry. I've worked on the mainland too. We'll make porridge."

"Orel!" he called to his assistant. But there was only a gentle snore from the pallet bed.

"Asleep," said the doctor. "Well, let him sleep. We'll prepare some water." He picked up a mess-tin and dived under the wet flap covering the opening. A minute later he returned carrying the mess-tin filled with snow. "See how we live!" said the doctor. "Just as though we were on the ice-floe!" returning to his comparison. "In order to get half a tin of water," he explained in businesslike tones, placing the vessel on the stove, "you have to fill it with snow three times. I warn you, though, the water isn't particularly good. But it's all there is."

He picked up a piece of wood from the floor and began stirring the snow.

"Hygiene!" I said smiling.

"There is no such word," replied the doctor with conviction.

I began to like him. He was businesslike, with a sort of kindly irony in all that he did. He gave the impression of a person easy to get on with.

"There are many ways of preparing

millet porridge from a concentrated package," he said, stirring the snow with his stick. "You can wait until the water boils, or you can put the contents of the package in the water first. But to tell the truth, whichever you do makes no difference. A real change in the anamnesis can be expected only with the addition of butter and fried onions. Unfortunately, at the moment we have neither the one nor the other..."

I looked into the tin. The thin grains of the snow suddenly formed a crust and then disappeared, melting into water.

"There you are," said the doctor, taking the tin off the stove. "Now it's got to be filled with snow again." And once more he dived beneath the flap.

It was very amusing, reminiscent of the old tale of eating jelly and running to the cellar for milk—a spoonful of jelly, a spoonful of milk. Why not bring snow in a bucket and then gradually add it to the tin?

"It's no quieter," said the doctor, entering the tent. Steam was coming from the tin, and he replaced it on the stove. "That wind just flogs you! Well, we'll have some fun tonight..." He squatted on his heels and began stirring the mess-tin. His hair was sprinkled with snow.

"One more trip," said the doctor, "and then there'll be enough water." I made my suggestion with regard to the bucket. The doctor looked at one hanging on a hook, then from it to me, and replied:

"Maybe, so..." Then he rose and seated himself on the stool beside me.

"Tell me," said the doctor, "did that airman get a bad packet?"

"In the leg," I answered. "At first he did not feel it at all. Then I noticed blood. He said that it did not hurt him."

"That's always the way when they're hot from the battle," said the doctor. "But it looks as if he got off lightly."

"There were three Messerschmitts," I recalled, "and he was alone. He did a foolish thing, I think, in taking them on."

"A foolish thing, you say?" repeated the doctor. "Suppose they'd gone after the Douglas?"

"It was already over the forest. The object was already gained. He would have done better to make off."

"Don't talk such nonsense," snapped the doctor. "Suppose they'd gone after the Douglas? There's not one Leningrad airman who wouldn't have done the same as he did... Well, now for the last trip." He picked up the mess-tin and dived under the flap. His assistant was snoring peacefully on the pallet. I looked at my watch. One o'clock. Six hours till morning, when I could set out on my way back.

"It's just impossible to hold anything metal in your naked hands," said the doctor, reappearing. "Get your fingers frozen in an instant. Here's cold for you!" With an abrupt movement he put the tin back on the stove.

"That's the last time," I said. "Now let it boil and you can put in the tablet."

I felt sleepy. The doctor went to a small shelf and took a packet of concentrated porridge from it, thought for a moment, and then took a second.

"I'll put two in," he said, turning to me, "may as well have a proper feast while we're about it."

"Let me do something too," I said.

"Your job is to eat," he replied. "Here, keep an eye on the water, tell me when it boils."

It would have been silly to insist, as if this job of making porridge called for a whole staff of servants. But all the same I did not enjoy sitting idle. The doctor shook several rusks and some crumbs from a bag.

"That's instead of bread," he said. "I hope you've got good teeth?"

He began breaking it into pieces, and I saw that it was hard as stone.

"It's frozen," he said. "Though for that matter I prefer frozen rusks to frozen bread."

Such fine points were beyond me, besides which the water chose that moment to boil. Crumbling the concentrated porridge, I sprinkled it into the tin.

The water boiled up again, and the millet slowly began rising to the surface. The water was thick and muddy.

"Now we must have patience for fifteen minutes," said the doctor. "Are you very hungry?"

I said that I was.

"That's right," said the doctor. "If you're a correspondent you're hungry. Shall we wake Orel?" he added, nodding towards the pallet. "I think I won't. After all, he's better off than we are. A good sleep's worth more than a full stomach."

I rather doubted the correctness of this aphorism. A smell of boiling millet gradually filled the tent. It was very pleasant. I had never noticed before how good millet smells.

"We'll eat, and then we'll go to bed," said the doctor, stretching himself. "To tell you the truth, I haven't been able to sleep for three nights now."

I could not understand what work there was to prevent the medical personnel on the ice from sleeping for three nights. I asked about it.

"There's all kinds of work," he replied, scooped up some porridge on his stick, and tried it.

"Is it ready?" I asked. I found I really was very hungry.

"Yes, it is," he said. "We'll have to imagine the butter and fried onions. Take the tin and pour out the water."

I left the tent, and the storm nearly swept me off my feet. My breath was driven back, and a thousand needles stung my face. I began pouring out the water. Somewhere not far off I could again hear a panting lorry and thought that the driver was certainly not having a good time just now.

Then I returned to the tent. The wet flap slapped me in the face as I entered. The doctor was placing two tin plates on a stool. He was rubbing his hands and seemed to be pleased.

"Well, here we are, everything's all right," he said.

"It's very far from all right with somebody out there," I replied.

"Why, what's that?"

"There's a car in difficulties somewhere. The driver's evidently having trouble with it."

"A car?" repeated the doctor, and his face looked gloomy. "Well, let's get a move on!"

"Why, what's your hurry?" I asked.

The doctor did not reply, but began serving out the porridge onto the plates. I was just about to take the first spoonful when the sound of footsteps came from outside the door.

"So that's that," said the doctor, and put down his spoon.

The flap was raised, and a man entered the tent. He was wearing an oily padded jacket that had once been white, belted round the waist. Dirty streams of sweat had rolled from his forehead down his face. His cap was pushed onto the back of his head, and strands of hair lay on his forehead.

He stood in the entrance, and a pool of water from the melting snow on his felt boots swiftly formed at his feet. He stood there looking at us out of his inflamed eyes, but as it seemed to me, without seeing anybody.

At last he asked in a hoarse, indistinct voice:

"What's this... here?"

I had realized at once that this was the driver of the lorry I had heard.

"Dressing station," replied the doctor.

"Medicos," said the driver hoarsely. "...If I could find someone to help push... push the lorry... just a little bit." He spoke without addressing anybody in particular. He was still standing at the entrance, but I could see his eyes clearing in the light and warmth. Then he stepped forward to the stove and stretched out his hands over it. I started as I saw them. They were a bright reddish-purple and swollen to double their size. I could see the blisters covering them even from a distance.

"Drop your hands and come here," said the doctor sharply. Then he turned and shook his sleeping assistant's shoulder. "Get up!" he ordered.

The driver was still standing by the stove, motionless, his hands held over it.

"What's the matter with you, are you deaf?" shouted the doctor. "Drop your hands!" He went up to the driver and dragged him away from the stove. "Can't you see what's the matter with your hands, eh?"

The driver held them in front of his eyes.

"A bit cold," he replied.

"Take off your jacket," ordered the doctor.

"I'm not taking anything off," said the driver with a sudden gust of anger, and shook his head stubbornly. "I've got a lorry out there with a load on. And there's a man there. I only need someone to help push."

"Take off your jacket!" the doctor shouted, "Smirnov, help him get it off."

The assistant went up to the driver and seized the belt, but the driver turned sharply and tried to dive out again under the tent flap.

"Hold him, the fool!" cried the doctor, and Smirnov seized the driver by the tail of his jacket. "You'll lose your hands this way! Do you understand that? Are you wanting to get gangrene? Take off that jacket at once!"

The driver resisted no longer, and Smirnov began stripping off the jacket.

"All right, then," said the driver. "Put on your ointment and bandage me if you want, but get a move on. I've got to find people to push the lorry."

"You're not going anywhere," said the doctor, picking some jars from those on the shelf. "Bed's the place for you."

"And the lorry?" said the driver taken aback and alarmed.

"We'll put a sentry at the lorry. Then another driver'll come and fetch it."

"You're crazy." The driver made a dash towards the door. "Are you joking, doctor? Leave the lorry half way along the road and creep into bed?" He reached for his jacket.

"Don't be a fool," said the doctor sternly. "You've got second degree frostbite. Do you realize what that means? Do you want to spend the rest of your life with stumps instead of hands?"

The driver looked at his hands, at a loss.

"But they don't hurt me at all," he said suddenly in a faint voice. The doctor looked at me.

"You see," he said. "Here's another one who doesn't feel any pain. None of them ever do at first." He came closer and poured something from a bottle into a tin mug.

"Drink that," said the doctor and held out the mug to the driver. The latter took it, sniffed and smiled.

"No objections to that... Ah, that's got a kick in it!" he added in delight, after drinking.

"Now give me your hands," said the doctor, and with the aid of his assistant began smearing something over the reddish-purple hands. The driver neither groaned nor winced.

"How strong was this stuff?" he asked. "Brandy, I suppose?"

"Wasting good brandy on you!" growled Smirnov.

"Now that's enough chatter," said the doctor, bandaging the right hand. "To bed, and quick!"

But the driver had already snatched his hand away and taken a step towards the exit. There was anger in his face again.

"I told you I'm not going to any bed, doctor." He seized his jacket from the stool with his bandaged hand. "I've got a load of food out there. And it's for Leningrad!"

"Don't start your pep talks on me!" shouted the doctor. I stared at him in surprise. At first I had thought him a

calm, equable person, and now he couldn't say two words without getting excited.

"Thanks for the bandages," said the driver, "but I'm going!" And his tone was so decided that I could well have imagined him fighting us if we had tried to detain him.

"Any more tents round here?" asked the driver, putting on his jacket. "I've got to find some people..."

"Where's your lorry?" asked the doctor.

"Over there, not far off, about fifty metres from you."

The doctor took his padded jacket from its hook.

"Get yours things on, Smirnov," he ordered. I also began putting on my jacket.

One after the other, we left the tent. The wind caught my breath at once, it seemed to be blowing harder than ever. I felt as though it went through me, and the icy snow needles were driving right into my body. With the first step I floundered into a drift and got a bootful of snow.

"Keep to the left," the doctor shouted out of the darkness. I followed the sound of his voice. It was very difficult going, struggling against a solid wall of wind and snow. I could not imagine how a man could drive a lorry in such weather.

The driver was striding along somewhere ahead, calling from time to time.

"We're coming, we're coming!" shouted the doctor. "Devil take you!"

We struggled forward for a very long time. I felt sure that this was no fifty metres, but a whole kilometre. I was probably right—the driver had his own way of measuring distances.

At last we came to the lorry standing with its front wheels in a drift.

"Fedyushov, out you get!" the driver called out gaily. "Help coming!"

"Oho-ho!" came an answering voice from somewhere, and then a man jumped down. "Five of us now," said the driver, "that'll sure be enough to move her!"

"We'll have to dig her out a bit first," said Fedyushov. He pulled out two shovels from somewhere in the darkness and handed one to me. We went to the front wheels and began clearing the snow from them. My shovel was small and awkward, like a child's toy.

"I'll try to warm up the engine," I heard the driver's voice saying in the darkness.

I worked indefatigably. I got so hot that I took off my jacket and no longer felt the needles of snow stinging my face.

"Things are moving," called the doctor's assistant; he had dug out the other wheel.

"Starter won't work," called the driver. "We'll have to give her a twist!"

"Give me the handle." It was the doctor's voice. Then I heard somebody jerking the starting handle and cursing desperately. "The whole thing's frozen solid," shouted the doctor.

"Just give her one more twist," came the driver's imploring voice. "Just once more, doctor!"

Then came the even beat of the engine.

Now for the main job—to push the lorry back onto the track.

We pushed with all our strength, but the machine did not move. I could feel the sweat rolling down my face, and its sticky trickles under my shirt. We pushed at the word of command and separately, but the lorry seemed rooted to the spot.

"To hell with it!" shouted the doctor, coming up to the cabin. "You go to bed and we'll place a sentry by the lorry. We can go on this way till morning and be none the better for it."

The driver jumped out of the cabin.

"No, please, doctor," he said, and I could hear tears in his voice. "We'll move her, honest we will! Wait a bit, I'll put something under the wheels." Swiftly he stripped off his jacket and pushed it under the right wheel. "Now, another good push!"

Again the door of the cabin slammed to and the engine raced. Again we pushed on the lorry. It seemed as if we were pushing with enough strength to send our legs through the ice. Suddenly I felt the lorry slowly move away from our hands.

"Here she goes!" everybody shouted.

The lorry was moving. We walked after it, our hands pressed against the rear. In this way we rolled it back to the track.

"Well, thank you all," the driver called from the cabin. "I won't get out again, I'm afraid of the engine stopping. Thanks again!" He stepped on the gas, the engine revved up and the lorry plunged into the darkness, chains rattling.

"Stop, stop!" the doctor shouted furiously. "Left his jacket behind, the blockhead!"

He picked up the jacket lying there on the snow and ran into the darkness.

"As soon as you get there, into the hospital with you at once," I heard his voice. Then the chains rattled again. The doctor returned.

"Well, let's go," he said in a tired, depressed voice. We walked along in silence. The way back seemed shorter. In the tent it was very cold. The stove had gone out. The porridge on the plates was covered with a thin rind of ice.

The doctor sank wearily onto a stool.

"It was a crime to let him go," he said. "And every night I commit crimes like that and tell myself it's the last time. And then the same thing again. I shout and swear at them—no good. Nothing for a doctor to do here!" he cried angrily. "Smirnov, light the stove!"

Smirnov jumped headlong from the bench where he had just settled down. Evidently he was familiar with the character of his chief.

"Trying his pep talk on me, the son-of-a-bitch!" the doctor growled in his beard. "Food for Leningrad! Propagandist!.." Then he turned to me. "And what if you put that mule on the plane, and the airman on the lorry—how do you think it would be?"

I was silent.

"It would be just the same! They're all like that!" The doctor picked up a plate of porridge and crushed the rind of ice with a spoon. "Now we'll warm up our porridge," he said calmly.

I looked at my watch. It was four

o'clock. Another four hours until morning. I suggested that we simply go to bed.

"We'll have our porridge," the doctor repeated. He lay on his back, arms flung wide, legs dangling.

"A senseless job, being a doctor on the ice," he said. "More swearing and pushing lorries than treating patients."

"Nobody forces you to push lorries," I objected. "That driver didn't ask you to push it."

"He didn't ask you either," said the doctor. His kindly ironical mood had returned. "Isn't that right? And now remember that you've been here only an hour or two, and I've been here two months."

Smirnov blew into the stove. A tiny flame was already licking the charred sticks.

"Will you have some porridge, Smirnov?" asked the doctor. "No? Then go to bed."

I squatted before the stove in the assistant's place. The sticks were crackling away merrily, the stove soon warmed up.

"You're a strange kind of correspondent," said the doctor lazily. "Sit there saying nothing. Why don't you ask me to show you my best people, those with orders and medals? Are you tired or what? Or maybe you're ill? If that's so I'll take a look at you and put you right..."

I told him that my health was excellent.

"Might as well come straight out with it," said the doctor. "I know what you came here for. You wanted Lida. Right?"

I started and sat up straight. This was too unexpected.

"You are mistaken," I mumbled, pulling myself together. "Of course, I would have liked to see her. We haven't seen each other for a long time. But I wanted to write something..." I nearly said "a couple of sketches."

He came close up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and looked me straight in the eyes.

"Well," he said, "she worked here as my assistant... She volunteered—I don't know if you know about that. When she came, the track was just being laid down. The ice was still thin, it 'breathed' when you walked along it. I liked that woman at once, somehow she reminded me of my wife." He spoke dispassionately, without feeling, as though dictating a case sheet. "We lived here the three of us—she, Smirnov and I. We slept on those pallets, all together. She worked well, she would have made an excellent doctor. Only you know the sort of work a doctor does on the ice. She had to do everything. And she did it. She was as obstinate as you make 'em! Pushed her nose into everything she'd better have kept out of. Once she fell through the ice. I thought she'd get pneumonia, but it was all right, it passed off. Right from the very beginning she went out with search parties. Now, when everything's more or less in order, she wanted to go to the army. I couldn't dissuade her. You could find out about her in the medical corps headquarters. I was very reluctant to lose her. There was a warmth about her." He removed his hands from my shoulders, turned and sank down by the stove. "Anything you want to know?" he asked.

I had no questions. We sat there without looking at one another. He had spoken about her as nobody else did. It was not so much the words, it was something in the tone.

"There's one more thing I can add," said the doctor. "She told me a great deal, but there was also a great deal she didn't tell me. I knew that she was expecting somebody. True, she didn't tell me, but I guessed it. She knew that it would have been cruel to talk to me about it because I am not expecting anybody. On the ice you have to show consideration for each other." He laughed. "When you asked me about her, I knew that you were the one..."

I sat there listening, trying not to lose a single word.

"How long was she here?"

"A month."

"She lived here?"

"Yes, I told you so. Slept on that pallet."

"What was her health like?"

"All right. For a Leningrader good enough."

"Why didn't she stop here?"

"But I explained all that." I felt that the doctor was agitated. "When everything was in order, she wanted to go to some unit on active service."

"And was there no other reason?" I asked in a hard voice.

"You want to ask whether she did not have to—avoid me?"

"Yes," I replied.

The doctor rose.

"And what right have you to ask me that?" he asked quietly. "You have not seen her since the beginning of the war. You were not with her when her mother died, and her child. True, I was not there either, but we spent a month in this tent, on thin ice. I rubbed her down after she fell through the ice. I prepared porridge for her. I..."

He fell silent. And I was equally silent.

That's how it is. You sit in a room talking with somebody for a long time. You feel you are old acquaintances and you are accustomed to everything—the things around you, the light, and the sound of his voice in that room. But suddenly, one word, and all the familiarity vanishes. Things take on sudden sharp edges, the light sears the eyes, you feel as though you were on a railway station and the train just about to pull out...

"Why don't you say something? Are you angry?" the doctor asked suddenly in his former tone of kindly irony.

"No," I replied, "in any case, it's none of it your fault."

"Pride?" he said and shrugged his shoulders. "After all, you're from the mainland."

"Man from Mars," I remembered a woman's hoarse voice saying.

"I can tell you..." the doctor began.

"Don't!" I cried. Suddenly I seemed to see everything in a new light. At any

other time I would have tried to get things clear, but now it seemed unimportant. I went close up to him.

"You had a wife?" I asked sternly, like an investigating judge. "You said that Lida reminded you of your wife."

For a second it seemed as though something had startled him, but then he took a grip on himself.

"Now here we have the correspondent," he said jestingly.

"Stop joking!" I said. "Better tell me everything you have in there," and I pointed to his breast. "You've got to tell me. Well? You had a wife? Did she die? From hunger? Or bombing? Or did she leave you?"

"No. She was a doctor too and worked in a partisan detachment. The Germans killed her," said the doctor in a voice unlike his own. "So much griet and suffering there is nowadays, that if somebody can find happiness, he should share it..."

I wanted to weep. I approached the doctor and touched his arm.

"I am glad that we met," I said.

"Is that the truth?" he asked, looking me straight in the eyes. And now I suddenly noticed that he was not in the least young. Every line in his face suddenly stood out as though etched with a sharp instrument.

"How could one tell a lie now?" I cried.

He seized my hand and moved towards the stove.

"Well—look at that—the porridge is burned," he said.

We began to eat.

...We never went to bed at all that night. It was already morning when I emerged from the tent to clean the plates with snow. The blizzard had died down, and the air was clear. As far as the eye could reach, the even, calm ice surface stretched into the distance.

Everything was white, but the sun had not yet risen, and as yet there was no glare to sear the eyes. Lorries were already rumbling along the track, their chains rattling, coming one by one or in whole columns.

I returned to the tent. Smirnov was still asleep, but the doctor was squatting in front of the stove looking into the fire.

"Well, everything's in order!" I said, as I put the plates back on the shelf. "I think I'll be going now."

"Yes, it's time for you to be making a move... Promise me one thing," he said softly. "Promise that you'll think about me when you are together."

His tongue seemed to move with difficulty. I turned to him.

"Yes," I said. "I promise." He held out his hand. I grasped it in silence.

Then I left the tent and went out onto the road.

As soon as I arrived in Leningrad, I went straight to the editorial office of the front line newspaper, wrote a report of the Ladoga Track and took it to the telegraph office. Now I was free. The medical headquarters was at the other end of the town and it was well on in the day when I got there.

A junior lieutenant, a girl, was sitting in the small personnel room. I told her Lida's name and asked whether she had come to receive her new appointment.

I had been prepared for a long wait while the girl hunted through stacks of papers, but she replied at once, glancing at a folder lying on the table.

"Yes, she's been here," she said. "And she's received her papers. She's been appointed to..." she named a certain army.

I thanked her and went out again. Next I made my way to the Finland Station. The square was empty. The famous monument—Lenin on the Armoured Train—was no longer there.

The waiting-room was packed with soldiers. Nobody thought of taking tickets, and for that matter, the ticket offices didn't seem to be working. Very soon everybody began streaming out onto the platform—a train had arrived.

I climbed into a freezing coach from some suburban train, and suddenly realized that I was almost dead with weariness... A jerk roused me. Everything was dark. Somebody shook my elbow and said:

"Time to get out! We're there—trains not going any further!"

I rose, my mind still fogged with sleep. I cannot remember ever being so desperately sleepy. Leaving the coach, I found myself standing on a small suburban station. In the dim light I could see a coquettish-looking kiosk with a couple of boards nailed across it looking as though it had been crossed out with two lines. Beyond the platform a trampled path led to the forest. This was the path which most of the soldiers from the train were taking, and I followed them.

After a little while I found that I was alone—all the other people in front and behind me had taken various branching paths. I guessed that there would be blindages and huts among the snowy spruce, took the path leading into the forest and knocked at the first dugout I saw. It turned out to be a company headquarters. I asked how to get to the medical post, and was given a guide.

We walked for a long time along the forest paths. At last the guide brought me to the dugout where the medical headquarters was stationed. I opened the door and entered. A grey-headed man was sitting at a small table just opposite the entrance.

Half an hour later we had had tea, and I had told Nikolai Fyodorovich Kornyshev, chief of Medical Headquarters, what had brought me to him.

"So that's it," said Kornyshev, when I finished. "She'll probably be coming tomorrow. You'll see her then. You can stop here with us if you like, or go back to the city for two or three days..."

I have a most vivid memory of all my days in Leningrad. But that day is burned into my mind. Everything is there, even the smallest details. Even after a year,

two, ten—everything will surely be etched in my memory as clearly as I saw it that January day.

I rose early. Kornyshev had already gone, but there was a note lying on the table in a neat handwriting, not at all the usual "doctor's scrawl": "Get up, wash, the batman will bring you breakfast, then go and take a walk in the forest. I shall be back at about twelve. Kornyshev."

"There are some good chaps in the world!" I thought, and obeyed his instructions to the letter.

The batman brought a bundle of wood and wanted to light the stove, but I told him that I would do that myself. I am very fond of kindling stoves, and from childhood I always loved to stare into the embers. In wartime, in winter, the chance to light a stove and sit there by the fire was a luxury, of course, and I knew how to value it. I squatted there on my heels, leisurely peeling the bark from the logs. Every now and then I glanced at the door, hoping that it would open, but then I remembered that the train arrived only in the evening, so that it was no use expecting her before eight o'clock. I suddenly changed my mind, left the stove to take care of itself and decided to take a walk. The morning sun was shining brightly and everything was silent. Motionless spruce trees surrounded me on all sides, a little drift of snow occasionally sliding down from the topmost bough—probably disturbed by some bird or squirrel.

I was struck by the majestic calm all around. It was difficult to realize that this was the front. I was glad to think that I would meet her in this silence.

...Whenever I began thinking about anything, it was about Lida. There were two Lidas in my mind—the one I knew, a person so near and dear to me, so well-known and familiar that I could forget that she and I were not one and the same, and another whom I knew from hearsay, standing behind Irina Vakhrusheva; she had suffered so much and learned to understand so much, stern like the whole of this city.

I thought about her, and then immediately thought about myself, whether she would still understand me now, or whether for her, too, I should be a "man from Mars?"

But this thought came from my head, not from my heart. I knew that the first hour we spent together would disperse all strangeness, and if there was anything I did not understand, she would make it clear to me.

I lay on some spruce branches and remembered the past few days. I thought about Irina, now become so stern, and the doctor pushing the lorry in the blizzard. Who could share happiness with these people?

I felt that never before had love so swayed the human spirit as in this grim time.

I looked at my watch. It was no more than eleven. I knew that the train would arrive only in the evening... But suppose she had come on some chance lorry? After all, cars must certainly be coming here from medical headquarters? She might arrive in my absence, and they would send her to her division. This was the thought that struck me, and then I almost laughed aloud! Love certainly does deprive a man of his common sense. But all the same I rose and walked along the road. I told myself that I was doing it just for the sake of taking a walk...

How wonderful it would be to meet her just now!.. Walking along with her duffel-bag on her shoulder. It would probably be heavy for her. She would see me and cry out. Would she stop, or run to me? After all, for her the meeting would be a miracle, a real miracle...

I walked along the road, peering into the distance. But I met nobody. I walked as far as the station and then turned back.

Kornyshev had not yet come when I entered the blindage. I began to light the stove, then went to a shelf bearing a pile of books. "I wonder what the doctor reads?" I thought, and began looking through them. On top there were several medical books, poems by Mayakovsky, "Anna Karenina," and Veressayev's "Notes of a Doctor." "There are some strange meetings on a bookshelf," I thought.

Footsteps crunched on the snow outside, and the doctor entered.

"Well, have you carried out instructions?" he asked benevolently. His cheeks were rosy and his eyes sparkled. "I suppose it's no use expecting any visitors till evening?"

I nodded.

"Well, well, excellent!" said Kornyshev. "Then the prescription remains the same—walk about and dream! I've got to run now. We'll have dinner together."

He went out of the blindage.

I sat there by the stove gazing into the flames. Then suddenly I felt that the place was insufferably hot and went out again into the forest.

The sun was still shining, the spruce trees soared up tall and majestic, the snow was as blindingly white as before, but I suddenly had a torturing desire to be back there, in the Leningrad streets. When I had been in Leningrad I had felt that I would be glad to flee from those streets with their drifting snow and wounded, ice-covered houses. I had felt that it would be happiness to be in a silence where no AA guns fired, no shells screamed and no metronome ticked.

But it seemed that I had been mistaken. I no longer noticed anything of all that had so enchanted me in the morning. I was not superstitious, but the thought entered my head that I would be punished for not wanting to meet her in Leningrad, for running away to this isle of peace and quietness... I returned to the dugout and began heating the stove again.

Kornyshev returned at about six o'clock. His cheeks were still rosier, and his eyes sparkled like those of a youth. He was followed by the batman carrying plates and a mess tin.

"Are you alone?" he asked politely.

"She hasn't come," I replied quietly.

"You don't say so!" said Kornyshev.

The batman brought in a lamp and lighted it.

"That's a shame," said Kornyshev, with sincere concern. "That means that they've held her up at medical headquarters. Making out her papers, probably. After all, they told you for certain that she was appointed to our army?"

"Nikolai Fyodorovich," I said. "How can I get to Leningrad?"

"To Leningrad? Now? But the train goes only at ten in the morning. And for that matter, what would you do in Leningrad at night? Wait till tomorrow. She's sure to come with the evening train."

"No, no!" burst from me. Even the thought of stopping here another day was unendurable.

Kornyshev looked at me searchingly.

"If you feel you must go, you'll have to wait until morning." He came close to me. "Get a grip on yourself. I'm going now, you read something. Here's 'Notes of a Doctor,' for instance. A splendid book. You've read it, of course?" He took the book from the shelf and held it out to me. I took it.

"Well, see you in the evening," said Kornyshev kindly, and left.

I turned the pages of the book, then laid it aside. I sat there, my mind completely empty, thought of any kind seemed physically painful. I did not remember how long I sat there until Kornyshev's voice jerked me out of my brown study. Nikolai Fyodorovich was standing in the doorway.

"Quick, quick!" he cried. "There's a lorry just going to Leningrad! Come along, I'll take you to it!"

I jumped up and snatched my jacket. We walked along the path, and I saw the dark outline of a truck. I climbed into the body.

"Well, good-bye!" said Kornyshev, wringing my hand.

"Good-bye!" I replied. "And very many thanks." Then the lorry started.

Night had already fallen when we reached Leningrad, but the streets were quite light. The moon was rising. And the strange thing was that as soon as I saw the grey Leningrad granite and heard the even beat of the metronome, I felt easier in my mind.

I climbed out of the lorry on Uritsky Square and ten minutes later was mounting the stairs of the "Astoria," where I met Olshansky coming down, lamp in hand.

"Where in the world did you stray off to, Signor?" asked Mephistopheles.

I told him that I had been to a unit, and had already passed him when Olshansky said:

"And there was a girl there, in the lorry, who was very interested in you."

I turned to Olshansky. He was standing there, shading the lamp with his hand, smilling slyly.

"I didn't tell her too much about you, it's true," he continued. "How do I know whether you're particularly keen on meeting her or not?.."

I seized him by the coat.

"Olshansky!" I cried. "To hell with all your jokes! Where is she? What's happened to her?"

He looked at me, startled.

"She was very anxious to know your address. I rather wondered if I hadn't been foolish to mention your name? You must forgive me... but... I think she's been sitting there in your room since morning."

I stood there on the stairs, leaning against the banister. Olshansky said something, but I did not hear a word. There was a beating in my temples and my mouth was dry. I felt that if I released the banister and tried to take a step, I should rall.

A thousand times I had imagined this meeting, but never had I dreamed that I would be shaken to such an extent.

Then I began slowly mounting the stairs. A light came from somewhere, and I did not realize at once that it was Olshansky lighting me with his lamp. At my room door I stopped to catch my breath. Then I softly opened the door...

Lida was sitting on the windowsill, half-turned from the door, looking out. The moon shone so brightly that the whole room was as light as it would be during the white nights.

"Lida!" I whispered. "Lida!.."

She jumped up and stood there, her back pressed to the glass.

"You?" she said. "At last!"

...I told her all about my search, but she suddenly interrupted me.

"How funny you look in uniform!" she said. "Not a bit like yourself. The shoulders of your tunic need padding. I'll think of some way of doing it tomorrow."

We were standing face to face beside the window, the moonlight falling upon her face. She looked small and frail, and I could see every line on her face.

Outside, St. Isaac's rose from the snow-covered square.

"Do you remember how we always loved to look out of the window at the cathedral?" I asked.

"Yes. During the white nights."

"It's just the same now as in the white nights. Even the window isn't frozen."

We stood by the window looking out onto the square. Then I put my arms round her and kissed her. I could not believe that I was holding her. I wanted to stand there for ever without opening my arms. She was looking into my eyes, and I into hers. This was happiness. Then we sat down on the divan and began talking about something unimportant—accustoming ourselves to one another.

"Have you been to see Irina?" I asked.

"No, I've been waiting for you here in the room all day. How grateful I was to that lanky correspondent! For you know it was he who told me that you were here. But heavens above, how scared he was when I told him to take me to your room at once!" She laughed at the memory. Her laugh was dull and rather sad.

I kissed her again. Her lips were icy.

"Are you cold?" I asked. Then I took off her felt boots and wrapped up her legs in a blanket. "It's freezing in here," I said.

"I'm not cold," she said, and closed her

eyes. "Do you know what I feel like? I feel as though I'm floating on a warm river and have got into an eddy, but one going slowly, so that it just rocks me pleasantly and everything's clear, and there's no need to go on any further."

"Are you tired, dear?" I asked.

She opened her eyes.

"No," she smiled. "What's there to make me tired when I've been sitting here all day waiting for you?"

"Hungry?"

"No, why should I be? I took my rations for two days."

"Just imagine how much I have to learn about you," I said. "You've been through so much!.."

"Not today, dear. We'll talk tomorrow. Today let it be as though we had never parted."

"Good," I said, "that's not difficult. Because actually we have never been parted."

I hugged her knees and laid my head upon them. I was happy, but I was thinking of another, boundless happiness. I wanted our parting to be the last so that we should never have to separate again. Side by side with this woman I felt ready for any labours, any achievements. At first she had been my heart and my love; now she had become the source of my courage.

"What are you thinking about, dear?" she asked.

"What happiness it would be never to part any more!"

"But that's not possible! The day after tomorrow I have to join my unit. I asked for two days' leave. One of them has already gone."

"You'll get three more," I said, and told her about my meeting with Kornyshev.

"Three whole days?" She clapped her hands like a child. "A whole three days together?"

I began kissing her cold fingers.

"I'll try to come and visit you at your unit," I said. "I shall probably be staying some time longer in Leningrad."

"Did you go to my place at Narvskaya?"

"Yes, I was there. The house is wrecked. It was difficult to find your room. At the window where we used to have tea there is an artillery observer called Mukhtar Tazhibayev. I'll tell you all about him."

"You probably thought that I was lost for good. Was it difficult to find me?"

"Now it doesn't seem at all difficult. I feel now that I'd have found you wherever you were."

She bent and kissed the back of my head.

"What do you think," she said, "when will the war end?"

"I don't know. I think, in a year. Or a year and a half."

"What a wonderful day that will be... I just can't imagine it. What will you do the first day after the war?"

"Come to Leningrad."

"But you live in Moscow?"

"We'll live in Leningrad. I think I couldn't live anywhere else now."

We sat silently. Then she laughed.

"What are you laughing about?"

"Nothing in particular. I just remembered how scared that correspondent of yours was—what was his name?"

"Olshansky."

"Would you believe it, for some reason he just couldn't take in the idea that I was your wife."

"The idiot!"

"But after all, he's right. I'm not your wife really."

"You're more to me than any wife."

"And you're more to me than any husband. That's why I found it so funny."

She laid her hand on my forehead. It was still as cold as ever.

"You're still frozen, Lida," I said. "Go to bed. Get undressed and go to bed."

I rose and went to the window. When I turned, she was still sitting there, embracing her knees with her arms.

"I... I'm not sleepy," she said softly. "Let's just sit here together."

She looked at me, and I saw something scared in her eyes. Then she stood up with a sudden movement and began unfastening the buttons of her tunic. Then she came up to me.

"You were... on Ladoga?" she asked softly.

"Yes," I said firmly. "I was in the tent where you lived. I talked to him."

We were silent. Then she asked:

"You... don't want to ask me anything?"

"No," I said decidedly and kissed her. I saw tears on her lashes and wiped them away with my lips.

...It was light, quiet, as it was in the white nights. We lay there in the bed.

"I wonder what time it is now?"

"I don't know. I feel as though time had ceased to exist."

"So do I. I'm sleepy now, but I'm afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Yes, afraid that I shall go to sleep and stop feeling how happy I am."

I put my arms round her.

"Go to sleep, Lida," I said, "sleep and don't be afraid of anything. There's nothing to be afraid of when we're together."

"I don't want to be afraid of anything. But all the same I feel rather scared."

"What of?"

"Too much happiness... Why should we have it earlier than other people? So much grief all around us..."

"We are not depriving other people of anything. Go to sleep, Lida! We won't think about all that just now. Sleep, my darling, good night."

In a few minutes she had fallen asleep.

A knock at the door wakened me, and I jumped out of bed. A soldier was standing outside the door; he handed me a note.

I read it. The secretary from the front line newspaper had written that in an hour and a half my editor would speak to me by direct wire.

"What's that?" asked Lida, when I came back to the bed. I looked at her, and it seemed to me that many of the lines had vanished from her face. I told her about the note.

"Is it far?" she asked.

"An hour's walk. I'll tell you what we'll do. I'll go to the telegraph office and you to medical headquarters. From there you can ring up Kornyshev and he'll give you three days' leave. As soon as you're free, come back here. And in the evening... in the evening I've got a surprise for you. But that's a secret now. All right?"

She was still in bed when I left.

It seemed to me that I got to the telegraph office very quickly, but all the same I was too late.

"You've already been called," said the man on duty and handed me a ribbon. I read:

"Return immediately."

At first it was as though something had torn inside me. But then I began to think how well everything had fallen out. After all, the telegram might have come a week ago, two days ago, even yesterday and I should have had to go without finding Lida. Now I had found her, and a deep happiness filled me.

My surprise for Lida had been to get three days' rations and invite Irina and Mephistopheles to supper. I was so happy that I wanted to tell the whole of Leningrad about it. It seemed to me that the more people rejoiced with us, the more conscious we should be of our own joy. Now all this had come to nothing, of course. In the evening I would have to leave.

I walked through the city thinking that it would be hard for me to leave it. I had come to feel for it as for a live thing...

I looked at the torn walls of its wounded houses and thought how wonderful it would be to live in this city later on and see these houses made whole again, to wander through the streets and remember all that had been...

Lida was standing at the window, the same place where I had found her the previous day.

"How long you've been!" she said, coming to meet me.

"I got a telegram calling me back," I told her, to get it over with at once.

"Yes?" she said softly, and her voice trembled. "I knew that it couldn't last long... our happiness... our too-early happiness..."

I said nothing.

"When are you going?" asked Lida.

"This evening."

"So soon?" she was silent for a moment, then added with a faint smile: "I'm talking as though the war had only just started, and you were going off, leaving me at home. After all, I must go today too."

"Don't let's talk about going away for the present," I said. "Let's just sit together a little."

...After that we went for a walk in the town. We did not decide on any definite direction, but by a kind of tacit agreement made for those places bound up with our memories.

We parted at the gunpowder works, and I jumped into a passing lorry.

Translated by Eve Manning

Drawing by Vassili Fomichov

THE BROODY FASCIST HEN

Foreseeing impending defeat the Hitlerites have set up a secret headquarters to organize German factories in neutral countries and preserve German companies in preparation for a future war.

(Newspaper report)

VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN

(Fragments)

If a museum exhibited
a Bolshevik
in tears,
Night and day
that museum
would be visited —
You couldn't see such
in a hundred years!
Five pointed stars
were branded on our backs
by White-Guard bands,
with our live bodies
Japanese engines were stoked.
Mamontov's band
buried us alive
head downwards in the sands,
With lead
and steel
our mouths were choked.
"Recant!" they commanded in paroxysm
But just three words
burst from flaming throats:
"Long
Live
Communism!"
Row after row,
tier above tier.
rows of iron,
tiers of steel,
On January 22nd
of the seventh year
the Soviet Congress
began to fill.
They seated themselves
making their way
with humorous remarks,
odd tales to tell...
It's time they started!
What's all the delay?
Why is the Presidium
thinned out as if felled?
Why are their eyes
redder than the loges' plush?
What's the matter with Kalinin—
hardly stands on his feet.
An accident?
What is it?
What's the hush?

Can it be?
No!
But can it be?
The ceiling
lowered on us
with downcast wing.
We bow our heads low—bend lower still!
The candelabras' lachrymned fires
fast sink
turn back
and quiver with a chill.
The bell gives a redundant ring
and chokes.
Controlling himself
Kalinin rises.
Tears he can't brush
from beard and cheek
drop
and glisten on his front—
there's no disguising.
Thoughts heave up
to imagine it.
Blood at the temples,
a seething tide.
"Yesterday
at six hours and fifty minutes
Comrade Lenin died!"
This year saw
what a hundred'll never know.
These days
will merge
in the years' dull fame.
Terror
from iron wrenched out a groan.
Through Bolsheviks
runs a cry of pain.
A burden unbearable.
A strain that nothing allays.
To find out—
when and how?
Why be tormented.
A catafalque
in the streets
and the alleys
the Bolshoi Theatre[1]
floated.
Gladness
crawls like a snail.
Sorrow's
a storm-raging rack.
No sun,
no ice glows pale,—
newspapers
sieved in a hail

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[1] The Congress of the Soviets described above took place in the Bolshoi Theatre.— Ed.

snowing everything
black.
News fell on the worker
at his bench.
a bullet
through his brain,
and over his tools and instruments
a glass of tears was drained.
The little peasant
who'd seen things in his days,
had often looked death
in the eyes
undismayed,—
now turned away
from his old woman's gaze—
but his dirt-smeared fist
betrayed.
There were people
hard as flint—
and then
they bit their lips
till the blood ran.
Children
grew as serious as the old men,
and venerable greybeards
cried like children.
Over all the earth
the sleepless winds blow.
But nohow,
rebelling,
can one reach the conclusion,
that this coffin
in frosty
room-burrowed Moscow
is the son and father
of revolution.
The End.
The End.
The End.
On whom then
to depend:
Glass—
and underneath is seen...
That was him
they carried from
the railway room then
thru the city
he took from the Gentry.
The street,
like a raw wound opening,
groaned,
with deep pain wracked.
Here
every cobblestone
recognized Lenin
from the clatter
of that first October attack.

Here
every word
embroidered on blood-red linen
was thought out by him,
by him invoked
Here
every tower
had listened to Lenin,
would follow him
through fire and smoke.
Here
Lenin is known
by every worker,
They'd strew,
like pine wreaths,
their hearts on his pall.
He led in the fight,
foretold they'd conquer,
And now
proletarians—
are masters of all.
Here
every peasant
has Lenin's name
more loving than saints,
in his heart written deep.
That very earth
he helped them claim
where their old dads
in hewn-out coffins
sleep.
And the Communards
under Red Square[1] *laid,*
seemed to whisper—
"Dear one!"
so loving—
"Live—
there's no need to end a beautiful fate—
a hundred times
we'll fight
and lay in our coffins."
Then
the words of a miracle man
would resound
that we should now die—
to give him back breath,—
the dam of the streets
would be razed to the ground
and people would rush
with a song
to their death.
But wonders don't happen—
no dreams will recall him.

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[1] "Communards" is the name given by the poet to those fighters for the October revolution who were killed in October 1917 during the storming of the Kremlin and who were buried on the Red Square.—*Ed.*

Just Lenin—
a coffin—
and shoulders bent.
He remained to the end
the most human of all men—
suffer
and carry
the sorrows of men.
Never yet
has been borne
by our oceans
through all ages
a cargo
so priceless,
as that coffin-red
to the House of the Unions,
floating on the backs
of sobbing and marches.
Sentries of honour
stand still at attention,
grim iron guard
of Lenin's firm forging,
and people
already
are waiting with tension,
there—
where all of Moscow's converging.
In the winter of cold '17—
to queue up,
few
would stand for bread—
next day'll do:
But in that
terrible
freezing queue
everyone stood,
children and sick ones too,
Villages
lined up with the towns,
in array.
Deep manly sorrow,
childrens' shrill cries.
The whole earth of labour
passed on parade,
a live consummation
of Lenin's own life.
A yellow sun sets slowly,
slant-eyed and lacquered,
strewing
ray-pale petals
under our feet,
as if
oppressed
mourning one who succoured
bow down Chinese
and hopelessly weep.

Nights are afloat
on the backs of the days,
mixing up hours,
confusing the dates.
As if
it weren't night,
no shining star rays,
but weeping
over Lenin,
are Negroes from the States.
Frost unprecedented
burnt one's very soles.
Yet people stood waiting
all day
in that press.
And everyone refrained,
despite the cold,
from even beating their hands—
no, not in place.
The frost seizes hold,
and hauls us,
as if
it is testing
how strong our love's tempered.
Bursts into the crowd.
Gets lost in the drift.
And steps in through the columns,
which everyone entered.
The steps rise up sheer
like sharp precise cliffs.
And now
even shuffling
and breathing
quite lapse.
It's fearful to tread—
underfoot a precipice—
a bottomless precipice
of just four steps.
A precipice
from serfdom
men ever have lain in,
where only red gold
wrought worth.
A precipice brink—
this coffin
and Lenin—
and beyond—the red commune
all over the earth.
What do you see? Only his great forehead.
And Nadyezhda Konstantinovna[1]
beyond...
in a mist...

[1] Kroupskaya, Lenin's wife.—Ed.

Maybe
tearless eyes
would see more ahead.
Into such eyes
I never glimpsed,
Floating banners
bow low
as they pass.
The last salute
is given—
finally.
"Farewell then, dear comrade,
you fought to the last,
your name in our hearts lives eternally." [1]
Fear.
Close your eyes tight—
and slowly pace—
as if
you were walking
a tight-rope
taut-smooth.
As if
for a minute,
face to face
you remained
with the only
infinite truth.
I'm happy.
That sounding march,
like a deep-running river,
bears on its surface
my body's light frame.
I know for certain—
now
and for ever,
that minute's
within me—
yes, that very same.
I'm happy
that I'm
a small part of that power,
that even tears
are common to us
One cannot partake
of anything greater
and purer
than that mightiest of feelings
called class.

Translated by Herbert Marshall

[1] The words are from Lenin's favourite revolutionary song.—Ed.

IN POLAND

The roads of Poland are crowded. But recently, these came to a dead end at the Vistula: now they have straddled it, and are lengthening westwards and have already reached Poland's old-time frontier, the Oder.

Who are the travellers one meets today on the bustling Polish roads? The war tore people from their accustomed haunts, scattering them far and wide, and now liberated Poland is, as it were, settling down once more.

This man, for instance, was packed off to Rzeszów by the Germans, and now he is pedaling north to his native Kutno, with his few remaining belongings hitched to his bicycle. Another is hurrying from Siedlce to Lodz to find out if his family is still alive. Others too are making for their native parts—Gdynia, or maybe Poznań to return there the moment these places are liberated. There's traffic the other way too: some Poles have managed to slip through the Germans' fingers and make their way across the lines. Many are heading for the sites of the "death camps" in the hopes of finding out about their missing relatives—they are visiting Sobibor, Majdanek, or the huge and fearful Treblinka.

And in recent days, vast numbers of people from all ends of Poland have been streaming to Warsaw, the liberated heart of their country. Among others we met here a party of engineering experts whom the Provisional Government sent from Lublin to draw up the engineering plans for Warsaw's rehabilitation. The Poles find a source of veritable inspiration in the Soviet Union's wonderful example in rebuilding German-wrecked towns.

Numerous people of various kinds are moving now over Poland's roads, trampling down the meagre January snow under their waggon-wheels. Singing, recruits swing past, led by a commander with a handsome moustache and diamond-shaped cap. He is a veteran of the Kosciuszko division which was the first in the whole Polish Army to start fighting the Germans. It was also the first to enter Warsaw together with the Red Army troops.

From time to time you run across an unpretentious grave that looks infinitely familiar: a small pyramid of wood, surmounted by a star. The graves of Russian soldiers. We passed some of these on a church commemoration for the dead. Hundreds of Poles, men and women, were lighting lampions on these Russian graves, decorating them with flowers, sending up prayers for their liberators. . .

Nightfall found us just outside a small town. These little Polish towns are all of a pattern with their tiny asphalted centre, unpaved market-place, deep in mud, diminutive filling station, cabmen in long coats with tin buttons, little coffee-houses and tiny shops with fancy names like "Olympia," "Palermo," "New Babylon;" the big Gothic church, and the hoardings with obituary notices and the playbills of some travelling company on them. But people are excited and thrilled by something else just now—the Provisional Government's decree on the land reform. This reform is uppermost in Polish minds and every day, alongside the reports from the battlefronts, the Polish papers publish reports on how the division of the landed estates is progressing.

At night the shutters are closed and many a lively argument and conversation spring up.

The talk centres mostly around the new land reform.

"Well, well," says Stanislaw Mańkowski, nodding his greying head, "many Polish governments meant to initiate that reform, starting from 1918 right up to 1939; but they couldn't do it."

"And why couldn't they?" young Josef Marcinek chimes in. "I'll tell you why: because they didn't want to. I've heard from Antopol, from Krynica, from Leonów, from Natalin, that the reform has gone very well in those places. I've got a brother-in-law at Lancut. You know him, Jan Kopacz. He got a few morgs of land too, from Count Potocki's estate. The big magnates used to live all around that district. It isn't so long since Potocki was receiving the swine Göring in that castle of his."

And Marcinek delivers himself of a few choice epithets à propos Göring; Potocki gets his share too.

Marcinek is an interesting type, something halfway between workingman and shopkeeper. He has no fixed occupation. When it pays, he does business in a tiny shop bearing the sign "Cosmos" over the door. On sale here you will find dried up shoe-polish, apples, mouldy toothpaste and crooked lamp-chimneys. If business is bad, he returns to the lathe in the spool factory. Sometimes he pursues both occupations. Many people in Poland are like that. One occupation didn't provide a livelihood and so you may often meet some curious combinations: a 'cellist who is also a chemist, a water-hawker who goes in for chimney-sweeping, a literary critic and meteorologist combined.

Marcinek is a slight, smallish fellow with a fine mop of hair. He pins his faith in the Polish Army which he regards

as the hope of free Poland, as her salvation. And he, too, is joining its ranks. There are many simple-hearted, sincere people like him in these little Polish towns.

By his side sits Edward Mazur, a twenty-six-year-old worker from Praga—a figure typical of the new Poland. A former railway mechanic, during enemy occupation he fought as a partisan with an Armia Ludowa unit. Now, responding to the Provisional Government's call, he is entering a school for Polish Army officers. There are thousands like him, too, who will form the core of Poland's new democratic officer body.

Pan Mańkowski says with a sigh: "Well, well... I wonder when we'll get home."

"Aren't you from these parts?" the stranger asks.

"Me, I'm from Poznań. The Schwabians made all the Poles get out of Poznań, curse them! Of my whole family, only my mother's left there, and she's eighty-seven."

There are no natives in this little town —they're all from other parts.

Most of the people now living here are deportees from Poznań. The original inhabitants were savagely murdered by the Germans. Out of twenty thousand, only seventy people escaped.

Pan Mańkowski gives us his mother's address:

"I'd be much obliged if you could look in on the old lady when Poznań is freed, and tell her I'm alive and on the way. I know you army people will get there before I can."

Sounds from the street disturb the conversation. Red Army troops are passing through the town.

In every house, windows are flung open. People gaze with respectful admiration on the great army marching westwards.

Pan Mańkowski repeats: "Yes, you'll be in Poznań before me."

Lublin is now a bustling centre with noisy street traffic. The "Stare Miasto" is very attractive with its little mediaeval lanes. There are also quite a few large modern houses, some of which were damaged in the fighting, but are being rebuilt at a perceptible rate.

Its provisional status of capital has lent this customarily quiet provincial town an air of metropolitan life. Many papers and periodicals are appearing here, several theatres are open. At the picture houses Polish, Soviet, American and French films are running. Particularly popular with Polish audiences are the Soviet films containing shots of Moscow. Spectators eagerly view the scenes of the Soviet capital, impressed by its size and beauty. In the film showing German prisoners being convoyed through Moscow the attention of Polish audiences was concentrated not so much on the prisoners as the noble outlines of the Gorky and Sadovaya thoroughfares. The hoardings are plastered with announcements of meetings and congresses of the various parties, unions and societies. An art exhibition has been opened, the first in Poland since 1939. Life, arrested by the Germans six years ago, is surging anew. Many schools have opened, both government and private, as, for example, the Organists' School and the Merchant Association's High School. Three universities are now functioning in the town—those of Lublin and Warsaw, and the Catholic University.

All this is true not only of Lublin. In Bialystok, in Radom and even in liberated Warsaw dozens of schools are opening. Poland has turned avidly to knowledge.

To Lublin people are flocking from all parts of the liberated country, and the arrivals are now probably as numerous as the town's own natives. In the crowded streets you meet a diversity of people. There goes a stocky, bewhiskered peasant who might have stepped straight out of one of Sienkiewicz's historical novels. He carries his food in a little bag together with some old plans of the land allotments, and is waiting for some government department to attend to his land affairs. Here, too, a professor, who by some miracle escaped the slaughter which the Hitlerites wrought among Poland's intellectual workers; a youth who has hastened here to enter the university, bringing along his little pile of textbooks that had been buried in the ground for five years past; an author, who fled from German-occupied Poland with a bundle of manuscripts penned in secret. The latter can hardly credit his eyes as he looks at the advertisements of the new Polish publishing houses, or an issue of "Regeneration," the full-scale literary magazine, or a poster announcing forthcoming literary readings, or the sign of "The Poet's Coffee-house"—all these things were non-existent in Poland during those years of horror.

A Chopin celebration has been held here. Tadeusz Mazurkiewicz, director of the Warsaw Opera House, gave a talk on the composer's life, and Stanislaw Szpinalski, the celebrated Polish musician, gave a recital of Chopin's works. Nothing unusual —one might think, just another concert. But for the Poles who have lived through the dark days of enemy occupation, the very mention of Chopin, of the Warsaw Opera, of Szpinalski, is a sensation, a joy.

The Polish intelligentsia sustained innumerable losses at the Germans' hands. We read the list of Polish scientists whom the Hitlerites murdered. Among them are representatives of every branch of learning.

Place names occur in brackets, after some of the names: Oswięcim—that's the name of the huge death camp near Cracow or Dachau, Machausen, Buchewaldsee, Maidanek, Paviak, Oranienburg and so forth. The Germans closed down schools, but set up morgues. In some cases the brackets contain a further brief remark, as, for example, Professor Witold Niewicki—"Killed together with his son." Or: Professor Jan Rostafiński—"Deported. Destination unknown." Or: Stanislaw Saks—"Killed in Warsaw Gestapo during inves-

tigation." Or: Professor Razoj—"Killed in ghetto."

There are about a hundred names well known throughout Poland in this ghastly martyrology of Polish science. And it is said that the list is not yet complete.

Then there is another terrible list: the catalogue of Polish books which the Germans banned. It forms a bulky volume in itself, and entered in it in alphabetical order, with true German pedantry, is practically everything that Polish literature has produced. The list, which prescribes that all the books be consigned to the flames, includes the works of Mickiewicz, Sienkiewicz, Josef Conrad, Stefan Zeromski, Marja Konopnicka, Boleslav Prus, Kazimierz Tetmajer, Gabriela Zapolska, Reymont and Kraszewski.

I was walking with a certain Polish writer a couple of days ago, along the streets of liberated Warsaw, when he said:

"It reminds me of Spain during the days of struggle against the fascists. If Lublin resembles Valencia, then Warsaw resembles Madrid, both externally and in spirit. Today the Soviet troops and the Polish Army have cleared many more dozen kilometres for which I'm glad not only because Polish territory has increased by that much more, but because Hitler's domain has shrunk. The more light there is in the world, the more reason and justice, the less is there of darkness, filth and brutality."

We stopped at the crossroads not far from the Plac Saski, once Warsaw's noblest square. Polish soldiers were pulling down street signs bearing the words "Adolf Hitler Platz."

There was also another German sign there. A soldier swung his rifle to knock it down, but my companion stopped him. This sign was attached to the charred remains of a tramcar and bore the words: "Nur für Deutsche" ("For Germans only").

"Let it remain, there's something symbolic about it," my companion said, looking at the wretched shell of the car. "Truly, for Germans only."

LEV SLAVIN

RUSSIANS

This tragedy was enacted in the town of Kreuzburg during the days of our impetuous advance into German Silesia.

I was shown the spot where it took place. I met a few survivors, and hearing their story, I experienced a new surge of pride in being Russian.

The life-stories of these men were different, and different roads had landed them on German soil. Vladimir Chesnokov once worked as a fitter at the power station in Kursk. He was called up early in the war, took part in the fighting at Moscow, and was wounded there. On his return to the ranks, he was hit again in the battle of Orel, captured in this condition and bundled off to work in Silesia.

Stepan Zarubin was a precision-tool maker at an Orel engineering works. Up to the last minute he was engaged in dismantling and evacuating the equipment; then he tried to make his way through the lines, but was caught and hustled off to a camp. Thanks to his useful craftsmanship, his life was spared, and he, too, was put to work.

Gennadi Suslov, a mechanical engineer, watched his whole family starve to death in the winter of 1942. He himself, despite being ill with scurvy, was shanghaied to Germany.

A fourth was Vladislav Sibirko.

The four men met in the autumn of 1943, after long and weary tribulations in the town of Neustadt, German Silesia, in a so-called "distribution camp," although "slave market" would have been a better name for it. They became friends and resolved to co-ordinate their secret fight against the Germans which each had hitherto waged individually. The four aimed at getting sent to some German munitions factory where they could act in concert. Suslov undertook to arrange this since the Germans knew he was an expert engineer, and rated him accordingly.

So it was that the four friends found themselves at the huge German Oppel works in the town of Oppeln. This factory turned out cars, lorries and self-propelled artillery for the Wehrmacht. Here they managed to make contact with other labour-conscripted Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians from the occupied Soviet areas, and started their fight against the Germans—a fight that was soundless and muffled, but deadly dangerous for all that.

Chesnokov specialized in powerhouse disasters. The frequent interruptions in the functioning of the turbines were his handiwork and that of his mates. But what he prided himself on most was the dynamo explosion in January of last year, which kept the works idle for close on three days and let the electric smelting furnaces run cold. Zarubin, allowed to come and go on the factory premises out of working hours, would do a very thorough and painstaking job on the particular machine part he was ordered to overhaul, and in the meantime would drop a few grains of sand in the bearings of two or three others, or find some other way of putting them out of commission. Suslov and Sibirko, for their part, set out to disrupt the main assembly line.

Working in this enemy factory, they were active, implacable fighters, and that helped them to endure the horrors of their

slave existence. The life in the foul-smelling barracks, where they slept literally on top of one another, the turnip slush which was the "Eastern workers" only food and which they dubbed the "Führer's soup," the kicks and blows of the German overseers—nothing could break the spirit of the Soviet patriots. They endured in order to fight on.

The Germans shot Boris Nikitin of Voronezh, Constantine Zuyev of Smolensk, Alexander Vassilyev of Spass-Demensk, Nikolai Vorobyov, the Rzhev engineer, and hundreds of other inconspicuous soldiers of the workshop war at Oppel's. But our four friends escaped.

They lived to see the happy day when the rumour spread through the slave barracks that the Red Army had shattered the Vistula defences and was rolling triumphantly through Poland. It was only a rumour—but confirmation soon came.

The "Eastern workers" were bundled into trains to be transported into the interior. The equipment in the factories turning out parts for Oppel's was dismantled and loaded onto flat-cars. The four friends landed in Kreuzberg with the very first party.

The factories there were in a turmoil. The cannonade of our guns was already audible. Soviet stormoviks slid over the town, firing at the German columns as they pulled out, and at the trains standing on the tracks. The friends decided the time was ripe, and started up a scrimmage with the guards. German rifles and revolvers were wrenched out of the enemy's hands. Then Suslov gave orders to tear up the points at the station and overturn an engine on the turntable. The Germans shouldn't drive off the six equipment trains standing ready to steam out.

The movement spread to other groups of workers at the factory. The guards and foremen were soon disposed of. The factory was in the rebels' hands; but not before the manager, who had barricaded himself in on the top floor, had rung through to the commandant and called on the help of one of the retreating units. In the meantime Zarubin had unearthed a red signalling flag, and clambering up the chimney stack, set it flying—his country's standard of victory. He was the first to be struck down by volleys of the German soldiers. Zarubin fell dead from the chimney top, but the flag remained waving over the factory and the town. The insurgent workers barricaded themselves in. The Germans attacked, with every weapon at their command. Tanks and self-propelled guns shelled the factory building. The workers replied with rifle shots and pitched lumps of iron, bricks, heavy pieces of slag through the windows. They fought back with crowbars, spanners and iron rails. Suslov hit on the idea of fixing the fire-hose to the hot water pipe and turning the boiling stream onto the Germans below. For five hours these men, whose principal weapon was their burning hatred, beat off the German assault.

Vladislav Sibirko died a hero's death in this struggle. He perished fighting on the staircase, and his body was found to contain six bullet wounds. Suslov had his right foot blown off, but he stayed on, firing his rifle through the window opening until a bullet cut him down. And only one of the four—Chesnokov—lived to see the moment when our tanks came tearing up to the factory walls. It was he, and the officer commanding the armour squad that captured this district, who told me of the tragic happening at Kreuzburg's Northern Works, and showed me the bodies of the Soviet patriots killed in the unequal contest. And all of us bared our heads over the remains of these Russian men whom the enemy had failed to cow.

BORIS POLEVOY

WINTER SPORTS IN THE SOVIET UNION

If on some fine winter day you were to fly low on a fast plane over the vast territory of the Soviet Union from the Baltic coast to Vladivostok and from Archangel to Rostov on the Don, you would see millions of people skiing across the snow-covered countryside and gaily whirling around the ice-skating rinks. The even winter climate of the U.S.S.R. with its numerous sun-lit days creates ideal conditions for winter sports.

Skiing and ice-skating are favourite forms of winter recreation in our country for people of all ages and in all walks of life. Ice rinks and ski stations and their equipment are at the disposal of each and every youth, university student, intellectual and Red Army man. That winter sports are widely developed in the Soviet Union is strikingly illustrated by the amount of athletic equipment manufactured in the country. Soviet factories and cooperatives annually produce more than 2,000,000 pairs of skates and approximately the same number of skis.

There were more than a hundred skating rinks and ski stations, catering for nearly half a million people each Sunday, functioning before the war in Moscow alone.

The traiditional mass ski-runs sponsored annually by the trade unions and youth organizations draw an average of five or six million people. Distances equivalent to more than one thousand times around the Equator are covered by the skiers participating in this popular two-week event. The state ski training programme has played an important part in preparing hundreds of thousands of reserve ski troopers for the Red Army.

This winter Soviet ice-skaters and skiers are observing two anniversaries. The speed-skaters are opening the second half-century of national championship meets and the skiers are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary since Russian athletic organizations first introduced the sport in the country.

Here, in brief, is the story of ice-skating and skiing in Russia.

1

Seventy-five years ago in the yard of a large apartment building between Petrovka and Neglinnaya Streets in Moscow, the first ice-skating rink of the Russian capital was opened by the Moscow Yacht Club. It was a two-storey affair. The ice surface of the top storey covered the tennis courts and the lower storey a shallow pond, 650 feet in circumference. It was here that the first all-Russian speed-skating championship took place on February 19th, 1889.

Eight speed-skaters—six Moscovites and two visitors from St. Petersburg—competed in this historical event. The winner of the three-verst (approximately two miles) championship race was Alexander Panshin of St. Petersburg, who covered the distance in 7 min. 21.75 sec. Serguei Puressev of Moscow finished second

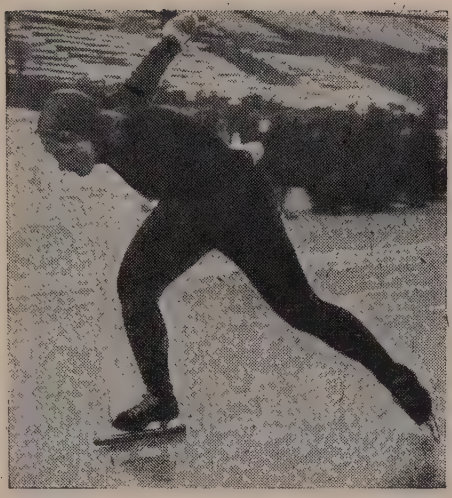
The St. Petersburg speed-skaters were the first Russians to win international fame. The ice-skating rink in the Youssoupov Garden in that city is five years older than the Moscow Yacht Club rink. It celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1890. Speed-skating contests were run off here between Moscow and St. Petersburg and records were broken on more than one occasion.

Alexander Panshin gained recognition as one of the best speed-skaters of Europe. Besides winning the Russian title, he triumphed in Austrian championship races three times, and, in his prime, raced against Joe Donoghue, an outstanding American athlete, who had never suffered defeat in his own country.

The Amsterdam Ice-Skating Club arranged a contest of speedskaters of the two hemispheres for the title of world champion. The list of participants in this big event included two Britishers, Donoghue from the U.S.A., Panshin from Russia and top-ranking athletes of Amsterdam. The races were over distances of half a mile, one mile and two miles. Panshin finished first in the half-mile event. His time was 1 min. 24.6 sec. The Russian star also scored a victory the next day, covering the mile in 2 min. 58.6 sec., two seconds ahead of Donoghue, who showed the best time—6 min. 24 sec.—in the two-mile race.

Another brilliant speed-skater of St. Petersburg was Grigori Kisselyov, who won the 5,000-metre event in the world championship meet staged in St. Petersburg in 1903. Soon after this meet Moscow speed-skaters sprang into the limelight.

A world championship meet was held in Helsinki in 1906 during a snowstorm which developed into a blizzard just before the start of the 10,000-metre event. All the contestants except one asked the judges to postpone the long-distance run. Nikolai Sedov, a Moscow college undergraduate, was willing to go on with the race despite the stormy weather. In Moscow Nikolai Sedov trained in time of frosts and snowstorms, circling the rink scores of times in his father's heavy fur-lined coat to build up his endurance and strength. Sedov won first place in the 5,000-metre and 10,000-metre races and was awarded the World Championship Cup.



Maria Isakova, holder of a world skating record

Another Russian speed-skater created a sensation in the sport world three years later. Evgueni Bournov, a locomotive driver from Moscow, arrived in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, to participate in the world championship races. The Russian champion not only scored victories in the 5,000-metre and 10,000-metre events but broke the Norwegian records which at the time were the best national records in the world. However, the most outstanding achievements of Russian speed-skaters occurred several years later.

In 1911 Nikolai Strunnikov broke the world record in the 5,000-metre event, held by Jaap Edan (Holland) for seventeen years. The Norwegians called Strunnikov the "Slav Marvel."

After Sedov, Bournov and Strunnikov there appeared a new generation of Russian speed-skaters, headed by the Ippolitov brothers, Vassili and Platon, Nikita Naidyonov and Yakov Melnikov.

The most spectacular of all Russian speed-skating champions is Yakov Melnikov. In the course of twenty years, beginning with 1915, he won the national title on eleven different occasions and captured top honours in ten international meets. At the age of thirty-nine, he was still regarded as

one of the best speed-skaters in the world. Melnikov celebrated his forty-third birthday by winning the 10,000-metre event at the U.S.S.R. championship meet. Together with another veteran, fifty-three-year-old ex-champion of Europe, Vassili Ippolitov, Yakov Melnikov, who is today forty-nine, participated in the Moscow title meet run off in the beginning of this year.

The famous traditions of the first two generations of Russian speed-skaters was passed on to the third generation, led by Ivan Anikanov, Constantine Koudryavtsev, Anatoli Kapchinsky, Evgueni Letchford and Nikolai Petrov.

Ever since Melnikov captured the national title in 1935 for the eleventh time, young Soviet speed-skaters have been vieing with one another for championship laurels on the skating lanes in Moscow, Gorky, Kirov and Sverdlovsk. Ivan Anikanov was crowned absolute champion of the U.S.S.R. on four occasions. He set five new Soviet records in distances, ranging from 500 metres to 5,000 metres. Anikanov relinquished the coveted title to his strongest rival, Evgueni Letchford (Gorky) who retained it for two years.

The most outstanding Soviet record was established by Constantine Koudryavtsev of Moscow, who sprinted 500 metres in 42 seconds dead in 1940, the best time to be recorded among national records of the world. Anatoli Kapchinsky who held two U.S.S.R. records—1 min. 31,4 sec. in the 1,000-metre event and 2 min. 20.6 sec. in the 1,500-metre race—perished in action at the front.

The results of the fiftieth national championship meet held in 1944 were sensational. The overwhelming majority of spectators expected one of Moscow's champion trio —Ivan Anikanov, Igor Ippolitov (the son of Vassili Ippolitov) and Red Army officer Vladimir Pronin—to win the title. However, Nikolai Petrov of Leningrad finished first and took the prize away from the Soviet capital.

Vladimir Preobrazhensky, U.S.S.R. slalom champion

The Soviet Union now has the strongest team of women speed-skaters in the world. In 1935 Valentina Kuznetsova of Gorky shattered the official world record in the women's 5,000-metre event, covering the distance in 10 min. 21.2 sec. Other world records were established by Serafima Pokhomova of Gorky, and Maria Issakova, sixteen-year-old telephone operator of a city fire department in Kirov. Soon afterwards Nielsen, women's speed-skating champion of Norway, bettered these records while racing in Davos, Switzerland, under ideal conditions. Maria Issakova became a world record holder again in 1938, flashing across the finish line at the end of a 1,500-metre race in Kirov in 2 min. 37.4 sec. At another meet held in Kirov three years later, Tatyana Karelina, a versatile athlete from Sverdlovsk, almost equalled the world record in the 5,000-metre event. She was timed in 9 min. 28.9 sec., only six-tenths of a second slower than Nielsen's world record-breaking performance.

Ice-skating sport in the Soviet Union has now reached its pre-war level. The leading speed-skaters of the country enjoyed a full month's training in the northern town of Kirov a short time ago. The major meets on the schedule this season include the national championships in Moscow for the title of absolute champion of the U.S.S.R., the Trade Union championships in Leningrad, the traditional Four-City (Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk and Gorky) Meet in Sverdlovsk, the capital of the Urals, the first Tri-City (Kirov, Archangel and Molotov) Meet in Molotov, the races for the Kirov Prize in Kirov and the Siberian and Far-Eastern Championship Meet in Omsk. Another highlight of the season is the U.S.S.R. figure-skating championships to be staged for the first time since the beginning of the war. Incidentally, Moscow and Leningrad have so far produced the best figure-skaters.

Maria Issakova set a new Moscow record in the 1,000-metre event, streaking across the finish line in 1 min. 42.6 sec. despite unfavorable weather conditions. The new champion of Moscow for 1945 is Vladimir Pronin, who covered 500 metres in 45.3 sec., 1,500 metres in 2 min. 26 sec., 3,000 metres in 5 min. 9.3 sec. and 5,000 metres in 8 min. 57 sec.

Pronin and Igor Ippolitov are gifted representatives of the fourth generation of Russian speed-skaters. The fact that two such outstanding young speed-skating champions should have appeared during the years of the Patriotic War is in itself remarkable.

The results of speed-skating contests between teams of different cities and sport clubs are registered in separate groups—men, women, boys and girls. This system is also employed in recording achievements scored in the U.S.S.R. championships, Four-City Meets and Trade Union competitions.

The results of the fifty national championships arranged for men and twelve championships for women reveal the principal centres of ice-skating sport in the Soviet Union. They are Moscow (thirty-nine team victories), Gorky (eight victories), Leningrad (five victories) and Sverdlovsk (two victories).

One will find hundreds and thousands of ice-skaters in the national republics, in small towns and collective farms. One of the busiest periods for Soviet skating rinks is during school winter vacation when hosts of boys and girls of grade schools scatter over the glistening ice. This is the time when schools, districts and cities hold championship races for juvenile speed-skaters.

As regards the technical achievements gained in the field of ice-skating, I may point out the new method of using boiling water to polish off the ice surface of rinks, applied for the first time in Kirov in 1936.

2

The first skiing season in Russia dates back to 1894 when Moscow cyclists, wishing to keep in trim during the winter months, founded the Moscow Skiing Club. The first ski race in the Russian capital took place on January 28th, 1896, on Khodynskoye Field. St. Petersburg held its first ski contest on March 2nd, 1897.

The favourite spot for Moscow skiers is Sokolniki, a picturesque park on the edge of the city. The Amateur Skiing Society sprung up here in 1910 and one of its members, Pavel Bychkov, became the first skiing champion of Russia. Bychkov was a young janitor employed by the Skue family. The Skue boys took their servant along to Sokolniki and taught him how to ski. Bychkov proved to be more talented than his teachers, winning the first championship race in 1910.

Another sports organization, known as the Sokolniki Skiing Club, came into being that same winter. This club produced two more Russian champions—Alexander Netukhin, who won the national title in 1912, and Nikolai Vassilyev, who dethroned Netukhin in the following year.

Four Moscow skiers—Alexander Netukhin, Mikhail Gostev, Ivan Zakharov and Alexander Yelizarov—caused a sensation in the winter of 1911-1912 when they skied from Moscow to St. Petersburg in twelve and a half days. Twenty-five years later, the same quartet repeated this long-distance ski run in the opposite direction in eight and a half days.

One of the most popular skiing events among the Moscovites was the traditional race around the outskirts of the capital, conducted at the end of the season.

A prominent Soviet skier is Dmitri Vassilyev, the youngest brother of Nikolai Vassilyev. In the course of sixteen years, starting with 1924, Dmitri Vassilyev won the national title eight times. He came in first in the Marathon Race from Yaroslavl to Moscow held in 1938, covering the distance of 232 kilometres in 18 hours 41 min. 2 sec. In the same event a year later he finished in second place 47 seconds behind Pavel Orlov of Gorky.

Among the seventeen athletes who have been crowned ski champions of the country one time or another are Vladimir Serebryakov (Moscow), Arcadi Dodonov (Tula) and Vladimir Myagkov (Leningrad).

Myagkov won the U.S.S.R. title in 1939 with the record time of 1 hour 17 min. 13 sec. in the 20-kilometre event. He later proved to be an elusive scout at the front. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred upon him for his outstanding battle exploits.

Myagkov heads the third generation of Russian skiers, which include Vassili Smirnov and his pupil Valentin Matyushenkov and four Alexeis—Alexei Dobryshin, Alexei Karpov, Alexei Rudakov and Alexei Ivanov. All of them have won championship events.

An unusual friendship exists between Vassili Smirnov and Valentin Matyushenkov. The former won the U.S.S.R. title on three occasions and this time in the 50-kilometre event—3 hours 16 min. 53 sec. —is still unbeaten. Last winter Smirnov started to train Valentin Matyushenkov, a joung chap below average height but a streak of lightning on skis. Both of them were sergeant-majors serving in the same Red Army unit. In the beginning of the season Matyushenkov finished ahead of his teacher in the 20-kilometre event in the Moscow championships. He did the same later in the winter on the Ouktouss Hills in the Urals outside of Sverdlovsk during the U.S.S.R. championships. Smirnov trailed Matyushenkov in his favourite distance over 50 kilometres.

This winter Smirnov took revenge, outdistancing his pupil in the 20-kilometre race held in the suburbs of Moscow. The skiing rivalry between these two inseparable sergeant-majors continues.

A similar friendship has sprung up between two women champions in slalom events — Nina Znamenskaya and Tamara Rodionova. Nina is a native of Kaluga while Tamara comes from Molotov. They first met in Moscow. Both of them shared the U.S.S.R. championship laurels last winter in Sverdlovsk. Nina triumphed in the slalom race and Tamara showed the best total for two events (slalom and long-distance downhill racing).

Soviet skiers have achieved great skill in ski jumping. In 1926 the longest jump on skis equalled 20.5 metres. In 1940 nineteen-year-old Constantine Kudryashov made a record jump of 82 metres. He would have jumped further but the jump-tower at Krasnoyarsk is only calculated for 75 metres.

Vladimir Preobrazhensky, twenty-year-old Red Army private, won nationwide fame in 1944 in slalom events, He won all the major slalom contests that year and the cup, instituted by the Norwegian Embassy. Another speedy chap in slalom racing is Rostislav Belyakov, an engineer of an aircraft factory.

Twenty women have won the title of U.S.S.R. champion in skiing sport. The most popular of this group is Zoya Bolotova,

who might have been beaten in Moscow, Gorky and other cities, but never in her home town of Sverdlovsk. Zoya is called the "Little Mistress of Ouktouss Hills." The U.S.S.R. championships were held here in 1943 and 1944 and Bolotova won all the three main events for women on both occasions. She holds the record of 46 min. 7 sec. in the 10-kilometre event. Maria Pochatova, Valentina Blazhenova, Evguenya Vorobyova and many other rising stars are making a strong bid for championship laurels.

The development of skiing sport in the Soviet Union is greatly facilitated by the annual mass ski runs conducted by the trade unions and youth organizations, in which millions of people participate.

A large number of country athletes take part in national championship races specially arranged for them. Last winter, for instance, more than one million young collective farmers competed in village skiing contests. Races were held in 60,000 collective farms. These impressive figures do not surprise anyone in the U.S.S.R.; the entire population knows that athletics in the U.S.S.R. means athletics for the broad masses.

3

Still another popular winter sport in the U.S.S.R. is ice hockey. This fast team game is played in practically every city of the country.

The temperature is 20 degrees or more below zero as the players wearing light sport shirts, streak down the rink. Some of them even prefer to play without any warm caps on their heads.

Ice hockey was first introduced in Russia in pre-revolutionary years. St. Petersburg had the strongest hockey team at the time. However, the number of teams then was insignificant — 10 or 15 teams in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

This game became widely developed only in the past ten years. U.S.S.R. championships were held in 1936 and 1937. The first U.S.S.R. Ice Hockey Cup tournament took place in 1937. The 1939 Cup tournament drew 202 men teams and 78 women teams. In the following year as many as 316 men teams and 111 women teams competed in the Cup play-offs.

The men's team of the Moscow Dynamo Sports Society, captained by Master Athlete of the U.S.S.R. Mikhail Yakushin, won the Cup four times while the women's team of the Moscow Burevestnik Sports Society, captained by Master Athlete of the U.S.S.R. Valentina Prokofyeva, defeated all opposition for five successive years. However, these champions have tasted defeat, too.

The ice hockey season in Moscow always opens with a blitz-tournament for a prize offered by the Moscow Sports Committee. In 1943 the men's team of an aviation school and the women's team of the Spartak Sports Society were the winners. This year's blitz-tournament prizes went to the men's team of the Central House of the Red Army and the women's team of the Dynamo Sports Society.

The U.S.S.R. Ice Hockey Cup tournament will be run off this winter for the first time since the outbreak of the war.

Numerous books, pamphlets and posters published in large editions bear witness to the fact that great attention is paid to the development of all forms of winter sports and the improvement of technique of champions and rank-and-file athletes.

PLATON IPPOLITOV,
Merited Master Athlete of the U.S.S.R.

THE SUPREME COURT

The senience is final and not subject appeal. Drawing by V. Fomichov

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT CHILDREN BY

ALEXANDRA BRUSTEIN and
NADEZHDA ABEZGOUS

THE MAGIC PAINTS

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS

PEOPLE:	*ANIMALS:*
A GIRL	A COW
A BOY	A DOG
AN ARTIST	A MOUSE
A SERVANT	A MOLE
KING SPIDER	A FIELDMOUSE
SKUNK } KING'S	A TOAD
BUFFALO } COUNSELLORS	A SERPENT (VOICE OFF)
BEARDED MAN	
THREE OLD WOMEN	

ACT ONE

Room in village house. Spring. Branches of apple-trees in bloom showing through window. Outside window head of Cow. Girl sitting at window in room drawing portrait of Cow.

GIRL *(drawing):* Stand still... If you don't you'll be all crooked.

COW: Oh y—e—s, I kn—o—ow. Draw me with a silver be—e—ll round my neck, deary, pl—e—e—a—se! When I was a little calf my mother had a bell like that.

GIRL: I'll draw you a bell on a pink ribbon.

COW *(bashfully and coquettishly):* Bl—u—ue would be better. Bl—u—ue suits my complexion.

GIRL: Blue if you like, then. *(Turns round).* Are you still scuttling around here?

MOUSE *(looking out from under table):* I'm scuttling, I'm scuttling. Give me something to gnaw, to eat, to chew! The mistress is so stingy and I'm that hungry I gnaw old books and newspapers. That's bad for me because I learn a lot of hard words the other mice don't understand. That mistress of ours is my antipathy!

GIRL *(tossing the mouse a crust of bread):* Take this.

MOUSE: Merci, merci, I am filled with gratitude! Perhaps you think I'm a glutton, but I am not, I have a family! I can't count them on the toes of all four feet: father, mother, grandfathers and grandmothers, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, cousins...

GIRL: What a lot! You must be a happy family!

MOUSE: Nothing of the sort! All those relatives cry day and night! Our hole is flooded with their tears, look—I am wearing galoshes!

GIRL: Why do they cry?

MOUSE: Because they are so unfortunate! They come from a long way off and King Spider has attacked their town! He plundered all the inhabitants—and what are the poor mice going to eat when the people themselves have nothing.

GIRL *(scared):* Will that King Spider come here?

MOUSE: Very possibly, very possibly, he may come!

GIRL *(hearing regular hollow tapping at door):* What's that?

COW: Someone kn—o—o—o—cking...

GIRL *(horrified):* King Spider!

(It is only the boy on stilts and wrapped in a blanket.)

BOY *(jumping down from stilts):* Oh, you scare-cat! *(Cow and mouse have disappeared.)* Who were you talking to?

GIRL: With the Cow and the Mouse.

BOY *(laughing):* What a fool! She talks with animals! She listens to the flowers!

GIRL: But the animals do talk, just like people! And the flowers—keep quiet for a minute and listen to the sounds in the garden. Do you hear them?

(Noises like the chattering of birds coming through the window.)

BOY: That is only the grass-hoppers.

GIRL: No, that's the forget-me-nots twittering. *(Listens to a melodious bell.)* That's the blue bells ringing to each other. *(The ringing develops into a soft song.)* Do you hear that? That's a lullaby. The poppies in the borders are singing.

BOY: Nonsense, that's the bees humming! *(The lullaby merges into a deep wave of sounds.)*

GIRL: Now, then, do you hear that? That's the song of the apple blossoms!

BOY: All right. I came to say good-bye to you. I am going to the town as an apprentice. I am going to be a locksmith and I'll make you a little box with a fine lock to it for your drawings!

GIRL: That will be wonderful because the mistress is always throwing my drawings into the fire. Because of her I always have to draw in secret, on the walls of houses.

BOY: So you drew the dog on the post-office wall?

GIRL: Yes... I'm sorry you're going away! You're my only friend.

COW *(appears at window):* And w—e—e?

BOY: The cow really did moo "w—e—e—e, w—e—e—e!" Good-bye, I'll run in and see you this evening before I leave. *(Runs away.)*

(Off—dog barks loudly.)

COW: That cheeky Dog again! I can't s—t—a—n—d him!

DOG *(appears at other window panting and using own ear to fan face):* I have news! N—n—n—e—w—s! Bow, wow, wow! I don't wish to speak *(nods towards Cow)* in front of strangers!

COW *(offended):* All right. I'll go away.

GIRL: No, no! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, always quarreling! Stay here, Pestrushka! *(To Dog):* Tell me in front of her what has happened.

DOG: A stranger has arrived! He's near the post-office and he is asking everybody who drew my portrait on the wall!

GIRL: Impossible!

DOG: Bow, wow, wow! The people say he's an artist!

GIRL: Artist? Then he must have come in a golden carriage.

DOG: No, on foot, with a little box in his hand.

GIRL: How is he dressed? In a costume of gold-embroidered velvet?

DOG: No, he is dressed very simply and his boots are cleaned with the cheapest blacking. Very nasty, I licked it. He's going to stay in your house, he has taken these rooms. Run and hide, he's coming into the house!

(Girl in fright hides behind window curtain. Enter Artist and his Servant, a gloomy old man.)

ARTIST *(looking round and rubbing his hands):* This will be a fine place for us.

SERVANT: This will be a very bad place for us, believe me!

ARTIST: Don't grumble, old man, don't spoil my happiness!

SERVANT: What is there to be happy about? We've come to a village where there are no people, no society.

ARTIST: What nonsense! There is wonderful company here. Where are you, my friends?

DOG *(in window politely bowing):* Woof! Woof! Woof!

COW *(at other window speaks kindly):* May I ha—a—v—e the ple—e—asure?

MOUSE *(looking out from under table):* Greet—greet greetings!

ARTIST: You see how many friends I have, old man? It is spring and the apple-trees are in bloom. If I could only find out who drew that dog on the post-office wall! I think that is the very dog whose picture is on the wall.

DOG: Yes, that's my picture. I was drawn by somebody here, hiding behind the curtain... By the way you don't understand dog language!

ARTIST: In that you are mistaken, most noble dog. Behind the curtain, did you say? *(Draws back the curtain.)* Why, it's a girl. Who are you? Whose are you?

GIRL: I'm nobody's. The mistress found me when I was a little girl.

ARTIST: What do you do here?

GIRL: I tidy up the rooms, light the fires, sweep the floors, wash the dishes... Boil, bake and fry, feed the poultry, milk the cow, wash the clothes...

ARTIST: And you draw pictures on the walls of buildings?

DOG *(in window):* She drew me very nicely, didn't she?

ARTIST: My dear Dog, it's just like life.

GIRL *(astonished):* You... you understand what the animals are saying? Do you know how the flowers sing as well?

ARTIST: Of course I do! As I came here I heard the blue bells ringing to each other, and the forget-me-nots twittering and the poppies singing their babies to sleep. And the apple-trees were singing like the ladies in the opera! But what's your name, little girl?

GIRL: I haven't got one. The mistress calls me "foundling"... If I had parents they would call me "daughter" and I would answer: "Here I am."

SERVANT *(enters):* There are some people here asking for you, master.

ARTIST: Who are they?

SERVANT: I don't know but nothing good will come of them, they don't look nice.

ARTIST: Bring them in—I'll be back in a minute. *(Exit.)*

(Girl again hides behind curtain.)

SERVANT *(brings in two strangers in mantles and hats pulled low over their eyes):* Wait here, the master will be out in a minute...

1st STRANGER *(his wolfish eyes glaring evilly from under his hat—softly to his companion):* Listen, Skunk, are you sure this is the artist we want?

2nd STRANGER—SKUNK *(little old man*

who speaks in servile manner): Don't worry, that's the one, Your Majesty!

1st STRANGER: Don't call me that here, donkey. Ask his servant.

SKUNK *(to Servant):* Listen, kind friend...

SERVANT: I'm not kind. I'm rude and unpleasant.

SKUNK: Tell me, is your master an artist? They say he has magic paints... They say that whatever he paints with those colours appears in reality! Is that true?

SERVANT: Here he is himself, ask him.

SKUNK *(to Artist who enters):* Good morning, Mister Artist. King Spider sent us to you. He wants to make you a very good offer: sell us your paints.

ARTIST: Paints? You can buy paints in any shop!

SKUNK: But we want to buy your paints and no others.

ARTIST: Why should I sell them? I need them myself.

1st STRANGER *(silent till now):* So you refuse?

ARTIST: Of course I do. I refuse.

1st STRANGER: Do you know what King Spider can do to you?

ARTIST: I am not even interested.

1st STRANGER: King Spider can do everything! If he wants to he can put out the sun and the stars in the heavens.

ARTIST: But I am cleverer, I can light them again.

1st STRANGER: Look out of the window —it is spring, apple-trees in blossom, sunshine, can you see? *(Laughs and as if in response to his laugh it grows dark, thunder rumbles through the darkness and when it again grows light the branches of the apple-tree at the window have become dry, dead twigs.)* You see, I have put out the sun. I have driven spring away. I have killed the apple-tree, see, it is black and dead like it is in winter. Now you see, puny little man, what King Spider can do. I hope you will not be stubborn any more.

ARTIST *(thoughtfully):* All right, I give in. What does King Spider want from me?

1st STRANGER: We will take you to the palace and there you will paint everything the King tells you to.

ARTIST: I am very tired, let me rest awhile...

1st STRANGER: Very well, rest. Tomorrow morning we shall come for you. Don't try to run away, we shall find you wherever you are. *(Exit with Skunk.)*

SERVANT: Now we are in real trouble, believe me. Lie down for a little while, master, gather your strength. God knows what we have to expect in the palace of that accursed Spider.

ARTIST: I don't intend to lie down at all. Give me a canvas, I'm going to work.

SERVANT *(gloomily):* I see you are going to fight that man.

ARTIST: Have you ever known me to refuse a fight?

SERVANT: Didn't you see his wolfish eyes? He is a bandit.

ARTIST: Yes, he's a bandit, but we've got to stop his banditry. Give me the canvas, I must have everything ready by the time they come.

SERVANT *(placing easel with back to audience):* You won't be able to cope with him, master.

ARTIST: You forget that I have my assistants! *(Opens box and takes out palette.)* My paints! I always call for your help when there is a wrong to right or evil to overcome... Now you can show this King Spider what pure colours and the pure hand of an artist can do. *(Sits before easel.)*

GIRL *(enters from behind curtain, looks out of window):* What did that man do? There are clouds covering the sun like a shade over a lamp! My apple-trees and the grass and flowers, they are all dead!

ARTIST: I will draw them all with my paints... You look out of the window, little girl, and tell me what you see!

GIRL: There is a hole forming in the clouds and the sky is shining through it with blue eyes.

ARTIST: Fine! I am painting a clear sky: look again and tell me what you see.

GIRL: The clouds are turning silver as though there were a lamp behind them. They have broken up and are floating away... The sun has come back.

ARTIST: Wonderful! I will draw the rest... What can you see now?

GIRL: I can see the grass growing. There is wheat growing in the black field again and now it has a fine green coat. And my apple-trees! They are in flower again! *(With her hand she strokes the apple branches at the window which are again covered in the pinkish snow of their blossoms.)* Did you do all that?

ARTIST: I drew the sun, wheat and flowers with my paints and they came back... And now, old man, get our things together, we're going.

GIRL: You're going? For good? And what am I to do?

ARTIST *(gets sudden idea):* I know what, I'll take you with me.

SERVANT: There you are! Now there'll be noise, trouble and disorder in the house...

GIRL: No, there won't. I shall be useful to you. Look how badly the lace of your collar is ironed. You men probably haven't got a single flower in the house, and tobacco spilt all over the table.

ARTIST: D'you hear her, old man? Bravo! Now I shall have flowers on the table and my collar will be ironed properly. I'll take you with me, little girl! I'll call you daughter and you'll answer: "Here I am!" I'll make an artist of you and some time I'll give you my

magic paints! Come on, old man, get our things together...

MOUSE *(looking out after Artist and Servant):* You see, I told you the truth: that man who came and killed the spring was King Spider.

GIRL: You're a clever little mouse.

MOUSE: The mice always do know everything! They go everywhere and see and hear everything. That is what the newspapers call "first class news!"

GIRL: Do you know I'm going away?

MOUSE: Of course I do, I know everything!

GIRL: I'm going away with the Artist! He's going to teach me to draw.

MOUSE: I know... I hear everything. I've decided to go with you. Of course I know it's a risk, the town mice tell me that Artists are unreliable people; today they are in funds and you get a good meal and tomorrow they will be on the rocks and the house mice will have to gnaw scraps of canvas and empty paint tubes.

GIRL: Never mind, Mouse, we'll be together.

MOUSE: And just think how useful I'll be, I have extensive connections through my relatives in the town! Good-bye. *(Disappears.)*

COW *(crying, appears at window):* You're going a—w—a—a—y!

DOG *(at other window):* I si—igh, I s—u—f—f—er!

GIRL *(embracing first one, then the other):* Don't cry, my darlings! Pestrushka-let me wipe your eyes on my hanky! And yours too, doggy!

DOG *(crying profusely):* Don't bother. I have my ear for that! *(Wipes his eyes with his own ear, using it as handkerchief.)*

BOY *(running in with knapsack on back):* Good-bye, I'm going!

GIRL: I'm going too, to the town.

BOY: Hur—r—a—a—h! *(Throws his cap into the air.)*

ARTIST *(entering with Servant):* Who's that?

GIRL: That's my friend, he's coming with us.

ARTIST: Splendid! My family is growing.

SERVANT: Hurry up and get out of this before we collect another half dozen kids!

DOG *(at window, paws together in supplication):* Won't you take me with you? I'm not a child, I am full-grown.

SERVANT *(in horror):* That's all we needed!

ARTIST: You're right, you know. Just what we do need is a good dog, a dog makes you look imposing.

DOG: Oh, yes, I am an imposing dog and I am well trained: I let strangers into the house and don't let them out again.

ARTIST: Do you hear that, old man? That dog has a college education. We'll take him.

COW *(offended):* You're taking everybody! What about m—e—e—e?

SERVANT *(holding his head):* Children! Dogs, cows!

ARTIST: Yes, old man, we'll buy the cow. A cow makes a family cosy.

COW *(nodding her head):* I'm co—o—sy.

GIRL: But promise me, my friends, that you won't quarrel! Quarrelling is very bad.

COW: We'll live friendly, I ass—u—u—re you.

DOG: Yes, friendly! Friendly! Bow, wow, wow!

ARTIST: Come along, then, friends.

SERVANT *(pointing to picture Artist drew):* What about the picture?

ARTIST: I'll leave that for King Spider. I'll write him a message. *(Writes on picture with brush, speaking aloud):* "We are stronger than you, King Spider!" Now let's go. Come along, daughter. *(Takes her by hand, leads her through auditorium singing:)*

Spiders do not scare us
Nor bandit enemies,
For we are all good people
And stronger than all these.

(Servant and Boy follow them singing.) (Dog can be seen through window going to cow.)

DOG: Do you think we shall overtake them? Permit me? *(Gallantly offers his arm to Cow.)*

COW: With pl—e—a—sure! *(Both disappear from window.)*

MOUSE *(looking out from under table):* I will go last. As they say in the newspapers: "She brought the procession to a close."

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Room in Artist's house

GIRL *(busy at housework, sings):*
You never hear us bragging,
Nor see us cry or fuss,
God grant that all good people
Should live as well as us.

MOUSE *(from under chair):* Singing, are you, Girl? You must live well here.

GIRL: Well, Mouse! Why, it's just like a dream. *(Sings:)*
It's just like in a story,
Though I'm alive, you see,
God grant that all good people
Should live as well as me.

MOUSE: That sounds fine. But will you remember me? *(Winks at her.)* Gnaw, eat, chew — g—g—give!

GIRL: With pleasure, Mouse. Here, catch this! *(Throws her something.)*

MOUSE: Merci, merci, I am filled with gratitude. *(Gnaws at her food.)* Won't the master be angry if you give his property away?

GIRL: The master? Why, he'll give you anything you ask for. *(Sings:)*
Whatever's on our table,
We share with everyone,
God grant that all good people
Should always have such fun.

MOUSE: He's a fine fellow, your master. I am feeding well in your house. I am getting fat and my coat shines. Your food is not fancy but good plain, home cooking.

GIRL: I do my best, mouse, but the master has very little money.

MOUSE: That's strange. Such a famous artist... Sh—sh—sh. Someone's coming. *(Hides.)*

GIRL *(again sings her song).*

SERVANT *(enters and waves his hand to girl):* Silence! Don't sing. Don't make a noise! Don't talk loudly!

GIRL *(also speaks softly):* Why?

SERVANT: Do you think King Spider will forgive the master for that insult? Of course he won't. There are all sorts of suspicious people sneaking around the house.

GIRL: All right, we'll talk softly...

SERVANT *(sternly):* Is everything ready? The rooms?

GIRL *(reporting like soldier):* Ready for inspection!

SERVANT: Clothes?

GIRL: Clean. Boots shining like a mirror! Supper on the hob. Beer on the ice! Pipe filled with tobacco! Sit down and smoke. *(Sits him down lovingly.)* And don't mutter like the kettle on the hob, granddad.

BOY *(enters):* How are you all getting on, people? Good evening!

SERVANT: Good evening, fidget! What have you learnt?

BOY: I've learnt a lot. I can already open any lock without a key. If you like I can open that box.

SERVANT: Get back, you mustn't touch that, it's the master's paints.

BOY: All right, I won't if I mustn't. I came to invite you to the ball.

GIRL: To the ball? Me? *(Jumps with joy.)*

BOY: There will be dancing on the Royal Meadow tonight. Hurry up, get dressed.

GIRL: But I am dressed.

BOY: You can't go to a ball like that, everybody will laugh at you.

GIRL: But I have no other clothes. *(Sadly):* I'll have to stay at home.

BOY *(also sadly):* It's a pity. Good-bye... *(Exit.)*
(Girl sighs and goes to door.)

SERVANT: Where are you going?

GIRL *(sighs again):* To the garden to get some lettuce, the master will be back soon.

SERVANT *(after girl has left)*: Well, the trouble's beginning...

ARTIST *(enters, in gay mood):* How's tricks, old man?

SERVANT: Bad. She's sighing and sighing so loudly that the ceiling groans and the plaster on the wall trembles...

ARTIST: Who? My daughter? Has someone offended her?

SERVANT: No, she's grown up and wants to go to the ball. She wants to dance.

ARTIST: Then let her dance as much as she wants.

SERVANT: Master, you make my hair grey and my head bald and because of you I cough blood... You're like a little baby. She needs all sorts of rubbish before she can go to a ball — dress, shoes, scarf, flowers...

ARTIST: That's true. *(Guiltily):* Why didn't I think of that?

SERVANT: I'm an old fool too, I ought to have thought of it.

ARTIST *(to Girl as she enters):* Good evening, daughter. What a worried look you have!

GIRL: Master, we have a very poor supper tonight, I'm afraid you'll be hungry. Perhaps you could paint a chicken or a nice piece of ham with your colours? And a bottle of wine as well, then we could have a good supper. Can you?

ARTIST *(smiling):* No, daughter, my paints won't do that. Go and pull some radishes; perhaps the cherries are ripe.

GIRL: We have some milk and I have baked fresh bread.

ARTIST: A royal supper! Run along, daughter, and don't be so sad. *(After she has left):* Now then, old man, get our money-box out.

SERVANT: You put that money away for a new suit!

ARTIST: I can wear the old one, it doesn't matter. *(Takes money out of box.)*

SERVANT: I've also got a little money put aside for a rainy day. Buy the girl something from me.

ARTIST *(embracing him):* I'm terribly fond of you, old man! See you soon. *(Exit.)*

GIRL *(enters. Wreath of cherries on head, pairs of cherries as earrings):* Now I'm dressed as well as I can be. What's that? *(Distant sounds of music.)* That's the band playing at the ball. They're dancing! *(She dances and sings and notices that Boy has come in and is watching her.)* Why did you come back?

BOY: I shouldn't enjoy myself without you...

GIRL: What a good friend you are! Let's dance here. I'll dress you up with cherries first. *(Does so.)* How's that?

BOTH *(dancing and singing):*
We're going to dance the night through
Although our house is small.
God grant that all good people
Have such a jolly ball.
(Sudden applause from outside window. Skunk, dressed as sweep, face sooty, applauds.)

SKUNK *(oily and cringing as usual):* Bravo, bravo, my children!

GIRL *(stops dancing):* Who are you?

SKUNK: I am the sweep, dear yong lady. The jolly sweep, the sociable sweep! I heard your voices and looked in at the window. You dance beautifully... What a pity that the people at the ball can't see you dance...

BOY: She can't go to the ball!

SKUNK: Because she hasn't got a dress to go in, eh?

GIRL: How did you know?

SKUNK: I am a fairy, dear young lady, and I want to help you. I've heard that your master has magic paints.

BOY *(brightening up):* Of course he has, in the box there!

SKUNK: In which box? In that one in the corner? I suppose that's where they are. Draw yourself everything you need for the ball.

GIRL: No, I can't. Master doesn't allow it.

SKUNK *(wheedling):* The master won't know.

BOY: You only say that because you can't draw what you want to.

GIRL: I can! I can draw anything I want to.

BOY *(daring her):* Draw then, draw a ball dress.

GIRL: I'll draw it. *(Goes to box.)* The box is locked.

BOY: I'll open it. *(Opens box.)*

(Skunk laughing softly and evilly disappears through window.)

BOY: Get on with the drawing, then.

GIRL: All right! *(Draws.)* See, I'm drawing a dress, a pink satin dress, and glass shoes that will chink and ring when I dance—tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!

BOY: Draw a carriage to take us there.

GIRL: Here's your carriage *(draws),* a golden one. With four horses, look at it!

BOY *(looks):* You've drawn that all so real. Why doesn't it all come, though? They are supposed to be magic paints.

GIRL: Everything will be here in a minute. O-oh! What's that?

(Trumpet sounds sharp and penetrating ta—ra—ta—ra—ta—ra. Closed doors burst open and three hunchbacked old women in rags with grey pigtails fly in.)

1st OLD WOMAN *(grimacing):* Greetings, princess, greetings!

2nd O. W.: We've brought your ball dress. *(Throws patched ragged shirt over girl.)*

3rd O.W.: And crystal glass shoes. *(Gives her huge worn-out boots with flapping soles.)*

(Girl stands frozen with horror.)

OLD WOMEN *(bowing and curtseying):* Greetings, princess, greetings! The princess's carriage! Bring the carriage!

BEARDED MAN *(appears at window):* Who wants to go to the ball? I'm the dustman on my way to the dump. Who wants a ride on my cart? The carriage is at the door. Ladies and gentlemen, who wants to go to the ball? *(Cracks his whip. Old women join hands round Girl and dance. Bearded Man at window cracks whip.)*

GIRL: I don't want to go. I don't want to! *(Tears off rags and throws them through window. Boots follow.)*

BOY *(moving to Women and Bearded Man):* Get out of here!

(Artist appears in room, Women leap out of window. Bearded Man disappears.)

ARTIST: Look what I've brought you! A new dress, new shoes. Try them on. See how they fit! And here's a shawl and a bouquet from the old man! Now you can go to the ball.

GIRL *(stands up in new dress and shoes, shawl on shoulders and bouquet in hand. Suddenly cries):* Forgive me, master!

ARTIST *(for first time noticing something wrong):* Who touched my paints?

GIRL: I wanted to draw myself a dress. I didn't know that your paints only obey you!

ARTIST: My paints will obey anybody who does not use them for petty things and not for his own good!

GIRL: Why was it that everything you drew in the village suddenly appeared?

ARTIST: I did not do that for myself! I brought back spring to the people after King Spider had stolen it. He killed the gardens and fields—I brought them back to life!

SERVANT *(running in):* More trouble, master! The house is surrounded with men who are hunting for you!

SKUNK *(enters but without disguise):* Good evening, great artist! Come here, men, come here!

SERVANT: Run, master, save yourself!

(Armed men in masks enter door and windows.)

SKUNK: There he is, seize him! The King orders him to be boiled alive.

ARTIST *(drawing his sword):* Touch me if you dare. *(Defends himself with sword.)*

SERVANT *(taking hammer from table):* I'm with you, master! Come on, you!

BOY *(raising stool in air):* I'll help, too.

GIRL *(armed with broom):* So will I!

(The struggle is short for the forces are too unequal, the attackers are too strong. The friends are seized and bound.)

ARTIST *(who is being dragged to door):* Don't worry, old man! Don't cry, daughter! Don't fret, boy! We shall soon be happy again, we are stronger than they are.

SKUNK: Throw the artist across a saddle and gallop away to the place you have been told. I'll finish things off here! *(After Artist has been carried off):* Sit down all of you! *(Threatens them with his sword.)* If you don't I'll run you through.

SERVANT *(gloomily):* Are we going to sit here long like trussed chickens?

SKUNK: I could refuse to answer your question, but I'm polite. You will sit here until my men have nailed up the doors and windows and have placed hay and straw round the outside. Then I will lock the door, set fire to the straw and return to the King. Do you hear that? That's my men working. *(Sound of knocking, windows are boarded from without.)*

MOUSE *(peeps out):* Sh—sh—sh. That old scoundrel doesn't understand mouse language. Take no notice of me and listen! I will find out where they've taken the artist. I have aroused all the mice, they will find him and tell me!

SKUNK *(rubbing hands):* Now we'll roast you alive! How jolly!

MOUSE *(savagely):* No, you old toad, not if I know it. Listen, little girl! In a minute the mice will gnaw through the ropes. When I say: one, two, three, jump up!

SKUNK: Now then, my friends... I am a kind old man, I am a sweet old man. It is not for nothing that they call me "Skunk;" I always look at a chicken so lovingly and then bite through its throat!

BOY: In the village we put out traps and if a skunk attacks the chickens—snap goes his head in the noose.

SKUNK: So you want to be rude to me? I am a delicate old man, it is dangerous for me to get excited... Still, I am not angry with you, my unfortunate people. I will even allow you to sing a song before you die, a sad, sad song. Sing and I will weep for you.

GIRL: All right, we'll sing. *(Sings):*

We never are downhearted,
We never cry or fuss.

SERVANT and BOY *(taking up song):*

God grant that all good people
Should live as well as us.

SKUNK: Perhaps you would like to say something before you die? Say what you want.

GIRL: Give me a drink.

SKUNK: Here you are, little one. *(Goes to water jug.)*

MOUSE *(peeps out):* All the ropes are gnawed through. One, two, three...

GIRL *(jumps up, throws off ropes, seizes Skunk's sword from table):* Thanks, mouse! *(To Servant and Boy:)* Get up!

SKUNK *(turning round):* What's this? Give me the sword! Give it to me!

GIRL *(pointing sword at him):* Silence! You're a delicate old man, it is dangerous for you to get excited.

BOY *(grabbing Skunk from behind):* Sit down in the chair!

SERVANT: Hurry up! We must hurry to save my master! We'll all go in different directions and look for him...

BOY: All right. I will run and call out the artisans, the gunsmiths, locksmiths, blacksmiths, archers and hunters... They will all help me.

GIRL: I will go with the mouse. Are you here, mouse?

MOUSE *(peeps out):* Of course! I'm a faithful friend, a friend for ever.

GIRL *(to Skunk):* Good-bye, old man! We're locking you up here. Sit down and sing a song, a sad, sad song... Come on everybody! *(Girl, Servant and Boy go out, Mouse disappears.)*

SKUNK *(alone):* The door's locked, the windows are boarded up. What's this? A hammer. Excellent! *(Knocks boards out of window.)*

DOG *(appearing in window):* Back! Back! Back!

(Skunk runs to other window and knocks out boards.)

COW *(appearing at this window):* Wh—e—e—re are y—o—u—u going?

SKUNK *(sinking into chair in despair):* I'm lost, I'm lost!

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

Girl and Mouse cross stage before drawn curtains from left to right: they study ground carefully.

MOUSE: The tracks have come to an end... No signs of horses' hoofs or men's boots. Here is a molehill. The moles are stupid and very uneducated, it's true, but they're related to the mice. *(Knocks on molehill.)*

MOLE *(peeping out of hole):* Who's knocking? Hurry up, it's cold. I'm wearing my knitted vest and scarf but still it's cold. Well?

MOUSE: Uncle Mole, did any horsemen pass your hill?

MOLE *(indignant):* I have an apartment under the ground with all modern conveniences, gas and central heating. Why should I come out to look at passers-by? *(Disappears.)*

MOUSE *(knocking angrily at hill):* An insignificant being! A true egoist!

MOLE *(peeping out):* Stop that stamping! The lamp in my dining-room is swinging. *(Disappears.),*

FIELDMOUSE *(poking head round curtain):* It's no use knocking at the Mole's door. He's a rich relation and has no time for us.

MOUSE *(looking round):* Who's that talking?

FIELDMOUSE: I am a fieldmouse. I'll tell you what I saw. Horsemen rode past me as fast as the wind! They had a man with them who was thrown across the saddle. He was bound but he was laughing and singing.

GIRL: That's him! That's our master! What else?

FIELDMOUSE: They crossed the stream and disappeared. *(Exit.)*

GIRL: Hurry up, mouse! We'll swim across. *(They move to wings, left.)*

TOAD *(appears from wings):* Stop! Pay your fares across. A gold piece for man and beast. Children and small animals half-price. Pay up, the ticket-office is open. *(Holds out paw).*

GIRL: We have no money.

TOAD: I can take your shoes, or shawl, or belt. Hurry up.
(Girl takes off things and gives them to Toad.)
TOAD *(trying on shoes):* A bit tight on the instep, but not too wide. *(Puts on shawl and belt.)* You may cross.
(Girl and Mouse exit right. In few seconds re-enter left and come out before curtain.)
GIRL *(walking faster):* How slowly we are going! When shall we get there?
MOUSE: You're barefoot and your feet are sore. Why did you give the Toad your shoes?
GIRL: Nothing is too much to give for the master! Where is he? Is he still alive? *(Between opening in curtains appears head of Serpent, waving on long neck.)*
SERPENT *(voice off):* Your master lives!
GIRL: Who's that?
SERPENT: I am the serpent. I won't let you pass until you pay.
MOUSE: We have nothing to pay with. One bandit, the Toad, has already robbed us!
SERPENT: I can take your plaits. I have always dreamed of having hair of my own. Give me your plaits, I'll cut them off. So you are sorry to lose them?
GIRL *(pressing plaits to bosom):* I am sorry. Never mind, take them... *(Screws up her eyes and walks to curtain, plaits disappear.)*
MOUSE *(clapping paws together):* What have they done to you! Nobody will know you...
GIRL: You know me... and the master will know me. Where is he, Serpent, tell us.
SERPENT: Far away in the Spider's palace. He is locked up in a high tower. Ss—ss—ss! D'you hear that?
(Sound of singing from distance.)
ARTIST'S VOICE *(singing)*:
We never are downhearted,
We never cry or fuss.
God grant that all good people
Should live as well as us.
(Girl takes up refrain joyfully.)
ARTIST'S VOICE *(off):* Daughter!
GIRL: I'm here, master! I have come for you.
ARTIST'S VOICE: There are bolts on my door and my hands are bound with ropes...
GIRL: The mouse will gnaw through your ropes and I will plait a long cord from nettles. You can tie it to the grating and lower yourself to the ground!
ARTIST'S VOICE: Nettles sting and you will hurt yourself, daughter!
GIRL: I'm not afraid of nettles. I'm not afraid of anything. I'll save you, master!
ARTIST'S VOICE: Then hurry up, daughter, don't waste time, King Spider...
GRUFF VOICE: Shut up! *(Noise of crash and silence.)*
GIRL: He has stopped talking... Can you hear me, master? What have they done to him, Mouse? Let's go there quickly!
MOUSE: I'm coming. Listen, Serpent. You have taken the last thing from us, so give us a pass there and back.
SERPENT *(evilly):* You don't need a pass to come back, nobody ever leaves King Spider's palace alive. Let them pass! *(Curtains rise and Girl and Mouse move on to stage.)*
GIRL *(looking round fearfully):* Where are we, Mouse?
MOUSE: We're in King Spider's palace. Look at that chair with the high back: that's his throne. Listen! Footsteps. Let's hide.
(Girl and Mouse run away.)
KING SPIDER: How are things, Buffalo? Have you frightened that obstinate artist?
BUFFALO: No, I can't say that we have...
KING: Doesn't he ask to be released? Doesn't he weep? Why don't you answer?
BUFFALO: Your Majesty, that man doesn't fear anything. He looks me straight in the eyes, me, Your Majesty, me! Looks at me quite calmly. He's a bold man, Your Majesty, he must be killed.
KING: Of course he must, but let him do what I want him to first. Let him paint everything I want with his magic paints. Money, myriads of gold coins, precious stones, millions of horses, cattle and animals with furs, fields and gardens, towns, arsenals full of weapons —everything that people work hard for I will get from those magic paints!
BUFFALO: He's a dangerous man! Who knows what he may paint!
KING: We don't need him! Let somebody else draw with his paints.
BUFFALO: Yesterday a hundred artists tried to draw with those paints and nothing came of it. The paints spread all over the canvas, they made a mess and not a drawing!
KING *(hears noise off):* What's going on there, Buffalo?
BUFFALO *(goes off and returns dragging Girl by hand):* The guards have arrested this girl... She broke into the palace.
KING SPIDER: Who are you?
GIRL *(quietly and proudly):* I am an artist.
KING: What? You? An artist?
GIRL: You needn't laugh, I'm an artist.
KING: Can you draw?
GIRL: Anything you want.
KING: Can you draw with magic paints?
GIRL: I think I can...
KING: We'll try you. Take the paints in that box in the corner... Draw us—let's see—a dog. Can you?
GIRL: Yes, I can. *(Opens box and draws.)*
KING *(softly to Buffalo):* If she can really draw it will be fine. She's only a child and we can easily hold her...
BUFFALO: There is no risk: if she cheats us we can hang her!
GIRL *(hands picture to King):* Here it is...
KING *(looking):* Hmmm... A dog... Why is there a cow as well?

GIRL: That's so that the dog should not be lonely.

KING: Not badly drawn. But where are the cow and the dog? *(Looks round.)*

GIRL *(helplessly):* I don't know...

KING: So the magic paints don't obey you?

BUFFALO: Have you tricked the King? *(Pulls hatchet out of belt.)*

GIRL: Wait a minute, wait till I count ten!

BUFFALO: Too long, count till three!

GIRL *(closing eyes in horror):* W—w—w—un... T—t—t—t...

BUFFALO: Two!

GIRL: No, no, I didn't say it. I only said t—t—t...

BUFFALO: I'm waiting. Count quickly.

GIRL *(looking round her in despair):* T—t—t—two!

BUFFALO: Now I'll chop your head off like a dandelion!

GIRL: No, no, I have not finished counting. Th—th—th... Three!

(Dog barks and Cow lows outside window.)

GIRL *(opening window):* Here they are.

COW *(at window):* Here we a—a—a—re.

DOG: Bow—wow—wow!

GIRL *(embracing them):* My dears, how glad I am you've come!

KING: So you can draw! Now draw me sitting on the throne all dressed in gold and precious stones!

GIRL: All right. Sit on your throne and I'll draw you...

KING *(sits on throne which is half-turned to audience so that high back makes King invisible, only his voice is heard):* Draw, girl! And you, Buffalo, kill that bold artist, we don't need him any more.

BUFFALO: Right now, Your Majesty! I'll order the men to throw him out of the tower window and he'll be killed on the rocks.

KING'S VOICE: Good. Go along and come back and tell me when it's done.

BUFFALO *(goes to door and stops suddenly):* What's gone wrong with me? My feet are like stones, I can't lift them from the ground. *(Presses his hands against the wall and makes desperate efforts to move.)*

GIRL *(continues drawing):* Yes, you wicked old man, your feet are stones, I drew them like that. You were as deaf and heartless as a stone and now you can stand like a cold and dead stone for ever.

BUFFALO *(sinking to floor):* Your Majesty... Why don't you do something to her... Your... Majesty!.. *(Lies motionless on floor.)*

GIRL: His majesty does not hear you. *(Gets up and turns throne towards audience; it is empty.)* I drew the King as a nasty little spider. There he is, running across the floor!

MOUSE *(beating floor with paw):* I've squashed him! Hurr—rr—ah!

GIRL *(again takes up palette):* And now I'll draw our dear master. Where are you, master?

(Door opens and Artist appears.)

ARTIST: Here I am... Who released me?

GIRL: I and your paints, master!

(Servant and Boy run in.)

BOY: Here we are!

SERVANT: Master, my dear master! And you, granddaughter... I never expected to see you alive again.

COW *(at window):* Time to g—o—o h—o—o—me!

DOG *(at window):* 'rah, 'rah 'rah! H—o—o—me! H—o—o—me!

ARTIST: Yes, friends, our fortune has come at last. We have conquered King Spider. Now the people in all the houses will light their lamps again... Fathers and mothers will embrace their children and when they put them to bed will say: "Sleep, my little ones, sleep—peace and happiness have come back into our lives." *(Sings):*

Now we all breathe freely,
No worry and no fuss.
God grant that all good people
Should live as well as us.

(All sing)

(Repeat)

END

From the Author:

A few words of advice to children who want to produce this play.

You can use the same scenery for all three acts: a room with two windows opposite the audience. The furniture and decorations must be changed for each act. For Act One (village room) there are long curtains at the windows (the Girl hides behind one of them); branches of apple-trees are hung above the windows behind the scenes; flowering and dead branches are changed when necessary. In Act Two, the Artist's room, there are short curtains at the windows so that the audience can see through them. In Act Three—room in the palace—some ornament is placed above the windows so that they seem high with pointed tops.

Those playing the parts of the animals may wear masks—half-masks are best. All of them, except the Toad, are only seen to the waist—the Cow and the Dog at the window, the Mouse from behind the furniture, the Mole from out of his hill and the Fieldmouse from behind the curtain. The Mouse wears ordinary gloves and the Dog wears furlined gloves turned inside out.

The Girl's plaits are held in place by a ribbon and taken off behind the curtain.

The King disappears by walking off quietly hidden by the high back of the throne.

Music for the play must be selected and adapted.

Translated by George Hanna

AT THE ROUND TABLE UNDER THE CUCKOO CLOCK

On February 4th we met at the Round Table for the seventeenth time and the Cuckoo once again announced the commencement of our meeting. I began by greeting our distant listeners at the front who had written us warm letters during intervals between battles in their offensive in Prussia, Silesia, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Then one of our guests from the Far North approached the microphone. This was Hero of the Soviet Union, Captain Alexeyev, commander of a distinguished squadron of torpedo cutters operating in the Barents Sea. The captain told our young guests about the splendid training and dashing valour of the young sailors of the Northern Fleet; about the ship's boys, many of whom have made a fine showing in battle in the Soviet North and the fjords of Norway. One of them, braving enemy fire, stanched a steampipe rent by shrapnel with his hands and in spite of burns, did not remove them until the damage was repaired...

Among our guests on this occasion was Vera Prokofyeva, one of the best sportswomen in the country. For many years Vera Prokofyeva has captained the invincible "Burevestnik" (Stormy Petrel) women's hockey team, named after Maxim Gorky's famous work of the same title. Their symbol is the proud bird with outstretched wings, and it adorns the sweaters worn by the players. For five years on end the eleven "Burevestniks" have won the Cup of the U.S.S.R. and held it against all opponents. This cup is now being contested again, for the first time since the war began. The "Burevestnik" hockey-players are in fine trim for the finals, and have so far emerged victorious over all their other competitors. It is interesting to note that Vera Prokofyeva, splendid captain of the "Burevestnik" team, is thirty-seven years old, and has a grown-up son who shares his mother's enthusiasm for sports. At the Round Table, she told us much about her life and activities.

The appearance of the next guest evoked a stormy greeting. He was Reinhold Glière, one of the country's most famous composers. His seventieth birthday was recently celebrated by the Soviet music world and on this occasion the Government conferred upon Glière his third and most distinguished decoration, the Order of Lenin. The venerable composer told us about his life, his first music lessons, and his studies with the well-known composers Taneyev and Ippolitov-Ivanov, who in turn were the pupils of Chaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. Glière also spoke about his work as a teacher of young musicians. Then he played a number of piano selections composed for young music-lovers. Reinhold Glière, who devotes a great deal of time and attention to the national music of the peoples of the Soviet Union, accompanied Kanarik Gregoryan, Merited Artist of Azerbaijan, who sang a number of Azerbaijanian and Russian songs by Glière.

The next at the microphone was the popular children's poetess, Agnia Barto, who recited several of her new humorous and pleasing verses, which evoked much laughter and apolause from the guests.

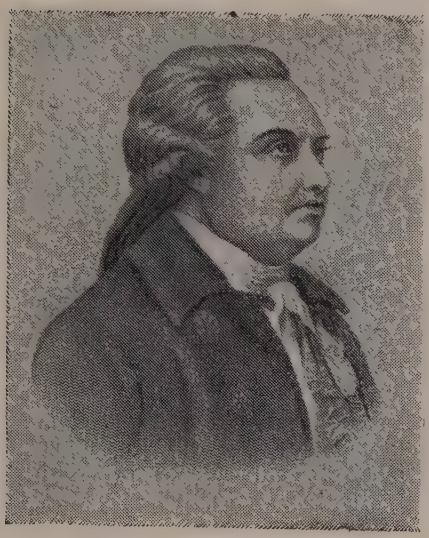
During intervals between individual items, the guests of the Round Table were entertained by the Children's State Chorus, the finest of its kind in the country. These youngsters gave a skilful performance of several songs by Soviet composers, Russian classics, and a lovely children's song "The Cat and the Mice," by Grieg. This chorus, formed in pre-war days at the Moscow Central House of Children's Art Education, was directed by Sokolov, Assistant Professor of the Academy of Music. It was not long before it had gained popularity and recognition among the most exacting authorities on music. It also won first place in an U.S.S.R. contest, after which its title was changed to the Children's Chorus of the People's Commissariat of Education. During the war this chorus has given many performances in hospitals for our wounded soldiers and Red Army units, and recently scored a success in a review of people's choruses of the country, including adult groups.

A merry song, delivered in pure and resonant children's voices, completed our gathering at the Round Table.

LEV KASSIL,
Chairman of the Round Table

BOOKS AND WRITERS

A MASTER OF SATIRE: THE FRIEND OF FREEDOM



Four names illumine the pediment of Russian comedy: Fonvisin—Griboyedov—Gogol—Ostrovsky. The first of these—Fonvisin—was descended from Baron Peter Fonvisin, a Knight of the Sword, who was taken prisoner by the Russians led by Ivan the Dread during the Livonian war. His son Denis, however, had already proved his unfeigned loyalty to his new motherland. During the Swedish and Polish invasion of the early 17th century this same Denis Fonvisin, to quote the tsar's own record, had stood valiantly against the Polish and Teuton invaders, and in the fray and in assault had selflessly thrown himself into battle. The descendants of Denis Fonvisin by a long record of service confirmed their loyalty to the Russian state, while in language, manners and faith they became so thoroughly assimilated that the great-great-grandson of that Knight of the Sword, who had defended Moscow against the hirelings of the Teutons, christened Denis, after him—dedicated his literary talents without reservation to the service of Russia and her people, and became the father of Russian national comedy, the first of the realist playwrights so well acquainted with Russian life.

Denis Ivanovich Fonvisin was born in Moscow on April 14th, 1745.

He was among the first and most brilliant pupils of the gymnasium attached to the University which had been founded in Moscow on the initiative of Lomonosov.

At the age of fourteen, Fonvisin was sent with other picked scholars to St. Petersburg, there to "demonstrate to the founder of the University benefits obtained at this seat of learning." He was honoured with marks of attention from the dean of Russian science, Lomonosov, himself.

It was in St. Petersburg, too, that the youth saw Fyodor Volkov, the famous actor, who may well be called the founder of the Russian theatre. In his autobiography, Fonvisin writes: "Nothing delighted me so much in St. Petersburg as the theatre, which I then visited for the first time. The impression which the theatre made on my mind is well-nigh impossible to describe; the comedy I witnessed appeared to me a work of profound wisdom, and the actors themselves, great men."

Fonvisin entered on his literary career while still an undergraduate. He worked on translations of Ovid, Voltaire and Holberg—and already he was sharpening his pen for satire. The very first trials of that pen, he said, "won me more enemies than friends. First I was feared, then hated," for his writings contained "a plentiful sprinkling of satirical salt."

Subsequently, this same "satirical salt" in Fonvisin's plays won him fame: but it also made him many enemies, including the Empress Catherine II herself.

On graduating, Fonvisin entered the government's Department of Foreign Affairs. A man of brilliant education, with a perfect command of Latin, French and German, he later became the closest assistant of Count Nikita Panin, the celebrated diplomat, who headed the Department at that time. Through his correspondence with Russian ambassadors accredited to European courts, Fonvisin was kept posted in all Europe's diplomatic affairs. And three long visits to Germany, France and Italy between the years 1777 and 1787, served to bring him into still closer contact with West-European political life, public opinions, literature and art on the eve of the French Revolution. Fonvisin's observations of French provincial and Parisian life just before the Revolution were so accurate and apt that French historians themselves have drawn on them to illustrate French conditions and manners during the last years of the "ancien régime." These observations, however, were not extracted from any published work of Fonvisin's but from his private correspondence. He is a brilliant exponent of the Russian epistolary art, and in the letters to his family he is throughout the forceful artist and keen satirist.

Fonvisin retired in 1792, only nine years before his death. Nevertheless, to him his true vocation was not the government service, but his literary activity, though the official duties absorbed much of his energy and left him little time for writing.

The year 1764 saw the production of Fonvisin's first comedy, "Coryon." Written in verse, it was based on the style of Gresset's drama "Sidney." "Coryon" was the work of a painstaking pupil who had learned the laws of the drama from Molière and other masters. But the pupil possessed a vivid, original talent of his own—a keen insight, a ready sense of the humorous that leavens the world. His next play, "The Brigadier," written in 1768—1769, was a comedy entirely his own.

In "The Brigadier" the playwright attacked the blind "Gallomania" (French cult) of fine society, its alienation from the life, culture and language of their own people. For Ivanushka, the comic hero of the play, Russian soil is only a source of the income which this heir to the family estates dreams of extracting by means of his serfs; while French culture is represented in his mind mostly by Parisian tailors and barbers.

In tones of mordant satire, Fonvisin paints the portrait of this ignoramus, who fastens on all that is of alien origin and knows nothing about the spiritual life, strivings and aspirations of his people.

But it is not only the drawing-room "Gallomaniacs" whom Fonvisin assails; he is equally merciless in his portrayal of the Brigadier and Counsellor, men Russian in upbringing, language and manners, who have no ideas of Paris or the French. They are drawn straight from life and drawn with an audacity utterly unprecedented in his day, which the reader or spectator feel as though these were his own neighbours or acquaintances appearing on the stage in person.

After listening to a reading of "The Brigadier" Count Panin, one of the most erudite men in Russia at that time, said to its author: "I can see that you have a very thorough knowledge of our manners—your brigadier's good lady is somebody we all know; we can all say that his grandmother, his good aunt, or some other female relative is just like her. This is our first comedy of manners... I could listen to it forever. I shall not be surprised if the comedy is very successful. I advise you not to neglect your talent."

Fonvisin's Brigadier is not only a boorish soldier, he is also a "gentleman," and flaunts his "gentility." The Almighty, in his view, can have dealings only with persons of the upper classes—the common people do not exist for him.

His civilian friend is the Counsellor—Fonvisin deliberately omitted to name either of these personages, by way of stressing that they were mere types. The Counsellor is a sanctimonious, canting hypocrite, a groveller and a taker of bribes.

"I have been a judge myself," he says; "in my day the guilty would pay for their guilt, and the wronged for being righted: so that everyone was pleased—judge, plaintiff and defendant."

But Fonvisin's big success was his second and best comedy, "The Minor," written in 1782.

Here his satire becomes biting, withering, his insight into the ways of the feudal landed proprietors is even keener and more penetrating than before.

Fonvisin takes us to a manor belonging to Prostakov and introduces us to his family: his wife and his son; Skotinin, the brother of Mme Prostakova; the young master's tutors, the domestic serfs.

Mme Prostakova rules the house, husband, family servants, peasants all alike with a rod of iron; no doubts assail her mind as to the legitimacy of her unlimited power over the life and labour of her peasant chattels.

"Have I no other servants in the house but your ugly face?" she screams at Yeremeyevna, the venerable old nurse. "Where's that slut Palashka?"

"She's been taken bad, ma'am, she's been lying down all day."

"Lying down! The good-for-nothing! Lying down, indeed! As though she belonged to the quality!"

"She's in such a fever, ma'am, raving all the time..."

"I'll show her how to rave! As though she belonged to the quality!"

Mme Prostakova is not devoid of intelligence; but that intelligence is submerged in bottomless ignorance, and her imperious will is not influenced by any promptings of conscience or honour: gross self-interest, brute selfishness are her motives.

She exhibits affection only for her son Mitrofanushka. Fondly she indulges his sloth, gluttony, his sweet tooth, his repugnance to learning.

Mitrofanushka's three tutors comprise a semi-literate invalid soldier, the beadle—a sly old fox, and a German coachman who passes himself off as master of all the sciences. In the famous lesson scene, Fonvisin pictures with pithy humour and withering satire how Mitrofanushka is "instructed" in arithmetic, grammar and other subjects. A propos the arithmetic lesson, Mme Prostakova remarks contemptuously: "It's all nonsense. Where there's no money, it's no use counting. And those that have money will manage to count it without any lessons." She notes with approval that her Mitrofanushka "cares not to advance in learning."

As to Mitrofan himself, he reiterated stubbornly, viciously: "I don't want to learn, let me get married instead"—a saying that is quoted in Russia to this day as the epitome of crass ignorance.

Skotinin, the uncle, is worthy of the mother and the son. His concern is greater for his pigs than for his peasants.

He says, quite frankly: "If there's any loss, I just take it out of the moujiks, and that's the end of it." This his brother-in-law Prostakov hastens to confirm: "True enough, brother, the whole district knows you're a past master at collecting your quit-rent."

The "deserving characters" Fonvisin brings into his comedy give voice to many of the progressive and emancipatory ideas in defence of man and human dignity that were championed by Voltaire, La Roche-

foucauld and La Bruyère; but these ideas, so enthusiastically received by progressive spectators in the late 18th century, sound as in a vacuum. They cannot penetrate the minds of the boorish landlords who regard the people as so much dirt. And Fonvisin depicted these creatures with such merciless realism that his comedy was bound to constitute an indictment of serfdom and of all who upheld it.

See who is master of the Russian peasant's life and work, Fonvisin seemed to say.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that permission was obtained to produce "The Minor" on the stage.

Gogol, who took many a leaf out of Fonvisin's work, wrote of his play: "Everything in this comedy appears a monstrous caricature... Yet actually it contains nothing of the caricature; everything has been taken bodily from the life and measured by the standard of real insight into human souls."

Gogol noted what a service Fonvisin rendered the Russian people: "Fonvisin's comedy," he wrote, "is striking in its portrayal of the brute bestiality of man, engendered by long years of unbroken, indifferent stagnation in the remote nooks and corners of Russia."

Prince Peter Viazemsky, Fonvisin's first and best biographer, truly remarked that his comedy was next-door to tragedy; he pointed out, furthermore, that his painting of feudal savagery, merciless in its exposure, was prompted by love of his country.

"The gross ignorance in which Mitrofanushka grew up," he wrote, "and the examples which he saw at home were bound to turn him into a monster like his mother... I maintain that 'The Minor,' notably the character of Mme Prostakova, holds latent within it all the fierce passions leading to tragedy... Just as Molière's Tartuffe stands on the borderline of tragedy and comedy, so, too, does Mme Prostakova... The author in painting his picture imbued the characters with a comic twist which, however, although placing the humorous in the foreground, does not exclude perception of the vile and hateful things behind. When, to one's sorrow, such families like the Prostakovs are encountered in real life, tragic consummations are not an infrequent occurrence among them. Our criminal records could furnish abundant illustration of this fact. Such is the moral aspect of this piece of writing, and the patriotic motives inspiring it are deserving every respect and commendation."

"The Minor" provoked the displeasure of Catherine II... Especially galling to her were the speeches of Starodum, the author's moralizer. He attacked court life, with its flattery and hypocrisy, and contrasted the severe simplicity of Peter I with the sumptuous luxury of Catherine II favourites, Once, when encircled by her courtiers, the empress complained in jest: "I'm come on bad times: even Monsieur Fonvisin wants to teach me how to reign."

But it was in no jesting mood that Catherine banned the journal "Starodum, or the Honest Men's Friend"—which the author of "The Minor" desired to publish.

Given to writing herself, Catherine entered into a controversy in print with the satirist—and emerged anything but victor. It was very little to her liking, for example, to read in Fonvisin's satirical journal his "Universal Court Grammar." Posing the question: "What is a courtier's lie?" the journal answers: "It is the grovelling of the contemptible soul before the haughty. It consists of shameless praise for the great lord for services he did not render and virtues he does not possess." Catherine could see that in this "answer" of Fonvisin's "great lady" only had to be substituted for "great lord," to make his satire a keen-edged weapon against herself.

In banning "Starodum," Catherine removed a most dangerous enemy of her feudal autocracy from the journalistic field. But she could not remove him from the Russian theatre and literature. Recalling all he owed the Russian theatre as a writer and a citizen, Pushkin, greatest of Russian poets, exclaimed in later days:

Oh, world of wonders, where of yore,
Of satire's pen the master bold,
Fonvisin shone, the friend of freedom...

The place Fonvisin holds in Russian literature and the Russian theatre could not be defined more precisely. He was indeed "of satire's pen the master bold;" his satire probed the most hidden ulcers, exposed the viciousness of the feudal serf-owners and penetrated fearlessly into the palace of Catherine herself. And at the same time, Fonvisin was truly "the friend of freedom;" inspired by ardent faith in the creative talents of the Russian people, he saw their future illumined, again to quote Pushkin, by the rays of "liberty enlightened;" it was the foes of that liberty that he assailed in the person of the Prostakovs and Skotinins.

As upon the Russian stage, so, along with the plays of Griboyedov, Gogol and Ostrovsky, "The Minor" still lives immortal on the Soviet stage.

SERGUEI DOURYLIN

"IVAN THE DREAD" BY V. KOSTYLYOV

In Soviet literature of late years the historical novel has occupied a prominent place. The people's past, their struggle for their rights, and the development and consolidation of the Russian state, form the subject matter of outstanding works like "Imperial Majesty" (Peter I) by Alexei Tolstoy, "The Ordeal of Sevastopol" by Serguei Sergueyev-Tsensky, and "Dmitri Donskoy" by Serguei Borodin.

Picture of Tsar Ivan IV, taken from a document of 1571

Valentine Kostylyov enjoys well-merited popularity as an historical novelist. He wrote most of his books in Gorky (formerly Nizhny-Novgorod) and knows and loves old-world Russia. To his pen belong the well-known novels "Pitirim" and "Kozma Minin." In the latter he has drawn a vivid picture of the Russian people's dramatic struggle for national independence at the turn of the 16th century and the beginning of the next. On the occasion of Valentine Kostylyov's sixtieth birthday recently the Soviet Government awarded him the Order of the Red Banner of Labour.

Some years back Kostylyov conceived the idea of writing an exhaustive trilogy on Ivan the Dread. The first book of the trilogy is called "Moscow Goes to War" and is reviewed in this article. The second is "The Sea" which will soon be coming off the press, and the trilogy ought to be completed about the beginning of next year.

"Russian history is an inexhaustible source of material for the novelist and dramatist," wrote Belinsky, the great Russian critic of last century. "What times, what characters!" he went on. "They would be enough for several Shakespeares and Walter Scotts."

The times and personality of Ivan the Dread have for long attracted the very best of our writers. It is enough to mention Lermontov's splendid poem, "The Merchant Kalashnikov and Tsar Ivan Vassilyevich" in true ballad style, a work known to English readers through the translations of John Coumnoc and others. The awful and majestic figure of the Tsar stalks through the poem as if he were present in flesh and blood.

The interest displayed in the times and doings of Ivan the Dread is quite comprehensible, for that was the epoch when the Russian National State crystalized around Moscow, when the foundation stones of its might and influence on the world were laid. In the 16th century the Moscow State emerged into world politics, the bounds of Muscovy spread far beyond the Urals, long wars were fought for the age-old Russian possessions on the shores of the Baltic. In Ivan the Dread's time within the country, life was tense with the impact of change. Like Louis XI in France or Henry VIII in England, Ivan the Dread in his resolute struggle for a monolithic centralized state dealt mercilessy with the rebellious princes and boyars, supporters of obsolete feudal relations and traditions. That struggle, often razor keen in intensity, gave rise to dramatic clashes and strong personalities.

And, of course, the central figure of that vivid period in Russian history was Ivan the Dread himself. His outstanding personality, profound and subtle mind, powerful will and strong character all captivate the imagination of the writer. "What a grand character for a historical canvas!" was said of Ivan the Dread by Karamzin, the well-known Russian historian and writer of the last century.

It wasn't at once and not by all writers, however, that Ivan the Dread's actions were given the right interpretation. Many writers and artists of the 19th century saw in the "terrible" Tsar only a cruel absolute ruler, a tyrant and despot. That conception found its reflection in foreign literature as well. It is enough to mention that the very title given him of "Grozny" (which means redoubtable, dread, formidable) is generally wrongly translated as "terrible."

The task of giving us an artistic presentation of Ivan the Dread, in accordance with historical truth, has fallen to the lot of Soviet art, to the present-day writer. And to waive false modesty we must admit that the task is being well done. The late Alexei Tolstoy, who was one of the most remarkable men of modern Russian letters, has recently given us "Ivan the Dread," a play now being staged by the Moscow Maly Theatre. The current number of the Moscow monthly "Znamya" ("Banner") carries an interesting play about Ivan the Dread called the "Livonian War" by Ilya Selvinsky, the poet. At the beginning of this year, Serguei Eisenstein, the producer of the well-known film "Battleship Potemkin," released another outstanding picture, "Ivan the Dread." Among these works of Soviet art and literature on Ivan the Dread is Kostylyov's novel.

"The principal aim of my work," writes the author of "Ivan the Dread," "is to show the part played by the people in consolidating the military power of the young multinational Russian state. I present Ivan IV as a statesman, an organizer of centralized power and as a reformer. His dearest dream was to draw close to Europe. Ivan IV made the first attempt to 'cut a window into Europe,' a fact that prompts me to describe the Narva campaign."

A most important event of Ivan the Dread's reign was the Livonian War, the beginning of which (1558—1561) is described in Kostylyov's novel. In his conception of Ivan's policy the writer is guided by Karl Marx's comment on the subject: "He was persistent in his efforts against Livonia; his conscious aim was to give Russia an exit to the Baltic and open the way for intercourse with Europe. That is why Tsar Peter admired him so much."

And Kostylyov shows Ivan the Dread as the big historical forerunner of Peter I and his great reforms.

The novel opens with scenes from the life of the rich 16th century boyars or nobles. A colourful picture is given of the arrogant noble Kolychev, the defender of old feudalism. His beautiful wife suffers at his hands and is terrified by his excesses. Through her the author shows the woeful lot of woman in ancient feudal Muscovy. The servants and the peasants also suffer from the headstrong violence of their lord. Andrei, a capable young fellow, flees from the domain, taking with him Okhima, an unusually beautiful Mordvinian girl. Their subsequent adventures, happy and sad, and their mutual love are the thematic backbone of the novel, the thread of fiction organically interwoven with the historical events narrated. In the destiny of Andrei, who becomes a master craftsman at the cannon foundry, the author reveals the ability of the Russian people, and the popular approval of Ivan the Dread's statesmanship. In this connection the author has followed the subjects of Russian folk songs, which, by the way, were so much admired by John Fletcher, the English traveller who visited Moscow in the 16th century. The songs praised Ivan for his struggle with the boyars, hated by the people, and described him as a Tsar to be feared but who was just to his people.

The author has succeeded in revealing the multinational nature of the Russian state then in process of formation. Mordvinians, Chuvash, Cheremis, Tatars and other nationalities take part in the events linked with Ivan the Dread's struggle.

The novel has many characters and among them figures of real historical importance, such as the young Tsar's counsellors Adashev, Prince Kurbsky (who later turns traitor), the boyar Vorotynsky, a commander, Gryaznoy, a future member of the Tsar's own troops, Vassian the monk, the dark figure inciting the nobles to revolt, and others.

The first volume of the trilogy shows only the beginning of the struggle between Ivan the Dread aided by "new people" and the feudal nobility lead by the domineering old woman Princess Yefrossinia, mother of Ivan's cousin, Prince Vladimir Staritsky. Through the medium of this feeble, weak-willed appanaged prince, is stressed the historical inevitability of Ivan's victory and the certain doom of the old feudal order.

In a review of the novel Robert Vipper, the well-known Russian historian and authority on the 16th century, writes: "Above the gallery of personages presented by the author towers the giant figure of Tsar Ivan Vassilyevich." Although at the time dealt with the Tsar is only twenty-seven he is shown as an already mature statesman, a man of granite will, In Ivan a clear outlook unencumbered by prejudice, impervious to outside influence in his views on the development of the Moscow State, and a keen understanding of the true problems confronting Russia are combined with a profound knowledge of the art of war and constructional engineering. Devoted to his great tasks of state Ivan could be majestically calm, balanced and ironic, a fact revealed in particular by his correspondence.

The stormy, rebellious spirit of Ivan is well brought out in the novel. The author also shows us the intimate life of the young Tsar, his touching love for the beautiful but delicate Tsaritsa Anastasia. She is truly the Tsar's solicitous friend, his unassuming adviser. The scene depicting Anastassia's death (she is poisoned by Ivan's enemies) and the Tsar's sad farewell to her is one of the best in the book and thoroughly grips the reader.

Compared with the classic novels of the 19th century the modern Soviet historical novel has brought much that is new to the art of depicting figures great in history. As Balzac, and, in Russia, Belinsky noted, the novels of the Walter Scott school depicted historical figures episodically, Soviet novelists, guided by the theory of the role of great men in history propounded by modern science, boldly place the great historical personage in the centre of the picture. At the same time in the specific treatment of the main hero, through his thoughts and feelings and his personal affections are disclosed the significance and meaning of his actions, the history of the epoch. This is the style of Alexei Tolstoy's novel "Peter I," in which the writer,

Emperor Maximilian I receives the ambassador from the Great Moscow Prince (Woodcut by Hans Burgmayer)

eschewing pettiness and avoiding the snare of too tedious attention to detail, shows the entire life of Russia's reorganizer on a broad historical background.

And so with Kostylyov the personality of Ivan the Dread stands forth with all the individual aspects and at the same time an expression of the historical destiny of Russia. That is what gives true majesty to the hero of the novel.

Politics were the Tsar's passion and naturally the writer gives political events pride of place in his novel.

Special interest is aroused by the pages devoted to problems of foreign policy: here Ivan the Dread appears as one of the greatest diplomats of his time.

The growth of the Moscow State evoked the fear and envy of its closest neighbours. The Germans were alarmed and angered at the growing strength of the Russian people. The Livonian Order was particularly aggressive, and strove to organize a bloc with Poland and Lithuania against Russia. Ivan IV achieved an alliance with England so as to counter the German barons and the Polish and Lithuanian nobles with the united forces of the young Kingdom of Muscovy and the English colonial power.

All this is well displayed in Kostylyov's book. In this connection the author cites a curious document. On page 353 we read:

"On account of the developing trade between Moscow and England the number of German, Danish and Swedish corsairs has increased in the Baltic. Merchant men from England and from Lubeck and other Hansa towns have begun to arrive in Narva well equipped with guns. Not a few pirates have been killed by the merchant's cannon. In the Baltic there have been regular battles between the merchants and the pirates, among whom were subjects of German electors.

"Following the lead of influential German Princes King Sigismund of Poland also became a patron of robbery on the high seas. He began writing letters to the English queen persuading her that "no limit can be put to the growth of the Muscovite" while to Narva are brought not only goods but arms, master craftsmen unknown till now (i. e. to the Tsar.—S. P.) and artists: thanks to this he is making himself stronger so as to vanquish all others (rulers).

"So far it seems we have excelled him only because of his ignorance in art and his unfamiliarity with politics. If this sailing to Narva continues we cannot see what else he'll have to learn.

"Some rulers have already heeded our warning and no longer send ships to Narva. Others who sail that way will be seized by our fleet and will jeopardize the lives and liberty of their wives and children."

Queen Elizabeth ignored this letter and others of the same kind from other kings and continued to patronize the trade of English merchants with Russia. Meanwhile in one of her letters which she called "a secret epistle" as besides her it was known only to the privy council, she assured Tsar Ivan of her sincere friendship and finished the letter with the following passage: "Pledging that we shall fight in unison with our joint forces against our common enemies and will discharge any and every one of the articles mentioned in this letter while God grants us life. This is our royal word." [1]

This episode throws the spotlight on the policy of rapprochement between Ivan the Dread's Russia and Elizabethian England and the plots of foes to prevent it.

Kostylyov's novel gives a detailed picture of life, customs and culture of Muscovy. Ivan the Dread adopted much of benefit from Western-European culture. The novel gives a vivid account of the first Russian printing press and Ivan Fyodorov, the first printer, the gun foundry and its craftsmen, and the state of military science in the time of Ivan.

The author himself writes: "I have made use of ancient books on military art to reflect in my novel pages from the history of gun casting, the artilery, the spear-armed infantry, the frontier guards, and so on." Russian military art of Ivan IV time is in itself quite a big subject in the novel.

Kostylyov's "Ivan the Dread" brings the reader close to one of the most interesting and important epochs in Russian history. There is every ground to expect that the following volumes of the trilogy will form a substantial addition to Soviet Historical novels.

SERGUEI PETROV

NEW BOOKS

"It was the gambling element of his political aims that brought one of the greatest of strategists a series of strategic failures and ultimately to complete defeat," Gatovsky says of Napoleon in his interesting work, "On the Role of Political Factors in War," issued by the State Political Publishing House.

The book is divided into six chapters: 1. Policy—a Determinant of Military Strategy: 2. Political Causes of Napoleon I Military Disaster; 3. Political Roots of the Failure of German Strategy in the War of 1914 to 1918; 4. Gambling Element in Policy and Strategy of Hitlerite Germany; 5. Policy and Military Strategy of Soviet State in the Years of Foreign Intervention and the Civil War; 6. On the Policy and Strategy of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War.

Grounding his arguments on well known works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin which define the roles and interaction of poricy, strategy and tactics, Gatovsky arrives at the only correct conclusion that it is the policy of a belligerent country that

[1] Translated from Russian.—Ed.

conditions the aims of its strategy so that consequently any strategic plan evolved by generals and military theoreticians must be an outcome of the general political plan.

"As they gain hold of the masses, social ideas become a material force," writes Gatovsky, "the knowledge of the righteousness of a war carried on by the country and ideas of patriotism permeating the masses become a mighty military force."

And further, turning to history, Gatovsky shows how in the year 1792, the French revolutionary forces before Valmy smashed the Prussian professional armies which were armed to the teeth, and how the Red Army, a people's army, in 1917 effected a triumphant social revolution, routing the admirably equipped white-guard hordes, driving out from their territory the troops of the foreign invaders, and thereby ensuring the security of the young Soviet state. He goes on to show how the poorly-armed and ill-trained forces of Republican Spain proved capable not only of holding out for a length of time against the blows of the Italo-German fascist war-machine, but also of dealing it some crushing counter-blows.

On the other hand, Napoleon's splendid army, when forced to bring into effect the gambler's design of conquering the world, struck hopelessly in Spain and was utterly routed in Russia. Similarly, the formidable war-machine of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany was smashed by the allied armies because the military strategy of the German war-leaders was rooted in the sands of the unreal political plans of German imperialism.

In these cases the position could not be saved either by the unquestionable genius of Napoleon or the detailed plan mapped by Schliffen contemplating a blitz-rout of each of Germany's adversaries in turn.

Still more striking is the example of the crash of the double-dyed gambler of the military strategy of German fascism in the present war.

Having created an immense and excellently technically-equipped army, the Hitlerites unleashed World War II, setting themselves the crazy task of enslaving the whole world.

Gatovsky reminds his readers of the successive failures of the whole hitlerite strategy which has brought Germany to the brink of inevitable military and political disaster.

"The depravity of the German strategy," writes Gatovsky, "enhanced the Red Army's chances of defeating the German troops. And the Red Army and its Higher Command with consummate... skill transmitted these chances into reality. German strategy was defeated by the strategy of the Red Army."

In the concluding chapter Gatovsky draws a vivid picture of the efforts exerted by Soviet people to ensure a victory over fascism.

Gatovsky further passes to an analysis of the Red Army's major operations, bearing evidence to the superiority of its strategy and its tactics to that of the enemy.

And there is not a man who on reading Gatovsky's book, if only he is the possessor of a discerning eye, a warm heart and a faculty for honest thought but will agree with the author in his final conclusion:

"Behind the German-fascist defective strategy is the gambler's policy of the most reactionary gangster regime, rotten to the core; the policy of a country surrounded by the mortal hate and execration of all progressive mankind. Behind the profoundly scientific Soviet strategy is the wise policy founded on the labour of a vital and mighty regime, which has saved mankind from fascist slavery, the policy of a country surrounded by the love and gratitude of all progressive mankind."

The "Soviet Writer" Publishing House recently issued a symposium entitled "Poets of Daghestan." This small anthology embraces the works of seventeen poets of different peoples of Daghestan—Lezghinians, Avarians, Kumyks, Lakians and Darghinians.

Valour and noble hatred for the foe emanates from the poetry of a people whose spokesman in ancient times voiced the words "the coward is surrounded by death."

Nowadays the modern poet Abdul Wahab Suleimanov exclaims:

Our fathers were warriors, all as one man.
Their sons will be worthy of their battle-greyed heads.

The book covers, in the main, works written during the war years. It opens with verses by Suleiman Stalsky, who was the oldest poet in Soviet Daghestan. Stalsky died a short while before the outbreak of the present war but, as Kamil Sultanov the author of the preface to this book, rightly notes, Stalsky "is one of those true poets who, even after their death, do not cease to take part in the life and struggle of the people." Following Stalsky the book quotes verses written by his friends and adherents, representatives of the older generation of Daghestan poets: Hamzat Tsadassa, Tahir Khuryugsky and Abutalib Hafurov. Then follow poems by the intermediate and younger generations.

Each poet shows a strikingly expressed individuality. Hadzhi Zalov's forte is the song-epic genre; the verses by Atkay are filled with lyrical meditation; the works of the talented young poet, Anvar Adjiev, are permeated with local colour and national folklore motifs. They all, however, have something in common: their verses ring out as a fiery battle call, as a vow to victory and vengeance on the foe. Love and tenderness for the motherland, now personified in the image of a mother, now as a beloved girl, merge with the determination to do one's duty to the end.

Today we need no light nor comfort,
No fond caresses. We must not rest
Till we have cleaned of the foe
The last inch of our native soil.

These words of the Kumyk Abdul Wahab Suleimanov, from the poem "Night," voice the general spirit of this book of verses, its inner leitmotif.

Issue No. 10—11 of "Istorichesky Zhurnal" ("Historical Journal") for 1944, published by the Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., carries an article by Helen Demeshkan entitled "Walter Scott as Historian."

The author is of the opinion that Walter Scott's role as historian and innovator which had a great influence on the development of historical science, has to this very day never received due appreciation. Yet the historical conceptions of this great Scottish author should be admitted as an independent stage in the consciousness of European society at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Demeshkan considers it right and fitting that Britain was the homeland of such a man as Walter Scott. The author thinks that modern historians over-estimate the influence of French Enlightenment on English social thought and emphasized that 17th century English historians were already showing great interest in historical fact and in concrete life and were approaching an understanding of the material factors of the social struggle.

The author then goes on to characterize the particular significance of Scottish traditions in the development of British historical science, and defines Walter Scott as the pupil of a brilliant array of Scottish historians and economists of the latter half of the 18th century—Hume, Ferguson, James Stuart, Robertson, and others.

The writer of this essay maintains that Scott occupies the position of an intermediate link between these 18th century historians and the French historical school of the Restoration (Thierry, Guizot and others), since when the social struggle had made its advent and become firmly established on the horizon of historical science.

The author regards the historical novels of Walter Scott, especially those treating of Scotland, as an illustration of the scientific-materialistic and progressive nature of Scott's historical creeds. She sharply attacks the opinion of Walter Scott as "a feudal lord wallowing in manor prejudices," and considers such views unjust and groundless.

She stresses the revolutionary and novel features of Scott's viewpoints, which found expression in a deep understanding of the people's historical role.

In this essay the author makes use of articles from Russian periodicals of the first half of the 19th century, and warmly recommends a little-known work published in Kharkov in 1836. This was by Professor Mikhail Lunin, and entitled "The Influence of Walter Scott on the Latest Researches into Medieval History." Furthermore, the author quotes Pushkin on Walter Scott (referring to the year 1830): "Walter Scott's influence is noticeable in all fields of writing, contemporary with his times. The new school of French historians was formed under the influence of this Scottish novelist. It was he who pointed to wholly new and hitherto unsuspected sources, notwithstanding the existence of the historical drama created by Shakespeare and Goethe."

Issue No. 12, 1944, of the same journal, includes an article by Victor Yatsunsky: "The Development of Historical Science in the U.S.A.." Among the first works of an historical nature to appear in the U.S.A. at the dawn of their history, the author names the chroniclers and diarists of the 17th and 18th centuries, and notes the painstaking efforts and merits of their work.

In the second group of works under consideration, the author refers to the historical writings of the period of the revolution and the first decades of independent existence of the U.S.A., with special emphasis on the works of Ramsay, Holmes and Hutchinson.

The writer then goes on to deal with the historical school which arose during the second quarter of the 19th century. Of this school, the author declares, Sparks and Bancroft were its most outstanding exponents.

Yatsunsky considers the liberal-democratic outlook which was combined with a religious Protestant world-outlook on the part of the historians, as a characteristic feature of this school. The author regards the romanticizing of the past as one of its substantial shortcomings, but notes the considerable progress of American historiography from the viewpoint of source-study.

A new period in the development of American historical science is noted by the author as beginning from the eighties of the 19th century when, under the influence of the ideas of Comte, Buckle, Darwin and Spencer, the religious Protestant world-outlook of American historians gave way to outlooks of a positivist nature.

The growth of the U.S.A. and the political consolidation of the country after the Civil War promoted the general progress of scientific knowledge. The "literary trend" in American historiography was superseded by the "scientific trend," a characteristic feature of which, in the author's opinion, was the expansion of historical themes and careful criticism of sources. Yatsunsky declares that the most outstanding exponents of this trend were Winsor and MacMaster, as well as Henry Adams and Rhodes.

An outstanding event in American historical science at the close of the 19th century was, in the author's opinion, the appearance of works by Turner developing a harmonious theory on the significance in the history of the U.S.A. of the colonization of the West.

Characteristic of the new trends occurring at the opening of the present century, are, so the author states, the works of Beard, in which due tribute is paid to the economic and social factors in history.

The author concludes with the statement that the latest American historiography is wholly independent and occupies a prominent place in the science of history. He gives a detailed outline of the institutions of an historical character in the U.S.A. and of historical editions. He also particularly emphasizes the fact and gives a high appreciation of the development of historical bibliography in the United States today.

MODEST MUSSORGSKY

Portrait of the composer by Ilya Repin

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky was born on March 21st, 1839, in the family of a landed proprietor in the village of Korevo, Pskov gubernia. Although the Mussorgskys were nobles who could trace their origin back to ancient times, there was a strain of peasant blood, too, in the composer's veins: his grandmother was a serf. The boy's extensive knowledge of folk songs, popular turns of speech, age-old customs and fairy tales were a potent influence in the shaping of his talent. "It was through my nurse," the composer wrote in his autobiographical notes, "that I became familiar with Russian fairy tales, and there were times when they kept me awake at night. They proved the main incentive, too, to my musical improvisations on the piano at a time when I had no notion of even the most elementary rules of pianoforte playing."

At the age of seven the boy was playing small pieces by Liszt, and two years later we hear of him performing Field's difficult concerto before "a large company."

His first music teacher was his mother. In the year 1849 the boy was taken to St. Petersburg to be placed in a Guards Officers' School, an institution favoured by the patronage of Tsar Nicholas I. The future composer, it is true, did not go to the school immediately on his arrival in the capital: owing to his extreme youth he was first sent to the German school of St. Peter and Paul for two years where he gained a fair knowledge of German and Latin (French he had spoken from early childhood). He was next sent to a boarding school where the boys were prepared for the military school. Here, among the "gilded" youth of this aristocratic circle were spent the best years of his boyhood. Drink was the order of the day. The boys had their own serf valets with them at the school. The bigger lads beat the younger ones and bullied them. It was a place where all living thought was stamped out and crushed, but in spite of all the baleful influences the young musician found within himself the strength to withstand his surroundings and fought out his right to continue his musical studies. While in St. Petersburg he studied under August Gherke, a prominent St. Petersburg musician, and he continued his music lessons later at the Military School, which he entered in the year 1852. His musical education was somewhat one-sided—the seventeen-year-old officer of the Preobrazhensky Regiment (which he joined on leaving school) was absolutely ignorant of Russian music and did not even know of the existence of Russian composers.

By this time Mussorgsky was a brilliant pianoforte player, amazing his listeners with the perfection and depth of his execution. People compared his playing to that of Anton Rubinstein, a pianist of world fame. He excelled in playing at sight, could rapidly master any music he heard and could sing well withal. An irresistible bent for composition had made itself felt while the lad was still at his military college. We know, for instance, that as far back as 1852 Mussorgsky had written a polka for the piano and in 1856 was contemplating an opera.

He composed drawing room love songs and pianoforte pieces and loved to improvise on themes of the fashionable Italian operas. It was at this stage that Borodin made his acquaintance in 1856.

The young Mussorgsky was in no way satisfied with his role of "society" amateur. His inward life, concealed from those around him, cried out for something different. In 1858 Mussorgsky abandoned his military career, sent in his resignation and gave himself up entirely to music. On meeting him a year later, Borodin was amazed at the change that had taken place in the young man. "I was profoundly struck by the brilliance, insight and vigour of his execution," he says in his reminiscences. Mussorgsky possessed all the ardour of the professional composer, had his own peculiar musical tastes and made deeply original experiments in composition.

From the time of his acquaintance with the composer Alexander Dargomyzhsky in whose house he became a frequent visitor, Mussorgsky entered a circle of outstanding Russian musicians. He formed a friendship with Mili Balakirev who was for many years the young composer's friend and guide in matters musical.

In the sixties of the last century Balakirev was the central figure of a group of distinguished young musicians among whom were Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Borodin and Ceasar Cui. Mussorgsky completely identified himself with this group which was to leave its name in the history of Russian music as the "St. Petersburg School" or the "Great Five" as it was called by the art critic Vladimir Stassov, the ideologist of the Balakirev group. Despite the vividly marked personality of each of the members they were all at one in the early days of their association at least in that it was a sine qua non for the successful development of Russian music on the one hand to strengthen the ties between composer and people, and on the other—to keep in touch with the advanced tendencies of modern West European music, rejecting the straightlaced routine, of which they regarded as typical the Academy of Music and the Italian opera.

In their best days the "Great Five" drew inspiration from the radical democratic ideas so dear to the heart of Mussorgsky. Later on, towards the early seventies, this group of pioneers gradually fell asunder: for many years a distressing disease disabled Balakirev. The others went each his own way "to the right." Mussorgsky stuck to his radical position, Stassov alone supporting him in his innovatory tendencies. The break with the group was for Mussorgsky a painful wrench, but the first years of the intercourse with the Balakirev circle had lent wings to his genius and had been his only school of composition: here there reigned no scholastic principles; it was a fount of living waters, a science derived from the creations of Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz, later on of Liszt, and first and foremost of Glinka and Dargomyzhsky. The Balakirev milieu had proved of inestimable worth in the shaping of young Mussorgsky.

Mussorgsky, however, was now unable for any length of time to continue developing his art, hampered as he was by strained material circumstances. His family had become totally ruined, he himself was destitute and saw himself compelled to seek employment as a government official.

In the early sixties he came into contact with the democratic ideas advanced by the new movement which in those years was sweeping through the progressive circles of Russian society. He read, entranced, the works of the great Russian thinkers Chernyshevsky and Herzen; he studied the theory of Darwin and the philosophy of Holbach. In those years his realistic aestheticism was built up on the aesthetic ideas of Chernyshevsky.

Intercourse with Taras Shevchenko, greatest of Ukrainian poets, with the historian Nikolai Kostomarov, with Stassov and other prominent figures from the progressive democratic camp tended to give greater strength to his radical outlook.

The trend of his conceptions and his scientific and philosophical interests began to exercise a decisive influence over his musical composition. "Basing himself on the conviction that the speech of man is controlled by strictly musical laws he regards it is, as the task of music to reproduce in sounds not only the varying moods of feeling, but mainly the formations of human speech." Guided by this principle the composer in his operas and numerous songs reproduced with remarkable truthfulness and variety the intonations of human utterances. This rare quality of intonation in singing is no mere happy compositional device. In Mussorgsky's art the consummate mastery of speech melody is but a means towards the attainment of aims incomparably greater.

In folk epics and in folk poetry Mussorgsky discovered simple stirring and heartfelt intonations of grief, revelry or laughter, catching with unsurpassed faithfulness the characters of human speech and interpreting them in sublime melody. It was the people that had come to be the central idea of Mussorgsky's music and the very content of his thought. The songs he wrote to the words of Nekrassov or Ostrovsky and to his own lyrics depict with unusual force the hopeless misery of Russian peasant life.

The world of images reflected in his songs embraces every aspect of Russian life. "Mussorgsky has gone still further than Dargomyzhsky and has with superb talent deepened and extended the framework and horizons of the latter... Mussorgsky's songs aim at depicting all strata of society—peasant, aristocracy and middle class; they show men and women, old and young, grown-ups, children and their nurses, students from the priests' seminaries, generals and religious fanatics."

In these words Stassov rightly indicates the extraordinary versatility of Mussorgsky's art. "Life," Mussorgsky was wont to declare, "wherever it may appear, truth even if a bitter one: bold and heartfelt and direct speech—this is what I stand for, the essence of my strivings and this is what I would be fearful of failing to achieve."

But it was only in the sphere of musical drama that the great Russian composer realized his conceptions in all their entirety. With mighty force he painted in his operas a picture of social struggle in which, for the first time in the history of world operatic art, the people is the hero. "I conceive the people as a great personality inspired by a single idea. Therein lies my task. I have tried to solve it in opera," Mussorgsky wrote to Repin, speaking about the people as the principal hero of his works. "It is the people I see in my mind's eye—only the people, great, entire, unadorned and ungilded."

On his dramatic efforts Mussorgsky embarked at an early age. As a youth of

seventeen he had conceived his "Han the Icelander," after a story by Victor Hugo; in 1858 he began work on the musical tragedy of "Oedipus," after Sophocles. In the sixties, he was captivated by the idea of creating a musical drama impregnated with social content. Such is "Salambo," Mussorgsky's incompleted musical drama after Flaubert's story, drastically changed by the composer. "The past in the present," the composer used to say, "that is my task." And this was a principle he followed in all his historical musical dramas.

The Libyan Matteau fighting for the liberty of his people is the central figure of the "Salambo" libretto. In the prison scene he sings an aria to a revolutionary text by the poet Polezhayev: "Lonely I die," he says, "and my defenceless body I abandon to the scorn of the hangmen."

In 1867 a bold musical dramatic effort came from the pen of Mussorgsky, "Marriage," a one-act piece after Gogol. Every intonation of the luscious speech of Gogol's heroes is exquisitely conveyed by the composer. Following in the footsteps of Dargomyzhsky who was just then working on the completion of his "Stone Guest," in "Marriage" Mussorgsky made an experiment in giving continuous recitative expression to the living intonations of his philistine characters. The result was misunderstood, even Dargomyzhsky venturing the opinion that Mussorgsky had "overdone it a bit." And yet at the same time Dargomyzhsky's motto: "I want sound to directly express the word; I want truth," and, in particular, "The Stone Guest," his last work, found its logical culmination in Mussorgsky's "Marriage."

So much for Mussorgsky's early efforts in musical drama which were excellent preparation for the eventual production of a profound historical drama. And at thirty the composer creates his best work — the opera of "Boris Godunov" (the libretto after Pushkin). This was indeed a revolution in Russian operatic art and at the same time one of the most wonderful achievements of world musical art. This sublime drama created an epoch thanks to the consistency with which the composer realizes his innovatory ideas. Pushkin's tragedy not only served as groundwork for Mussorgsky; the composer owes to the great poet the essential idea of his drama. The attitude to the people of those in power and, vice versa, the roles of the interventionists and their puppets—of the usurper, the magnificent delineation of the characters of Godunov, Shuisky, of the Polish nobility, the figure of Dimitri, the atmosphere of the "time of troubles"—all were prompted by Pushkin's tragedy.

The composer has, however, introduced certain changes and made additions to the Pushkin text. The last scene — before Kromy, which is absent in Pushkin, ably conveys the elemental upheaval of the people's rising against the boyars. In the scene in front of St. Basil's Cathedral the people clamorously demand of Boris: "Bread, give bread to the hungry!" In the last episode of the opera the "yurodivy" (weak-minded religious devotee) to the dull tolling of the alarm bell, pronounces the following ominous words standing against a background of flames: "Flow, flow, ye bitter tears... Soon the enemy will come and there will be darkness, darkness, impenetrable darkness. Woe to Russia! Weep, weep, o Russian people—ye hungry people!"

Revealing with the insight of genius the tragedy of the Russian people, Mussorgsky has not failed to show their might and will to struggle for their freedom.

The incomparable force of the music in "Godunov" lies in its dramatism which recalls the creations of the leading masters of the theatre. This dramatic opera is one of the greatest treasures of Russian art.

"Khovanshchina," another of Mussorgsky's people's musical dramas on which the composer was engaged throughout the last years of his life, is conceived in the form of a wide historical canvas. Mussorgsky is carried away by the strife of historical forces. The composer tries to give a picture which should reflect all the interrelations of social groups, classes and estates in the period of the regency of the Tsarevna Sofia, sister of Peter I.

The strangers, streltsi, a scribe, a favourite, the enlightened European, the infuriated woman-schismatist, boyars, inhabitants of the German Sloboda (town quarter), the "reiter"—precursors of the future army of Peter — all these are presented in a poignant struggle drawn into a knot of irreconcilable contradictions.

Whatever the shortcomings of the libretto written by the composer himself, there can be no doubt that in "Khovanshchina" Mussorgsky has given the widest and most varied social-historical picture ever known to the art of dramatic opera.

As in "Boris Godunov" the composer has turned to historical sources, the artist's insight completing the picture of the epoch; he has shown in "Khovanshchina" the new Russia come to take the place of the old Russian feudal reaction.

Realizing the author's fundamental conception it is the people who in "Khovanshchina" become the real centre of the action, while the different characters represent various social groups of feudal boyars (Ivan Khovansky), sectarians (Dossifei, Marfa), the courtier clique (Golitsyn) and government servants (the scribe).

The author's idea however has not been realized to the full owing to a lack of concentration in the libretto which in places runs too much to detail. But Mussorgsky's musical dramatic language with its amazing contrasts is forcefully convincing. The gloomy streltsi march in the execution scene, symbolic of defeated feudalism, is set off by the bright march motif of Peter's men, symbol of the new epoch ushered in by Peter.

The sectarians perishing in the flames symbolise old bigoted Russia dying. Prince Ivan Khovansky falls, struck down by the hand of the assassin. In force of expressiveness the death scene holds one

of the foremost places in world operatic literature.

As in "Boris Godunov" the main image in "Khovanshchina" is the suffering and majesty of the Russian people. Here, too, as in "Boris Godunov" the people asserts its strength in the struggle.

In 1874 Mussorgsky began work on a new opera, "Sorochintsy Fair," after Gogol. Here the composer has succeeded in creating one of the few Russian humorous operas with Ukrainian local colour vividly expressed, sparkling with merriment and with the dramatic personnel magnificently characterized. Such episodes as the symphonic overture, Gritsko's song, the aria of Khivria and her duet with the priest's son belong to the best specimens of genre music in the Russian classical repertoire.

Among the vocal works of Mussorgsky in the period of his maturity three cycles deserve special mention. The first, "The Nursery" (1870), recounting the simple events of child life invariably produces as strong an impression on the modern audience as it was wont to have at the time of its first appearance. The marvellous reproduction of childish speech intonation and the incomparable way in which he has caught the rhythm fully justify the ardent admiration evoked by these songs in even the greatest of musicians, Liszt, for example.

The next vocal cycle, "Without Sunshine," to the words of Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1874), is tinted with a deep melancholy. But few songs will be found to rival these heart-felt confessions of a soul in its loneliness. And, finally, the "Songs and Dances of Death," the last cycle of songs to the words of the same poet, are full of stirring dramatism. All four songs: "Trepak," "Lullaby," "Serenade" and "Captain" have death for their principal character. The tragic element is stressed by each one of them being founded on such musical genres as songs or marches. The well-known piece entitled "Forgotten" (after Vereshchagin's picture) is a gem of musical lyricism. It is a characteristic point that in all Mussorgsky's tragic images is revealed the misery of the people. In the well-known songs, "Hush-a-bye, Peasant's Son," or "Yeryomushka's Lullaby" different aspects of peasant life are revealed, while in "Savishna," another favourite which reminds one of rapidly uttered lamentations, the same motifs of a people's sufferings are transferred into the sphere of personal emotions (a yurodivy imploring a girl for love).

In the satirical songs "The Gallery," "Pupil of Seminary," "The Goat" and "Classical Scholar" the marvellous gift of characterization is brilliantly manifested.

Of Mussorgsky's more considerable choral works the two following, composed on bible themes, should be noted: "The Defeat of Sennacherib" (1867) and "Joshua of Nineveh" (1877).

And we have yet a number of instrumental works of great beauty. Besides some unforgettable symphonic episodes in his operas ("The Moskva at Sunrise" in "Khovanshchina," church bells in "Boris Godunov" and the overture to "Sorochintsy Fair") the composer has written a sublime symphonic picture "Midsummer's Night on Lyssaya Mountain" (1867), one of the finest embodiments in music of Russian folk fantasy.

Prominent among his numerous works for the pianoforte is the cycle called "Sketches from an Exhibition," a suite of "illustrations" that is a gallery of varied pictures of human life and history.

The rich heritage bequeathed by Mussorgsky was left in a state of chaos, the archives scattered and dispersed, many of the works incompleted and in disorder. It required the greatest efforts on the part of Rimsky-Korsakov and Stassov and in our days of Paul Lamm and Boris Assafyev carefully to assort, edit and in some cases to adapt for use a number of Mussorgsky's works.[1]

This state of things may be explained by the composer's tragic fate in the last years of his life. Poverty and the fatal propensity for drink acquired during the years of military service were drawing the man of genius to inevitable disaster. He died on the bed of a military hospital where a doctor of his acquaintance had managed to place him by passing him off as his orderly. His death occurred on March 28th, 1881. The famous portrait by Repin was painted in the hospital shortly before the composer's death.

This tragic end reveals the fate of many outstanding Russian people under the tsarist regime: their labours could not support them. The sum total received by the composer from his publishers throughout his whole lifetime amounted to seven hundred and one roubles and fifty kopeks!

The great gift of realism, a mighty creative force conducive to the blazing of new trails will explain to us the powerful influence exercised by Mussorgsky on the musical life of subsequent generations. The mentality of individuals and social groups is presented by Mussorgsky with greater complexity and richness than was the case with any of his predecessors. His innovatory tendencies found reflection in two outstanding French musicians — Debussy and Ravel. Mussorgsky's ideas have met with understanding among Soviet musicians. Our operatic drama owes a great debt to Mussorgsky, the inspiration and creator of the Russian folk musical drama.

Professor ARNOLD ALSHWANG

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[1] Rimsky-Korsakov undertook the task of re-editing and orchestrating "Boris Godunov" and "Khovanshchina." The latter work has assumed the nature of a joint authorship. Lamm and Assafyev on the other hand have restored Mussorgsky's operas in their original form.

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre, directed by Alexander Tairov, has just celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. It opened its first season (1914—1915) with the tragedy "Sakuntala" by Kalidasa.

Its history has been an eventful one. The Kamerny Theatre, like any other big undertaking, has had its ups and downs, has experienced failures and successes, but the results are there for all to see.

Seventy-five plays in all have been staged, forty belonging to the Russian classics and Soviet playwrights, while thirty-five productions have been taken from European and American repertoires.

The Kamerny Theatre is known far beyond the precincts of Moscow; it has toured the country twenty-two times, visiting more than a hundred towns from the Black Sea to the White Sea. The theatre is known in sunny Georgia and cold Siberia. Since the outbreak of war its members have made repeated journeys to the front, giving numerous performances to soldier audiences.

As this theatre expanded and developed, its contact with the life of the country has strengthened more and more. From the very first it aimed at combining the romanticism and grandeur of tragedy with the smile of satire and comedy, and strove to convey the romance and majesty of the great Socialist Revolution. Vsevolod Vishnevsky's "Optimistic Tragedy" expressed the spontaneous romance of the first years of the Revolution. In the days of the Patriotic War performances in the Kamerny Theatre have been inspired with a noble patriotism fostering feelings of affection for our Red Army. "Admiral Nakhimov," the title-role of which is splendidly acted by People's Artist Paul Gaideburov, arouses in the audience feelings of pride in the fighting traditions of the Russian people.

Among the theatre's creative efforts, achievements and experiments a prominent place is taken by the female characters created by Alice Koonen, whose pleasing feminine attributes are a distinct feature of the theatre. Her tender, womanly Adrienne Lecouvreur, the unfortunate Emma Bovary and, lastly, Kruchinina in Ostrovsky's "Guilty Without Guilt," are roles all played successfully by Alice Koonen.

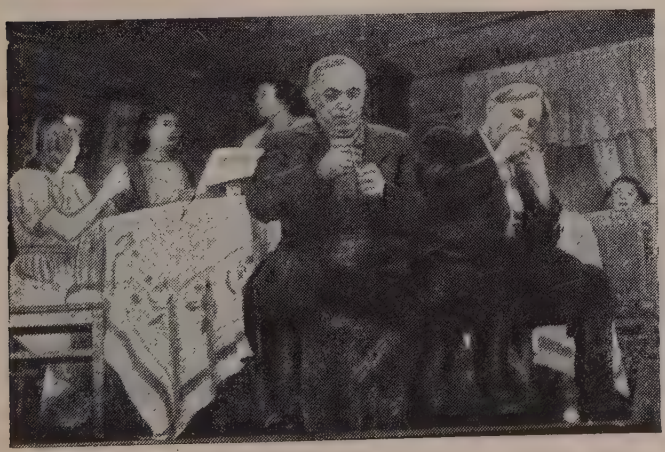
The poise, clarity, "measure and grace" which the great Russian actor Mikhail Shchepkin considered as essentials in histrionic art, are essentials of Alice Koonen's talent which is steadily developing. She has been fortunate in working in the splendid ensemble directed by Tairov which contains such actors as Serguei Tsenin, Nikolai Chaplygin, Helen Uvarova, Augusta Miklashevskaya and the producers Leonid Lukyanov and Victor Ganshin.

In connection with the theatre's anniversary Tairov has been awarded the Order of Lenin while Alice Koonen received the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. Other actors and collaborators of the theatre were also awarded government decorations.

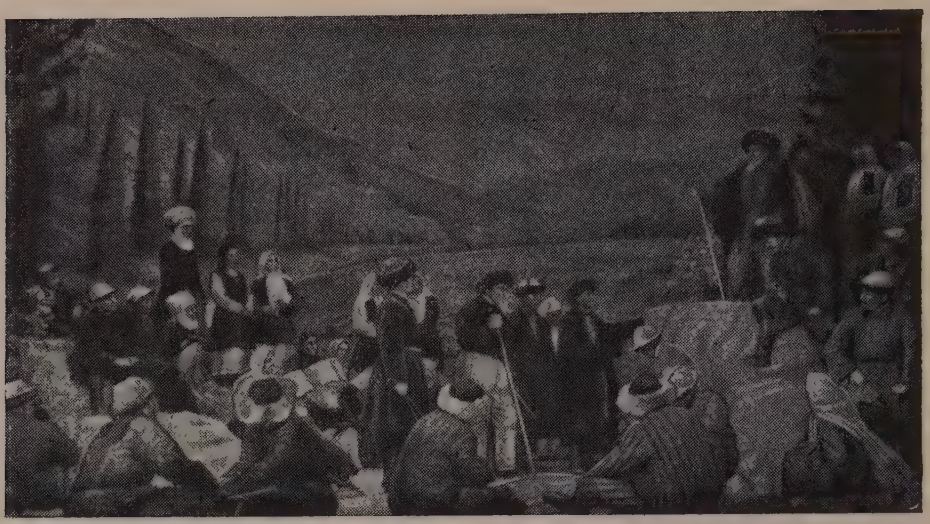
— Perkins from Chicago!
— Chumachenko from Poltava!

In this way do the two heroes of Alexander Korneichuk's political comedy "Mr. Perkins' Mission to the Land of the Bolsheviks" introduce themselves to each other. Mr. Perkins is an American millionaire, while Chumachenko is a Soviet peasant.

Mr. Perkins arrives in the U.S.S.R. during the autumn of 1943. These were the days when the Red Army was forcing the Dnieper. He has come to see for himself what the Soviet "man in the street" thinks about the post-war period. Mr. Perkins is accompanied by a certain Mr. Hemp, a gentleman whose attitude to the U.S.S.R. is decidedly hostile. He persistently advises Mr. Perkins to visit some outlying collective farm to see Soviet life as it really is, without any frills. Mr. Hemp is certain that there Mr. Perkins will find the weak places in the Soviet system. But he is woefully disappointed. On the farm Mr. Perkins meets Chumachenko, an ordinary Soviet peasant,



Scene from Alexander Korneichuk's play "Mr. Perkins' Mission to the Land of the Bolsheviks," now running at the Moscow Theatre of Satire.



Scene from Act I of the Kirghiz opera "Altyn-Kyz"

who turns out to be totally unlike the "average person" whom the two strangers expected to meet here. Chumachenko is quite well informed on all questions of international politics and is firmly convinced that the friendship between the Soviet peoples and those of Great Britain and the United States of America, which will form the corner-stone of the new post-war world, can exist only on a foundation of complete mutual understanding and esteem. And here, in a remote Russian village, on an October night in 1943, the American millionaire and the Russian peasant talk things over with the same bluntness and frankness as the most pressing international problems are discused by their great nations.

Critics have called Alexander Korneichuk's play "a sharp and clever political feuilleton in dramatic form." The play, as staged in the capital, by the Moscow Theatre of Satire, is interesting and impressive. The role of Mr. Perkins is taken by Pavel Paul while that of the peasant Chumachenko is played by Vladimir Khenkin. The remaining roles, too, are in the hands of the theatre's best actors.

Among the mountains of Tien-Shan in the Kirghiz Soviet Republic a dramatic theatre has been functioning for over six years. The performances are in the Kirghiz language.

In winter, despite forty degrees or so below zero, and the dangers of travelling over treacherous mountain roads, the artists journey on horseback to outlying hamlets. The actors manfully cross the perilous mountain passes to perform before audiences of cattle-breeders who graze their immense flocks on heights of over three thousand metres and on the frontier pastures along the Soviet-Chinese borders high up among the wild rugged rocks of Tien-Shan.

During the present season four new plays by Kirghiz playwrights have been produced. Three of these reflect events of the war: "Honour," a drama by Aala Tokombayev, depicts collective-farm life in wartime; a review entitled "That's Not the Way" by Alykul Osmonov, describes the adventures of a Kirghiz officer home on leave from the front; "Obeying Orders" by Kassymal Djantoshev, is about the life of an Ukrainian partisan detachment, one of whose members is a wounded Kirghiz Red Army man. The fourth new play, "Everyone's Doing His Bit," is a lively comedy by Kassymal Djantoshev in which the action takes place in a Kirghiz collective farm.

All four plays are enjoying great success.

Some seven or eight years ago, nearly all the artists of this theatre were working in the fields. For instance, Sonunbiubiu Satybalyeva, the leading lady, was doing farm work; Kalmabet Erkebayev, now specializing in heroic roles, drove a tractor in the foothills of Kungei-Alatau; the actor and composer Abdykaly Temirov also worked on a farm. Not so long ago Abdashim Kobeganov, the theatre's art director, was a modest village schoolmaster in one of the mountain hamlets of Tien-Shan. They have all travelled the difficult path of those who apprentice themselves to art and become prominent figures in the theatrical world.

The Kirghiz National Theatre has staged the première of Michael Raukhverger's "Cholpon," a ballet based on the libretto of Oguncbu Sarbagishev, the Kirghiz playwright. The subject is an old folk tale about Nurdin, the son of the Khan, and the beautiful Cholpon, the daughter of a hunter. The charming story contains the old and ever new truth of a man pursuing the spectre of happiness, all neglectful of the friendship and devotion that are his for

the taking. Material from native Kirghiz folklore has been widely used throughout.

The dance is the latest development in Kirghiz art. The first performance of a Kirghiz ballet took place in 1938 and 1939, when "Anar," a character ballet and the character dances in the opera "Ai-Churek" were first performed on the stage.

Quite an event in musical circles this winter was the ten-day festival held in the capital of Georgia and dedicated to the music of the Transcaucasian Republics. At Tbilisi gathered the chief figures in the musical world of three republics—Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Among the guests were several Moscow composers headed by Reinhold Glière, President of the Association of Soviet Composers.

In addition to some admirable specimens of folk music, Armenia was represented by new symphonic and chamber compositions. Among them were a symphony by Aro Stepanyan, "Armenia," a poem by Grigor Egiazaryan, and another by Serguei Aslamazyan, entitled "To the Heroes of the Patriotic War." Two quite young Armenian composers—Arno Babadjan, who played extracts from his pianoforte concerto, and Alexander Arutyunyan, who presented a new overture—both earned hearty applause. The main item in the programme of Armenian music was a performance of Aram Khachaturyan's Second Symphony.

The Georgian musicians sang and played against a background of vivid colourful scenery representing a native village festival. During the war, Georgian composers have produced a number of patriotic songs, battle marches and several large symphonic works. Various compositions by the composers Mshvelidze, Kiladze, Balanchivadze, Gabichvadze, Tuskiya, Taktakishvili and a symphony by the aged composer, Dmitri Arakishvili, were included in the programme.

Over four hundred works—symphonies, operas, cantatas, suites and songs—are Azerbaijan's contribution during the war years. The best among these—by the composers Uzeir Gadjibekov, Soltan Gadjibekov, Ashrafi Abassov, Djavlet Gadjiev, Kara Karayev and Mamed Isfail-Zade—achieved outstanding success at the festival.

The Georgian Opera House at Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, has a most diverse repertoire. The theatre bears the name of Zacharia Paliashvili, a Georgian classical composer whose opera "Abessalom and Eteri," is a strong favourite with the public. During the present season a new staging of this opera will be produced by Michael Kvaliashvili.

The theatre has also staged Russian and European classics such as "La Bohème" by Puccini, Borodin's "Prince Igor" and Chaikovsky's famous ballet "The Swan Lake."

Outstanding among the operas by Georgian composers is "Daredjan Tsbieri" by Meliton Balanchivadze, one of the founders of Georgian operatic art.

The orchestra conducted by Grigori Kiladze also greatly adds to the theatre's prestige.

Mukhtar Ashrafi, the eminent Uzbek composer, has completed a new symphony, entitled "Glory to the Conquerors." Its first performance was timed to mark the twentieth anniversary of Soviet Uzbekistan.

A pupil of the Russian composer Serguei Vassilenko, Mukhtar Ashrafi's first operas "The Snowstorm" and "The Great Canal" were written in collaboration with his master.

During the war, Ashrafi has written his "Heroic Symphony," the first symphony in the history of Uzbek music, which gained him a Stalin Prize in 1943. His new symphony, "Glory to the Conquerors," is distinguished by the courageous and powerful character of the music.

Two hundred years have elapsed since the birth of Ivan Starov, the famous Russian architect.

A native of Moscow, it was in this city that Ivan Starov received his early education which he continued in St. Petersburg. Upon graduating from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts he visited France and Italy where he studied ancient and Renaissance architecture. Returning home in 1768, he occupied the Chair of Architecture at the Academy of Arts while continuing his own creative work.

Starov is the author of the Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery in St. Petersburg. In 1783—1788 he built the Tavrida Palace, the remarkable Hall of Columns and the Winter Garden lauded in verse by Gabriel Derzhavin, the poet par

Main facade of the Tavrida Palace designed by the architect Ivan Starov (1783—1788)

excellence during the reign of the Empress Catherine.

Starov's art proved a powerful influence in the history of Russian architecture. Not only was he the first to bring French classicism to Russia, but he also imparted to it a peculiar purely Russian treatment.

Then again, Starov was the first to introduce the English park into Russia. In the early period of his activities (1771—1773) he designed the magnificent country seat and grounds at Bobriki near Tula. Later he built a palace and designed the grounds in the village of Nikolskoye near Moscow where the exquisite park is an important part of the architectural ensemble.

Reinhold Glière's seventieth birthday was the occasion of a festive evening held at the Association of Soviet Composers where the venerable musician was the guest of honour. A paper on the Art of Glière was read by Dmitri Shostakovich who spoke of Glière's services to Russian musical culture, noting that among his pupils were such composers as Nikolai Myaskovsky and Serguei Prokofyev.

After numerous addresses by representatives of musical bodies, greetings received from the United States of America and Britain were read, including congratulatory telegrams from Serguei Kussevitski, Leopold Stokovsky, Alexander Grechaninov, Igor Stravinski and other prominent musicians.

On this, his seventieth birthday, the composer was honoured with the Order of Lenin.

A film "On the Question of the Armistice With Finland" has been released by the Central Studio of Documentary Films. The audience watches the signing of the original agreement between U.S.S.R. and Finland concluded in 1940, and treacherously violated by the rulers of Finland who joined in the German aggression.

Documental sequences show the visit to Finland of Hitler "himself" and the toadying atmosphere created there by the then rulers of Finland. The suddenness of the assault enabled the German-Finnish invaders to take possession of certain Soviet territories and encircle Leningrad with the ring of the blockade. But the Soviet people and their Red Army smashed the enemy onslaught and passed over to a triumphant offensive. Finland was offered conditions moderate and generous but these were rejected by the members of the Finnish government. The latter placed their hopes on German help and the three lines of the mighty defence fortifications traversing the Karelian Isthmus. But the Red Army conquered this intricate structure and the strongholds of the Viborg area within a period of ten days. The film goes on to show the Finnish defences crumbling under the fire of Soviet artillery. Revealed in detail are the strategy and tactics of the fighting, the valour of Soviet soldiers, the consummate skill of the generals... The Finns again begin to talk of peace... The rupture with Germany has opened to them the way to peace. The picture ends with the signing of the armistice. The planning of the scenario and the direction of the film are the work of Julius Raizmann.

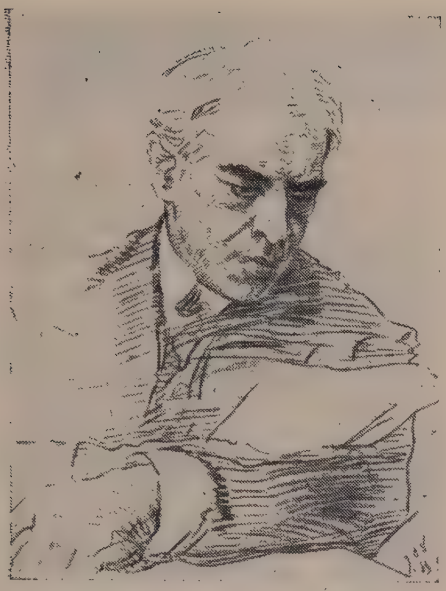
Considerable interest has been aroused in Moscow by a conference reporting on the capital's front line theatres. Various special troupes were formed during the war to cater to the front. They are in action continuously, giving hundreds of performances at front line positions, in dugouts and blindages, and on the decks of warships. Eight theatrical front line companies organized by the best Moscow theatres—the Maly, Vakhtangov and others, met and compared notes at the conference.

Evenings devoted to Slavonic music are frequently held in Moscow concert halls. At her last recital, the violinist, Galina Barinova, played works of three Slav composers—Antonin Dvórak, Henrik Weniavski and Alexander Glazounov. In Barinova's rendering of the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra were displayed all Dvórak's melodiousness, all his simplicity and profound feeling. The violin of Weniavski, the great Polish virtuoso of the last century, has been silent for many years but the soul of his music lives in the compositions he has bequeathed to us. From his works Barinova chose the Second Concerto. The evening's programme terminated in a Concerto for Violin and Orchestra by the Russian composer Alexander Glazounov, a composition distinguished by its lofty nobility of style.

Serguei Prokofyev's Fifth Symphony (Opus 100) was performed in Moscow by the State Symphony Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. and conducted by the author. "The Fifth Symphony," says Dmitri Kabalevski, "is one of the most important works of the eminent Soviet composer and may be ranked with the outstanding creations of music."

"The Singers" by Ivan Turgenev, one of the writer's best lyrical stories, describes a competition among Russian village singers masters of folk song, at which the author happened one day to be present. In the year 1943, Alexander Goldenweiser, the well-known Moscow pianist and teacher, wrote an opera bearing the same title as Turgenev's story, which has recently been performed at the Actor's House in Moscow. Goldenweiser was, as many know, a personal friend of Leo Tolstoy's. From his pen has come an interesting book of reminiscences, many pages of which are devoted to his meetings with the great writer.

Quite a number of composers took part in the competition sponsored by the Association of Soviet Composers for the best children's song. Themes from child life, to judge from the contributions submitted, have evoked vivid interest on the part of



Constantine Stanislavsky.. Drawing Valentine Serov

such musicians as Dmitri Kabalevski, Zara Levina, Anatole Alexandrov, Leonid Polovinkin and others.

At one of the meetings of the Children's Committee of the Composer's Association, Dmitri Shostakovich's eight-year-old daughter played two new pieces composed by her father—a march and a waltz for children.

"...He had the soul of an artist, the eyes of an artist, the hands of an artist," said the poet Valeri Bryoussov in speaking of his contemporary, the painter Valentine Serov. The eightieth anniversary of Serov's birth was duly marked in the Soviet press. Serov introduced into Russian art a poetical quality and spirituality that make his pictures akin to the world of Chekhov's images, and the Moscow Art Theatre. At the early age of twenty-two he had already produced his famous "Girl With Peaches," that masterpiece of portraiture (1887). And it is the portrait in which Serov's genius has developed in all its richness. A portrait from his brush is not merely a perfect likeness of the outward man, it is the sitter's biography—his character. Such is the inherent quality of his portraits of Maxim Gorky, of the actress Maria Yermolova, of the painter Isaak Levitan, of Dmitri Stassov, lawyer and public worker.

Numerous landscapes and historical canvases speak of a great and individual talent. His works form no small contribution to Russian art.

A scientific thesis "On the Russian Horn Orchestra" has been submitted by K. Vertkov, a Leningrad musicologist. The horn as a musical instrument was originally used in the hunt. Horn orchestras, distinguished by their mellowness and emotional force, enjoyed considerable popularity in Russia in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The thesis offers a comprehensive survey of the history of horn orchestras in Russia. The author of the research is a participant of the present war and has been decorated for valour.

Moscow concert-goers have every opportunity of acquainting themselves with new musical achievements. A new symphony by Vladimir Kryoukov, widely based on the folk song of the Khakass people of Western Siberia, has been performed in the Large Hall of the Moscow Academy of Music.

The Odessa School of Art has been in existence for over eighty years. The activity of this school, which was interrupted during the German occupation, is being rapidly resumed and reorganized. Most of the old professors and teachers are back in Odessa once more. The departments of painting, sculpture and ceramics are now open.

A group of composers from the town of Kishinyov, capital of the Moldavian Soviet Republic, has returned from a musical folklore expedition. They have recorded over one hundred and twenty dances and songs, including those of the ancient Moldavian wedding ceremony.

Forty-nine artists of the Third Byelorussian Front who participated in the fighting for the liberation of the Smolensk area, Byelorussia and Lithuania have organized an exhibition of their pictures. A total of 1,430 of their works are on view.

The Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator is staging a fairy-tale called "Homeland." It is by the children's playwright, Alexei Simukov, and deals with the struggle waged by honest people leading a life of peaceful labour against wickedness, cruelty and violence.

At Ashkhabad, in the Pushkin Dramatic Theatre, the première of a play entitled "Brothers," by Berda Kerbabayev, the Turkmenian writer, has taken place. It deals with the fraternal friendship of the Russian and the Turkmenian peoples.

NEWS AND VIEWS

GRIBOYEDOV DAYS IN THE U.S.S.R.

The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the great Russian writer, Alexander Griboyedov, author of the immortal comedy "Wit Works Woe," proved a great event in the cultural life of the country.

The Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. issued a special decree by which monuments to Griboyedov are to be erected in Moscow, Leningrad and Tbilisi; a number of specified schools and libraries are to be endowed with the author's name; a bronze bust of Griboyedov is to be set up in the large Hall of the Moscow University; sixteen Griboyedov scholarships in schools of higher learning in Moscow, Leningrad and Tbilisi are to be founded. Furthermore a complete collection of his works is to be published and memorial tablets affixed to houses connected with the writer's life.

On the day of the Griboyedov anniversary, a memorial meeting was held at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Present at the meeting were prominent figures in letters, art and science, numerous Red Army generals, officers, workers from Moscow enterprises. Members of the Diplomatic Corps were also present. On the stage was a huge portrait of Griboyedov framed in gold, and garlanded with flowers. A book lay open at the writer's words: "Even the smoke of one's homeland smells sweet..."

The proceedings opened with an address by the author Leonid Leonov, who remarked that Griboyedov's comedy held a warm place in his country's heart. Professor Nikolai Piksanov, the well-known literary critic stressed the fact that the Griboyedov anniversary had grown into a national festival. The speech of Alio Mashashvili, the Georgian poet, dealt with the ties of friendship linking Griboyedov with men prominent in the cultural life of Georgia. Alexandra Yablochkina, the veteran actress of the Russian stage, spoke of Griboyedov's art as an inexhaustible fund of inspiration for many generations of Russian actors. The evening concluded with scenes from "Wit Works Woe" played by actors of the Moscow Art and Maly Theatres and the Leningrad and Saratov Dramatic Theatres.

A similar commemoration meeting was also held by the writers of Leningrad. After papers had been read by various Leningrad men of letters, Yuri Yuryev, the well-known dramatic artist, recounted the scenic history of Griboyedov's comedy.

At Riga, a paper on Griboyedov was read by Andrejs Upits.

In Latvia a new edition of "Wit Works Woe" in the Lettish language is under publication.

Griboyedov matinées and evening performances have been held in the secondary schools and schools of higher learning in Vilnius. Special anniversary numbers were issued by the Lithuanian newspapers.

At Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan, a conference devoted to Griboyedov was organized jointly by local students and men of letters. Memorial exhibitions have been opened throughout the towns and villages of the Republic.

In Gorky over thirty lecturers visited various schools, clubs and libraries to speak on the subject of Griboyedov's writings.

The author's influence on the development of Azerbaijanian literature formed the subject of numerous lectures and papers at Baku, Azerbaijan's capital. Griboyedov was a great friend of Abass Kuli Aga Bakikhanov, an eminent native scholar of those times.

An exhibition dealing with the theme of Griboyedov and Georgia is on view at the Literary Museum in Tbilisi. Among the documental treasures preserved by the museum is the church register recording Griboyedov's marriage to Nina Chavchavadze, daughter of the well-known Georgian poet.

In connection with the Griboyedov anniversary celebration "Wit Works Woe" has appeared simultaneously at some forty theatres throughout the country. Another of the author's plays entitled "It's One's Own Family" and written before "Wit Works Woe," in association with Alexander Shakhovskoy and Nikolai Khmelnitsky, has been staged by several theatres. It is a vaudeville typical of the stage of Griboyedov's epoch, replete with witty and animated songs and dances and abounding in comical situations.

A Griboyedov exhibition has been arranged under the auspices of the Moscow Theatrical Museum in the Writers' Club. Over two hundred exhibits are on view, including portraits, sketches of costumes and theatrical scenery, drawings, photographs and books. Of considerable interest are the exhibits connected with the première of "Wit Works Woe" given at St. Petersburg on January 26th, 1831. Other valuable items include unique copies of playbills, bearing the names of Michael Shchepkin, Pavel Mochalov, Jacob Briansky, Catherine Semyonova, Alexander Lensky, Prov Sadovsky, Constantine Stanislavsky, Vassili Kachalov and many other outstanding Russian actors who throughout the century have graced the performances of "Wit Works Woe."

An exhibition of Griboyedov publications has been organized under the All-Union Lenin Library where unique editions of Griboyedov's works have been preserved. Among them is an interesting almanach for 1825 entitled "The Russian Thalia," which was the first publication to print "Wit Works Woe." Another curiosity is the "Lyrical Album for 1832" where, alongside of several of Glinka's songs are two waltzes composed by Griboyedov who was a connoisseur and great lover of music.

Two interesting evenings held within the walls of the U.S.S.R. Society for Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) deserve mention in our columns.

The first, devoted to French cinematography, was opened by the producer, Vsevolod Pudovkin, President of the VOKS Cinema Department. He spoke of the long-standing friendship binding art workers in Russia and France.

A brief survey of French cinematography was made by Serguei Yutkevich, the producer. "France," he said, "is the birth place of the movie. The art of our two countries is united by our strivings for progress." Serguei Yutkevich went on to recount how in the grim years of the Hitler occupation the men working in French cinematography continued their activites far from their homeland. The producer Renouard, for instance, had released in America "This Is My Country," an anti-fascist film dealing with the struggle waged by the people of France against the Hitlerites. "Upon the liberation of France," he said, "immense vistas are opening up now before all workers in French cinematography."

Present on this occasion were Monsieur Garraud, Head of the French Military Mission to the U.S.S.R., Brigadier-General Petit, members of the French Mission and Military Mission together with prominent workers and leading figures in Soviet cinematography. The evening concluded with a performance of Soviet and French documentary films and the French feature film, "Femme du Boulanger."

The second evening was devoted to Samuel Marshak's translations of English poetry, past and present. Among the audience were Mr. John Balfour, members of the British Embassy, foreign correspondents and men and women of the Soviet literary world: Vera Inber, Margarita Aligher, Alexander Fadeyev, Serguei Mikhalkov, Lev Kassil, Leonid Sobolev and others. Professor Michael Morozov, the well-known Shakespearean scholar, gave a warm appraisal of Samuel Marshak's mastery in the field of poetical translations. "In them," said Professor Morozov, "poet meets poet. Reading his translations we find the authentic Burns, Keats, Kipling. We sense English scenery; we gain a picture of English life... The art of Marshak the translator is immense in scope. He reveals to the Russian reader all the charm of the English popular ballad, the depths of English lyricism, and the subtle humour of the epigram."

Samuel Marshak read his translations of several popular old English ballads, six of Shakespeare's sonnets and poems by Robert Burns, John Keats, William Wordsworth and Rudyard Kipling. He also read his translations of the modern English poets, Brown and Elliot. The concert that followed included English songs translated by Marshak and set to music by Dmitri Shostakovich, Tikhon Khrennikov and Dmitri Kabalevsky.

At the end of the programme Mr. John Balfour, addressing Samuel Marshak in Russian, expressed sincere appreciation of the poet's fruitful work in the field of translation of British poetry.

In this most inviting-looking mansion, the House of Scientists, there is a certain snug nook—a very cosy spot midway between the ground and first floors, just above the white marble staircase of the entrance. Here people converse, smoke or wait for their friends to arrive. From here you get a good view of all the comings and goings... And if you are curious to know who are today's guests at this hospitable house known to all Moscow, just take up your observation post on that little velvet sofa and keep your eyes open.

One after the other you may watch the various habitués arriving: here comes Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. Abram Yoffe, followed by Academician Michael Kirpichov; that's Doctor Krikor Kekcheyev, here comes Professor Victor Buvert, the very same whom his colleagues are always asking teasingly: "Do you ever leave this place to go home?"

This is a club, numbering some two thousand seven hundred members, prominent figures in Soviet science—among them astronomers and agronomists, geologists and geographers, technologists and philologists, metallurgists, economists, historians... Scholars of all types and conditions, from the venerable academician to the youthful docent.

It is here that learned societies hold their meetings and scientific conferences and sessions of the Academy of Sciences take place. In these halls distinguished men of science are fêted on their jubilees.

And on ordinary days, too, people like to drop in just to look round; or to dine and then repair for a quiet rest in a comfortable armchair in the blue drawing-room, to glance through the latest number of the London "Studio" or the American "Geographical Magazine;" to play a game of chess or try their skill at the billiard-table. Countless are the ways of spending a pleasant evening in this house!

The Great Hall, for instance, is famed for its concerts. Monday is given over to the activities of the Music University; on Tuesdays the performances of the All-Union Concert-Touring Association take place; on Saturdays and Sundays the traditional Philharmonic Concerts are held. On Thursday the Great Hall becomes the lecture-room of the Marxism-Leninism Institute where the "student" personnel con-

sists of some three hundred professors and research workers.

In the White Hall the scientific sections and bodies of the House of Scientists assemble for their meetings and here, too, chess tournaments are held.

There is a cinema where films dealing with scientific subjects are shown. Regular classes take place, a circle studying the English language in one room, a photography circle in another. In a third room a meeting of the tennis club is discussing preparations for the summer tournaments. Much attention is given in the House to physical culture and sport. There is a tourist section headed by Academician Alexander Frumkin. And there are classes in callisthenics.

The story is told of an old Moscow astronomer who, upon reaching the entrance of the House, heaved a sigh of relief and turning to his wife, said: "Home at last!" And this was no slip of the tongue, nor the absent-mindedness of a scholar.

Their club is "home" to many of its learned members. And that is why Professor Andrei Richter, the surgeon, spends his few leisure hours snatched from his work in the military hospital in the classes of his painting circle where his companions of the brush and palette, the physicist Anatoli Mlodzeyevsky, zoologist Serguei Tourov and Vladimir Beresnev, the philosopher, eagerly await him.

Similarly, Professor Vladimir Lavrov, the geographer, just returned from Bucharest, hastens to read his paper on Soviet Moldavia before the geographical section of the House. Major-General Stepan Ilyassevich of the Engineering and Technical Corps and the Club's oldest member flew yesterday to Moscow from the front lines. Today he is sitting, violin in hand, in the White Hall among other members of the "professors'" orchestra waiting for the tap of the conductor's baton to begin to play.

Both the orchestra and choir of the scientific workers are known in Moscow not only for the professional excellence of their execution, but also for the originality of their repertoire. They specialize in playing compositions never yet performed in Russia. And so, it is thanks to them that we have had the good fortune to hear Haydn's "The Seasons" oratorio, Liszt's "Prometheus Unbound," Schumann's "Wanderings of a Rose" and the little-known symphonic composition by Rimsky-Korsakov, "From Homer."

The House of Scientists possesses yet another specific feature. It is not only a club for scientists, but a Club of scientists, "masters of ideals," builders of Soviet culture. The House comprises some thirty odd sections and groups engaged in various branches of science and technical activities. Over eight hundred members of the House are actively engaged in the work of these small learned associations. Reports, conferences and discussions, thorough investigations into individual problems and the resulting elaboration of concrete suggestions to be applied and used in the socialist national economy—such is the work of these sections and such are the practical effects achieved by their work, distinguished as it is by the variety and novelty of the themes under research.

It goes without saying that now, during these days of the Patriotic War, the entire work of the sections is a direct contribution to the war-effort, as the themes of the reports eloquently show: "Agricultural Technique in War-time," "Method of Treating War-trauma," "The Danube and its Navigation." The front not only controls but actually places orders for the scientific-technical researches and decisions on which the members of the House are engaged.

It began with the Board for Tank Repairs. They had asked for a consultation with the engineers of the technical section of the House. It eventually proved that the engineering people alone were not sufficient and that metallurgists, chemists, electricians and constructors must be drawn into the work... And that was how the Inter-section Military Bureau in the House of Scientists came into being. The Bureau is in constant contact with its clients—the Board for Tank Repairs, the Central-Artillery Board, and the Military Air-Force Board.

Many of the sections are working intensively on questions connected with the rehabilitation of the liberated regions, the restoration of Donbas and Hydro-Electric Station on the Dnieper.

At the conferences, important problems of national economy, "problems of the future," are set and discussed. More and more frequently we see the word "post-war" figuring on the agenda of meetings, and in the titles of reports and lectures. In the White Hall, the chief designer of the Tractor Centre is reading a paper on the "Development of Tractor Building in the Post-war Period." The question of post-war prospects for the electrification of rural economy in U.S.S.R. is under joint discussion by electricians and experts in agriculture. Builders and transport specialists are engaged on questions relative to the growth of Moscow and its city transport.

This focussing of constructive thought on tomorrow's problems of socialist economy is a characteristic trait of the House of Scientists.

It is common knowledge that the House of Scientists was initiated by Maxim Gorky and the idea ardently supported by Vladimir Lenin. What Gorky envisaged as its highest aim was to enable men of science to meet there free from the everyday cares and duties of what is so often mere departmental work; to exchange experiences and enjoy the benefits of mutual appreciation and criticism. And it is along this path that the work of the Moscow House of Scientists is proceeding.

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