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WITH GREETINGS FROM THE FRONT

The passenger train was going westward from Kiev, but was still far from the front. To judge by the way it was cautiously crawling over temporary bridges and newly-made embankments, waiting for long periods at semaphores and letting military trains go past at every halt, it would probably take another day, or even two, before it reached its destination. Ploughed fields still stretched before the eyes of the passengers, tractors with trailers loaded with seed passed along the roads, and people, cows harnessed to their machines, were harrowing or sowing the fields. It was May—and in the collective farm sowing was at its height.

The coaches were packed with passengers—both military and civilian. People lay on the floor, under the seats, and on the luggage shelves right under the ceiling. It was almost impossible to make one's way along the corridors, between the many bundles. At the stations, the conductor guarded the closed door, holding off would-be passengers and shouting from the steps:

"No room! Go on further!"

"We'll just stand somewhere."

"No room, no room. Ever since Kiev we've had people standing on one foot, like geese. How long d'ye think one can go on standing on one foot?"

"But let me in, at least. I'm from this car, I just went off to buy something."

"From this car?" The conductor suspiciously eyed the young Red Army man with the straggling red moustache which he had evidently only just grown and which bristled in every direction like a cat's whiskers, then turning to the passengers for confirmation, she asked: "Ours?"

"Ours, ours! I know him by the moustache. Came with us right from Fastov".

Two or three women with sacks, following the soldier, pushed their way onto the platform. With every stage the train became more and more packed. The stuffiness and general discomfort inside was apt to cause a certain asperity in the conversation.

"Hey, you, young fellow," somebody shouted down from beneath the ventilator to the soldier as he made his way to his place over the backs and knees of the passengers. "Sell me yer whiskers for a loofah. I'm going to the bath when I get to my regiment."

Somebody pulled at a boot projecting from the luggage shelf.

"You've got a fine nerve, you have! Sleeping there for the third day, ye'll rot away wi' sleeping, and here's folks wi' their legs swollen wi' standing! Haven't even seen him move to go to the lav'tory! Hey, you, wake up there! Come on; time to change places. Up wi'ye, and give another fellow a chance."

Two soldiers lying side by side on one shelf kept bumping into each other, and could not sleep.

"What d'ye keep wriggling about for like a fish? If ye want to lie down, then lie quiet. Keep on turning and turning as though ye'd a knife in yer back. What's up—too hard for ye? Mebbe ye'd like a feather bed?"

"The mess kit keeps slipping."

"Mess kit, is it? Found a fine thing to use for a pillow, didn't ye? Of course, two empty cans won't stick together. Hang'em up and use your greatcoat."

It was only in the compartments, where the passengers had rather more comfort, that one could hear ordinary quiet talk—about the second front, the market prices in the Donbass, the Dnieper district, about good and bad supply points; there was the rattle of dominoes on the lids of suitcases and even songs, and a balalaika.

Captain Spivak was returning to his unit at the front after being discharged from hospital. He had made himself a kind of couch with his waterproof cape, his greatcoat and his knapsack and lay there, his long legs thrown across the iron support of the luggage shelf, looking out of the window for hours at a time, or reading and re-reading for the tenth time an old newspaper which he had bought in Kiev. His head was aching from lying for days in the crowded compartment. Captain Spivak had been fighting for three years, but this was the first time he had travelled in a passenger train since the beginning of the war. He had covered the whole road—from the Ukraine through Perekop to the Crimea, from there to the Caucasus, from the Caucasus to the Volga and from there back to the Ukraine—on foot; he had fought on the steppe, and in the forest, away from the towns, and if he had chanced to pass through one, it was a town in flames with the ruined station echoing with rifle shots instead of engine whistles. He remembered the railways as they had been before the war—clean coaches, smelling of fresh paint, electric light in every compartment, running water at each end of the coach, trains arriving and leaving according to schedule, polite conductors. From old habit he even asked the conductor on entering if this was a smoker, whereupon the conductor looked at him in amazement and replied snappily: "A smoker? What a question?! They're all smokers nowadays. . . . Where d'ye come from, Captain? The Far East?"

Spivak had become accustomed to many things at the front; but he was not accustomed to railways in the front line zone simply because he had never had anything to do with them. He lay and fumed because the train would stand for hours beside a signal in the middle of the empty steppe, and because at the stations nobody could tell him how long

it was going to stay. No sooner would he make an attempt to get to the door than the whistle would sound. He swore at the window, which seemed to have grown into its frame—it had probably not been opened for three years, the straps were torn off and there was nothing to take hold of. He frowned as he passed his finger over the stubble on his chin—nowhere to shave, no water in the lavatory, and no way of getting near the little table in the compartment.

Beneath his shelf was a young soldier with a red mustache, an old woman with a little girl of about four on her knee returning from evacuation, two middle-aged women, one a teacher, to judge by her talk of schools and schoolchildren, sent by the Commissariat of Education to work somewhere, the other a major's wife, going to visit her husband in hospital; there was an old man of seventy in a military greatcoat, which he had probably bought from some soldier, or perhaps been given as a present, and two disabled men—one of them with only one arm, the other on crutches, his face hideously disfigured by burns and scars, and blind. The two disabled men sat beside the window and kept rather to themselves, talking quietly at times about their own affairs, and taking no part in the general conversation. The one who had lost his arm was evidently not yet accustomed to his disability and the blind man would roll cigarettes for him and open tins of food with a knife—he could manage it better than his comrade; the one-armed man would go out to get hot water and milk at the stations, read newspapers to the blin man and help him out onto the platform.

Only snatches of conversation reached the captain above the rattle of the wheels, but they were too few to hold his attention.

Covering his face with the newspaper to shield it from the sun which was coming in through the window, his eyes travelling indifferently over the faces of the other passengers, Spivak lay and wondered how much longer he would have to spend in that compartment, how many more kilometres he would have to bump and rattle on lorries to reach the front, and where he would find his army; he recalled his wife and children whom he had been able to visit at home after leaving the hospital, thought of the people he had met and the talks he had had with them at home in his village in Poltava district, which had been the start of this journey; rummaged in his kitbag, pulled out some bits of home-made biscuits and began to chew them for something to do, drank some warm sour milk from his flask.

At some unexpected halt, many of the people left the coach, and suddenly the compartment became quiet and roomy. The train had stopped in the middle of the forest. Spivak also went out, walked along the embankment for a little, climbed down to a stream running under a railway bridge, stripped to the waist, washed, and after returning refreshed to his compartment, listened to the talk going on below him. The train was standing, there was no rattle of wheels to break the thread of conversation.

One of the women, the teacher, was talking: its subject was life before the war, the war itself, and the losses and grief which it had brought to people. At the moment she was telling about her own family.

"We were three married sisters before the war, four brothers, and father and mother. My brothers, my youngest sister and I lived with the old folks. We were in different apartments, but in the same house. On holidays we always gathered for dinner at Dmitry's, that's my oldest brother. Eighteen of us at the table! All our friends envied us, we were such a happy family. Father was an engine driver, and he gave us all a college education. Dmitry was a factory director, two of my brothers were engineers, and my sisters were teachers. We lived well. When we were still studying we helped each other, the older ones helped the younger, and then nobody needed any help because we were all earning. And now what's left of our family? One sister, her husband and children were killed in the very first days of the war at Kovel, Dmitry joined the partisans, and there's no news of him; he left three children and a wife, who's now an invalid—the Germans tortured her in the Gestapo. Father was killed during the railway bombing. Then there's no news at all of another brother—his last letter was from Smolensk way, during the retreat, and nothing more was heard from him. I've had nothing from my husband for six months. My youngest sister, Varya, who lived with me, received news from the front that her husband had been killed. But it was a mistake. She lived alone for a year, then married again. And now, not long ago, her husband came back—disabled, minus a leg. He'd been surrounded near Minsk in 1941, and stayed there in the forest with the partisans until they joined up with the Red Army. Then in the last battles he lost his leg. And now he's back. Varya has a child by her second husband, and two by her first. When I left, she hadn't made up her mind what to do, whom she should live with. And all that in one family."

"I, Madam, had three sons," said the old man in the military greatcoat. "One of them, the youngest, is fighting, and two are gone. The eldest was killed at Stalingrad, the second died in hospital, in our own town, in my arms. I have this to remember him by, this greatcoat. . . . Before the war, you know, I'd made up my mind to retire and take things easy. My sons were grown up, all working and earning good money. 'Dad!' they told me, 'We can't let you go on working, now when you're as old as you are. You'll get a pension, and we'll buy you and Mother a cottage on the edge of the town with a garden to it'—we lived in Nezhin—'and we'll get you some livestock. You'll live there all nice and quiet on that—not so much you need, is there?' And I thought to myself, well, that is right, what more do old folks like us need anyway? And just in that very spring of 1941 we began looking for a cozy little cottage with a garden, where my old woman and I could live all nice and quiet, like on a holiday. And here we are—nothing left of it all—neither house nor sons. . . . Everything is gone.

And three little grandchildren on my hands. No time to think about resting now. Got to live. One foot in the grave, but I've got to live and work too. Not for myself, for my grandchildren. My own blood. We'll bring them up. We can't send them to a children's home with their Granny and Granddad alive. There's just the hope that Sasha'll come back, he's the third. And I'm not so young as I was, I'm seventy-two. I'm cutter by trade. The work is not hard, and I've nothing to complain of with my health, I've never had a serious illness in my life, only mumps when I was a child. But I'm not so strong as I was. Nothing wrong with me, but just kind of weak. I can tell it by some of the things in the house. Say a bucket of coal weighs a pood, and I feel as if it was three. And if I try to walk a long way—I find I can't do it. But I've got to live for another ten years at least, to bring up the grandchildren. The oldest's eight. When'll he be able to stand on his own feet? And then, I may be bringing back with me some more. . . I'm going now to look for my daughter. We had a daughter, too, you see, a widow with two children, she lived in Izyaslav. During the German occupation she disappeared as though dropped in the sea. All the letters we've written her—at that time, and since liberation—and not a single word from her. We still don't know where she is. I'm going to try and find out. Maybe she went away somewhere, or maybe she's dead. She was a Party member. Or maybe she herself's not alive, but the children are there, in some home or other. . . . So that's how life's gone with me. Thought I'd worked, lived my time, brought up my children, now I could die in peace. But I've got to live, there are things for me to do. I've stopped smoking. I smoked a pipe for forty years, but now I gave it up. Not for saving money, but just for my health. I've even started doing gymnastics, Müller system. Only I don't let the old woman know it, it'd upset her. She'd think, here's an old codger trying to get young again. But after all, I've got to do everything I can to get some strength, so as to hold out as long as I can. There's that famous scientist, Mechnikov, they say he prolonged his life by drinking sour milk, he took a glass of it every day on an empty stomach, and that killed some sort of harmful bacteria inside, which make you grow old sooner than you need. Well, we haven't got a cow, and sour milk costs too much money at the market, so I thought that cold showers might do as well—help the circulation. . . ."

Nobody in the compartment laughed at the seventy-two-year old athlete, and he himself told about his simple researches in the sphere of prolonging life without the shadow of a smile.

"You need to live, Dad, not only for your grandchildren," said the major's wife. "Ye'll be interested for yourself to see the restoration of everything that your sons gave their lives for."

"Interesting, of course it'll be interesting," the old man agreed. "There's nothing new about it for us, we know how life was before the war, but all the same we want to see it again. . . . But I think, Madam, that Dnieproges and Zaporozhye will be restored and working again sooner than my little granddaughter Katya forgets about the bombing. Even now she sometimes screams in her sleep: 'Mummie, they're coming! Mummie, they're coming!'"

Spivak lay there listening, and thinking that the nearer the end of the war came, the more folks began to think about their own lives, about the shattered families and homes, of the weary burden the people must bear of restoring all that had been destroyed in the fighting, of the damage which could and could not be effaced. He had heard many similar conversations among friends and acquaintances in the village at home.

"How I long for a quiet, peaceful life!" said the major's wife with a heavy sigh. "It's not only the end of the war I want, I want everything to be as it was before."

"It won't be the same now," the teacher replied.

"Why not?"

"Not exactly the same. We ourselves aren't the same. I myself, for instance, feel that I shall never again be merry and carefree like I used to be before the war."

"But I was talking about simple, ordinary things. I want to see the markets full again, twenty-five kinds of bread in the shops, shop assistants in starched aprons, stalls with ices for twenty kopeks at every corner, militiamen in white gloves, lighted houses. . . ."

"That there will be. . . ."

The disabled men had utilized the halt to have dinner on the little table in their corner, talking in low voices about front line life, recalling some Lieutenant Kudrya, who had got concussion just when he was eating fried American sausage, and since then had lost all appetite for meat, talking about the fighting at Kanev, about some crossing or other, about baggage and documents forgotten somewhere.

"Where are you going, lads?" the old man in the greatcoat asked them. "You've done your share of the fighting, I can see, but you're making westward."

"We've been to his home," said the one-armed man, pointing to the blind one. "At Darnitsa, beyond Kiev, and now we're going to my village."

The one-armed man replaced the remainder of their provisions in the kitbag, and dusted the crumbs from the table with the sleeve of his tunic. The blind man rolled two cigarettes, one for himself and one for his comrade.

"We came to Darnitsa," the one-armed man began to relate, "came to the street where he'd lived, he couldn't see what it was like there, but I looked and there wasn't a single house standing. He said: 'Count them, it's the third from the corner.' But where the third might be you couldn't tell, nor the second, nor the first either. Nothing but piles of bricks. We walked and walked along and then we met a man he knew. 'None of your folks left, Petro,' he told him. He once had a mother and a sister, but they'd both been killed when the place was bombed. The Germans had bombed Darnitsa pretty badly—

there was a bridge near by, and a crossing, it was just the sort of place they went for, they made a sieve of it—it was just one hole on top of the other. 'Well, if that's the way it is,' says I. 'Come along home wi'm e, Petro, we'll live together. I've had letters at the front from my folks, they're alive and well. I've a mother too, and a sister who's a widow, and a brother, so come along, Sergeant,' I says. . . . We were in the same machine-gun crew. He was in command, and I was second. We fought together for two years, from Vladikavkas to Kanev. He saved my life, too. I'd have lost my head there and not just my arm, if it hadn't been for him. I was wounded when a tank shell smashed our machine-gun, and he carried me off. He got a splinter in his own foot, but he wouldn't leave me, carried me three hundred metres to a ravine. Bandaged my arm with his own outfit, stopped it bleeding. Then he went back for the platoon commander and got into another tank attack. That was when they put him right out, he caught it from a flame thrower and got another splinter in his leg. So that we might easily have lost sight of each other. But we met in the field dressing station. He knew me first by my voice. He was lying there on his pallet, you couldn't see anything of his face, it was all in bandages, couldn't tell who he might be. But I lost my temper with a nurse about something or other and began shouting. And he called to me: 'Is that you, Sidorenko?!. . . 'Well, we were both at the same hospital and were both discharged at the same time. So what's the sense of parting company now? We were in a far-away hospital, all the way on the Black Sea, at Sochi. We went to his place first, it was the nearest. Well, if a man's in such bad straits, no home and no family—better come to me, I said. I've got a mother—she's a real good soul. When she knows that he didn't leave me in the fighting, but saved my life, she'll welcome him like her own son. We'll just live there like brothers. We'll manage somehow. I've had some schooling, six classes, I'll learn to write with my left hand and work in the collective farm office. There'll be work for him, too. He used to work on motor repairs, turner, mechanic and smith, he knew it all, so he can make himself useful to our folks, even if it's only to teach them the idea of it. We've no real good men for the machinery, only our own blacksmith, the kind that's only good to make oven hooks for the women or sharpen ploughshares, but no good for big repairs, like the harrow, or forging wheels. But even if my pal can't find anything to do—well, so he'll stay home and take care of the house. He'll have a pension, and the farm'll help. After all, who is it he's lost his eyes for? For the whole Soviet people, of course. We're a hard-working family, my mother's only forty-seven. And I'll be able to earn, too. We'll manage."

With a sharp jerk the train started again. Once more the wheels bumped over the fish-joints of the rails, faster and faster, louder and louder. The fragments of talk that drifted to Spivak became more and more disjointed. The other disabled man said something, turning his blind face disfigured by scars to his comrade, and the soldier with the red mustache said something, and the old woman with the little girl on her knee related something, but the captain could catch only a word here and there.

Lulled by the even beat of the wheels and the swaying of the train, he began to doze again; he arranged the cape and greatcoat more comfortably beneath him and fell asleep for some hours.

Noise and laughter wakened Spivak towards evening, at the next big halt. Now there were different people sitting below him. A new passenger was the centre of conversation and general attention—a rosy-cheeked man of about thirty in a grey suit and a grey hat, and leather topboots, the tops turned down and the lower shafts in concertina folds. He quickly picked up the ball of conversation, be the subject what it might, showing an intimate knowledge of market prices, types of German bombers, and feminine psychology; he cracked jokes about anything on earth, and told stories which made some passengers laugh and others frown and turn away.

Spivak had a hazy recollection that when he had been dozing he had seen this man enter the compartment, pushing in front of him one of the young women sitting beside him, and dragging his suitcases behind him over the very heads of the other passengers without any ceremony. The woman was evidently a chance acquaintance made during the journey. In the compartment he had written down her address, the place where she worked and the time when she could be found at home, had given her his own address and exchanged photographs.

After getting something out of the heavy suitcase in the luggage rack, the passenger in the hat turned it with one hand and nearly dropped it. Spivak noticed that his right hand was crippled, evidently he had not the complete use of it. But for some reason the captain felt at once that this was not the result of a wound, but some old trouble, perhaps from pre-war days or even congenital. On his journey home Spivak had met many former soldiers now disabled and discharged from the army. He could always tell them by some remnant of uniform, a tunic peeping out from under the coat or a military cap, by medal or the Guard's badges which many were reluctant to part with when they went into civvies. But there were no such relics of the front to be seen on this passenger.

Listening to the talk among the new company below, Spivak had several times caught the expression: 'It's wartime, what's the odds,' from the man in the hat—a common expression which he could not endure; frowning, he laid aside the newspaper which he had again taken from beneath his head, and turned on his side to face the inside of the compartment. He felt that soon his patience would crack, and he would have to take a share in the talk, which had assumed a very different tone from that of a few hours previously. Regarding the back of the passenger's head with the greatest disfavour, Spivak decided in his own mind: "Let him say

'it's wartime' just three times more, and I'll get down from the shelf."

The passenger was telling about some village in the Kiev district, where mothers, to save their daughters from being mobilized for work in Germany, made them invite the only man left in the village—a lad of about seventeen—to their homes. The idea was to have a medical certificate of pregnancy, which exempted women from mobilization. That was two years ago. The passenger related it all laughing. Now, he said, all the children in the village are related . . . and no fuss, no scandal, no jealousy, because it had all been a friendly agreement. They all go on living together peacefully. But the Germans had sent the lad to Germany, all the same. He saved others, but could not save himself.

One of the women, in a white beret, the one whom the passenger had helped get a seat in the compartment, asked him:

"And what if that fellow comes back from Germany? How will they arrange things? He can marry one of them, of course, but what about all the others?"

"Blame the war," laughed the passenger. "Plenty of things like that happening nowadays. They'll settle it all somehow. No time for jealousy now, with nowhere near enough men to go round. It's wartime!"

"One," Spivak said to himself.

For a long time the passenger in the hat discoursed on how they could settle it, casting sly glances at the women. He appeared to be a travelling agent, getting supplies for some factory or trust. Judging by his talk, he had travelled many districts in recent times—the Donbass, the Zaporozhye, the Kharkov and Kiev district, and had seen and heard much. But what he had seen was all one-sided: the things that interested him were hotels, railway stations, restaurants. Kharkov after the Germans, as he described it, was a city of private cafés and pubs. "You can get anything you want, down to birds' milk, but of course you need a bit of cash." In Kiev there was cheap vodka, the cheapest to be found in the whole Ukraine. In Voroshilovgrad he was able to work things so that he got a ticket for the Moscow train, when nobody, not even majors and lieutenant-colonels, could leave that day. He had made the acquaintance of a woman working on the railway who kept telling him how much he resembled her husband, who had been mobilized for restoring the railways near the front-line, and now he could be sure of a place in a first-class compartment from there any time. Kharkov he liked, not only for its cafés, but also because of its public baths. "The baths there are grand! You take a private bathroom—it's like an apartment. Two rooms with a divan, the only thing missing is a tea-table with a samovar. Family rooms there, too. Before the war they'd been forbidden, but now they have them again. For anybody, no restrictions. Wife—or anybody. Don't even look at your passport."

"I wonder why they allowed it again?" his companion asked.

"Why? It's wartime! What's the odds. . . ."

"Two!" Spivak noted, more irritated. He must have said it rather loudly, because the man in the hat looked up at him and asked:

"What was that you said, Captain?"

"Nothing," Spivak replied. "I'm just counting the kilometres. Go on."

The train stopped again. Outside the window there were shouts of "Poppyseed buns! Boiled eggs! Seeds! Who wants seeds?"[1] A bewhiskered soldier, after much struggling, managed to prize his claspknife under the window sash and open it. The passenger in the hat leaned out, called a girl, bought seeds and offered them to the women. Everybody got busy with seeds, collecting the husks into their hands or handkerchiefs. The passenger spat them right out onto the floor, behind the suitcases where they were not so visible. Somebody said:

"Won't the conductor be angry at the mess and send for the guard?"

The agent waved his hand airily.

"Never mind, there's plenty of dirt here already. She'll sweep it up. They don't fine you for that sort of thing in wartime."

"I think I might call that three," Spivak decided, and leaning down from his shelf, said:

"I can see, young man, that you'll find life less to your taste when the war ends."

"Why?" The passenger raised his head in surprise.

"You won't be able to use your catchword any more. It'll cut the ground from under your feet."

Gripping the edge of the shelf, Spivak jumped lightly down. There was nowhere to sit. The women moved closer, to make room for him, but the captain sat down on the edge of an old woman's wooden suitcase standing between the seats, near the table.

"What sort of an expression is that, young man—'It's wartime, what's the odds, it's wartime!'" said Spivak, addressing the passenger. "You keep coming out with it all the time—like bullets from a machine-gun. I've been counting—three times in an hour. If one reckons that you stop talking to sleep for eight hours in twenty-four and are awake for sixteen, that makes forty-eight times a day you come out with that idiocy. And in a month—a thousand four hundred and forty. And how many times you've used that catchword during the whole war—terrible to think. Several million, I should say."

The man in the hat was evidently taken aback by this captain with his two Orders, his cropped hair sprinkled with grey and eyes flashing angrily in his thin yellow face, who had jumped down as suddenly as though he had fallen from the clouds. Heads appeared in the corridor—passengers from the neighbouring compartments, who had heard the beginning of what promised to be an interesting conversation.

"What does it mean, that expression of yours?" Spivak continued, his eyes fixed on the bridge of the man's nose. "'It's wartime, what's the odds.' Why—what's the odds? Wha are the odds to whom? How is one to understand it—the end, or what?. . . My

[1] In Russia certain large seeds, especially sunflower seeds, are roasted and the kernels eaten.

brother, the machine gunner, Ivan Spivak, might have said 'what's the odds' when he hadn't a single ribbon left and the infantry hadn't come up, while the Germans were there already, crawling back to their trenches, reaching out for the machine gun. 'Might as well die to music!' said he, while he threw a grenade into a case of German mines. But what does your catchword mean? Fishing in muddy waters? Wartime, indeed! Have you done anything in this war, suffered anything? Looks like you're trying to make up for the lack of men too and have taken on a round as a lady-killer—Kharkov—Voroshilovgrad—Dniepropetrovsk—Poltava?"

Laughter rang out in the coach. The passenger in the hat could only find a few disjointed words in face of the captain's energetic attack.

"No, you're mistaken, Captain. I've been at the front. . . ."

"At the front? Where? Not much of the front about you. . . . War, young man, that's a weighty word, a tremendous word, and we're not allowing anybody to plaster it onto every kind of dirty business. At the front? Your talk doesn't sound much like it. Spit, make everything dirty—it's wartime. . . A good soldier doesn't talk that way. That's tricksters' talk. Here," Spivak pulled his newspaper down from the shelf," read that decree. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev signed it. The Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party of the Ukraine. Here it is. As though he'd heard what people are talking about. There's a serviceman for you. Defended Stalingrad. Read it. A severe reprimand to the Secretary of the Kiev city committee of the Party and the Chairman of the city soviet for ten chestnut trees cut down in the town. That's front line ways. A bit of human feeling. He himself's sick of ruins and wreckage, and he knows that the people want a bit of order. They want cleanliness, light, green. But you don't. You can swim in dirt like a pancake in butter."

All the other passengers in the coach had fallen silent. In the next compartment a child began to cry. It was hushed from all sides.

"'War excuses everything.' Who said so?" Spivak continued. "Even in the very worst days, when we were retreating, when the Germans pressed us to the Volga, even in those days, such words would have deserved. . ." the captain hesitated.

"A sock in the mug," came somebody's remark from beyond the partition, where a group of soldiers returning to their unit from hospital had found places.

"You too! A nice, civilized way of talking you've got! Shut up!" came another voice.

"What else's good for him, the fat stallion? Pull his ears, then!"

". . . would have deserved court martial for treason," Spivak concluded his sentence. "Even then. If it hadn't been we that pushed the Germans back, but they us, and we'd had only a month, a week, even a day left to live—still we'd have lived it like human beings, and not like beasts. Then, in 1942. But now—let the Germans say: 'What's the odds, we're finished anyway!' That song is for them, not for us."

Spivak stood up, took his cap from the shelf and put it on. The passenger in the hat sat there, red and confused, blinking.

"Of course, I may have been a little mistaken, Captain," he mumbled.

"Yes, just a little bit," said Spivak, with the faintest shadow of a laugh in his voice. "Like the deacon at the wedding, who instead of 'Isaiah, make merry,' sang: 'What devil drove me to marry a second time.'"

The unexpected joke and the captain's smile called forth loud and general laughter. Up to then he had spoken so angrily that the people listening with interest and full agreement had nevertheless looked at him with a certain caution and had not quite dared to laugh aloud at the embarrassed passenger with the hat.

"Perhaps I was mistaken. . . . It's a saying that goes round. Everybody says it. . . . Of course, if you think about it, then it's not the right expression. Quite wrong, in fact. I admit my mistake. But you've no right to lose your temper about it, Captain. This is the first time in your life that you see me. That's not the way to talk." The man rose, fumbled with his left hand in his trouser pocket, and brought out a wallet. "You think I've seen nothing of the war? Here, please," and he held out a packet of papers to Spivak.

"Yes," said the latter, when he had unfolded the papers and glanced through them. "You've seen fighting. In 1942, on the south-western front? And on the Karelian? Yes, you've fought. But what for—you yourself don't know very clearly. . . . And on the western front? On three fronts?. . . Well, well," he said, after a moment's silence, returning the passenger's papers to him. "What shall I say to you?... In that case, Lieutenant, I can tell you something, only please don't be offended. It was told me by our major-general, our divisional commander. Here's what happened. The general released a certain regimental commander from his duties. To be frank, that commander was not a right person under present conditions of warfare. Nothing went right with him. Plenty of noise and shouting, but nothing to show for it. We suffered reverses, but it had no effect on him! Then we hit back and still he got no wiser. The whole regiment was glad when he went. In fact, the general had done the right thing. But somebody from the staff started to defend the commander, to talk about him as of an old soldier, who had fought a long time and been on seven fronts. What would he do now, that major? Join a transport company? Then the general said: 'Well, what about it, seven fronts. . . . I've got a suitcase I'm carrying my things in right from Khalkhin-Gol. It's been in Mongolia, in Finland, in Poland, and here on all the fronts from Leningrad to the Black Sea. It's even been in the German rear with me. Where hasn't it been! But it was a suitcase to start with, and it's nothing more now. . . .'"

The laughter in the compartment wakened all the passengers who had until that moment been sleeping on the top shelves. They began to stir, and not having heard Spivak's last words, asked those standing nearer what it

was the Captain had said to start all that noise.

The train slowed down, drew up at a station. Spivak settled his belt, pulled down his tunic, and began making his way towards the exit. On the platform he collided with the chief conductor coming from the next coach.

"Ah! There you are! Fine!" said Spivak in the same irritated tone in which he had just spoken to the passenger. "I think, Comrade Chief, it's about time to have signs with 'smoking' and 'non-smoking' nailed on, eh? What do you think? Pass the idea on to your chiefs. Why put it off when it can be done now. These signs should be put on as soon as the train is ready to go on the line. And why are we travelling without water? We stood three hours under a water tower, but didn't fill the tanks. What's the odds—it's wartime, eh? No need to wash? Do you wash yourself, or are you, too, postponing that matter until Germany capitulates?"

The conductor was completely taken aback by the captain's angry looks; he opened his eyes wide and spread out his hands. Spivak without waiting for answer, jumped down onto the platform.

The noise and laughter in the coach continued for a long time.

"Hot-tempered chap!"

"He'll be going for the station-master next!"

But Spivak was walking up and down the platform beside the train, thinking, and wondering with some surprise why he had become so quick-tempered. He had been home, to his own district, where he had worked in the district Party committee just before the war, and had neither enjoyed himself nor rested. Nerves, or what? Or perhaps, he should not have gone to the rear, not made a break with his soldier's life until the end of the war. But no, it did no harm to take a look at life and at people. At least you would know beforehand what to expect in case you remained alive and went home again sometime. . . . He would surely be demobilized after the war? He was not a regular officer, he was from the reserve, and forty years of age. There would be sufficient young folks for the standing army in peacetime. . . . But suppose he was told to stay in the service? Well, after all, he had filled plenty of jobs in his time—shepherd, tractor driver, Party organizer in the collective farm, instructor at the district Party committee, and if he remained in the army, who knows, he might even end up as a general. . . . Spivak laughed. Hardly. A long way yet to a general. And in peacetime you don't stay in the service till sixty. Better if they let him go back to the collective farm. . . .

Women came from the village with milk to sell, still warm, fresh from the evening's milking. A market collected beside the train. Spivak ate a large bun filled with beans and drank a litre of milk. He wanted to top it off with a glass of sour milk, but could find none in the market.

"How's this, girls, don't you make sour milk here, or what?" he asked the women. "Don't you know how? Just you wait for my return from Berlin. I'll come and spend a day with you, teach you how to do it. Show you how my wife makes it, so thick, you can eat it with a fork."

"Come ye, come ye, Captain," cried the women. "Ye needn't keep it down to a day, neither. Come and stop all ye want—the longer, the better—we'll be glad an' all to have ye!"

"Yon's the sort o' captain we can do wi'!"

"Eh, gi' us more o' yon sorts."

"What do we need wi' him, he's grey already."

"Mebbe grey, but look at them orders!"

"Grey, is it? And yer own man? He wasn't grey—'cos there wasn't a hair left! Liefer grey hair than a bald pate!"

"Come ye, come ye, Captain, don't ye harken to their silliness!"

After talking to the women, Spivak drank another half litre of milk, ate a sweet bun filled with poppy seeds and felt his spirits rise.

The engine was puffing louder and more frequently, drowning the sound of the wind in the high poplars beside the station and the nightingales in the thicket. The station master came out with his flag, and walked hastily along towards the head of the train.

"Line's clear. Let her go."

A command rang out: "To the co-o-oaches!"

As the train steamed out, the women waved the white napkins in which they had wrapped the buns.

For a long time Spivak stood on the platform between the coaches, smoking, looking at the dark clouds in the west, and at the steppe, until earth and sky merged into one dark mass and even the telegraph poles could no longer be seen flickering past.

II

Captain Spivak had been wounded for the fourth time, recovered in his own district centre, Poltava, and after his discharge received ten days leave. Thus it was that, in the third year of the war, he was able to spend a little time at home—a source of envy to his comrades when he returned to his regiment. He managed to get back to the same division in which he had served and with which he had covered the road from Stalingrad to the Dnieper as regimental political officer, and was even detailed to the same regiment. But it was no easy matter to find it. While he had been in hospital and on leave, the army had moved far ahead, without leaving any address—to Rumania or Czechoslovakia. After reaching the last station on the repaired line, Spivak spent several more days on lorries looking for the rear of his army before he at last got on the trail. After discovering the army stores, it was not hard to find the political department and get detailed to his own regiment.

There was a man from his own parts in the regiment, from the same village and collective farm, Nikolai Petrenko, battalion commander. The Party district committee had summoned Spivak to work in the district, and Petrenko had been sent to the district agricultural centre to work as agronomist. They had been called up together, in the first mobilization.

As long as he was still mulling over in his

mind all that he had seen and heard at home, Spivak turned aside all questions about life in the rear with jokes.

"Don't talk to me about life at home," he said. "There's plenty that seems pretty tough when you're not used to it. We've been spoilt here with all the food we get, all the clothing, soap and tobacco. But there your wife'll hand you out such supplies, clothes and soap and tobacco, that you'll be longing for the commissary we all curse when we get a box of matches late. She'll tell you—I've no shoes to go out in, the flour's finished, go and get some wood."

"What's life like?" he answered another. "Well, it's like this. Here you're the commander of your company. You've got all sorts of soldiers, some young, some older, but all the same all fit and ready to do anything you tell them to. But there they'll give you a brigade—Uncle Panka who'd one foot in the grave even before the war. Grandma Yavdokha, a frisky young thing of seventy, fine brisk soldiers they'll be, and if you say them one word they'll give you twenty back again—so you can't wait till they finish, yes, and some youngsters that hadn't been breeched when we left for the front. That's what you'll have. And with them you'll have to do the ploughing and the sowing and the reaping. Or else they'll make you director of a machine and tractor station. There are your tractors, they'll tell you, out there in the weeds. Gather them up from the steppe, a wheel here, a pinion there. On one you'll find the cylinders without pistons, on another the pistons without connecting rods. The combines stand there with their sides naked. When the Germans were there, they made buckets of the iron. The lathes are smashed. No balls for bearings, no transmission, no straps. And the repair work to be completed in a month. You'll soon be saying it's ten times easier to fight your way across the Dnieper."

In appearance Captain Spivak was lanky, stooped slightly, and wore a permanent frown, as though always angry about something. Although he liked to laugh at other people's jokes, he never displayed the shadow of a smile to accompany his own witticisms, which sometimes left his hearers uncertain as to what was intended seriously and what was merely fooling. But when his eyes opened widely and began to flash, his voice hardened and face paled and he flung down his kit or cap or whatever he happened to be holding—then it was plain that the matter was serious. He spoke sharply when arguing, and displayed few niceties of speech with his comrades. His friends in the regiment were few. His vehemence, together with his invariable frown, whether jesting or angry, made him like a delayed action bomb, they said—you could never tell when or why it might go off. But nothing is regarded more indulgently at the front than irritability or a quick temper if only a man does his job. It is the slacker that is not tolerated there. Spivak was valued in the regiment for his political work, his success in keeping morale at the highest pitch. His lectures and talks were exceedingly popular, both with officers and with the men.

Everybody noticed that Spivak had returned to the front from his furlough still gloomier and more apt to flare up than before. Some put it down to family troubles, others said: "What sort of leave is that, ten days! Just enough to get you out of gear." It was only Lieutenant Petrenko, commander of the second battalion, who knew his friend well, that was able to understand his state of mind: "Spivak's probably thinking out something he's seen back home."

Spivak had overtaken his regiment on the march. On that sector of the front an offensive was in progress. He came to Petrenko in the second battalion, just after some fighting for a village, as the regiment received a fresh assignment—to surround and destroy the enemy in the village of Lipitsy, an important point in the German defence on this sector.

. . . It was a pitch dark night. In the evening, when the men had had dinner and rested up in a village whose name nobody could remember—something like Yanchin or Yanichkin—there had been a heavy downpour with a cold wind and thunder. Now the column was marching over some kind of unsown ground. Their boots would not grip on the soft soil, but slipped over the wet weeds. It was not very high grass, but thick, with juicy, fleshy leaves—the men could feel them through their heavy boots. Even in dry weather, a growth like this would be slippery. Captain Spivak, marching alongside the column, could sense some pleasant perfume through all the heavy odour of uniforms, impregnated with the smoke of campfires, wet with rain and sweat. It came up from the ground. He stooped and tore up a handful of green stuff, rubbed it between his palms, carried it to his face and sniffed. One of the soldiers followed his example, then a second and a third.

"Mint," said one of them in a soft tenor. "We're walking on mint. Eh! Smells good."

"Mint!" a second repeated in surprise, softly—orders were to move noiselessly. "And no end of it, too. Where's it come from? Wild, maybe?"

"No, it's not wild," said the first. "It's sown. They sow it like wheat."

"What for?"

"A lot of things. They make medicine from it. Have ye ever had a toothache? There's drops, mint drops, for toothache. And they use it for sweets, to give them taste. It's a useful sort of thing. We sowed it in our collective farm, three hectares of it. Got a good bit out o' it, too. Several thousand. Eh, it's good to get a smell of it. Stuff it in your pockets, we'll have it instead of tea."

The column halted. Their way was blocked by a rainwater pool with steeply sloping banks. Somebody noticed a large white stone, and began to roll it down to the pool, but the first men had already passed it; some took a run and jumped it, others waded through it and crawled up the far bank and went on, without waiting for the last ones who came running to overtake them. The sky was beginning to clear, stars shone out through the rifts in the clouds. A cold, cutting wind blew from the north, such as sometimes comes in May after

warm almost summer-like days, when a sharp frost nips the flowering orchards during the night. From the direction of Lipitsy village occasional sleepy machine-gun rounds could be heard, and the glow of rockets would flicker over the clouds.

"One collective farm in our parts sowed a hectare of roses," the same soldier who had told about the mint, said to his comrades. "Everybody laughed at them—fooling about, they said, stuff for women, growing flowers. But how much d'ye think they made out o' them roses?"

"Sold 'em in bouquets, or what?"

"No, gave'em to the State like the other stuff. What would ye call roses, now, in the ordinary way? Why, just flowers, and that's all. But them scientists calls 'em senshul-oil. They make an oil out o' them rose leaves. They say they can get a pood of oil out of a hectare, and that's worth ten thousand."

"Oho! That's the sort of oil to eat wi' yer porridge!"

"Ye wouldn't eat much of it. No good for food. Need to know what it's good for. Like perfume, for instance, you can't drink it, it's revolting. No good for food. . . ."

"But there's one thing, ye know, not so bad," the soldier with the soft singing tenor continued rather more loudly, after a short pause. "On a big farm to have all sorts of trash between your fields of wheat and buckwheat and sunflower and the like—if one doesn't do well, the other'll make up for it, ye can always be sure of getting something. In our farm we sowed colianders. They call them senshul oils, too. Well, I dunno just what they uses 'em for, but they stink plenty. Just like bedbugs. Ye start sneezing when ye're a kilometre away, and when ye start to thresh 'em ye need a gasmask. And then...."

"That's enough threshing and talk!" suddenly said Petrenko, under his breath, as he appeared out of the darkness from somewhere to the side. "Hayseeds! Herdsmen! Leave your threshing till you get home!"

"Yes, Lieutenant," whispered the talkative soldier and said no more.

For some minutes the battalion advanced in complete silence. It was Petrenko himself who broke it.

"Not colianders, but corianders," he flung back over his shoulder, as he quickened his step to catch up with the head of the column. "Who was that talking about essential oils, you, Zavalishin? Cor-ianders. And not senshul oils, but es-sential oils, that's what it's called. Understand? Because those plants contain the oils which are essential, that is, necessary, in the perfumery industry. That's value, it's gold! And before the war a pood of rose oil cost not ten thousand rubles, but fifty-five thousand, if you want the exact figures. Don't straggle, there! Step out, at the back! When we come to a gulley we'll have a smoke."

Spivak involuntarily smiled at the battalion commander's correction.

"Always the agronomist! Doesn't like inaccuracy anywhere!"

The battalion was flanking Lipitsy. They had headed left, intending to proceed eight kilometres up to the three hillocks at the fork in the road—marked on the map as 174.3—and then to turn sharp right, and come out in the German rear.

A dark figure detached itself from the head of the column.

"Halt!"

Spivak recognized Petrenko's voice. The battalion commander went a little to the side and sat down. Spivak joined him.

"Who's that?" asked Petrenko. "You, Captain? What do you think, Pavlo Grigoryevich, have we done eight kilometres?"

Spivak and Petrenko, when they were alone, often dropped formalities and addressed each other by name instead of rank.

"Eight kilometres?" said Spivak. "I should think so. We started at nine, and now,"—he glanced at the luminous dial of his wrist-watch—"it's ten fifty-five. Yes, we've come that far. What are you looking at, Mikola?"

"The three hillocks should be here, according to the map. There's something over there, can't make out whether it's them or clouds."

Spivak spread his waterproof cape out on the ground and squatted down. The darkness of earth and sky merged into one another. The horizon was lost in the clouds still covering part of the sky.

"If you look," said Spivak, laughing at the thought that had flitted into his head, "for anything at night, you lie down on the ground? Where's that custom come from, Mikola? It's the habit of a plainsman, a peasant! Isn't it? For instance, you're grazing the oxen, in a night of May, you crawl into an old stack, dig yourself snug into the straw, warm up and fall asleep. You wake up—and where are your oxen? Made off. You jump up out of the stack, lie down on the ground and start looking all round. Where've they gone to? The devils. You can see them clearer against the sky. Suddenly you see something moving on Okhrim's winter grain, looks like horns. Off you go there quick, before old Okhrim sees you! But before you know it he is after you, and gives it you good and plenty. And next day the master adds his bit when he learns that the oxen have been in the grain. Ever herded them, Mikola? They're wicked beasts. If one gets it into his head that the grass tastes better in a certain place, he'll be off there straight as a die, like a drunken Jerry in a psychological attack, no matter what you do. I once found them twenty kilometres away, at Kapustin village."

"So you're starting too, Pavlo Grigoryevich, to think about oxen," said Petrenko. "Were you home?"

"Sure I was home," Spivak replied, and the smile was still in his voice. "Saw the folk do their sowing. Even took the plough myself."

Over towards the village the sky was already slightly lighter, there was a faint pale blue glow on the clouds—either something on fire there, or else the Germans getting nervous, sensing a ring closing in on them during the night, and sending up rockets again. Against the lighter sky three humps could be plainly seen not far away—three hillocks rising in the steppe.

"There they are," said Petrenko, and rose to his feet. "Follow me, quick march!"

With every hundred metres the crackle of machine-guns ahead sounded louder. Again they found themselves walking over hard ground—old, dry, brittle growth amid young shoots.

In a shallow dip, beside a deserted steppe well, Petrenko halted his battalion and sorted it out by companies.

"Lie down! Company commanders here! Gorbenko, Nezameyev! Lieutenant Dobrovolsky, give them three more tommy-gunners. Reconnoitre the outskirts of the village. They probably have trenches there too. Some devil's sending up tracer bullets. Get through to the road. Take clippers, there may be barbed wire."

Stretched out on the ground, Petrenko brought tobacco and a fragment of newspaper from his pocket, rolled a cigarette, covered himself with his waterproof cape and began to smoke for the first time that night. To right and left of him, fanwise, heads close together, legs spread out, lay the company commanders who had come for orders. Somewhere behind them, telephone operators rolled up their bobbin, bringing the line from the regimental command post.

Petrenko, orientating himself by some tall building on the border of the village, standing out dimly in the darkness, and the church and windmill, barely visible in the light of occasional rockets, gave preliminary instructions as to the places from which the companies should attack, where the machine guns should be placed, and what the tommy-gunners should do. Meanwhile Spivak and the Party organizer, Junior Lieutenant Rodionov, an elderly, bewhiskered man of huge size, a former Odessa docker, assembled the political workers. "Who can we choose?" Spivak asked the Party organizer. Cautiously, in order not to disturb the other men who were resting, Rodionov summoned one after another from the companies, and Spivak began to talk with them.

"New? Back to the front from hospital? But new, as far as we're concerned? That's what I mean. . . . Where did you fight? On the southern and fourth Ukrainian fronts? Stalingrad? Good . . . . What were you in civil life? What was your work? Technician? And you've done a bit of fighting. You'll be a political worker. Think you can manage it? Never mind. I'll help you. Need a bit of ardour about it. Not a case of ring the bell and put it away. . . . Well, lie down and sleep for a bit, we'll talk some more later on."

"Ever retreated?" he asked another one.

"Yes, Captain. From Kerch in 1942. In the Kuban."

"And where have you advanced from?"

"From Tuapse. Took Rostov. Took Kiev."

"I see. Gone right through the school. All ten classes. What family have you? How many relatives fighting?"

"Well, if you count all my brothers and first cousins, all Ossipovs, then there's eighteen of us right now, Captain."

"Good. . . . Sniper?"

"A bit, when we're on defence."

"Kept count?"

"Twenty seven today."

"So. . . . And how do you fire—enjoy killing 'em, or just for the interest of it like shooting hares?"

"I use armour-piercing incendiaries, Captain. If they fall I can see at once when they begin to burn. Then I know I've got 'em all right. Even if they're only wounded, they'll finish wi' roasting."

Spivak collected fifteen political workers, and talked to them.

"We're getting not so far from the border, Comrades," he said. "I don't know about you, but I shan't be able to rest quiet if those Germans who lived in our towns and villages, saw our Black Soil region, and ate our bread, grapes, cherries and lard return home alive. Swine have a short memory. They say a pig forgets the stick, but remembers where he swilled. I came back from home not long ago. Do you know what everybody there's thinking, as they lay the first bricks on the ruins? Lord help us, they think, to restore our life again, live even a better life than before, and make it strong enough to last for ever. People who've lived two years under the Germans ask us to give them such a drubbing that they'll never come back again. Of course, our diplomates will be talking to our Allies about the ordering of the world after the war—what to do so that fascism can never come to life again and spue up another Hitler in Germany in twenty or thirty years. That'll be specially discussed at the peace conference. Well, all that's not the job for our soldiers' heads, we shan't go to the conference to settle all that. Our diplomacy today's very simple, as simple as a shell from a gun—to encircle them and destroy them.

"Remember that your battalion will be operating on a very important sector. When they're pressed from the other side, they'll all make a dash for a way out to the rear, that is, if they don't raise their hands at once, and they'll try to make a breakthrough. It's your job to stop them! Whatever they do, don't let them through! Not a single one of them must get away. That's what you must get firmly into your own heads and make the others understand it. More traps — that's the orders for the army. Today, we've got a trap set too. Not a big one, it's true, not any Korsun-Shevchenkovsky, but we can catch a rabbit in it all right. Clear, eh? No questions? How is it with fighting equipment? All got anti-tank grenades? Enough cartridges and anti-tank rifles? The artillery may come up to us too, but for the present we'd better depend on ourselves only. There'll be some hot fighting.

"Well, that's all I wanted to say to you, Comrades. You pass it on to the men in any way you like. How you put it—that's your business. Find the words that'll get there. Now go and rest for the present. We'll see how things are in the morning. I'll ring up headquarters, find out what they've heard by radio, and let you know."

Petrenko finished by giving some orders.

"The first to break into the village must light a strawstack, only not one on the edge but further in. If it's on the edge it'll light

up our own men. Just one, you don't need more. Don't burn them for nothing. Don't think too much about running after spoils. If you happen across some dump, leave a guard, and the rest go on. You, Osadchi, will take the right flank, see you don't make any mistake—the third battalion has some captured machine-guns, don't mistake them for German because of the sound. My command point is here. Advance on that tall house. That's about all. Any questions?. . ." Petrenko yawned. "Place the companies! If there are any changes after the patrol comes back I'll send runners to you."

Stooping, so as to keep under cover of the tall weeds, the company commanders went to their units. After he had gone a little way, Osadchi suddenly remembered something, ran back to Petrenko, and squatted down beside him.

"Lieutenant! Give me some matches!"

"What d'ye want matches for?" asked Petrenko sleepily.

"To set the straw afire. You always told us: 'Plan everything to the last detail,' and I've just thought that none of us has any matches, we've all got flint and steel, but while you're chipping at them things, Jerry can split your head ten times over from the back o' ye. Mine's all gone too. I've got a box, but not a match in it."

"You're a nuisance," and Petrenko turned over onto his side, preparing to sleep in earnest. "You can set it alight with a tracer bullet. . . . Have the men got them?"

"Yes. . . . It's right you are, we can use chasers! And I never thought of it!"

"So, so. . . . Well," and Petrenko took a lighter from his pocket, "here's that too, just in case. Give it me back after the battle. . . . So you're hoping to be the first in?"

"O' course I shall. In command of a platoon—I won't be dropping behind, Lieutenant, and I guess I shan't be in the back o' the company either."

"Good. We'll see. Go along with you now."

Osadchi rose.

"But they're not chasers, they're tracers," Petrenko said to his retreating form, as he pulled his cape over his head. "From the word—trace, show where they've gone. Time for you to know that, Junior Lieutenant." And with a soft snore he fell asleep.

The patrol brought back no news. The village appeared to be undefended from that side. The rockets, the machine-gun fire, had all come from the side where the other battalions were preparing the attack. On one part of the common the scouts had come across some trenches, but they were empty; perhaps the rain had forced Jerry out of his trenches to take shelter in the cottages. But in the first houses, which the scouts had examined, there were neither Germans nor inhabitants. There was no barbed wire by the village. The trenches did not form a continuous line, nor was there a general communication trench.

"Good," said Petrenko in a voice hoarse with sleep and dampness. "Very good, but not quite good enough. You've found out just exactly nothing. The German's not such a fool as not to protect his rear. If he's decided to hold on here, then he covered his rear as well. Can't be otherwise. Quick march, back with you! If you can't get back before the attack one of you come to me and report, the others join the first sub-unit you see."

After the scouts had gone, Petrenko did not lie down again. Two hours were left before the beginning of the attack.

"Well, Pavlo Grigoryevich," he said, turning over on his side towards Spivak "how are things back at home? Tell me a bit."

Spivak moved a little closer.

"Well, what shall I tell you. Everything's in order. . . . Read your letter. . . . Your folks are living in the collective farm. My wife went to live with my sister in Zolotonosha when the Germans got to our village. . . . There nobody knew her. Your wife, I suppose, has written you—they were all in Alma-Ata. Now everybody's back again. Working in the collective farm. All alive and well."

Spivak named all their acquaintances who had been killed at the front or in partisan columns, or butchered by the Germans—collective farmers, teachers, members of village Soviets, workers in the district. Petrenko preserved a gloomy silence. He already knew most of it from his wife's letter. It was only occasionally that he interrupted Spivak with a question—how this one had died, when, on what front, or with a surprised exclamation: "Wha-a-at? He's gone too?"

"Yes, a cyclone's passed over. Sorrow in every house. . . Well, those left alive are all there. Luka Gavrilovich is chairman of our collective farm. Semyon Karpovich is first secretary of the district committee. Fedchenko's in the district executive committee. . . ."

Both were silent for a little while.

"The Germans have ravaged the district badly, Mikola," Spivak continued. "You'd never know the farm. They burned down the buildings, the land's all weeds. The equipment's smashed. Out of seven cars and lorries, there's only the radiator of the big car lying there in the garage. On the farms, there's nothing but new-born cattle, the whole herd'll have to be raised anew. You could reckon the loss at three million. And the people, what they've suffered, and are still suffering, you cannot count that up in money."

"But all the same, what's happening there now? How's the sowing getting along? Will they get it done?"

"Yes, they'll get it done. They'll manage. . . . They say: we're going to raise grain for the Red Army, and you fight. When the Ukraine will contribute her share towards the country's grain supply—that'll make things easier. Even in the winter they gave grain and potatoes to the Red Army Fund. But I looked at those that are feeding us, Mikola, those children and old folks, and our workers in the district, and I saw the conditions under which they're restoring the farms. I swear that's a front too, and not a bit easier than ours. . . . They'll get the sowing done. They'll plough with what tractors they've got, they'll work with the horses our vets sent them, they'll plough with cows, and with their own hands—they dig the ground with spades. They finished the early sowing while I was there. And the amazing thing is, they finished almost in the same

time as we did before the war. Only the sown area's smaller. They'll manage the sowing none so badly. That's the easiest part. Weeding and harvesting—that'll be more of a job."

For a long time Spivak lay rolling a cigarette in his chilled fingers. Finally he licked the paper and stuck it down.

"I couldn't say which is stronger there just now, Mikola," he continued. "Grief, sorrow, or thirst for a good life. Those ruins can affect people two ways. The weaklings are frightened and discouraged, but the strong ones work so that you can almost see the sparks coming from under their hands. They've been longing to work in freedom. There was work enough under the Germans, of course—but how did they work, that's the point. The folks were driven to the fields with whips and sticks. They didn't plant gardens, they didn't try to increase the herds. But now it's different. Here they'll be mending a fence, there putting up a cottage, making a chicken house out of a wrecked lorry. Life goes on. You mourn those that are gone, but you want to go on living. Things are very, very hard, but people say: we've got over many a hard time in our lives.

"Do you know who it was that pleased me especially in the district, Mikola?" Spivak continued, after lighting his cigarette under the shelter of his cape, and holding it with the glowing end hidden in his curved palm.

"Who was it?"

"Petro Akimovich Romashenko, the director of our machine and tractor station. Grand fellow! Working ten times better than before the war. In those days there was nothing to single him out among the others. Nothing special. Just average. He himself, you remember, was always ill, always speaking of going south, something wrong with his stomach, and his medicine was a half glass of mineral water to a half glass of vodka. But now he's working like a trojan. Working miracles, you might say. He used to have seventy tractors, and now he's collected odd parts from all over the fields, a bit here and a bit there, from the whole district, and repaired a hundred and seventy lorries and forty-seven tractors, he's even been able to give some to other stations. Got the workshop repaired in two weeks. Got lathes together from scrap. There was no petrol to set the machines going, so he turned a combine motor into a gas generator and managed well with blocks. Somewhere at the front the Germans bombed a store of spare parts, so off he went there, and collected bearings and wheels.... He has the same folk working for him as everybody else—old men that have already been pensioned for years, girls and children. But they've all got the real fighting spirit. Organized some "Voskresniks",[1] put up cottages for workers who lost their homes in the invasion. Sometime long ago, before there were any collective farms, Romashenko used to be a stove setter, you know, so he remembered his old job, and set the stoves in the cottages himself on the "Voskresniks." When they told me in the collective farm how well the tractors were working—girls driving them for the first time got through eight hectares—how they got the farms through their sowing, how the director didn't sleep nights, but went round the brigades helping to start the engines or set the shares—well, when I met him in the street I just took and kissed him. He feels a bit awkward with men from the front. I should say he hasn't quite the right understanding of the role of the rear, although he's working there himself. He's about our age, he could have been in the army too, but they kept him back—he was needed there. He was a year beyond the Volga, and six months in reserve somewhere. In a word, never saw fighting. And he's pretty peeved about it. . . . Here's the war coming to an end, and he hasn't killed a single Jerry. But I told him: 'Look here, Petro Akimovich. The Order of Lenin is given for service both in the field and in civil life. It's the kind of distinction, that you can never tell if a man's got it at the front or in the rear. You go on working the way you're doing now, get the harvest in first in the district, and you'll have the Order of Lenin—and you can count yourself a real fighter.'

"In general, you might say, Mikola, that things are moving back there. The devastation's bad, of course, but life's going on. . . ."

Spivak fell silent for some minutes.

"Yes, it's all quite good, Mikola," he continued. "Of course, you have to take the word 'good' relatively. You can't compare it with prewar days. Well, there're two MTS's working in the district already! The collective farms were organized again from the very first day. The Germans didn't succeed in shaking the people's determination to have them. In our farm there was only one old woman, Solokha, who under the Germans found some sort of a three-legged wounded old nag and cured it, and when the collective farm was set up again she stuck out for a fortnight, didn't want to hand it over to the farm stables. They had to talk to her and point out again all the advantages of collective farming, and remind her how she'd lived before the war—how many tons of grain she'd received for the work she did, all the sugar she'd got as premium for her work on the beets—she always had two sacks of the best sugar in her cupboard. When she remembered the sugar, she cried over the horse a bit, they say, and then took him to the common stables. She's working as group leader in the third brigade now, dug more ground for sowing than anyone else. She and her group have earned more than seventy workdays already. And her horse brings water for the tractors. People lived in collective farms for twelve years before the war,—they had a chance to see for themselves what's better. Everybody's dreaming of getting everything back as it was.

"But all the same, there's a lot of complications there. It's not only the difficulties with the work. One thing I don't like is that some of the people don't always quite find their way about in the conditions and don't always see the new demands that life makes on them just now."

[1] From the word Voskresenye—Sunday. Voluntary work done in free time for some social object.

Evidently it was only now, when he began to tell in detail about affairs in the district, that Spivak began to bring his thoughts and impressions into some sort of order. He spoke with long pauses. Petrenko did not often interrupt him with questions, feeling that he would tell the main things by himself.

"There's some folks that can't get right in their heads what's been happening. . . . There were the Germans—dark night. Soviet power came—day. There may be ruins and devastation all round, but it's day. Victory is being won at a big cost. Every person should feel that law and justice has returned. Every question has to be approached carefully, thoughtfully, and no fool must be allowed to cloud our joy in victory. It mustn't be tolerated—not in a single collective farm, not in a single family! . . ."

"And are there such cases?"

"Yes. . . ."

"Just what is it you're thinking of, Pavlo Grigoryevich?"

It was so long before Spivak replied that Petrenko put another question.

"Who were the police in our farm?"

"There were three of them. Maxim Yukhno, Pavlo Gorbach. . . ."

"I thought as much. As soon as the Germans overran our parts, I thought at once, those are the ones that'll be our butchers."

"Yukhno and Gorbach, yes. Yukhno took his father's old house, where the third brigade had been, and went running about all over the place trying to get the mill back. As for Pavlo Gorbach, during the war he ended his term for theft somewhere near Lvov, he came with the Germans. . . . The third was Kolka Kravchenko."

"Don't know him. What Kravchenko? A-a-ah! That lad who used to train the young horses on the stud farm?" cried Petrenko. "Our trainer? The one who got a premium for a foal's traning? Wha-a-at! That Kolka?"

"That very same. . . Lord alone knows what bit him. Born in 1926. Grown up in the collective farm. What quarrel had he with Soviet power? They say it happened this way—he wanted to get out of going to Germany. That was when they were mobilizing the young folk. What was he to do to stop them from taking him? Well, he found a way out, signed up for the police. And his father, the old fool, hadn't the sense to talk him out of it. They thought it would be the same as it was before in the village—all the policemen had to do was deliver summons and call village gatherings. But then it turned out to be very different. They were given rifles. And that was when his father told him: 'Nay, lad, something wrong here. Giving you a rifle instead of a baton. You'll be finding yourself shooting your own folks next.' And Kolka himself could see by that time that it wasn't all what he'd thought, but then it was too late. He walked about the village armed, drove prisoners, guarded arrested people in the commandant's quarters. But whoever you ask, they all stand up for him now. 'Never saw any brutality rom h m,' they say. This is the sort of thing they tell. The commandant came to hold a meeting, gave orders for the people to come at five in the evening, and when two girls were some minutes late, ordered them to have twenty-five strokes of the lash. His eye happened to fall on Kravchenko at that moment, and it was him he ordered to lash them. Kolka took them into the office, an empty room—the girls themselves told me about it—and went as white as the ceiling. 'Now, girls,' he said, 'scream as loud as you can, and when you leave, go out crying.' And then he gave the strokes on his own boot. He let them out, came to the club and reported to the commandant: 'Your orders carried out, Sir.' He served in the police two months and then he ran away. I don't know if he made for his relatives—he had folks in Mirgorod—or whether he tried to get to the front, to join ours, or maybe the Germans killed him somewhere on the way. Nothing heard of him to this day. And now there's his Dad left—a hard-working man, he'd been a day labourer in the old days, and his mother, who had worked in the pigsties in the collective farm and never had less than four or five hundred workdays, she was counted a Stakhanovite. His brother's in the Red Army. Now the family is branded—the family of a policeman under the Germans. . . ."

Petrenko wanted to ask Spivak something, but the latter, without hearing him, continued speaking, excited by what he was telling.

"It was difficult, Mikola, for the people to live under the Germans. . . . Forty-two boys and girls from our farm were driven off to Germany. I don't even dare to tell you who they all were. They were so desperate at being dragged from their homes, they were even ready to cripple themselves, if only they could keep off that train taking them to Germany. Some did. Scalded their hands with boiling water, or poisoned their legs with something. They say the Germans had them examined very thoroughly by a medical commission, to see that there was no blemish on their bodies, scared of bringing some infection into Germany. . . . Well, they flogged the collective farmers, I've told you that already. The commandant flogged them, the foremen rode about on a motor-cycle, and beat up the people on the steppe. What the devil! Some Gorbach or Yukhno could shoot a man like a dog, just like that, and nothing would happen to him—he'd say it was for sabotage, and that was enough! In the Dawn Farm they hanged the brigade leader, Zinchenko, he'd had an exhibit in the Union Agricultural Exhibition, had a medal. He hung there for a week with his medal on his shirt. . . . They hanged people in the district town, on the square in front of the cinema . . . . Yes, it was a hard and difficult life. You've got to take that into account. . . . Take our beekeeper, Granddad Okhrim—two of his daughters were Young Communists, his son a lieutenant, a tankist—when the Germans came, do you know what the old man did out of fear? Presented a pig to the commandant. And now he gets no peace because of that pig. 'Germans' bootlicker,' they call him. He unburdened his conscience to me. 'You see, Pavlo Grigoryevich,' he said, 'I was just scared for the children. It's terrible to see death. When-

ever you'd go to the town, you'd see it. Always new ones hanging there by the cinema now. And my two girls are both Young Communists, everybody knows it, and knows how they criticised Hitler and wrote placards against the Germans and hung them in the club. So I killed a good-sized pig and took it along. Gave it them as a sort of bribe. And I thought, well, anyway, today I give it them myself, and tomorrow they'll take all the pigs and cows and calves from the folks anyway. What's the difference?' I told him: 'There is a difference, Okhrim Ignatyevich. The difference is that you humbled yourself before the enemy, while the others didn't humble themselves in front of tommy-guns or the gallows, they kept their self-respect. But all the same,' I told him, 'I wouldn't be too stern with you for it. I'd give you a chance to work it off. There's twelve hives left, you saved those and that's good. Now you work so that in three or four years we have three hundred, as we had before the war, so that there's honey by the ton, help to make everything grow and flourish, so that we can forget all about those Germans for ever, curse them!. . . ' It's a big question, that, Mikola, to judge every man, how he behaved when the Germans were there," Spivak continued. "But we've got to settle it. If they sent me now to work in some liberated collective farm, that's what I'd begin with. Why, there, at home, they had a manager of the estate, and brigade leaders. There were some that took on the job willingly, and some were chosen by the people. Do you know who was brigade leader on the vegetable patches under the Germans? Miron Makovets, that old man who always spoke so sensibly at the meetings. Well, the collective farmers themselves chose him. He didn't want to take it on, he kept refusing for a long time, but they persuaded him. 'If it isn't you, Miron Fomich, then they'll set somebody else over us, all the same. Don't worry, they said, 'we'll rely on you. You'll treat us right, and we'll not let you down.' Well, of course, he worked because he was forced to it. If anything wasn't delivered on the date set, there was a thousand ruble fine for him to pay as responsible leader of the brigade. He carried out orders. But he treated the folks properly. No beatings, no cursing—nothing of all that. Just as in the collective farm, he chose the people for the work, let them off when they were ill, and saw that nursing mothers had a section near home. Although he had no connections with our folks working underground, didn't know anybody, had nobody to tell him what to do, and doesn't brag any now, still the old man worked as though he was one of the underground lot himself. In his brigade they read Soviet leaflets openly, helped families of Red Army men out of their common stocks. They pickled twenty barrels of cabbage for the Germans and the whole lot rotted—mixed something or other with it. Just before the Germans retreated they saved six pair of oxen — drove them into a hut, piled old straw over the door and crept in through the roof at night to feed them. Today the vegetable brigade's working like no other. Now judge for yourself. Speaking formally, he worked as brigade leader for the Germans. So he is a bootlicker too. But how did he work? Ask the people about that. Then there's the manager, Timokha Kozinsky. . . ."

"Kozinsky was manager? Timofei Markovich? Our stud man?"

"Yes, so there it is, Mikola Ilyich," Spivak continued. "If I were chairman of a collective farm now, this is what I'd say: these are my people, I've got to work with them. I'd check up on them myself. I'd enquire about every man at a general meeting. We weren't there at home at the time, we didn't see it all, we don't know. But the folks themselves are hot against the traitors. If you ask at the meeting they won't cover anybody. A man w expose his own brother. That is, of course, if he really was a German bootlicker. But I wouldn't let anybody try to wipe out some old score under cover of it. What worse charge can you bring against a person than that he's a servant of the Germans? I'd check up on it all myself. I, as chairman, should be the brains, the father, I've got to live with the people. And I swear the sowing would go still better, and the weeding and the harvesting. . . . But such as Prokopchuk, who came to our farm, I'd just throw him out. To send such representatives to the collective farm now, in an important time, it's the same as appointing some veterinary as head surgeon in a hospital for serious cases. . . ."

"You're talking as though I'd been there at home with you, and knew all the details," said Petrenko. "What Prokopchuk? When did he come? Before the war or now? What's wrong with him?"

"What Prokopchuk? There's only one in the district. Vaska Prokopchuk, chairman of the district consumers' cooperative. Came for preparing the spring sowing. Not before the war, but now, after liberation. Don't you know that chatterer? He's messed everything up, they say so, you'd need a shovel to sweep it all up. Because of one dirty bitch, he lumped all the women together with her, shouted at them: 'A o you here ran around with the Jerries!'"

Somewhere in the darkness a lark awakened, and its voice sounded from the ground. Another close by answered it. The sky was still densely dark, the east was no lighter, but the first birds were already preparing to greet the morning. Neither Spivak nor Petrenko stirred to glance at their watches. It was not the first sleepless night they had spent on the steppe, and they were long since accustomed to judge the time by the stars, the dew, the freshness in the air and the birds. From the larks' awakening to the dawn would be an hour and a half. How could those larks sense the coming of morning? Perhaps, like man, by the stars? Or perhaps they could hear sounds too fine for human ears—the twittering of birds somewhere far to the east, where the sun rises earlier?

"That's how I'd begin, Mikola Ilyich," Spivak continued, "If suddenly an order from the People's Commissar for Defence, Stalin, took me away from this place back to some collective farm, I'd begin with the people. Even oxen and cows do not go to the fields by themselves, but must be driven by man.

Raise that man's spirit and he'll repay you twice and thrice as much, just for the joy of it. Am I right? Those are the times we're living in. . . ."

"Yes, Mikola," Spivak went on, "there's a lot of complications there. You meet some person, some Fedot or Malashka, you look at them, talk to them, and you think, yes, they're the same and yet not the same. How much poison the Germans tried to drop into their hearts while we were away! For two years their children didn't go to school, they read no Soviet newspapers, while the Germans kept stuffing them with all sorts of rubbish about land and their New Order. And then on the other hand you think—how much those folks have seen that even we at the front never had to see? Do you know, Mikola, not long ago a correspondent from some newspaper came to the Shock Worker Collective Farm, talked to the farmers in the brigades, took several photographs, and then after he'd gone there was a rumour current that this was a German spy, making up new lists of Stakhanovites for Hitler. . . .

"And there's some there, who still live with the memories of the past. In all the time since the district's been liberated, Semyon Karpovich has only been to our farm once. The people are waiting for the secretary of the Party district committee, Comrade Serdyuk, or the chairman of the district executive committee, the representative of governmental authority, to come and talk to them man to man, sort out all the knotty questions; and they send Vaska Prokopchuk, whom I wouldn't trust to read a newspaper to the men, the son of a bitch who would mix up even what was before him, black on white. Puts in his own ideas of it all, so that instead of 'Help your comrades in battle' you get: 'Each for himself and the devil take the hindmost.'"

"But why doesn't Serdyuk come to us?" asked Petrenko.

"I suppose he looks at it this way: A good, well-run collective farm, an experienced chairman, he'll manage. . . . In fact, Semyon Karpovich was never too keen on travelling. He had his own way of working, by telephone. . . . He'd ring up, twist someone's tail, and give orders without ever moving from his table. Liked his telephone better than his car. Well, but then he had people he could rely on. But now they haven't even the car—some kind of a Rumanian cart with no springs, and they have to share it with Fedchenko, the chairman of the district Executive committee. But with things as they are now, in spite of all the transport difficulties, I'd cut off those telephones that still remain somewhere in the village Soviets, devil take them, throw them into the swamp so that they shouldn't have any ersatz for live, man-to-man connections with the farms. . . . But what's Jerry doing?" Spivak rose to his knees, looking towards the village. "Nothing to be seen or heard. Can they have sloped off already? No, they're firing from over the other side. Maybe there aren't so many of them here as the reports said?"

"We'll see when we get there," said Petrenko. "I'm not so very keen on this silence, Pavlo Grigoryevich."

"Same here," replied Spivak.

He looked at his watch. Twenty minutes left before the beginning of the preliminary barrage. The regimental and divisional artillery were to open the battle. Both men remained silent for a little while, one collecting his thoughts to sum up, the other turning over in his mind what he had heard from his comrade.

"Did you talk to Serdyuk about all you've told me?" asked Petrenko at last.

"Not in detail. I went to the district committee three times, but there were always a lot of people about, he was busy, and I didn't want to discuss it all before a crowd. One thing I must say, though, Mikola, it was really good to see all the same old people on their jobs. It was well thought out, preserving the forces. There's Fedchenko; there's Semyon Karpovich, Nikitchenko and others—all men who know the district inside out, and don't need three months to get their bearings. The district wasn't a single day waiting for the Soviet authorities once the Germans were gone. . . . You know how they returned? Together with the troops, right after the advanced units. A whole supply column of them. In Krasny they helped the sappers to repair the bridges and make crossings. It's all very good, you can't complain. Only that some of them are still working in the same old way—that's not so good. . . . Things can be run in various ways, Mikola. You can bring back the life folks had before the war in ten years, or you can do it in three, like Zavalishin intends to build the cowsheds again."

"You know what, Pavlo Grigoryevich," said Petrenko. "Write to Serdyuk. This isn't the way—you went home, left again and never talked it over with him. It's not for me to teach you what to do, you're a Party worker. Take some time and just write all that you've told me. Or else we'll write it together. Eh?"

Spivak thought for a moment.

"All right, we'll write. . . . But how can I put it all on paper? You know, it'll lose force. You can't use every kind of language in a letter. Or maybe, better not to pitch into him too strongly? I do respect Semyon Karpovich, all the same, Mikola. I always liked him because he never made long speeches and didn't keep people pinned down at meetings till morning, but said what he had to say in a couple of words and settled it all. He's no fool, the old man, but he's just a bit heavy to shift."

"A bit heavy, yes," said Petrenko. "And that's where the trouble lies."

"All right, let's write," said Spivak, already fired with the idea. "Let it be a kind of comradely letter home from the front. We'll write this sort of way: Our district, Semyon Karpovich, is not a large one, not distinguished in any way, there were no Moscow salutes about it when it was liberated, but all the same, we servicemen want to see it a leading district in the coming period of restoration. After all, it's our district, our home. . . . We dream of

our district, our home. . . . We dream of coming home to find a sack of white flour in the cupboard. There is nobody who so longs for the scent of ploughed fields and flowering gardens as a soldier does."

Spivak glanced at his watch again.

"Zero hour, to the dot. Now, it'll start."

The words were not out of his mouth when the first shells burst beyond the village, coming from the side where the main forces of the regiment were preparing their attack. The sound followed several seconds after the burst. Everything was still quiet. They could see the shells bursting, silently, swiftly, like flashes of distant lightning—and over their heads, in the faintly greying sky, the larks were still trilling, and the sound of the nightingales still came from the gardens on the outskirts of the village. Then the roar began. The shells were falling four kilometres away. The separate explosions could not be distinguished at that distance, they merged into one general roar.

For exactly fifteen minutes, according to orders, from beyond the village came a roar and flash as our guns pounded the main line of the German fortifications. The enemy did not reply. At the end of the fifteen minutes, when the barrage began to die down, the first German gun thundered from the village. The burst came far on the horizon—they were firing at the Soviet batteries. Simultaneously, three rockets soared up from the side where the German shells burst, and after describing a sharp curve scattered in crimson sparks on the steppe.

The battalion commander, broad-shouldered, a head shorter than Spivak, rose and stared silently before him in the dimness, as though trying to see the grasses waving and distinguish the whereabouts of his companies making their way to the village. Spivak unfastened his cape with chilled fingers, and threw it off. In the night it had warmed him little, now it was quite useless, for in battle, even on the hottest days, the captain always shivered from nervous tension.

"Where are you going?" Petrenko asked him.

"To Osadchi," Spivak replied.

And everything apart from the dawning battle—home, collective farm, Semyon Karpovich, the sowing—disappeared from his mind.

III

Spivak and his fellow-villager Petrenko had long ago lost count of the battles they had fought. War is no continual attack, even during an offensive.

It is not always that one and the same division, one and the same regiment pierces the enemy defences, breaks his resistance, and attacks, storms and captures large settlements. Sometimes a neighbour to right or left takes the main brunt of the fighting —attacks, drives a wedge, upsets the enemy's plans, threatens him with encirclement, so that even before the second division attacks, the Germans have nothing left to do but leave their defences and run, to escape being caught in a "sack." Such troops then move ahead in forced marches, in columns, as though on manœuvres, fearing only one thing—to lose touch with the enemy and find themselves in the awkward position of having nobody to fight. This had also fallen to the lot of Spivak and Petrenko—to march for weeks without any long rests or halts, without meeting a single smashed tank, a single corpse on the way, seeing only the traces of the enemy's recent presence in the villages—smouldering buildings.

Ever since November 19th, 1942—they had both advanced from the Volga—they had often taken part in big battles. Spivak had been decorated once for Savur-Mogila and again for Cherkassy. Petrenko had been awarded the Red Star for the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky battle.

The fighting for Lipitsy began and ended just like a dozen other battles. There was sufficient confusion in the first hours, until it grew light and the morning mists which rose from the rain-soaked earth dispersed. There were many surprises, and mistakes which were corrected, right there, while the fighting was going on. Beyond the main fortifications in front of the village, which had been well ironed out by the barrage, the infantry came upon two more lines of trenches. In the village itself, there were pillboxes at every crossing, and in the gardens tommy-gun ambuscades were waiting. Lipitsy was a big village, a district centre, and it was defended by two German Jaeger battalions, badly mauled in the previous fighting, their ranks thinned, but possessing sufficient fire power. They had been given several medium tanks, which manœuvred between the gardens from one end of the village to the other.

When the solid, impatient talk of the Maxims mingled with the roar of battle on the eastern side of the village, followed by the dry rattle of tommy-guns—so they'd arrived!—Petrenko suddenly heard before him the ringing sound of German heavy machine-guns and tommy-guns, and bursting hand grenades. Here too, in the German rear, as he had expected, there was a strong guard which the patrol had missed in the night. The machine-guns were stationed in the windmill, in the trenches round it on the common, in the large house to the right by which he had orientated himself during the night—it was a two-storey rolling mill—and in a long, brick granary to the left of the road.

This was when Petrenko really could begin to direct the fighting properly, both seeing and hearing the enemy—give the company commanders and mortar-gunners their assignments afresh, and move his machine-guns. The first hours of the fighting he spent at the command post with the telephone operators, runners and tommy-gunners, moved to the mill along the gulley, and then visited Lieutenant Maznyuk's fifth company, straddling the road leading to the German rear from the village. Here he stayed till the end of the battle.

As he had expected, after sunrise the Germans, unable to hold out on the eastern outskirts and the centre of the village, made westward along the streets and through the gardens, which brought the whole weight

of the fighting onto Petrenko's battalion, A company of tank busters sent from the reserves by the regimental commander came up to reinforce them. Artillerymen galloped up with two 45-mm. guns. The expanse between the rolling mill on the right and the brick granary on the left, threaded in the middle by the road, became the scene of furious counter-attacks by the Jaegers. They attacked on the march, in full force. First they came running along in a herd, panically. They were scattered, and dispersed into the gardens, and for half an hour collected again somewhere there; the sound of commands in German and revolver shots could be heard plainly. There were "psychological" counter-attacks, both with preparatory mortar fire and without—sudden dashes supported only by machine-guns firing from the mill. There were tense moments in the fighting, when an observer might well have thought that with just a little more pressure, the Germans would break through and stream out of the village. Once when one machine-gunner was wounded or killed just as the Germans were leaving the gardens for the open square (his fingers relaxed, his head drooped to the ground), and another, his partner in cross-fire, had something wrong with his Maxim, the Germans rose to their full height. But whether it was from the machine-gunner's strong language, or the terrible look the battalion commander sent that way, the machine-gun suddenly began working again, covering the opening breach. There were such critical moments as that when the Germans sent four tanks through the gardens and along the street against Maznyuk's fifth company. The thick bushes in the hedges provided good cover for the men and their guns. The tanks came along without observing them, their turrets rotating, peppering all around them blindly with small explosive bullets from large-caliber machine-guns — bullets that burst in the grass and twigs with a sound of a revolver fired in one's ear. They were not heavy tanks, and of a type unknown to the men—old Czech or French tanks, but still—tanks. The men lay still, preparing grenades. In a silent interval between the machine-gun rounds, somebody called out:

"Those aren't Panthers, lads, those aren't Panthers!"

"What are ye shouting about?" another voice answered. "Want to go and kiss 'em for not being Panthers?"

The artillerymen settled one tank, firing point blank, at a range of fifty metres. It caught fire and halted beside a shed with a straw roof. The flames leaped over to the shed and the house. The smoke rolling over the yard made it impossible to see whether the crew succeeded in getting away or remained in the tank. The second machine, which was rolling straight along the street, hit a mobile mine fastened to a cable by two tank busters concealed in slit trenches beyond the low stone walls flanking the street. It halted, its treads dragging after it, the wheels burrowed into the ground, then it slowly turned over onto its side. The tank busters then set it alight with several shots in the engine. Tommy-gunners dealt with the crew as they jumped out of the manhole. The two tanks following turned sharply round and made for the village. After the battle, Captain Solovyev's third battalion, on the right, found them minus crews, not damaged in any way, and took possession of them as spoils of war. They were put down to his account, which annoyed Petrenko considerably. In fact, this usually quiet, reserved man later on had a heated discussion with Solovyev about it in Regimental Headquarters, calling him a "scrap-dealer."

It was about seven o'clock when the morning mists dispersed and the men had a clear view of Lipitsy. The village was about four kilometres in length, extending up a gentle slope, so that it was clearly visible from end to end in the cool rays of the morning sun. The orchards were in full blossom. The sun turned the wet thatches to gold and sparkled in the puddles on the roads. The trees shone white as though snow-covered, and the long shadows of the poplars with their narrow, unfolded leaves, cut black across the ground. Not a dog barked, not a cock crowed that morning. Mines and shells burst in the yards, and the branches of the trees were scorched by the blast and snapped off by splinters. The inhabitants had hidden in cellars. Not even the starlings were visible, the merriest and noisiest of the spring birds, those restless mimics, which during the war had learned to imitate the whistle of falling shells and bullets. Here and there a cottage was burning, set on fire by a shell. Beneath the apple trees, white and pink with blossom, rose the crimson tongues of the flames. Smoke rose—not the smoke of fires from summer kitchens, but the smoke of burning buildings.

In this battle, too, there were many of those incidents which could amuse the soldiers till the end of the war if only one lived so long, and if the fresh impressions of other battles did not erase them.

Tommy-gunner Petrusevich made his way ahead into an empty shed from which he could conveniently cover an open farmstead and the road before it. Firing through the window in the lower part, he did not notice that a German tommy-gunner was sitting in the attic of the same shed. For a long time this "combined" firepoint puzzled everybody—the ground floor firing on the Germans, the upper one—on ours. Whose was it? At last Petrusevich caught the sound of the tommy-gun above, and realized that he had a partner upstairs. He mounted a log, drove a hole through the floor under cover of the other's tommy-gun, looked through, saw the German and could think of nothing better than to catch him by the leg. Whether Jerry's ammunition was finished, or he was too startled to think of shooting Petrusevich through the floor, or whether he simply dropped his gun and it rolled too far away for him to recover it—neither the one nor the other fired. The log on which Petrusevich was standing rolled away from under his feet when the German tugged, and he was left hanging there in the air, holding a

German leg. So they stayed till the end of the battle. The young fellow, who had not yet opened his account of killed, athirst for glory, wanted to deal with Jerry himself—either to bring him to headquarters a prisoner, or at least to shoot him; but his tommy-gun was hanging by its thong, barrel downwards, and it was impossible to aim it at the German without the risk of losing the leg. It was only after the fighting was over, when the field kitchen came into the village and Petrusevich could smell boiling porridge, that the men heard a voice from the shed:

"Hey! Co-ook! Leave a portion for Petrusevich! La-a-ads, come he-e-elp!"

The soldiers, remembering the strange tommy-gun shooting from that shed during the battle, hastened to see what it was all about. The sight was unforgettable—a leg in a German topboot, with its broad shaft, dangling through a hole in the roof, and swinging from it like a pendulum, small, light Petrusevich, clutching desperately at the trousers for fear the boot might come off, furious at his lack of success, his face dripping blood from the nails of the German's boot, at the very end of his strength. Even the next day his hands were still shaking, as though he had concussion, and he was quite unable to aim with his tommy-gun. But the German, when he was dragged from the roof, could not stand without support—he had to be sent to the dressing station.

The battalion Party organizer, Rodionov, took the place of a wounded machine-gunner in a deserted cottage. A shell brought a corner of the roof down upon him. Rodionov, a huge, burly man, endured the weight without any especial difficulty, and even managed to dig his way out from under the pile of bricks, plaster, beams and straw without assistance. But before leaving, the owners of the cottage had hidden from the Germans a large feather bed and a bucket of treacle, black as tar—right there under the attic floor. Of course the bucket had to fall right on Rodionov. While his arms were still pinned down by something, the treacle trickled down over his head and down his neck to the very last drop, soaked through his tunic and underwear and even into his boots and puttees. He crawled out from under the wall, black as a moroccan soldier, with straw and feathers stuck onto every part of him. The soldiers, helpless with laughter at the sight of the junior lieutenant, forgot all about the enemy for the moment—in fact, they were quite incapable of fighting. The company commander counseled Rodionov to take himself off somewhere else. Cursing as only an Odessa docker can, he went to the rear, where the reserves were stationed under cover of the bushes, and there the tommy-gunners, doubled up with laughter, spent a whole hour scraping the treacle off him into messtins with their pocket knives, hoping that in some leisure moment they could clear it of foreign bodies and drink really sweet tea. After that, if anybody in the battalion said: "Eh, some tea would be good, but there's nothing sweet with it," someone would reply: "What d'ye mean, nothing sweet? We'll just go and scrape the junior lieutenant!"

. . . No few soldiers were led or carried by the orderlies to the gulley where Petrenko had spent the last part of the night at his command point, and where a dressing station had been set up after he left. Blood-stained puttees, torn shirts and bandages lay about on the green grass. Those of the wounded able to move surrounded the old well, dipped into it with messtins fastened to lines, drank eagerly of the rotten-smelling water and gave some to their comrades lying on the ground. The sun rose high, and shone hot as in midsummer. The drying ground steamed. Small white clouds rose above the horizon and drifted over the steppe. The supplies commander and cook arrived with bread and a field kitchen, stopped at the well, and began to serve the wounded with food.

Petrenko was already in the village with the fifth company. He had long ago sent two platoons of men from two of the companies forward along the road with machine-guns, with orders to lie down and dig in on the crest, from where reserves might come up to assist the Germans. The outcome of the fighting was now clear. The Germans could not break through. Corpses in muddy green tunics lay everywhere in the streets and gardens. No more tanks appeared. The firing was dying down. On that side of the village, it was only on the stretch occupied by the fourth company that a group of tommy-gunners with a heavy machine-gun was still stubbornly resisting in the rolling mill.

Petrenko had not seen Spivak since dawn. Sometimes he enquired of runners coming to the company about his friend. Petrenko himself had been with the fifth company. In the sixth, the mortarmen and tommy-gunners had seen nothing of the captain. Zavalishin told the battalion commander: "I was at the fourth company, I saw him with Junior Lieutenant Osadchi when they captured the Germans, but I didn't see him after. . . . You're worried about him, aren't you? I can see that. At the front, someone from your own parts is like a brother. And from the same farm, too! Real luck for you to have been fighting together . . . Eh, if I'd a fellow from my village in the company! I'd fight for him in battle, I'd try to save him." Petrenko, frowning, answered Zavalishin with the Ukrainian proverb: "You don't look after your own Dad when you're busy on a job. Heard anything like that?"

But Spivak was alive and unharmed. He had been all the time with the fourth company, which, as Osadchi had promised, had been the first to break into the village, had swiftly cleared one street, but after that had come under heavy machine-gun and artillery fire from the mill and had been forced to hug the ground. One heavy machine-gun firing from under the mill roof had been silenced after a heavy shell had smashed half the roof. Two others were firing from a narrow embrasure on the first floor. Tommy-gunners were firing from the windows of both floors. In front of the mill was an open

space — the street and a large, empty yard.

In the centre of the village the firing had died down with the exception of an occasional rifle shot; evidently the battle was over. Here and there men were finishing off the remnants of the enemy, smoking them out of cottages, disarming them, taking them prisoner. There was only the mill left. To ask for artillery fire, when the company was right beside it and the village full of our own men, was too risky a proceeding. But the Germans evidently had no intention of surrendering.

Spivak and Osadchi lay in the bushes beyond the road behind the ruins of some stone shed, thinking out the best way to finish the business as quickly as possible and have dinner.

Senior Sergeant Razumovsky was lying on the stones beside Spivak, a handsome young fellow with etched black eyebrows like those of a girl and large, dark, dreamy eyes. He was from Kharkov, and had been an electrician before the war. When Spivak had been wounded in the winter, he had still been a private; he had been utterly fearless in battle, did not know the meaning of the word "tired" on the march, and never uttered a word of complaint about the hardships of life at the front. He had come to the regiment from a partisan column operating in the Kharkov region while it was occupied, which had been disbanded when it joined up with the army. At first Razumovsky was in the regimental reconnaissance and promised to be a crack scout: but after a while he had to be transferred to a company for it appeared that it was quite useless to expect him to bring in a "tongue"[1]. In Razumovsky's group of scouts, some accident always seemed to happen to the prisoner—either he began to shout, and unfortunately the gag they stuffed into his mouth had choked him, or a chance bullet from behind got him—the result was the same. No prisoner. Evidently Razumovsky was too embittered for scouting. In the company, when crossing the Dnieper, he replaced a sergeant who fell from the pontoon during the fighting, took over command and kept it without any formal appointment. During the fighting for the right bank, in Spivak's absence, Razumovsky killed nine German soldiers and two officers in a cottage with a hand grenade, was awarded the Red Star, appointed Senior Sergeant and given command of a platoon.

Spivak remembered the heart to heart talks he had had with this silent, thoughtful, blackbrowed fellow on the march. Ever since he had begun to receive letters from home in the liberated Poltava district, and learned that his wife and children were safe, Spivak had felt rather uncomfortable when he met Razumovsky. The latter had lost his whole family during the bombing of Kharkov, he had nobody left, not a single relation in the whole world. His mother was gone, his wife, his two sisters and his brother. . . .

"This is a big turning point in the war, Captain," the silent Razumovsky had once said to the regimental political officer. "Plain to see that there'll be no resurrection for the Germans. But I don't feel any better for that. Even worse, if anything . . . . I'm afraid, Captain, afraid of that day when they'll tell us—the war's over, no more Germans to be killed. What'll I do then? The very thought drives me crazy. . . ." All that night, while the column tramped through the deep snow, Spivak told Razumovsky how hard things were for many people he knew, and how they found the courage to take it and go on living and being useful members of society. He told about one regimental doctor, an old man who had fought with Budyonny, and had lost his family twice. His first wife and two children had been killed by Makhno's bands[1] in their home in Melitopol region. His second wife and grown-up daughter had been killed during a bombing of Lvov in the very first days of the Patriotic War. And the doctor, fifty, white-headed, kept his chin up, never took an extra glass at dinner, smoked no more than other people, performed the most difficult operations, encouraged the wounded with his favourite saying: "You'll live long enough for the wedding, lad!" ordered long lists of books and papers from a doctor he knew so as to keep in touch with everything new in medicine, and after the war intended to return to some new experiments on painless childbirth.

Something rustled from behind. The commander of an anti-tank platoon crawled up on all fours.

"Comrade Junior Lieutenant! . . . Have you any orders?"

Petrenko had sent guns to the fourth company to fire point blank at the mill from the gardens.

"Prepare to attack! Grenades out!" How many times Spivak had heard those words, and they always brought him that nervous trembling. Tensing his jaw muscles, to prevent his teeth from chattering, he told the anti-tank commander:

"When we run across, cease fire. Or still better: when we are hidden beyond the mill send two or three shells into the first floor and that's all. Understand?"

Spivak knew well enough that he was no coward, remembered that he had trembled just the same and felt the same nervousness before making a speech to a large collective farm meeting, but nevertheless he hated this awkward weakness. He felt that all the men could see he was nervous.

Osadchi transmitted the command to the first and second platoons: "Prepare to attack!"

How many tommy-gunners there were in the mill—five, ten or more—it was difficult to estimate; they moved from place to place, firing from different windows. The Germans were shooting cautiously, in short bursts, sparing their ammunition, drawing out their last hour. While the artillerymen were preparing for battle, the tank busters, with a happy hit in an embrasure,

[1] A prisoner brought in for information purposes. — *Tr.*

[1] During the Civil War.

either smashed a machine-gun or else put out its crew, and silenced it.

Spivak lay and thought that this was the most difficult part of a battle—to get the men up from the ground with the muzzles of tommy-guns and machine-guns trained on them. Not so far to go—about sixty metres on the road, but it would be easier to walk from Moscow to Vladivostok than to run across this space. During the night he had told the political workers to find the right words for the men. What words would he himself find to raise them? Or perhaps no words were necessary? They had heard the command: "Prepare for the attack." Now they were lying there, looking at the commanders. Razumovsky was the sort of fellow who would dash into any hell without thinking twice about it if there were Germans there. A good half of his men were old soldiers, whom Spivak had known for a long time. They had listened to him often. What was he to say to them? That some of them, in this final minute, were looking on the sun for the last time? One would manage to run to the "safety line," the space beneath the walls out of reach of bullets from above, another would remain lying on the ground, his arms flung out as though to embrace it. But who it was that would be lying there—this was a matter of chance, that same blind chance which another time might send the bullet a half centimetre from the heart, leaving a man alive. They knew all that themselves. Knew that in spite of everything, they must get there, because there was no other way of getting at the Germans who did not want to surrender. That's what war is. The most difficult thing is to get at the enemy for that hand to hand fighting in which nobody has ever surpassed the Russian soldier.

At the first sharp shots from the small anti-tank gun, Spivak paling slightly, raised himself on his hands and looked at Razumovsky.

"Now come on, all together! For our country, Comrades!"

Doubling up his long body, he ran across the road as quickly though he were a boy again racing a friend, without looking behind him, but hearing, above the increasing firing from the mill, the beating of many heavy army boots, the men's hoarse breathing and a prolonged curse from somebody, like a prayer: "Some steel in yer bellies, for yer crazy Hitler and all his band and yer humpbacked Goebbels, ye stinking snakes, ye damned lice, twist yer guts round yer hearts and bodies!" The soldier had enough breath to run and curse at the same time, and probably the cursing helped him in that difficult and fearful moment.

Two of the platoon did not get as far as the mill. One, wounded, crawled to a stone wall and crouched under it, writhing with pain, tearing at his tunic. Another remained lying motionless, prone in the middle of the road, his arms flung wide. Beyond the mill, on its blind side, there was no cover—the same bare, rutted yard. An opening to crawl in had to be sought at once, and was found—a large shell-hole.

Spivak and Razumovsky each hurled a grenade, and followed by the men, dashed into some dark cellar littered with old iron, wood and boxes. At that moment Osadchi, hearing the bursting grenades in the mill, raised the rest of the men and ran with them to the main entrance. The artillery ceased fire. Hand to hand fighting commenced in the various parts of the mill, on the stairs, in the corridors and passages—cramped spaces which gave no room to take a good swing with a rifle butt—swift, bitter fighting. In large buildings with complicated architecture men always fight with the utmost fury, perhaps because they expect an ambush everywhere, and the continual feeling of danger at every step rouses them to frenzy. And here, too, when a German dropped his tommy-gun and raised his hands at the last moment, few of the men could restrain themselves from bayonetting him or bringing down their rifle butts with the already useless advice: "Ye should've done that before, ye swine!"

Was it really necessary for Spivak, a staff officer without any fighting unit under him, to storm the mill together with the men? Regulations say nothing about the place of the regimental political officer during a battle. Some consider it a matter to be decided by their immediate superiors—if a personal example is demanded, then they attack, if not, they can stay at the command point. Major Goryunov, regimental commander, who had known many political officers, knew by experience that it was harder to get a good political officer than to squeeze out twenty extra litres of wine for a regimental holiday, and he demanded nothing of Spivak apart from good lectures on the international situation for the regular officers, so that their brains should not atrophy in the continual marches and battles. But it was not in Spivak's character to live cautiously, neither at home, nor here at the front. In addition to this, being himself subject to moods, he did not rely too much on other people's complacency. That same Major Goryunov, who threatened to hold the political officers responsible for wounds as for breaches of discipline, might in some other mood sing a different tune: "Messed about with the Germans till evening, where was the regimental political officer?" Spivak could not have stood such pricks, even in jest. But there was also another thought which spurred him on to take part himself in the storm of the mill. Returning to the front from hospital (this was the fourth time), he always tested himself in the first fighting to make sure that he had not got soft, not lost the endurance he had gained in previous battles, that German bullets had no more terror for him now that the war was approaching its end. Today Spivak was satisfied with the test of his nerves. He had shivered, of course, as usual, but only before the dash across the road; in the mill he had had himself well in hand, he had fought coolly, as though he were boxing, back in his distant boyhood.

When the German dead were counted, it appeared that there had been twenty of

them, including a captain, three lieutenants and four NCO's. By looking back on the general run of fighting, the men were able to establish who had bayonetted or shot the various Germans, who had killed the lieutenants, who should make additions to their list of killed. Osadchi had shot one lieutenant, Andryukhin another, the third, defending himself desperately, had been bayonetted simultaneously by Abrosimov and Kryzhny, after he had wounded three men. The captain had escaped their bayonets. . . . Spivak had gone into the fight armed only with a revolver loaded with nine cartridges, and no tommy-gun. "As though I'd been paying a visit to my mother-in-law, idiot that I am!" he cursed himself later. He never did carry a tommy-gun, like many political officers, who consider that their main weapon in battle is their words. The German captain and three Jaegers were lying by the heavy machine-gun on the first floor. Spivak had emptied his revolver downstairs among the tommy-gunners, and then fought with some kind of an iron rod that he had found in the machine room. Climbing the dark, shaky stairs to the first floor, he fell down from the top step and bruised himself badly on the cement floor. When he clambered up again he found Osadchi, Razumovsky and Andryukhin fighting the Germans. He saw the captain run from his machine-gun, jump onto the window sill, fire his revolver and send two bullets into Razumovsky. Osadchi's empty revolver was dangling from its cord at his side, and his tommy-gun refused to fire, or perhaps the cartridges had given out. Andryukhin had opened some kind of an emergency exit leading down below, and there had stumbled on three Germans: one of them he shot point blank with his rifle, the other two he engaged in a hand to hand fight. From the threshold Spivak swung at the captain with the iron rod but missed him. The German first levelled his revolver at Spivak, who sprang to one side, but then, the German probably fearing he had miscalculated the number of bullets remaining, brought it to his face, pushed the barrel into his mouth and without stopping to think, pressed the trigger. That was the last shot fired in the mill — the Jaegers were bayonetted. Andryukhin kicked the Germans he had killed down the stairs and ran quickly back with rifle at the ready. When he saw that there was nobody left to brain, he pulled his handkerchief from his pocket, soaked it in the blood draining from Razumovsky, who lay face downward on the floor wounded in the chest and abdomen, hung it over the end of his bayonet, thrust it through the window and waved the improvised red flag to and fro to show that the mill was taken. . . .

After the battle was over, everything became normal again. Starlings reappeared on the trees and house roofs, and again the song of larks descended from the heavens; perhaps those larks had been singing high above the earth in the very heat of the battle, but then nobody had heard them. . . . A wedge of dive bombers flew westward, and disappearing over the horizon, discharged their load somewhere far in the German rear. The sound of bombs was barely audible, and a dull rumbling and groaning came from the earth. An occasional shell fell to the ground. The Germans were firing at the village from somewhere, spasmodically, aimlessly—one shell fell far to its left, ten minutes later another burst in the thick orchards to the right, leaving a big black gap there. But nobody paid any attention to these occasional explosions. Inhabitants appeared in the yards and streets—old men, barefoot lads, women in embroidered blouses.

Soldiers carried the killed out onto the square, where others were digging a grave, and laid them side by side. The battalion had lost eleven men in the fighting for Lipitsy, besides the wounded who had already been sent to the field hospital on lorries which had brought shells to the division from the rear. Sergeant Andrei Bolotnikov had not lived to see the sun rise—he had been killed fighting the German guard at the windmill; he had been a milling machine operator in the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, one of the few Stalingraders remaining in the battalion. The Yerevan textile worker, Ashot Akopyan, had found his death in this distant Carpathian village; he had been the best sniper in the regiment and had been decorated; in three years of honourable service he had accounted for a hundred and five Hitlerites. Junior Lieutenant Arkhipov, a former Donbass steel smelter, commanding a platoon of tank busters, had been killed by a direct hit from a large-calibre mortar shell. His body had been collected in fragments. In the pocket of his torn tunic they found his Party card, the address of his mother and wife and an identity card, stained with blood. These documents showed clearly that it was Arkhipov who had been killed and that it was his remains that the orderlies collected, but a couple of paces away a shell had also blown to pieces Maximenko, a former combine operator from Stavropol, and the orderlies collecting the bodies on stretchers, could not be certain that they had laid the limbs of Junior Lieutenant Arkhipov to his own trunk, and not those of Maximov, and vice versa. But the common grave dug for soldiers killed in battle for their country is called in Russian a "fraternal grave," and nobody in that grave would have been offended with the orderlies for mixing their blood with that of their comrades who lay beside them on the field and for uniting their bodies in an eternal brotherly embrace.

A direct hit is a terrible thing. It's a fortunate thing when the documents remain intact. Sometimes when a shell bursts there are only splashes of blood around the hole, scraps of flesh and bone which have lost all semblance of a human body, and nothing more. The other men try hard to recall—it must have been Trofimov who was lying there. No, not Trofimov, he went on patrol and hasn't come back yet. Perhaps Kravchenko? Kravchenko was sent with a report to the command point. Did he return? Nobody saw him. If he did return, then perhaps it's he, but if some chance bullet got him on the

way and he's lying somewhere in the weeds on the steppe, where even the local people won't find him so easily, then it might be somebody else. Nikitin hasn't been found, either among the killed or the wounded. He's just disappeared. There was somebody lying there where the shell burst, there is his blood, but who it was, not one of his comrades can say definitely. And so the news has to be sent home that one, two or even three men are "missing." A hundred times a mother will read the notice, ask old soldiers how a man can be missing at the front, guess that perhaps he's a prisoner, perhaps wounded and picked up by another unit; and after the war she will wait and wait for all the servicemen to come back and the prisoners to return from Germany, asking everybody if they have chanced to see her son? She will wait as long as life is in her, and there will be nobody to tell her: "Don't wait any longer, Mother, I myself buried him. . . ."

Eleven dead were picked up from the battlefield, and while they were being carried to the square, far away on the steppe the twelfth died on the lorry—Senior Sergeant Razumovsky, who never recovered consciousness after he fell, blood pouring from him, on the trampled muddy floor of the mill.

Three soldiers dug the grave. "Shall we take up another layer?" asked one of them, wiping his brow with the sleeve of his tunic and measuring the depth of the grave with the handle of his big sapper's spade. "Go on digging," said another. "They'll lie here a long time. They'll not go home again. Dig it deep, make a job of it."

A group of soldiers sent by battalion headquarters was approaching the grave—a platoon of tommy-gunners to fire a volley, followed by the officers.

"We'll take out another layer and that'll do. They're coming."

The ground was damp on top, while lower down it was still frozen with the winter cold. Cast up onto the surface, it steamed in the sun's rays like manure.

"Steaming," said one of the soldiers digging the grave, a young collective farmer from the Saratov district. "Spring's come!" Then, hearing the sound of a shell coming over, he instinctively ducked, although he was standing in a deep trench whose sides rose higher than his head, and shouted: "Down!" The shell fell on the square a hundred metres from the grave. One large fragment, whirring like a partridge on its flight, passed over them and slapped down beside the very grave.

"Look where it went, the devil! Nearly got us."

"Nearly's only half way."

"A metre closer—and it 'ud have been right on us."

"It was spent already, fell like a stone. We'd only have got a bruise."

"Yes, and if it'd got ye on the noddle, that bruise'd have laid ye out so as ye'd not have got up again, but stopped here wi' the rest, for company."

The young soldier finished clearing his corner and clambered out, looking over to where the shell had fallen. From the fresh hole smoke was rising, or perhaps steam from the torn-up earth.

"It's steaming, I tell ye, it's spring," he repeated. "Spring! It's grand, lads, spring, in these parts. With us, the snow melts in a week, the water runs off, the ground dries up and gets so warm ye can go barefoot; but here, see how cold it was in the night! The folks are sowing and the earth's like ice down below. The Carpathians are near, is it from them the cold comes? But there's no frost touched the gardens, I felt the buds—they're firm. Here the folks have apple trees everywhere," he continued, looking about him. "In other parts it's cherries and apricots, but here it's nothing but apples, in every garden. Do they grow especially well here? . . . Some folks say after a long, cold spring, there's a good harvest of everything, grain and vegetables both. And others say the opposite—a kind spring brings a good harvest. And the girls here, although they only lived under Soviet power for two years, they're right well interested in our lads. They talk too, like our Ukrainian girls. I got to know one of 'em, that's her cottage over there, other side o' the shed. I helped her get her stuff out of the cellar and carry it into the house. She asked me in this evening to eat curd cakes. . . . Eh, lads!" suddenly burst from him with a kind of groan. "It's kind o' desolate to die in springtime! . . . That blasted Hitler, he oughter've rotted, the dog, when he was little and his mother, the German bitch, was feeding him with a spoon! What made the bastard want to come down on us like the plague?"

After the funeral—an ordinary soldiers' funeral, without tears or lamentations and curses, just a couple of words from the battalion commander: "Farewell, Comrades! Your country will not forget you!", ten tommy-gun salvoes, swiftly swinging spades, a post in the fresh earth and a plywood board bearing the names of the killed—Spivak went to the men who were digging trenches. Nobody knew how long they would be in the village. The regimental commander had ordered a rest until roughly 23.00. Scouts from some reserve sub-unit which had not participated in the night's fighting had been sent ahead by divisional headquarters and were working beyond the village. If it turned out that the enemy was still retreating, then, as had often happened before, they would have to march earlier. But even if it were only half a day, even only an hour they stopped there orders were to fortify—with tank busters and machine-guns. Only the fifth company found itself in luck—in its defence sector, on the common beyond the village, there was an old ditch, deep, and half filled with silt and sand—some kind of old boundary.

The men swiftly dug places in the sides for firing points and roofed them in. The sentries were placed; the others rested. Some slept in the sun, arms and legs flung wide apart, snoring so that the larks settling near them rose again in consternation; some sitting on the edge of the ditch in their underwear or

even as their mothers bore them, mended their trousers or tunics, or cleaned their weapons.

In one platoon the political worker, that same sniper who had pleased Spivak because he hunted Germans with armour-piercing incendiaries, was talking to the soldiers, going over the results of the fighting. In another, a soldier unknown to Spivak was relating to his comrades what the local people had told him about life under the Germans. There was nothing new in what he was telling—the usual German brutality, the same that they had seen all through the Ukraine, where they had passed. But the soldier was giving it in detail, evidently just as he had heard it from some old woman or young girl in the village (women tell of the Germans with greater horror) and especially those details which had impressed him the most. Spivak stopped to one side and listened to him for a long time. He told how those same Jaegers whom they had beaten that day had entered the village in March, the time of bitter cold and blizzards, how they had driven all the people out of the village into the gulley, and themselves taken possession of the cottages and all. He told many horrible and funny things about the German landlord—the *Sonderführer*, or *Zunder*, as the people called him, who lived in the village and then made off for Germany again when the Red Army crossed the Dnieper. He told how gradually the old system of work for the landlord was restored in the village; first the Elder sent people to work in the fields and to cut wood for the Germans, picking out those whom he liked least, sharp-tongued wives of Red Army men, and peasants who failed to remove their caps when they met him; then he announced at a meeting that every adult—men up to the age of sixty, women to fifty-five—must work two days a week for the *Zunder*; the people began toiling on the German estate from dawn till dark, leaving their homes and children without care, and receiving for their labour some sort of receipts from the overseer. How the landlord would have reckoned up with them according to those receipts they never knew—the Germans made off without waiting for the end of the harvest. He told how the people had had to make a bathing hut on the river bank for the *Frau*, and one day the girls had hidden her clothes in the bushes, so that she had to run home naked and furious, cursing in broken Russian: "Devils! Bolsheviks! Plague and infection!" And ever since when the fat creature, tired of the heat, wanted to splash in the river, two tommy-gunners standing on the bank guarded the inviolability of her person and her clothing. . . .

"Comrade! You aren't a political worker?" Spivak asked. "I haven't appointed you, have I?"

"No, Captain, what sort of political worker would I make?" the soldier answered. "I've never done any o' that sort o' stuff. I can only just read a mite, went to school two winters. I can just make out print. I'm no good for political work, Captain, I don't know anything about them sort o' things."

"That doesn't matter," said Spivak smiling. "Wherever you find yourself, you just get to know what sort of village it is, and what sort of people, how many there were before and how many are left, how they lived under the Germans, and tell it to your comrades. Just the same as you're doing now. Clear?" and he laid his hand on the man's shoulder. "You've got the same gift as a good scout, of looking little and seeing a lot. And your feelings aren't dulled. Tell it all so that after the war, too, each one remembers something of it, and not only what rivers we forced, the places where the housewives gave us good soup and where we tasted chicken during the war, but all that sort of thing you have just told."

In one place more Spivak listened to a political worker talking to the men—in Lieutenant Belov's company. Spivak had advised the political workers to remind the new recruits frequently about the division's fighting record and the Stalingrad tradition. He missed the beginning of this talk, but when he arrived, the men were discussing what was happening now in Stalingrad, and what this town, rising from the ashes, would be like after the war. Sergeant Fomin was speaking, the political worker and commander of the group, who had been in the battle of Stalingrad and had been decorated. He was from Siberia, a former Irkutsk building worker.

"I don't know," he was saying, "I've never been there since 1942, I haven't seen how things are going there. But I'd like to see it. I think that'll be a special sort of town. A town of towns, as ye might say. . . . There's a lake, comrades—in Siberia; we call it a sea—Lake Baikal. And when ye sail over it in a ship or rowing a boat, ye'll never throw a cigarette butt into it, so clean and pretty it is. Thirty metres from the shores ye can see all the stones and shells at the bottom. And I'm thinking that in Stalingrad, it'll be like that, too—even the most heedless sort o' fellow won't dare to spit on the pavement. The ground there is washed in our blood. There'll be memorials at every step: 'Here So-and-so of the Guards fought to the death.' 'Here three held out against a company as long as their eyes could see the target and their hands hold a rifle'. Stalingrad—that's a place where something tremendous happened in our lives. Not all of us came there good fighters and worthwhile men. But those who came away alive to go on fighting—came away with a different sort o' soul in them, they were different people. . . . Maybe it was there that the turning point came in the war, and not in some other place, just because that town was named after Stalin, and we understood that to give that up to the enemy meant to give up what is dearest to us and to all working people on this earth."

"May I put ye a question, Comrade Sergeant?" said one of the men with a slight, mocking smile, raising himself on his elbow. He had been listening to Fomin all the time, his eyes half-closed, but with an alert expression, not in the least sleepy. "May I?. . .

I wasn't at Stalingrad, I haven't the honour of wearing that medal ye've got, it's a great pity—although I've read plenty about the defence of Stalingrad. No one can argue about it, they fought there like real heroes, they did; but it seems to me, Comrade Sergeant, that ye're just exaggerating a bit about that being born anew and different, like. What does it mean—after Stalingrad we were different people? How different—Soviet, or what? But what were ye before—not Soviet? Or mebbe it's the other way round—ye were Soviet before, and then became something else? Somehow doesn't click there, Comrade Sergeant . . . . That bit's not quite clear to me, if ye'll excuse me saying so."

"Not clear?" said Fomin thoughtfully, turning towards the man who had spoken. "I'll try to make it clear then, Comrade Karzhenevsky. I'm not talking about any sort of a new birth. We just got sort of rounded off—added a bit of this and that, scraped off a lot of rot that was no good to us or anybody else. . . . What d'ye call yourself, now, Karzhenevsky, Soviet?" Fomin asked the man suddenly, developing the thought that had evidently come to him while talking.

"Nay, others can say that best," said the man with the same slight mockery, shrugging his shoulders." Lived twenty-four years under Soviet power. Dad was a Red Partisan, my brother died in 1918. . . ."

"Very good, that means ye're Soviet, eh? And I don't take ye for a kulak or some sort of factory-owner of the old days, though ye do meet some o' that sort sometimes. . . . Been in the army long? Since Vinnitsa was liberated? Not long, I see. In reserve at first, eh? Only two months in a front line unit? Well, plain to see ye're not seasoned yet. What did ye do today, Karzhenevsky, when that tank turned on us? Lay there in your trench. I shouted at ye: 'Karzhenevsky—grenade!' Why didn't ye throw it? Ye had a grenade wi' ye? Sure ye had. Were ye leaving it to the artillery, or did ye just funk it? Ye were letting the enemy through—to run off to Germany, get their strength back again—(Spivak heard his own thought echoed)—and in twenty years come back again to burn and shoot and hang. Ye saw where the tank was going? Straight for Mikhailyuk and Popov. Why didn't ye get up? It's because o' you that we buried them two comrades today. Because o' you, yes. Ye were the nearest, ye could have stopped that tank, but ye let it by. And now ye see what came o' it. And ye call yourself Soviet? There was nothing o' that sort wi' us in Stalingrad, Karzhenevsky. It's the Guards' law—die, but help your comrade. There we paid for everything wi' our own blood. For all the rottenness there still is in folks like you. There, Karzhenevsky, we came to understand a lot. And now we look at things and at folks wi' other eyes."

There was nothing much Spivak could have added to these words of Fomin's—they contained so much of what he himself had felt and experienced at the front, of what he had thought more and more often in recent days, when one could feel in the air the coming end of the war. As the captain approached, Fomin had risen, saluted, and then continued talking, without even glancing at him again, hastening to finish what he was saying, and observing how the men listened, never taking their eyes off him. Spivak felt well disposed towards the young sergeant, daring in thought and evidently in battle, and decided that he had not chosen badly, when naming his political workers that day. He did not interrupt Fomin, but waited until he finished, and then added his word about Stalingrad.

"I think too that it will be an especial kind of town. When it's built and people come back to live there again, there will surely be no tricksters and cowards there. But for that matter, that scum's getting less everywhere now. . . . And even Karzhenevsky'll understand how people are born again in war." After a moment's silence, Spivak turned to the man whom Fomin had scourged for cowardice. "Eh? What do you think, Karzhenevsky?" The soldier was silent. The smile had left his face. He had paled, his eyes were cast down—it was difficult to guess what he was thinking, what sort he was, this man who, like millions of others, had donned a tunic and the cap with the red star. "Will you understand?"

"This isn't the first time it's been that way wi' him," said a soldier sitting beside Karzhenevsky dourly. "He's let us down more'n once. Day or so ago, when we took that hamlet, they sent him for ammunition and he was away half the day. Said he couldn't find the place, lost his way. Lay somewhere safe and quiet in a trench, more like it."

"He'll learn," said Spivak. "Before Berlin Karzhenevsky may be named Hero of the Soviet Union three times yet. But only before Berlin. When the war ends it'll be too late. He'll just go back home the way he left. If he's any conscience, he'll often remember Mikhailyuk and Popov. But maybe he'll not return home at all," Spivak concluded unexpectedly, in a different, harsh voice. "Today the whole battalion fought well. Ten men have been recommended for decorations. I only hear of one that disgraced himself, and that's Karzhenevsky. If he goes on fighting like that, hiding in cracks, his own comrades or commander'll be putting a bullet into him in the fighting. And everybody'll be grateful. One coward the less after the war. . . ."

Before returning to regimental headquarters, Spivak went to Petrenko once more. In one half of the cottage the people were washing, scouring and replacing the things they had brought out from the cellar. There was the grandfather, on crutches, in a clean linen shirt, with an old Russian Cross of St. George; there was his wife, there was a lad of ten and a young girl. All were excited, fussed about, talked loudly, interrupting each other, as though intoxicated. Every now and then the old woman would forget why she had come out into the yard, what she wanted to get, gesticulate, and pausing on the threshold, begin talking to the soldiers lying on the grass near the cottage.

In the other half of the house, Petrenko

with his clerk and telephone operator had taken up his quarters. The battalion commander had found time to shave, taken off his tunic and lay on a wooden bed in his clean undershirt, listening to the company commanders' reports (but only those who had shaved and put on clean collars, the others he sent back), and giving instructions about bringing the companies into order after the fighting and about the preparations for the advance. Krapivka, the clerk, was sorting out some papers on the table. Near him on the wall hung a guitar which he always took with him in the supply column together with the officers' luggage and various headquarters property. The telephone operator sat with his headphones on by the open window rolling breadcrumbs into balls and flicking them out to the starlings hopping about under the apple trees. When the last company commander had left, Krapivka, thoughtful and melancholy, put his papers into his kit, took up his guitar and touched the strings. Petrenko lay on his back, his eyes open, his arms behind his head. When he wanted to sleep noise never disturbed him. Krapivka, tuning his guitar, coughed and began singing in a rather hoarse, but pleasant and expressive baritone.

Spivak sat down on the edge of Petrenko's bed, rolled a cigarette and lit up. Petrenko began asking him about the treatment he had had in hospital, and whether the bones had knitted well—Spivak had received two bullets in his shoulder and arm—and whether he could use the arm as well as before. Spivak raised it, showing that it would go no further than the shoulder.

"You can call it half an arm," he said. "Half for work, and half for the look of it. If every wounded man loses half the use of a member, then you may come home in the end good for nothing but looks."

"There's something not quite right with my leg, too," said Petrenko. "That old wound's beginning to ache, just about here," and he showed the place. "I can even feel some swelling. When the weather's damp it gives me hell." He turned over onto his side and closed his eyes, as a sign that he wanted to rest. "Why don't you lie down too, Pavlo Grigoryevich?"

It suddenly struck Spivak that it was just so, in a clean shirt, lying on a bare wooden bed, turned to the wall, that his father had died. For two days he had lain there conscious, talked to the family, called the children and embraced them, and then turned to the wall and without another word had lain there all day and died in the evening.

"Well, I'm going, Mikola." He laid his hand on Petrenko's shoulder.

"Going? Why don't you rest a bit here? Or are you needed at headquarters?"

"Oh, by the way, Mikola," said Spivak, taking his cape and kit and then turning back to Petrenko. "Shall we write home, eh? What we were talking about last night?"

"To Semyon Karpovich?" Petrenko opened his eyes. "Most certainly."

"Together?"

"Yes, together if you'll have me. I've got something to say to them, too. You know, Pavlo Grigoryevich, I think we ought to make it a long letter. We've got to say everything that's been piling up inside us all these years. They probably haven't had as much time for thinking as we have. They haven't lain in the trenches, like us. Looking at the same bush in front of you for six months—you lie and stare at it and think about everything in life, both past and future. . . ."

"But what's it going to be? A new *War and Peace* in three volumes? Roosevelt's message to Congress? Or just a written speech from two Communists absent from the district Party conference? Speeches are not bad things, of course. If we get back home, then of course we can make them ourselves, but if we don't, there they are, our proposals and wishes. With greetings from the front, from two Party members, you know, Petrenko and Spivak. How about it?"

They agreed that Spivak himself should begin the letter, starting with his impressions after his trip home, and then they would meet somewhere again and continue together. Perhaps it would take more than one meeting if time permitted.

IV

"And do the girls sing again when they're coming home from the fields in the evening?" Petrenko asked the next time they met. "Though there aren't many girls left there, you say. . . . But are they the sort that'll sing even if there are only two of them left in the brigade?"

"They sing all right," said Spivak. "I heard them several times. You're right, it's a good sign, I thought so myself. Only their songs are different. They even sing our soldiers' songs—*Let's Have a Smoke*, and new ones that someone made up when the Jerries were there. At first they didn't sing, I was told. It was all too terrible. At Bolshoi Yar, where the road goes past to the brigade, the Germans shot down a column of prisoners and threw the bodies down the well. There's a common grave there now. In the winter, when the leaves had fallen, the shepherds found three who'd been hanged on the willows in the garden behind the old mill. They couldn't tell who they were, they'd rotted; maybe some of ours. People were missing there too, they're still trying to find traces of them. The Germans would arrest folks, drive them to the district town, the next day the women would come with things to hand in to them, only to be told in the Gestapo: 'Not here.' Where they were gone, nobody knew. And it was terrible walking in the fields. There were special courses at home for teaching people how to deal with mines. Olga Rudychenko—she's group leader now instead of Marina—she took the sting out of twenty mines on her sector. And the ruins scared them, and the weeds. Well, they're singing again now, they're alive again. Olga even treated me to champagne. A German supply column stood in her yard, so she dragged a whole case from a lorry and hid it in the straw. Drank it all with the other women. She gave me and Oksana two bottles. And there's another one left,

in case Kuzma comes. I wonder Prokopchuk didn't dig that champagne out of her!"

"And it'll be the same with our folks, Pavlo Grigoryevich,—if we don't return, they'll mourn a while, and then sing again?"

"What else do you expect, Mikola, life goes on. I wouldn't even want my Oksana to spend her whole life mourning for me if I died. What would that help me? Let them sing and enjoy themselves. . . ."

"And are there any collective farms in the district lagging behind?" asked Petrenko, going off onto another tack.

"Still early for that. They've only just come to life, and had no time to fall behind. Although they say bad work takes no wits. They might manage it just in the sowing. . . ."

"How are things with the Eighth of March Collective Farm that got it in the neck at all the conferences for losing its cattle and not getting in the harvest?"

"I don't know, I wasn't there. I didn't have a long leave, I hadn't time to go over the whole district. But I remember hearing that things weren't so good there. Behind with the sowing. And you can't say they were in a worse situation than the others. There, in Grushevka, there was more equipment left in the farms than with us. They were aside from the main road, they say there were very few Germans there, they hardly saw them. The cottages are intact, and there's more of the cattle left. But they're not getting through the sowing so well, compared with the other farms."

"You know, you talked about joy in our victory, Pavlo Grigoryevich," said Petrenko. "That comes into this too. It's not much fun for folks living on some backward farm like our Eighth of March Collective Farm.... Why is it that we haven't got that phrase in the army—backward regiment, backward battalion? It would be a fine thing if some regiment didn't carry out its assignment, and the divisional commander began to justify himself to army headquarters with 'Well, what do you expect of them, Comrade Commander, that's always been a backward regiment, right since the beginning of the war!' But in the districts, even in the best time before the war, when the averages were toted up, you could always find such miserable farms, upsetting all reckonings year after year, where the people, if you think about it, haven't ever really enjoyed all the advantages of Soviet power. And it wasn't necessarily in some remote hole, somewhere in the swamps where you can't get to during spring or autumn. They might be right in the centre of the district, under the very noses of the district committee secretary and the chairman of the executive committee. Everybody was so used to it, it was as though that was the way it had to be—like a compulsory assortment—one or two backward farms to every thirty or forty good ones, in every district. And that's why I'm asking—aren't there any like that our way, that are trying to fall into that category right from the very start?"

Zavalishin, who was present, saluted Spivak, the senior officer, saying: "Comrade Captain! May I speak to the Senior Lieutenant?"

"That's quite right what you're saying," he continued, turning to Petrenko. "Life's not very good for the folks in these backward farms. We had one o'them in our district, where I lived before the war. It was called the Forward, and the name was just a joke. Backward, was what we called it. It had no luck from the very start, and right up to the war the management was no good. It was one of four collective farms among which the property of a giant farm had been divided. Ours got the pig farm, another got the vegetable farm, still another was given the orchards, while Forward got nothing but land and poor land, to boot—good perhaps for pasture but not good enough for cultivation. Naturally their income was always much lower than that of the other farms. And then the chairmen kept changing till it made ye giddy. One drank himself silly, another spent all the funds, Lord knows what he did wi' 'em, they took him to court, a third was that rough and rude, looked as though he couldn't move a step wi'out a curse. All that shouting put folks off, the best people left the farm, all the workmen—the smiths and carpenters and wheelwrights. He just made a real mess of the farm. They'd be sowing till St. Peter's Day, threshing up to New Year, it was nothing but bad harvests, debts, and no fodder. We'd be getting kilograms, and they'd have grams, we'd draw rubles and they—kopeks. Anyone could see what was wrong—needed someone good on top. But d'ye think they got it? Again they chose a fellow only good to be set up on the fields to scare the crows, a man that should be kept away from any big job—Mishka Antipov. He'd been sent packing from three collective farms in our district for the same thing—always exchanging things, he was. He'd change a lorry for a thresher, the thresher for a bull, the bull for a sheep, and the sheep for Pekin ducks. Seemed to think that was his whole job. Sowing, weeding, harvesting—that didn't concern him, he'd travel to and fro about the farms, day and night, looking where he could exchange something and have a drink. When they sent him to *Forward*, the district committee gave him a severe reprimand with a warning to mend his ways. Well, it soon wore off. That secretary who'd given him the reprimand left for the town to study, Mishka started again in the same old way. Sold all the pedigree stallions in the farm and began to build a power station wi' the money. The mares were left widowed, and he didn't finish the station—so he exchanged the turbines for a churn. But there was nothing to drive the churn—no engine. So he put a pile of iron in a shed and locked the door, and that was that. Not a gay life they led, on that farm. They had a gloomy sort o' look, the lads and girls were badly dressed and even the kids didn't seem to laugh like others. On our farm they were buying themselves motor-cycles, and there they'd be going to the market to buy themselves bread in spring. And somehow, our district leadership never seemed to find the time to go there and get a bit of order into the place. We'd be working in the fields, we'd look up and see a car coming from the district centre,

a blue car it always was. It'd go to the crossroads and we'd wonder which way it'd turn right or left? If it turned right, then it was coming to us, if left—that meant the Forward. Well, of course, it would always turn right, to us, as though there was a magnet pulling it. A wealthy farm, work going well, nice to come and take a look at it, all the folks pleased and making a fuss of the visitors. And in the Forward it'd be nothing but complaints and quarrels and disorder, till your head went round. I don't know what they're doing there now—Mishka Antipov's about my age, maybe he is in the army, and that perhaps may have saved the farm."

"As for backward collective farms," said Spivak, "if you talk about that to a man like Nikitchenko, he'll reel you off a whole theory. He'll tell you it's utopia to say they can all be good ones, someone's sure to lag behind. And he'll even bring out some sort of proverb—even God didn't make all fingers the same length. There's no equality in nature, he'll tell you. But we can remember how the collective farms worked that our MTS served. And twelve of them! Were there any lagging behind? Of course there were. But how? The Bolshevik finished its early grain at ten o'clock in the morning, while The Winner finished the same day, but at two o'clock in the afternoon. Well, it was reckoned late, lagging. When we figured up results, we'd say: The Bolshevik was first. That might be a matter of hours and sometimes days, even. It did happen that someone would lend a hand, help out with the harvesting or grain deliveries in an especially tight corner. But there were never such differences as one farm paying ten kilograms of grain for a workday and another one or one and a half. We never got to that."

"Let's write about that too, Pavlo Grigoryevich," said Petrenko. "Whether or not we live to see that life there'll be after the war, we ought to speak our mind about it. Life's beginning anew. Enter our new house, dear friends, and wipe your feet on the mat. Don't repeat old mistakes."

"There's another thing I'd say, Comrade Lieutenant," Zavalishin said. "We carpenters, when we make something new out of old wood, we drive the nails into fresh holes so's they'll grip better."

"But there are people," Spivak recollected with a laugh, "that have quite different dreams about restoring life as it was before the war. Have you ever talked about that, Mikola, with your Krapivka? I talked with him once. 'Eh, Comrade Captain,' he said, 'what a wonderful life that was that we had before the war, but we didn't know how to value it. Just think—pickled herrings cost R. 2.50 a kilogram, take as many as you want, a barrel if you like. Astrakhan herrings, thick as your arm, backs like suckling pigs, you could see the fat dripping from them. And Don herrings, the best kind, for R. 4.50 pickled with bay leaves. Any shop you looked in, you saw shelves full of food. Every kind of sausage — hot dogs, thick and thin, tins of all kinds, sturgeon and all other sorts of smoked delicatessen. And drinks—swim in it, from plain vodka to those liqueurs in earthenware bottles, just open one and you can smell it all over the room, as though you'd spilt a bottle of perfume. Yes, and cheap it all was! For a quarter litre of vodka R. 3.15. No cards, no lines.' He spent a whole hour going over it all, what was in the shops and what it had all cost—I'd quite forgotten the old prices and I don't know the new ones, but he remembers down to the last kopek. 'And how did we value it all?' he said. 'Why, this way—you'd run into a shop in passing, well, and you'd just buy what you wanted for your lunch or your dinner, wrap it up, please — there'd be more paper than purchase: you'd stuff a quarter litre of vodka into your pocket, you wouldn't look at the sweetstuff—children's stuff, rubbish. The sales-girl would ask—maybe you'd like a half kilogram of Khalva? Nut khalva, fresh, just brought in! What do I want with that stuff, you'd say, just spoil my teeth!... Eh, why didn't I take it all by the pood, idiot, that I was? If I'd only known what was ahead and that it'll take ten years at least to get it all back again, I'd not have worried about my teeth, I'd just have got false ones, and I'd have eaten and drunk like a camel, laying in a supply.' He gets as upset as though he'd committed some crime against the state because he didn't eat and drink all he could before the war. I consoled him. 'Never mind, Makar Ivanovich,' I told him, 'we'll have our good times yet. And not in ten years—the shelves in the shops will be groaning long before that. We'll have even more food and it'll be still cheaper.' 'I don't need that, Comrade Captain,' he said. 'What do I need with it being any cheaper? Let it be just the same as it was. It was good enough that way. No need for it to be cheaper. I only wish, Comrade Captain, to live until the old times come again, as they were before the war, and with the same appetite that I've got now at the front. And I don't need it any cheaper.'"

Petrenko laughed.

"We could write about Krapivka too, somewhere at the end. Semyon Karpovich likes a joke. He'd read it to everybody."

Not only Spivak and Petrenko, it appeared, were thinking hard about life in the future—of a coming return to Civvy Street, and of meeting old friends at home with whom they had worked before.

The regimental commander, Major Goryunov, a tall, swarthy man from Rostov with a deep, loud bass, an old soldier who had been in the Civil War, learned that his political officer and commander of the second battalion were writing some kind of letter home.

"I sometimes wonder, Spivak, how they'll restore the station back in Rostov?" he said one day after dinner in his tent, laying his hand on the lieutenant's shoulder. "Which of you officers has been in Rostov? Do you know the part round the station? There's a slight defect in the traffic—a block near the station because of the railway line which runs right across the street. Say you're in the tram or trolleybus with all your luggage, hurrying to catch a train, looking at your watch every second. You haven't a moment to spare, and sure enough, there's a baggage train standing right across the road. And that's that! Either you wait in the tram till it can start again, or

you pick up your luggage and walk half a kilometre to the station. Either way, you've lost your train. What I think is, when the Rostov architects restore the station and the parts round it, surely they won't leave it as it was before? Surely they'll think out some way of altering that crossing, take the track aside somewhere or have the station in another place? Eh?"

"Sure they will, Comrade Major," Spivak assured him.

"There'll be some interesting conferences in the regions and districts after the war, when the men come back from the front," joined in Major Kostromin. "There'll be plenty of Communists coming back from the army. The Party organizations will be much bigger. Our comrades at home will tell about what they did. These days, you don't know whom to admire most—the men in the Red Army, or our workers, miners and collective farmers. It's not so long since we passed through the Donbass, and the whole place was burning, from end to end. Terrible to look at, remember? We thought it would take twenty years at least to restore it. Well, there's open hearth furnaces working already, and every day more mines start. They don't write much about Dnieproges in the papers, but at army headquarters I heard from an Ukrainian delegate who came with presents that they're planning to have it going again pretty soon, pretty nearly in two years. And which of you read in the *Historical Journal* about the Stalin collective Farm in the Alma-Ata region? Political officer, what about you? How did you miss it? It's grand material for talks with the men. I think I still have that issue; I'll find it and give it to you. That farm's been entered in the chronicles of the Patriotic War for its successful work in wartime and the help it sent to the front. It's gone into history. During the war years it's doubled its stock and made a big increase in its sown area—and that without the men who joined the army, the women did it and the lads. It's made big contributions of money and produce to the Red Army Fund. The chairman himself gave a hundred thousand rubles for tank building. That collective farm consists half of Kazakhs and half of Ukrainians who went to live in Kazakhstan before the Revolution. By the way, it was that region that the Panfilov Division came from, and there were two from that farm in the twenty-eight guards who faced the tanks near Moscow[1]. But the finest thing of all is the attitude of the collective farmers to the evacuees. They took four hundred and thirteen people from the western regions into their farm, looked after them, fed them and found work for them. And every month they keep from a hundred and fifty to two hundred convalescent soldiers in their own rest home. Well, there's something to thank these collective farmers for, isn't there?"

"Go ahead, write your letter," rumbled the regimental commander, clapping Spivak on the shoulder. "It'll be useful. Write that we're soon coming, we'll help them build. Only please don't spoil my battalion commander with all sorts of home memories. Don't turn him back into an agronomist too soon. For even my second in command's beginning to talk about melon plots."

The days flew past in battles and marches, and Spivak could never find the time to make a clean copy of his letter, which was assuming the proportions of a fair-sized book. When he looked at his notes, he shook his head: "By the time they read it with a magnifying glass at the field post, with all the strict care of wartime, and it's gone along the railway the same way as I came, stopping for a day at every halt, Mikola and I'll be back there ourselves, before ever Semyon Karpovich gets it." But he wanted to write it, and each conversation with his comrades about the rear, each meeting with Petrenko added several more pages to the letter.

Petrenko, as an officer of the line, had become more militarized in three years than Spivak, and many of his ideas and comparisons came from army life, from the front.

"If the devastation scares the folks back there," he said once, "and some think that it'll take a very, very long time to restore everything that the Germans destroyed, advise Semyon Karpovich to encourage the collective farmers as we encourage our soldiers who aren't seasoned yet. We here at the front can feel the country's support better. The Urals arms us. All Russia feeds us, clothes us. We here can see the whole disposition of our forces, today's and tomorrow's. But you have to be able to talk to people. You know how it is with an unseasoned soldier. He stands there in his trench with his rifle or hand grenade. It's night, dark, with nothing but the bare steppe, and the sparse chain of lookouts, none of his own folks to be seen right or left, and the enemy sending up rockets a hundred metres away. He stands there staring ahead—of course, he sees a German in every bush—and thinks to himself: 'What the devil will I do with my machine-gun and its two belts if the Germans suddenly try to make a breakthrough right now, this moment, with tanks, with Ferdinands? Well, I'll fire one belt, and then the second, and then what? No time to fit on another!' Maybe some of the collective farmers have the same sort of feeling just now—what can I do with my spade and cow against all these weeds? . . . And you always begin by explaining to the soldier that he will get help if the Germans attack. You come to visit him at night, going the rounds, and you tell him: 'Don't you think, lad, that you're standing here alone, that you were put here and left to your own fate. No, there are plenty of eyes here in this bare steppe, eyes, ears and hidden fire. Over there are our heavy machine-guns. Further back, the artillery, regimental and divisional and corps. That's the kind of soldiers that don't have to stand on the front line, they can reach out from there. But their eyes, the observers, are right here with us, beside you, in our trench. If they see anything on the sector in front, they'll phone the battery and then there'll come such a hail of fire from there

[1] Twenty-eight men from the famous Panfilov Division held up a big tank attack on an important sector during the German advance on Moscow.

that you won't tell earth from sky. They'll correct them from here if they don't land right on the target: "Thirty right," "Twenty left." And somewhere back there, there are the "Katyushas" (multi-barrelled mortars.—*Tr.*) too. And that's not all — the divisional commander can call on the air forces if things get serious: "Send us a flight of stormers, there's work here for them." See how many helpers we infantry have.' You talk to him that way, laugh him out of his fears, let him smoke in his sleeve—and the lad perks up at once. And that's the way to talk to the collective farmers. You have to show them all the dispositions—who'll help the Ukraine and who's already helping. The Urals will help, and our long-distance artillery, Siberia. Just now reconstruction's going on in wartime, but when all those factories that are making guns and tanks will go over to peacetime construction, think how many tractors they'll turn out! And all the motor vehicles that'll come back from the front. Why should we need so much in the army in peacetime? And we'll get Germany to pay heavily for the damages. We'll make the prisoners restore the factories they smashed. And then there's another thing to think about—how many millions of rubles we had to spend on defence ever since Hitler came to power and Europe began to stink of powder? Although we weren't fighting yet, there were always two halves to our budget — half for the tractors and combines, half for tanks and aeroplanes. But now, if there isn't the threat of war hanging over our heads every minute, we'll be able to use more funds for economy. There's never been such speed of construction in any of the Five-Year Plans as there'll be after the war. And that needs to be explained at every step there to the front line infantry, to the collective farmers, so that they can go into the attack with a good heart."

"Maybe Semyon Karpovich finds it pretty dull doing the same thing for the second time in his life," said Petrenko another time. "You have to look at things from his point of view, too. For fifteen years the man's never been out of the district. Once he carried collectivization through, set up the farms, and now he's got to get things going again in the same place, go through all the difficulties, get the farms working, plant gardens. Repeating the past. But no, it's not repetition. Nothing is ever repeated exactly in life. Once when you weren't there, Pavlo Grigoryevich, one of the men, a Party member, an old partisan who'd fought with Budyonny, asked me: 'Tell me, Comrade Battalion Commander, what do you think the war's done to us—pushed us back or helped us forward to the aim we've all set ourselves—everlasting peace and friendship among the nations? I saw the Donbass after the Germans,' he said, 'I saw Zaporozhye, Dnieproges. Everything smashed, ruined. Will we have to climb up all those stairs again, gradually pass through all the stages? 'That was a difficult question he put. That's more for you to explain. Well, I told him what I thought. 'No,' I said, 'we're not pushed back, we've gone forward the Lenin way. A long way forward! Of course, it's terrible, the devastation we've seen. You saw it, I saw it, all saw it. It'll be a Herculean job to restore all our economy. We shall restore it, of course, we have no other way out. But what was it worth to crush the worst enemy of Socialism—the fascists? That's a victory of victories! A victory before the eyes of all mankind. You can feel,' I said, 'that we've already passed that anti-Soviet trench which shut off the world from us. They look at us differently now. They wonder at us—what people are these that have broken the power of Hitler, before whom all Europe lay in the dust? English engineers and workers send us parcels with letters in them: "To our Russian brothers." 'We're climbing the Carpathians,' I said, 'and we'll see far from there! What did we know of our Slav neighbours before the war? There was Yugoslavia on the map, there was Czechoslovakia, Poland. Once upon a time the Polish Pans fought us and we fought them. We knew that the Montenegrins are brave people, even Napoleon in his time couldn't subdue them. Indeed, we knew very little. But now we're fighting shoulder to shoulder with the peoples of those countries for one common cause. You know who Marshal Tito is?' I said. 'Of course everybody knows him, every one of your men knows him as well as they know our own marshals, Rokossovsky or Konev, and rejoices at his victories like our own. No,' I said, 'you must look at the ruins differently. The Germans haven't pushed us back. It's not for the likes of them to shape history. We have more brothers in the world now than we ever had before. You know the proverb: rather a hundred friends than a hundred rubles? Well, we shall have the rubles, too, that won't take long, and we've got the friends into the bargain.'"

Petrenko was not just an ordinary agronomist, he was one of those working on the more intensive cultivation of the soil. It may have been because he knew how much unused strength the earth holds and how many extra thousand million people it can feed that he felt with real keenness the falsity of the German wails about the earth being overcrowded. . . . The Germans needed "living space." But the soil on The Bolshevik Collective Farm, the farm where he had grown up and worked — three thousand hectares — had once belonged to some landlord, one single family. This land had been taken over by the collective farm—by three hundred families! It sufficed for all, and would still suffice in a hundred years, and in two hundred, when there might be twice or even three times as many people. The earth could yield harvests of thousands of poods. The farmers could themselves cultivate new plants and direct their growth, without fear of the elements; as a factory worker directs his lathe. This was not merely a dream of Petrenko's —he knew with certainty that it would be so. He himself was doing it. Around Petrenko gathered all those restless, seeking, bold collective farmers who were not entirely satisfied with the present. He cultivated new, highly profitable plants, fought against the traditional winter idleness of the peasants, making good use of them for all kinds of work in the different

branches of the farm's economy. There was plenty of land in the farm, but even one metre unsown made him furious. With the girls, he planted flowerbeds at the camps for the field brigades, and sowed fecula for the bees between the beds in the farm gardens; he made the farmers plant trees in the cottage gardens and along the streets. He was an agronomist to the marrow of his bones, loved the collective farms and his profession and never thought to change it for any other. But the war began, and he had to change it nevertheless.

In his three years' service, Petrenko had not turned into an outstanding warrior, although his age—neither old nor young—and his education gave him the chance to go far. He started the war with the rank of lance corporal, with which he had been discharged after having served his time, afterwards he was appointed platoon commander with the rank of junior lieutenant. After his first wound, he was given a company and the rank of lieutenant, and a battalion and one more star on his epaulettes after his second wound and a short training course. But further promotion passed him over. Either his documents would be lost, in the case of an encirclement, together with the headquarters to which they had been sent, or they would be returned because of some incorrect formulation by a careless clerk; and his own modesty held him back from reminding the command that the usual time for promotion was already long past. Even without being a particularly brilliant strategist, his three years in the service could have brought him as far as major or even lieutenant colonel, and in all probability he would have commanded a regiment none so badly, but as they say, "the clerk let him down."

Petrenko was an exacting and strict commander. He developed these attributes after his first battle, when he saw what war is, and what is needed to lead these men clad in grey greatcoats through fire and water. To hold men steady in face of tanks, crawling towards the trenches, or to raise them to an attack under fire, when every saving crack has a magnetic drag, and it would seem that there was no strength which could bring them up off the ground, it is necessary, of course, for the soldiers to know what they are defending, for what they are waging this life-and-death struggle; but no less necessary is iron discipline, a habit derived from many days of training and of barrack life. The feeling of implicit obedience to the commander must be developed in the soldier to the point where the instinct of self-preservation is subordinated to it. It must be further strengthened until it becomes a second instinct—and the stronger of the two. Learning from the experience of several unsuccessful battles, Petrenko thoroughly understood the importance of army discipline, and began to work it up at every step in the platoons which he commanded—in camp and on the march, in battle and at halts, day and night. He saw everything, let nothing escape him and excused nothing—a soldier bringing a dirty messtin to the kitchen for dinner, a slack bearing on the part of a platoon commander giving orders, puttees thrown on a dugout table beside the bread, a stripe sewn carelessly on a greatcoat. He never tired of finding fault and giving reprimands, but without nagging, rather with ardour, with a firm conviction that the success of the sub-unit in the coming battle depended on the stripe being sewn properly onto the soldier's greatcoat. He was always stern and unsmiling—the first time he laughed was when he heard a conversation between two young sergeants, platoon commanders (he was commanding a company at the time).

"That devil's all eyes, that junior lieutenant!" said one. "Saw Kozlov's machine-gun twenty metres off at night, Kozlov hadn't set it up right in the trench—without pegs. A fly can't get past without him seeing it. What a man! I guess he gave his wife a hell of a life at home. He'd be looking into her soup to see how many potatoes she'd put in and whether she'd fried the onions right. Ye know, Kuzmenko, I always have the feeling that, wherever I am and whatever I do, the company commander's standing somewhere behind looking at me."

That was what he wanted—the instinct. But it was not because he had attained his object that Petrenko laughed. He remembered his home and his wife. The sergeant was wrong. He had never looked into his wife's soup or tried to interfere with her control of household affairs, or the way she dressed. On the contrary, it was his wife who had made him shave, knotted his tie on holidays, pulled his shirt straight and always scolded him for the books, cigarette ends, seed samples and fishing and hunting equipment that he left scattered everywhere.

Newly arrived soldiers who came into Petrenko's battalion did not always appreciate from the very start the unimposing figure of their commander. At first they were merely afraid of him, because of his continual fault-finding. If there was any way of avoiding his dugout, the soldiers would walk an extra two hundred metres not to come under his eye. He would find a speck of rust on the very cleanest rifle, and for an awkward about-turn on dismissal, he would send for the platoon commander and order him to drill the soldier right there, at the command point. But later on, the men would begin to wonder when he rested or slept, that senior lieutenant who was so hard to please? Dozens of times in the night he would be enquiring by phone of the company commanders about the situation. And again from early morning till late in the night he could be seen at the same companies, measuring the depths of the communication trenches, checking up on the firing points and the position of the machine-guns. More time passed, and one heard of the losses in other companies where the commanders were not so particular, or some prisoner would say that over there they considered the district between the railway post to the right and the grove to the left—precisely, the one held by the second battalion—to be impassable for scouts, and the German officers had the highest opinion of the Soviet commanders leading the defence there. And then the soldiers began to respect

their battalion commander, as a growing son, becoming wiser, begins to respect and thank his father for his strict upbringing.

It had happened somehow that of all the old battalion commanders in the regiment, Petrenko had received the fewest decorations—the Stalingrad medal and the Red Star. Other battalion commanders had two or three Orders. It might be that the cause lay in himself, in his reserve and reticence, his dislike for boasting in reports. Somehow he never seemed to come under the eye of the command. But despite the modesty of his decorations, Major Goryunov wanted nothing better than to have all his battalions commanded by men like Petrenko.

V

There was another night like that at Lipitsy. Rockets lighted up the sky. Tracer bullets drew fantastic patterns against the darkness. High up, night bombers roared as they went off on their first trip. Frogs were croaking in the swamp, and nightingales were singing in the thick pine saplings not far away.

But this time Petrenko was not preparing to attack. The advance had stopped for a time. For three days the soldiers had been constructing defences in this hilly district, cut by deep ravines, similar to the Donbass with its glades and gulleys. They broke up the stony ground, cut down pines in the groves for covering pillboxes, washed clothes in the clear streams at the bottom of the ravines, washed themselves and shaved, cursed the Germans when shells suddenly began coming over, disturbing the peace and quietness, and admired the distant blue Carpathians. Kuban and Terek Cossacks said that the Carpathians resembled the Caucasian mountains, men from the Urals were reminded of the crests at home, and Siberians talked about Khamar-Daban at Lake Baikal. From the rear, columns of lorries kept coming up with shells, mountain guns, food supplies and fresh troops.

Spivak and Petrenko were lying on the breastwork of a trench looking to the west, where the last narrow strip of light still lay along the horizon. At the front the soldiers always looked to the west—it had become a habit. Over there were the towns and villages still awaiting deliverance. Over there was the enemy who had to be constantly watched. Over there, in the west, the sky glowed for long in the evening with the reflection of burning buildings. . . .

Petrenko talked a great deal that night. He seemed to be in great excitement and Spivak felt a vague alarm. In wartime, everybody can become superstitious, and sometimes, despite himself, a man is affected by premonitions, dreams and omens, even though he would be ashamed to admit it to his closest friend. Perhaps Petrenko had been very tired that day, not eaten since morning, and the vodka he had drunk at supper had affected him, or—perhaps there were not many more such nights before him. The previous night Spivak had dreamed that he was wandering along a road littered with the corpses of horses and men, alone like a soldier who had lagged on the march; he had sat down to rest on a shell box to have a smoke, and was surprised to find the road silent and deserted, though, to judge by the smouldering fragments of carts and lorries, hot fighting must have been going on only a few minutes before.

"I'm no muzhik, Pavlo Grigoryevich," said Petrenko. "Although I love the steppe, and peasant labour, and nature, but all the same I'm no muzhik. I've tested myself. I love to listen to the noise of big factories and the machinery. It's like music to me. In our tractor brigade, for instance, when the engines start running in the morning, all six of them roaring at once so that the ground trembles under them—I tremble inside too. I've heard it a hundred times, but still it excites me. I was in the Donbass before the war, when it was all roaring iron and smoking chimneys. A wonderful sight!... I would look at a factory and think how it gets to be like home to people. Take an old worker, one who's been on the job, say for thirty years—where's his soul? In his shop, of course, at the open hearth furnace, in the pit. But take a real muzhik, an old-time peasant, and where was his soul? In his barns, in his pigsties; in his fenced off or encircled with barbed wires vegetable plot. I hate those muzhik kennels, Pavlo Grigoryevich. My family didn't live so badly before the revolution. We had our farm, our land, our horses. And what did greed make of our family? You know us. Remember, how he went out of his way to become the son-in-law to the kulak Dudnik?"

"Why, of course, he wanted to marry Marfa, that hunchback who suffered from fits."

"Hunchbacked, suffering from fits, half-witted and deaf into the bargain. How he would have lived with her, I can't imagine, it would have been enough to make him croak anyway. Dudnik had a brick house and five pair of oxen, and there was nobody to inherit it all except Marfa. It was because of the house and the oxen that he killed Andrei Babich, his rival. They fought, he hit him on the head with a spade and split his skull in two. And then he wanted to hang himself. He sat there in the forest under a tree plaiting a rope from bark. There's never been a letter from him since he was sent to Siberia in 1912. And Stepan, the elder brother, the peasants beat him up when they were dividing up the land—he coughed blood for three years. And my father gorged himself with soured milk at the market and passed out. They used to call after us in the street "ryazhenka" (soured milk)—the nickname stuck to me till I was married—"Mikola Ryazhenka." Father had brought milk and sausage to the Poltava market to sell in 1919, and when somebody shouted: "Round-up! Requisitions!" he drank ten jugs of soured milk and ate half a pood of sausage to avoid losing his stuff. He drove out of town and died in the cart. A neighbour brought him home dead. Mother lamented over him: 'Oh, Ilya, Ilya, what 've ye done! Ye've got children, ye've got little ones. Who'll feed the beasts now, who'll plough the land?,

"... Your father, Pavlo Grigoryevich, never taught you, did he, how to plough the

land so as to take in a slice of somebody else's? Or to move the boundary posts at night?"

"We had nothing to plough and nothing to plough with."

"Well, we had.... There's other kinds of kennels besides the sort where toads sit under the benches and the wet drips down the walls. Mansions can be kennels, too. You remember the village Boichenko—five farms on the Poltava road? A neat little village, houses with iron roofs, poplars and stone walls and gardens round them. But if ever you were caught by a blizzard in winter, you never look for safety in Boichenko. There were so many rooms in the houses you could knock all night and they'd never hear you. Where on earth they slept there, the devil alone knew, but you could swear or shout or weep, there'd be nobody to take you in for the night, you could just lie there in the middle of the road and freeze.... Kennels. What would I have been if it hadn't been for collectivization? What would my membership in the Young Communist League have helped me on my own individual farm? Be your own agronomist? Dig yourself into it like a beetle into dung, and forget why you ever joined the Young Communist League. Weren't there such in our villages who were put out of the Party as kulaks at Party cleanings? One good harvest, a second good harvest, luck with the cattle—and it whetted the appetite. The men got greedy, began renting land from widows and hiring labourers and calling them relations. A Party card in their pocket, but scratch them and you'd find a kulak.

"The further behind we leave the thirties," Petrenko continued after a long pause, "the clearer it is how high we climbed when we set up the collective farms. See how fine things have gone at home! The muzhik's stirring his stumps, he's been pulled out of his kennel. Look at all the talent that's come to light! How many splendid people have been saved from being cramped and stifled!..."

Petrenko spoke more that night, and Spivak listened to him.

"Write this, Pavlo Grigoryevich. People died for Socialism in 1905, they went to their deaths for it in 1917. For Socialism, Lenin and Stalin spent the best years of their lives in exile. And the blood that's flowing now—that's for the same thing, for Socialism. We have passed through the whole Ukraine, but we have seen no collective farms there. They had not had time to rise again. We were the guests of a moment. Before the fires were out in the villages, the order came: 'Prepare to advance!' We went on further. But people asked us: 'How shall we begin to live? Collective farms again, or how?' The Germans had told them that we had started wearing epaulettes because the tsarist regime was coming back in Russia. And we told them: 'Yes, collective farms. There will be Soviet power again, there will be collective farms, MTS's, there will be meetings where people can speak their mind, children will go to college to study, Stakhanovites will go to Stalin in Moscow—everything will be as it was before the Germans came.' We told them that, and went on further westward. The rest is your job, friends. Our part is to liberate the people and tell them: 'Yes, it will be so again!' and yours is to bring it quickly, that Soviet life...."

There was an unusual silence in the forward positions. Not a single rocket from the German side, not a single machine-gun round. For a long time Spivak and Petrenko lay there on the cool, crumbly soil thrown up out of the trench. There was no need to take cover behind the breastwork—not a bullet whistled over their heads, as though they were not at the front at all, but home, in the fields, out hunting or resting after working with the collective farm brigade. It was as quiet as though the Germans had left the positions they had taken up during the day and gone on further under cover of night. But no, they had not gone. The battalion sentries, a half kilometre ahead, had reported by telephone that they could clearly hear German talk, the rattle of messtins, songs and the sound of a mouth organ from the trenches a hundred metres in front of them.

That night the friends talked for a long time about their collective farm, people they both knew there and in the district, and of the letter to the secretary of the Party district committee....

"Well," said Spivak at last, "we must get it rounded off, Mikola. How much shall we write? You can't say everything in one go, anyhow. If we live then maybe we can write again. We'll end this way: 'Don't worry about labour power, Semyon Karpovich, like Nikitchenko about his oxen, because there are few left and an odd number at that. We'll soon be coming to help you! And we'll write what kind of people we've got, what forces are coming to the districts after the war. We can't praise the servicemen too much because we are among them, it would be like blowing our own trumpet, but we can say that they're not bad lads. From your battalion alone you could find collective farm chairman and brigade leaders to supply three districts. And what chairmen! One is so used to living out of doors here that you couldn't fasten him down to an office-stool with nails. Another was shaking his head over the trenches and thinking: 'And all the Ferghana canals we didn't finish digging before the war!' A third when he was drowning the policemen and elders in the Dnieper where they had gathered with the others to cross, thought: 'Where did this scum come from on Soviet soil? How was it that we didn't recognize them before?' They've all been cheek by jowl with death, and they've all been thinking of life. There'll be those like Razumovsky poor lad, who'll not find their homes or wives, or children when they come back. What's going to happen to them? How can they be consoled? Just by work. The sort of work in which a man can lose himself, and feel every minute that he's still fighting. You can find good people for any kind of work. Only you've got to advance them as Stalin advanced his marshals. See how many new names have come to the front during the war. Men commanded regiments and battalions

at the beginning, and now they're moving whole armies and fronts. You can't live all the time on old memories—do things as they've always been done. Gnatenko, the famous Ukrainian farmer (the first to get 500 tons of sugar beets from a hectare—*Tr.*) is a captain in the army now. Are you going to send her back to the beets? And you, Mikola, if we don't find Marina alive in Germany, you'll find other people to do your experiments no worse than she did. You know how Olga Rudychenko from Marina's group has turned out? What she did when the Germans were there? First of all, she saved the document giving the land in perpetuity to the people. She went into the collective farm offices just before the Germans came, and there, not to the credit of our Luka Gavrilovich be it said, she found all the papers thrown about in the middle of the office. She saw the document in its red envelope and hid it away under her blouse, and kept it there at home till ours came back. She saved three wounded Red Army men from the Germans, hid them two months in the shed, in the ditch under the stalls, fed them, changed their bandages until they could walk, and then took them out of the village at night and sent them to the partisans. That's just how it was, Babenko himself told me. Those men were in his column. He recommended her for a decoration, sent the recommendation to the partisan headquarters. She's a grand girl! The women told me how she once argued with a German about the name of our collective farm. A motorcyclist came along the street, stopped beside her gate, took out a map and called her. 'What's this village called?' and he pointed to our part of the village. 'Bolshevik Collective Farm,' she said. 'What—Bolshevik?' The Germans had called the farm Alexeyevka Estate No. 2. 'Yes,' she said, 'Bolshevik.' The German began pulling his revolver out of the holster, but Olga looked at his map. 'Pan Officer', she said, 'what are you getting angry with me about? Look here, it's written that way here on your map, too! Bolshevik Collective Farm (the map must have been a copy of ours, with the names in Russian and German). 'I'm telling you right, Pan,' she said. 'And you see that road—it goes to the Red Partisan. If I tell you—Estate No. 2 you won't understand, and only lose your way. There's no such name on your map.' The German rolled up the map, hit her across the face and went on—to the Red Partisan. And she stood there laughing. Well, what do you think—won't she be able to get the money out of the administration for superphosphate, or oxen from the farm for threefold cultivation? She wasn't appointed group leader. But the very next day after the collective farm was restored she collected all Marina's girls, went to the vegetable patch, to the Elder Kozinsky's plot, to dig his potatoes for the Red Army. And before the spring sowing, when the district was still discussing what they should do now, with the lack of working power, cattle and machines, whether to bend their efforts on quality or quantity, Olga was the first in Alexeyevka to begin collecting birds' dung and ashes. Settled the question short and sweet: 'If you don't give us horses, we'll carry the manure on our own shoulders.'"

Had it not been for the darkness, Spivak would have seen that his friend's eyes were glistening with tears, as he lay there beside him on the breastwork chewing a blade of grass. Perhaps they glistened only because it was dark, and nobody could see. . . .

Fighting down his emotion and coughing away the lump in his throat, Petrenko said:

"Write this too, Pavlo Grigoryevich, at the end—about subsidiary lines of work. Let them remember those trifles from the very first day—fishpools, berries, silkworms, beekeeping. No matter how hard it is now with labour power, there are always some old people and cripples who are no good at all for field work. They can be used for these home lines. The great thing is, not to lose sight of the whole economic unit. It'll bring in an extra ten thousand and maybe hundred thousand rubles. Grain and cattle, of course, are the main thing, the advance guard, but let them bring up the rear at once, so that it doesn't lag."

Spivak took a runner who knew the way to the third battalion, and left Petrenko at one o'clock. The soldiers had not yet had time to dig continuous lines of communication trenches over the whole sector. During the day, the Germans did not allow them to come out on top, so the most convenient time for meeting people in the battalions and companies was at night. That is how it is in defence works not long occupied—the working hours for almost all the officers and men is the night, which demands particular vigilance. Rest, in turns—during the day.

Spivak just managed to get to the battalion command point and drink a mug of cold, rich milk with the commander, Captain Solovyev and his assistant for the political work, Senior Lieutenant Kalugin. Solovyev was domestically-minded, and kept with him a milch cow taken from the Germans, which had come with him in the supply column right from the old border. Whenever an officer came to headquarters, Solovyev would begin by treating him to a mug of milk from his own "dairy farm," and have one himself for company. He also had his own travelling vegetable patch—green onions planted in a box, which came along with the cooks' column. But Spivak did not taste the onions that time, although the hospitable Solovyev had already winked to his orderly. At one forty-five fighting broke out to the left, in the section held by the second battalion. . . .

Solovyev went out of the pillbox and listened where the grenades were bursting and machine-guns firing, returned and said:

"Three hundred and four point five. That's it. Where Petrenko is. Cutting out the appendix."

Spivak understood him. Petrenko's battalion had occupied a tactically favourable height forming a wedge in the German positions. Jerry was evidently driving at the flanks—against Osadchi's and Belov's companies—trying to turn the wedge into a sack, squeeze the battalion off the height, destroy it and dig in there themselves. That

was if the artillery fire and machine-gun rattle did not mean the beginning of some large-scale operation. There was a rumbling coming from further on, too, beyond Petrenko, where the first battalion was stationed, and to the right, on the sector held by the neighbouring regiment. Possibly the Germans had brought up reserves and were counter-attacking along the whole sector held by the division. But in that case why was the third battalion silent?

Spivak rang up Major Kostromin at headquarters and asked whether he could return to Petrenko's battalion.

"No," said Kostromin. "I'm going there myself. You can't get through from there, in any case. Stop with Solovyev, and do your job there."

"And what's happening to Petrenko, Comrade Major?" asked Spivak.

"They're fighting. The situation's serious. The Germans are putting everything into it. I don't know the details yet. I'm going to find out. Rodionov's killed."

"What? How?"

"Don't know. Just reported that he's killed. The line's not working now for some reason. Well, I'm off. So long!"

Soon after, reports from their neighbours made it clear that the weak artillery and mortar fire on their sectors was merely demonstrative, covering the attack on the main objective—Height 304,5.

"That dead silence never leads to anything good," said Captain Solovyev. "They were very sparing of their ammunition ever since last evening."

Although everything was still quiet before the third battalion defences, nevertheless, if the Germans should try a deeper flanking movement, something might be expected here too, particularly on the left flank. Solovyev and Kalugin went to make a round of the companies, and Spivak remained alone at the command post by the telephone.

After waiting an hour—the sky seen through the slit of the waterproof cape covering the entrance was already getting lighter—he rang up headquarters again. Captain Syrtsov, Chief of Staff, replied. Spivak knew at once from his voice, from the way he coughed several times into the instrument before beginning to speak, that there was some bad news for him.

"What is it that interests you, Pavel Grigoryevich?" asked Syrtsov. "The situation in the second battalion? They're fighting. Beat off three attacks. Evidently the Germans want to put a padlock on that corner, but that little game won't work. Of course, it was to be expected. That 'Kursk bend' was a bit too enticing. There aren't any tanks, the tommy-gunners are attacking. And there's heavy artillery fire. They tried to flank the command points. We lost touch for a time. Now communications are restored again. Rodionov's killed, did you know?"

Spivak remembered Rodionov's words: "I'll never die from a bullet, Comrade Captain," and asked:

"How was he killed?"

"Caught by blast, and hurled against the wall of the pillbox. Not a single wound, but heart stopped."

"Anything else, Victor Yefimovich?"

Syrtsov hesitated a few seconds.

"Petrenko's wounded. Seriously. Head and chest. Maznyuk's taking his place. And Kostromin's there now."

"Petrenko?"

Probably Syrtsov, who knew of the close friendship between the two men, was surprised at the calm voice in which Spivak repeated the name. But the captain had felt, right from the very beginning of the conversation what the Chief of Staff would tell him. Only he had feared something worse.

His first instinct was to run to the regimental command point and from there make his way to the second battalion. But then another thought made him take up the receiver again.

"Victor Yefimovich, is that you? Where's Petrenko now? How is he?"

"He was sent to the field hospital only five minutes ago in Goryunov's car. Stretcher bearers brought him here. After he was bandaged he recovered consciousness and asked for vodka, I gave him some, and then he lost consciousness again. The bullet went clean through his chest, through the right lung, and there's another bullet wound in his head, but it looks as though the brain wasn't touched."

Spivak gave the receiver back to the operator. The field hospital—that was twenty kilometres in the rear. You could not go there on a day which was beginning with so much disturbance. And he probably might not stop there long, for that matter, he would be sent further on at once. If he lived, then perhaps they would meet again somewhere at the front, if the war did not end first and if he was not killed himself. And if he died, then he would never see his friend again. In wartime they do not send telegrams to friends and relatives to come and take leave of the body.

Spivak left the stuffy pillbox and went out into the open air, heard the roar of battle from the left, where Height 304,5 was situated, and the song of the larks overhead in the grey sky; he sat down on the breastworks, took his pouch from his pocket and began rolling a cigarette with shaking fingers, dropping half the tobacco on the ground. All the time the words were going round and round in his head—maybe he said them aloud, without noticing it: "Mikola, devil take it, why did that have to happen? . . . Mikola, eh? Mikola, Mikola! . . ."

As Spivak and Solovyev had guessed, the Germans had driven at the foot of the wedge cutting into their defences, where the third and sixth companies were stationed. Including the reserves that had come up, the attacking force equalled two battalions. When fighting had started on the flanks, firing had broken out simultaneously in the rear, beyond the command point. In the evening, evidently during that suspicious silence, the Germans had sent a group of tommy-gunners across no-man's land who had managed to seep through the defences and come out in the rear. When Kostromin came to the battalion they had already been finished off. There had not been very many of them—fifteen, in all, but in the darkness they had created consider-

able confusion. First they were discovered by the commander of the supplies group and his cooks and drivers. Two were killed and the rest driven off. But in the darkness two of our own horses were killed and one man was wounded. Then the Germans attacked the mortarmen standing in the gulley. Here, too, the sentries had been on the alert, and opening tommy-gun fire, killed four more of them. Nevertheless, seven tommy-gunners succeeded in making their way right to the command point, where the staff guard was stationed, with the runners and telephone operators, Petrenko and the clerk. Rodionov had been in the fourth company since the previous evening, and there he was killed. The men said that when he heard the rattle of German tommy-guns, Petrenko's first words were: "Pity! Rather late in the season! This isn't 1941, to hem us in." He was calm, as always. Leaving the telephone operator in the pillbox at his instrument, he ordered all the other men to arm themselves with grenades, of which there was always a whole box in headquarters, and go out one by one. "Outside! Things'll be clearer there." As he was making his preparations, the men heard him say—probably in order to show them that their commander was not worrying: "When will I teach you, Krapivka, to put things in their places? What have you done with my German gun? You took it when you went to see the girls in Boguty. Why didn't you put it back?"

"Here it is, I've got it, Comrade Senior Lieutenant," Krapivka answered.

"You have it! Of course. But if you take it, clean it and put it back under my pillow."

He was wounded as soon as he left the pillbox.

A week later, Spivak had to go to army rear, forty kilometres from the front line, for a one-day course for political officers. On learning that one of the field hospitals was situated in the village where the political section was stationed, Spivak went there after the course, to find out if Senior Lieutenant Nikolai Ilyich Petrenko was among the wounded there; and to his joy he was told: "Yes, he's here. In Ward 7—over there, that cottage with the red roof."

Petrenko was lying on a low iron folding bed, his head to the window. Spivak could not immediately recognize which of the six wounded men was his friend—all of them had bandaged heads. It was Petrenko, glancing towards the door, who cried out in surprised delight and made a weak attempt to raise himself.

"Pavlo Grigoryevich! You? That's grand! Found me!"

Spivak had already learned from the doctor that the wound in the head was not serious and the bullet wound through the chest, too, had not developed any complications.

"Well, how was it?" was Petrenko's first question, when Spivak sat down on the edge of his bed. "Did we hold the height?"

"Yes, held it, curse the place. It was a real bit of hot stuff. Kostromin says the junctions let you down. Was there a gap at the junctions?"

"Not where I was. It must have been Solovyev's way. His herdsmen were so busy pasturing cows that they had no time to watch the Germans. . . . Well, what's new? Eh? It's boring lying here, Pavlo Grigoryevich, I'll pass out! They don't let me read, and for that matter there's nothing new here anyway, only the old stuff that I've read twenty times over. They say I'll have to stay here for three months. I asked them not to send me any further back, at least, so as not to get cut off from my own army, or I may not be able to get back again. . . . Who's in command now in the battalion? Maznyuk? And who's taking his place in the company? And how did you happen along here? Found out I was here and came specially, or been at the army political office?"

The nurse had warned Spivak that he must not talk to the senior lieutenant for very long. Spivak answered his questions, including those about the losses in the battalion, keeping silent about some of the casualties. Then he said: "Well, so that's that, Mikola. You lie and rest here, and I'll be back soon."

On leaving the cottage, Spivak looked round him, admired a cool corner in the shade of a tall poplar in the garden, spread out his waterproof cape on the grass, lay down, took the rough notes for his letter together with a notebook out of his pocket, and spent the next three hours making a clean copy of it. Having finished, he made an envelope out of thick paper and went back to Petrenko in the ward.

"Here's the letter to Semyon Karpovich, Mikola, see how much there is of it. A whole book. Time to send it off, — else it'll mean only talk and nothing more. I've even made an envelope. Or can it go without an envelope? Just roll up the notebook and let it go that way."

"Everything here?"

"Everything. I only added that you are now in hospital, wounded, riddled a bit, but getting patched up."

Petrenko turned the pages, and then signed it without reading.

"Well, that's that," said Spivak, pasting down the flap of the envelope, with moistened bread. "Now I'll send it off. Otherwise the Lord alone knows what may happen to us."

After writing a postcard to Petrenko's wife at the latter's request, and one to his own, Spivak took everything to the field post office, which was in the same village.

"Is there anything one can write on the envelope," asked Spivak, handing over the letter, "a request to the censor not to hold it up? Or won't it help any?"

"It won't help, Comrade Captain," the man answered, laughing.

"But what can I do, all the same, so that it gets there quicker? Before you used to write: 'Express,' 'Air Mail,' 'For the sowing,' 'For the harvest,' but what can you do now?"

"I don't know," and the man shrugged his shoulders. "All letters from the front go the same way."

"Three months?. . . I'm afraid," and Spivak looked at the mountain of letters in the

cottage and the sorters working on them, "the end of the war'll catch you unawares. Three years later you'll still be sending letters from here 'with greetings from the front.' ... So, there's no way of hurrying things? Just trust to luck, eh? To which ever censor it happens to come to? The trouble is, that they always begin with the short letters, and leave the long ones for the last. Well, all right. Just hope for the best. So long!"

On the way from the post office Spivak bought a jug of fresh, fragrant honey, another of cream and a basket of some early berries, brought them to Petrenko and laid them under a newspaper on his bed-table, shook a little tobacco from his pouch when the nurse was not looking, then sat and talked with him for half an hour more. The sun was sinking.

It was time to return to the regiment. After making a note of the hospital address, Spivak took leave of his friend, promising to come and see him again the first chance he had and went to the highroad outside the village, along which lorries were passing one after the other, laden with shells, bombs, boxes of tobacco, macaroni, tinned foods and sacks of flour and cereal.

When a man's feeling good, luck always favours him. The very first lorry which overtook Spivak stopped with grinding brakes, and the driver shouted: "Get in, Comrade Captain! Where d'ye want to go ?" "Beyond Yartsev village — three kilometres left." "Well, I can take you right there."

Spivak swung himself into the body of the lorry. The driver stepped on the accelerator, and again the lorry rushed at full speed along the wide military road, polished to a glassy smoothness by thousands of tires.

On the ammunition cases in the body of the American lorry sat a group of soldiers in new tunics and caps, and with shining new tommy-guns. But these were no fresh recruits. On one Spivak saw the Stalingrad medal, two had the "Defence of Odessa" medal, another the Order of the Red Banner. All the lorries behind were of the same type, and in them too were men in new uniforms, with tommy-guns, anti-tank rifles and mortars. Evidently that was some unit that had been resting and reforming in the rear. Among army men it is not customary to ask a stranger, be he soldier or officer, about dispositions of units, but Spivak could not restrain himself.

"Making ready for a new dash, lads?" he asked the men. "Come to help? Well, that won't hurt us. . . . Now there'll be a bit of dashing forward, right up to the very end."

"Yes, and we've already done some moving, Comrade Captain," said one of the men. "We've been travelling thirteen days, right from. . . ."

A grey-moustached sergeant with the Order of the Red Banner, evidently in charge, looked sternly at the soldier.

"And nobody's asked ye where ye're from and where ye're going. The captain spoke generally—about help! Well, of course, we're coming to help, we're not a delegation checking up on preparations for the harvesting."

Spivak nodded approvingly.

"That's quite correct. Where they're from—that's not important. What's important is that the dash should be a strong one."

And that word "dash" stuck in his mind like a line of poetry. He smoked with the soldiers, admiring their stern, sunburned faces—good reinforcements, seasoned lads, you could see at once by their looks, by the calm, unhurried way they turned their heads as they examined the strange locality on a new front, that nothing could startle or frighten them. He began asking them where their homes were, hoping to find somebody from his own parts, Poltava district; and all the time the word "dash" kept going round in his head. . . . There is a splendid paragraph in army regulations, those dry compendiums of long-garnered wisdom of war and life, which says, "when attacking, if you come under heavy enemy mortar fire, do not stop. If you stop you are lost. If you lie down you'll bark your shins, too. Dash forward! and continue carrying out the assignment. If the artillery's covering a line where it has the range, dash forward and get to grips with the enemy!"

"Dash forward!" said Spivak aloud, but nobody heard him above the noise of the engine and the wind in their ears. "Good!" and he regretted that in the letter to Semyon Karpovich he had not included the words: "If you want to live well—make a dash forward!"

Translated by Eve Manning

EUGENE SHWARZ

A STORY ABOUT LOST TIME

Once upon a time there was a schoolboy called Peter Zubov who was in the third class. But an idler was he, and always lagged behind in grammar, arithmetic, and even in singing.

"There'll be plenty of time to catch up by the end of term!" he would say. "I'll make it yet!"

But the first term went by and then the second, and still Peter kept putting things off; and he never worried, dismissing every thought with "there's time to catch up."

One morning Peter came to school, late as usual. He burst into the cloakroom completely out of breath, and banging his satchel against the partition cried:

"Auntie Natalya! Take my coat, please!"

"Who's there?" asked Auntie Natalya from behind the cloakracks.

"It's I, Peter Zubov," the boy replied.

"But why is your voice so husky today?" she asked. "I've been wondering about it

myself," he said. "I've suddenly become hoarse."

Auntie Natalya came out, but she no sooner looked at Peter, when she cried:

"Oh, Goodness gracious!"

Her dismay conveyed itself to the boy, and he asked:

"What's wrong, Auntie Natalya?"

"Oh, nothing. . . ," the woman replied. "You said you were Peter Zubov, but you are more like his grandfather."

"I. . . a grandfather?" the boy questioned. "I am Peter Zubov of the third class."

"Look in the mirror!" Auntie Natalya said.

The boy did as she suggested and nearly toppled over for looking back at him was a tall, lanky, pale-faced old man, with grey whiskers, a long grey beard and a face furrowed with wrinkles.

Dumbfounded Peter looked at his own reflection in the mirror and his grey beard began to wobble.

"Oh, mother!" he bawled and rushed out of the school.

He ran home, thinking:

"Well, if mother doesn't recognize me, then I'm done for!"

He reached the house and rang the bell. His mother opened the door.

She and Peter regarded each other in silence. He stood there, his grey beard thrust forward and almost ready to burst into tears.

"Whom do you wish to see, Grandpa?" she asked.

"Don't you know me?" Peter whispered.

"No, I'm sorry," his mother said.

Poor Peter turned away and walked off he knew not where.

He walked on and on, thinking:

"What a miserable, lonely old man I am! I have no mother, no children, no grandchildren and no friends. And worst of all, I've had no time to learn anything! Real old men are either doctors, or superintendents, professors, or teachers. But who needs me, a mere third-class pupil? I wouldn't even get an old-age pension, for I've only been working for three years; and what a fine showing I've made in those three years: nothing but bad marks. What will happen to me now? Just a poor old man! An unfortunate boy! I wonder how all this will end?"

And so Peter walked on and on, thinking and thinking, and before he realized it, he found himself out of town, and rambling into the woods. He struggled on and on through the woods until darkness fell.

"I wish I could find a place to rest," Peter thought, and suddenly he saw a little log cabin gleaming white amid the fir trees.

Peter entered the house—no one was in. A table stood in the centre of the room with a kerosene lamp suspended above. Placed around the table were four stools. A clock was ticking away on the wall, and a pile of hay lay in the corner.

Peter climbed upon this pile, buried himself in the hay to get warm, sobbed quietly, and then wiped away his tears with his beard and fell asleep.

Peter awoke to find the room brightly illuminated. The kerosene lamp had been lit. Seated around the table were two little boys and two girls. In front of them was a huge abacus, its bronze plated frame glistening in the light. The children were calculating and mumbling quietly:

"There's twenty years, and another fifty, and a hundred, and then another thirty. . . . That's for you, Mr. Serge. And these are yours, Mrs. Olga. And here's your share, Mrs. Martha. And these are yours, Sir Paul."

"Who are these children?" wondered Peter. "Why are they so grim? Why do they groan, and puff, and sigh like real old people? Why do they address one another like grown-ups? And why are they here at night, in this lonely forest cabin?"

Peter lay there motionless, holding his breath, straining to catch every single word. And what he heard filled him with horror.

The creatures seated around the table with the calculating frame were not little boys and girls, but evil magicians and witches. And Peter learned that according to the way of the world, a man who idles away his time does not notice his lengthening age. And so these magicians had got hold of Peter and transformed him into an old man; and they had done the same thing to another little boy and two little girls. The poor children had grown old without noticing it, and the magicians had appropriated to themselves the time lost by these children so that the magicians became little children, and the children became old folk. And these robbers were seated around the table adding up the stolen time and dividing it out among themselves. What was to be done? Was Peter destined never to recover his lost youth?

The magicians finished their calculations and were about to put the abacus away into the drawer and leave when Mr. Serge, their leader, said:

"Messers magicians! Take care. You must know that the children whom we transformed into old people today may yet become young again!"

"But how?" cried the magicians.

"I will tell you," Mr. Serge replied.

Drawing by A.Poret

He tip-toed out of the cabin, walked around it, came back, bolted the door and poked the hay with a stick.

Peter froze into immobility, never stirred.

The evil magician did not notice the boy. Beckoning to the other magicians to draw closer, he began quietly:

"Unfortunately, things are so arranged in this world that a man can find a way out of any trouble. Should those children whom we today transformed into old people seek out one another tomorrow, come here exactly at midnight and turn the hands of the clock back seventy seven times over, they will again become children and we will perish."

He fell silent. After a while Mrs. Olga spoke up:

"But how will they ever find that out?"

"They wouldn't get here by midnight," grumbled Sir Paul. "They'd be late, even if only for one minute."

"Yes, catch them coming here!" mumbled Mrs. Martha. "I can just see them do it! Why, those lazybones wouldn't manage to count to seventy seven; they'd get off the track before they ever reached fifty!"

"That's all very true," Mr. Serge replied. "Nevertheless, we must be on our guard. Should the children get to the clock and touch the hands, we wouldn't be able to move from the spot. But enough of this chattering! Let's go hunting in the city."

The abacus was thereupon deposited in the drawer, and the magicians ran out of the house like children, but all the time groaning and puffing like real old people.

Peter waited until the sound of their footsteps had died down in the forest. He crept out of the cabin, and losing no time, moved cautiously under the cover of the trees and bushes, and finally ran, nay, dashed towards the city to look for aged schoolchildren.

The city was still asleep when he got there. The windows were dark and except for the militia men at their posts there was not a soul in the streets. Daybreak came at last and the first tram cars began to move through the avenues. Peter on his watch finally spied an old woman carrying a huge basket and moving slowly down the street.

Peter rushed right over to her with the cry:

"Granny, tell me please: are you a school girl?"

"What?" asked the old woman sternly.

"Are you a third class pupil?" Peter whispered timidly.

The old woman stamped her feet indignantly and waved her basket threateningly at poor Peter who hastened away.

He paused to catch his breath and then walked on. The city was completely awakened by this time. Janitors were watering streets filled with the hum of traffic. People were hastening to work. Trucks clattered over the pavements, the drivers hurrying to deliver their goods to the stores, factories and railway stations. Peter had seen them many times before, but only now did he realize why people are always hurrying, afraid to waste time, to lag behind.

So Peter walked and walked, scrutinizing every aged man and woman he came across, but none seemed to fit in. There were old people hastening down the street, but he could tell at once that they were genuine ones, not third class pupils.

There was an old man with a briefcase in his hand—probably, a teacher. Then he passed another old man carrying a bucket and brush—most certainly a house painter. Then the red car of the fire brigade raced past him—and here, too, was an old man, the chief of the fire brigade. He surely never wasted a single minute of his life, thought Peter sadly.

So he walked on and on, but no aged children appeared. The streets hummed with life: everybody looked busy; only Peter alone seemed sadly left behind, a laggard, a good-for-nothing whom no one needed.

Exactly at noon Peter entered a small garden and sat down on a bench to rest.

Suddenly he saw something which made him leap to his feet again.

Seated on another bench near by was an old woman sobbing bitterly.

Peter wanted to run towards her, but dared not.

"I will wait and see what she does," he thought.

The old woman ceased crying and sat there swinging her legs. Then she produced a newspaper from one pocket and a currant bun from another. As she unfolded the paper Peter barely managed to suppress a cry of delight: it was the Young Pioneer's paper, the children's periodical. While she read, the old woman dug her finger into the bun picking out the currants.

When she had finished the currants, she put the paper and unfinished bun away, and then suddenly bent down to look at something in the grass. She picked up a ball—probably lost by some child.

The old woman turned the ball in her hands, inspected it, wiped it carefully with her handkerchief, got up and, walking slowly towards a tree, began to play ball!

Peter leaped across flower beds and bushes, crying:

"Granny, upon my word, aren't you a schoolgirl?"

The old woman jumped with delight, and gripping Peter's hand, said:

"Of course I am. My name's Marusya and I'm in the third class. And who are you?"

Peter told Marusya his story. Then he took her by the hand and they ran off to look for the rest of their mates. An hour, then another and a third went by. Finally they drifted into the courtyard of a large apartment house and there they saw an old woman hopping from square to square chalked on the ground.

So Peter and Marusya rushed towards her.

"Granny, are you a schoolgirl?" they asked.

"Of course I am," she answered. "I am Nadenka, in the third class. And who are you?"

When Peter and Marusya had told her all about themselves, they joined hands and went off to look for their fourth comrade-in-misfortune.

It seemed as if they were never destined to find him. The old people inspected all the courtyards, all the parks, children's

Drawing by A. Poret

cinemas, hobby centres, but the boy was nowhere to be found.

In one park they saw a bespectacled old man chasing a butterfly. This must be our man, they thought.

"Grandpa, are you a schoolboy?" they chorused.

"No," was the reply, "I'm a professor. I must find out what kind of a butterfly this is and how it came to be in this park so early in spring. Good day!"

And off he went chasing the butterfly just like a schoolboy.

What was to be done? Where was their fourth comrade? . . .

Time was slipping away very fast. Dusk fell and lights appeared in many windows. The day was drawing to a close. What was to be done? Was everything to be lost?

Suddenly Marusya cried out:

"Look! look!"

Peter and Nadenka looked up to see tram No. 9 racing along at full speed and an old man swinging on its "tail": his cap was cocked to one side, his beard floating in the wind and he was whistling just like a boy. Of all things! There they were nearly exhausted searching for him, and he calmly sneaking a ride through the city absolutely unconcerned!

The three started to race after the tram. Fortunately a red traffic light brought it to a standstill.

They caught up with the tram, grabbed the folds of the old man's coat and pulled him down from the "tram-tail."

"Are you a schoolboy?" they asked.

"What a question?" was the reply. "Of course, I'm Vasya, in the second class. But what do you want?"

After their stories were told, all four lost no time to jump into the tram and hasten to the suburban woods.

A group of schoolchildren were travelling in the same tram. They immediately rose to offer their seats to the old people:

"Please, granny, please, grandpa, take a seat!"

The "grandmas" and "gradpas" flushed red from embarrassment and refused.

The schoolchildren, however, were well mannered and would not think of sitting while old people were standing up.

"Please, sit down," they persisted. "You have done enough work in your long life and have earned your rest."

Fortunately, the tram had reached the edge of the forest. The old people leaped down and ran towards it.

More trouble, however, was in store for them: they lost their way in the woods.

The night was very dark. They roamed the forest, stumbling, falling, unable to find the way.

"Time, time!" moaned Peter. "It's flying away. I didn't notice the road to the hut yesterday, I was afraid to waste time. But now I realize it's sometimes advisable to spend a little time in order to save it later."

The old people felt fairly exhausted, when fortunately for them the wind began to drive the clouds from the sky and the full moon appeared.

Peter climbed a tree, and, lo! there was the house, just a few steps away, its bright windows and white walls hidden amid the firs.

Peter climbed down and whispered to his comrades:

"Quiet! Not a word! Follow me!"

The children crawled towards the cabin. They looked cautiously through the window. The hands of the clock showed there were five minutes left before midnight. The magicians were lying on top of the hay, guarding the stolen time.

"They are asleep!" Marusya said.

"Quiet!" whispered Peter.

Noiselessly opening the door, they crawled forward.

It was one minute before twelve when they faced the clock. Exactly at midnight Peter stretched his hand towards the clock hands and . . . one, two, three! began to turn the hand, from right to left.

With a wild cry the magicians leaped to their feet, but they remained rooted to the spot. They stood there growing and growing becoming transformed into adults, silver streaks appearing on their temples, their cheeks furrowed with wrinkles . . . .

"Quick, lift me up!" cried Peter. "I'm becoming so small, I can no longer reach the hands of the clock! Thirty one, thirty two, thirty three . . . ."

Peter was hoisted up on the arms of his comrades. When the hands of the clock had been turned back forty times, the magicians shrank into feeble, hunched old men and women. They dwindled down, becoming smaller and smaller, bending lower and lower to the ground. When the hands of the clock completed the seventy seventh revolution, the evil magicians vanished into thin air, as if they had never existed at all.

The children glanced at each other laughing merrily. They were children once again, it was by their own efforts and not through a miracle, that they had regained the time lost in vain.

They were saved, but you must remember: a man who wastes his time grows old without noticing it.

Translated by Lia Gavurina

THE STORY OF A COLLECTIVE FARM

A model of the collective farm was displayed at the World Fair in 1939. Its fame had spread across the continent of Europe and on over the boundless Atlantic, from the tiny Ukrainian station of Ivkovka to New York. A few months ago it celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The farm came into being in the spring of 1920 in the Altai Region, in the remote Siberian village of Kamyshenka, one hundred twenty kilometres from the railway. Its organizers—it was the first collective farm in Siberia and perhaps one of the first in all the Soviet Union—were partisans who had returned home after the rout of Admiral Kolchak, the most go-ahead progressive men in the village. Very soon they had won over more than a hundred families.

But in those days it was hard to carry on collective farming in a rational way, so as to win success. The overlong distance from the railway was a big drawback. And so after two years' work the indefatigable go-aheads in Kamyshenka set out on foot for Moscow for help and advice from Lenin. Ilyich gave them a hearty welcome, presented them with a tractor and advised them to move to the Ukraine, if the members would agree.

In December 1923 one hundred and ten collective farm families in Kamyshenka got ready for the long journey with all their cattle and effects. While they were on the way they heard the sad news of Lenin's death and on arriving at their new settlement, a former landowner's estate, near the district centre town of Sinelnikovo, they named their collective farm after Lenin.

By the eve of the World war II the collective farm had become a well-developed and profitable undertaking with many lines. It had five thousand hectares placed at its disposal in perpetuity, and worked it with tractors, combine-harvesters and other first-class machines. It had five different livestock farms. Agronomy in the collective was a respected and much applied science.

The farm had its own cinema, a radio receiving station, power station, library of 8,000 volumes, out-patients hospital, veterinary centre, crèche and two kindergartens, its own secondary school, a school of livestock breeding, a brick and tile factory, power and water-driven mills and workshops of different kinds.

The farm's trotting horses carried off twelve country-wide records in the four prewar years!

Then the war cut short the peaceful labours of the collective farm. Scores of its young members went off to defend the country, two hundred of its best horses were handed over to the Red Army. The farmers left at home attacked their job with vigour but the times were hard. The front came sweeping towards Sinelnikovo district. The nazi hordes reached Dniepropetrovsk. The Red Army still pulled back. . . .

Every day the burning question of what to do became more acute. To stop where they were would have meant to let all they had accumulated by twenty years of labour become German spoils.

"No, better leave, better endure the worst of hardships than remain to live under a yoke, in bondage!"

That was what Irina Zhestovskaya, the farm's oldest milkmaid, said in those hard days.

On August 27th, 1941, the farm weighed anchor and steered east. It was an unusual, sad and yet at the same time majestic sight. Fifteen hundred head of cattle, hundreds of people, dozens of wagons laden with the most essential goods: provisions, cattle feed, household effects and medicine chests, vans carrying the kiddies, mobile kitchens—the collective farm column strung out for several miles and, together with Red Army units, withdrew to the Don. The collective farmers had to suffer many hardships on that journey, there were many dangers and reverses lying in wait for them.

All precautions proved in vain. Influenza and foot-and-mouth disease broke out among the cattle, which was particularly dangerous since the herd was on the march. And still the front drew menacingly nearer. To go ahead without rooting out the disease meant to doom the cattle and carry the infection for hundreds of miles. So the collective farm veterinary surgeons and their assistants took a risk, well aware of what the consequences might be. They infected all the animals with the disease, converted the halting place into a hospital, cured the cattle for twenty days, and only then, literally a few days before the Germans came, did they set off again.

The enemy dogged their heels. For five days the collective farm columns fled from the Germans along the roads of the Rostov Region, turned off one road onto another, swerved back again, changed their course and, at last, reached the Don. But there they were in for another stroke of bad luck: the crossing had been blown up already. They turned towards Novocherkassk only to find the bridge down. Then the collective farmers joined the sapper regulars, helped them to put up a temporary bridge and so crossed the river.

The first snow fell on November 10th. It found the collective farm in Stavropol Terri-

tory, 1,052 kilometres from home. That was the beginning of their first wintering out. Seven tiny dugouts and a ricketty shed for about fifty cattle was all they found at hand for a hundred and fifty families and their herd of fifteen hundred. For two weeks the collective farmers toiled at making dugouts, putting up temporary shelters for the livestock, finding and carrying fodder. In a word they settled down somehow or other and although the winter was severe, managed to keep all their stock alive.

The collective farm was anchored there for almost nine months and in that time gave hundreds of tons of meat, milk, pork fat and wool to the Red Army. But in the summer of 1942 the front approached them again, and once more they had to weigh anchor. They launched on a second, still more difficult, still more dangerous stage of evacuation.

For hundreds of kilometres ahead of them stretched the arid Kalmyk Steppes and desert sands. Death or captivity followed hard upon the collective farmers' heels. The Germans were advancing along the Astrakhan-Stalingrad road. Shells plumped down and bombs burst along the route of the collective farm columns. To avoid the danger the farmers turned off the main road and followed the remote by-ways. They travelled day and night, halting seldom and only where there was hope of getting a little water. They cleaned out old neglected wells and sunk new ones . . . and nobody grew faint-hearted, nobody weakened or faltered in that unparalleled heroic trek.

One cannot read unmoved the story of those days as told by the farm's bookkeeper, Kiril Shovkoplyas:

"August 13th, 1942. Intolerable, devilish heat. The skin's peeling off our faces and blood is oozing through cracked lips. But we are pushing ahead, stubbornly and practically without a stop, covering up to forty kilometres a day. The cattle is in a bad way. Water, water! plead their inflamed teary eyes. But there is no water. All around—burning steppe. A dense hot dust blinds the eyes and suffocates. It seems that we are always on the point of losing control of ourselves and that our last vestiges of strength will desert us. But we are travelling, moving on. Night has come. We have halted for a couple of hours. We are searching for a well. It's no use. We push on further. Villages have disappeared. We are on the edge of the black-earth country, ahead lies the wilderness and desert. But nothing daunts us, we have lost the ability to feel fear. We are pushing on. . . ."

The second collective farm migration lasted seventy-six days. Another 1,948 kilometres lay behind, covered in two and a half months! On November 4th, 1942, the collective farm columns halted for their second wintering near Uralsk, in West-Kazakhstan Region. Everything had to be started all over again, for here too there was nowhere to house the people and shelter the cattle. Once more they began excavating dugouts, putting up cattle-sheds, finding and carting fodder. And this time, too, unsparing toil saved all the cattle.

That in brief is the heroic chronicle of the migration of a party of Soviet peasants who preferred any hardships to German captivity. They had come across the Don Steppe and the Caspian deserts, through bitter cold and burning heat, had been urged on by the howl of sandstorms and the deadly shriek of German bombs, had crossed the Don and the Volga, had come from the Dnieper Region to the Urals.

A large colourful map hangs in the collective farm offices. It shows schematically the Dniepropetrovsk Region, the Donbass, the North-Caucasus, the Lower Volga, the Trans-Volga Region and West-Kazakhstan. Two thick dotted lines—one black, one red—twist and turn right across the map from west to east, from Sinelnikovo to Uralsk and back again. On either side of the map are photographs of the people who made that unexampled journey.

On returning home a scene of awful desolation met their eyes.

The Germans came on November 3rd, 1941, — old folk of the neighbouring village recounted. They were amazed to see the well-built cattle sheds, silos towers, the power station and the two-and three-storeyed houses.

Their gangster faces creased in self-satisfied smiles! Just think, a valuable farm like that to fall into the Germans' hands intact! Gebietskommissar Baron von Posern and his sub-commandants, Wulf and Ersfelb, rubbed their hands in glee. "Gut, sehr gut!" But it was enough for them to take a turn about the farm for all their glee to evaporate as if by magic.

Empty! They opened the doors of the farm buildings one after another and their disappointment and rage steadily grew. Emptiness everywhere! Huge splendidly equipped stables and cow-sheds, sheep-pens and pig-sties greeted them with a lifeless depressing silence. Only the emboldened sparrows darted this way and that under the roofs of the empty buildings, making them ring with their clear mocking twittering.

"Zum Teufel!" growled the Gebietskommissar consigning persons unknown to the devil.

"Was soll es bedeuten? What can it mean?" asked the bewildered sub-commandants.

It was only after inspecting the dwellings and finding no sign of life there either, that the Germans realized just what had happened and fell into an indescribable fury. In his impotent rage the Gebietskommissar erupted fire and brimstone, gave some unfortunate a dressing down in the choicest language until he was hoarse, heaped threats and curses on the heads of all and sundry, stamped his feet in a paroxysm of rage and even broke his stylish cane.

Enraged by the departure of the collective farm en bloc, the nazis were ready to wipe off the face of the earth all that was left. Fortunately for the farm, this time German canniness unexpectedly gained the upper hand even of the vicious thirst for destruction. The better buildings in Sinelnikovo had been ruined in the battle. Nothing was left in

the little town that might have served as barracks for the S.S. cutthroats and the Gebietskommissar resolved to postpone execution of his sentence on the empty collective farm buildings: he billetted his S.S. detachments there.

In their first year the nazis tried to cultivate the deserted collective farm land. They drove in hundreds of slaves, brought a number of tractors, ploughed the land, put a thousand hectares under winter crops and even sowed spring crops. But all their efforts proved vain and fruitless. The very land, nature herself, seemed to be against the occupants. The winter crops froze, the spring crops perished in a dry, hot wind. A cold, snowless winter and then a hot, dry summer strode with vengeful step across the enemy-occupied farm, leaving in their wake nothing but a thin growth of wan, scorched crops. A relentless, invisible spirit seemed to curse everything the Germans touched in the way of farming. Failure followed failure and in the second year they gave up trying.

The Gebietskommissar did not manage to carry out his initial sentence either. The Red Army came back to the Sinelnikovo vicinity in a mighty whirlwind rush. The nazis ran to save their hides and had no time to carry out their devilish plan of destruction in full. Before they left, however, they did fire three blocks of dwellings, the farm office, the bakery, the club and dining-room, the power-station, the mill, the brick factory, a cattle shed, a stable and a pig-sty, and smashed all the farm implements and effects. The damage done amounted to twenty-five million roubles.

For some farms that would have meant complete ruin but the Germans were not able to ruin this one. The buildings they set on fire were so soundly built that the flames did little more than consume the timber parts. The stout brick walls, cement floors, stone and concrete pillars were practically unaffected. But most important of all the pedigree cattle, the collective farm's treasure, was beyond the nazi brigands' reach.

The collective farmers got home in time to sow the spring crops and then began the work of rehabilitation. The trials and hardships borne had not been in vain. The farm had preserved its draft animals and tractors intact and thanks to that not only got through its own sowing in quick order but also helped the neighbours. In that first spring of rehabilitation the farm cultivated almost nine tenths of its pre-war swathe of spring crops, while this spring they have greatly exceeded it.

The cattle sheds the Germans burned down were rebuilt with comparative ease. A tougher job was the restoration of the two- and three-storey blocks of flats. They had suffered badly in the fire and to put them in a habitable condition would have called for a great deal of scarce building materials. Consequently the job was put off till better times and to house the roofless farmers about a hundred clay huts were built.

It was a year in the spring of 1945 since the collective farm returned from evacuation. On the anniversary the collective farmers reviewed the past twelve months and once again, possibly more than ever before, realized the strength latent in their collective, cemented by a quarter of a century of sound team work.

DIMITRI ROUD

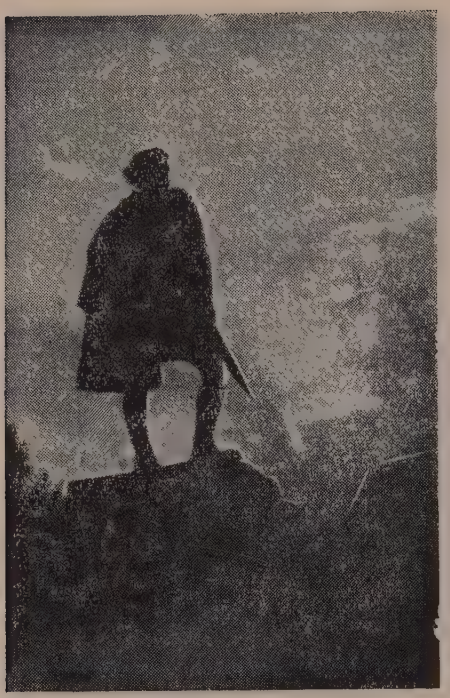
LETTERS FROM ALBANIA

A PARADE IN THE CITY OF TIRANA

The first rays of the morning sun fell on our plane as we gained altitude to pass over the mountainous frontiers of Albania. The huge grey masses of the mountain crags wrapped around with a milk-white shroud of clouds seemed to float past below our silver wings. The plane was headed for Tirana, capital of Albania. We had been airborne two hours when a wide mountain valley opened up before us with glaringly white houses and villas dotted here and there and a town that was buried under the deep, velvety green of poplars and cyprus trees. This was Tirana. The wheels of the aircraft crunched over the gravel of the landing strip of a big aerodrome. It was the end of a long trip from Moscow to Tirana, capital of Albania, the little country that occupies the mountainous Adriatic littoral of the Balkan Peninsula.

A young officer stepped out of the aerodrome offices and came towards the still taxiing plane. He gave us a hearty welcome, led us to the telephone and fifteen minutes later we were seated in a car belonging to the Soviet Military Mission whirring through the wide streets of the city towards the Imaf Boulevard; the Boulevard was decorated with Albanian national flags—a black double-headed eagle on a background of red—and with slogans on bunting. We had arrived in the nick of time—within half an hour the Albanian national festival would begin.

July 10th is the date of the foundation of the Albanian regular army which liberated the country from the German occupants. On this date the General Staff of the Albanian Army was formed. The army grew out of a small partisan column that had raised the revolt against the Germans. Beginning in the tiny mountain villages the flames of revolt spread throughout the entire country embracing all the towns and provinces. Valona, Korcha, Argirokastro and Tirana revolted. Many young and old, women and children fought in the partisan detachments. The movement met with a hearty response from every citizen of liberty-loving Albania. Then came the just retribution for the many long years of suffering and oppression, for the thousands of people done to death, for the villages destroyed, for the blood of women and children. In November 1944 the last German battalion was driven out of the country by the People's Army of Albania.



Memorial to an unknown fighter for Albania's independence, in the town of Korcha

We drove past the ranks of soldiers drawn up for the parade. In battalions and brigades they were disposed along the wide Imaf Boulevard. The troops were standing at attention and we would have liked to look closely into every swarthy, manly face. Tall, handsome, with aquiline profiles, their eyes blazing brightly, the soldiers stood motionless, their rifles held before them. Many are the tales they could have told about fights to the death in rocky mountain gorges, about bold raids on German garrisons or about months of strenuous campaigning in the mountains. Today was their festival, the triumph of the victors in the capital of the country they had liberated.

Thousands of Tiranians were on the streets in holiday attire. There were many peasants in the huge crowds; they had come down from their mountain villages and brought their families with them. The air resounded to the strident shout of thousands of voices:

"Long live Hoja!"

Colonel-General Enver Hoja, head of the democratic government, Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Albanian Army, passed along the ranks accompanied by his closest comrades-in-arms. The crowds packing the sidewalks threw flowers to him as he passed. The general made his way through what was literally a shower of oleanders, roses and bouquets of mountain flowers in order to reach the troops that stood motionless and silent awaiting the meeting with their beloved leader. Enver Hoja had conducted a glorious campaign with these soldiers. Many of them he knew by sight and quite a number by name. From the first "cheta" or squad of forty men that he organized in Peza to this thrilling parade in Tirana—such was the road the Albanian Army and its Commander-in-Chief had travelled.

Enver Hoja is a young man of thirty-six. He is tall, smart, wears a light grey tunic and a Sam Browne. He has the gait of an athlete as he walks along the ranks and then climbs on to the platform. His speech, addressed to the soldiers and people of Albania, is frequently interrupted by the stormy applause of thousands of people. The air is shattered by a thunderous ovation when he mentions the name of Marshal Tito.

The troops pass in solemn march; the saluting base is the decorated platform on which are standing members of the Albanian democratic government and members of the Soviet, American and British Military Missions. The right wing of the platform is occupied by representatives of Orthodox, Catholic and Mohammedan clergy.

Mountain pack artillery, anti-aircraft guns, motor-cyclists follow each other past the saluting base. The military band closes the procession: the band had opened the parade with a march and during the hour and a half the troops had been filing past, had stood playing in the terrific heat.

Noon. The sun has reached the zenith and life disappears from the city. In the silence of the empty streets one occasionally hears the whir of passing motor-tyres or the hoof beats of a donkey on the stone paving.

At five in the afternoon the city comes to life again. The blinds of the shops are raised with a rattle, the restaurants and cafés are soon filled with customers and a lively crowd appears on the streets. The traffic in the Albanian capital offers striking contrasts: brightly painted new limousines manœuvre along narrow streets between exactly the same tiny donkeys as you see in the streets of Samarkand or Andijan. The picturesque, brightly hued national costumes of the peasants, the huge piles of fruit, vendors of brilliantly coloured carpets and homespun fabrics are to be seen side by side with elegant shop-windows and people in immaculately tailored European clothes. At night the wide streets are well lit by electric light.

The Albanian people have lived through many gloomy periods in the course of their history; the weight of many occupations, of the endless divisions of the country by the great powers into "spheres of influence," the bloody feuds fomented from abroad, the harsh rule of King Zogu, the terror of the blackshirts and the Hitlerites. . . . Today, for the first time in history the Albanians feel that their fate is in their own hands. The victorious outcome of the war has given them faith in their own strength and in their capacity to defend the liberty they have won. Attempts against the independence of Albania have not ceased. The fascist-like Greek reactionaries are rattling sabres on the Albanian frontiers. They are making use of the Greek radio to howl about taking away from Albania the provinces and towns of Korcha, Argirokastro and the port of Valona as "ancient Greek lands." In their unbridled provocations the fascist

Girls from the partisan village of Darda, Southern Albania

bandits that have found asylum in Athens have gone so far as to demand that Tirana be ceded to them. They organize armed provocation on the borders and fire at Albanian frontier posts. The Ankara radio is following in the footsteps of the Greek reactionaries.

Actually the Greek population in the above-mentioned provinces of South-Albania amount to a bare half percent. Incidentally even this half percent fought almost to a man in the partisan detachments side by side with the Albanians for the liberty and independence of their country and never even dreamed of cutting themselves off from the people to whom they had become related by blood in battle. The towns of Korcha and Argirokastro have from time immemorial been the cradle of the Albanian liberation movement. All the leaders of the people came from these provinces. It was here that the first partisan columns were formed and it was here that the people's army which liberated the country grew up.

The Albanian people, confident of their own strength, watch coolly but carefully the campaign of provocation that is being conducted by foreign fascist remnants. The Albanians are confident that their army, tempered in war, is a bulwark of strength.

When the cool breeze of the evening began to blow from the mountains Tirana became a mass of holiday illuminations. The clink of glasses filled with foaming, tart wine, the strains of music coming from the loudspeakers in the streets, the songs of the young men in military uniform as they strolled through the streets and squares with girls on their arms—all merged into one constant stream of sound. Bright stars were sprinkled over the black velvet dome of the sky spreading over the city and over the distant mountain valleys that sparkled brilliantly with the fires of joy and happiness.

2

KEMAL ALLA'S GUN

We left Tirana long before dawn in order to travel as far as possible before the midday heat set in. The tommy-gunner on guard at the exit from the city carefully examined our documents, raised the barrier and the car sped on over a splendid macadamised road gradually climbing higher and higher round sharp hairpin bends.

We took our last look at Tirana from the top of a high mountain. From there we had an excellent view of all parts of the city—old Tirana, the commercial section, and "New Tirana," a wide arterial highway with hotels, villas, large blocks of modern flats, government offices and a big sports stadium. The Italian fascists had hoped to settle here permanently. Today this part of the city is called the "City of Youth." The "Palace of Youth," a beautiful white building, rises high over "New Tirana." In the evenings sounds of laughter, music and ringing young voices steal out through the open windows of the palace.

The evening before we left I saw some old cinema newsreels taken from the archives. There were many Italian films propagandizing the Italian "conquest" of Albania. Scene followed scene on the screen: all this happened in very recent times—Italian infantry marching through the streets of Tirana; despicable smiles on the faces of the Albanian Quislings bowing servilely to Mussolini's satrap; "il Duce" himself in all manner of poses accompanying his fascist gangsters in their subjugation of the tiny, unarmed country; the smoking ruins of peaceful Albanian mountain villages through which pass endless streams of Mussolini's soldiery.

Looking at the green tops of the mountains gilded by the first rays of the rising sun as our car sped along the mountain roads, I thought of the days that I had spent in Tirana, of the meetings and talks with the people that I had enjoyed.

"Go about the country and see for yourself how free Albanians live," I was advised.

My companion in the car was Milto Guro, a well-known Albanian writer. Guro spent his childhood in Russia, graduated from a commercial college and speaks Russian fluently. He is a fine companion: he knows his native land, its history and geography in all its details. He told me about the manner and customs of the people, about the work of peasants, about their minerals, about the bloody reign of King Zogu, about the treas-

ures of ancient architecture excavated in the vicinity of the Santa-Cuaranto harbour, about the Albanian high schools—the Lycées—and about Enver Hoja. The winding road brought us to the top of mountains that reached up into the clouds. It was from here that Hoja had launched his last drive for the capture of Tirana. The mountains of Albania, majestic in their wildness, preserve the stories of the courage of many soldiers and the intricate histories of human lives. In Albania the word "mountains" means struggle. The people do not say of a man that: "He took part in the people's war of liberation," they say simply: "He was in the mountains."

The history of Albania is in her mountains; her riches, her future are in the mountains. Rich deposits of chromium ore with an almost 50% content of pure chromium lie there in millions of tons almost untouched. There are also coal, oil, asphalt—the best in the world with which the roads of Paris are paved—timber and copper. The Germans and the Italians did not organize either a mining or a refining industry; they merely grabbed everything that was available and in return gave the people the gallows, condemning them to an existence of hunger and need.

One of the most important tasks facing the young democratic government is the economic exploitation of the country's natural resources, the rational employment of its oil, metals, forests and coal. The national life that was undermined by the occupants has been restored. The industrial foundation of a new national economy is being laid. Young specialists from the Ministry of Economy had told me about this with great enthusiasm when I was in Tirana. These are hot-headed young men who but a few months ago were engaged in solving operational problems, in which the odds were usually about ten to one against them and who even before they have properly recovered their breath after the last skirmish with the enemy are already engaged on economic problems.

We crossed the high passes over the Graba Mountains and began the downgrade trip into the Elbasan Valley. We got a sudden view of the valley as we turned round one of the bends: it lay far below us, a smooth, endless green carpet disappearing into the blue haze of the distance. Elbasan itself is one of the biggest Albanian cities. We arrived on a market day and the town was crowded with peasants from the surrounding villages. We bought a melon from a peasant in the market.

"What language is the stranger talking?" he asked Milto Guro.

As soon as he found that I came from the Soviet Union he began talking excitedly and in a few minutes a crowd had gathered round him that continued to grow all the time.

"Long live the Soviet Union!"

It was a difficult job to shake all the hands that were held out to us. The looks and smiles that met us were filled with love and admiration for our country. Somebody started singing a partisan battle song. To the strains of this song they accompanied us to our car. We passed through the rows of artisan's booths where old jewellers were making whimsical filigree brooches, buckles and rings from silver, where saddlers and coppersmiths were busy plying their trade. We passed along walls of the old fortress built by Skander-bek, the first fighter for Albania's independence, a man whose name is surrounded by legend and is today everywhere respected.

The road did not continue for very long through the level, fruitful plain but soon began to climb again into the endless mountains. Hanging precariously to the steep mountain sides was an occasional village surrounded by square green cultivated fields won from the mountains by hard toil. We crossed streams and waterfalls by recently-built bridges. The strong concrete structures that formerly spanned these water barriers had been blown up by the retreating occupants. At every step there were traces of fighting. In one place, along a distance of one kilometre, I counted seventy-five German motor-vehicles that were riddled with bullets, wrecked and burned by the partisans.

We were already in Southern Albania where the partisan movement originated. Thousands of people had taken up arms. From individual raids and ambushes they went over to the storming of towns where they gave battle to large German garrisons. The victories of the Red Army filled the hearts of the Albanian partisans with hope.

After crossing a high pass we dropped down to the beautiful mountain lake, Okhrida, the opposite shore of which was Yugoslavia. Fishing boats skimmed over its smooth, silver, sunkissed surface. Milto Guro announced solemnly and with great determination that we were not going any farther: he insisted on staying in the village of Lin whose little cottages were scattered along a picturesque spit of land.

"We can't go on without eating the Koran fish. It is the last prehistoric fish left in the world and it breeds in this lake."

There was nothing for it but to submit to his insistence, to my own curiosity and the pangs of hunger.

We met with a hearty welcome in the village. Hospitality is one of the outstanding traits of the Albanian people. There is a folk tale which says that a poor Albanian was sentenced to death and people asked him whether there had ever been a worse moment in his life. "Yes," he answered, "one day a guest came to my house and I had no bread to offer him. . . ." In addition to bread our breakfast consisted of vodka chilled in a mountain stream, crayfish, cheese, tomatoes, and the really marvellous prehistoric fish which tasted something like mackerel. The grey-haired old partisan peasant who was our host proposed the first toast to Generalissimo Stalin, to the Red Army, the army of liberation: "If it had not been for the Red Army," he said in concluding his toast, "we should not have seen the sunlight of freedom, we should not have known life and happiness."

"Come here, Kemal Alla!" he called.

A ten-year-old lad stepped out of the crowd of peasants that surrounded us.

"Show us your gun," said the old man.

The boy held the weapon out to me. The barrel, a piece of iron tubing, was fastened to a smooth wooden stock. The bolt was so primitive that it was difficult to believe that the weapon could be fired: the striking pin was pulled back by hand and in place of the usual spring there was a piece of tightly drawn elastic like that of an ordinary catapult.

"We used guns like this against German automatics! Show him, Kemal!" And the old man pointed to a rusty bucket lying on the roof of the cottage.

The boy loaded his gun, aimed and fired. The bucket, pierced by his well-aimed bullet, came rattling down from the roof amidst the guffaws of the onlookers.

The boy came over to us and in a voice that was almost inaudible from excitement said a few words and held the gun out to me. All the people standing around applauded and shouted loud greetings in chorus, frequently repeating the name "Stalin." My interpreter told me that the boy partisan was asking me to take the gun with which he had fought for over two years as a gift to Stalin. By the excitement on the boy's face and the burning gleam in his eyes it was easy to see how hard it was for him to part with his magnificent weapon, but he was happy to make a gift of it; we could also see that if we did not take the gun the fearless partisan who had been tempered in so many battles would have burst out crying.

Shortly after that we left the hospitable village and travelled on to the town of Pogorodets; we halted for a short time on the way to inspect a big children's camp something like our Crimean "Artek." Hundreds of sunburned, healthy-looking children were spending their school holidays in tents on the banks of the lake. Almost all these children, both boys and girls, had fought in the partisan ranks.

The sun was already disappearing behind the peaks of the distant mountain ranges as we turned another sharp bend and caught our first glimpse of the white minarets and tree-shaded buildings of Albania's most beautiful city. At the city gates an officer inspected our documents, greeted us and ordered a soldier to raise the barrier.

3

CARNAGE IN CHAMERIA

The Albanians call Korcha the Albanian Paris. They smile at the comparison themselves for they realize that it is something of an exaggeration. One cannot help, however, falling in love with the city of snow-white houses, stately poplars and cypress trees, minarets and church domes. If you look at Korcha from some distance and from a height, it is like a jewel set in the blue and rose-coloured mountain crags that surround it. Its height above sea level is about three thousand feet. When you breathe the sweet mountain air you forget the terrible heat of Tirana at noon.

Throughout the years of Albania's doleful history Korcha has been the eagle's nest of bold rebels and enlightened revolutionaries, the cradle of the Albanian national liberation movement.

On the central square of the town, like a symbol of the inflexible freedom-loving spirit of the Albanians, stands a granite monument to the unknown fighter for the country's independence. A young mountaineer in national costume stands on a cliff with his head held proudly high. The wind is playing in his hair and his hand is firmly grasping a rifle. The sculpture is really beautiful at sunrise. Lit up by the piercing, rosy rays of the early sun, the lad carved from granite seems to rise over the mountains that surround Korcha.

A stream of people flowed to the foot of the monument. A meeting was in progress that seemed more like a volcano in eruption. The feelings of thousands of people came out into the open in strident cries of exultation, in sonorous partisan songs. Above the head of the crowd floated portraits of Enver Hoja, Tito, Stalin and Truman. On huge strips of canvas were slogans in honour of the democratic government of Albania, the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and Great Britain. Every minute there came shouts from the crowd addressed to the United Nations:

"Recognize democratic Albania!"

A woman partisan

The crowd took up the shout and thousands of young voices shouted in chorus:

"Recognize us!"

In chorus the crowd shouted greetings to Generalissimo Stalin and the Red Army. Angry shouts were addressed to the Greek provocateurs, the warmongers, who demanded that Albania cede them the town of Korcha. The crowd gathered in a solid ring around the car of the Soviet Military Mission passing by. Soviet officers were carried shoulder high through the streets to shouts of:

"Long live the Soviet Union! Long live the Red Army!"

In this stormy ocean of passions sounded the great joy of a liberated people, the confidence in their strength and in their future. Above them, on the granite cliff, his cloak fluttering to the breeze, stood the young lad with his rifle firmly grasped in his hand. Looking down from his pedestal across the sea of heads and banners, over the buildings and mountains, he seemed to be saying to those who threatened the liberty that Albania had won in blood:

"Don't touch us. We shall not give up that which we have gained. . . ."

In the village of Darda we witnessed a festival that was like the continuation of what we had seen in Korcha. The whole population of the village was gathered on a small open place in the mountains. Darda had been an unassailable centre of the partisan movement. Everyone of its inhabitants was armed. They blew up all the mountain roads leading to them from the outside world, and fought with fanatical stubbornness and bravery. During the whole period of the war the Germans only managed to hold Darda for two months. The Hitlerites angrily dubbed Darda "Moscow" because of its stubborn resistance and the courage of its people. The hospitable people of Darda told me all this themselves.

"We were both proud and happy. Great, determined Moscow inspired us to implacable struggle against the Germans."

Girls dressed in gold-embroidered national costumes danced at the Darda festival. First they would whirl at a dizzy speed making their gold coins and necklaces ring until they were lost in a whirlpool of crimson cloth and silk shawls; then they would float slowly through a magnificent round dance, holding hands, lifting their beautiful, finely chiselled faces to the white clouds that floated over the mountains.

We passed through the village of Borova. Here there had been a bloody battle lasting many days between the regular units of the army of liberation and the Germans. The Hitlerites completely destroyed the village. The remains of walls and chimneys jut up gauntly towards the sky.

The same picture is presented by Leskovik, a beautiful little township in the mountains. The town was razed to the ground by the Germans. Eye-witnesses told us what we knew only too well long ago. The Germans' methods were the same whether the villages were in Smolensk district or in the mountains of Albania—cans of kerosene and torches.

The Greek frontier is not far from Leskovik. For several kilometres the road runs along the banks of a mountain river. The other bank is Greece. I halted at a frontier post.

"Almost every day," said the lieutenant in command of the post, "we are fired on from the Greek side of the border. They open fire with rifles and machine-guns. We have strict orders not to reply. Not one of my soldiers has ever fired a shot in return, however great the temptation to teach the fascist provocateurs a good lesson."

It was quiet in the mountains. A cold stream gurgled and the leaves of a century-old platan rustled lightly. Man had won this longed for quiet in the thunder of tremendous battles and at the cost of great sacrifices.

Why do shots ring out in the mountains? Why is it that people who have won their freedom and peace walk about bent low, afraid of a shot in the back fired by a treacherous hand from the far side of the river? It is not only the shots that disturb the silence of the Balkans. The Athens radio-station deafens, disturbs the pure mountain air with muddy waves of unbridled, provocative propaganda. The Greeks call Southern Albania, its ancient lands and the towns of Korcha, Argirokastro, Delvina and Valona, "the Greek northern Epirus." They howl about the Albanian terror against the Greeks in Southern Albania and speak openly of using arms to forcibly annex a half of Albania to Greece.

Milto Guro, my companion, has a perfect knowledge of the Greek language so that when we visited many of the Greek villages in the Southern part of Albania, I was able to talk to many peasants and to prominent public people, all of them Greeks. All that I saw and heard in these days may be summarized briefly as follows:

There is not even a suggestion of any persecution of the Greeks living in Southern Albania. On the contrary, in the Greek villages teaching in the schools and services in the churches are conducted in the Greek language, newspapers and books are published in Greek. All the local elected bodies consist of Greeks. Greek delegates work together with Albanians in the prefecture. One of the portfolios of the central government—that of the Minister of Justice—is held by the representative of the Greek minority, Manol Konomi—himself a Greek.

Together with the whole Albanian people the Greeks fought in the Army of Liberation and in the partisan columns for the liberty of their homeland—Albania. In the famous 19th brigade, for example, all the officers and political instructors were Greeks. The Albanians never showed any feelings of unfriendliness towards the Greeks and helped them in their struggle against the Italians. The Greeks with whom I spoke were indignant at the provocative campaign conducted by reactionary Greek politicians.

"We fought for our liberty against fascism side by side with the Albanian people. We fought for land and for the right to labour in peace. We do not require the 'protection' of people whose foul hands are stained with the blood of fighters for democracy."

The rows of crosses that line the roads—the cemeteries of Italian and German soldiers—

speak eloquently of the ferocity of the battles that were fought there. The rows of partisan graves show the blood brotherhood of the two nations who fought together for freedom. The inscriptions at the graveheads are in two languages, Greek and Albanian. The inscriptions begin with one word that is common to all languages and dialects of the world—partisan.

While speaking of the problem of the Greek minority in Albania one must not forget the Albanian minority in Greece. About 80,000 Albanians remained in the province of Chameria when the Greeks seized it in 1913. Only 25,000 of them are left today. The remainder were wiped out in prisons or in exile or died from hunger and privation. When the Greek people launched their struggle for liberation against the German and Italian fascists, the Albanians in Chameria joined the E. A. M. and fought in the Greek partisan detachments.

In 1944 the reactionary military organization E.D.E.S. protected by the Gestapo was organized in Greece. It was lead by General Napoleon Zervas who called himself a fighter against fascism. When his troops occupied the whole of Chameria they began a wholesale slaughter of the Albanian inhabitants. In Delvina I met people who had witnessed terrible pogroms. Fatis Veli, an old woman who escaped by a miracle, told us that General Zervas' soldiers killed women and children, burnt down the houses and robbed and plundered everywhere. On July 27th, 1944, the pogrom in the town of Parametia lasted the whole twenty-four hours. In the burning town the cries of those being done to death mingled with the grunts and shouts of the bestial murderers. Tiny infants were thrown into the fire, their mothers raped and then murdered. An old woman saw her husband and two sons murdered. A similar pogrom took place in August in the town of Filiat.

Zervas' troops razed sixty-one Albanian villages to the ground. They destroyed eighty-five mosques, killed over two thousand people. On March 7th, 1945, the slaughter in Filiat was repeated. This time over two hundred men, women and children were killed. It would be difficult to estimate the number of people who died from hunger and cold in the mountains where they tried to save themselves. There were thousands of them.

This were how General Zervas settled accounts with people who had fought shoulder to shoulder with Greek patriots for the liberty and independence of the Greek people.

One evening we sat on the terrace of the "Stalingrad" Café in the little town of Santa-Cuaranto on the banks of the Adriatic Sea watching one of the finest sunsets in the world.

The purring sounds of jazz in the loudspeaker were suddenly interrupted by a loud speech in Greek. Milto Guro listened.

"Just hear what that swine is saying!" exclaimed the old man excitedly. We were listening to one of the regular radio broadcasts by General Zervas. From his speech we learned that "the bloody dictator Hoja" was still hanging and shooting Greeks in Korcha and Argirokastro and that nowhere else were democratic elements so persecuted as they were in Albania. . . .

The General finished his speech and was followed by a stormy militant march. We asked the owner of the café to tune his receiver in to another station. The strains of the Athenian Military Band were out of place in that quiet bay whose mirror-like surface was gilded by the rays of the setting sun.

ROMAN KARMEN

"HELLO, HELLO, THIS IS MOSCOW CALLING!"

The last day of peace in 1941 was wound up by our usual: "And so, good night, comrades!" It was that very night that the Germans hurled their first bombs on the peaceful towns and villages of our western border.

At twelve o'clock, on June 22nd, 1941, I was urgently called from the cinema studio to the radio broadcasting station. Everybody already knew what had happened. . . . Alarmed glances . . . a curt phrase here and there . . . somebody quietly sobbing in the corner. . . . Grim voices predicting: "Wait, Germany shall feel our hand yet. . . ."

I went to take a look at the studio, made a preliminary trial of the lines. Then Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov entered the studio. He looked tired but his gaze was firm and clear. He walked up and down the studio and took a drink of water. . . .

"May I begin?"

"At the microphone—Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov."

And from that minute when Molotov's voice rang through the ether, I realized that now all our affairs, thoughts, cares, energy and all our lives had to be dedicated to the problems of war and victory.

During the night of July 3rd I was invited to the Kremlin. I presented myself at three a.m. Stalin's broadcast was being prepared. All preparations were made, and at 6 a.m, as I was reading the communiqué of the Soviet Information Bureau from the Kremlin studio, a slight noise behind me made me turn around. I turned hot all over when in came Stalin followed by Kaganovich, Beriya, Malenkov and Voroshilov. I rather sensed than understood Stalin's words and reassuring gesture:

"That's alright, go on with your broadcast."

When I had finished broadcasting the regular War Communiqué, Stalin asked me:

"How will you announce my broadcast?"

I began a long, solemn and careful reply, but Stalin stopped me and said:

"Let me write it down for you,"—and on the back of the material which I had just finished sending through the ether he wrote down the text of the announcement with a green pencil. I switched on the microphone and read:

"And now at the microphone—Chairman of the State Defence Committee, Comrade Stalin!"

Yuri Levitan, radio announcer, at the microphone

Standing next to Stalin and holding my breath I listened to his speech. I followed and hoarded in my memory the play of every muscle on the face of this great man, every intonation of his voice. Never shall I forget that early July morning and the image of the great leader in the small Kremlin studio, from which on that bygone day he visualized the coming victory through the dim powder smoke of the war years and through the dust of the frontier roads.

Those were difficult days. The enemy was on the offensive, occupying our cities and devastating our land. It was a highly unpleasant mission—to broadcast sad news.

When the bombing of Moscow began we used to broadcast from the second story of the Central Telegraph Building. Quite often during our broadcasts the faint sound of the alert would penetrate the heavily curtained windows. Then the Air Defence Headquarters would at once shut off the Moscow city network and announce: "Citizens, alert!" while the announcer would continue his broadcast for the other cities.

During one of my broadcasts a terrific blast shook the air: the Germans had thrown a bomb onto the Radio Committee Building. The bomb landed in the yard and struck an abandoned artesian well without causing any damage to the building or to its occupants. But the following day the German radio brazenly announced the destruction of the Moscow Radio Centre. . . .

At one time, as you will recall, our broadcasts were headed "The latest news." And we were aware that more than anything else under the sun the Soviet people were waiting for these promising words: LATEST NEWS. And as soon as the information was received at the Radio Committee every other station would be switched off and every broadcast stopped so as not to delay the announcement of our Red Army victories.

. . .An unusually lively atmosphere prevailed at the Radio Committee on the evening of August 5th, 1943. The material had not yet arrived and nobody knew the exact hour of the broadcast. Around 11 p.m. the longed for call came from the Kremlin:

"You may announce that an important message will be broadcast later; will send the material forthwith."

And so, on August 5th, at 11 p.m. sharp, I announced for the first time:

"This is Moscow calling. Tonight, August 5th, between 11 and 11.30 p.m. we shall broadcast an important message. Listen to our broadcasts. Listen to our broadcasts."

Then the text of Stalin's Order of the Day arrived. The telephones were ringing unceasingly and the listeners were on tenter hooks: "Why the delay? Have a heart! Read the Order—our patience is all but gone. . . ."

And then, at 11.30 p.m., it was my good fortune to broadcast Stalin's historical Order of the Day regarding the recapture of Orel and Belgorod.

"This is Moscow calling. Order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. . . ."

And from that hour on the victorious march of our armies was signalled by Stalin's orders awaited by our country with natural impatience. Everybody was anxious to know whether there would be a salute. From morning till night my friends, their friends and perfect strangers would all call at my home and at the Radio Committee to ask whether there would be a salute, what town had been captured. When I'd leave the house the youngsters in the street would yell after me: "Salutan, when will there be a salute?" When I came late to the dining room, the people at once became pessimistic: "Why is Levitan late for dinner today? Probably it means no salute." When I'd be good and hungry or handed a tasty dish, those at the dining room would at once comment: "Look, he's eating in a hurry; obviously there's going to be a salute, and perhaps more than one."

Some people tried interpreting even the speed with which I walked about. If I walked fast it meant that 'there was a chance of a salute', while my walking slowly would be considered an ill omen. And once the following episode took place. At 4.50 p.m., I phoned to the station from the dining room: "How's everything? Quiet?" The answer was: "So far things are quiet." To this I replied: "Well, I'll soon be over." It was a beautiful day and I took things easy, stopping to chat with numerous friends I met on my way over. Calmly I entered the studio only to be greeted by a whole crowd of dispatchers and secretaries yelling at the top of their voices: "The idea! You must be off your head! What do you mean by it? . . ." I was dumbfounded at this reception. Above the noise I could make out the familiar call signals. Just imagine the state I was in! Then I decided to counter-

attack and shouted: "Why, then, didn't you phone me?"—"We certainly did, but were told that you had already left. The idea of taking forty-five minutes to walk one kilometre!" Since then I tried to reduce to a minimum the amount of time I spent going from one place to another.

And once I happened to be at Arbat Street when I received the following phone call: "Extra. Be at the Radio Committee in ten minutes." On my way over the car broke down. Standing on Arbat Square I tried to get a lift, but the cars dashed by without heeding my request. Finally a militiaman walked over to me and addressed me as follows:

"Citizen, I have noticed your dashing up and down the square trying to get a lift. That's no way to behave and I ask you to stop it."

I had to explain everything to him. The call signals could be heard from a loudspeaker installed above the bakery.

"We'll fix this in a jiffy," the militiaman promised, and walking over to a car standing in front of a doorway, he said to the driver: "Will you take this comrade to Strastnaya Square? He has to broadcast some salutes." At once the chauffeur opened the door of the car. . . . Since then, in cases of emergency, I could always rely on the militia to help me get a car.

I read every order by Stalin, the most important reports issued by the Soviet Information Bureau and documents by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs announced at all hours of the day and night. Radio listeners wondered how I managed always to be on the job. As a rule I used to be right there on the spot, but even when I had to go away, the dispatcher had only to look in his telephone book, where on the page headed "L" was written "WHERE TO FIND LEVITAN."

Never shall I forget the broadcasting studio during the war. How many days and nights have I spent there awaiting the regular orders of the day! How eagerly would I listen to the sound of cars passing below! At last—the sound of a car door being slammed! The scissors with which to cut open the package are held ready. And in rushes the state courier, greets everybody, hands over a large red envelope marked: "Secret matter, urgent," and dials back: "Comrade colonel, package handed over."

His duty fulfilled the courier is in no hurry to leave. Slowly he closes his briefcase, adjusts his trim jacket and waits—perhaps we'll tell him what town has been captured. Acquiring the latest news, he smiles broadly and continues all happy on his errands.

And then came the day when I read the most wished-for Order, No. 359—the one which announced the capture of Berlin. That was the third for that evening. No words can express the emotion which overwhelmed me upon receipt of that Order. Each minute prior to the broadcast seemed like an eternity! I could scarcely wait for the appointed hour, but I felt like stepping over to the microphone at once and announcing the historical victory to the world!

Never shall I forget the memorable dates of May 7th and 8th, 1945. Everybody was waiting for the announcement of Germany's unconditional surrender. The telephone at the Radio Committee rang incessantly and everybody wanted to know when the important communiqué was to be broadcast. At 2.10 a.m. sharp, on the night of May 9th the historical document announcing Germany's unconditional surrender and declaring May 9th to be VICTORY DAY was read. And at the words: "May 9th to be a free day," I felt like shouting: "Hurrah, comrades, have a good time, this is victory at last!"

At 5 p.m. of the same day I was called to the Kremlin. Stalin was expected to speak. It was unbelievably difficult to get across Red Square to the Spassky Gate, for the entire enormous square was a sea of rejoicing people. The people had come here so as to be nearer to the Kremlin, to Stalin, to the victorious Kremlin stars which now shone again. Songs, spontaneous dancing, waving banners, laughter. . . .

Again the familiar studio. A tall square room of 16 sq. metres. Special, light-brown portieres on two walls to prevent any echo during broadcasts. A heavy rug covering the floor. A large window to the left of the entrance, and facing it a horse-shoe shaped tribune in the centre of the room. Four microphones are attached to it: two for broadcasting and two for making records. Two ordinary desk lamps face the microphone and nearby there are switches. A divan and two armchairs. A small round table in the right corner and on it some "Narzan," a serviette, some "Herzegovine Flor" cigarettes and a box of matches.

It is from here that Stalin, the Party and government leader, is to speak.

At 7.40, from this Kremlin studio, I read Stalin's Order concerning the liberation of Prague. Ten minutes to nine Stalin entered the studio: a familiar, calm gait, a steady gaze, an almost imperceptible smile. We greeted each other. I recalled how I first met Comrade Stalin in this same room on July 3rd, 1941.

At 9 o'clock sharp I announced:

"This is Moscow calling. All receiving stations of the Soviet Union are working. At the microphone is Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin."

Stalin went over to the microphone and said:

"Comrades! Compatriots, men and women! The great day of victory over Germany has come. . . ."

And on that same day, from the Kremlin studio, we read Stalin's most joyful, most long-awaited Order to the Red Army and Navy—the Order announcing final victory.

In the evening I left the Kremlin. The Red Square was all agog with rejoicing people. Thousands of rockets and multicoloured searchlights illuminated the sky. . . .

YURI LEVITAN

BOOKS AND WRITERS

MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV

In the early twenties, in the period shortly after the Civil War, a new generation of writers made its appearance in Russian literature. They introduced the revolution into their art, introduced a new hero, the man of the epoch of great changes, the builder of a new society.

Outstanding amongst the writers of this new generation was Mikhail Sholokhov.

Sholokhov has earned the respect of the people and achieved great popularity both as a writer and as a citizen. His novels are known and appreciated by millions of people. His *And Quiet Flows the Don* has sold a total of two and a half million copies. The Soviet people showed their great faith in the writer by electing him to the Supreme Soviet of the U. S. S. R., the highest legislative body in the country. Sholokhov is also a member of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. Services rendered to Soviet literature were rewarded by his investiture with the Order of Lenin in 1939 for his successful work in the development of Soviet literature and by the award of a Stalin Prize for his *And Quiet Flows the Don* in 1941. The countless letters which he received from readers testify to the lively interest displayed in his work in all parts of the U. S. S. R. and other countries.

On one of the rare occasions when he spoke in public Sholokhov made a statement concerning an author's community with his readers and his responsibility to them. "The people whom our art serves," he said, "speak daily of our work through the mouth of our readers. They criticize and condemn us when we need it, they take us by the arm and support us when we fail, praise us when we deserve it and each of us feels that there is constantly beside him the titanic guiding hand of the people who are themselves creators — a hand that is industrious but gentle."

Mikhail Sholokhov was born in 1905 so that by the end of the Civil War he was scarcely seventeen. As a beardless youth he took up arms and mounted his horse and his impressive youthful memory retained the episodes of the bloody drama that was played out on the fertile steppes of South Russia.

In one of his early books, a collection of short stories called *Azure Steppes*, he described the Civil War on the banks of the Don. This beautiful, blossoming region with its strange and dramatic history, with its sturdy inhabitants, strong in mind and body, became the scene in which all Sholokhov's stories unfold.

The region of the "Great Armies of the Don" with its own customs and laws occupied a special place in the old Russian Empire. For several centuries in succession the boldest people, who refused to submit to the Tsar's officials and who did not want to be the slave-like serfs of the landlords, fled to the Don from Central Russia. On the banks of the Don they found rich earth belonging to nobody but open to the raids of the wild nomad horsemen of the plains. These bold spirits settled on this land and lived a life of freedom but one that was filled with constant alarms and dangers. From childhood they handled plough and sword, scythe and gun with equal mastery. The Don Cossack ploughed his land in peace but beside him in the furrow lay his weapons and nearby grazed a saddled horse.

Such was the life of these soldier-farmers. In the 18th century they were in Berlin after having defeated the army of Friedrich the Great. During the Napoleonic wars their valour astounded all Europe.

The tsarist government used the Cossacks to defend the borders of the Empire. The government did not touch their land, allowed them to retain their manners and customs and granted them special privileges. At the same time the autocracy tried to make the Cossacks its humble servants, a weapon to suppress any discontent or free-thinking. When the revolution began in 1917, therefore, although the majority of the Cossacks mustered with the people under the banner of the revolution, a certain section of them was for years under the influence of reactionary slogans and supported the White-Guard movement. This split the living body of the Cossacks into two hostile groups: it divided people close to each other, even blood relations, and made them enemies. Strong, stubborn, whole hearted people, who gave themselves up entirely to their passions, they fought desperately and ruthlessly. Equally strong and profound were the triumph of the victor and the despair of the conquered, made still worse by the consciousness of the fact that the cause the latter had defended had been against the interests of the people.

These tragic events fill Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*: it records in all its intertwining details the Civil War in the Don Region.

Sholokhov himself comes from the Don. He has a fine knowledge of the manners and customs of his people, of their psychology and conception of the world, he knows all the many shades and hues of characters formed by the conditions of Cossack life. His permanent residence is in the stanitsa — the Cossack village — of Veshenskaya, and here he is always at home to visitors from all walks of life. Sholokhov pays frequent visits to the collective farms, musters the old people and the youth, listens to their songs and their endless stories of war, revolution and collective-farm life. In the stanitsa the writer studies the history of the Cossacks, their customs, their psychology and their work. A lover of hunting and fishing Sholokhov is a constant companion of the Don fishermen from whom he learned the wisdom accumulated by the people in the course of centuries. The people of Veshenskaya willingly help the writer with his work: those who took part in events which he describes make corrections of fact, and the old people make available to him the treasure houses of their memory, they tell him old tales and sing him songs. This enables him to reproduce local colour with such finesse and expressiveness in his works. It is found in his superbly described landscapes, in his strange local turns of speech, in his splendid descriptions of the manner of life and the relationships existing between his characters. It is this local colour which gives Sholokhov's stories their great interest.

If Sholokhov's art depended on ethnographical accuracy alone his writings would have but a limited value. Sholokhov, however, displays an ability to find the universal in the local, the eternal in the temporary. The Don parochialism proves to be nothing more than an envelope covering a conflict of tremendous significance which is not confined to any one locality. In the fate of his hero, Grigory Melekhov, a Don Cossack, we see the presentation of one of the greatest problems of modern man. It is this indivisible link, this intertwining of two principles — historical concretism and the eternal man — that makes *And Quiet Flows the Don* a work of such great power.

Grigory Melekhov is a truly tragic figure. A tragic guilt is upon him. He has committed a crime in having gone against his own people. He took the path of counter-revolution, he became a traitor to the interests of the people. He is rejected by the people, he is rejected by history and by the present day. He became an exile and an outcast with no place left fot him on earth. The whole world became hostile and alien to him. This is the major conflict in the novel which appeared at the time of great changes and great trials, when the great problem of human behaviour had become one of faithfulness to the people and unity with them. For this reason Sholokhov's romance of the Don is closely bound up with other Soviet, West European, and American novels treating of the same subject, a theme which no thinking and feeling present-day artist can pass by indifferently.

The tragic guilt of Grigory Melekhov is made the deeper in view of the fact that he does not belong to the oppressor class by birth. He is the son of a peasant, by blood and by inclination he is close to those who effected the revolution, to those against whom he fought. He feels nothing but hatred and disgust for the White Guards with whom he is fighting against the Red Army, he is not at home amongst them, the blood of his liberty loving ancestors boils in his veins, the blood of those who would not wear the serf's yoke. The farther he goes the more clearly Grigory sees that he has bound up his fate with a lost cause. His own treachery and the wrongs he has committed become clear to him. A strong and passionate man, capable only of whole-hearted and profound feelings, Melekhov flagellates and tortures himself but still he does not find strength enough to overcome the logic of his own errors and crimes and proceeds farther and farther along the road of treachery and counter-revolution.

Melekhov is not an "average, typical hero." His lot in life is the exception. The task which the writer set himself, of showing the bonds between the individual and the people, is solved in the most intricate way. It is shown truthfully by depicting the exception. The tragic story of Grigory contains a great idea which is fundamentally optimistic. The people are eternal as is their striving for unity, liberty and happiness. Woe to him who tries to build up for himself his own separate, tiny well-being in isolation from the people.

This is the essence of the novel, its basis and its major conflict. *And Quiet Flows the Don*, however, is not a "monoromance" in which all the characters are mere momentary shadows passing beneath the gaze of a central figure and without any independent existence of their own. Melekhov is surrounded by people as real as he is himself. They possess their own complete, inner logic, they move in orbits of their own that seem to have been traced out for them and are not just satellites of the planet Grigory.

Sholokhov's works are in the nature of epics. In *And Quiet Flows the Don* and other works he has drawn a whole world of human beings. There pass before us old men, sage with the wisdom of experience, adolescents just entering the battle of life, kind-hearted soldiers who dream of peaceful work, avaricious adventurers who have forgotten everything except war, girls who are just beginning to feel the first pangs of love and women who have felt all the curbing strength of passion.

The people depicted in *And Quiet Flows the Don* do not merge into a human background against which Grigory acts, they are not supernumerary who merely serve the purpose of making the central character more complete. For a matter of two or three pages some jubilant Cossack appears, speaks five or six times and then disappears again forever. You remember him, however, you do not confuse him with the many other Cossacks that Sholokhov describes, you catch the individual traits that the writer pictures so accurately and expressively. There are many such episodic characters in *And Quiet Flows the Don*, but

in addition to them there are also many characters of primary importance. First and foremost there is the Melekhov family and their neighbours, friends, and enemies, people connected with Grigory by lines of attraction and repulsion. The extent of Sholokhov's pictorial art is tremendous.

The epic nature of *And Quiet Flows the Don* is that of modern art — it is the psychological epics. The human soul is the material used by the artist. Sholokhov exposes all the inner life of people of various inclinations, ages and temperaments, he describes the different states of the human soul ranging from the intoxication of love to mortal fear, from parental tenderness to the deepest hatred. This gamut of human feelings is rich in colour. When we have read Sholokhov's story we know literally everything about his characters — we know their civil, family, military and personal histories. None of them is a simple sum total of psychic conditions but an integral and complete character. Grigory is the same everywhere and at all times, in war or in love, in his tormenting and passionate love for another's wife Aksinya, a love that Sholokhov describes with great strength and purity. The same is true of the other characters of the book — they are consistent and singular in their strivings.

Take, for example, the head of the Melekhov family, Grigory's father Panteley. He has served his time as a soldier and is engaged chiefly in farming. There is a humorous side to his character. Panteley thinks rather a lot of himself, he is painstaking to no purpose, naively cunning and awkwardly deceptive. In this old man's easily perceived cunning, however, in his vain efforts to retain the mastery of a family that is breaking up, in this helplessness of a once bold Cossack there is something that arouses sincere sympathy. His lonely death amongst strangers in a strange village, unnoticed and unmourned, lays bare the whole tragedy of Melekhov the elder.

Still harder and more sorrowful is the lot of his wife, Grigory's mother. The blows fall swiftly one after another on the Melekhov family, but they strike hardest of all at the heart of the old Cossack woman. Everything in her is dead with the exception of her never weakening love for her children, which grows ever stronger and more despairing. There is genuine tragic power in this feeling which touches us the more keenly because Sholokhov does not raise her up on to a pedestal, but depicts her as an ordinary Cossack woman in no way distinguishing her from the others.

Another passion, but one that is as powerful and invincible, lives in the soul of their neighbour Aksinya, the wife of the Cossack Stepan Astakhov. She loves Grigory as desperately, concentratedly and stubbornly as he does her. Their was indeed a fatal love. She brought unhappiness to the man she loved and to all her near and dear ones. In her there is also the element of tragedy. Not for a moment, however, does Sholokhov fly into the clouds, his characters are of the earth earthy. It is this combination of high-strung feelings and merciless realism that the real essence of Sholokhov's artistry is to be found.

Beside fiery, passionate Aksinya, is her rival Natalia, Grigory's wife. She also loves him but in a different way: she is quiet, devoted and self-abnegating. In this humble love there is as much greatness as in the love of Aksinya that sweeps all barriers on one side. Grigory's wife to the last minute of her unsuccessful life is ready to give up everything to him, to sacrifice everything for his happiness. . . .

Then there is the third woman in the plot, Darya, the wife and later the widow of Grigory's elder brother. She is wayward and amoral but at the same time there is something unusually attractive about her. It gradually becomes clear that her moral and then her physical death are not so much her own fault as the fault of circumstances which destroyed this character, strong in its own way and unusual, a character that could not distinguish between good and evil.

This ability displayed by the writer to depict the human soul in all its intricacy and contradictions is the strongest feature in Sholokhov's talent.

It is not only the characters of Sholokhov's figures that are intricate and contradictory: the same may be said about the relations existing between them. Grigory and Stepan Astakhov, Aksinyas' husband hate each other wholeheartedly although the logic of circumstances makes them fellow-thinkers and accomplices. The young Cossack Mikhail Koshevoy and Grigory, on the contrary were once friends. More than this. Mikhail subsequently becomes the husband of Grigory's youngest sister. They are, however, political enemies. Mikhail is devoted to the cause of the revolution, realizing that it will bring liberty and happiness to the people. He hates the White Guards for the crimes they have committed against their country, against his fellow-countrymen. He does not trust Grigory who joined the Red Army after the Whites had been defeated. There is a painful conversation between them when the two Cossacks try to find out what drove Grigory into the ranks of the White Guards, try to untangle the intricate network of cause and effect but fail to achieve clarity. Nobody believes in the rebirth of Grigory, in his final break with his counter-revolutionary past, in his resolve to devote himself completely to his family and his love: neither the revolutionary Koshevoy nor the surviving Cossack White Guards. The latter again entangle him in their foul deeds and he follows them again, this time with the deepest disgust and despair, but still he follows them. Grigory has to follow the path of treason to the very end, to complete emptiness and hopelessness.

In this way Sholokhov brings into conflict the different "truths" of many people, some of them hostile to one another. Behind these individual stories, behind these various "truths" arise the one big truth—the truth of the historical process, the truth of the fate of the people. It is not shown in the tiresome tirades of the author but in the logical development of his characters and their clashes. Sholokhov is an objective artist and it is the objectiveness of his creations that captures his audience, compels to believe completely in the characters of the story, to go forward

step by step to the one possible conclusion, to the ideological climax of the book.

These features of high analytical realism which distinguish Sholokhov's novels make it akin to the works of the great realists of the last century. *And Quiet Flows the Don* reminds us very forcibly of the traditions of classical Russian prose seen in all their profundity in the works of Leo Tolstoy. The modernistic influences that were scarcely felt in Sholokhov's earlier works disappear altogether in his novels. From chapter to chapter, from book to book the author achieves ever greater accuracy, severity, psychological completeness of depiction and dramatic connections between events.

Character and circumstances, the psychology of the characters and the objective reality of their surroundings, man and history, these two basic elements of art are in close, organic unity in Sholokhov's works. His characters have "free will", freedom of choice, and decision. We see, however, that this choice and decision are conditional, that they in their turn become the cause of new effects, that all the characters of the story are people of their own time and their own country and that their every action, independent of the sympathy or antipathy of the author, leads to the inevitable historical result it deserves.

This is what is new and modern in Sholokhov's prose. In our days when processes of world-wide significance are closely bound up with the life of every individual, when the individual feels with his whole being the breath of history, the problem of the unity of the fate of individuals with the fate of society has become the main problem of the modern novel. Sholokhov solved the problem brilliantly. He succeeded because he understood correctly the laws of history and accepted them with all his being, for he saw in the turmoil of the events the intelligent course of history embodied in man and working for man and not blind chaos in which man took no part. That is why the tragedy of Grigory does not make *And Quiet Flows the Don* a dismal and pessimistic book. Grigory perished but the people from whom he came and whom he betrayed conquered; the victors were those strong, powerful feelings that existed in people before this but which were suppressed and distorted and finally had the opportunity to develop freely and magnificently. Sholokhov succeeded in expressing this profound and truthful idea, in retaining to the full the objectivity of the story-teller and not descending to any concessions or explanations, open or hidden.

Sholokhov makes use of a palette with the widest range of colours. Following after episodes filled with profound drama come page after page of humour. Sholokhov's humour, like all other elements in his work, gives one the deep feeling that it is organically part of life itself with all its many aspects and colours. Sholokhov does not invent funny situations, he prefers to leave it to the words of the characters themselves, their manner of speech, lively and natural, to bring a sympathetic smile to the lips of his readers. Those naive and cunning old men and lads from the Don steppes are comical, but the laughter is often a manifestation of very serious processes. One of Sholokhov's most successful humorous characters is Granddad Shchukar in *Virgin Soil Upturned*. His constant failures in life, his endless troubles are all amusing but nevertheless his funny stories are the cover for noble ideas and the wisdom of the people: a firm feeling of sympathy for the unfortunate old man gradually takes hold of the reader. Another Sholokhov's type is the Communist Nagulnov from the same novel. His is a naive and hot-headed, open and attractive nature, he is a hero of the Civil War more suited to open fighting, to the battlefield. He realizes, however, that building up the country in peacetime requires other methods and he tries to work as circumstances dictate. His hot-headedness, his fiery nature often come into conflict with his intellect and with his sence of duty. These contradictions give rise to a number of situations that are not with their singe of humour, but here again the humour of certain scenes in which Nagulnov appears is closely linked up with the main theme of the story—the struggle between the old and the new in human relations.

Humour enters organically into the system of art media employed by the writer. In Sholokhov's funny characters there is that same "earthiness," that same decisive and irresistible optimism that colours the pages of *And Quiet Flows thes Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned*; this is equally true of those chapters that deal exclusively with psychological analysis and those describing scenery. The spiritual world of the characters and the landscapes in Sholokhov's novels are bound together by fine but strong threads. Here is an example of this connection.

The last chapter of *And Quiet Flows the Don* (Volume IV) begins thus:

"In early spring, when the snow melts and the grass that has lain under all winter dries up, the fires begin in the steppes. The flames, driven by the wind, sweep over the steppes like rivers of fire, hungrily devouring the dry grass, leaping up to reach the tall thistles, rolling over the tops of the brown wormwood and spreading across the floors of the hollows. . . . For a long time after the fires there is an acrid smell of burning exhumed from the burnt, cracked earth of the steppes. All around the fresh young grass shines green, high in the blue heavens above countless larks are trilling their sweet melodies, flocks of geese in course of migration pause to feed on the succulent green grass while birds that have settled for the summer are already weaving their nests. Where the fires have passed the charred earth lies black and evil-looking. The birds do not nest there, animals pass around it and only the wind, winged and swift, sweeps over it carrying far and wide the grey ash and the dark acrid dust.

The life of Grigory had become as black as the burnt-out steppes. He had lost everything that was dear to his heart. Everything had been taken from him, merciless death had robbed him of everything. Only his children were left to him. He himself still clung fran-

tically to the earth as though his broken life still had some value to him and to others."

Here the soul of the character is portrayed by a picture of the burnt-out steppe. The picture of the landscape has an independent value, for it is drawn with strength and expression. Its metaphorical meaning, however, is great because it compels the reader to feel very keenly the extent of the arid wilderness that is Grigory's soul. In his attitude towards nature Sholokhov is following the best traditions of the Russian realistic novel with its magnificent portrayal of the plains and woods of our native land.

This "classicism" in Sholokhov's work is not simple imitation of literary methods that have passed the test of time. Sholokhov's realism, his objectivity and his psychological profundity, his breadth and his drama are all based on the writer's own view and comprehension of the world. The writer knows none of the damaging influence of the decadents, the limitations of the naturalists or any of those spiritual aliments that serve to narrow the outlook of the artist and make his art one-sided and of little value. The writer's approach to the reality he is describing is that of the investigator and psychologist, the poet and fighter, his is the path of independent discovery, and he boldly incorporates new human characters, new forms of human relations and new conflicts in his personages. It is due to this firmness and stability, this originality in the broadest and best meaning of the word that the artist is able to learn from the old masters without suppressing his own individuality and to create new works of artistic value. Sholokhov successfully follows classical examples because of his organic connection with the Soviet way of life, because he knows and understands the lifeof the people, the life that flows through all his works and is incorporated in the finest spiritual experiencesof the individual and in the passionate outbursts of huge masses of people.

Sholokhov began writing *Virgin Soil Upturned* while he was still working on *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The new novel deals with the socialist reconstruction of the village, the transition of the peasantry to collective methods of work. On the Don, with its peculiar manners and customs, the process was one of especial intricacy and contradiction.

Sholokhov lived with his characters, he advanced with them in time, from them he obtained material for new themes, new characters, new conflicts. These, however, were conflicts of a new kind.

Virgin Soil Upturned also deals with a war, but it is a different sort of warfare from that of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The Don Cossacks like all the Soviet peasantry, adopted the socialist manner of farming. This process with its tremendous historical scope and significance affected the fate of various people in different ways. Yesterday's owners of tiny parcels of land became the masters of huge territories, modern farm machines and hundreds of head of cattle. They were able to make use of all the achievements of science, all the advantages of farming on a grand scale. They had to find new organisational forms and their customs and established opinions and tastes often proved incompatible with the new way of life. Sholokhov depicted this logic of the old manner of living and the birth of new principles and traditions with the objectivity and completeness that is usual with him. Always he is accurate and truthful, he draws pictures of his people without hiding their weaknesses and mistakes; he does not fear the truth. Take, for example, the crowd of infuriated women who demand the keys of the granary from Davydov, the chairman of the collective farm. They curse him and even use their fists on him. Davydov is firm and determined. He makes a joke of it, but refuses to accede to the demands of the women who have suddenly become scared of the huge expanses of land which face them and want to return to the former rotten but accustomed way of life. Davydov knows that this is only a relapse of the old doubts which life itself will overcome. Sure enough a few days pass and the women who were guilty of causing the disturbance, ashamed of their behaviour, merrily but shyly admit their wrong in response to Davydov's joking remonstrances. In these scenes there is a great deal of fine, genuine humanity. They show the nobility of the relations that have been established between a progressive and conscious citizen who sees clearly the brilliant prospects offered by the new methods and those that he is leading, to whom he is showing the way to a better life.

Although Davydov is one of the chief characters in *Virgin Soil Upturned* he is not a Don Cossack, but a worker from a big Leningrad factory. This newcomer, however, wins his way to the hearts of the Cossacks who shortly before had been hostile to all "foreigners." He wins the confidence of the Don Cossacks by his sincerity, his directness and his farsightedness. With the aid of two native Cossacks, Razmetnov and Nagulnov, he takes on himself the difficult task of organizing a collective farm. These people, the most authoritative and highly respected in the stanitsa are not just paragons of all the virtues. Kind-hearted and trusting Razmetnov, hot-headed and impetuous Nagulnov have weaknesses and shortcomings like their fellow-villagers. In their souls there sometimes arises a struggle between various strivings and convictions. They are distracted and make mistakes, they argue and ponder. They are real people who live hard and intense lives but at the same time their efforts, their will-power, their energies are directed to one single purpose;they are building a new world, they are laying the foundations of new noble and just human relations, and this lofty purpose raises and ennobles the builders of the new society. In the process of struggle people grow and improve, the old egoistic instincts die, feelings of solidarity and civic responsibility are born and mature.

In this novel, also Sholokhov shows us the mutual relations between his characters and events. The people in *Virgin Soil Upturned* are not the victims of events, on the contrary, they are reforming life in accordance with their own ideas and intentions, for the direction taken by the historical process coincides with their interests, and they facilitate

the fulfilment of historical inevitability. They are not in conflict with the times for time has become their friend. The fate of the people is decided by the fate of society, but still they do not lose their individuality on account of the fact that they have new opportunities for development and growth. This is the idea behind *Virgin Soil Upturned*.

In 1943 some chapters from a new unfinished novel, *They Fought for Their Country* began to appear in the columns of the Moscow newspapers; this is a story dealing with the new trials and the new deeds experienced by the author's native land. Even the publication of these fragments was an event of importance to the literary world. Readers recognized the well-known features of one of their favourite writers, his humanism, his quiet, noble humour, his close attention to the spiritual life of the people he depicts and his close connection with the people. In his new novel Sholokhov writes of events that are not yet in the past, events that are still moving and progressing. They are described, however, with the profundity and detail of psychological analysis, with the epic objectivity and reticence, so typical of Sholokhov.

JOSEPH GRINBERG

NOTE: For Sholokhov's wartime writings see No. 5 of our journal, *Sholokhov in War Days* by Boris Dayrejiyev.

S. STEPNYAK

(On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death)

Among the people who contributed to a rapproachement between English and Russian society, an important place should be conceded to Serguei Kravchinsky, who wrote under the nom de plume S. Stepnyak.

Kravchinsky was born in 1851. His father was a military surgeon. Young Serguei's childhood was spent in military surroundings. His parents were preparing him for a military career; he started his education in a military gymnasium, and in 1869 he entered the Mikhailov Artillery school in Petersburg.

Kravchinsky kept in touch with Petersburg radical circles, and at the Mikhailov school he became the centre of a radical group.

Having graduated Kravchinsky did not stay long in military service. In 1871 he resigned in order to devote himself to the propaganda of emancipatory ideas among the workers, and, like many others of that period, betook himself to the provinces and villages. For two years he was wandering over Russia and became well known among the peasants who loved and respected him.

Kravchinsky wrote several pamphlets for distribution among the peasants. Ivan Turgenev, who read one of them, *The Story of the Wise Naumovna*, admitted that its author "had both talent and fire." Another outstanding writer, Gleb Uspensky, predicted that Kravchinsky would become an important writer.

However, practical political activities attracted Kravchinsky more than literature. A rebel by nature, he dreamt of revolutionary conspiracies, uprisings and battles for the freedom of peoples. In 1875, Kravchinsky went to Herzegovina to take part in an uprising against the Turkish yoke, and in 1877 joined the Italian revolutionaries in an attempt to start an armed uprising in the Italian province of Benevente. The attempt failed. Kravchinsky was arrested and spent nine months in prison awaiting his execution. His life was saved, however, by the coronation of King Gumberte who proclaimed an amnesty, and he was simply exiled from Italy.

Upon his return to Russia he became a member of "Land and Freedom," a secret society then being formed, and took charge of its printed organ published in a secret printshop.

Kravchinsky, a man of enormous physical strength and an iron constitution, endowed with exceptional ability and energy, a man who knew how to keep cool in moments of danger, enjoyed the affection and respect of his comrades. His fearlessness won him legendary fame, which was enhanced by his daring attempt made upon the life of General Mezentsev, head of the political police, who was known for his cruel treatment of prisoners.[1] After this Kravchinsky's comrades persuaded him to flee abroad. He was never to see his homeland again. The rest of his life was spent in Western Europe—in Switzerland, in Italy and, lastly, in London, where he spent the last eleven years of his life.

Though torn from his motherland Kravchinsky continued to serve his cause. He decided to acquaint western European society with the actual situation in Russia and, particularly, with the activities of the revolutionaries who in the West were frequently depicted as demons of hell and destroyers of culture and morality. In 1882 Kravchinsky, under the nom de plume of Stepnyak, published a book entitled *Underground Russia* in Italian to counteract the absurd figments about the Russian "nihilists" and their "evil deeds" of which the western European press was full after the death of Tsar Alexander II. In it he described the Russian revolutionaries, showing them to be men and women who had sincerely devoted their lives to the interests of the people and to the struggle for Russia's happy future. Kravchinsky's book,

[1] Lenin and other Russian marxists condemned the means of individual terror as an erroneous method, harmful to the revolution.

written with warmth and talent, was a great success and was translated into almost all the European languages.

Having settled in London Kravchinsky began to write a number of books and articles in which he gave a striking picture of the police oppression prevailing in tsarist Russia and of the grave economic and legal position of the Russian people. The author tried to gain the sympathy of western European society for these people and the men who fought to improve their existence. In speaking to P. A. Kropotkin he said: "The English must love the Russian people, and if they know them they will." Among Kravchinsky's books mention must be made of *Russia under the Tsars, The Russian Peasantry* in two volumes, *The Russian Storm Cloud*, and the novel *The Career of a Nihilist*. Shortly before his death appeared *King Storm and King Zog*, which gives an interesting picture of Alexander III reign.

Kravchinsky frequently lectured on Russia. In 1890 he gave a cycle of lectures in the U.S.A. It was upon his initiative that the society of "Friends of Russian Freedom" and the newspaper *Free Russia* were organized in England. Their aim was to propagate the idea of the liberation of Russia from tsarist oppression. Similar societies were organized in the U.S.A. and in Switzerland.

Kravchinsky acquired many friends in England. On Saturdays outstanding writers, journalists, actors and public figures of different nationalities, would congregate in his modest home. There one could meet the poet William Morris, the future Secretary of State John Burn, Spencer Watson and other well-known representatives of English public life.

Kravchinsky had the right to be proud of his activities, but this could not prevent him from dreaming passionately of far-away Russia. He once admitted to the famous Danish critic George Brandes that he was ready to give a lot to be able to breathe his country's air once more.

Kravchinsky was hardly forty-five years old when a stupid accident led to his death: on December 23rd, 1895, while crossing the railway track, he was killed by a locomotive suddenly appearing from around a bend.

Kravchinsky's life was comparatively short but he will be remembered with gratitude by our people and by the friends of our country.

BORIS KOZMIN

NEW BOOKS

The State Literary Publishing House has published a symposium on "Lenin" containing extracts from Soviet literature in which Lenin is described. The book opens with Stalin's speech on Lenin delivered on January 26th, 1924, a week after Lenin's death. This is followed by short extracts from Gorky's reminiscences of Lenin. With brief, deft touches Gorky describes Lenin as "thickset, sturdily built and with a skull like Socrates."

"I was delighted," wrote Gorky, "with his clearly expressed will to live and his active hatred of life's meanness. I loved the youthful excitement which permeated everything he did.

"Sometimes it seemed that the indomitable energy of his soul flashed from his eyes in sparks and his words, saturated with his soul, sparkled in the air. His words always gave one a physical sensation of incontrovertible truth."

Further on we see how observant Gorky was in discovering those living, human details which really show us Lenin as he was in everyday life.

"Enthusiasm was part of his nature, not the mercenary zeal of the gambler but an enthusiasm which gave Lenin that uncommon cheerfulness of spirit which is only to be found in a person who is absolutely sure of his vocation, a person who feels an all-round contact with the world and who understands from beginning to end the role he must play in the chaotic world—the role of the enemy of chaos." Here is a little episode described by Gorky: "I invited him to go to artillery headquarters to take a look at an aim corrector for anti-aircraft guns that had been invented by a Bolshevik, an ex-artilleryman.

"'What, do you think I understand about that?' he asked, but went.

"In a half-lit room seven gloomy-looking generals were gathered around a table on which the apparatus stood; they were all grey-headed, bewhiskered, learned old men. Somehow the modest figure of Lenin in mufti seemed lost and unnoticed amongst them. The inventor began to explain his apparatus. Lenin listened two minutes, three and then said appreciatively, 'Hm-m, hm-m,' and began to question him as freely as if he were conducting a lesson in politics. . . .

"'I told the generals you would bring a friend,' the inventor told me next day, 'but I did not say who the friend was. They did not recognize Lenin and probably did not believe that he would appear so quietly without any pomp, without even a guard. They began to ask me whether he was a professor or a technician. Lenin? Terrific surprise—how could that be, it was not possible—how could he know anything about our business? He put questions like an expert! Miraculous! And I don't think that they ever really believed it was Lenin.'"

The remainder of the collection consists of extracts from modern Soviet literature depicting Lenin, folklore and poems by Soviet poets, prose by Alexei Tolstoy and Nikolai Ostrovsky (from his book *How the Steel Was Tempered*), Konstantin Fedin, Vsevolod Iva-

nov and a number of others. There are also extracts from Alexander Korneichuk's play *Truth* and Nikolai Pogodin's *Kremlin Chimes*, a play that is still running at the Moscow Art Theatre. Two scenes are given—in one we see Lenin with a peasant family after he has been out shooting and in the other he talks to an engineer who is hostile to Soviet power. The breadth of Lenin's ideas on the industrial reconstruction of the country attracts him and gives him a new outlook on affairs in general.

Amongst the poets we find V. Mayakovsky, V. Bryussov, S. Yessenin who wrote poems on Lenin and together with them N. Tikhonov, I. Selvinsky, V. Inber, S. Vassiliev, the Ukrainian poet Maxim Rylsky, the Byelorussian Yanka Kupala, the Georgian I. Mosashvili, and others. These later poets tell us how Lenin inspired the Soviet people during the war against the Hitlerites. One of the most significant pieces is undoubtedly the extract from Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Ilych Lenin*; it is about "the most human of all men" and tells the story of Lenin's life and struggle, his significance for the Russian people and all mankind. This is one of Mayakovsky's best works.

There is a poem by Stepan Shchipachev among the later works entitled *The House in Shushenskoye* (the Siberian village to which Lenin was exiled during tsarist times). The house is now a museum and the poet's impressions after visiting it form the subject of his poem.

Lenin Street, a poem by S. Vassiliev takes the reader to a small Ukrainian town during the German occupation. The main street of the town was called *Lenin Street*, but the occupants renamed it *German Street*. The morning after the old name reappeared on the houses. The fascists shot five people but this did not help. They burned down the whole street but every day unknown hands wrote on the ruins the name that was so terrible to the invaders—*Lenin*. When the Red Army returned to the town the Russian troops were welcomed by their leader's undying name.

The oldest bards, Jambul of Kazakhstan (who died recently at the age of almost a hundred), Suleiman Stalsky of Daghestan and anonymous singers composed deeply moving and lyrical songs about Lenin. These are the opening lines of an Azerbaijan folksong, *He Saw a Thousand Years Ahead*:

"A great man is born once in a hundred years and the whole world can see him like a mighty mountain; the world, however, has never before seen such a great man as Lenin. Different nations have had their great men but he was great for all mankind."

It is an excellent symposium although it does not exhaust the subject. If the compilers had tried to include only the folklore about Lenin composed by the peoples of the USSR they would need several volumes.

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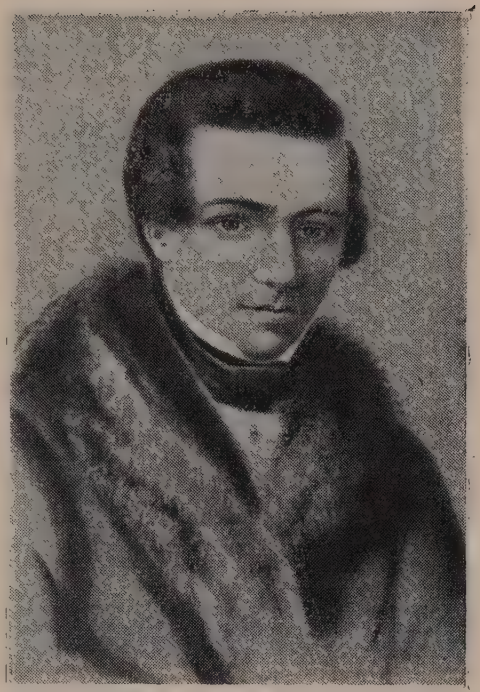
A volume of selected verse by Alexei Koltsov has been issued by the Soviet State Publishing House. Koltsov was a true poet of the people and when one listens to songs that



Alexei Koltsov

are still popular one is apt to forget that they were composed over a century ago to lyrics by this poet.

Alexei Koltsov was born in 1809 in the family of a stern, gloomy and brutal cattle-dealer from Voronezh. From the age of eleven Alexei used to accompany his father round the fairs and market towns. He hated the vulgarity of this life with its incessant bargaining and the slaughter of cattle although these journeyings gave him that which is best in his poems, the language of the people. Nights spent in the steppes, his association with cattle-drovers, herdsmen, peasants gave the future poet a first hand knowledge of the life of the people.

Koltsov hated the system of serfdom then prevailing in Russia: his poems show the pain he suffered for these "slaves" and his faith in their strength and great future.

A semi-literate youth whose total schooling amounted to no more than two years, Koltsov acquired extensive knowledge by his own efforts. His father's business sometimes brought them to Moscow where he came into contact with some of the outstanding people of his time, the philosopher Stankevich, the critic Belinsky and the great Russian poet Pushkin.

In this way Koltsov lived a double life: on the one hand there was the hated cattle-trading and the tyranny of a father who separated him from his fiancée by selling her into bondage to a rich landowner, while on the other hand there was this intercourse with the best of his contemporaries who appreciated him and his work, his interest in progressive philosophy and social thought and in the development of his own poetical talent.

The grief he suffered at the loss of his beloved and the heavy work he was compelled to do undermined the poet's strength and he died of consumption before he reached the age of thirty three.

Belinsky wrote an excellent appreciation of Koltsov's poetic ability and originality. "His songs," wrote the critic, "tell boldly of bast shoes, ragged kaftans, matted beards and old foot-cloths, and all this dirt is transmuted into the pure gold of poetry."

Koltsov sang the praises of the boundless spaces, fertile plains, golden fields, swift-flowing rivers and heavy rustling forests of his native Russia with a profound lyricism permeated with love and gentleness. The description of rural life in many of his poems is both vivid and original. In the *Village Revel* we see a peasant family in a log cabin open to receive guests, the decoration of the spacious room and the food ready for the table. There is a very convincing portrait of a peasant in the *Ploughman's Song*, a poem that finds its way into all school books. The reader accompanies the ploughman when all nature awakes at spring time, when the grain lies snugly in the earth, when the golden ears fall obediently before the scythe and sickle of the reaper. *Harvest*, *Man with the Scythe* and the *Young Reaper* are all poems dealing with nature and the labour of the peasant.

Koltsov devoted many of his poems to the man in bondage who has been battered by an evil fate and is tormented by his cruel masters. The *Russian Song* is the plaint of a young girl who has been forced to marry a man she does not love. In the *Bitter Lot* a lad compares his fleeting youth to a summer nightingale and his life to a strong oak lying prone on the ground. In the *Irresolution of a Villager* a peasant mourns that "bitter fate" which has sapped his "vigorous strength."

All these poems are written in the language of the people. Similes, epithets, figures and metaphores are taken direct from the speech of the people and are therefore easily applied to popular Russian subjects.

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A few years ago one of the Soviet literary journals published an article on the life and work of Henry Lawson (1867—1922). The State Publishing House has now issued a translation of a collection of short stories entitled *Pass Round the Hat* which will bring the work of one who is now an Australian classic within reach of the Soviet reader.

The simplicity of Lawson's stories is attractive to the Soviet reader—he is a great artist, a strain of genuine humanity pervades his stories with their colourful descriptions of nature and the moving courage of the backwoodsmen in their struggle against the elements and the bitter conditions of their life.

Lawson's style is restrained and laconic and with a few simple touches he achieves striking artistic effects. These features in his style have undoubtedly influenced many English and American short-story writers.

The raw nature of the Australian bush is well brought out in Lawson's work but man is always the centre of attention. This great respect and love for man is the most attractive feature of Lawson's work. Beneath a rough surface Lawson sees high moral qualities in such simple folk as the scapegrace McQuary in *That's My Dog* or the jocular ragamuffin Malachi in the *Story of Malachi*; he penetrates into their secret lives and makes the reader love them. A fine character is *Giraffe*, a sheep-shearer in *Pass Round the Hat* from which the collection takes its name. He is always ready to help his neighbour, to pass round the hat for a friend who is sick or in trouble. Giraffe is a native of Bendigo Victoria. He was well known to the shearers who came to Burke from the sunburned bush for hundreds of miles around. When bets were made he held the stakes, he acted as banker to the drunkards, was either peacemaker or second to young fellows who fought, and he was older brother or uncle to the majority of the children in the town; he was the referee when children quarrelled as to who was the winner of the races at the school picnic, and was the friend of all strangers.

"The fellows here can look after themselves," he says. "But I like to help a newcomer in trouble. I was one myself once and I know what it's like."

Some of Lawson's stories have a tragic ending, but despite this we cannot call Lawson's book pessimistic. He has a sincere belief in the strength of man and in the goodness of human nature. However tragic the circumstances, Lawson's characters do not give way to despair or submit to fate. Some of the stories in the collection show us Lawson in humorous vein.

The selection of stories for this collection is a particularly happy one and the reader closes the book with regret at having to part company with a fascinating author who has been the source of much real pleasure. An introduction to the volume by E. Lann outlines Henry Lawson's biography.

* * *

The history of the Czech people has been for centuries the story of their struggle against the German marauders who surround them, against all efforts of the Germans to subdue them. The defence of the frontiers has always been the primary anxiety of the Czech kings and their people. In the Sumava Mountains in the west the duty of defending the border devolved upon the local peasants who were dubbed "the tramplers" on account of their incessant trampling of the frontier between Bohemia and Bavaria.

The services rendered by the peasants entitled them to certain important privileges. Nine kings in succession freed them from all feudal service, no feudal baron had the right to acquire land in the territory or to settle there himself; they had their own courts of law, their own press and their own standard—a dog's head on a field of white, from which they earned another nickname, the "Dogsheads."

After the battle of Bielahora in 1621 when the Czechs lost their independence and came under the rule of the Austrians the tramplers

were necessarily the first to feel the heavy, cruel hand of their new German masters. Forty days after the terror and executions in the Czech capital, Prague, the tramplers reverted to Wolf Wilhelm Lamminger, Baron von Albenreit, in redemption of a pledge and were finally sold to "him and his heirs and successors in perpetuity."

The tramplers, however, did not submit without a struggle. They appealed to the law on the grounds that the Hapsburgs had declared themselves the lawful successors to the Czech Kings and had promised to fulfill all their obligations. The Hapsburgs did not consider themselves under any obligation to peasants and furthermore realized that the tramplers were experienced, battle hardened soldiers who had given their blood for their country on more than one occasion; they regarded them as disseminators of sedition. The tramplers lost their case and were informed that their rights and privileges had been abolished and that they were to maintain a perpetuum silentium. They kept the silence only until a favourable moment arrived.

When Maximilian Lamminger, the son of their first owner, took stern and cruel measures to rob them of the last vestiges of their freedom the struggle flared up again. The tramplers appealed to the Emperor who turned their case over to the courts. They refused to submit to their German master and his hirelings and a bloody conflict ensued.

This new effort to retain their liberty failed, their resistance was crushed by soldiers, and the courts, instead of giving them a proper trial, sentenced the leaders to severe punishment and some of them to death. Jan Kožina, a man who had always kept strictly to the letter of the law and was one of the most peace-loving leaders, was sentenced to be hanged. The German authorities hoped that this would frighten the tramplers and show them that for them there was no law but the will of their masters.

The execution was carried out. The condemned Kožina, standing on the scaffold with the rope around his neck, challenged Lamminer to stand before the court of God with him. It was a popular belief in those days that such a challenge meant death within a year and a day. Lamminger actually did die from a stroke a short time before the year was over.

Lamminger's death made a profound impression on the tramplers and on the whole Czech people. In this the Czechs saw a confirmation of the justice of their cause and the injustice of the Germans. The story of Jan Kožina was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and was the source of a number of legends and became part of that arsenal from which the national consciousness of the Czech people took its arms.

Alois Irasek, a famous Czech writer who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries took this story as the subject of an historical novel. The Russian translation of this story, *The Dogsheads*, has just been published by the State Literary Publishing House. Irasek paints a very strong picture of the tramplers and their tragic struggle against the Germans for he keeps the tramplers and their background at the proper historical level and, as a biographer says, "keeps his creative fantasy within bounds and depicts the psychology of the common people." (Al. Tuchek). Irasek was born in 1851 and began to write in 1875. He was exceptionally prolific and produced a book almost every year—he wrote poems, short stories, novels and plays. His most important works are his historical novels which cover almost the whole history of Bohemia. In these novels it is the facts themselves, and not the author, that speak.

In his novel *The Dogsheads* Irasek keeps strictly to historical truth and is so convincing that in many places we are reminded of the recently ended German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Irasek did not live to see those days for he died at the age of sixty in 1931. The Germans, however, remembered him as having awakened the national spirit of the Czechs during the reign of the Hapsburgs and took revenge on his family. The real epilogue of the book is not the retribution that overtook the Irasek family but the crumbling of the Nazi system and the liberation of the enslaved Czech people.

ARTS

THE ORIGINATOR OF RUSSIAN GENRE-PAINTING

Eight or nine canvases in oil; some water-colours, satirical in nature, of contemporary life and manners; some portraits—a few in oil, the greater part in water-colours—that was all an artist left behind him after a brief five-year's career. But his work proved the beginning of Russian national genre-painting; it served as the starting point for the big realistic "Travellers'"[1] school which developed later; it became part of the country's heritage of art and culture and made itself known abroad too.

The artist was Pavel Andreyevich Fedotov.

He was born in Moscow in 1815. His father was a humble official, and his childhood not without hardship. The boy was a lively, quick-witted youngster. He took to drawing while quite a small child, and even these early efforts showed him to be observant and true of eye. His father had been an army officer who had risen from the ranks; he was very proud of the commission he had held, planned an army career for his son, and when the boy was ten years old he was sent to the Moscow cadet corps school. This certainly did not augur a future in art. At the school there was the usual curriculum for army officers' training institutions. Fedotov had a phenomenal memory, and once he had read a thing he never forgot it. None of his schoolmates knew as he did the dates of the Russian princes, tsars and emperors; he could recite them unerringly not only in the usual, but the reverse order too. He could say without a moment's hesitation in what province and even town any given regiment was stationed. His teachers were excessively proud of this prodigy, and frequently showed him off to their superiors. Fedotov graduated at the head of his class, and his name was engraved in golden letters on the marble Roll of Honour.

He was given a commission in the Finland Guards, stationed at Vassilyevsky Ostrov in St. Petersburg. Lively and sociable, with a gift for making friends, he was soon at home in his new surroundings. His official duties did not weigh too heavily on him, and he was moved fairly fast up the ladder of promotion. But that is not to say his life was easy. His father, now far advanced in age, had retired, and the family needed help. An officer's pay, on the other hand, did not furnish comfortable provision even for one. Some way had to be found of earning money. Fedotov's taste for drawing had not left him, and as the years went by it steadily gained in strength. He made many portrait sketches of his fellow-officers that were apt and true

[1] The "Travellers" were a group of artists of the realistic school in the latter half of the last century; they represented the democratic, progressive trend in Russian art. The name comes from their *Association of Travelling Exhibitions*.

P. Fedotov. "The Morning of an Official upon Receipt of His First Decoration"

P. Fedotov. "The Major Proposes"

to life. Fedotov decided to try a water-colour portrait of Grand Duke Mikhail, brother of the tsar and chief of all the Guards. The portrait was a success. It was bought immediately, and Fedotov repeated it many times in all kinds of different postures. The sale of these portraits mended his financial affairs.

But now Fedotov felt an ever increasing urge to take up drawing and painting seriously. That called for hard work, as he realized, and he devoted to it all the time he could spare from his duties.

He began to attend the evening classes at the Academy of Arts, and sought acquaintance with artists, eager to pick up from them whatever he could. But what profited him most was his visits to the Hermitage—St. Petersburg's famous picture gallery.

Not that it was a simple matter for an officer to frequent the Hermitage in those days. The pictures were the private possession of the Emperor; they were housed in the living quarters of the Palace, which it was against regulations for military men to enter except in full dress uniform, most troublesome both to put on and to wear. Still, whenever time offered, Fedotov would patiently don the complex accoutrements and make his way to the Hermitage. He was particularly impressed with the work of the Dutch and Flemish masters. The subtlety of their technique, the faultless brushwork, the superb rendering of accessories in their paintings held him spellbound. He was especially fond of Van Ostade, Ter Borch, Jan Steen, Pieter'n Hoch and Bartolomeus van der Helst, and never tired of admiring and studying their painting of the textures of materials.

"I shan't do anything," he once said to a friend, "until I have learned to paint mahogany like the Dutch."

His untiring study of the Dutch masters' methods and true understanding of their art left an impress on all Fedotov's work. From them he inherited mellowness of tone, grace of outline and unity of outward expression and inner idea.

At last Fedotov decided to show his work to an artist greatly looked up to in those days—Carl Brullov. He found an opportunity to meet him but the reception Brullov gave him was distinctly cool. He did not advise him, he said, to abandon his army career for art, as the former did, after all, provide him with means to live. But even this reception could not affect Fedotov's resolve to continue his work in art.

As time went on, he found it ever harder to combine painting with his army duties. He felt he had to choose between the two. The matter did not depend only on his own choice, however. It appeared that for a young officer to retire was not so simple in those days. The powers that be were very suspicious of any applications to be put on the retired list, and for a Guards officer the final sanction lay with the Emperor himself, who was not overfond of letting his officers go. It was chance that came to Fedotov's aid.

Besides the portrait of the Grand Duke, Fedotov had done several pictures of the Guards' regiments' life — *The Pavlovsk*

Guards' Bivouacking, A Court Grenadier Revisits His Old Company of the Finland Guards, The Battle of Smolensk, and some others. They were much liked, and Fedotov made quite a name for himself as an artist in army circles. Then, in 1837, he did a large water-colour—*Grand Duke Mikhai Arriving at the Finland Guards' Camp.* The Grand Duke was shown surrounded by officers—every one was a genuine portrait, down to the artist himself, album in hand. This water-colour was favourably received; Fedotov was honoured with a diamond ring and given an order for another painting—*Blessing the Colours in the Renovated Winter Palace.*

The Grand Duke was told about Fedotov's wish to retire and devote himself wholly to painting. He for his part was disposed to grant the request, but could not take it upon himself and promised to put the matter before Tsar Nicholas I.

Seven long years were to pass before the Grand Duke did show the Emperor Fedotov's paintings of army life. He chose a propitious moment, and the result was in the artist's favour. In 1844, Fedotov was allowed to retire in order to "engage freely in artistic pursuits"; he retained his uniform, the rank of captain and a monthly pension of one hundred rubles in paper, or 28 rubles and 60 kopeks in gold. Half of this money Fedotov sent to his father; the other half had to be kept for himself and his faithful friend and servant—Arkady Korshunov, his batman, who had been released from service together with his captain. Korshunov may truly be said to have been Fedotov's good genius in his solitary existence. That existence was anything but easy. Fifteen kopeks was all Fedotov could spend on dinner for both.

But a new life was beginning for him, he came in contact with new people—writers, poets, artists, musicians. He was gaining faith in himself now, and entered this milieu with confidence. This faith in his art was reinforced by the opinion of Ivan Krylov, the famous writer of fables, whose work he greatly admired. It was shortly before his death that Krylov saw Fedotov's drawings and water-colours. The artist's observant and satirical eye, and the brimming vitality of his work won great favour with Krylov. He wrote to Fedotov, urging him to turn his back on military subjects and devote himself entirely to portraying everyday life, which, Krylov said, would furnish him with material without end. Fedotov followed this advice; he immersed himself in studying the life around him, while at the same time working to develop his technique.

Fedotov did not belong to the class of artists who can paint from memory, do things out of their head. The model was essential to him—whether of the human figure or of some detail of furnishings. Only when he had steeped himself in a study of the model could he operate freely with all the means at the disposal of the artist.

That all Fedotov's figures are so typical, their faces so expressive, their postures and motions so characteristic, and his general composition so forceful and charged with vitality, is the product not only of the artist's keen eye and satirical turn of mind; it is due also to his having painted straight from life.

That life he sought and observed wherever he had the opportunity. He would wander about the market places looking for the types of merchant, salesman and customer that he wanted; the most interesting among them he would drag off to his rooms, feed or simply pay them and make sketches of them. He was fond of roaming in the outskirts of the city, peering in at the windows of humble homes and watching the life inside; again, he would turn in at taverns and eating-places, eagerly studying the people he encountered there—"from the pot-bellied squire to some greasy cook," as a contemporary remarked. He was equally exacting as regards the "accessories" in his pictures. He collected, to quote his memoirs, "costumes and furnishings, down to the last detail, which I either bought or hired, so that absolutely everything in the picture should be done from life."

Embarked on the professional artist's career, Fedotov, dire as were his financial straits, devoted three years of constant effort preparatory to the painting of pictures he had planned. He went nowhere except to the Hermitage or in quest of the types he wanted. In the few leisure hours he allowed himself, he would sing in his powerful and pleasing voice, with his guitar as accompaniment; or he would play the flute—he was fond of music—or, again, read his beloved Balzac. His taste in literature was rather individual. He admired the poetry of Byron; among Russian writers, he particularly appreciated the satirists Fonvizin and Krylov. Fedotov left several sketches to Gogol's *The Gamblers.* Part of his own spare time was spent in composing captions in verse to the pictures he as yet only meant to paint; he handled verse without effort, but the literary value of these writings was small.

Vladimir Stassov, the eminent Russian art connoisseur and critic, who was personally acquainted with Fedotov, wrote of him: "I knew him in the best period of his life. . . . More than once I heard from his own lips the verses, in which he explained his paintings and which he was fond of reciting. I was often with him in his quest for characters and accessories. I well remember his conversation, his humour and gaiety, his wit and gift of observation—all the things that made him so attractive to those who knew him then."

Fedotov believed in an artist's exclusive devotion to his art. He could have married a very nice girl who was really fond of him, but, he wrote, "there isn't enough of me for two lives, two things, two loves—for a wife and for my art." And so he remained true to his vocation alone.

For a time, Fedotov was greatly impressed with Hogarth. He would spend hours over engravings of Hogarth's canvases, with their biting satire of English life, their hundreds of figures, their meticulous detail, their amusing, diverting situations. On Fedotov's own admission, what most attracted him was Hogarth's "complexity." He did a series of sepia drawings representing, with a complexity equal to Hogarth's own, scenes of Russian metropolitan life, with a moral and

didactic tendency similar to the English artist's. There was the "Fashionable Shop"—a regular gallery of spendthrifts, of husbands ruined by frivolous wives, of gallant executors of ladies' commissions, of smart salesmen. Or *Fido Is Ill* and *Fido Is Dead*, the story of a General upset because the old mistress' pet lapdog had taken ill and died. *He Banked on his Talent and Took a Dowerless Wife* told the tale of a luckless artist in his unheated studio, where everything went to wrack and ruin. *The Duped Bridegroom's Awakening* showed a young man who had married a toothless spinster for her dowery—only to discover on the morrow that all the fine furnishings in her house were hired for the occasion, and the tradesmen now came to take them away. Such numbers of characters and accessories of all kinds were crowded into these drawings and others in the same vein that Fedotov had to add all manner of explanatory captions and verses, as the drawing sheet was not big enough for him.

This period was not of great importance in Fedotov's work; but it certainly served to heighten his satirical perception.

It was in 1848 that Fedotov first exhibited his work. The friends of the artist Aghin, the illustrator of Gogol, the engraver Bernardsky, the writers Dostoyevsky, Panayev and Grigorovich, the poets Nekrasov and Zhemchuzhnikov told one another that for nine months he had been entirely submerged in his work; with a sheepskin coat around him in his unheated room, he was engaged on a picture which, to judge by odd, fragmentary sketches, promised to bring him general recognition.

And, in fact, now that he had all his material together, Fedotov hardly left his house, so engrossed was he. The picture was *The Morning of an Official upon Receipt of His First Decoration*. Furthermore, he was working on another canvas—*Over-fastidious*. Both were completed for the Academy exhibition of 1848. Not only were they accepted, but the council of the Academy nominated Fedotov "candidate academician" and suggested that he should paint a special picture for his election as member of the Academy.

Fedotov accepted the suggestion, and set to work. This third picture was his famous *The Major Proposes*. The idea he had long had in mind. Now he proceeded, patiently and persistently, to look for "models." This is how he himself describes the quest: "When I needed a merchant for my Major, I would haunt Gostinny and Apraksin Courts,[1] reading the merchants' faces, listening to their way of talking, studying their tricks of speech and manner. Or I would stroll down Nevsky Prospect for the same purpose; but for a long time I could not find what I wanted. At last one day by Anichkov Bridge I met the embodiment of my ideal; and no lucky man with the most rapturous of rendezvous on the Nevsky could have been more delighted to meet his fair lady than I was at the sight of that ginger beard and fat paunch. I followed my friend to his house, then found an opportunity to scrape acquaintance with him, trailed around after him for a whole year, studying his ways, and finally received permission to paint a portrait of this venerable sire; only then did I put him in my picture. I spent a whole year on this one character—and what about the others? But none of my friends ever think of that. They see a lively, diverting picture—nothing more."

These three pictures represented Fedotov at the Academy exhibition of 1849. *The Major Proposes*, together with the other two, of which the public had taken but little note the previous year, produced a veritable sensation, the like of which had fallen to the lot only of Brullov, with his *Last Days of Pompeii*. Brullov himself joined in the chorus of acclamation, though but a few years before he had dissuaded Fedotov from taking up a painter's career. The title of academician was conferred upon Fedotov by unanimous vote. His reputation was made.

The public flocked to the exhibition, and before Fedotov's pictures the crowd never thinned. Everywhere—in the aristocratic drawing-room and the humble home of the artisan—the talk was of *The Morning of an Official* and *The Major Proposes*. The censors noted this with distaste. When the pictures were being hung, the censors had already made some trouble about *The Morning of an Official upon Receipt of His First Decoration*; they had had the title changed to the clumsy one of *After a Party—and the Reproaches*. And when a reproduction of the picture was issued, the public hardly recognized it; the official was no longer wearing his decoration, for the censors had ordered it to be deleted. He now pointed quite meaninglessly to his chest; the whole point was lost and the tsarist censors had won. And later too, the tsarist officials looked much askance at Fedotov's work. At the London Exhibition of 1862 *The Major Proposes* was hung so high that, to quote Stassov, "no one could see it;" and the artist was forbidden outright to send *The Morning of an Official* to the Paris exhibition of 1868.

With few exceptions, the graphic arts in Russia in the 1840's were far below the standard of Russian literature, music and the theatre, which breathed such a spirit of life, truth and kinship with the people, and were illumined by stars of such magnitude as Dostoyevsky, Nekrasov, Koltsov, Glinka, Dargomyzhsky, Shchepkin and Samoilov.

It was Fedotov's work that put Russian painting on a par with Russia's literature, music and scenic art; and this is the great service which stands to his credit in the history of Russian culture.

Stassov, who warmly applauded Fedotov's work, who himself watched *The Major Proposes* as it was painted, aptly remarked that Fedotov had "touched chords deeper than anyone before him in Russian art." Of *The Morning of an Official* the critic wrote: "Look at that official's face: it is a visage grown mechanical and wooden; the man is utterly corrupt, a taker of bribes, an unfeeling slave of his superior; he thinks of nothing but of what can bring him money and decorations for his buttonhole. . . . Ill-

[1] Shops centres in St. Petersburg.

nature, arrogance, callousness, adulation of his decoration, as the supreme, indisputable argument—a life degraded to utter banality—all that is told in this face, in the figure and posture of this case-hardened bureaucrat in his dressing-gown and bare feet, with his hair in curlers and his decoration on his chest." And of *The Major Proposes*—a picture that shows a gallant officer come to sue for the hand of an over-ripe young lady of the merchant class—Stassov rightly pointed out that this was not a "diverting story," but "a tragedy piercing horribly from behind a gay and amusing screen." "You forget to laugh," he went on, "when you think of what this scene stands for: there are two hostile camps here warring against each other; enemies seeking only to outwit each other—callous, brutal, vulgar, and fiercely egoistic, without scruple of any kind." These passages epitomize the profound meaning of the two pictures.

In these paintings, Fedotov's art truly came into its own. This applies particularly to *The Major Proposes*. In other pictures, the accessories, though in themselves perfectly done, tended to overburden the composition. This applied to *The Morning of an Official*, to *Over-fastidious*—which showed a lady too long unmarried finally accepting a hunchback—and to *An Aristocrat at Breakfast*—an impoverished aristocrat breakfasting in his sumptuous rooms off a crust of stale bread, and hiding it as his dog gives warning of someone at the door. This was undoubtedly a hangover of Fedotov's admiration for "Hogarthian complexity." In *The Major Proposes* there is more freedom, more air, than in any of the earlier pictures; the harmony and depth of the colour scheme is splendid, especially the contrast between the one room, flooded with sunlight, and the other, which is very fine in tones of darkish grey. We find a similar freedom in *The Town Governor Reviews an Imaginary Parade*—a stolid, self-satisfied martinet strutting before his household to the sounds of a child's organ and drum.

As time went on, Fedotov tended more and more to forego the role of accuser; the artist in him gained the upper hand over the moraliser. He was no ruthless satirist. On the contrary, his gentle nature now prevailed—and there is no trace of moralizing in his *Widow*—a charming, unpretentious scene representing a young, sweet-faced woman, alone and forsaken by all, leaning with an expression of deep melancholy against a tallboy as she gazes with tear-stained eyes at the things which made up her home and which now have been seized by her dead husband's heartless creditors—at all the things, precious in their associations, from which she must now part. This little thing is an elegy of sadness. There is nothing of the didactic here—it is art alone. The execution is masterly, with consummate artistic tact in every stroke. All contours are done in soft, flowing lines; the cold grey tones of deepening twilight are superbly rendered. The picture was an enormous success, and the artist was obliged to do several replicas, varying only as to some minor details.

Fedotov's last painting—*Encore, encore!*—was charged with dramatic meaning. In a dark, dank, smoke-filled hovel, lit by a waning candle-end, a young officer, landed with his regiment in some unspeakable backwoods corner, and bored to death, makes his poodle jump over a bit of string, time and time again. The utter futility of his existence, the mental degradation, the dark horror of this animal life is conveyed by Fedotov with force. It took the artist a long time to get the lighting right: it persistently eluded him. But in the end, he coped brilliantly with his task, and this picture is, as regards colour scheme, among the most interesting of Russian paintings.

Generally recognized and appreciated, Fedotov worked effortlessly, at his easel. His talent was reaching its prime, his work improved with every new picture, he had extensive and interesting plans. But tragically and unexpectedly his life was cut short at the early age of thirty-seven. A treacherous malady attacked him. Horrible nightmares assailed him as soon as he fell asleep, and gave him no rest. From a happy nature, full of zest and the joy of living, he turned melancholy and morose. His reason became blurred, and finally he had to be placed in a mental home. A fortnight before his death, sanity returned; but his organism was worn out, and on November 17th, 1852, Fedotov passed away in the arms of Arkady Korshunov, his unfailing friend and servant.

IVAN LAZAREVSKY

A THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

The first Russian Theatre for children will be twenty-five years old at the end of 1945. Those who made up its audience years ago are now taking their children to it. It was founded in the severe, hungry winter of 1920 and named the "Moscow Children's Theatre." Sixteen years later, in 1936, it was renamed "The Central Children's Theatre." Since then it remains first in importance among the Soviet theatres for children. There are more than seventy of them in the U.S.S.R., which give performances in eighteen different languages. For instance, in Tbilisi, which has a large Armenian and Russian population besides the Georgians, there are three children's theatres: a Georgian, Armenian and Russian. Tashkent has two children's theatres: one Russian and one Uzbek; Kiev has three: Ukrainian, Russian and Jewish, etc.

While searching for ways and means of perfecting its art the Soviet theatre for children frequently changed its methods, continually searching for new principles. However, in the course of twenty-five years one principle has remained unchanged, namely:

A theatre for children must be a r e a l theatre; it must be a phenomenon of true

Scene from *"The Snow Queen" at the Central Children's Theatre, Moscow*

art. Only then will it be able to carry out its pedagogical mission. As Stanislavsky said: "We must perform for children just like we do for adults, only better. "

Those who perform in children's theatres, are not only r e a l professional actors, but actors of a high artistic standard and the finest producers stage plays mounted by the best theatrical artists. Many of the most prominent Soviet writers are the authors of plays shown on the stage of children's theatres, and the most famous composers are invited to write the music for them.

It is interesting to note that the author's fee for a play written for the children's theatre is about one and a half times, and sometimes twice, that which is paid for a play for adults.

A performance at the children's theatre is an event of interest in the theatrical life of the country. The press gives it as much attention as to an "adult" drama, or maybe even more.

It is true that at the dawn of its history the children's theatre mostly staged plays "from the life of children." But later the Soviet theatre rejected the theory that a play for children must be preeminently a play about children.

A child always dreams about the future. He delays the realization of his most cherished dreams until "later," until that time when he will at last become "an adult." Virtually all children's games are born of impatience, as if they were anticipating their own future.

This does not mean that the children's theatre should altogether reject plays that depict the life and mentality of children. Child heroes continue to appear on the stage of our theatre. Yet it is much more important and thrilling to show the young audience the adult hero, towards which it is striving. To create ideals—such is the theatre's task.

It is known that a child is more impressed by positive examples than by negative ones and less by being shown the bad consequences of bad deeds than by the representation of noble acts, which cause a desire to imitate them.

It is this consideration which determines the nature of the modern plays, created by the children's theatre in cooperation with the playwrights.

Leonid Volkov, a well-known producer and actor, who won the title of "merited artist" a few years ago, is in charge of the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow. Leonid Volkov is a disciple of Constantine Stanislavsky and Eugene Vakhtangov, therefore it is not surprising that the Stanislavsky school has determined the style of this theatre and is a bond between it and the Moscow Art Theatre. Volkov still appears on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre which enhances the strength of this bond.

Valentin Kolessayev, the chief stage manager, has been working for the children's theatre for twenty years. In addition to about seventy professional actors, some of whom have already won deserved fame throughout the country the theatre has a so-called "auxiliary" body of fifteen young actors, who appear in mass scenes and dumb roles. These are students about to graduate from the studio attached to the theatre.

Today among the actors of the Central Children's Theatre there are quite a few who have given up the "adult" theatre and joined the children's theatre, of which Valentina Sperantova, who has been playing for the Soviet children for twenty years, is one of the most brilliant ones. Much has been

written about her, and her name is among those of the most distinguished masters of Soviet theatrical art. No actor or actress knows how to show the complicated emotional world of a child on the stage better than she does. She not only plays for the children, but plays exclusively the parts of children. In the types of boys and girls she represents the audience immediately recognize themselves. Even before her real name became widely known to young audiences, she was highly popular under the name of "Yegorka," the hero of Afinogenov's play *Black Steep Bank*. Her latest roles were those of Gerda in Andersen's *Snow Queen* and of the boy Lyonya in Eugene Shwarz's play *Distant Country*.

Among the actors and actresses of the Central Children's Theatre who enjoy the affection of its juvenile audience, mention must be made of Antonina Elisseyeva, Irina Victorova, Alexandra Kudryavtseva, Sofia Volkhovskaya, Semyon Sajin, Zinovi Goushansky, Taras Solovyov and Matvei Neiman.

The theatre's so-called "pedagogical body," consisting of six members, is one of the most characteristic features of the constitution of the Children's Theatre. Of course they are not only teachers but work in the theatre itself and so form a direct link between theatre and school. The schoolchildren usually go to the theatre accompanied by their teachers, and the tickets are bought for entire classes. Only a small number of tickets are left for sale through the ticket office. But the theatre's pedagogic work begins at the ticket office. When a schoolboy asks for a ticket, holding the money in inkstained fingers, the cashier refuses his request, telling him that a theatre ticket must not be held in dirty fingers. The first thing that these pedagogues try to impress upon the young theatre-goer is that going to the theatre is in itself an important and solemn event.

To the question: "What is the most specific feature of the children's theatre?" one always feels like answering: "Of course, its audience."

Indeed, this audience has nothing in common with that of an adult's theatre. The youngsters make up the most active audience seen anywhere or at any time. The audience of a children's theatre is no less interesting than the performance on the stage. To the young theatre-goers a play is something much more important than a mere entertainment or sight-seeing. The boundary between stage and reality is wiped away; the audience rejoices and suffers with the heroes, repeating what they say, calling to them loudly warnings of threatening danger and giving them advice.

The reactions of the audience and its behaviour during the performance constitute a matter of constant study, the results of which aid the producers of the play considerably. In this respect the first trial performances of new plays are most instructive.

After the first few performances of Serguei Mikhalkov's *Tom Canty* the play came up for discussion in a school. The author, producer and a few of the actors were present at the discussion. One of the school-girls declared:

"Everyone in it is bad. The guard is bad. John is bad too. Where are the good ones?"

The author and the producer were forced to admit that the remark was well founded. Perhaps the colours in which they had depicted the age were too black? And as a result the author introduced some changes into the text and wrote a special intermezzo, while the producer changed a number of settings and the treatment of popular scenes.

But usually, before the producer starts on his work the pedagogical body of the theatre arranges readings of the play in schools and children's libraries.

Valentin Katayev completed his new play *A Son of the Regiment* for the theatre. At the end of the play one of its heroes, Captain Yenakiev, who had adopted a boy called Vanya Solntsev at the front, dies. The play was read by its author in a children's library in Moscow before its constant readers who would be going to see the play in the future. The children were already familiar with Katayev's tale from which the play was taken. They knew that Captain Yenakiev dies of his wounds and that Vanya Solntsev enters a Suvorov school to become an officer of the Red Army in the future. But they do not want to see the death of their beloved captain on the stage. From the audience arise shouts:

"Don't let him die! We don't want him to die!"

This places the author in a difficult position. If Yenakiev is to remain alive, the entire play would have to be changed, for its basic idea is that Captain Yenakiev dies but continues to live in the person of Vanya Solntsev.

This the children understood very well, but one thing is to read about the death of their hero in a story, and another thing is to see him dying on the stage. Suddenly a youngster shouts:

"Then let him die and not die!"

This is an excellent idea, and the author conceives a perfect plan: yes, Captain Yenakiev is wounded. Here he lies near his gun, surrounded by his comrades. His situation is hopeless, and death is near. He is delirious, and the objects of his delirium are shown on the stage. . . . A polished white marble staircase covered with a red runner. Its golden ballustrade is decorated with the emblems of all kinds of Russian arms from the most ancient times down to the days of the Patriotic War—from the era of Alexander Nevsky to the times of Joseph Stalin. Up the staircase, which seems to have sprung up on the battle-field, the wounded captain, holding Vanya Solntsev by the hand, is leading him higher and higher. The audience, which recognizes the vestibule of the Suvorov school, understands that Captain Yenakiev is going to die, but wasn't his dying wish to send Vanya to the Suvorov school, so that he could carry on Captain Yenakiev's cause? . . . And here the captain himself is leading Vanya Solntsev up the marble steps of the staircase. . . . On one of the land-

ings they are met by an old grey-haired man wearing stockings and a green coat resplendent with diamond stars. . . . Of course the youngsters in the audience at once recognize Suvorov himself. . . . and Captain Yenakiev is no more. But in such circumstances the audience is able to reconcile itself to his disappearance. . . . Suvorov leads Vanya Solntsev higher and higher, whilst Stalin's smiling face watches him from above.

The pedagogues are doing a great deal of varied work in the theatre. A special "information desk" is busy in the foyer during the intervals, answering thousands of questions asked by the youngsters. Now that they have seen the heroes on the stage they want to know more about their lives than the play tells them. Did Lomonosov meet his father after he had become a famous scientist? What happened "later" to the members of Lieutenant Sedov's polar expedition? To what period does the action in *Tom Canty* belong? Did Hans Christian Andersen write nothing but fairy-tales, and what is known about his life? What books tell of the life and work of Johann Gutenberg?

Each visit to the theatre causes a lively discussion about the heroes, explanations of their behaviour, the period of the play, its author and the acting. The opinions expressed are sometimes peculiar, but always of value to the theatre.

During the twenty-five years of its existence about a hundred plays have been staged by the Central Children's Theatre. The titles of many of them are well known to our reader: *Hiawatha* by Longfellow; *Pinocchio* by Collodi; *Robin Hood;* Molière's *Scapin's Pranks; Thousand and One Nights; Under His Own Guard* by Calderon; *Romanticists* by Rostand; *Tom Canty* (from Mark Twain's *Prince and the Beggar*) and *The Free Flemings* (taken from Charles de Coster's *Till Eulenspiegel*). The theatre has staged Pushkin's and Andersen's fairy-tales, Russian fairy-tales, Japanese folk-tales, Sizova's play about the great Russian scientist and poet Lomonosov, M. Daniel's play *The Inventor and the Comedian* dealing with Johann Gutenberg, Podoralsky's play *In the Land of Eternal Ice* about the famous Russian arctic explorer Sedov; many plays written specially for children by A. Afinogenov, A. Kron, Alexei Tolstoy, Valentin Katayev, Serguei Mikhalkov, Mikhail Svetlov, Russian classic plays by Ostrovsky, Fonvisin and others.

The theatre spent more than two years of the war in the Kuznetsk coal basin, Siberia. It had to forget that it was a theatre for children only, and without much effort adapted itself to audiences of every age. In the grim days of war its actors, formed into groups, went down into the mines, and there, deep under ground, during the miners' hours of rest, they would perform for them fragments from *Scapin's Pranks,* musical numbers, readings from Russian literary classics and light vaudevilles. But it was the scenes taken from "fairy-tale" performances for children, such as Marshak's *Teremok* and Eugene Shwarz's *Snow Queen* (founded on Andersen's fairy-tale) that were most successful with the miners.

Teremok is a part of a play staged by this theatre under the general title of *Fairy-Tales* written by the outstanding Soviet writer for children, Samuel Marshak.

Snow Queen, for youngsters in their early teens, is one of the chief favourites.

Andersen's fairy-tales teach us that real happiness is in serving men and doing good deeds for the sake of human welfare and happiness, that there is nothing stronger than the feeling of love and friendship, and that he who is true to it is able to perform miracles.

The Soviet playwright Eugene Shwarz adapted Andersen's fairy-tale *Snow Queen* for the stage, changed parts of it and included bits from Andersen's other fairy-tales. However, this has not detracted from the play's Andersen's basic idea: loyalty, love and friendship are invincible.

The Snow Queen froze the heart of the boy Kai, and he became rude and wicked. The Snow Queen kidnaps him, and Kai finds himself in the kingdom of ice. Kind and loving Gerda starts to look for her friend; she goes through many adventures and is persecuted by the wicked Adviser, who acts in concert with the Snow Queen. What else could be expected of the wicked Adviser, who has been dealing in ice all his life!

Gerda is ready to stand any privation; nothing deters this brave little girl, whose unusual adventures are followed with the keenest attention by the audience.

Gerda gets to the king's palace where she is given a golden carriage to ease her search for Kai. Followed by the Adviser she hurries farther and farther northwards in her golden carriage, but on her way she is captured by robbers. The Story-Teller helps her out, and with the help of the reindeer she reaches the palace of the Snow Queen, on the very edge of the world. With the breath of her love she warms Kai's iced heart. In vain does the Snow Queen and the wicked Adviser try to return Kai to the kingdom of eternal cold: a warm heart, kind feelings and the loyalty of a friend have beaten cold and ice.

"What can our enemies do to us, as long as our hearts are warm!" one of the heroes of the play exclaims.

These words embody the idea which the theatre has tried to impress on the conscience of the audience.

This year the theatre staged S. Mstislavsky's play *The Rook, a Bird of Spring* for somewhat older children. The action of this play takes place on the eve of the Russian revolution in 1905. Its hero is Nikolai Bauman, the famous co-worker of Lenin, a revolutionary and organizer of the masses. This play was staged by Leonid Volkov. It depicts the heroic period during which the characters of the people belonging to the Bolshevik party were formed; it shows the struggle of the Russian revolutionaries for freedom, for the happiness of the people.

The theatre also tells of Russia's history of bygone days. Shortly before his death the playwright Constantine Trenyov finished his historical tragedy about the youth of Peter the Great for the Central Children's Theatre.

Nikolai Shapovalenko's play *Two Volunteers* is now being rehearsed by the actors of the theatre. Its action takes place in 1863, and it deals with the participation of several Russian sailors in the Civil War in America on the side of Lincoln's troops. The author has used historical facts of the participation of Russians in the struggle of the abolitionist North against the slave-owning South in America.

A Jolly Dream—such is the name of a new play by Serguei Mikhalkov, the poet. It is being staged by Valentin Kolessayev, and the decorations for it are painted by the Spanish artist Alberto Sanches. It is a play in verse and written in the manner of an Italian commedia del'arte, with the introduction of the traditional masks of Brigella, Tartaglia, Pantaleone and others. The hero of this play, a Soviet school-boy, Andryusha, finds himself in Silvio, a kingdom of cards. In this kingdom any merry-making is strictly forbidden, and even to the sick prince Tartaglia the clown is reading nothing but horrible and boring fairy-tales, which make one cry. Such is the doctor's order; they maintain that the prince will recover only if he will "cry away" all the bacilli of his illness with his tears. Andryusha rises against the laws of this kingdom of tears and succeeds in introducing joy and merry-making into the land of cards. . . .

Adventures and fantastic stories occupy a considerable place in the repertory of the Central Children's Theatre. Jules Verne always appeals to the imagination of our children—and their fathers as well.

The theatre has chosen Jules Verne's story *Doctor Ox*. It was on the subject of this story that Martier wrote his libretto and Offenbach his music long ago. The theatre has used Offenbach's music but completely rejected Martier's libretto. The story is being arranged for the stage all over again.

The play *Doctor Ox* deals with a scientific experiment that accelerates the pace of life in a half-asleep town, Kikedon; it transforms everything including the colour of every object, houses, articles of clothing and plants, making everything that is grey and every day assume bright and festive hues.

In staging this magic play considerable use has been made of the technical achievements of the Experimental Laboratory for luminous colours, one of the auxiliary technical enterprises of the Central Children's Theatre.

Thus staging plays about noble knights, about Courage and Justice and men of great passions the Children's Theatre transfers the audience into the world of still unrealized possibilities, calls forth in them a desire to learn and create, act and win, serve their country and mankind.

EMIL MINDLIN

ART NEWS

The winter theatrical season is now in full swing in Moscow and is presenting many novel items. The Bolshoi Theatre of the U.S.S.R. is the country's pride. For a hundred years now it has witnessed the birth and development of our national musical art. This season its repertoire has been enriched by several productions of Russian classical art. Mussorgsky's wonderful opera *Boris Godunov* is once more before the footlights, with Ary Pazovsky as musical director and conductor, Fyodor Fyodorovsky as art director, and Leonid Baratov, producer. Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, first produced a hundred years ago, has now been revived. In view of the great interest taken in opera, the theatrical cast of the Bolshoi Theatre is playing in the main theatre and its affiliation.

The latter has produced two premieres this season: Gounod's classic opera *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Bella*, a new opera by the Soviet composer Anatole Alexandrov, based on a story by Lermontov. A new production at the Bolshoi Theatre is Serguei Prokofiev's *Cinderella*.

The repertoire at the Maly, Moscow's oldest dramatic theatre, includes Nikolai Pogodin's play, *Creation of a World*—a picture of peaceful reconstructive labour in the U.S.S.R. Constantine Zubov has revived Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, a last year's production. The producer plays in the principal role and the settings are by Paul Sokolov-Skalya.

The Stalingradians, a play by Nikolai Virta, depicting the heroic defence of the city, is being prepared for the spring season of 1946. The classic Russian playwright Alexander Ostrovsky, holds undiminished sway on the stage of the Maly where two of his comedies are now running: *A Profitable Place* (decorations by Constantine Yuon) and *Poverty is no Crime*. Work has been started on *The Plane is Twenty-Four Hours Late* a play of two Soviet playwrights Nathan Rybak and Igor Savchenko, in which we see the friendship existing between Soviet people in the hour of danger.

The Moscow Art Theatre is keeping abreast with the times. Among the new productions are *Difficult Years*, the second part of *Ivan the Dread* by the Soviet writer Alexei Tolstoy, recently deceased, and Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband* in a new translation by Victor Vilenkin, edited by Samuel Marshak. The main roles are taken by the best artists of the Art Theatre. In the playbill we find the old familiar names such as Vassili Kachalov, Olga Knipper-Chekhova, Olga Androvskaya, Vladimir Yershov, and others. One of the novelties of the season is *Twelve Months*, a fairy-tale by Samuel Marshak, produced by Yanshin, music by Boris Assafyev. Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, produced by Ilya Sudakov, which had its first premiere in the autumn of 1899, is being rehearsed with Alla Tarassova and Boris Dobronravov in the principal roles. Another revival is *Wit Works Woe*, the great classic comedy by Alexander Griboyedov.

A new production on the stage of the Vakhtangov Theatre is *The Great Tsar* by Vladimir Solovyov, the Soviet playwright. This is what Reuben Simonov, the theatre's art director, has to say about this play:

"The figure of Tsar Ivan Grozni in this play is original without forfeiting historical truth. The traits of the formidable monarch are combined with the wisdom and strength of a great reformer of the State of Russia."

The play's producer, Boris Zakhava, is a close friend and pupil of the late Eugene Vakhtangov. The Russian classical repertoire is represented by Ostrovsky's *Dowerless* in a new setting and is produced by Reuben Simonov. The latter is also responsible for the production of Sophocles' *Electra* with Anna Orochko in the principal role. The young actors of the theatre have put on *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde.

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre is producing Calderon's *Invisible Lady*, in a new translation with interludes by Tatyana Shchepkina-Kupernik, who is a grand-daughter of the great Shchepkin, one of Russia's most famous actors. Olga Bergholz and George Makagonenko are joint authors of the play *They Lived in Leningrad*. This play is dedicated to the heroic participants of the unprecedented defence. *Madam Bovary*, with Alice Koonen in the title role, has been revived at the Kamerny.

The Mossoviet Theatre is running several plays by Soviet playwrights: *A Sentimental Acquaintanceship* by Nikolai Pogodin, depicting the love binding the boys at the front to their wives and sweethearts left behind, and *Brandenburg Gate*, a play by Mikhail Svetlov. Speaking of this play, the art director, Yuri Zavadsky, said it might well be regarded as a poetical truth about the war.

The theatre has adapted for the stage Marcel Prevost's novel, *Manon Lescaut*, and Isidore Stok is busy on a new version of his *Fog Over the Gulf*.

For several years now close collaboration has existed between the Lenin Komsomol Theatre directed by Ivan Bersenyev and Constantine Simonov, the writer. *Under the Chestnuts*, the latter's new play, produced by Serafima Birman, depicts the struggle waged by the Czechoslovak people against their oppressors and the friendship of Slavs linked in a common struggle against the Hitlerites. *A Song of the Forests* is a play by Lessya Ukrainka, the Ukrainian authoress, and produced by Sofia Giatsintova. In this fairy spectacle Eugene Mandelberg's luminous colours are used for the first time. Natalia Venkstern is the author of the dramatic version of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, another production of the Lenin Komsomol Theatre, directed by Ivan Bersenyev.

The rout of Napoleon's armies in Russia in 1812, forms the theme of the play *A Great Captain* by Constantine Trenyov (printed in No. 9 of our magazine) and is now showing at the Central Theatre of the Red Army produced by the theatre's art director, Alexei Popov. Lope de Vega's comedy *The Dancing Master* makes its first appearance on the Russian stage in a translation by Shchepkina-Kupernik, Margarita Aliguer's *A True Fairy Tale* is dedicated to Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the girl-heroine of the Patriotic War. Figuring in the role of the young partisan is Valentina Popova, one of the theatre's youngest actresses. The theatre's more youthful artists are staging Arthur Pinno's *A Dangerous Age*, translated from the English by Pavel Bakulin.

Milleker's comic opera, *The Beggar Student*, from the revised text by Nikolai Erdman, has been added to the repertoire of the Musical Theatre named after Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. Another premiere is *Francesca da Rimini*, a ballet by Boris Assafyev.

Alexander Ostrovsky's comedy *The Marriage of Byelugin* is running at the Moscow Theatre of Satire.

The children's theatres are also showing a number of productions, including Ostrovsky's *Poverty is no Crime* at the Central Children's Theatre and Valentin Katayev's popular story, *A Son of the Regiment* (see No. 11, 1945, of *International Literature)*, which relates the adventures of a peasant boy at the front. *The Jolly Dream* is a comedy by the poet Serguei Mikhalkov. *The Two Volunteers* by Nikolai Shapovalenko tells of two Russian sailors who fought in America under Lincoln's banner. *Tabby's Farmstead*, for the very little ones, is a contribution by the poet Samuel Marshak, a play interwoven with subjects from Russian folk stories. *King Spider*, a fairy-play by Alexandra Brustein, is one among many productions of the Moscow Theatre for Children (the text was published in No. 9 of *International Literature*, for 1944).

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Writing more than a hundred years ago, in 1836—Nikolai Gogol said: "Show me the people who have more songs than we. Our Ukraine rings with song. All along the Volga from its source to the sea; all along its gliding caravans of barges dragged over the water, the songs of the "burlaki" (haulers of barges) resound. To the sound of songs the village "izbas" (cottages) are built of pinewood beams throughout the length and breadth of Russia. To the sound of songs bricks are passed from hand to hand and towns spring up as quick as mushrooms. To the song of the women-folk a Russian is swaddled, married and buried. . . ."

These words are as true today as on the day they were first written. The song is the Russian's friend and companion. It sounded the note of encouragement in the grim days of war and now that victory is come it sings of joy and gladness.

No sooner was the war ended than the review of folk singers of the U.S.S.R.—choirs and solo performers—terminated in a grand concert at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre.

The programme was opened and concluded by the united choir, comprising a thousand voices, singing the State Hymn of the

Soviet Union and the majestic song by Vano Muradeli: *The Will of Stalin Leads Us On*. These items lent an air of dignity to the whole performance.

The review owed much of its vivid colourfulness to the multinational character of the music, the performers hailing from nearly every republic and region of the U.S.S.R.

The decorative backgrounds effectively stressed the national essence of every ensemble. A picturesque Ural landscape brought out to the best advantage the chorus of Ural metallurgists, forgers of the formidable weapons of war. The background for the chorus of Northern songs was delightful: the ancient Russian house, the "terem" with its tiny attics, quaint staircases and windows of mica; the girl and women lace-makers bending over their frames. The long working hours are beguiled with song and the music runs through their cadences like the delicate tracery of some rare, precious lace. The old song *The Little Ring* wafted through the hall like a melodious pattern.

Classic opera was represented by a harmonious rendering of the chorus from Chaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* by the metallurgists of Magnitogorsk and was followed by a song of pride and sublime grief: *The Varangian* born in the days of the Russian Japanese war in 1904. Then came a chorus of girls—participants of the anti-aircraft defence of Leningrad—with the glittering spire of the Admiralty building in the background merging with the intense blue of the sky. On the tunic of each performer shone a Leningrad Defence Medal. Zuppe's technically difficult *Waltz* and Kochurov's *Leningrad Youth Song* were admirably rendered by this ensemble.

The austerity of execution in the chorus of Armenian teachers was as pleasing to the ear as the spirited temperament of the Georgian textile-workers from Kutaisi or the easy lilt of the Baku bakers.

Next came Byelorussia. . . . A peasant chorus from the village of Bolshoye Podlessye rendered *The Song of the River* with great feeling and gusto. The art of singing without any accompaniment was demonstrated by choruses from Tallinn and Riga. The performance of the Bashkir ensemble of song and dance was lively and gay, carrying one away. Some of the older extremely interesting ensembles which took part in the review, including, for example, the chorus of Chelyabinsk workers, that of the women-weavers of Moscow and a great many others could not take part in the concert for lack of time.

The solo performers were members of the most varied professions—workers, engineers, technicians, librarians, teachers, and they showed excellent vocal ability.

Two hundred thousand singers, members of ten thousand ensembles, took part in the review—these figures are an eloquent testimony to the Soviet people's ardent love of song.

* * *

Dmitri Shostakovich has completed a new composition—his Ninth Symphony. Apart from other works, this is his third symphony composed during the war.

The Ninth Symphony consists of five movements: the first, third and fifth all hurry and tumult; the second lyrical and melodious; the fourth a recitative. The music is permeated throughout with a joyous festive spirit.

The composer himself performed his new work before an audience of Moscow musicians in the form of a piano duet, his partner being the young pianist, Svyatoslav Richter. One of the first to hear this symphony was Raphael Kubelik, conductor of the Prague Philharmonic, who was then on a visit to Moscow, the son of the famous violinist, Jan Kubelik.

"We may well congratulate Shostakovich," says the composer Aram Khachaturyan. "His Ninth Symphony is a new achievement of creative art. We can confidently say that his Ninth Symphony will be a big success."

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How immensely rich is the musical inheritance left by Serguei Rachmaninov! His symphonies and chamber works have been included in the programme of a comprehensive "Rachmaninov Cycle" arranged in Moscow by the State Philharmonic and Radio Committee. The finest soloists, pianists and conductors take part in these concerts. Alongside compositions of world fame the programme will contain several works to be performed on the Soviet concert platform for the first time.

A session of musicological research dedicated to Rachmaninov's art is to be held in Moscow by the Central Museum of Musical Culture. Among the papers to be read are the following: *Rachmaninov and His Place in Russian Musical Culture* (by Professor Constantine Kuznetsov), *Rachmaninov's Early Works* (by Professor Pavel Lamm), *Rachmaninov as Conductor* (by Professor Vassili Yakovlev) and others.

An exhibition showing the main phases of Rachmaninov's life, work and appearances on concert platforms has been opened in the foyer of the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. Of great interest are exhibits of the composer's personal belongings and letters. There is abundant documental material, music written in his own hand, photos, etc. Many of the exhibits are on view for the first time.

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It is night . The waters of the grim Volga are rolling heavily. Among the splashes of bursting shells a boat crammed with armed men is crossing the river. They are soldiers heading for the opposite bank where a battle unprecedented in history is raging. They are bound for Stalingrad! This is the opening scene of *Days and Nights*, a film produced by Stolper and based on Constantine Simonov's novel of the same name, excerpts from which were published in No. 4 of *International Literature* for 1944.

The film relates the story of the men in the battalion commanded by Captain Saburov, one of the defenders of Stalingrad. In these days and nights endured by this handful,

of heroes is reflected as in a drop of water the sublime grandeur of the Stalingrad epic. Who are these men? There is the captain Saburov, young in years but tried in the fighting at Moscow where the Germans suffered their first defeat; the youthful Lieutenant Maslennikov, naive and modest; the regimental commander, an old officer of the regular army who fought in the World War I. Differing in age and experience, all these men are inspired by the one desire to smash the Germans and convert Stalingrad into a grave for the Hitlerites. We witness the stubborn, relentless fighting for the town, for its every section, house, floor.

The days and nights of the Soviet soldiers are passed amidst the roar and howling of shells, amidst conflagrations and ruins. We learn the story of Captain Saburov's love for Anya, a Stalingrad girl who, during the very first days of war, donned the uniform of a lieutenant of the Medical Corps.

The audience as it watches the course of a pure romance in the midst of grim horrors, is deeply stirred by the power of life, elemental and eternally young.

The figures best delineated in the film are Captain Saburov and Division Commander Protsenko, a general of the Stalin school in whom unwavering firmness and a faculty for solving the most complicated problems are combined with human consideration for others and an irresistible humour.

In even the most dramatic episodes one senses the confidence of the Russian soldier in victory.

* * *

The film *All Hail, Moscow!* is a novel effort by producer Serguei Yutkevich. The heroes are the pupils of trade schools, the same jolly, vigorous youths in neat black uniforms with shining buttons met with in the streets of many of our Soviet towns. The film describes the life and work of these young people who are the labour reserves of the U.S.S.R. working class, their interests, thoughts and adventures.

The plot centres round an event of great importance in the lives of the boys, viz., the participation of trade schools in the All-Union Olympic Competition of Music, Recitation and Dancing. An actual tournament of this kind was conducted during the war years and disclosed how many outstanding singers, dancers and reciters were present among our future turners, carpenters, locksmiths, electrotechnicians. The principal roles in the film are taken by the heroes in person—the pupils of the trade schools, and the producer says he was delighted with his unusual cinema actors.

* * *

Eugene Lanceret, an outstanding Soviet artist, has recently celebrated his seventieth birthday.

At the beginning of his artistic career Lanceret was deeply interested in 18th century Russian art, its architecture and landscape painting. His infatuation was no mere outward conventional approach, but a profound penetration into the spirit of the epoch. In his early works this feeling for history makes itself particularly evident. Among his best pictures are *Ships of Peter I, Petersburg in the 18th Century, The Road to »Tsarskoye Selo.* The colouring of this epoch, the style of its architecture—nay, more, the very soul of that age have been conveyed by his canvases.

Sketch from an album. By Eugene Lanceret

But mere retrospection was never an aim in itself to the young artist. This attitude came to the fore during the Russian revolution of 1905, which the artist welcomed with enthusiastic delight. Lanceret contributed actively to the satirical press of the day, then the rallying centre for the representatives of progressive art. His drawings: *The Fight, Obeying Orders,* and *Your Excellency* are among the best specimens of Russian revolutionary satire.

In 1912 Lanceret devoted himself to a cycle of illustrations for Leo Tolstoy's *Khadji Murat,* a work which proved a landmark not only in the artist's career but in the history of Russian book illustration. The range of his research grew with the years and without neglecting his work in black-and-white he achieved considerable success in the field of decorative theatrical scenery.

In the year 1912, Lanceret on the recommendation of the painter Ilya Repin, was invested with the title of Academician of Art, and in 1915 he was elected Member of the Council of the Russian Art Academy.

In Soviet times the artist's versatile talents attained their full powers. His monumental decorative designs of which the most conspicuous is the decorative painting of the

Kazan Railway Station in Moscow, occupy a prominent place in Soviet art.

The brilliant scenery to Griboyedov's *Wit Works Woe* staged by the Maly Theatre displays the painter's intimate knowledge of the historical background and domestic life in Russia in the first quarter of the 19th century. He made some interesting sketches for the film *Anush*. But he still sticks to his work in black-and-white. His prolific brush produces hundreds of illustrations, book-covers, illuminations; especially good are his vignettes and "ex libris" designs.

His energy in the war years was something remarkable. A huge panneau glorifying Russian arms attracted general attention.

Honours have been lavished on him. He bears the title of Merited Artist of the Republic and is the holder of a Stalin Prize. His seventieth birthday has been marked with a high government award—the Order of the Red Banner of Labour.

* * *

The history of Russian porcelain goes back for two hundred years. The interest in its manufacture dates back to the middle of the 18th century when deposits of excellent kaolin clay were discovered near Moscow.

After long experiments the Russian self-taught scientist, Dmitri Vinogradov, a friend and coeval of Lomonosov, discovered the secret of the manufacturing process. The first object in porcelain made by Vinogradov—a small cup with a lid, dated 1748—is preserved in the State Museum of China in Moscow. From that year the history of Russian porcelain begins. Russian china is deservedly famous and highly valued by connoisseurs and collectors. . . .

The Soviet china factories helped the war effort by producing electric insulators, medical appliances and special tubing. But the old traditions were faithfully preserved and objects of art were still produced, although in smaller quantities than before.

An exhibition of porcelain manufactured by four Soviet factories—the Dulev, Dmitrov, Pervomaisk and Kalinin, during the war-years, is on view in Moscow at the Central House of the Red Army. In the well-lighted halls stand dainty vases and table services, dishes and bowls, goblets and sculptured figures. In the designs are mirrored scenes of heroic events. The traditional patterns of nosegays and the intricate designs of national ornament are cleverly interlaced with new themes: banners of victory, turrets of ships—barrels of formidable-looking guns and machine-gun belts.

Preserved in a tea-service designed by Ivan Konkov, an artist from the Dulev factory, are episodes of the never-to-be-forgotten days of the Leningrad defence. Another service by the same master sparkles with the variegated lights of the Moscow victory salvo. The portraits executed on porcelain of the Soviet Marshals—Zhukov, Konev, Rokossovsky and Vassilevsky—by Vera Yurievskaya (Dulev factory) are excellent. A large group sculptured by Serguei Orlov (Dmitrov factory) represents Alexander Nevsky standing over a German knight prostrate at his feet. Serguei Orlov has a style peculiarly his own. He has made some excel-

The Fleet of Peter the Great. By Eugene Lanceret

lent sculptures in porcelain of the heroes of Russian fairy-tales. Here is Tsarevich Ivan riding a grey wolf; here is the hump-backed steed with a mane of gold; in the works of Vassili Bogolyubov, another of the Dmitrov factory artists, the world of legend and fairy-tale is fused with the world of the heroes of today.

Some 2,000 objects in porcelain are on show, each bearing the impress of its author's individual style. Vassili Fedulov's table-services are excellent. He uses colours as transparent as water which after glazing acquire the brilliance of the sapphire, emerald or ruby. The old masters have trained many apt disciples, young people, whose work is also on show.

Many visitors to the exhibition were interested to know how things were going in the Leningrad porcelain factory, the best in the country. They have resumed the painting of vases, table-services and sculptures. In the creations of A. Shchekotikhina-Pototski is recorded the heroic past of the Russian people. Her latest productions are dedicated to the great figures of our heroic epochs: Alexander Nevsky, Dmitri Donskoy, Minin and Pozharsky. E. Kubarskaya, T. Bespalova, A. Yatskevich have reproduced in porcelain episodes from the heroic defence of Leningrad. During the war against Hitler Germany many of the artists joined the army. The studio of I. I. Riznich, for instance, was closed for several years while its owner was at the front. The artist has returned to the factory and is now again at his favourite occupation. The colouring of the tea- and dinner-services produced by the Leningrad factory is exquisite, the china in the "Cobalt net" and "coral print" design being especially noteworthy.

* * *

Exhibition of Soviet porcelain. Suvorov. By V. Bogolyubov (Dmitrov Porcelain Works)

Exhibition of Soviet porcelain. A goblet by F. Maslov (Dmitrov Porcelain Works)

Situated at a distance of a two hours' railway journey from the capital is the State Museum-reserve of Zagorsk, a monument of ancient Russia. Its greatest treasure is the Troitsk Cathedral, one of the most ancient relics of Russian architecture. It was built during the years 1422—1423 by Prince Yuri, son of Dmitri Donskoy, who defeated the Tatars.

Of great interest are the works of Andrei Rublev, the master of ancient Russian church paintings, whose school produced many remarkable works at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries.

Serious restoration work has been accomplished in the cathedral under the guidance of Academician Igor Grabar. Some thirty rare ikons of the Rublev school have been cleaned and restored. Several are the work of the master himself; others were painted by his disciples. *The Wake*, which is the best-known of Rublev's works is preserved in the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

* * *

An exhibition of decorative artistic fabrics is being held in the premises of the Moscow Association of Painters. Some three hundred exhibits, the work of forty-three experts in painting and printing on cloth are on show. There are silk stuffs for ladies' dresses, excellent in colouring and design; splendidly painted shawls, scarves, table-clothes, parasols, cushions, lamp-shades, curtains and other hangings. Conspicuous among many other lovely things is a carpet by E. Ponomareva in shades of gold and heliotrope. There is a charming interior by Miloshevskaya, the curtains, table-cloth and lamp-shades in patterns of roses and bluebells. We were much struck by a curtain worked by I. Churkina, made of heavy white silk with clusters of lilac and pink flowers.

NEWS AND VIEWS

MIKHAIL BOTVINNIK SPEAKING

The results of the radio-match between the U.S.S.R. chess teams and those of the USA are by now known all over the world. The Soviet players won a victory over their worthy opponents by a score of $15^1/_2 : 4^1/_2$.

We had a talk on the subject with Mikhail Botvinnik, the U.S.S.R. chess champion who played on the first board, and asked him what Soviet chess-players thought of the tournament.

Botvinnik. The tournament was a sort of review of the work done by Soviet chess-players during the last five years. We've reared a galaxy of first-rate players. In our country, thanks to the support of the government, the game of chess has become widespread to an extent unprecedented in history. You will see what I mean when I tell you that in 1937 and 1938 700,000 players took part in the chess tournament sponsored by the U.S.S.R. Trade Unions.

"What is your opinion of the play of the various Soviet participants?"

Botvinnik. I think our two young grandmasters, Smyslov and Boleslavsky must be regarded as the heroes of the day in the Soviet teams. They took upon themselves the principal blow, playing against Reshevsky and Fine—both players of world championship class. In that encounter Smyslov and Boleslavsky scored three and a half out of four possible points. The Soviet participants, in general, made very good going. Of course, Bondarevsky and Flohr were upset at losing one game each, but those were the only defeats for our team. And our opponents were all strong players.

"Did this tournament bring anything new into the theory of chess?"

Botvinnik. There is no doubt that a study of the tournament will add some new elements to theory. Some of the games were very interesting in that respect. A distinctive feature was the absence of mistakes in the openings. The decisive struggle deployed towards the middle of the games.

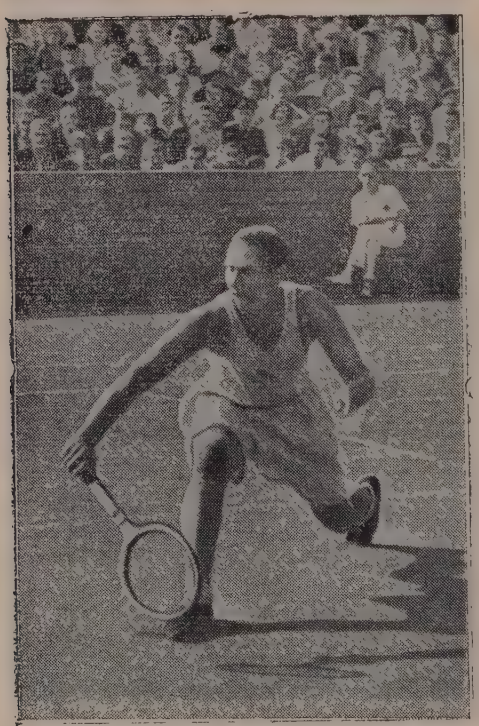
"What would you say to a suggestion to have the radio tournament repeated?"

Botvinnik. I can only hope that these matches may become an annual sporting tradition, a friendly bond between chess-players of democratic countries.

* * *

Early in the morning, when Moscow is just awaking from sleep, you may meet in the still deserted streets a young man with a suit-case in his hand. His step is rapid and vigorous. He is making for the stadium, or the Park. . . . Anyone taking a peep into his suit-case, however, would gasp with astonishment. So different are the objects placed in the two compartments! In the one—wigs, a little box full of theatrical make-up, a book on the art of acting. In the other—tennis balls and a racket! That little suit-case belongs to Nikolai Ozerov, a student. And the extraordinary assortment of objects are the appurtenances of his two professions. Nikolai Ozerov is about to graduate from the Theatrical School. His love for the stage is rooted in family tradition: he is the son of a well-known opera-singer. Although the young student has not yet won fame on the stage, his name is nevertheless widely known in the Soviet Union. Nikolai Ozerov is tennis champion of the U.S.S.R.

In 1945, the struggle for supremacy on the tennis court was a particularly tumultuous one in the U.S.S.R. There were so many excellent players on the courts! After some heated encounters the winners proved to be last year's champions. The women's champion was Galina Korovina, a Leningrad girl and our friend Nikolai Ozerov was the men's champion. His final game with Semion Belits-Heimann, his strongest competitor, was one of exceptional interest. Ozerov was in full feather. The variety of his strokes seemed inexhaustible. He wrested the victory from his opponent in a brilliant finish.



Nikolai Ozerov, tennis champion

* * *

August 11th, 1945, is a date closely bound up with the name of the parachutist Lieutenant-Colonel Nabi Amintayev.

But before we hear more about that partic-

ular morning let us call to mind a picture of the mountain hamlet of Kumykh, of some twenty years or so ago. A small barefoot boy, dark-eyed and dark-haired is crawling stealthily along the very edge of a roof in pursuit of an old, blue-grey pigeon. Now he's got it! But no,—with a flap of his wings the pigeon flies away. The boy slips, and with a cry falls from the roof. That was Nabi Amintayev's first jump. It brought him no fame but only bumps and bruises. . . . He was a plucky little chap. He would go hunting for eagles' nests on the mountain crags, and roll down the slope, and rub the sore places, and clamber up again. As a little lad he would spring into his saddle to take part in the horse racing and learned all the intricacies of the native trick riding. At the age of twelve he came under the care of the Red Army and his inborn daring and courage were controlled by military discipline. He graduated his school with flying colours and was given the command of a troop of cavalry. But the pace of even the swiftest horse was too slow for Nabi Amintayev: his dream was of aviation.

We see him next in a flying school among some young parachutists drawn up in lines in the Voronezh aerodrome. That was thirteen years ago, but Amintayev still distinctly remembers his first jump. It seemed to him, he says, that his parachute had got stuck in the air and that he himself was poised between heaven and earth looking like a question mark. A few days later the jump was repeated. Little by little parachuting was gaining hold of him, becoming a passion. He was splendidly fit physically. An excellent swimmer, a dashing rider, good cyclist and football-player.

Ordinary jumps had no attractions for him. He was eager for difficulties. He made jumps when his plane was in the most inconvenient positions. He jumped off when it was in a spin, banking or diving. He contrived to jump when his machine was flying upside down with the landing gear uppermost. On one occasion he made fifty-three jumps in one day. He jumped off a plane that was travelling at speeds varying from two hundred to five hundred kilometres an hour. He jumped in the day and in the night, in the hottest weather and during intense frosts. What he strove for was to gain height. He wanted to raise the ceiling of Soviet parachuting.

Then war came, confronting Amintayev with new tasks. The airscout Amintayev gave place to Amintayev the instructor, who trained paratroops. And the number of them that he trained was a record one. Many a fearless parachutist owes a debt of gratitude to his master, Amintayev. And he, all the time, was thinking of new achievements!

On the morning of August 11th, 1945, the day on which our story begins, substratostat BP.79 carrying Amintayev in its gondola took off from one of the Moscow aerodromes. And from a height of 10,436 meters Amintayev, dressed in his usual flying suit lined with squirrel, jumped off. Down he flew, spreading wide his hands as a swallow does its wings. Behind his back was his parachute—unopened. Twice he had to press his way through heavy humid clouds. And suddenly, as he consulted his altimeter, the movement of his hand drew him into a spin. He was twirled and twisted in the air—and with a violent effort forced himself into an upright position. His parachute he did not open until the distance from the earth had diminished to 710 meters. . . . He made the regulation landing in a field near a village in the vicinity of Moscow. He had made a jump of 9,725 meters without a parachute during a one hundred and fifty seconds' fall. It was indeed a jump from the sky! That one set a new record. The Soviet parachutist's ceiling had been raised.

* * *

Eighty years have passed since the birth of the Latvian poet, Janis Rainis, whose name occupies a place of honour in world poetry at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Rainis took to his pen when still a youth. His writings were the fresh and original work of a young poet who has read Aeschylus and Euripides in the original, studied his native folklore and delighted in modern literature. The first collection of his verses appeared in print comparatively late in his life—in 1903—when the author was thirty-eight years old. In his book Yanis Rainis appears as a bold reformer of language, a dreamer, a transformer of life, a revolutionary.

The flames of struggle burned in his verses under the cover of romanticism. In the year 1905, Rainis became a bard of the revolution. He remained faithful to his ideals to the end—even when away from his homeland, living abroad, in Switzerland.

We can find all the phases of the Russian Revolution of 1905 mirrored in the collections of his works entitled respectively *Seeds of Storm, A New Force, A Quiet Book, Leaves Driven by the Wind, Those Who Never Forget.*

The poet's fame grew with the years. He became the spokesman of the Latvian people, conveying in his verse their thoughts and feelings. Some loved his lyrics, others appreciated him as an author of plays that were true to life, and a poet, deeply versed in folklore. Others again were attracted by his satirical gifts, but one and all were fascinated by the lofty morale of his writings. His plays *I Dance and Play, The Young Raven,* and *Daugava,* a dramatic poem, all point their spearheads at the oppressors of his people. The Latvian people's age-old hatred for their German enslavers found vivid expression in a play that was first staged in 1911. The modern reader will find no difficulty in deciphering its symbols.

Rainis has made some excellent translations into Latvian of works of classical world literature, among them Pushkin's *Boris Godunov, The Demon* of Lermontov, Gorki's *Song of the Falcon,* Goethe's *Faust, Egmont, Iphyginia in Tauris* and *Tasso,* Schiller's *William Tell,* Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *King Lear,* Calderon's *Judges in Salamanca,* Ibsen's *Festival in Solhaug*

and *William Ratcliffe* by Heine. *The Restless Heart* is the title of a volume of his translations in verse which appeared in 1924 and contained lyrical poems of many epochs and nations.

His works are full of lofty feelings and humane ideas. The heroes of his dramas are almost invariably men of noble and altruistic ideals, his conceptions are vividly expressed in his *Steed of Gold*, a dramatic fairy-tale for young people.

Rainis's works express the freedom-loving aspirations of his people. In the gloomy days of the German occupation Latvian patriots gathered around the gravestone which marks his burial-place. The monument represents a youth breaking the chains shackling his body. The eightieth anniversary of the poet's birth was marked by the Latvian people throughout a land freed from the oppressor.

Rainis's works comprise eleven volumes, not counting a considerable amount of unpublished material. The Russian poet, Valeri Bryussov, was one of the best translators of Rainis into Russian. In 1935 a volume of the poet's selected works was published. In 1944, in a collection bearing the title of *Songs of Struggle and Courage*, the most colourful of his patriotic verses appeared in print. At the present moment a four-volume edition of Rainis's works in Russian is being prepared for publication; Boris Pasternak, Vera Inber, Mikhail Zenkevich and Vladimir Derzhavin collaborated in the translations.

* * *

The city of Moscow stands surrounded on all sides by woods and parks, with many picturesque old county-seats, converted by the Soviet government into museums. One of these monuments of bygone years is Kuskovo, the estate of Count Sheremetev, one of the wealthiest nobles of the 18th century.

A quarter of an hour in the train, a few minutes' walk and a turn of the road opens up before your eyes an avenue of age-old trees—a sparkling pond, and a gleam of white columns supporting the porticos of an old palace. . . . one of the very few 18th century palaces that have survived the barbarous destruction wrought by the Germans.

In the left wing of the building are eleven rooms showing the domestic milieu and everyday life of a noble's family of those days.

The furniture, pictures and sculptures of the lofty apartments—all enchant the eye in those suites. Your eye rests on the parquet floors of rare woods; the artistic designs of the ceilings; the moulding on the walls; on the costly chandeliers, brocaded wall-hangings, the furniture sets skillfully wrought by serf-craftsmen. The tapestried drawing-room and the appointments in oak in the study of the master of the house have been restored. On the walls are pictures from the brush of the famous serf-painter Argunov and portraits by Rokotov, and ranged along the walls are some beautiful sculptures by Shubin. Your attention is drawn to a portrait of Parasha Zhemchugova, a gifted serf-

Lermontov Exhibition at the State Literary Museum. Drawing by M. Lermontov. Manœuvres at Krasnoye Selo

actress, daughter of the local smith, who eventually became the wife of Count Sheremetev.

The entire ensemble of the estate—the small Italian and Swiss houses, the grotto and park, the treasures which were evacuated during the war years, have been restored in readiness for the opening of the museum. In the right wing of the palace a museum exhibiting porcelain is about to be opened; it will exhibit some 16,000 rare objects made of Russian and European China, porcelain, and glass.

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Four years ago throughout the Soviet Union preparations were being made for the centenary of the death of Mikhail Lermontov, the great Russian poet. The opening of the Lermontov Jubilee Exhibition had been fixed for June 27, 1941; on June 22nd the war began, and matters literary and cultural were put off for many long, long months to come.

Now this exhibition has returned from evacuation and is on show in the halls of the State Literary Museum. A rich collection of material, consisting of pictures, drawings, documents and printed matter recording the life and works of the poet is now on view. Of great interest are a large portrait of the poet, oval in form, from the brush of K. Gorbunov (dated 1833), and another, by F. Budkin, commissioned by the poet's grandmother in 1834. Among the exhibits devoted to Lermontov's stay in the Caucasus are manuscripts of his poems, and some water-colours painted by the poet himself. We can see Lermontov's military service record containing three entries showing his investure with orders and medals, and the resolution, signed by Tsar Nicholas I, revoking the honours!

The visitor's attention is involuntarily drawn to an excerpt from a church register recording the fact that the body of Lermontov, as that of a man killed in a duel, had been denied religious rites of interment. Close by is a portrait of the poet on his deathbed, made by Shvede on the day after Lermontov's tragic end.

The poet's ardent patriotism is vividly reflected in the material for his poem *Borodino*, and the Russian-French war of 1812. In another hall we see a collection of pronouncements on Lermontov by progressive Russian thinkers and writers, among them V. Belinsky, A. Herzen, N. Gogol, N. Chernyshevsky, N. Dobrolyubov, N. Nekrasov, A. Chekhov, M. Gorky. We see many editions of the poet's works and personal recollections of his contemporaries.

There is also a show-case containing some of Lermontov's personal belongings—a dagger and sabre with which he never parted in battle and a Caucasian belt with a powder-horn.

* * *

The English writer, Mr. John B. Priestley, accompanied by his wife paid a visit to Moscow. In the U.S.S.R. Mr. Priestley is one of the most popular of contemporary English authors. His plays and novels are greatly appreciated by Soviet audiences and readers. *A Dangerous Corner*, and *Time and the Conway Family* were staged here with great success some years before the war. *Blackout in Gretly* and *Daylight on Saturday* had a large circulation. Premières of *An Inspector Calls* took place on the stages of two theatres only a few weeks before the author's arrival in Moscow.

While visiting the capital, Mr. Priestley met many prominent representatives of the Soviet theatre and cinema—producers, actors, and playwrights. An evening was arranged in his honour at the Moscow Actors' Club where the people of Moscow theatres assembled and the guest of the evening was welcomed by the producers of his plays—Alexander Tairov and Nikolai Akimov.

Another interesting evening was organized by the staff of *Soviet Art*. In a talk there with his Moscow friends Mr. Priestley had plenty to say about theatrical and literary life in England. He attended a performance of *An Inspector Calls* at the Moscow Kamerny Theatre on his own birthday. Welcoming our honoured guest, the director, Alexander Tairov, wished him many happy returns of the day, begging him to accept as a birthday gift this performance in which the theatre had striven to express the author's ideas and feelings. The English writer was warmly welcomed by a large audience.

A reception held at VOKS (The Society for Cultural Relations of the U.S.S.R. with Foreign Countries) in honour of Mr. Priestley was attended by Mr. Roberts, Chargé d'Affaires for Great Britain, the Soviet writers: Nikolai Tikhonov, Mikhail Sholokhov, Samuel Marshak, and others. Mr. Priestley's visit was given prominence in the Soviet press, which published talks with the author and articles dealing with his works and personality.

* * *

Every Thursday the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the Soviet youth paper, organizes literary "at homes" where people prominent in art and letters meet at friendly gatherings. The programmes of these evenings are widely varied. One Thursday, poets read their new verses, the next—front line writers meet to exchange impressions of war-life; another week, the youth of the Theatrical School read their latest works—excerpts from plays, sketches, and scenes. One very interesting Thursday saw the Hungarian cinema actress, Francesca Gaal, as its guest of honour.

"At last I am in Moscow," said the artist. "At last I have seen the towers of the Kremlin! How many times have I listened to the Moscow Kremlin Chimes! I heard them when the fascists were running amok in Hungary and, listening to the voice of Moscow, I knew that there in Russia people were fighting for justice and truth! I am very fond of Russian literature. I have read a great deal of Chekhov, Pushkin, and Dostoyevsky, Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov* struck me forcibly by its essentially Russian characteristics. Chaikovsky is very popular in

our country; *Eugene Onegine* is at the present moment being produced on the Hungarian stage. We always liked Russian drama in our country. Chekhov's and Gorky's plays are very popular in Hungary.

"I came to Hungary shortly before the war and lived there for four years, hiding from the German and Hungarian fascists. I have my own accounts to settle with the Nazis. They dragged my mother out of a home for the aged and killed her. My sister was one of the victims of the Pressburg Concentration Camp. My brother's son was killed. We waited for the coming of the Russians. When the Soviet troops were approaching the village where I lived, I came out to meet them, hungry as I was, in my skiing trousers, singing a merry song from "Peter". They recognized me immediately. I was deeply touched by the kindness of the Russian officers and soldiers.

All these memories come back to me here, in Moscow. My visit to your capital is an old dream come true. I have met wtih many interesting people from the world of art. I attended the Physical Culture Parade in the Red Square—what a marvellous festival of strength, youth, and beauty! My greetings to you, Moscow! "

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Great interest is shown by Soviet schoolchildren and adolescents in questions of science, technology and art. To many of their questions they will find answers in a Children's Encyclopaedia, the publication of which has been undertaken by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, with the President of the Academy, Vladimir Potemkin, as Editor-in-Chief.

The Encyclopaedia will contain information on the most varied fields of knowledge—the earth and the universe; nature and man; language, literature, history, technology, and art. The Encyclopaedia is to be published in installments covering three years, prominent scientists, educators and writers collaborating in the publication. The books will be abundantly illustrated.

* * *

A Children's Book House under the State Publishing House of Literature for Children is to be shortly opened in Moscow.

Eager young readers will have two reading-rooms at their disposal. Soirées will be held where the young people will be given opportunities to meet writers, to take part in discussions about books and hear new works, still in manuscript, read aloud.

In a museum of children's books great collections of books, old and modern, in Russian and foreign languages will be exhibited.

Special rooms will be set aside where writers and artists will be able to work undisturbed, and there will also be a well-stocked reference-library.

* * *

This year will see the two-thousandth anniversary of the death of the Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus, a great materialistic philosopher of antiquity, and one of the founders of the atomic theory. As far back as the 18th century Russian scholars showed a profound interest in Lucretius and his famous poem *De Rerum Natura*. Part of the poem was translated into Russian in rhymed verse by Lomonosov.

A general meeting dedicated to Lucretius is to be held by the Academy of Sciences, where a paper will be read by the President of the Academy, S. I. Vavilov, on the role of Lucretius, the physicist, and his atomic theory in modern science. A paper on Lucretius as poet and writer will be read by I. I. Tolstoy.

* * *

An academic edition of *De Rerum Natura* is being prepared for print. The complete Latin text of the poem and the Russian translation in verse are to be published in one volume for the first time. Essays on the writings of Lucretius as philosopher, scientist, and poet, with commentaries on his poem, will appear in a separate volume.

* * *

The Academy of Sciences makes it a practice to exchange publications with a number of scientific bodies in foreign countries. Books and periodicals addressed to the Academy are continually arriving from Britain, the United States, France, Canada, Iran, China, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Sweden and other countries. A consignment of scientific publications was recently received from the Smithsonian Institute in USA. The book repositories of the Academy's libraries are regularly replenished by publications of the Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the British Royal Society, the Rockefeller Institute in the United States and others.

In its turn, the Academy of Sciences of U.S.S.R. sends abroad a great number of Soviet scientific publications. Of periodicals alone, some thirty thousand copies have been sent out within the last three years.

Editor-in-chief: ALEXANDER KARAGANOV

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FICTION

TRUE STORIES

IN THE REAR

BOOKS AND WRITERS

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PRINTER'S ERRORS

Page 15, line 16: w — should read: will
" " " 47: A o — should read: All of