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A SON OF THE REGIMENT

Heavy silence reigned, the silence of an autumn night. The forest was wrapped in a damp cold. Thick fog rose from the black swampy patches. The bright light of the moon now at its zenith barely penetrated the mist. In the cold beams slanting down through the trees wisps of vapour writhed eerily as though in some mystic dance.

The nocturnal forest was filled with that loveliness that always goes straight to a Russian heart, that calls up pictures of old tales and legends—the grey wolf carrying the tsar's son Ivan with his small cap on the side of his head and the Firebird's feather wrapped in a kerchief and hidden under his coat, the huge mossy paws of the goblin, the cottage on chickens' legs—no end to them all.

But the beauty of the Polessye forest was the very last thing to enter the heads of three soldiers returning in that dull, dead hour from reconnaissance.

For more than twenty-four hours they had been reconnoitering the German rear. Their assignment—to find and mark on the map the positions of enemy defences.

It had been a difficult job, and a very dangerous one. Practically the whole time they had had to crawl. Once they had lain for three hours, motionless, in the cold, stinking mud of a swamp, covered with their waterproof capes, yellow leaves floating gently down upon them.

The rustle of carelessly stirred leaves seemed to resound through the forest, the crackle of a twig breaking under a boot rang out like a pistol shot.

The moonlight also made things more difficult. They could only advance very slowly, one after the other, about fifteen yards apart, trying to avoid the bright beams. Every five paces they would stop and listen.

The man in command led the way, giving his orders by means of signals. If he raised his hand over his head all immediately stopped and froze to the spot; if he moved it to the side and downward they swiftly and silently hugged the ground; if he beckoned they advanced; if he gestured backward they retreated.

Although there was not much more than a mile left to the front line the scouts continued with as much caution and watchfulness as they had done all the time. In fact, they had become even more careful, made more frequent halts.

They had entered upon the most dangerous part of their way.

The previous evening, when they had set out, this district had been deep in the enemy rear. But the situation had changed, the Germans had retreated during the day, after some fighting. Now the forest appeared to be empty. But appearances might well be deceptive. It was more than possible that the Germans had left some tommy-gunners concealed there, and at any moment the scouts might fall into an ambuscade. Of course, that held no terrors for them, although they were but three. They were careful, experienced men, ready for battle at a moment's notice, each of them armed with a tommy-gun and four hand-grenades. But the point was, that they must avoid battle at all costs, their job was to get back unobserved to their own side and hand over to the platoon commander the precious map with the German batteries marked on it. This would to a great extent decide the outcome of the next day's fighting.

Everything was unusually silent. It was a rare lull in the fighting. Had it not been for some distant gunfire and a short machine-gun burst somewhere off to the side, one might have thought that there was no war.

Slowly, cautiously, the scouts moved on towards their positions. Suddenly the man in command halted and raised his hand. In an instant the other two were standing motionless, their eyes fixed on the leader. For a long time he stood there, the hood of his waterproof cape thrown back, his head turned slightly, trying to distinguish the suspicious sound which he had noticed. He was still a young man, only twenty-two, but in the battery he was already reckoned an old campaigner. He held the rank of sergeant and while he was popular among the men, they had at the same time a very wholesome respect for him.

It was a very strange sound that had attracted Sergeant Yegorov's attention. Despite his wide range of experience, he found it impossible to determine what it was.

"What in the world can it be?" thought Yegorov, straining his ears and hastily calling to mind all the suspicious sounds he had ever heard on night patrol. "Whispering? No. Cautious digging? No. A file? No."

This faint, strange sound, like nothing that he had ever heard, came from somewhere quite close, to the right, behind a clump of juniper. It sounded as though it issued from somewhere underground.

After listening for a moment or two, Yegorov beckoned without turning round, and slowly, silently, the other two scouts slipped up to him like shadows. He pointed in the direction from which the sound was coming, and signed to them to listen.

For some time the three of them stood straining their ears, their fingers on the triggers of their tommy-guns. The sounds continued, as incomprehensive as ever. Then for a second

they changed, and it seemed to the three as though they could hear singing coming from underground. They exchanged glances. But in the same instant the sounds again resumed their former character.

Yegorov resolutely signed to his men to lie down, and himself flattened out on the leaves, already touched with hoar frost. Taking his dagger in his teeth, he silently pulled himself along with his elbows. A moment later he had disappeared behind the dark clump of juniper, and after another moment, which seemed like an hour to the waiting men, they heard a faint whistle. That meant that Yegorov was calling them. They crawled after him, and soon saw the sergeant kneeling and looking down into a small slit trench hidden among the bushes. From its mouth they could plainly hear muttering, sobbing and somnolent groans. Understanding each other without need of words, the scouts surrounded the trench, and held the ends of their waterproof capes over it so as to form a kind of tent, letting in no light. Yegorov reached down into the slit, holding an electric torch.

The picture which it showed was simple and terrible. In the bottom of the trench a boy was lying.

His fists clenched on his chest, his feet, dark as potatoes, drawn up, he lay on his back in a stinking green pool and wandered in delirium. His shaggy bare head, which had long known no scissors, was thrown awkwardly back. His thin throat trembled. Hoarse sighs came from the open mouth with its fever-parched lips, muttered words, broken phrases and sobs. The swollen lids closing the eyes were of a pale, unhealthy, anaemic colour. They seemed almost blue, like skimmed milk. The short, thick lashes were matted together. His face was scratched and bruised. There was clotted blood on the bridge of the nose.

The boy was wandering in a terrible dreamland. Reflections of nightmare contorted his tormented face. Each moment its expression changed. Now it was twisted with horror, now with a terrible despair; then sharp lines of hopeless grief would form round the mouth, the brows would writhe and tears well out from the closed eyes; then suddenly he would begin fiercely grinding his teeth, his face would assume a baleful, ruthless expression, his fists would clench so hard that the nails bit into the palms, and dull, hoarse sounds would burst from the tense, strained throat.

Suddenly the boy's visions seemed to change, a pitiful smile, a childish smile, spread over his face and in a weak, barely audible voice he began singing some indistinguishable song.

The boy's sleep was so heavy, so deep, his spirit was so far away in a torturing maze of nightmare that he was conscious of nothing else—neither the fixed gaze of the scouts staring down at him, nor the bright beam of the torch turned full upon his face.

But suddenly, as though some inner alarm had sounded and roused him, the boy opened his eyes, started and sat up, his eyes blazing widely. In the same instant he had snatched up from somewhere a long, sharpened nail. With a swift, agile movement Yegorov succeeded in seizing the lad's burning fist and closing his mouth with his other hand.

"Keep quiet! It's your own people," Yegorov whispered.

It was only then that the boy noticed that the soldiers' helmets were Russian, their tommy-guns, their waterproof capes—all Russian, and the faces bending down to him—Russian, dear and familiar.

A feeble smile of joy showed faintly on his exhausted face. He wanted to speak, but could only get out the one word:

"Ours. . . ." And lost consciousness.

2

Captain Yenakiev, the battery commander, was sitting on a small wooden platform fixed at the top of a pine, between the trunk and a strong branch. On three sides the platform was open, on the fourth—the side facing westward—several thick logs had been piled up, as a protection against bullets. To the top of this parapet a stereoscoping periscope had been nailed, with several twigs fastened to the end of it, making it look like a forked branch.

To climb up to the platform one had to mount two ladders. The first, rising with a good slant, reached about half way up. After that, the rest of the way had to be accomplished by means of a second one, almost vertical.

Besides Captain Yenakiev, the platform held two telephone operators, one from the infantry, the other belonging to the artillery, their leather-covered instruments hanging on the scaly tree-trunk. The fourth man was Captain Akhunbayev, commander of an infantry battalion, who was in charge of that sector of the front.

As the platform would not hold more than four people at a time, the other two artillerymen were standing on the ladder—Lieutenant Sedykh, platoon commander at the top, and below him, his helmet almost touching the lieutenant's boots, Sergeant Yegorov, whose acquaintance we have already made.

Captain Yenakiev and Captain Akhunbayev were busy with very urgent, very important and very meticulous work—filling in upon their maps the information brought by the artillery reconnaissance. Those maps, criss-crossed with markings in coloured pencil, lay side by side, spread out upon boards, and the two captains were sprawled over them, pencils, rubbers and rulers in their hands.

Captain Akhunbayev, his helmet pushed onto the back of his head, his broad, brown, frowning brow bent over his work, slid his transparent ruler over the map with impatient movements. He made some marks with a red pencil, rubbed something out, at the same time glancing swiftly up from under his brows at Yenakiev's face, as if to say: "Well, what are you dallying for, man! Let's have the next. Let's get a move on." As always, he was impatient and found it hard to hide his irritation. In these last hours—it might even be minutes—before the battle, everything seemed too slow for him. He was seething.

Captain Yenakiev and Captain Akhunbayev were old comrades-in-arms. It so happened that for the last two years they had been together in almost all their battles, so that

the division already took it as a matter of course that wherever Akhunbayev's battalion was fighting, Yenakiev's battery would be pounding away.

Akhunbayev was impetuous, impatient, brave almost to rashness, while Yenakiev, although his courage was no less than that of his friend, was cool-headed, restrained and calculating, as a good artilleryman should be. Now, while entering upon his map the data brought by Yenakiev's scouts, Captain Akhunbayev was in a hurry to get the job finished and dismiss the runners, waiting at the foot of the tree, who had come from every regiment for plans of the reconnoitered locality.

The order to attack had not yet come through, but many orders which had been received showed that it might be expected very soon indeed. Akhunbayev wanted to get to his men before the fighting began in order to inspect all the preparations personally.

A novice might have been excused for thinking that a big battle was in progress, with himself in the thick of it. Actually there was nothing going on except the usual exchange of artillery fire, and not very heavy at that. Some battery or other, Soviet or German, would send out a few shells to get the range of a new target. The enemy observer would immediately spot it, and from the rear one of the special anti-artillery platoons would begin to seek it out. Then the hunt would be up for this platoon, in its turn. In this way, there would soon be a real battle raging on the sector. From all sides guns would pound—small calibre, larger ones, mediums, and finally the heavies, the superheavies; sometimes even the giant guns would give tongue, barely audible, far in the rear; then suddenly, there would be the unexpected howl, rasp and hurricane of a colossal shell shrieking its way to some apparently innocent patch of sand; a coal-black cloud shot with fiery flashes would rise, carrying with it bushes and trees, and slowly sink again.

Sometimes a splinter came from some unexpected direction, struck the ground hard, ricochetted, whirled, rasped, howled like a wolf and hurtled on with a metallic groan that set one's teeth on edge, carrying away twigs and cones in its flight.

But the men working over their maps on the treetop seemed to see nothing and hear nothing of all this. It was only occasionally, when the fire became especially heavy at any place, that the telephone operator turned the handle of his leather-covered instrument and said quietly:

"Give me Violet... Is that Violet? This is Chair speaking. Testing the line. What's that happening your way? . . Everything quiet so far?... O. K. Everything's quiet here too. Carry on. So long."

When the work was finally ended, Captain Akhunbayev immediately became more cheerful. He swiftly thrust his map into his satchel, fastened his waterproof cape with quick movements, sprang up on his short, strong, slightly bowed legs and shouted to his orderly down below:

"My horse!"

He looked at his watch.

"Check. Nine sixteen by mine. How's yours?"

"Nine fourteen," said Captain Yenakiev, his glance sliding to his watch.

Captain Akhunbayev emitted a short, triumphant throaty sound. His eyes narrowed and flashed back.

"You're slow, Captain Yenakiev."

"Not a bit of it. I'm not slow. My watch's dead right. It's you that's rushing ahead as usual."

"Zaitsev, get the time!" cried Akhunbayev heatedly.

The telephone operator rang up the regimental command point, then reported that the time was nine hours fourteen minutes.

"The god of war[1] backed you up," said Akhunbayev conciliatingly, and placing his watch beside Yenakiev's, moved the hand round. "Have it your own way this time. Good-bye for the present."

His waterproof cape rustling loudly, he slid down the two ladders in one rush, without pausing, passing the waiting artillerymen who drew to the side to make room for him; he threw the map to the waiting adjutant, jumped onto his horse and galloped off, scattering the yellow leaves.

After he had gone, Captain Yenakiev slid the tight rubber band from his notebook and gave his attention to the periscope. This notebook contained targets. He already had the range on all of them, but he would have liked to check it again with a few shells. He wanted to be sure that in case of need his battery could immediately do the job with its first shots, without wasting valuable time correcting the fire. To work them over again would present no difficulties, of course, but he was afraid that his battery, which had advanced far ahead, to the very infantry lines, might betray its presence too soon. The whole object was to strike absolutely unexpectedly, in the final, decisive moment of the battle, and to strike in the exact spot where the blow was least expected. That spot, in Captain Yenakiev's opinion, was on the right flank of the section, between a fork in the road and a rather deep gulley filled with young oaks.

At the moment there was nothing of interest about that spot. It held neither firing points nor defences. Most battlefields contain similar uninteresting places, not distinguished in any way. The fighting sweeps past them without stopping. Captain Yenakiev knew this, but he possessed a lively and practical imagination.

For the hundredth time he sketched out in his mind the coming battle with all the possible details of its development, and again, as always, he saw the same picture: Akhunbayev's battalion would break through the German defence line and its right flank would turn against any possible counter-attack. Akhunbayev would then impatiently fling his centre forward, dig in to defend the slope of the height opposite the fork in the road and gradually bringing up his reserves, build up for a fresh decisive blow along the road. It would

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[1] The artillery is known in Russia as the god of war.

be just there, between the fork and the entrance to the gulley, that Captain Akhunbayev would stop. He would have to stop, the logic of war demanded it; it would be necessary to issue cartridges, to clear away the wounded, to bring the companies into order and, most important, to regroup the men for the next blow.

But for all this time was needed, not much, but still time. It was inconceivable that the Germans would fail to utilize that pause. Of course, they would take advantage of it. They would throw in tanks. That would be the very best moment for a tank attack. They would unexpectedly bring out their tank reserves concealed in the gulley. Captain Yenakiev was practically certain that they would have tanks there, although he had no data to confirm it. His imagination told him so, and imagination was backed up by experience, a fine understanding of manoeuvering and that special mathematical turn of mind which always distinguishes the good artillery officer accustomed to correlate facts swiftly and accurately and draw unerring conclusions.

"Maybe I'll risk it and try it all the same?" Captain Yenakiev asked himself, adjusting the stereoscopic periscope to suit his eyes.

The vague grey horizon became lighter, denser. Dimly outlined objects suddenly stood out distinctly. The whole panorama came magically closer and divided into several planes rising one behind the other, like scenery in a theatre.

On the nearest plane, outside the focus, the top of the forest which contained the pine and the observation post rose strangely wave-like. There was even one branch of that same pine, monstrously magnified, which seemed about to pierce the eye with its huge brush of needles and two monstrous cones.

Beyond this lay a strip of field. At its lower edge the winding line of the Soviet forward positions could be seen with stereoscopic clarity. All this was carefully camouflaged, only a very experienced eye could detect its existence. Captain Yenakiev did not so much see as guess the location of the embrasures, the communication trenches and the machine-gun nests.

Along the upper edge of the field, just as distinctly, in equally great detail, but smaller, the German trenches ran parallel to ours.

The No Man's Land between them was so contracted by the optical approach that it seemed hardly to exist at all.

Still further, Captain Yenakiev could see the wave-like panorama of the German rear. He could find his way about there to a certain extent. Swiftly he took in the stripped groves, the sleeping swamp, the heights that looked as if they were pasted one onto another, the ruins of cottages.

Finally Captain Yenakiev returned to that same spot—between the fork in the road and the narrow gulley, which was entered in his notebook as "distance 17."

With intense concentration he examined that empty spot, not distinguished in any way, and in his mind's eye—as he had done so many times already that day—he filled it with Akhunbayev's moving men and the small silhouettes of German tanks suddenly crawling one after the other from that mysterious gulley.

"Or maybe better not?" thought Yenakiev, trying to focus the periscope better on that spot. This was not indecision or hesitation. He never hesitated, and he was not doing so now. He was weighing the chances, trying to come to the correct decision. He wanted to be quite sure which would be the best thing for him to do—to cover target 17 with greater accuracy, even though it meant risking the premature disclosure of his battery, or to keep the battery quiet until the very last moment and risk losing several minutes for correcting the fire at a critical and perhaps decisive moment in the battle.

At this moment, however, a voice was heard from below, the ladder shook, spurs clicked, and a young officer, almost a boy, with a swarthy face, upturned nose and thick black brows sprang up, breathing heavily. A liaison officer. In spite of his efforts to preserve an official and even stern expression, an impetuous boyish smile kept breaking out on his face.

He clicked his spurs, flung his hand swiftly to his cap, brought it down with a jerk and handed Captain Yenakiev a package.

"Orders from regimental headquarters..." he began in dry, official tones, but unable to keep it up, added: "for the attack!" And his brown eyes sparkled.

"When?" asked Yenakiev.

"At nine hours forty-five minutes. The signal will be two blue rockets and one yellow. It's written there. May I dismiss, Sir?"

Yenakiev looked at his watch. It was nine thirty-one.

"Yes, dismiss," he said.

Lieutenant Sedykh also began to descend, but halted.

"Comrade Captain, it quite slipped my mind. What are your orders with regard to the boy?"

"What boy?" Captain Yenakiev frowned, but then remembered. "Ah, yes!"

The scouts had reported the finding of the boy, but he had not yet come to any decision as to his disposal.

"How's the boy getting along? Where is he?"

"So far he's with me, at the platoon command post. With the scouts."

"Has he regained consciousness?"

"He seems all right."

"What does he tell you?"

"He's got plenty to say. But Sergeant Yegorov knows more about it."

"Send Yegorov here."

"Sergeant Yegorov!" Lieutenant Sedykh shouted down.

"Here!" came the immediate reply, and his helmet decked with twigs rose above the platform.

"How's that boy of yours going on? How does he feel? Tell me about him."

Captain Yenakiev said "tell me about him," instead of "report," and Sergeant Yegorov, who had a very fine feeling for shades of discipline, saw in this permission to talk more freely and informally than army discipline

usually permitted. His tired eyes, reddened from several sleepless nights, smiled openly and clearly, although his brows and mouth remained serious.

"It's the usual thing, Comrade Captain," said Yegorov. "His father died at the front during the first days of the war. The Germans took the village. His mother didn't want to give up her cow, so they killed her. His Grandma and his little sister died of hunger, so he was left alone. Then the village was burned down. He went round with a bag begging for scraps. Somewhere along the road he was caught by field-gendarmes who sent him off forcibly to one of their horrible children's camps. There, of course, he caught the scab, the itch and typhus—he nearly died but somehow he came through. Then he ran away. He's been tramping for nearly two years, hiding in the forests. He wanted to get across the front. And the front was a long way off then. He got quite wild, his hair's a shaggy mane. Got savage, too. A real wolf cub. He always carried a sharpened nail in his bag. That was the kind of weapon he'd found for himself. And the one thing he wanted was to kill a Jerry with it. And another thing in his bag was a spelling book, all torn and rubbed. We asked him what he wanted that for. So as not to forget how to read, he said."

"How old is he?"

"He says as he's twelve. Though you wouldn't give him more than ten to look at him. He's all thin and starved. Nothing but skin and bone."

"Yes," said Captain Yenakiev thoughtfully. "Twelve years old. When the war began he can't have been more than nine."

"Started his troubles early," said Yegorov, sighing.

Both men were silent, listening to the sound of the artillery fire, which had died down noticeably, as it always does before the beginning of a battle. Soon there was a tense, deceptive silence.

"Well, is he a good sort of lad?" asked Captain Yenakiev.

"A fine boy. Lively as they make 'em," cried Yegorov, dropping any last vestiges of formality that remained. The captain frowned and turned away.

There had been a time when Captain Yenakiev had had a boy of his own, his son Kostya; true, a little younger than this one. He would not have been seven. He had had a young wife and a mother. And all this he had lost in one day, three years previously. He had left his apartment in Baranovichi, summoned to his battery by the general alarm, and from that time he had never again seen his home, his son, his wife or his mother. And he would never see them again. All three had perished on the Minsk road on that terrible June night of 1941 when the German dive-bombers had flown against defenceless people—old men, women, children—fleeing on foot along the Minsk road from the bandits who had broken into their land.

Captain Yenakiev had been told of their death by an eye-witness, his old friend, who had happened to be by the road at the time with his unit. He had given no details—they were too terrible—and the captain had asked for none. He had not the heart to question him. But in an instant his imagination had drawn the picture of their death, a picture which never left him, which was before his eyes constantly. Fire, flashes, explosions which rent the air, machine-gun bullets spraying, a frenzied crowd with their baskets, suitcases, baby carriages and bundles, and a little boy of four in a blue sailor cap falling like a bloodstained rag, waxen hands flung wide, between the roots of a torn-up pine. Captain Yenakiev could see with particular clarity that blue sailor cap with the new ribbons, which Granny had made from one of the mother's old jackets.

"What is his name?" asked Captain Yenakiev.

"Vanya."

"Just Vanya?"

"Just Vanya," Sergeant Yegorov replied with cheerful readiness, a broad, good-natured grin spreading over his face. "And his surname's just as good—Vanya Solntsev [1]."

"Well, there's only one way," said Yenakiev, after thinking for a moment. "We'll have to send him to the rear."

Yegorov's face lengthened.

"It's a pity, Comrade Captain."

"What's a pity?" And Yenakiev frowned sternly. "Why's it a pity?"

"Where'll he go there in the rear? He hasn't got a soul of his own. An orphan. He'll go under."

"He'll not go under. There are special children's homes for orphans."

"Yes, of course, there are those, all right," said Yegorov, still keeping up the informal tone, although a hard, commanding note had already crept into the captain's tones.

"Well?"

"Well, it's this way," said Yegorov, shifting from foot to foot on the shaky ladder. "You see, how shall I put it, we thought of keeping him with us, at the platoon command post. He's a lively lad. A born scout."

"You're letting your ideas run away with you," said Yenakiev in some irritation.

"Not at all, Comrade Captain. He's a very self-reliant boy. He can find his way about the district as well as any adult scout. Even better. He asked us himself: 'Teach me to be a scout,' he says: 'I'll find out all your targets for you. I know every bush here,' he says."

The captain laughed.

"Asked himself, did he... Doesn't make any difference what he asks. It's not allowed. And in any case, how could you undertake such a responsibility? After all, he is a little human being, a living soul. Suppose anything happened to him? He might be shot, such things happen in wartime. Isn't that so, Yegorov?"

"Just so, Sir."

"Well, you see, then. No, no. It's too early for him to begin fighting, he'll have to grow up a bit first. He needs to go to school now. Send him to the rear with the first lorry."

Yegorov looked crushed.

"He'll run away, Comrade Captain," he said uncertainly.

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[1] From the word "solntse"—sun.

"What do you mean, run away? Why do you think so?"

"'If you send me to the rear,' he says, 'I'll run away on the road all the same.'"

"Was that what he said?

"That was what he said."

"Well, we'll see about that," said Captain Yenakiev drily. "My orders are to send him to the rear. Can't have him running about here."

The informal talk had ended. Sergeant Yegorov drew himself up.

"Very good, Sir."

"That's all," said Captain Yenakiev shortly, as though the words had been chopped off.

"May I dismiss, Sir?"

"Yes, dismiss."

While Sergeant Yegorov was still descending the ladder, a pale blue star slowly floated up from beyond the dim yall of the distant forest. Before it was extinguished it was followed by another and then a third—this time yellow.

"Battery, stand by!" said Captain Yenakiev quietly.

"Battery, stand by!" the telephone-operator called into the receiver in ringing tones.

And that ringing cry was caught up throughout the menacingly silent forest, in hundreds of near and distant echoes.

3

Meanwhile Vanya, his bare feet tucked under him, was sitting on spruce branches in the scouts' tent, hard at work with a wooden spoon on a mess-tin full of marvellously hot and marvellously tasty stew made of pork, potatoes and onions, and flavoured with garlic, pepper and bay leaves. He shovelled the food down so avidly that it sometimes stuck in his throat. His hard, sharp-pointed ears moved under his shaggy, greyish, long-uncut hair with the energetic action of his jaws.

Vanya Solntsev had been brought up in a respectable peasant family and knew well enough that he was being very bad-mannered. Etiquette demanded that he should eat without haste, every now and then wiping his spoon with a piece of bread, and without shuffling and champing too much. Politeness also demanded that from time to time he should push away the mess-tin and say: "I thank you for your bread and salt. I am fully satisfied," and not continue eating until he had been urged three times: "Be so good, eat some more." Vanya knew all this very well, but he could not help himself. Hunger overcame all the rules of good manners.

Holding the mess-tin in front of him with one hand, Vanya wielded his wooden spoon busily with the other, never taking his eyes from the long loaf of rye bread, for which he had no third hand. Every now and then his blue eyes, hollow with starvation, would stray to the soldiers feeding him. There were two of them in the tent—those same scouts who had brought him from the forest with Sergeant Yegorov. One of them, Corporal Bidenko, was a raw-boned giant with a kindly gap-toothed mouth and long arms like rakes, nicknamed "Skeleton"; his companion, the Siberian Gorbunov, was also a giant, built like the heroes of old tales and legends—with smooth skin rippling over the muscles of his well filled-out body, round rosy cheeks, white eyelashes and a light stubble on his ruddy scalp. His nickname was Chaldon. [1]

It was not without difficulty that these two giants found room for themselves in the tent, intended for six men. They had to draw their legs well up to prevent them from sticking out.

Before the war, Bidenko had been a Donbass miner. The coal dust had so eaten into his dark skin that even now it had a blueish tinge. Gorbunov had been a woodcutter in the Baikal district, and he still seemed to carry with him the aromatic scent of freshly cut birch. His whole appearance was light-coloured, like one of his own trees.

The two men were sitting on the perfumed spruce branches, their padded jackets thrown over their mighty shoulders, watching with satisfaction how Vanya polished off the stew. Sometimes the sociable, talkative Gorbunov, seeing that Vanya was ashamed of his bad manners in gobbling down the food, would say benevolently:

"You're all right, Shepherd. Don't be shy. Eat all you want. If there isn't enough, you can have more. We're all right for grub."

Vanya went on eating, licked the spoon, thrust a piece of soft army bread with its sour chestnut-coloured crust into his mouth, and felt as though he had been living for months in the tent with these kindly giants. He could hardly believe that quite a short time ago—just yesterday—he had been tramping through that cold, terrible forest, all alone in the world, at night, hungry, cold, ill, hunted like a wolf, seeing nothing but death facing him. He could not believe that those three years of beggary were left behind, the humiliations, the continual terror that tormented him, the awful depression and emptiness. For the first time in three years Vanya was among people whom he did not need to fear. The inside of the tent seemed to him beautiful. Although outside the weather was bad, rainy, a pleasant even light penetrated the buff tent walls, like sunshine. True, things were rather cramped owing to the two giants, but how neat and tidy it was, with everything lying or hanging in the best possible way.

In all there were six men in the group of scouts, in addition to Sergeant Yegorov. They usually went on patrol in couples, at three-day intervals. One day they would be on duty, one day they would rest. As for Sergeant Yegorov, nobody ever knew when he rested.

Today Gorbunov and Bidenko, old friends who always worked together, were resting. There had been fighting ever since morning, the air in the forest was quivering and shaking, and every moment dive-bombers would pass overhead with a deafening roar as they went out or returned, but nevertheless the two scouts calmly enjoyed their well-earned rest with Vanya, to whom they had already become strongly attached, finding a nickname for him—"Shepherd."

The name was a good one. In his brown home-spun trousers dyed with onion skins,

[1] A slang nickname for a Siberian.—

his torn jacket, barefoot, with a bag slung over his shoulder, the shaggy-haired boy looked just like a shepherd in the old spelling books. Even his face—dark, haggard, with a beautiful straight nose and large eyes under the cap of hair which hung down like a thatched roof, was exactly that of a village shepherd.

Laying down the mess-tin, Vanya wiped it out with a crust. With the same crust he wiped his spoon, then popped it into his mouth, stood up, slowly bowed to the giants and lowering his eyes, said:

"Many thanks. I am deeply grateful to you."

"Maybe you'd like some more?"

"No, I've had enough."

"We can pour you out another tinful if you want," said Gorbunov, winking with a certain boastful air. "It doesn't mean anything to us. Eh, Shepherd?"

"I've no room for anymore," said Vanya awkwardly, and his blue eyes suddenly glanced up for an instant mischievously from under his lowered lashes.

"Have it your own way. It's for you to say. It's one of our rules not to force anybody," said Bidenko, who was known for his fairness. But the proud Gorbunov, who liked to have everybody wonder at a scout's life, asked the lad:

"Well, Vanya, how d'ye like our grub?"

"It's good," said the boy, putting his spoon in the mess-tin handle downwards and gathering up the crumbs from the newspaper which had been doing duty for a table-cloth.

"Sure it is good, isn't it?" said Gorbunov with animation. "You won't find grub like this anywhere else in the division. Grand grub it is. You stick to us, lad, to us scouts, that's the main thing. You'll never come to any harm with us. Will you stick to us?"

"You bet I will," said the boy gaily.

"That's the spirit. Then you'll be all right. We'll give you a wash in the bath. Cut off that jungle. We'll fix you up a uniform somehow to make you look a bit military."

"And ye'll take me out wi' ye on patrol, Uncle[1]?"

"Yes, we'll take ye on patrol too. We'll make a real scout o' ye."

"I'm little, Uncle. I can get through anywhere," said Vanya eagerly. "I know every bush around here."

"That's grand."

"And ye'll teach me to let rip wi' a tommy-gun?"

"Why not? We'll teach ye when the time comes."

"If I could only fire it once, just once," said Vanya, looking longingly at the tommy-guns swaying on their straps from the incessant vibration of the guns.

"You'll fire then, don't ye fret. And ye won't stop at that. We'll teach ye all a soldier has to know. But first of all, of course, ye'll have to be entered for issues of all kinds."

"What's that, Uncle?"

"That's very simple, lad. Sergeant Yegorov'll report about ye to Lieutenant Sedykh, Lieutenant Sedykh'll report to the battery commander, Captain Yenakiev, and Captain Yenakiev'll give orders about enrolling you. From that day, then, ye'll receive issues of all kinds—clothes, rations, money. D'ye understand it now?"

"I understand, Uncle."

"That's how it goes with us scouts ... Wait a bit. Where are ye off to?"

"To wash up, Uncle. Ma always taught us to wash the crocks when we'd finished, and then put 'em away in the cupboard."

"And quite right too," said Gorbunov sternly. "It's the same in the army."

"There's no waiters in the army," observed the fair-minded Bidenko didactically.

"But ye can wait a bit wi' the pots, all the same. We're just going to have tea," said Gorbunov complacently. "Would ye like a drink of tea?"

"I would, please," said Vanya.

"Well, and quite right too. That's the way it is wi' the scouts—as soon as we've eaten, tea. With sugar, of course," he added indifferently. "We take no count o'that."

Soon a huge copper kettle appeared in the tent—an object of special pride among scouts and a source of constant envy to the other batteries.

It seemed that the scouts really did not need to count the lumps of sugar. Bidenko silently unfastened his kitbag and emptied a great handful of lumps onto the newspaper. Before Vanya had time to blink, Gorbunov had tipped two big lumps into his mug, and then, seeing the look of delight on the boy's face, followed them with a third. "That's what we scouts are like," he seemed to be saying.

Vanya seized the metal mug in both hands. He even closed his eyes in ecstasy. He felt as though he were in some wonderful fairy-tale world. Everything round about was like a story—the tent, which seemed to be filled with sunshine although the weather was cold and damp outside, the kindly giants throwing down handfuls of sugar, and promising him that mysterious "issues of all kinds—clothes, rations, money," and even the words "stewed pork" printed on the mug he was holding.

"D'ye like it?" asked Gorbunov, proudly watching the boy's pleasure as he cautiously drew the tea in through his pursed-up lips. But Vanya could find no words. His lips were busy with the tea, which was scalding hot. His heart was bursting with joy because he was to stay and live with the scouts, these wonderful people, who promised to cut his hair, fit him out with a uniform, and teach him to use a tommy-gun.

All words seemed to run together in his head. All he could do was to nod gratefully, raising his eyebrows as far as they would go and rolling eyes, in token of the highest degree of delight and gratitude.

"He's just a kid," said Bidenko pityingly, with a slight sigh, and with his huge thick fingers, that looked as though they had been smoked, he began to roll himself a cigarette.

Meanwhile, the sounds of battle had several times changed in character. First of all they had been near at hand and regular, like waves. Then they drew a little further away and weakened. But now they roared up again with triple strength. It was possible to distinguish

[1] It is the Russian custom for children to address adults as "uncle" and "auntie."

new sounds, hurried and apparently disorderly explosions of bombs, which kept falling somewhere in clusters, all in the same place, as though some giant battering rams were hammering on the ground.

"Ours diving," Bidenko noted in passing, pausing for a moment to listen.

"Doing well," said Gorbunov approvingly.

This, too, continued for a long time.

Then there came a short interlude. Everything was so quiet that the hard, stubborn tapping of a woodpecker in the forest could be plainly heard, like a morse transmitter. Everybody was silent, listening, while the lull lasted.

Then, from far away, came the sound of rifle fire. It increased, became louder. The individual shots mingled, merged into one another. Machine-guns rattled simultaneously at about a dozen places along the front. Then the threatening machinery of battle suddenly groaned, whistled, banged like a rotator going at full speed.

Only an experienced ear could distinguish through all this ruthless mechanical din the faint sound of human voices, like a chorus somewhere singing a long drawn-out "a-a-a-ah!"

"The queen of the field gone into the attack," said Gorbunov. "Now the god of war'll join in the song."

As though in confirmation of his words, hundreds of guns again gave tongue from all sides on various notes.

Bidenko listened long and attentively, his ear turned towards the battle.

"I can't hear our batteries," he said at last.

"Yes, they're quiet," said Gorbunov.

"I guess our captain's waiting for the right moment."

"That's how he does. But then, when he does let fly..."

Vanya's startled blue eyes were travelling from one speaker to the other, trying to see from their expression whether things were going well or not. He could make nothing of it, but could not screw himself up to ask.

"Uncle," he said at last, turning to Gorbunov, whom he thought the kindlier of the two, "who's winning—the Germans or us?"

"Eh—there's a lad for you!" laughed Gorbunov, and patted the back of the boy's head.

"All the same, Chaldon," said Bidenko seriously, "it would do no harm for you to dash over to the wireless fellows and find out what they know."

At that moment, however, hasty steps sounded, stumbling over the tent-pegs, and Sergeant Yegorov dived into the tent.

"Gorbunov!"

"Here."

"Get moving. Kuzminsky's just been killed in the infantry line. You're to take his place."

"Our Kuzminsky?"

"Yes, a tommy-gun round. Eleven bullets. Get a move on."

"Very good."

While Gorbunov, stooping, hastily donned his greatcoat and flung his equipment over his head, Sergeant Yegorov and Corporal Bidenko were looking in silence at the empty place which had belonged to the scout Kuzminsky. It was no different from any other place: the ground sheet was spread with the same neatness, not a wrinkle to be seen, the kitbag stood at the head covered with a coarse towel; but on the towel lay two letters and a newspaper which had come from the field post after Kuzminsky had gone.

Vanya had seen Kuzminsky only once, at dawn, when he was hurrying on duty. Just like Gorbunov now, Kuzminsky, stooping, had been throwing on his equipment and settling the folds of his greatcoat under his holster with its big metal ring. Kuzminsky's greatcoat had carried a strong, appetizing odour of army soup. But as for Kuzminsky himself, Vanya had had no time to look at him, as he had gone out at once. He went without taking leave of anybody, like a man who knows that he will soon be returning. And now everybody knew that he would never return, and they stood looking in silence at his place.

The tent seemed somehow empty, damp and depressing.

Vanya cautiously stretched out his hand and touched the damp, limp newspaper. It was only then that Sergeant Yegorov noticed him. The lad expected him to smile, and an answering smile was ready on his own lips. But Sergeant Yegorov looked at him sternly, and Vanya sensed that something was very wrong.

4

"You still here?" said Yegorov.

"Yes," whispered the boy guiltily, although he felt conscious of no fault.

"He'll have to be sent away," said Yegorov, frowning in the same manner as Captain Yenakiev. "Bidenko!"

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Get ready to go."

"Where?"

"The battery commander's given orders for the boy to be sent to the rear. Take him to the second echelon on any lorry going that way, hand him over to the commander and get a receipt. Let him send the boy to some children's home. We can't have him hanging around here. It's not permitted."

"So there we are," said Bidenko with unconcealed chagrin.

"Captain Yenakiev's orders."

"A pity, all the same. A lively kid, he is."

"Whether it's a pity or not, it's not allowed."

Sergeant Yegorov's frown became deeper. He himself was sorry to part with the boy. The previous night he had been planning to keep Vanya with him as a runner and in time train him to be a good scout. But the commander's orders allowed of no discussion. Captain Yenakiev knew best. Orders were orders.

"Not allowed," Yegorov repeated again, his sharp, authoritative tone emphasizing that the subject was closed. "Get ready, Bidenko."

"Very good, Sergeant."

"Well, looks like it'll have to be," said Gorbunov, settling the folds of his greatcoat under his rubbed, polished holster. "No good fretting, Shepherd. If it's Captain Yenakiev's orders, it's got to be done. That's military discipline. At any rate you'll get a ride. Right? Well, good-bye, lad."

And with those words Gorbunov swiftly but unhurriedly left the tent, leaving Vanya

standing there, small, sorrowing, at a loss.

For three years Vanya had lived like a stray dog, with neither home nor family. He had been afraid of everybody, the whole time he had suffered hunger and terror. Now, at last, he had found good, kindly people, who had saved him, warmed him, fed him and shown him affection. And in that same instant, when everything had seemed to be so wonderful, when at last he had found a family, everything disappeared in a flash. All gone, like wisps of fog.

"Uncle," he said, swallowing his tears and cautiously touching Bidenko's greatcoat. "Uncle! Don't take me away. Please! Don't!"

"It's orders."

"Uncle Yegorov... Comrade Sergeant. Don't tell him to take me away. Let me live with you," the boy continued desperately. "I'll always clean your mess-tin and bring you water..."

"Not allowed, not allowed," Yegorov repeated wearily. "Well, what are you waiting for, Bidenko? Ready?"

"Ready."

"Then take the boy and get going. There's a five-ton truck loaded with empty cartridge cases standing now at the regimental exchange point, ready to start back. You can still catch it. Because ours have gone forward four kilometres. They're digging in. Now the rear units are coming up. What'd we do with the lad then? Off with him!"

"Uncle!" cried Vanya.

"Not allowed," Yegorov cut him short and turned away, to avoid the lad's pleading face.

Vanya understood that all was over. He realized that a wall had risen between him and those men who just a little while ago had been as fond of him as of their own sons, and affectionately dubbed him "Shepherd." From their eyes, their voices, their gestures the boy felt with certainty that they still loved him, but he felt with equal certainty that the wall that had risen between them stood firm and fast, even if he beat his head against it.

Suddenly the spirit of revolt rose up in the lad. An angry look appeared on his face. He seemed to have become thinner. His small chin was thrust forward, his eyes flashed obstinately, he ground his teeth.

"I shan't go."

"But you will, all the same," said Bidenko benevolently. "There's a spitfire! Won't go! I'll just put you in the lorry and take you. That's the way you'll go."

"But I shall run away all the same."

"Well, lad, you'll have a job. Nobody's run away from me so far. Better be moving, or we won't get a lorry."

Bidenko took the boy gently by the sleeve, but he tore his arm away angrily.

"Keep off, I can walk alone."

And picking his way with his bare feet, he went out of the tent into the forest.

5

It was late next evening when Bidenko returned to his unit, very hungry and bad-tempered.

In the meantime, great changes had taken place along the front.The offensive was developing swiftly. Following on the heels of the Germans, the army had moved far to the west.

This time the scouts' headquarters was not in a tent but in an officers' pillbox taken from the Germans—a fine, solid construction, covered with thick logs four deep, with turf on top.

The pillbox was crowded with men. It was one of those rare occasions when all the scouts were home at once. In addition, Bidenko saw a number of other people—friends and acquaintances from various platoons come to smoke good tobacco and drink sweet tea out of that famous kettle with the wealthy scouts.

From all this, Bidenko drew the correct conclusion that during his absence the division had been relieved and their battery was resting in reserve.

Almost all the men were smoking, and the dugout, heated to suffocation, was filled with that strong army smell that they always say you could cut with a knife. Gorbunov was fussing about, busy with his favourite occupation—dispensing hospitality.

"Ah, here ye are, Vassya," he said, as he saw his pal enter. Holding a huge loaf against his body, he proceeded to cut off several thick slices. "Well, handed over the boy? Draw up. Ye've come just right for tea."

He had taken off his tunic, and his singlet, the top buttons unfastened for coolness, showed his massive,well-covered, fresh-coloured chest.

"We're in reserve now," he continued. "Resting. Take your things off, Vassya, and warm up. Here's your bed, I brought it along. Well, and how d'ye like our new apartment?Ye won't find another like it in the whole division. Something special, this is!"

Bidenko took his outer clothes off in silence, went up to his bed, flung his greatcoat and equipment angrily down upon it, then squatted down before the stove and warmed his big, blackened hands.

"Well, what's the latest from front headquarters, Vassya? Germans asking for peace yet?"

Bidenko said nothing, looked at nobody and sniffed gloomily.

"Have a smoke?" said Gorbunov, seeing that his pal was badly out of humour.

"To hell with everything!" growled Bidenko suddenly, strode back to his pallet and flung himself face downwards upon it.

It was clear that something unpleasant had happened, but it was considered the worst of bad form among the scouts to show undue curiosity about anybody else's affairs. If a man said nothing, that meant he didn't want to talk. And if he didn't, then let him alone. He'd tell them himself when he was ready. Meanwhile, leave him alone and don't try to pump him.

So Gorbunov, not in the least offended, acted as though he had noticed nothing and fussed about with his domestic affairs, continuing his story of how he had nearly been killed the previous evening when he was with the infantry, replacing Kuzminsky.

"You see it was this way. I'd just taken hold of a rocket. I was going to send up a green one to signal them to shift the fire further forward. And then suddenly a big 'un landed right there beside me. Right under my feet it went off. The blast got me and bowled me right over, I didn't know where I was, on my

head or my heels. I even lost my senses for a moment. I opened my eyes, and there was the ground, right beside them. So it looked as though I was lying."

Gorbunov laughed merrily.

"I felt as if I was broken into bits. 'Well,' I thought, 'that's me done for. I'm down for good this time.' I looked myself over, but I couldn't see anything wrong. No blood anywhere. Must have smashed up good and hard against the ground, I guessed. But there were six holes in my greatcoat, and a dent in my helmet the size of your fist... And what d'ye think of this—my heel had been taken clean off my right boot. Just as though there'd never been one. Might have been taken off with a razor. What d'ye make of that? But myself—just as though for a joke—not a scratch. Here, you can see how the heel was taken off. Look there, mates."

Smiling gaily, Gorbunov showed his guests the mutilated boot. They examined it carefuly, some of them even touching it politely with a finger.

"Yes, you were in luck," one of them summed up.

"Those sort of things happen," said another, squinting at the lump sugar which Gorbunov was putting on the table. "It was like that with one of ours. When we forced the Berezina near Borissov, private Tetkin of our platoon had his belt cut by a splinter, but he wasn't touched. You can never tell..."

"Kuzma," Bidenko suddenly called from his bed in the strangled voice of a very sick man. "Listen, Kuzma, where's Sergeant Yegorov?"

"Sergeant Yegorov's on duty today," Gorbunov answered. "He's gone to inspect the sentries."

"Will he be back soon?"

"Threatened to be back for tea."

"I see," said Bidenko and groaned as though with toothache, very audibly—a sound interpreted as an appeal for sympathy.

"What's up wi' ye?" said Gorbunov indifferently, his whole manner saying that he was asking only out of politeness, and not out of curiosity.

"Oh, to hell wi' it all!" Bidenko suddenly repeated gloomily.

"Have some tea," said Gorbunov. "Maybe ye'll feel better after it."

Bidenko sat down on a stool by the table, but his mug stood untouched. For a long time he sat there silent, his eyes fixed on the stove.

"Ye see, it's a daft sort of thing," he said at last in an unnaturally loud voice, trying to put a note of humour into it. "I just don't know how to report to Sergeant Yegorov."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I didn't carry out orders."

"How's that?"

"Didn't get the boy to front headquarters."

"Rubbish!"

"It's a fact. Made off. Bolted."

"Who did?"

"Why, that boy. Our Vanya. Shepherd."

"You mean, he ran off on the way?"

"That's it."

"Got away from you?"

"Uh-huh!"

Gorbunov said nothing for a little while, then suddenly the whole of his huge, solid body began to shake with laughter.

"How on earth did ye manage to muck it up, Vassya? Eh, you wait. When Yegorov comes along he'll give ye an earful. How did it all happen?"

"It just happened. He got away. That's all."

"There's the famous scout for you! 'Nobody's ever got away from me,' says he, 'no, nobody's ever got away, but the boy got away! Eh, Vanya! Eh, Shepherd!"

"A bright kid," said Bidenko, with a wry smile.

"Easy to see he's bright, if he could get the better of a professor like you. Tell us all about it, Vassya, in order, how it all happened."

"He just ran off. What's there to tell about?"

"But all the same. May as well come out with it. We'll get to know anyway".

"Oh, to hell wi' it all!" said Bidenko, with a hopeless gesture, made his way to his bed and flung himself down with his face to the wall and not another word could they get out of him.

It was only later that all the details of this unprecedented happening became known.

6

The lorry, its empty cartridge cases ringing and rattling as it jolted over tree roots, had barely gone three miles through the forest when Vanya suddenly seized its high side, his face tense with desperate resolve, and flung himself over, tumbling head over heels on the mossy ground. It all happened so quickly and so unexpectedly that it took Bidenko a moment to recover himself. For an instant he thought the boy had been shaken out on the turn.

"Eh, easy there!" he shouted, banging on the back of the driving cabin with his fist. "Stop, devil take it! Stop! We've lost the boy!"

As the driver jammed down the brakes on the lorry, Bidenko saw the boy jump to his feet, seize his bag and run into the forest as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Hi! Hi!" shouted the corporal desperately. But Vanya did not even turn round. Arms and legs working like the sails of a windmill, he raced head foremost through bushes and over hummocks until he disappeared completely in the many-hued thickets.

"Vanya-a-a!" shouted Bidenko, cupping his huge hands round his mouth. "Shep-he-eerd! Sto-o-p!"

But Vanya did not answer, and only echoes came back from the forest: "O-o-op!"

"You just wait, you little imp!" said Bidenko angrily, and asking the driver to wait for a little while, he strode into the forest after Vanya, trampling the fallen twigs and leaves. He had no doubt that he would very soon find the boy. After all, what was it for an old, experienced scout, one of Captain Yenakiev's most famous "professors," to catch a runaway boy in the forest? Ridiculous even to think of it!

After shouting in every direction to Vanya to come back and not play the fool, Bidenko started the search according to all the rules of military art. First of all he took his bearings with the compass, so as to be able to find the place where he had left the lorry at any mo-

ment. Then he turned the pointer of the compass in the direction the boy had taken. However, he did not follow the azimuth, knowing well from experience that making his way through the forest without a compass, the boy would be certain to swing round to the right. Without a compass in the dark, or without any object that can serve for orientation, everybody begins to circle clockwise. This being so, Bidenko thought for a little while, calculated the time, and then turning slightly to the right, moved off silently to intercept Vanya.

"That's where I'll grab you, my cockerel," he thought, not without some satisfaction. He pictured vividly how he would silently creep up behind a bush right under the boy's very nose, seize him by the arm and say: "Well, that's about enough, my friend. You had a walk in the forest, now it's time to go back. Come you along wi' me to the lorry. And no more tricks, mind! Because nothing'll come of it anyway. The man's not born yet, not the boy neither, that can get away from Corporal Bidenko. See and remember that."

Bidenko smiled gaily at the pleasant thought. Though, to tell the truth, he had no desire to take the boy to the rear. He had taken a very great fancy to that blue-eyed lad, thin with hunger but proud, even fierce at times, with his shaggy hair hanging over his eyes, a real shepherd. Vanya had awakened in him a feeling of tenderness, almost paternal, a mingling of pity, pride and apprehension for his future. But there was something more, which Bidenko himself hardly understood.

In some strange way, Vanya reminded Corporal Bidenko of himself, when he had been quite small and had been sent to mind the cows. He could dimly remember the early mornings, the mist poured out like milk over the bright-green meadow. He could remember the sparkling jewels of dew, many-coloured—bright green, violet, crimson, and his hands seemed to hold again the pipe cut from an elder stem, from which he would draw such clear, tender, merry yet monotonous notes.

He had liked Vanya even better after his jump from the speeding lorry.

"A plucky little devil. Nothing he's scared of. A real soldier," thought Bidenko. "A shame, a real shame to send him away. But what can ye do? It's orders."

These thoughts running through his head, the scout walked on and on, deeper into the forest. According to his calculations, he should already have met the boy long ago. But there was no sign of him.

Bidenko often halted and listened in the autumn hush of the forest. For his experienced ear, however, this silence was filled with voices. He could catch the most varied, barely audible sounds. But there was no sound of human steps.

The boy was gone.

Nowhere was there the slightest trace of him. Vainly Bidenko examined every bush, every tree trunk. In vain he lay down and studied the fallen leaves, grass and moss. Nothing anywhere. It was as though Vanya had vanished into the air. Bidenko could have sworn that not even the most experienced scout could have passed through like that without the faintest trace.

After some moments of bewilderment, Bidenko began wandering through the forest, here and there, in all directions. He racked his brains over the inexplicable absence of any trace of the boy. Once he even lowered himself so far as to call in a disguised, woman's voice:

"Vanyu-u-ushka! Ho-o-o! Stop fo-o-o-o-ling! Ti-i-ime to go-o-o!" The next moment he was disgusted with himself.

He looked at his watch and saw that he had been searching for over two hours. Then he realized that the boy was gone, and he would not get him back.

Never in his life had the experienced scout been so humiliated. How in the world was he to report to Sergeant Yegorov? How would he look him in the eye? Not to mention his pals. What a laugh they'd have at him! He could have sunk through the ground. But there was nothing to be done. He couldn't wander about here till night, like a wood-gnome.

Bidenko got out his compass, found his bearings, and with a groan made his way back to the place where he had left the lorry. It was no longer there, of course—he had not expected to see it. The driver, with an urgent military assignment, had no right to wait so long. And for that matter, he had no longer any need of it. He would have to go back.

Before setting out, Bidenko decided to have a smoke and re-wind his puttees. He sought out a suitable stump and sat down. Just as he was preparing to roll himself a cigarette, something rustled in the branches above him and came tumbling down. At first he thought it was some kind of bird, but when he looked more closely, he gasped. It was that same old spelling book without a cover which Vanya had carried in his bag.

Bidenko looked up. There, at the very top of a tree, among the green pine branches, were the familiar brown, homespun trousers ending in bare feet, dirty and brown like potatoes. Bidenko jumped up as though he had been stung, dropping tobacco and paper and even lighter onto the ground, and in a second was up the tree.

Vanya never stirred. Bidenko stretched out his hand to him, and then saw that the boy was asleep. Sitting astride a rosy-yellow resinous branch, embracing the thin shaggy bole, and resting his head against it, he was deep in the profound sleep of childhood. The shadow of his lashes lay upon his bluish cheeks and on his lips, cracked with fever, was a faint, innocent smile. He was even snoring a little.

Bidenko understood everything. The shepherd had fooled him in the simplest fashion. Instead of running away from the scout all over the forest, he had simply climbed up this high tree as soon as he found himself out of sight, to wait until things got quiet again. After that, he could come down and go where he wanted. If it had not been for the spelling book falling from his unfastened bag, that was undoubtedly what he would have done.

"Eh, the cunning little rascal! There's a fox for you! Got a head on him, all right!" thought Bidenko delightedly, admiring Vanya. Then he carefully put a firm arm round the boy's shoulders, brought the sleeping head close to him and said tenderly:

"Come along, Shepherd, down wi'ye."

Vanya opened his eyes swiftly, saw the soldier, and tried to break away. But Bidenko was holding him firmly. He realized at once that he had no chance.

"All right," he said gloomily, his voice hoarse with sleep.

7

Five minutes later, after collecting the spelling book, the tobacco and the lighter, they were walking through the forest towards the road where they could find a place on a lorry going their way, which could take them to the front headquarters. Vanya walked in front, Bidenko a pace behind him, never taking his eye off the boy for a second.

"Enough, my friend," said Bidenko didactically. "You had a walk in the forest, and now it's time to stop fooling. Because nothing'll come of it anyway. The man's not been born yet, or the boy either, that can get away from me. See and remember it."

"That's not true," Vanya answered angrily, without turning. "If it hadn't been for my spelling book, you'd never have got me."

"Oh, wouldn't I, indeed! I'd have got ye, all right!"

"No, you wouldn't, either."

"Oh, yes, I would. Nobody's ever got away from me yet."

"But I got away."

"Ye wouldn't have done."

"If it hadn't been ..."

"Well, and here's your 'if' for ye."

"It's not true."

"Got ye."

"It's not true, it's not true," Vanya repeated stubbornly.

"I'd have combed the whole forest, but I'd have found ye."

"Why didn't ye do it, then?"

"Because I didn't. Ask no questions and ye'll get no lies. I'd have found ye by your tracks."

"Why didn't ye find me, then?"

"I did find ye."

"That's not true. I'm cleverer than you. You looked for me wi' a compass and ye didn't find me."

"What's that nonsense ye're talking? When did I look for ye wi' a compass?"

"Well, ye did. You couldn't see me, but I could see all ye did from the tree."

"What did ye see?"

"I saw ye point the compass the way I'd gone."

"Little devil, he sees everything," thought Bidenko, almost admiringly, but answered sternly: "That's none of your business, my boy. I was using the compass to note where the lorry was, to find it again. And it's none of your business, anyhow."

Bidenko was making rather free with the truth here. But it helped nothing.

"That's not true," said Vanya, implacable. "You were trying to catch me wi' the compass. I know. Only you didn't manage it because I was too clever for ye. But I could find ye without any compass at all in half an hour in any forest ye want, day or night."

"Now, now, that'd be a bit too much for ye, I doubt."

"Will ye bet on it?"

"So, I'm to start betting wi' ye now, am I? Ye're a bit over young for that yet awhile."

"Well, let's just try, then, wi'out any bet. You tie up my eyes wi' something and go away from me into the forest. I'll start looking for you after five minutes."

"I can see ye finding me!"

"I'll find you all right."

"Never in the world!"

"Try it and see!"

"All right, we will," cried Bidenko, suddenly carried away by his scouting ardour. "Ye'll never find me whatever ye do. Wait a bit, though," he suddenly added suspiciously. "What's this ye're getting up to? I go away into the forest and leave ye, and you take your chance and make off again? Eh, no, lad, nothing doing. Ye're as full of tricks as a bagful of monkeys, I can see."

Vanya laughed.

"Ye're afraid I'll go?"

"I'm not afraid of anything," said Bidenko gruffly. "Ye just chatter a bit too much, that's all. My head's aching from your rattle."

"Ye're not afraid," said the boy gaily. "But I'll get away from ye all the same." And Corporal Bidenko could sense such absolute confidence, such unbending resolution in those gay words, that although he said nothing, he quietly resolved to be on the alert every moment.

As for the boy, an imp of mischief seemed to have got into him. He stumped cheerfully in front of Bidenko with his strong bare feet, as though getting his own back for the insult the scouts had put on him, kept on repeating challengingly:

"But I'll get away! Even if you tie me to ye, I'll get away all the same!"

"Well, and d'ye think I can't tie ye up? That wouldn't take me long. See how ye'd get away then."

Bidenko laughed.

"And by the Lord," he suddenly cried decidedly, "I'll do just that—take a rope and tie ye."

Like every experienced scout, Bidenko always carried a five-yard coil of thin, tough cord. Now he began seriously considering whether he shouldn't fasten Vanya to him when they got into the lorry. They would have a good distance to go. It would be pleasant to take a nap on the way. But how could he doze if the boy might jump out over the side any moment?

"I'll do it, and that'll be the end of it," thought Bidenko. "And then when we get there, I'll untie him again. It's the only way to deal wi' him."

He was as good as his word. When they had come out onto the road and taken their places in a lorry going their way, Bidenko took the neatly coiled line from his pocket.

"Now look out for yourself, Shepherd, I'm going to fasten you up," he said gaily, trying to make a joke of it so as not to offend the boy. But Vanya had no idea of being offended. He fell in with the joking tone and replied in kind:

"Tie me, Uncle, tie me all ye want. But see the knots are good ones, so as I don't get 'em undone."

"Ye won't get mine undone in a hurry, my lad. They're double sailor knots."

As he spoke, Bidenko was fastening the line round Vanya's arm just above the elbow, firmly, yet taking care not to hurt the lad; the other end he wound round his own fist.

"Now ye're done for, Shepherd. Ye won't get away from that in a hurry."

The boy said nothing. He lowered his lashes to hide the gleam in his blue eyes.

It was a fine, big lorry they had found, covered with tarpaulin—a new American Studebaker, going empty right to their destination. At first, Bidenko and Vanya were the only passengers, so they were able to make themselves comfortable in the driver's cabin, where they felt no jolting at all. Bidenko made several attempts to talk to the boy, but Vanya preserved a stubborn silence.

"Just look at the proud little cuss," thought Bidenko tenderly. "Little, but a temper of his own all the same. Independent as they make 'em. Been through something in his time, ye can see."

And again the picture of his far-off childhood flashed through his mind.

Meanwhile, more and more people had been getting into the lorry at every control post. Soon it was crowded. There were soldiers from the front line fresh from battle—they could easily be distinguished by their helmets and dirty waterproof capes fastened round their necks and hanging in a knot at the back. There were two lieutenants in close-fitting greatcoats with narrow silver epaulettes and new, hard caps. There was a girl from the military store in a mackintosh, short heavy boots, with a round rosy face looking out from her shawl which was wound round her head country-fashion, like a cabbage head. There were several jovial fighter-pilots who smoked the whole time fishing cigarettes out of transparent cases made at an aircraft factory from scrap bullet-proof glass. There was an army surgeon, a woman, elderly, with round glasses under the blue beret pulled tightly onto her grey head with its close-cropped hair. In a word, a cross-section of the kind of people usually moving about the front line zone on lorries that happen to be going their way.

Dusk began to fall. Rain spattered down on the tarpaulin covering. There was still a good distance to go, and people began to doze, making themselves comfortable as best as they might.

Corporal Bidenko also began to doze, his head resting on the fist with the cord wound around it. But he slept as lightly as a cat, waking every now and then to tug the cord.

"Well, what's up?" Vanya would answer. "I'm still here."

"Sleeping, Shepherd?"

"Sleeping."

"All right. Sleep. Nothing wrong. Just testing the line." And Bidenko would go to sleep again.

Once he suddenly got the idea that Vanya was not there beside him. He sat up hastily and pulled the rope. No response. A cold perspiration broke out upon the corporal. He shot up onto his knees and pressed the electric torch that he had ready all the time.

No. Everything was all right. Vanya was still there beside him, asleep, with his knees drawn up to his stomach. Bidenko shone the torch onto his face; it was calm and peaceful. He was sleeping so soundly that even the beam shining full upon him could not waken him.

Bidenko put out the torch, remembering the night when they had found Vanya. Then, too, they had shone their pocket lamps onto his face, but what a different face then—tormented, ill, haggard, terrible. How he had started, staring wildly! And that had been only a few days ago. But now the boy was sleeping peacefully, dreaming pleasant dreams. That was what it meant to get back to his own folk at last. There was certainly much wisdom in the old saying that in your own home even the walls can heal.

Bidenko lay down, and lulled by the even swaying of the lorry, dozed off again.

This time he slept long and peacefully, but on awakening did not forget to pull on the cord. Vanya made no sound.

"Asleep, I suppose," thought Bidenko. "Thank the Lord, he's tired out."

Bidenko turned over onto his other side, slept again for a little while, then again pulled the line.

"Listen, what's all this?" came an angry contralto from the darkness. "When am I going to get some peace? Why's there some kind of string fastened to me? Why do you keep tugging me? Why can't you let me sleep?"

A cold chill ran over Bidenko.

He turned on his pocket torch, and everything seemed to swim before him. There was no boy there. But the cord was fastened to the boot of the army surgeon who was sitting on the floor, her glasses flashing angrily in the beam.

"Heh! Driver, stop!" bawled Bidenko in a terrible voice, drumming with his fists on the driver's cabin with all his strength.

Without waiting for the lorry to come to a halt, he dashed over arms, legs, heads, kitbags and suitcases to the side, and leaped over onto the road.

The night was impenetrably dark, and a cold rain lashed him. On the western horizon a distant artillery battle flickered. Dozens, hundreds of lorries and light cars, troop carriers, trailers, guns, oil tanks were passing in both directions, their headlights showing the dark pools covered with the glittering ripples and bubbles of the downpour.

Bidenko stood there for some time, arms hanging, legs apart. Then he spat hard and said:

"Oh, to hell with it all!"

Unhurriedly he turned and made his way back to the nearest traffic regulator to find a place in a lorry going back to the front line.

8

"Now, young fellow, get away from that gate. Not allowed for strangers to stand around here."

"I'm not a stranger."

"Who are ye, then?"

"One o' your own."

"What d'ye mean, our own?"

"Soviet."

"Ye can be as Soviet as ye like, it makes no difference. I tell ye—it's not allowed. And that's that. Get along wi' ye!"

"Is this headquarters, Uncle?"

"Never mind what it is."

"But I want to see the chief."

"What chief d'ye want?"

"The biggest one."

"I don't know anything about it. Go along."

"Let me in, Uncle. What harm'll it do ye?"

"Get along. I can't be talking wi' ye. Can't ye see I'm on sentry duty?"

"Ye don't need to talk to me, Uncle. Just let me go to the chief, and that's all."

"You're a quick young imp, ye are!" said the sentry, laughing, then suddenly, his laugh changing to a frown, he shouted: "There's no chief here!"

"That's not true. There is one."

"How d'ye know?"

"I can see at once. It's a good house. There's a saddled horse standing in the yard. A woman just carried a samovar in. And a sentry at the gate."

"Not much you miss. A bit too bright ye are, I can see."

"Let me in, Uncle."

"More likely to blow my whistle, here, and call another chief to ye, the captain of the guard. He'll take ye away from here quick enough."

"Where'll he take me?"

"Where ye need to be taken. Well? Ye hear me? Get away from the gate. It's not allowed. And that's the end of it."

Vanya went off to the side, sat down on an old millstone, rested his chin on his fists and patiently settled down to wait, never taking his eyes from the wicket gate.

The sentry settled the strap of his tommy-gun round his neck and resumed his pacing back and forth along the fence, tramping silently in his white felt boots striped with orange-coloured leather.

After running away from Bidenko for the second time, Vanya had begun looking for the forest where the scouts' tent had been. He had no definite plan. He simply felt drawn towards the scouts, the men who had been the first to treat him so well, so kindly. The fact of their having sent him to the rear seemed to the boy just a big misunderstanding, which could easily be settled. All he needed was to plead sufficiently.

But despite the lad's skill in distinguishing localities and finding roads, he was quite unable to find that particular wood and the tent. Everything had moved too far westward. It was all different, unrecognizable. Vanya knew that he was somewhere quite close to it, perhaps very near. But there was no sign of the tract of forest with that particular tent. The place where he was wandering was very similar, it was true, but it was quite empty, no sign of the tent.

For two days the lad wandered along some new military road, one which he did not know, passing through burned-out villages asking all the soldiers he met where he could find the scouts' tent. But as he did not know what scouts they were, or which was their unit, nobody could tell him anything. Besides, all the soldiers seemed to be very suspicious people with a dislike for talking more than was necessary. The usual answers he received were:

"I don't know."

"Why do you want to know?"

"Go to the commandant."

"Not allowed,"—and so on.

Vanya was getting desperate; he was even beginning seriously to think of making his way to some town in the rear and applying there to a children's home. That is what he certainly would have done in the end, despite all his obstinacy, had it not been for a certain boy whom he met one day.

This lad was not very much older than Vanya—about fourteen and looked less. But what a boy he was! Vanya had never seen anything so magnificent. He was wearing the full uniform of the Guards cavalry—greatcoat reaching to his heels like a skirt, a round Kuban hat of black sheepskin with a crimson top, epaulettes with crossed sabres, spurs, and as though to crown all this military grandeur, a bright crimson bashlyk[1], hanging negligently on his back.

His head with its rakish forelock cocked on one side, the boy was cleaning a small Cossack sabre, pushing it back and forth almost to the pommel in the soft earth of the forest.

It took a good deal of courage even to approach such a boy as that, let alone speak to him. But Vanya was not one of the timid kind. As casually as he could, he came up to this magnificent boy, planted his feet astride, put his hands behind his back and began watching him.

But the boy-soldier never batted an eyelid; paying not the slightest attention to Vanya, he continued his military duties, every now and then spitting between his teeth in a preoccupied manner.

Vanya said nothing. The boy also said nothing. This continued for a long time. At last the boy-soldier could hold out no longer.

"What are ye standing there for?" he asked morosely.

"Because I want to," said Vanya.

"Go back where ye came from."

"Go yourself. It's not your forest."

"Yes, it is."

"How's that?"

"Simple. Our sub-unit's stationed here."

"What sub-unit?"

"None o' your business. Look—there's our horses."

The boy jerked his head backwards, and through the trees Vanya could actually see horse pens, horses, and the black cloaks and bright-coloured hoods of the cavalrymen.

"And who are you?" asked Vanya.

With a dashing gesture the boy slapped the blade into its scabbard, spat and rubbed the place with his boot.

"D'ye understand regimental badges?" he asked mockingly.

"Course I do!" said Vanya boldly, although he knew nothing about them.

"Well, there ye are," said the boy, pointing to his epaulettes, with two white stripes sown

[1] The hood, part of a Cossack cavalry uniform.

across them. "Corporal of the Guards Cavalry, Understand?"

"Oh, yes, some corporal!" said Vanya with an insulting smile. "We know your kind of corporal!"

The boy tossed his flaxen forelock, deeply offended.

"Corporal all right, whether ye like it or not," he said. But he could not stop there. He opened his greatcoat, and Vanya saw a large silver medal on a grey ribbon on his tunic.

"See that?"

Vanya was crushed. But he showed nothing of it.

"Bit o' tin!" he said with a crooked smile, almost crying with envy.

"Tin or not, it's a medal," said the boy, "for military service. And get back where ye came from while ye're still in one piece!"

"Don't show off so much, or ye may get more than ye're expecting!"

"Who from?" asked the magnificent boy, screwing up his eyes.

"From me."

"From you? Ye're just a kid."

"I'm no younger than you."

"How old are ye?"

"None o' your business. How old are you?"

"Fourteen," said the boy, exaggerating a little.

"Ho!" said Vanya and whistled.

"What d'ye mean wi' your 'ho'?"

"What kind of soldier are ye, then?"

"An ordinary soldier. Guards cavalry."

"Go on! It's not allowed!"

"What's not allowed?"

"Ye're too young."

"I'm older than you."

"All the same it's not allowed. They don't take ones like us."

"But they took me!"

"How did they take ye?"

"They just took me."

"And entered ye for all issues?"

"Of course."

"Ye're making it up."

"I don't make things up."

"Swear it."

"Guards word of honour."

"Entered ye for issues of all kinds?"

"All kinds."

"And gave ye a gun?"

"Of course. Everything according to regulations. Did ye see my sabre? Fine blade, lad. From Zlatoust. Ye can bend it into a hoop and it won't break. But that's not all. I've got a burka [1], the real thing. Grand! I only put it on for battle. It's being brought with the supply column now."

Vanya swallowed hard, and looked pitifully at the owner of a burka which was brought along for him with the supply column.

"But they didn't take me," said Vanya, crushed. "First they took me, and then they said it wasn't allowed. I even slept in the tent wi' 'em once. With the scouts, the artillery ones."

"Looks as though they didn't take to ye," said the magnificent boy in a matter-of-fact tone, "if they didn't want to take ye as their son."

"What d'ye mean, son? Whose son?"

"Son o' the regiment, of course — everyone knows that. Without that it's not permitted."

"And ye're a son?"

"I'm a son. I've been a son of our Cossacks for over a year now. They took me back at Smolensk. Major Voznesensky wrote me in his own name, because I'm an orphan on both sides. So now I'm called Corporal of the Guards Voznesensky, and serve with Major Voznesensky as a runner. He even took me wi' him on a raid once. Our Cossacks raised a big row that time in the German rear. The way we dashed into that village where the Germans had their headquarters! And the Jerries all running out into the streets in their underpants! We killed more'n a hundred and fifty o' them. Cut 'em down like cabbages." And he pulled his sabre out of its sheath and showed Vanya how they had cut down the Germans.

"And did you cut them down too?" asked Vanya, trembling with admiration.

The lad longed to say: "Of course," but evidently his conscience as a guardsman was too strong for him.

"No," he said, somewhat confused. "To tell the truth I didn't cut 'em down. I hadn't a sabre then. I was on the carriage with the machine-gun. And now that's enough. Go back where ye came from," added Corporal Voznesensky, catching himself up suddenly: he felt that he had been talking too freely with this unknown person, who had come from God knows where and in general seemed a rather suspicious character.

"Good-bye, lad!"

"Good-bye," said Vanya, quite crushed, and went.

"Looks as though I didn't suit them," he thought with chagrin. But at once he felt in his heart that that wasn't true. No, no! He couldn't be mistaken. He felt that the scouts had been very fond of him. It was all the fault of the battery commander, Captain Yenakiev, who had never even set eyes on him.

It was then that an idea struck Vanya — to go and find his way somehow to the highest officer he could find, and complain of Captain Yenakiev.

That was how he finally found himself at the cottage where he reckoned that there must be some high-ranking officer, sitting on the millstone and waiting patiently, without taking his eyes off the cottage, for the officer to appear.

After some time, an officer came out onto the porch, pulling on his suede gloves, and shouted:

"Sobolev! My horse!"

9

Judging by the speed and alacrity with which a soldier dashed out from behind the cottage leading two saddled horses, the boy at once concluded that if this wasn't the very highest officer, he was at any rate of sufficiently high rank to deal with Captain Yenakiev. The stars on his epaulettes confirmed this impression. There were so many of them — four on each side, besides a gun.

[1] A Caucasian felt cloak worn by Cossacks.

"He's not so very old, but he must be a general for sure," Vanya decided, looking with respect at the fine, well-polished top boots with their spurs, the old but very well-cut greatcoat, the electric torch on its second button, the binoculars slung round the officer's neck, and the satchel and compass.

The soldier led the horses along the street, into the main gate, and halted them before the wicket. The officer went up to them, but before mounting, gaily clapped his own animal on its satiny neck and gave it a piece of sugar.

Everything seemed to indicate that he was in the best of good humour.

When the regimental commander had sent for him that day, it must be admitted that he had felt a certain tremor—that feeling which such a summons always brings, the apprehension of a reprimand, although he was not conscious of any failure or omission. But the strict commander had not only had no fault to find, he had even commended his battery for its good work and had ordered him to recommend for decorations the ten men who had most distinguished themselves in the last battle. Best of all, the colonel, a reserved man, chary of praise, had highly commended that same sudden crushing artillery attack which Captain Yenakiev had planned and prepared so carefully, and which actually had decided the issue.

The colonel had given the captain tea from his own field samovar, which was considered a high honour in the regiment. He accompanied Yenakiev to the door, and taking leave, repeated once more:

"In general, you're doing a good job. Fine work, Captain Yenakiev."

The captain reddened in confusion, and replied:

"I serve the Soviet Union, Comrade Colonel!"

All this was certainly most pleasant, and Captain Yenakiev was enjoying the prospect of telling his officers the colonel's opinion of their battery.

"Uncle," he suddenly heard a voice beside him. He turned and saw Vanya standing to attention in front of him, hands to his trouser seams, blue eyes bent on his face.

"May I speak to you?" said Vanya, trying to look as much like a soldier as possible.

"All right, speak away," said the captain gaily.

"Uncle, are ye the chief?"

"Yes. The commander. Why?"

"And who do ye command?"

"I command my battery. I command the soldiers and the guns."

"And do ye command the officers too?"

"It depends on which ones. I command my own officers."

"And are you commander over captains?"

"No, not over captains."

Deep disappointment clouded the boy's face.

"Oh... I thought you could command captains too."

"What difference does it make to you?"

"I need one that can."

"Well, but why?"

"If you're not a commander over captains then there's nothing to talk about. Ye see, Uncle, I need a commander that can give orders to all the captains."

"And what orders do you want given to all captains? This is interesting."

"I don't need them given to all captains. Only to one."

"Who's that?"

"Captain Yenakiev."

"What did you say?" cried the captain.

"To Captain Yenakiev."

"H'm... And what sort of captain is he?"

"He commands the scouts, Uncle. He's at the very head of all of 'em. Whatever he tells 'em to do, they've got to do it."

"What scouts are those?"

"Why, the artillery scouts. Everyone knows that. The ones that plaster the German firepoints. Oh, Uncle, he's such a bad-tempered one, that captain! A real tartar!"

"And have you ever seen that bad-tempered captain?"

"That's just it, I've never seen him."

"And has he seen you?"

"No, he hasn't seen me either. He only told 'em to take me away and hand me over to the commandant."

The officer screwed up his eyes and looked at the boy with some curiosity.

"Stop... Wait a bit. What's your name?"

"Mine? Vanya."

"Just Vanya?" smiled the officer.

"Vanya Solntsev," the boy corrected himself.

"Shepherd!"

"That's right!" cried the boy in surprise. "The scouts called me Shepherd. But how d'ye know that?"

"I know all about everything that happens in Captain Yenakiev's battery, lad. And now tell me, my friend, how do you come to be here, if Captain Yenakiev gave orders to take you to the rear?"

A flash of mischief gleamed in the boy's blue eyes, but he immediately lowered his lids.

"I ran away," he said simply, trying with all his might to look confused.

"Ah, so that's it! And how did you run away?"

"I just cut and ran."

"You just cut at once and ran at once?"

"No, not at once," said Vanya, rubbing one foot against the other. "I ran away from him twice. I ran away once, and he found me. And then I ran so that he didn't find me any more."

"And who's he?"

"Uncle Bidenko. The corporal. One of their scouts. Maybe ye know him?"

"I've heard of him, I've heard of him," said the officer, frowning still more. "But I can't quite believe that you ran away from Bidenko. He's not that sort of man. I rather fancy you're making a bit of this up, eh?"

"Not any of it," said Vanya, drawing himself up. "I'm making up nothing. Cross my heart and die!"

"You hear that, Sobolev?" said the captain, turning to his orderly, who had been listening to the conversation with the liveliest interest.

"Yes, Sir."

"And what do you think? Could this boy have possibly run away from Bidenko?"

"Never in this world!" cried Sobolev, with a broad, delighted grin. "There's never been a grown man could get away from Bidenko, let alone that shrimp. He's just spinning a yarn, if ye'll excuse me, Comrade Captain."

Vanya went white with rage at the insult.

"Don't I budge!" he said firmly, with a look at the orderly full of cold scorn and dignity. Then, fiercely indignant, two red spots on his cheeks, he began telling how he had tricked the old scout, the words tumbling over each other.

When he came to the part about the rope, the captain could contain himself no longer. Wiping away the tears with his glove, he opened his mouth in such a roar of laughter that the horses pricked up their ears and stamped in alarm, while Sobolev, not venturing to laugh too loudly in the presence of his commander—one didn't do such things—shook his head and sniggered into his fist, repeating over and over again:

"Oh, Bidenko! Oh, the famous scout! Oh, professor!"

But when Vanya began telling Yenakiev about his meeting with the boy-soldier, the captain's face darkened, he became thoughtful, gloomy.

"'They made me their son,' he says," Vanya related excitedly. "'I'm the son of the regiment now', he says, 'and I went on the carriage with the heavy machine-gun, and that's because they liked me.' And then he said that mine can't have liked me, and that's why they sent me away."

Vanya stopped for a second to take in a great gulp of air and looked pitifully at the captain with his limpid naive eyes.

"Only that wasn't true, Uncle, that mine didn't like me. They did like me. Cross my heart and die! They liked me a lot. But they couldn't do anything because of that Captain Yenakiev."

"So it looks as though everybody liked you, only Captain Yenakiev didn't."

"Yes, Uncle," said Vanya, blinking apologetically. "They all liked me but that captain. And he never had even seen me. And how can ye tell what a person's like if ye've never seen 'em? If he'd only seen me, just once, mebbe he'd 'a liked me too. Isn't that right, Uncle?"

"You think so?" said the captain, laughing. "Well, that's enough. We'll see."

With a decided movement he placed his foot in the stirrup and mounted.

"Have you ever ridden at night with the other lads?" he asked sternly, but his eyes were laughing as he gathered up the reins.

"O' course I have. Lots o' times, Uncle."

"You can stick on a horse? Well, Sobolev, take him up with you."

Before Vanya had time to blink an eyelid, the orderly's strong hands had lifted the boy up and settled him in front on the horse.

"To the scouts!" Captain Yenakiev ordered, and they galloped off.

"Ye got away from Bidenko, but ye won't get away from me, lad!" said the orderly, pressing the boy to him firmly but carefully.

"And I don't want to," answered Vanya gaily.

He felt that he had come to an important and very delightful turning point in his life.

When they came to the scouts' pillbox, the captain jumped from his horse and threw the reins to the orderly.

"Wait here!" he said, and ran swiftly down the steps, spurs ringing.

10

All the scouts were present and at that moment were playing dominoes. They banged the tablets down on the table with such vigour that one might have thought revolvers were being fired.

"Attention!" shouted the orderly for the day as he saw the battery commander enter. The scouts jumped up, throwing down the dominoes on the table. Corporal Bidenko, in charge of the group, wearing his helmet and carrying his rifle, according to regulations, stepped up to the commander and reported:

"Comrade Captain! The scouts' group of the platoon command post attached to your battery. The group is in reserve. The men are resting. Nothing to report during my period of duty. Corporal on duty Bidenko."

"Good day, artillerymen!"

"Wish you good health, Comrade Captain[1]!" chorussed the scouts.

It was Captain Yenakiev's custom after this to give the command to stand easy, and permit the men to resume their occupations. This time, however, he seated himself silently on the stool offered him, and looked for a long time at the picture "Spring in Germany," war booty.

The men knew their commander well. One look at this frowning brow under the peak of his cap, one glance at his narrowed eyes and the fine lines round them, his firm lips curving in a cold, enigmatic smile under his short moustache, was sufficient to show that somebody was "for it."

"So there is nothing to report?" said the captain, flipping the table with his gloves.

Bidenko said nothing, guessing at once how the land lay.

"Why do you say nothing?"

"Permit me to report..."

"A report is unnecessary. I am already informed. A fine scout whom a boy can fool! Have you reported to the group commander?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well?"

"The commander gave me four extra fatigues."

"How many?"

"Four."

"Too few. Inform him that I have given orders for two more. Six in all."

"Yes, Sir."

Captain Yenakiev still kept his eyes fixed on the soldiers standing to attention before him.

"Sit down, men," he said at last, unfastening his greatcoat in token that official business was ended, and informality was possible. "I've heard a great deal about your housekeeping, and that you've even some

[1] The traditional Russian army greeting.

special tobacco. What about letting me try it?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when five pouches were stretched out towards him, five pieces of cigarette paper and five lighters ready to flare up at a sign, and offers came from every side.

"Take mine, Comrade Captain. It's a mite more delicate like."

"Try mine! It's mixed wi' juniper!"

"Permit me to roll one for ye, Comrade Captain. Nobody can roll a cigarette like me."

"Maybe ye prefer weaker tobacco? Mine's from Sukhumi, sweet as figs."

"You're well off here, I can see that," said the captain, slowly deciding whose tobacco to take. "But you needn't bother to offer yours, Bidenko. I'm not taking any. If I smoke yours then I may sleep through anything."

"That's right," said Gorbunov, winking. "Quite correct. He must have gone to sleep in the lorry after smoking that tobacco of his when our shepherd fooled him."

"That's what I was meaning," said the captain.

"Comrade Captain!" said Bidenko pitifully, "if he'd been an ordinary sort of boy! But he's not a boy, he's a real little devil. Honest, he is!"

"What then, was he really a fine lad?" asked the captain, drawing on his cigarette. "How did you like him, men?"

"A real grand kid!" said Gorbunov, with that broad grin that appeared on all the scouts' faces when they talked about Vanya. "A real independent lad! And there's another thing—a born soldier. We'd 'a made a fine scout of him. Well, there it is."

"You're sorry about him?" said Captain Yenakiev.

"Well... of course... sorry or not... of course, he'll be all right there in the rear. But—to tell ye the truth—we were sorry when he went. He's a real soldier. The army'd be just the place for him."

"You're not making this up?"

"Why should I be doing that? We could see it at once. Although, of course, you're the battery commander, you know best."

"And why don't you say something, men?" said Captain Yenakiev, with a searching look at the faces surrounding him. "How did the boy strike you?"

The same broad grin immediately spread over all faces, as though at a word of command.

"Think it over well! It's you who'll have to live with him, not me."

"A grand kid, shepherd! Bright and breezy!" said the scouts, not yet fully understanding where all this was leading.

The captain looked at them very hard and straight for a moment, then after thinking for some time, said:

"Well, all right, then. Only remember, that he's not just a plaything, but a live person. Heh, Sobolev!" he shouted going to the door. "Bring the Shepherd in here!"

When to everybody's amazement Vanya suddenly appeared at the door, the captain laid his hand firmly on his shoulder and said:

"Here's your Shepherd. Let him stay with you for the present. Later on, we'll see."

11

Captain Yenakiev had hardly left the pillbox before the scouts surrounded Vanya, eager to learn how all this had come about.

"Shepherd! Dear lad!" cried Gorbunov.

"Well, young fellow, make your report!" said Bidenko sternly. "Where've ye come from? Where the devil did ye fly off to? And how did Captain Yenakiev find ye?"

"What Captain Yenakiev?" said Vanya, bewildered.

"Why, the one that brought ye here to us."

"That wasn't Captain Yenakiev?"

"The very same."

"Gosh!"

"Why, didn't ye know?"

"How could I?" cried Vanya, his short lashes fluttering. "If only I'd known!.. If only I'd just guessed!. Ye're not pulling my leg, Uncle, that really was Captain Yenakiev?"

"Of course."

"The battery commander?"

"Yes. The same."

"Oh, Uncle, it's not true!"

"Wait a bit, Shepherd," said Gorbunov, his face split from ear to ear with the same grin that was on all the scouts' faces. "Better stop gasping and tell us everything in order."

But Vanya was evidently too excited to say two consecutive words. His eyes glowing with delight, he looked around the scouts' new pillbox, which already seemed as warm and familiar as the tent where he had first spent the night with them. The greatcoats and waterproof capes were arranged just as tidily; there were the same kitbags at the heads, the same rough towels. There was even the copper kettle on the stove, and the lump sugar which Gorbunov had hastily tipped out on the table was the same.

True, the carbide lamp, a captured German one, was different. It seared the eyes unpleasantly with its glaring light which, like the lamp itself, seemed captured. The boy screwed up his eyes against it, wrinkled his nose and put on a look as though he could not utter a word.

As a matter of fact, he had long ago guessed that the officer whom he had accosted beside the cottage was Captain Yenakiev, but he kept that to himself. It was not for nothing that the soldiers had seen a born scout in him. And the first rule for a real scout is—better to know plenty and say nothing than to talk plenty and know nothing.

Thus Vanya's fate underwent a magical transformation three times in this short period.

12

As evening fell, Bidenko and Gorbunov went out on patrol taking Vanya with them. It was the first time they had taken him, and they had omitted to say anything about it to their commander.

Their assignment was to penetrate as far as possible into the enemy's positions and ascertain the roads along which their battery could best make its way forward through the swamps in case of an advance. They were also to find good positions for the artillery platoons,

the most advantageous points for observation posts, investigate the defences, and most important of all, bring information about the number and position of the German reserves. It would not be a bad thing, of course, to grab a useful "tongue" [1] on the way back—an artillery or staff officer. But that was a matter of luck. They took the lad with them as guide, since he was thoroughly familiar with all this swampy locality, so difficult to penetrate.

His job was to go ahead, show the scouts the path and warn them of any danger. In order to make him look natural, and avoid the suspicious appearance of a person wandering about in the German rear without any visible object, they had thought of a horse—he was to drive the horse which was supposed to have wandered away.

13

The day passed without any particular incidents. The scouts saw that Vanya really did know the locality splendidly, and carried out his duties as guide sensibly and exactly.

While Bidenko and Gorbunov sat concealed somewhere in an old pen or in the bushes, Vanya went ahead with his horse and examined the surroundings, then returned and cawed, to let the men know that all was clear. In this way the work went much better and faster.

The scouts usually were not idle while they were waiting for Vanya, but utilized the time to enter on the map all they had discovered on the way. This time they had made unusually useful discoveries. The sector assigned to Captain Yenakiev's battery had been very well and thoroughly reconnoitered throughout the whole depth of the German defences. The only part left to investigate was a small swampy stream;it was necessary to enter on the map the places where the guns could be brought across to the other side as unobtrusively as possible. This was particularly important in the event of a successful breach of the German defences. It would give Captain Yenakiev the chance to send his guns far ahead along the main march route at the most favourable moment in one unexpected dash and batter the retreating German columns almost from their own rear, without losing time in reconnaissance.

But it was impossible to carry out this complicated investigation in broad daylight, and especially to find suitable fords, test their bottom and measure the depth of the water. It was necessary to wait for nightfall. For this reason Gorbunov, in command of the group, decided they would spend the night in a meadow in the middle of the swamp, make their way to the river before dawn and under cover of the morning mists, find fords, test them and enter them on the map. After that they could return to their unit.

That was what they did. After spending the night in the meadow, Vanya took Serko's bridle at about two o'clock, just before dawn, and went ahead as usual. Bidenko and Gorbunov waited for him. The river was not far away, and they reckoned that Vanya should return in an hour at the latest.

An hour passed, two, three. No sign of Vanya. Instead of the boy, Serko returned alone. Then the scouts knew for certain—some misfortune had happened to Vanya. They would have to go and rescue him.

Vanya Solntsev had not been satisfied with merely being taken along as guide. He knew that this was a responsible, honourable job. But nevertheless, it was not enough for him. His enthusiastic, insatiable spirit demanded more. He wanted to win glory for himself as a real scout, and astound everybody.

Before setting out, Vanya had secretly found himself a compass. As it later turned out, he had quite simply stolen it from one of the scouts. Or to be more exact, he had quietly taken it from the bed, reckoning that he would return it before the man went out on reconnaissance. He saw nothing wrong with this, since the scout always let him carry it, and had even explained its use. A pencil Vanya already possessed. And for a notebook, he decided to use his spelling book.

In this way, equipped according to all the rules, the Shepherd began to operate like a real scout.

During the reconnaissance, Gorbunov and Bidenko had no idea that while they were awaiting Vanya, he was doing a little scouting on his own account. They thought that he had simply gone ahead with his horse, examining the locality, and would then return and tell them if the way was clear. But Vanya had other ideas. Imitating the scouts, he began independent observations. Breathing hard, deep folds in his forehead, he fussed with the compass and ascertained the azimuth. On the pages of his spelling book he traced awkward signs of directions and targets reconnoitered by himself alone. At last he even made an attempt at a plan of the whole locality. Roughly but with sufficient accuracy he traced the symbols for roads, groves, rivers and swamp.

It was when he was engaged in this occupation that the German patrol discovered him, settled down with his compass and spelling book in a thicket of young oaks and drawing up a plan of the locality with the river and a new bridge which he actually had discovered in the reeds.

Vanya defended himself desperately. But what could a boy do against two German soldiers? They simply twisted his arms behind his back and led him across the new bridge and up a hill in the forest. Here they pushed him into a deep, dark pillbox and locked him in.

14

After some time, a soldier came for Vanya and led him into another pillbox for interrogation. Outside, a camouflage net hung over it, fastened to the boles of the pines; inside, it was roomy, warm and lighted by electricity. A wireless set purred in a corner. In the middle there was a long table fastened to the floor with a man and a woman sitting behind it.

The man was a German officer in a tight trench coat with a wide turned-back collar

[1] Prisoner captured for information purposes.

of black velvet, sewn with silver braid, which gave him a funeral look. Vanya could not see his face, as it was hidden by a hand with a thin ring and dirty nails. He could only see the thin neck, red like that of a turkey, yellowish hair and flat, fleshy ear.

The officer looked like a man utterly exhausted by sleeplessness and irritated by too bright a light. His black cloth cap with its broad upturned crown and large varnished peak like a trowel was hanging from a nail behind him.

That cap, and particularly that aged-looking, flattened ear with a tuft of hair in the middle, gave the boy a depressing and ominous feeling as of something menacing, ruthless.

As for the woman, Vanya could not imagine who she might be, although he immediately thought of her as "the teacher." She was wearing an old moleskin jacket with a bunch of artificial flowers fastened in the collar, a knitted skirt stretched at the knees and grey rubber boots. Her light hair, tightly twisted into horns, rose over the too high and narrow forehead, and on the flashy bridge of her nose there were two red marks from the pince-nez which she was polishing with a piece of wash-leather. She had protruding light-blue eyes with piercing pupils.

Vanya was placed before the table, on which he at once saw his compass and spelling book opened at the place where he had tried to draw a plan of the district with its river, bridge and grove, the same grove where he was at this moment.

The woman quickly donned her pince-nez—golden ones of thick glass, blew her nose on a tiny lace-edged handkerchief, and began speaking metallically in an unnaturally stiff and correct Russian, like a trained magpie.

"Come here, boy, and reply to all my questions. Do you understand me? I shall ask and you will reply. Is that not right? We are agreed?"

But Vanya understood very badly what she was saying to him. His head was still ringing from the fight with the soldiers. His eyes were dim. His arms, twisted behind him, with the hands tied, were stiff and very painful.

"Boy, you are in pain?"

Vanya said nothing.

"Unfasten the little rat's hands," she said quickly in German, and added in Russian with a smile that exposed one gold tooth: "Unfasten the hands of the child. He promises to improve. He will not again fight with our soldiers, or bite them. He became excited. Is that not so, boy?"

Vanya's hands were untied, but still he was silent, casting swift glances around him from under his brows.

"And now," said the German woman, once more displaying her gold tooth, "now, boy, come nearer to us. Have no fear for us. We shall just ask you, and you will just answer. Yes? Well, and so tell us who you are, what is your name, where do you live, who are your parents and why are you in a fortified area?"

Vanya dropped his eyes sullenly.

"I dunno anything. What d'ye want wi' me? I haven't done anything to ye," he whined. "I was just looking for me horse. Had an awful job to find him. I've been tramping and tramping all day and all night too. I got lost. Then I sat down to rest me a bit. And your soldiers began hitting me. What did they do it for?"

"Now, now, boy. It is not good to talk so rudely. The soldiers did their duty, and it may be that they became angry. Not more. But we wish to know who are you, where are you from, where are your parents—your father, your mother?"

"I'm an orphan."

"Oh, my poor child! Your parents have died, yes?"

"They didn't die. They was killed—your people killed them," said Vanya with a terrible, frozen smile, looking at the German woman's fleshy nose, with tiny pinpricks of perspiration shining upon it. She fumbled about for a moment, and began wiping it with her handkerchief.

"Yes, yes. That is war," she said quickly. "It is very sad, but you must not grieve. Nobody is to blame. Everywhere there are orphans. Poor boy! But grieve not. We shall give you an education, we shall send you to a children's home. A good children's home. And then, perhaps, to a training school. You will receive a profession for your life. You wish that? Don't you?"

"Frau Müller," said the officer in German, in a growling bass, which held a note of irritation, as he impatiently drummed on his freckled forehead with his fingers, "enough fooling about with him. Who wants all this kind of thing? I need to know where the young rascal's got his compass from, and who sent him to make a map of our fortified area."

"Just a moment, one little moment, Herr Major. You don't know the soul of the Russian child, but I know it well. You may depend upon me, first I shall penetrate into the depths of his soul, I shall gain his confidence, and then he will tell me all. You may trust me. I have lived ten years among these people."

"Very good. Only don't fool about with him. I've had enough of it. Penetrate into his soul faster, and let the young ruffian say who gave him the compass and taught him to make a plan of our military objectives. I can see a professional touch here. Get on with it."

"Well, boy," said the German woman in Russian, smiling patiently, again showing her gold tooth, "you see yourself that I love you and wish your good. My parents—my papa and mama—lived in Russia for a long time, and I too lived here for ten years. You see how I talk Russian? Much better than you do. I am a really, truly Russian woman. You can trust me absolutely. Talk to me as openly as you would to your own auntie. Have no fear. Call me Auntie; I shall like that. Well, and so tell me, boy, where you received this compass?"

"Found it."

"Dear, dear, dear! What a naughty boy to try to deceive your auntie who loves you so. You must learn that lies debase a person's dignity. Well, just think once more and tell me where you got that compass?"

"Found it," Vanya repeated with dull obstinacy.

"So compasses grow here out of the ground, like mushrooms?"

"Somebody lost it and I found it."

"Who lost it?"

"Some soldier."

"Here there are only German soldiers. German soldiers have German compasses. But this is a Russian compass. What do you say to that, boy?"

Vanya said nothing; he felt with chagrin that he had made a false step.

"Well, and how did that happen?"

"Dunno."

"You don't know? Excellent. I understand. You do not wish to betray the people who gave you the compass. You wish to be silent. That does you honour. But the people who gave you the compass are not good people. They are very bad people. They are criminals. And you know what always happens to criminals? You do not wish to be a criminal, do you? Isn't that right? Tell me, who gave you that compass?"

"Nobody."

"How is that?"

"Found it."

"Good, I believe you. We will say that you are telling the truth. But in that case tell us who taught you to make such beautiful drawings?"

"What drawings? I dunno what ye're asking me," said Vanya wiping his nose with his sleeve.

"Come here. Nearer. Do not be afraid. I shall not hit you. Whose property is this book?"

"What d'ye mean, property?" said Vanya, with a sob. "I don't understand what ye're asking me."

"Whose is this book?" asked the German woman losing patience.

"That spelling book?"

"Yes. The spelling book. Whose is it?"

"Mine."

"And who drew in it?"

"Drew what?"

"Ach, boy, do not pretend. Who made that plan?"

"What plan?" sobbed Vanya again. "I dunno anything about your plans. I lost my horse. Tramped after it all day and all night, I did. Let me go, Auntie! What've I done to ye?"

"Come here, I tell you!" cried the woman, and behind her glasses her eyes became sharp as those of a hawk. She seized him by the shoulder with hard claw-like fingers and pulled him to the table, pushing his nose right down onto the spelling book.

"There it is. Who drew that?"

What could Vanya say in reply? The diagram was too evident. Silent, pale, Vanya looked at the rubbed page where over the picture and title a plan of the river with the new bridge and fords was traced awkwardly but plainly in copying ink pencil.

Vanya had been specially proud of the fords. He had discovered them himself and then drawn them as accurately as the scouts. Opposite each ford was a thick horizontal line above which was carefully written the figure "1," showing a depth of one metre, while beneath it was a letter showing the nature of the bottom.

Vanya realized at last that he could find no way out of this, that he was lost.

"Who drew that?" the German woman repeated, her voice vibrating like metal strings when one plucks them.

"Dunno," said Vanya.

"You do not know?" said the woman, and red patches appeared on her face, spreading over it until it became a dull pink like strawberry toilet soap. Then with a sudden wrench she seized the lad's ear in her iron fingers and wrenched his head forcibly up.

"Open your mouth! I order you. Open your mouth this minute and show me your tongue."

Vanya understood and clenched his teeth. Then the German woman gripped him with strong, amazingly muscular knees, pushed her index finger into his cheek and began to open his mouth by force. Vanya screamed with pain and for an instant showed his tongue. The woman looked at it and then said cheerfully:

"Now we know."

Vanya's whole tongue was purple from the copying pencil which he had wetted continually while making his drawing.

"So, boy," said the German woman, squeamishly wiping her thick red fingers on her knitted skirt. "We shall ask, and you shall answer. Is it not so? Who taught you to draw topographical maps, where are they, these people, and how can they be found? You understand me? You will receive three experienced guides and you will show them the road."

"I dunno what ye're asking me," said Vanya.

The boy was standing close to the table, he was biting his lips hard, holding his head obstinately down. Tears gathered on his lashes and dropped one by one onto the map drawn on the space between a picture of an axe driven into a tree and the beautiful writing in slanting lines: "We are not slaves. No slaves are we."

"Speak," said the German woman quietly and breathed hard through her nose.

"I won't," said Vanya still more quietly.

At that instant he saw the officer's hand with the ring slide slowly downward, disclosing a freckled face of an unhealthy colour with a sharp red nose and a small chin like that of an old woman. Vanya had no time to see the officer's eyes for they blazed and flashed, and then a heavy blow on the face flung him against the wall.

Vanya struck the back of his head against a beam, but had no time to fall before he was hurled back to the table where he received another blow, as heavy as the first. And again he was not allowed to fall. He stood there swaying in front of the table, blood dripping from his nose, spattering the writing: "We are not slaves. No slaves are we." Blindingly white and black signs floated before his eyes in pairs, his ears rang as though he were in an empty cauldron that somebody was hammering from the outside. He heard a voice, which seemed terribly quiet and terribly far away:

"Now you will say?"

"Auntie, don't hit me!" screamed the boy, covering his head with his arms in terror.

"Now you will say?" the far-away voice repeated softly.

"I won't," whispered the boy, barely able to move his lips.

Another blow hurled him to the wall, and Vanya remembered no more. He never knew how two soldiers dragged him out of the pillbox or heard the German woman scream after him:

"Wait a bit, my fine bird! You will talk quick enough when you've been three days and nights without food or water!"

15

Vanya recovered consciousness in thick darkness, brought to by terrible blows that shook the earth. He was thrown about, away from the wall; everything seemed to rock. Sand was falling from above like dry powder, sometimes in fine trickles, sometimes in large patches. Vanya coud feel its weight upon him. He was already half buried. Using arms and legs, with a tremendous effort he tried to dig himself out, breaking his nails. He had no idea how long he had been unconscious—probably a long time, for he was faint and sick with hunger.

The stuffy, icy dampness had chilled him through and through. His teeth were chattering, his fingers were numb and stiff. His head was aching badly, but it was clear.

Vanya realized that he was in the same pillbox where he had been imprisoned before the interrogation, and that the place was being bombed.

With great difficulty, supporting himself by the shaking walls, the boy crawled about looking for the door. He sought for a long time and at last found it. But it was fastened on the outside and he could not push it open. Suddenly there was such a tremendous blow, quite near, right above his head it seemed, that the lad was deafened for a moment. Several beams fell down, nearly catching his head. The wooden door, torn from its hinges, was shattered, and through the scattered crossbeams the sharp light of day struck his eyes. He could hear the dry rattle of many machine-guns quite close at hand firing away as though trying to outdo each other.

The bomb which shattered the pillbox where Vanya had been imprisoned was the last. In the silence that followed, the various sounds of the machinery of war could be plainly heard, as it worked full strength. Mingling with its ruthless, metallic noise the boy's returning hearing could plainly distinguish the soft chorus of human voices, as though somebody were singing: "A-a-a-h!" And his consciousness recalled the phrase which he had once heard from the scouts: "The queen of the field has gone into the attack."

Clambering up the falling, half-buried steps of the dugout, the lad made his way out and fell to the ground. He could see the forest, that same forest through which the Germans had dragged him not so long ago. At that time it had been tidy and orderly, quiet and calm, with paths laid out everywhere as though it were a park, and river sand covering them. Small wooden bridges with handrails made of white birch twigs had spanned the ditches; a camouflage net sown with green squares and ovals had stretched over the headquarters pillbox; German sentries had stood motionless before striped sentry-boxes; red and black telephone lines had stretched in all directions, and a field power-station had throbbed and drummed somewhere in the thicket; and the headquarters buses and passenger cars had been hidden in special deep pits covered with branches.

Now all this German headquarters forest, formerly equipped with every comfort and convenience, was quite unrecognizable. There were smoking shell-holes surrounded by uptorn pines, many-coloured fragments of motor-vehicles, and dead Germans, their greatcoats scorched and still smoking. A tuft of the camouflage netting was hanging high up on a tree. There was a choking smell of gunpowder. Bullets whistled past, chipping bark and breaking off twigs.

Vanya realized at once that the Germans had already retreated from the forest, but that the Russians had not yet come. It was that short yet achingly long pause when the battery was swiftly changing its position, the men were hastily heaving mortars up onto their shoulders, telephone-operators were running along rolling their great bobbins before them, liaison officers racing about in armoured cars, sappers cautiously nosing about with their mine-detectors and infantrymen with their rifles galloping ahead at top speed, not stopping to fall prone, over land which five minutes previously had been held by the enemy.

His heart beating hard, Vanya waited, hugging the ground, for the moment when his own folks would come.

There they were.

The first to appear was a tall soldier in a torn, dirty, flapping waterproof cape. He came running between the boles, fell to his knees, swiftly changed the disc of his tommy-gun, then fell prone and took aim.

It seemed to Vanya that he aimed for an eternity, but actually it was only a few seconds. His face looked out keenly, ruthlessly, from under the hood of his cape into the depths of the forest. He was making his choice. At last he pressed the trigger. The tommy-gun with its round black disc vibrated with a short burst.

At that instant Vanya recognized the soldier. It was Gorbunov. But heavens, how he had changed! It was the same fabulous figure—broad, solid, even stout, but where was his kindliness, his characteristic gap-toothed grin? Now his face with its light eyelashes, absorbed, fierce with the lust of battle, dark with sweat, was peering menacingly ahead.

How different this Gorbunov was from that other, whom Vanya was accustomed to seeing clean-shaven, pink and white, and benevolent. But if that Gorbunov had been good, this one was splendid.

"Uncle Gorbunov!" cried Vanya in his thin high voice, trying to make himself heard over the noise of battle.

Their eyes met.

A joyful smile broke over Gorbunov's face—that same broad familiar grin, uncovering his gap-toothed mouth.

"Shepherd! Vanyushka!" cried Gorbunov, his ringing, rather high-pitched voice resounding through the whole forest. "Devil take ye—alive! And I thought ye were finished and done for. Lad, dear lad, this is the best surprise!" he said, one spring taking him to

Vanya's side. "Eh, lad, what a time you gave us?"

He hugged the boy hard, then passed a hot hand over his cheeks and twice kissed him with his hard, soldier's lips. As for Vanya, he could hardly believe in his own happiness, as he felt the warmth of the man's large, perspiring body, hot with the fire of battle.

Everything that had happened seemed to Vanya like a dream, a miracle. He wanted to snuggle closer to Gorbunov, to hide under his waterproof cape and sit there as long as he wished—even five hours. But he remembered that he was a soldier, and such foolishness was not fitting.

"Uncle Gorbunov," he said quickly, "in the forest over there, there's a headquarters pillbox, where they interrogated me. Ever so much better than that one of ours with the carbide lamp. Twice as big."

"Ye don't say!"

"Battery word of honour."

"And warm?" Gorbunov asked solicitously.

"Oh, as warm as ye want! And they had a wireless there. It was playing all the time."

"A wireless? We need that badly," said Gorbunov, in a bustle of housekeeping already. "Come along, where is it—show me!"

"Quite near here."

"Then let's go and take possession. I've been wanting to find a pillbox like that for the group for a long time. One with a radio. Our battery ought to come just this way."

They dashed to the dugout.

"This one?" asked Gorbunov.

"Yes, this one," said Vanya, his eyes narrowing scornfully.

Gorbunov took a piece of charcoal from his breeches pocket, brought especially for this very purpose, and quickly wrote on the door in large letters: "Taken by the scouts' group of the platoon, first invincible battery of the X artillery regiment. Corporal Gorbunov."

Meanwhile, lorries trailing light 76 mm. guns were already racing up, corkscrewing between the trees.

Captain Yenakiev's battery was changing its emplacements.

16

"Well, Shepherd, here's the end o' your larking. Ye've run around, now ye've finished. We're going to make a real soldier out o' ye."

With these words Corporal Bidenko threw a capacious bundle of uniform down on the cot. He unfastened a new leather belt which was fastened tightly round it; the various articles tumbled out, and Vanya saw new breeches, a new tunic with epaulettes, underwear, puttees, a kitbag, gas mask, greatcoat, a peaked cap with a red star, and best of all—topboots. Wonderful little fine leather topboots with leather soles, the light points of wooden pegs fastening them neatly to the uppers.

This was a moment which Vanya had awaited for a long time. He had dreamed of it. He had anticipated its delight. But when it actually arrived, he could not believe his eyes.

For a moment he could not breathe.

It seemed impossible that all these wonderful, well-sewn new things—all this wealth—really belonged to him.

Vanya looked at the uniform, not daring to lay a finger on it. He longed particularly to touch the little metal guns on the epaulettes. His finger made a motion towards them, but drew back again, as though they had been red hot.

His lashes fluttering, he looked alternately at the things and at Bidenko.

"Is all this for me?" he asked shyly at last.

"Of course."

"No, say honestly, Uncle Bidenko."

"It's the truth."

"Battery word of honour?"

"Battery word of honour."

"And word of honour as a scout?"

"Sure!" said Bidenko, frowning in order not to smile. "I even signed the order for them instead o' you."

"Oooooh! What a lot of things!"

"Equipment," said Bidenko sternly. "There's all that's according to regulations, no more and no less."

It was only now, when he heard the magic words "order," "equipment," and especially "according to regulations," that Vanya realized at last that this was no dream. These things really were his, all his own.

He began to examine them, lay them aside, unhurriedly, in businesslike fashion, carefully looking each one over in the light. At last, after examining and enjoying the last one, Vanya said:

"Can I put on my uniform?"

Bidenko shook his head and laughed.

"Eh, ye're in a hurry, ye are. Want to get 'em on. Taken a fancy to 'em. Nay, nay, lad, first of all we'll have to take ye to the bath, and we must have the locks off, and after that we can start making a soldier out o' ye."

Vanya sighed heavily, but said nothing. Much as he longed to put on his uniform at once and become a real soldier, he dared not oppose his superior officer; he had already sensed dimly the meaning of military discipline, although not understanding it completely as yet. He had learned unquestioning obedience. He had learned by experience what it meant to take things into one's own hands, and what consequences it might bring. He still felt ashamed when he thought of Bidenko and Gorbunov, and all the trouble and anxiety he had caused them, when he began mapmaking on his own. For two days and nights Gorbunov had lain concealed in the German "headquarters forest," risking capture and death every moment, to search for Vanya.

The boy knew all this. But there was much that he did not know. He did not know that Gorbunov had made up his mind not to return to the unit without him. He had taken the lad on patrol without permission and felt himself responsible to the battery commander. Vanya did not know, either, that when Bidenko, on returning to the unit, had reported to the commander, Captain Yenakiev had been furious, threatened to have Lieutenant Sedykh court-martialled and ordered a group of five scouts to set out immediately in search of the boy. Luckily, that day there had been a fresh advance, and the matter had been settled by Vanya's appearance.

This time the German front had been

breached along a stretch of over a hundred kilometres. In the first day's fighting our men advanced over thirty kilometres, without giving the Germans an opportunity to halt and establish some sort of order. For this reason, by the end of that day the "headquarters forest," as it was called on maps and in reports, was deep in the rear, while our men continued to push their advance, raining down blows on the retreating enemy. Thus it came about that the pillbox which Gorbunov had reserved for his group was not used.

Vanya paid yet one more visit to the hated place, however. The Germans had fled so hastily that they had left everything behind. Even the black cap hung on the wall. Vanya took down his bag which was also hanging there, and took the compass and the spelling book which was still open at the page with the drawing and the inscription: "We are not slaves. No slaves are we," stained by dried blood.

The offensive developed swiftly. The rear services were left behind. For this reason, a long time had passed before Vanya received his uniform; another thing was that it had to be altered to fit the boy, and in the turmoil and constant movement this was practically impossible. However, the scouts used all their influence to discover a good tailor, bootmaker, and most important of all, a good barber with clippers.

That excellent housekeeper Gorbunov did not stint his hospitality. Tinned pork and a hundred cigarettes, a good deal of lump sugar and a bottle of pure aviation spirit all helped in the good work. They all courted the tailor, the bootmaker and the barber, whom they found with the Mortar Guards, as though they had been their dearest friends, their closest relatives, sparing neither food nor drink. The result was that Vanya's uniform was ready at the first possible moment and aroused universal admiration among the scouts. It was so small, so well made, fitting like a glove, just as it should be. And even soldiers from neighbouring pillboxes came to look at Vanya's boots.

Now the only thing left was the bath and the barber.

The bath, set up in a dugout, was already heating, and everybody was waiting for the barber with his clippers. At last he appeared, ushered in by Gorbunov.

He unfolded his towel which was wrapped around his instruments, and laid them out neatly on an empty bed; the towel he tied round Vanya's neck.

"Long since you had a bath?" he asked the lad in businesslike tones.

"Not since forty-one," said Vanya.

"Not so long, comparatively," said Glas.

All laughed dutifully. It was clear at once that Glas was a man of weight in his own sphere, a real professor, whose visit was a great honour.

"Have a drink now, or when ye've finished?" asked Gorbunov, putting out a bottle, a mug, two huge chunks of black bread and an open tin of pork on the bed.

"Before the war, wise folks at home in Bobruisk used to work first, and drink afterwards," said the barber in melancholy tones. "Now what shall we do with this young man?" he asked, raising the hair on the back of Vanya's head between two fingers.

"Cut the child's hair," said Bidenko in a woman's plaintive voice, glancing tenderly at the Shepherd.

"That's clear," said Glas, "but the question is, just how? There's ways and ways of cutting it. "There's a clean shave, there's a close clip; there's sides clipped and a brush on top, and there's with a forelock."

"With a forelock," said Vanya.

"Why must it be a forelock?"

"I saw it like that on a boy, a Guards Cavalryman, Corporal Vosnessensky. A fine forelock."

"I know. My work," said the barber.

"No, a forelock doesn't suit an artilleryman," said Bidenko sternly. "For a cavalryman—yes. But for the battery—no. A gunner needs a clean shave. Like a billiard ball."

"Nay, I wouldn't say just that," said Gorbunov. "That's more for the infantry. Not a bit the right thing for an artilleryman. What sort of a god of war is that, with a head like a billiard ball? An artilleryman would be better with sides clipped. That's much more to the point."

"That's for the airmen," said somebody duly from a corner.

"For the airmen? Maybe ye're right. Well, then, a close clip."

"That's too much like the tanks."

"Ye're right. Our Vanya'd have too much of the look of the armour. That's no good. We must give him a hair-cut so that ye can tell at once the lad's an artilleryman."

For a long time the whole group discussed the question of Vanya's hair-cut in all its phases, the barber waiting patiently. When it at last appeared that nobody knew how hair should be cut artillery style, Glas said with a condescending smile:

"Very good. Now I'll cut him as I think best. Bend your head down, boy."

With these words he took an aluminium comb from his side pocket.

"But with a forelock," said Vanya plaintively.

"And a good slant on the temples," added Gorbunov.

"Don't worry," said the hairdresser, and the scissors sang their own song in his raised hand. Vanya's shaggy locks began falling onto the towel.

Glas was a real artist at his job. Everybody knew that. But here he surpassed himself. He cut the boy's hair this way and that way, with every air and grace possible. The instruments whisked and changed in his hand with the lightning swiftness and skill of a conjurer. Now the scissors flashed, now the clippers whirred, for a moment a razor gleamed like lightning on the temples.

And as the locks settled on the towel, the lad's head changed magically.

Vanya squirmed and giggled as the unaccustomed instruments touched his strangely bared head. The scouts laughed too, as they saw their Shepherd changing into a real little soldier right there before their eyes.

His sharp ears, emerging from beneath the hair, seemed a little large, his neck rather thin, but the forehead was open, round, and

straight—a fine soldier's brow, with a small, neat forelock. That forelock delighted all the scouts. It was just as it should be. Not a dashing cavalry forelock, but a decent, modest artillery tuft.

"Well, lads, that's that!" cried Gorbunov in delight. "Taken the roof off of our Shepherd."

Vanya was dying to see himself in the mirror, but the barber, like a true artist, was finicky and particular about his work, and continued to fuss around for a long time, putting the finishing touches to his work of art. At last he flicked a whisk about Vanya's head and sprayed him with eau de cologne. The lad had not even time to shut his eyes; they smarted painfully, and tears poured down his face.

"Finished," said the hairdresser, taking the towel from Vanya's shoulders. "Now you can admire yourself."

Vanya opened his eyes and saw a small mirror, with wall-paper pasted to the back; from the glass an unknown yet strangely familiar boy was looking back at him, a boy with a light round head, large ears, a tiny flaxen tuft and wide happy blue eyes. He passed his cool palm over his hot head, and both tickled.

"A forelock," he whispered in delight, and touched the silky-feeling tuft with his finger.

"Not a forelock, a tuft," said Bidenko insistently.

"A tuft, then," Vanya agreed with a gentle smile.

"Well, and now, lad, to the bath-house!"

17

Vanya's appearance in the scouts' pillbox in his uniform was a real triumph. But before they had time to examine their son really properly, Sergeant Yegorov entered. He took in the boy with a swift, comprehensive glance and evidently found him satisfactory, since he spoke no word of censure.

18

Captain Yenakiev was resting. It was not very often that he had the opportunity to do so, but even those rare days or even hours when he could rest the captain tried to turn to the best account for the service.

There were many matters for which he could find no time when fighting was going on, most of them important enough, though not of first importance. Captain Yenakiev never forgot them, he merely postponed them for a more convenient time.

As for his own personal affairs, he had practically none. Since the loss of his family, there was nobody to whom he wrote. He had no relatives. He was quite alone in the world. But he was a very reserved man; there were none in the regiment who knew of his misfortune and his loneliness, and very few who guessed.

The battery had become Captain Yenakiev's family. Every family has its own family business, and it was these affairs that usually occupied Captain Yenakiev when he was supposed to be resting.

Among these matters was the future of Vanya Solntsev.

Captain Yenakiev had only seen and talked with the boy once; but Vanya had the happy faculty of making himself liked at first glance. There was something extremely attractive about that ragged, country shepherd with the bag of coarse material slung over his shoulder, his shaggy head like the thatched roof of a cottage, and his clear blue eyes.

Like the soldiers, Captain Yenakiev had taken a fancy to him at first glance. But whereas the scouts had liked him in a merry, perhaps even somewhat thoughtless fashion, and called him their son in jest, he had actually been more like a little brother to them, a mischievous, amusing lad who brought a change in their grim wartime life. In the captain, on the other hand, he had awakened a deeper feeling. Vanya had touched a wound not yet healed.

When he permitted the scouts to keep Vanya, Yenakiev had not forgotten him. Each day, when Lieutenant Sedykh made his report, Captain Yenakiev invariably asked about the lad. He often thought about him and in his mind Vanya was somehow linked with his own boy in the sailor cap who would now have been seven years old, the boy who was gone and would never return.

Did Vanya resemble the captain's dead son? Not in the least. There was not the slightest likeness—neither in appearance or age, let alone character. That boy had been too small to possess any definite character as yet, whereas Vanya had almost the developed individuality of an adult. But that was not the thing that mattered. What mattered was Captain Yenakiev's living, passionate, active love for his dead boy. The lad had been dead a long time, but the father's love was still a living force.

When Captain Yenakiev received the report of the patrol in which Vanya had taken part, when he learned of the events in the "headquarters forest," he was furiously angry. It was only then that he realized how dear this freckled, strange boy was to him. He had given permission for the lad to remain with the scouts, but he had said nothing about sending him out on patrol. It would have gone hard with Lieutenant Sedykh if all had not ended well.

It was then that Captain Yenakiev decided to undertake the care of the boy himself at the first convenient opportunity.

By the many small signs that always distinguish the commander's billet, Vanya Solntsev, as usual without questioning the scouts, swiftly found Captain Yenakiev's pillbox. Stumping down the slippery steps in his unaccustomed new topboots with their slightly rounded soles, Vanya went down into the headquarters pillbox. He felt that sensation of alertness, excitement, mingled with apprehension, of every soldier when summoned to the commander. Captain Yenakiev was sitting there informally on his cot, which was covered with a horse blanket. His boots were off and his tunic unfastened, showing his blue flannel singlet. The only difference between his cot and those of the scouts lay in the pillow with its clean pillow-case, freshly put on.

Without his greatcoat and cap, in his tunic with its several rubbed ribbons, a slight frosting visible at the temples, Vanya found

the captain older than when he had seen him the first time.

"Good day, Uncle," said the boy, pulling off his cap with both hands.

Captain Yenakiev looked at him, and the dark eyes surrounded by tiny wrinkles narrowed slightly. In the first instant he had not recognized the Shepherd, Vanya, in this slender and fairly tall soldier-boy—the topboots gave him an inch or so—with the strong, round head, rising from the broad collar of the new greatcoat with the artillery epaulettes and collar markings.

"Good day, Uncle," Vanya repeated, his happy blue eyes beaming, as though inviting the commander to pay attention to his clothes. But as Yenakiev remained silent, Vanya carefully seated himself near him on a box, pulled up the shafts of his boots and laid his hand holding the cap on his knee.

"Who are you?" asked the captain at last with cold curiosity. No question could have caused the lad greater pleasure.

"Why, it's me, Vanya, Shepherd," he said, grinning broadly. "Didn't ye know me then?"

But the captain did not smile, as Vanya had expected. His expression became still colder.

"Vanya?" he repeated, his eyes narrowing again. "Shepherd?"

"N-nuh."

"And what have you dressed up in? What are those on your shoulders?"

Vanya was slightly at a loss.

"Them's epaulettes," he said uncertainly.

"Why?"

"According to regulations."

"Ah, according to regulations. And why?"

"It's for all soldiers," said Vanya, amazed at the captain's ignorance.

"Soldiers. And are you a soldier?"

"Of course I am!" said Vanya proudly. "There's even been an order about it. I got uniform issue today. All new. Grand!"

"I don't see it."

"How don't ye see it, Uncle? Here it is, the uniform. Topboots, greatcoat, epaulettes—look at the guns on'em. See?"

"I see the guns on the epaulettes, but I don't see the soldier."

"But that's me, the soldier," whispered Vanya, smiling foolishly, thoroughly knocked off his balance by the captain's icy tones.

"No, my friend, you're no soldier."

Captain Yenakiev sighed, and suddenly his face became stern. He threw his historical journal down on the table, marking the place with a pencil, and said sharply, almost rapping out the words:

"That is not the way a soldier appears before his battery commander. Stand up!"

Vanya jumped up, sprang to attention and stood motionless.

"Dismiss! Present yourself again!"

It was only then that the boy realized that absorbed in his uniform he had forgotten everything else—both who he was and where he was. He quickly pulled his cap down over his eyes, dashed outside, settled his belt at the back and again entered the pillbox, but this time quite differently. He marched in, clicked his heels, flung his hand up to his cap and jerked it down again.

"Have I permission to enter?" he cried in a childish treble which to himself appeared dashing and soldier-like.

"Enter."

"Comrade Captain, Red Army man Solntsev reporting according to orders."

"Now that's qui e a different matter," said Captain Yenakiev, a little smile appearing in his eyes. "Good day, Red Army man Solntsev."

"Wish ye good health, Comrade Captain!" Vanya replied dashingly.

Captain Yenakiev no longer concealed the merry, kindly smile.

"That's the stuff!" he said, using that same expression very popular all along the front, which Vanya had so often heard Gorbunov, Bidenko and other scouts applying to himself. "Now I can see that you're a soldier, Vanyushka. Let's sit down and talk. Sobolev, the tea ready?" shouted the captain.

"Yes, Sir, ready," said Sobolev, appearing with a large steaming kettle.

"Pour it out.Two glasses. One for me and the other for Red Army man Solntsev. Or else he may think that we live worse than the scouts here. Eh, Sobolev?"

"That all depends on how ye look at it," said Sobolev, showing by his tone that he quite shared the captain's opinion of the scouts as people good enough in their way, but apt to throw dust in people's eyes with their hospitality.

Sobolev placed two glasses in silver holders on the table and poured out the strong, dark tea, with its wonderful aroma. And then Vanya realized what real luxury and wealth was. True, the sugar was not lump, but granulated, but Sobolev handed it in a glass dish. There was no pork and potatoes, but Captain Yenakiev placed a box of the best Moscow biscuits on the table and a tablet of good chocolate, at the sight of which Vanya was dumbfounded with delight.

The captain looked at Vanya gaily.

"Well, Shepherd, tell me where it's better—here or with the scouts?"

Vanya felt that it was better here, but he did not want to speak ill of the scouts or disparage them in any way, especially in their absence.

"Ye're richer here, Comrade Captain."

"And you're a clever lad, Vanya. Don't want to let your own folks down. Right, eh, Sobolev? Doesn't let his own folks down?"

"Right, Sir. Does a soldier ever let his folks down?"

"Well, that'll do, Sobolev. You are free for the present. Red Army man Solntsev and I are going to have a talk. Well, there it is, Vanya," said Captain Yenakiev, when Sobolev had disappeared beyond the partition. "What am I going to do with you now, that's the question?"

Vanya took fright. Perhaps the captain was wanting to send him to the rear again. He jumped up from his box and stood to attention before the commander.

"Please excuse me, Comrade Captain. It will not be repeated. Battery word of honour."

"What won't be repeated?"

"That I didn't enter according to regulations."

"Yes, lad, I must say, your entry wasn't all it should have been. In fact it was disgraceful. But that's a matter that can be cured. You'll learn. You're a bright lad. But what are you

standing for? Sit down. I'm not talking to you as an officer now, but informally."

Vanya sat down.

"Well, as I was saying: what am I to do with you? You re not so very big, it's true, but all the same you're a fully developed individual. A living person. Your life is now beginning, just when no false step should be made. Eh?"

Captain Yenakiev looked at the boy with stern tenderness, as though trying to penetrate into the very depths of his heart. How different this slender little soldier-boy with his tender neck, like that of a girl, rubbed by the rough collar of the greatcoat, from that shaggy-headed, barefoot shepherd-boy who had accosted him outside regimental headquarters. How completely he had changed in this short time! Had the same change taken place within him? Had his spirit grown since that time, strengthened and become more manly? Was it prepared for all that lay ahead?

Vanya felt that it was now, in this moment, that his fate was being decided. He became unusually serious, so serious that even his clear, round childish forehead was crossed with lines, like that of a grown soldier. If the scouts could have seen him in that moment they would never have believed that this was their merry, mischievous Shepherd. They had never seen him like this. Probably it was the first time in his life that he had looked and felt that way.

It was not only Captain Yenakiev's words which had had this effect upon him, those simple, serious words about his life; it was not even the stern, tender glance from the rather tired eyes with the little dry lines surrounding them; it was the living, fatherly love which Vanya could feel with the whole of his lonely and really very empty little heart. And how he had needed that love, how he had thirsted for it, without knowing what it was that he had needed!

For a long time both were silent—the battery commander and Vanya, united in one great surge of emotion.

"Well, what about it, Vanya? Eh?" said the captain at last.

"As ye order me," said Vanya softly, and lowered his eyes.

"Not difficult for me to give orders. But I want to know what you decide for yourself."

"What's there to decide? I've decided long ago."

"And what have you decided?"

"To be an artilleryman wi' you."

"That's a serious question. That's a thing to ask your parents about. But I think you have none, have you?"

"Yes. I'm an orphan both sides. The Germans shot all my folks. I've nobody."

"Looks as if you've got to use your own head, dôesn't it?"

"Yes, Comrade Captain."

"The same with me," said Captain Yenakiev with a sad smile, to his own surprise, but immediately caught himself up and added jestingly: "Two heads are better than one, eh, Shepherd?"

The captain frowned and sat silent and thoughtful for some time, stroking his short toothbrush moustache with his first finger, as he often did when preparing to take an important decision.

"Very well," he said decidedly, and clapped his palm lightly on the table. "Early yet for you to go on patrol."

And again Vanya's destiny changed swiftly, as is always the case in wartime.

19

With characteristic thoroughness Captain Yenakiev drew up a plan for Vanya's education. He worked it out in every detail, just as though it were an assignment for his battery. But after thinking out his plan from all sides, without haste, he set to work to carry it out swiftly and decidedly.

According to this plan, Vanya first of all had to learn the duties of each member of a gun crew. To this end, Captain Yenakiev, after consulting with his NCO, transferred Vanya to gun No. 1 of the first platoon as a reserve man.

At first the lad was very homesick for his friends the scouts. He felt as though he had lost his family. But he soon saw that his new family was no worse than the old one. It immediately welcomed him and made him feel at home. When Vanya appeared at gun No. 1, to his surprise he found that everything about him was already known. The gun crew were well acquainted with his whole history.

But the thing that especially impressed him, and made it comparatively easy to bear the parting with the scouts, was the gun itself. That very word—gun—had always sounded powerful and thrillingly attractive to the boy. It was the most warlike of all the warlike words that surrounded him.

20

"It's a good thing that ye like our gun," said Kovalyov, the gunner. "It's a fine piece. Nothing like it, for one that understands. A grand worker."

He clapped the muzzle as though it had been a horse, then looked at his palm and noticing that it was soiled, took a clean, soft rag from his pocket and lovingly wiped the gun. Then he sat down on the carriage and began to mend his glasses with a pair of pliers, looking at Vanya with the very kind but piercing eyes of a longsighted man.

"So that's how it is, eaglet. Got to start loving a gun in your early years. I was just a squirt like ye are now when I first came to the battery. And that's neither more nor less than thirty years agone. A good while, that. And I can mind it as if it was yesterday. O' course, I was a wee bit older 'n ye are now. I was going on nineteen. I got to the war 'cause I was a hunter. But I was just a runt, all the same. And just think, our battery was standing just about here, in these parts. So ye see, it's like a circle: o' course, ye wouldn't know the place now."

He looked around him, and waved his hand.

"Everything's changed and different since then. Where there was forest there's fields, and where there was fields there's forests, grown up. But all the same, it was somewhere here. On the border o' Germany. We were retreating then. Now we're advancing. That's all the difference."

These words made a tremendous impression upon Vanya. Of course, he had often heard it said that the army was advancing on East Prussia, and that East Prussia was already Germany, that soon the Soviet troops would be on German land. Like all the army, Vanya was firmly convinced that in the end that was how it would be. But now, when he heard those longed-for and long awaited words "the border of Germany," he could not even understand at first what Kovalyov was talking about. He was so excited that he even forgot himself and called Kovalyov "uncle."

"Where's Germany, Uncle? Where's the border?"

"Why, there it is. Over there," said Kovalyov, jerking his pliers over his shoulder as though showing some familiar street to a passer-by who had lost the way. "Behind that height. Five kilometres from here. No more."

"Uncle, ye mean it? Ye're not having me on?" said the boy plaintively, knowing from experience that some of the soldiers liked to jest with him. But Kovalyov's eyes were quite serious.

"It's the truth I'm telling ye," he said. "There's a river, and the other side of it there's the beginning of Germany itself."

"Battery word of honour?" asked the boy quickly.

"And what would ye be needing a battery word of honour for, when we've just been getting the range there? See, how many targets we've got the range on?" And with his pliers Kovalyov pointed to a piece of paper covered with figures. "What's there special about that? Our scouts went over there yesterday, right into Germany, they got back this morning. There's a panic there, they say, all lost their heads, they have."

"Wha-a-at! The scouts been in Germany?"

Kovalyov did not realize what a blow this was to Vanya, right in his very heart. So the scouts had been in Germany! Quite possibly Bidenko and Gorbunov had been there, and Sergeant Yegorov most certainly had been. And if only Vanya had not been transferred to the gun crew, he might have been there too. He would have begged the scouts and they would have taken him. That was sure. And Vanya burned with chagrin. In his heart he was still a scout. Now his feelings were deeply hurt.

Of course! The scouts had been there, and he had not been. He choked, reddened, and biting his lips, lowered his lids on which tears were glistening.

"I'd have made it hot for 'em, in Germany," he said unexpectedly through his teeth, and blue sparks flashed in his eyes.

At that moment a loud command rang out from beyond the spruce camouflage:

"Battery! Stand by! First gun!"

Sergeant Senya Matveyev sprang out of the telephone-operator's trench slit, fastening up and settling his creased greatcoat with its black collar markings on the way. His young excited face glowing, he shouted with all the force of his lungs:

"First gun into action! Target No. 14! Shrapnel! 8.0 to the right! Target 110!"

Almost before he had said the words, which seemed like some secret code to Vanya, everything around him had changed in a flash—the men, the gun itself, all about it, even the sky over the near horizon. Everything became grim, menacing, as though glistening like polished, well-oiled steel.

First and foremost, the gunner Kovalyov had changed.

Vanya had no time to move out of the way, no time to think: "Now it's beginning," when Kovalyov had leaped over the mount, with one hand putting on the helmet he had caught up from somewhere, with the other pulling the tarpaulin covering of that tall thing beside the shield which the boy had observed before.

The boy's head whirled. He did not know where to look. First of all, in a flash, a second covering was whipped off, and Vanya saw the lock—massive, heavy, shining oiled steel with an aluminium handle and a mighty steel lever, curving like a jaw-bone.

But the main thing which riveted Vanya's attention was a steel chain, covered with rubbed leather. He understood at once what that was. One pull at that leather sausage, and the gun would fire.

Barely had the loader—Vanya guessed at once that he was the loader—barely had he pulled the lever, and the heavy lock with well-oiled ease and silence opened, displaying the serrated steel cylinder and the mirror-like, grooved inside of the barrel, when the boy's attention was attracted to the shell cylinders.

They had been taken from their boxes and were standing on the ground in parallel rows, like soldiers in metal helmets, sorted according to the colours of their stripes—black all together, yellow all together, red together. One was already on the left knee of a soldier who was kneeling on his right, and this soldier was doing something with the nozzle of the shell, while another soldier was bringing another one, already prepared, to the gun and swiftly placing it in the barrel, giving it a parting pat with his hand.

The shell had barely time to slide in, as the loader had clapped the lock to. It clicked. Without taking his eyes from the black tube, Kovalyov took the chain in one hand, raised the other and said:

"Ready."

"Fire!" shouted Sergeant Matveyev, jerking his arm down.

Before Vanya could realize what was happening, Kovalyov, his face grimly resolute, jerked the sausage, throwing his arm well back to prevent the lock striking it in the recoil.

The concussion was not very loud, but of such force that the boy felt as though it sent out crimson, ringing circles. His mouth was bitter with the taste of powder.

For an instant nobody moved, listening to the faint sound of the shell which had flown into Germany. Then Kovalyov again fixed his attention on the gun-sight, his fingers twisting the manipulator, while the loader tore open the lock from which a smoking copper shell-case shot out and clattered to the ground, rolling over and over.

Vanya stood there, deafened and delighted with the miracle which he had just witnessed —the firing of the gun.

Then he began to feel awkward, standing there among all these busy people, doing nothing. He took the warm, slightly dulled case, carried it away to the side and placed it on a pile of other empty cases. As he carried it—this thin, light case with its thick, heavy base, he felt as though it still rang from the shot in his hands.

"That's right, Solntsev," said Sergeant Matveyev, writing something in his shabby notebook with a pencil, at the same time glancing anxiously at the telephone-operator's slit trench, from whence he awaited another command. "You can be collecting the empties, so that they don't roll about under our feet."

"Very good," said Vanya happily, drawing himself up to attention, with the feeling that now he too was taking his part in that important and very honourable affair spoken about with such respect by the whole front as "barrage."

"And after the firing, count them and put them in the empty trays," added Matveyev.

"Very good," Vanya replied still more gaily, although he had not any very clear idea as to what the "trays" were.

Vanya placed all the empty shell-cases side by side, in even rows, and admired his work; then, as there was nothing more to do, he went to Kovalyov.

"Uncle," he said, but suddenly remembering that there was a military job going on, he quickly corrected himself. "Comrade Sergeant, permit me to speak to you."

"All right."

"I wanted to ask you something. Where have we just fired? Into Germany?"

"Into Germany."

"And first we corrected our fire?"

"Yes."

"By looking through that black tube?"

"Exactly."

Vanya said nothing for a little while. He could not make up his mind to continue. What he wanted to ask seemed too bold. For such a request they might take away his uniform and send him to the rear. But in the end, curiosity got the better of all caution.

"Uncle," said Vanya, in his most coaxing, insinuating tones. "Uncle, please don't be angry wi' me. If it's not permitted, then I don't want it. I don't want nothing. But let me—just once, only once!—look through that tube that ye correct the fire wi'."

"Why not. That's all right. Look away. Only careful. Don't move the sight."

Hardly daring to breathe, Vanya went up on tiptoe and stood on the spot where Kovalyov had been. Spreading his arms wide so as not to risk touching the sight, the boy carefully placed his eye to the eye-glass, still warm after Kovalyov. He saw a plain circle, with a swampy landscape and the serrated tops of the indigo forest vivid and near looking. Two sharp, thin lines crossed the circle, vertically and horizontally, making the landscape as clearcut as a transfer. Just where the two lines crossed Vanya saw the top of a tall spruce tree rising above the forest.

"Well! Can ye see anything?" asked Kovalyov.

"Yes, I can see."

"What do ye see?"

"I can see the ground, and I can see the forest. It's as pretty as anything!"

"And ye can see where the lines cross?"

"Uh-huh. I see it."

"And ye see that tree standing out? Just where the lines cross?"

"Yes."

"That's the tree I sight from."

"Uncle," whispered Vanya, "that's Germany itself, is it?"

"Where?"

"Where I'm looking."

"Nay, lad, that's not Germany at all. Ye can't see Germany from here. Germany's there, in front of us. And ye're looking at what's behind us."

"How's it behind us? But ye sighted from there, didn't ye, Uncle?"

"Yes, from there."

"Then that must be Germany."

"Nay, lad, ye're far off the mark. I sighted from there, that's right enough. From the spruce. But we fired right in the opposite direction."

Vanya looked at Kovalyov round-eyed, not understanding whether he was to be taken seriously or not. How could that be—to sight from behind and fire in front? Queer sort of set-up, it seemed to Vanya. He peered into Kovalyov's face, trying to find some sign of guile, but Kovalyov was quite serious. Vanya shifted from one foot to the other, tormented by this riddle which he could not solve.

"Uncle Kovalyov," he said at last, a frown of intense concentration on his smooth, childish brow. "But the shell went into Germany, didn't it?"

"Yes, into Germany."

"And burst there?"

"And burst there."

"And ye saw it bursting through that there tube?"

"No, I didn't see it."

"Eh!" cried Vanya in disappointment, "then ye just send the shells chancy like, wherever they happen to land!"

"Why d'ye say that?" said Kovalyov, smiling into his moustache. "We don't send them chancy-like at all. There's people sitting there at the observation post watching where they land. If anything doesn't go the way it should they telephone us at once—how and where. Then we correct our fire."

"Who's sitting up there?"

"The observer, the senior officer. Sometimes the platoon commanders. Sometimes not. Today, for instance, there's Captain Yenakiev himself directing the fire."

"And Captain Yenakiev can see Germany from there?"

"Of course."

"And he can see our shells bursting?"

"Of course. Wait a bit, he'll tell us himself how it was."

Vanya was silent. His thoughts were in a whirl. He just could not understand how it could be that they sighted behind, shot in front, and only Captain Yenakiev could see and know everything.

"Left 003!" shouted Sergeant Matveyev. "Shrapnel! Target 118!".

Strong hands lifted Vanya, swung him over the wheel and set him down at the side, and in the same instant Kovalyov was standing in his place at the gun-sight, his eye to the dark glass.

Now everything went still faster than the first time. And nevertheless, while following all this marvellous activity, Kovalyov still found time to look round at the boy and say:

"Ye see. A tiny bit out. Now we'll get them in the right place!"

"Fire!" shouted Matveyev, jerking his arm down with even greater force than before.

The gun belched forth, but this time it did not make such an impression upon the boy. Remembering his job in the fighting, he ran round the gun, whose barrel had slid back with an easy, well-oiled movement to its former position, and was in time to seize the hot shell-case in the very instant when it fell from the gun.

"Good lad, Solntsev!" said Matveyev, again hastily scribbling something in his notebook, as it rested on his bent knee. "How many have we used?"

"Two shrapnel!" cried Vanya alertly.

"Good lad!" said Matveyev again.

Vanya would have liked to reply: "I serve the Soviet Union," but he was shy about using such a resounding phrase for such a simple matter.

"It's nothing," he mumbled shyly.

"Pull your socks up, Shepherd!" cried Kovalyov gaily, settling his glasses. "Ye're only going to have time to carry them off now, we're going to snow ye under wi' 'em."

He was right. The next instant the telephone-operator's green helmet appeared from the slit trench, and Sergeant Matveyev shouted with such a ringing, high and triumphant voice that the shell cases rang.

"Four shells running fire! Into that cursed Germany! Fire!"

The four shots roared out almost together, so that Vanya had barely time to catch the empty cases as they flew out. But swift as it all was, he not only managed to catch them and carry them away, but even to place them evenly.

From that moment the gun continued firing, without stopping for a moment, with amazing, almost miraculous speed. As he ran with the cases, Vanya listened and realized that now it was not only the first gun that was firing. From all sides he could hear the loud shouts of command, the ringing of the locks as they slammed to, the thuds of the guns. The whole of Captain Yenakiev's battery was now in action.

One after another, unceasingly, and sometimes two and three simultaneously, the shells screamed their way over the crest into Germany, there where even the sky was not Russian, but somehow repulsive, dully metallic, artificial, German.

In turn, the gun crew ran up to Kovalyov, who allowed each one to pull the cord once or twice, firing into Germany. As they fired, they shouted:

"Onto the cursed German soil! Fire!"

"There's for ye, Germany! Fire!"

"For the country, for Stalin! Fire!"

"Death to Hitler! Fire!"

"Thought they'd got us, the swine! Fire!"

Vanya ran up to Kovalyov, and pulled his padded jacket from behind.

"Uncle, let me send one into Germany too."

He was afraid that Kovalyov would refuse. His mouth was tight with apprehension, he even paled, his breath coming quickly through distended nostrils. But Kovalyov did not even notice him. Then a dark colour flooded the lad's face, he stamped angrily with his boot and in an insistent, trembling voice tried to outshout the noise of the firing.

"Comrade Sergeant, permit me to speak to you. Allow me to fire into Germany. I have deserved it too. Look, there is not one empty case lying here."

It was only now that Kovalyov noticed him.

"All right, Shepherd, all right. Fire away. Only get your hand out o' the way quick, so as not to get it bashed by the lock."

"I know that," said Vanya quickly, and almost tore the cord from Kovalyov's hand. He gripped it with all his strength, till his knuckles were white with the tension. He felt that there was no power in the world that could take from him that leather sausage with the ring at the end. The boy's heart was beating hard. He was filled with only one feeling—fear that he might not do it properly.

"Fire!" shouted Matveyev.

"Pull!" whispered Kovalyov.

He need not have spoken.

"There, ye swine! Take that!" cried the boy and pulled the cord furiously, with all his strength. He felt how in the same instant the gun beside him started like a live thing, leaped and thundered. A sheet of fire shot out from the muzzle. His head rang.

And from the far forest came the sound of Vanya's shell winging its way into Germany.

21

When Captain Yenakiev made his way to the battery, the mist was tinged with rose in the east, and the wind had become still more unpleasant.

22

Captain Yenakiev took a cigarette from his leather case and handed one to Kovalyov. They lighted up.

"Well, how about it? The lad seems to be all right, eh?" said the captain.

"A fine boy," said Kovalyov seriously, decidedly. "A worth-while boy."

"You think he's worth while?" said Yenakiev quickly, and looked at Kovalyov with narrowed eyes.

"I think so."

"Something can be made of him?"

"Most certainly."

"I thought so, too."

"I had him at the gun-sight a little while agone. Told him a bit about it. And imagine,

he understood it all. I was amazed. He's a born gunner."

Captain Yenakiev laughed.

"And the scouts say he's a born scout. So take your choice! In a word, he's born for us in general. Right?"

"He's a born artilleryman."

"Just a born soldier."

"Not so bad."

"You know, Vassili Ivanovich," said Captain Yenakiev suddenly, looking hard at Kovalyov with eyes that were suddenly filled with a childlike, confiding expression. "I'm thinking of adopting him. What do you think about it?"

"It would be worth while, Dmitri Petrovich," said the gunner at once, just as though he had been expecting the question.

23

The sound of shots mingled with the sound of explosions. There was a continuous ringing, roaring thunder about the guns. The sharp, choking smell of gunpowder made one's eyes water like mustard. Vanya could even taste the acid, metallic flavour of it.

The smoking cases shot out of the gun one after the other, struck the ground, rebounded and rolled over. But nobody was collecting them, they were simply kicked out of the way.

Vanya had no time even to take the shells out of their boxes and strip off their coverings.

Kovalyov always worked quickly. But now each one of his movements was instantaneous and quick as lightning. Never taking his eye from the gun-sight, Kovalyov twirled the mechanism for raising and swinging the barrel, his two hands working sometimes simultaneously, independently of each other. Every now and then, biting his moustaches with his worn teeth, he would swiftly jerk the cord, and again and again the gun would recoil, and flame would belch forth.

Captain Yenakiev stood beside Kovalyov on the other side of the gun wheel, watching tensely through his binoculars the explosions of his shells. Sometimes he would move away to the side, in order to see better, sometimes he would run in front and lie prone on the ground. Once he even climbed onto a high clump of undergrowth with amazing agility and stood there at his full height, indifferent to the fact that several mortar shells exploded in the vicinity, and as Vanya heard, splinters rang against the gun shield.

"That's it. Good! Another one!" said Captain Yenakiev impatiently, returning to the gun and pointing something out to Kovalyov. "Two points right. See, they've got a mortar there. Give it them. Three shells. Fire!"

The gun jerked convulsively again, and Captain Yenakiev, never removing his binoculars, said quickly:

"That's it, that's it. Good for you, Vassili Ivanovich, right in the bull's eye! That's silenced the swine. And now back to the infantry. Aha, the devils! Hugging the ground, can't raise their heads. Give them another one, Vassili Ivanovich!"

Once, at a particularly effective shot, Captain Yenakiev even laughed outright, dropped his binoculars and clapped his hands.

Vanya had never before seen his captain so quick, lively, and young. He had always been proud of him, as a soldier is of his commander. But now another feeling mingled with that soldier's pride—the pride of a son in his father.

Suddenly Captain Yenakiev raised his hand, and both guns were silent.

"Aha, they're running," said the captain. "Now then, at the retreating German formation, shrapnel! Target 35, tube 35! Fire!" he cried, and each gun fired six times. Then with another slight gesture he stopped the firing.

The machine-guns continued their rattle, but now, in addition to the sound of their mingled noise, there was that already familiar sound of human voices, from various parts of the field, in a long drawn out "hurraa-a-a-ah!"

"Forward!" cried Captain Yenakiev, and ran ahead without looking round.

"To the wheels!" roared Sergeant Matveyev, who had blood trickling down his neck.

Again the guns rolled forward, this time still faster. Infantrymen hot from the battle came racing to meet them and with loud, eager shouts helped the artillerymen to push the spokes, while others carried or dragged along the boxes of shells.

Without a stop Yenakiev's guns advanced to the centre of the height, almost on top of the German main positions. Here the enemy had managed to get a grip in the long trench of a vegetable garden. They had begun to dig in. But at that moment the guns came up, and the fighting flared up again with renewed intensity.

Suddenly Captain Yenakiev noticed Vanya.

"What! You here?" he said. "What are you doing here?"

Vanya immediately halted and drew himself up smartly.

"Number six at the first gun, Comrade Captain," he reported with a snap, his hand flying to his helmet with the strap which would not fasten firmly round his chin, but hung freely.

It must be admitted that here the boy was drawing the long bow a little. He was not number six at all, he was simply reserve for number six. But he did so badly want to be number six, he did so want to show up in a good light before his captain and adopted father, that he involuntarily exaggerated a little.

He stood there to attention before Yenakiev, gazing at him with his wide blue eyes, shining with happiness that the battery commander had at last noticed him. He wanted to tell the captain how he had carried the shells, how he had taken off their covers, how a mortar shell had fallen not far away and he had not been at all frightened. He wanted to tell him everything, to hear words of approval, that jolly, army expression: "That's the stuff!" But at the moment Captain Yenakiev was in no mood to talk with him.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" said the captain in alarm. He wanted to cry:

"Don't you understand? There are tanks coming against us. You'll be killed here, you little idiot! Run!" But he stopped himself. He frowned sternly and jerked out through his teeth:

"Leave this place at once!"

"Where?" asked Vanya.

"Back. To the battery. To the second platoon. To the scouts. Wherever you want."

Vanya looked into the captain's eyes and understood everything. His lips trembled. He drew himself up still more.

"I'm not going," he said.

"What?" asked the captain in amazement.

"I'm not going," repeated the boy stubbornly and lowered his eyes.

"It is an order, do you understand?" said Captain Yenakiev quietly.

"I'm not going," said Vanya with such tension in his voice that tears even appeared on his lashes.

In an instant the captain understood everything in the heart of this boy, his soldier and his son. He understood that it was no use arguing with him, and most important of all, there was no time.

A barely perceptible smile, youthful and mischievous, twitched his lips. He took a sheet of grey paper from his satchel, laid it against the gun-shield and swiftly pencilled a few words. Then he placed the sheet in a small grey envelope and stuck it down.

"Red Army man Solntsev!" he said, so loudly that everybody could hear.

"Yes, Comrade Captain."

"A battle assignment. Take this package immediately to the divisional command point, to the chief of staff. Understand?"

"Yes, Comrade Captain."

"Repeat."

"The order is to take this package to the divisional command point, to the chief of staff," Vanya repeated automatically.

"Correct."

Captain Yenakiev held out the envelope, and Vanya took it as automatically. He opened his greatcoat and pushed the package into his tunic pocket.

"Have I your permission to go?"

Captain Yenakiev was silent, listening to the distant sound of engines. Suddenly he turned abruptly and jerked out:

"Well? What are you waiting for? Go!"

But Vanya continued to stand at attention, unable to tear his shining eyes from the captain's face.

"Well? What is it?" said Captain Yenakiev gently. He drew the boy to him and then suddenly, almost abruptly, pressed him close.

"Carry on, son," he said and gently pushed Vanya away with his small hand in its rubbed wash-leather glove.

Vanya turned left, straightened his helmet and ran off without looking back. Before he had run a hundred yards he heard firing. It was Captain Yenakiev's guns greeting the tanks.

24

Vanya left the headquarters pillbox and ran back. It was only now that he noticed that the fighting was not only on the height where he had left Captain Yenakiev. Now battle was raging along the whole front, slowly moving westward.

As Vanya ran, he was overtaken by lorries of motorized infantry, tanks waddling across deep gulleys like ducks; self-propelled guns, their caterpillars screeching, moved with apparent deliberation but real speed; telephone-operators ran with their staves and rolls of wire, unwinding them as they went; a general in a smoke-coloured Cossack cap with a crimson top bumped past in a jeep, holding a map, folded like a newspaper, before his eyes.

Everything round about was strange, unfamiliar, under that low-hanging, grim sky from whence a cold wind carried the first snowflakes.

Suddenly Vanya saw his gun. It was standing there, a little askew, one side propped up on several boxes and shell cases piled one on top of the other, replacing the wheel that for some reason was missing. Not far from the gun stood a lorry, its side lowered, and several men were carefully lifting something into it.

His heart chilled, seemed to stop beating, as the boy approached. It was something terrible that he saw. The field before the gun was covered with German dead. Everywhere, there were piles of empty shell-cases, machine-gun ribbons, trampled explosives, blood-stained spades, kitbags, dented shell-cases, torn letters and papers. And on the familiar gun-carriage, which alone seemed to be comparatively undamaged among the general destruction, sat Captain Yenakiev, his head and hands hanging, his whole body sagging sideways against the open lock.

To Vanya, the captain appeared to be asleep. The boy wanted to rush up to him, but some mighty, inimical force seemed to root his feet to the ground. Motionless, he looked at Captain Yenakiev, and the more he looked, the greater his horror at what he saw. The whole of the captain's neat, well-pressed greatcoat, was torn and blood-stained, as though he had been torn by dogs. His helmet was lying on the ground, and the wind stirred the grey hair on his head, on which a few snowflakes had already drifted. Vanya could not see the captain's face, the head was hanging too low, but blood was dripping from it all the time; a great deal had already collected under the gun-carriage, a whole pool of it.

For some reason the captain's hands were ungloved. One of them was especially plainly visible. It was quite white, the fingers gleaming like snow, with blue nails. The legs in their thin, old but well-polished top-boots were stretched out in an unnatural fashion, and looked as though they might slide at any moment, the heels scraping the ground.

Vanya looked at him; he knew with certainty that this was Captain Yenakiev, but he did not believe, could not believe that it could be he. No, this was some completely different person—immobile, incomprehensible, terrible, and above all, strange, like everything that surrounded the boy at that moment.

Suddenly a heavy but tender hand descended on Vanya's epaulette. He raised his

head and saw Bidenko. The scout was standing beside him, large, kindly, familiar, smiling affectionately. One of his huge hands was on Vanya's shoulder, and the other, thickly bandaged and wrapped in a blood-stained cloth, he held pressed to his body, like a baby.

Suddenly something seemed to turn over and disintegrate in Vanya's heart. He flung himself at Bidenko, threw his arms round his old friend's waist, pressed his face to the rough greatcoat with its scorched smell, and the tears welled from his eyes.

"Uncle Bidenko... Uncle Bidenko..." he repeated, trembling all over, swallowing his tears.

Bidenko tenderly removed the lad's heavy helmet, stroked his warm shaven head with his bandaged hand, saying awkwardly:

"Never mind, Shepherd. It's all right. Even soldiers can cry sometimes. There's nothing to be done about it. It's war."

25

There was a note in the pocket of the dead Captain Yenakiev. He had written it before directing the fire on to himself. Although it had been written in haste, one might well have thought that the captain had composed it in peace and quietness of his own pillbox, so neat it was, so clear, without a single correction. And in that terrible, last moment when he had written it, there had been practically nothing left all around him.

Captain Akhunbayev was lying on the ground, his arms flung wide from beneath his waterproof cape. The bullet had pierced his broad, stubborn brow in the very centre. Kovalyov had just sunk onto the ground, as though about to take off his boot and rewind his puttees, but suddenly collapsed sideways and moved no more.

But in his letter, Captain Yenakiev did not forget to write the date and hour, even the place: "In the district of objective No. 8." And when signing his name, he had not omitted the full stop.

The note was folded into a triangle and placed in the outer pocket of his tunic, so that it might be easily found.

In this letter Captain Yenakiev took leave of his battery, greeted his comrades and asked the command to do him the last military honour—to bury him not in Germany, but in his own Soviet soil. In addition, he asked that care be taken of the future of his adopted son, Vanya Solntsev, that he be trained to be a good soldier and later on a worthy officer.

Captain Yenakiev's last wish was fulfilled. He was buried in Soviet soil.

After a snowstorm had covered the grave, Vanya Solntsev was summoned to headquarters. Again he heard that word which always means for the soldier a change in his destiny. The commander of the artillery regiment informed Vanya that he was being sent to a Suvorov school[1], adding:

"Get ready."

Four days later, Vanya Solntsev, accompanied by Corporal Bidenko, was walking along the broad, rutty street leading from the station to the centre of an old Russian town. They walked unhurriedly, with that expression of dignity combined with a touch of secret displeasure, with which front line men usually walk along the streets of a rear town, surprised at its quietness and easy-going life. Bidenko's arm was bandaged, he carried nothing. The boy had a green kitbag on his back. This bag contained many things, necessary and unnecessary, which scouts and gunners had given Vanya, all united in their desire to give their son everything he needed for his long journey. There was the famous bag with the compass and spelling book; there was a piece of wonderful perfumed soap in a pink celluloid container and a toothbrush in a green celluloid case with holes pierced in it. There was tooth powder, needles, thread, a boot brush, polish. There was a tin of pork, a bag of lump sugar, a matchbox filled with salt and another with tea. There was a mug, a mouth organ, a lighter—captured, several serrated shell splinters and two fine cartridges from a large-calibre German machine-gun—one with a yellow cover, the other having a black one with a red band. There was a loaf of bread, underwear and a hundred roubles.

But the main thing there were Captain Yenakiev's epaulettes, carefully wrapped in a handkerchief and then a newspaper; the regimental commander had given them to Vanya on his departure in memory of the captain, telling him to preserve them as the apple of his eye, and keep them for the day when perhaps he himself would be able to wear them on his shoulders.

As he gave the boy the epaulettes, the colonel said:

"You were a good son to your own father and mother. You were a good son to the scouts and the gunners. You were a worthy son to Captain Yenakiev—good, courageous, obedient. Now the whole of our artillery regiment counts you as its son. Remember that. Now you are going away to study, and I hope you will not disgrace your regiment. I am convinced that you will be a splendid cadet, and later on, a splendid officer. But remember: always and everywhere, before all and after all, you must be a true son to your motherland and a true son to the best son of that country, that great man Stalin. Good-bye, Vanya Solntsev, and when you are an officer, return to your regiment. We shall expect you and accept you as our own. And now get ready."

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[1] Cadet school, named after the famous Russian general.

WATER BEAUTIFIED

It was the third year of war ... Armenia, as elsewhere throughout the rear, was accommodating a number of evacuated factories, and in many places the munitions' plants were working day and night. Now a factory needs a great deal of water and it is just this commodity that is rather scarce in Armenia. But adopting war time methods, the people accomplished what would have taken ages in peace time: they diverted the springs and streams from the slopes of Aragats to those waterless parts of the country, stored it in reservoirs and piped it off to wherever necessary. The villages adjacent to the pipes received their share of water. In dry, arid Armenia, water is more precious than jewels and the peasants have learned to treasure every drop.

For scores of years the village of Parakar had had to make do with the scant resources of ponds, where the rainwater collected. When a hydrant was set up on the village green and the peasants saw the sparkling stream spurting from it, they sent delegates to Papian, their popular member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, with an unusual request:

"You know we've got water. How can we think of letting it run through a plain iron pipe? Our collective farm wants to beautify it, make the proper setting for it. We've got the money to pay for the job ourselves, but we ask you to find us the best artist in Armenia to beautify our water the way our collective farm wants it to be done."

Papian, who had been a collective farmer himself, shared in their feelings and entered into the affair heart and soul. Instead of just putting them in touch with a suitable organization he himself sought out the artist Rafael Izraelian, acknowledged to be one of the finest artists in the country, and offered him the job.

One could dwell here on Izraelian's feelings. Every genuine architect dreams of getting an order straight from the people, and to receive this in the middle of the Patriotic War was real good fortune. Besides what a splendid job—to build a beautiful water system to confine the precious fluid in an appropriate stone casing! This was something worth planning!

Raphael Izraelian thought out no formal solution to his problem but tried to fill his work with the thoughts and feelings which would reflect the days of the Patriotic War. He recalled how many fine young men the village had sent to the front to defend the homeland. It is impossible to live a day without water, and to its source goes the old mother whose sons are in the forces, she carries the ancient clay pitcher on her shoulder... the younger woman, thinking of her husband at the front, and the girl who has bade farewell to her sweetheart. The traveller will also stop to slake his thirst... Let stranger and kinsman alike recall, recognize and experience a contact with those who fought so that they might work in peace.

It was this concept that gave birth to the idea of using the architectural form of "stella" —a slab to remind the beholder of those who gave their lives for their country and bearing a handsome scroll with the inscription: "In honour of Parakar's glorious sons, fighting for the homeland." But the stella can recall only the past whereas the water, itself, the ever-brimming spring—that is immortal. That is both present and future. To prevent the stone slab from detracting from the image of the water the architect built a wall inclosure along the stella and ornamented it with delicate leaf and flower designs and wavelike curves so that the stone harmonized with the water.

The architect himself went along to "beautify the water," to erect his stella. He was ready to do the stone-mason's job himself, so carried away was he by his task.

And that's how the village of Parakar got its "framed water."

Two relatives of the Parakar villagers coming from Kamarliu, a village a long way off, saw the beautifully framed spring and of course decided to set up one even better in their own village. So Izraelian received a second order, this time straight from the collective farmers themselves. The village of Artik, rich in soft red stone, followed Kamarliu and later came similar word from Zangezur, far off in the mountains—its men are reputed to be the bravest in Armenia. And so it spread from place to place; every village, every district wanted to have "an artistic spring-head in honour of their sons who were serving and those who had fallen," so that their memory would live, live on through the ages, so that the remembrances of them should not be sad and lonely, confined within the four walls of a room, but open and free, living always in the stream of pure water, water ever flowing and loudly telling of the glory of those sacrificing health and life for their country.

As for Raphael Izraelian, he was snowed under with orders. To this day the mountains and valleys have preserved the scattered traces of bygone architectural styles—the ancient Roman roads and the tumbled fortress ruins; the Persian arch of a bridge, or remains of a wall; the fine ancient Armenian architecture of hoary monasteries and medieval castles crowning rocky crags. But now new memorials have sprung up throughout the land—memorials designed with all the wonderful variations of which a master mind is capable. But all are imbued with the same historical idea, the same mood. Springs framed in stone have become the medium of a great architectural concept, the symbol of a style begotten of history.

MARIETTA SHAGINIAN

THE LAST ENCOUNTER

All this is history now—the ploughed-up earth on the Oder and the Seelow heights where every inch is soaked with blood and sweat, and the self-propelled gun standing on end with its armour battered and twisted, and the bullet-riddled brigade flag waving miraculously from the turret of a smoke-blackened tank. This is the picture we have retained in our memory, a grim and vivid picture not yet defaced by time. For many years to come the Battle of Berlin will engage the minds of historians, philosophers and writers as the supreme manifestation of the fighting spirit and moral potential of a people who invested all their passion, vitality, resolution and will in this last, decisive blow.

Many encounters took place in those days on the streets of Berlin. But there is one I should like to single out. It was but a fleeting encounter that occurred on May 2nd, the day Berlin fell, near the Imperial Chancellery.

Under the grey, low-hanging Berlin sky a dense column of grey-clad German officers and soldiers were picking their way along the narrow footpath that ran through the street filled with debris. They walked slowly and in deep silence, their shoulders almost brushing the sides of a Russian tank as they passed. On the turret of the tank stood a Russian officer. Watching the passing Germans, his eye came to rest on the heavy figure of a grey-headed general in a high-visored cap. The general's eyes were inflamed and he walked with his shoulders hunched. As he passed the tank he glanced idly at its grey, smoke-blackened flanks on which a rhomboid was painted and for the fraction of a second his eyes flickered; he raised his head and met the eyes of the Russian tank officer. Then he passed on.

For a long time the officer stood there staring at the bowed shoulders of the German general as he walked along with the slow and painful gait of one who is deadly tired.

The tank with the rhomboid belonged to the First Guards Brigade and the German was General Weidling, commander of a German Panzer Corps and the last Commandant of Berlin.

There are some fleeting encounters which for a brief moment light up people and events like lightning. It was in just such a flash as this that the meeting amidst the ruins of Berlin occurred. It was not an accidental encounter—it was more like the last link in a chain of encounters that had crossed the lives of the First Red Army Guards Tank Brigade and a German general.

In modern battles in which thousands and millions of people are participating, one single tank brigade may seem but a tiny grain lost, so small a part is it of the whole huge mass of machines. In the same way as the whole world with its colours and perfumes is recorded by a single blade of grass, the life story of this one brigade shows features that belong to the whole army. War, the great sculptor, with its mighty mallet and chisel hewed out the strong character of the First Guards Tank Brigade which always fought in the direction of the main drive.

The brigade won its first decoration, the Order of Lenin, in the fighting at Moscow. Its sixth decoration, the Order of Suvorov, was awarded for the Battle of Berlin. Two battles—Moscow and Berlin... What a profound difference between these two decisive battles!

The first time General Weidling met the tanks of the Russian First Guards Brigade was in the Moscow area. Weidling had just started his career on the Eastern Front with the rank of a colonel.

The Germans had drawn their armoured spearheads up to Moscow, by passing our strongpoints in their formidable onslaught on the Soviet capital. According to his testimony, Weidling, like all the other German officers, believed implicitly in the infallibility of the German military doctrine hatched in the incubators of the Prussian General Staff machine. It was as though they bore the device: "umfassen, einschliessen, vernichten" (envelop, encircle, and destroy) on the points of their spears. These were the pillars that supported the edifice of German military tactics.

The tension of these now remote days of October 1941 may perhaps be best conveyed by a telephone conversation that took place one night between Colonel Katukov, commander of the Tank Brigade, and General Headquarters. Colonel Katukov was given orders to rush his tanks to the most threatened sector of the front, and in those grim hours Headquarters counted on every tank, every gun and every man in laying its plans for the battle that was to decide the fate of Moscow. Stalin ordered them to a decisive sector. They were to be loaded on railway flatcars and shipped off at once. After thinking the matter over quickly, the brigade commander asked for permission for the tanks to make the 360 kilometre run under their own power in order to save time. Katukov waited while Headquarters considered his proposal: every hour was precious. Presently the colonel heard the calm voice of Stalin at the other end of the wire. If the brigade commander is willing to undertake it, the tanks could proceed under their own power.

And so one dark, moonless night the tanks rumbled through Moscow with dimmed headlights, filling the deserted streets and squares with their measured throb. Moscow was ominously silent, grimly alert. Even if they did not realize the full significance of the threat that hung over their country, the very sight of silent Moscow put new feelings into them. As the tanks rolled past the Kremlin the men, obeying a single impulse, opened the hatches and leaned out to gaze, in silence, at the darkened battlements.

Forty hours after Stalin's order had been given the brigade reached the Volokolamsk highway and deploying for action dealt the Germans sudden, brief, decimating blows.

On the scales of history the few dozen tanks of one brigade might seem to weigh but little. But who knows, perhaps the staunch resolution of the young tankmen who defended their line to the death proved to be that grain which, added to the efforts of the men fighting to the right and left of them, tipped the scales over to our side. . .

One of the brigade's most treasured possessions is the order signed by Stalin making it a Guards unit. It was dictated over the telephone on a November night in 1941. "The performance in battle ... of the tank brigade should serve as an example to other Red Army units in this war of liberation from the fascist invaders," it reads. It was in those days that the first rules of conduct for Soviet tank Guards were born. "When the Guards are on the defensive, the enemy shall not pass; when the Guards attack, the enemy must yield," was the battle device of the brigade.

The roads of war are narrow lanes, and circumstances brought Weidling's division into contact with the First Tank Brigade again in July 1943. This time they met on the Kursk salient. The Germans had made long-and careful preparations for this battle. It was to be a major offensive and was planned under the code name of "citadel."

Weidling's division was among the first-line troops which under the cover of Tigers and Ferdinands began hammering at our defences.

Stationed on Height 245 of the Kursk salient, the First Guards Division received the first impact of the German onslaught. I still have a copy of a leaflet, now yellowed with age, giving a reticent account of this early morning battle.

"Forty German planes flew over first. Paying no attention to the handful of Soviet tanks they passed beyond our position. The second wave, however, unloaded. Then came the tanks. A black mass of machines moved toward our left flank. Ten German tanks covering a battalion of tommy-gunners detached themselves from the column and descending into the hollow began to climb up to Height 245. Shalandin and Sokolov drove their tanks forward and set two enemy tanks on fire. Shalandin handled his machine with remarkable skill. Again and again he climbed on a mound, fired three shots and backed away. He had calculated mathematically the manoeuverability of the Tiger's turret and knew that before it got ready to shoot he would have time to take cover. For nearly four hours this unequal battle went on without the Germans being able to pass the two small heights defended by four Soviet tanks. The Germans called on their aircraft to bomb a square containing the height. Now the four tanks had to parry land and air blows simultaneously. Bochkovsky's tank caught fire; Sokolov's fell into a bomb crater, Bessarabov's machine was immobilized. That left Shalandin. He fought furiously, tearing up and down the hill, dodging bombs and lashing out at enemy machines. He dashed to the top and fired three rounds. This was the young tankman's last manoeuvre in a sea of fire. When the battle was over, his friends found him in his scorched machine, burned to death. Judging by the position of his arms he had been about to fire another shell when he succumbed."

One year later, in the summer of 1944, Weidling clashed with the Russian tankists again. He was now a general in command of the Ninth Army. And no matter in which direction he retreated the Russian pincers always seemed about to grip on him. The notorious German formula acquired a new Russian meaning in the Bobruisk "kessel" in which the Ninth Army was trapped. It had become a weighty formula for all to see on the fields of Byelorussia. The Russian tanks cut the Ninth Army's communications, and bore down on Weidling's headquarters. Weidling himself, his army lost, barely escaped from the trap.

The next encounter occurred in the early winter of 1945 on the distant approaches to Berlin. The First Tank Brigade, forming the spearhead of a Soviet armoured ram, split the German Ninth Army in two. Two days before the offensive began, Guards Colonel Temnik, commander of the brigade was summoned to General Katukov's headquarters set up in a dense pine forest. The general and Temnik walked arm-in-arm up and down the forest path where tanks and guns stood behind every tree. The First Guards Brigade was Katukov's pet child associated with memories of the autumn of 1941 and the fierce battles with German tanks in the Moscow area.

The general never planned an operation without considering the men who were going to put it into effect. In his opinion Guards Colonel Temnik was just the man for the job in hand. Under the difficult conditions of mobile warfare he would be able to size up the situation rapidly and act swiftly and effectively. He liked the hot-blooded, temperamental colonel. Everything about him, his character and personality, seemed to fit him perfectly for the operation.

On the fourteenth day of the offensive the brigade approached Kunersdorf. They had only sixty kilometres to go and the brigade commander had to decide, and decide quickly, how to swoop down on the enemy and retain the element of surprise. It so happened that at this moment the tank brigade was far ahead of the main forces. To wait for the latter to come up would have been senseless. Kunersdorf had to be taken on the run without pausing. True, this time the danger of taking action without the support of the main forces was considerably increased by the fact that the Germans could rush fresh forces from Frankfort on the Oder.

For more than sixteen hours nothing was heard from Colonel Temnik at headquarters.

There were two possible explanations for this: either he had gone so far forward that it was difficult for him to keep in touch by radio or he had met a big German force and joined battle. At headquarters they wanted to believe the former—Temnik had broken through and was most certainly in Kuners-

dorf. Standing beside the radio-operator the general listened to him as, in a voice quite hoarse by now, he tried to contact "Grozny." But Colonel Temnik whose call sign was "Grozny" (formidable) did not respond until evening. Late at night a dispatch rider came in with his report to the effect that the brigade had broken into Kunersdorf.

General Katukov was delighted. "I knew he would do it!" he said. "He always beats the enemy to it, he is, if you like, a real 'Advance Officer'." Twice he repeated 'Advance Officer' as though this idea characterized the activity of the clever, strong-willed colonel, who had gone out boldly and determinedly ahead of the main body.

In those sixteen hours the fate of the tank brigade had been in the balance. It saw some heavy fighting on the Kunersdorf hills. After Captain Bochkovsky's battalion had repulsed nine attacks he sent a runner to the brigade commander to inform him that its strength was giving out. But the colonel had no reserves to send to his aid. He could only order the captain to hold out to the last. Along with the order he sent Bochkovsky his most prized possession, his own and the brigade's—the old colours of the Guards.

And Bochkovsky beat off his tenth counter-attack. What's more, he counter-attacked himself. When the main forces reached Kunersdorf at dawn the following morning, they saw the brigade banner flying on one of the hills that surround this historic battle site.

The last and final encounter between the First Guards Tank Brigade and Weidling's tank corps was during the Battle of Berlin. The ups and downs that marked the career of this representative of the Prussian militarists are typical for the German military caste as a whole. Weidling, who had been in disfavour ever since he had lost the Ninth Army in the Bobruisk "kessel," rose to prominence again in the final stage of the war as commander of a tank corps forming part of the Ninth Army.

General Weidling was transferred to the Berlin area three days before the Russian offensive was launched. He came from East Prussia where his tank corps had been completely routed. A new command was waiting for him at Berlin. Goebbels, Reichskommissar for the defence of Berlin, visited the Ninth Army and inspected Weidling's corps. In his order to the army Goebbels wrote: "The German soldiers will be the barrier that will stem the tide rushing from the distant Asiatic plains."

On the evening of the day when Goebbels' order was being read out to Weidling's tank corps, the First Tank Brigade was preparing for its offensive.

Captain Zhukov had returned that morning from hospital. In vain had the doctors, and his brigade commander, too, protested that he was not yet fully recovered from his wound (his ninth, by the way). Zhukov merely shook his head.

"I'll finish the cure after Berlin is taken," he said.

And everybody, brigade, battalion and company commanders, understood him. How could he, Captain Zhukov, a veteran of the brigade, who had fought the Germans at Moscow, stay away when the great decisive battle was to be fought?. His life ambition, the ambition of the whole brigade, was about to be realized: the Red Army had taken Berlin by the throat.

As usual before the battle the Brigade Commander ordered the colours to be carried round the battalions. Perhaps it was the calm morning or maybe the solemnity of the moment, but in any case tankmen filled with emotion stood in silence and allowed their eyes to follow their colours, the old Guards colours.

The tanks of the First Guards Brigade smashed into the German lines. The situation and the terrain were far more difficult than during the breakthrough on the Vistula. Acting in coordination with the artillery and the infantry, the tanks had to break through the German defences on the run. Zhukov's battalion had the hardest job: to blaze a path for the brigade. The amazing luck that had been with him for nearly four years forsook him at the final moment of triumph. In the fighting for Berlin he got his tenth wound. This time it was fatal.

They laid him on the tank.

His friends wanted to make these last few moments of his life happy. They showed him the operations map: by the direction of the arrows drawn on the map Captain Zhukov understood that the brigade had reached the eastern suburbs of Berlin.

Weidling's tank corps was smashed by the Russian army. Weidling himself with the remains of his corps withdrew into the city. As events followed each other with lightning rapidity the chaos that reigned in the German High Command grew worse. Hitler, ensconced in the underground premises of the new Imperial Chancellery, issued order after order. From the dark fascist nether regions, obscure men rose to the surface in those days. The nearer the end approached, the more feverishly did Hitler shuffle his commanders. He was afraid to depend on anyone. Ritter von Hauenschild, the commandant of Berlin, was removed and replaced by General Reiman. On April 23rd, Reiman was replaced by Colonel Ketter who was immediately promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General. And two days later Hitler removed Ketter and appointed Weidling.

At five o'clock in the afternoon Weidling went to the Imperial Chancellery to report to the Führer. After being searched at the entrance—it was humiliating but this procedure had been introduced after the attempt on Hitler's life—Weidling descended to the deep underground premises where the Führer had his private chambers. A broad staircase led to the third subterranean floor of the Chancellery. At the end of a long corridor were more steps. One turn to the right and another to the left brought Weidling to a massive door strongly resembling the door of a vault. This was the entrance to Hitler's underground apartments consisting of a reception-room, dining-room, bed-room and bathroom. A huge reinforced concrete slab directly above the apartment made the shelter absolutely safe.

On April 29th Weidling made his last report to Hitler.

"I was amazed at his appearance," said Weidling after capture. "Before me sat the ruin of a man. His head lolled helplessly, his hands shook and his speech was almost unintelligible. I was deeply shaken by the sight."

According to Weidling, the Führer made some convulsive movements; his trembling hands slid over the green field of an operational map and in a hoarse whisper, as if cursing his fate, he said: "The situation must improve, the Ninth Army will move up to Berlin and strike at the enemy together with the Twelfth Army which will move up from the south-west. The troops commanded by Steiner will close in from the north and strike at the Russian northern flank. These blows must alter the situation in our favour.

At noon Weidling called a conference of divisional commanders in the building of the General Staff on the Landwehr Canal embankment and painted the situation in the darkest colours. In the middle of the conference an SS man, one of Hitler's adjutants, entered the room, walked over to Weidling and handed him an order from the Führer stressing the need to resist to the very last. The Germans still had tanks and guns, there were still considerable forces in Berlin proper, but all of them—including Weidling—lacked the most important thing: confidence.

That night, while the commanders of the German fighting forces were in conference on Landwehr Canal where Weidling proposed surrender, the final instructions for the decisive assault of Berlin were being issued at the command post of the Russian tank brigade. The commander had moved his headquarters three hundred metres forward. His worst fear at the moment was that his brigade might be withdrawn at the last moment and held in the reserve. Now that victory was a matter of hours and metres that was not to be thought of ...

There were good grounds for transferring the brigade to the reserve. Only a few hours before the commanding officer had asked the brigade commander with great tact how many tanks he had left. The commander had replied without enthusiasm. His superior officer, a veteran soldier, knew very well, however, what it meant to tell the First Tank Brigade on a night like this that it was to pull back to reserve positions. So instead he gave the brigade a battle assignment, the last in the Battle of Berlin.

The grey Berlin sky was lurid with explosions that morning. The Battle of Berlin was in its final stage but the fury of the fighting did not abate. On the contrary, it seemed continually to be increasing in ferocity. Both sides seemed to be putting material and spiritual emergency rations into that last decisive combat.

Two of a group of three tanks were hit as they moved towards the new Imperial Chancellery.

The third tank, an old T-34, veteran of many engagements, was lucky enough to break through the sea of fire and carry out the last battle assignment of the war.

And it was this battle-scarred tank with the rhomboid painted on its side that stood at the Berlin crossroads on the morning of May 2nd when the German soldiers and officers, among them a general with a sour, dejected expression on his face, filed slowly past.

That was the last meeting between the First Red Army Guards Tank Brigade and Wehrmacht General Weidling.

BORIS GALIN

A CHAMPION

From afar can be heard the cheerful splash mingling with the rush of moving water reminding one of a swift mountain stream as one approaches it through the mountains. Warm, very damp air beats in one's face and through the open door can be seen the swimming bath with its blue tiled rim and the sparkling green water. The flash of the ripples is reflected along the tiles, over the walls and across the ceiling. Even the air seems greenish as though we were standing in an enormous aquarium.

"Where is Meshkov?"

"There he is, in the water..."

As you look down from the platform you see the uneven, bubbly surface of the water cloven by the swimmers. There are several of them, turning in the water like corkscrews, little waves flowing over their heads, their bodies exaggerated, now long-drawn out, now contracted and again elongated as if seen in a distorting mirror. Their faces cannot be seen, they are under the water except for a brief second as the swimmer inhales a breath. Which is Meshkov?

In the centre of the pool there is a swimmer. His legs, stretched out behind him, mill in the water leaving a foamy wake like that of a motor-boat. In his movements there is something elusive which distinguishes him from the other swimmers, that same something by which one can always and unmistakably recognize the prima-ballerina when she appears upon the stage amongst the soloists already dancing there.

This swimmer is not, at the moment, moving faster than the others, no. But in his manner of swimming there is a peculiar iron rhythm. His movements are full of a wise and concentrated strength. It almost seems as if the water obeys him, parting before him of its own accord. He is in absolute harmony with the element, possesses it and swims with the freedom of a bird's flight through the air. Drops of water and foam are sent flying as the water boils around him; he swims on and on, enormous, his long arms like levers... "A master!" exclaims somebody on the platform under his breath.

At last Meshkov has finished his practice. He stands on the tiled floor, drops of water

Leonid Meshkov

running over his smooth skin. He has the thick neck of a sportsman, a simple Russian face, his hair cut short like a soldier's. His breathing is deep and regular as he rests.

Leonid Meshkov's fate is characteristic of the Soviet sportsman.

Ten years ago at the Volga sports competitions a young Stalingrad worker, Meshkov, set up an all-Union record. Two weeks later he was to be seen in Moscow. Experts, trainers and champions were gathered on the platform overlooking the swimming pool. Meshkov set up a new record. His appearance was not only unexpected, it was brilliant. The young man from the Volga immediately took his place in the first ranks. He bore his success calmly, joined the Leningrad Institute of Physical Culture and began his life as a student.

He worked assiduously, doggedly, even pedantically. A sportsman, full of brilliant possibilities, possessing an interesting and vivid talent, he studied with the patience of a schoolboy. He saw his future clear before him, unclouded by vainglorious mists. Neither victory nor success could turn his head.

Almost at the same time another talented swimmer, Semyon Boichenko, appeared in Moscow. Boichenko also attracted general attention. Meshkov and Boichenko met and so began a long, exciting and brilliant competition which is still going on to this day and every new meeting is an important event in the sports world. As a result of this interesting contest, the struggle between two gifted swimmers, Meshkov has set up one record after another.

Meshkov's character is lucid, straightforward, and spontaneous. Of course he understands the pleasure of personal success, but a sober and serious feeling of responsibility towards Soviet sport in general is also strongly developed in him. He feels himself to be part of a whole and not a brilliant but lonely star.

Even before the war broke out Meshkov had already been recognized as a master. He had made several world records. Sports contests had taught him to combine two different styles—the crawl and the breaststroke; he was equally at home with both. But the crawl was more to his liking for it seemed to him that a swimmer using this stroke was in closer affinity with the element, the very nature of water.

And then the war began.

The illustrious swimmer Meshkov volunteered for the army.

Now there were no more blue tiles, no more splashing water or applause. Now there were difficult, hard military days, the life of a soldier. Meshkov carried out his duties in his usual assiduous and straightforward manner.

He was severely wounded in one of the battles and taken to hospital.

The champion swimmer had been wounded in both arms. In his right arm the shoulder joint had been injured and in the left the wound had affected the nerves controlling the movements of the hand. His hand grew stiff and uncontrollable. Meshkov was in hospital for more than half a year. At last he was discharged. Both arms hung useless. The muscles of those long, powerful levers dried up, lost their suppleness and strength.

His friends said: "That's the end of Meshkov. How awful!"

Somewhere, a long way off, was a swimming pool, swimmers crossing the watery expanse. Bursts of applause, cries from the platform. Silence. Meshkov, alone, walked slowly along the street—walked home.

And now he began to work. Every morning he taught his arms to live. He taught them to move like tiny children. Patiently and meticulously he did daily exercises. "How can you expect to be a sportsman again after such a wound?" asked those at the swimming pool.

Meshkov stood in the middle of the room, bent his arm, stretched it out, made rotary movements. He brought the strength back to his arms drop by drop. Carefully he felt his muscles—they had become more supple, rounded. Or did it only seem so to him? "Don't torture yourself, Leonid..." visitors would persuade him. Again he would bend and unbend his arm.

At last the day came when he stood by the swimming pool again, undressed and entered the familiar greenish water—not so much with a feeling of excitement as of happiness, as if he were entering his own home. The water would give him back his strength. He believed this with his whole being. He trained with the diligence of a pupil. Each day he felt his muscles growing stronger, the agility returning to his arms. As a sportsman the will to victory was natural to

him. After being wounded he was possessed by a great will to live.

Here he stands on the tiled floor of the swimming pool—a champion, a sportsman in the full blaze of his youth and strength.

Quite a short time ago he met Boichenko again. The contest continues, still full of its former interest. Meshkov came in first, one second better than Kaisly's (U.S.A.) official record.

During his sporting career Meshkov has broken more than sixty U.S.S.R. and world records. He is now again in excellent form. The stop-watch invariably shows record time. The audience on the platform cries: "Bravo, Meshkov!" He comes out of the water, shaking himself like a lion. Hard, rounded muscles roll under the smooth skin.

Meshkov has won many victories, but the most wonderful of all is his victory over faint-heartedness, weakness and depression; he won that great struggle with himself for the return to life and happiness.

TATIANA TESS

IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

That morning in Prague was exactly the same as one year or five years ago. Leaden clouds hung over the city, washing the stone pavements with rivulets of warm May rain. People with grey faces still heavy with sleep went by, bending under umbrellas. Their own green-capped wonderful Prague that had smiled on their happy youth and maturity seemed to them now a vicious and cruel step-mother.

Yes, the time had passed ... and for ever it seemed, since Prague had been jolly and carefree!

It was hard to credit that a grown man could live on the microscopic rations the Germans issued to Czechoslovaks. Crushed by poverty, hungry and humiliated, they were step-sons in their own Prague, the once free and cheerful capital now turned by the Germans into the provincial centre of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The Czech children, deprived of all joy and doomed to injustice, shared the lot of their disinherited parents.

Wretched show windows of pillaged empty shops ... deserted cafés with tiny saccharine tablets and black, nauseating ersatz coffee... gloom and neglect in the squares... The Czech tongue spoken in whispers...the clack clack of clogs on the pavement... silhouettes, heads lowered, wandering about in search of the stub ends of cigarettes. That was "Golden Prague," altered beyond recognition during the years of German domination. Thus it was on the particular day we are describing.

Exactly at 11.29 a.m. the loud-speakers in Prague's houses, factories, squares and streets suddenly spoke up.

"Attention! Attention!" called an excited voice in Czech. "Prague Radio Station speaking. Czechs are being murdered here! Czechs, rally to us!.. Citizens of Prague! Czech soldiers! Officers! Police! All who have arms, hurry! Rally here all brave and honest Czechs! Death to the Germans! Death!.."

The Czechs heard the call with bated breath, repeated by the familiar voices of the Prague announcers Kozak, Mangil and Lismans. The city, with its millions of people, seemed to stiffen into rigidity, but the period of immobility lasted just as long as it takes a spark to send a powder magazine sky high. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, venerable old men and children spilled into the streets.

"Men of Prague, build barricades!" called the radio station. "Brave Czechs, don't let the Germans manipulate their troops! The hour of retribution has struck! Death to the Germans! Death!"

The body of Čudek, the inoffensive caretaker of the Prague radio station, fell onto the pavement at the entrance to the building—he was the first victim of the uprising.

The streets and highways of Prague had long cried out for vengeance. The age-yellowed faded stones of ancient Hradčany and hoary Unheld, where hooded alchemists of the middle ages had roamed and to which Arabian merchants had brought foreign goods, were spattered again and again with noble blood.

Hundreds of thousands of citizens, with picks, spades and their bare hands, tore up the stones and built barricades. Every city block, every side-street, every house became a bastion. Patriots armed with shot-guns, pistols and hand-grenades formed into small parties and detachments of the national guard.

German troops, concentrated in Devoš Žižkov and Pankrac districts, opened fire at the insurrection centres. A tank unit stationed at Benešov was ordered to make for Prague with all speed and was expected there any moment. Here and there tommy- and machine-guns yammered. The window panes rang at the opening gun salvoes.

The Germans sent in artillery and tanks, shelled the homes of civilians. Three shells pierced the walls of No. 24 Úzky Street, an unattached house. There was nobody to fight there as the enemy tank crew well knew... it had belonged to the late Karel Čapek, the famous Czech writer, author of *War with the Salamanders*, *Mother* and many other books. The writer's brother, Joseph Čapek, a well-known artist, died, after six years' imprisonment, from torture endured in Buchenwald concentration camp. The only inhabitants of the house on whom the German Tiger fired were two defenceless women: Karel Čapek's sister Božena and his wife Olga, the popular artist of the Czech National Theatre.

There were several hundred thousand German soldiers in Czechoslovakia at that time. Here in the heart of Europe, in a country that was a natural fortress, the nazis still hoped to hold their ground till better times,

and although the rising in Prague was spreading (it gripped the entire city in a day), the fate of the capital's inhabitants hung by a hair. How long could the poorly armed insurgents hold out against the German regulars, equipped with the last thing in technique? A day? Three days? Five days? Whose help could they bank on?

The fighting in the city was at its height when the Prague radio station sent out another call—an appeal for help to the Red Army. The text of the appeal has not been kept but thousands of Prague people know it by heart.

"We appeal for help to you, our Russian brothers!" rang out a voice charged with emotion. "To you, brave men and officers of the Red Army! Prague is in revolt! The city is locked in battle! We have few arms, there is no ammunition. We await your help, valiant men of the Red Army! Hurry, brothers!"

The voice of Prague was heard in Moscow.

At that time the Red Army corps and divisions were still fiercely engaged at Dresden. Through the roar of the battle deciding the outcome of the war, many Red Army men, officers and generals heard the voice of Prague. Ranges of mountains, hard to negotiate, lay between them and the insurgents. Beautiful Golden Prague lay far beyond those peaks...

The celebration we now describe took place exactly a month after the events mentioned. The journalists' report we quote is a brief extract from the despatch carried by the newspaper *Lidové Noviny*.

"On Saturday a grand festival took place not far from Prague. General Rybalko's valiant troops were celebrating their third birthday.

"During the struggle for Berlin, the troops under General Rybalko heard the voice of Prague calling for help from the Red Army.

"This army had blazed a glorious trail from the Don to Berlin and then came Marshal Stalin's order to the men of the invincible Soviet armies to speed to the aid of Prague. At the hardest moment of the battle at the barricades, General Rybalko's tanks swept into Prague. They crushed the fascist demon with a blow that fell like a thunderbolt."

"It was a miracle, a real miracle!" all sorts of people told us in Prague.

Statesmen, professors, writers, artists, merchants, clerks, workers, everybody we met in the Czechoslovak capital regarded the Red Army's arrival in insurgent Prague as nothing short of a miracle.

That brilliant operation was based on two of Suvorov's principles—speed and high pressure.

By-passing Dresden, the First Ukrainian front troops, suddenly exerting terrific and totally unexpected pressure, broke through and raced along the Dresden-Leipzig highway to the Czechoslovak frontier. Like a powerful spring flood they swept through the craggy mountains to the aid of the city faint from the bloody, unequal strife at the barricades.

The tanks bearing along at the head of the Red Army battle group rammed German mobile columns that crossed their path, flung them over the precipices and into the gorges. They swept on with unflagging momentum along the only mountain road; it was lined by a living, swaying wall. Thousands of Czech peasants with their wives and children from all the mountain villages rushed to the road, formed an unbroken line along the left side and stood for days shouting until they were hoarse "Nazdar Stalin!" and showering the machines with scarlet alpine tulips and fronds of sweet-smelling pine, tossed into the machines loaves of bread, rounds of cheese and wept with joy.

Grinding through that extensive mountain area in an incredibly short time the tanks plunged into Prague and smote the Germans like a bolt from the blue.

Prague inhabitants told us that when German panzer columns rumbled into the centre of Prague after Munich, youths and girls linked arms and stood across the street at Vaclavské Náměsti.

"We won't let you pass!" they cried, with tears in their eyes.

Their tears brought ribald laughter from the over-fed nazi braves in grey jackets exuding that specific smell of the German barracks. Sobbing, the Czech girls and boys lay down in the road; the Germans kicked them and belaboured them with their rifle-butts.

The entire population of the great city poured into the avenues and squares to welcome the Soviet tanks. Vaclavské Náměsti, the broadest and handsomest street in Prague, was an unbroken sea of heads. The people stood pressed close to each other and their clapping, cheers and greetings merged into a thunderous roar.

"We've waited for you so long! Do stop! Let's have a look at you!" girls and boys shouted, and linking arms to form a living chain they held up the tanks.

They clambered onto the grim machines, hugged and kissed the embarrassed crews, whose blue overalls still retained some of Berlin's dust. The children perched like sparrows on the barrels of the self-propelled guns, and hung like bunches of grapes on the running boards of the armoured carriers, lorries and cars. It was a matter of honour for every adult and child to have had a Red Army man as a guest in his house.

"I was lucky that day," Olga Šeinpflugova, wife of Karel Čapek, told me. "I met four Soviet officers in Vaclavské Náměsti. I told them I wouldn't let them go, that they'd have to take up their quarters in our house. They kindly accepted my invitation..."

II

Many roads pivot on Prague and radiate from it north, south, east and west. They ascend hills, covered with larch and pine woods. Then they leap down into the valley twisting like snakes, their asphalt gleaming dully in the sun. On either side of the roads stretch cornfields and light-green vegetable beds.

Oak and maple copses alternate with pine, woods so dense that they are as dim as a cloister. The sun drenches the meadows and fields in dazzling light. The wind wafts over them the intoxicating fragrance of dew-spangled hay and sends waves rippling across the sea of corn.

All the roads are lined with fruit trees and countless are the cherries, plums, apples and

pears to be picked this year by Czechoslovakia's hard working peasantry. For the first time in seven years the crop will belong to them; and from early morning they string out along the roads as they cycle to the fields and orchards.There they toil, pulling up the weeds, banking every bush, painting tree trunks in festive white. And all the while lorry loads of Red Army men whizz by them. They are travelling with plenty of music—instrumental and vocal, while vibrating in the wind on the side of every machine is a strip of red calico bearing the inscriptions: "We are from Berlin," "We have triumphed."

Not long ago the din of war resounded over these same roads. Here, everywhere, as far as the eye can see Germans had been for seven years. The sun shone just as brightly, the tops of the graceful pines swayed in the same way, but...

The grey-haired Dr. Prokop Maxa, a man of profound erudition, told us:

"The history of the Czech people is nothing but tragedy: Smetana's *Bartered Bride* is symbolic of Czechoslovakia.

"But believe me—I know my country's history very well—never has she had to bear such torture, such humiliation as during these past seven years..."

Prokop Maxa is a leader of the Czechoslovak patriotic movement, but this same conviction is expressed everywhere in town and countryside all the way from the Danube to Vltava and in Golden Prague.

The fascists' first step after Munich was to deprive the democratic republic of its independence and reduce its Slav inhabitants to the level of "a nation of slaves." Governor Heidrich, one of the "master race," was set to rule a new province, a part of the German Reich.

It would be too long a job even to enumerate all the humiliating inhuman laws, decrees and instructions issued by the butcher who was master of the life and death of each and all born on the ancient soil of the descendants of Jan Hus and Jan Žižka. Heidrich aimed at bringing the Czechoslovak people to their knees, destroying their national consciousness and ancient culture and, finally, wiping them off the face of the earth!

To get an idea of the powers this fascist blackguard enjoyed, how contemptuous he was of the "nation of slaves" committed to his charge, one has but to glance at the 20-crown note he put into circulation in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This 20-crown note carries the portrait of Heidrich's son, as choice a piece of twelve-year-old nastiness as one would expect a fascist to sire!

The number of Czechoslovakia's sons who have perished under torture, from intolerable humiliation or of plain starvation is formidable. Those who have been sent to the block and the gallows, shot or assassinated are countless. Since the world has heard of the furnaces of Majdanek, the trenches of Oświęcim, the dark cells of Buchenwald one would think it difficult to astonish anyone now with instances of nazi frightfulness. But no, not everything has been brought to light, not everything has been told, as anyone who visits the prison of Pankrac will agree. It was not just a matter of chance that the Germans fought so furiously against the insurgents and the Red Army near Pankrac, at the high stone walls that hid from the eyes of the uninitiated the heinous bloody crimes of Governors Heidrich and Frank.

The newly appointed prison governor guides us along the endless corridors. He draws the bolts of countless steel doors, dividing the corridors into sections and at last brings us to the remote secret department, of whose existence nobody was to know.

We entered through double doors with an air cushion between, that effectually stifled all noise.

The room formed a perfect square. On a slightly raised platform stood a long yellow table and three chairs. The walls were shrouded in heavy curtains hung from rings. Shaded electric lights threw a big oval on the ceiling.

The room possessed twelve square metres of floor space. That was not generous but quite enough for three to sit at the table and pronounce sentences on whoever was placed before them on the cement floor.

We draw back one of the curtains ... the room is not so small after all—another eight square metres lie behind.

The black curtain swung back after sentence had been pronounced. The eight square metres of floor space behind the curtain is severed by another at right angles to the first.

A bronze-plated rail runs beneath the ceiling. It carries eight blocks slipping along on well-oiled rollers. Hooks are attached to the blocks, the very same kind of hooks visible in German butchers' shops. Nooses dangle from the hooks. Here, in a space of eight metres, they hanged eight men at intervals of a minute and a half. After the hanging, the butchers gave the body a slight shove and it sailed off noiselessly along the rail like a carcass in a German shop, and disappeared behind the curtain. Then came the turn of the second. He was given a light push and he too sailed off on the well-oiled rollers behind the curtain, jerking and twisting in convulsions beside the first.

But besides the lengthways curtain in the twelve-metre room and the breadthways curtain in the eight-metre room, there is yet another curtain in the small room, just as black and heavy.

Drawing it aside we find that we've been deceived again as to the amount of floor space. There are not twelve plus eight metres, but more. This lengthways curtain conceals a room of fourteen square metres. There's a similar cement floor here but this one slopes towards a drain in the centre. A wash-basin is fixed to the wall with two taps. Attached to one is a long length of rubber hose-pipe drawn out towards the drain—a drain for blood. Beside it is the execution block. The butchers sever the head, wash their hands under the tap and, with the hose-pipe, swill the blood from walls and floor.

And so we have a chamber twelve—eight—fourteen square metres, divided up by curtains. Will not this other curtain, again lengthways, yield additional space? Let us draw it aside!

It conceals the last link in this terrible chain. Coffins roughly knocked together out of boards for the trunks. Portable boxes for the heads. Both the coffins and the boxes are fitted with handles and they contain sawdust and shavings to absorb the blood—everything foreseen ... everything prepared with the usual German precision.

We retrace our steps, passing through the curtains, and as we reach the compartment where the hooks on rollers hang from the rails our eyes happen to notice a stool in the corner.

What's that? Inscriptions?

Yes.

They are written in pencil on the legs of the stool and underneath the seat, in the hurried and agitated hands of the various people who spent their hour of death here.

"We were executed December 20th, 1944. Reason: gave a piece of bread to a Russian prisoner. A Merry Christmas to all our friends and all the Czech people!

Svoboda Oldřich, Horeček Antonin, Horeček Jaroslav, Hrůza Václav from the village of Kontouli, Brands District, near Labem. Joseph Klap from the village of Glavno Sudovo."

. . . . . .

"Farewell, Czechia and our family! . . . František Kolba, candidate for death!"

. . . . . .

"I have not lived to see liberation—executed March 28th, 1945. Kopecky František from the town of Rozhmital."

. . . . . .

At our request the man responsible was brought in, the man who had pronounced sentence on Svoboda Oldřich, the brothers Antonin and Jaroslav Horeček, Hrůza Václav, Joseph Klap, František Kolba, František Kopecky and many unknown Czech patriots, whose ashes are now appealing to us.

The butcher is brought into the chamber hung with the black curtains. His gaze is persistently focussed on the empty corner. His eyes cannot and do not want to dwell on the objects that condemn him as a bloody professional butcher. The little finger on his right hand is crooked and trembles almost imperceptibly.

We make our way to the exit. The bolts on the steel doors closing the passages rattle behind us. We pass through the endless corridors of the prison, where German torturers waiting to be interrogated are standing at attention, faces to the wall.

A half a minute's halt at a square grating. On the other side of the bars is Hacha, a revolting Czech Quisling, traitor No. 1 to his country. He is stimulating insanity. It won't work however. Judgement is coming!

III

Even during the gloomiest, most reactionary years of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the Czechoslovak people never experienced anything like the sufferings of the past seven years.

When the Germans applied the screw of oppression, the people's avengers killed that bloodthirsty hound Heidrich, the nazi governor.

The avengers disappeared, leaving no trace. The Germans were in a frenzy. They must have reprisals immediately, without a moment's delay! And the choice fell on the innocent Czech village of Lidice.

In the official communiqué, published for the benefit of the world on the second day after the assassination, the fascists declared:

"It is officially announced that during the investigation into the assassination of SS Obergruppenführer Heidrich exact proofs were established that the population of the village of Lidice near Kladno aided and abetted the group of murderers whosoever they may be. The requisite proofs were established without the assistance of the local population who were interrogated.

". . . Since the inhabitants of the village of Lidice by their activities and aid to the murderers of SS Obergruppenführer Heidrich have flagrantly broken the existing laws:

"All men to be shot, the women sent to concentration camps.

"The children to be despatched for suitable retraining.

"All the buildings in the village—to be razed to the ground, the name of the community to be expunged from all records."

The Germans, of course, had no proofs of the complicity of Lidice's people in the assassination of Heidrich. Nevertheless the communiqué was signed by Frank, who stepped into the role of butcher immediately after the death of Heidrich. Then came the executions—thousands, tens of thousands of executions.

Frank quitted Prague as soon as the Soviet tanks reached the Czechoslovak frontier, but he was taken prisoner by the Americans at Rokitsany. Dr. Echer, Czechoslovakia's representative to the International Committee for Investigation of Fascist Crimes, went to the headquarters of General Bradley's 12th Army group where Frank is confined together with Fieldmarshal Rundstedt.

This is how the investigation went:

"Dr. Echer: You are Karl Frank?

"Frank (sits down theatrically): Yes, I admit I am Frank, born in Karlsbad, former German Imperial Minister. (A pause.) I thought I was a political prisoner of the American Army...

"Dr. Echer: No, we are charging you with heinous war crimes. You will answer for them before Czechoslovak organizations. In accordance with the Moscow Treaty you will stand trial at the court of the people... Are you aware of the radio announcement which declared that anyone who helped the assassinators of Heidrich in any way would be shot together with all his relatives?

"Frank (losing his bombast): Yes, I knew of this announcement but I'm not responsible for it, since it was drawn up by the German Gestapo and brought to me to sign.

"Dr. Echer: Do you realize what a crime you committed in signing that announcement?

"Frank: No. At that moment I didn't weigh up the consequences, although I was already opposed to such measures. (His eyes drop.) Now I see that a decree of that sort is a crime. But then I had to sign it and carry it out."

The ober-hangman caught red-handed, then, tried to make out that following Lidice "only" one and a half to two thousand persons were killed, but Dr. Echer's portfolio contained Ge-

stapo documents pertaining to the massacre of twenty thousand Czechs as reprisals for Heidrich.

"Frank: The order to destroy Lidice, to shoot all men and soldiers and place all women and children in concentration camps came straight from the Führer's headquarters. I had nothing to do with it...

"Dr. Echer: Do you consider that the destruction of Lidice was a crime?

"Frank: Yes, now I do.

"Dr. Echer: And then?

"Frank: Then the police assumed that the assassins were concealed by the population of Lidice... (Pause.) I should like to say one or two things in justification.

"Dr. Echer: Proceed.

"Frank: In the middle of June 1942 I was told of a secret order of Hitler's whereby thirty to forty thousand politically unreliable Czechs were to be done away with as a reprisal for the assassination of Heidrich. I asked for an audience with Hitler immediately. It was granted... I went to the main headquarters and in half an hour outlined to Hitler what would happen if his order were carried out. I remember what I said to Hitler perfectly well: 'My Führer! By this decree you are destroying the foundation of social and happy cohabitation with the Czech people. You are destroying their ability to work. Thereby you are conjuring up three hundred thousand avengers!'"

And so it seems that Reichsminister Frank was not a butcher, but a benevolent guardian of the Czech people. He could not allow the destruction of "the foundation of social cohabitation with the Czech people." But what had he to say about the plan to exile all Czechs outlined in concrete terms by Hitler in 1942 during his interview with the journalist Exner?

"Frank: Yes, I knew that the expulsion of the Czech population was being discussed by the leadership of the national-socialist party. But at the time I wrote a memorandum pointing out that the plan was impracticable, because the space that would be vacated by the Czechs could not be resettled in war time."

In war time the plan was hard to carry out for technical reasons—a really handsome excuse!

IV

Thousands of people visit this desolated spot. They come from Prague, from the surrounding villages and from many other places in Czechoslovakia. They stand in silence, heads bared under the open sky. In the centre, bareheaded are President Eduard Beneš and members of the Czechoslovak government. Red Army and Czechoslovak generals stand at the salute, paying military honours to those who gave their lives for their country.

On this depressing stretch of wasteland, overgrown with weeds, once stood the quiet, neat Czech village of Lidice. Clean white houses nestled in the foliage of orchards. Bees droned over the meadows, exacting tribute from the wild flowers. The corn waved in the fields, watered by the warm spring rains.

Now—not a sign of life. All has been swept away, destroyed, razed to the ground.

Five centuries ago Tamerlane's hordes swarmed into flourishing ancient Horesm to encounter stern resistance at the walls of its capital Kunia-Urgench. Its inhabitants defended their native city with utter devotion and it would never have fallen had Tamerlane not ordered the River Darya to be diverted from its course. When at last the cruel conqueror took Kunia-Urgench his fury was terrible, he ordered it to be razed to the ground, ploughed up and sown with barley.

A huge field of barley sprang up on the site of the ancient capital of Horesm. That, at least, was life. Nothing replaced Lidice, nothing except ashes and evil prickly weeds.

In that bitter silence rang out the passionate, wrathful words of President Eduard Beneš:

"What particularly struck the world about the crime at Lidice was the detailed, precise coldbloodedness, the utter cynicism with which the wholesale extermination of an innocent population was carried out. An official German communiqué was published in which the German government solemnly proclaimed her responsibility for this foul deed and from which it appeared that this repression was visited upon people who were known to be innocent and that this was a manifestation of terror from which the German regime has shaped a public state doctrine with a juridical foundation," stated the President with emotion.

The President's passionate indictment rang over the wasteland that had once been the quiet, peaceful village of Lidice. The people stood listening, scarcely breathing, fearing to miss a word.

V

The July sun settles onto the blue rim of the horizon. The wind is raising tremulous wavelets on the limpid waters of the Vltava; it mirrors the turrets of the Hradčany Kremlin bathed in the light of the setting sun. Two flags—the Czechoslovak and the Soviet—wave above the Kremlin; they intertwine in the wind and the people of Prague gaze at them with joy. They see in them the symbol of faithful, indestructible brotherhood. Everywhere—in the streets, on the balconies and in the buildings—are placards, slogans, flags and pennants... Prague goes on celebrating its liberation, exultant and gay.

Prague rejoices and toils but does not forget the men who manned the barricades during those May days. Prague remembers the gallant Red Army known here by the one simple word: "Osvoboditelka"—liberator.

Wherever Czechs and Red Army men fell in battle, whether it be a square, the pavement, or the door-step of a house, a glass jar of fresh flowers stands on the very spot. The flowers are for ever being changed. Unknown people—men, women, grandfathers and kiddies—bring fresh bunches, and taking off their hats, gaze at the strip of Czech land annointed by the blood of their liberators. A sentry stands at the entrance to the radio station, where the patriots of Prague fought their first action against the Germans. A mound of bright flowers rises about the pavement. The broad, spacious street, cleaving its way straight from the centre to its leafy outskirts,

had been an arena of furious battle. It was in this street that the flag of the Czechoslovak Republic was first raised. Over the stones of this street moved the pageant of freedom; over them rolled the first Soviet tanks and lorry-borne tommy-gunners.

That street is now called "Stalin Avenue."

We have travelled many roads in Czechoslovakia. We have seen Brno, dim amid the smoke of its factories, Zlyn alight with enthusiasm, Bratislava the resurrected, Iglava, nestling amid orchards, and many other towns and villages large and small. It is a long road from the Danube to the Vltava. Along the way are many big hills and little hills and beneath them, wrapped in eternal slumber, lie the warrior-heroes who gave their lives for the freedom and happiness of a brother people. And on the memorial scroll of one of those graves, someone has written two words in Czech:

"Pravda vítezi!"

And that means:

"Right has triumphed!"

EL REGHISTAN

NATAN RYBAK

Czechoslovakia, July.

SWEDISH GYMNASTICS

Various projects for organizing a "northern collaboration" are again being discussed in Sweden. The Swedish press itself exposes these plans as reactionary and anti-Soviet.

(Newspaper report)

Drawing by V. Fomichov

FOR CHILDREN ABOUT BY

A STORY ABOUT FRIENDSHIP, LABOUR AND DARING

The book this article deals with is interesting not only because it contains a wonderful story, but also because the book itself appeared under unusual circumstances.

The author you know already. He is the same Lev Kassil who exactly a year ago introduced the readers of our magazine for the first time (issue No. 11, 1944) to his Round Table Broadcasts Under the Cuckoo Clock arranged every month for children of the Soviet Union.

During the war L. Kassil happened to visit a military aerodrome in the Far North, where he became friendly with the weather-forecaster of the aerodrome, a man called Arseni Gai, a former schoolteacher. Gai told the writer many interesting things about the weather and winds and finally disclosed the secret about his friends, the commandoes of the fairy-tale land of the Azur Mountains.

Kassil had already heard many stories about the daring raids made by the commandoes along the coasts of Norway and Africa where they became a terror to the German garrisons. But the story Arseni Gai began, though never ended, had nothing in common with the exploits of the daring British and Norwegian commandoes of this war. It was the beginning of a beautiful legend about the land of the Azur Mountains, about its brave and honest inhabitants and about the disasters which descended upon the one-time prosperous country. But he was not destined to learn who those commandoes were about whom Arseni Gai frequently hummed a song and to whose letters he always looked forward with such impatience. Gai's fascinating story was interrupted by the howling siren and deafening fire of German machine-guns from the air. Gai rushed towards the thermometer left on the cliff beyond and . . . he never came back. The cliff was pulverized by a German bomb and the weather-forecaster was mortally wounded by a splinter.

Many months have gone by since then. Kassil returned to Moscow, but the secret of the land of the Azur Mountains gave him no rest. Then he hit upon an idea—perhaps, if he told the story about Arseni Gai and his mysterious commandoes in the Round Table Broadcast, perhaps someone who knew would hear . . . . And this is exactly what happened. In less than a week's time he received a letter from the small town of Zatonsk in the Volga area informing him that Gai's commandoes would be very pleased to welcome the chairman of the Round Table. At the first opportunity Kassil decided to go to Zatonsk for a day to learn all he could about Arseni Gai's friends; instead of one day, however, he spent a full week there and learned all the things which now fire the imagination of the many thousands of readers of his book *My Dear Lads*.

Lev Kassil

It was from the lips of Valeri Cherepashkin, the twelve-year-old "historian of Zatonsk" that he heard the continuation of the wonderful fairy-tale about the land of the Azur Mountains. He learned about the disaster which had overtaken the beautiful country: a new king who was very stupid and very feather-headed, ascended the throne, and brought along with him all the winds which sweep the globe—the frightful Sirocco which is the terror of the vineyards, the stormy Cyclon, the desert ruler Simoom and the squint-eyed pirate Typhoon. By their master's order the winds devastated the country, scattered its wealth to the winds, withered the orchards and brought unhappiness to the people.

There lived three glorious craftsmen in the land of the Azur Mountains: Amalgama, the Master of Mirrors and Crystal; Isobar, a skilful gunsmith, and the wise John Gardenhead, who was a wonderful horticulturist. These men decided to rid the country of the evil king and his devastating winds. They fled from the palace and found refuge among kind-hearted and brave people who called themselves the commandoes. Their motto was: Daring, Loyalty, Labour and Victory. There was no work they could not do, and no danger they feared. Together with the commandoes the craftsmen prepared the battle against the evil rulers of their country. Day and night they forged their weapons, and then went off to storm the palace.

It was a hard struggle, but the skill of the craftsmen and the daring of the commandoes triumphed in the end. The king was overthrown and the winds placed under lock and key. Afterwards they were only released when the clouds must be swept from the skies, to turn the wind mills and fill the sails of the ships. Once again orchards blossomed in the land of the Azur Mountains. And nailed to the palace wall was the emblem of the commandoes: a rainbow and arrow entwined with the convolvulus.

"In my opinion, if one does not love the city where one was born and raised, one will never be able to love a city where other people were born. And in that case, what can one love in this world?" This is how Valeri Cherepashkin began his *Short History of Zatonsk*. His opinion was apparently shared by his friends. Was not the little green town on the bank of the Volga really beautiful? Was not the great Russian river Volga a fairy-tale in itself? Could anything be as fascinating as the secret meetings of the friends in a cave on the river island? It was there that the small but solid union of commandoes was formed from the best pioneers of Zatonsk.

"We vowed to live like brothers, and decided to discuss everything together, never fight amongst ourselves and to make Daring, Labour, Loyalty and Victory our motto!" reads the record in the "historian's" diary.

The song which Arseni Gai composed for the fighting union of "wartime pioneers" had the following words:

Come what may, but to the very end
A commando'll never waver, lie or be a coward,
He'll not betray his country or his friend.
Forward, Commandoes! Commandoes, forward!

The daily life of the little citizens of Zatonsk, a life of labour and not always an easy one, was closely interwoven with events in the fairy-land of the Azur Mountains. In life, just as in the fairy-tale, they had to earn the right to be called a commando. Only the most reliable and most skilful lads were accepted into the detachment, and the new member received a new name. The pigeon lover became the Magician of Undercloud Nests; the best collector of scrap metal Volcanoes' Alarm Clock. Kapiton Butyrev, a very diligent lad and jack-of-all-trades, was christened Isobar the Gunsmith. Valeri Cherepashkin, the dreamer and historian of Zatonsk, was called Amalgama, the Master of Mirrors. It is impossible to enumerate all their wonderful adventures in the land of their dreams, on sea, under the ground, and on land where Daring, Loyalty and Labour always triumphed.

These were their constant companions in real life. That is why Kapiton Butyrev, the trade-school pupil, was, despite his thirteen years and small stature, able to command, not only the commando detachment in their amusing adventures, but also a whole team of trade-school pupils at the large shipyard of Zatonsk, and, operating the milling-machine, turned out three times his production quota for the front. That is why in every home where the father went off to fight, the people knew for certain that one day a whole team of alert lads would come and do all the work in the house and in the yard usually done by the men; and if the pan was leaking or the primus refused to work, all that was necessary was to take them to Kapiton Butyrev, and no matter how tired this indomitable gunsmith Isobar may have been after a day's work at the plant, he would repair the thing and bring it back next morning in good order.

And although for a long time no one in the town had the slightest suspicion about the existence of the commando union (the lads maintained the strictest secrecy!) the neatly dressed and friendly looking lads enjoyed universal love and even a kind of respect.

Loyalty in friendship, daring in the face of danger and efficiency in work are always necessary in life. And the harder life is, the greater the need for these qualities to overcome all difficulties and triumph in every clash.

When the war began to thunder somewhere far away, and father's place was left empty at the dinner table; when the number of orphans and widows in town began to multiply and the thunder rolled ever nearer the Volga, the lads of Zatonsk began to regard the exploits of the three masters in the land of the Azur Mountains and their own pledges to each other and to their Country in a new light.

Young sailors from a naval school temporarily transferred to the town from the Baltic region, at once assumed a boastful, arrogant air. The lads of Zatonsk were tempted to give them a good licking. But as hosts they were obliged to be hospitable. After a consultation among themselves, the commandoes decided that they would not be the ones to start, but that if the others picked a fight they must be taught a lesson. And thus it came about that there were two camps in the town: the local boys, made up mainly of trade-school pupils, and the snobbish shipboys. And it so happened that the shipboys invariably outdid their rivals: they licked the local team in a soccer match, and in other sports competitions it was not so easy to stand up against the well-trained shipboys and all the girls of the town looked at the agile sailors with approving eyes. Nevertheless, the day came when the shipboys could not get along without the trade school pupils.

For some time they looked with longing

eyes at a small launch which had been in the back-water for a long time awaiting capital repairs. At home in the Baltic they had been accustomed to have all their practical training on board ship, but here they became landlubbers. So they began to think of ways and means to repair the launch. They could not do it themselves. There was only one way out—to humbly ask the trade-school pupils at the shipyard for help. And so they came to pay their respects to the team leader, Kapiton Butyrev. After thinking it over, the trade-school pupils agreed, and proceeded with the repairs. They spent all their free time on the launch, putting all their zeal into the work and made a first-rate job of it. The launch was christened "Arseni Gai" in honour of the friend of the Zatonsk commandoes who had perished in the Arctic.

This launch laid the foundation for a firm friendship between the Pioneers of Zatonsk and the Baltic shipboys. Friendship means strength and strength—victory. And it was not long before the truth of this was felt.

The guns already roared on the right bank of the Volga, at Stalingrad. Enemy planes raided and bombed Zatonsk more than once. War was next door. Children and old people were evacuated from the town which was put under military command.

One day the commandoes noticed German parachutists on the islet where they usually gathered around their bonfire. They immediately informed the people's guard and the shipboys. Kapiton Butyrev and Valeri Cherepashkin joined the shipboys in the attack against the parachutists. The people's guard attacked from the front, and the shipboys, in accordance with Kapiton's plan, struck a surprise blow from the rear, so precipitating the rout of the paratroops. All the Germans were rendered harmless except for a machine-gunner who kept the people's guard away from the island. Through a secret underground tunnel dug by the shipboys during their tactical training, the leader of the commandoes crept over to the German and dragged him so violently into the narrow entrance of the tunnel that when the rest came up it was with great difficulty that they managed to dig out the husky Fritz.

Once again, and this time in real life, the commandoes were victorious. Living as they were in direct proximity to Stalingrad the Zatonsk lads had more than one occasion to prove their loyalty to their motto. And when the great city had beaten back the enemy hordes and the din of battle over the Volga had died down, every commando displayed a green and red ribbon with a gleaming medal on his breast—the Defence of Stalingrad Medal. This is how the Country rewarded the youthful patriots for their daring and loyalty which helped to bring about Victory.

HELEN ROMANOVA

LEV KASSIL

MY DEAR LADS

(Chapters from the novel)

OLD AND YOUNG

In the shop ventilators hummed, drummed, banged, the lathes, transmitters and drills clanged and whirred. Every now and then the confused noise of the shop was pierced by the ringing, strident scream of the electric saws in the yard. Kapka was standing at his lathe, the largest in the shop, in his old overalls, oily and stained. Beneath his feet was a small bench which the shop had named the tribune. Kapka was a tidy-minded lad; the lathe was too high for him, but he was not content simply to stand on an empty box, as others did. He had made himself this tribune, and painted it indigo-blue; and now other trade-school boys had begun to follow his example if their lathes were too high for them.

He had forgotten his anger of the previous day, his eye hardly troubled him, the lathe which the foreman himself had rigged up the previous evening seemed to mould itself to his hands, white oil flowed and sprayed, and the glittering metallic shavings rose in a growing heap on the floor. Kapka had felt in a better humour after his decisive conversation with Khodula. He was pleased that Lyoshka had not dared to disobey, and had come to the shop all the same. Khodula was looking pretty miserable, and he kept his bandaged finger stiffly stretched out all the time. It had not been possible to send him to the lathe as the finger really was swollen, but he was quite capable of carrying away finished parts, sweeping up the shavings and doing other kinds of odd jobs.

The work went well, the lathe was behaving itself, on the left side the pile of finished parts was growing in a most satisfactory fashion, and the whole brigade was right on the job. Kapka himself felt that at these times, standing on his indigo-blue tribune, he really was, as the lads said, "a whale of a fellow." In such moments nobody would have dared, even under his breath, to call Kapka "spindle," the name mockingly called after him as he walked along the street because of his smallness.

Through the rows of machines came Kornei Pavlovich Matunin, a good uncle to all the boys, the teacher of these young workmen. He was wearing a tidy cotton overall, a metal ruler marked off in millimetres, a narrow comb and a red pencil protruded from the pocket. Pulling his short grey moustache, he walked unhurriedly from lathe to lathe, examining his pupils over his narrow metal-rimmed glasses.

Kapka, absorbed in his work to the exclusion of all else, did not see the foreman's approach, and continued working, whistling softly through his teeth.

"Why is this nightingale performing like

this in the workshop?" he heard suddenly, right in his ear.

Without stopping his work, he glanced up for a second and saw the foreman beside him.

"I was just whistling to myself, Kornei Pavlovich," said Kapka in confusion, surprised that the foreman should even have heard his whistling through all the noise.

"You'd do better to tone down your tunes to a whisper. We throw out whistlers here," said the foreman sternly.

"I tried at first, Kornei Pavlovich, just to keep the tune in my head, and then I heard somebody whistling and found it was me. It's a really good song, the soldiers were singing it last night at the landing stage. It's a war song and it's kind of moving too."

"Well, Kapitosha, and how's things going?" asked the foreman.

"Getting along all right, Kornei Pavlovich, you can see how many I've taken off."

The foreman cast an experienced eye over the heap of parts.

"Good lad, Butyrev, good lad, Kapiton, you're ahead. Only work evenly, without jerkiness. Lathe not acting up? Let me test the dividing head for you. That's it. Vasenin, Vasenin!" he shouted to a tow-headed lad at the side, who had just thrown a part down on the floor. "Why do you throw it down in that silly way? Put the parts down carefully, or you'll batter them. Doesn't do the parts any good to be thrown about, they need gentle handling, all the more so when I've told you you're doing a special lesson this morning, a special assignment. These parts are going to the front. Look here, Vasenin, how Butyrev's working, neat as can be. He may be small, hardly see his head over the lathe, but he does his job in tip-top style."

At this moment the foreman's eye fell upon the angry bruise on Kapka's cheekbone. He took the boy by the chin, bent down and settled his glasses.

"Lord help us!" said the foreman. "Lord help us! Who's done that to you, Butyrev?"

"Nobody. I did it myself, Kornei Pavlovich."

"And what did you want to quarrel with yourself like that for? Lord help us!"

Kapiton shook his head free and bent over his lathe, surprised to feel that it would have taken little more for tears to come into his eyes.

Kornei Pavlovich stood for a little while longer at the lathe, made as though to go on, and then turned back again. Kapka could see that the foreman wanted to speak to him about something. And sure enough, Kornei Pavlovich coughed and said softly:

"I happened to hear your talk with Dulkov yesterday, when you had that row with him behind the gate. You know, Kapka, you might tell the lads not to get foul tongues on them. Sometimes it's not worth saying a good word, that's true, but that doesn't mean you need dirty your tongue. You're young lads yet, you should keep your talk clean. When you use dirty words, then your tongue's like a broom, sweeping all the foulness into yourselves. That's not the way..."

A mighty, all-enveloping howl resounded through the shop and yard. The dinner whistle.

The lads rushed for the dining-room. During dinner, as usual, the talk ran on military Orders and medals, aircraft and the cinema. These were all familiar topics, and each one could speak his mind with full knowledge and authority.

After the dinner hour the foreman collected them all in the alley-way and again told them that for this lesson they had received a very special and important job. He then proceeded to explain the work, illustrating his words with blueprints and models.

"So you see, it's this way: a double channel goes lengthways, we'll use the mill cutter with a four millimetre width. And from here, the thread goes round the bushing. Look here. Like this. And this side we get it a little narrower, as we've already done. Clear to everyone?"

"Kornei Pavlovich, Kornei Pavlovich!" Kapka pushed his way right under the elbow of the foreman, peering up at him under his glasses. "Kornei Pavlovich, what's that part going to be for?"

"Don't be inquisitive. If you've been told it's a special assignment, that means there's no questions asked. Clear?"

"Clear," drawled Kapka. "But I just would like to know, it's interesting!"

"And maybe I'd like to tell you, but it's not possible. Understand? If you've been told you can't know, then you can't, and that's the end of it. Military secret. Our factory's been entrusted with the job, we'll do it in addition to our ordinary work, and our mouths shut. Of course, it'll mean putting in a few extra hours."

"Maybe it's for a tank?" said Kapka the irrepressible.

"Quite possible," the foreman agreed.

"Or for a Katyusha?"

"Maybe."

"Not for an airplane, Kornei Pavlovich?"

"Might well be that too..."

Towards evening a rather unusual excursion arrived at the factory. Learning in some way of their own that the ship repair factory had been entrusted with a special job, the old folks had come to offer their assistance; these were pensioners, veterans of labour, the old Anchorage Guard of the river banks, Volga men all. From Svishchovka came Yegor Danilych Shvyryov and Makar Makarovich Rasshivin. From the wharves came Mavriki Kuzmich Parfyonov, and old Mikhailo Vlasyevich Busyga, Ustin Yermolayevich Skokov and Ivan Terentyevich Yashkin himself, that same of whom Valeri Cherepashkin's diary said that he had lived in feudal times and lost his hearing at the very time when sound films were invented. Their combined ages would have come to at least five hundred. These were mighty, gnarled old men, who in their time had tramped the length of the Volga as boatmen, raftsmen, and every other kind of riverside job. Some of them, as for instance Shvyryov and Busyga, had sailed as stokers and mechanics, and then worked in the repair yards or ended their days as beacon-lighters.

These old men were accompanied by the director himself, Leonti Semyonovich Gordeyev, followed at a short distance by Kornei Pavlovich Matunin. The lads could see

that their foreman was agitated. Every now and then he would pull at his short moustache, settle his overall, or take out his checked handkerchief to wipe his forehead. After all, once upon a time he himself had been an apprentice in the Anchorage workshops and Mikhailo Vlasyevich Busyga and Yegor Danilovich Shvyryov had been over him.

Unhurriedly, supporting themselves on sticks, the old men passed through the shop. They stopped at the lathes, peered over and under everything, picked up the finished parts, feeling them with critical fingers, brought them close to their near-sighted eyes, clearing their throats sternly.

"These are mine, working along that row," said the foreman self-consciously.

"Not bad lads you've got, Matunin," old Shvyryov admitted. "Something to be made of them. Keep it up, anchorage lads! Good stuff."

The visitors came to the lathe from behind which the crown of Kapka Butyrev's head was just visible.

"This is Butyrev, Vassili Semyonovich's son," said the foreman, introducing Kapka. "Doing very well. See this? On three spindles already!"

"Come on, let's see what you can do," said Busyga.

Beads of perspiration stood out on Kornei Pavlovich's forehead in his agitation, even before Kapka began.

"Come, Butyrev! Show what Matunin's taught you."

Kapka reddened till even his ears were hot. He remembered that time, long, long ago when he had been quite small, and Mikhailo Vlasyevich Busyga had come to tea with them on Sunday. The table had been laid in the garden, under a tree. Kapka's mother had poured out cup after cup for the honoured guest—Busyga was capable of drinking half a samovar by himself. In the evening the father had picked up sleepy Kapka, stood him on a chair, and holding his hand so that he should not fall off, told him to recite a poem, wanting to show off his clever son to the guest. "Come on, let's see what you can do," the visitor had said in his gruff voice. And five-year-old Kapka, his eyes moving between the sweet cakes on the table, and the huge, awe-inspiring guest, had recited: "Who gallops, who runs neath the cold, cold mist?... (Rimka, don't tell me, I know it myself.) A late rider, and with him his son..."

Kapka's eyelids were sticky with sleep, his mouth with jam. The chair seemed to sway beneath his feet, and in the dusk the shaggy, bearded Busyga seemed like the Forest King about whom he was reciting. So that Kapka's "To his father, all trembling, the child then clung" sounded wonderfully convincing, and he snuggled close to his own father's warm shoulder. "Well, he's said enough, fine lad!" said Busyga. "I know more," said Kapka, offended, and without climbing down, hurried through the rest of the poem to the very end.

But now it was a more serious test that was before him.

With his left hand alone, he quickly picked up a part, placed it in the clamp, tested the spindle, with his right hand he switched on the lathe and slipped in the automatic gearing so smoothly that the old men grunted approvingly. Then Kapka took out the finished part, wiped it with a piece of waste and handed it to the foreman. It was then passed from hand to hand.

"Well, Vassilich, does your father write to you?" old Busyga asked Kapka, tapping the part with his purple yellowing nails, thick as the claws of a rhinoceros.

Kapka swallowed the lump that suddenly seemed to rise in his throat, tried hastily to find an answer, but the director anticipated him:

"He'll write in good time, he'll write. You know how the posts are now. Well, shall we go on, comrades?"

The old men went on to another lathe, and Kornei Pavlovich, lingering behind them a little, looked round and winked at his pupil, as though to say: "Good for you, Butyrev, you didn't let me down."

From that day, they decided to work for two hours longer in the evening. At first the day seemed endless. It was no easy matter to master the new lesson. Parts fouled in the lathes. The foreman was run off his feet. The boys' faces were drawn and tired, grey with the metal dust which got into their very pores.

A MAN-TO-MAN TALK

"Does Comrade Kapiton Butyrev live here?"

"Come in, the door's open!" cried Kapka.

The latch clicked, the porch door opened, and the shipboy Victor Stashuk entered. Seeing him, Kapka rose. He was embarrassed and prepared for anything. Stashuk, seeing Kapka in the light of the smoky paraffin lamp, also stopped in surprise and half turned back to the door, ready to go out again.

"I need Comrade Butyrev," he said uncertainly.

"I'm Butyrev."

"No, I need Kapiton Butyrev himself."

"That's me."

Stashuk looked at him in incredulity. So that was it! Could this spindle really be that same Kapiton Butyrev, to whom he had been sent by the school? But it was too late to retreat, and besides that, the Komsomols who had sent him had given him the strictest instructions to come to an agreement with the trade-school boys. There was nothing to be done. Discipline. Stashuk saluted and clicked his heels. But at that moment Rima came running in. Seeing Stashuk, she was confused for a moment, then taking in the boy and her brother with a swift glance, saw the mutual awkwardness and confusion.

"Good day. Kapka, have you introduced yourselves? This is that shipboy."

"So I see," said Kapka, looking aside.

"You know, Kapka, the one I told you about. You remember now?"

"You've gabbled about plenty of shipboys."

Stashuk took a step forward, clicked his heels and saluted again.

"Allow me. Victor Stashuk, pupil at the Baltic Fleet training-school. Here on an assignment."

"Butyrev," said Kapka curtly, introducing himself in his turn, "Sit down. Well, Rima, are you off to the cinema again?"

"No, no cinema today," said Stashuk, sitting down on the edge of a stool. He took off his round cap with both hands and laid it neatly on his knee. "My leave's only till eight. We have a certain matter to discuss with you, the boys have sent me to you to speak for them..."

He stopped, hoping that Kapka would be curious and ask what this business was. But Kapka showed no curiosity. He sat there looking very formal. Stashuk again very much wanted to throw up the whole business and go away. He felt piqued. But he had to carry out the assignment. Stashuk cast a sly glance at Kapka from beneath his brows and decided to change his tactics.

"I think we've already met before!"

"Possibly," said Kapka, in exactly the same manner as the foreman, Kornei Pavlovich. "Quite possible. Only I remember nothing of it. What is the business you have with me?"

"It's a matter of defence," Stashuk began, and then briefly explained the matter. The training-school of ship boys wanted the trade-school to help them repair an old barge that was lying idle on the factory territory.

"The puttying and painting we can do ourselves," said Stashuk, "and the tackle and spars we can fix up." He glanced at Kapka out of the corner of his eye to see what impression the nautical terms made upon this landsman. But it appeared that Kapka was not impressed by the naval terminology. "But perhaps you could help us with the engines, they have to be taken down, the cylinders ground out, and that sort of thing."

Kapka pursed his lips importantly. He sat there, solidly on his chair, pondering something.

"Rima, give our guest some tea."

"Please don't trouble," cried Stashuk. "I've just come on business. Only for a minute."

"This business will take more than a minute," said Kapka sternly. "M'yes... That work's not so simple. I know that barge. There'll be plenty of work with it. And it'll take time. Here we've got to reckon every moment beforehand. This isn't just a matter of 'one-two' or rowing practice on dry land. The main thing is, that the fellows are up to their ears in work as it is. All they can tackle. Snowed under, they are. And then this on top of it all."

The talk was already along businesslike lines, and both were pleased that everything was going seriously.

"I just don't know what to say," said Kapka, blowing on his saucer of tea, which he held in his outspread fingers. "Have some more tea. Pour out, Rima."

Rima poured out another cup for Stashuk and then sat down to one side, silently. She realized that she had no place in this discussion of men's affairs.

"All the same, be a pal and help out," said Stashuk, blowing hard on his steaming saucer, which had already burned his lips.

"Who do you think I am? The director?"

"No, but all the same, they say you carry a good deal of weight."

"They say... they say... So it seems that 'the squirt's of some use, too?" Kapka placed his empty saucer down on the table and wiped his mouth with the corner of the table cloth. Rima cast a disapproving glance at him, but he jerked a threatening elbow in her direction. "All right, we'll think out something."

"Well, good-bye, I'd better go," and Stashuk stood up, putting on his round cap. "Thank you."

"Wait a bit, what are you in such a hurry for? Sit down a bit."

"Why do you want to run away at once? Rest a while," said Rima.

Stashuk sat down again with evident pleasure.

"Was it very terrible in Leningrad?" asked Kapka unexpectedly and eagerly, and his eyes burned while all his solid businesslike manner dropped from him like a garment, so that Victor, who had been intending to reply, sailor style, that it was nothing special, said simply:

"Of course it was! Do you know all we had to do there? It was just ghastly. And all the people that went under..."

He began to tell them about Leningrad, how they had lived in the deadly grip of the blockade, how they had taken part in the fighting on the Nevskaya Dubrovka, when the Germans had nearly broken through into the city and for some hours the training-school boys had held up the enemy. Kapka listened to him, every now and then taking a sip of tea to moisten his throat, dry with excitement.

"I've been recommended for a medal for valour. It's not my turn yet, but when it comes, I'm told I'll certainly get it. You know, I'm not the scared kind."

"I'm the same."

Then they began to talk about the cinema. Now the conversation was quite easy, they interrupted each other, and a listener would have heard such phrases as: "And you remember Charlie Chaplin ... how he swallowed the whistle?.. And went along..."

"Oh, he's a comic, that Igor... Remember how he says: 'Mamma dropped me from the sixth story ..."

"Yes, and you remember ...it's in another picture. The police take him up, and he does like this, with his finger: 'But... but without any impudence!'"

"Kapka, show us what Igor Ilyinsky does with his eyes," Rima begged. "He does it wonderfully, a perfect imitation!"

Kapka obediently stood up, walked up and down the room with a mincing step, poking his seat out behind like a cock, squinting horribly and wrinkling his nose.

"Grand! Igor Ilyinsky to the life!" cried Stashuk in admiration.

The noise awakened little Nyushka. First one bright eye showed from under the quilt, then the second, and after that an inquisitive little nose. Soon Nyushka had cautiously

poked her chin out, and finally becoming quite bold, sat up in bed, huddling the quilt around her.

"Rima, who's that?" she asked in a loud whisper.

"Here, what's all this? Go to sleep!" Rima laid her down, tucking the quilt tightly round her.

But Nyushka did not take her eyes from the visitor and his strange cap without any peak to it.

"Why is your cap on back to front?" she asked and stretched out her neck to see Stashuk's nape. "Oh, and there's no peak at the back either!"

"He's a sailor," Rima explained hastily. "See, he's got ribbons at the back."

"She's backward because she's got no mother," Kapka complained to Stashuk. "Others of her age know all the orders and medals, and she can't tell the difference between a diamond and a star. To hell with her! Go to sleep, Nyushka!"

"What's written on that ribbon in front?" asked Nyushka, admiring the gold letters on the front of Stashuk's cap. He held it out to her.

"Look, you see here's an anchor, and there it's written: 'Red Banner Baltic Fleet.' You see? So that everybody can see where we come from."

"Oh, Nyushka, that's enough. Go to sleep!" Kapka shouted at her, and turning to his guest, added: "You know what? Let's go to Kornei Pavlovich while it's not too late, he's our foreman. We'll have to speak to him first."

As they were going, a kind of shadow slipped away from the wicket. Kapka and Stashuk paid no attention to it.

They walked together along the street. The silhouettes of the houses were darkening. There was not a spark of light anywhere—the blackout had been especially strict recently.

"There are huge sheatfish here in the backwater," Kapka bragged. "Once one pulled a man in."

"Are there any flounders?" asked Stashuk.

"No, no flounders."

"Well..."

They crossed the street, turned a corner, and made their way down to the Volga. A warm dampness came up to meet them, caressing their faces. The Volga was beside them, quite near, its black, almost invisible surface here and there threaded with the shining lines of reaches.

Translated by Eve Manning

FUTURE OFFICERS

"Our breast of iron fears neither the rigours of the weather nor the fury of the foes: it is the reliable shield of the Fatherland against which everything shatters." These are the words of the great General Kutuzov. Now they can be read on a board which hangs at the main entrance of the Suvorov School, reminding the young cadets of the long and arduous road before them. It will be some time yet before they will have the right to repeat Kutuzov's proud words on their own behalf.

The boys have entered the school from different places and by different ways. Among them are lads from children's homes, the sons of partisans, and Red Army men who fell in battle against the Germans; they also include youngsters who were partisans themselves, and whose brave deeds earned them Orders and medals of the Patriotic War; boys who served as scouts for the regular army and others who distinguished themselves in battle.

They stood many a stern test, lived through much during the war. Some spent the whole period of the blockade in hungry, tortured Leningrad; others fled from burning villages to wander for weeks in the Smolensk forests until they chanced upon a partisan column to give them succour... Not every grown man has seen as much as these lads in their short twelve or fourteen years.

What do these boys of such various make-up do at the school? How do they spend their day?

The bugler sounds the "reveille." He blows clearly and lengthens the notes, now playing seconds now thirds, and repeating the call several times to make sure he is heard in all the dormitories.

It's so quiet between ten p.m. and seven a.m. that the building seems empty. A newcomer might think his ears were stuffed with cotton wool, so quiet is it in the dormitories after "lights out."

But punctually at seven a.m. all the noises that disappeared at night return with a rush as if unseen dams had been opened, releasing the hubbub from all sides. Doors slam and a staccato of footsteps sounds on the staircases and in the long corridors. No time is lost here—in three minutes everyone must be dressed. At first this seemed an impossible feat, but now some manage it in less time.

All out on the parade ground, in tunics during the winter, in summer, in shorts only... Ten minutes exercise in the open air.

Then they march back to dormitories in their units. Beds have to be made carefully and evenly so that the blanket looks as if it had been ironed into place. Clothes must be brushed and boots cleaned, and nothing slip-shod about this either—not a speck of dust must be left on uniforms, and boots must shine like the morning sun.

You must wash down to the waist and the more water you use the better—that means you have discovered how pleasant is a good wash in the morning. The biggest bore of all, of course, is to clean your teeth. But look how zealously the officer in charge is using his brush. You can see he's forgotten everything else on earth. He's immersed in his job. Now he's a man who's been through the mill, he

Cadets at a Suvorov School: left to the right—Victor Gastello, son of the Hero of the Soviet Union; Arthur and Victor Chapayev, grandsons of the famous Chapayev

knows what's what, why, he's been at the front. If he likes to clean his teeth so much then it means it must be something really worth while.

After the ablutions comes the morning inspection. The boys muster in the corridors, lines of black trousers and jackets with brass buttons and red shoulder straps, only the caps are missing. Since the inspection takes place indoors caps have been left in the dormitory. They are placed on a special shelf, all in a row, peaks to the front. It's enough to step into the dormitory and glance at that even row of caps to realize at once that you have come to a place occupied by service people respecting everything that is just so.

"Comrade Senior Lieutenant! No. 1 Company is mustered for inspection!"

This is a very important moment. The officer is checking up on correctness. He looks to see if the tunic is arranged properly under the belt, if the folds lie well on the back—a regard for special smartness and even a certain amount of elegance is early imbued in the future officer. The slovenly fellow is bound to run into unpleasantness at this inspection. If his ears or fingernails are dirty, then, although his tunic may fit his back like a glove and his trousers have a knife-edge crease, he will be sent back to the wash-basin.

The lads march to the mess room for breakfast also in their units. Each takes his place, tucks a serviette into his collar—you mustn't sit down at table without it—and, without superfluous chatter, sets to.

After breakfast, lessons begin. In the junior preparatory class a sheet of white paper is pinned up near the blackboard. A pyramid has been drawn on it. At its peak is a red flag alongside of which is the name of Merkushev. This means that Boris is top of his class. Bima Kocheryzhkin is trying to keep up with Boris. A German mine splinter wounded him in the right arm and he thought he would never be able to write. He often cried in secret, but Bima's arm has healed and now he firmly grasps his pencil and painstakingly traces the letters. No matter that he's the smallest member in the class, he'll overtake Boris and reach the top of the pyramid.

A German lesson is taking place in the first class. Here, as always, Vassya Malinovsky takes the lead. He is good at other subjects, too, but he tackles German with special zeal and persistence.

"I've got to know the language, simply got to," says Vassya. "If only I'd known it before! Just think, once I lay like a log beneath the window of a German headquarters, heard everything that was said but couldn't understand a word. Except 'Halt!' and 'Hände hoch!' I didn't know a word of German! I was mad with myself then! But never mind, now I'll learn."

More lessons after lunch. The curriculum is an extensive and a serious one—in seven classes, not counting the two preliminary ones, the Suvorov boys have to cover what is spread over ten years in the ordinary schools. Add to that special drill, riding lessons, two foreign languages, music and dancing, military exercises in the field—and you will realize that it's a tall order requiring plenty of zeal. And the boys do their utmost to keep face before their officers and uphold the honour of the school. That's why an unprepared lesson is something unusual in the school, as they say in the army—it's an "EO," an "extraordinary occurrence." Besides the lads are interested in the lessons for their own sake and are not content with the text-books alone. They expect to learn from the teacher vivid facts and examples and are drawn to the map which for them is not merely a sheet of paper, but a record of what they themselves have experienced.

But there goes the dinner gong. After their meal, the juniors have an hour's rest, the "dead hour" it's called. The seniors spend this time outdoors skiing or playing volley-ball.

Then comes the dancing lesson in the large hall. To piano accompaniment the lads, in shorts and running vests, dance the polka. An officer has to have a good carriage, and be deft and graceful in his movements, and dancing helps all this. And it's fun too, to go careering over the polished surface with your pal tapping the floor with a flourish of heels.

Meanwhile the smallest lads have run through a dozen fine games while the second-class boys have a more serious job in hand.

They are studying the saddle—the cavalrymen's saddle. You have to know its every part, how to dismantle it and put it together again. With the prospect of the first riding lesson looming large, the boys study diligently.

The muffled strains of singing are issuing from the end room of the corridor—it is the school chorus learning a new song.

For the senior preparatory class this is the quietest time of the day. The little fellows are all eyes and ears as they listen to their instructor reading *Robinson Crusoe*. The lads are enthralled by the gallant traveller's extraordinary adventures, his courage and persistence in his struggle with nature. And yesterday they heard a story about Suvorov. For a long time afterwards they discussed it between themselves and each pledged to take as his model the great Russian general whose name the school bears.

The day is drawing to a close. It is fine to play and dance, but the ringing bugle notes summon the boys to home-work. Teachers help the more backward pupils. When the lessons have been prepared you may report to the teacher and with a light heart go off to play until supper.

At ten o'clock the bugles sound "lights out." A hush falls on the school. Shaded lamps dimly light the rows of beds and the lockers with their piles of neatly folded clothes.

The school's summer camp has been set up in pine woods by the river. It's exactly the same as an army camp in all respects. There are army tents kept in army order. Inspectors make things hot for the slovenly. An exclusive spot is the "advance line" where only the officer has the right to be during the day and where the ceremonious evening parade is held, with the band playing the anthem and the moment of silence when the ranks are motionless and faces thoughtful.

And all around is Russian land, soil profusely drenched in the blood of recent battles. Only a short while ago the camp territory was cleared and the old dugouts reeking of cordite smoke and strong army tobacco were filled in. The Suvorov lads were for ever lighting on a souvenir of the war. Once they found a small zinc plate with several letters etched on it backwards. The boys smeared the plate with ink, spread it on a sheet of paper and read the word "Prizyv"—"The Call." Apparently the editorial staff of an army newspaper, retreating, with the forces in a heavy rearguard action, had buried their type.

Here at the summer camp, with the traces of recent battles still visible, the Suvorov boys engage in war games and route marches. They learn to guide themselves by the sun and the stars, discover what an azimuth is. Already they are able to find the Great Bear and, with this as a guide, locate the Polestar. There it is—the small soldier easily finds his way back to the camp from an unfamiliar wood.

Senior Lieutenant Kuzmin's detachment goes on its first night march. For the first time the boys discover what the soldier's conception of night is. It is an entirely different night.

With the fall of darkness sounds can be heard that are simply undetected during the day. Somebody's cough sounds just like a revolver shot. That is why the officers, mustering the detachment for a night reconnaissance sortie, ask: "Who's got a cough?" and the barkers are left behind. If a twig crackles

Group of cadets of the Tula Suvorov School with the director, Major-General D. Frolov

beneath your foot at night it can be heard half a mile away. Kuzmin shows them how the scout must travel: first you place your heel on the ground and then gingerly follow up with the rest of the foot. A mischievous look appears on Kuzmin's face: he winks and says he'll crawl away from them in full view and let them watch where he will turn up. Then he disappears, just disappears from sight. Not the slightest rustle—the boys heads jerk this way and that trying to catch a glimpse of him. The lieutenant has vanished. Then suddenly, he pops up again literally at their feet and, of course, not where they are expecting him. He deepens the dramatic effect with a sepulchral whisper: "That's how we crawl up to a German sentry. Savvy?"

Kuzmin goes down on all fours, bearing upon his hands and knees only, his feet drawn up as if he fears to wet his boots and crawls away. The boys gasp. There he is crawling and not a sound! Before they have got over their amazement Kuzmin returns to his charge with more questions:

"What point would you observe the enemy from during the day?"

"A high point," chorus the boys.

"Right. And at night?"

"Again from a high point," sing out the lads with even greater assurance.

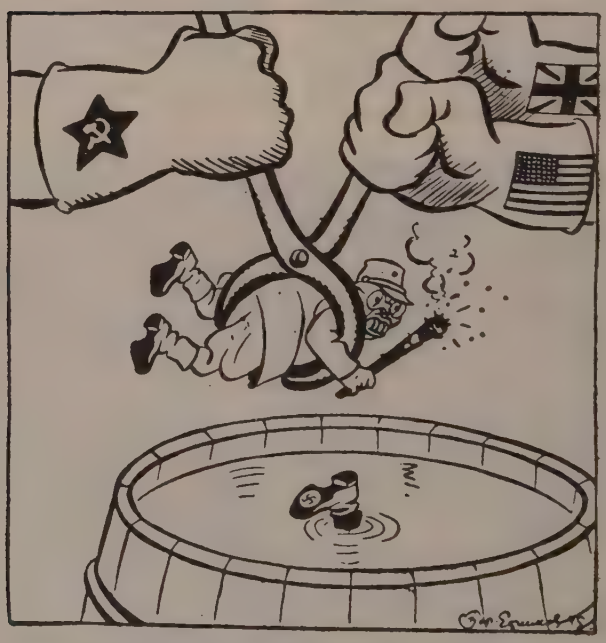
"And you wouldn't see a thing," growls the lieutenant. "At night you ought to carry out observations from a low point so that everything in your field of vision stands out against the light background of the sky, not against the dark earth."

Another revelation! All of a sudden from some distant spot a strong light bursts forth, dazzling the eyes. Possibly a bright lamp or lantern. But it turns out that Company Commander Krylov, moving off unnoticed for about 400 yards, has dived into the bushes and struck a match. Yes, an ordinary match. That's how any light can be seen in the dark.

In this way the first mysteries and secrets of the night are disclosed to the future officers; that is how gradually, day by day, they learn to see the invisible foe and hear inaudible sounds. This knowledge and experience will stand them in goot stead many a time in their service in the forces.

E. SEROVA

FIRE FIGHTING



Settling two war incendiaries *Drawing by B. Yefimov*

BOOKS AND WRITERS

NOTES ON RUSSIAN-POLISH LITERARY TIES

In view of recent developments, we intend in this article to make some observations on the literary bonds existing between the Russian and Polish peoples.

At the beginning of last century, the best works of Russian literature were widely translated into Polish; these were in the main translations of the most outstanding Russian poets, such as Derzhavin, Dmitriev, Batyushkov and Lomonosov. In 1825, the critics mentioned the seventh translation of Derzhavin's famous ode *God*. It is interesting to note that simultaneously a Latin translation of this same ode, made by a Pole, was published. The gifted Polish translator and poet, Leon Rogalski, devoted himself entirely to Polish translations of the works of Russian poets.

From 1824 onwards, the works of Alexander Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, were translated into Polish. In 1826, two translations of his poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* appeared at the same time as his *Caucasian Prisoner*. Previously to this several Polish translations of the works of the romanticist and prose-writer Alexander Marlinsky had been embarked upon.

The case of Prince Peter Alexandrovich Vyazemsky (1792—1878), a popular Russian poet, journalist and critic, is characteristic. Entering state service when still quite young, he was despatched to Poland. He had already prepared himself for this work by thoroughly studying Polish. He was a keen student of Polish literature and an admirer of the Polish theatre and became intimate with Polish society, especially with its oppositionist section. He made the acquaintance of Juljan Niemcewicz, the foremost Polish poet of that period, known as "the prince of poets." Throughout his life Vyazemsky treasured a feeling of friendship towards the Polish people and of admiration for its culture; he translated the works of Polish poets and wrote various commentaries about them.

It is only natural that the ties between Russian and Polish writers gave rise to mutual influences. As an example we may cite the influence exercized by Juljan Niemcewicz's *Historical Songs* on the poem *Meditations* by the famous Russian poet and Decembrist, Kondrati Ryleyev. On the other hand the fact that a group of gifted young Polish poets were familiar with Zhukovsky's *Ludmila* and other writings greatly helped the rise of early Polish romanticism.

The bonds between the two Slav peoples were not limited to literature alone. The "Warsaw Society of Friends of Science" elected a number of Russian scientists and writers as honorary members of that society, just as Russian scientific organizations elected representatives of Polish culture. Russian and Polish magazines devoted articles to each other's writings.

Russian chauvinists together with the tsarist officials stood for the russification of Poland, and tried to incite the Polish and Russian peoples against each other. This perfidious policy was opposed by the progressive elements of both countries with a strengthening of intellectual friendship.

Such was the case of Adam Mickiewicz. Thrown out of Vilno by Novosiltsev he was received with open arms in Moscow and St. Petersburg. This Polish poet became an intimate member of Russian literary circles where he made many sincere friends. With several of these he preserved cordial and lifelong ties. While in Russia Mickiewicz wrote several outstanding works which were printed in the Polish language in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Here they were immediately translated into Russian by our poets. His verse gained unanimous approval and an enthusiastic welcome in Russia surpassing anything he had ever witnessed before even in his homeland, where the prevailing literary style was set by the advocates of a formal classicism who failed to understand Mickiewicz's inspired romanticism.

In April 1828, on the occasion of Mickiewicz's departure for St. Petersburg, Moscow writers organized a farewell dinner—an episode characterizing the relations between Mickiewicz and Moscow literary circles. The Polish poet was presented with a guilded silver cup on which were inscribed the names of his Moscow friends. Many toasts were drunk in his honour accompanied by the reading of many poems dedicated to him. Deeply moved, Mickiewicz reciprocated by an inspired improvization.

During his four and a half years stay in Russia, spent mainly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Mickiewicz became friendly not only with writers and poets, but also with many representatives of science and art. It is interesting to recall his meeting with the well-known Russian composer, Mikhail Glinka, who composed the music for several of the Polish poet's verse. But most significant was Mickiewicz's close friendship with Pushkin—a striking expression of the Russian-Polish spiritual union.

While abroad, Mickiewicz immortalized this friendship in his poem *A Monument to Peter the Great* (1832) in which the Polish poet recalls a rainy evening when a Russian and a Polish youth both stood at the foot of Peter's Monument closely huddled together under one cloak. This symbolic image of the brotherhood of two great poets found a lasting echo in the poetry of the two countries. Half a century later, the Polish poet Arthur

Oppman recalled these bygone days in the poem *Do You Remember Me?* in which he relates how "two youths were hiding from inclement weather, covered with one cloak," a recollection which provided this Polish poet "with support even at present" and gives him a source of inspiration.

Half a century later (1923) the famous Russian poet, Valery Bryussov again describes "the two under one cloak."

It is interesting to recall that when Pushkin was killed by Dantès in a duel, a rumour spread throughout Russian society that Mickiewicz, who then lived in Paris, had challenged Pushkin's murderer. This rumour was incorrect but its invention and rapid spreading throughout Russian society is proof of the deep friendship for Mickiewicz, in whom the Russians were ready to see an avenger for the death of their most beloved poet.

To Pushkin's memory Mickiewicz dedicated a touching article which he signed "Pushkin's friend."

When, following upon the Polish uprising of 1830—1831, Mickiewicz flung harsh accusations against the persecutors of his people, the tsarist authorities began to persecute him. The sympathies of almost all the Russian intellectuals were on the side of the Polish poet, who was compelled to go abroad where many of his Moscow and St. Petersburg friends visited him while many Russians who had not known him previously now became eager to get in touch with him. Among the latter the great Russian writer Nikolai Gogol claims first mention. He established a close friendship with Mickiewicz and over a course of many years they met in different European towns.

Even in Russia, and this despite all prohibitive measures, the friendly attitude towards the Polish poet, condemned by the official authorities, hardly changed. For instance, the famous Russian writer Alexander Herzen in his recollections describes how during a public dinner in Moscow the poet and philosopher Alexander Khomyakov offered a toast "for the great absent Slav poet." Mickiewicz's name could not be mentioned at a public affair, but everybody understood who was meant, and the toast was applauded unanimously.

In the following decades the more important works of Polish literature were at once translated into Russian, and vice versa.

The great Russian masters of the middle and latter half of the last century, such as Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Goncharov and later Chekhov and Gorky, together with outstanding poets of the more recent period—Blok, Bryussov and Mayakovsky—found numerous able translators in Poland. These latter include our talented contemporary Juljan Tuwim, who translated anew the greatest masterpiece of ancient Russian literature, *The Lay of Igor's March* (12th century). Tuwim has also translated Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman* and several of Mayakovsky's works. This interest in Russian literature left its mark on Polish literature. Thus Sienkiewicz's stories reveal Turgenev's influence. A strong liking for Mayakovsky found its reflection in the writings of the brilliant contemporary Polish poet, Kazimierz Wierzyński. Our attention and gratitude are due to the work of Polish scholars dealing with Russian literature, in the first place to the studies on Pushkin by the two able Polish research workers, Jósef Tretiak, Wacław Lednicki and others.

No less intense is the attention of Russians towards Polish literature. In the last quarter of the 19th century the works of the greatest Polish novelists, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Józef Kraszewski, Eliza Orzeszkowa and of the poetess Marja Konopnicka, were translated and frequently published in Russia. Of similar interest to the Russians were the more recent authors, Kazimierz Tetmajer, Władisław Reymont, Stefan Żeromski and other illustrious writers of modern Polish literature, whose works were often translated into Russian; Stanisław Przybyszewski's and Gabrjela Zapolska's dramas were not only read with interest but frequently staged in Russia.

Today, a time of friendship and rapprochement between the Russian and Polish peoples, there is naturally a heightened interest in Polish literature. Polish classics are re-published by us while several new translations of the works of the great men of Polish literature have already appeared. Such, for instance, are Marja Konopnicka's poems and *Grażyna* by Mickiewicz in new translations by A. V. Kovalensky. A great deal more is ready for the press or about to be published, including a complete edition of Mickiewicz's works containing several new translations. Among the latter there is a translation by Susan Mar of a greater part of *Pan Tadeusz* and a translation by our well-known poet Nikolai Asseyev of Mickiewicz's poem *Konrad Wallenrod*. This is the eleventh complete Russian translation of Mickiewicz's great work besides countless translations of extracts.

New translations are under way from the works of the greatest Polish playwright, Juljusz Slowacki, of Aleksander Fredro, Henryk Sienkiewicz, olesław Prus and several others.

This strengthening of the spiritual bonds is an indication of a growing sympathy of two fraternal peoples.

NIKOLAI GREKOV

ABAI KUNANBAYEV, POET AND EDUCATOR OF THE KAZAKH PEOPLE

(Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth, 1845—1945)

In the books of Gabriel Derzhavin and in those of other Russian writers, that wonderful country, Kazakhstan, is painted in the same brilliant colours as the Caucasus of the romanticists.

But the real Kazakhstan we know from Kazakh literature itself.

Aba'i Kunan Ba'i (Kunanbayev, in its Russian form), the greatest of Kazakh writers, wrote that of the two thousand million

people in the world, two million of them are Kazakhs. "We have no cities and no people who know the world. Surely we shall not remain so insignificant amongst the races of mankind?" Aba'i chid his people because he believed in them. The Kazakhs had no cities, but they had their own literature, a living, intricate literature treating of everyday affairs.

The steppes changed—in place of the old patriarchal tribes, Kazakhstan's finest people fought against this practice. Aba'i himself was born into the class known officially as "white bones"—the local equivalent of "blue blood." He was one of the younger sons of the rich and influential Sultan Kunan Ba'i. Aba'i was in an affluent position and at an early age mastered the science of the Moslem world, learned foreign languages and obtained good knowledge of Russian literature.

Aba'i Kunanbayev, the greatest poet of the Kazakh people, was born in 1845. He belonged to the pastoral tribe of the Tobykty, in the Ghengis Mountains, Semipalatinsk Region. His father, Kunan Ba'i, a stern and despotic steppe ruler, had shortly before become a Russian subject and was the Elder of his tribe.

The early years of Aba'i's childhood were spent in an atmosphere of internal strife within the polygamic family (Kunan Ba'i had four wives). Fortunately his mother, Ulzhan, was an outstanding person who provided her son with something rarely found in those days, a sheltered family life. For Ulzhan he was always the favourite child and she changed the name Ibrahim which his father had given him to the more tender "Aba'i," a name which stuck to him through life.

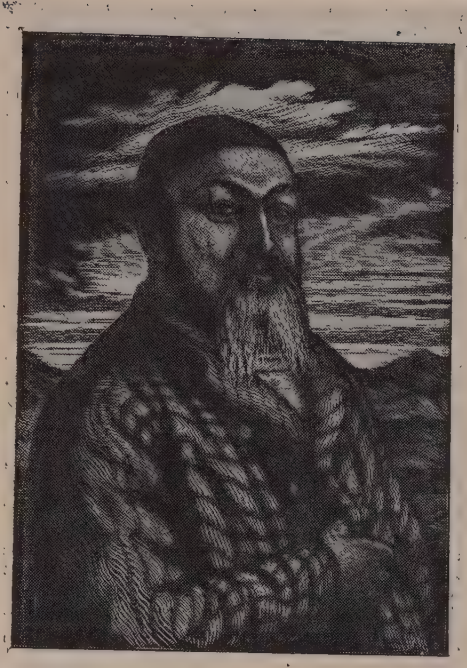
Living in silent remoteness from Kunan Ba'i, Aba'i and his mother found moral support in grandmother Zare. The solicitude, instruction and love which the two women lavished on Aba'i did much to soften the stern coldness of his younger days.

Aba'i's schooling was confined to four years in a Moslem madrasa, or religious school of the scholastic type. During his four years here, Aba'i learnt the Shari'a, the Code of Islam, by heart, and studied the works of Arabic, Persian and Jagatai literature and completely mastered the languages of these peoples. Although he enriched his natural talents by studying the treasures of Oriental literature he did not follow the example of his contemporaries—such poets as Akmolda, Ahan-Sereh, Nur Jan—and was far from adopting a strict imitation of the Arabic and Persian forms.

The story of Aba'i's life reveals that although he lived in the steppes he was a frequent visitor to the Semipalatinsk Town Library where he obtained the classics of Russian and world literature, took piles of books back to his distant mountain village and read them with all the passion of a poet.

One of his biographers attributes this change in Aba'i's life to the influence of the Russian political exiles who became his friends.

His interest was aroused in the Russian language and in Russian culture. He broke the strict laws of the madrasa and entered a Russian school without permission, at the same time continuing to study at the madrasa.



Abai Kunanbayev. Engraving by Fyodor Constantinov.

The great Russian writers and thinkers became his real teachers.

During these school years Aba'i himself began to write verses. The thoughtful and industrious youngster was able to gain considerable benefit even from the scanty "science" of the madrasa. But his father, however, determined the boy's future life.

Kunan Ba'i had many enemies in the constant struggle of the steppe notables for tribal hegemony. Into this struggle he was compelled to draw his children and his closest relatives. He therefore recalled the fourteen-years-old Aba'i from his town school back to the village and began gradually teaching him the art of determining lawsuits to prepare him for administrative duty as the head of the tribe.

But his son, blessed by nature with uncommon intelligence and a great heart, could not reconcile himself to the life around him, to the inhuman oppression of the toiling people of his native Kazakhstan.

Aba'i, who knew all the existing poets, akyns (bards) and participants in bardic contests, soon gained fame as an eloquent and clever orator who placed a high value on poetic speech.

His use of the traditions of Kazakh's folk poetry made his verses both original and of a national character. In this period the future poet developed into a writer whose work is firmly rooted in his native soil.

Aba'i was drawn into tribal disputes by

his father and for a long time lived spiritually aloof from him. He could not reconcile himself to the cruelty and injustice of his father and frequently acted contrary to the latter's interests and desires, giving just and disinterested decisions in lawsuits. The serious disputes between the overbearing father and his turbulent son became more frequent. The breach became complete when Aba'i was twenty-eight years old.

. . . Aba'i, now able to decide his future way of life for himself, returned anew to his study of the Russian language. His new friends were the akyns, singers and talented youths from the steppes (most of them not of aristocratic origin) and the finest representatives of the Russian intelligentsia of that time whom he met in Semipalatinsk. Aba'i, already a mature and educated man, again studied his native literature, the Oriental poets and, mainly, the Russian classics. At the age of thirty-five he returned once more to poetry. The verses he wrote at this period were published under the name of his young friend, Kokpa'i Jantayev. It was only in the summer of 1886, when Aba'i was forty years old, that he decided to publish his beautiful poem *Summer* under his own name. From that day onwards, the remaining twenty years of his life were replete with intense creative activity.

By this time the poet experienced complete disillusionment over the moral aspect of his feudal-tribal surroundings and made every effort to free himself. In his youth he had been the unwilling participant in the endless tribal strife and disputes and he now fully realized the ruinous results which the tribal strife brought on the people; he began to understand the real nature of the disputes that were stirred up artificially by tsarism. His thoughts over the fate of his people were heavy indeed and the verses of his mature years express the deep sorrow of the poet at the bitter lot of his backward people. He strove to open the eyes of the people, scouring in truthful and scathing poems the feudal nobles of the tribes and the leading bureaucrats for their vices and calling on the masses of the people to educate themselves.

In this period Aba'i worked hard over his own education. The books of the Russian classics became his constant companions. A happy chance brought Aba'i into contact with revolutionary Russian political exiles in the seventies and eighties, men who had been reared on the teachings of Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. One of these, V. Mikhaelis, was a close friend of the well-known journalist, Shelgunov. Aba'i's close contact with him and with Nifont Dolgopolov, Severin and Gross soon developed into firm friendship. In the summer they visited Aba'i as his guests in his own village and in winter they maintained a regular correspondence. His Russian friends assisted Aba'i in his education, with great attention and sympathy selecting books for him and answering his queries. At the same time they themselves learned much from Aba'i who had a profound knowledge of the history, customs, poetry, art, economics and social structure of the Kazakhs and other Turkic tribes.

His contemporaries expected that he would become one of Kazakhs' leading orators but this, however, proved a great mistake.

"The Russians see the world. If you know their language then the world opens up before your eyes. A man who studies the culture and language of another people becomes their equal. Study the art and culture of the Russians, that is the key to life."

An ardent admirer of Pushkin, Lermontov and Krylov, Aba'i began translating their best works into the Kazakh language.

Aba'i had a good knowledge of the works of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pissarev, having made their acquaintance with the help of his Russian exile friends. Belinsky served not only as one of Aba'i's ideological teachers but also, if one may say so, as his guide through the treasure house of classic Russian literature.

In the eighties Aba'i translated whole chapters of *Eugene Onegin* into the Kazakh language and they became the favourite songs of the steppe people. In this way Aba'i "saw the world."

Aba'i wrote a book called *Gakliya*, a didactic work which he began at the age of forty-five. Aba'i wrote: "I have lived my life: have quarrelled, fought, judged and have so weakened, become so tired and convinced of the futility of all I have done." Aba'i did not know how to aid the people, he did not know why they should increase their herds, he did not know how to live. . . Because "without the people there is no life." "What use is it to unroll cloth in the desert and sit beside it with a measure in your hand?" "If there are no people with whom to share your sorrows and your joys, then science itself is only sorrow, it only hastens old age."

Aba'i had no sort of romantic attitude towards the steppes. He never over-rated the past. He condemned the proverbs of his people as having been conceived in ignorance. Aba'i was exacting to his pupils. He demanded not only attention but also action, he wanted deeds. But people are often proud of their ignorance and are sometimes prepared to defend that ignorance with passion; but passion should be preserved in order that man may go forward to the future. To Aba'i a man who did not ponder over the world, who did not consider the future of his people was like the magpie that spent his whole time around the dung-heap of the nomad people. When the nomads moved on, the magpie remained always there on the dung-heap. He never saw anything but the dung.

Aba'i demanded that man should be guided by the heart of a lion, a knight's heart, to which the intellect should be subordinated. A man had to be the equal of the best. After a race, said Aba'i, it doesn't help to say you were not the last; speak not of those worse than yourself but about those who are better.

At difficult times, among the ruined steppes, Aba'i read Chernyshevsky and Socrates, studied the literature of the East, but he believed that there were ears in the steppes for the new poetry.

And indeed, the name of Aba'i, the poet, thinker and composer, became one of the most popular and respected names known to the people. Akyns visited Aba'i, composers

and singers came to him from distant parts of the country. Around him were grouped his poet-pupils. All of them were busily engaged in educating themselves; they studied Russian literature, wrote historical, romantic and every-day poems on subjects allotted them by their teacher.

Before Aba'i's time there was a strong current of rhetoric in Kazakh poetry, mostly of a religious nature. Aba'i, in all his work, struggled for the introduction of realism into literature, he tried to bring literature closer to life. He demanded great truthfulness and high poetic ability.

"Verses are pearls amongst words, brilliance is their lord..."

Aba'i did a great deal in the field of prosody. Instead of the traditional three metres that had become customary in Kazakh poetry, he created sixteen new metres and introduced new rhythms.

His versatile activities and those of his pupils were directed against the pillars of village feudalism, against the tribal archaic customs, against all that was outworn and savage in the East and which found support in the system of tsarism. In this way Aba'i earned the bitter hatred of the feudal lords of the steppes.

One of Aba'i's bitterest enemies, Orazba'i, gathered around him the dissatisfied elements of the Kazakh upper classes. They began to spread slanders about Aba'i and to persecute his pupils, and in 1897, with the obvious sanction of the tsarist authorities, they made an attempt on his life. They flooded the offices of the governors, heads of districts and tsarist judges with all sorts of information against him. On the basis of this information, officers of the Semipalatinsk police came to make a search in the village.

On many occasions the governor himself tried to get Aba'i "removed" from the steppes. He feared the wrath of the people, however, and was compelled to confine himself to isolating Aba'i from his Russian exile friends.

None of these measures, however, prevented the people from recognizing the services rendered by Aba'i. Very often people came to him to settle internecine disputes concerning raids and murders which the authorities could not untangle and which remained unsolved.

Aba'i's name began to attract the attention of progressive people in the East, especially among the Tatar youth, who were compelled to quit the towns through the persecution of the authorities or due to the repressions carried out against those from the Caucasus or the Crimea by the tsarist government. Caucasians who had fled from exile in Siberia would be the guests of Aba'i's village for months at a time and would make their way home across the Kazakh steppes. The village of Aba'i gradually became the gathering place of the progressive people of the Kazakhstan of that period.

All this greatly alarmed the regional authorities. A secret watch was kept over Aba'i's village. Aba'i himself was the object of constant surveillance on the part of all the local authorities.

As the years passed, the number of his imitators and admirers increased. His great influence was constantly widening among the people. Not only his own, but the poems of his pupils were copied, learned and sung. In the forms used by the story-tellers the romances of Western and Russian writers spread over the steppes, all of them retold by Aba'i to the story-tellers. In this way Dumas' *Three Musketeers* and *Henri of Navarre*, Lessage's *Lame Devil*, Russian folk-tales about Peter the Great, and romances of the time of the Inquisition spread throughout the steppes. In Aba'i's translation for the story-tellers the people heard tales of the pioneers who settled on the American prairies, the subjects of Lermontov's works and many Oriental poems.

Taking their cue from Aba'i a number of other educated men from his circle helped to spread the stories amongst the people. The poet had his own children, his sons and daughter, taught in a Russian school in the city. Later one of his sons graduated the Mikhailov Artillery School in St. Petersburg. His daughter and his second son, Magovya, later returned to the village on account of poor health.

Aba'i's deeds and his works were especially popular amongst the youth of the steppes. At many of the popular festivals, at funerals, banquets and weddings his songs were sung. Lovers conveyed their thoughts to each other in his verses. Brides-to-be included in their dowries handwritten copies of his lyrics, poems and instructions. Many of these booklets are still in existence.

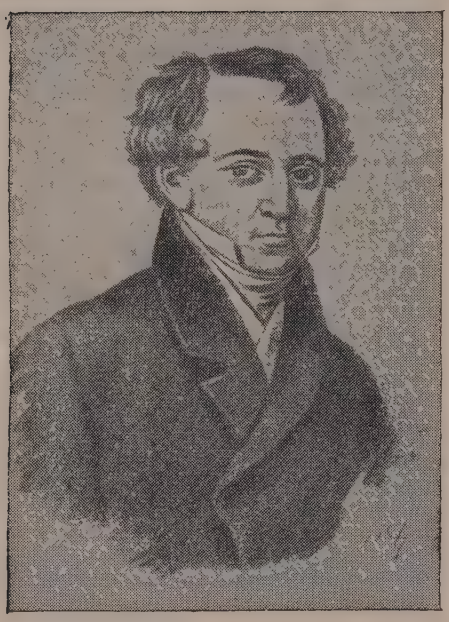
His enemies were unable to reconcile themselves to the fame which Aba'i had won for himself. An intricate network of intrigue deeply wounded the poet's heart. Aba'i's relatives drew away from him, even his own brother turned against him; with slander and threats his enemies strove to drive away his pupils and persecute his friends. Into this gloomy atmosphere came a number of deaths that were heavy losses to Aba'i, especially that of his son Abdrahman, who was to have been his successor, a talented and educated man. Broken by the fierce struggle, Aba'i suffered the last blow of fate —another son, the talented poet Magovya, died of consumption.

Aba'i outlived him only by forty days. The poet died in his native steppes in the sixtieth year of his life.

Aba'i wrote: "Man is the friend of mankind" ... "All your life is bound up with the fate of mankind. They say that you and others are but guests in this world. No, people, you are the guests of each other."

Aba'i wanted to change the life of his people. Always before him was posed the question: how, by what means can I change the fate of the people? But he was aware of such a force—the force of the people themselves. From Russian literature, Aba'i learned boldness of exposure, an exacting attitude towards life, and Aba'i himself became a teacher of men.

MUKHTAR AUEZOV



Fyodor Tyutchev

In his preface to a volume of poetry by Fyodor Tyutchev (1803—1873), published by the State Publishing House, Moscow, 1945, Constantine Pigarev gives an outline of the Russian lyricist's biography.

Tyutchev's literary gifts developed at an early age. His first poem, which was read before the Moscow Society of Lovers of the Russian Literature, was written when he was twelve years old. At the University, Tyutchev was attracted by the young Pushkin's poetry, studied Pascal's *Thoughts* and read and reread Rousseau's *Confession*.

During his many years abroad in Germany and Italy, when in the Russian diplomatic service, the young poet came in close contact with West-European romanticism. His interests were wide. During his stay in Germany, Tyutchev, now a brilliant observer and judge of European life and a witty conversationalist, met Heine and Schelling, but as his friend, Gagarin, tells us, he was much more interested in France and Europe in general than in Germany. He regarded Munich as he would a box in the theatre from which he could conveniently observe the "European stage."

His journey to Prague and introduction to Vatzlav Ganka of the Czech national movement gave Tyutchev an excuse for putting forward ideas which had long possessed him concerning the fate of the Slav peoples. In Ganka's album he wrote his first address to the Slavs.

Long years spent in the highest circles, in a world of officialdom and festivity were not able to convert Tyutchev to its ways. In spite of his monarchic convictions and close relationship to the palace, in a letter to his wife Tyutchev wrote the following words about some members of the Tsarist government: "If my station were not so low I would with the greatest of pleasure throw my salary in their very faces and openly struggle against his herd of cattle."

The profound and contradictory inner world of this poet who gave us the only poems in literature truly expressing the "chaos and harmony" of nature and the lyricism of the "felicity and hopelessness" of late love, was well protected from the encroachments of his surroundings.

If Tyutchev had lived today no doubt critics would have been found to explain the contrast between the "day" and "night" world of his poetry, his absorption in nature, etc., as a romantic escape from reality. Happily Tyutchev's whole outlook refutes this—he ran away from nothing.

Although he did not always clearly understand the historical storms of his times, he at least understood, as a thinker and a poet, that the strength of the storm, the "eternal discussion of the elements," the thunderous discharge, disquiet under a semblance of peace are the main forces underlying nature and history.

Tyutchev was by no means an aesthete rejecting all moral criteria in art. The author of the preface quotes Tyutchev on Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter*, an indictment against serfdom: "One rarely meets," says Tyutchev, "a union of two origins on such a scale and so perfectly balanced: the artistic feeling and a feeling of profound humanity."

Nature, Russia, love—these three themes are united by Tyutchev in his lyrics.

He calculates the fate of the cosmos from Russian nature and, from the history of Russia, he tries to solve the problem of the fate of mankind.

The charm of Tyutchev's poetry lies in the way he humanizes nature—her forces, her "play"; they are not mythological but concrete, engraving a landscape in one of nature's dramatic moments; and the epithets he uses to catch the exact mood of these moments delighted his contemporaries.

"Nature is like a sphinx," wrote Tyutchev. But his poetry about nature is a proof of the power of human genius to solve the "mysterious" (Tyutchev's pet word) riddles of this sphinx.

Of Russia Tyutchev wrote:

Russia cannot be grasped by mind,
She cannot be measured by a yardstick.

If Tyutchev had limited himself to this understanding of Russia and the words "Russia can only be believed in," he would never have risen above the aphorisms of other Slavophils.

But Tyutchev understood the very real possibilities which history had opened up before Russia. That is why, with a perfectly legitimate reason for his belief, he wrote: "History is Russia's true defender."

Tyutchev's love lyrics are the most perfect of all his poems. Theirs is not simply the wonder of the experience of "late" love,

examples of which, sanctified by time, can be found amongst the works of many poets, but the wonder of poetry which transforms the language of personal confession and self-analysis into an epic picture of emotion. It is by no mere chance that Tyutchev avoids the word "I" and writes: "Oh! how tender and superstitious is love in our declining years!" In these poems the rapprochement of the image of feeling and the images of nature is seen in all its perfection. One is struck by the rhythm which accentuates the poet's main thought: "Delay, delay, the evening of the day, prolong, prolong, the enchantment."

The State Publishing House has prepared a magnificent gift for the Russian reader in this collection.

Pigarev's interesting article might have been fuller if its author, a connoisseur on Tyutchev's literary inheritance, had mentioned Tyutchev's place in Russian poetry, especially his treatment in poetry and in the critical writings of the 20th century.

Constantine Paustovsky is one of those writers whose books are read with equal pleasure by young and old, and this is also true of his stories which have just been published in a small collection called *Thunder over the Steppes* by the State Publishing House for Children's Literature (Moscow and Leningrad, 1945). Not one of the stories is without its children or young people, although the main hero is not always a child and not all the stories can be classed as traditional children's literature. But at the same time the educational importance of Paustovsky's stories is significant. These are wartime stories. The words of one of Paustovsky's own heroes, an old beacon-lighter, gives us the clue to their understanding: "I try to teach them," says the old man speaking about his pioneer-friends, "to honour the land of their birth, for without this a man is not a man but a rotten stump."

Without this feeling it is impossible to defend one's homeland. Whether Paustovsky is giving us the true wartime thoughts and conversations of the people (*Conversations along the Road, An Argument in a Railway Carriage*), or telling us about children at the war (*Thunder over the Steppes, The Glass Necklace*), describing the difficulties of a young doctor trying to overcome his own fear and that of the patient he is attending for the first time in his life (*Orders for Military School*), or describing a young woman who, evacuated to a strange place, finds herself in an empty house, the owner of which has died, and how she brings the poetry of childhood back to this house about which the owner's son, defending his parental home at the front, is dreaming (*Snow*); whatever Paustovsky is writing about he never ceases to point out to his young reader with tender lyricism the beauties of his homeland, his countryside and splendid people. Paustovsky describes simple and everlasting feelings, faithfulness and courage, love for children, sympathy with human suffering, the love of nature and for all the birds and animals inhabiting the earth.

Paustovsky's stories not only delight the reader with their mastery and poetry but incite a respect for mankind and love for one's homeland.

The State Publishing House recently published an interesting book entitled *The Poet* by Effendi Kapiev. This volume is dedicated to Suleiman Stalsky, people's poet of Daghestan, one of the Caucasian high-mountain republics. Kapiev drew a peculiar portrait of this poet. As he himself states in the foreword, "the author has tried not so much to show the poet's own make-up as to comprehend through him the soul of his small mountain people, his country and times." As a result, Suleiman Stalsky's portrait proved exceptionally convincing and alive.

The book has no definite theme, no consistent story of the life and activity of this original people's poet, whose writings have passed from mouth to mouth and become the poetic wealth and glory of Daghestan. But all four parts of the book reveal a deep feeling for and knowledge of the nature and life of his country, and they show the originality and manysidedness of Suleiman Stalsky. There are separate episodes from his life, memoirs, countless stories, proverbs, sayings, aphorisms and winged words. For instance: "What is the sharpest thing?—the tongue. What is the bitterest thing?—the tongue. What is the sweetest thing?—the tongue."

Examples of chapters' headings are: *A Discussion on Poetry, A Song, A Fairy-tale, The Poet*, etc.

From Stalsky's own story we learn of the sad youth of a poor hired hand who suddenly becomes aware of his poetic ability. We learn of the insults and sufferings he had to undergo at one time from those in power because of this gift; we are told that only after the October Revolution was he able to reveal himself fully. And then Suleiman Stalsky became not only a poet but also an efficient manager of his collective farm in the mountains.

Kapiev shows him to us on the collective farm, in his mountain hut, in Moscow and in the Kremlin at a collective farmers' conference. He pictures him in his dealings with old men, children and young people; in joy and anxiety, in anger and in joking mood, impetuous and calm. He also shows us the creative process and birth of a song.

The book is written in an emotional and colourful vein. Whether the author is describing a landscape or the mountaineers, he always reveals a deep knowledge of the subject in hand. Therefore the romantic exaltation of the stories is in perfect harmony with the realism permeating this book.

The finest pages are dedicated to Suleiman the poet. Here the author reveals a great power of observation, a keenness and sharpness of characterization. "Suleiman wrote with his entire being as one ploughs the soil," Kapiev relates of Stalsky, who, when he decided to learn how to write, found it very hard to do so with fingers callous from long years of peasant labour... Or: "Suleiman followed the girl with a look with which he would follow a butterfly in the garden..."

In this book we find tender lyrics, fine

humour and the solemn epic form. Nevertheless all these genres are used with success in revealing the tremendous theme "Poet."

BOOKS IN ENGLISH

"MEN OF THE STALIN BREED"

It was during the difficult and glorious days of the war waged by the Soviet people against Hitler Germany that the peculiar features and qualities of the Soviet people which aided them to victory, came to the fore with striking vigour. Both at the front and in the rear these features were manifested by people of the most varied professions; regardless of individual destiny, these people were united by a common cause—an ardent devotion to and love for their homeland, a clear understanding of purpose and a readiness to sacrifice themselves in the name of victory.

It stands to reason that these peculiar characteristics of the Soviet people of this epoch could only be reflected in a literary masterpiece where these typical features are presented with forceful conviction. At the same time it is only natural that meanwhile Soviet writers, unwilling to wait for the bigger works, are trying their hand at depicting the various types and deeds of their contemporaries in small sketches, stories and other "miniature forms" of a documentary character.

Such are the biographical sketches comprising the book entitled *Men of the Stalin Breed* (Foreign Language Publishing House, 1945), published in Moscow. This volume contains fifteen sketches dedicated to the representatives of the Soviet youth who proved their worth during the days of the Patriotic War. The reader is introduced to the heroes of the front: Soviet girls—the heroic partisan Zoe Kosmodemyanskaya and the sniper Ludmila Pavlichenko; the pilots Alexander Molodchi, Boris Safonov, and the famous Glinka brothers; Red Army warriors —the Russian Ivan Bogatyr, the Kazakh Malik Gabdulin, the Uzbek Kushkar Turdyev and the Latvian Yanis Wilhelms. In other sketches we meet men of "peaceful professions," who devoted all their knowledge and energy to their country's war effort; the blast-furnace worker Faina Sharunova, the engine-driver Boris Lunin; the mathematician Sobolev, the physician Chumakov, who discovered the virus of encephalitis, the composer Shostakovich.

The most successful articles proved to be those in which the author clearly depicts the life and deeds of their heroes without any embellishments. Such are the sketches by M. Tevelev, N. Bogdanov and M. Nikitin. Falling short of these are the sketches in which the authors aim more at providing a form of fiction.

It must be admitted that in almost every sketch the authors are much more successful in depicting external events rather than revealing the inner life of their heroes, the mainsprings which direct their actions. Undoubtedly, in real life, the originals of these sketches are more striking, more interesting than shown in this book. Nevertheless it will serve a useful purpose.

The reader will enjoy most the features and details which reveal the heroes of the stories in everyday life. For instance, one such excellent episode is the story told by the instructor of the aviation school of how he succeeded in obtaining the "ace" Boris Glinka for the school:

"When I learnt that the head of the aviation school was a fellow countryman of mine, a Caucasian, I decided to go and pay him my respects and, what's more, to take my lads along en masse. It was a grand occasion. The head of the school was delighted with the guests. Little did he know, of course, that we had his instructor locked up in our quarters and were proposing to carry him off by plane. But he was so emphatic in his protestations of friendship that I said outright to him:

"Well, as a test of your friendship, we're going to ask you for something you hold most dear.

"Naturally, he had no idea of what we wanted—it might have been a rug, a Caucasian cloak or a treasured cask of wine from his father's cellar. Nevertheless, he replied from the bottom of his heart:

"'Ask what you like, Ibrahim!'

"There and then I asked him for Lieutenant Boris Glinka. He went pale. But what could he do? He was a Caucasian, and it is not in the nature of a Caucasian to go back on his word. So he gave us Boris!"

From our point of view the publishers should be charged with a decidedly poor mounting of the book, in particular for its somewhat dreary dark-blue cover. And a greater number of footnotes would have been an advantage.

BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, 1944

The new collection, "Best American Short Stories" for 1944 will be read with the greatest interest. Previous collections are well-known to us under the editorship of the late Mr. O'Brian.

This collection came out when America was already at war and, as the new editor Martha Foley expresses it, "had already learned that victory does not come easily."

However, it is as yet too early for life at the front to find its reflection in these stories; they are dedicated either to the experiences of veterans of the last war who will now have to join the army (*The Veterans Refleat* by Irwin Shaw, etc.) or to those who have already been called up and are awaiting their assignment (*Notes of a Dangling Man*, by S. Ballow). Some of the stories describe the feelings of mothers and wives separated from their menfolk (*The Rented Room* by Josephine W. Johnson, *Strike up a Stirring Music* by Berry Fleming, etc.).

In this collection one also notices very obvious traces of unaccountable pacifist outlook. In those stories written in 1943 one sometimes meets an exceedingly gloomy prognosis of the future, forebodings of an unhappy

aftermath of the war. But they have their interest for us just now; it is so pleasant to see the complete humiliation of those miserable "realists" who believed that Hitler's mechanized pounding could not be beaten and who lacked faith in humanity.

There are stories which resurrect anew the philosophy of disappointment of the "lost generation." For some reason what the cleverest people of the "pre-war generation" (as they dubbed themselves in the thirties) said about a future world-wide war of exceptional justice has been completely forgotten just as if Ralph Fox, John Cornford and others had never lived! In other words there is no evidence that the fundamental character of the war against Hitler had been understood. To judge by this collection the events which took place at the Soviet-German front in 1943 had not yet come into the field of vision of the authors represented in this volume.

Nevertheless, the collection is interesting. It is not difficult to observe certain new and common features in this varied collection of very unequal stories.

The best stories of 1944 possess all the wonderful qualities of the "Great American short story" as O'Brian expresses it. A certain rather ordinary, even trivial situation is told in a quiet, imperturbable manner, but with humour and a lively sympathy for human sorrow, and from the "ordinary" develops, unnoticed, an "extraordinary occurrence." This quality of American story-telling has attracted the sympathies of the Soviet reader for many years now. But, of course, all depends on the harmonious interplay, and each time, the equilibrium must be set up anew. How often it happens that the imperturbability becomes a mannerism and the author "plays up to his character" so consistently that the story is left cold and soulless. Sometimes one finds the opposite extreme: the author never leaves the reader in peace, sketching under his very nose.

In the best stories of this collection equilibrium is observed.

Such is the case in William Barrett's story *The Señor Payroll* about a Mexican stoker. The author neither effaces nor intrudes himself upon the development of events and displays a very clean sense of humour.

It is also true, of Noel Houston's story *A Local Skirmish* about certain peculiarities in the German national character and two witty Americans.

This equilibrium is not so well observed in two other stories which, generally speaking, are quite good. These are Sydney Alexander's *The White Boat* about the tragic off-day of a negress and her children, and *SS Libertad* by Eyre de Lanux, describing some Spanish republicans in a French concentration camp in 1939. The story is somewhat spoilt by the super-naive intuition of the author, by stressing his own detachment from all that takes place.

To a greater or lesser extent the same failure is found in such stories as *The Fishermen of Fatzeuora* by W. Fixefield, *Illumination* by Jessamin West, *Come to Dance with Me in Greland* by Shirley Jackson, although they are not without their merits.

A singular and very interesting work is the longer short story by Curson McCullere, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.

This is one of those stories, almost inevitably included in every such collection, about life in the far-away corners of America, its sleepy atmosphere and mental torpor, a slow-moving yet capricious provincial life.

Authors of such stories nearly always insist on their own complete neutrality; they are never surprised and never lose their tempers; they firmly insist that this "idiotic" province is durable and massive to the point of miraculousness, that it always has been and always will be. Even Erskin Caldwell's *American Stories* give such an impression.

But in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* the author follows an unusual line. The author tells his own story, sometimes sharing his views on the course of events with the reader. But this does not detract from the solidity or finish of the story, from its own peculiar melody; it is a "ballad" in the true sense of the word. It is not difficult to understand why a collector of short stories included this work in his volume in spite of its length (60 pages).

Martha Foley speaks of the "novel crisis" in the U.S.A. We cannot undertake such a general discussion in this short article, but it cannot be doubted that new stories are scarce; even some of the acknowledged masters have given us nothing for a long time.

Former collections were richer and more interesting, their connection with their own times was more profound. O'Brian would not, perhaps, have included in one of his collections a story like *The Female of the Fruit Fly* by O. March, so full of a false significance and lack of originality, or *God's Agents Have Beards* by Emmanuel Winters, which is simply inept and vulgar.

But this collection clearly shows that America possesses many excellent masters of the short story, and several of those mentioned in this article whose names are new to us are, undoubtedly, most promising.

Appearing on the scene is a new constellation of talented story-tellers. Decadence, formalism, misplaced laconicism, a wish to create a false impression of interest—all this is less noticeable in this collection than in its richer predecessors. It is evident also that the so-called "inner dialogue" is disappearing. It served an excellent purpose when kept in its proper place, but it turned into a literary mode and was dragged into the text without any rhyme or reason as a sort of sub-text. In these stories one hears the cry of real human pain out of which nobody tries to make a literary sensation.

ARTS

VLADIMIR STASSOV, A MOTIVE FORCE IN RUSSIAN CULTURE

"Everything in which there was even a spark of beauty was near and dear to Stassov, excited and pleased him. His great love embraced all that is beautiful in life from a wild flower and an ear of wheat to the stars; from the fine chasing of an ancient sword and a folk-song to the verses of the most modern poets.

". . . When he died I thought: there is a man who did all he could and has done all he could."

Maxim Gorky

The name Stassov is well-known in Russia; it is to be found in the Russian chronicles of 1380, when one of Stassov's ancestors took part in the battle of Kulikovo Field against Khan Mamai, a battle which marked the beginning of Muscovy's liberation from the Mongol yoke.

Vladimir Stassov's father was a court architect; he began his career during the reign of Catherine II and was a proponent of the strictest classicism. The best and most progressive people in the art world were always to be found gathered around architect Stassov and later around his son. For a whole century the Stassov home in St. Petersburg was the key to the living national culture.

Vladimir Stassov was first intended to follow in his father's footsteps. When he was a boy he climbed with his father up the scaffolding of buildings and at an early age learned to understand this world of creative labour, this world of magnificent materials—iron, brick, stone, marble, gold and silk. He always remembered a saying of his father's, that "a man is only worthy of the name of man when he is useful to himself and others." Although Vladimir was educated in the recently-opened aristocratic School of Jurisprudence, in upbringing and in character he was a true Russian democrat.

In his childhood he saw both in the heavy toil of the workers and in his architect-father's sketches and designs, how the beauties of architecture—which was "petrified music" —were built up. He loved this beauty in whatever form it appeared, he loved art. The aloof admiration for objets d'art that was expressed by indifferent or satiated aesthetics was alien to him. "When I first met Vladimir Stassov," wrote Gorky, "I felt in him a great and vigorous love of life and faith in the creative energies of the people. His element, his religion and his god were art and when you listened to his rapid, hurried speech you involuntarily thought that he had a premonition of great events in the field of creative effort, that he was living on the eve of the creation of some great works of literature, music, painting, always with the joyful anticipation of a child before a great holiday.... It seemed as though this fine old man with his youthful heart always and at all times felt the secret workings of the human soul—the world was to him a studio in which people painted pictures, composed music, carved beautiful bodies out of marble, erected magnificent buildings... He believed in the inexhaustible energy of creative effort and every hour was for him the end of work on some things and the beginning of the creation of a number of others..."

After architecture Stassov was introduced to the world of music; the time spent at school was for him and many of his contemporaries an opportunity for the serious study of music. His friend and companion Alexander Serov later became a leading composer. Stassov was a good pianist, and he began to think like a musician; in music he found ideas about his native land, and sensed in the sounds recorded by the genius of the Russian composers the mighty movements of history.

When his education was completed Stassov, unlike his young contemporaries, did not begin the usual career of government service. He was a good linguist and in 1851 went to Italy as the secretary of the rich young Prince A. N. Demidov-San-Donato, a descendant of one of Peter the Great's workers, the blacksmith Demidov, who founded the Urals iron and steel industry. His long stay in Florence and Rome when Italy was the fond dream of artists, poets and musicians, had a beneficial effect on Stassov.

He returned to St. Petersburg by way of Warsaw, and became enamoured of the beautiful Polish city. He retained his excellent relations with Demidov who was of service to him in his later years.

In 1855 Stassov began working in the Public Library of St. Petersburg, at that time the leading book repository in Russia. Stassov worked in the library till the end of his days and his office in the Library's "Rossica," which he directed, was for many years a centre of that life-giving energy, vivacity and demand for creative effort which emanated from this great man.

In a letter written to Stassov in July 1899 Ilya Repin said: "You are the same as ever. The same bubbling nature, the same thirst for the new, for action, the same vibrant serpent of progress still stings you to the heart, stings you often."

To Repin, Stassov was a "Russian bogatyr," a titan, a man with an unquenchable soul.

V. Stassov *Portrait by I. Repin*

In Repin's famous portrait Stassov in a red blouse stands at the foot of a staircase as though about to begin an eternal ascent.

Stassov's work in the Public Library did not make a "bookworm" of him. On the contrary! From the state book centre of the Russia of his day he could see the more clearly the tremendous scope of the cultural work done by mankind. He became a passionate preacher who called on man to exert greater effort, encouraging him with what is new and frequently disregarding the old, customary norms. This is why Stassov, who rose to the high rank of Privy Counsellor in his government service, was really a revolutionary at heart. "The great merit of the Russian people lies in the boldness that was embodied in Peter the Great. The old must be destroyed if it stands in the way of building the new."

Stassov's passionate devotion to a purpose was well-known, and he was no exception.

The difficult and intricate course of Russian history required from the Russian people colossal energy and strength and, not infrequently, great deeds. It is no cause for wonder that an energetic and powerful personality should appear in the field of Russian culture but it is strange that until now nobody has realized the inevitable regularity of this phenomenon.

There is no sphere of Russian democratic culture in which Stassov did not leave important and brilliant traces. He firmly believed in the right of the people to put that which was their own, national and native, in the foreground... In one letter he protested against the unnecessary modesty of the Russians who were disinclined to point out thier services in the sphere of culture.

In Russia Stassov became an authority on music, painting, sculpture and architecture. He sought out people and attracted them; it was thanks to him the "mighty five" was formed, the group of five Russian musicians who made Russian music famous throughout the world. Similar groups of inspiring and creative genius were formed in the other arts.

Although he did not in any way belittle the culture and talents of other peoples Stassov opened the road to a national Russian art organically linked up with the people.

It was Stassov who conducted the campaign against the old Italian affectation in Russian music. In face of a storm of abuse he supported those names which now constitute a group of musicians acknowledged by the whole world.

Who has not heard of Mikhail Glinka, Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Mili Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov? . .

They were linked by their struggle for the native theme in music. It is typical of them that Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov compiled collections of Russian folksongs that are

of classical importance. Time has shown the truth of their work.

Are not Glinka's and Rimsky Korsakov's masterpieces still played in our theatres today? Stassov displayed foresight and courage when he persisted in bringing these composers to the notice of the public.

Stassov did just as much for painting. It would be difficult to say which he loved the more, music or painting. Most likely he loved them in equal measure. He devoted his energy and the force of his conviction to the defence of the realistic and the original in painting. He was of the opinion that painting should not be treated lightly but should be of service to mankind; the service must be the enrichment of art. The real value of a painting, said Stassov, lies in its effect on wide sections of the people.

Today we can see with especial clarity how correct Stassov was when he passionately defended his views on realism and on that art which permitted the artist to express truthfully to the fullest extent all his ideas and feelings. Stassov was right when he raised his voice in favour of the development of the decorative arts of the people, arts that were based on rich national traditions. We must also remember that Stassov possessed the rare gift of being able to "discover" new talents and give real creative help. He did not merely stand on one side and advise. He was one of the first to see and realize the importance of the work of Ilya Repin, Vassili Vereshchagin, Victor Vasnetsov, the sculptor Mark Antokolsky; he correctly estimated the value of the work of the Russian artists Alexander Ivanov, Pavel Fedotov, Vassili Perov, Nikolai Gue, Ivan Kramskoy, Vassili Surikov, Nikolai Yaroshenko and others.

Today everybody realizes why Stassov wrote about these people. Today they are recognized artists. At that time however he had to break down the old feudal conceptions of art through which many German "Kulturträger" of no talent had at one time tried to "settle" in Russian cultural life.

Stassov contributed towards a correct understanding of the peculiarities of Russian culture and of its significance to mankind as a whole.

The typically Russian conviction in the fruitfulness of an exchange of cultural ideas between different nations made itself felt, in Stassov's outlook. All his life long Stassov carried on a large correspondence with people in different parts of the world—America, England, Italy, France, Poland, China, Arabia.

In 1858 and 1859 Stassov paid a long visit to the ancient Russian cities of Pskov and Novgorod where he sought examples of old Russian art and carried out excavations: for a long time he busied himself with antiquities in Yaroslavl and Rostov on Volga. These researches were made in connection with an exhibition in the Public Library and then—an independent piece of work—he collected all the portraits of Peter the Great: his labours resulted in a collection of 400 being exhibited in the library. In 1860 Stassov was elected a member of the Russian Archeological Society. He worked energetically at various problems in archeology and ethnography and drew some unexpected and original conclusions from a comprehensive study of his materials. In these years Stassov interested himself in the history of costume, especially Russian national costumes, and collected extensive material on this subject which he analysed thoroughly.

A list of Stassov's works at this period is sufficient to give an idea of the efforts he made in all these fields. He wrote a number of articles for the press on *The Throne of Khans of Khiva, The Djagatai Exhibition in the St. Petersburg Public Library, The Antiquities of Yaroslavl and Rostov, Russian Wood Architecture, The Orthodox Church in Western Europe in the 16th Century, Armenian and Caucasian Art*, etc. Somewhat earlier than this, as a result of an accidental conversation with a sailor, the Public Library obtained a copy of the ancient Georgian Pitsund Gospel, a valuable 12th century document.

It was through Stassov's efforts that the Public Library arranged exhibitions of ecclesiastical Slavonic manuscripts with miniatures, of ancient music manuscripts, of the materials of ancient Russian writings, from leaves to birchbark and metal. There was also an exhibition of engravings of the Russian school.

None of Stassov's work bore the stamp of the dilettante. As quantities of material in the widely-differing fields of culture were gathered they were systematized and scientifically studied from the standpoint of artistic value.

From this point of view two works by Stassov are of especial importance—*Russian Folk-Ornament* published in 1872 and *The Origin of the Russian Byliny*, a piece of research which appeared in 1868. In these the cycle of cultural influences is indicated. He showed, for example, the connections between the epics of various peoples, and maintained that man, in his creative work, had crossed all national frontiers.

Recognition of the world significance of Russian culture, a point which Dostoyevsky once made when unveiling a memorial to Pushkin, is present in all Stassov's activities. He valued the creative work of every nation, he found pleasure in everything beautiful and humane that came his way. In addition to studying Russian and Asiatic art he did some research on Jewish art and wrote an interesting article: *The Tribe of Israel and the Creation of European Art*. He was tireless in his efforts to persuade the Public Library into purchasing a collection of ancient Hebrew manuscripts in the possession of the Karaim family of Firkovich and insisted that despite their high price they should be acquired.

During a press discussion on the scheme to build a synagogue in St. Petersburg in 1872 Stassov published an authoritative article in a booklet in the "Jewish Library" series and gave much valuable advice.

Stassov, the herald of Russian music and its most passionate propagandist, at the same time drew the attention of the society of his day to European music; he was a great admirer of Liszt. When Berlioz came to Russia he stayed with Stassov as his guest.

It is only in our own time and thanks to the work of Soviet scholars that the full significance of Stassov's ideas and work have become

clear, ideas which he generously scattered throughout his research works on literature and history; a long article which appeared in a collection published by the journal *Niva* on the occasion of the beginning of the 20th century was a detailed and profound analysis of what had been done in various branches of art during the 19th century. This same article contains a brilliant forecast of the architecture of the coming 20th century. This is the architecture of the Soviet architects, both the mass building of small houses for individual families and the designing of huge blocks of city buildings.

Music, however, was and remained that sphere of art in which Stassov displayed the greatest enthusiasm. It will be remembered that he was not only a critic but also the inspirer of the Russian composers. It was Stassov who gave Serov the subject for his opera *Rogneda* and the opera *The Millowner's Wife from Marly*; he also provided Rimsky-Korsakov with the subject of his symphonic poems *Sadko* and *Sheherezada* and gave him ideas for several scenes for the opera *Sadko*. Rimsky-Korsakov composed his opera *Tsar Saltan* on Stassov's advice; Borodin's *Prince Igor* based on *The Lay of Igor's March*, Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and *Boris Godunov* and Cesar Cui's *Angelo* and *Saracens*—all owe their origin to Stassov.

Stassov encouraged the sculptor Ilya Ginzburg to create his monumental statue of Leo Tolstoy; it is thanks to Stassov that we have a cinema film of Tolstoy and a phonographic record of his voice. Many of Ilya Repin's great pictures were painted at the suggestion and with the encouragement of Stassov. This was an inexhaustible and generous nature, a passionately restless individual who, according to his contemporaries, in every way resembled the generous Russian soil.

In touch with the wide world, yet loving everything Russian, throughout the thousand years of its history, Stassov naturally felt keen interest in the Slav problem. But this interest did not take the form of an official Slavophile project. Any form of national exclusiveness was foreign to Stassov the democrat. He did not regard the world as a market, as a place in which the exploitation of a neighbouring people could be organized, but as a field for the free cooperation of nations in the creation of beauty. And he took up the Slav problem in this way—as the cultural cooperation of the Slav nations amongst themselves. In 1867, when important visitors from Serbia, Croatia and Bohemia visited Russia, Stassov organized a brilliant concert of Slav music.

Our characterization of this exceptional man would not be complete without mentioning how he forecasted the events of our day.

He was always a confirmed and consistent supporter of the emancipation of women and their equality with men. In his research on the Russian byliny or legends he found that in olden times Russian and Slav women lived active lives and were by no means kept in isolation in the "terem" or women's quarters. Stassov singled out some heroic women in the Slav epics. His book on his sister, Nadezhda Vassilievna Stassova, shows us a woman who was a forerunner of our present day.

The figure of Stassov, the refined, wise interpreter and proponent of Russian culture is thrown into strong relief. In the words of Romain Rolland he was one of the great heralds and at the same time a participant in the intellectual life of the peoples of the Soviet Union. All his wonderful life, his profound love of mankind make him worthy of this place. "I have never met a man who loved so whole-heartedly that which is most important, best and dearest in life, who had such a sound knowledge of the value of the higher things of life and who recognized with an eagerness and passion that reached complete self-forgetfulness the crown of life, its best people"—thus Stassov was described by his great compatriot, Ilya Repin, in a letter written in 1905.

VSEVOLOD IVANOV

ARAM KHACHATURYAN

Although the musical compositions of Aram Khachaturyan are as yet comparatively few in number, he is classed in the front rank of Soviet composers. He owes this position to the nature of his talent and the style of his music—a colourful symphonic style deeply rooted in the folk songs of Transcaucasia. The wonderful Oriental tradition bequeathed to us by the Russian classics— of which Glinka's *Lezginka*, Balakirev's *Islamey*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherezada* and *Antar* and his opera *The Golden Cockerel*, or the "Oriental" act from Borodin's *Prince Igor* and the symphonic picture *In Middle Asia* are so typical—did not exhaust the musical treasury of the East. Soviet composers have followed their classical predecessors and use the melodies, intonations, instruments and methods of sound-production adopted in the Middle-Asiatic republics of the Union and the Iranian East.

Though basically Armenian in inspiration, the art of Khachaturyan is not a nationally-exclusive art. He is attracted by the wide open spaces of Russian and world music.

His harmony so complex and yet so natural in its spontaneous freshness; the luxuriant ornament of his melodies; his bold use of chromatic devices, all this characterizes Khachaturyan's symphonic works. His music is painting in sounds. His colours might appear too garish but their vividness is justified by the wealth of popular idiom, the gaiety of the melody, the vigour of the rhythm.

Aram Khachaturyan is the son of a modest craftsman, an Armenian of Tbilisi. He was born on June 6th, 1904, in a musical family, his brother being a well-known radio singer. Owing to the family's straitened circumstances the boy had no opportunity to develop his musical gifts, and it was only after the establishment of the Soviet regime that he could seriously take up his favourite study. From the age of nineteen Moscow became Khachaturyan's permanent place of residence. From the Gnessin Musical School which he attended

Aram Khachaturyan, the composer

from 1923 to 1929, he passed to the Moscow Conservatory where he remained till 1934. Khachaturyan has kept a warm place in his heart for Professor Michael Gnessin who early divined his gifts and advised him to devote his efforts to composition. And it was under the guidance of Professor Gnessin, formerly a prominent figure in Russian musical modernism, that Khachaturyan's first creative conceptions found their embodiment.

It was then that the colourful palette of impressionism held his imagination, and produced his first published compositions—*A Dance*, a *Poem* for violin and pianoforte, and a *Poem* for piano. All these compositions are based on Armenian folk music, the two violin pieces being written in the grand concerto manner.

After graduating from the school at twenty-five Khachaturyan entered the Conservatory where his talent was strongly influenced by the famous Russian symphonic composer, Nikolai Myaskovsky. Under his tuition the young composer produced several works of importance: a *Toccata* for pianoforte, a *Trio* for pianoforte, violin and clarinet (1932), a *Dance Suite* for orchestra (1933) and his *First Symphony*, dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of Soviet Armenia (1934), which was the culminating point of the first stage of the composer's artistic development. The quaintness of the ornamentation in the *Trio* is reminiscent of an oriental carpet. The exquisite harmonies and timbres are in no contradiction to the folk elements of the fabric.

The *First Symphony* shows a skilful use of the folk songs and dances of Armenia, Georgia and Turkmenistan in a large musical form.

After leaving the Conservatory, Khachaturyan, who by that time had already made his name as a composer, gave much of his time to public work and became one of the prominent figures in the Union of Soviet Composers. He continued writing music, and by the middle of the thirties produced among other compositions three pieces which brought him fame: a *Concerto for Pianoforte* and a *Concerto for Violin* (first performed in Moscow in the summer of 1937 and in the autumn of 1940, respectively), and his symphonic *Poem of Stalin*.

The *Violin Concerto* was awarded a Stalin Prize, the first interpreters of the Khachaturyan concertos being the pianist Lev Oborin and the violinist David Oistrakh.

The symphonic *Poem of Stalin* with the concluding chorus sung to the words of Mirza Bairamov, the popular bard of Turkmenistan, has a history of its own. It was in November 1937, during the festival of Soviet music, that the now famous *Song of Stalin* for chorus which soon found its way to the hearts of millions, was performed for the first time. And it was this song with the characteristic Armenio-Georgian-Turkmen intonations that the composer introduced into his symphonic *Poem of Stalin*, first performed in the winter of 1938. There are three movements. Following on the grand prologue, comes a symphonic scherzo, and the *Poem*, as already said, culminates in the chorus. The three movements follow one another without a break. From this composition Stalin emerges as the embodiment of the whole Soviet people.

The ballet *Gayaney* and the *Second Symphony* are Khachaturyan's contribution to music during the years of the Patriotic War. A first-class Stalin Prize was awarded for the *Gayaney* ballet.

The action of the ballet takes place in one of Armenia's collective farms on the eve of the Patriotic War. Gayaney is a peasant woman, a young mother who is a great favourite with the people on the farm. A wonderful manager, her capable hands make things hum in her own household and in the fields. The war comes and Gayaney is brought face to face with a terrible situation. She discovers that her husband is a traitor. Impelled by feelings of patriotism, she denounces him. The dramatic conflict lends the ballet an element of epic grandeur.

The happy pictures of a revived national life contrasting with the heart-rending personal drama of Gayaney are handled with the talent of a great master.

In the colourful series of folk dances of the different nationalities—Lezghinka, Russian dance, the Ukrainian Gopak, the Waltz—the music is partly based on skilfully-used melodies of folk songs and dances.

The development of the dramatic action is given in ten successive "scenes" of varying styles, now built of dance elements, now—and this includes the greater number—consisting of symphonic episodes. The most impressive is the finale of the third act—the discovery of the conspiracy and the scenes of the fire, giving a powerful picture in music of elemental calamity.

As you listen to the eleven ballet numbers included in the first symphonic suite of *Gayaney*, you feel that this is music which at

times reaches the heights of the classical ballets, without in any way repeating them. The audacious combination of the extreme registers in *The Awakening of Ayshi* recalls the picturesqueness of Ravel and Stravinsky, and the vigour and poignant joyfulness of the *Sword Dance* carries you back to Borodin in his *Polovets Dances*. *Gayaney* is a great work of Armenian art, embodying some of the vital principles of the Russian school of music.

It must not be forgotten that this outstanding work was not only completed during the war but was written on a war theme. *Gayaney* is essentially a triumphant song of life. Khachaturyan's achievement shows how a people can enrich its culture in days when its powers both spiritual and physical are being strained to the utmost.

The *Second Symphony* (1943) both chronologically and in style is closely related to the ballet of *Gayaney*, permeated, as it is throughout, by the living intonations of song, folk epic and dance. With Khachaturyan the symphonic form is as free as if it had no laws and rules of intricate construction to conform to, but was poured forth spontaneously from the treasury of musical folklore.

The *Second Symphony* begins and ends with the sound of the tocsin, sounding against a background of alarm and acute vigilance. The freely-flowing, improvised and ornate singing of the violins, the light dance rhythms, and the long chain of mournfully passionate sighs and intonations—such are the elements of the world of music into which we are introduced in the first part of the symphony. The second part, the fiery scherzo, is marked by a wealth of brief dance tunes and rhythms. It is one of the most characteristic instrumental scherzos of Soviet music. The procession of mourners (in the third part), and the colourful march, and the constant repetition of the chords of the classical *Dies Irae*, build up a sweeping picture which is both lyrical and epic. The finale, so al fresco in conception and execution, is truly monumental; the chromatic flood-like succession of chords, the mighty chorus of the brass instruments combined with the sophisticated melody of the violins, and finally, the dazzling flash of light at the end, such are the elements of the magnificent musical panorama which gives so good an idea of Khachaturyan's symphonic manner. It is one of the first works, written in the grand manner, in which the spectacle of the country and its people in the days of the great struggle are so well rendered.

Khachaturyan is now forty-one. His artistic individuality is clearly formed. But he has by no means exhausted the gifts of his great talent. He is an artist with a constant urge to extend the field of his themes, and to seek new forms full of variety and organic unity.

Professor ARNOLD ALSCHWANG

PRIESTLEY'S DRAMA IN MOSCOW

J. B. Priestley's play *An Inspector Calls* is a social drama first and foremost, since it deals with social injustice. Eva Smith, a young girl, commits suicide because she has no right to work, to love, to motherhood, she is a worker deprived of work and thrown out into the street twice—once as the instigator of a strike and again at the whim of a rich customer of the store; she is a woman who is abandoned by her "high society" lover, because she does not fit in; one to whom support was refused in the most difficult period of her life, when she is unemployed, destitute and pregnant... Such is the heroine of Priestley's play and one whom the author does not present on the stage. Only those appear who are guilty of her end—members of a family all implicated in the causes of the girl's tragic death.

Police Inspector Goole enters the provincial home of the prosperous factory owner, Arthur Berling, on a spring evening in 1912, just as the engagement of Berling's daughter Sheila to Gerald Croft, a young heir of a competing firm, is being celebrated at the dinner table.

The inspector has called to ask the members of this respectable family a few questions concerning the fact that on that day a certain pregnant young woman had poisoned herself at the municipal hospital. "In what way could this event concern the Berling family?" Arthur Berling asks indignantly.

But Inspector Goole persists in his questioning, and his ensuing dialogues with each member of the Berling family disclose that all of them are implicated in the tragic fate of the dead girl.

The social theme of Priestley's play sounds most clearly in the third and final act. The man who has introduced himself as a police inspector leaves the house... And then it appears that Eva Smith has apparently not committed suicide at all, that each member of the Berling family has caused injury not to one and the same girl but to different ones. This means that there was no single chain of crimes which lead the girl to her death.

From the very start the audience feels that Eva Smith is in essence a collective image, a motif for which the playwright found a scenic expression. The girl's photo serves as the connecting link between the testimonies of those questioned by the inspector, but he shows it to each separately, hiding it from the rest. He could easily have shown them photos of different girls, and each would have recognized the one whom he had actually met and whose fate did not differ from that of millions of Eva Smiths.

Does this mitigate the fault of the Berlings? No, it increases it endlessly.

The evil is spread the world over—Priestley says—and it is not for Eva Smith only that the Berling family bears responsibility: there are millions of girls who like her find themselves in a similar, tragic position ...

The philosophy prevailing in the society to which the Berlings belong is stated in the toast which Arthur Berling offers to the health

of the engaged—his daughter Sheila and the young industrialist, Gerald Croft. Arthur Berling is convinced that the order under which everybody thinks of himself and of his interests only, stands as firm as a rock. Arthur Berling even cites an example of the steadfastness of that order: it is this order which makes it possible to build such technically-remarkable items like the SS. "Titanic" of 46, 800 tons, a ship that will not sink under any conditions. Priestley hopes that the audience will recall the terrible catastrophy when the "Titanic" went down with all its passengers shortly before the World War I. Arthur Berling lives in 1912, two years prior to the World War I, but he considers war unthinkable. He says and sincerely believes that there will be no war, since war would endanger the very existence of civilization, his civilization, Mr. Berling's civilization.

Priestley's last play could be criticized for a certain naive moralizing were it not for the fact that behind this particular instance lies a common idea—by no means a moral but a social problem. The amorality of character is a mere phantom of the incurable disease with which certain groups of society are afflicted. Their greedy self-satisfaction at the beginning of the war against fascism nearly led their country to the brink of a national catastrophy. And it is these groups which are responsible before the English people for the calamities of the last decades.

Priestley's play is running at two of Moscow's theatres: the Kamerny and the Leningrad Theatre of Comedy, now visiting the capital. Its notes of indictment have been expressed quite differently in the two performances.

In both theatres the producers have succeeded in expressing a great inner intensity in spite of the fact that the entire play is written in dialogue form.

The performance, staged by A. Tairov and L. Lukyanov at the Kamerny Theatre, captures and transmits the laconic character of the external artistic effects and the profound inner dramatic force so characteristic of Priestley's play. E. Kovalenko, responsible for the stage setting of the play, stresses its simplicity and conventional character.

At the Leningrad Theatre of Comedy (producer S. Yutkevich), a certain symbolicism distinguishes the performance: thus, Berling's dining-room has the appearance of a public court-room. There is a great deal of red cloth (settings by N. Akimov), while the table at which Inspector Hull is seated while he conducts the investigation resembles a judge's desk. The same spot is occupied by Sheila and Eric from which they launch their accusing phrases. Inspector Goole makes his appearance from among the audience.

The Kamerny Theatre has shown people whose real nature is not so easily revealed at first sight. Arthur Berling (played by S. Tsenin) is a man forceful enough and apparently of sound mental balance. His wife, Sybil (A. Miklashevskaya), has successfully concealed her emptiness and coldness of heart under a guise of moralizing statements. Gerald Croft, who abandoned a girl in a helpless position, is nevertheless capable of being horrified at the realizaton of his guilt, just as he is capable of sincere devotion. As such he is depicted by the actor N. Chaplygin. All the more harshly do the actors of the Kamerny Theatre indict their heroes when, amidst meager, laconic but brilliantly-expressive settings, they confront the audience standing erect like defendants and, full of confusion and miserable fear of the public sentence, they are compelled to confess their shameful deeds...

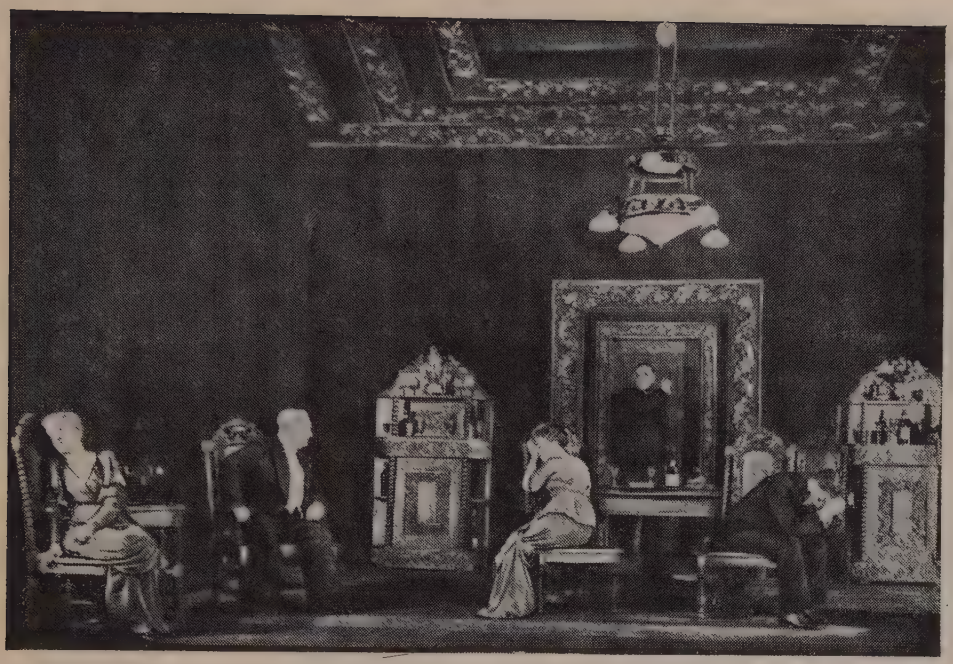
In the performance at the Kamerny Theatre the theme of Priestley's play, his protest and polemics of accusation, acquire a living force of conviction, since the stage characters are alive and are not mere personifications of justice and vice.

In the performance of the Leningrad Theatre of Comedy the heroes of the play are thoroughly lashed, and their characters tinged with one and the same colour. Arthur Berling (actor V. Kisselyov) is stupid and primitive; Sybil (I. Zarubina) is vulgar and impudent in her arrogance; Gerald Croft (I. Hansel) is depicted as nothing else than a dyed-in-the-wool Lovelace. The vices of these heroes are exposed and stressed, and the actors leave nothing to the audience when revealing the hidden essence of people wearing a mask of outward decency.

But J. B. Priestley's play is also a philosophical one dealing as it does with human conscience. Inspector Hull calls and makes the people look around them and appraise their deeds: and those things which they considered of no account through an inertia due to a life based on egotism, turn out to be a source of suffering and grief. Turning their eyes inwards these people realize their vain selfishness bordering on cruelty and their frivolous outlook, which leads them to commit ignominious crimes. Yes, they not only recognize each other, but also themselves and they experience shame when facing the moral court just as they felt fear of the social court. The title *An Inspector Calls* has been given to the play at the Kamerny Theatre, and Inspector Goole takes the centre of the stage. The producers and the artists responsible for the setting of this play have stressed the importance of Goole's role right from his first appearance. The enormous room of the Berling home is semi-darkened and only the table around which the guests are gathered on the occasion of Sheila's engagement is brightly illuminated. But as soon as Inspector Goole appears the room brightens as more and more footlights come into play until they illuminate every corner of the stage.

The actor, Gaideburov, in the role of Goole, wears an ordinary jacket. The sentence of both court and conscience is left to be pronounced by a man of our own times.

An inconspicuous man wearing a cheap ready-made suit, he speaks in a restrained low voice. And only when the recollection of the tragic fate of Eva Smith and many thousands like her arouse his ire and grief, does he raise his voice. He does not shout at the characters, he does not expose them, he almost fails to accuse them. He makes them reveal their hearts completely, to the inner most depths. And when the hearts and characters of the people questioned by Goole are



Scene from J. B. Priestley's play An Inspector Calls, *staged by the Moscow Kamerny Theatre*

laid perfectly bare, the audience realizes that they are criminals deserving of no consideration.

As played by Gaideburov, Goole does not possess any mysterious power or particular attraction. Not only does he expose, he also suffers because the people around him are so imperfect, because there is so much injustice in life. Gaideburov as Goole personifies the social and moral conscience of society.

In the performance by the Leningrad Theatre of Comedy the actor L. Kolessov as Inspector Goole stresses the latter's professional characteristic features, rather than his humanism. Conscience and suffering for the people have been replaced by the character of the master-examiner.

There is one more occurrence in J. B. Priestley's play which allies the inner content of this drama with tragic art. "You won't forget this" are the words with which Inspector Goole winds up Eva Smith's story. This is the idea of human purification, the idea that evil is not eternal. These words first of all pierce the souls of the two younger members of the play, Sheila and Eric Berling. These young people won't follow in their elder's footsteps; they will leave the suffocating atmosphere of their home for a broad and light road. Priestley pins his hopes on the younger generation and here we are reminded of the young girls and youths in Chekhov's and Gorky's Russian dramas.

This theme by Priestley follows the fine tradition of all art replete with a lofty concept of life and not with a pessimistic one. A fresh, strong wind sweeps into the drama, into its sultry atmosphere, and faith in man arises simultaneously with the indictment.

It is a pity that the young actress at the Kamerny Theatre, R. Larina in the role of Sheila, lacks the inner fire essential to this theme if the play is to ring out with all its force. She has no lucidity, she is a weak child of her age and environment, an ordinary girl with good tendencies, but a flabby soul. And looking at her one realizes with bitterness that such a one will return to Croft and become reconciled with him. Unlike Nora she will not go away and fight for her ideals. In this respect the Kamerny Theatre has failed to attain the last, most complicated, most hidden recesses of Priestley's theme. The more powerful performance by the actor G. Yankovsky in the role of Eric is not sufficient to strengthen Sheila's unsuccessful image. Inspector Goole stands out alone among the actors of the Kamerny Theatre.

The Leningrad Theatre of Comedy has entitled the play *You Wont' Forget This* since we believe in this performance the transformation taking place in Sheila's and Eric's hearts is most stressed. The actor B. Smirnov does not give a very successful portrait of Eric, but Sheila, as played by the actress E. Yunger, is depicted much more forcibly. This actress succeeds in showing that as a result of her mental upheaval Sheila will become a real person.

The two theatres in Moscow have produced a great work of modern English drama. Its psychological depth is attracting the public's attention—a fact only natural and logical, for the basis of the ideological contents of this play lies in the high standards of human life, for the realization of which the whole world struggles and bears responsibility.

YURI GOLOVASHENKO

The Ukraine's best dramatic theatre directed by Marian Krushelnitsky bears the name of the Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko. It was founded twenty-three years ago, —strange as it may sound,—in a military unit. A group of graduates from one of our theatrical studios formed the nucleus of the troupe.

At present the theatre has a large and varied repertoire of Ukrainian plays both classical and modern. During the war, the Shevchenko Theatre was evacuated and continued working far inland—in sunny Ferghana (Middle Asia), and after the expulsion of the Germans was one of the first theatres to return to its Ukrainian home. The first performances were hailed with great enthusiasm by audiences in Kiev and Kharkov.

The heroic romance genre which the theatre mostly favours is that best suited to the introduction of the music, songs and dances characteristic of the creative art of the Ukrainian people.

The theatre's tour in Moscow went off with great success, one of the plays shown being the classic drama *Give Your Heart Freedom and It Will Lead You into Captivity*, a drama in which the pure colour of folk art is sustained in all its pristine brilliance.

The play *Bogdan Khmelnitsky*, from the pen of Alexander Korneichuk, mirrors a heroic episode from Ukrainian history. The interest is focussed on the figure of the Hetman Bogdan Khmelnitsky (1593—1657)—a valiant soldier and wise statesman.

The year 1945 witnessed the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Izchok Perec, the Jewish man of letters, an occasion duly honoured in Poland, the writer's homeland, where, after five years of German thraldom, the Jews have gained their freedom.

In the Soviet Union the anniversary was marked with new editions of Perec's writings, big meetings held in his memory and the production of *Marriage* on the stage of the Jewish State Theatre in Moscow.

This performance, dramatized by the writer Dobroushin, is composed of several of Perec's tales and stories. *Marriage* was originally written in the form of a monologue, spoken by a young and beautiful woman who sacrificed her happiness by joining her life to a wealthy old miser aged seventy that she might help her sick father, aged mother and young brothers.

This narrative forms the main groundwork of the play; a short story entitled *In the Basement*, centering round a poor Jewish teacher, and a one-act play entitled *The Fire* also enter into its composition. The adaptation of the different elements has been made with considerable taste and a delicate tact. Not one word has found its way into this composite play that is not actually taken from Perec.

The admirable scenery by Nathan Altmann, the efficient stage management of M. Hersht, the dramatic ability of most of the performers —all contribute to creating a performance of vivid expressiveness carrying on the traditions of the Jewish Theatre under the able direction of Mikhoels.

Schoolfellows, the new play by Boris Laskin, a young playwright, produced on the stage of the Lenin Komsomol Theatre, tells how young Soviet men and women did their bit in the Soviet-German war.

Letters keep coming in day by day to a women's aviation regiment, addressed to pilot Katya Yermolayeva. Unknown admirers declare their love for the pretty girl-heroine, twice decorated for gallantry, whose portrait has appeared in the illustrated magazines. But Katya is adamant. She rejects every proposal. This is war, she says, and there is no place for love. The appearance of Paul Sharokhin, an old schoolfellow, in the regiment visibly perturbs her. A feeling of disappointment gradually mars her joy. Paul is not in military uniform, he keeps himself to himself and answers any questions addressed to him in a strange, vague kind of manner. Katya does not know what to make of him.

Scene from the play Marriage, *staged by the Moscow State Jewish Theatre*

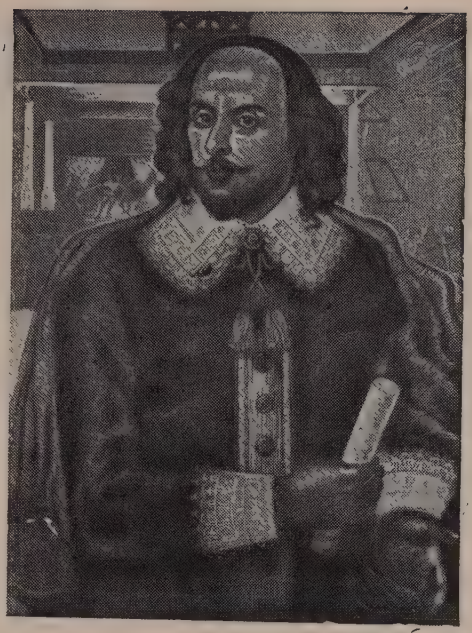
Another thing she does not know is that Paul has to keep a certain responsible assignment secret even from her. He makes his way into the rear of the Germans, to the town where he and Katya grew up and went to school together. And when Katya is given an assignment to "pick up a certain man behind the German lines," Katya does not know that it is Paul whom she has to bring back. Her plane is wrecked just over her native town and Katya is injured. It is Paul who finds her and carries her into her mother's house. In the bearded bespectacled man she fails to recognize her old schoolfellow. Her girl-pilot friends who thought of her as lost meet her with open arms. Coming to her native town after its liberation, Katya recognizes, in the chairman of the town Soviet, Paul Sharokhin, and she sees at last that the man she loves is a real hero.

The audience follows the development of the plot with intense interest, the success of the performance being considerably enhanced by the acting of N. Kutassina as the youngest of the girl-pilots, a lively demonstrative young person who wins all hearts, and Dmitri Ivanov as Paul.

The writings of John Fletcher, Shakespeare's contemporary and friend, have for many years now attracted the attention of the Soviet theatre. The critics who make a study of the Elizabethan epoch render tribute to Fletcher's colourful talent, his Aristophanean irony, the mastery of his compositional structure and vivid delineation of characters. Fletcher's plays have on several occasions figured on the Soviet stage. His *Tamer Tamed* or *Woman's Pride* is now on at the Maria Yermolova Theatre in Moscow which was named after Russia's greatest tragic actress.

The comedy has an irresistible fascination for the actors of this theatre, one of the youngest in our country, with its theme of the freedom of woman's personality, the vitality of its plot and the scenic merits of the action. The brilliant translation by Tatiana Shchepkina-Koupernik—a grand-daughter of the famous Russian actor, Mikhail Shchepkin, conveys Fletcher's polished dialogue splendidly. Andrei Lobanov has produced a clever, merry performance with a good content. There is taste and consummate mastery in the scenery and the composition of the mise-en-scene, when, for instance, the actors remain in fixed positions for a moment, creating the semblance of an English 17th-century engraving. This sparkling performance of Fletcher's comedy is an indisputable success.

Everybody knows how popular the works of William Shakespeare are in the Soviet Union. Our columns have often carried news of the studies made by our Shakespeare scholars and of the work done in illustrating the different editions of his works. Nor have portraits of the great playwright been forgotten. About a year or so ago, a small woodcut of Shakespeare was made by Mikhail Pikov, the illustrator of *Antony and Cleopatra*, giving an image of intense concentration in the style of the early English Renaissance. And quite recently a large portrait in colours on linoleum intended for mural decoration was made by the Soviet engraver Aaron Soloveichik. In contrast to the first, this portrait was made on the basis of later effigies in the barocco manner, a style more idealized and decorative than the first.



William Shakespeare *Engraving by A. Soloveichik*

One of the Moscow theatres has a most unusual name: it is called "The Railway Theatre" and was founded on the initiative of the People's Commissariat of Railway to cater for the many-thousand-strong army of Soviet railwaymen.

Besides the usual classical and modern repertoire the theatre has staged plays from the lives of transport workers, one of which is a comedy by Boris Romashov called *A Distinguished Family*—the story of a family of Soviet railwaymen.

The theatre has permanent premises in Moscow but gives a great deal of its time to touring, showing its performances to railwaymen all over the Union. In the seven years of its existence the Railway Theatre has covered some fifty thousand kilometres of territory, giving performances in a hundred and fifty towns and many remote railway junctions in Siberia, the Urals, the Crimea, the Caucasus and the Far East.

Out of the four years of the war the troupe spent two in their train. There they lived, worked, rehearsed, made their costumes and painted scenery. The train would not only stop at the large stations but performances were often given before small groups of railwaymen at some wayside halt in an out-of-the-way spot in the steppes. And even when—as was usually the case on such occasions—

there was an audience of no more than twenty or thirty people, the actors would play with the same swing and elation as before the bigger audiences in the capital.

The outstanding Russian pianist Constantine Igoumnov has celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his musical career. A remarkable interpreter of the Western composers of the romantic School—Chopin, Schumann and Schubert, yet it is in the performance of Chaikovsky's pianoforte music that Igoumnov's lyrical gifts display themselves in all the delicacy, variety of shading and simple poetical feeling that make them distinctive.

"I played Chaikovsky's sonata," says Igoumnov, "at my first recital in Moscow half a century ago, and also at the Anton Rubinstein International Competition for Pianists at which I received Honourable Mention, my name being among the first three competitors."

Many of the works of Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Glazounov and Liadov were first heard from concert platforms in Igoumnov's admirable renderings.

Igoumnov is one of our outstanding teachers. Many pianists who eventually gained wide fame themselves have studied under his able tuition, among them Lev Oborin and Jacob Flière. The composer Anatole Alexandrov was also formerly one of his pupils.

In connection with his jubilee, Constantine Igoumnov has been invested with one of the highest decorations in our country—the Order of Lenin.

Before the war Soviet audiences showed tremendous interest in the first stereoscopic films which were so striking a new development. Birds, instead of flying about on the flat surface of the screen, seemed to be flying just there in the body of the hall; the sea splashed its waves right on the public, and a parrot of all the colours of the rainbow performed its antics on a wire tautly stretched over the heads of the spectators.

The inventor of the stereoscopic film, Semyon Ivanov, continued his experiments and investigations despite the difficulties of wartime, and in 1944, the first stereoscopic cinema-studio was set up in Moscow.

The studio people are now busy on the stereoscopic film of *Robinson Crusoe* after Defoe's story of that name.

Berlin is the name that has been given to an exhibition of paintings by Pavel Sokolov-Skalya. Only real art can convey within the limits of small canvases events of such great import; it is the face of Germany in the first days after the surrender to the allied troops that we see in these pictures.

The theme of the twenty-five studies exhibited is the Berlin of May, 1945.

Symbolically expressive is *The Reichstag*, a sketch of the gloomy building wrecked by bombs and shells, with the banner of victory flying from its roof. Akin to it is another, *In the Tiergarten*: an anti-aircraft gun, and the red flag hoisted by Russian soldiers on a green tree that has remained standing—the whole against the background of an old German house.

Deeply symbolic are: *Living Conveyor*, a picture of people pulling down a destroyed house; *Home*, a touchingly simple sketch of a grey-bearded Russian peasant returning to his old village from fascist captivity; a large portrait of a girl regulating street traffic in *The Crossing*, and a whole series of other studies of Berlin crushed... *Requiem* is a composition dedicated to the memory of the soldiers fallen during the storming of the Hitler capital.

Berlin. Drawing by Sokolov-Skalya

NEWS AND VIEWS

In the war years the railway troops, shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army, covered the whole road of the glorious advance from the banks of the Volga and the foothills of the Caucasus to the Elba and the Austrian Alps.

Following the Red Army's forward units, the railway troops rehabilitated or built anew the lines, providing the front with reliable communications.

The magnitude of the task which confronted the railwaymen from the very first days of the advance is self-evident. After the rout of the German armies at Moscow there were 4,000 kilometres of railway lines, sixty-five large bridges, some three hundred smaller bridges and a considerable number of dépôts, water-towers and telegraphs to be reconstructed. That was the first test of their mettle and the railwaymen came off with flying colours, every assignment being delivered in time.

In the two-and-a-half months following on the annihilation of the foe at Stalingrad and the repulse of the German hordes from the Caucasus, the Red Army liberated over six thousand kilometres of railway. These lines were all promptly rebuilt and the bridges were thrown over the rivers Don, Northern Donets and Kuban.

The railways that had suffered the biggest destruction were those on the Western, Bryansk, Central and Leningrad sectors of the front. A new instrument of destruction was employed by the Germans which they called the "hook," and by means of which the sleepers were torn out. The railwaymen coped successfully with this new complication.

When the Dnieper was forced, the Red Army command gave the order for the twelve-hundred metre bridge across the Dnieper at Kiev, which had been blown up by the Germans, to be built up anew. And in thirteen days the order was carried out.

During the year 1944, the length of the liberated lines amounted to some twenty-five thousand kilometres. The railwaymen kept pace with the forward Red Army units and achieved a record of from fourteen to sixteen kilometres of line rebuilt a day.

New and difficult tasks faced the railway troops when the Red Army entered the territories of the neighbouring countries. In Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Germany the railways are constructed differently from those in the U.S.S.R. The fastenings of the tracks are different; in a great many sectors the sleepers are made of metal and the rails are not fastened with spikes as in U.S.S.R. but with screws; the tracks, too, are narrower than here. In many of the bridges our trains could not pass between the girders.

Everything had to be rebuilt and despite all difficulties the terms of assignments were not only observed but even shortened. The German resistance in Budapest was broken on February 13th, 1945, and from January 27th, 1945, Soviet trains began to arrive in at the Budapest railway station. On April 10th, when the fighting in the centre of the city still raged fast and furious, Vienna received the first train carrying war material and armaments for the Red Army. When the offensive of the river Oder and on the approaches to Berlin was launched, the railway men broke all previous records for repairing the trunk-lines. The bridge crossing the Oder was reconstructed in seven days instead of the fifteen days as scheduled. It was on April 23rd, that the troops of the First Byelorussian front broke through to Berlin, and two days later, at four o'clock, in the afternoon of April 25th, the first Soviet train steamed into one of the Berlin stations.

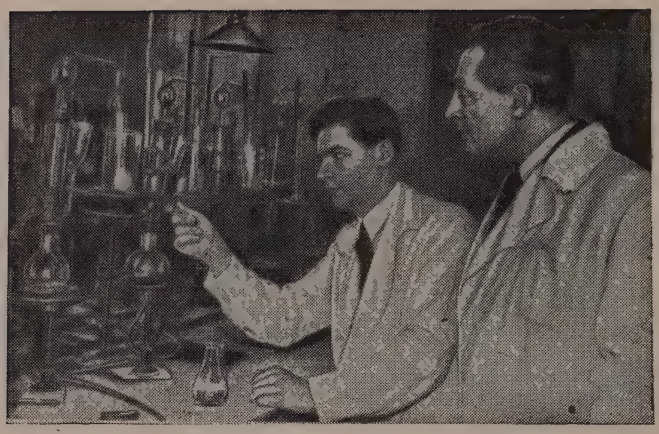
In the North, near Stettin, the railway troops provided supply lines for Marshal Rokossovsky's great flanking manoeuvre over marshlands, wide rivers and gulfs. In the South, railway lines were built through the Transylvanian Alps and the Carpathians.

The fine effort made by the railwaymen has been duly appreciated by our people and by the Soviet Government. Thirty-nine railwaymen were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and tens of thousands of officers and men of the railway units were awarded various orders and medals.

In the dense taiga that surrounds the upper reaches of the Amur there is a gold-mining camp amongst the cliffs that mark the old bed of that great river. From time immemorial gold lying near the surface has been mined here. The "Amurzoloto" Trust had decided to leave these mines in the near future believing the gold deposits to have been exhausted.

Several months ago, on the basis of prospecting carried out by Yuri Bilibin, Doctor of Geology and Mineralogy, the Moscow "Zolotorazviedka" (Gold-Surveyor) Trust decided to start extensive survey work at a depth of from thirty to forty metres below the surface. Up till now the gold mined in the U.S.S.R. like that on the Colorado and Yukon Rivers was found mostly at a depth of from five to ten metres. In the Soviet Union the question has now been raised of studying and working the deep-lying geologically older fields.

Doctor Bilibin investigated the local rocks and traced the site of the Amur's ancient bed; he arrived at the conclusion that there must be gold far below the surface. The presence of gold in the river has long been known. By deep drilling a prospecting party found gold-bearing quartz on a site almost two kilometres in length. The experience of the Far East prospectors has been turned to account by other gold-mining enterprises which are sending out special expeditions to prospect ancient gold beds.



Professor B. I. Zbarsky and his son, in their laboratory

The importance of biochemistry in medicine is now firmly established. Everybody knows that it is chemists who have supplied physicians with such wonderful remedies as penicillin, streptocide and the sulphamid drugs,and who have done such tremendous work in the study and mass production of vitamins.

All these things were not so self-evident however thirty-five years ago, when one of the most prominent Soviet chemists, Boris Zbarsky, launched his career in Geneva by a thesis on *The Influence of Acids and Alkalis on Oxydizing Ferments*.

On his return to Russia Zbarsky proceeded with the enthusiasm that has always characterized him on researches entailing the use of biological chemistry in the service of medicine.

By the year 1915, during the World War I, Zbarsky elaborated a new method of obtaining chloroform and for the first time the Russian army and medical profession obtained chloroform of domestic manufacture.

It was after the October Revolution that Zbarsky wrote a new page in physiology by his investigations into the role of erythrocites in human metabolism. He showed that in conveying the products of desintegration of albumen (amino-acids), as well as oxygen, into the tissues of the organism—erythrocites contribute to the nourishment of the tissues.

Zbarsky's works are an important theoretical and practical contribution to the study of albumens. He originated the idea of analysing albumen in toto instead of splitting it up artificially.

Another of the tasks Zbarsky set himself to perform was to study the composition of albumen in the organs of the human body both in a state of health and under conditions of disease. It was a kind of "chemical anatomy" of the human body that he established.

These extensive studies allowed Zbarsky to put before science and medicine the extremely interesting and bold conceptions that lack of one or several amino-acids may cause certain morbid processes.

At the present moment Zbarsky is engaged in researches on the early diagnosis of cancer, a factor of great importance in the successful treatment of this dread disease.

In addition to the scientific work he has been carrying on for the last thirty-five years, Zbarsky has gained well-merited recognition in this country for his practical activities. To him, jointly with the late Academician Vorobyov belongs the honour—unprecedented in world science—of embalming the body of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

In 1930 Zbarsky organized the now widely known Institute of Nutrition, the first in the U.S.S.R. And it is under his guidance that several thousand specialists in biochemistry have been graduated within the last years from the Biochemical Faculties of two of Moscow's medical institutes.

Many of Zbarsky's disciples are now working as professors in different cities of the Soviet Union.

Zbarsky's services to science have on more than one occasion been marked by the government. Winner of a Stalin Prize, he has twice been honoured with the Order of Lenin, twice with an Order of the Red Banner of Labour, and with the Order of Merit.

One of the highest awards in the country—the Order of Lenin—has been awarded to the writer Vladimir Bakhmetyev in connection with his sixtieth birthday.

Bakhmetyev took to writing very early. As long ago as 1915 Maxim Gorky, the friend of all that was young, fresh and talented, was attracted by a published story from the pen of the young beginner. This novel entitled *Martin's Crime*, the story of a nature severe and exacting, eventually ran through twelve editions.

Throughout his life Bakhmetyev met men of all sorts and conditions, and it is these people, taken straight from life, that he brings into his books. In many of his narratives he draws an appealing, noble image of the Russian woman. He continued in the traditions of Nekrasov and Gorky who sang the praises of the Russian woman as mother, worker and heroine.

Bakhmetyev listens intently to the expressive language of the Russian people. By the

speech of his hero he conveys a living portrait of the original.

The most important of his works is a monumental novel bearing the title of *The Offensive*. It reflects the main phases of the Russian people's fight for the Soviet order and the role in the struggle played by the working class. Not only is the character drawing colourful and lifelike, the wording precise and the imagery aptly chosen; the novel shows, forcefully how the lofty morale of the Soviet man was fashioned during the years of Revolution and Civil War, the Soviet man who has now gained the esteem of all democratic mankind.

Bakhmetyev sings the praises of man and has a deep and delicate feeling for the Russian countryside. We find some admirable descriptions of nature scattered through the pages of his books. The Siberian landscape has a peculiar appeal for the writer. He is a master of literary form, from the monumental canvas to the short story, fiction and miniature.

Bakhmetyev did some very good work during the war. He conducted great public activities in connection with writers' associations and wrote articles and essays for the periodical press, concurrently working on the concluding part of his *Offensive*. Bakhmetyev is at the present moment in charge of the work of editing the writings of the late Vyacheslav Shishkov.

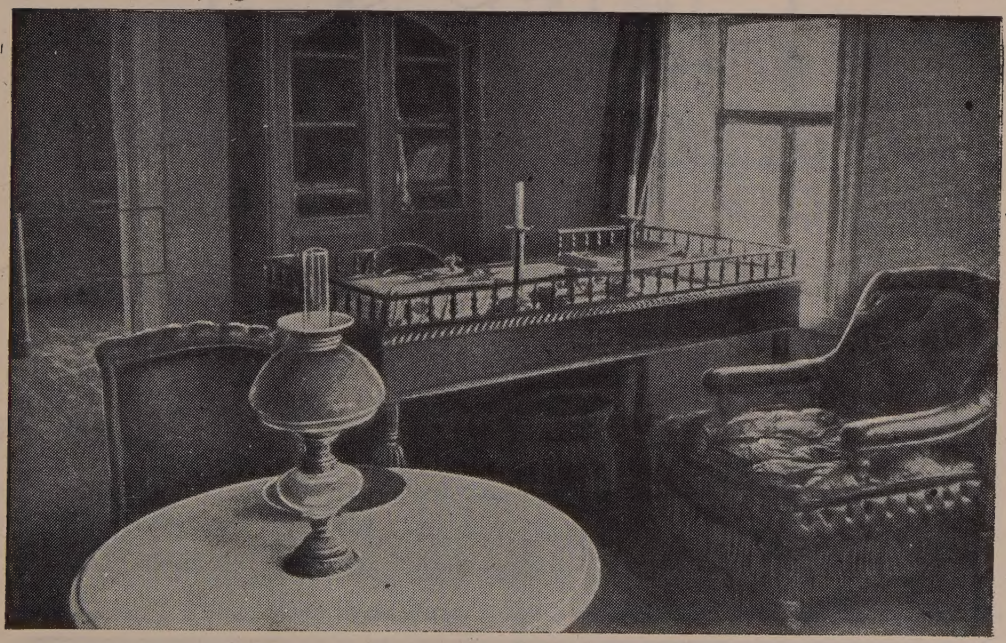
A simple writing table with an inkstand on it; two candlesticks. Leather armchairs. On a round table an oil lamp under a glass shade. An unpretentious bookcase filled with books. The blinds are up and the sunlight streams into the room.

We are in Leo Tolstoy's study in his Moscow home, where the writer lived from the year 1882 to 1901. Among the frequent visitors at the house were his friends—the writers Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Leskov and the painter Ilya Repin. In the drawing-room, standing in its old place, is the piano at which Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Serguei Taneyev so often sat, and at which Chaliapin sang.

The Tolstoy Museum-House in Moscow has been re-opened to the public after restoration. In the sixteen rooms of the old house standing in a large courtyard which passes into the garden, the furniture and numerous relics bound up with the life and writings of Tolstoy have been carefully preserved. In the study we see the sofa on which he liked to rest; a desk at which were written *Resurrection*, *Kreuzer Sonata* and others of his works. We know that Tolstoy went in a great deal for manual labour and at one time and another interested himself in different crafts. We can see his carpentry and boot-making tools, and also a pair of boots made by the writer's own hands.

The "Artek" pioneer camp and health resort for children, situated in one of the loveliest spots on the shores of the Black Sea in the Crimea, has just celebrated its twentieth birthday. During these years more than one hundred and fifty thousand children have been under treatment and spent their holidays here at the expense of the government.

During the occupation of the Crimea the Germans burnt the famous Suuk-Su palace, destroying and looting the children's camp. When the occupationists were driven out of

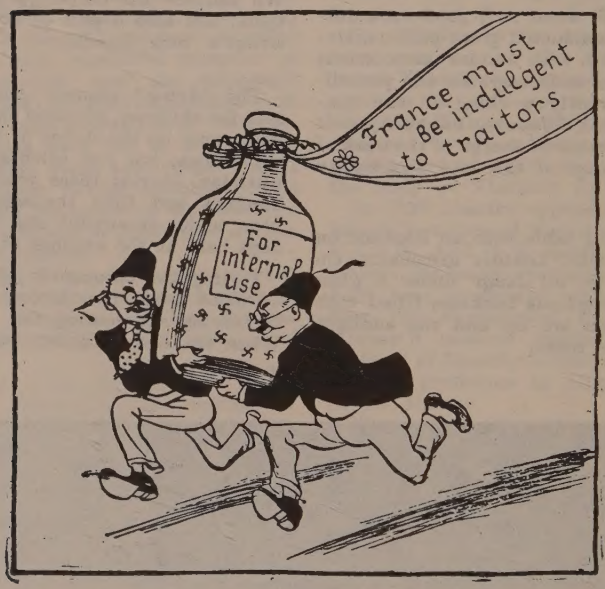


Leo Tolstoy's study

the Crimea the portions of the building that had survived the ravages made by the Germans were repaired; the electric station and services were rehabilitated. In the summer of 1945, the camp received the first party of child-visitors. You might have seen them, stirred and joyful, roaming along the delightful beach and the shady paths of the grounds. Several thousand children have already stayed here for their holidays—children from all parts of the Soviet land—from Moscow, and Leningrad, and the liberated areas of Byelorussia, the Ukraine, Moldavia, Esthonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

THE TURKISH RECIPE

A few days ago the Turkish newspaper *Tasvir* came out in defence of Pétain. Condemning the organization of his trial from every angle the paper wrote: "Pétain's trial showed that France is sick and will not easily recover".



Drawing by I. Maximov

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