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LAZAR LAGIN

IRONCLAD "ANNIE"

CHAPTER 1

The Three Put to Sea

Three sailors from the Red Navy lay on the top of a low hillock: Stepan Vernivecher from the "Chervona Ukraina," tall, uncommunicative Nikifor Akleyev from the "Bystry" and Vassili Kutovoy, whom the whole batallion regarded as an elderly for he was every day of thirty-two years old. Kutovoy had joined the brigade from the reserve and not from a ship; the coal grime had not yet completely washed out of the palms of his hands—he had been a miner before the war.

Overhead the blue July sky was motionless. A few yards behind them tiny wavelets of warm sea-water splashed softly against the shore.

Ahead of them, behind the tiny hillock, was death, close and inevitable death. The sailors knew it and had but one desire left, to extort the highest possible price for their lives.

To be quite exact, they had one other desire: they wanted to drink. There was, however, nothing drinkable about; their last taste of water had been at five o'clock in the morning and now evening was beginning to draw in. Well, if there isn't any water there just isn't and they'll have to die thirsty, that's all.

The ruins of Sevastopol lay smoking a few miles away to the north-west but the sailors tried hard not to look in that direction. The Germans were already there, and what was more they were here, behind that hill ahead of them. They lay behind the hill and were in no great hurry—there was nowhere for the sailors to go. If this were the case, why take any risks? These were cautious Germans.

One of them could not stand the waiting and cautiously poked a long face capped by a dusty helmet over the ridge of the hill. Akleyev pressed the trigger of his tommy-gun, but no shot followed.

The drum, the last drum, was empty.

It's true, that didn't save the German's life. At the same time as Akleyev pressed the trigger of his tommy-gun Stepan Vernivecher pressed the thumbpiece of his "Maxim." A short burst broke the strained silence and the German dived nose forward into the sunbaked earth. Then the head of the dead man, catching against the stones, disappeared over the top of the hill as somebody pulled him down by his legs.

"Good work," said Akleyev admiringly. He looked at Vernivecher and saw him remove the lock from his machine-gun and, unseen by the Germans, slide it along the grass and drop it on the beach below. They heard it clang against the stones.

So Stepan had run out of ammunition, too. Things were bad, then. Kutovoy had only had a few rounds left in his tommy-gun drum for a long time now. He would be the last to fire, just a second before the end came.

It was an amazing thing how they had used up all the ammo without noticing it. They had dragged the pouches of all the dead with them but this was still not enough. Akleyev realized suddenly that they would have to be more careful of the ammo in the future and only fire at certain targets. He had no sooner thought it than he made a funny grimace: what was this future he was worried about? For them there would never be any "future." Unfortunate, but a fact. They had known this when they volunteered to cover the withdrawal of the marine battalion. The battalion had reached the boats safely, so everything was as it should be.

Behind them something rustled. Akleyev turned and saw Vernivecher crawling towards him. An immediate shot came from behind the hill. A tiny cloud of dust rose just in front of Vernivecher and rapidly disappeared. Stepan stiffened out and clung to the burnt grass.

"Let's put an end to it, you fellows," he said in a loud, hoarse whisper. "I can't stand it any longer. . ."

"What's the matter?" asked Akleyev.

"Let's dash forward! . . We'll shout 'Hurrah' and run at them. . ."

"You're in a hurry to die," remarked Akleyev, coolly. "What's all the hurry about? There's no kingdom come, that I can assure you."

He glanced at Kutovoy; he was very pale and silent, gripping the handles of his machine-gun tightly.

"In a situation like this the first thing we need is calm," said Akleyev and was himself astonished at his sudden gift of speech. "This is what I think: it's not all up with us yet—for instance. . . for instance. . ." He thought furiously trying to suggest something and added suddenly: "For instance, we haven't reconnoitred the beach yet. That's our first job."

"Nonsense!" said Vernivecher. "We're fooling ourselves."

"Perhaps there's a cave of some sort," put in Kutovoy. "We can hide there. Or perhaps we'll find something else."

"We'll find a battleship!" was Vernivecher's sarcastic comment. "'Ironclad Annie' with brown eyes."

"I'm surprised at you, Styopa," objected Akleyev calmly. "You're a sailor, you can still do a lot of good in battle, but no: with you it's just 'oh, oh, let me die right now.' Go down and reconnoitre the beach."

Vernivecher did not stir.

"Comrade Vernivecher," Akleyev slightly raised his voice, "you heard my orders? Go down and reconnoitre the beach!"

"Thanks," answered Vernivecher with a sour smile. "I've found a commander to jump on me." Nevertheless he crawled away and disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

A few long minutes passed.

Two enemy aircraft appeared over the 35th Battery, circled over the tiny jetty and dropped their bombs.

German tanks, raising clouds of dust, rattled by and disappeared down the road.

Silence again set in. The Germans behind their hillock were in no hurry. They were not inclined to take any risks, they were certain of their prey and were waiting for a mortar to come up.

At last Stepan Vernivecher's excited face appeared over the edge of the cliff. Hurriedly he beckoned to Akleyev. Cautiously Akleyev crept towards him.

"There's a little motor-boat down there!" he whispered breathing heavily and nodding his head in the direction of a little spot of land. "A battered little limousine. . . washed ashore, by God! . . and there's a petty officer on board, only he's most likely dead. . . Maybe not quite dead but covered in blood. . . And there are four containers full of cartridges there. . ."

"What's the engine like?" asked Akleyev.

"Don't know anything about the engine. Didn't try it, didn't want to make too much noise," he added apologetically.

"You were right, Styopa," said Akleyev. "Now run back and fetch a hundred rounds here."

"They're here already!" said Vernivecher; he pushed some cardboard boxes of cartridges across the grass to Akleyev. His earlier mood had gone and now he just breathed optimism.

"Right again!" exclaimed Akleyev. "So we'll live after all."

He threw some cartridges to Kutovoy who filled up two drums; he had to have enough to cover the withdrawal of his two comrades to the motor-boat. He did not have to use them after all for the Germans over the hill showed no signs of life. At any moment the mortar was due to arrive.

When the three reached the shore Vernivecher remembered his dismantled "Maxim" gun, crawled back and got it, searched amongst the pebbles for the lock, put it back in its place and mounted the machine-gun in the stern of the boat.

"The main armament of 'Ironclad Annie,'" he muttered, fondly stroking the battered jacket of his gun. Then he cast a critical glance over the war-worn, plywood boat and heaved a sigh.

"Some cruiser!" and went to look at the engine. The engine was in good order.

"Full speed ahead!" ordered Akleyev and lay down behind the "Maxim."

The motor whirred and the boat slipped forward in the water just as the Germans discovered they had been tricked; they dragged their mortar out to the edge of the cliff.

"We won't waste ammunition," said Akleyev to himself as he fired a burst of fifteen or twenty rounds at the enemy on the shore.

2

To tell the truth, it was scarcely possible for a sailor to take the flimsy motor-boat seriously. It was intended for sailing within the harbour limits and was about as much use on the open sea as a handkerchief would be in place of a sail or a boy's catapult in place of a 14-inch gun.

In addition to everything else the boat had been holed in several places by shell splinters. The sun-bleached blue curtains that hung at the cabin windows were as full of holes as a fishing net. There were no holes below the waterline, however.

An unknown petty officer lay dying on the blood-stained, leather-covered seat. He was delirious and kept asking to be sent out on reconnaissance. Kutovoy was trying his best to help him. The petty officer, however, had too many wounds, and all of them bad gashes caused by shell splinters in his head, chest, thighs and shoulders.

The Germans fired from their mortar at the moving "limousine." The first shell burst some twenty yards to starboard. The splinters flew high over Akleyev's head and the wave caused by the explosion washed over the side of the boat wetting Kutovoy from head to foot and bringing the dying man back to consciousness.

"Water. . ." he whispered, but Kutovoy expressively spread his hands and the dying man nodded understandingly. Then he made a sign to Kutovoy. Kutovoy bent over the dying man.

"Sevastopol. . . eh?" said the petty officer in a scarcely audible whisper, tears rolling down his eyes.

"Don't you worry, we'll take Sevastopol back, and pretty soon at that. . ."

In the stern-sheets Akleyev, with economical bursts from his gun, kept the fascist mortar team pinned to the ground. . .

The dying man listened, wanted to ask something, but again lost consciousness.

He lay quiet for a few minutes and then said quite clearly: "Kostya, where have you put the iron?" He apparently thought that he was going on shore leave and tried hard to get up from the seat. In despair Kutovoy held him down, but the petty officer kept muttering:

"Can't you let a man iron his slacks. . . Must I bother about that too. . . Can't you. . . let a man. . . iron. . . slacks. . ."

He soon became quiet again and Kutovoy joined Akleyev in the stern of the boat.

"You take a rest for a bit," he said and pushed Akleyev away from the machine-gun

The motor-boat was already some distance from the shore but the mortar shells still continued bursting to her starboard. Vernivecher was steering the boat farther out to sea and to the west. This worried Akleyev who went down to the engine-room.

"Have you got a head on you?" he asked.

"Thanks!" answered Vernivecher. "What's the matter?"

"The matter is that you're sailing for Constanza and Kutovoy and I want to go to the Caucasian coast."

"I'm trying to get away from the shells," said Vernivecher angrily. "And you're picking on me."

"You roll her a bit," said Akleyev describing a zigzag with his hand. "Run her over a couple of dog's legs."

"Aye, aye, a dog's leg it is," responded Vernivecher.

3

The sun dropped rapidly beyond the horizon and the distant shore merged into the darkening sea; Akleyev ordered Vernivecher to stop the engine.

He himself did not notice how he had come to the conclusion that he must take command of the crew of this cockleshell. He regarded Vernivecher's uncomprehending glance as a breach of discipline and grew very angry.

"Shut off the engine, Comrade Vernivecher," he repeated harshly.

"Have we arrived?" asked Vernivecher ironically. "May we tie her up, Comrade General-Admiral?"

"Where is your compass?" Akleyev answered with a question.

"What compass?" asked Vernivecher, dismayed. "I haven't got a compass... as though you didn't know..."

"Where is your chart?"

"And there's no chart. I apologize, I left it on the cruiser. You seem to have got a touch..."

"Then shut off the engine and we'll wait for morning. If we don't we'll wander all over the sea and waste the petrol. D'you understand that?"

"That I understand," said Vernivecher complacently, even with a touch of respect; he shut off the engine.

A sudden silence fell. The silence awoke Kutovoy who had, to his own surprise, dropped off to sleep behind the machine-gun; he was pleased that Akleyev had not found him asleep. He was already afraid of Akleyev as one is afraid of an exacting but just commander.

Akleyev left the engine-room for the cabin and bent over the petty officer. The P.O. lay stretched out straight and quite motionless. Akleyev put his ear to the man's chest. His heart was no longer beating.

"Finished," thought Akleyev. Although he had seen many deaths during the war and had lost six of his comrades that very day, he was upset. He could not help thinking that if there had been a doctor on board he would have saved the P.O. As it was, he was dead. Akleyev felt something like a pang of conscience as though it was only on account of his lack of foresight that there was no doctor on board. He drove these thoughts away, however, and began to think of what to do with the dead man. The man had died in battle and deserved a proper funeral, especially as conditions allowed it at present. He decided to wait till morning for the funeral.

"Sleep at your posts," he ordered and sat down beside Kutovoy. He did not wake Vernivecher till daylight, but Kutovoy he awoke at about two o'clock with instructions to wake him as soon as it grew light. Then he went into the cabin, lay on the unoccupied seat and slept.

4

The funeral was held at dawn. The dead man should have been sewn up in a hammock with a weight at his feet. They had neither hammock nor weight. They combed the dead man's hair, washed the blood from his face with salt water, placed the cap with the words "Black Sea Fleet" in gold firmly on his head and in place of a weight they tied to his feet the rifle with which he had defended Sevastopol and then laid him on the gunwale in the stern of the boat. Akleyev took off his cap, Kutovoy and Vernivecher followed his example. Nikifor Akleyev made a speech.

"Comrades of the Black Sea Fleet," he began, and the other two, without an order, stood at attention. "Comrades of Sevastopol, we are going to bury one of our comrades who heroically defended the main base of our fleet. To the last minute of his life he did not surrender to the enemy. His sailor's record book was pierced by a shell splinter and so soaked in blood that we cannot read his name or the brigade in which he served... That's war for you! But we promise you, our dead comrade, that we will take vengeance for your young life and for Sevastopol. We also promise to remember you again when we return to the main base of our fleet. Farewell, comrade of the Black Sea Fleet!"

He nodded to Vernivecher and Kutovoy and as they dropped the dead man over the side he fired three short bursts from his machine-gun by way of salute.

His comrades continued to stand at attention thoughtfully watching the rings that spread over the surface of the water where the body of the petty officer was slowly sinking to the bottom. Akleyev, casting a glance over the battered vessel, noticed a flagstaff behind the door of the cabin with a flag tightly wound around it. Although it was still a long way off eight o'clock he decided to carry out there and then a plan which had formed in his mind.

"Stay where you are!" he shouted as he jumped down, seized the flag, disappeared into the cabin with it and immediately returned to the stern.

"Attention!" he shouted as he thrust the flagstaff into the sockets.

The flag hung heavily in the motionless air. A dark-red, almost black patch, stood out triumphantly and menacingly on the white background.

"You know whose blood that is," said Akleyev, "and you know what the flag means."

He glanced at Vernivecher and remembered

his wisecracks about "Ironclad Annie"; he felt they were an insult to the vessel which he now commanded.

"And there's something else," he continued, his face flushed a deep red, "there are some people who make fun of this boat, using the insulting words 'Ironclad Annie' about her. I don't want to hear anything of the sort again. D'you get that? As long as you're on this vessel it will be as invincible and as menacing to the enemy as a cruiser, or you're not Black Sea sailors but landlubbers. Understand?"

"And now," he added without waiting for an answer from Vernivecher, "let's get down to work."

CHAPTER 2

The Golden Limousine

There was plenty to do. Now that it was quite light they could see that they were no more than about eighty cablelengths from the shore. The first German aircraft was already over the horizon. This was only a reconnaissance plane, but soon dozens of bombers would come after him. The first thing to do, then, was to put further out to sea.

"Which way? On what course?" were the questions that flashed through Akleyev's mind. "Toward Turkey and then along the Caucasian coast? We'll be safe from the aircraft but will die of hunger and thirst: firstly, there's no water; secondly, there's no food; thirdly, there's no compass, and fourthly, there's very little petrol. It's still worse to land up on the Rumanian coast. No, it's no use going to Turkey, better to make straight for Novorossiisk. Where's Novorossiisk? In the east, so for an hour and a half we'll sail due south, then we'll turn east."

He got direction from the sun that was now rising over the horizon and selected sailing points on shore to guide him; that was apparently one worry less on his shoulders.

"Here are your guide points," he said to Vernivecher, "sail by them."

The engine started up and the boat moved off leaving a trail of foam in its wake.

In the distance they could hear the dull sound of engines, the rattle of machine-guns and the first thudding of the quick-firing guns: Soviet marine chasers were beating off attacking Messerschmitts.

It was obvious that the limousine would also have to fight the German aircraft, and that pretty soon.

"Keep a look-out for aircraft!" Akleyev said to Kutovoy and Vernivecher.

He had no sooner managed to rig up the "Maxim" on the roof of the cabin than Kutovoy shouted "Aircraft!" and took up a position alongside him with his light machine-gun.

The Messerschmitt was flying from the direction of the sun at a height of about 6,000 feet. It approached rapidly, growing in size as it came nearer.

"Fire only on my orders," Akleyev whispered to Kutovoy as though the German flying up there might hear him.

"D'you think he can hear you? Speak louder," snorted Kutovoy with such a pleasant smile on his swarthy face with its rare pock-marks that despite the seriousness of the situation Akleyev had to laugh and wave his hand in his confusion.

After that things seemed easier for both of them as though the wave of the hand had wiped away the constraint they both felt. Now they were awaiting the fearful moment when they would have to open fire as calmly and confidently as though their machine-guns, not adapted for anti-aircraft fire, could enter into a serious combat with the guns and machine-guns of the approaching German aeroplane.

They did not have to fire, however. The Messerschmitt circled over the suspicious-looking cockleshell several times and then apparently decided that the game was not worth the candle and continued on its way to the coast. Perhaps,—and this was just as likely,—he had used up all his ammunition and was going home for a fresh load of bombs, shells and cartridges.

"Won't you sound the all clear?" asked Kutovoy more for the sake of something to say than anything else and received a shake of the head in answer which he understood to mean "No."

Two more aicraft flew over the motor-boat and also continued on their way without making any attack.

"Not so bad fighting this way," said Kutovoy. "We don't touch them and they don't touch us. All we get is a sore neck sitting with our heads thrown back like turkeys."

"The war hasn't begun yet," answered Akleyev. "We'll fight all right before we reach Novorossiisk."

"That's true," Kutovoy willingly conceded; he thought for a moment and then added: "I could manage a bucket of porridge right now."

"Buckwheat or what?" laughed Akleyev.

"Let it be buckwheat. And with plenty of fat."

"Would you give me some?"

"Why not? If the worst comes to the worst I could manage on half a bucket," said Kutovoy magnanimously. He wanted to laugh but only croaked and said: "If we only had a little drop of water. . ."

"That's how things are, my friend," said Akleyev in a very serious tone. "We have no food and no water. So don't let us have any more talk about it, we only make matters worse by talking."

"That can be done," answered Kutovoy in the most encouraging tones possible, and both of them remembered that when they had volunteered to cover the battalion's retreat the day before they had thrown the bread and bully beef out of their haversacks to make room for extra ammunition. They remembered it and weren't in the least sorry about it.

2

It was worse than death itself for machine-gunner Stepan Vernivecher to sit at the wheel in the cabin of a motor-boat during an air alarm. Naturally he realized that as he was the only one who knew how to handle the engine there was nothing else to be done about

it. Still it made him angry and he swore with a ferocity that was unusual even for him.

He heard the three Messerschmitts come buzzing over one after another. Each time his small but well-knit muscular figure became tense like a spring and he began to zigzag by guess-work. Knowing nothing made him mad. What was happening in the air? Why were Akleyev and Kutovoy not firing? Suppose they were Soviet aircraft? No, they couldn't be, he could tell from the sound of the engines that they were Germans.

Vernivecher realized that if nobody came to him in the engine-room the danger must be over. He had difficulty in holding himself back, in not running out to the stern of the vessel to see what was going on and take a look at the aircraft that were flying overhead.

Things went on like this for half an hour or perhaps more and Vernivecher was going to shout to somebody when Akleyev dashed into the engine-room.

"Hard aport!" he shouted and Vernivecher spun the wheel round.

"D'you see it?" asked Akleyev.

"Now I can see it," said Vernivecher, "a motor torpedo-boat."

"Don't show him our sides. . . Keep her bows on to him and act according to circumstances," said Akleyev all in one breath and rushed back to his machine-gun.

The motor torpedo-boat was advancing to attack at top speed, its bows lifted half out of the water and two high walls of white spray on either side of it. The low roar of its engine drew nearer with all the inevitability of a falling bomb.

The limousine, its bows towards the oncoming enemy, seemed to be scarcely moving while waiting till it came within range of aimed fire.

The Germans kept up a running machine-gun fire and the surface of the water, thick as gelatine, was pitted with the splashing bullets. Then the light hull of the limousine began to tremble as Akleyev's and Kutovoy's machine-guns opened fire. All the while Vernivecher had to sit in that hateful cabin and play with a little wheel! What a job for a machine-gunner!

He watched the approaching torpedo-boat, listened to the bursts fired from his "Maxim" by Nikifor Akleyev and began to curse:

"Is that the way to shoot? He ought to be firing at the Jerries, then they'd have a taste of something."

Three German bullets made little round holes in the glass wind-screen in front of him and whistled over his head.

The torpedo-boat was already quite close and the little vessel was shuddering the whole time from the constant rattle of the machine-guns. Vernivecher just had time to spot a tall German in a wet oilskin that shone in the sun. The German fell like a log under the wheel; the motor torpedo-boat swung right round and the little gun in its stern sheets started barking.

The shells from the gun raised little showers of water and the spray shone like a rainbow in the sunshine. Either the German gunners were worried or else they were badly trained for all their shells missed and soon the gun ceased fire altogether. The German boat returned to the attack.

The Soviet limousine rocked gently in the wave raised by the German vessel.

"I think things are going fine!" said Akleyev to Kutovoy and wiped the tiny beads of sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. Kutovoy merely nodded in reply, he had not time to say anything. His teeth were clenched as he sat filling the drum with cartridges like an experienced machine-gunner. Only when he had filled the drums did Kutovoy think it fit to continue the conversation that Akleyev had started.

"Not so bad," he muttered and laughed. "Once you start firing at the Jerries you forget you are hungry." He remembered the German who had been shot, most likely he was an officer, he wanted to tell Akleyev his ideas on that subject but Akleyev was no longer listening. Sticking his head into the cabin Akleyev shouted to Vernivecher.

"Stepan! Are you all right?"

"I'm still alive," answered Vernivecher through the open door of the engine-room.

"You haven't been wounded?"

"Not yet."

"Listen, if you are wounded don't keep it to yourself, report it immediately!" shouted Akleyev with an air of finality and returned to his machine-gun. The motor torpedo-boat was again being led in for the attack.

Then something unexpected happened. Instead of waiting for the Germans to come within range of their machine-guns Vernivecher opened the motor up to full speed and the little limousine raced to meet the German boat.

"That's right, that's the order to give!" shouted Kutovoy in a wild ecstasy. He was sure that Akleyev had ordered Vernivecher to attack and Akleyev had no time to disillusion him.

The top speed of the Soviet motor-boat was now added to that of the German and they approached at such a rate that they seemed to be falling on each other. The roar of the engines, the incessant rattle of the machine-guns, the clatter and the heavy splash of the bow waves completely shattered the early morning silence.

"We'll test the Germans' nerves!" cried Kutovoy gleefully. His usual imperturbability had left him as though blown away by the wind.

Whenever he went into an attack, when he was threatened with a sudden but glorious death, Kutovoy was a man transformed. His face with its slight touch of smallpox and the cunning little dimples in the cheeks was covered with the ruddy glow of the steppes and he began cursing Hitler and Goebbels whom he specially hated and whom he cursed for dirty, rotten toads. He did not notice that in moments of great excitement he lapsed into his native Ukrainian language.

"We'll test the Germans' nerves, curse their mothers!" he cried, pouring savage, well-placed bursts of fire all over the German boat.

The German bullets soared in unseen flocks over the heads of the two sailors. With a slight crunch they bit into the frail plywood of the boat so that the splinters flew. They were already so close that they could hear orders given in the hated foreign tongue. In a second

there would be a splintering of wood and the roar of explosions as Germans and Russians locked in death. Still Vernivecher drove straight forward until the German could stand it no longer.

Again the torpedo-boat turned sharply aside but this time the stern gun did not have time to open fire; an almost invisible blue flame appeared over the Germans' engine-room followed by a dense cloud of black smoke.

"He's alight, the toad, he's alight, the viper, like a candle at Easter!" shouted Kutovoy excitedly and together with Akleyev he began to fire on the Germans who were clambering up on deck to put out the fire. One of the Germans, a short stumpy fellow dressed only in shorts, was running up with a fire-extinguisher; he stopped dead in his tracks, spun round funnily on one spot, flopped on to the slippery sloping deck and rolled overboard. Another, with a shock of yellow hair, slumped heavily and fell back into the hatch from which he had half-emerged.

The Germans were no longer even thinking of another attack.

Vernivecher would have kept hot on their trail but there was no sense in taking unnecessary risks. What was more they had to be sparing with their petrol. Akleyev stuck his head into the open door of the cabin and shouted at the very top of his voice:

"Hard aport!"

Vernivecher obediently swung the wheel over.

"Stop!" ordered Akleyev two or three minutes later.

The fascists were trying to squeeze the last ounce out of their limping engines in order to get out of range of the Russian machine-guns and extinguish the fire. The flames, however, moved faster than the boat and reached the ammunition lockers; with an evil roar and a tall column of fire, smoke and wreckage that went high up into the sky, the boat blew up. The smoke hung in the air for a few moments and then dispersed, a few charred splinters and half a lifebuoy that had been broken in two by the explosion bobbed up and down on the widening circles that marked the scene of the explosion.

"I think that was just as it should be!" said Akleyev as calmly as if he were in the habit of sinking enemy motor torpedo-boats every day of his life. No matter how hard he tried to keep that look of indifference on his face, however, his mouth spread involuntarily in a smile that stretched almost to his ears. Just like a little boy he dug Kutovoy playfully in the side and, no longer worrying about the expression on his face, ran to Vernivecher in the engine-room.

"That's your 'Ironclad Annie' for you, Styopka! That's our golden limousine!.. What do you say? eh?" He flopped into the engine-room and out of the fullness of his spirits clapped Vernivecher on the shoulder. Vernivecher cried from pain and, losing consciousness, collapsed on the deck.

Akleyev's palm was red with blood from Vernivecher's wound.

CHAPTER 3

"If You Want to Live You Won't Die"

Two fascist bullets had found Stepan Vernivecher. As often happens in the heat of battle he did not feel the wounds at first. All his attention was concentrated on the bows of the fast approaching German torpedo-boat. When the Germans grew faint-hearted and turned aside, especially when the fire broke out, Vernivecher wanted to chase after them but on Akleyev's orders he changed his course and stopped the motor. Then he enjoyed the sight of the sinking German vessel and cursed heartily every time a German was shot down.

Only when the ragged cloud of smoke and flame had completely disappeared from the deep blue sky above the site of the catastrophe did Vernivecher feel a strange weakness and pain in his right shoulder and in his right arm just above the elbow.

It was just at that moment that Akleyev burst unsuspectingly into the engine-room.

"Kutovoy!" shouted Akleyev in dismay, hurrying to lift the collapsed and unconscious Vernivecher. "Hi! Hurry up here!"

The boat swayed as Kutovoy ran from the stern to find Akleyev bending over Vernivecher.

"Is he dead?" he said in alarm.

"He's alive," answered Akleyev and he and Kutovoy carried Stepan into the cabin and laid him on the seat.

"He's heavy," said Kutovoy as he lifted the heavy burden over the condenser tank with difficulty, "he's a tank, by God he is... You wouldn't think so by looking at him..."

"You wait and be another three days without food," said Akleyev soothingly, "and then even a sparrow would seem like a tank to you."

"Ph-e-w!" whistled Kutovoy. "Then get the coffins ready... If we don't eat for another three days we'll all be dead 'uns."

"If you want to live you won't die," said Akleyev and, angry at himself for having started this unnecessary and untimely conversation, sent Kutovoy back to the machine-gun and himself bandaged the wound on Vernivecher's shoulder and fixed a tourniquet above the wound on his arm.

The blood ceased to flow but Stepan did not come round.

"Another would have died at once," thought Akleyev, remembering how he clapped Vernivecher on the shoulder in his joy. "Even a healthy man would have kicked the bucket. Here's a man that may have his collar-bone shattered..."

He sat on the edge of the seat near the wounded man's head, put his arms out of the broken porthole, scooped up some of the cool early morning water and sprinkled it in Vernivecher's face.

As Vernivecher slowly opened his eyes Akleyev had time to think that Stepan with his broken shoulder-blade would not be able to man the wheel and that he would have to detail Kutovoy for this duty. It was not a very difficult job and Stepan would be able to explain to Kutovoy what to do. It is true that the limousine's armament would be halved—one machine-gun instead of two. There was nothing to be done about it and things might have been far worse.

"Forgive me, Stepan," he said as the man opened his eyes, "I didn't know you were wounded..."

Instead of answering Vernivecher tiredly closed his eyes.

"Why are you. . . petrol? . ." whispered Stepan in a broken voice, frowning from the severe pain.

"The man's crazy," thought Akleyev sorrowfully, "he's not even talking sense."

"You'd better rest," he said to Vernivecher. "Don't talk now, Styopa."

"Why are you. . . splashing. . . petrol?" Vernivecher repeated sternly without opening his eyes. "Isn't there enough sea water?"

Akleyev very sensibly decided not to enter into a discussion with him. The man was obviously in a delirium.

"That's luck for you," he thought. "As if we didn't have enough without it!"

He raised his hand to brush back from his eyes the hair that had long since been in need of cutting and suddenly felt a faint smell of petrol on it. Realization of what this meant was like a blow to him.

He stuck his head out of the cabin porthole and saw what he had feared more than any Messerschmitt, more than the torpedo boat, more even than a storm. The sea all round the boat was covered with a thin oily film that played peacefully in the sun's rays with all the colours of the rainbow.

Akleyev, unable to believe in their misfortune, went to the engine-room and tried to start up the engine: it coughed once or twice and then became silent again. Akleyev tried again and again to get the engine going but the piece of machinery that a short time before had been humming so regularly and rhythmically could no longer even cough.

The one thing had happened that could not be cured: a fascist bullet from the dying torpedo-boat had holed the petrol tank and all the fuel had flowed into the sea.

2

"We'll hoist a sail," said Akleyev when Vernivecher despite the pain and his weakness, crawled into the engine-room to see for himself. "It's easy enough, we'll hoist a sail and go home in fine style. . ."

Vernivecher looked at him doubtfully but did not speak. He wanted to say that everything was all up but did not. He was silent not because he had come to a different conclusion.

"Let that comfort him," he thought in answer to Akleyev's words. "If he'll die happier that way... The devil with him! Let him tell these fibs to Kutovoy. He's a land-lubber anyway, you can see it in everything he does. I am a hard-boiled egg, and can die without deceiving myself if it's necessary."

It was more than he could do to remain silent, however.

"What are you going to make a sail from?" he asked Akleyev. "We left our groundsheets on the Historical Boulevard in Sevastopol. It's a bit too far to go for them."

"If we only had those groundsheets!" repeated Akleyev, either not noticing or deliberately trying not to notice the mistrust in Vernivecher's words. "We'll have to forget all about groundsheets until we get to Novorossiisk. We ought to be able to make a sail out of this. . . If the worst comes to the worst. That is, under the present circumstances. . ."

Shaking his head he looked up critically at the ceiling. He stared and came to the definite conclusion:

"It will most certainly do!"

"There's an absolute calm!" Vernivecher began again, nodding towards the smooth, mirror-like surface of the sea. "We'll have to blow into the sail ourselves."

"There will be a wind," Akleyev said. "In a little while we'll have all the wind we want. So much that we won't even know what to do with it."

As he was not very confident of his own words he decided to cut the conversation short.

"All hands astern!" he shouted to Kutovoy who was lying beside the machine-gun.

"Astern it is!" answered Kutovoy happily for he was always glad when he heard Akleyev's voice, the confident voice of a commander who clearly foresaw everything.

"You keep a lookout for ships and aircraft! continued Akleyev with difficulty raising the heavy seat and taking from the locker an axe, a crowbar and, in case of emergency, a brand-new red-painted bucket.

"A lookout for ships and aircraft it is."

So there was nothing else that he, Vassili Kutovoy, had to worry about except keeping a lookout, all the other worries Akleyev would take on his own shoulders.

"I'll take the roof off the cabin. . . For a sail. . ." Akleyev informed Kutovoy, in a matter of fact tone, armed with the axe, and began to rip and tear the curved roof of the limousine's little cabin.

Stepan Vernivecher, however, sceptic as he may have been at heart concerning Akleyev's undertaking, could not sit still while a comrade was working.

"Eh, what are you doing?" he muttered, afraid that Akleyev might think that he was seriously getting ready to help him. "Is that the way to take the roof off?"

As though ripping the roofs off motor-boat cabins was an everyday affair to him, Vernivecher picked up the crowbar with his uninjured left hand and lifted it up to show Akleyev how the job should be done. But the inhuman pain and his extreme weakness overcame him. He turned white, almost fainted and had to drop back on the seat.

"You lie down and rest, Styopa," Akleyev told him. "You don't need brains for a job like this. . . But you have got to recover."

Vernivecher obediently lay down on the seat; he looked up at Akleyev with his axe and crowbar, wanted to have another dig at him but instead turned his face to the bullet-pitted wall of the cabin and either from weakness or pain, or more probably from the consciousness of his helpless condition, began to cry.

3

Kutovoy did not understand how you could get a sail by hacking off the roof but he did not stop to ask.

He decided that this was what one had to do under the circumstances and began to search the sea and the sky with the greatest care. Kutovoy was the only one of the three who did not doubt the seaworthiness of their tiny

limousine. He was to be forgiven for this was the first time in his life he had been out to sea. Before the war—in "civvy street"—his only knowledge of ships came from the summer Sunday afternoons on the pond in the mining village. The old miners called this pond "Chudskoye Ozero" (Lake Peipus) because two especially hated German foremen had once been drowned in the pond by the workers they had driven to desperation.

Kutovoy looked over the limousine with respect and laughed as he thought of the rather homely little boats on "Chudskoye Ozero" with their short and fat oars and squeaking rowlocks. In comparison the smart, well-built little limousine with its cabin, its engine-room, propeller, steering wheel, its gangway leading from the stern into a cabin with portholes hung with curtains seemed to him like a mighty battleship, the last word in naval architecture.

It was true that in addition to the usual two-oared boats there were also the huge, four-oared variety. The lads, who were always given to exaggeration, christened them "barques."

It was comfortable and safe on the "barques" but the girls who out of sheer vanity always tried to make their submissive admirers indulge in senseless expense, for some reason preferred the unreliable two-oared skiffs, in which you could not stand up without fear of tipping them over, to the more expensive and elegant "barques."

A few years passed and a girl married, soon acquired a family and some intelligence. Now she appeared on the blue-painted landing stage, dignified, her hand under her husband's arm, he as solemn and as important as a retired general. Not for anything now would you be able to entice her into a skiff—only the "barque" for her even if it was more expensive.

So it had been with everybody. All the girls he had known had graduated from two-oared skiffs to "barques," which meant that time did not stand still and people were growing older. He, Vassya Kutovoy, apprentice on a coal-cutting machine, son of the old blaster, Afanassi Ivanovich Kutovoy, did not notice how he had grown from Vassya to Vassili Afanassyevich, a man of fame in mine No. Two-bis. And in the end he too, with his grey-eyed, fluffy-haired Nastya, transferred his affections from the skiffs to the "barques." Now they would row in the "barque" and she would keep shouting: "Kostya, you little nuisance! You'll drown me! . ."

This didn't worry her son, a fidgety, fair-haired boy as lively as quick-silver. Boating was not the least bit interesting to him if he could not scoop up water with his hands.

Then Nastya graduated completely to the rudder and Vassili Afanassyevich and his son Kostya Kutovoy, a twelve-year-old bundle of mischief with his father's dimples in his cheeks, took the oars: Kostya was the athlete of the house in which they lived and a passionate football fan.

The big red sun bade the pond farewell somewhat unwillingly. It sank slowly behind the Carpathians, as the local wits called the huge dumps of "muck," its last rays gleaming like fire in the dusty windows of the pit-head buildings. From the boats the wistful sounds of accordions, guitars, mandolins, balalaikas and human voices accompanied the parting sun. Every boat sang or played its own song, often enough a sad one, but the general effect was good and merry and people did not want to go away from the pond. Nevertheless they had to go home and usually a youthful tenor would begin singing from one of the boats: "Sun hanging low. . ." and the other boats would take up the words: "Evening drawing nigh. . ." and Kutovoy also joined in and Nastya and Kostya with his boyish alto; the whole pond sang the tender and soulful song while the first stars appeared in the darkening sky of the late summer twilight. . .

It was a funny thing, but every time Vassili Kutovoy got a rest from war and a chance to dream a little he always recalled the warm summer twilights in his native village and the slow walk home from an outing to the new apartment. His old mother always met them at the door and always muttered the same words with obvious relief: "Thank God, you're all alive," and ushered the gallant sailors to the table where the old father awaited them although he thought it beneath his dignity to admit that he was lonely without them.

For some reason or another Vassili Kutovoy also remembered Lizaveta Sergeyevna, the cantankerous and bilious wife of Piskaryov, the drunken head-miner. Behind her back they called her the she-boss, or just simply the "ulcer." Lizaveta Sergeyevna always came in the evening when she was sure to find Vassili Afanassyevich at home. Always she came with the same complaint—Kostya had been stealing apples from her orchard.

Her complaint finished, the she-boss cast a triumphant glance at Kostya and went out. Kutovoy politely accompanied her to the door and locked it behind her. This cut off Kostya's path of retreat to the street. Then Kutovoy, with a look of anger on his face, took off his belt and began to chase his erring son round the table.

Kostya was a footballer, he was agile and tricky; although it was difficult to catch him it was not impossible. Kostya could not expect salvation from his mother. When he was about seven, at the very beginning of his criminal activities, he had tried to play on her maternal instincts. He had besought her to save him in such a voice that even a stone would have been moved to pity. But Nastya had hardened her heart and stood definitely on the side of the law. Since then Kostya had always depended on his own legs under these circumstances and always tried to gain time in the hope that somebody might knock at the door. Guests were his only hope at such a moment. But if there were no guests Kostya's fast legs and agility could not save him. The paterfamilias, Vassili Afanassyevich Kutovoy, panting from the chase, would drag his son out from under the table or a bed with his huge hand, stretch him across his knee and pitilessly count him out ten with the belt, saying all the time:

"I don't know where this little ragamuffin gets his ideas from. Who does he take after, I ask you?"

There is no such thing as a just father in

this world. Kostya could easily have told his father who he took after. Granddad Afanassi Ivanovich had frequently related how he had whipped his naughty son Vassya for the same crimes, committed, incidentally, in the same orchard.

Kostya, however, realized that such reminiscences would not have any good results and therefore during the execution he only sniffed, did not ask to be forgiven, did not seem downhearted, held himself bravely and as far as was possible in his unfortunate position, independently.

"Say what you like," Kutovoy smiled and continued to keep a sharp lookout over sea and air. "He's a proud lad, he'll be a fine man when he grows up."

After such recollections Kutovoy usually wondered what would happen to Kostya if he, Vassili Kutovoy, were killed at the front. The Germans had shot Granddad Afanassi Ivanovich together with Piskaryov's two sons because they blew up the pit-head gear at their mine. The grandmother had died either from sorrow or hunger. This he knew for certain. He got the information in a letter from his young brother, a tank captain on the Southern front. A miner-partisan who had come from behind the enemy's lines had told the brother. He also said that Nastya and Kostya had gone away somewhere, they had been evacuated but he did not know where. Somebody said they had gone to the Kuban, somebody else, to Siberia. Perhaps they had gone to the Volga. How had they got there, to that distant and unknown part of the world? Did they, indeed, ever get there? Perhaps the Germans had bombed their train? That might well have happened. If Nastya and Kostya had arrived safely how would they live till the end of the war, a woman with a young son who was still empty-headed, and then how would they ever get back to the Donets Basin, and who would meet them, and how would they live, a widow and her son?

Every time these sad thoughts came into Kutovoy's head he comforted himself with the idea that everything would be all right. The good people would not neglect them, the family of a fallen sailor. And then Nastya herself was not a foolish woman. It would be all right, they would not be lost. Kostya would grow up into a fine man. Fight on calmly, Vassili!

This is what he had told himself the day before when they had been lying on the hill, and not only he but even Akleyev had thought that they were living the last hour of their lives.

Now that he and his comrades had managed to reach the open sea from under the very noses of the fascists and especially after they had sunk the fascist torpedo-boat—no joke that—Kutovoy was firmly convinced that he would return home from the war alive and well. "Oho!" he said to himself and laughed at his thoughts. "Everything is turning out for the best. We'll smash Hitler, go back home and again we'll be living a fine life. Even better than before the war... and Kostya will train for a naval officer..."

This great idea that had only just entered his head—to train Kostya as a naval officer—pleased Kutovoy so much and brought with it so many other thoughts that he did not notice that Akleyev, after ripping off the roof of the cabin, stopped his work and came towards him in the stern.

"Kutovoy!" muttered Akleyev softly and Kutovoy even shuddered at the suddenness of it. "Haven't you noticed anything?"

"Noticed what?" asked Kutovoy guiltily. "I don't seem to have seen any aircraft... And there's nothing else about, either..."

"Doesn't it seem to you that we are being carried in nearer the shore?" said Akleyev still more softly, looking at the half-conscious Stepan Vernivecher.

Somehow it seemed to Kutovoy that the air was getting fresher and that it was easier to breathe...

4

Actually nothing extraordinary had happened. Why should they have supposed that there would have to be a shore wind blowing seaward? It could be an offshore wind, but on the other hand it could just as well be the kind that would blow the motor-boat back to the Germans and death like an implacable executioner that was in no hurry.

It was still a long way to the shore. It could be seen, or rather guessed at on the very horizon, on the reddish wavy edge of that huge bowl called the sky.

"If the wind doesn't increase," muttered Akleyev making some mental calculation, "it will drive us to the shore just by sunset. Are all your machine-gun drums full?"

"All of them," answered Kutovoy, "and the two belts as well. So we'll have to fight on shore again."

"If they don't sink us before we get there," corrected Akleyev, "but I don't think they will..."

The trouble was that on the previous day Vernivecher, in avoiding the firing from the shore, had steered the motor-boat northwest of the route taken by the vessels that had evacuated the troops from Sevastopol to Novorossiisk. The wind was now driving the boat back to the shore, that is, to the places where the Germans had been firmly established since the very beginning of the siege of Sevastopol. The front, if the strip of reddish bomb- and shell-ploughed land could be called a front, ran through the 35th Battery. At that point the Germans were attacking departing Soviet vessels from air, land and sea. At the place where they would land there was the profound silence of the rear area.

This is how Akleyev sized up things and explained them to Kutovoy. According to him there might not be any Germans on that part of the coast. At the worst they would have to deal with base units and if they managed to handle them without too much noise they could afterwards try and reach the partisans.

"Right through the Crimea?" asked Kutovoy with a laugh.

"Why through the whole of Crimea?" Akleyev objected. "No, we'll have to go as far as the Baidar Gates."

"Vernivecher won't be able to stand that,"

said Kutovoy. "He's weak and sleepy. He's lost too much blood."

"If he can't walk we'll carry him. The Black Sea sailors have never been known to abandon a wounded comrade."

"That's what I was thinking," said Kutovoy simply and then added: "Suppose we were to make some oars? With oars we could go against the wind. We could use those sticks"—pointing to the handrails—"they'd make fine oars."

"Those sticks, as you call them, are the taffrail."

"All right, then we'll make the oars out of taffrails."

"Who will row?"

"You and I together. Don't worry. I can row."

"How long d'you think we'll keep going? Might manage a cable's length. We haven't eaten for three days."

"Then we'll go back to the coast?"

"It looks like it. . . There we'll get a drink, at least. . . We'll have a go at the Germans and we shan't be any worse off."

"That's true enough," agreed Kutovoy and thought to himself that Nastya would never think of training Kostya as a naval officer. "So you tore the roof off for nothing?" he laughed. "It won't do for a sail?"

"Perhaps not for nothing," answered Akleyev calmly enough, "the trouble is I can't tack with it, my sail will only work with a favourable wind."

"All right," said Kutovoy for want of saying something. "It's cold!"

5

They sat down on the gangplank and discussed what they would do ashore. They decided that Akleyev with the light machine-gun would go ahead and reconnoitre and that Kutovoy would stay aboard with the "Maxim." There was hardly a word said about Vernivecher. He was out of the picture altogether and if he insisted on his share in the fighting they would tell him to wait until one of them was killed or seriously wounded. Then, perhaps, Vernivecher would be able to take the gun of the one who was knocked out.

They also decided to take the machine-guns into the cabin and go there themselves if German aircraft or surface craft appeared. That would give the enemy the impression that the motor-boat had been abandoned. The roof, half-ripped off, would serve to strengthen the impression.

They made their decisions and then there was nothing else to do. It is true they ought to have swilled water over the floor-boards to wash the blood away, but they decided to wait in order not to disturb Vernivecher's sleep.

They both remained seated in the stern-sheets, silent, gloomy and sunk in unpleasant thoughts. The wind was scarcely perceptible and the shore drew nearer very gradually, almost imperceptibly; the sun made its journey across the heavens leisurely, like a sailor on watch who has a long time to wait for his relief.

The sea around them was tiringly monotonous and magnificent. The slightly troubled surface of the water glistened blindingly. Overhead was an empty and sultry July sky. Above them was an immaculate unmoving blue purity, below them the same indifferent blueness. There was no flashing of the sharp-pointed wings of sea gulls, no flashing of the curved backs of leaping dolphins with their triangular dorsal fins. The gunfire had scared the sea gulls away, the dolphins had been driven off by the shells, bombs and mines.

On the very horizon there was a little greyish cloud.

For some reason or another Akleyev remembered how a lecturer had once visited their destroyer before the war and had told them that at a depth of some three or four hundred metres in the Black Sea the dead kingdom of hydrogen sulphate began. Somehow these thoughts only served to make him more unhappy.

He glanced at Kutovoy. "Beautiful!" was all Kutovoy said and a silence fell again.

From time to time Akleyev glanced up at the cloud that was coming over the horizon. It raised some sort of hope in him although he was in no hurry to share this hope with Kutovoy. He realized what another disappointment would mean under the circumstances.

"You lie down and rest for a bit," he said to Kutovoy.

Kutovoy merely shook his head and remained where he was.

One, two and perhaps even three hours passed in silence. Then the door of the cabin creaked and Vernivecher appeared. His unshaven cheeks with their few red bristles were hollow and had an unpleasant, earthy hue, his sunken eyes had an unhealthy glitter in them. He was feverish. The loss of blood, hunger, thirst and fierce pain had done their work well, fully in accordance with the medical text-books. Vernivecher could hardly stand on his feet but he had no thought of complaining.

"Taking a sun bath?" he laughed leaning against the low lintel of the door. "Everything we need for a health resort—sun, air and water."

"Sit down, Styopa," said Kutovoy and offered him the most comfortable place on the gangplank.

Obediently Vernivecher sat down.

"We have discussed the situation, Styopa," began Akleyev, "and we have decided. . ."

"I know," Vernivecher laughed again. "I have to wait until one of you is killed. I heard what you said. And whoever remains alive will carry me to the partisans, through the Baidar Gates. . . Everything is clear. . ."

6

There is a happy moment when the mess call is sounded after a sharp fight and the sailors, excited with the success of battle and the joy of life, can talk, and gossip and indulge in sarcasm on the subject of girls and love. It only requires someone to say the first word before they all begin boasting and lying to their hearts' content.

In the tiring and solemn hours before the battle, however, when you don't know

whether you'll ever see the sun over your head or the water under the keel of your ship again, all the coarseness of youth disappears from the men's lips like dust before a storm. Once more the sailors are clean in words and in thought, as pure as the cause for which they may shortly have to give their lives. This is the time when they have need of simple heartfelt talks—about their native places, their families, children, parents, wives and sweethearts. This is the time when they bring out their favourite photos, brown and faded from sailor's sweat; it seems that they have known those sweet features so long and are yet seeing them for the first time, they show them to their comrades, and it is then with all their heart and soul that they feel the necessity and the sacred nature of that which their country and the happiness of their near and dear ones expect of them.

If in such a moment your comrade asks you whether you have a girl at home you answer briefly: "yes," "no," or "of course." And you invariably ask him "and you?" because the man who asks is the one who wants to talk.

7

Vernivecher looked at Akleyev and suddenly burst out laughing.

"Nikifor, your beard's like plush!"

Vassili Kutovoy looked at Akleyev and realized how well Vernivecher had described him. His cheeks and chin were covered with an even and thick coating of silky bristles of an attractive greenish-brown colour. Kutovoy even remembered a Teddy Bear that he had bought Kostya for his birthday long ago and had to admit that Akleyev's cheeks were really coated in plush.

Akleyev rubbed his hand over his chin and, to keep going the jolly conversation that had been started, said importantly:

"I'm growing a beard. Like Admiral Makarov."

"The girls won't like you with a beard," Vernivecher warned him, "then you'll be in a bad fix... D'you love your wife?" he said suddenly to Kutovoy, apparently a propos of nothing at all.

"Of course I do, she's good to me," answered Kutovoy.

"And you, Akleyev?"

"I'm not married."

"But you have a girl?"

He did not find it easy to answer this question. If Vernivecher had known Akleyev better he would probably never have asked him. They had known one another for a matter of six days, however, when one battalion had with great difficulty been made up out of the remains of a number of badly mauled battalions and had immediately been sent into battle. Sensitive and experienced Vernivecher would have known, under other circumstances, that Akleyev was not the type to open up the secrets of his heart even to his closest friends.

Phlegmatic, silent and rather dry-looking, he was proud almost to the degree of bashfulness. When he walked past a girl who smiled at him he was always terribly afraid of making himself ridiculous and walked on with a stern and even angry expression on his face. He could not force himself to look the girl in the face and at the same time was torn by the desire to do so. As the modern girl is extremely observant she could guess at first glance the feelings that bothered this tall sailor with the clever but stubborn face and the big blue eyes under thick brows burnt by the Crimean sun. He was more afraid of making himself ridiculous than of anything else in his life and evoked in the girls a kind of condescending smile in which, as we all know, there is never anything to take offence at. He had no very high opinion of himself.

In "civvy street" he had been a zincographer in a Moscow printing works and had been secretly in love with a pretty and apparently intelligent linotype operator. He, however, kept her waiting too long before he made his love known to her and she married the assistant shop manager.

In Sevastopol his feelings underwent a second serious test. One jolly Sunday in May he had leave ashore and was sitting alone on a bench on the Marine Boulevard. It happened that the seat next to his was vacated and then occupied by a girl on whom he had cast swift but cautious glances on several occasions.

She was of athletic build, solid as a little loaf of bread, with wonderful blond hair piled up high and brushed back behind the ears, in accordance with the latest Sevastopol fashion. Her hazel eyes, not very large, flashed in an attractive and cheeky face like the seeds in a water-melon. Akleyev noticed that she always had a book in her hand—a woman of culture. This pleased him.

"May I?" she asked the blushing Akleyev and obviously having no doubt as to his answer, opened the book, and carefully, so as not to crush or dirty her dress, sat down on it.

She would have sat there till late in the night without getting a single word out of her blushing neighbour had she not started the conversation herself: within five minutes they were chattering as though they had known each other for a thousand years. He did not yet know that her name was Galya Syrovarova and that she was a governess at a kindergarten; nevertheless he was head over heels in love with her. It seemed that Galya dreamed of going to Moscow to study and that Sevastopol choked her.

Akleyev thought to himself that this girl who radiated health and strength looked as little like choking as anybody he knew, but of course he didn't say so and then he mentioned, in passing, that he was a Muscovite. She looked respectfully at him and began to question him about Moscow, about the shops and theatres and said that she realized that Sevastopol girls were far behind the Moscow girls and that she was actually stifled in Sevastopol.

Akleyev considered it his duty to defend the town of which he had grown fond in the course of seven months' service but Galya only said: "Don't talk nonsense, please."

There is no need to go into the details of their conversation. Suffice it to say that for

two hours Nikifor believed himself the happiest man in Sevastopol. When Galya looked at her watch and explained the cause of her hurry, he suddenly, in one second, became the most unhappy sailor in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Navy. It appeared that Galya was going to the Grafskaya Jetty to visit someone in hospital there whom she called her best friend. He was also a sailor and so wonderful, so brave and so terribly handsome. Galya promised to introduce Akleyev to her girl friend, a jolly chestnut-haired girl and all four of them, Galya and Stiva, Akleyev and Chestnut would go out together and that would be awfully nice and jolly. . .

Akleyev, his head hanging forward, listened to her chatter and humbly agreed that they would all be friends and all four of them go out together. With regard to himself he had by that time firmly resolved that he would have nothing to do with any chestnut-haired girl and that he would not meet Galya again, as this was all very humiliating and of no use as long as she already had some devil called Stiva.

A fellow sometimes has bad luck. Even his rival's name was a fine one, like that of Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina*, and what sort of name had he been given? Nikifor! Phew!

In his talk with Galya he had discovered that Stiva was really just plain Stepan and that Galya had christened him Stiva. Of course it was not just a matter of names.

It is difficult to say whether Akleyev would have had sufficient strength of will never to meet Galya again. We know that even the most iron-willed people are not always able to keep such resolutions. Akleyev was helped by the fact that his vessel soon put to sea on a long training cruise. This, however, did not give him any rest. Sometimes, while on duty on a wonderful June night he would watch the stars dancing merrily over the stern, gaze at the little wavelets of phosphorescent water lapping softly against the ship; from somewhere down below the mighty breathing of the engines would make itself audible even on the bridge and then his head would become filled with thoughts of the past meeting and future rendez-vous.

Akleyev was resolved never to think of Galya again but he had made no such oath with regard to Stiva and when he was on watch he dreamt that the unknown and hated Stiva had disappeared from Galya Syrovarova's life. The best thing would be for him to be transferred to some distant base, to the Pacific Fleet, for example. We must be just—Akleyev did not wish him to die.

The training cruise ended at last and the destroyer again tied up at the Minnaya Jetty; Akleyev was due for shore leave the next day but the war began instead and all shore leave was cancelled.

Now you know why Akleyev, when Vernivecher asked him if he had a girl, answered: "No, and you?"

CHAPTER 4

Vernivecher Does Things His Own Way

It seemed that this was the question that Vernivecher was waiting for. His usually smiling face became serious and dreamy and his sunken, earth-coloured cheeks turned rosy red.

"I have had many girls," said Vernivecher, "but only one love and that was a love that was something out of the ordinary. . . We met at the sports' ground. I was playing right back ('like my Kostya,' thought Kutovoy), and she was in a running team. She didn't run so well, not the U.S.S.R. style, exactly because she still had not had enough practice. I was playing for the Navy team that day and I gave such a pass as you only dream about. At half time she came to me herself and said:

"'Comrade Vernivecher, you played well enough to appear at the Moscow Dynamo Stadium.'

"'Well, suppose I did?' I said to her.

"'In that case you don't know anything about Moscow football,' says she.

"And again I say to her:

"'Well, suppose I don't?'

"That made her angry.

"'You and your supposes! Don't you know any other words?'

"'Comrade Sweetheart,' I said to her, 'there are some other words I know. For instance. . .' Then, brothers, I looked at her straight in the eyes and said: 'For example—I like you.'

"I laughed and something touched my conscience.

"She blushed and said:

"'And suppose you do?'

"Then she suddenly realized that she was repeating my words and she laughed as well. I looked at her, liked her and something made me happy.

"'How did you find out my name?' I asked her.

"'The girls told me. I noticed you a long time ago.'

"'And I have been watching you run all the time,' I said.

"'Drop it,' she said, 'that's just nonsense.'

"I did not want her to think too much of herself and said:

"'It's true I've watched you for a long time but you don't run very well. You've still a long way to go to break records.'

"Another would have taken offence at such a remark but she answered without showing any anger:

"'Comrade Vernivecher, I don't run for records but for the sake of my health.'

"'And d'you think I play football to get ill? I also play for my health. . . And for future battles. And what's more, until such time as I become a rear-admiral you may call me Styopa.'

"We chattered on and on and I left the stadium that day in love for life. Believe it or not, as you please."

"Why shouldn't we believe you?" said Kutovoy. "That's how it should be."

"Only just think of it," continued Vernivecher as though thinking aloud. "You go ashore for years on end, wander about, drink, stick to yourself and somewhere all the time your fate, that which we call happiness, is perhaps quite close by. . . It's astonishing! . ."

He forgot his wounds, forgot that the boat

was being carried to the shore, that at any moment from land, air or sea death might come to them. Vernivecher was overcome by his reminiscences.

"As soon as ever I could get shore leave we went out together and everything was all right. Just before the war began I sprained my leg during training. They put me in hospital and there I lay and worried. The cruiser was at sea on a training cruise and I didn't let her know I was still ashore. I wanted to test her love. The first Sunday, of course, she didn't come. She waited for me on the boulevard. The next Tuesday she found out and immediately she finished work in the evening she came with a bunch of flowers. Just as if she were visiting a young mother. 'Stiva,' she said, 'what's wrong with you? Why didn't you let me know?' And she was so pale that I was sorry for her."

An indistinct suspicion crept into Akleyev's heart: Stiva, who was really Stepan... and a sailor... and he had a girl that loved him... Suppose this were the same Stiva?

He cast a hurried glance at the half-sleeping Vernivecher and was surprised that he who was possibly the happy rival did not arouse any angry feelings in him. Akleyev even questioned himself for a moment: had he forgotten his love for Galya at last? This was already the second year since they had met that one and only time. As soon as the memory of Galya with her slanting bright eyes like water melon seeds came back to him he realized that he still loved her as much as ever and that there was not another girl in the world who attracted him so much even though at that one meeting he had realized that she was not as cultured as she had seemed at first sight.

The fact, however, remained. Styopa did not arouse anything but friendship in him and that gnawing feeling of guilt which a man always has when he comes out of a battle unscathed and meets seriously wounded comrades.

"That's probably because we haven't got Galya on board the motor-boat with us," thought Akleyev, who loved to think out to the very end everything that worried him. "If Galya were here she would cry that her Stiva had been wounded and would stroke him and hug him and kiss him and I would be as mad as a wolf."

He waited until Vernivecher again opened his eyes.

"Do they call you Stiva?" he asked cautiously. "Why, you are just a plain Stepan?"

"She christened me Stiva," explained Vernivecher guiltily, and the cold seized Akleyev's heart again. "She liked Stiva better. What do I care as long as she loves me?"

"I suppose her name's just Galya, or Svetlana, or Mussya!" continued Akleyev trying to give his face a look of indifference.

"It's Mussya!" exclaimed Vernivecher. "Did you guess, or do you know her?"

"What was there to guess?" said Akleyev, shielding his eyes with his hand and gazing with exaggerated intentness at the still distant shore. "Anybody could guess. Every girl in Sevastopol is either Galya, or Mussya, or Svetlana." He stopped and then added merrily: "And every Stepan they call Stiva..."

Vernivecher looked at him in some doubt.

"That's a theory that's absolutely wrong. It was quite an accident that you guessed."

"Let it be an accident," said Akleyev. "The main thing is that she loves you and there's no doubt about it."

"I hope you are a prophet," said Vernivecher slowly.

"I am not a prophet," answered Akleyev, "but I understand women."

Vernivecher did not answer and drew back from the light wind. He was feverish.

2

It was funny that Vernivecher had nothing to do with Galya; Akleyev's thoughts turned to the lone cloud that had been interesting him so long and which was already at some height above the horizon. It had now grown into a big, leaden cloud and was travelling southwards across a clear sky. Behind it other clouds were creeping over the horizon. It looked as though the clouds were bringing a fresh breeze with them, perhaps even a storm. This threatened more serious trouble for the little boat that was already without any means of control. The wind which was springing up, however, would blow the boat to the south and not to the Crimean coast. This gave Akleyev a hope that he was still not ready to share with his comrades.

A scarcely audible whine of motors put him on his guard. A Messerschmitt, presumably from the Kacha aerodrome, was coming from land straight towards the boat. It would have been extremely naive to assume that their boat was the target of the fascist aeroplane. In those bitter July days there were many such cockleshells putting out from Sevastopol and all of them were easy and almost safe targets for the cannon and machine-guns of the fascist airman who could afford to display "fearlessness" in attacking them.

There could be no thought of the drifting motor-boat giving battle to an armoured and well-armed fighter aircraft. They had to hide in the cabin and get there as quickly as possible.

But that was not as easy as it seemed. Kutovoy, trying to hurry inside with his machine-gun, caught Vernivecher in the side with his elbow. The latter groaned and would have fallen if Akleyev had not supported him. He had to be almost carried and laid on the seat in the cabin. Then the other two went back for the "Maxim" which had unexpectedly become too heavy for Akleyev to manage alone.

When Kutovoy crept in after his gun the Messerschmitt was no more than eight hundred yards away. It was flying low, almost skimming the water. The painful noise of the engine increased mercilessly, it hurt the ear-drums and sent a cold shiver over the whole body.

There is something insulting to human dignity in passive, even if forced, waiting for an approaching mortal danger. The cowards have it easier. They don't know this feeling. Fear paralyses their weak wills and

their timid brains. Long before a bullet or a shell splinter gets them they are no longer men but pulsating corpses.

Real men who love life and do not fear death are indignant, oppressed and furious at this feeling.

"Perhaps we should go out with the guns, eh?" said Kutovoy hoarsely. "We have plenty of ammunition."

"We've no armour-piercing bullets," said Akleyev morosely. "Lie down while you're still alive."

They lay down side by side, pressed close together, with scarcely room enough for the two of them on the narrow cabin floor between the seats. Kutovoy could feel Akleyev's heart beating fast.

A few seconds later the German fighter passed over the boat with a monstrous, soul-crushing roar. Through the half torn-off roof could be seen the wings of the German with their black crosses framed in white lines.

"Messerschmitt," said Kutovoy as though Akleyev did not know it without his telling him. It had suddenly become difficult, physically impossible for him to remain silent.

Akleyev did not speak.

Kutovoy tried to take his mind off the aircraft. He looked at Akleyev's amusing beard and again thought of the plush Teddy Bear (now it seemed so long ago to him, in a different cenury) that he had bought Kostya for his birthday. He could not, however, force himself to forget the Messerschmitt even for a moment; it was so near and yet in complete safety and could, amongst other things. kill him, Vassili Kutovoy, and Nikifor Akleyev and Stepan Vernivecher.

It was not fear for his life that tormented Kutovoy at the moment. There was no fear: Kutovoy was already astonished at that. He was being choked by his savage, indescribable hatred for the Germans and the tormenting shame of helplessness.

"Never mind!" he muttered savagely, perhaps speaking to his comrades, perhaps to himself. "Never mind! Some day we'll get our own back, some day I'll pull out your guts,—you ersatz devil!—and stretch them all the way to Berlin. Then you and I, you viper. . ."

The end of his threat to the Germans was drowned in the roar of the approaching aircraft's engine. When it seemed that there had never been and never would be any silence, the mad rattle of a heavy calibre machine-gun began. One, two, three, four bursts one after the other. Then the evil shadow of the aircraft flying extremely low brought a twilight to the cabin that was like an eclipse of the sun; then it became light and quiet again.

The Messerschmitt had no time to waste on a battered little cockleshell that showed no signs of life. It flew off in the direction of the 35th Battery where it could count on bigger prey. . .

"Phew, as hot as in a bath-house," muttered Akleyev a few minutes later. "He even made me sweat." Then he added in a worried voice: "Is everybody alive?"

"It seems like it," answered Kutovoy uncertainly, bending over Vernivecher who was lying whit his face to the wall.

"Stepan!" Akleyevcalled to him.

"Nothing happened to me, Vernivecher grunted without turning round, "I could do with some sleep. . ."

"Sleep then," said Akleyev gladly. "You're right to want to sleep."

He examined the boat carefully from stem to stern and all he found was three small holes in the bows that were not in the least dangerous.

"No," he said decisively, "that Jerry was no ace."

Kutovoy added a few words not worth printing to this characteristic of the German. Vernivecher was silent again, and Akleyev, realizing that Vernivecher had to be left alone, returned with Kutovoy to their old place in the stern. That was all Vernivecher was waiting for.

3

Vernivecher certainly did not want to die. His was an effusive nature, he was easily attracted, courageous and without malice, a fine lad and the favourite with the women; he was always full of plans and loved life as only a man in his early twenties can.

There was still much that he wanted to do. He wanted to fight the Germans until complete victory had been won, he wanted to marry Mussya, he wanted to shake hands with Stalin, to enter college, to write a book (the book was the most important) of Sevastopol reminiscences that would put all writers in the shade; he wanted to visit Moscow and America, to be present at Hitler's execution, to go walking in conquered Berlin, to play right back for the U.S.S.R., to invent a portable sniper's machine-gun with telescopic sights, to see his mother and his younger brother who had remained behind in Rostov-on-Don where he had been a taxi driver before the war.

That was not all.

Even octogenarians part with life very unwillingly and Vernivecher was still quite young and a few minutes before had suddenly realized in a new, in a real way, how good it was to be alive, to admire the free and mighty beauty of the sea, summer or winter, stormy or still, to go rushing in a hydroplane over the steep, dark-blue waves or to surrender oneself to the will of the current of a stream overgrown with water lilies, to go crunching over the snow in thick felt boots, to wander round the city, coat collar turned up, on rainy autumn evenings when the headlights of the cars are reflected in the shiny black asphalt as in a river, to play chess and cards, to jump with a parachute and ride on a roundabout, to smell the printer's ink on a freshly opened new book, to receive greetings from friends, to practice on the parallel bars in the gymnasium and hang on the running board of a crowded tramcar, to enjoy the light breeze on a hot noon and the heat of the fire-breathing Russian stove during the sharp frosts of January, to enjoy the first summer cherries and to pick the last rosy apples, already turning dark from frost on trees that are beginning to lose their leaves in the late autumn.

Just imagine what a wonderful thing it all is—life!

Vernivecher remembered a discussion that had arisen in their battalion under the Mackenzie Heights. One of the sailors (he was later killed near the Italian Cemetery) said that he would shoot himself if he lost an arm or a leg:

"If I have no gun I'll throw myself under a truck, or blow myself up with a grenade, jump out of the hospital window, or under the hospital train, I'll drown myself, only I won't live as a cripple."

Of course there was an argument.

"Any fool could shoot himself," Vernivecher had said. "Life isn't all dancing, although it's pleasant enough. If I lose an arm I shall want to live just the same. Probably more than I did before I was wounded. I would live without both arms, with my legs cut off, without eyes, still I should be glad to be alive."

"That's going too far, Styopa," they had cried to him at the time. "You always do step over the mark. Without arms, legs or eyes—what sort of life would that be?"

In reply he had said four words:

"What about Nikolai Ostrovsky?"

The men were silent for a second and then had to admit that in our country even a blind man, condemned to perpetual immobility, could live a fine life and bring benefit to his country.

From that it must have been quite clear that Stepan Vernivecher had no desire whatever to die: nevertheless he had decided to die, had decided, finally and resolutely.

4

The idea first came into his head as he lay in the cabin and accidentally overheard the talk between Akleyev and Kutovoy. He realized full well what it would mean for two exhausted sailors to land on an enemy-occupied coast, to fight against big odds and make their way through the Baidar Gates to the partisans whom they, of course, would not find at once. There were few chances in a hundred that they would succeed. This slim chance would disappear altogether if Akleyev and Kutovoy had to carry him as well. Vernivecher knew that under no circumstances would they abandon him. This meant that they would both die because of him—fine, no doubt, but quite senseless.

Vernivecher was proud and the knowledge that he had become a burden to his comrades, that he hindered them in their struggle for life, worried him as much as the wound in his shoulder.

When the last Messerschmitt appeared and Vernivecher, almost losing consciousness from the accidental knock he had received, had been laid on the cabin seat, there was one question which gave him no peace: had the Messerschmitt noticed any signs of life in the boat or not? If it had seen anything then it was only because Akleyev and Kutovoy had been compelled to take care of his groaning person instead of hurriedly hiding in the cabin with the machine-guns.

Vernivecher decided that if the Messerschmitt noticed any movement it would fire on the boat. Indeed, the Messerschmitt did fire at them. That time they got off safely. Such things might easily happen again and again, and Vernivecher did not believe himself justified in taking advantage of the goodness of his comrades.

He would have liked to say something fine, warm and even tender by way of farewell. Now that he had made his decision they had become nearer and dearer to him. He was afraid, however, that such apparently useless words, especially on his lips, would only serve to make them cautious with him. He therefore waited in silence until he was alone in the cabin and then made his simple preparations.

First he emptied all his pockets. This was not so easy to do with only his left arm to use, but Vernivecher, although he did not admit it, was glad of everything that delayed him. Gradually he laid out on the seat beside him a jack-knife with a cracked ebonite handle, a long empty, home-made cigarette case with the words "Smoke, Sailor!" on its duraluminium lid, his sailor's record book, his Young Communist League membership book, a faded and cracked photo of Mussya in a hat that did not suit her, two of Mussya's letters written since the war began, the flint, steel and tinder that had already become part of their life at the front; the stump of an indelible pencil and a fairly large packet of money that he had collected during the past two months: there had been nothing to spend money on in Sevastopol.

On the back of one of Mussya's letters he wrote in scrawling letters: "I don't want to be a hindrance to you. Fight the skunks until victory. S. Vernivecher."

He read through this short missive, added the words "Black Sea Sailor" after the signature, read it again, was not satisfied with it but did not want to waste any more time and what was more it required quite different nerves from his to write with the left hand. He placed the note in the most prominent place, clenched his teeth on account of the pain, squeezed through the porthole and dropped heavily into the water.

5

At first Vernivecher felt a pain in his stomach as he flopped flat into the water. The pain left him immediately and a miraculous pacifying coolness spread over his whole body. He opened his eyes and saw on all sides the calm, endless sea which stretched away below him into a gradually darkening green abyss. Now and again there were flashes of silver in it from the shoals of little fish he had disturbed. A few feet above his head, scarcely swaying floated the longish shadow of the motor-boat. Then the boat moved away to one side of him and above him shone the blinding sun from which Vernivecher involuntarily screwed his eyes.

When he opened them again he saw that he was almost on the very surface of the water and only then realized that he had all the time been instinctively holding his breath. He also felt with his whole being that he did not want and could not die, that he would give up everything for another day

another hour, another minute of life, for the joy of filling his lungs full of the wonderful, fresh, salt sea air.

Vernivecher thought sorrowfully that he had made a mistake. Not in his decision but in the way he was carrying it out. He had hurried unforgivably. He should have waited until they got quite close to the shore and then make his jump. That would have given him at least another five or six hours of life. Six hours! Almost an eternity! Actually he had only to wave his undamaged arm a couple of times and he would come up to the surface like a cork and would be able to shout to his comrades to save him. They would certainly save him. But how would he be able to explain to them? They would understand why he had thrown himself in the water. But why had he begun to swim? Why had he asked for help? "Frightened?" Akleyev and Kutovoy would think of him: "Stepan Vernivecher has become a coward, he hadn't enough guts in him, he's only a weakling after all. . ."

The thought of the shame which Vernivecher was sure awaited him if he returned to the boat was stronger than his desire for life. He dived deeper, with a terrific effort of will-power forced open his mouth and drank in water. The bitter, salt water rushed into his nose and his wide-open mouth.

He was almost unconscious when he realized that contrary to his desire he was coming up to the surface: he forced himself to put his hands behind his back. Somewhere overhead a huge shadow was rapidly approaching.

"A dolphin!" thought Vernivecher indifferently and lost consciousness.

6

A half minute before, Akleyev and Kutovoy, sitting half asleep in the sternsheets of the motor-boat, suspecting nothing, were roused by a heavy splash on the left side of the boat. They glanced idly in that direction, saw the growing circles on the water but did not suspect anything in particular.

"That's a whale," laughed Kutovoy, lazily, "hang on tight, Nikifor, or he'll swallow us. . . With all the ammunition. . ."

Akleyev fell in with Kutovoy's jocular tone. He was just getting ready to paint a picture of the wonderful life they would lead in the whale's belly, of the way they would make the whale the terror of the Germans by turning it into a strong naval unit, when of a sudden the boat was rocked by a strong gust of wind, the cabin door was thrown open and the two men were astonished to see the cabin empty.

"Where's Vernivecher?" gasped Kutovoy.

He jumped to his feet but Akleyev was quicker; he rushed into the cabin, saw Vernivecher's things in a neat pile, remembered for an instance the bitter words: "Everything is clear" and without seeing the note of farewell, immediately understood what had happened.

"Stepan has drowned himself! We didn't look after the lad!" he shouted to Kutovoy, hurriedly removing his boots and trousers: he leapt into the water by the same way as Vernivecher.

7

Many fine and necessary deeds would remain undone if they were carefully thought out and all the chances weighed up beforehand. It is not only because such thoughts and calculations would lead to an irrecoverable loss of time but also because a mature, all-round discussion of the chances would lead to a vote "for" once in a thousand times or less. But how many fine deeds have been performed successfully because people have been able to act without preliminary calculations and have been guided only by the principles of a real soldier and a real man.

What indeed were the chances of saving Vernivecher? More than half a minute had passed and the wind had carried the boat a good dozen yards from the spot where he dropped into the water. Just try looking for a man in the depths of the Black Sea! Akleyev, however, did not weigh up the chances of success, he jumped into the water so quickly that he did not even have time to fill his lungs with air. A few seconds, therefore, and he was forced to come to the surface and then some twenty feet below the surface he saw a large dark body. It was Vernivecher, who, as we already know, was instinctively swimming to the surface but had forced himself to open his mouth and draw in a stream of the sickening salt water and was again descending to the bottom of the sea. Akleyev could not bear to think of what might have happened if he had filled his lungs with air before jumping into the water. He would have had enough air for about forty seconds and in that time Vernivecher, who only showed himself for a moment, would have sunk irretrievably to the bottom.

This thought came to Akleyev much later when they were both back on board the motor-boat. As soon as he saw Vernivecher, Akleyev swam to him with a faster crawl than he had ever shown in a swimming match. Then he paused for a second to take in a deep breath and dived into the water almost vertically. Somewhere deep down below he could see the body of Vernivecher, swaying slightly as it sank into the depths of the bottle-green water.

It was a good thing that Stepan had lost consciousness, or he would certainly have resisted and Akleyev would not have been able to hold him. When he took hold of the collar of Vernivecher's singlet it was so deep under the water that it seemed foolish to try and reach the surface with that tiny supply of air left in his lungs. When he was still some five yards from the surface of the water he began to feel that he couldn't go any further and that his lungs would burst. Everything became hazy, a terrible laziness spread over his whole body and something dark whispered to him: "Let go of Vernivecher, let go of Vernivecher. . . It makes no difference, everything's all over. . . Let go of Vernivecher and get rid of that poisoned, foul air in your lungs. . . Take a deep breath. . . It doesn't matter if it's water you breathe and not air. . . Better breathe in water and die than not breathe at all. . . Everything's all over, anyway. . . Oh, how fine it would be to take a deep, deep breath and die. . . Everything's all over, anyway. . ."

It is possible that Akleyev would have given in to this dark and magic force if he had not seen the blinding glare of the sun quite close over his head and realized that only a thin film of water separated him from its warm rays. Akleyev held out, he did not expell the foul air nor did he take a breath, he remained alive, alive, alive!

He was at the last ebb of his strength when he saw above him the high, clear blue sky indescribably joyous like life itself and the motor-boat, rocking on the shining blue lacquered water, and Vassili Kutovoy, mad with joy, waving his arms and shouting something to him.

Akleyev did not at once realize that Kutovoy was shouting to him because he was breathing. He breathed deeply and frequently and enjoyed the simple but incomparable joy of drawing in deep breaths of sweet, fresh, slightly salt air and immediately breathing it out again and never bothering about the fact that he would have to breathe again in a few seconds. There was enough air! There was enough air to last him all his life! Breathe as much as you want!

He breathed and breathed and did not hear what Kutovoy was shouting to him from the boat.

"I thought that Stepan was drowned and that you were drowned too!" shouted Kutovoy excitedly. "I thought you were both drowned, you devils, oh, you sailor men! . . Swim to the boat, Nikifor, strike out with Stepan, the devil. . . He's got into the habit of jumping into the sea as though it were a swimming pool. He's a fool, say what you like. . ."

Kutovoy, who was usually taciturn and reticent, had become garrulous as only a man can be who a few seconds before had been certain that he had been left all alone on a cockleshell that was being driven towards a shore where there were Germans. This was not cowardice. Kutovoy was certainly not a coward. Nor was it animal fear of a near and inevitable death. He knew full well that together with Akleyev and Vernivecher he would die just the same when the boat reached the shore. It was not cowardice but an awful feeling of loneliness, a feeling of losing support which gives a man courage and strength in the most unequal and hopeless battle.

"Why don't you swim to the boat?" he screamed joyfully to Akleyev. "Why don't you swim to the boat, I want to know? . ."

At last Kutovoy's words reached Akleyev's brain. Only then did he realize, not without some feeling of shame, that he had completely forgotten Vernivecher whom he was still holding firmly by the collar of his singlet and that he had to have the water pumped out of him as quickly as possible before it was too late. He swam heavily to the boat, pressing Vernivecher's head tightly to his body with his left arm; with difficulty he handed the man over to Kutovoy who was leaning over the side of the boat and who almost tumbled into the water; then he himself scrambled on board over the side of a boat that had suddenly become unbelievably high. and together with Kutovoy immediately began pumping the water out of Vernivecher.

This was harder than they had expected. They had to take the unconscious and heavy Vernivecher into the cabin and lay him on the seat. When they had brought him in and laid him down they discovered they had not done the right thing. They should have laid him on the floor and not on the seat. They lowered Stepan to the deck and again laid him down in the wrong position. They could not lay him on his back because of the wounds in his shoulder and arm. Try to bend an injured arm back and you will kill the man. As they got Vernivecher laid out on the deck, Akleyev took off his singlet with its blackened blood stains and began systematic pressure on the lower part of the thorax.

"This is the Scheffer method," he explained to Kutovoy who had never served on board ship and had never learned how to give first aid to the drowning.

Akleyev said "Scheffer method" and Kutovoy was supposed to understand from these words that he was not to be afraid because Vernivecher looked so dead with his expressionless eyes wide open, his flesh cold, his skin a greenish-blue colour; there was no need to give up hope but to have faith in science which, as you can see, Comrade Kutovoy, gave us the Scheffer method of bringing a drowned man back to life. The main thing was not to lose heart.

He concentrated on an effort to remember all he had been taught about artificial respiration. He remembered all the instructions and began to carry them out thoroughly and accurately. It is quite simple. All that was necessary was to press rhythmically (Akleyev remembered that it must be "rhythmically") on the lower part of the thorax and everything would be all right. When he had practiced it on board ship it had been hard for him to prevent himself from laughing at the strong healthy figure of the mechanic Vassilyev who lay on the deck and who was also trying hard not to snort at the medical orderlies and the medical officer who was conducting the test; everything was done properly and the sailor Nikifor Akleyev was marked down excellent in the practice of artificial respiration. And even a year later Akleyev was still firmly convinced that it was the easiest thing to start a man breathing artificially, a matter of two or three minutes.

But suddenly he discovered that it was not such a simple thing after all, and that it took more than two or three minutes. A quarter of an hour, half an hour passed, Akleyev's back ached from working in a cramped position, and Vernivecher still lay wet, cold, motionless and without a sign of breath.

Several times the idea came to Akleyev that no matter how he tried it was too late to save Vernivecher. His eyes met those of Kutovoy and there he read the same thought; a feeling of rage came over him, rage at himself, at Kutovoy, at Vernivecher's rotten character who simply refused to return to consciousness because he did not want to. His arms pained him, his muscles ached, his movements lost the delicacy necessary for the job. Then he handed Vernivecher over to Kutovoy and the latter began carefully copying what he had seen Akleyev do, until he too became tired.

When Akleyev and Kutovoy had both decided, each for himself, that it was useless

continuing the work, a scarcely perceptible shudder ran down Vernivecher's back. It was so imperceptible and still more unexpected that Akleyev and Kutovoy, afraid of disappointment, did not utter a word or even exchange glances. Immediately after this another shudder ran over Vernivecher's back, this time so obvious that there could no longer be any doubt. Vernivecher groaned almost inaudibly and a constantly increasing stream of perfectly clear water gushed out of his mouth.

There was a lump formed in Akleyev's throat from sheer joy. Afraid that tears might show in his eyes, he turned away from Kutovoy who continued working over Vernivecher. With no small effort he uttered the words: "Scheffer method." This time the words "Scheffer method" were supposed to mean: "You see, brother Kutovoy, we've dragged the lad back straight from the claws of death! The rest will be much easier. Now there's nothing to worry about. We have only to believe in our own strength and behave like Black Sea sailors."

This is how Kutovoy understood the words. He winked at Akleyev and the jolly dimples formed in his swarthy face that was not in any way marred by the scarcely visible pock marks. He continued the "rhythmical" pressure with enthusiasm, pressing on the long suffering back of Vernivecher and muttering through his clenched teeth that there was no water that could drown such a sailor!

Then Kutovoy placed Vernivecher in the more experienced hands of Akleyev and began to undress rapidly, remaining only in his trunks. He helped Akleyev lift Vernivecher up on to the seat, took off his wet clothing and dressed him in his own dry clothes.

"He's groaning, gro-aning!" he whispered, his hazel eyes flashing. "God grant we'll go to Berlin together with him yet. . ."

CHAPTER 5

The Wind Changes Direction

While they were busy saving Vernivecher's life they had had no time to think of anything else. Akleyev, however, had not forgotten the clouds that were coming down from the north. When he was sure that Vernivecher's life was no longer in danger he went out of the cabin. The whole northern part of the sky was now covered with heavy black clouds. They were moving across the clear blue of the sky like the shutter over the lens of a camera. The weather was changing. The clouds were bringing a storm with them. In any case the breeze was freshening and, apparently, changing direction. The wind would in all probability drive the boat to the south. This put an end to the fear that they would be driven back to the Sevastopol coast.

This alone was of sufficient importance to tell Kutovoy about it. Besides there were other things that were no less important to make Akleyev call Kutovoy away from Vernivecher who was still unconscious.

He called Kutovoy into the engine-room and pointed to the wheel on which the drops of blood still showed black.

"D'you know how to manage that wheel?"

"But we've no petrol?" said Kutovoy in astonishment.

"You answer me. Can you handle that wheel or not? If you can't then say so."

"I have fooled about at it," answered Kutovoy. "I had no right to. The boys let me try it because I was interested but I never was taught."

"Then sit here and await my signal. You have to keep the boat head on to the waves, that's all."

"But we have no petrol," repeated Kutovoy hopefully. He saw that Akleyev was serious.

"There won't be any petrol. There will be a fresh wind and that will drive us south. D'you understand that?"

"And Stepan wanted to drown himself!" said Kutovoy somewhat late with his anger. "He would have drowned for nothing. So we'll be fighting at sea again?"

"At sea again," smiled Akleyev, "only don't you shout too soon. You probably don't know what a storm at sea is like yet."

"Storms don't frighten sailors," answered Kutovoy who knew as well as Akleyev what a storm meant, especially for a motorboat that was out of control, but he realized that if they had been carried to the shore things would have been much worse.

Akleyev laughed again. It amused him to think that Kutovoy who had never been aboard ship called himself a sailor, but he did not say so. The man had certainly fought in the marines and was now behaving quite well.

"The wind may rise at any moment," he said placing Kutovoy in the engineer's seat at the wheel. "You know what to do? Wait for my orders and then keep her head onto the waves all the time. If the waves hit us broadside they turn us over and that'd be the end of us. D'you get me?"

"Yes, I understand," answered Kutovoy.

"I'm going to fix up the sail," said Akleyev, "and I'll look at Vernivecher. Your job now is to look after the wheel. You try it now to see how it works. . ."

He came up out of the engine-room and almost immediately Kutovoy heard the sound of the axe and the ripping of plywood. There was still a lot of work to do. That part of the roof which Akleyev intended to use as the sail was almost cleared when the wind began to blow the boat towards the shore two hours before. Only two hours, and it seemed like a whole year!

Vernivecher came to himself from the noise of the ripping plywood. With difficulty he opened his eyes and saw Akleyev using his axe awkwardly but with great effort.

2

Vernivecher remembered having placed the meagre contents of his pockets on the seat, he remembered squeezing through the porthole and dropping into the sea, he remembered how he had forced himself to swallow water and even how some huge dark body which he had taken for a dolphin had passed over him in the water. And then suddenly, opening his eyes, he found himself on the seat on which he had been lying when Akleyev began ripping off the roof and Akleyev was still standing on the opposite seat and still using his axe in-

correctly (Vernivecher was willing to bet his head that it was not being done properly).

Surely that had not all happened in a dream or in delirium? Vernivecher realized that he was in a condition when delirium is not at all uncommon.

This assumption made him quite easy at heart. He wanted to say something nice to Akleyev. Suppressing the pain and his terrible weakness he raised himself on the elbow of his sound arm and saw his wet slacks of special camouflage material and his blood-stained singlet hanging on the cabin door to dry. His boots and socks were drying on the stern gangplank. He began to understand but nevertheless he put his hand up to his head—his hair was still wet.

In his exhaustion Vernivecher fell on to his back. He was unbelievably ashamed and at the same time (although he would not admit it to himself at any cost) a feeling of unbelievable joy spread over him: he was still alive despite everything! Who was it that had risked his life to save him? He saw the strands of wet hair hanging over Akleyev's care-lined forehead and realized who had pulled him out of the sea.

He felt himself and discovered that he was wearing Kutovoy's trousers and, apparently, his singlet. A feeling of tenderness towards his trusty comrades that he had never felt before swept over him and for the second time that day, the second time, indeed, since his childhood, he wept. This time he had not the strength to turn away from Akleyev to hide his tears. He probably did not even try very hard.

Akleyev, however, turned away in time so that he would not confuse Vernivecher.

"The wind seems to be changing," he muttered in a carefully selected tone of indifference. "We are now being driven south, brother. . . It's driving us so fast that if we can only hold out . . ."

3

Getting his heavy plywood "sail" off the roof at last, Akleyev dragged it to the stern and leaned it against the cabin wall. He began fumbling about under the seat looking for something to hang the sail from. A piece of raw hide, or even a piece of duraluminium would be fine. He had found a couple of dozen nails in the morning when he had got the hammer, axe and bucket out of the locker.

Of course there was neither leather nor duraluminium on the boat. Why should there be any such thing on a motor-boat that only put out to sea for the shortest spells and then only within the harbour limits where everything needed could easily be obtained?

Akleyev took off the belt he had been wearing ever since he had joined the navy and which he had fully intended wearing to the day of his death; without hesitation, he laid it on the deck and, with the same determination as that with which he would have hacked off his own finger, cut four strips of leather from it with the axe.

He could have asked Kutovoy or Vernivecher and either of them would have handed over his belt without a murmur, but Akleyev did not consider himself justified in taking from other people, even in the common cause, anything that he had himself. Who would not hate to part with a belt, a black sailor's belt with a buckle on which is emblazoned the symbol of the sailor's glory, the anchor? It was almost as bad as parting with a sailor's cap or jacket! No, Akleyev was not the type to misuse his authority in such a way.

Five minutes later the "sail" was attached by four leather loops to the cross beam of the cabin. It covered the cabin door so that there was no communication between the cabin and the engine-room.

Kutovoy had no right to leave the wheel and all three members of the crew were separated from each other for the period the gale was blowing. Akleyev did not worry about Kutovoy. He relied on his skill, on the able hands of an experienced worker. Vernivecher's case was worse. He was badly wounded, had lost a terrible amount of blood, had lain for almost an hour without a sign of life, had a high fever, suffered intolerably from thirst and had to remain all alone, without the company of his comrades, in a cabin with half the roof off, with unglazed portholes through which the waves would soon be beating. There was nothing he could do. It might have been even worse; in any case there was no choice.

Supporting himself by the taffrail, Akleyev made his way along the gunwale to the glass screen of the engine-room, told Kutovoy what was happening and then looked into the cabin through the open roof and saw Vernivecher lying on the seat.

"Stick it, Stepan," he said. "While the storm lasts, you will be alone. Stick it like a sailor."

"Stick it like a sailor it is," answered Vernivecher in a weak voice and even found enough strength to smile. He was grateful to his comrades, not so much for having saved him as for not having said a single word of reproach. He had the courage to wonder how he would have behaved under the circumstances and had to admit that he would not have been able to keep back the wisecracks and the venomous words. For many years he had a high opinion of himself and now he was beginning to think about himself worse than he really was.

"Good luck, Stepan," called Akleyev waving to him through the roof as he hurried back to his place in the stern.

For five minutes he had nothing to do, then the first gust of wind came pressing the sail against the back of the cabin; the wind died down for a moment then blew again with increasing fury. Menacing-looking violet clouds were now covering the whole horizon. The blue sky and the green water were moving faster and faster to the south, and sky and sea alike were gradually turning an unpleasant leaden colour. The rising wind brought wave after wave in the wake of the disappearing blueness.

4

All calamities, including natural ones, are comparative. If the storm that arose that day at sea was anything like those that often arise in summer and sometimes last for days and even weeks in the fall, winter and spring, raising gigantic heavy waves that seem to be coated in quicksilver, the motor-boat would have disappeared in a few minutes.

The strength of the wind and at the same time the danger from it and from bad weather are measured at sea by a twelve-ball system. A four-ball wave is just as dangerous to a tiny vessel as a twelve-ball wave is to a cruiser or battleship.

The motor-boat was tossed by waves under a wind which, if the vessel had its own twelve-ball system of counting, would have been eleven balls. The wind drove the tiny vessel away from the bank, far out to sea with a speed which under other circumstances would have been pleasant. The motor-boat was driven bows on to the waves, it was thrown up on the crests and down into the troughs and creaked so pitifully all the time that not only Kutovoy but even an experienced seaman like Akleyev thought it was likely to come undone at the seams at any moment and fall apart. The boat, however, did not fall apart. Tirelessly and even with a sort of elan it flew from one wave to another, overtaking and passing them, slid down over countless foamy crests, patiently bore all the blows of the gusty wind and swept on farther and farther out to sea. Kutovoy and Akleyev steered their vessel without compass, chart or guide points, afraid only of showing their broadside to the wind or waves because if they did nothing could save them; they would turn turtle and sink.

The problem of how to prevent the vessel from showing her sides to the wind was one which occupied their minds every time a wave washed across the boat. Kutovoy held on firmly to the steering wheel and when, despite his efforts, the boat turned from its course, Akleyev, soaked in perspiration, seized the free side of his heavy sail and dragged it towards him so that the bows cut the waves. The difficulty was not in the steering itself or in the constant risk but in the terrible monotony of the work of the men at wheel and sail. Dozens, hundreds, thousands of waves and behind them dozens, hundreds and thousands more, until it seemed that there would be no end to them. Any single one of them could have sunk that frail, battered plywood cockleshell.

The joyless and difficult day came to an end without any sunset; night fell fast and still the waves came on one after another, crashed against the tormented hull of the little boat, hissed and dropped behind with their phosphorescent white tops to make way for others.

Suddenly a warm rain began to fall pattering on the deck and cabin roof of the boat. Enough rain fell to soak Akleyev's clothes completely, and then it stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

Through the solid bank of swift-flying clouds patches of dark blue sky appeared across which lonely stars flew like tracer-shells. The openings in the clouds became larger and larger until the northern part of the sky was quite clear, the gusts of wind grew less frequent and weaker and by five in the morning the wind had died down to such an extent that it was no longer a danger but a source of welcome coolness and motive power for the boat.

A couple more hours passed and then a calm set in. Once again the early morning sun, still not hot, ruled in the pure blue sky. Again an endless blue sea sparkled in its rays; its waves were light and peaceful ripples on which the boat rocked as though she were at anchor.

Akleyev took down the plywood sail that had served them so well and walking up to his ankles in water passed the sleeping Vernivecher on his seat and went to Kutovoy in the engine-room.

Kutovoy did not trust his knowledge of matters connected with the sea and waited for Akleyev to give him the order to leave the wheel. He sat bent forward, terribly tired from his ceaseless, unaccustomed struggle with the raging storm. His swarthy face had turned a kind of grey, his eyes were deeply sunken. Seeing Akleyev he smiled in a tired way.

"So you're alive then?"

"Wet but still living!" answered Akleyev merrily. "And by God, brother, you've done a good job. As if you had years of service, it's a fact. . ."

As he said this Akleyev glanced round the tiny engine-room and Kutovoy felt that this was both approval of his work during the recent storm and a high assessment of his qualities as a seaman.

"What did you think?" he muttered with satisfaction, and a smile spread over his face forming the cunning and merry little dimples in his cheeks. "Did you think that because I've never been to sea I would make a mess of things? But I decided I would rather die than be seasick. And I wasn't sick. . ."

Kutovoy did not know that seasickness cannot produce any of its outward signs when the stomach is absolutely empty. But he was so proud of his simple achievement that Akleyev did not bother to explain that to him.

"You'll make a good helmsman," he said. "You must have a sailor soul."

There was no greater praise that Akleyev could have given him and Kutovoy was fully aware of its significance.

From the cabin came a low groan as Stepan Vernivecher muttered the single word: "Water!"

5

Difficult as had been the work of Akleyev and Kutovoy during the storm they had had an easier time than Vernivecher, not merely because he was wounded and terribly weak from loss of blood but because it is more difficult than anything else for an active man to do nothing at a time when there is great danger. What was there he could do? He lay and thought, he thought over everything during that time.

Vernivecher had always been convinced that everything he did was correct. Suddenly he realized that he was wrong and with shame remembered how he had proposed, as they lay there on the hill top, to dash forward unarmed to certain death, how he had almost refused to reconnoitre the coast, how he had steered the motor-boat straight at the German torpedo-boat without any orders from Akleyev. It was a good thing they had not been sunk then as they might well have been.

If he had not done that perhaps the petrol tank would not have been damaged.

Passing on himself a mental sentence that was more severe than any that the strictest but unimpartial court could have passed on him, Vernivecher tried to get rid of these dismal thoughts by dreaming of how he would march into Berlin. It would be fine if at the time they got there Berlin were as badly damaged as Sevastopol. To the thunder of artillery salutes and the blare of the bands Soviet troops would march in—infantry, artillery, tanks, cavalry and sappers. Thousands of Soviet aircraft would make a display in the air. The place of honour in this parade would be held by a composite brigade of marines. In their black jackets, sailor caps, machine-gun belts and ribbons flying in the wind they would march with measured tread, stern faces, never glancing at the people of Berlin. The scared Berliners would crowd the sidewalks to see the Soviet sailors. They had come all the way to Berlin itself, the "black commissars", "black clouds"—the heroes of the defence of Sevastopol and Odessa.

Marching beside Vernivecher in the ranks would be Nikifor Akleyev and Vassili Kutovoy. They had retreated together and they would advance together as far as Berlin, until the final victory. Suddenly all three of them are sent for and ordered to arrest Adolf Hitler and bring him to headquarters. They go and search for him. They hammer at closed doors and Hitler asks: "Who's there?" And Stepan Vernivecher answers: "Soviet sailors have come to fetch you, you fascist skunk! Your last hour has come! Open the door! This is the end of your bloody rule!"

Then Vernivecher thought for a long time about Mussya, how they would be certain to meet somewhere during the war, and after the war they would marry and Nikifor Akleyev and Vassili Kutovoy would come to visit them. Kutovoy would come with his wife and child and then they would have to introduce Akleyev to a good friend of Mussya's because their wartime comradeship would last until death and that was still a long way ahead.

Vernivecher expected his wounds to keep him in hospital for a month or more. If there really was no way of avoiding the hospital then he would spend the time there working on his invention of the sniper's machine-gun. He would look for a wounded engineer in the hospital and together they would work out their invention.

All this time the motor-boat, head on to the swell, was shooting away southward over the waves. Vernivecher was tormented by a thirst that was made a thousand times worse by loss of blood. He was extremely weak and in a high fever. He hung on to the seat with his sound arm so that the rocking of the boat would not send him flying to the deck; he was tired, dozed off for a while, then woke up again. Several times he was thrown to the deck as he slept. The unbearable pain in his wounded arm awoke him, he scrambled back to the seat with difficulty and again seemed to plunge into some sort of a black, bottomless pit. It could not be called sleep, it was more like loss of memory. It was when he was in this coma that the word "water" escaped his lips, a word he would never have thought of mentioning if he had been conscious. He knew there was no water to be obtained.

CHAPTER 6

The Vessel Is at Sea

Nevertheless they did obtain water. It was almost madness to leave the sail without attention during the storm but it would have been still greater madness not to attempt to collect the rainwater. A bucket was rolling about the cabin but the door was tightly closed by the sail. Should he pull the sail back from the door? If he did the wind would certainly keel the boat over. Akleyev made his way along the narrow gunwale, hanging on to the taffrail, reached the first broken porthole of the cabin, squeezed through it and seized the bucket that was rolling noisily from one end of the cabin to the other as the boat pitched and tossed; he was going out the same way when he suddenly remembered Kutovoy and returned to the cabin. Holding fast by the bulkhead he fell against rather than walked to the engine-room door, opened it and shouted to Kutovoy:

"Throw your pea jacket outside!"

"It'll get wet," exclaimed Kutovoy not guessing what Akleyev wanted.

"Of course it will, you landlubber, you!" Akleyev was angry with him. "It'll get wet and you'll have something to drink."

He had no sooner said that than he scrambled out of the window and reached the stern just as the wind, unwillingly it seemed, was blowing the sail away from the stern bulkhead.

Kutovoy threw off his jacket and with one hand thrust it out beside the windscreen.

Without letting go his hold on the bucket Akleyev put the whole weight of his body behind the sail and held it until Kutovoy had again put the boat on her course.

Akleyev began to curse for not having brought the axe and a couple of nails with him. He could have hammered a nail into the bulkhead and hung the bucket to catch the water that was running off the remains of the roof. But he could not even think of going back to the cabin.

Almost in tears from vexation, he had to stand with one foot on the slippery stern and with the other on one of the ribs of the gunwale and at the risk of being swept overboard hold the bucket in his hand under the corner of the roof.

The wind howled, the waves roared and then hissed tireless and angry like wet wood in a stove. The whole air was filled with the unkindly noises of the storm. Akleyev, however, could not hear anything except the narrow stream of water, fresh water, that was trickling into the bucket. If there had been a scupper along the roof there would have been enough water to fill the bucket. Motor-boat cabins, however, are not fitted with scuppers and the water ran off the whole length of the curved roof in a fine film. There was a sort of monstrous and irreparable injustice about this. Three men were dying of thirst

and fresh water, wonderful sweet drinking water was running off the roof in gallons, hundreds of gallons, only to fall into the sea and mix with it until no trace was left.

Very little water actually reached the bucket, little more than a pint.

Akleyev carefully poured it into his water bottle without touching a drop himself. This water was intended for Vernivecher. He merely permitted himself to suck the wet sleeve of his jacket. This was a pleasure that only a man who has been without a drink for two whole days and nights can imagine.

It was difficult for Akleyev to force himself to stop sucking his sleeve. It was much more difficult than jumping up from the ground when an attack is ordered. Akleyev, however, did it.

As soon as the wind had died down somewhat and the treacherous sail could be left for a minute or two, Akleyev took off all his clothes and wrung them out over the bucket. He got more water than he had succeeded in catching from the roof—almost a pint and a half. Together with the water from Kutovoy's jacket it made about a quart of cloudy but drinkable water.

Now he could give Vernivecher a drink and sip about a gill of water himself: they did not know how much longer they would be at sea and they would have to economize water by the strictest possible methods. He put the water-bottle and the bucket in the locker under the seat so that not a drop of the valuable fluid would evaporate under the hot July sun.

They still wanted to drink as much as they did before. Akleyev remembered the director of the printing works where he had worked in "civvy street"—the director had heart trouble and was always complaining that the doctor had forbidden him to drink more than five glasses of liquid a day. Five glasses! Let him try being in Akleyev's shoes for a couple of days. . .

By evening the waves had disappeared. The boat was becalmed. In every direction as far as the eye could reach there was sea without end or bound. The dolphins played merrily and carelessly in the pale rose of the sunset. Perhaps these were the same dolphins that the bombs and shells had driven farther out to sea and they were now showing their joy at the newly-gained peace and quiet. Perhaps, however, these dolphins had never seen the shores of the Black Sea but had spent the whole war here far back in the dolphin's hinterland. One thing was certain—they felt that they were in perfect safety which was sufficient evidence that the motor-boat was far from the regular sea and air routes. Now all hopes were concentrated on the wind or on a lucky chance.

There was very little hope that the wind would blow again during the next few days. Still less was there a chance of meeting a Soviet vessel in these distant waters. In short there would have been every reason for despair on the part of people less tired and exhausted than the crew of the tiny ramshackle boat.

During the long hours of enforced idleness, hunger, fatigue, and most of all thirst, became ten times stronger than ever—the tiny ration of water only served to make them thirstier; a terrible inertia set in weakening their muscles and their will-power, inclining them to sleep, idleness and apathy. If they submitted to this feeling all hope of a rescue would disappear; they had to struggle against it immediately and decisively.

Soldiers sometimes get into the state when they feel nothing but indifference and apathy to everything that a short time before would have excited them, to everything they were fond of, to everything they held dear and dreamed of in the short intervals between fighting. Neither memories of home nor of dear ones are able to bring a man out of this state. The only thing to make a man shake off such an apathy is thought of his duty to the army or navy. As long as man can remember that he is a soldier he is active, he does what has to be done and that gives him strength to overcome difficulties and what would appear to be insurmountable obstacles.

The sun had already dropped low behind the horizon when Akleyev went over to Vernivecher who was still lying in silence.

"Do you want a drink?" he whispered to him.

Naturally Vernivecher wanted a drink more than anything else but he whispered:

"And what about you? Why don't you and Kutovoy drink?"

"What makes you think we don't drink? We have already had a drink."

Akleyev gave him a sip of water.

"If you have to, can you sit up?" he whispered.

"I can, if it's necessary," answered Vernivecher a little astonished.

"Then put on your cap because we're going to strike the flag," said Akleyev and glanced at Vernivecher searchingly. Vernivecher took the words quite seriously and Akleyev, pleased now, went aft to the flag.

"Attention!" came the order in Akleyev's croaking voice.

Vernivecher, clenching his teeth, raised himself up, sat still, and turned his head to where he could see, through the open door of the cabin, the simple linen of the white flag with its blue stripe and red star, with hammer and sickle against the orange background of the sunset.

Akleyev and Kutovoy stood at attention in the sternsheets.

At that moment on all the vessels of the Black Sea Fleet, on battleships and submarine-chasers, on submarines and motor-boats, on cruisers and mine-sweepers, on destroyers and petrol boats, retreat was being sounded and the flag struck. In the warm Caucasian twilight officers of the watch gave the command and ship's officers and ratings stood at attention wherever they were when the command was given. Buglers stood at the forepeak ready to sound the "retreat" the moment the order was given to "Strike Flag." The buglers would continue blowing until the ensigns and pennants, their soft folds flapping gently, were slowly lowered, ready to be raised again the next morning. In this daily ceremony, as old as the navy itself, there is something which is always

moving, encouraging and proud, which fills the seaman's heart with a wonderful feeling of the power and strength of the menacing and indestructible fraternity of the sea, the wise and complex unity of the fleet.

On the tiny, battered motor-boat lost in the empty waters of the Black Sea the men felt at that moment with especial keenness that they and their vessel were part, even if an insignificant one, of the Red Navy, in the same way as the other vessels of the Black Sea Fleet.

A few seconds past and Akleyev gave the order: "Strike Flag!" and brought his hand up to his cap, worn jauntily on one side, by way of salute. Kutovoy and Vernivecher also saluted. This was a flagrant breach of regulations: when raising or striking the flag seamen do not salute. Akleyev, however, was in the position of commander, Kutovoy did not know the rules and regulations and Vernivecher, although he knew the rules and did not stand to attention as he should have done, saluted because it gave him comfort.

Akleyev looked silently at the flag and Kutovoy in hurried confusion lowered his hand from the salute and lifted the flagstaff from the brackets.

"Stand at ease!" ordered Akleyev and Vernivecher, whose head was spinning from weakness, again found pleasure in stretching out on the seat.

Thus ended the second day of the cruise.

2

Next morning Akleyev and Kutovoy began keeping watch turn about. The "Maxim" was brought out of the cabin and placed fully loaded. The man on watch had to keep a good lookout for air and surface craft and in the event of a Soviet vessel or aircraft coming within view he was to fire bursts from the machine-gun until the signal was observed.

There was, indeed, very little hope that help would come. There was even less possibility of a wind arising. The main thing was,—and this both Akleyev and Kutovoy realized—that a man on watch was doing a useful duty, laid down in the rules, and this gave them courage.

One watch was relieved by the other and no aeroplanes or ships appeared, not even hostile craft. The boat had been driven into a real dead spot. The vessel, however, was at sea, it was a naval vessel and as far as was possible watches were kept as thoroughly as on board a battleship. In the morning the flag was raised and in the evening Kutovoy lowered it at Akleyev's command.

Vernivecher still had strength enough to sit up for these ceremonies during the first two days after the storm. Then he finally lost his last ounce of strength. He lay still the whole time and was more and more frequently in a state of coma. He was tormented by thirst and the half glass of water a day that was given him naturally could not satisfy him; he was tormented by hunger and the inflammation of his wounds and was almost all the time in a high fever with ague. He was covered with his own peajacket and those of his comrades but nevertheless he shivered (in July on the Black Sea!) and his teeth chattered as though there was a forty degree frost. His comrades persistently kept watch.

When one was on watch the other slept so that he would not waste his strength. Then they decided to sit while on watch.

The long hours dragged by with nothing to fill them but the watch. Hunger and thirst made themselves felt every single minute. Akleyev remembered having read about shipwrecked sailors who had eaten leather cut up into tiny shreds. Secretly, when Kutovoy was asleep, Akleyev tried a piece of his belt, chewed the hard, salty leather for a long time and even forced himself to swallow it but his stomach refused to accept such ersatz food and returned it immediately. Sailors in adventure stories apparently knew some secrets unknown to Akleyev.

Another time the dolphins began to get very bold and played so close to the motor-boat that Akleyev could not resist firing a long burst into one of them. Several of the bullets hit the dolphin for his blood sprang up in fountains covering the water all around with a brownish film; the dolphin itself sank like a brick.

Kutovoy woke up from the sound of the firing and even Vernivecher tried to raise his head.

"A vessel?" cried Kutovoy, hopefully. "Is it a ship?"

"I was hunting dolphins," admitted Akleyev shamefacedly and there was such disappointment on the faces of his comrades when they heard that, that he began to think it had been a mistake to fire at the dolphins.

"Did it get away?" asked Kutovoy more from sympathy than curiosity.

"Yes," answered Akleyev. "It was wounded and dived under the water."

"I suppose you have to shoot them in the head," was Kutovoy's opinion. "Did you shoot him in the head?"

"I tried to."

"That's right... only how would you get him out if you killed him? . ."

"We've first got to kill one and then get it out..." said Akleyev timidly.

"Y-e-es," said Kutovoy. "Of course... If we had a boathook... We two can't do much in the swimming line nowadays..."

The whole discussion led to nothing for the dolphins, scared by the machine-gun fire, stopped playing near the boat.

The only thing Akleyev could do with regard to food was to forbid Kutovoy to talk about it. As for Vernivecher he was silent all the same. It was not within Akleyev's power, however, to forbid them to think about food and water, nor could he prevent them from seeing things in their dreams.

3

It seemed they had said everything there was to be said on all subjects; they had spoken about the recent but nevertheless distant years in "civvy street," about the pals Akleyev had had on the "Bystry," about how he had fought single-hand for eleven hours against fifteen Germans near the Mackenzie Heights; Kutovoy told how he made his first records in the mine, how he had had a fight with the

mobilization clerk at the naval base because he kept him in reserve and did not send him to the front at once—he did not send him to the marines because he thought he could be better used drilling rocks and building shelters somewhere, until Kutovoy explained that he worked a coal-cutting machine and was not a driller; eventually he sent him to the front and Kutovoy arrived in the line with his party after a march of only an hour and a half. Then they discovered that their battalions had been fighting side by side at Sapun Hill and they began to talk about their officers, the majority of whom had been killed. Akleyev recalled an occasion on which there had been four new commissars appointed in his battalion in one day: they had each of them led their attacking marines whom they had raised from the ground for a charge and each of them died the death of the brave before headquarters had time to confirm his appointment.

With every passing hour hunger and thirst made themselves more keenly felt. The men did not want to move, they did not want to think of anything except food and drink. Conversation grew less frequent and what little talking there was was brief and disconnected, even when they spoke of their families and their near ones. Only one subject could still keep them talking freely.

That subject was the coming victory. This was in July 1942 when there were still four and a half months between those bitter days and the brilliant outcome of the battle of Stalingrad which had not yet begun.

One evening, the fourth day of their cruise on the motor-boat, Kutovoy was contemplatively watching the wonderful and majestic panorama created by the sunset glow on the clouds.

"Those red clouds get on my nerves. It is like Sevastopol burning. . ."

Akleyev did not answer immediately.

"If you look at them long enough you'll see that it's Berlin that's burning. At any rate it's Berlin that I can see burning," he said at last.

"If I could spend just one hour firing at Berlin " said Kutovoy, "I should be ready to die happy. . ."

"Just when it will be possible to begin living a real life!" said Akleyev in reply and the two friends sat silently wrapped in their thoughts.

The sunset glow soon faded and dark blue night spread over the sea; Kutovoy broke the silence by explaining to Akleyev an idea that had apparently been in his head for a long time.

"It's a pity," he began cautiously, "that nobody will know that we sank the German torpedo-boat. . ."

"We'll report it ourselves," laughed Akleyev.

"That's if we ever get back. And if we don't? If we. . ." Kutovoy did not want to say "if we die."

It must not be thought that Kutovoy thought of great glory and popularity. He was simply sorry that his Kostya would not hear of that great deed.

"We're not the first or the last," answered Akleyev. "The main thing is that we did sink it." He paused for a while and then added: "D'you remember the monument in the water near the Marine Boulevard?"

"The monument to the lost ships?"

"Yes, to the lost ships. Do you remember the names of those lost ships?"

"No, I don't," answered Kutovoy, then he corrected himself honestly: "I never even knew them."

"I don't remember them either," admitted Akleyev. "Every time I see that memorial my heart goes cold with excitement. I think that when this war is over they'll erect another monument in Sevastopol with the words: "To Lost Sailors of the Black Sea Fleet," in letters of gold, and if you and I and Vernivecher are fated to die then the glory that we have earned will be recorded in that memorial. And when the last fascist has been killed that again will be a glory that we share. I don't want anything else, I'm not proud."

"I'm not proud either," said Kutovoy pacifyingly.

"Still it was a fine job we did on that torpedo-boat!" came Vernivecher's weak voice from the cabin. "It does me good to think of it even now."

He had heard the whole conversation between Akleyev and Kutovoy and at first had wanted to say that he was not proud either but did not say so because he had no desire to lie. Akleyev's words had been some small comfort to him but he was not converted to the ideas expressed. Vernivecher had a passionate desire that the story of the fight with the torpedo-boat should be known to at least one person in whom he was interested. That person was Mussya.

4

For the third day the men on watch had had to sit. The last fragments of strength were leaving the sailors.

Kutovoy even tried to make a joke about it: "At first we stood on watch, now we sit on watch and very soon we'll be lying."

"So what?" exclaimed Akleyev. "If we have to we'll lie on watch. The chief thing is to keep a look out."

"Well, so far we can still sit," added Kutovoy a little more lively, but Akleyev did not hear him for he was already asleep.

This short and not very promising conversation took place about seven o'clock in the evening. At about half past eight Kutovoy heard the distant roar of cannon and the quite distinguishable rattle of machine-guns. At first he thought he was dreaming. During the past few days he had frequently imagined that he had heard shots, sirens and the distant sound of ship's bells. Each time, however, he had become convinced that it was all an illusion.

The cannonade became louder and closer, and when at last Kutovoy realized that his ears did not deceive him and that it was time to wake Akleyev, the latter himself awoke.

"Firing!" he whispered excitedly. "D'you hear it?"

"Uh-huh," answered Kutovoy, his whole body trembling. "A battle."

They stared intently to the west where the sounds of battle were coming from. The roar

of guns and the frequent bursts of machine-gun fire were interrupted by occasional heavy explosions.

"Bombs!" exclaimed Akleyev each time although Kutovoy was not in need of any such explanation. "They're bombing our ships."

"Will they sink them?" said Kutovoy.

"I don't think so. No, they won't sink them! Another bomb! May those Jerries. . ."

Within twenty minutes the firing ceased and against the fiery wall of the sunset glow three tiny, almost invisible dots appeared over the horizon and immediately disappeared in a northerly direction.

"The swine have run away!" said Akleyev.

"I wonder if they sank them," said Kutovoy excitedly.

"There would have been an explosion. . ." said Akleyev.

Neither he nor Kutovoy had heard an explosion. They continued watching in the direction where the fight had just ended and soon saw against the glowing sunset sky the black silhouette of a naval vessel that seemed to have been drawn in India ink on a red background.

"A mine-sweeper!" exclaimed Akleyev excitedly. "By God, a mine-sweeper!"

He dropped to the deck and began to fire the "Maxim" into the air. Kutovoy joined him with his light machine-gun. The "Maxim's" belt was fired off in four bursts, Kutovoy changed his drum several times and the whole deck was littered with hundreds of empty cartridge cases. In the evening silence that set in after the battle the vessel could not fail to hear that fierce machine-gun fire. No matter how keenly the friends listened, however, they could hear nothing that sounded like a reply, nothing that could be taken as a sign that the mine-sweeper was paying attention to a motor-boat in distress.

Akleyev and Kutovoy both realized that this mine-sweeper was their last hope of rescue, that it had entered these waters by chance and that there was no reason to hope that other vessels would appear in these waters during the next few days. If another vessel did happen to come this way it would be too late—they felt that their strength was giving out and they would not be able to keep watch much longer, not even lying down. Both of them realized this but neither wanted to say so aloud.

The sunset died away, the darkness of night covered the sky with a black blanket in which the mine-sweeper disappeared as though it had dissolved.

The firing roused to consciousness Vernivecher, who had long been lying flat on his back. He could not understand what had been the cause of the savage fire that his friends were putting up and he wanted to know, though not very anxiously, what it was all about. He no longer had strength enough to get up from his seat and go outside to find out what had happened, and did not want to ask questions. If there was anything good they would tell him, if it was bad—he had enough trouble without it.

He heard Akleyev come into the cabin, stand over him for a second or two and then return to the sternsheets of the boat. Vernivecher pretended to be asleep and heard Akleyev say to Kutovoy with some relief: "He's asleep."

"Well," muttered Akleyev, at last breaking the long silence, "I must fill the belt. You load your drums."

"He's strong!" Kutovoy thought; aloud he answered: "I'll fill them right away. That's a job we're used to."

"I'm taking over the watch," said Akleyev when Kutovoy had filled all his drums.

Kutovoy did not fall asleep immediately and Akleyev did not wake him till dawn.

CHAPTER 7

Captain Sukhovey Plays the "Arrival"

The fast mine-sweeper "Paravan" was returning home from a mission. It was late in the afternoon when a single German aircraft, flying almost out of sight, passed over the vessel. The crew of the vessel manned their guns to beat off an attack but the aircraft made no signs of attacking. It hung around for about ten minutes, apparently to make sure which course the boat was on and then flew off to the north. The single aircraft was a scout and bombers could be expected about an hour later.

Captain Sukhovey, commander of the mine-sweeper, decided to put further out to sea, westward of the course he had been following. His starboard engine had been put out of action the day before when he had fought fifteen dive-bombers. The Germans had left him when they had used up all their ammunition; two of the aircraft remained behind in the depths of the blue waters of the Black Sea.

Captain Sukhovey did not want to start another fight with only one engine running; he therefore ordered the helm hard a-starboard. The Germans anticipated that the Soviet commander would probably take evasive action and sent two flights of dive-bombers after him. One of them had to search for the mine-sweeper to the east of the course he had been following, the other to the west.

One hour eleven minutes after the reconnaissance plane had disappeared the "Paravan's" cannon and machine-guns were in action and the first German bomb had come whistling down.

This time the Germans were in a hurry: by the time they found the mine-sweeper it was already sunset. Meeting with the full force of all the "Paravan's" guns they wisely decided not to hang around too long, not to dive too low, but to get rid of their bombs in a number of runs; they circled over the vessel three times with all their armament blazing away and then flew away home to report on the fulfilment of the mission.

What was important was not what the Germans reported about the mine-sweeper, but the fact that one of the bombs had damaged the electric steering gear. The wheel-house and the wheel had gone the day before and at the worst it would have been possible to manage without a rudder, steering with the screws: the starboard engine, how-

ever, was badly damaged and completely out of the picture.

All the efforts of the crew were bent on putting the steering gear in order. Under normal conditions there would have been enough work for a day but out at sea there is not that amount of time to spare and the commander of Watch Number Five had promised to have the gear ready by dawn, working only during the few hours of a July night that is shorter than a sparrow's beak.

There is, therefore, nothing astonishing in the fact that when the bridge reported to the commander of the "Paravan" that long bursts of machine-gun fire had been heard in the distance he did not give that report the attention it deserved: he was up to his neck in trouble already. It is true he went up on deck for a moment and listened carefully and even tried to peer into the darkness of the night but he could neither see nor hear anything. The night was as silent as only a night can be far out at sea in a dead calm.

"Probably the Germans playing the fool as a farewell," was Sukhovey's conclusion. He returned to the part of the ship where Watch Number Five was deciding her fate.

The idea that it might be a Soviet vessel firing only entered Sukhovey's mind at a later hour when the repairs were finished and he was free to think of other things. He looked at the luminous figures on his watch and noted with vexation that it would not be long before it was light, cursed the short summer nights and ordered the lookout to be doubled as soon as dawn broke.

2

Some miles away from the commander of the "Paravan," the commander of another vessel, Seaman Nikifor Akleyev of the Red Navy, was, on the contrary, impatient at what he considered to be the long hours of darkness. It would be hard to describe his thoughts on that sleepless night. One thought never left him that they must not lose sight of the mine-sweeper, that is, if it had not already gone away, which was quite probable.

Akleyev was not at all convinced that he would ever actually see that vessel in this life or any other vessel for that matter. He was inclined to believe the contrary. He still had some hope, even if no very great one, that the vessel had heard the motor-boat's signal but had waited for dawn before beginning a search. Of course they could not search for them in the dark.

The dawn came and it was the motor-boat and not the mine-sweeper that now had a background of glowing sky and the lookouts found it long before the sun's rays gilded the fast, delicate lines of the sweeper.

"Off the starboard bow, harbour landing craft, bearing 135," reported the astonished lookout to the commander of the "Paravan" who had already been on the bridge for some time.

"A motor-boat?" said the equally astonished captain. "We're much too far out for a motor-boat. Check up again."

"It is a harbour landing craft, a limousine motor-boat, Comrade Captain," reported the lookout. "It is carrying our ensign and has two men in the sternsheets. It must have been they who fired last night."

Sukhovey swung over the engine-room telegraph to "Dead slow ahead."

"Do you see that black spot off the starboard bow? Steer straight for it!"

With only one engine breathing cautiously the mine-sweeper moved slowly towards the tiny black silhouette of the motor-boat. There was only a light smoke rising from the mine-sweeper's funnels but this was the first thing seen by the two watchful sailors on the motionless cockleshell.

"Fire!" screamed Akleyev in a voice that was not his own, and began to fire long bursts into the air from his "Maxim." Kutovoy stood alongside him and emptied two drums in four bursts.

"They are firing, Comrade Captain... two machine-guns! They are firing into the air!" reported the lookout excitedly. In a second the rattle of machine-gun fire reached the mine-sweeper.

"Signaller! Flags 'Signal received and understood' to the masthead," ordered Sukhovey and a red pennant with a white ball in the centre rose to the masthead informing the men on the motor-boat that their signal had been seen and its meaning understood.

3

Akleyev fired another burst and Kutovoy had loaded another two drums before they were finally convinced that the mine-sweeper was coming to their aid.

Everything was so real and nevertheless so much like a dream that at first they did not dare tell Vernivecher. The mine-sweeper drew nearer until they could distinguish the ensign flying aft and the red pennant with the white ball at the masthead.

"Signal received and understood!" exclaimed Akleyev in a choking voice seizing Kutovoy's hand and squeezing it hard. Actually he only thought he was squeezing it hard; in reality any ten-year-old boy could have squeezed it harder.

"How do you know?" asked Kutovoy innocently, for he had not the faintest idea of signal flags.

"D'you see that red pennant on the shrouds of the foremast? That means they heard us and understood what we wanted to tell them."

Try and guess what Akleyev meant by the "shrouds of the foremast"—Kutovoy supposed he must mean the ropes from which the little triangular red flag was flying. The thing that mattered was that he was now certain that the mine-sweeper was coming in their direction and he ran into the cabin and found Akleyev already bending over the weak and unconscious Vernivecher.

"Stepan, Styopa... Vernivecher!" cried Akleyev shaking him by the sound arm. "Get up, Styopa! Everything's all right now! There's a mine-sweeper coming for us, brother!"

Vernivecher did not open his eyes at once. He was afraid of showing his weakness,

he was afraid of crying, so weak had his nerves become. After waiting a good minute, when his friends were already getting scared, he slowly raised his wax-like, dried-out eyelids and saw the gaunt but happy faces of Akleyev and Kutovoy leaning over him and smiling in silence.

"There she is, Styopa!" whispered Akleyev as though he were afraid to disturb the solemn silence around them. "Here comes our mine-sweeper, we'll show it to you in a minute!"

He lifted Vernivecher so that he could see the approaching vessel through the porthole. The "Paravan" was already quite close, no more than two cables-lengths away.

Kutovoy, fumbling feverishly in the locker, pulled out the famous water bottle and glanced inquiringly at Akleyev. Akleyev nodded his head in approval and Kutovoy offered the bottle to Vernivecher.

"Drink it up, brother, drink it all up! There's no need to save it any more."

It was like a dream: there was no need to be sparing with the water.

Vernivecher drank all the water in the bottle. There was very little of it.

"Now you lie down again, Styopa, and we'll go out to meet the sweeper," said Akleyev tactfully to Vernivecher but the latter raised his hand in protest and in an unexpectedly strong and resonant voice said:

"I'm coming with you. . . I'm coming aft."

There was no time to quarrel with him, it would be useless and perhaps even unjust. Akleyev took him round the waist, lifted Vernivecher's sound arm round his own neck and led Vernivecher with faltering footsteps to the sternsheets. In the meantime Kutovoy was sweeping the hundreds of empty cartridge cases from the deck. Having brushed the deck clean Kutovoy for some reason or another began to shake out the folds in the flag which of course dropped back immediately he removed his hand as there was not even the suggestion of a breeze. Next he began to pull the sharp pieces of glass from the broken port, also for no known reason, cut his finger, smiled happily as though this were God knows what pleasure, sucked the wound and hurried to help Vernivecher walk along the gangplank to the stern of the boat.

The mine-sweeper was within fifty yards of the motor-boat when the three sailors reached the tiny after-deck. They stood side by side—on the right flank Akleyev with his right hand at the salute and his left firmly holding Vernivecher by the waist, the latter's legs giving way under him and his head spinning madly; on the left flank stood Kutovoy also with an arm round Vernivecher's waist and for safety's sake he had Vernivecher's sound arm around his neck. They stood to attention awaiting the oncoming mine-sweeper, their heads, as far as the weight of Vernivecher's body allowed, held at the height laid down in the regulations for the Red Navy. They were silent, their eyes had a solemn, even a stern look in them. Only a few minutes lay between them and the final rescue. A great joy filled their hearts, not just the ordinary and easily understandable joy of men who have been saved from mortal danger but a feeling of triumph such as only comes to real fighting men, to those who to their dying breath never surrender and for that reason are victorious.

From his bridge the commander of the "Paravan" saw on the after-deck of the tiny motor-boat three exhausted seamen, their gaunt faces overgrown with beards, standing to attention at a moment when they might have been excused the most undisciplined display of their feelings. He realized that these were men from Sevastopol and with the whole of his excitable nature he felt that they deserved something special and uncommon by way of greeting. As the bows of the two vessels drew level the captain placed his silver pipe to his lips and blew the "Arrival." Every officer and man on deck sprang to attention on hearing the signal, petty officers and men stood with their hands at the seams of their slacks, chief petty officers, midshipmen and officers standing at the salute. The "Arrival" is the tune played on the boatswain's pipe when an admiral is piped aboard—it was played now in honour of a tiny, battered, harbour landing craft with three seamen on board.

Two short blasts of the pipe sounded the "Stand at ease," two seamen on the sweeper seized the motor-boat with their boat-hooks and made it fast, and for the first time in five days the boat was again moving under mechanical power. Two other sailors jumped down into the boat, seized the unconscious Vernivecher whose friends were scarcely able to hold him in their weak arms, and handed him up gently to the orderlies who were already standing by with a stretcher.

"Weapons next!" said Akleyev and he and Kutovoy tried to lift the "Maxim" but this was a burden already far too great for them; the two sailors from the mine-sweeper handed up the "Maxim" and the light machine-gun and Akleyev took from its socket the flag under which the motor-boat had sailed and completed its voyage and with great difficulty, though without help, climbed aboard the "Paravan."

"Comrade Captain," he addressed himself to the commander who came down on deck from the bridge. He was choking from excitement, drew a deep breath filling his lungs with air: "Comrade Captain! Three seamen from 'X' Battalion of Marines arrived from Sevastopol and at your disposal—Akleyev Nikifor, Kutovoy Vassiliand Vernivecher Stepan. Vernivecher was seriously wounded in a battle with a German torpedo motor-boat. The torpedo-boat was sunk." He stopped for a breath and then added: "Nothing else of importance occurred..."

4

The ship's doctor dressed Vernivecher's wounds and fed all three as much as was permissable in view of the fact that they had been within an inch of death from hunger and thirst.

Vernivecher and Kutovoy fell asleep immediately, but Akleyev, supported by the arm of another sailor, came up on deck to see that the motor-boat was properly stowed.

The "Paravan" was scarcely moving. It was

still going on its course by inertia with the engines shut off. The men at the trawl winches aft were hawling the motor-boat on to the deck. The battered bows of the motor-boat appeared over the sweeper's gunwale. Akleyev first saw the boat appear. It seemed to him that the boat had just such a tormented expression as Vernivecher and Kutovoy, the wise and tired face of a man in glasses. The windscreen in front of the engine-room actually looked like a pair of spectacles.

A few minutes later the motor-boat was lying on the "Paravan's" after-deck. It lay careened over to port, a tiny, shallow-water craft that for six days had been "Ironclad Annie" and had only ceased to be a warship when its crew left it. The boat seemed to have lain down to rest and the drops of sea-water driping from its bottom were like drops of salt sweat from the brow of a hard-working sailor.

The "Paravan" was now moving full speed ahead, all her armament ready for action, the commander back on the bridge. From his post up there he saw Akleyev watching how the boat was stowed, saw him stagger and with difficulty reach the quarters aft where a fresh bed had been made for him.

"No," thought Sukhovey, happily, "with such men as these we cannot help but win!"

Akleyev dropped off to sleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. A thin, yellow hand hung down from the bunk. His arm hung loose like a whiplash until suddenly his fist clenched. Akleyev was dreaming that he was back at the 35th Battery at Sevastopol. It was no longer the Soviet sailors but the Germans who were forced back to the cliffs over the Black Sea. And he, Nikifor Akleyev of the Red Navy, sailor from the "Bystry" was using the butt of his rifle to drive the last German soldier, a man fighting back from sheer fright, over the edge of the cliff.

Translated by George Hanna

THE "GREAT HEART" OF GÖRING

"Hermann is such a good man! He has such a great heart... If Hermann had been the leader instead of Adolf, there would have been no war. Hermann is a lover of peace..."

From a speech by Göring's sister (Reuter)

Drawing by the Kukryniksy

SARATOV GAS

Saratov presented a rather odd appearance in the autumn of 1944. The weather was exceptionally fair for this time of the year, and the tiear blue sky, freshly whitewashed buildings and well-appointed thoroughfares gave the city a holiday atmosphere. And yet many of its streets were dug up and disfigured by narrow deep trenches with heaps of earth on their edges and an endless number of metal tubes fifteen metres in length. Such beautiful avenues as Nekrasov and Michurin streets, for example, were completely blocked and closed to traffic. Groups of workers were busily digging up the roads and welding the pipes.

Work went on by day and by night. At night it seemed as if lightning flashed continuously in the sky over Saratov and its environs.

To the south and west of Saratov the ground slopes upwards. The endless trench wound its way out of town, now rising uphill, now crawling down into the valleys. It stretched for forty-five km. from the villages of Yelshanka and Kurdyum, west of Saratov, to the cracking plant which lies at a distance of fifteen km. to the south. In many places the main trench branched out into smaller ducts leading towards plants, factories, mechanized bakeries, bathhouses, laundries and large apartment buildings.

The light blue crates on wheels of the welding machines were in evidence in the city streets, in the fields and gardens of the surrounding countryside. Scattered here and there along the trenches were oxygen containers. The fields were dotted with scores of large canvas tents, and in front of them were tables and benches installed right in the open air. These were the camps for the construction workers. Huge columns of trucks clattered over the ground bringing long metal tubes and depositing them alongside the trenches.

The city was one vast construction site!

This was a historic period, a turning point in the life of Saratov: industry, transport and public services would henceforth all be run on new fuel, on gas.

Tremendous deposits of gas have been discovered by geologists only fifteen km. from Saratov. According to approximate calculations, the deposits are estimated at tens of billions of cubic metres, which means enough fuel for scores of years allowing for maximum exploitation. These deposits are among the largest and most powerful in the world.

The gas found there is methane, marsh gas, whose chemical formula is CH_4.

For many centuries the people of Saratov went about their business completely unaware of the fact that inexhaustible sources of cheap fuel were within a stone's throw. Only once in the past did nature hint at the presence of this treasure. It happened eighty years ago. One night a peasant in the village of Yelshanka went into his cellar with a lantern in his hand. Suddenly there was an explosion in the cellar. The peasant was badly burned and the cellar destroyed. Ever since a legend has been current among the villagers that the cellar was haunted by a devil who had poured out his wrath upon the peasant. None of the contemporary men of science took enough interest in this incident to try and find the real explanation for it.

The presence of gas in the Saratov Region was first discovered in 1906, on the left bank of the Volga. Drilling an artesian well on a property owned by a merchant called Melnikov, the workers suddenly felt a "strong wind," blowing from under the ground. When one of the workers attempted to light a cigarette the gas ignited, and a pillar of fire rose high over the farm buildings. The gas burned without any smoke or soot (indeed it is colourless and odourless, only a very strong blast assuming a pale blue tint). The fire was extinguished with great difficulty, the well was closed, and the merchant's son took samples of the gas to Riga for chemical analysis. In this way it was established that the Saratov area had deposits of methane, a gas with a high caloric content. The enterprising merchant immediately built a glass works on his land and ran it for some time on this fuel for which no one demanded any pay.

The presence of gas indicated the presence of oil in the same area, and, indeed, liquid oil was found there in 1913. At the same time bituminous lime-stone also was discovered on the right bank of the Volga, at a distance of fifty km. from Saratov. Until 1917, however, with the exception of the glass works on the Melnikov estate, no steps were taken towards prospecting—still less drilling—for gas. It was only after the Revolution that geological prospecting was begun on a serious scientific basis. Incidentally, while exploring the well on the Melnikov land, geologists discovered that besides cheap methane, it also yielded valuable helium.

In 1932 prospecting was begun near Saratov under the guidance of the geologist Professor Makarovsky. In 1935, Kotova, a young woman-geologist, found traces of oil in the local lime-stone and soon after found also bromine and potassium in the Salt Ditch springs.

In 1940 oil too was found in the same area. Finally, geologists pointed out a number of places quite near the town of Saratov where in their opinion oil was likely to be found. In 1941 preliminary drilling was begun in the fields around the village of Yelshanka, and in September of that year a "gusher" of gas spouted from the well.

The outbreak of war prevented the immediate exploitation of the gas. The well was put into conservation and geological prospecting almost ceased. The enemy offensive had reached the interior of our country, and the Red Army, fighting every inch of the way, was falling back on the Volga.

At the end of August, 1942, the first shots rang out at the fortifications of Stalingrad. Saratov became the immediate rear of the fighting front and the whole of its industry was mobilized for the needs of the front. Trains bearing troops and supplies steamed incessantly to the front over the railways leading through Saratov. The Volga was covered with steamers and barges bringing war supplies for Stalingrad. German night-bombers were attacking the plants and factories of Saratov.

Stalingrad fought to the death in the battle against the hated foe, but Saratov, too, deserves the title of a soldier of the labour front, working the clock round to provide the army with the greatest amount of supplies. The front demanded airplanes, tanks, bread. And just when the situation had reached its most critical point, Saratov discovered that its fuel was giving out. The Saratov power stations run originally on Donbas coal, were subsequently transferred to the use of Karaganda coal, while some plants were kept going on oil and wood. The fighting at Stalingrad cut off Saratov from the supply of coal, oil and wood. The railways worked exclusively for the front, and the Volga was cut off at Stalingrad. Saratov plants and factories were gradually reducing their output, and some of them soon came to a complete standstill.

And in the critical hour Saratov remembered the Yelshanka gusher.

On September 5th, 1942, the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. decided upon the immediate construction of a gas pipeline from Yelshanka to Saratov to provide fuel for the Saratov power station.

Work proceeded at a real wartime tempo. The date set for completion of this pipeline was November 1st of the same year! In other words, this arduous labour was to be accomplished in little more than six weeks.

In the meantime, the battle of Stalingrad was burning with an ever fiercer flame. An endless stream of troops poured through Saratov to the Volga area to strike at the enemy at Stalingrad. Saratov, too, was making feverish preparations for resistance, for battle... Recruits and people's guard volunteers were trained on its squares; anti-tank pits and trenches were dug on the outskirts of the town, fire nests were made. And in the midst of these preparations the construction of the gas pipeline had to be commenced. It was a question of life and death: either gas would be supplied to the Saratov power station, or the city's industry would collapse and the city itself would be frozen up.

It would seem that the builders were caught completely unawares: they had neither equipment, materials, transport, nor an adequate number of skilled workers; there were no tubes for the gas pipeline. No more than seventeen km. of pipes, a mere trifle in peacetime, were required. But where were they to come from in what was practically a frontline zone? It was impossible to obtain them from the interior, for all the roads were occupied by the troops. The builders would have to find the pipes and make all the parts necessary for the gas pipeline (flanges, covers, castings etc.) on the spot. The situation was exceptionally difficult...

It was decided to get the tubes by dismantling oil, gasoline and kerosine pipelines at the local plants.

The engineers of the People's Commissariat of Construction were there day and night personally supervising the construction. Every assembly man, welder, fitter, bricklayer and carpenter did the work of two and even three, hitting their targets at two and three hundred percent.

The assembly men had the hardest job of all. Most of the pipelines in the plants were deep underground. They had to be dug up, cut into sections with acetylene apparatus and brought to the surface. These pipes had been utilized for gasoline or kerosene, which still lingered in them. Sparks during cutting might cause explosions. Engineers Sviridov and Romanov found a way out: a small hole was drilled at the place of incision; through it, clay was packed into the pipe to the right and left of the hole to shut off the gasoline fumes. After this the workers could safely go on with the cutting. In the course of the work, the engineers, technicians and workers made many apt suggestions which accelerated and facilitated operations. Most of the assembly men had to work on the premises of plants under constant enemy bombardment.

It was very arduous labour. Thousands of local factory and office workers, high-school and college students, Red Army men and officers turned out on Saturdays and Sundays to help dig the trenches. All the people of Saratov came to the aid of the builders, working with unprecedented zeal, against tremendous odds. The work was especially difficult within the city limits where the workers constantly came upon water mains, drainage pipes, telegraph and telephone cables and streetcar tracks. The railway track too was a great obstacle, for it was necessary to work so as not to interrupt train movements (so important for Stalingrad in those days) for a single hour.

Rain and cold added to the difficulties. Swollen subterranean streams flooded the trench and the workers sometimes had to work waist-deep in water and mud... This was a truly heroic effort!..

But the builders triumphed and on October 28th, the last pipes were laid in the trench. On October 29th, tests were made, gas flowed to the boiler-room of the Saratov power station, and on October 30th one of its boilers was already converted to the use of local methane.

A few days later, a second boiler, and then a third were likewise converted to the use of gas. As if touched with a magic wand, Saratov's industry began to come back to life. The supply of planes, tanks and ammunition to the front was doubled and trebled. But the city still had a shortage of electricity. In November, after the first section of the pipeline had been completed, an order was received

to lay another pipeline to provide gas as quickly as possible for the Saratov heat and power station.

This was perhaps an even more difficult task than the first.

Winter had already set in. The cold was unusually severe. The frozen soil had to be warmed before it could be tackled with pick and spade. Bonfires burned in the streets throughout the five and half km. stretch of the new line. The welders were faced with overwhelming odds. They worked without any shelters or even outdoor stoves. The wind and snow blinded them... The oxygen and acetylene froze. And one of the main difficulties was again the lack of pipes which now had to be obtained from neighbouring towns and villages.

And this task too was accomplished in due time.

It became quite clear that gas could be made the principal source of power for the whole of Saratov and its industry.

New wells were drilled throughout 1943. Experienced drillers and superintendents were summoned from Baku and Grozny. One after another new sources of gas were made available. It was precisely during the war that a job was accomplished in so short a time which would have demanded several years in normal conditions. The work gained further scope in 1944 and the number of wells was brought up to thirty-three.

...In the autumn of 1944 we toured all along the line from the cracking plant to Kurdyum. The forty-five km. trench was nearly completed. The builders were working at top speed in an effort to complete the digging and laying of the pipes before the frosts set in.

Here and there I saw an excavator, but most of the digging was done by spade. Thousands of workers were distributed in small squads all along the line, in the fields and gardens, in the city streets and suburbs.

From Saratov we drove on to Yelshanka. Its fields and gardens are scattered along the slopes of low hills. The village itself is situated in the valley on the banks of the little river Yelshanka. It was an ordinary pastoral landscape, and it seemed strange to see derricks and the new buildings with tall smoke-stacks amid these fields and gardens. From the very beginning of its existence Yelshanka has supplied vegetables, berries and grain to Saratov. Now it has become the supplier of inexhaustible power. The local collective farmers have gone to work in the gas fields.

Our car stopped in front of a new big two-storey building. The interesting thing about it was that it was the first building to use gas for light and heating. Suspended from the ceiling in every room was a three-jet gas-bracket. All the stoves in the house were heated with gas. I paused before one of the fire-places. The gas was roaring fiercely, so great was the pressure. The flames swept the whole of the two-metre length of the stove, and the strong heat spread evenly throughout the room... The stoker, a former Yelshanka collective farmer, laughed when he said:

"And we used straw and dung for heating in the past. You'd bring in five huge bundles of straw and get hardly any heat from it..."

In the valley right on the bank of the little river I saw three big sheds of the most primitive construction with two chimneys like factory smoke-stacks towering over them. This was Well No. 12. No smoke came from the stacks, they seemed lifeless. Stretching from the central cabin was a powerful gas pipeline. A small distance away from the sheds a small device—a dripping pan—was attached to the pipeline; at this point a small pipe branched off from it; its other end lowered into a metal container. A milky liquid was emitted in spasmodic jets from the pipe. After the precipitates settled the liquid became transparent.

Our driver took a bucket and went over to the container.

"I might as well refuel the car," he said with a smile.

"Why? Is this gasoline?" I asked.

And that is just what it was. The liquid pouring into the tank was water and gasoline. After the water, the heavier of the two liquids, had settled on the bottom, the gasoline floated to the top. Through the transparent layer of gasoline I could see the golden surface of the water. The water was released through a pipe attached to the bottom of the container, while the gasoline ran into a tank nearby. The purest gasoline I ever saw, even purer than aviation gasoline! Poured onto the palm it evaporates in a second. It is almost like a miracle: gasoline of the very best quality pouring straight from the ground.

One of my companions, the chief engineer of the geological prospecting organization, explained this miracle. Forcing its way from under the ground, methane carries along the vapours of water and gasoline. Before the gas enters the pipeline it is dried in special separators which absorb the moisture. In the separators and in the pipeline itself the fumes are gradually transformed into a liquid which is released through drippers.

Originally the liquid was allowed to run back into the soil, because the builders believed it to be only ordinary water. They soon noticed, however, that the "water" smelled of gasoline. Cigarette lighters filled with this "water" functioned splendidly. Bottles of it were sent to a laboratory in Saratov and an analysis made. At first the chemists doubted: had not the bottles formerly contained good gasoline? They went to the well to make tests on the spot, and found pure gasoline coming straight out of the soil. Thus, they discovered a marvellous natural laboratory supplying this valuable product.

Dripping pans installed at intervals of half a kilometre all along the pipeline absorb the moisture and conduct the gasoline.

We entered the central shed built right over the mouth of the well. The gas forces its way from under the ground at a pressure of fifty-four atmospheres and enters a massive pipe lying on the ground. From this pipe it enters two vertical pipes each about three metres high, from which it flows through a smaller pipe into the gas pipeline. This separator is used to free the gas from moisture and lower its pressure to twelve atmospheres. The pipe leading from the separator was covered with

a thick layer of ice although all shutters were ajar and it was warm outside. The ice is formed as the pressure is lowered from fifty-four to twelve atmospheres. Under a pressure of twelve atmospheres the gas is conducted to Saratov.

To facilitate drying the gas is heated in the pipe. A little way from the main shed I saw a furnace with three funnels. The gas taken from this well heats a pile of brick in the furnace to a temperature of up to 1,300°; the hot air from the furnace enters a wide pipe in which the gas pipe is enclosed.

The lifeless stacks rising over the sheds are effectively serving their purpose by creating a strong draught in the furnace.

From Well No. 12 we turned towards Well No. 24, one of the most powerful in the Yelshanka District. The work on this well was completed on September 9th when a powerful fountain of gas, yielding more than two and a half million cubic metres in twenty-four hours, shot up from a depth of eight hundred and sixty metres impelled by a pressure of eighty-four atmospheres. The drills no sooner penetrated the last thick layer when the gas began to press upwards with extraordinary force. It blew the drilling installation out of the well and fragments of the pipes and a cloud of mud and stone were sent flying into the air. A pale blue fountain rose to a height of sixty metres with a terrific roar which could be heard six kilometres away. Speaking near the derrick was impossible, for every sound was drowned by the roaring of the gas. The drillers were obliged to stuff cotton into their ears. This monstrous force has now been tamed and the gas confined to sturdy pipes.

Scattered all over the ground are piles of earth, stones, colourful clays and sand. The American drill "Franks," with the aid of which the well was bored in the comparatively short time of five months, was still over the well when we were there.

It is expected that in addition to gas, this well will also yield pure gasoline in far larger quantities than Well No. 12.

"We had a comparatively easy time drilling this well," one of the workers told us. "The first ones were far more difficult. With the gas of one well we fought for forty days before we forced it into the pipes. Especially difficult was work on Well No. 15. . ."

I had heard about this well from the superintendent of the Yelshanka prospecting party.

The gas burst upwards with such terrific might that the drills and pipes were sent flying into the air and dropped with a frightful crash around the well. The gas forced its way out with a deafening roar. Stones burst out of the well hit the derrick with a force that sent sparks flying through the air. To weaken the pressure, the drillers began to pump a lime solution into the well through a side well, and a crust formed round its mouth. The gas then fanned out in various directions, and at a distance of twenty metres around the well fountains of water and mud forced their way up through the ground. Numerous craters, some about seven metres deep, were formed. It was like scores of geysers throwing up water into the air, so great was the pressure of the gas. All this happened in winter, with the Mercury far below zero. Drops of water froze in the air and fell to the ground in a shower of hail. An icy mound formed around the well, which was soon hidden in a grotto of ice from which the gas popped like cannon balls...

Workers and engineers were mobilized for the struggle against the raging element: a short distance from the well the workers dug a huge pit in which they prepared a mixture of sand, stone and cement. This was used for filling the holes in the ground through which the gas had forced its way to the surface. When a solid roof had been formed, the workers closed the main well too. The gas was tamed. It still had to be imprisoned in pipes, an extremely difficult and dangerous job. It meant lowering the pipes to a depth of two hundred and ninety metres until they struck solid limestone and pumping cement into them to close the side fissures of the main well. A special ladle was designed for pouring the cement to any depth in the well. But when an attempt was made to lower the fountain fixtures and ladle into the well, the gas hurled them aside with terrific force. The operators and mechanics spent forty-eight hours in an effort to subdue the gas and adjust the fixtures. Finally they succeeded in covering the well. The gas again fanned out in all directions knocking the bystanders off their feet, blinding, suffocating them and forcing them to keep at a respectful distance. With great difficulty they finally succeeded in lowering the pipes into the well, pumping in the cement and closing the side fissures, and the gas was subdued and imprisoned in the pipes. It had taken nearly four months to accomplish.

This is a striking illustration of the difficulties facing geological prospecting parties and drillers in the new gas fields; each experiment, success, failure has been thoroughly studied and taken into account during subsequent drilling, and wells are now opened with comparative ease. Well No. 32, opened on October 5th, 1944, was "conquered" in four days. The gas fountain, which came at the rate of two and a half million cubic metres a day, was forced upwards by a pressure of eighty-five atmospheres. Before it had ejected the clay solution by means of which the drilling is done, the drillers closed the lid, and gradually releasing the clay solution, easily brought the gas within control.

... We drove on from well to well. A huge stack came into view towering about two metres above a vast field. The lid over the well was snapped, a faucet inserted on one side. Scattered around the pipe were heaps of purplish and grey clay and sand. This was Well No. 1, the first of the Yelshanka and Kurdyum wells.

Well No. 1 is idle for the time being. It has a daily capacity of more than one million cubic metres of dry gas forced up by a pressure of fifty-four atmospheres from a depth of five hundred and twenty metres. This million is being kept in reserve. Altogether of the nine wells opened since the autumn of 1944, only the two smallest are in use. Their yield has been sufficient to satisfy all the demands of Saratov industry. The

remaining seven are awaiting their turn. Wells No. 24 and No. 32 alone are capable of yielding over five million cubic metres of methane daily.

It is really astonishing how generous the soil of the Saratov Region is! Gas, gasoline, salt—and this is by no means all. In a rush-grown river valley near Kurdyum we stopped near the derrick towering over Well No. 2.

"Congratulations!" said the superintendent to my companion, the engineer, after greetings had been exchanged. "The output of oil is increasing hourly."

This was the first well in Saratov Region to yield pure, light oil.

Oil just as excellent is being obtained from Well No. 4 right in the city of Saratov.

The conjecture of the geologists that the Saratov Region was rich in oil has been brilliantly confirmed. Oil has been found in four places at a considerable distance from one another. The next task facing the geological prospectors is to find local big-scale oil deposits. The scope of prospecting has been considerably extended and new wells are being constantly drilled throughout the Saratov Region.

Thus, we have gas, salt, oil and every day brings new natural wealth to light in this region.

On our way back from Kurdyum we again passed the Yelshanka fields, and stopped beside Well No. 6. This well yields neither gas, nor oil, but water. Water comes from the pipe in a powerful gusher yielding more than a million litres a day. And what splendid water! An analysis made by the chief chemist of the geological prospecting trust has shown that this water contains properties similar to the Yessentuki spa. People suffering from digestive and intestinal disorders go there to drink the water straight from the well. It is perfectly transparent and has a pleasant taste.

Two powerful mineral springs have been discovered in the Saratov area, one of them right in the city. The water contains fifteen percent of ordinary salt, bromine, potassium, iodine and boron. Every cubic metre of water yields seventy kg. of salt. Every litre contains three hundred mgm of bromine and thirty mgm of iodine. These two wells have a tremendous capacity, one of them yielding several million litres a day. It is like an underground river forced to the surface at a pressure of thirty atmospheres. Given free rein the water would shoot into the air in a fountain about forty metres high. There will be no need to go to Pyatigorsk, Yessentuki and Matsesta for rheumatic, heart and nervous disorders. The miraculous spas are available at Mt. Sokol near Saratov and in the city itself. The People's Commissariat of Health of the U.S.S.R. is building a large health centre near the well.

Such in brief are the generous gifts of the Saratov soil.

... On the way back to Saratov we drove past large new factory blocks built on both sides of the highway during the Great Patriotic War. These enterprises, my companion revealed, are now working at full capacity with gas as the chief source of power. We met numerous trucks driving in the opposite direction. My companion pointed to the various cars: "This one is run on gas, and this one, too."

There were quite a number of such cars using cheap gas instead of expensive gasoline. Filling stations in various parts of Saratov supply compressed gas to the cars... Of interest is the fact that cars run on gas are able to cover without repairs three times the distance traversed by cars run on gasoline.

Locomotives at Saratov Station and local passenger steamers are also run on gas.

In general, gas is rapidly becoming part and parcel of life in Saratov. By the autumn of 1944, two hundred and fifty state, municipal, public and cooperative enterprises had been converted to the use of gas. The volume of fuels shipped by rail and water is declining with every passing month.

Gas opens up brilliant prospects for the Saratov Region. Its inexhaustible deposits afford excellent possibilities for industrial development. Apart from its use as fuel, gas may also be used for manufacturing purposes. As an organic product, methane may be used for the production of galoshes, buttons and thousands of other commodities, including valuable medicines. A glass factory planned for the region will be the largest in the country.

On Marshal Stalin's suggestion, the Soviet Government adopted a decision in December, 1944, to bring Saratov gas to Moscow. The term set for the construction of the Saratov-Moscow pipeline is one year. It will cover seven hundred and eighty-three km. through the Saratov, Tambov, Ryazan and Moscow Regions, across ninety rivers, five lakes and many roads.

Six compressor stations are being built to pump the gas. Preparations for this construction were begun immediately after the adoption of the Government decision. During the winter timber has been felled along the site, materials carried and living quarters built for the workers.

The digging of trenches and laying of pipes began in the spring as soon as the snow melted. Thousands of collective farmers turned out to help in the construction. Midsummer of 1945 finds work in full swing all along the vast construction site from Saratov to Moscow.

This pipeline may truly be called a country-wide effort. Members of the Academy of Sciences, prominent scientists and engineers have cooperated in the realization of this project. The best plants in the country are producing pipes and equipment. Work is conducted at what may be called a wartime tempo.

From next December Moscow will receive a daily volume of one million seven hundred and fifty thousand cubic metres of gas with a high caloricity for use in industry and apartment buildings.

This, of course, is merely a fraction of the wealth contained in the soil of Saratov Region.

Plans are afoot to provide gas for Stalingrad and a number of other cities in the Volga area.

ALEXANDER YAKOVLEV

BULGARIAN TRAVEL NOTES

It is a three hours' train journey from Sofia to Plovdiv, but it took us till evening to get there. Not that the line was out of order, as you might think, or that there was something wrong with the engine. Everything was all right. Yet we were delayed at big stations and pulled up at small stations because the people were rearranging our itinerary. They wanted to see the delegates to the Slav Congress, to greet them and talk to them. Wherever troops were stationed, a guard of honour was drawn upon the platform. Everywhere there were bands playing and big posters on the walls and hoardings, and though these posters were all different they spoke of the one thing—Slav unity.

Flushed with the excitement and importance of the occasion, girls in national garb brought us presents of flowers, apples, wine, cakes—in short, showed us the hospitality of their country.

Boys in school uniforms sang songs. The bands played the anthem of the Soviet Union and "Šumi, Marica okrvavena" ("Waves of Maritsa, red with blood"). The sunshine was warm as in summer and in the light breeze the flags flickered gaily.

This was not the excitement of southerners avid for shows and sights. It was the joy of grave people, who were living life anew these days. They had so much to say in these brief meetings, they spoke from the heart. Some wept, some laughed for joy. Old and young pressed forward to our train.

It was the same all over Bulgaria, from day to day. The train was met no matter how late in the evening or night it arrived. Rain and sleet, a wet snow and a wind blowing from the mountains made it very cold. But the people waited for hours. We were intending to pass through some of the smaller stations without stopping but we got wires saying: "If you don't stop we'll stop you, we'll lie down on the rails."

Alighting from the train here, you feel you have plunged into a spring flood which is about to sweep you down through the valley. You experience a sense of well-being and youth, and you want to do something for these people with the eager young eyes and open-hearted ways.

At one station I suddenly found myself clasped in the embrace of an elderly woman with a broad peasant face and high cheekbones. The hair that escaped from under her black shawl was grey. She embraced me with maternal affection and spoke some words that I understood:

"How long, ah, how long I've been waiting for you!.." Tears came into her voice for a moment, her emotion was too much for her. "We've been waiting so long for you, but we knew you'd come, and you came. Two sons of mine were killed, they were partisans. The third is in the place you're going to—he's the mayor. Tell him you saw me, give him my love, he will welcome you like a brother."

I did not doubt the sincerity of this elderly Bulgarian woman, nor the fact that her son had become the mayor of a town and would give me a brotherly welcome. Her big brow was furrowed and lined, tears stood in her eyes and she did not hide them. I was reminded of the mothers of our partisans. She looked very like them. They are all sisters.

... At Chirpan a tall vigorous woman shook hands heartily with me. The crowd around was so noisy that I could not hear what she said at first. Then, in a lull, I heard her say, as one might say to an old friend:

"Where are the books? When will the books come?"

"Which books?" I asked.

"Russian books," she said, raising her voice in order to be heard above the noise. "I'm teaching in the school here. I'm the teacher of Russian. We have no new books, no Soviet books. Send us some as soon as you can, that is my special request to you. We haven't seen Soviet books for so long. Write down my name—Lydia Popova, Chirpan—spelled with an "i," not an "e."

A priest was travelling with us, a quiet unassuming man who looked worried and sometimes disappeared for a while. But he went everywhere with us.

"You are surprised, perhaps, that I go everywhere with you?" he said. "But this is my district. I am the representative here of the Patriotic Front. I am a commissar and a member of the agricultural party."

... In the square of a small town a little girl recited a long poem. She had heard I was a poet, so she kept glancing towards me while she recited. The poem was very long, even longer than most long poems, and there was as many names in it as lines. But she recited it with such fervour and exaltation, she was so carried away by it, that there was nothing we could do but kiss her. Everybody hugged her. The author, a local man, was radiant. He may have been waiting all his life for this day. He had done his part. He was right. This was the day that verses should be read.

Ah, those springtime Bulgarian towns with their empty houses from which all the people had poured into the street. Where did all these flowers come from? The main street of Plovdiv was a flowery path. The bustle of the crowd reminded one of the roar of a young mountain torrent. I was glad of the bunch of flowers into which I could plunge my face and hide the tears that rose unbidden to my eyes. I observed that all my fellow travellers were intent on smelling their flowers too.

You would be mistaken if you thought this a town where life was easy and the people carefree and naive. It was a town of partisans, of workers who carried on the secret struggle.

This town saw the struggle, heard machine-gun-fire in its streets, its little houses, and its outskirts, and there was crossfire with the gendarmes. It was here that Liliana Dimitrova was killed; it was from here that those sixty daring boys and girls came who were in the detachment called in honour of Anton Ivanov. Their names are known to everyone. Their portraits are reproduced on a poster that forms the letters A. I. They laid down their lives for the happiness of their people.

This is the town of tobacco-workers.

Here in the shops stand the machines, intricate and adroit, that gum the paper for the cigarettes, fill them with tobacco, and turn them out four at a time. The machines are marked "Dresden." Pointing to one of them a worker says: "The German could invent a sensible machine like this but he hadn't the sense to be a man," and spits contemptuously.

You cannot leave this place without seeing the shop where the young people work. The girls here are neat, quick, adept and silent. They are the pick of the young people, the cream of Plovdiv's youth.

This town is Sofia's rival. The streets are broad and there is plenty of green everywhere. The houses are new.

Beyond it lies a tiny place called Kazanlyk where the upper storey of the houses juts out over the lower like a balcony. These houses remember the war of liberation and the first People's Guard. This is the place for attar of roses and army men. A large city need not be ashamed of an army club like the one in this little place. The flame of the spring sunset glows over the quiet little streets and the Balkans are grey in the distance.

Stara Zagora with its rose-tinted horizons surrounding the town. The wide, clear square is flooded with people as though it were a huge stone basin. The local people carry portraits of Stalin, of gigantic proportions, to the meeting.

... Amazingly beautiful is the bend of the evening river, Yantra, and the stretch from which the view of Tyrnov opens. This is the ancient capital of which the Czech writer Irasek said that there was nothing like it in all Europe. From the high bank over the cold waves of the blue river that flows far below, you look out over meadows, woods, rocks, and ruins reminiscent of the Crusades. Once the Crusaders who thought to capture Bulgaria on the road to far Jerusalem held this tower.

The fascists intended to make the town a fascist preserve, the bulwark of reaction. But those who bore the sign of the swastika had no more success than their predecessors, the robbers of the Middle Ages.

Gabrovo is a workers' hive. It has nine knitting-mills, and fourteen tanneries. It is a town of strikes and secret underground workers. It rose when it heard that the miners of Pernik had started a strike on September 6th. On September 8th, the partisan army swept down from the mountains and started a violent fight with the police. By morning it was all over: the workers' town had won a final victory.

We came to Pleven, at the sight of which you visualize the longest battle in the Russo-Turkish war. Young people are strolling on the heights where the old guns stand as they did in Skobelev's time. The young people are going to the soldiers' burial-ground, where from childhood the names of Russian dead have been familiar to them and they have revered their liberators. Here we are at Gortalov Redoubt and below lies the new Plevna flourishing and friendly—its wars long since forgotten.

Thus did Bulgaria unfold before us, and we felt the beating of her people's heart. To come to a country which welcomes you and is in itself a good country adds a great joy to life. But to come to a brother country, where everything breathes the emotional response and fervour of that first meeting, where everything is filled with the desire to make life over anew, to go forward freely to that future for which generations have fought—and to arrive in that country the day after the people's victory—is happiness indeed. This happiness was ours in the spring-time valleys of Isker, Vita, Yantra and Struma.

... The man who was with us was known all over Bulgaria. Whenever he emerged from the train and said a few cordial words in that husky voice that carried so far, something unimaginable happened. Before you knew where you were he was being carried on the shoulders of the people, although he attempted to keep them off and carry on with his speech, for which they were ready to toss him in the air again.

He wore a general's coat and a cap with a shining cockade. His gait and movements were those of an athlete and his hands were large and powerful. No one could tell that he was sixty and has seventeen years of prison and penal labour at his back.

When the swift and noisy day had passed and he lay down on the narrow couch in the sleeping-car, he could not sleep. Rocky cliffs glimmered in the dark windows and a large busy colourful life passed swift as a train before his mind's eye.

He is a minister without portfolio, and he is called "Your Excellency." The people called him Bai Dobri, or simply Dad. When he was very small he was given to a shepherd to herd the cattle in return for a kilogram of wool and a lamb. He roved the meadows and breathed the mountain freshness. He became a socialist and the ministers in Sofia thought him better out of the way. He had become the secretary of a party group by that time. It was an interesting time. Then the first Balkan war broke out and he incited the soldiers not to fight. The officers wanted to kill him but the soldiers gave them no chance.

Then followed prisons—something like the rocks that towered one above the other over the road. There were so many that he had lost count of them. But the ex-shepherd seemed to have nine lives, a hide like a bull's and a heart of iron. No matter how much he was tortured, it was impossible to get a word out of him. He spent two years in chains with the spectre of the gallows before his window. But he thought to himself hat those who were so anxious to get rid of him would die first.

And they did. He was still alive and was likely to be for a long while yet. This was just the time to live. He had spent seven hundred days in a cell with bare walls, a cold floor, a cell as narrow as a coffin. Seven hundred days of life in utter darkness. But you could think over a great deal in that time, and think of the main thing. A hundred and thirty-five days of hunger-strike. The figures are interesting. And they add up to seventeen years of prison. Yet nights came when you

went through the streets and breathed deeply, and all Sofia was wrapped in slumber, except for an occasional sigh. What dreams were there those nights?

Mountain gorges were good when you sat by the campfire knowing that you had your own people, the partisans, around you. And the gloomy years fell away as though they had never been, and as though there was only tomorrow, which had still to be won. Win it, my brothers! We shall show them yet that we are young. The staff of the partisan movement was in Sofia. The Gestapo was working hand-in-glove with the local heads of the police. The jackal and the hyena understood each other. Sofia was burning, and bombs fell in the streets. Through the din, the fire, smoke and clatter the population left the city. He could not go, but the staff had to be transferred somewhere.

It was transferred to Plovdiv. The day before he had met in Sofia a wonderful woman. She was good and loyal and fearless. She looked well, too, just as he did. Who could tell now that once she had been tortured, her hands had had benzine poured over them and were set alight, that she had been rotting in prison for an age of a time. Her name was Tsola Dragoicheva. She is the secretary of the Patriotic Front. In Plovdiv, in the days when Liliana and Sasho were killed, this woman said good-bye to him—he was leaving for Sofia—and with her usual quiet smile added:

"Well, I wonder if we'll ever meet again..."

The train was slowing down, there must be another station soon and the people would be awaiting us there. He would go out and say something warm and sincere. They were good people and had suffered much in their time. Now they want to live like other folks, and not like meek orphans who have always been beaten.

He would come out now to the people, Lieutenant-General Dobri Terpeshev. Yes, he was a general by right. He was in command of the Bulgarian insurrectionist movement. An army of a hundred thousand had fought against him. The date of the insurrection had then been close at hand. He would never forget that day.

It looked as though it were beginning to rain as it had then, but then it had been an autumn downpour, not spring rain. The roofs let in the wet like a sieve. Everything was wet. It had been unpleasant to put your feet down on the floor. When the messengers came they found him sitting on the dilapidated couch. He had put his arm around their shoulders as though they were dear friends—no, younger brothers.

"You must fly like swallows, my children, you to the South, and you to the North of Bulgaria. And spread the news of the insurrection. This is an historic hour and your task is historic too."

It all turned out as he had planned: the partisan detachments had rushed down like mountain streams through the valley. Telegraph poles were felled and wires hung broken. The gentlemen from Sofia would learn nothing now. There was a strike in Pernik and another in Plovdiv and another in Sofia. The railways were not working. Everything was held up, everything was dead. Only the torrent of the people's insurrection swept irresistibly onward. And here was Sofia. And the War Office.

The train pulled up. We were in the midst of bustle. A band was playing. That was enough of reminiscences for one day.

He went out briskly, as though he were fresh after a good sleep. And called out:

"Long live the fine free Bulgarian people!"

The people responded like an echo:

"Long live our Bai Dobri!"

The moon shone over the scene and everything was as clear as in daylight. Wonderful night and wonderful too, everything that happened!

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

THE MAKING OF AN EXECUTIONER

There is a great alley leading to one of Berlin's large thoroughfares. It was in a house on this side-street, used for preliminary detention of Gestapo agents, that I first set my eyes on Rolph Niessen. There was nothing about this rather thickset young man, with his straw-coloured hair combed back, to distinguish him from the rest of the executioners and sleuths awaiting in this house their turn to be sent to prison. And what would he not give now to become the most obscure of them!

Nevertheless, there are some features in his biography which make him quite outstanding. Before going into them, I shall review the biography of Rolph Niessen in general outlines. It may perhaps give us an idea of some of the details of the machine that was Hitler's Third Reich.

Rolph Niessen's father was a lawyer, moreover—a respectable lawyer. He was a German of the old type. He was accurate in his business dealings, was narrow-minded, loved order, beer and sentimental reminiscences about his student years at Heidelberg. Rolph's mother brought into the family, in addition to her bridal trousseau, a small cottage in a Berlin suburb with a wealth of linen, porcelain, bric-a-brac, rugs and hangings adorned with instructive adages about the aims and conventions of a respectable home. In short—a typical home of a typical German family.

It was into this family that Rolph was born. According to the testimony of his surviving relations, he was not a bad boy; he even showed some abilities and was somewhat dreamy. His mother and father adored him; he was their only son! Of course, there was nothing out of the ordinary in the family, but it may be assumed that the boy was sur-

rounded with that romanticism of a home and friendly family which for long and sometimes for ever remain in man's memory.

Rolph wanted to become an artist. His father took him to an art school, and on Saturdays, drinking beer with his friends, he displayed, not without pride, the drawings of the future Raphael.

Fate, however, had a different future in store for the German Raphael.

Rolph was nine years old when Hitler came to power. Soon thereafter he was drawn into the conveyer of hitlerite education.

Pursuant to the law by which all boys and girls who reached the age of ten had to join the Hitlerite Youth, he was enrolled into one of its organizations. Thenceforth he no longer belonged to his family; he belonged to the Hitlerjugend.

The essence of education in the Hitlerjugend consisted primarily in tearing the boy or girl away from their parents, wresting them from the circle of family influence. All attachments and impressions were branded as stupid romanticism and cruelly ridiculed. The aim of the hitlerites was to counteract the influence of the family which might be unfavourable for Hitler.

The parents were obliged to feed and cloth their children, but they had no right to bring them up. Those who tried to shape the ethical outlook of their child did so at the risk of being interned in a concentration camp. Eleven-year-old boys and girls were trained to believe that love for Hitler must replace love for their fathers and mothers. Not only love, even a neutral attitude towards one's parents was scorned. Parents, they were told, must be held under suspicion: perhaps they were plotting something against Hitler. Every word uttered by them, every action of theirs had to be watched. And the children, if they wanted to become honoured citizens of the new Germany, were obliged to take an active part in this spying.

Enrolled into the Hitlerjugend, Rolph was sent for the summer to one of the camps of their organization. It was there that his education commenced. In justice to Rolph it must be said that he proved a capable pupil and quite rapidly mastered the new principles.

All that commands respect in man was killed in the children. Humaneness was suppressed. The children were taught to torture animals calmly and without mercy—this was one of the essential subjects. Inquisitive thought, the feeling of nature, the play of imagination were likewise suppressed. Artistic ability, attachment to family and home, delicacy, poetic inclinations or impetuosity were ridiculed. Encouragement was given to one faith—faith in Hitler, and only one character was recognized—a character that was cruel, indifferent, overweening, oblivious to the influence of beauty, emotion or independent thought. This was called German faith and German character.

At the age of thirteen the child had no childhood nor family, no heart nor imagination. Step by step the robot was produced to whom nothing but "führer" existed. Not all the children lent themselves to this education. Some committed suicide, others turned into semi-idiots. But Rolph Niessen, as I have already said, proved a worthy pupil. He developed into a genuine young nazi, worthy of his teachers and of the efforts spent on him.

At the age of thirteen he had already forgotten everything that had interested him in his boyhood. Gone was his love for painting. At fourteen he was among a group of boys who one night beat to death one of their fellow-students for reading anti-hitlerite literature. At fifteen he had his own father confined to a Gestapo prison, because old Niessen dared in the presence of his son to voice disapproval of one of Hitler's actions. Rolph's mother died when he reached the age of sixteeen, but Rolph did not attend her funeral because she was the wife of a state criminal.

At seventeen he was appointed "führer" of one of the Hitlerjugend organizations. Thenceforth all the youngsters of this organization were pledged to implicit obedience to him. He, Rolph Niessen, had become a superior being to them. His order was supreme law. He was a chief whose command had to be obeyed, a bearer of truth, a being at whose bidding one had to send one's mother and father to their death, without blinking an eye.

Who was he actually, this little "führer?" A product of the nazi state education, he was a youth without thought, without a heart, with an atrophied sense of good and evil, with a castrated conscience, indifferent to pleading, suffering and blood. The school which had set itself the aim of "scientifically" training murderers, training them methodically, step by step, could not have wished for better results.

He had no attachments. He had no feelings. Dreaminess, beauty, magnanimity and kindness were unknown to him. He was purged of mind and soul. He was as if wrapped in a filter and he absorbed only what he was meant to absorb. Impetuosity, inquisitiveness, passionate desire to know the world—all that makes up the charm of youth—did not filter through. The making of a murderer as called for by the educational plans of the hitlerite state was completed. His teachers had every reason to rejoice: it was not often that one could produce such a perfect model.

When war began Rolph mustered enough shrewdness to evade service. He wormed himself into the job of guards' chief at a camp for foreign workers near Berlin.

It was here that he won notoriety as a cutthroat. His ingenuosity in executions was exceptional. Once, for some misdemeanour—this fact is confirmed by affidavits of witnesses—he cut out a man's heart with a kitchen knife. The prisoners interned in this camp were Russian and Polish workers, hence, free game in Hitler Germany. On another occasion he "amputated" a leg in the same fashion. Such operations amused the camp authorities, and Niessen was nicknamed the "royal-surgeon."

Approximately at the same time he was accepted into the nazi party, and married. Was his marriage preceded by romantic courting, sentimental letters or love? Indeed not! It was all very simple: the "führer"

of the nazi district organization decided that it was time for the "royal-surgeon" to acquire a family. Through the efforts of the organization a bride was found (a member of the hitlerite party) and, moreover, a "führer" of some women's organization. On the whole, this was an honourable marriage for Niessen, it amounted to an indirect recognition of his services to the German state.

Thus the foundation was laid for a "true German family."

Niessen continued his work as chief of the camp's guard.

One dark, bleak autumn night in 1944, five Russian workers fled from the camp. Police dogs and motorcycle guards were dispatched in pursuit. The photographs of the fugitives were published in the press together with offers of a reward for their apprehension.

One of the workers was found in a ditch not far from the camp. By order of the camp command, Rolph Niessen crucified him on a tree in the centre of the camp yard. Another worker was captured in Landsberg, some distance away. A twelve-year-old girl, a member of the Hitler Youth, noticed him in an attic. He was sent back to the camp and buried alive. A third worker, found near Poznan, threw himself into the Warta and drowned.

But two managed to escape. They were young lads,—members of the Soviet Youth organization, driven from their homeland by the Germans in 1942. They were not idle in their hide-out. They wrote proclamations for the camp inmates, informing them of the advance of the Soviet troops and calling on them to prepare for an uprising. Through secret channels the handwritten proclamations reached the prisoners who were at that time working on the repairs of a bomb-wrecked railway.

This continued for many months. When the Soviet troops approached Berlin, the two Soviet youths called the prisoners to rise. The uprising broke out at night, and the camp administration was caught by surprise. Most of the hangmen were killed on the spot; only a few managed to flee, among them Rolph Niessen.

He fled to Berlin at the time when barricades of overturned autobuses and trucks filled with boulders were being built in the streets, and when Goebbels, seated in the cellar of the Reichs ministry, was writing that everything, including the Allied advance towards Berlin, conformed with Hitler's strategic plans. At the same time, the nazi party was hurriedly preparing to go underground. Rolph Niessen was given forged documents and addresses of secret meeting places to be used in the event of the Russians entering Berlin. He was ordered to remain in Berlin and try to disguise his appearance.

It would be too much to say that Rolph readily accepted the risk. He himself related that he was thinking of fleeing west, to the zone of British or American occupation, but faith in the omnipotence of all sorts of "führers," hammered into his head ever since his adolescence, and fear to disobey their orders, were stronger. Niessen remained.

When Berlin was taken by the Soviet troops and the city began to return gradually to normal life, Niessen, following the order of his underground chiefs, obtained, by means of forged documents, the post of a clerk in one of the offices of the district burgomaster.

The burgomaster of this district was a middle-aged German engineer who eagerly undertook the difficult and responsible task of restoring and reorganizing the life in the district.

And this was the reason for which the burgomaster was to be killed. Such was the decision of the nazi gangsters. The murder of the burgomaster was entrusted to the experienced master of "surgery" Rolph Niessen.

But Niessen failed. Some of his actions aroused the suspicion of other Germans employed in the burgomaster's office, and he was arrested.

Now, under arrest, he is wailing: "I was forced! Forced to join the Hitlerjugend, forced to marry, forced to execute people. . ." Of course, he makes no mention of the fact that he himself readily welcomed this "force."

I devoted this article to Niessen, because he is, so to say, a sample of the nazi state education. Those who read with disgust and dismay about the monstrous crimes perpetrated by the Germans in all the countries, may perhaps find an explanation of all this if they analyse the educational system through which the German youth was put through by the hitlerites. I have merely given the outlines of this system.

It is important and necessary to punish both the criminals who perpetrated the unparalleled atrocities and the criminals who raised these criminals. It is important and necessary to destroy every vestige of the monstrous educational machine of the hitlerites. But it is also important and necessary to destroy the imprint left by this education on the minds of the people. This will demand no little effort and much time.

EUGENE GABRILOVICH

For a long time past the scientists of many countries have been trying to find an effective means of combating the terrible plague, the disease that carried off thousands every year in India alone.

A certain amount of success in combating the bubonic plague has been achieved in recent years. Much has been done in the way of prophylactics: injection of a serum made from the living microbes is a reliable protection. But lung plague, the most dangerous form, is still unvanquished. He who catches it is doomed. Despite all their efforts micro-

biologists have not been able to find reliable means of giving protection against air-borne infection, that is, infection through the nose, mouth and eyes.

The problem of finding protective means against lung plague is of immense theoretical and practical interest. It was tackled by Mechnikov, while the great scientist's heirs, the Soviet microbiologists, are carrying on the job.

Daring investigations are being made by Professor Magdalina Pokrovskaya. In 1936 she tried on herself an anti-plague vaccine of living germs. The experiment ended safely and the professor made a big step forward; she has shown that you could inject her vaccine of living plague germs under the skin and that it was very much more effective than a vaccine of dead germs.

But even this vaccine proved ineffective against lung plague. More years of painstaking research followed and Professor Pokrovskaya came to the conclusion that the vaccine introduced under the skin did not sufficiently immunize the lung tissue which has less protective cells capable of combating the infection than other organs of the body.

Deep penetration into the secrets of the organism's "laboratory" where microbes are destroyed, poisons neutralized and protective substance produced, went a long way to show how the disease developed. It appears that the macrophage, the devourer of microbes, dead cells and everything in general foreign to the organism, met defeat and perished when it clashed with the plague rod.

While with an injection under the skin forces counteracting the infection are built up in various parts of the body, the lungs are immunized so slightly that for all practical purposes no battle against the plague germs takes place at all. It follows that the usual vaccination under the skin does not produce the required immunity against the lung plague.

Pokrovskaya resolved to increase the resistance of the lungs by introducing the serum through inhalation, by diffusing it straight into the wind-pipe.

The experiments were made on animals of course. Professor Pokrovskaya vaccinated her guinea pigs and made them inhale the serum at the same time. Many tests were made and the results were impressive. Of one hundred guinea pigs immunized by both methods, eighty-two recovered when infected with lung plague.

At the same time tests to check the results were made: some animals were given the skin vaccination alone—only sixty out of a hundred recovered. Others were treated by inhalation alone and the results were still worse—only forty-five percent recovered.

In Tunis the French scientists Nichol and Vilenne tried inhalation some time ago, but they used a vaccine of dead microbes and did not reinforce inhalation by skin vaccination. Their experiments did not yield results and inhalation was forgotten. Pokrovskaya's method is vastly different from the Frenchmen's. By her experiments on guinea pigs she has upset the accepted view that to introduce into the lung tissue living plague germs, even though weakened, is absolutely fatal.

The time came to show that precisely the same effect was obtained when a human being breathed in the living plague vaccine. Once again Magdalina Pokrovskaya staked her own life, and as before it was done amid the quiet of the Stavropol Anti-Plague Station. Pokrovskaya inhaled two doses of weakened living plague germs. There were two hundred million microbes in the first dose, and one thousand two hundred million in the second. At the same time she gave herself a single vaccination under the skin.

Nothing alarming occurred, there were no dangerous symptoms.

Another twenty volunteers followed Pokrovskaya in testing the new method upon themselves.

But what precisely happened in the lungs after the weakened, but nevertheless still living, plague microbes were introduced, had still to be explained.

Professor Pokrovskaya read a paper on her latest researches at the Jubilee Mechnikov Conference at the Mechnikov Institute in Moscow.

What happens after the plague dust enters the lungs?

Professor Pokrovskaya's hypothesis that inhalation sharply raised the resistance capacity of the lung tissue was confirmed. The rods, it appears, "aggravate" the macrophages whose strength increases with their "anger"; they grow larger, the number of nuclei increases several times over.

It is as if the organism mobilized all means of defence. The alarm is sounded in the most remote corners. The macrophages are called to the organism's defence from all bases—from the spleen, the liver and the marrow. They are ready to repel the invading foe. On this occasion, however, it transpires that the alarm has been grossly exaggerated: although the plague rods are alive they are weakened and incapable of rapid increase.

The macrophages fling themselves furiously at the intruders, maul and finally devour them. The fortunes of the deadly struggle can be clearly followed. The weakened plague rods which have raised the alarm, inevitably perish.

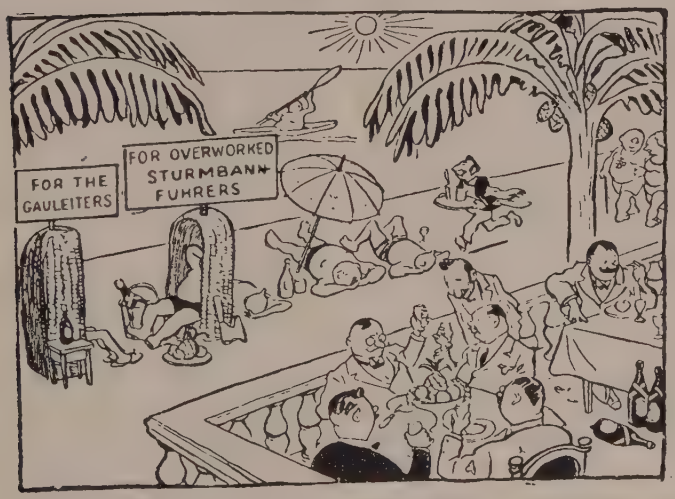
It is not hard to imagine what occurs in the organism when the intruder is not the weakened rod of the vaccine but the fully potent germ.

Trained to combat the living microbes of the vaccine the macrophages do their duty; they rally to the attack. The battle this time is much harder, but after inhalation, the organism emerges victorious.

Lately Magdalina Pokrovskaya's laboratories have begun producing the plague poison so essential for anti-plague serums.

EMIL FINN

SPANISH-SWEDISH RESORTS



Concentration sanatorium for tired hitlerites

Drawing by I. Semyonov

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT BY

MATVEI TEVELEV

HEIRS

Something exploded above their heads and they dropped to the ground. There was another burst, a third and a fourth. The boys continued to lie on the cold, rain-sodden ground, their eyes tightly closed and their ears covered with their hands.

When all was quiet again Styopa Ryabushenko got up. Overwhelming curiosity made this chubby, red-head fearless. As usual he was on his feet before any of the others. He advanced a few steps towards the road and halted.

"Nikolai Yegorych is killed!" he yelled.

Twenty trade-school boys in faded caps and with blanket rolls over their shoulders rushed toward Styopa, the tin kettles and mugs that hung from their packs rattling as they ran; they tried to grasp the meaning of his words. When they came to where he stood they saw Nikolai Yegorych lying by the roadside, a long, gaunt figure with grey tobacco-stained whiskers. His fingers were dug into the grass as though he were trying desperately to uproot it. His face expressed neither pain nor suffering. The boys stared at him, stupefied, for neither their reason nor their senses could grasp what had happened.

One evening the year before, just as the twenty boys were preparing to retire for the night, there was a knock on the door of the dormitory and an old man entered carrying a suitcase. At first the boys thought he must have wandered in by mistake but he put the suitcase down firmly in a far corner of the room and said:

"Well, young fellow-me-lads, I've come to stay with you."

The thirteen-year-old occupants of the dormitory received the intelligence coldly.

"We're quite all right by ourselves," Kostya Patashov, a lop-eared youngster, ventured pertly eyeing the stranger with suspicion.

"Maybe, but you'll be better off with me," the old man replied gravely and walked over to Patashov.

"What's your name?"

"Koska, why?"

"Listen, youngster," said the stranger sternly, "I asked you a civil question and I expect a civil answer."

"I told you, Koska. . ."

"Sure, I heard you. But I want your proper name, not some silly nickname fit for a pup and not a human being. . ."

Patashov reddened.

"Kostya's my name," he blurted out finally.

"Now you're talking, lad," the old man beamed and running his hand over the boy's close-cropped head leaned over and said in a loud stage whisper: "You're a crown prince, Kostya my boy, didn't you know that? The heir apparent to the Russian working class. Heir to the most glorious life on earth. And you call yourself Koska!"

By the time the lights were switched off for the night, the boys had learned that the old man's name was Nikolai Yegorych, that he was an expert pattern-maker and had come as instructor to the twenty boys in the dormitory.

The boys did not warm up to him immediately.

One day in class, as Nikolai Yegorych was bending over a pattern, several paper pellets shot from a catapult hit him.

"Who did that?" he demanded.

No one moved. Twenty boys sat silent with downcast eyes.

"There are cowards in this class!" cried the old man in anger.

That was a telling thrust. The boys blushed scarlet and three of them rose noisily from their seats. They were Kostya Patashov, Styopa Ryabushenko and Lyonya Kantikov, a roly-poly chap whose round face was as red as a beet.

"We did it, Nikolai Yegorych," said Lyonya Kantikov, laying the catapult on the desk in front of him, "but we won't do it again."

The incident cleared the atmosphere of mutual distrust. Thenceforward the boys accepted the old man as their friend.

Nikolai Yegorych was in his sixty-fifth year. He had no family and had seen plenty of suffering in his life. He had been exiled in his youth for participating in a May Day demonstration and had served a term in Warsaw jail for taking part in a strike and being found in possession of illegal revolutionary literature. He had worked in all kinds of factories, large and small, from the Urals to the Azov Sea, and had many interesting stories to tell the boys of the great and fascinating world of labour they were about to enter and inherit.

"Ours is an honourable calling," he used to say, "see none of you disgrace it, either out of stupidity or for personal profit."

The lads loved to hear the old man sing.

At twilight he often sang softly as though fearing to wake someone, and the boys would follow him under their breath. The *Warszawjanka*, an old revolutionary song, was one of his favourites.

When the war broke out and Vitebsk was in danger, the trade-school boys left town. En route their train was bombed and left behind in the confusion of the nocturnal raid. Nikolai Yegorych and his twenty pupils continued the journey eastward on foot.

It was very hard on the old man. His legs ached abominably but he did not complain. He walked at a smart pace, holding himself erect and looking his usual neat, clean-shaven self. And now, not far from the station where they had stopped for the night, a German shell splinter had hit him and he walked no more. . .

The boys buried him in the wood. His tea kettle, tin mug and the stick that had been his constant companion they laid reverently beside him in the hastily dug grave. They filled in the grave and smoothed over the mound and hurried away from the woods. They shivered as they went and thinking it was the dampness that chilled them walked faster to get warm.

Around a sharp bend in the road they met a group of women carrying bundles.

"Turn back!" the women cried. "There are Germans this way. Germans everywhere!"

The road to the east was cut off, so the boys turned back toward the station settlement and made for the school building where they had spent the previous night.

It was a two-storey brick building surrounded by young apple trees and the windows had all been blown out and the roof damaged by a direct hit.

The boys had just entered when the roar of engines and the rattle of motor-cycles was heard.

"Germans!"

Expecting some shooting to follow, the boys dropped down but there was no shooting and after a while curiosity got the better of fear.

The first to rise as usual was Ryabushenko. Before the others realized what he was about, he had dashed out of the room and run down the drive to the village.

Presently he returned, sniffed loudly and announced:

"There's going to be a movie today, everyone's invited. They handed candy around too."

And he produced a handful of coloured sweets from his pocket.

"You're a swine, that's what!" cried Kostya Patashov and his fist shot out.

Styopa staggered back and the candy scattered over the floor.

That evening an officer and a group of soldiers came to the school.

"Who are you?" the officer asked the boys.

They stood huddled together and made no reply.

"Komsomol?" croaked the officer and guffawed.

"Idiot!" thought Patashov resentfully.

The Germans searched the premises but found nothing. They rejected the damaged building as unsuitable for their own purposes: the roof was off and the ceilings leaked.

For a time no one bothered the boys. In fact they seemed to have been forgotten. Nobody took charge of them, nobody troubled about them. Left to fend for themselves they felt quite grown-up.

One day Styopa Ryabushenko rummaging among the desks found an old school grammar. This was a real discovery. The boys crowded around eagerly scanning the familiar verses, portraits of leaders, pictures of the Lenin Mausoleum and columns of marchers carrying banners. The lads turned the pages of the old, familiar book, with a dull pain in their hearts. They remembered Nikolai Yegorych... Their hearts ached as they fingered the dog-eared pages and they thought of Nikolai Yegorych and how he had taken them to the movies last May Day and given them ice-cream. They had all worn red paper carnations in the buttonholes of their black uniform overcoats and in the street-car coming home Styopa Ryabushenko had given his seat to a woman because that was what Nikolai Yegorych taught them to do. As they recalled these things the old man's death, which till then they had refused to accept, was brought home to them with brutal force.

One sunny morning a policemen from the local authorities came to the school and ordered all the boys to report at once to the commandant's office. The commandant, a short, fat man who looked as though he had been scrubbed clean and covered with a coat of pink varnish, was smiling and in a capital humour.

"Oh," he said, coming up to the boys, "I've heard that you're apprentices? That's fine."

And he began telling them what a wonderful country Germany was, how beautiful were its cities and how they would have the pleasure of seeing all these marvels themselves if they were found to be perfectly healthy. They would go to Königsberg, Elbing and perhaps to Berlin. Yes, they were lucky indeed to be going on such an interesting journey at their age. True, they would have to work afterwards, but didn't all the Soviet schoolbooks say that he who does not work shall not eat?

The boys exchanged looks. There was something definitely attractive in the prospect of travel the commandant opened to them. And after all what was there to be afraid of?

They were told to go back to the school and wait.

On the way home the boys were less talkative than usual. For some reason they avoided one another's eyes.

"We're a fine bunch, we are," Kostya Patashov reflected bitterly. "Lapped up everything that darn German said like it was honey or something." He tried to imagine Nikolai Yegorych before the commandant. What would the old man have said? Would he have let the Germans look him over as though they were buying a horse? He'd have told them a thing or two... And Kostya longed to find a thing or two to tell them—biting words to make them start, tremble. He remembered how the old man had once

called him a crown prince and a hot wave of shame and anger surged over him.

As they crossed the threshold of the school Patashov noticed a small red object on the floor. He picked it up. It was one of the candies that Styopa had dropped when the Germans had first entered the village.

"What've you got there?" Ryabushenko asked going over to look.

"Yours, I believe," said Kostya feeling the white-hot anger welling up within him.

But none of the boys were prepared for what happened.

"You're a son of a bitch yourself!" cried Ryabushenko. He threw himself on Patashov, his fists flying. He struck Kostya savagely and Kostya did not defend himself.

The boys dragged Ryabushenko away from Kostya and they all sat down on the steps without speaking. The door was wide open and they could see the fields beyond the station and the strip of dark forest on the horizon. Clouds scudded across the sky casting their shadows on the green meadows beneath.

If only they could get away... But how could you get away when there were patrols on guard everywhere every hour of the day and night?

At noon two soldiers accompanied by a policeman came to the school.

"Come on, you young scoundrels," the policeman shouted, "get ready to leave!"

No one replied.

"Hey you, come out of there!"

Silence.

The policeman saw red. Cursing loudly he tried to push open the door only to find it barricaded. The soldiers came to his assistance and the three of them leaned their weight on the door and tried to break it in with their rifle-butts. The door cracked and was about to give way when bricks began flying from the upper windows. A sharp piece caught the policeman right in the face. He howled and began spitting blood.

The boys stood in the spaces between the windows. On the floor was a pile of smashed bricks. Their faces were pale but determined. They'd show those Germans that you couldn't bribe them with candies or views of Königsberg or Berlin.

On a piece of red bunting he had found in the teacher's room Styopa Ryabushenko scrawled in charcoal the phrase with which all Soviet school primers begin: "We are not slaves."

And now the scarlet streamer was waving like a banner over the school building.

The Germans stopped firing. The commandant with a group of soldiers from the village came running to their aid.

A good dozen of them rushed to the door which finally gave way under their combined pressure.

As they were about to climb the stairs a hail of stones met them from the upper floor. The boys were invisible, they had concealed themselves behind corners and hurled their missiles from there.

The soldiers, accustomed to bullets but not to stones, beat a hasty retreat.

Twice they attempted to rush the school but all to no purpose. Suddenly Lyonya Kantikov who had been standing by the window as observer cried out:

"They're going away!"

The boys rushed over to the windows to see the Germans hurriedly descending the hill to the river. Patashov didn't like it. He felt sure they were up to something. But before he had time to communicate his alarm to the others there was a loud detonation and the next moment something hit the school with a terrific impact shaking it to its foundations. The two tanks standing by the railway track had opened fire at the building.

Shot followed shot. Clouds of dust and smoke rose, blinding the boys. The first to be hit was Styopa Ryabushenko. Bleeding profusely, he fell, mortally wounded. Little Vassili Dukach, the smallest of the bunch, a skinny, dark-haired lad, was killed outright. The boys picked up the wounded Ryabushenko and ran out into the corridor but it was no better there. Everything was crumbling about them.

The boys crowded together on the stairway uncertain what to do. And suddenly in the midst of all the din and the smoke, with death hovering nearby, there came the sound of singing. Kostya Patashov began it in his high-pitched adolescent voice:

"Fierce are the forces that grind and oppress us..."

A rush of memories, warm and heartening, engulfed the boys when they heard the familiar tune, and they joined Kostya as he sang:

"Toilers and moilers of every nation,
Join the red banner, your salvation,
The international cause of the workers.
Wresting the power from the idlers and shirkers."

It was the *Warszawjanka*. The song filled their hearts with pride in the noble legacy to which they were heir and to which they were being loyal, just as years before it had given courage to people who sang it in dungeons and on barricades. And it seemed that the strains of the *Warszawjanka* still echoed even after the building finally collapsed burying the twenty Soviet boys under it.

Only one of them survived. By a sheer miracle Lyonya Kantikov was not killed. Badly injured, he managed to creep away from the demolished building during the night. He was picked up later by the inhabitants of the station village. It was he who told me this story.

Translated by Rose Parker

BOOKS AND WRITERS

ARABIC MANUSCRIPTS

Professor Ignati Krachkovsky, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., is one of the foremost Arabic scholars, noted for his researches in the culture and literature of the Arab world. His work, which is well-known in the Soviet Union and abroad, shows not only his erudition but his mastery of style. Therefore Soviet readers were delighted to make the acquaintance of Professor Krachkovsky's memoirs. He recalls several vivid episodes in his life in *Arabic Manuscripts*, published by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.

These are not the usual type of memoirs. "I have written memoirs not about myself, but about the Arabic manuscripts which have played so large a part in my life," he explains in his preface. Each story in the book is about some Arabic manuscript, the fate of which is often of no less interest than that of a hero in one of the Arabian tales. But in order that the manuscript lying undisturbed like some fairy-tale princess under a shell, should find its destiny, the exploits of a valourous knight of that kingdom is needed—a scholar able to call the manuscript to life. The meeting of scholar and manuscript and their journey in company is the subject of Professor Krachkovsky's interesting book.

"I wished to show, first and foremost," he tells us in the preface, "what a man's feelings are while he is studying a manuscript, and give an idea of the things that move him, things of which he never speaks in books on his scientific conclusions. I wish to speak of joy and vexations of which many know nothing and consider our work dull, dry and aloof from life."

Two of the stories are taken from the second chapter of the book entitled *Wanderings in the East*, in which the author recalls his work in libraries of the Near East as a young man, in 1908—1910. The third is taken from the fifth chapter, entitled *The Ball Comes to the Player.*

Odessa, Constantinople, Smyrna—one after the other they disappeared as though into a mist, and in July I found myself in Beyrouth. There were many disappointments awaiting me, and the first was in myself. I found that a comparatively thorough knowledge of Arab literary language did not take me very far in conversation, which I knew only from a few folklore manuscripts. People hardly understood me, and it was only with difficulty that I myself could comprehend Arabic spoken quickly. Conversation was necessary, it was one of the objects of my journey. It was necessary to take drastic steps, and I decided to go and live two months in a small place in Lebanon, where I would hear no language but Arabic.

At first the new surroundings and new people absorbed my interest, and books took second place. I tried to spend my whole time in company, in order to have more practice in the language. The sociable, friendly Lebanon people were very curious about me, and received this "Moskobi," so strange to them, with open arms; but being rather unsociable by nature, I found it difficult.

"You buy all, and sell nothing," my new friends said. "You hear all and say nothing."

A leopard cannot change its spots, and soon I began to long for books; I felt more at home with them than with people.

. . . Two subsequent winters spent in Beyrouth, in the half-French, half-Arab St. Joseph University steadied the balance between books and people, although undoubtedly the fact that the people I met were "bookish" made this easier. What names these were in the European and Arab worlds!

. . . Rich though the picture was in colourful people, the richness of the manuscripts was overwhelming—I was spell-bound. Up to then I had known single manuscripts; here I saw a whole collection of hundreds and thousands which seemed to fall into my hands of themselves. I felt like a little boy on the edge of a boundless sea, enchanted, unable to tear myself away. It was too much for me.

TREATISE ON GRAMMAR OR AN ANTI-RELIGIOUS PAMPHLET

(1910—1932)

My stay in Cairo was drawing to a close, but I was still unable to tear myself away from the manuscripts in the al-Azhar library — the university of the Moslem world. Whereas in the Khedive's library I had been able to examine printed lists first, here there was only one manuscript copy of a brief list, and it was necessary to make a hasty choice of manuscripts in the library according to titles, casually and often inaccurately given to the books.

During my last days there, at the beginning of January 1910, I happened upon a *Treatise on Inflexions*, by the blind philosopher-poet Abu-el-Alya. I was interested not so much in the treatise itself as in the author who was well-known to me; and I gathered information about him, but without any definite object. I inherited him, so to speak, from my teacher, Victor Rosen, who in his last years had been very much attracted by this witty sceptic, who showed insight into the human spirit. He had the subtle analytical approach of a pessimist, but his mild ironical smile softened the bitter hopelessness of his oppressive thoughts.

Of course, I did not expect to find anything new in the treatise, anything characterizing Abu-el-Alya himself from this point of view. I was only surprised that this work was so rare-

ly mentioned, and his other manuscripts are completely unknown. My surprise was shared by Sheikh al-Makhmasan, one of the curators of the library, who gave me the manuscript. I often discussed literature with him. He took a particular liking to me; there were Moslems from Russia under him in al-Azhar, and he extended his patronage to me.

Outwardly, the manuscript was not of any particular interest. It was an ordinary copy made by a professional scribe of the nineteenth century from the Medina original which he did not always understand as an educated man should. But from the very first lines it became clear to me why the work was so little known; if the Arabs had had an index of prohibited books, this treatise would have been somewhere at the head of it. True, it dealt apparently with grammatical subjects; also with the orthodox and popular subject of the inflexions in the names of the angels, with the usual extracts from the Koran and verses, references to outstanding authorities and numerous literary points. But this was merely on the surface; the whole thing had a concealed but elusive irony difficult to grasp unless the reader knew Abu-el-Alya's literary outlook and style, and felt his typical form of structure, which faultlessly masked a bold thought. Actually, this apparently traditional treatise on grammar covered a subtle, witty pamphlet on the Moslem conception of the angels—a form used by Abu-el-Alya in another well-known work, his *Message of Pardon*, where with the same delicate irony he mocks the traditional conception of life beyond the grave.

I went eagerly through the lines of the uneducated writer and strove to retrieve the author's thought from amidst the distortions of the text. Sometimes a chance ray of light would reveal the concealed idea, but other phrases I had to pass uncomprehended. There was no time to study them in the few hours left to me in Cairo. I had to confine myself to making brief and hasty notes and copying parts of them. When I returned the manuscript to Sheikh al-Makhmasan for the last time before my departure, I merely said:

"If you ever read it, you will understand why this work was so little-known."

The train left early in the morning; at the moment of its departure, to my utter amazement, I saw the sheikh, breathless and evidently searching for me. The people standing on the platform were astounded when he shouted through the window of the moving car:

"I haven't slept all night; I'm surprised they never burnt Abu-el-Alya together with his *Message*!"

I could see without further explanation that the idea behind this "treatise on grammar" was clear to him.

Many years passed before I was able to penetrate all the subtle allusions of the blind sceptic, decipher all his literary quotations and reminiscences, but I never forgot my little discovery.

. . . In the summer of 1926, in a secluded spot on the Caucasian Black Sea coast, I completed at last my work on an unusual reconstruction of this incomprehensible text which had been distorted for centuries. In 1932 the *Message* of Abu-el-Alya was printed, twenty-two years after I received the insignificant-looking exercise book with feeble copy from the sheikh in the al-Azhar library.

. . . That ends the story of a small discovery beneath the cupola of the al-Azhar Mosque—a discovery now fixed and established by the printing press of the Academy of Sciences on Vassilyevsky Island, Leningrad.

AN UNWRITTEN THESIS

(1910)

"Perished renowned youth, sovereign of miracles; oh, could it be but overtaken by the flying hoofs of racing steeds!"

For some reason, these lines by an Arab poet were still ringing in my ears, reminding me of January 1910, when I returned from Cairo to Beyrouth for the second time.

Alexandria, "town of stock exchanges and cotton," interested me very little; it had much more of the West about it than the East. Nevertheless, I decided to spend some days there. I wished to make the acquaintance of Khabim Zaiyat, who in the time he could spare from his trade in dried fruits (which were known all over the world) drew from ancient manuscripts, with the subtle feeling of a connoisseur, the forgotten pictures of the undiscovered side of Arab culture, bringing them to life in articles that were published later. I also wanted to look through the manuscripts in the city library. Zeidan, the novelist who was interested in literary research, had told me in Cairo that part of the library of the second Khedive, Ibrahim Pasha, son of the famed founder of the Muhammed-Ali dynasty, had come to this library. A letter from Zeidan opened all doors for me.

I was still completely under the impression of al-Azhar, the university of the Moslem world; here, however, I found a very different picture. The library was situated in the new building of the City Council done in European style; the eastern department filled a large hall with the usual book-cases along the walls and a long table in the centre. There were no other visitors at the time, and the curator readily opened the department for me alone. It was in charge of a young sheikh who had studied at al-Azhar, but had it not been for his Egyptian costume—the characteristic collarless brown robe with wide sleeves—it would have been difficult to guess that he was a graduate of this college. His glasses, his pointed beard, his French in which he evidently took more pride than in the Arab manuscripts under his care, helped to create the impression of a European. But the Arabic tongue and our talk about Arab literature swiftly stripped off this superficial veneer, which may well have been a reflection of the general Alexandria style.

The manuscripts were in order, there was even a short list made out in the same way as that in al-Azhar; although with no differentiation between printed works and manuscripts. With all his undoubted desire to attain the height of European requirements, the sheikh nevertheless had very little realization of the treasures committed to his care. My hopes, however, had not deceived me: among about twenty manuscripts worthy of attention I found two gems—unique examples from the

realm of Arab poetry which at that time particularly interested me.

One contained verses by a contemporary of the famous Syrian historian Abu-'l-Fidi; the poet, an ardent patriot and a panegyrist on the town and gardens of Kham, familiar to me, glowed with enthusiasm, sometimes even dropping literary language for his native colloquial Syrian. I took my time and made a copy of several extracts which I published five years later; the manuscript itself is still unique.

For some reason it did not excite me very greatly, but the second manuscript disturbed me for a long time to come. I had left its examination for the last days of my stay in Alexandria, when my passage was already booked. When I received it, I began to examine with feelings of pleasure what I thought to be an example of calligraphy. The manuscript dated from the sixth century of the Hegira and showed every sign of belonging to the school of the famous Ibn-al-Bavvab. A small page contained barely three or four verses written in a very large, artistic hand where all the vowels were designated and all the indications for the reader given. Following an original calligraphic style, a verse not completed within the line swung upwards in a smaller script, and this unusual asymetry enlivened the picture pleasantly. The paints, mainly of a green tone, had lost none of their freshness with time, and were restful to the eye. It was evidently the work of an outstanding master of his craft and had not only all the fine details of practised skill, but also the freedom of a real artist.

As I read the manuscript, however, I forgot about its outward form and was completely carried away by the contents. These were verses by a talented poet of ancient Arabia, undoubtedly prior to Islam, with rich pictures of Bedouin life giving concrete details of conditions and surroundings with almost photographic accuracy. They were composed in the severe style of the ancient Arabic Kassid, and followed the established canons of composition. Sometimes pictures in sharp relief mingled with notes of reflection; the beginning of one song—"Perished renowned youth, sovereign of miracles; oh, could it be but overtaken by the flying hoofs of racing steeds!"—was impressed upon my memory.

I had only the vaguest memory of the name of Salyam-ibn-Jandal, as the poet was called in the manuscript. Of course he had not belonged to the writers of the famous "Divans," the "Six," as they were called, but the greatness of his talent could be felt in every verse. With growing excitement I deciphered line after line, and realized that it had fallen to my lot to make a scientific discovery. The library held none of the equipment to which one is accustomed in Europe; during my wanderings I lacked even the books familiar to all Arabic students; but I was certain that if my poet was mentioned anywhere, the manuscript which I had discovered was undoubtedly unique.

It was clear that I could not leave off work on the discovery that I had made; that question was decided the first day when I saw the manuscript. Although I had intended to leave the next day and my passage was already booked, I postponed it for the following boat immediately after the visit to the library. I had to copy out the whole of the manuscript. For two days I worked feverishly, in a kind of ecstasy, to the boundless astonishment of the sheikh who finally gave me the key of the department with a request to return it to the watchman in the evening, when I left.

I took my place on the ship in a daze. My thoughts were still in pre-Islamic Arabia; but I had with me a complete copy of the verses of Selyam-ibn-Jandal, reproducing down to the finest point every detail of the Alexandria manuscript. When we passed Jaffa during the night, I was still unable to sleep; when I walked about the deck, it was not of the perfume of the famous orchards of orange-trees that I was thinking, though it was wafted to the ship for the last time over several miles of sea, but of how fine it would be to write a thesis on this poet. I could already see in my mind's eye, on the one hand, research into the actual conditions in which Selyam-ibn-Jandal's song was composed—research after the style of a recent work by Jacob on ancient Arabian Bedouin life; on the other hand, an analysis of poetry, developing the ideas of Schwarz on a poet of an early Islam book which had just been published in 1909. True, I had already a theme for the thesis I intended to write, and the work was half done, but Selyam had claimed all my attention; the wish to announce this discovery as soon as possible, to establish priority and find a modest place for his work in the history of science, was pardonable in a young student of Arab lore.

As I approached Beyrouth, I finally decided to lay aside my first theme and concentrate on this new one, especially since it would demand, it seemed to me, less time.

It is not difficult to realize the excitement and pride with which next morning, before eight o'clock, I hastened to my Arab professor in Beyrouth, Louis Sheikho, at St. Joseph's University, a massive building which dominated not only the ward where I lived, but the whole town. My teacher, who himself had introduced books and manuscripts to the world; was well able to understand such feelings. I knew that he would share my joy and excitement. I was sure that I would find him at home, either in his modest cell, writing, or engaged in the endless correction of the al-Mashrik magazine which he edited, or else in the comfortable "Eastern Library," on the same floor, which was my usual place, too; except for the two of us, the place was generally empty, a professor from the Eastern Faculty might drop in occasionally.

It turned out that Sheikho was sitting correcting the current issue. After the first phrases had been exchanged, I noticed some verses lying in front of him, and asked what article that was.

"Oh, I am preparing to publish the Divan Selyam-ibn-Jandal."

Dumbfounded, I could hardly whisper:

"From the Alexandria manuscript?"

Sheikho glancing at me in amazement, replied: "No, the Istanbul one," and in his turn asked the cause of my excitement. Pulling myself together, I told him the purpose of my visit. His surprise was unbounded, he could

only gesticulate and exclaim: "Amazing!" We hastened to compare the manuscripts; they turned out to be of the same school and of almost the same date. No less surprising were the circumstances which had supplied the impetus for his work. Some months previously a well-known French orientalist had printed this same poem by Selyam from the Istanbul manuscript in the *Journal Asiatique*. He was no great Arab scholar and the work was not brilliant; thereupon Sheikho, who many years previously had also made a copy of the manuscript, decided to give a more detailed criticism. Of the Alexandria manuscript, of course, he suspected nothing. There was nothing left for me to do except give him my own copy, which he could use for details.

In this way the thesis I had planned remained for ever unwritten, for my priority had already lost all basis. Sheikho's work called forth several short articles and notes, but a large-scale work on Selyam such as I had visualized on the ship has never yet appeared.

And now, when anybody talks about the part played by chance in science, I always remember how French, Arabian and Russian scientists in different countries simultaneously occupied themselves with various sides of the same Arab poet from the same manuscript. And when I meet Selyam's poems or his name, I see in my mind's eye that quiet room in noisy Alexandria, the young sheikh with his French-cut beard, the copy of the manuscript with its large letters of a green shot with gold, and I hear:

"Perished renowned youth, sovereign of miracles; oh, could it be but overtaken by the flying hoofs of racing steeds!"

And it is only sometimes that the thought stirs somewhere deep within me—perhaps it is a pity, all the same, that I did not write the dissertation on Selyam-ibn-Jandal?

A WRITING FROM SOGDIANA

(1934)

Happy the scientist who is able to observe in his own lifetime the birth and development of a new branch of science, who sees unexpected discoveries and the study of new material gradually presenting a great picture unknown to former generations of investigators. Thus it was in my life with the Sogdian language and the Sogdian culture, which for many centuries flourished in Central Asia. It had ramifications that extended beyond its boundaries, and although broken by the Arabs, it did not disappear without a trace, but passed into a new stage, and continued as a single unbroken line of development of Central-Asiatic culture.

When I used to observe as an outsider the indefatigable efforts of my older comrades, their joy in their discoveries, so familiar to the scientist, the patient effort with which, step by step, they deciphered lines until recently a mystery, investigating manuscript after manuscript in the Sogdian script, I never thought that I, an Arabic scholar, far removed from the history of Central Asia, would be fated to take part in this work; it never occurred to me that into my hands would fall the only Arab relic of its kind, invaluable for Arabic research, which clearly reflected the tragic moment of the final battles between the Sogdians and the Arabs. But fate willed that it should be so, and it came to pass that Sogdian and Arabic manuscripts lay side by side upon a table in Leningrad, while scholars of ancient Arabia and Iran pored over the faint, worn characters. And it would have been hard to say upon whose efforts shone the first ray that illuminated the right path, the ray which, like an electric shock, caused both of us to start simultaneously.

In 1932 there was great excitement among Iranian scholars in Leningrad. Rumours were current about Sogdian manuscripts found in Tajikistan, and up to that time none had ever been discovered in Sogdiana itself, but only in its colonies in eastern Turkestan. Meanwhile, the rumours became more definite, and to include traces of some kind of archives supposed to have been discovered on Mount Mug on the southern shores of the Sarafshan. Finally, in the autumn of 1933, a special expedition, not very large, set out to conduct digging operations on the spot. The rumours were confirmed; the wealth of Sogdian material discovered surpassed all hopes, but most amazing of all, isolated Chinese and Arabic documents were also found, which reflected the intricate political picture which Central Asia presented at that time.

Reports of the Arabic manuscripts reached Leningrad even before the return of the expedition. Their character was such that my scepticism allowed little hope of anything of value coming to light. It was said that they were written on leather; but at that time there were only six known Arabic manuscripts on leather in the world. It was difficult to believe that any unexpected addition to their number would come from Tajikistan rather than from an Arab country. I thought that they were more likely to be sheets from a parchment Koran than anything else. That, of course, would be of interest, but it was not a rarity. This view was supported by a letter from Alexander Freiman, head of the expedition and an old friend of my student days, who wrote that during the excavations the expedition had found a tiny fragment of leather with some Arabic words that were apparently part of the usual Moslem confession of faith. True, there were rumours that scholars who examined a larger document in Central Asia had seen there the name Tarhun, the name of one of the great Sogdian rulers at the time of the Arab conquest, but I was inclined to attribute this to a certain preoccupation, pardonable in anyone desirous of linking the discovery with local history.

Nevertheless, my curiosity was aroused and I tried to procure a photograph of the writing; for some reason the photograph could not be taken in Central Asia. There was some friction over the question of who should be considered the owner of all these manuscripts, where they should be kept and who should be entrusted with their study and arrangement. Luckily, they came to Leningrad, and although here too there was some delay and indecision as to where they should be studied, I learned in January 1934 that they were temporarily placed in the manuscript department of the Academy of Sciences' library.

I was ill at the time and in a high fever, but of course I could wait no longer. The next day found me walking along the familiar University Embankment to the Academy. I was not alone, my wife was with me. In the previous ten years she had delved so deeply into the secrets of Arab paleography and epigraphy, that she read the Kufic even better than I did. We smiled as we recalled how a quarter of a century previously, even local Arab scientists who were showing us the Cairo Mosque, said in reply to a question about some inscription: "But that's Kufic, it's impossible to be read!" Now it was no unusual matter for my wife's gifts and sharp eye to assist me in deciphering writings which were not clear to me, notwithstanding the knowledge of Arabic which my many years of study had given me the right to claim.

We found A. Freiman sitting at a large table in the manuscript department on the ground floor. He was absorbed in the script—something between writing and "strokes"— which the expedition had brought, and looked distrait, although firm and as usual, with his round spectacles constantly slipping on his forehead. He had already prepared a special envelope for us, and took out a document, watching to see the impression it would produce.

At first glance I felt the ground slipping from under my feet. Either fever or excitement sent all the blood to my head, my eyes swam. I was helplessly holding a piece of crumpled, worm-eaten leather; as though through a red mist I saw separate Arabic letters, but could not decipher a coherent Arabic word. My heart beat as though it would burst and my first dreadful thought was: "I can't make out a thing!" The next moment, however, I was ashamed of myself, and with a mighty effort of will forced myself to look again; I saw, however, I could not examine it with any concentration; the red mist immediately rose again before my eyes. Bending my will to the task, I began to examine it piece by piece, unable to keep my eyes fixed on anything for long. My thoughts raced feverishly with every nerve impulse, and I kept unconsciously whispering aloud: "Yes, in the first lines there are remains of the usual opening formula: 'Bismillah'—in the name of Allah. . .That means it's the beginning to something and not a page torn from the middle. . . Here in the middle, sure enough, the name Tarhun. Of course, that's not the Koran. . . But what is it then?" My thoughts raced helplessly, tormentingly, the blood throbbed in my ears. "A letter? There, there at the end of the second line, plainly enough 'from . . . his client' . . . but the name, the name? 'Diva. . . Diva'. . . that's Diva plain enough, with a long 'i' and a long 'a'! What sort of nonsense is this, what name is that? And the next line starts off still worse—here it's clear enough—'sitti,' but that's not possible in literary language. 'Sitti' is used only in conversation and means 'my lady,'—what's it doing here? The end of one line, 'Diva,' and the beginning of the next 'sitti' . . . " Then another sudden prickling of all my nerves. "But maybe it's one word carried over? We find that in Arab papyri from Egypt. Divasitti. . . Divasti. . . There's no such name! . . There's Tarhun, we find references to him in Central-Asian literature, but there's no Divasti there. . . What the devil is this! It's 'Divasti' there, plain as can be. . ."

My companion turned to A. Freiman:

"You haven't any Divasti in the Sogdian documents?" my companion asked Freiman in surprise.

He started, his glasses went up on his forehead. At last he replied in bewilderment:

"N-no. . . but everywhere there's something like Divanestich, or better, something connected with Divan—an office, it may be, or some title. . ."

"But there's no Arabic letter 'n' here," I cried, "just 'Divasti, Divasti'!"

Suddenly another idea struck me. I leaped from my chair and ran out, to the utter amazement of a young Iranian scholar sitting at the table, who had come to Freiman with some question and was completely dumbfounded at my distraught appearance and strange dialogue. In order to get there quickly I went up the side staircase to the eighth floor, to the Institute of Eastern Research and the Arabic study rooms. There on the shelves stands the twelve-volume work of at-Tabari, our main historian, and a sudden hope had sprung up in me that here I might find the explanation of this obscure name.

It was a good thing that I met nobody on the stairs or in the study—I felt that my appearance was enough to scare anybody, and I was in no condition to explain intelligibly what was the matter with me.

Breathless from running, I rushed over the familiar shelf, took down the index of at-Tabari, and began feverishly turning the pages, in search of some similar name. I could barely see for excitement, but nevertheless I scanned all the names beginning with "D" almost to the end. "No, there's no Divasti," and my heart sank. Then suddenly a few lines lower down, I saw "Divashni."

"But there's no difference except the dots!" I almost shouted. "It's the very same!"

Fearing to believe that I had really found the solution, I began to turn the pages of the volume to which the index referred. There could be no doubt about it: the subject was Central Asia, a description of events at the beginning of the Hegira centuries. I was in no state to attain a thorough understanding of the text at that moment, I had no doubts remaining. I was glowing as I raced downstairs again at the same headlong speed. Had I been twenty years younger I would probably have slid down the bannisters.

When I reached the manuscript department, I dropped into a chair, barely able to whisper to Freiman, who still knew nothing of the reason of my sudden flight: "Divasti is found!" This was so unexpected that three pairs of eyes turned upon me almost in alarm. But when I had caught my breath a little, and was able to explain in broken phrases, the triumph was general. Everybody realized immediately that light had fallen upon the discovery, and that the clue was in our hands.

After the day's excitement, reaction set in, and I felt myself drained of the last drop of strength. I could do no more with the document

that morning. But I was satisfied. It was a long and complicated work that lay before me, but I knew that I was on the right road, and next day it was in a very different mood that I began systematically to decipher the script, parallel to making a detailed study of the corresponding pages of our at-Tabari. It was only now that I could look without trepidation, calmly, at the characters; only now I could appreciate the regular beauty of the writing of an experienced office calligrapher. Every day now brought its joy and chagrin, small discoveries alternated with disappointments, but there was nothing terrible about all this. The crushed fragment of leather, which had lain in the earth for twelve centuries, could not conceal its secrets from the analysis of the paleograph, it could not keep silent when brought face to face with the historian, whose evidence was preserved in the invaluable work of at-Tabari.

Actually, the name "Divasti" had been the key to it all. It not only explained the Arab writing, but gave a firm basis for work on the Sogdian document. Divasti, it turned out, was a Sogdian ruler; this was the remnants of his archives, found by the expedition on Mount Mug.

The deciphering of the name of the Arab ruler to whom his letter was addressed, a matter of much less difficulty, unexpectedly supplied an accurate date for the document, the hundredth year of the Hegira, about 718-719 of our era.

Symbol by symbol, all the factual data of the letter were mastered. That "worm-eaten" fragment with the beginning of the confession of faith which the expedition had discovered separately, soon found its place in the document. Even lines which had been destroyed by the insatiable worms were, in the main, reconstructed.

Now, when I look at a photograph of the smoothed-out letter on leather, I wonder at times that we succeeded, not only in deciphering the lines where only single letters remained, but in catching some idea of that which had been eaten away. I feel proud of the science and the exact methods that make it possible to find what at first glance would seem to be irretrievably lost.

I think that this feeling was shared by everybody, even specialists in completely different spheres, when they gathered a fortnight later, in February, at a session of the Academy of Sciences for the purpose of hearing the expedition's report. The reading-room of the Institute of Eastern Research, where one usually saw a few readers sitting in corners, was now filled to overflowing. Not only were all the places taken, even the gangways were crowded.

The Permanent Secretary of the Academy, who entered during the meeting, was startled, so unusual was the sight to anybody accustomed to the usual meetings of the Eastern group. It was really a triumph—a triumph for the expedition which had enriched science with unusual material, and a triumph for science which bore witness to the power which was raising our knowledge to a higher level.

Of course, work on the documents did not end with this meeting, any more than the publication of the *Sogdian Collection* was completed that year, a publication giving the main scientific results and including a systematic study of the Arabic letter described here. Later on it appeared that the name of the hero should be pronounced Divashti, and not Divasti; we succeeded in establishing the name of the castle to which he led his Sogdians after the final breach with the Arabs; we even discovered the particular breed of goats, from the hide of which the leather of this fragment had come.

Further investigation will probably bring more details to light; I hope that somebody will succeed in reading still better or more completely the individual letters and words which are still a riddle to us; but these are now details. The right path was opened to us the moment that the strange, mysterious name Divasti first met our eyes. That instant, something in the nature of subconscious thought impulse, a kind of revelation, was the beginning of the analytical scientific process. Owing to this, that name is now something near and comprehensible for all Iranian scholars, for all historians of Central Asia. And Arabic scholars are happy in the knowledge that the letter from Sogdiana which fell into their hands was not only an important and exceptional relic of Arabic paleography, but an historical source of first importance.

Academician IGNATI KRACHKOVSKY

FRIEND OF PUSHKIN AND OF LIBERTY

(In memorium Kondrati Ryleyev)

The early part of the 19th century in Russia brought forth a whole galaxy of fine poets who spiritually came of age during the Napoleonic war (1812—1814).

The people's heroic struggle against the Napoleonic invasion deeply stirred the nation's consciousness. The longing for liberty filled the Russian people, who felt the yoke of feudalism the more irksome in proportion to the glory of Russia's victory.

The sentiments of the Russian patriots and particularly of the ardent patriotic youth, were voiced by the poets of freedom.

As progressive English literature at the turn of the two centuries centred around Byron, so the young Russian poets of the early 19th century gathered around the figure of Pushkin.

And a star of the first magnitude in Pushkin's constellation was Kondrati Ryleyev, his personal friend and one of the leading figures of the emancipation movement in Russia. His name and work are treasured by the Russian people.

Ryleyev was born a hundred and fifty years ago, on September 18th, 1795, not far from St. Petersburg. His father, an army officer, meant his son to follow in his footsteps, and the Napoleonic wars found Ryleyev in an army corps—a Russian military school for preparing officers of the Guards. Like Pushkin, who was a few years younger, Ryleyev was carried away by patriotic fervour. This was when he wrote his first verses, *Love for My Country* in which he paid glowing tribute to Kutuzov and reviled the "nefarious designs" of Napoleon.

At the beginning of Ryleyev's literary career, his friends describe him as having been an ardent and ambitious youth. He used to dream of liberty and friendship among the nations and to read of the ancients' heroic exploits. Unlike many young men of the wealthy classes, whose lives were a round of frivolous vanities, Ryleyev was drawn even then to "lofty and noble aims." In the purity of his nature, the beauty and exaltation of his romantic impulse, Ryleyev shows the nobility of Shelley and the passionate love of liberty of Schiller.

He was with the Russian army in its foreign campaigns of 1813—1815; he witnessed the political storms that accompanied the downfall of Napoleon and observed the democratic movement for emancipation mounting in Western Europe. Greatly impressed by the scale of events, he was fond of comparing those turbulent times with Rome and Greece in their heyday. From Paris he wrote to a friend:

"Do you remember how we would read historical accounts of the days of glory in ancient Greece and Rome? Those are mere tales, you often would exclaim. But compare the happenings of our time with the events of those days, and you will see that the present is more to be marvelled at, more incredible, than all that went before, and if we cannot believe the extraordinary occurrences of bygone years, I do not know how our descendants will credit the events taking place before our eyes. And how, indeed, should they believe that within the span of ten years, so many states rose and declined and several monarchs were set up and overthrown?"

At the end of 1815, the young poet returned to Russia. He lived for some time in the town of Ostrogozhsk, a cultural centre near Voronezh, and here, in the spring of 1819, he married the girl of his choice.

But great as was his personal happiness, he remained true to his lofty ideals.

After a time Ryleyev moved to St. Petersburg. The capital was the centre of the country's cultural life, and there the poetry of freedom, the voice of youth uncowed, was developing. The younger generation revolted against the knowledge that Russia, at the summit of might and glory, was still a backward land of serfs in which the people were ground down under the heel of uncurbed landowners and a despotic monarchy.

The liberals among the nobility were dissatisfied with the government of Alexander I for joining in the reactionary foreign policy of the Holy Alliance and allowing itself to be influenced in many respects by Metternich, the head of reaction in Europe. The young champions of freedom welcomed the liberation movement in Spain, in Italy, and later in Greece.

And it was these sentiments that Ryleyev's poetry expressed. In the summer of 1820, he published his famous satire *To a*

Court Favourite, castigating Count Arakcheyev, the minion of the tsar and "oppressor of all Russia," as Pushkin called him.

Ryleyev's fearless and noble gesture stirred all minds and the young poet's name became famous. "It was with this poem," recalls Bestuzhev, the writer, and a friend of the poet, "that Ryleyev entered upon his political career." He devoted himself to the civil service and became a judge. Contemporaries note that "Ryleyev was upright and painstaking in the performance of his duties, and sought in every way to relieve the lot of those he tried, especially if they were of the common, defenceless people." The following incident was related:

A poor man was seized on one occasion on suspicion of some grave offence and brought before Miloradovich, the military governor. He was duly interrogated: but his guilt could be established only by his own confession, and Miloradovich threatened him with every penalty unless he confessed. The man was innocent and did not want to accept the onus of a crime he had not committed. Thereupon Miloradovich, weary of arguing, declared that he would bring him before a criminal court, knowing how reluctant the common Russian people were to face the courts. He thought he would frighten the man into telling the truth; but the latter, instead, dropped to his knees and thanked him with tears of joy for his goodness.

"What goodness have you seen from me?" the governor asked.

"You are sending me to the courts," the man replied, "and now I know that I shall be rid of all torment and molestation; I know that I shall be acquitted. Ryleyev is there, and he does not allow the innocent to suffer."

In these years in St. Petersburg Ryleyev's poetic gifts also blossomed forth. He became the heart of the city's literary world. In 1821 he was elected to the Free Society of Lovers of Russian Letters. He became the friend of Pushkin, and profited by the great poet's counsels.

Russia's best read literary publication in those days was the *Northern Star* Almanach, which Ryleyev and Bestuzhev brought out. The *Northern Star* printed the verses of the finest Russian poets of that day—Pushkin, Baratynsky, Vyazemsky and others. The Almanach left a perceptible trace in the development of Russian literature. Thirty years later, in memory of Ryleyev and his friends, Alexander Herzen, the famous Russian author and revolutionary, gave the same name—*Northern Star* — to the literary magazine he began to publish in London.

Beginning with his earliest writings, Ryleyev was a civic poet.

"His one thought, his constant idea," Bestuzhev wrote of him later, "was to awaken in the hearts of his countrymen sentiments of love for their homeland, to fire them with the desire for freedom. Such a purpose in itself bears the imprint of poetry, wherever it may be brought to fruition; but it becomes infinitely poetical when, surrounded by the spies of despotism, amid slavish praise, amid fulsome flattery and cowardly obeisance, in the midst of a whole empire groaning under the yoke of oppressive tyranny, the voice of a poet rings out, speaking of lofty truths which our hearts have long known, though we hear of them for the first time."

In his literary canons Ryleyev was drawn to that high culture of classicism, whose first outstanding representative in Russian letters was the famous scientist and poet, Lomonosov, the fisherman's son. It is characteristic that even in his love lyrics—the type of verse most common in the literature of the leisured classes of his days, Ryleyev proclaimed the idea of patriotic service as the keynote in the life of all who prized freedom. To his bride he wrote:

'Tis not your love, but other joys
And other cares that I desire.
The fight alone my being fills,
The call to arms my heart must fire.
No room for love within my breast.
Alas, my country suffers sorely!
My soul, by grievous thoughts oppressed,
For liberty is longing only.

In his message to Bestuzhev Ryleyev declared:

Unto the grave my soul will hold and prize
The glowing courage of ideals of truth.
My friend, 'tis not for nought the public weal
Is precious to the hearts of youth.

In 1825 a very tragic incident took place in St. Petersburg, which gave rise to a great deal of talk.

Novossiltsev, aide-de-camp to the tsar, made an offer of marriage to the sister of an officer named Chernov; the proposal was accepted and the engagement became generally known. It was, however, opposed by Novossiltsev's mother, a vain and imperious woman and under pressure Novossiltsev broke it off. The brother flew to arms in defence of his sister's honour; he challenged Novossiltsev to a duel, and both were killed.

Novossiltsev's wealth, birth and connections were those of the higher aristocracy; the Chernovs were gentlefolk, but poor. Chernov spoke of this difference in their social position, in his farewell letter: "Let me fall, but let him fall too, as an example to worthless pride, and that wealth and nobility may not insult the innocent and the gentle of heart."

Chernov's funeral, arranged by the St. Petersburg "liberals," was a veritable political demonstration against the upper aristocracy. Ryleyev was on Chernov's side heart and soul, and dedicated to his memory some lines championing the dignity of the human being.

Ryleyev loved the history of his people—this was generally a characteristic of the young Russians then struggling to develop national culture. He and Griboyedov urged men of letters to study the old chronicles, folklore and the old-time Russian tales. "The people's history is the poet's heritage," Pushkin wrote in those days.

Ryleyev was the author of a cycle of original "ballads" in which he told of famous figures and incidents of Russian history. He sang the might and valour of the Russian princes of the Kiev age: Oleg, whom the people called "the Wise," the sage princess Olga and the gallant warrior Svyatoslav. Dimitri Donskoy, Boris Godounov, Bogdan Khmelnitsky, Peter the Great and other famous characters look out at us from Ryleyev's pages. Particularly remarkable is his ballad of Ivan Sussanin, the

Russian peasant who laid down his life for his country; this ballad received high praise from Pushkin. The subject was later used by Michael Glinka, the famous Russian composer, for his opera *Ivan Sussanin*. Another of Ryleyev's ballads, about the glorious death of the Cossack leader Yermak, the conqueror of Siberia, was put to music and is commonly sung in Russia to this day.

But particular inspiration came to Ryleyev when he wrote of the fighters for freedom.

His first work on this theme was *Voinarovsky*, a romantic narrative, written in 1823. According to the poet's plan it was to open a large cycle of narrative poems from the history of the Ukraine.

Voinarovsky mirrored the tragic fate of a remarkable Ukrainian figure of the days of Peter the Great. Deceived by the pseudo-patriotic phrases with which Hetman Mazepa disguised his treason to Peter, Voinarovsky, the Hetman's nephew, joins in his plot and pays for it with exile to Siberia. Set against the stern Siberian landscapes, the poet paints Voinarovsky's mental anguish and his love for the young Cossack girl who has followed him in his exile. In earlier lines there pass before the reader the figures of Peter I, Mazepa, and Charles XII of Sweden, driven with ignominy from the Russia he set to conquer. The poet drew freely in *Voinarovsky* on Ukrainian folklore and the ethnographical information then available about Siberia.

Voinarovsky bears considerable traces of the influence of the romantic poetry of Pushkin, and especially of the rebel romanticism of Byron. Ryleyev was passionately fond of Byron, whose marvellous poems, he said, "portrayed the passions of men, their innermost urges, and the eternal conflict between the passions and a secret striving towards some lofty and infinite goal." For Ryleyev, Byron's poetry was the living voice of the fight for freedom.

Byron's sudden and dramatic death stirred Ryleyev to the core. He wrote some fine lines *On the Death of Byron*, in which he spoke of Byron as having "lived for England and the world," having been "a Socrates in mind, in soul a Cato," and having "Shakespeare himself excelled:"

Britannia, of the seas proud queen,
Pride not thyself on arms and might,
But on the lasting civic fame
And on thy gallant sons.
That soaring mind, the century's beacon,
Thy son, thy poet and thy friend,
Byron has perished in his prime
In the good fight for Greece's freedom.

Ryleyev also planned a poetical narrative, *Nalivaiko*, about the leader of an Ukrainian national uprising against the Polish nobles. However, the events soon to develop and the poet's tragic end prevented the realization of these plans. Of *Nalivaiko*, Rylevev wrote only a few stanzas. In one of them he foretold his own fate. His hero says of himself:

I know full well that death awaits
Him who against the tyrant's yoke,
His people's champion, will first rise.
My doom, I know, has long been sealed;
But tell me, when has liberty
Been won without a sacrifice.

"When Ryleyev was writing Nalivaiko's 'Confession'," Bestuzhev recalls in his memoirs, "my sick brother, Michael Bestuzhev, was staying with him. One day he was reading in his room; Ryleyev was in his study, finishing these lines. When he had done so, he took them in to my brother and read them to him. Michael was struck involuntarily by the prophetic spirit of the fragment. 'Do you know,' he asked, 'what a destiny you have foretold for yourself, and for us too? It's as though you had set out to name your own lot.' 'Do you think I doubt my destiny even for a moment?' Ryleyev replied. 'Believe me, every passing day convinces me of the need for my actions, of the fact that we must perish to pay for this first attempt to give Russia her liberty and to give a lofty example to the still sleeping Russian people, that must be awakened to freedom'."

Several years before, Ryleyev had joined a secret political society to overthrow the autocracy and abolish serfdom by revolutionary means. This body, later to be known as the Society of Decembrists, numbered Russia's finest minds among its members. Pushkin too was a Decembrist sympathizer.

Ryleyev's energy, fervour and supreme devotion to the revolutionary idea soon singled him out among his political associates, and he became the leader of the Northern Society, which had its headquarters in St. Petersburg.

December 26th, 1825,[1] brought the Decembrist revolt in the Senate Square in St. Petersburg. The revolt was poorly organized; most important of all, the insurgents had no contact with the masses of the people, and they were crushed. Tsar Nicholas dealt ruthlessly with the conspirators. Most of them were sent to penal servitude in Siberia, and five were sentenced to be hanged. Among these five was Ryleyev.

On the eve of the revolt he wrote his last poem, *The Citizen*, an impassioned appeal to the youth, to the people, to future generations to battle for the liberty of man. He prepared actively for the rising and was the moving spirit of the whole affair.

"The meeting at Ryleyev's on the eve of December 26th was a noisy and turbulent one," Bestuzhev writes. "The numerous gathering was in a feverishly exalted mood. You heard there the reckless phrases, the impracticable suggestions and instructions, the words without deeds for which many paid such a heavy price though free of guilt. But Ryleyev was truly glorious that night! He was not handsome, ordinarily his speech was plain, but not smooth; but when he lit on his favourite topic—love of his country—his face became animated, his coal-black eyes glowed with an ecstatic flame, his speech flowed like molten metal; one could not take one's eyes off him at such times. And on this fatal evening, which decided the uncertain issue—to be or not to be—his visage, pale as the moon, but illumined

[1] New style; according to the Julian calendar then in use in Russia, it was December 14th.

by some supernatural light, now appeared, now vanished among the agitated waves of that sea, seething with so many different passions and impulses."

In the evening of the day of the revolt, Ryleyev was seized and thrown into the darkest casemate of the Fortress of Peter and Paul. There he spent half a year. And on July 25th, 1826, he and his friends went proudly to their death.

For several decades after, Ryleyev's poetry was banned and the very mention of his name forbidden. Some of his poems were printed by Herzen abroad (partly in the London *Northern Star*). Herzen compared Ryleyev's earnest poetry to a bell, "sounding the call to battle and death as though it were a call to feast." And the spirit of liberty that pervaded all he wrote found its echo in the Russian literature of later days, in the work of such great poets as Lermontov and Nekrasov.

SERGUEI PETROV

A BOOK ABOUT THE MEN OF THE NORTHERN FLEET

There have been quite a number of stories about the men of the Navy during the war. Our readers have read translations of the best of them—*Sailor Soul* by Leonid Sobolev and *Ivan Nikulin, Russian Sailor* by Leonid Solovyov. Not long ago the magazine *Znamya* (The Banner) published a new novel: *Fraternity of the Sea*, by Alexander Zonin. It falls below the high artistic level of *Sailor Soul*, but it has its own merits and is an interesting story.

The author wrote about the fleet before the war as well. One of his books was *Admiral Nakhimov*, a man famous in the annals of the Russian fleet. Throughout the war Alexander Zonin has been with the ships of the Northern and Baltic Fleets and has seen active service. This gave him the material for a number of essays, a book, *The Destroyer "Dauntless,"* and finally, *Fraternity of the Sea*, a novel about the men of the Northern Fleet.

The Northern Fleet was formed only twelve years ago, that is in 1933. Its men had to master the difficulties of the grim climate of the Far North: the Polar night, hurricanes and snow-storms. The sailors of the North had none of the traditions which are handed down from generation to generation in the fleets of the Baltic and Black Sea. But it was precisely this fleet that through force of circumstances was called upon for the most intensive operations. The Northern Fleet sailors had to guard the sea lanes along which flowed the war supplies coming to the Soviet Union from U.S.A. and Britain. The Germans, operating from Norwegian and Finnish bases, thought they would be able to close the routes altogether, but the men of the Northern Fleet adopted aggressive tactics and not only upset their plan but forced them to take to the defensive. It was here in the North that the laws of modern naval warfare were confirmed. There were no classic battles, but there was daily unremitting struggle on the surface, under water, in the air and on shore with all types of naval weapons involved.

Zonin's story gives a broad picture of the life of the officers and naval ratings, men of all naval trades, who not only do their share often with heroism, but are the actors in the personal dramas which arose out of the war. Let us acquaint you with the main outline of the plot, which we think will fully reveal the author's idea.

Nikolai Dolganov, captain of a destroyer, and his crew score a number of telling successes. His wife Natasha comes to him in the North. She has spent some time in German-occupied Briansk in Central Russia, and the joy of the reunion is somewhat overclouded by her grim recollections. The Germans were close to Briansk when Natasha, who was pregnant, began to feel her labour-pains. The chauffeur Orlov who was ordered to take Natasha to the maternity home proved to be a German spy. He knew that the Germans were entering the town. On the way to the hospital he struck Natasha a vicious blow. Her child was still-born. Some kind-hearted people hid her from the Germans; she managed to get along until the Red Army liberated the town. A meteorologist by profession, she came to the North to work at a meteorological station. Her work was a link with her husband while he was at sea.

The command noticed Dolganov's ability and promoted him to destroyer squadron-commander. Finding that his formation was fighting mainly with small craft and in isolated groups and that there was actually very little coordination between the various branches of the fleet, he devoted his spare time to working out a complicated operation in which both destroyers and MTB's, submarines and aircraft would be engaged at the same time.

His scheme evokes objections from experts and leaders who did not think it possible to carry through such an involved operation with a young fleet in the trying conditions of the Far North. Some were ready to accuse Dolganov of neglecting his immediate duties for the sake of his scheme.

Further complications ensue when it is found that mysterious accidents occur on the destroyer he used to command. There is an enemy on board, cunning and adept, whom it is difficult to detect. In the end he is caught; he is a rating named Bushuyev who turns out to be the German spy who under the name of Orlov caused the death of Natasha's baby.

Dolganov's personal life is also overclouded at the time, not so much from real as imaginary troubles. Dolganov imagines that Natasha is attracted by Major Kononov, a well-known airman, who is obviously not indifferent to her. The drama does not come to a head; Dolganov and his wife love and trust each other. Explanations take place, and Dolganov is convinced that his suspicions were unfounded.

Zonin's handling of the happy ending to the drama of jealousy is convincing.

Dolganov keeps pegging away for his plan and finally wins approval. He is put in charge of the operation and carries it through in a splendid style. It is judged to be a step forward in naval tactics. The determination of the man in love with his job and eager to push things ahead, overcomes the passivity and doubts of people whose superfluous "prudence" is in danger of making them the slaves of routine. Dolganov's triumph is symbolic of the triumph of his fellow officers and men, the young Soviet Northern Fleet, ever ready to do and dare.

Some of the scenes from life are written in a vivid style. The brief and sympathetically written scene of the meeting between the dour submarine sailor Ivan Kovalyov and his brother's widow is truly moving. The word-pictures of northern landscapes are well drawn and the fight to save the ship during a terrible storm is powerfully described. But the writer's attention is centred on the technical side of navy life. Perhaps that is why the portrayal of the heroes is somewhat one-edged, dry and lacking in relief. In the effort to give an exact reproduction of the peculiarities of naval warfare and operations, Zonin overburdens the text with special terminology and technical details and this cannot but tell on the language of the novel which is unavoidably affected.

It seems to us, however, that the "specialized" colouring of the novel is the direct outcome of the author's fondness for naval life. Zonin is in love with its stern, austere poetry and has set himself in the first place the task of showing its characteristics.

Alexander Zonin's service lies in that he has avoided a hackneyed presentation of the sailor and depicts war at sea as an unceasing round of heavy toil, which calls for the exertion of all of a man's faculties, strength of body and mind. The sailor's intrepid courage on board, when he gives proof of the highest qualities, does not come of a sudden as if by inspiration from above, but is the result of long and persevering training as it would be in any other field. Zonin tries to show the qualities essential and peculiar to a sailor.

The Fraternity of the Sea tells us that navy life gives a man unlimited opportunities to show what he is made of and to apply his creative faculties. And where there is this, there is romance, not imaginary romance, but something real. The battle against the elements and the foe shapes men of heroic calibre. It seems to us that this—the underlying idea of the novel—explains its success, despite its shortcomings, among Soviet readers in the Navy and in other professions.

ALEXANDER MAKAROV

NEW BOOKS

Heights That the Guards Took is the title of a volume of stories from the Navy Publishing House. Arkadi Perventsev writes of the men who took part in the battles of the initial phase of the war in 1941—1942, and confines himself to operations in a small sector of the Black Sea coast. Here the men of the Red Army and Fleet had vowed to "stand or die" and repulsed the enemy at Novorossiisk.

The gallery of war-heroes includes a seasoned commander of a coastal-defence vessel, Dubonos, the leader of a detachment of guards, Matushenko, the men who make long-distance flights—Kagulov and Mironov, seamen of the "Iron Battalion" who took a city in a naval attack, some exceptionally daring sea-scouts chosen "on the revenge principle," and an artilleryman, Gorbatiuk, who believes that skill, not numbers, counts most in fighting.

In these stories we are also shown the civilians who helped the army and navy and regarded the freedom and independence of their country as their personal affair. A girl from Taman displays courage as a scout, an engine-driver's family joins the partisans, a boy, Valka, becomes a hero, and old Fyodor Ivanovich returns home to till the land under enemy fire because he is eager to help the men of the Red Army and Navy. The author touches on some important questions of military training at a particularly difficult stage of the war and shows how high the discipline was in the Red Army—an army of a new type based on mutual respect between commanders and men. Some stories speak of the growing skill in fighting, training and the mastery of the technical side of warfare.

The severe struggle against the common enemy has strengthened the ties between the Slav nations of Europe. Along with the cordial sympathy with which the war communiqués were met, there was a growing interest towards the history of the friendly peoples, their culture, their written and spoken word.

One of the valiant brigades formed from the partisan detachments of Slovenia was named Ivan Tsankar, and its heroic exploits revived in the minds of the Slav nations the memory of this outstanding Slovenian writer.

Ivan Tsankar's (1876—1918) road to fame was not strewn with roses. The son of a tailor, he managed, despite the difficult straits of the family, to work his way not only through high school but also through the college of philosophy of the Vienna University. Tsankar's hardships did not end with his student years. His subsequent years were filled with repressions, persecutions, persistent literary work, revolutionary activities and bans. ... Nevertheless, during the forty years of his life Tsankar wrote forty volumes. He is the author of verse and sketches, novels and short stories, dramas and comedies.

The State Literary Publishing House recently issued a small volume of Ivan Tsankar's *Tales and Short Stories*.

Outstanding among the seven works included in this volume are the autobiographical stories *Mother* and *How I became a Socialist*. While less expressive and colourful than other works of this volume, these stories are interesting mainly because they give an idea of the surroundings in which the author grew up and spent his youth; they paint a picture of Lubliana and Vienna under the yoke of Austro-German reaction, of the Austrian school where knowledge had to be "picked up secretly on the road."

Ever since his youth Tsankar was interested in the people, in their life and destinies. The personality of the future singer of the people's sorrow was moulded by secretly read books, heated literary debates and, lastly, by the life in the working class quarter of Vienna where social-democratic ideas flourished side by side with poverty and tuberculosis.

In later years Tsankar spent much time wandering through the country; he drifted into villages and highland settlements, spent hours in a wayside inn; and all the time he kept on writing, writing about the people, their sufferings and privations, their past and present, about truth and injustice, about patience and endurance.

Bitterness and ire emanate from his story about old man Ernei (*Farmhand Ernei and His Right*) and Simon the blacksmith (*The Story about Simon Sirotnik*).

Old Ernei is a forceful character. For forty years he worked as a farmhand. All of his master's wealth is the result of his labour; the master's granaries are bursting from the grain raised by him, and suddenly in his declining years Ernei is dismissed. The dumbfounded old man sets out to seek for the truth. It is neither retribution, nor revenge for the offence that he longs for. He is determined to find the truth no matter how deep it may be buried. Everywhere he encounters nothing but ridicule. He is on the verge of despair when he reaches the residence of the emperor. In the capital he is seized and forcibly sent back to the place where he had spent his long and hard life. Then Ernei goes to the local priest and in the name of God demands an answer to the questions which torment his mind. The priest orders the "heretic" Ernei out of his presence. Something snaps in the old man's heart. Neither sorrow nor hope is left there. With firm tread he walks out and at dusk sets fire to the house of his former master who is guilty of the evil deed. And when like a gigantic bird with fiery wings, the flame sears upwards, the jubilant figure of old Ernei appears among the crowd and perishes in the fire.

Tsankar chose the ancient tale, the legend as a medium of telling the grim history of people in symbolic images. Tsankar looks at Slovenia through the eyes of young Kurent, the ancient God of Joy, who in the story *Kurent* embodies the inexhaustible strength of the people, and the writer's words are filled with bitterness when he says:

"My people, nine times condemned, how hast thou lived and what hast thou lived to see? Thy history is the story of the long suffering of a sick pauper, who time and time again raised his head but could never rise to full stature... Thou hast barely come into this world when thou hast become a slave. Abuse was thy schooling, and this science was knocked into thee with a stick. Thou hast been pushed and chased by stepfather, stepmother and godparents. Sometimes thou hast sobbed, sometimes thou hast fallen down and sometimes thou hast risen... Strong thou art, oh, Slovenian people! Thou hast been bleeding for one thousand and five hundred years, but the blood is still flowing through thy veins..."

By their heroic struggle for the freedom and independence of their homeland, the Slovenian people have proven in deed their inexhaustible, enduring strength.

Louis Forestier is a Frenchman who since 1910 has been working in the Russian film industry. His first-hand knowledge of the pre-revolutionary cinema lends interest to his memoirs, which under the title *The Great Dumb-show* have just come from the State Cinema Publishing House. Their interest is the greater since very few memoirs of this period of the Russian cinema exist. The only other book is *The First Years of Russian Cinematography* by Khanzhonkov, published by *Art* (*Iskusstvo*) in 1937.

Forestier's book permits us to trace the initial steps of the art which Lenin was subsequently to call the most important of all arts. We meet a motley assemblage of men and women who in those days were prominent in the Russian film-world, among them many whose only care was to get rich in the shortest possible time.

There is the sausage-factory owner who, having decided that more money was to be made on films than sausages, launched an enterprise of his own; there is the owner of the beauty-parlour who founded the "Varangian" firm; there is the ex-photographer, Drankov, who aspired to become the pioneer of the Russian cinema; and there is the Cossack officer Khanzhonkov, who made a name for himself in the cinema world of pre-revolutionary years. It is not surprising that public scandals were the inevitable accompaniment of the activities of these entrepreneurs. The film *The Living Corpse*, released in 1911, turned out to be such a gross distortion of Leo Tolstoy's story that it aroused a storm of protest from his daughter, the Moscow papers, and all who were shocked by this mockery of the great writer's memory.

"Films were made by rival studios of the same stories and released under the same titles. The firm that released the film first thus spoiled the other firm's game, which involved a heavy loss. To avoid this, the subject and the title were kept as far as possible a dead secret until the work was complete." This was the case with the picture *War and Peace* which was filmed simultaneously by three firms, and with *The Conquest of the Caucasus* and *The Precipice*.

The memoirs go up to 1925, so that the concluding pages cover the first stage of the Soviet cinema. Forestier speaks of Lenin, and how he filmed him in 1920 at the meeting in Sverdlov Square, Moscow, and at the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921.

Lev Gumilevsky's little book *Wings of a Fighter*, which comes from the "Young Guard" press, is the biography of Alexander Yakovlev, the noted Soviet aircraft designer. Gumilevsky has been known for the past few years as the author of some excellent scientific books written in a popular style. One is called *The Railway*, and appeared in 1943.

His latest book is something more than a skilful statement of technical achievement. The chapters called *The Feeling for Aviation* and *Simple Solutions* take the reader into the designing office and may help young people who are considering the choice of a profession to define and understand their own inclination and abilities.

Yakovlev's work is presented in relation to the nature and the historic destiny of Russian aviation. There is a special chapter on *Flying in Russia*. The author shows his hero as a typical representative of Russian scientific and technical thought, a man whose salient features are simplicity, daring and a radical way of making decisions.

The State Publishing House for Political Literature has given us two valuable translations—the first is the fourth and last volume of *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (arranged for publication by Charles Seymour, Rector and Professor of Yale University). The period covered is June 1918 to November 1919. This book, which is one of the main sources of information on the secret history of World War I, is well-known to all who take a particular interest in the history of foreign policy and international relations at that time. Colonel Edward House who died in 1938 was undoubtedly one of the most important of the American politicians of Woodrow Wilson's day. Though he occupied no official position and was content to be known as the President's personal friend, he had exceptionally great influence on the course of world politics. The United States' attempts to act as intermediary, their entrance into the war, the peace negotiations of 1918, all took place with the participation of Wilson's "silent partner," as he was called at the time. The main developments of World War I are reflected in the four volumes of his *Papers* and illumined by the inside knowledge of an unusually well-informed and influential contemporary.

This last volume concerns the events that took place between June 1918 and November 1919, when Germany and her allies made the last desperate struggle, the end of the war and the peace negotiations that preceded Versailles and the League of Nations.

The reader of the fourth volume finds here convincing evidence that in 1918-1919 the Allied statesmen attempted—unsuccessfully, as we know now—to solve problems that remain still acute and real in 1945. Questions of putting to the vote the recognition of small nations on an equal footing with great powers and questions of economic disarmament of defeated Germany make this volume of special interest today.

The translation has an introduction by Alexander Troyanovsky on *Colonel House and His Papers*.

Another interesting book has come from the same Publishing House in *The Library of Foreign Politics* series in which books by Tardieu, Aldrovandi-Marescotti, Kikudziro Iani, and Otto Bismarck have already appeared. *Peace making 1914* by Harold Nicholson, whose knowledge of diplomacy and international affairs is beyond question, has an introduction by Ivan Maisky, former Soviet ambassador to Great Britain. Maisky also edited the translation. The book is on the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919, in which Nicholson, a former diplomat, took part. It is the second part of the trilogy on the history of British diplomacy (the English edition was first published in 1933).

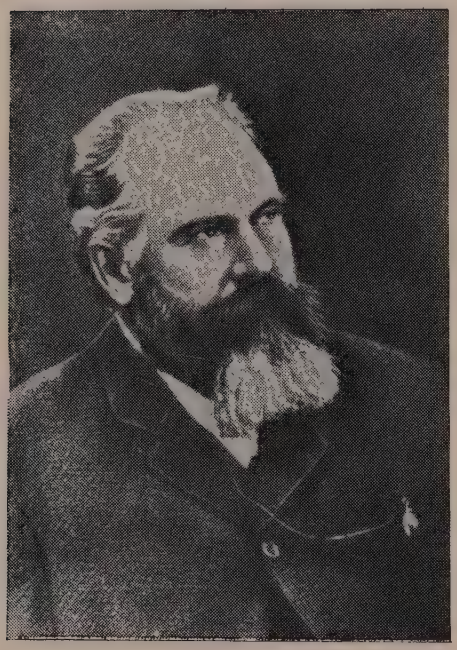
The arrangement of the book is unusual: in the first part the author gives his own estimation of the Paris Conference. In the second part he gives excerpts from a diary kept in 1919. This part, Ivan Maisky points out in the preface, is a genuine human document, extremely interesting and instructive.

Nicholson says about the purpose of the book and his own political philosophy that he is sure that at any international congress it is precisely living people who determine the character of the negotiations and their task, and that the aim of these notes is to convey the impressions of a contemporary witness before they are effaced by time.

It must be acknowledged that Nicholson has accomplished his task brilliantly. This diplomat is also a noted essayist, the author of papers on Byron, Tennyson, Swinburne and Verlaine. His style is rich and sparkling, he has the knack of vivid characterization, as is seen in the pen-pictures of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonnino and Wilson.

The book is of special interest in our day when problems of the construction of the postwar world and the guarantee of security are to the fore. The reader is carried away into the atmosphere of 1919, attends the sessions of the Peace Conference described by one who took part in them, and sees for himself the inevitability of the circumstances that led to the failure of the conference and its offspring—the Treaty of Versailles.

A GREAT TEACHER



I still feel a kind of reverent awe when I enter the ninth-form room at the Moscow Conservatory to lecture to my pupils; this was once the first-form room in which classes were held by that great Russian composer and scholar, Serguei Ivanovich Taneyev, Director of the Moscow Conservatory of music, a man of fine spirit and great personal charm.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov taught a whole generation of musicians of the "St. Petersburg school"—such famous men as Alexander Glazunov and Anatole Lyadov, Igor Stravinsky and Serguei Prokofyev. Some two hundred or so studied under Rimsky-Korsakov himself and many more were pupils of his pupils.

"The other great light in Russian musical learning, Serguei Taneyev," as he was called by Lasar Saminsky (one of Lyadov's disciples), headed the "Moscow school" of Russian musicians which produced Alexander Scriabin and Serguei Rachmaninov, Nikolai Mettner and Alexei Stanchinsky (a youth of genius whose works still remain to be studied), as well as many outstanding living Soviet composers.

It is now thirty years since the death of Taneyev, for he survived Lyadov and Scriabin —the latter a special favourite of his—by only a few months.

The date was commemorated in the Soviet Union and especially in Moscow by numerous performances of Taneyev's compositions, including his trilogy, *Oresteya*, by meetings of learned societies where papers were read on the life and works of the great musician, the publication of an exhaustive collection of material devoted to his memory and the preparation for print of certain of his hitherto unpublished works.

1

Serguei Ivanovich Taneyev was born on November 25th, 1856, in the old Russian town of Vladimir on the Klyazma, in the family of Ivan Ilyich Taneyev, one of the best educated men of his time.

The composer's father had graduated three of the faculties of the Moscow University—medicine, mathematics and philology—where he presented a brilliant thesis entitled *A Dissertation on Tragedy*. And it is, perhaps, in these philological tendencies of his father that the sources of Serguei Taneyev's love for classical tragedy is to be found.

An education of this encyclopaedic nature, one that was characteristic of the progressive Russian intelligentsia, was combined in Ivan Taneyev with a love of poetry and still greater love of music to which he devoted such hours of leisure as were afforded him by his employment in a government office. He played both the piano and the violin, had tried his hand at composition and even had some of his musical pieces published.

From his son's earliest childhood the father imparted to him his love of music. The boy was gifted, possessing a marvellous ear and musical memory. At the age of five he was making rapid progress in his pianoforte playing in which he received instruction from a local music mistress. In supervising his education his parents aimed at widening the childs's horizons and the little Taneyev read much, gaining a knowledge of the life of mankind, of the secrets of nature and the great power of art which transforms life.

Listed among the first entrants of the Moscow Conservatory opened on September 1st, 1866, we see the name of Serguei Taneyev. The professors of that time included Chaikovsky, who had not long before graduated the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Taneyev, however, joined Chaikovsky's class somewhat later, when he began to study the theory of composition, working during his first years of studentship in the pianoforte class conducted by Professor Langer (known, besides, for his transcriptions of Chaikovsky's operas and symphonic works), and afterwards under the famous pianist Nikolai Rubinstein, the founder and first Director of the Moscow Conservatory. Rubinstein was not slow to recognize his pupil's talents and Chaikovsky, too, became greatly attached to the young Taneyev.

In those years, Taneyev's distinctive traits as composer and pianist had already

manifested themselves and the road along which the master, rightly called the "Father of Russian polyphony," was to travel lay clearly marked before him. By the time he finished the Conservatory, Taneyev was already the author of a number of compositions, including a large symphony in four movements and an orchestral overture which he presented for his diploma.

In May 1875 Taneyev graduated simultaneously as pianist and composer, receiving the Conservatory's large gold medal and being the first to have his name inscribed in gold letters on the marble roll of honour. The roll hangs near the entrance to the Small Hall of the Conservatory and the name of Taneyev is followed by dozens of new names of those who are now outstanding Russian musicians.

On graduating from the Conservatory Taneyev concentrated mainly on composition, although he devoted a great deal of time to pianoforte playing. On December 3rd, 1875, Chaikovsky's famous Concerto was performed for the first time in Moscow by the young Taneyev.

In the spring of 1876 he undertook a great concert tour through Russia (together with the famous violinist Leopold Auer) and towards the end of the same year went to Paris for the winter where he became intimate with Ivan Turgenev. His playing produced a powerful impression on the great writer who became greatly attached to the twenty-year-old maestro.

While in Paris, Taneyev studied West-European music, acquainting himself with the French masters—Charles Gounod, Camille Saint-Saëns, César Franck, Vincent d'Indy and many others.

These pursuits did not prevent him from playing a great deal, or working at new compositions which were, however, not very numerous at that time. His creative labours became much more intensive in the next year when Taneyev returned to Russia. He produced successively a Second Symphony, a Cantata to the text of Pushkin's *Monument*, some instrumental chamber music, romances and other pieces.

In 1878 Taneyev was invited by the Moscow Conservatory to teach Harmony and Instrumentation in the place of Chaikovsky who had that year decided to give up teaching.

But Taneyev was fated to become the successor not only of Chaikovsky. In 1881 Nikolai Rubinstein died and his whole class of advanced pianoforte students also passed to Taneyev whose activities were becoming more and more varied. Pianist, composer, teacher and theoretician, Serguei Taneyev was now gradually winning fame as a conductor. In 1882 his new *Symphonic Overture* was performed under his direction (first at Moscow and then at St. Petersburg), and on March 23rd, 1884, the third anniversary of Nikolai Rubinstein's death was marked in Moscow by the first performance of Taneyev's cantata *John of Damascus* dedicated to his memory and conducted by the composer.

By this time Taneyev's authority stood high, eloquent testimony to which is a passage in a letter written to him by Chaikovsky: "You seem created," the latter says, "to carry on the work of Rubinstein. It is my opinion that in the pianoforte class—as in the director's study or at the conductor's stand—it is for you to take the place of Nikolai Grigoryevich."

In May 1885, Taneyev, who was only twenty-nine years old at the time, was appointed Director of the Moscow Conservatory and in the autumn of the same year he undertook the direction of the orchestral and choral classes while continuing to conduct all the theoretical courses and the class of pianoforte playing.

The composer's plans were becoming more and more extensive and it seemed almost impossible to combine all these manifold duties with creative labour. Soon after the completion of the Third Symphony, performed for the first time in Moscow in 1885 under the direction of the author, Taneyev set to work on his musical trilogy *Oresteya*, at the same time outlining other new compositions.

In 1889 he gave up his post of Director of the Conservatory, keeping only the counterpoint class (to which was later added a course of musical forms), in order to devote more time to the theoretical research which led up to his famous *Treatise on Counterpoint*, a digest of the intensive labour of twenty years.

In October 1895, the première of *Oresteya* took place at the St. Petersburg Opera House, and three years later Taneyev's Fourth Symphony was performed. The following years brought several new chamber compositions, both vocal and instrumental.

Taneyev's fame as composer and pianist was spreading in Russia and abroad. His appearances on concert platforms at Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Düsseldorf and many other towns, were invariably successful.

Musicians flocked from the ends of the country to the little house in Moscow where Taneyev lived, thirsting to learn from him, to ask his opinion and advice, for his word was law throughout the musical world.

A man who played a great role in propagating the music of Taneyev was Serguei Kussevitsky, who edited a great number of the composer's works. In the autumn of 1913 he arranged in Moscow a cycle of concerts from Taneyev's works and in March 1915 conducted (first at Moscow and then at St. Petersburg) Taneyev's grand cantata *On Reading a Psalm*.

That work was to prove the composer's swan song.

At the end of April 1915, he caught cold while attending the funeral of his favourite pupil, Scriabin, whose death had come as a great shock to him. The illness was complicated by heart trouble and on June 19th, Serguei Taneyev died at the village of Dvudkovo not far from Moscow where he had often used to spend the summer. Nature's last gift to the great musician were masses of flowers brought to his deathbed by the children of the surrounding countryside.

The coffin containing his body was conveyed to Moscow for the funeral. In a

telegram he sent to Moscow, Glazunov called Taneyev the "world's teacher."

In the course of a few months Russia lost three great musicians—Anatole Lyadov, a composer of originality and charm, who died in the autumn of 1914, Alexander Scriabin who followed him shortly after, and then Serguei Taneyev, of whom Serguei Rachmaninov wrote the following:

"To all of us who knew him and who came knocking at his door he was the supreme judge endowed with wisdom, justice and simplicity, accessible to all. He was an example in his every act for whatever he did, he did well. By his personal example he taught us how to live, to work, even how to speak, for he spoke, too, in a way peculiarly his own, 'the Taneyev way,' briefly, vividly and to the point. Only necessary words fell from his lips. He was a man who never uttered superfluous words, the weeds of speech... And we all looked up to him as to one higher! Not one of us but valued his advice and guidance. We valued it because we believed in him and we believed, because faithful to himself, he only gave advice that was good. I always regarded him as an embodiment of that 'truth upon earth' the existence of which was denied by Pushkin's Salieri." [1]

2

The musical heritage bequeathed to us by Taneyev has not yet been studied to the full, which is due in part to the composer's being so exacting to himself that he would only publish part of what he had written. Of his four symphonies, for example, he permitted only one, the Fourth, to be published, calling it the First. And similarly, only one of four symphonic overtures, the one to Aeschylus' trilogy *Oresteya*, appeared in print.

Here is a brief list of Taneyev's works: *Oresteya*, a musical trilogy, two cantatas: *John of Damascus* and *On Reading a Psalm*; four symphonies; four overtures for a symphony orchestra; concerto for pianoforte and orchestra; concert suite for violin and orchestra; some twenty or so pieces of chamber music (trios, quartettes and quintettes); over a hundred vocal compositions (solo and chorus); several pieces for the pianoforte, including the famous *Prelude and Fugue* and adaptations of folk songs.

The list would be incomplete without Taneyev's standard theoretical works viz his *Treatise on Invertible Counterpoint* and *Treatise on Canon*, and his analysis of the contrapuntal exercises of the youthful Mozart. The first of these treatises Taneyev prefaced by a motto from Leonardo da Vinci (*Libero di pittura*, I, §1): "Nissuna humana investigatione si po dimandare vera scientia, s'essa non passa per le mattematiche dimonstrationi." (No branch of study can claim to be considered a true science unless it is capable of being demonstrated mathematically.)

In a highly interesting book entitled *Music of Our Day* (New York, 1939, p. 224), Lazar Saminsky, speaking of Taneyev as "an unexcelled master and the mightiest contrapuntist since Bach," writes that "Taneyev's glorious *Treatise on Counterpoint* means to musical science as much as Newton's *Principia* to cosmology."

Taneyev was, however, not only the greatest of theoreticians who had delved deep and generalized the whole experience of musical culture, but also an inspired creator of works synthesizing the main lines of development of Russian musical classics.

Combining an epic monumentality inherited from the music of Borodin with the lyrical delicacy of his teacher, Chaikovsky, Taneyev created works characterized by a singular stamp of grandeur and dramatic might.

And if Stassov and Mussorgsky both called Borodin's Second Symphony "the lioness," the same name, conveying as it does an impression of strength and nobless, may well be applied to Taneyev's only published symphony (Borodin, it should be noted, was a favourite of Taneyev's from his early years).

This monumentality in the epic style is felt in many of the composer's other works, pre-eminently, of course, in his Quintette for pianoforte and strings written in 1912.

There is moreover in Taneyev's music (and particularly so in the string quartettes and romances) profound meditation, pages of a lyricism soul-felt and delicate.

The most striking thing in Taneyev's music is the depth of thought and forcefulness of ideas, an element making of Taneyev, in a certain sense, a philosopher in music.

As far back as 1916, Boris Assafyev, to whom belongs the honour of being the first to have written on Taneyev, wrote the following words in his monograph on *Oresteya*: "A peculiar characteristic of Taneyev's art is the preponderance of thought over emotion." And, indeed, one is invariably led to feel that it is not emotion as a transitory mood but the enduring idea that is uppermost in the composer's art. What he mainly strives for is not only to create, but to synthesize philosophically his artistic images.

And first and foremost it is the idea of justice that is embodied in the mighty images of *Oresteya*. In the Epilogue to the tragedy of Aeschylus the composer saw "the triumph of the power of light over the chaos of violence and revenge" the triumph that comes when "there sets in for mankind a new era of peace and justice", These are the words we read in the author's programme prefacing the overture to his musical trilogy.

And truly, Taneyev's music is instinct with the spirit of moral purity and righteousness. Taneyev himself, incorruptibly honest and a composer of exquisite perspicacity, was a living embodiment of this idea, ever striving for its vivid embodiment in art.

An achievement of this aim was, in the composer's opinion, possible only through organic contact with the national sources of Russian culture. "It should never be forgotten that only that endures which is deeply rooted in the people," wrote the then twenty-four-year-old Taneyev, expounding his literary credo in a letter to Chaikovsky.

Having mastered to perfection the Russian folk song and the peculiar structure of its melody, Taneyev strove before anything else to

[1] A reference to Pushkin's drama *Mozart and Salieri*.

reveal the essence and ethical significance of Russian culture.

The strength that comes from moral integrity is revealed in his cantata — Taneyev's last work—*On Reading a Psalm* (words by Khomyakov). In the first two movements unforgettable pictures of the sublimeness of the universe are unfolded while the concluding part proclaims yet once again the idea of justice, which is, properly speaking, the idea underlying *Oresteya*. This idea we find expressed in some lines by the poet Khomyakov, in a way peculiarly his own:

I want a heart purer than gold,
And a firm will to labour,
I want a brother loving his brother,
I want truth in the Courts.

This is, as it were, Taneyev's will and testament bearing a dedication reverently inscribed to his mother.

3

Taneyev did more than merely develop the best elements of Russian musical classics—he handed down its traditions to the following generations of masters.

Among those who studied under his guidance were composers of diverse trends and to them all the great teacher allowed full scope, encouraging the creative searchings of each.

But it was Scriabin who found the greatest favour in his sight. It is true that there was once a legend in circulation, sponsored by certain lovers of cheap sensation, to the effect that Taneyev was a die-hard conservative in music who fought shy of anything new or unusual. But here is what we read in the stenographically recorded reminiscences now being prepared for publication by Boleslav Yavorsky, a prominent scholar and theoretician:

"If ever on looking through the work of a pupil Taneyev said that it resembled Scriabin (and Taneyev hardly ever did say that any composition resembled anyone else's), his face would assume an expression of extreme kindliness and light up with a smile, he would cast aside his role of the self-restrained professor. He knew all of Scriabin's compositions and to the very last you could speak to him about one or any of them; he used to attend all Scriabin's concerts and was present at the orchestral rehearsals of the Second and Third Symphonies of *Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*, having told pupils of the rehearsals beforehand, during the lesson..."

Rheinhold Glière, one of Taneyev's favourite pupils, to whom the master entrusted the young Serguei Prokofyev and who is now President of the Association of Soviet Composers, told me that Taneyev used to make a point of his pupils hearing Scriabin's works, which he knew perfectly well himself, at concerts as well as at rehearsals.

This predilection is borne out by some others of his pupils who to the end of their lives preserved a grateful memory of their great master.

It was Taneyev who, like Lyadov, was the connecting link between Russian musical classics and the compositions of modern Soviet musicians.

Breadth of generalization and epic monumentality are the elements of Taneyev's art that are reflected in Soviet music.

In the works of composers like Miaskovsky, Shebalin, Shaporin, Glière, Anatole Alexandrov, Lyatoshinsky, Gabriel Popov and others may distinctly be felt direct continuity with the style, so vivid and original, of Taneyev, "the father of Russian polyphony." In Shostakovich, too, that community is manifest particularly in the famous Seventh Symphony whose main theme so closely resembles that of Taneyev's symphony.

To us, Russian musicians, Serguei Taneyev will ever remain not only a great Russian composer and profound thinker, but a man whose life affords a great example of humaneness, socratic wisdom and moral integrity.

Professor IGOR BOELZA

A CHEKHOV ACTRESS

I first saw Olga Knipper when the curtain of the Moscow Art Theatre rose for the première of Alexei Tolstoy's *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*. Her future husband, Anton Chekhov, also had his first glimpse of her in this play.

By this time he was already a well-known writer and he was tremendously impressed with her acting. He spoke to many friends of the impression she had made on him; in a letter to Nemirovich-Danchenko, one of the founders of the Art Theatre, he confessed that Olga Knipper as Irina seemed to him "extraordinary."

Moscow began to talk about the young actress.

Olga Knipper had received a first-class education; she had not at first thought of the stage as a profession, though a keen lover of the theatre and art in general. As a very young girl she had taken part in amateur theatricals. Among her circle of friends were the Goncharovs—the family to which Pushkin's wife, the beautiful Natalya Nikolayevna, had belonged; and they still owned the Polotnyany Zavod, an estate which the poet had visited so often before his marriage. The mistress of Polotnyany Zavod managed the estate and the factory herself, and would come home tired only to supper, where some score of people would meet around her table. She did not interfere at all in the young people's amusements, which, in the meantime, became of quite a serious order. The young people set up a sort of theatre on the estate—with only the most primitive equipment, it is true—and here they gave regular amateur performances. The authorities treated it as an innocent pastime, unaware, it seems, of its real significance. Actually, this was a sort of unofficial popular theatre — I say "un-

official" because theatres which catered specially to the tastes of the common man were treated with suspicion and even suppressed by the tsarist authorities. These young people had set out to introduce the workers and peasants to art. An amateur art group was formed, and workers from the factory took an eager part in play productions and concerts. The whole neighbourhood, all the villages around came to see them, till they were known through the whole of that region.

Olga Knipper appeared in some of Ostrovsky's plays. Other productions included Molière and fragments of operas — Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, for instance— and Olga, who had a fine singing voice, took part in these opera performances too. She derived quite a lot of satisfaction from this work, though, of course, her dreams were of something bigger.

Her family affairs took such a turn that she had to think of earning her living and Olga decided to go on the stage. This was when she entered the Philharmonic Dramatic School.

She was to remember all her life her first talk with Nemirovich-Danchenko who took charge of one of the classes. If she meant the theatre to be her life's work, he told her, she would have to dedicate herself to Art without reserve.

"Have you thought it over? If you have a family, you know—a husband, children, friends—the theatre will devour them all."

But Olga stood by her decision; and the whole of her life thereafter was a test of the truth of what her first teacher had said.

At the Philharmonic she soon became one of Nemirovich's favourite pupils.

She was different from other girls in the profession or on its fringes, and particularly from her fellow-pupils at the school. An actress' career in those days usually meant one of two things: a life of publicity and success, admirers, flowers and jewels; or the stage as a revolt against the shackles of official reaction, as a heroic dedication to art, severe and self-abnegating, all but monastic. But in Olga Knipper there was very little of the "celebrity" and nothing at all of the "nun." She was eager to devote to her art all the energies of her buoyant, exuberant personality but without relinquishing what life had to offer away from the stage.

Olga was immensely impressed with Nemirovich's teaching, and she has always considered herself greatly indebted to him. It was a "new kind of actor" that Nemirovich trained, new men and women for the profession—he revealed to them not merely the emotional side of acting, but the idea. His class produced such famous actors as Moskvin, Savitskaya and Roksanova. He followed their progress constantly, and not only at the school, but by staging productions with them, as for example, in Podsolnechnaya village near Moscow with the local peasants as the audience.

The trip to Podsolnechnaya was a memorable event in Olga Knipper's life. For there Nemirovich told her—she was the first to hear— of his famous meeting with Stanislavsky and their plan to found a new theatre. He suggested that she should not accept any engagements for the time being—should not leave for the provinces, as she had planned, but wait till that theatre became a reality.

Olga Knipper joined the Art Theatre when it opened and has never left it. She appeared in *Tsar Fyodor*, as I said, and then as Arkadina in Chekhov's *Sea-gull*.

Her interpretation of Arkadina was a wonderful piece of work. Still a young girl, she had to play the part of an aging actress— aging, not old. The latter would have been easier—to abandon her real self completely, to disguise her face with an old woman's make-up, dull the light in her eyes, bow her shoulders, make her motions heavy and sluggish—and the illusion of age might be convincingly created. It was much harder to convey this less pronounced difference between her own age, appearance, voice and motions and those of Arkadina, who, to use her son's words, was "forty-three when he was there, and thirty-five when he wasn't," who wanted "to live and love and wear pretty blouses." To be sure, this was a remarkable production, in which—such was the quality of the acting— it might be said of practically every part that it was the main part in the play. Spectators were struck by the remarkable mood that the genius of Chekhov had created: firmly blended in the acting and staging were the new ideas of Chekhov and the traditions of Russian classical realism. And in this play Olga Knipper received her "baptism of fire" as a Chekhov actress.

The next Chekhov production at the Art Theatre was *Uncle Vanya*, in which Olga Knipper played Helen. This was a part she

enjoyed very much. In a letter to Chekhov she wrote: "How I would like to live again in *Uncle Vanya*!" And indeed, she did live rather than act in the Chekhov productions. To the Chekhov plays she always "came home."

How utterly different were these two parts—Arkadina and Helen: the one energetic, rapacious, knowing what she wanted and out to get it; the other gentle, good and weak. Yet Olga Knipper was brilliant in both.

And final recognition as a great actress came to her when she appeared in *Three Sisters*. As Masha in this play, she reached the zenith of her achievement—there was no part she played better, more truthfully, though she played many, and played them wonderfully. Her Masha was a true embodiment of the simplicity and truth that Stanislavsky preached so passionately. This part, with so few lines, was her most eloquent role. She was genuinely wedded to it. Olga told me herself that when she got her call before the farewell scene with Vershinin, she would close her eyes and pray inwardly that no one might speak to her on the way to the stage, that no one might distract her attention and break into the pain that filled her being to the brim, like a bowl that one is afraid of spilling. And when she said goodbye—practically without a word, it is no exaggeration to say that there was not a woman in the house who did not weep with her; perhaps they wept without tears and their sobs were soundless, but no one could help being moved by the breath of her genuine love and despair. When Maria Yermolova, the famous stage celebrity, saw *Three Sisters* for the first time, she came to Olga Knipper behind the scenes and embraced her with streaming eyes; she had no words to express the emotions that the young actress' performance had stirred in her heart.

The last play Chekhov wrote for the Art Theatre was *The Cherry Orchard*. He used to say—partly joking perhaps—that he had written an "amusing" play. This was not so. He drew, as he always did, a piece of real life, in which, as in real life, merriment was blended with deep sadness, and there were besides prophetic notes of optimism for the future. I might say here that when he began the play, Chekhov meant Ranevskaya to be an old woman, and thought the part might be played by Olga Sadovskaya, whom he greatly admired. For Olga Knipper he planned the part of Charlotte—he had wanted Charlotte to be really gay, and himself failed to notice that she turned out a grotesque, pitiable creature, while Ranevskaya, his principal character, somehow got younger and younger, till she reached a stage where she could be played without hesitation by Olga Knipper.

This is a part in which the actress has appeared for several decades now, and with ever greater perfection. As usually interpreted, Ranevskaya is a not very complex character and was at that time a fairly common type: a silly woman of the landed class, flighty and frivolous, who has lost her connection with her native country and become one of the cosmopolitan creatures, of whom hundreds swarmed to the fashionable resorts and the salons of Paris hotels.

But the part as Chekhov drew it was deeper, and in Olga Knipper's acting you feel it. Her Ranevskaya, frivolous as she is and greedy for a gay and crowded life, knows not only bursts of repentance that send her to look for comfort from Catholic Fathers: she knows greater, purer feelings too. She still has not lost her love for her home, for the "nursery" where she slept as a child, for the lane in which she sees her mother all in white. That makes her different from the "cosmopolitans" for whom nothing is precious, and Olga Knipper knows how to bring it out. Still, the audience look on quite serenely as she leaves the old house to which, actually, she has long been a stranger. Her life has not been in vain: just as her lovely cherry orchard once yielded an abundant crop of fruit, so this rather frivolous woman has given birth to Anya, a girl who, with others like her, is to build a new life and so Ranevskaya has her projection into the future; her drama is not depressing. And Olga Knipper has played the part with ever more remarkable insight as the years have gone by.

Chekhov died, leaving the Art Theatre bereaved. And there was something extraordinarily moving about the production of *Ivanov* after he was gone. As after the death of some dear friend one cannot bear to part with his possessions or books, and fondles them with love and longing, so the theatre now addressed itself to the only Chekhov play it had not yet produced—a play written before the theatre was in existence.

In spite of her fresh loss, or perhaps because of it, Olga Knipper's acting was particularly profound. Her part was that of Ivanov's Jewish wife. Perhaps she recalled how Chekhov, on receiving some of her photographs, had teased her that in one of them she looked "like a little Jewess, very musical"; there were in her rendering elusive, intangible Semitic touches and tones—not "character acting" or imitation, but something that gave an impression of immense difference from the Slavs around her, of the poetry of an "ancient mysterious race." Especially the sad eyes that were characteristic of Jewish women in those days. It was not hard for her to be sad just then.

She left a tremendous impression of untold loneliness. I think of the touching, apologetic notes in her voice as she attempts to revive her husband's love: and of that hopeless reply, which haunted me for so long after, like a quiet requiem: "The flowers are renewed each springtime—but not the joy."

If Olga Knipper had never played anything but her Chekhov parts, she would still be a great actress. But as the artist's brush produces picture after picture, so she created one fresh character after another. She has played over two score parts during her stage career. And that is a lot: for the Art Theatre staged only a very few productions each season; this was one of its innovations at a time when other theatres put on a new play practically every week.

To this day I see with my mind's eye many of the parts she played and feel again what I felt when I saw them first: the sense of

something clear and fresh and charged with important meaning.

Olga Knipper's general culture, her knowledge of life and history helped her to feel both the style of the play and the period. And what contrasts there were between her parts: the saintly Irina in Alexei Tolstoy's *Tsar Fyodor* and the prostitute Nastya in Gorky's *Lower Depths*. Triumph of the artist in the pure, proud Anna Marr (in Hauptmann's *Forsaken*), who wears the ring of a woman who died in exile in Siberia, and the triumph of the passions, the tainted breath of vice, in Teresita (Leonid Andreyev's *Drama of Life*).

Olga Knipper has devoted to the Art Theatre more than forty years of her life and her work has won her the recognition and affection of the people. She has been honoured with the title of People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. and the Order of Lenin; and in 1942 she was awarded a Stalin Prize for her many years of service and outstanding achievements in art.

Olga Knipper's life flows serenely between her work, her books, her music. At any interesting concert you will see her, if only her health permits. But in her serenity there is no indifference.

When, in 1941, she had to go to the Caucasus where she was, by general decree, to rest in safety and where she herself meant to study new parts, she found it quite impossible to "rest quietly" while the country and her beloved Moscow were passing through their grim ordeal.

Her return to Moscow and the theatre made her infinitely happy. Victory brought her the exaltation of a moral and intellectual triumph shared with the entire nation.

...The years were kind to Olga Knipper. Perhaps because she had so often played aging women in her youth no change was to be felt for a long, long time. I remember how a few years ago, at the Chekhov museum jubilee, she played a scene from *Uncle Vanya*. She came on in a white lace dress with red roses, animated and excited, with shining eyes and the old smile playing about her mouth.

Her smile is something I have remembered since the earliest years of our acquaintance: that subtle, slightly mysterious smile of lips just touched with down—a smile that seemed to conceal some happiness that she alone knew, some riddle disclosed to no one else.

Now the answer may be given to this riddle: what that smile concealed was the wisdom of a great actress and a great human personality. Concluding his monograph on the Art Theatre, Nikolai Efros, the well-known critic, wrote:

"The five Chekhov plays are the finest jewels of the new Russian theatre; and the Art Theatre is their true keeper."

Of Olga Knipper I would say: "The Chekhov parts are the finest jewels in her treasury, in her contribution to the history of the Russian stage, and she is entitled to be proud of them."

TATYANA SHCHEPKINA-KUPERNIK

ART NEWS

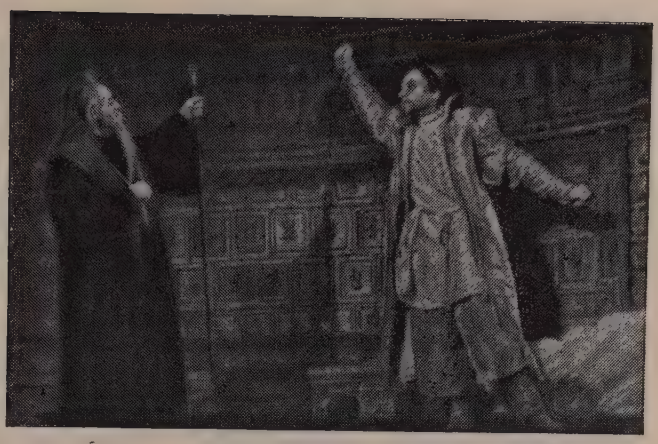
Alexei Tolstoy's *Ivan the Dread* has been staged by Moscow's oldest dramatic theatre, the State Maly Theatre.

The epoch of Tsar Ivan the Dread was a critical period in the history of Russia. The process of the acquisition and unification of the Russian state, begun long before the reign of Ivan, had by this time assumed a character tense and turbulent. The descendants of the ruling princes and the boyars opposed the reforms introduced by the Tsar and were hostile to his home and foreign policies. It required the wisest statesmanship and the unshakable will of an outstanding politician and strategist to steer with a steady hand the huge ship of the Russian state through the storms and hurricanes of the epoch.

Ivan the Dread was a man of this calibre—a remarkable statesman, politician and general and one of the best educated men of his day. No need to wonder at the admiration with which he was regarded by another mighty organizer of the state of Russia—Peter the Great. Many foreign observers of that time ranked Ivan the Dread's reforms very highly. Queen Elizabeth of England is known to have carried on an animated personal correspondence with the Russian Tsar. In her wisdom she understood the growing might of Russia and all the economic advantages that would accrue from friendly relations with Ivan. The correspondence between these two talented statesmen of the 16th century has been published in U.S.A. In the year 1557, Jenkinson wrote that no other European monarch has inspired in his subjects such esteem as the Moscow Tsar. Ivan the Dread possessed a numerous army, a rich Exchequer, tremendous power and that confidence in the great historical future of his country which always leads to victory.

It is this colourful page of Russian history that has been revived by Alexei Tolstoy's *Ivan the Dread*. The performance is produced by Prov Sadovsky, the Maly Theatre art director.

The centre of attention is the image of Tsar Ivan, impersonated with the truth of life and great inward power by Nikolai Solovyov. The talented actor has found the right intonations to convey all the depth of Tsar Ivan's dream of Russia's might and independence. Ivan the Dread lived and reigned in an atmosphere of tense struggle, of tumultuous passions. The dark forces of old boyar Russia are embodied in the Princess Euphrossinya Staritskaya, whose role is conducted with striking realism by Vera Pashennaya. Helen Gogoleva gives a masterly rendering of the part of Maria Temryukovna, Tsar Ivan's favourite wife—a young Circassian princess brought to Moscow from distant Kabardia, who became the great Tsar's faithful spouse. The "blazhenny" (a weak-minded religious fanatic) is played with delicacy and truthfulness by Alexander Gruzinsky.



Scene from Alexei Tolstoy's play "Ivan-the-Dread," at the Maly Theatre

The scenery painted by Paul Sokolov-Skalya revives old Moscovite 16th-century Russia: the Tsar's apartments in the Kremlin, an outskirt of Moscow, a frosty winter day in the Red Square—are pictures of the old Russian life which succeed one another before our eyes. The music by Yuri Shaporin based on the original folk melodies is intimately intertwined with the dramatic action.

For some eighty years now there has existed under the auspices of the Maly Theatre a school of dramatic art. The necessity of promoting scenic education had always been insisted on by progressive theatrical people. It was Alexander Ostrovsky, the great playwright and one of the founders of the dramatic school at Moscow, who said that: "To be an artist it is not enough to know, or to have imagination—you've got to know how things are to be done."

In this, the oldest theatrica school, whole generations of Maly Theatre actors have successively been trained; intimately connected with it is a pleiad of artistic names: Alexander Lensky, Maria Yermolova, Glikeria Fedotova, Nadezhda Medvedeva, Ossip Pravdin... An interesting story is told of the oldest of our Soviet actresses Alexandra Yablochkina, now President of the All-Russian Theatrical Association. When in the year 1885, as a very young girl, a pupil of the school, she had to recite the speech of Pushkin's heroine, Tatiana, at an examination, she was in such a state of nervous excitement that she broke down, burst into tears and nearly rushed off the stage!

Within these walls some eminent actresses such as Eudoxie Turchaninova, Varvara Ryzhova and Vera Pashennaya studied. At the present moment these masters of stagecraft with half a century's experience to their account are sitting in the Small Hall of their old school in the capacity of strict examiners, watching the performances staged by the graduation class of 1945.

The 1945 class of the school numbers seventeen young actors and actresses who came here in the grim autumn of 1941, when the Germans were pressing on Moscow. Many were the difficulties that fell to the lot of these young people through the four years of war; some of their fellow-students joined the army and fell in battle—these seventeen have honestly worked for four years and are about to enter on their career of professional actors. There will be no suspense, no anxious uncertainty, no looking out for an engagement: the government will see to it that they be given suitable employment in one of the many theatres in our country

It is a very good thing that our young actors have at these final examinations shown their capacities in various genres: in the realistic family drama (Maxim Gorky's *The Zykovs*); the poetical fairy-tale (Alexander Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden*); comedy and vaudeville (*A Lesson to Daughters* by Ivan Krylov, and an old vaudeville entitled *Joseph, a Boy of Paris*), and lastly in a modern play dealing with peaceful post-war reconstruction (Valentine Katayev's *My Father's House*).

Very good work has been done in training this group of young actors by Vera Pashennaya, who conducted the course of dramatic art, and her assistant teachers, the producers Michael Gladkov and Irina Polonskaya. In watching the play of the young performers you could see in each his own individuality, his own creative manner and insight into the image impersonated. Their excellent delivery is a joy to the ear—one of the best traditions of the old Maly Theatre.

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre has shown the première of John Priestley's *The Inspector Comes*. "The play," says Alexander Tairov, director of the theatre, "is poignantly modern in conception. In a form originally dramatic it treats the question of man's responsibility for the fate of others, of the inadmissibility of social conditions that can create a background for fascist aggression."

Concurrently the troupe are busy with the staging of *A Visitor to Dinner*, an American comedy by Moss Harte and J. Kaufmann.

A dark-skinned boy is wandering in the mysterious world of the jungle. He has a fearless eye, firm muscles and strong arms. It is Mowgli, the hero of Rudyard Kipling's splendid book, the hero of young readers throughout the world.

The subject of *Mowgli* attracted the interest of Serguei Obraztsov, a master of the Russian puppet theatre and Director of the Central Puppet Theatre in Moscow. This was quite natural, for on what other stage could be presented the marvellous world of the inhabitants of the jungle whom Kipling has endowed with vivid and forceful human characteristics? Where, if not in the puppet theatre, could be shown the treachery of the rapacious tiger Sher-Khan, the bear Baloo's kindly good nature, the lazy grace of Bagheera, the black panther, the amusing prattle of the fussy porcupine or the naive cruelty of the monkeys?

The artist, Valentine Andriyevich, has created a whole gallery of animal-puppets combining zoological truth with scenic expressiveness. In the hands of the experts who manipulate them, the puppets come to life—their leaps and antics, their slightest movements, creating a complete illusion of the jungle world.

The work of an actor of the puppet-stage is an art as complicated as it is delicate. This is brought home to you as you see the two puppets of contrasting characters in the hands of Simeon Samodur: the rapacious Sher-Khan, a huge spotted cat, always ready for a leap, and Kaa, the python, lazy and slow—a gigantic snake, for whom all the inhabitants of the jungle deferentially make way.

Against the background of the motley world of beasts the puppet representing the boy Mowgli seems somehow to lose in strength and relief. It lacks that expressiveness, that wealth of movement and animated mimicry which distinguishes the animal-puppets. This is the heel of Achilles in the *Mowgli* performance which none the less marks a new and interesting stride forward on the road of the puppet theatre's development as a new and important genre of scenic art.

Carmen is revived at the Bolshoy Theatre in a new staging by producer Reuben Simonov, one of Eugene Vakhtangov's closest disciples.

"What we mainly aim at," says Simonov, "is the creation of a realistic performance. Great attention has been given to the mass scenes in an endeavour to show the crowd as a living entity. Despite the tragic denouement of the plot, we sense the optimistic nature of its content. You are carried away by the life-force of Bizet's sparkling music."

The scenery belongs to Peter Konchalovsky, who, in the year 1910, together with the famous Russian painter Vassili Surikov, made a journey to Spain, bringing away with him numerous sketches and drawings. The best forces of the Bolshoy Theatre are engaged in the new production. Alexander Melik-Pashayev is conducting.

Sign of the full-blooded theatrical life going on throughout the country is the number of new productions given this season in the fourth and victorious year of the war.

At Petrozavodsk, capital of the Karelo-Finnish Republic, we have the première of *Burglary*, a play from the pen of Minna Kant, the Finnish playwright, written in the eighties of last century and showing the life of the Finnish village in those days. Folklore material is widely used: proverbs, sayings, songs and dances.

Constantine Simonov's *Russians* is on at the Byelorussian Dramatic Theatre at Minsk.

The Tsar's Bride, Rimsky-Korsakov's classical opera, has been revived at Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan.

At Kazan (Tatar Republic) the première of *Farida*, a new national opera, took place, the composer M. Yudin skilfully intertwining native Tatar melodies into the texture of his music.

At Kiev we have Maxim Gorky's *Children of the Sun* and *An Officer of the Fleet*, a modern play by Alexander Kron.

The Vladivostok Theatre gave the première of R. Sheridan's *Dueña*.

A new production of Ostrovsky's comedy *Talents and Admirers* is the contribution of the Stalinabad Dramatic Theatre.

At Vitebsk was held the première of Nikolai Pogodin's *Kremlin Chimes*.

The Rook, a Spring Bird, a play dedicated to the memory of the Russian revolutionary Nikolai Baumann, is the name of a new pro-

Scene from "Mowgli," at the Moscow Puppet Theatre

duction on the stage of the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow.

The Merry Sinner by L. Solovyov and V. Vitkovich, produced by the Moscow Theatre of Satire, tells of a popular hero of Oriental legends, Khodja Nassreddin, a gay scamp, a witty and resourceful defender of the oppressed.

My Life in Art, Stanislavsky's famous book, has always been widely read by Soviet theatrical people. A translation into the Uzbek language has recently been completed by Javad Abidov, the Uzbek actor. *An Actor's Work on Himself*, by the same author, is also being translated in Uzbekistan.

A Lettish translation of Anton Chekhov's plays has recently come out in Riga. The collection includes *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Sea-Gull*, *Uncle Vania* and *Ivanov*.

War and Peace, an opera on the subject of Leo Tolstoy's novel, is the title of a new work by Serguei Prokofyev.

The dramatic plan is original and bold. The basic idea of heroic patriotism is proclaimed by the choral epigraph and symphonic overture. The first two acts are Peace, the action centering around the dramatic love story of Natasha Rostova and Prince Andrei Bolkonsky. But toward the end of Act II there arises the anxious foreboding of the coming storm. Acts III and IV are War. We have the scenes preceding the Battle of Borodino, Napoleon's headquarters and Moscow in flames. In Act V the meeting between the mortally-wounded Prince Andrei and Natasha is the culminating scene of the lyrical theme, while the picture of the retreating Napoleonic troops completes the story of the great historical epic. The choral epigraph of the opening scene is echoed in the concluding choral apotheosis.

In Prokofyev's new opera there come to the fore the strong ties linking the composer with two trends of Russian classical opera—the lyrical drama of Chaikovsky on the one hand, and Mussorgsky's popular drama on the other. Manifesting itself in the scene of the ball, in the image of Natasha and of Prince Andrei is the Chaikovsky tradition, but it is the spirit of Mussorgsky that breathes in the choral mass-scenes, and the poignant precision of the intonations.

Prokofyev's music is always new, fresh and manifestly individual. *War and Peace* abounds in melody which, though rich and plastic, is simple and clings to one's memory. The epic folk element is widely developed, particularly impressive being the monumental choruses of the people, soldiers and militia in the scene before the Battle of Borodino.

The first concert performance of the opera was held at Moscow under the direction of Samuel Samosud, who gave a profoundly introspective reading of Prokofyev's score. The State Symphonic Orchestra and Republican Choral Ensemble (conducted by Alexander Stepanov) rang out in sonorous harmony. The image of Field Marshal Kutuzov was created by Alexander Pirogov; Alexei Ivanov was good in the character of Prince Andrei.

Scene from "The Merry Sinner" at the Satire Theatre

The production of Prokofyev's opera is an important event in Soviet musical life.

The Musical Radio-Journal for Children is an interesting novelty in the field of Soviet broadcasting. A number of outstanding Soviet composers have volunteered their services. Dmitri Shostakovich has kindly consented to act as editor.

It is the aim of the journal to acquaint children in easily comprehensive form with the main principles of musical art, new works of Soviet composers and interesting facts and episodes from the history of music. Each programme is, properly speaking, a comprehensive concert-lecture embracing themes of the greatest variety. Uniting the different parts of the journal are explanatory verses by the poetess Natalie Konchalovskaya. The journal opens with an original "Musical Cover," the contribution of composer Nikolai Chemberdji. The invisible "pages" of the journal turn over to the melodious chiming of tiny bells. The first of these musical pages bears an introductory statement by Dmitri Shostakovich. He reads it himself at the microphone, the children hear the popular composer's voice telling them in simple words about the interesting things they will hear in the journal.

Page two is a story called *The Violin String*, an episode of the Patriotic War by Constantine Paoustovsky. As the subject develops, the reading of the story is intimately blended with fragments from Chaikovsky's Violin Concerto.

In the following pages comes Emile Ghillels, the pianist, playing Liszt's *Campanella*; he is followed by George Vinogradov, singing Glinka's miniature, *The Lark*, as an illustration to the one-hundred and forty-first anniversary of the great Russian composer's birth.

In the section of "Novelties" are new songs specially written for children by Anatole Alexandrov and Dmitri Kabalevsky. An item of the greatest interest is a talk given by Serguei Prokofyev on the subject of "Can there Be an End to Melody?" In order to convince the children of the analogy between musical structure and his favourite game of chess, the composer shows that sound-combinations are literally inexhaustible.

The clever "Miscellaneous" section acquaints the young listener with curious facts and amusing episodes from the musical past.

There's another department, too, the "Chronicle," that tells of current events in Soviet musical life.

At a festive meeting of the Musical Section of the U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), composer Serguei Prokofyev was presented with the Gold Medal of the British Royal Philharmonic Society.

Present at the meeting were: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Great Britain, Sir Archibald K. Kerr; members of the British Military Mission to Moscow; members of the British Embassy; the President of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Mr. Edwin Smith; members of the British delegation of scientists to the jubilee session of the Academy of Sciences of U.S.S.R., headed by Mr. Robert Robinson; representatives of Moscow musical life and correspondents of the Soviet and foreign press. Speeches of greeting were delivered by the President of VOKS, Vladimir Kemenov, Sir Archibald K. Kerr and Acting President of the Committee for Affairs of Art, Alexander Solodovnikov.

In his answering speech, Serguei Prokofyev stressed that his being awarded the Gold Medal must be regarded as an expression of the sympathy and friendly feeling existing between the Soviet and the English peoples.

The newsreels of the Patriotic War have been enriched by *Berlin*, a new documental film, chronicling the final decisive battle against fascist Germany, the capture of Berlin and the unconditional surrender of the German armed forces.

On the creation of this film forty cameramen worked under the direction of producer Julius Raizman, the stills of the Berlin fighting being shot in the fire of battle.

The spectator is immediately thrust into the tense atmosphere of war. The street fighting in Berlin is not yet over, but the Imperial Chancellery is already in the hands of the Red Army. Here is Hitler's private study. Was it in scrutinizing this globe that he stood contemplating his criminal plans of world conquest? These ideas were to be consistently carried out by a Germany armed to the teeth. Disconnected Europe was overrun by fascist troops, the hitlerite armies had invaded Africa; London, the heart of Great Britain, had become the target for violent attacks from the air. German submarines were sinking ships off the coasts of America.

The situation is vividly illustrated by the stills of German trophy newsreels cleverly introduced into the film. Transported by her victories, Germany treacherously threw her vast forces on the land of peaceful labour—the Soviet Union. The world is stunned by Germany's military successes. Many think that there is no power that can arrest the flood of the German invasion. But it was the Red Army that in hard and bloody fighting shattered the fascist war-machine.

The offensive on Berlin was launched from the banks of the ancient Russian river, the great Volga.

We are shown the German armies rolling back, Germany's defeat marked by river-boundaries: the Volga, Don, Desna, Dnieper, Bug, Niemen and finally the Oder, the last water-barrier before Berlin, called by the Germans themselves the "river of fate."

Preparations for the decisive battle are under way. Thousands of tons of fuel poured into underground reservoirs. Trains carrying war-material coming up in a continuous flow. The muzzles of mighty guns pointed at Berlin... Here is Marshal Zhukov returning from the Supreme Command H. Q. He has brought with him an order from Stalin to launch the offensive, capture Berlin and raise the banner of victory over the city. In Zhukov's H.Q. illustrious generals are assembled in conference.

As the night wanes twenty-two thousand guns belch forth upon the enemy an avalanche of hurricane fire. The night-squall of flame, the winged clouds of Soviet aircraft darkening the German sky—it all makes a marvellous picture. Tanks are thrown into the breach; following in their wake is the artillery. Marshal Zhukov on the commanding point, directing the titanic battle, Marshal Konev's troops from the Ukrainian front going into action. The outcome of the battle decided by the suddenness and force of the thrust. By April 21st, the Red Army had come up to Berlin.

The desperately resisting German capital was gripped in an iron ring pressing down on it inexorably. Here are the German soldiers fighting in the streets of Berlin. The episodes of the street fighting are exceptionally impressive. The Russian soldiers are dashing forward, making their way through the burning buildings. Fighting for every floor of the houses and fighting below in underground Berlin, occupying one town quarter after another, the Soviet troops are forcing ahead towards the centre of the city. The inhabitants are seen crawling out of basements, cellars and shelters. And then again—another still from an old German newsreel—thousands of hands welcoming a showy procession of Hitlerites. Now these hands are eagerly stretched out for bread, which is being handed out from a cart by a girl in the military Red Army uniform.

The fighting is approaching the centre of the city. Russian tanks breaking through to the

Brandenburg Gate. Two hundred metres in all are left to the building of the Reichstag. The fire of battle has reached its culminating point. Recorded to the end of time are these pictures of Russian soldiers running up with the banner to the gloomy building of the Reichstag, ascending the steps. Now they are on the roof! Berlin lies prostrate at their feet. The banner of victory is waving over the capital of Germany.

On May 2nd, 1945, Berlin capitulated. Through the wreck of the streets we see people liberated by the Red Army. Frenchmen, Belgians, Americans, Poles, Norwegians, English. The flags of all nations greeting the liberators. Germany has ceased to be a prison of the peoples.

In all its details the film has recorded the signing of the act of complete and unconditional surrender. We see the entire procedure of that historical event. The German Field Marshal, General Keitel, has arrived on the scene for the historic occasion. He has one more opportunity of driving through the streets of Berlin. "But this is not the same Berlin, not the same Keitel," remarks the announcer.

The epilogue of the greatest war in the history of mankind. The spectator is transported to the streets and squares of jubilant Moscow, illuminated by thousands of lights, the flares of rockets, the many-coloured rays of searchlights, the fiery glow of the victory salvo.

Berlin is a film executed with consummate mastery and inspired with genuine creativeness.

Sophia Vishnevetskaya was known to Moscovites almost exclusively as a painter of theatrical scenery. She had created in association with Helen Fradkina the setting of numerous productions: Mérimée's comedies, *Fairy-tale* by Michael Svetlov and Gogol's classical comedy *The Inspector-General*. Neither did the artist lose touch with the theatre in wartime; it is she who is responsible for the scenery of *Before the Walls of Leningrad* staged at the Theatre of the Baltic Fleet. But now Sophia Vishnevetskaya has transferred her interests to picture painting, her work with the fleet and the lengthy sojourn in beleaguered Leningrad prompting her to set off on the road of artistic reporting. The suite entitled *Leningrad and the Baltic in the Patriotic War* is a summary of the painter's work during the four years of war. It contains about a hundred drawings in pencil and Indian ink. Vishnevetskaya is happiest in war landscape. The austere scenery of the Baltic, the changing hues of its skies, are depicted lovingly and with sincere truthfulness. The series of Indian-ink sketches of Baltic ships at their moorings are very well done. Very interesting, too, are the Kronstadt studies of ships sailing out to sea. The 1944 paintings—sketches of liberated Tallinn, the cliffs in northern regions of the Baltic—are all excellent in their way.

At Murmansk, in the House of the Sailors of the Northern Fleet an exhibition of the paintings of Soviet artists has been opened. The department of historical painting is represented by authorized copies of well-known pictures by Boris Johanson, Paul Sokolov-Skalya and others. There is a large section named "Heroic Towns," dedicated to the defence of Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad. Among others may be seen Constantine Yuon's "Moscow in the War" and Dimitri Shmarinov's "Stalingrad Is Ours." The landscapes by Igor Grabar, Serguei Gerassimov, Vassili Baksheyev and others are all greatly admired by the numerous visitors.

Etchings, water-colours and drawings, the efforts of twenty-five years of the painter's life, are on show in Moscow at the exhibition of the pictures of Sarah Shor. The work produced during the Great Patriotic War is particularly worthy of attention.

At Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, an exhibition of works by Armenian artists is enjoying well-deserved success. About six hundred objects are on show: paintings, black-and-white drawings, sculpture, and objects of applied art.

Among the visitors present at the opening of the exhibition was the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, accompanied by Mr. A. Day.

Two interesting exhibitions are dividing the attention of the Far-Eastern city of Khabarovsk. On show in the local Art Museum are some works of old Russian masters, among them Ilya Repin, Ivan Shyshkin, Isaak Levitan, and Valentine Serov.

In connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Amur Flotilla, an exhibition of paintings by marine artists is now on view. The pictures deal with historical themes, episodes from the life of the flotilla.

The guest of honour at an evening held at the U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) was Academician of Architecture, Victor Vesnin, who was invested with the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Victor Vesnin is the first Russian architect to have been decorated with this medal, founded some hundred years ago and awarded annually by the King of Great Britain for distinguished achievements in the domain of architecture.

In reply to the enthusiastic greetings, Academician Vesnin said: "I regard this reward as a symbol of the friendship between the architects of the Soviet Union and those of Great Britain, which will grow still stronger in the years of the coming great peaceful construction."

An exhibition of paintings by Jacob Romas opened in Moscow. On view are sketches made within the last five years in the environs of Moscow, on the Volga, the Dnieper, the Caspian Sea, at Kronstadt and Leningrad.

In his paintings of the sea the artist is at his best. His pictures are true to life, his

colours are rich and varied. Romas' latest exhibition testifies to the penetrating eye and efficient brush-work of the artist.

"Uzbekistan Artists of the Last Twenty Years" is the name of an exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculpture now on view at Tashkent, capital of Soviet Uzbekistan. Close on a thousand works by eighty artists are exhibited. The principal theme is Uzbekistan: the life of the Uzbek people and Uzbekistan nature.

Printed and blocked fabrics, carvings in wood and bone by the artists Eugene Povstyany, Vassili Vornaskov, Serguei Yevangulov and Mikhail Rakov are on view in an exhibition hall.

The walls of this small hall seem to be covered with a variety of costly fabrics. In reality they are cheap materials: muslin, sacking, chintz and calico which the hand of the artist has covered with colourful patterns. Here are the works of Eugene Povstyany, one of the best masters of the traditional Russian art of coloured prints.

One of the patterns called "The Fair" attracts all-round attention. The bright, vivid colours of the merry go-round, dolls, flowers, toys—all mingle with the jubilant mood of the fair. Very interesting, too, are the patterns "The Moscow Salvo," "Crimson Banners," "On a Stroll." Particularly effective are the prints on glass fabrics.

Mikhail Rakov, an artist woodcarver, known for his delicate, fanciful work, contributed much to the revival of Kholmogor woodcarving. Samples of Rakov's work at the exhibition are a miniature jewel casket with exquisite filigree work of a "Troika" design, a casket with a winter landscape, several delicate powder-boxes and two notebooks bearing the designs "M. Lomonosov" and "The Fox and the Grapes."

Serguei Yevangulov has a show case all to himself. The artist aims at introducing in his carvings sculptural lines. In "Ivan Sussanin" Yevangulov shows man against a background of nature. The tiniest details are carved in the bone.

In the miniature "Ship" carved in ivory we see the swelling sails, the lace work of the tiny stair, the rippling waves. The little fishes, the masks fashioned from walnut shells and the stones of fruits are delightful to look at. Yevangulov, too, has two medals on show bearing the effigy of Stalin and executed in a stern, noble style.

Vassili Vornaskov shows his skill in woodcarved platters, vases and vessels with figures painted within an intricately intertwined floral ornament. Of these "African Landscape" is most effective.

IDYLL IN THE VATICAN

Kasimir Pape, the "ambassador" of the Polish emigree "government" to the Vatican, is still considered there to be the "representative of the only authority recognized by the Church"

A tender Pope for Pape

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

NEWS AND VIEWS

THE CELEBRATION OF THE 220th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE U.S.S.R.

The celebration of the 220th anniversary fo the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in Moscow and Leningrad between June 15th and 30th became an international scientific event. One hundred and twenty-two representatives of the United Nations had been invited to take part in the Jubilee Session. Special Soviet planes had been sent to fetch them from London, Paris and Teheran. Among our British guests were: Sir Robert Robinson, representing the Royal Society, the Astronomer Royal Sir Harold Spencer Jones, Professor F. A. Donnan, Professor Max Born. Among the Americans: Professor Irving Langmuir, Professor Harlow Shapley, Professor James Mac Bain, Professor Detlev Bronk. Among the members of the French delegation were M. Maurice Caullery, President of the Academy of Sciences of Paris, M. Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the famous physicist and director of the National Centre of pure and applied scientific research, and M. J. Tréfouel, director of the Pasteur Institute.

When Peter the Great, after visiting the Royal Society in London and the Academy of Sciences in Paris, of which he became a member in 1717, decided to have a research centre of the kind, he consulted on the matter a number of foreign scientists. Some of them were invited. Peter I would have liked Isaac Newton to come to St. Petersburg, but the great British scientist declined that invitation.

The Emperor donated to the future Academy his private library, his collections of rare terratological specimens, of minerals, insects, butterflies and fossils. They formed the nucleus of the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., which today contains nearly eleven million volumes, and of its museums of Anthropology, Ethnography, Mineralogy, Zoology, and Paleaontology, which the members of the Session visited with the liveliest interest.

According to the idea of its founder, the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, created by Imperial ukaze dated February 8th, 1724, was to be more than a learned society of scientists. A research centre for promoting science and studying Russia's natural wealth, it was at the same time a University and public school to train specialists in the various professions, artisans, technicians and research workers needed by the great reformer of the Russian State.

Peter the Great did not live to witness the inauguration of the activity of the Academy in 1725, but on his death-bed he worked out the plan for an expedition to Kamchatka to discover whether Asia bordered on America. This was the first of the great geographical expeditions organized by the Academy of Sciences. Since then the systematic exploration of the country with a view to utilizing its mineral, vegetable and animal resources remained, together with mathematics, among the main items of the Academy's activity. In the 18th century its Geographical Department drew up maps of Russia and Siberia and published geographical atlases.

In his *Outline of a Plan of Scientific and Technical Work* of April 1918, Lenin put before the Academy of Sciences the task of studying the economic conditions of different regions, so as to furnish scientific data for electrification and for the forthcoming reorganization of industry at the source of raw material supplies. During the last quarter of a century more than five hundred expeditions have been sent out by the Academy to the farthest corners of the Soviet Union prospecting and searching—according to scientific data—for oil, coal, minerals, iron ore, manganese, rare metals and arable land. This scientific study of the natural wealth—mineral, agricultural and hydraulic—together with the technical discoveries, made possible the development of the modern heavy industry of the Soviet Union, which contributed to the Red Army's victory.

Russian cadres of scientists grew under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences. Twenty years after its foundation, in 1745, it elected as member the great Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, son of an Archangel fisherman, who by his genius and hard work reached the heights of science. Chemist, astronomer, geographer, mathematician and poet, the founder of physical chemistry and creator of the Russian literary language, it was he who organized the first mosaic workshops and chemical laboratories in Russia. Peter the Great's portrait and the famous Battle of Poltava, which he laid out in mosaic, are exhibited in the halls of the Leningrad Academy of Sciences, on the occasion of the 220th anniversary celebration, together with documents and unpublished manuscripts showing the development of Russian science from the 18th century down to our days.

In the 19th century the Academy of Sciences counted among its members the mathematician P. Chebyshov, the astronomer F. Bredikhin, the chemist A. Butlerov, the physicist V. Petrov and others.

The Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has ever since its foundation attached the greatest importance to international scientific

relations, electing to its membership distinguished men of science representing all fields of knowledge and different countries. France was represented among others by the botanist Charles Linné, the naturalist Buffon, the philosophers Voltaire and Diderot, the mathematician Laplace, the bacteriologist Pasteur; Great Britain by such famous names as Davy, Faraday, Darwin, Lord Thompson Kelvin; Germany, the freedom-loving Germany, intrinsically hostile to the spirit of hitlerism, by men like Kant or Goethe. The first American to become an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg was Benjamin Franklin, elected in 1789. Science, by its very essence, knows no frontiers, and scientific international collaboration constitutes the most important condition of its progress.

The celebration of the 220th anniversary of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., which enabled the scientists of twenty-two countries to meet freely and to discuss scientific problems, assumed the character of an international congress of scientists, the first after the war. This is only a beginning. The cultural ties between the scientists of the United Nations are going to gain in future in frequency and steadiness.

During the Session, celebration meetings were held at the Bolshoy Theatre and the Hall of Columns in Moscow and at the Philharmonic in Leningrad. In his opening speech, Vladimir Komarov, then President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., stressed the collective and international character of scientific research. The U.S.S.R., he said, has a plan of scientific activity which, while favouring the free development of pure science, orientates the research workers towards actual problems and coordinates their work in the general interest, towards the common aim before us. Nicholas Bruyevich, General Secretary of the Academy, spoke of the scientific achievements obtained through this coordination of effort, notably with regard to the activity of the Soviet scientists during the war, which contributed so much to the victory of the Red Army.

The role of the Academy in the progress of science and the development of the different branches of knowledge was shown in reports dedicated to the great Russian schools of science. Professor Nikolai Zelinsky read a report on the development of organic chemistry, Vladimir Obruchev reviewed the geological and geographical investigations of the country, Boris Delaunay spoke of Chebyshov and the Russian school of mathematics, Boris Yuriev reported on the Soviet school in aerodynamics; Leon Orbeli spoke of Pavlov and the Russian school of physiology, and Ivan Meshchaninov read a report on a new doctrine in linguistics.

In the course of the celebration Session the foreign delegates addressed the audience congratulating the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. on the occasion of its 220th anniversary. Sir Robert Robinson spoke on behalf of the Royal Society, Professor Maurice Caullery on behalf of the Paris Academy of Sciences, Professor Harlow Shapley on behalf of research institutes of the United States. Representatives of the Academies of Sciences of Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, India and Yugoslavia also took the chair.

During the anniversary celebrations, the Academy's eight Departments (Physics and Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology and Geography, Technology, History and Philosophy, Literature and Philology, Law) met in special sessions. Soviet and foreign scientists read papers on their latest research work. At the Chemistry Department papers by professors Langmuir, Hinshalwood, Mac Bain, and Svedberg met with particular success.

In addition to the scientific conferences and celebration meetings the programme of the Jubilee Session included visits to institutes, laboratories, museums and exhibitions. The Kapitza Institute of Physical Problems, the Frumkin Electrochemical Institute, the Semyonov Institute of Physical Chemistry in Moscow, the Komarov Botanical Institute and the Pavlov Physiological Institute in Leningrad, were among the most popular.

The exhibition of the defence of Leningrad, showing by what heroic effort on the part of the people and of the Red Army the German advance was brought to a halt at the very gates of the city, and the ruins of the palaces of Peterhof and Pushkin, made an unforgettable impression on the visitors. Pulkovo, once famous for its Astronomical Observatory, is now merely a hill covered by charred trees and ruins. Grass now grows in the shell-holes and the swallows have built their nests in the ruins of the shattered dome. The Observatory will be rebuilt, and the plans have already been drawn up. German prisoners are clearing away the débris.

The excursions to Yasnaya Polyana, Leo Tolstoy's country-house which is now a museum, and on the Volga-Moscow Canal were a great success in spite of the rain.

The celebration of the 220th anniversary of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. closed on the 30th of June with a reception given at the Kremlin. In the brilliantly lighted gilded great hall of the Palace, the Soviet Government, headed by Stalin and Molotov, gave a dinner party for the members of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and their foreign guests.

The following morning, at dawn, Soviet planes took off from the Moscow aerodrome carrying the foreign scientists to their respective capitals, to Paris, London, Warsaw, Teheran and the United States.

LYDIA BACH

* * *

The work of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in the field of literature and language is concentrated in five institutes: the Institute of Russian Language, the Marr Institute of Linguistics and Thought, the Orientology Institute, the Institute of Literature and the Gorky Institute of World Literature.

Far from interrupting scientific work for even a single day, the four-year Patriotic War has set new tasks before the scientists and confronted them with new demands.

Especially far-reaching was the reorganization of work in the linguistic institutes. It called for many new dictionaries, dictionaries of military terminology in the languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union, and pocket dictionaries of the Russian and various national languages spoken in the U.S.S.R. The Red Army's advance westwards, beyond the borders of its native land, gave rise to an urgent demand for special conversation guides in the languages of the countries entered by the Russian troops. Pocket conversation guides were rapidly compiled giving the most current expressions in the form of questions and answers. A total of twenty-three such conversation guides have been published. The personnel of the institutes furthermore translated numerous documentary materials for the military organizations. The war work, however, did not interfere with the fulfilment of the basic plans.

During the war years academic grammar books have been compiled in a number of languages (Uzbek, Kazakh, Mari and others). Considerable work has been accomplished in the compilation of Russo-national (Kirghiz, Kazakh, Mari, Bashkirian, Kara-Kalpak) dictionaries and the publication was completed of an Azerbaijanian dictionary in four volumes. Under the guidance of Professor Alexeyev, the Academy's oriental scholars completed the compilation of a voluminous Chinese dictionary and compiled a dictionary of the Mongolian language. N. I. Konrad directed the compilation of a Japanese hieroglyphic dictionary. I. J. Krachkovsky, a member of the Academy, made a study of Arabian philology, and V. M. Alexeyev studied Chinese folk epics. The new languages and literature of India were the subjects which engaged the attention of Professor Barannikov. During the last few years Soviet scientists have completed the commentary-supplemented translation of treatises on military art by the two Chinese classical writers, Sun-dzy and U-dzy, published in a complete and scientifically-verified edition for the first time.

Noteworthy among the endeavours relating to the Russian and other Slav languages is the *Outlines of the History of the Russian Literary Language of the Older Period*, and the extensive course of introduction to Slav philology now being compiled by Professor Derzhavin.

The war has not interrupted the energetic work of the literary scholars. Yet before the war the institutes of literature had undertaken a study of the history of Russian literature from the ancient times to our days (ten volumes) and also commenced the compilation of the histories of West-European literature: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish and of the United States of America. These works naturally represent collective endeavours, and they absorbed a vast amount of new materials. Apart from bringing out the artistic merits of each writer and his role in the development of national and world culture, much attention has been paid to revealing the relation between art and the progress of the people, the struggle for the realization of the moral ideals of mankind.

Special attention has been paid to the history of Soviet poetry, prose and drama, to its connection with the literature of the past and with West-European literature.

The compilation of monographs about individual writers, which may be regarded as supplements to the above-mentioned efforts on the history of literature, was likewise continued. Voluminous essays are being prepared about Pushkin, Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Gorky, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rabelais, Romain Rolland and other men of letters.

Fundamental works have been prepared for publishing during the war years: they include the history of Russian critica literature (in fifteen volumes), the history of literary research in Russia (in three volumes) and the history of Russian folklore (in three volumes). Extensive work is under way at present to collect Soviet folklore and the folklore relating to the Great Patriotic War, in particular.

Critical essays prepared for the press include monographs about Belinsky and Pissarev, and work is in progress on a monograph about Chernyshevsky.

Jambul Jabayev, the Bard of Kazakhstan is dead. A lifetime of almost a century has come to an end, the life of a poet whose verses were known throughout the land, whose venerable figure and penetrating gaze of the keen old eyes, the grey beard and great fox-fur hat were familiar to every man, woman and child in the country.

Jambul Jabayev was born in February 1846, only nine years after the tragic death of Pushkin, a decade before the opening of the great epic of Sevastopol, when Leo Tolstoy was a youth of eighteen as yet unknown to fame, and Charles Dickens a little over thirty years old.

A faithful son of his people, Jambul gave to them his songs inspired by the national scenery of his land, singing of courage and love, of the sufferings of the poor and the injustice of the rich...

The Great October Socialist Revolution found Jambul an old man of seventy. With a youthful fervour the folk poet responded to the long-awaited emancipation of the people of Kazakhstan. The verses of Jambul became a living link between the native poems, handed down by word of mouth, with their beginnings

Jambul Jabayev

rooted deep in the dim past of their country, and the progressive Soviet literature. An inexhaustible gift of song, a language sonorous and fraught with imagery and skill in blending the traditional forms of folk poetry with a new content, brought fame to Jambul. His verses are repeated from mouth to mouth in the steppes of his native Kazakhstan, learnt by heart by the boys and girls in the schools of Moscow and printed in the army newspapers...

The grim trials of the war breathed a new strength into the heart of the old bard. When the Germans were marching on Moscow, surrounding Leningrad, pressing forward to the Volga, the inspired lines of his song sounded like a passionate call to battle. His *Songs of War*, his last book, are a contribution of considerable significance to Soviet poetry.

With the death of Jambul Soviet literature has lost a national poet to whom it was given to preserve far into old age a heart of youth.

Vikenti Veressayev, a prominent Soviet writer, has died at the age of seventy-eight. He was born at Tula in the year 1867, in the family of a physician. Veressayev began to write at the age of eighteen and had already in the nineties of last century gained a wide popularity by his books *Pathless* and *An Epidemic* which met with warm sympathy in the advanced circles of Russia.

A representative figure of the progressive Russian intelligentsia, Veressayev, throughout a long lifetime, responded as writer and public man to every event in the political and social life of his country. A man of deep and versatile learning, physician and philologist, Veressayev has created a number of books which were very popular with a large reading public. In his *Notes of a Doctor, The Turn of the Road, At the War, To Life*, topical problems were tackled ably and fearlessly. Veressayev worked indefatigably and efficiently in the domain of the history of literature and the translation of fiction from foreign languages into Russian. His works on Pushkin, Gogol, and researches into the works of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are widely known. He has left us a number of translations of the ancient Greek poets. The last years of his life found him zealously working on new translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Living in Veshenskaya, a quiet little village by the Don, is the well-known writer, Michael Sholokhov. It is here that were passed the years of his childhood and early youth and were written several of his books, among them *Quiet Flows the Don* and *The Soil Upturned*. Sholokhov lives and writes in close touch with the people—the main hero of his literary canvases.

In 1945, Sholokhov completed the fortieth year of his life. The occasion was a red-letter day in the stanitsa (as a Cossack village is called). From outlying places, friends, neighbours and admirers came to wish the writer many happy returns of the day. Sholokhov's writings are flesh of the flesh of the Don Cossacks. On his pages they find themselves and their lives described in a stirringly life-like manner. Evenings were arranged in schools and clubs throughout the stanitsas in the vicinity of Veshenskaya devoted to Sholokhov's works. A popular meeting was held at the local House of Culture. Lugovaya, a local school mistress, read a paper on the literary activities of Sholokhov. Then the floor was given to the guest of honour and Sholokhov, whom it is generally no easy task to persuade to speak in public, talked long and willingly to his fellow countrymen of his work and plans for future writings. Then youths and girls, and aged Cossack women, and men with drooping grey moustaches were seen ascending the platform. And the native long drawn-out steppe songs resounded through the hall and there was a whirl and sparkle of the dashing Cossack dance—a people were honouring their writer with a show of their native art.

In the year 1921, there died at Poltava an outstanding Russian writer and big figure in public life—Vladimir Korolenko. His voluminous literary heritage was left in the charge of his family—a wife and two daughters. They sorted and put in order the writer's archives, his rough drafts and manuscripts. Shortly before the war his widow died and the cares entailed by the task they had taken on themselves now fell on the daughters—Sophia and Natalia. Year by year Korolenko's books were published under the editorship of the two sisters and it was they who prepared for printing a one-volume edition of the writer's works comprising some thirteen hundred pages.

In 1927 a museum bearing the name of Korolenko was set up in the house at Poltava where he had lived and died. During the war the Germans, occupying Poltava, burnt the house

to the ground but luckily the museum treasures had been evacuated in good time far into the rear. At the present moment the best part of the manuscripts and other literary material, among them the author's unpublished correspondence with Gorky, are in Moscow, in the depositories of the Lenin Library of the U.S.S.R.

Soviet literary circles have marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens, whose name enjoys great popularity in Russia. His books are known to have been an unfailing source of joy to people like Gogol and Belinsky, Leo Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. The prominent Russian critic, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, writing in his diary, said that he had become a devoted friend of the great English novelist. Vladimir Korolenko, in an excellent sketch entitled *My First Acquaintance with Dickens* (published in the No. 9, 1944, issue of our magazine), tells of the powerful impression produced on him when as a child he had read *Dombey and Son*.

The novels of Dickens are in great demand at all Soviet libraries, favourites of young people and adults alike. Performances of the *Cricket on the Hearth* and the *Pickwick Club* have scored successes behind the foot-lights of the Art Theatre and in 1944 *A Strange Gentleman*, an early play of Dickens, was staged by the students in their final year at the State Institute of Theatrical Art.

Tamara Sillman, a talented young scholar, taking her Doctor of Literature degree, read before the Institute of World Literature under the Academy of Sciences a brilliant thesis on the works of the great English novelist.

In connection with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the writer's death an evening dedicated to his memory was held at the Central Library of Foreign Languages in Moscow. An exhaustive paper was read on the occasion by Eugene Lann, dealing with the life and writings of Charles Dickens, mentioning incidentally that the first translation of Dickens into a foreign European language was into Russian.

No better expression of the Russian reader's attitude towards Dickens can be found than Gorky's words when he said: "Dickens has remained to me a writer before whom I bow my head in esteem: he is a man who is to an amazing degree master of that most difficult of arts—love for Man."

The age-long friendship binding the Slav peoples has been cemented in the years of the struggle jointly waged by the Slavonians against fascism. And it is of this close-knit and deep-felt relationship that was born the interest of the Russian people for their Slav brethern beyond the borders.

The new programme of the State Ensemble of folk-dance under the direction of Igor Moisseyev is made up of the dances of Slav nationalities and acquaints the Soviet spectator with the dance folklore of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The Ensemble have taken their task seriously, the mounting of the dances having been preceded by thorough-going research work. Among the experts whose advice was sought are Academician Boris Assafyev and Professor Zdenek Nejedly, a prominent man in Czechoslovakian cultural life. The Ensemble have succeeded not only in skilfully handing the picturesque ethnographic colour, melodies and movements but have embodied in the dance the national characteristics revealing the soul of their people.

The Krakovyak, performed by V. Nikitina and N. Danilov of the Igor Moisseyev Ensemble

Extremely interesting is the *Yugoslav Suite*, into which enter Serbian dances, a Macedonian women's dance and a warlike dance of the Montenegrians. There is grace and gusto pervaded by a romantic glamour in the *Polish Suite*—Troyak, Krakovyak and Mazurka. In the Troyak, old Poland comes to life, irradiating with poetical loveliness. The Czech and Slovakian polkas are excellent miniatures which seem to have stepped down from old engravings. The *Arkan* is a well-staged Guzul shepherd dance, the spectators' imagination filling in the dark relief of the Carpathian hills, the high blue sky and the bonfire around which the shepherds are assembled.

And near to our popular Ukrainian dances are the dances of Guzul, the resemblance making itself felt still more forcibly when we see unfolding before us on the stage the splendid *Ukrainian Suite* called *Vesnianki*. There is something exquisitely affecting in the elegiac dance of the maidens, and the *Gopak* is turbulent and warlike. Very good also is the joyous Byelorussian *Yanka*.

The programme holds three Russian dances full of an infectious mirth and sweeping dash. Genuine humour, young vigour and a marvellous lightness are in every movement of the dancers.

The evening of Slavonian dances is a presentation splendidly expressive of the age-long brotherhood of the Slavonian peoples.

The Alpinists of Georgia have organized the exploration of the Cave of Khvamli, situated fifty km. from Kutais in the middle of a sheer crag, three hundred metres high, to penetrate which the devices of expert Alpine technique have to be brought into play.

The legend runs that in the Middle Agest this inaccessible cavern served as a depository of the state treasures of Georgia. Allusions to this fact occur in a book written by a geographer of the 18th century, the Tsarevich Vakhushti. Historical evidence also shows that during the invasion of the Mongols all the valuables from East Georgia were transferred to this cave. It is held by some authorities on the history of literature that it is in the cavern of Khvamli that the hitherto undiscovered original of Rust'hveli's *Knight in the Tiger's Skin* may have been stored. And we can well understand the eagerness with which the Georgian Alpinists are setting forth on their dangerous and difficult expedition.

Speleology, the scientific study of caves, is a comparatively little-developed domain of learning. It is to the Alpinists of Georgia that will belong the honour of recording the results of their investigations in the first pages of the history of this science in the U.S.S.R.

JUSTICE CRAWLS

A "Goddess of Justice" exactly to the taste of the war criminals, not to mention several learned legal lights abroad.

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

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Cable address: Interlit, Moscow