INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

7

1944

THE STATE LITERARY PUBLISHING HOUSE
PRINTED IN THE SOVIET UNION

MIKHAIL PRISHVIN

SPRING UNADORNED

The House on Wheels

I have wandered a lot in my lifetime but whenever I came to a new place I always wanted to build myself a house and settle down there. I usually began studying a district from this angle, as though searching for a suitable place where I could build myself a house. Even though my numerous attempts at finding a permanent abode all disappeared like soap bubbles, nevertheless each new place, each fresh plot of land made me certain that sooner or later I should find the right spot, that I would select some place or another in which to build a house, inspect the local timber resources, and become accustomed to streams, valleys, mountains, plants and animals that were new to me. And so I would dream of settling down, hunt, make observations and write until my reserves for that journey were exhausted. Once I even bought myself a cottage in Zagorsk, near Moscow, where I firmly established myself. This, however, did not prevent me from indulging in my inherent ability to settle in any place that pleased me.

Where did I get this contradictory desire—to remain in one place and at the same time to be everywhere? I remember that my favourite childhood dream was to build myself a house on wheels and go off to some unknown land where the foot of man had never trod—perhaps it all came from this? At that time dreaming over the books of old Jules Verne, my castles-in-the-air could never have been realized. About twenty years later, I read a news-item in the papers about a "horseless carriage" on the English Embankment in St. Petersburg. Things have gone well with me in life, almost all my childhood dreams have gradually been realized, and at last, when I was already old, I managed to build myself a self-propelled house and go where I pleased. As things turned out, the fairy-land I was seeking was not very far away: I found it near Kostroma, in the village of Vezhi, the home of Nekrassov's Mazai, who saved the hares from drowning during the spring floods. I halted my house on wheels at a high place in the woods and when the Volga was swollen with the spring waters and pushed back all the streams that were rushing madly towards it the whole area was flooded. Then not only hares, but all the animals came swimming towards me. I want to tell you how the spring passed that year, how Frost and Sun, Water and Wind engaged in battle, of the misfortune that overtook the animals, how they saved themselves and how we saved them, how we built ourselves the Great House, so great, indeed, that we sometimes thought that we were fixed in one spot and at the same time were everywhere.

A certain magazine with which I concluded a contract helped me build my house on wheels: I was to write about my wanderings and the magazine would help me build a house on wheels. Shortly after we signed the contract, they sent me a 30 cwt "GAZ" (Gorky Auto Plant.—*Ed.*) truck to Zagorsk from Moscow, and I began to think how I would build my hunter's lodge on that truck. I immediately rejected the idea of a caravan-trailer such as exist in America for I was to travel through roadless places, mostly in the forest and through the early spring mud. For some reason I like the countryside best in the early spring when the trees are still bare. For me the bright spring with its floods is the best of all seasons but it would be impossible to have a trailer through the mud at

that time of the year. For this reason I immediately rejected the idea of the American model and planned to build a simple caravan on the truck chassis from double plywood. My invariable companion on my journeyings is my son Petya who works as a sable and Canadian fox selector at the Puskhin State Animal Nurseries. He arranged with some carpenters at the Nurseries to build a caravan according to my design with walls consisting of double layers of plywood. This plywood looks almost the same as a board, is very durable, and as we found out later, retains the heat splendidly. The semi-cylindrical roof of the caravan was made from the same sort of plywood; we covered it with good khaki oil-cloth and painted the whole caravan in this same colour so that we would be well camouflaged in the woods and would not frighten the birds and animals.

For some time now hunting with a camera has interested me more than hunting with a gun so that in designing my hunting lodge I payed particular attention to its adaptability as a dark room. Both the side windows were fitted with sliding shutters which closed so tightly that it was completely dark inside and negatives could be developed right there on the spot. There was a tiny window at the front which served two purposes: firstly it opened so that I could put my hand out and tap on the driver's cabin, and secondly it enabled me to use daylight for developing by inserting red, green or yellow glass in the window.

Inside the caravan we built two long chests with sleeping accomodation on the lids; inside there were places for food, the folding boat, guns and cameras. There was enough space left between these bunks to allow a third member of the party to sleep there. These bunks were so long that even if a man were stretched out on them there was still room for a dog at his feet. There were many partitions inside the chests so that the food and other articles would not get mixed up. In front of the caravan, under the window with the coloured glass we built a table like those you see in a railway carriage. All round the walls were hooks, coat-hangers and shelves.

The carpenters put the "house" onto the truck and fixed it to the side walls with iron clamps; the whole contraption looked like some gigantic insect.

I felt very happy about the whole business.

"My dear friends," I whispered to unknown friends, "never forget your childhood dreams, retain these children of your imagination together with your heart's fondest wishes and sooner or later they will bring you joy!"

To all children, to the children of the whole world I had something else to say:

"Be glad that you are today able to say to your fondest dream: 'Let it take fifty years like Prishvin's but sooner or later, my dear little dream, it will be in my power to make you mine!'"

Arisha

I didn't hit on the idea of visiting old Mazai's country immediately; as a matter of fact I had no fixed plan for my journey and I had no aim such as activates every real expedition. I was glad just to be able to go wherever I wanted and yet always be at home.

Fortunately my son Petya and I can both drive a car. Petya is a zoologist by calling, a game tracker by inclination and my best friend. To our great regret, my wife, who had always accompanied me on my wanderings, was no longer able to do so on account of poor health. Naturally Petya and I can both cook and have in fact prepared our own meals for months on end. It isn't just a matter of cooking, however, but of a woman's tender care without which it is impossible to keep house: you don't get the feeling of a permanent abode but seem more like a tramp wandering on and on without knowing whither.

And then to our help came Arisha, who made the third very excellent member of our expedition. Arisha joined us two years ago when I had to leave my Zagorsk hermitage and take a flat in Moscow. For health reasons my wife could not live permanently in Moscow and I, too, could not give up my life of wandering and coop myself up in a brick house. We needed a servant and considerable thought on the subject led us at last to Arisha, a distant relative of my wife's. The girl had had a hard life of it; her parents had a large number of children and in order to rid themselves of an extra mouth to

feed sent the girl to an old maid who prayed hard to God all day while the poor girl did the housework, ploughed, reaped and washed the clothes.

My wife suddenly thought of Arisha when we needed somebody for our Moscow flat. We found her after some trouble and when she came to us she was pale and thin like a wax candle. She immediately settled into our family. She has the sort of face that makes everybody think he has met her before and he worries about it until at last he slaps himself on the forehead as it dawns on him: he has met her in the Tretyakov Gallery in a picture by Vasnetsov or Nesterov or perhaps even Rublyov.

The finest thing about Arisha was that she treated all good people and animals as though they were related to her. Soon after she had moved into our flat in the huge house on Lavrushinsky Street she brought us the news that there was a cricket living in the Tretyakov Gallery which is right opposite our house and that there were huge numbers of swifts flying about Moscow and she wanted to know where they all lived. From the very moment she arrived all the dogs in our house became her friends and there was a constant friendly ringing at our doorbell from morning to night as the servants from other flats brought her their kitchen leavings for her favourite dogs. Some of these animals soon got to know Arisha's window and when they went out into the yard would look up to see if she were there.

Arisha had many other good qualities apart from this friendly attitude towards animals although she herself was quite unaware of these.

Canine Travellers

When I began to persuade Arisha to accompany us on our journey one of the conditions she made was that we take our Irish setter, Boy, along with us as watchdog. Boy is a wonderful watchdog. That very nervousness which made him so sensitive was a source of worry to me when I took him shooting for his training which even now is not finished. As everybody knows, a dog's training begins by his obeying the order "to heel" when he must immediately come to his master and walk by his left side (the gun being in the right hand). In this way I would walk for hours with him in the woods and not let him go. He was very impatient, he longed for permission to go ahead, walked beside me all tense and prancing. I would walk along, sometimes looking for game, sometimes wrapped in thought and when a new idea came into my head I would haul my notebook out of my pocket and write it down. That was the moment he was waiting for; while I was writing I would forget the dog and he would disappear. Then I would whistle for some time until he would eventually come running up foaming at the mouth.

At first I objected to taking along a dog whose nervousness infected me and referred Arisha to Lada who would at any rate keep by my side.

"Will Lada look after the truck?" asked Arisha.

Petya burst out laughing; as a matter of fact I had only suggested it as a joke. Lada is a fine dog in most respects but absolutely worthless as a watchdog.

In a certain village I once discovered a mongrel pointer known there as Venus. The dog was only a year old and I tried her out in the woods. I discovered that the dog was extremely sensitive and had almost a human understanding. During her lightning career, her sensitiveness never led her astray and she could catch any scent no matter whence it came. I bought the dog for a song, renamed her Lada and did good shooting with her that very season.

Now Lada was nine years old, a tidy age for a gun dog but she was still in fine fettle, her teeth and hearing were sound, she had not lost her keenness for the hunt and worked as well as any pointer.

In addition to Boy, whom we took as a watchdog, and my pal Lada we also had to take Petya's four-footed friend, a young spaniel named Svat in order to show this universal gun dog the tracks of the birds and beasts. We included the spaniel to increase our own experience for we very much wanted to test in practice the usefulness of these tiny dogs that are scarcely bigger than a cat but have setter's ears reaching almost to the ground.

The Storeys of the Forest

Here is a list of all the living creatures that made up our expedition:

Petya and I, Arisha, our canine travellers: Boy, Lada and Svat and two live decoy ducks, Khromka and Cleopatra.

Of course we had to do a lot of planning with regard to the equipment we were going to take with us although this was a mere bagatelle compared with our one great drawback. Our expedition had no objective, we had no definite subject for our investigations. Petya and I thought this matter over very seriously. We had our house on wheels but we did not know where and for what reason we were going to travel in it.

We decided to get in touch with the Chair of Ecology at the University and obtain a subject from them. This subject would supply Petya with work for his post-graduate thesis and for me it would be a starting point from which I would enter that great house of all living things, would see everything there with my own eyes and later tell of what I had seen with my own tongue.

Petya rang up Professor A. N. Formozov, the ecologist, and visited him at home by appointment. Later he returned just as I expected, beaming.

"As soon as I mentioned you," said Petya, "Formozov understood everything at once and was very sorry that he had given himself up completely to science and could no longer look on the world with his former artist's eye and feel what an unfettered man experiences. He gave me as a theme "Storeys of the Forest", the most interesting subject you could possibly imagine. It seems that the forest is divided into a number of ecological storeys, beginning with the roots of the trees where the shrews and other animals live and ending with the tree tops. In tropical countries there are apparently birds that live permanently in the upper storeys and never descend. The professor told me that I should confine myself strictly to the ground floor and select for myself an animal, the smallest of the vertebrates and one that is practically unstudied; it is hardly bigger than your little finger if you don't count his tail and snout which ends in a trunk..."

"The shrew!" I exclaimed.

There was no end to my delight with this "subject". It was wonderful to think that the house of living creatures in the forest had storeys and that now we had a clear idea of what we were going to begin with, the smallest, quite unstudied, vertebrate.

Grandad Mazai's Country

As soon as we knew that our expedition was going to study the storeys of the forest, the whole business was clear and the expedition started equipping itself. Petya found work at an ecological laboratory in the library of which he read books on that subject from morning to night. I visited the reading room of the Lenin Library and went over all the writers and poets, selecting everything that I found of value concerning the poetry of the forest. My search soon evolved into an interesting literary theme "The Forest in Russian Poetry" by means of which I determined the significance of each writer and poet in depicting the Russian landscape. Quite unexpectedly I discovered that only those who were hunters showed a completely original understanding of nature in their literary work—Leo Tolstoy, Mamin-Sibiryak and especially Nekrassov. It occurred to me that nobody had ever understood Nekrassov on account of his feeling for nature having been purely that of a sportsman; in any case my eyes were opened to this fact for the first time. Through my own experience I understood Nekrassov and through Nekrassov I began to understand myself.

I paid particular attention to Nekrassov's poem *Mazai and the Hares* and I greatly desired to visit that district and myself watch the animals save themselves from the floods each in his own way.

A well-known zoologist told me that apart from a very skimpy German booklet on the behaviour of animals during floods there had been no investigations of this kind made.

While Petya and I were thus engaged each on his own business the spring days began to draw near, the icicles on the Zagorsk roofs lengthened until they weighed a pood while in Moscow mimosa was being sold at all the street corners. About this time a proposal was made that the sportmen's group at the writers' club go shooting in that very district where Nekrassov's *Mazai and the Hares* was written. The writer Alexei Silych Novikov-Priboy [1] had visited this

[1] One of the oldest Russian writers who died recently. Author of *Tsushima* and other naval stories.—*Ed.*

place for about ten years running and had always brought back a quantity of wild duck. The old sportsman had done well to keep quiet about places rich in game for there are not many of them left in the neighbourhood of Moscow. We all ate his ducks but could never discover where he got them in such large numbers. To my good fortune the time of Nekrassov's jubilee came around and Novikov-Priboy apparently did not feel justified in still keeping silent about Vezhi, where Mazai lived. We learned that Vezhi is still the same as it was in Nekrassov's time, that every year the waters of the Volga overflow into the lowlands and that now not only hares have to save themselves but also elk that have bred considerably in the district since Nekrassov's time. We were also astonished to learn that grandad Mazai was not a creature of Nekrassov's imagination but had really lived all the time in Vezhi, went out shooting with Nekrassov and rescued the hares. Since his time, other Mazais, his descendants, have been living in the same house. This discovery of Mazai in Vezhi immediately convinced me of the unity of truth and thought in the soul of a sportsman.

Thus it came about that the place where Petya and I would study the storeys of the forest was decided upon.

Travelling by day or night was all the same to us, since our house was now on wheels and we could stay wherever we liked and live as though we were at home. With one difference, however, for "at home" in Moscow meant that we were separated from nature by stone walls and in Zagorsk by the eternal proximity of the neighbours and their fences, the cocks and all those objects that screened the streets with their little houses and prevented the rays from the great wide world entering into the souls of the people who lived in these little houses on the little streets and not without a certain amount of slyness called themselves "little". Our plywood walls did not keep out the rays of the wide world and in our house on wheels we were as much in contact with the weather as the hare lying amongst the huckleberries between the big fat roots of a tree or the bird dozing on its branch; in our house we did not live by thermometer and barometer but ourselves felt the weather and all its changes and sounds.

Brothers in Spirit

We travelled on and on, passing in turn through the towns of Pereyaslavl, Rostov [1], and Yaroslavl. Nobody on the towns paid the slightest attention to our humble conveyance. We would park on one side of a town square and look out of our windows as though living in our own house. At night we supped and went to bed like all the other regular inhabitants of the town. We crossed the Volga at Kostroma which was still lying under a thick blanket of snow, went straight through the town and along the banks of the Kostromka River, crossed the solid ice of several big lakes and numerous smaller ones. All these lakes, ponds and pools are formed by water left behind in spring when the Volga floods its banks, pushes back its tributaries and floods the whole region. When we were quite near Nekrassov's Vezhi, the ice of one of these little flood lakes cracked just as we were leaving it and our truck dropped back into the mud. Petya carelessly accelerated, causing the wheels to dig in more deeply. While we were sweating around the machine, paying no attention whatever to anything around us, we suddenly heard a jolly, ringing voice somewhere nearby:

"Hi, you, dust under the wheels!"

We stood back from the truck and looked round in astonishment. On the driver's seat of an old fashioned passenger sleigh such as is seldom seen nowadays sat a giant of a man with a blonde beard. Pride from an abundance of strength and an air of freedom were expressive in every line of the man's body as though he were not sleigh-driver but the absolute master of the whole Volga Basin. I had observed this characteristic in Maxim Gorky and in another great Volga bard: they seem to imbibe this from the Volga; the river overflows its banks and they are ready at any time to expend their spirits paying no attention to trifles, to the dust under the wheels.

"Good day!" said the giant.

"Good day, friend!" we readily replied to this man with the splendid, healthy body and no doubt possessing a great soul. "Help us," we asked him, "only

[1] Ivanov Industrial Area.—*Ed.*

tell us first of all why you called us 'dust under the wheels'."

"Did I call you that?" said the giant in astonishment and began to roar with laughter so merrily that we began to smile in sympathy.

And, indeed, the remark did not refer to us, but was used by him in place of an indecent Russian interjection which may indicate hostility or friendship according to the tone of the voice. "Dust under the wheels" used with the same intonation indicated sympathy and a readiness to help.

"Here's a real Mazai!" I said to Petya, "Nekrassov's Mazai, when he was in his prime."

"Dust under the wheels!" exclaimed our Mazai in astonishment. "Do you know the Mazais here?"

"Dust under the wheels!" repeated Petya after Mazai's fashion. "We are out shooting, have come to Vezhi for the first time and know Mazai only from Nekrassov."

"*Mazai and the Hares*!" laughed the new Mazai. "Very soon you will see how they drown. Only they don't call me Mazai but 'Bee'."

"A fine nickname," we sighed, "and what a bee!"

"They named me after the horse," laughed Mazai, "my horse was called Bee, and so was I. I shouted 'Bee' at the horse and they called me 'God's Bee'."

Mazai tied his horse Bee to an alder on the bank, took our axe without saying a word, went away into the woods and shortly afterwards returned with an ash so big that Petya, Arisha and I together could not have carried it. This was to be his lever! Then he cut another tree into pieces and piled them criss-cross under the rear axle of the house on wheels. All three of us then pressed on the lever and lifted the rear of the truck clear of the ground. . . Now we had to put something under the wheels and build up the fulcrum so as to lift the truck still higher. As soon as Mazai took his weight off the lever, the truck carried Petya and myself up into the air.

"Dust under the wheels!" exclaimed Mazai. "Aren't you people light!" He again built up the fulcrum and put the lever into position.

We prised the truck again but this time it was not Mazai but Petya, the lightest of the three, who let go. It required the weight of all three to counterbalance the truck, however, and as soon as Petya left us, Mazai and I, both went flying into the air.

With a roar of laughter and exclamations of "Dust under the wheels!" we set up the whole rig again, all three of us leant on the bar and, eventually, thought of asking Arisha to put the logs under the wheels.

We soon had the truck out of the water and the house on wheels drove easily up the hill along a good road.

Mazai wiped the sweat from his face with the sleeve of his jacket, and held out his hand to us.

"Thanks, lads!" he said.

"Thank you," we answered, "what is there to thank us for?"

"What for, what for?" said the dissatisfied Mazai, "for nothing at all except that we are now brothers in spirit."

We did not understand this and after thinking it over decided that it was because we were sportsmen. It seemed, however, that this was not the case.

"Sportsmen, that's something else," said Mazai, "shooting is shooting, but I said brothers in spirit."

Then we thought we understood and as we had something with us told Mazai that we were brothers of the bottle.

"No," answered Mazai, "I won't refuse a glass but don't think I am a boozer. Sometimes I catch cold, of course, then I take a jug, pour in half a litre of wine, dissolve a glass of mustard in it. . ."

Arisha could not suppress her horror: "Mustard!?"

"Mustard," reiterated Mazai, "I dissolve a whole glass in the wine, add two spoons of ground pepper and four spoons of rasberry jam."

"Mustard and rasberry jam, Queen of Heaven!"

"Yes, Queen of Heaven! And I forgot to tell you, a spoonful of salt. I boil up the whole mixture and drink it at one gulp."

"You can't drink all that in one gulp."

Mazai gave her a studied look.

"Why do you take her about with you?" he asked.

Without waiting for an answer he

told us that when he had drunk the medicine he would lie down on the hot stove, wrap himself up in two sheepskin coats and would get up next morning as fresh as a cucumber with the dew on it.

"So there you are," said Mazai concluding his story of how he doctored himself. "I drink that and I am ready to drink a glass with you, but I am no boozer."

"Then why are we brothers in spirit?"

"Oh, you, dust under the wheels," said Mazai laughing, "can't you guess, how can we be other than brothers in spirit when we all flew into the air on the same pole?"

Mazai was a widower and lived in an upper room of the house belonging to his nephew Danilych where we also found temporary sanctuary whilst in Vezhi. We had everything we needed with us but it was dangerous to use petrol and kerosene, or light fires on a street lined with stacks of hay and straw.

Mazai told us about his nephew. There had never been another singer in the world like Danilych, he told us. Ever since he was a young man and used to sing in the fields someone was always coming along who understood the quality of his voice and would invite him to sing in opera. It happened that they even offered him money on the spot if he would only go. When he was young Danilych was afraid of his father, an Old Believer, and when he married he was afraid of his wife, another Old Believer. Even now at home we would not hear him sing because it was Lent and his wife would not allow it. Mazai comforted us by saying that we would not have to wait long for today or tomorrow the Volga would be in flood, the whole countryside would form one huge sea and Danilych would go fishing in his little boat. There, out in the open, nothing could stop him from singing; he would not bother about his wife or about Lent and in the same way as the water would cover the whole country so Danilych's songs would be heard everywhere and wherever we went we would not be able to escape Danilych's songs. All the birds and every blade of grass would sing together with Danilych. We should not have long to wait.

When Mazai had finished we told him that the ice was already moving in Kalinin. He almost shouted and stared at us doubtfully and reproachfully. When we told him that we had heard it from people who came from Kalinin, that we had heard it on the radio and read it in the Kostroma newspaper, Mazai exclaimed:

"Well, if the ice is moving in Kalinin we shan't have to wait long."

Mazai's Twig

Hanging beside the gun on the wall of Mazai's cottage was a long, dry juniper twig at the end of which a black arc was drawn on the wall: the twig moved along this arc forecasting the weather. At one end of the arc was a white circle denoting the sun, while at the other end a black circle which denoted the rain. The hunters in the Siberian taiga use barometers like this, and Mazai himself once noticed that the branches of the firs lift up in good weather and droop in bad, and after that he made himself a barometer from a juniper twig.

Everybody who invents something useful wants to become famous but it never entered Mazai's head to praise himself or advertise his invention: he was not pleased with himself but with man in general and pointing to the twig would say that man is master of the whole world, that man can do anything and anybody who wants can be such a man. The twig in Mazai's cottage became as holy as the Old Believer's icons in the house of Danilych the singer. If anybody, no matter who, were to say that the twig was wrong, that the twig deceived him, Mazai would yell: "Dust under the wheels!" and destroy the slanderer on the spot. How indeed could the twig deceive when all the forest drooped its branches before the onset of bad weather, and lifted them up before fine weather? Mazai's twig was the expression of his faith in the truth of nature, of man's struggle and concord with nature.

"The twig is drooping!" Mazai told us in the evening, and that was the signal for us to get to bed immediately and early next morning to drive to a place called Barbara's Beehives, a spot the flood water had never yet reached.

The Aeolian Harp

In distant times, Barbara's Beehives had probably been an apiary. On the last step but one of the ancient terraces,

Barbara's unknown husband had felled the trees and put out his beehives on the terrace. And after his death, his widow, Barbara, had no doubt attracted the Volga fishermen with her honeycombs. The oaks that still remained on that terrace were big and old so that in Barbara's time, a hundred years or so ago they were just a little younger and fresher. Below this place the whole site, probably once the high bank of the Volga, was now covered with junipers right down to the water line. It was only by crushing these bushes under the wheels that our house was able to reach the top and come to a halt alongside an ancient oak. The forest rose above our heads, below us lay the meadows along which the sister rivers Sot and Kast ran into the Volga. From here Vezhi was spread out as though on the palm of the hand and in the distance you could see the banks of the Volga as they were at that time.

When we halted, I got down from the driver's cabin and as usual began to examine my surroundings at the same time not frightening any of the regular inhabitants from lair, burrow or hollow tree.

We put up our antenna between a fir tree and an oak. For some time past we have made a habit of doing this when out shooting for a long while. We tie the end of the antenna to a rope which is formed into a loop. The other end of the rope is tied to a weight which Petya hurls so that it carries the rope over the highest branch of a tree. Of course the weight immediately drops to the ground taking the rope with it which pulls up the antenna. We soon had the antenna fixed between the fir and the oak. Nobody pays any attention to a wire when there are antennas all around. When, however, there is nothing artificial in the vicinity and our antenna is the only one, it then impresses everybody. This is because we are spoiled in the towns by having too many conveniences and are beginning to look on all these miracles of the mind of man only from the viewpoint of our own convenience. This comfort hides the miracles from us and we experience nothing extraordinary. When you penetrate the forest wilderness, you still possess human desires even though you begin investigating the lives of numerous creatures which, for better understanding, you connect with one another. Then this communication with people through the copper wire that hangs between the fir and the oak becomes a miraculous communication, that miracle which all people, white, black, yellow and redskin have dreamed of for thousands of years.

Trackers

Mares' tails in a clear sky are the best barometer in foretelling the advent of a cyclone. Such mare's tails had begun to appear. A day or two, perhaps even three would pass and the water would begin to rumble. The sun draws steam to such an extent that the whole surface of the snow appears to be covered with fine black dusk. At first we thought that people were burning charcoal somewhere nearby but it turned out that this dust was a mass of tiny jumping insects: bring your hand down near them and they disappear, leaving a bluish-white patch of clean snow on the once grey surface. For an hour or two, even gnats begin to fly about; there is no end to the life on that snow mantle in the warmth of the midday sun. In the evening come the clouds which cover the whole earth and shut out the warmth. The melted snow, penetrating between the snowflakes, sinks in deep where it is mistaken for the warm thaw water of the beginning of spring by the bigger spiders and bugs which begin to make their way to the snowy surface. Just before dawn, Jack Frost clenches his fist and all this life hurries away and the clean, strong snow crust is exposed like a white book bearing the blue tracks of the animals.

Our house was also cold during this frost and as soon as dawn broke Petya and I went out to make the acquaintance of our neighbours and man's most distant relatives. The first thing we saw was the tiny descendant of the epoch of huge reptiles and lizards. Deceived by the evening warmth, a little, rosy-coloured frog had come to the surface and set out on his journey through the world. That night there had been a light fall of snow and the tracks of the traveller were easy to follow. At first they moved straight and confidently in the direction of an ice-free spring. Possibly the frog knew where to go, just as I did when I wanted to run away from school and go to America; I knew exactly where

America lay and had a plan already made out in my pocket. The poor little frog, however, did not move far in the direction of the ice-free springs. When Jack Frost took the reins, the frog stopped, turned this way and that and then returned towards that warm hole from which he had smelt the spring that night. When Jack Frost began to shake his reins more and more, the frog began to dash back and forth in terror. In the glistening fresh snow which lay like the crystals of Bertholet's salt on a wadding of fir needles there lay before our eyes the fantastic web made by the little traveller's tracks in the direction of the ice-free springs and at the end of that labyrinth, against the rubber tyres of our house, he himself lay there, pink and lifeless, his legs outstretched.

Quite near our house there were also the tracks of a hare leading to the ice-free spring. We followed the tracks into the forest and came to a huge ash that had been felled by the wind. All the winter the hares had been nibbling this ash tree so that the "Hares' Club" on account of the many traces and large number of nuts could be seen from afar in the forest. Realizing where our hare had been and what he had been doing all night we came to the conclusion that the tracks across our ground led straight to the burrow. We very soon found the owner of the tracks; he lay under the steep bank of a forest stream and was the usual white colour almost indistinguishable from the snow. Now, however, in the rays of the spring sun, he lay like a piece of dirty yellow cotton wool on a lump of sugar bluish-white in colour. The slight snowfall in the night so deadened our footsteps on the snowcrust that the hare let us get quite close to him and stared at us with his bright little black buttons of eyes no doubt thinking that he, being white, could not be seen against the snow.

Near the ice-free spring we found traces of a water rat, and under a log we found a piece of pike hidden and knew that we had an otter for a neighbour. At dawn, a fox had come here and left a very clear track behind him but on his return, for some reason or another, he had hidden his tracks by walking in those he made on his way down. This he did so cleverly that only the sharp eye of an experienced tracker could discern it on account of the sharp outlines and unusual clearness of the tracks. We followed the tracks into the forest and found the foxes hole at the top of the sandy slope of a gully amongst the various outlets of a badger's dwelling.

The deciduous forest was so piled up with snow that it was almost impossible to get through and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we made our way through the conifers, noticing here and there the capricious sculptures carved by the frost. This was our first lesson in studying the forest and its storeys; we learned to look not only ahead of us as everybody does in the forest but to watch all the storeys simultaneously so as not to miss anything, neither "Apollo's curls" in the top storey nor the tracks of a wolf on the ground floor. We followed that track for some time to make sure that it really was made by a wolf and not by a dog. Our experience soon told us that it really was the former that had passed through the forest; an old wolf with bad teeth that could not keep pace with the youngsters when they hunted down game, and so lived alone and left long, strange-looking tracks behind him.

The rays of the sun gradually began to warm up the fir cones which opened under the influence of the warmth and dropped their seeds. These came flying down from the top storey on their tiny parachutes, left the kingdom of light to move to the lower regions, the kingdom of frost and darkness. The seed of valuable life, of wonderful future fir-trees, lay on the snow at our feet and would lie there until washed away, nobody knew whither, by the spring flood water. Crossbills, the colour of blood, were flying about at the tops of the trees dropping whole fir cones.

A red-throated bullfinch sat beside his modest mate on a twig of the topmost branch of the highest fir tree. He did not peck at the fir-cones, he did not even preen his feathers but just sat there reflecting the red sun on his red breast. Suddenly another such bullfinch appeared from nowhere, red, the same as the other, but livelier, well preened, with black eyes flashing fire. He circled twice emitting a few bullfinch notes. As he

prepared to fly off, the hen forsook her branch and flew off with him. Then the first bullfinch shook himself, turned this way and that, jumped from one twig to another, hopped all round the top of that fir tree, but there was nothing he could do about it, so he flew off in the direction taken by his late girl-friend and the daring stranger.

We were not far from home when we came across a heap of hay that for some reason had been left out over the winter. At about the height of a man's chest there was quite a wide opening the sides of which were covered with ice. As I glanced at the opening I saw that it had been a large hole: perhaps somebody had crawled in there and then later the stack had settled and the big hole had become a narrow opening.

When we returned home, the sun's rays from outside and Arisha with her two oil stoves inside had made our house so hot that we had to leave the door open for ventilation. The frozen frog still lay beside the tyre of the truck with his legs outstretched. When I looked at that poor little frog I again recalled my childhood journeyings to America, and I remembered how my mother's presence revived a little soul that was frozen by ridicule and reproach. This recollection of my own past on account of the frog who tried to reach the land of ice-free springs, again brought back to me thoughts of the relationships existing between all living things on this earth. When we showed the frog to Arisha and pointed out his miserable journey she clapped her hands and exclaimed in pity:

"Poor little thing!"

She took him in her hands and began to blow the warm breath of spring into him. She poured some boiling water from the kettle into a bowl, added cold water and then dropped the frog, already warmed up by the breath of spring, into the warm water.

Tap-Tap!

I wanted neither to sleep, read, nor write. Petya was out fishing. Arisha had gone to bed and although half asleep was alarmed at the idea that in Petya's absence someone would break in.

"Afraid of bandits! What bandits roam around nowadays? And if a whole gang did come just look at the number of guns we have hanging here!"

"I'm not afraid of people," answered Arisha. "I'm thinking of animals. We're in the wilderness, in the forest, you never know what might come here."

"What, for example?"

"Well, a python, say."

"There aren't any pythons here."

"Or a tiger."

"I keep telling you there aren't any tigers either."

"So you say, but suppose there are?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Arisha, and go to sleep!"

For a long time she was silent, half asleep and turning over in her mind all the possible dangerous animals.

"And the otter?" she asked suddenly.

"There's nothing you can do about the otter, Arisha."

Gradually the scared girl dropped off to sleep and I was quite alone without any desire to work or read, alone with a three-quarter inch oil lamp.

Travellers, explorers of polar and other countries never write about terrible moments of loneliness which are felt by everybody, great or small, young and old, scientists and poets. In these moments there is nothing you fear, especially non-existent animals like Arisha did, but, on the contrary, you would consider it the greatest good fortune to be able to fight a tiger single-handed and comfort yourself with the idea that having once conquered the "tiger" you had conquered everything. In such moments your soul is like a water-mill in winter: the wheel is stationary, all covered with icicles. Then there are no terrible "tigers" in a man's soul nor is there any unknown friend for whom my notebook is ready and lies even now beside the oil lamp with the little blue "pioneer" pencil from the Krassin Factory. People don't write about such things but the overcoming of such moments is the main difficulty in starting any new enterprise...

I crawled into my sleeping bag, turned down the lamp, covered my head so that there was just a small hole for air and, in order to avoid any unnecessary thoughts and to enable myself to get to sleep quicker I began to count up to a thousand. All went well, for

as early as the second hundred the numbers began to get mixed. Suddenly I heard a distinct and mysterious tap, like that in Turgenev's story *Tap-Tap*. A few seconds later the tap was repeated, and Arisha, who was very much on the alert, heard it and even answered:

"Just a minute, I'll open the door!"

She actually began to dress. I have often noticed this phenomenon with many cowards: a real coward only talks about being scared but when something terrible happens he forgets his fear and afterwards is astonished at himself: it is as though another man rose up in him in moments of danger.

I told Arisha to lie down again, relighted the lamp, dressed rapidly and before going out listened attentively.

"Tap-tap," just as in Turgenev's story.

Quietly, so as not to disturb that mysterious "tap-tap" I turned the lock and without making a sound opened the door and stepped out onto the ladder. I did not have to wait long outside when I heard that "tap-tap" yet again and again. I suddenly realized where it was coming from and put my ear to the side of the house; then it was quite clear that the "tap-tap" came from the driver's cabin. I took out my pocket torch which I always carried at night, crept up to the window and when the "tap-tap" again occurred I switched on the light and looked in. A wonderful picture met my eyes: Lada lay stretched out along the whole length of the driver's seat and Svat, standing on his hind legs near the gear lever, had rested his fore legs on the cushion and was licking Lada's warm belly all dotted with little pink nipples. As he licked, Lada wagged her tail with pleasure, beating it against the iron sides of the cabin.

A Warm Hour

Just before the end of winter there is often a heavy downfall of snow but I have never seen such snow as fell just before the spring floods that year. For days on end the last snow fell like a solid white wall from a yellow sky, and nature's unseen sculptor built up fantastic figures on trees, bushes, and stumps. The most wonderful thing about these figures was that they made a different impression on everybody, even on two people walking side by side: one saw a figure one way, while the other saw something quite different. I like to refute this by photographing a selected figure in the fond hope of being able to use the snap to prove the reality of the figure as I saw it.

When the snow ceased a day later, I immediately set out to find some indisputable figures amongst the dreams and fantasies. While I was seeking forms suitable for recording on the film the sun came to my aid; I was in a forest deep in snow and it seemed that these sleeping figures had suddenly come to life and were rushing to play with each other. Silver birds flew on all sides with golden arrows chasing them, and here and there I saw wonderful figures from Cervantes, Shakespeare, Dante and a whole host of Greek gods. Very touching was the appearance of my dear, dead relations and friends, and beside them, what I must admit were no less dear, the long-dead dogs Yarik, Kenta, Nightingale, Faithful, all of whom I have previously described in my attempts to spread that same friendship amongst children as there had been between us.

Apart from a fresh squirrel track, there were no animal traces anywhere. Crossing the glade where I had previously noticed the pile of hay containing the iced-up hole, I remembered the opening and decided there and then to inspect. I found all trace of the opening had disappeared. "If only something would show itself," I thought as I walked along that forest road down which the lone wolf had passed the last time I was here. The road cut through the forest, along which he had walked so calmly last time, now presented a most unusual sight. All the young trees were now curtseying deeply to the older ones; their heads overburdened with snow, the slim young birch-trees bowed down like arched bridges under which it was possible to walk only by stooping low. The hazel bushes, however, were huddled in clumps and offered real obstruction even where a path had been cut through the forest. After the great blizzard, the sun did not shine through a frost but with the brilliance of spring—a real, unfettered spring sun. Its rays were so warm that one could undress

and sit naked in the snow like one does on mountain glaciers in summer. This phenomenon happens for a short time almost every spring in this part of the world. Gradually the hour of warmth visiting the forest liberated every slavishly bent branch.

It began by my striking the saplings with my stick to shake the snow from them before passing under their arches. My blows were light, they scarcely touched the trees, yet the saplings sprang up immediately like beautiful maiden in fairy-tales and became tall, straight, beautiful white birches. Then a most astonishing thing happened: the big branch of a huge fir straightened itself, shook off the snow and remained swaying in the air. It was as though I had struck it with my stick for in that warm hour movement began and a revolution started amongst the trees as it does amongst people. Everywhere young trees were springing up erect, throwing off their white caps and white blankets, swaying, whispering to one another, lashing to release themselves from the snow.

Amongst the big trees where I had but a short while before seen the figures formed by great sculptors, my own dear little figures, it was no better than amongst the youngsters. Knights of sorrowful mien came tumbling down from above bringing with them dozens of other creatures that had been formed beneath them, and every branch, relieved of the weight, swayed up and down shaking off the remaining snow. Apollo came flying down head first in the clear blue gap between the birches.

This simultaneous movement of all the trees was as astonishing as the awakening and activity of what seemed to be permanent, immovable, customary modes of life during times of revolution. The dull thud of falling bodies of snow, rustling, creaking and cracking on all sides despite the slightest breath of wind seemed to set the whole soul in motion so that one wanted to flee from the forest in terror. By the time I felt like retreating one heavy snow figure fell in the place where the black grouse had their night haunt under the snow. One after another the big black birds crawled out of the snow, shook off the white snow dust and ran off into the woods. The forest itself, however, was swaying and trembling and in their terror, the birds became muddled as to their usual flying route, and dashed off in an unknown direction. A wood-grouse suddenly appeared with his feathers all messed up and, paying no attention whatever to me, a human being, alighted awkwardly on an ash. He had hardly recovered himself before a huge ball of snow several times larger than a football came flopping down on him from the top of a fir-tree. The panic-stricken wood-grouse, like his black brethren, flew off hastily and haphazardly. In something like ten minutes the one time blocked path was cleared of snow, affording me a view over a good long distance.

I spotted the lone wolf that I knew only by his tracks as he slunk off through the trees. The maddened, cowardly squirrels and hares dashed along the track and meeting with a snow bombardment in the forest, rapidly turned back, leaped out again and, losing their sense of direction, dashed off down the path. Then came a fox, halting from time to time to listen; a fox with sharp pointed ears, white breast and his valuable brush held high for safe keeping. Huge shadows for a fraction of a second flashed by one after the other blocking out the path.

When I heard the ice cracking shortly afterwards, I guessed what was happening—elks that had been pasturing here all the winter were now dashing across the stream cracking the upper crust of ice, the beautiful frost blanket.

In this hour of warmth every living thing left the forest in mad fear and made the ice ring as they crossed the river. I ought to see how they wallowed across the river. I hurried back across the glade where the forgotten heap of hay stood. There was not a single flake of snow on the whole stack now, but the huge hole was there as before and tracks led away from it as though a huge plough had been drawn through the snow. The warm hole in the hay now diffused a smell of bear over the whole glade.

Grey Tears

In spring there are grey tears of joy and it really warms the cockles of your heart when you first see them on your window-

pane after a long winter. It is even more pleasant when their warm drops fall on your face; everybody then thinks that he alone is the one that spring has chosen, that the first spring drop has fallen on him, the happiest of men. When young, I too wanted to be the chosen one, but it seems ridiculous to me now. Let the "chosen" comfort themselves, I now think, for I know that spring comes to all. In spring-time I now want to be in harmony with the whole of nature and to share my joy with everybody. And when the first drops of living spring water call another, then a third and then hundreds, thousands and millions, I begin to work, gain strength and call on all people to enjoy the great festival of spring unadorned.

The Wagtail

Any day I was expecting my favourite harbinger of spring, the wagtail, and at last she came and sat on an oak-tree; she sat there for a long time and I realized that it was to be our wagtail, that she would take up her abode somewhere nearby. We began surmising as the bird came flying and alighted on the oak. Was this our bird, would she live here somewhere nearby or did she have to fly further and was only resting here? When our starling flew home she dived straight to her hollow tree and sang. Now when our wagtail flew home she came hopping up to our truck and Svat lay still trying to decoy and seize her. With her black tie and her closely fitting light grey frock, vivacious and comical, she strutted right under Svat's nose pretending that she did not even see him. When he made a dive at that smart girlish figure, putting all his canine passion into the leap, she, of course, expecting the attack for she knew full well the nature of a dog, flew off just a few paces beyond his reach. He kept his eye on her and again became immobile while she, hopping and swaying on her thin springy legs, looked straight at the dog and seemed almost to laugh aloud. She attacked also, sometimes even at a jog trot.

The best time was when quiet old Lada was nearby. She would remain stock still as though standing for the gun andewould watch the whole game but mak not the slightest attempt to interfere. Boy, of course, intent on the game also remained motionless, although his immobility was really the result of a superfluity of energy. He fixed the smart little bird with his fiery eye and did not dare budge from his place even though the game lasted over an hour.

Lada followed the whole proceedings with the same amused interest as we did. When the bird, evading Svat's jaws, flew away and when she began to attack and approached Svat, Lada kept her black eyes fixed on him wondering whether he would hold out and catch her or whether the bird would show him her long tail again.

The Magic Needle

Two big trees in the forest had joined their roots together in the same way as two men join hands when they want to carry a sick person. A heavy layer of earth lay over these tangled roots which formed a bed for a swift-flowing spring brook. Where the roots ended, the brook dropped into a deep hollow which made a sound like an empty barrel, a grumbling that could be heard throughout the entire forest. Several nights when we had been out shooting wood-grouse we got our direction from that distinct sound. By standing still and listening to the grumbler growling, one could set off in the required direction. We had several such notable streams—the Chatterer, the Grumbler and a dozen others unnamed on all sides. When the big red sun sank we immediately realized that it was not for nothing that the little lizards had come out of their winter hiding place and had crawled to the top of a high oak to catch the last rays of the sun. This was the first warm night and the forest streams were not silent as formerly but grew stronger. Either there were several charges of wind during the night which brought us the sound of running streams coming from different directions or we had spring alarms on our minds and rolled backwards and forwards in our sleep so that we heard the sounds first from one side and then from the other.

Dear friend! If you could but fly to me in that early morning hour and see with your own eyes what wonders, what a splendid theatre opens up before you when your friend, together with

the breaking dawn, unclenches his fist. It seems as though the strength of all nature is concentrated in me and that it depends on myself either to clutch all that strength to myself or to unclench my hand and expose the world in all its beauty.

Should you fly to me I would lead you by the hand into the forest, where it is quite dark under the fir-trees. We would climb up on to a height studded with pines where every sound, even the tiniest is reflected. There we would stand by a tree and for a long time would find it difficult to get used to the beating of our own hearts, to the ringing of blood in our ears, to the scraping of our clothes on our own skin and to the pain of memories long past that would arise in us.

When you had become accustomed to all this fragmentary mass of noises and were able to ignore them all, then in the complete silence that you had found you would hear the first mysterious sounds of the winged life of the forest. I would then teach you to understand this twittering, like that of the tiniest bird, and you would immediately learn the art of dashing to meet this sound and, when necessary, of standing as motionless as a tree. In this way, alternating between spurts and halts, we stop at that very tree from which comes the twittering of the tiny bird at a time when all nature is silent. Then, peering through the spaces in the dark bunches of pine needles you would see the black silhouette of an enormous bird, its feathers trembling from extreme tension. You stand in fluttering expectation and, as it gradually becomes light, to the song of the wood-grouse is added the lullaby of the black grouse. With the sunrise we begin to shiver and realize from our own experience that the whole world is trembling with joy.

On that wonderful morning the wood-grouse fought each other so fiercely that it seemed as though the forest sprites were washing linen there and were beating their articles with clubs. The battle became so fierce that all the wood-grouse, cocks and hens, came down to the ground. Two of the best fighters got caught in a net set out by Mazai and then began to beat each other even more ferociously as though each of them thought that he was not being held by the net but by his opponent. When the tussle was over, the grouse did not fly away but just separated and the cocks kept looking back each afraid that another cock would attack him from behind. The remains of the snow in the forest made the place look as though guests had arrived and white tablecloths had been spread for them amongst the trees. The grouse strutted across these white tablecloths leaving the crosslike markings of their great claws behind them. By following up these tracks and joining those on one tablecloth to those on the next, you could easily find the place where the fight took place; there were so many grouse feathers and so much down there that one could quite well imagine that the wood sprites had been making themselves a feather bed.

The Snail

Mazai brought two wood-grouse from the forest and presented one to Arisha. Arisha, accepting the grouse with thanks, wanted to get on with her usual work, but Mazai sat on the caravan steps and would not let her enter. Obviously he wanted to tell her something or ask her something. She realized this and stood leaning against the side of the truck, waiting. Mazai was a widower and still virile enough to start a new family life and he liked Arisha quite a lot. He thought that when he brought her the grouse it would be quite easy to tell her about his own house, that his nephew Danilych lived downstairs, that there was plenty of room in the upper storey, that this winter he had earned quite a lot with his sleigh in Kostroma, that he could buy a cow, that they had plenty of meadow land so that feeding the cow would be no trouble and if he had his own house and his own cow and there were plenty of fish in the river and game in the forest, life in Vezhi could be quite good, even the finest life on earth...

Yes, it was certainly not for nothing that he had brought Arisha the grouse that morning; he had thought of saying so much when he made the gift and had sat on the steps so that during the harder moments of the conversation the snail should not crawl back into its shell. For some reason Mazai's tongue refused to obey him and the silence became awkward. Arisha, in order to

break this painful silence, pointed to the grouse and said:

"At daybreak this, morning I heard them in the forest; it sounded as if the forest fairies were rinsing clothes and beating them with a club. It was them, wasn't it?"

"Them," answered Mazai readily. "It was the grouse and not the fairies; there aren't any goblins in the forest."

"That's what you say, but how can the forest have no master?"

"Quite simple," answered Mazai. "I've spent all my life in the forest and never seen a single face. Look, just see what's going on over there!"

He pointed out some white gulls to Arisha.

A swift stream cut into the frozen surface and a gull, seated on a lump of ice that shone pink in the sun's rays, was being carried swiftly along.

"What does she do that for?" asked Arisha.

"Just taking a ride," answered Mazai.

He told her that the fishermen regarded this as a good sign; when the gulls go riding like that, they said, the spring would continue its course without a halt.

In other places, wild ducks were making for a dark spot of land, swimming easily through the thin ice crust and leaving behind them a trail of blue water. The frozen surface was so thin that water rats swam along the canals made by the ducks in order to reach that same piece of land. Only mice and shrews could still run across the ice and so reach dry land.

Mazai showed Arisha a tree with a rook's nest in it and told her that yesterday that had been a whole tree whereas today there was but a half of it left and if things went on that way it would be bad for the rooks.

"Will they be drowned?" asked Arisha.

"Of course," answered Mazai, "if the children allowed them to be; but they come along in boats and as soon as they can reach the rooks nests they burn them."

He made Arisha look into the nest so that she could see the rook. For a long time Arisha saw nothing, then at last she noticed a tail at one side of the nest and a beak at the other and felt very pleased with herself.

And so, showing Arisha everything worthy of note at flood time, he was just about to start his chief topic of conversation when the water under the very bank was violently disturbed.

"That's a pike casting here spawn," said Mazai instead of what he should have said.

Arisha had by this time either got tired of looking at things or, being accustomed to always working, was unable to stay idle for any length of time.

"Are you going to keep me much longer?" she asked Mazai.

Mazai got up from the steps. The snail crawled into her shell and disappeared.

There never could be a romance without this, without the snail crawling into her shell, without the goat running off or the bird flying away.

The Ant Offensive

This was the day that all life had been waiting a whole year for; you could recognize the day by the vigour of life in your own self: on this day you do not get tired of watching the changes, and with your own eyes see the beginnings of romances and unusual social activity. Glancing at an ant-heap built around a fir-tree we saw a dark patch on the light circle and getting out our field glasses began to watch what was going on.

We saw that for some reason or other the ants wanted to break through a ring of pitch on the tree trunk in order to reach the top of the tree. You have to watch for a long time to understand what ants are doing. In the forest I had often noticed that ants run up the tree against which their hill is built but I had never paid particular attention to it. I had never worried about whether it was something important that made the ants so persistent, or where they were going and why they were running about or climbing a tree. I now noticed that it was not individual ants that were after something but that all the ants needed that open road up the tree from the lower storey to, perhaps, the highest.

An obstruction on the upward road met by some of the ants had activized the whole ant colony and today a general mobilization had been ordered to clear the obstruction. The whole colony moved upwards and the whole

A woodcut by F. Konstantinov

kingdom, every member of it, was swarming in a quivering mass around the ring of pitch. The ant scouts had previously taken the risk of trying to crawl upward by themselves and one by one they had stuck in the pitch. Every new scout made use of the corpse of his predecessor in order to advance the length of his comrade's body and himself become a bridge for the next scout. The warm night and the hot rays of the sun in day-time had apparently provided the ant colony with the task of increasing the speed at which the bridge across the pitch ring was being built. A wide stream of ants launched an attack at such speed that even from our house below we could see the change in the white ring round the tree; the foremost ants unwaveringly and selflessly threw themselves into the pitch, their bodies forming the way for the next who, in their turn, made a road for others.

Speedy Love

By various signs known to sportsmen we knew that today would occur the first sunset on the water, so we got ready to go duck shooting. All the sportsmen in the village put collars on their decoy ducks and tied to these collars a long string with a weight or a stone attached to the end of it. They then set these contraptions floating on the water to attract the mallards. Even the old sportsman Mironych could not stay at home but came out on crutches to look around, to set his own ducks in the water and get his boat ready. Rheumatism had completely shattered the old man and what was a greater calamity as far as his shooting was concerned, he suffered from night blindness. As soon as twilight set in, Mironych became completely blind and it became so difficult for him to get about that he could easily freeze or drown. People had often warned him about this.

"Drop it, Mironych," they said, "it's time to give up; you can't live another life-time. Give the youngsters a chance!"

"I don't interfere with the youngsters," answered Mironych. "They'll find their own way about and when I've got to die I shan't try to cheat death; only I know that not everybody must die lying on the stove, there's nothing anywhere in any scriptures about a stove for old people."

Mazai's duck, Marusska, had spent sixteen years with her master and was so accustomed to him that when he went out in the boat he did not carry Marusska in a basket but let her sit on top of it; also he had not clipped her wings, so she could fly away if she wanted. But whither could an old duck like her fly while her old friend the drake sat in the basket quietly quacking to her?

Feeling that we were going to have a fine evening, we set Cleopatra on a string and Khromka we just let swim at will. Like Marusska she would not leave us.

Khromka in common with all other living beings had her own history. A rat once fell in love with her, took a fancy to her, seized her by the leg and tried to drag her into his hole but the young duck was too big for the opening and in the meantime we arrived on the spot. We tried very hard to save her leg but the duck remained lame and it would take a long time to tell all the tortures we went through on account of that injured leg. Not only her own species attacked her on account of it but the geese and chickens also realized that in nature anything ugly is doomed to destruction and they never missed an opportunity of pecking at her head. The wise duck soon realized that her only safety lay in remaining near people and she took every opportunity of keeping near us. She got so used to us that when we went out in a boat Khromka would swim after us and when the boat went too fast for her at first she would warn us by quacking and then take and fly after us. She became so affectionate that we all liked her; all were sorry for her and looked after her so well that when Khromka grew up she was the equal of any other duck and her scream was inferior only to that of Cleopatra.

In addition to the pneumatic rubber boat we have a canoe, a purely sporting affair that is put together from some fifty very pleasing polished pieces of wood. When the framework thus formed has a covering of waterproof canvas stretched over it, the result is a first-class canoe. The great disadvantage is the trouble of putting all the sticks and bars together, but once this is done the ease with which the canvas canoe slips over the water more than compensates for the labour involved in assembling it. The double-bladed paddle requires no effort to use, you merely need to touch the water with it. When the body is released from work and you are on the water in the fresh air the mind begins to work with exceptional vigour so that you absorb all that is happening on the water and in the sky as if in a dream.

On this particular occasion we had great trouble in getting the canoe together and we worked over it until late in the evening, when a whole fleet of duck hunters with Mazai at the head and Mironych at the tail came floating down to us from Vezhi.

A whole flotilla of us set out together. The remains of the ice in the rivers were obstacles that the boats could not pass and we had to drag out boats over the barriers with some risk of falling into the icy water. We all got safely over the ice, however, and even dragged Mironych on his crutches with us. We went down the Sot and the Kast rivers and then the party began to split up each going to his favourite place so that gradually the whole shooting expedition was scattered amongst the tree tops of the flooded forest. Petya and I had selected places not far from each other so that Cleopatra's shriek would be heard by Petya's Khromka and would wake her up. Petya's place was called "Under the lime-trees" and mine was simply known as "The Stone".

It was a little island that kept changing its shape with the rising water even as we looked. There were no bushes on the island and in the middle was a huge boulder. As I approached, a hare that had been caught there by the water leaped upon the stone and remained motionless. He could not have been alone on the island for quite a lot of other little animals must be there. I drew my canoe up amongst the alders with hardly a sound, pulled the branches together after me, twisted them into a little tent for myself with windows looking out onto the water, towards the stone. My Cleopatra, immediately she got into the water, began to give voice and was answered by Khromka in an instant. A pair of mallards came flying over, the duck in front followed by the drake in his wedding dress. Suddenly another pair appeared flying towards them. The two pairs had almost met when a hawk pounced on the duck from the second pair and the whole crowd got mixed up. The hawk missed his mark. The duck dived, landed on the water hid in the bushes. The enraged hawk disappeared behind a blue cloud. The lone drake recovering from the hawk's attack flew round in a little circle but the separated duck was nowhere to be seen. Thinking, no doubt, that his lost duck was being chased by the strange drake, he turned to set off in pursuit.

The lost duck, who soon recovered

from the attack of the hawk, came swimming out of the bushes and began to scream. Another lone drake came flying up and a battle of voices arose between the wild duck and my decoy. The latter almost burst herself screaming but still the wild duck beat her to it. The drake preferred the wild duck and began courting her.

The first pair, after flying in a huge circle, returned with the deserted drake following. He could not still believe that this duck was his and that a strange drake was giving chase to her.

His real wife sat on the water contentedly preening her feather in silence. My Cleopatra had decided to capture the drake now that she had no rival. And he heard her... They are so faithless that in love no matter which it is as long as it's a duck! But maybe time passes more quickly with them than with us, and a minute of parting with their beloved is equal to ten of our years? Maybe in his hopeless chase of the duck of his imagination he became aware of the voice of a live duck below him and hears in her the voice of the one he has lost—then the whole flooded area becomes attractive to him.

He pounced on Cleopatra so tempestuously, even before I could get a shot at him; he wooed her. After that he began to make the drake's customary circle of thanks just above the water. I could have aimed at him easily from my cover, but remembering my own ardent youth, I could not shoot.

The Shrewmouse

Hearing something behind me, I looked round silently and saw two white hares pommelling one another so soundly that the white winter fur was flying in all directions like the fluff from poplar trees. It was still too early for hares to be about but the water which had trapped them on the island had scared them and as they ran about seeking a way of escape from the island they met and fought. Right before my eyes the water rose and swallowed up the land with its thick layer of dead leaves. One of the leaves near the edge of the water began to move of its own accord and then stood up on edge. This was followed by another; then more and more of them began moving. A head appeared, disappeared and then appeared again and a water rat crawled out, shook itself, rubbed itself down with its paws and set off towards the stone on the side where the hares were.

When you spend an evening sitting in a shelter like this there is no end to the objects to be observed. There is the clumsily made rook's nest on the birch-tree; the bird's beak sticks out at the side and her tail at the other. The rook is sitting on her eggs and the water is on the move all around. You notice how the different light and dark markings on the birch trunk disappear one after the other as the water rises and creeps ever nearer the rook's nest. The bird ought to abandon her nest, fly away somewhere else and start family life over again, but she cannot bring herself to do this and nobody else is concerned about her. Even if one wanted how could you convey such a simple thing to her?

Gradually evening spread over the flooded area, and the water as far as the eye could reach, took on the most varied hues. In the distance, fluid streams appeared and gradually I began to make out some unknown living creature moving through the water dividing the whole expanse into blue and red. The water was so still that the creature ruffling the whole surface may have been quite tiny; perhaps it was just some kind of a bettle that the water had forced to think of settling on new lands. It was soon obvious that the creature was swimming towards "The Stone". I got out my field glasses to examine it and saw the snout of a shrew sticking out of the water; the tiniest mammal, almost as small as your little finger, had undertaken a long journey and had forsaken its native land, submerged by the floods. When the shrew reached a willow branch beside the bows of my boat she was apparently quite exhausted by her journey. Climbing on to one willow twig she rested right there beside the water. The water was still rising and she soon had to move higher up.

Just at that moment, Cleopatra gave voice and a drake dropped down to the water, making blue and fiery rings around himself. The empty sheel from my gun flew past the branch on which the shrew was sitting, and the blast shook the

bough so that the little shrew moved up one storey higher. A warm sun ray fell right on her so that her eyes, no bigger than the tiniest beads, flashed with fire and it seemed more like a fairy tale; such a tiny midget that, apart from tail and snout, was no bigger than your little finger. But she also had her eyes that reflected the great sun just like the big human eyes of us rational beings. The same thing happened this time as had happened with the lizard; the sun reached the horizon of the flooded earth and the water caused its rays to rise as the sun sank.

The shrew, anxious to keep warm, continued climbing higher and higher up the willow. The basement storeys of the forest where the shrew usually lived were now deep under water, and this underground dweller, bathed in the sun's rays, kept climbing higher and higher, probably reasoning, after her own fashion, that there were also burrows up as well as on earth. Those tiny bead-like eyes burning away up there were very pathetic. By this time the hares down below were no longer visible and only by the white patches that kept appearing in the darkness could you tell that they were still there lambasting one another and tearing out each other's winter fur.

The Frog Princess

When, at dawn, we made our way to our "butts", thunder and lightning and the rain was so heavy that we had to go home again. This was the first warm rain after which the sap in all the birches, young and old, would begin to low.

With the first roll of thunder, the frogs in our pond dashed about so violently that they stirred up the water. Then they swam to the bank, stuck their pop-eyed heads out of the water and began to croak. Amongst the multitude there was a frog princess whom I immediately recognized and went to greet. She did not know me and as soon as I drew near, she disappeared. I waited for her in vain but she did not show herself again. I went back a few paces and then turned round to look and there she was, peeping out of the water.

"Is she pretending?" I thought. "Of course the little devil recognized me."

I turned back but again she disappeared.

This time I did not go so far away, the next time still less until I only had to turn my eyes on her and she went under the water, look away, and again she would emerge.

Our innocent romance ended with the princess and I, separated by a very short distance, staring silently at each other, she with bulging eyes, I with mine wide open.

The Isle of Salvation

During the night following the warm rain, the water rose almost another three feet causing a town with white buildings, previously not visible, to appear suddenly as if it had emerged out of the water. The high bank of the Volga, formerly smothered in the white blanket of snow, now rose up above the surface with its yellow clay and sand. Several villages could be seen surrounded by flood water, but nobody could be amused by these unfortunate people who shared the usual pitiful plight of the animals during the spring flooding of the Volga.

Dotted among these great floods were tiny patches of unflooded land, some of them entirely bare, others covered with bushes. Ducks of all varieties were gathered around most of these dry patches while on one long spit of land a long line of geese who looked as if they had been placed side by side, stood staring into the water. In other places, only the tree tops stuck out of the water and these were covered with smaller animals of all kinds. Sometimes so many of them were gathered that an ordinary willow twig looked like a huge bunch of big black grapes. A water rat came swimming to us, apparently from a great distance, and leaned wearily against an alder branch. The rippling of the water threatened to dislodge the rat from her perch, so she had to climb up higher and sit in a fork of the branches. She fixed herself up so that the water did not reach her. Once a wave, bigger than the others, touched her tail and carried away a circular ripple as a result.

A fairly large tree which apparently stood on some sort of a mound now

under water housed a hungry raven glaring round in search of prey. The raven could not see the water rat in the fork of the branches but every time a higher wave touched her tail it took a ring of ripples away with it which betrayed the rat's hiding place. Then began a battle of life and death. Several times the rat fell and again climbed up on to her perch and she suffered considerably from the blows of the raven's iron beak. The bird had almost got a secure hold of the water rat when the latter succeeded in nipping her enemy so successfully that the feathers flew as though it had been splattered with small shot. The raven almost fell into the water and began zealously to put her feathers in order, treating her wounds after her own fashion. From time to time the pain reminded her of the water rat and she looked in that direction, her expression asking:

"What sort of rat is this? Such a one has never before existed."

The water rat, by the way, after her lucky snap at the raven, didn't bother to think about the bird any more but fixed her small beady eyes on our bank which she wished so much to reach. She swiftly began to cut herself a twig, taking it between her forepaws which resembled hands. She began to gnaw through the twig, twisting it in her paws. When she had completely severed the twig, she threw it into the water. She did not begin chewing the newly cut twig but dropped into the water with it and began to swim dragging the twig with her. The predatory raven, naturally, saw all this and followed the rat with its eyes right up to our bank.

Our bank had become an isle of salvation and a new home for all kinds of animals, large and small, and, as it turned out later, for creatures that were quite invisible. Every minute shrews and field mice, water rats and mink, rabbits, stoats and squirrels all came swimming in a huge crowd, one and all with their tails well erect.

We, as masters of the island, met and welcomed every animal with careful attention, and having examined them allowed them to make off for that region best suited to their individual natures. For a long time we did not know that we were only meeting an insignificant part of the pilgrims to their new home. Our acquaintance with the new world of refugees began when Arisha said:

"See what's happening to our ducks!"

We looked at them and at once noticed that they had got much darker and appreciably fatter than before.

"What on earth's happened?" we wondered.

We sought the answer to the riddle from the ducks themselves. It turned out that innumerable swimming spiders and other insects swept from their regular haunts by the stormy flood waters had regarded our Khromka and Cleopatra as safe islets and so had climbed on to the ducks confident that at last after long journeying over the water, they had reached a reliable landing place. There were so many of them that our ducks had become noticeably much fatter.

Bream and Pike-Perch

When the rivers were forced to flow in the opposite direction under the pressure from the rising Volga waters, the homes of the animals and some birds were flooded out. The fish, however, found this backward flow a real aid for it helped them move to their breeding places at the head-waters of the rivers. At this time of the year, the bream loves to cast its spawn in the branches of sunken conifers and Mazai even lopped off fir branches and anchored them under the water for the bream. For the pike-perch he cut hollow branches since this fish likes to lay its roe in such rotting wood.

The day turned out so warm that the willows resembled faint green smoke, the birches stood out like trees made of chocolate and catkins were so thick on the ash that when the grouse alighted on them they were completely hidden. Everywhere rings kept appearing on the calm water and Mazai, filled with joy at the splendid beauty of spring unadorned, promised himself that if he could only get hold of a fine fat break or pike-perch he would present that first catch to Arisha and this time would most certainly tell her what was on his mind.

"Of course," he said to himself, "I'm not young and she's not very interested in me, but then she's not young either; in five years or so she'll be forty

and for a woman that spells old age."

While Mazai was pondering over his luck, a huge bream, which makes a habit of spawning where another has already cast her spawn, was seeking a place to rid herself of her load. The bream in question had been seeking spawn all that morning, peering into fir branches under the water and into the rotting logs. As he looked at these, Mazai recalled how a pike-perch had cast her spawn in this very spot the year before. He rowed the boat towards the place and found that he had not been mistaken. A fish accompanied by her mate had come to the same place and cast her spawn and swum off leaving the male on guard. By a stroke of good luck, the bream also approached the log at this moment and seeing the spaw of another fish completely ignored the pike-perch sentry. The latter, seeing the bream approach, dashed so furiously at her that the scales flew. The pike-perch was so intent on the bream that he did not notice Mazai approaching in his light boat and with a single, swift blow Mazai plunged the prongs of his fish spear into both the pike-perch and the bream.

Live Nights

It is naturally a fine thing on an excellent day in early spring to row over the flood water to one's sweetheart with something in one's hands. On such a day every living creature, animal, bird and even fish wants to show himself off in some way or another. Our woodpeckers, Major and Minor, wanted to demonstrate how strong in the head they were to their beloved. Major battered so vigorously at the ringing wood with his beak and the whole of his head that his drum-roll carried across the water to Ozhoga where the other woodpecker, Minor, retaliated so soundly that it returned to us and inspired Major to further drumming achievements. It seemed that the whole of the flooded area was watching the contest between the woodpeckers and even the frog princess crawled up on to a log and listened, to decide for herself which of the drummers was the hardest hitter. Mazai too, after he had greeted Arisha and made her a nice present, listened to the woodpeckers.

"Ours is tapping much harder," he said.

Wise Arisha was, of course, pleased with the present and out of respect for Mazai tried to understand the woodpecker contest.

"Our woodpecker is nearer," she said in soft, tender voice, "the other is farther away so we can't judge which is the stronger."

Mazai agreed and proposed that Arisha accompany him in his boat to a spot half way between and there decide which of the woodpeckers was drumming the hardest. Arisha accepted with pleasure and Mazai placed her in the boat.

Evening was just beginning to fall. The frog princess gave the signal and hundreds or maybe thousands of hidden frogs stuck their noses out of the water and began croaking, the whole countless nultitude adding their chorus to that of the streams running from our forest.

Amongst these pleasant sounds were some that Arisha did not understand.

"Aren't those the goblins?" she asked.

"No," answered Mazai, "there are no goblins; that's a water buffalo lowing. Were there any goblins," he continued musingly, "they would have their sprites and between them they start a tribe of young pixies which would increase and multiply until at every step in the woods you would come across a goblin. I've spent enough time in the woods but I've never yet come across one."

"And you won't meet them," said Arisha, "an evil force is an invisible world."

"So that's how it is, invisible," laughed Mazai.

Suddenly cries of victory filled the whole watery expanse quite distinct from the chorus of innumerable singing birds, singing frogs and singing waters.

A pair of cranes came swooping low over Mazai's head and landed on that some patch of dry earth on which the elk had first found sanctuary. Now the tiny spot remaining there just left enough room for the cranes to alight.

When these birds had settled, preened themselves and listened to the chorus of sounds each louder than the other and especially to the drumming of the two woodpeckers they suddenly screamed so imperatively and sharply over the whole expanse of water that nothing could mistake that voice for anything but an order:

"Stop it!"

"They are the judges," said Mazai, "they have come to restore order."

"They are poor judges," said Arisha, "nobody pays any attention to them."

"Wait a while," answered Mazai. "When evening comes they will be obeyed. People themselves don't establish order so easily yet you expect the cranes to do it at once."

In the meantime, the noise of lowing streams and the frog chorus were joined by the familiar evening sounds of fighting grouse.

"Well, Arisha," said Mazai, and decided then and there to make his proposal. He told her everything that was on his mind, poured it out like water from a bucket; how the upper part of his house was vacant, his nephew Danilych lived downstairs; he had a cow, he caught quite a lot of fish, in winter he earned as much with his sleigh in Kostroma as he did fishing and ploughing in summer.

Arisha listened quietly to Mazai and, without answering him, lowered her head and sat deep in thought.

Not getting any answer for a long time Mazai began to blame himself.

"What a blockhead I am, what a blockhead!" he repeated several times.

"Why a blockhead?" answered Arisha in her tender voice which went straight to Mazai's heart.

"A stupid blockhead!"

"So stupid that even if a frog crawled over him he wouldn't feel it?"

"Never mind."

Mazai frowned slyly and with tiny, screwed up eyes peered at Arisha.

"All the same," he said, "when a frog crawls on to a log, perhaps it's more convenient for it to climb on to something which has no sense of feeling."

"Let it climb," said Arisha tenderly, "let the sly little beast amuse herself, and you've conquered your temptation and can't feel anything any more."

Mazai looked at Arisha with his eyes narrowed to the tiniest possible slits.

"What's the good, you're so modest," muttered Mazai. "The frog will climb up anyway. If, as you say, a man can't get on without a frog, it would be better for me to be able to feel."

Mazai burst out laughing so happily that it infected Arisha so that she, too, had to smile. She became so rosy-cheeked, young and pretty that there could no longer be any doubt. Arisha had been teasing him and realized as well as Mazai that there is no reason for a man to be a blockhead.

Then the heron's court began in full force, all the birds singing and screaming, each trying to outdo the others. Every spring there are live nights like these when nothing wants to sleep and everything is on the move, singing and screaming. Things came to such a pass that the judges themselves forgot their role and screamed with the one object of outdoing everything else.

They were prepared to achieve their air of overscreaming every other living thing and so spoil the finest evening of early spring and interfere with all the best songs.

When the sun had just set and the surface of the water was lit up in blue and rosy patches, a black boat carrying a man appeared on the golden water. It was the singer Danilych, rowing his boat out into the wide waters. What song he sang, what the words were, it is difficult to say; in fact it was not the words that mattered but the way the vigorous singing captured the whole of nature until every tiny creature, forgetting itself, let its own song blend with that of Danilych, all the songs running together as though following a narrow path.

Mazai, his head drooping, wanted to keep repeating: "Eh, blockhead, blockhead!" when suddenly he heard Danilych and at the same time as the song began Arisha's whisper reached him:

"No, Mazai, no..."

Mazai listened more attentively.

"Oh, Mazai, dear Mazai, don't be a blockhead!" the girl softly exclaimed.

Translated by George Hanna

THE INFANTRYMAN

If, on his safe return from the war, Ivan Trofimovich Savelyev ever thinks of telling his family, his wife and in particular his father, Trofim Ilyich, an old soldier, the whole story of what happened to him on that particular day, he will be certain to get into a muddle, because the impressions of that day are mixed up with preceding days and those which followed. And quite likely, upon his recalling it, he will smite his left breast and say: "Here's the medal they presented me with that very day."

As a matter of fact, that day, like many others in his life, was remarkable for a number of big and little events which happened during the twenty-four hours. These seemed highly significant to him then, because they had a direct bearing upon whether he would continue to be Ivan Trofimovich Savelyev or become dust of the earth, far away from home. I heard the story from him the night of that particular day and I take it upon myself to recount everything that happened to him. I think I shall be able to do it with a fair degree of accuracy, because the story stuck in my mind.

It was the seventh or eighth day of the offensive. As dawn broke about three a.m. Savelyev awoke. Wrapped in his tent-cloak, he had spent the night at the bottom of an enemy trench captured late the evening before. A fine rain was falling but the walls of the trench afforded shelter from the wind and so, although it was wet, it was not so cold. There was no chance of moving on further, because the whole of the valley ahead of them was covered by German fire. The company was ordered to dig in and spend the night in the trenches.

"Meantime the neighbouring companies will circle the hills ahead of us," said Senior Lieutenant Savin, who was commanding the company.

And to tell the truth, Savelyev was glad that they were going to spend that night, at least, in one spot, and that the battle would only be resumed in the morning. He had had little sleep for three days and had been marching with the others. He had felt drowsy the whole day.

It was already dark when they settled down at about eleven o'clock, so Senior Lieutenant Savin permitted the soldiers to sleep by turns; while one slept the other went on duty. Savelyev, a patient fellow, liked to postpone the best to the last, so he agreed that his pal, Yudin, should sleep first. Savelyev did his two hours trench duty, while Yudin slept beside him. At half past one he roused Yudin and then wrapped himself in his tent-cloak and fell asleep. He must have slept for two-and-a-half hours when the dawn wakened him.

"Is it already light?" he asked Yudin, poking his head out from the folds of the cloak, not so much to see if it was really growing light but to make sure that Yudin had not fallen asleep at his post.

"Just starting to get light," Yudin replied in a voice denoting his chilled and shivering condition. "You go on and sleep a little more."

But there was no chance. Sergeant Yegorychev, who had been appointed company-commander the previous day in place of the lieutenant who was killed, came along the trench just then and ordered the men to get up.

"The Germans have been retreating during the night," he said, "and we're going to chase them."

Though Savelyev was lying almost in water, he had got a bit warmer, and was reluctant to rise.

He stretched himself a few times, without throwing off his covering cloak, then braced himself and sprung up.

"Let's smoke," he suggested to Yudin.

"The very thing," said the other, "if you've any tobacco."

"I've got a bit of makhorka," Savelyev said, suddenly remembering that he had lain down to sleep without first emptying his last scraps of tobacco into the German butter-dish he had found in the trench. Now the tobacco, wrapped in a scrap of newspaper would most probably be wet. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out the paper. The tobacco was a moist clot.

"Oh, hell!" he burst out. "We won't have any time to dry it either."

Still, he got out the pink butter-dish, unfolded the wet paper, scraped up the couple of pinches or so of tobacco that lay in it, emptied them into the dish and stood it open on the ground to see if it would dry up a little in the air.

With a tug here and there, he straightened his uniform which had gone awry while he was lying down. Then he examined his tommy-gun which he had slung across his shoulder under the tent-cloak and thus kept it dry. It was all in order now. "Not like the tobacco," he thought. "If it would only dry up quick—I'm dying for a smoke."

But it had no time to dry. Senior Lieutenant Savin, who had evidently made the rounds of all the companies since day-break, came up just then and, assembling them all, explained the day's mission. They were to pursue the enemy who was enclosed in a semi-circle, but who had retreated two or three kilometres and had to be overtaken again. Lieutenant Savin, as Savelyev noted, was in the habit of calling the Germans Jerries, but when he was explaining the day's assignment he invariably spoke of them as the enemy.

"The enemy," he said, "must be overtaken within the hour. We are attacking in fifteen minutes' time."

It was lucky the kitchen had been brought up during the night after being stuck in the mud somewhere for several days. When Savin had gone, the sergeant told them of its arrival and the news bucked them all up, for everyone could do with a hot meal.

The cook, judging by results, must have been making dinner the whole day—at any rate each man got a whole canful of hot porridge and tinned meat. There was so much of it that Savelyev, in spite of the fact that he had eaten nothing the previous day, found it hard to tackle the lot. After he had finished, he felt a heaviness in his body and limbs, a weakness in his legs and an overpowering desire to lie down to sleep again. At this moment he imagined even one kilometre was beyond his strength.

But Sergeant Yegorychev had already ordered them to be on the move, and Savelyev, getting up from the trench parapet, started to fix his equipment more comfortably. Counting the tommy-gun, drum, grenades and iron rations, his pack weighed a pood (sixteen kilograms) or so. He had never actually weighed it, but reckoned it up on his shoulders daily and sometimes it seemed less than a pood, sometimes more, according to how tired he felt.

At the hour fixed for the attack, the sun was still hidden, and a fine rain was falling. The wet meadow grass and the sopping earth squelched underfoot.

"What a damnably rotten summer it has been!" Yudin said to Savelyev.

"Yes," Savelyev agreed, "but very likely the autumn will be fine—when St. Martin's summer comes."

"Aye, but we've got to live to see that St. Martin's summer," Yudin said gloomily.

When it came to a fight, Yudin was plucky enough, but the rest of the time he had a tendency to indulge in pessimistic thoughts.

"So the raven's croaked again," growled Savelyev, who could not bear any talk about death. He himself pondered the subject often enough, but never mentioned it.

Very quietly they crossed the long meadow that they had been unable to cross yesterday. Towards evening the lieutenant had been killed here, and Savelyev had afterwards dragged his body into the trenches. Now it was utterly peaceful, there was no cross-firing and only the frequent craters half washed away and filled with rainwater, served to remind them of the fact that a battle had been fought here the day before.

In about twenty minutes, after crossing the meadow, they reached a little wood, along the edge of which ran the German trenches abandoned that night.

Some tins from gas-masks were lying around and on the spot where the mortars had stood—those same mortars that had killed the lieutenant the previous day—lay half a dozen cases of mortar-bombs.

"They are still leaving everything behind," said Savelyev.

"Yes," Yudin rejoined, "but they seem to drag their dead away with them. Or did we kill so few yesterday?"

"Why no?" said Savelyev. "We killed plenty, I'm sure." Thereupon he noticed that the neighbouring trench was covered with fresh soil and a foot was stick-

ing out. It was shod in a German army boot, with broad iron tips.

They went cautiously through the wood, expecting an ambush every moment. But nothing happened.

"Has that tobacco dried up yet?" Yudin asked when they emerged on the outside edge and faced a broad long field.

"How could it have dried up yet?" Savelyev returned. "It won't be dry till evening."

Both were dying for a smoke, but they could not ask anyone for tobacco since, as was always the case on the seventh or eighth day of an advance, the rear lines were a long way behind, and everyone's tobacco had given out. If Savelyev had enough left for a couple of fags, it was only because he had been particularly economical. Even Senior Lieutenant Savin had nothing to smoke: he was marching with them a little way forward, sucking a home-made cigarette holder.

Savelyev saw that the reconnoissance men were half a kilometre ahead. The Germans, lying in wait, might let them pass and then send mortar-bombs at the whole company. So emerging from the wood the men kept twenty paces from each other by Savin's orders, and moved along the field in silence. Savelyev was waiting for the first German mortar to strike; he was certain that the Germans would start firing anyhow. A couple of kilometres ahead were hills, and Savelyev scenting the enemy from afar knew he must be lying there since this was a convenient position.

And so it turned out. When the reconnoissance was a kilometre ahead, Savelyev saw and then heard several mortar-bombs burst simultaneously. Immediately, the Soviet artillery opened fire on the hills. It occurred to Savelyev that the mortars would keep it up until our artillery succeeded in locating and smashing the enemy or forced them to shift their position. They were probably preparing right now to transfer their fire and would shoot straight across at his company. In order to be as far ahead as possible by that moment, he quickened his pace and the others did the same. Now they were going much quicker, nearly running, and though the strap of his kit-bag cut into his laden, chafed shoulders and spine, he forgot this in the excitement of the coming battle and fancied that the going was easier.

So they went for another three or four minutes; then somewhere close behind them, the first mortar-bomb burst and someone about forty paces to Savelyev's right cried out that he was hit, and fell to the ground. Savelyev saw Yudin, who was ambulance man as well as soldier, run up to the wounded man. The next few bombs fell far short of the mark; but then several burst simultaneously quite close. Savelyev and the other men fell flat. When they jumped up again and ran on, Savelyev glanced back and saw no one was missing. They had to do this over and over again, dropping to the ground, jumping up, advancing by short rushes, while the German bombs burst beside them without hurting anyone. But after they had jumped up the seventh or eighth time, Savelyev saw that two men had fallen out and were lying there in the road; one struggled up and fell again.

"Must be badly hit," Savelyev thought, as he ran on.

In this way they covered a kilometre and approached the low hills behind which the reconnoissance was sheltering. All the scouts were there. The company settled down behind the hills, too, and Savelyev and his company were in luck: the spot they had chosen proved to be a kind of trench half-full of water. Probably the Germans had started to dig these and then given up. Savelyev got into it, unfastened his spade, dug down a bit further into the earth shovelling the soil in front of him.

Our artillery fire was still directed on the hills, but the mortars ceased suddenly. Savelyev and his neighbours were lying, waiting for Savin to order them to move on further. It was only about 500 or, at most, 600 metres from the hills where the Germans were and it was exposed, bare ground, offering no cover. Five minutes or so after they had lain down, they were overtaken by Yudin.

"Who was the fellow that was hit?" Savelyev asked.

"I don't know his name," Yudin replied. "It's that young chap that came with the reinforcements yesterday."

"Badly hit?"

"Hell, it's not such a bad wound,

but anyhow it's enough to put him out of action for a while."

"Funny thing, that!" Savelyev went on. "I mean the way the new chaps always get hit. They just arrive and the first thing you know they've been hit. While you and me, we go on fighting day after day, year in year out and we're still whole and sound."

"Our time will come yet," Yudin said gloomily.

"Aw, go to the devil!" Savelyev burst out, getting mad as usual at Yudin's gloom. "Always croaking, I declare."

A moment's silence, then Yudin said pleadingly:

"Listen, Savelyev. . ."

"What?"

"Try that tobacco, will you? Maybe we could have a smoke even if it is a bit damp still."

Savelyev took out the German butter-dish, unscrewed the lid and felt the tobacco. It was quite damp, but he got a scrap of dry newspaper out of the leg of his boot and still cursing himself for his own carelessness in letting the tobacco get damp, began to roll a cigarette. Then, pulling out the flint and tinder which they all called "Katyusha" he struck a spark and tried to light the cigarette from the wick. The newspaper smouldered, but the damp tobacco would not draw.

"No go!" he said to Yudin. He unrolled the paper and sprinkled the tobacco back into the butter-dish.

At that moment, shells whizzed over their heads and the hills where the Germans lay were enshrouded in smoke. This, evidently, was the minute for which Savin, forewarned by his chiefs, had been waiting. At all events, as soon as the salvo boomed, he gave the order to rise and push on ahead. Looking with some regret around the wet but nevertheless snug trench, Savelyev gave a tug at the strap of the tommy-gun, and, placing it more comfortably, straightened up and set off.

For three or four minutes he ran on like the others, without hearing a single shot from the Germans. When they were about a stone's throw—two hundred metres or perhaps less—from the German side, there was a sudden outburst from their machine-guns, first from one on the left, and then from two straight ahead. Savelyev flung himself on the ground and only then realized he was out of breath after this heavy running. His heart was thumping as though it would strike the ground. Someone behind him—he could not see in his hurry who—had not dropped in time, uttered an unnatural cry and turning over with outflung arms, fell heavily. "He's been hit," thought Savelyev, "knocked out, evidently. That was a tough one."

The German guns continued firing right over their heads. One shell and then another whizzed over Savelyev's head. Without raising his head, his cheek touching the wet grass, he turned and saw the battalion guns standing about a hundred and fifty paces behind him, firing straight at the Germans from the open field. One shell more whistled over his head. The machine-gun firing from his left fell silent. And at that same moment Savelyev saw Yegorychev, who was lying a little to the left, lift his hand without rising and pointing ahead, set off crawling and wriggling over the ground. Savelyev did the same. It was hard work, the ground was low lying and wet. When he clung to the grass it cut his fingers like sedge.

He crawled along like this for fifty paces or so, the guns firing overhead. And though the German machine-guns ahead of him never ceased, still those very shots seemed to make it, if not easier, yet somehow quieter.

They were near the Germans, so near that the machine-guns' bursts shaved the grass, now behind, now at the side. He crawled another ten paces or so, and like the others, felt quite certain that now, this very minute, they would have to jump up and run those remaining hundred metres at their full height with no cover until they reached the German trench. It would all be a matter of luck.

Several more shots were fired separately, then a burst simultaneously. In front of them, the earth was flung up from the breastwork of the trench, and at the same moment, Savelyev heard Savin's whistle. He jerked his kit-bag off his shoulders, thinking as he did so that if his crowd captured the trenches he could return for this later. Meanwhile, his load was lighter. He sprang to his feet and as he ran, fired a burst from his tommy-gun, then another, stumbled over

an unnoticed tussock, jumped up again and ran on. At that moment he no longer had any dread of going forward, his sole desire was to get to the German trench as quickly as possible and jump into it. He did not stop to consider whether there might be Germans in it or wonder how they would greet him. He knew that once he jumped into it the worst was over no matter how many Germans might be sitting there. The very worst bit of all were these remaining metres, when you had to run with your chest unprotected and entirely exposed.

When he had stumbled, fallen and again risen to his feet, his comrades left and right had already overtaken him. So when he dived down into the trench, he saw the body of a German who had been killed and in front, a sweaty back clothed in a Russian tunic. He ran after the Red Army man, turned left and rushed headlong at a German who had sprung out towards him from the opposite direction. They collided in the narrow trench and Savelyev, who was carrying his tommy-gun out before him, did not shoot, but in the unexpectedness of the collision thrust it hard against the German's chest. The man fell. Savelyev, thrown off his balance, stumbled to one knee. He struggled to his feet with difficulty, trying to get a grip somewhere on the slippery walls. At that moment Yegorychev, who must have been pursuing this same German, came hurling towards him. Yegorychev's eyes glittered angrily in his pale face and, if the German had still been on his feet, Yegorychev would surely have killed him.

"What, is he killed?" he asked, with a jerk of his head in the German's direction.

But as though contradicting Yegorychev's words, the German muttered something in his own tongue and tried to struggle up from the floor of the trench. He could not manage it, for the floor was slippery and he had to keep his hands up while he scrambled.

"Get up, can't you?" Savelyev ordered. "Come on, up with you!" and he stirred the German gently with his foot. "Hände nicht," he said, making an effort to remember the correct German words.

But whether the German understood or not, he was afraid to drop his hands and still went on trying to get up without using them. With one hand Yegorychev lifted up the German by the scruff of his neck—his strength was colossal—and set him down between himself and Savelyev. As he watched the German clambering up the trench-wall with his hands still raised, Yegorychev's first anger vanished and Savelyev could see by his face, which was of a stern mould lacking the usual Russian good-nature, that he would not harm this German.

"Take him to Savin," said Yegorychev, "I have to go. . ." and he disappeared around the trench.

Floundering through the trench and pushing the German before him, Savelyev went to look for Savin. On the way, they passed the dead body of the German Savelyev had seen when he first jumped down into the trench. Then they turned into the communication trench and saw the result of the Katyusha's action. Everything in the communication trench itself and along the parapet seemed to have been powdered with grey ashes. German corpses lay at a little distance from each other in the trench and on top one lay with his head and arms hanging down into the trench. "Must have wanted to jump and didn't have time," Savelyev thought. As the German prisoner passed the body his head touched it and recoiled with a shudder.

Savelyev found Savin in a half-ruined German dugout, alongside the trenches. Like everything else here, it had been built in a hurry, the Germans must have dug it the previous day. At all events it had nothing in common with the soundly-built German dugouts and neat trenches Savelyev had seen the first day of the attack, when they broke through the main German line. "They don't have time to make them these days," he thought with satisfaction, "they're always in a hurry." Turning to Savin, he said:

"Comrade Senior Lieutenant, Yegorychev's orders were to bring the prisoner here."

"Good. Hand him over," said Savin.

Savelyev saw three other German prisoners, guarded by a tommy-gunner he did not know.

"Here's another Jerry for you, brother," Savelyev informed him.

"Sergeant," said Savin to the tommy-

gunner, "when they're all here, take another man—someone with a wound that isn't serious—and lead the prisoners to the battalion."

Savelyev noticed then that the tommy-gunner's left hand was bandaged, and that he held the gun under his right armpit, managing it so well that he could fire with one hand.

"May I go?" Savelyev asked Savin.

"Of course! What are you waiting for?" was the angry reply. "Maybe you think operations are over? Take your place at the defences, there may be a counter-attack yet."

Savelyev went back through the trenches and a minute later found Yegorychev and several others. The trenches were already being put in order and the men were picking convenient spots for shooting.

"Where's Yudin, Comrade Sergeant?" Savelyev inquired, feeling anxious for his friend.

"He went back to look after some wounded."

For the tenth time these days Savelyev was struck by the thought that Yudin had a hard job of it: besides doing all that Savelyev did, he went out to look after the wounded, drag them off the field and bind their wounds. "It must be tiredness that makes him grumble like that," he thought. "The war wears a man down."

Yegorychev pointed out a place to him, and unfastening his spade, he set to work to widen the nest, so that he could arrange everything more conveniently.

"There weren't many of them here," Yegorychev remarked, as he was setting up the machine-gun beside Savelyev. "Did you see how the Katyusha pounded them?"

"Yes," Savelyev replied.

"Well, there weren't many left after that. It was remarkably-astonishing to see the way that was done," Yegorychev replied.

Savelyev had noticed that Yegorychev had a habit of using the words "remarkably-astonishing" as though they were joined but he used them rarely, only when something gave him very especial satisfaction.

Savelyev, as he flung up spades full of earth on to the parapet, was thinking all the time how fine it would be to smoke. But there was no sign of Yudin and he felt ashamed to smoke without him. He had just completed the job on hand when Yudin came back.

"What about a smoke, Yudin?" Savelyev said.

"Has it dried up yet?"

"It must have," Savelyev replied, unscrewing the lid of the butter-dish.

"Comrade Sergeant, want a smoke?"

"Got some tobacco, have you?"

"Yes, only it's a bit dampish."

"Let's smoke it," Yegorychev said.

Savelyev took two pinches of it, and gave them to the two men who had their bits of paper ready. Then he took a third for himself and rolled a cigarette. At that moment they heard the whistle of a shell, then its explosion quite close to the trench. The earth literally spouted over their heads and all three of them squatted down in the trench.

"Look at that! We didn't even spill the tobacco," Yegorychev exclaimed.

"No, we didn't," Yudin agreed.

Keeping their crouching position, they rolled themselves cigarettes, but Savelyev, looking down at his hands, saw to his dismay that all the tobacco in his scrap of paper was scattered on the ground. He looked down, the floor was swimming in water and the tobacco was lost. Then opening the butter-dish, he took out, regretfully, another pinch. He had hoped to have enough left for two cigarettes but now there was only enough for one.

They had hardly begun to smoke when shells came whistling over again, this time at a greater distance—either they were going beyond the target or were not intended for this spot.

"The tobacco is still a bit damp," Yegorychev remarked, letting out smoke rings. "Doesn't draw too well."

Savelyev spread out his hands with a gesture which said: better be satisfied and thankful for what we've got.

The next lot of shells again fell near their trench and once more the earth was flung up. Clods dropped into the water and splashed them.

"They must have made this spot beforehand, knowing they wouldn't be able to hold out here."

"Now we'll get a regular showerbath. They'll paste us nicely this time," Yudin remarked gloomily.

"Croaking again?" said Savelyev.

At that moment another shell burst somewhere round the turning of the communication trench. No one was hit but they were flung to the trench floor into the water. They got up again and Savelyev glanced over the parapet of the trench. There was no sign of any movement on the German side.

"Everything all right?" Yegorychev asked when the whizz of another shell again forced Savelyev down to the bottom of the trench.

"Yes, it's all right."

Yegorychev took his watch from his trousers' pocket, looked at it, and without saying anything, put it back.

"What time is it now, Comrade Sergeant?" Savelyev inquired.

"You tell us what time you think it is," Yegorychev retorted.

Savelyev looked up at the sky, but it was hard to predict anything from it; it was a flat grey and rain was still falling.

"It must be about ten, I should think," he ventured.

"And what do you say, Yudin?"

"Midday, I reckon," he replied.

"Well, it's getting on for four o'clock," Yegorychev told them.

And although on days like this, full of danger and excitement, Savelyev was always mistaken about the time, and evening came unexpectedly, he was astonished on each occasion at the passing of time.

"Surely it can't be four yet," he said incredulously.

"Well, so much for your guesswork, you see," Yegorychev said. "It's right on the dot."

The German artillery kept up the firing for a good while but without success. A shell burst a good way to the left in the trenches, and someone from that quarter called for Yudin at once. He was away ten minutes, in the course of which no firing occurred. Then a shell came whistling over and another explosion was heard at the same spot as the last. Silence fell and the Germans did not shoot any more.

Ten minutes more passed before Yudin came up to Savelyev, and his face was bloodless.

"What's up, Yudin?" Savelyev asked in astonishment.

"Nothing," Yudin replied. "I've been hit, that's all."

Turning sharp round to get a better look, Savelyev saw that Yudin's tunic sleeve was slit the whole length, the arm bandaged and tucked inside the belt. He knew that this was only done when it was necessary to keep it from dangling.

"Is it broken?"

"Yes, it must be," the other replied. "Vorobyov was wounded and I was binding him when I was hit. Vorobyov was killed and I was—well, you can see." Then he squatted down beside Savelyev and said: "Savelyev, give me a bit of tobacco to smoke on the way."

Savelyev opened the butter-dish. At first he wanted to divide the pinch that remained at the bottom. Then, feeling ashamed of the intention, rolled a big cigarette of all the tobacco left and handed it to Yudin. The latter took it with his good left hand and asked for a light.

The Germans were not shooting now. There was dead silence.

"Well, I'd better be going, while shooting's slack," Yudin said. "Good luck to you," and with his cigarette glued to the corner of his mouth, he held out his hand to Savelyev.

"You better. . ." Savelyev began, then stopped, because it suddenly occurred to him that Yudin's arm might have to be amputated.

"What do you mean?"

"You get well and come back to us."

"No. Even if I do get well I'll most probably be put into a different unit. You have my address. If you should happen to pass through our Ponyri after the war, come and see me. For the present it's good-bye. We're hardly likely to meet again while the war's on."

He shook hands with Savelyev who found nothing to say. Then, helping himself awkwardly with his left hand, he clambered out of the trench and set off slowly, stooping a little, across the field.

Savelyev watched him go. Although he had often abused Yudin, particularly on account of his gloomy outlook, he felt sorry now that he was leaving.

"I must have got used to him," he thought to himself, not realizing that he had not only grown accustomed to the man but fond of him. If Savelyev had had any tobacco left at that moment, he would have smoked it. So instead

he resolved to munch some hard tack to pass the time, although he was not hungry. This reminded him that he had dropped his kit-bag on the way. Asking permission of Yegorychev, he climbed out of the trench and went to the spot where he reckoned it ought to be. Ahead of him he saw Yudin, who had not gone far yet. But Savelyev did not call out to him. After all, what could he say to his friend? In about five minutes' time he found the kit-bag lying where he had left it. He picked it up and brought it back.

Suddenly he noticed what the observer in the lower trench noticed a few seconds later—German tanks advancing, ten or twelve of them, to the left of the wood on the horizon a kilometre away.

As soon as he caught sight of them, Savelyev had an instinctive desire—though they had not yet opened fire—to run to the trenches and jump down into them. He had not reached it before the tanks began to shoot—not at him, of course, but it seemed to him, as so often happens, that they were shooting precisely in his direction. He was breathless when he jumped down into the trench where Yegorychev was already ordering the grenades to be got ready.

Andreyev, a long-range anti-tank rifleman from their platoon, was fixing his weapon in a convenient spot in the trench. Savelyev unfastened a big anti-tank grenade from his belt and placed it on the parapet in front of him. He had only one now because five days ago he had expended the other in a moment of irritation and flung it at a German tank some two hundred yards away. It had, of course, burst without doing any damage. Yegorychev had seen this and given him a dressing-down for it. And he felt ashamed and upset about it himself because it looked as though he had been scared. Yet he knew well that he had not been scared but only excited. Now, as he unfastened the grenade from his belt, he decided that he would throw only if the tank came quite close.

The tanks were not coming in the direction Savelyev expected. They were not making for the spot where his company was situated, but somewhere much further to the left. Only the two outside ones were coming their way.

"The main thing is to sit and wait," said Savin, as he passed them, evidently on his way to give the same order throughout the trench. "Sit and wait and throw your grenades if he comes. If you sit still, the Germans can't take the trench."

He went on, and Savelyev could hear him repeating the same thing to other soldiers.

The tanks kept firing on the move, unceasingly. Their shells burst now overhead, now to the left. Savelyev raised himself a little to peer over the trench. They were approaching fanwise, one was quite close on his left, the other heading straight for the trench. Savelyev ducked again. And though the one on the left was larger—a "Tiger"—and the one coming head on was but medium-sized, the latter looked larger because it was nearer. He picked up the grenade lying on the parapet and weighed it in his hands. Its very heaviness calmed him and bucked him up. When he glanced out again, the tank was only fifty paces away. This startled him and he ducked.

At that moment Andreyev, the anti-tank gunner opened fire at the side. This was the worst moment of all. When the tank clattered over him, as he lay flat on the trench floor, and the unfamiliar smell, mingled with burning and smoke, reached his nostrils, and the earth crumbled from the edges of the trenches, Savelyev felt less afraid. He only squeezed the grenade close to him as though fearful lest someone might snatch it from him.

When the roaring had died down, and the tank had passed over, Savelyev, without thinking what he was doing pulled himself up by his hands, threw himself on his belly on the trench parapet, then jumped up and flung the grenade under the tracks. He put all his might into the throw and, losing his balance, fell on his face. Then, without looking to see the results of his action, he turned and slumped down like a sack into the trench. As he lay there he could still hear the roar of the tank and he thought he had probably missed it. Then his curiosity grew too strong for him; and though it was a terrifying business, he stood up in the trench and looked in the direction the tank had taken. Clattering it turned on one track, while the second, which resembled an ironed-out railroad, dragged along after it. Savelyev realized that he had scored a hit.

At that moment two shells whizzed

over his head and he ducked down into the trench. Then came a violent explosion.

"We've set fire to it!" shouted Andreyev, turning his anti-tank rifle to the side where the tank was. "We've fired it!" he shouted again.

Looking over the parapet, Savelyev saw that the tank was blazing.

The other machines were a long way to the left—one was burning while the rest were on the move, but at that moment Savelyev could not tell whether they were going or coming. The throwing of the grenade, the explosion of the tank and the excitement in general were all mixed up and he found it hard to get his bearings.

"You hit his track," Andreyev explained—in a whisper, for some reason or other. "He stalled and she pasted him."

Savelyev understood that "she" was the anti-tank gun.

"Look! My anti-tank rifle was standing upright, and he broke it," Andreyev added in a deeply aggrieved tone.

The edge of the riffle was broken at the spot where it stood on a level with the trench.

"I couldn't save it," Andreyev went on in the same aggrieved tone.

But Savelyev was not listening. He was leaning as far as he could over the trench-parapet, staring at the burning tank. The thought that he was responsible for half of the job elated him, so that he could not tear his eyes from the sight.

The rest of the tanks had cleared out somewhere to the left and were no longer to be seen. The Germans now opened heavy mortar-fire. When a few bombs had exploded nearby, Savelyev felt a sudden dread that he who had just thrown a grenade at a tank, would be hit by a splinter from a bomb, and every time he heard the sound of one, he shrank against the trench wall.

This lasted for an hour and a half until it ceased altogether. Senior Lieutenant Savin, accompanied by Captain Matveyev, the battalion commander, came along the trench.

"This is the man who busted the tank," Savin said to Matveyev, as they halted by Savelyev.

Savelyev had not reported that he had hit the tank, but Savin knew it, as he always knew everything about his company.

"All right, we'll commend him for a decoration," said the other. "Well done!" he said as he shook hands with Savelyev. "How did you do it?"

"As soon as it passed over my head I jumped up and threw the grenade at his track," Savelyev replied.

"Well done!" Matveyev repeated.

"He was promised a medal for his earlier exploit also," Savin persisted.

"I've brought it," Matveyev said. "I brought four medals to your company. Go and tell all the men within reach and the platoon-commander to come here."

Savin went to carry out his order. Matveyev sat down beside Savelyev in the trench and drew out several certificates with seals. Selecting one, he folded the others carefully and returned them to this pocket. Then he drew out of the other pocket a little box, opened it and took out a medal. Savin, Yegorychev and two Red Army men from the platoon came up at this moment.

"Well, now," Matveyev began. "On behalf of the Supreme Soviet and the Command I award you the medal 'For Valour'."

At first he presented Savelyev with the certificate, which he put away in the pocket of his tunic, then the medal. Savelyev's hands trembled so that when he accepted it he almost dropped it.

"Well, now there you are," Matveyev repeated, either because he did not know what else to say or because he regarded further speech as unnecessary. "Congratulations. Carry on fighting," and he went on his way down the trench.

"Listen, Yegorychev," Savelyev said.

"What?"

"Fix it on for me, will you?"

Yegorychev got out a pen-knife that hung on a chain in his pocket, opened it carefully, unhurriedly, unfastened the collar of Savelyev's tunic, made a small slit in the material and affixed the medal to the wet, sweaty, mud-splashed tunic.

"It's a pity we've nothing to smoke on an occasion like this," Yegorychev remarked with a smile.

"Not a thing," said Savelyev, smiling too.

Then Yegorychev thrust his hand into his hip pocket, drew out a metal cigarette case and opened it. Savelyev saw a very small quantity of tobacco, or rather tobacco-dust, lying on the bottom.

"For a special occasion," Yegorychev

said. "I've been saving it for an emergency."

He rolled them each a cigarette and they lit up.

"What's going on? Seems to have quietened down a bit?" Savelyev remarked.

"That's right," Yegorychev agreed. "You'd better chew a rusk or two now. They'd all better eat something, I'll give orders. Who knows, maybe we'll have to start moving right away," and he left Savelyev.

When he was alone, Savelyev pulled out his kit-bag, got a rusk out of it and gnawed it for some time. Then, noticing that the sole of his left boot was coming off, he ransacked the kit-bag for a bit of thin string and bound the sole firmly to the boot. Then he examined the sole on the right foot. It was sound.

To the left, a good way ahead, heavy firing was going on, but here it was quiet—perhaps the Germans were preparing something or perhaps they had retired. Anyhow, Savelyev sat still a minute longer, then, remembering what Yegorychev had said above moving off soon, he got another rusk out of his sack and started to chew it, although he was disinclined to eat.

As a matter of fact, what was happening was unknown to either Yegorychev or Savelyev. On the left, where the tanks were, the company and the battalion dealt only auxiliary blows while the crux of the battle was where the German tanks had gone and afterwards the Soviet tanks had repulsed the Germans and made a big thrust ahead. The Germans were not fighting here at the moment because they had retired three kilometres or so beyond a swampy stream. While Savelyev was sitting in the quiet trench, munching a hard crust, the regimental command post received orders for the battalion to advance in ten minutes' time, follow the river downstream and force it that night.

Fifteen minutes passed, then Savin got his company on to its feet. Like the others, he stuffed his things back into his kit-bag, slung it over his shoulders, scrambled out of the trench and set off. They reached the shelter of the woods safely.

It was already growing dark and as they crossed the grove and came out on its fringe, Savelyev saw first of all a burnt German tank, and a hundred paces from it, one of ours also burnt. They passed close to it and Savelyev could see the number,—120.

"A hundred and twenty, a hundred and twenty," he repeated mechanically. It reminded him of something. Then suddenly he remembered, as though it had been only yesterday, a certain late afternoon when they had risen wearily and started out for the fifth time, and they had seen before them some tanks standing in shelter, and one was numbered 120 as they passed. Yudin, who had a spiteful tongue, said to the tankists who poked their heads out of the hatch:

"Well, coming to the attack with us?"

One of the tankists replied shaking his head ruefully:

"It's not the proper time for us yet."

"It never is," Yudin retorted. "All right, wait till we're entering the town, and you'll drive in—proud tankists, don't you know!—with the hatches open and the girls giving you flowers. But we'll manage to plod through the attack without you, somehow."

He had sworn roundly and strode on further. Savelyev, too, had felt that it was a bit too much of a good thing—here they were, going to risk their lives under fire, while the tankists were sitting under cover, waiting for something. Now, as they passed the burnt tank, he recalled the passage of arms and felt sorry: they who had gone into battle, unprotected, exposed to fire, were all alive, while the tankmen sitting securely behind armour had probably all perished in battle. And for perhaps the first time it occurred to him that armour-plating wasn't too good either. And Yudin was very likely on his way to the dressing station, if he had not got there already, with a broken arm that had to be tucked into the belt so that it would not dangle. "Still, a soldier's life is none too easy," he thought, "and you shouldn't offend the people who're in it. Today you upset them and tomorrow maybe there's no chance to ask forgiveness."

It was dark when they came out into a low-lying meadow that merged into a swamp. The river was quite close now. Swollen with rains, its plaintive murmur carried even here.

As the Senior Lieutenant had foretold,

by midnight they had to concentrate and then force the river. He was crossing the swamp with the others, trying to tread softly and not stick and splash in the mud. But the water squelched under his feet loud enough, it seemed to him, for the Germans to hear.

And they did. Savelyev was but a short distance from the bank when the first mortar-bomb sailed over his head to plop in the mud somewhere behind. Then a second whistled and struck nearer. Yegorychev ordered them to flop, which they did with alacrity. Savelyev started feverishly to dig the wet swollen earth, to scoop out if not a trench, at least a hollow in front of him. The bombs kept plopping into the swamp, left and right of them, and twice they drew short moans from someone.

The night was dark, and it was hard to lie in that muddy swamp and wait. Everything for the crossing had not yet been brought up and once the place had been occupied it could not be left. Savelyev lay there in silence; he wanted to cross the river as soon as possible and try to break through to the Germans. But meanwhile you had to lie and wait, that was all there was to it.

All the events of the day passed before his eyes as he listened to the splashing and plopping of mortar-bombs. He thought of Yudin, who was perhaps still trudging along on his way; and the burning tank whose dead crew they had once jeered at; and the track of the German tank he had hit, flattening out and wriggling like a snake; and finally, Yegorychev's cigarette case with the crumbs of tobacco on the bottom; and the good-natured smile with which the usually gloomy Yegorychev had proffered it. And whether it was because so much had been crowded into that hard and terrifying day and that there had been so many similar days, he suddenly fancied that some time or another he would not fail to tell them all about it at home. For if he had managed to keep alive so far he would surely come through to the end, and very likely go on living long afterwards.

Translated by Anthony Wixley

NIKOLAI GRIGORYEV

FOR THE SAKE OF HAPPINESS

One rarely meets a tall tankist. 5 foot 4 in. or 5 foot 6 is all right, but 5 foot 12 is already a set back. On the other hand, as if to make up for the lack of inches, a broad chest, supple limbs and robust health seem to be a tankist's first requirements. Yet no one would ever have called Guards Captain Kolosny a hefty lad. His hips and shoulders were far too narrow.

"Aren't your decorations a bit too heavy for you? Don't they weight you down?" joked the general when presenting Kolosny with yet another order.

Fair-complexioned and blue-eyed... an artist would have painted his face in water colours. These same transparent hues would also have best conveyed the soft, delicate gleam of those Byelorussian dawns that rose over him at his birth, as he grew up, and later when he came to man's estate and fell in love with his Catherine.

Shortly before the war, Petroos Kolosny entered an Armoured Fighting Vehicles School. One morning, early, he took leave of Catherine, gripped his light suitcase and left for the railway station.

The war found him at the military school. The war sent him into battle.

We have no idea what the letters of those two were like. We only know that his front-line sleep was troubled by dreams of a son. Oh, those dreams! But the day would surely dawn when they would come true! An apple orchard. His wife steps out of the house and puts a tiny creature into his arms. His heart misses a beat, his legs give way under him, so that he had to lean against a tree. Then, slowly, carefully, calculating his every movement he lowers himself down onto the grass. Now he is not likely to let his son fall. Catherine sits beside him. He experiences a strong desire to pat this bit of humanity gently on its little head. But Catherine stays his hand: "Better not," she says. No, he mustn't. Of course, he mustn't. Curse it, how rough is the palm of a tankman! And, bending down, he gently ruffles the hair on his son's head, blowing ever

so softly, with a hardly perceptible rounding of the lips, and then sighs happily.

His baby's hair. . . He often mentioned it in his uneasy slumbers under the heavy vault of the tank roof—its colour, its sweet smell,—the little curl on the back of the tiny head.

His men, the crew of his machine who shared with him the narrow sleeping space, were excited by this revelation of their captain's life, overheard unwittingly in the dead of night. But not for the world would any of them as much as hint of this secret of their commander who ate of their food and shared their fate in battles. Daylight chased away the dreams—and again there existed but a commander and his tank crew—in a powerful high speed machine crushing the enemy.

Meanwhile, the battles grew in intensity. Under the combined blows of our armies, the front-line had shifted from the centre of the country far westwards. Captain Kolosny's regiment and company were already operating on the right bank of the Dnieper. It was here his men noticed that their officer had acquired one more map which represented a region lying much more to the north than their present battle area. But the captain marked off the towns and villages on both maps with the same punctilious care—those through which he himself was passing and those he learned about from the communiqués. The captain's face brightened up at such moments and his soldiers secretly rejoiced together with him.

Battle followed battle. One day they were expecting a particularly hot engagement. The enemy's defence line had been dented as a result of many violent attacks by our troops. It now lay with them to throttle a strong resistance. It looked like being a hard-fought battle.

In the bluish winter twilight, the tanks put on fresh coats of white paint and filled up with petrol. Once more the crews rehearsed combined operations with artillery and with the infantry attached.

Dusk gave way to darkness until the sky was studded with stars. After a brief rest, the men started to prepare for the fray. It was a custom in Kolosny's company to go into fight in their best uniforms wearing their boots of chrome leather.

Having changed, and donned a fresh overall, Kolosny was walking to and fro among the tanks waiting for reports that the machines were ready. He was busy thinking out what to say to his men before leading them into such a hard battle; what word would intensify their strength and courage and set their hearts aflame with the desire to achieve heroic deeds.

At this moment a letter was brought to him. Kolosny's hand-torch clicked. The words were brief and to the point: "Executed by enemy for being a partisan."

Catherine!

The hand-torch dropped into the snow.

It was his groan which he was unable to stifle which brought the men to his side. He recognized the fighters of his own crew.

"Captain! What's happened?"

His torch picked up by someone again opened its luminous eye to light up the face of his mechanic. He had seen a thing or two, this Stalingrad chauffeur, before some tankists had dragged him out of a smashed lorry. Later he had become a tankist himself and his face was always besmeared with lubricating oil, so that every wrinkle seemed to be traced in brown Indian ink. This made him look older than his years and acquired for him the nickname of "dad".

"Petroos, our very own. . ."

There was so much real affection in the old soldier's words and so much more unexpressed kindness shining in his eyes, that before he was aware of it, the captain had turned to him, unthinkingly as a blade of grass turns towards the sun. This human warmth, this simple kindliness was his greatest need now. But his arms, stretched out towards the old soldier suddenly stiffened. Summoning all his self-control he forced his arms to fall again to his sides. It was as if he had clambered over a mountain peak. His voice sounded hoarse and aloof.

"We'll be Petroos and Ivan again when we're back on our collective farms. While the war's on there's no Petroos here. Only officers and fighting men. . ."

"Yes, captain," mumbled the driver lamely and guiltily.

"Now for the report on the readiness of the tanks."

"Yes, captain, report on the readiness."

The foremost line. Suddenly the huge snow-drifts formed there by the night

winds shrank and flattened out. But from their midst came movement which quickly flooded the whole field—the tank attack had begun.

At top speed, throwing up whirls of snow the assault tanks rushed on the enemy lines.

Captain Kolosny, his face paler and more haggard than it had been but a few hours before, was sitting at the gun, his hands on the wheels, his foot on the pedal. He had decided to man the gun himself this time, usurping the gunner's rights.

The tanks of his company were tearing along, obedient to his will, as if they had miraculously grown wings, his own wings.

"How well they keep the formation lines! What fine fellows! I wonder if the colonel can see them?"

He suddenly wished all the world to see his company in this precipitate, all sweeping attack!

"Thanks on behalf of the Service. Keep on," he had this message delivered by the radio operator.

The enemy's line of defence lay along the slopes of several hills. By the time the last artillery salvo had died away, and the clods of earth, torn up by the bursting shells from under the layer of snow had buried the remaining Germans, the tanks had reached the summits and broke into the flaky shroud of heavy suffocating smoke.

In less time than it takes to tell, the hills were flat-ironed; on dashed the infantry and, in a hand-to-hand fight, smothered the last sparks of resistance.

With rolling thunder, and flashes of lightning, the tank company hurled forward to the crest.

Beyond the crest. . . For a moment Kolosny thought he saw before him a forest of broken, fire-blackened tree-trunks sticking up in all directions. He had even time to wonder: "How odd of the topographer to have missed a wood!" Then the tree trunks all turned and inclined in his direction and the realization of what kind of forest it was made him shudder. An ambuscade?! An unheard-of multitude of guns. . .

Kolosny's tanks opened up a furious barrage, but what were the guns of all his company against the ocean of fire the German batteries could accomplish?

This ocean of fire broke loose. Immediately the tank on his right tumbled, nose down. From its side, with a swing like a long lash, a broken caterpillar fell to the ground. Then another turned over and crashed heavily into a crater, with its turret maimed.

It smote Kolosny to see plumes of smoke curling partly out of all the appertures of the stricken steel beauty. . .

Captain Kolosny turned impetuously from the periscope.

"One minute! Just one more minute of life to have time for revenge!"

And to the crew:

"Forward, comrades! Since we cannot shoot them down let us crush them! For your mothers, for your sons! And for the sons. . ." he gasped for breath, feeling robbed, bereaved. . . "and for the sons that have never been born!"

Those words that were to go straight to a soldier's heart—he had sought for them vainly that night. . . Now, they burst out of his own bleeding heart.

"Crushing," the driver called back.

"We'll crush them!" echoed the men.

The very cylinders seemed to be boiling with fury. With a blow of immense weight, the tank ran headlong into the thick of the steel forest. It dragged its belly over the cannon it had squashed and pounced on another. Finishing this one too, it proceeded to a third!

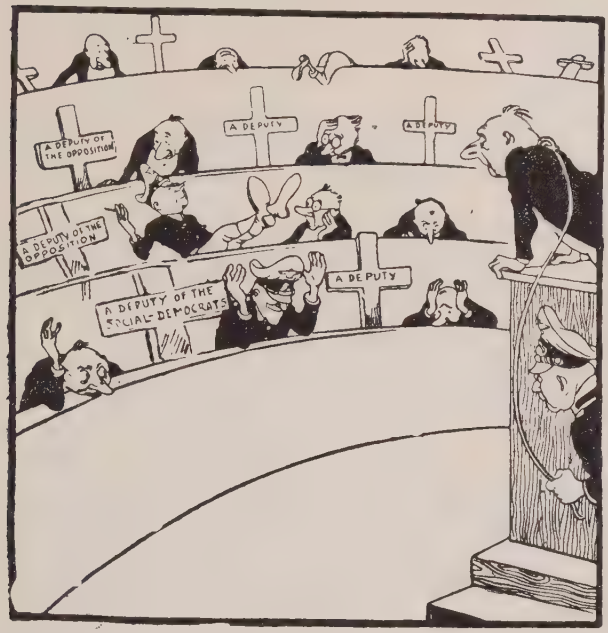
The whole company was squashing the Germans now. Under the snub-nosed tanks cannon barrels were turning somersaults, their armour shields warped and cracked, their wheels came off and skidded about like mad. Dirty tatters of German trench coats, belts and caps got jammed in the caterpillars and were turning with them.

Again and again, breaking the way by fire and caterpillars, the tanks cut through the formation of the German artillery,

"And for the sons. . ." the words of retribution sounded in the air and inside the tanks. "And for the sons that have never been born!"

Translated by N. Dvoretskaya

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT—HUNGARIAN STYLE



At the opening of the Hungarian Parliament there were only a few score deputies present who had managed to escape the murder, arrest, or "clean-ups", conducted by the Hitlerites when they occupied Hungary. The hall was principally filled by German and Hungarian officers and civil servants.

From newspapers

View of the Hungarian parliamentary session. Opposition deputies marked with a cross

A DANGEROUS COLOUR OR MISFORTUNES OF A BERLIN BLACK CAT

As the hitlerite paper *Mühlhausener Tagblatt* points out, black encourages a pessimistic mood, therefore, Germans wearing mourning are counted as defeatists.

From newspapers

Drawings by V. Fomichov

LENINGRAD CALLING

You in America ask what it was like?
Have you seen a house with its face off?
That's nothing.
Have you heard it happen all around you?
Have you had the glass crash in on your bed
When you were too sick to run with the rest?
That's nothing.
Have you been hungry till your bones stuck out
And then there were only bones in hanging skin?
That's nothing.
Have you seen it happening to the one you love most?
Are you beginning to get it?
Have you seen his smile and watched him die?
No, you haven't got it yet.
All that—you go through it mechanically, almost without feeling.
You know it's all around you,
If it wasn't that, what was it, you ask?
Well, I'll tell you:
It was before you got so you didn't feel it,
And after, when your feelings began to come back.
It doesn't seem to fit together?
You want me to make it clear?
You think you'll understand?
Listen:
There's an ocean between America and here,
And all the modern means of communication, airways included,
Can't take it away.
But one thing you will understand,
You, in America,
Who came forward and stood firm when democracy was challenged,
Who took the weight of every blow with stiffened shoulder and tightened fist,
Whose blood is the blood of those who fought against slavery, against tyranny and for justice,
You'll understand one thing
That rings out over the ocean and across all oceans,
You'll understand this, and the rest is not so important:
There's no turning back.

THE RAID INTO THE CARPATHIANS

(Notes of a partisan)

In the autumn of 1941, when the German hordes overran Sumy Region of the Ukraine, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Putivl Urban Soviet, sixty-year-old Sidor Kovpak, a partisan of Civil War days, again went off with fellow stalwarts on the partisan trail.

At first the column was small but very soon the renown of the valiant commander and his men spread far and wide through the Ukrainian steppes. The people dubbed Kovpak "Grandad". What follows is the simple story told by this popular hero, who has twice merited the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, of a great raid he led far into German-occupied territory.

When the Moscow announcer reads over the radio the Soviet communiqué and enumerates dozens of places familiar to me, those summer and autumn days of 1943 spring to my mind—the days when our partisan column marched through thirteen Ukrainian regions, the days of the raid into the Carpathians. It coincided with the repulse of the fascist onslaught on the Kursk bulge and the Red Army's assumption of the offensive which is still going on unabated to this very day. Our job was to cross rivers and steppes, traverse railways and highways, forests and swamps, to push deep into German-held territory, to blow up and demolish oil fields and vital communication lines.

Our brief rest, after a long and arduous march along the west bank of the Dnieper was over. Our men had covered 6,400 kilometres and not merely marched, but fought hard battles en route at rivers, railway junctions, between the Dnieper and the Pripyat, fought for towns...

The impending march was still more hazardous for it was a raid into the enemy's very lair, where he thought himself safe. We hid nothing from our men. We told them the stark, unvarnished truth about the perils that beset the path ahead; but you might as well try to scare a lion by shooting it with a gamp as scare a partisan with danger. They are men who have given themselves to the cause heart and soul.

. . . We break up our camp in the forest. Company after company strings out along the road.

The raid has begun. As a rule the day is spent in rest either in the forest or in remote villages; the night in forced marches of 30—50 kilometres at a stretch. The iron rule is: all march in strict formation, the ranks are sacrosanct! There's nothing more dangerous than to relax formation. My mobile headquarters on tachankas never leave the ranks. There is a second inviolable rule: within a minute or two of the enemy's appearance he must come under fire which is aimed right at the target, fire to kill. Mortars are mounted on special waggons, their barrels pointing in all directions—circular defence on the march. In attacking, the German aims at swamping the baggage train and column before it can deploy, but we are always ready to open accurate fire and pin the assaulting force to the earth.

And it is not once nor twice that the Germans have burned their fingers when striking from ambush. Hardly have they leaped from behind the trees when our machine-gunners begin mowing down their lines. The mortar-men press the company "samovars" to their bellies and shower the Germans with mortar-bombs. We teach our men on the march never to open fire for the sake of noise, merely to scare. The first volleys must spread panic among the enemy. If he's forced to take to earth, if after the word "go" killed and wounded begin to fall, if "Aryan" blood flows, the stuffing is knocked out of the Germans straight away and it becomes easier to wipe them out.

And so, with all our forces clenched in a fist and bristling with weapons all around, we pushed on our way, now along

scarcely perceptible paths, now along by-roads, now along highways.

Sometimes we happened to put up for the day in villages we had visited during our first raid. At one place the men found instead of the expected village nothing but the charred remains of the cottages. From dugouts in the woods the population ran out to meet us, the whole village from the oldest to the youngest. They shed tears of joy, hugged and kissed the partisans—their old friends—treated them with what they could, hardly able to believe their eyes. The Germans burned their village because they had once given hospitality to the partisans. The gendarmes told them that we had all been killed or captured.

Convincing themselves that it was really us in the flesh, the people took heart. They saw in us the harbinger of coming victory.

The collective farmers were astonished at our artillery, drawn by sturdy well-conditioned horses, and the solid mortars, handled the infantry's tommy-guns with respect, peered in wonder at the wireless transmitters and gazed with admiration at the cavalry squadron.

"If partisans have all this," said the peasants, "then what must the Red Army have?!" We smiled, remembering how we had begun hostilities with a single machine-gun, and that a training weapon coaxed by patience and ingenuity into the semblance of the real thing.

Now we are rich! We can even share our weapons with new columns which spring up everywhere along our route. We leave a village and on the same day a dozen or so armed stalwarts go off to the woods. Often enough one of the formation's veterans stays behind with them. He passes on our traditions, our experience won by our blood.

Our reconnoissance men were never hard up for guides. Old collective farmers volunteered to guide them along little-known paths past German posts and garrisons. We have the scouts to thank in a great measure for the fact that until we entered the western regions we had not a single major clash with the enemy.

My indefatigable reconnoissance chief Pyotr Vershigora, former cinema operator, always knew what was happening ahead and on either side. He threw out his feelers in all directions. Our mounted and foot reconnoissance moved along the railways and I always knew the location of important military trains.

One day three freight trains passed us one after the other. True we were in a hurry but the temptation to hamstring that important section of the line was too great. So a nice little surprise was prepared for the next train. Hardly had the engine reached the crossing than the air shook with the gun salvoes and the sharp crack of the anti-tank rifles. The staccato rattle of the machine-guns joined a second or two later. The cars were riddled with shell splinters and machine-gun bursts—the doors began to open, but too late. The engine and front cars ran onto mines and from the rails an enormous column of metal scrap and splintered wood rose into the air.

For a long time as we moved on our way we heard behind us the booming roll of explosions and saw blinding flashes. It meant that cars packed with "total mobilization" Germans were flying sky high and tumbling down embankments as they struck the "surprise packets" thoughtfully planted under the rails by our sappers.

I don't know to whom the Germans ascribed those "fireworks" because they failed to get on our track. Still, they were nervous, they instinctively sensed that some dangerous force was slipping past their barrier-posts and garrisons, moving phantom-like to the west. Otherwise why should German reconnoissance planes have nosed so persistently over the woods and roads in places where there had been no hostilities for a long time past?

We approached the "frontier" of the so-called "Galicia District". That is what the fascists had arbitrarily christened the western regions of the Soviet Ukraine, openly incorporating them into occupied Poland, which in turn was called the Polish Governor-generalship. Here Governor-General Wächter and SS police-führer Brigadier-General Katzman ruled the district. Our intention was to make rather a mess of their blissful content. The very air seemed electric with impending battle.

The "District" authorities were put into a fury when they learned of our presence. The destruction of a bridge on the Proskurov—Tarnopol railway

brought Governor-General Wächter a deal of unpleasantness. And no wonder—a vital railway artery had been put out of commission.

The Germans had hallucinations of major parachute landings.

Scared by our progress the nazis rushed up crack police regiments from Tarnopol and even from Cracow. Along all the roads right to the banks of the River Sluch—already behind us—came motor columns of police trailing guns.

I called a halt at the fringe of the forest three kilometres from the town of Skalat. The men needed a rest after that long spell of arduous night marches.

It's hard to say where precisely our forward line was situated—it was everywhere. So that when the observers who had dug in at outposts on the heights informed us that Germans were advancing from the town in fighting formation we weren't the least bit anxious. Hundreds of eyes kept check of the nazis' movements. They had resolved to attack us from the front and flanks.

Going the rounds from company to company I saw everywhere the calm faces of the men, their weapons held in a firm assured grip. When the Germans got close enough so that their faces could be discerned the battalions counter-attacked. The partisan avalanche swept down on the nazis from the forest edge. With sabres bared the cavalry squadron poured from the woods into the thick of the Germans as they turned about face for the town. Back to Skalat they swept, glancing with fear-contorted faces, and abandoning their weapons. The rout was complete. The gendarmes fled from Skalat, too, leaving to us big stores and a tidy pile of weapons. Among the spoils, by the way, were the sixteen lorries that had brought the punitive expedition to Skalat. Although we had given the fascists a painful tap on the nose the entire command and I realized that we had reached a period of big battles, that the hour of stern trial had come, that the Germans would try to square accounts with us.

From where we were it wasn't so far to the Carpathians. The thing to do was to break through to the foothills before the enemy could bring up large forces and bar all the passes to the mountains.

Major-General Sidor Kovpak

We resolved to strike at the bridge across the Dniester at the village of Sivka. There was no sense in attacking it in full force for enemy aircraft would discover us immediately and then reinforcements would be rushed up by lorry.

I decided to assign the dangerous and difficult operation to the cavalry squadron. Its commander, Lenkin, caught on to the plan like lightning. It was this: steal into the vicinity, make a whirlwind charge, cut down the guard and clear the way for the infantry battalions.

The platoons moved along the forest paths, invisible from the air. Only when the glittering river come into view did Lenkin deploy his thunderbolt of gallant lads and storm the bridge. Cheering in the mad sweep of the charge they tore down on the stunned guard; while the partisans, leaning from the saddle as they galloped cut down the German machine-gunners. The gendarmes were too late to fire a single burst. The cavalry swept across the bridge, knocking the nazis into the water. In the lead, with sabre bared, galloped Lenkin himself.

When not one living German was left on the bridge or at its approaches Lenkin gave the order to dismount and instantly took up circular defence. The

horseholders kept the horses under cover so as not to attract the attention of enemy aircraft. From the air, too, our men, now in the trenches, were difficult to distinguish from their former occupants the German guard.

Lenkin was later decorated with the Order of the Red Banner for his part in the Carpathian expedition. Most of his men also earned awards. Applying a well-known proverb it might well be said of our cavalry that they "don't draw the sword without cause and don't sheathe it until they have won renown".

Soon afterwards the advanced patrols were lying beside the dismounted cavalry. Night was an excellent ally. Under its cover the entire formation reached the bridge and before the sun peeped over the horizon, it had crossed to the other side of the river. All of us, from general to rank-and-filer, congratulated each other: the Dniester was behind us!

We had now gone too far for the Germans to tolerate our progress. In addition they were beside themselves at the neat way we had fooled them at the Dniester. They had sent forces to hold the small fords where they expected us to steal across, but we had taken the bull by the horns and stormed and captured the bridge.

The nazis thought they would square accounts with us at the River Lomnitsa which we could not possibly avoid. Police battalions occupied all the bridges and fords. The German command reinforced them with tanks and artillery batteries. The populated points along the riverside were prepared for stubborn defence. The Germans intended to engage us in a general action and crush us once and for all.

We stood face to face with the enemy. Only the river lay between us. Dense forest covered us from air attack. To wait until the enemy attacked was unprofitable and unwise. The initiative must be seized: surprise means victory!—the precept of General Suvorov, the Russian general who never suffered defeat, must be followed.

Our plan was to start by distracting the enemy's attention, to put him on tenter-hooks. Our detachments reached the river along a stretch of twenty-five kilometres. The Germans had something to think about: where would the partisans seek a ford? Might not they again attack a bridge? Our scouts reported that the Fritzes were noticeably on edge, just as we desired.

There was no lack of guides from the local population. They showed us several fords and the commissar and I determined on three of them near a certain village.

The assault of those fords was particularly illuminating. It put the enemy utterly off his stroke and provides a story worth the telling.

The attack was appointed at the usual partisan time—at night. Concentrating all my artillery and mortars in one mass I turned their fire on the enemy bank. The Germans replied on the instant and a familiar artillery duel began. Meanwhile the companies moved down to the fords and began entering the water. In silence, without a single sound, the detachments struck out to the opposite bank. The strong current made itself felt even at these comparatively shallow places. With compressed lips the men fought the water, helped comrades in distress and dourly pushed on to the further bank.

Observing the same silence on arrival the battalions put themselves in order and deployed for attack. When the signal was given the partisan infantry went in from two directions sweeping down on the German gun-posts. A grim hour and a half battle of fire, grenade and bayonet followed. We lost several of our comrades but emerged the victors. The Germans fled, their batteries hardly getting away, abandoning shell boxes, tarpaulins and so on.

German battalions in other villages couldn't make up their minds to come to the rescue. They feared that they too would be attacked at any moment. Meanwhile our batteries and baggage were completing a successful crossing.

The swift mountain river growled, the turbulent current swept the horses from their feet and overturned the waggons. All were wet to the skin and shivering with cold, but spirits were never higher! Again the Germans had been fooled, again the punitive generals would be biting their nails!

Now we should certainly break through to the Carpathians, the road to the dense and beautiful Stanislav forest was open. Blowing up the bridges as we went along the Stanislav—Kalush railway and the highway running parallel we broke

through to the "Black forest" west of Stanislav.

German reconnoissance planes—harbingers of coming battles—cruised right above the roads. Just as our demolition squad blew up a German train at a bridge a reconnoissance plane came snooping along. The explosions were so severe that the blast dashed the plane aside and the pilot made off like a dog with a tin-can on its tail. Exchanging many a joke about this incident, the men entered the forest in high glee, just as if there had been no hard-fought battle and the assault of the ford. Messerschmitts with yellow rings on the fuselage, circled above us and with ear-splitting roars dived down to the very tree tops, trying to make out what was afoot in the forest thickets.

And our men grinned: "You're on a wild goose chase now all right, Herr 'Messer'."

In those brief hours of rest in the "Black forest" we were all in the grip of high expectations. From here we should begin our march into the Carpathians! We had finished with hostilities on the steppe expanses and at rivers. The mountains were strange to us; how should we fight on those precipitous peaks and in the narrow passes? None of us knew anything about this sort of warfare. How should we haul our guns up there? Would not our baggage be a millstone round our necks? What should we encounter at the oil fields? After all the Germans realized that it wasn't a weakness for mountain scenery that had drawn us to the Carpathians. . .

I went about among the men, listened to their heart to heart talks, asked the commanders to speak their minds. They were all concerned with the same apprehensions that disturbed me. But every man, right down to the last cook and stretcher-bearer, remembered that we had been sent here, deep into the enemy rear, by our country and that it expected of us still greater courage, a still greater exertion of all our strength and will.

How much talk there was about our entry into the Carpathians that night, around the infrequent campfires lit in pits and carefully hidden from air observation. Men remembered their fathers who had thrashed the Germans here in the last war, recalled Brussilov's breakthrough into Galicia.

Both the commissar and I knew that the storm-clouds were gathering around us. Police regiments and battalions were speeding to the mountains in lorries from all sides. After missing us at the rivers the Germans, to guard against eventualities, fortified the Hungarian frontier so as to cut an enormous ring round the partisan formation. The Hitler command brought pressure to bear on the Hungarian government and it submissively detailed a whole division against us. Not far off mountain infantry regiments were mustering, brought from Norway for transfer to the front. On the way they got fresh orders and also made for the mountains.

Documents seized showed that 500 lorries had been allotted to the forces sent against us to secure mobility.

But let me say, and without a shade of exaggeration, that not one of us even so much as thought of retreating in the face of danger and of deferring the march into the mountains. Let the Germans mobilize 100,000 devils if they liked, we would still find the way to the oil-fields and leave hundreds of fascist tanks and planes without juice.

We began the southward drive to the enticing Carpathian peaks on the night of July 19th. It was obvious that the Germans least expected us here. The 4th SS regiment, it turned out, had been stationed to stop us at the village of Rassulnya. According to "German arithmetic" we should have arrived only in several days time, and the SS men were peacefully sleeping, blissfully unaware of impending danger. They had miscalculated our marching speed.

Our scouts removed the sentries without a shot. I ordered company commander Bakradze:

"Break into the village from the west. I'm giving you two more companies to do it with. Try to make out that you are at least three times stronger in number. Drive the Germans to the north-eastern outskirts. There they'll meet Matyushenko."

"That's clear. Everything will be all right," came Bakradze's brief reply.

Battalion commander Matyushenko got orders to flank the enemy and make it appear as if the Germans were completely in a pocket.

A few minutes later those hard-bitten veteran commanders led off their men.

It all went off just as if the Germans had gone out of their way to facilitate our plan. Still rubbing the sleep out of their eyes they tumbled into the streets in their underclothes. Bakradze attacked them and drove them into the arms of Matyushenko. By morning nothing was left of the SS regiment but rags and tatters. Our artillerymen captured the regiment's guns at the positions and fired the entire store of shells after their late owners to speed their flight. Sixty blazing lorries lit the scene of slaughter; 300 SS men lay in the streets and the kitchen-gardens. Taking advantage of the illumination the partisans gathered the spoils: guns, machine-guns, wireless transmitters, cases of cartridges, mortars and sub-machine-guns.

A day later we came to the Carpathian foothills. Wooded slopes of the mountain spurs, steep roads, forests climbing to the sky. . . We were wrapt in admiration at the alpine landscape but how much more difficult was it for us to operate! In the mountains we lost our important advantage—freedom of manoeuvre. The ascent grew ever steeper. The incline soon reached 45 degrees. The horses were wringing wet with sweat, and foamed at the mouth; the men and commanders helped them as best they could, dragged the guns themselves, dismantled and carried the heavy machine-guns. Where now were our fifty versts a day?

Travelling was slow but as before we maintained strict formation. The commanders and commissars had their men constantly in view. Iron military discipline was relaxed not one iota.

Noisy mountain streams were racing down all around, but to take a few steps aside for a drink men had to ask permission. In this new and unaccustomed situation discipline had to be exceptionally strict.

Dawn found us on the march. Hardly had the saw-edged horizon loomed into visibility than an enemy target-spotter flew over the road. Forty to forty-five minutes later planes roared over diving and dropping bombs. There was no confusion or panic. The detachments bristled with rifles and machine-guns pointing skywards. Heavy fire made the planes rise to a higher altitude, nevertheless that morning we lost three of our comrades. We buried them under simple piles of stones.

That very day three air marauders—a reconnoissance plane, a fighter and a light bomber—crashed on the mountain rocks, winged by the unerring fire of machine-gunners and riflemen. That was the partisans salute to the memory of the dead. Very soon, however, an opportunity for a more serious reckoning with the enemy arose: dozens of oil-derricks loomed up on the horizon.

The Drohobycz oil-fields! For over a month we had been pushing towards them, had fought dozens of battles large and small and now we had reached our objective. It's painful to destroy national property, but the law of war is hard. At present it must be done so as to weaken the enemy, to speed victory.

For six days there was no difference between night and day. One immense conflagration raged in the Bitkuv-Yablunov area. On all sides our companies marched on the derricks and the oil-cracking plants. They engaged the German guards while the demolition men swiftly did their work.

Oil was burning at its sources and in the storage tanks while the Germans dashed furiously from one place to another, powerless to do anything. All sectors were attacked at the same time. Many of our unknown friends, workers and oil engineers, true Soviet patriots led us by obscure mountain paths right to the derricks, showed us where oil-pipes ran. We let fifty thousand tons of oil escape. Risking their lives, our friends did their work without the slightest fuss and usually departed without even giving their names.

All our men carried through the operation with sterling courage, scoring danger. In six days we blew up forty-eight derricks, thirteen storage tanks, three oil-cracking and one ozocerite plants. All the German artifices were futile. We succeeded in destroying a big part of the oil at Drohobycz.

But now the Hitler command knew just where we were. The enemy thought he had us trapped. Eight German and Hungarian divisions blocked all the exits from the mountains. Those despicable Ukrainian-German nationalists, who have sold themselves body and soul to the fascists, also took a hand in the puni-

tive expedition. We made a wonderful mess afterwards of the flank of their "Galychina" division.

At Nadvornaya the 6th SS police regiment was after us, at Yaremche the 26th and at Pecheneghino the 347th. A contest began for altitude, for the most advantageous position in the mountains. We went ever higher and higher. On July 25th began a period of almost incessant, exhausting actions with an enemy many times outnumbering us. We put our waggons on two wheels and then even these were useless. We had to resort to pack horses, piling as much equipment on the animals and ourselves as we could. We lost in fire power but gained in mobility.

Those were tough days. At times we even had to carry our wounded and cases of ammunition on our backs. Planes constantly patrolled the roads but the local mountaineers showed us paths unknown to any but them. At times though we had to travel where there were no paths at all, to travel the road of the partisan over timber obstacles, up stiff ascents and along ravines, through virgin forest.

We had to tighten our belts more than once. There is water and salt in the mountains in plenty, but provisions are scarce to say the least. Villages in these parts are few and far between. We were helped by the shepherds and herdsmen on the mountain pastures.

Under pain of death all village elders were ordered to drive the cattle down into the valleys. But even then the people came to our aid. Time after time we caught "stray" cattle near our camps. They had been specially driven to us by the herdsmen.

We manoeuvred in the mountains, breaking through first one and then another enemy cordon. In all there were twenty-one. The partisans, with their native humour, called them "pontoon".

For two days on end a battle raged in the valley of the River Polyanynya. Covering each other our detachments fought a Hungarian division, police regiments and units of the frontier guard at one and the same time. We used up all our shells, our guns lapsed into silence. Cutting a road for ourselves with an audacious bayonet charge, we broke loose from the throngs of encirclement and dashed for Mounts Shevka and Senechka.

We advanced to the heights from one side. A police regiment, completely equipped and fresh, pushed towards it from the other.

On August 1st in the morning a raging battle began on Mount Shevka. It's not likely that any of us will ever forget it. . .

Riflemen, tommy-gunners, anti-tank riflemen and machine-gunners occupied grass-grown trenches. They had been dug by our fathers in the first world war who, it seemed, were encouraging us in this battle.

The green German ranks pushed towards the mountain top in complete silence. The enemy soldiers clambered persistently up the rocks and cut through the scrub. We saw everything but gave no sign.

The first battalion was ordered to open fire only when the Germans were dashing for this positions at the double. The fascists reeled back on the instant, choking with their own blood.

But again and again, now from the west, now from the south and the north-west German columns pushed up towards the fire-breathing peak. And every time we threw them back to the foot.

Enemy aircraft appeared on the scene, hanging over our positions from dawn to dusk. Nine planes incessantly dropped their loads on our trenches. The Germans tried to pin us to the ground and then, by an attack from all sides, to overwhelm and crush us. Just as soon as the smoke and dust of the bombing had cleared away the SS men again sprang up and came on towards us. But the partisans, though racked with hunger and worn out by the arduous march through the mountains, countered the enemy with murderous fire every time.

After two days of stiff, unflagging battle we took advantage of darkness and a mountain pass to shift unnoticed to the other peak. There we rested and put ourselves in order right under the enemy's nose. All day long we watched his planes bombing the height we had left. Someone must have blundered for then we saw the planes knock seven bells out of their own infantry.

Nevertheless we were still inside a big and strongly clinched circle. Where should we break it? Where did the Germans least of all anticipate a blow? We came

to an audacious decision. On the night of August 3rd the partisans swept down like a mountain landslide onto the town of Delyatin in the Pruth valley. The town is the key to the upper reaches of the river. It has six big bridges and is the junction of several highways and railways. It was from there that the enemy sent their main forces into the mountains. They least of all expected us to risk an attack at such a place.

By this time the fascist command had already blared all over Stanislav Region that we had been wiped out. The Germans were so sure of it that we were able to approach close to the town without deploying into fighting formation. We fell upon the Delyatin garrison just like a bolt from the blue. All six bridges, including the road bridge across the Pruth, went sky high. The panic in the nazi garrison was simply indescribable. German engine crews, seeing partisans dashing for the station, abandoned their engines and tracks, the station guard fled. Over 500 Germans ended their lives that day in Delyatin and its environs.

The partisans fought with a furious, bitter energy. The tidings that we were alive, fighting and winning, went from village to village. We entered on that risky battle fully confident in our strength, staunchness and courage. We captured rich booty in Delyatin, put many important military objectives out of commission and dealt another staggering blow at German prestige.

We fought many a battle after Delyatin, each of them a model of heroism, courage, pluck, resource and skill.

Our strength lay in the unity of our people, in their readiness to come to the aid of each other. And when later we had to split up and travel in isolated detachments so as to put the Germans off the track, to make them deconcentrate their forces and divide their attention, I was certain that none of the detachments would lose its bearings in these difficult conditions.

For two months our detachments moved by different ways but to the same spot and the same objective, often having no communications with each other at all. Each traversed about 700—800 kilometres, now accepting battle, now avoiding it. Pyotr Vershigora was in command of one of the bigger detachments and by some sort of partisan sixth sense he often divined that somewhere not far off weaker detachments were heavily engaged. He would then draw off the enemy's forces to himself giving his comrades the chance to push on further.

In those days we passed through all Stanislav and Tarnopol Regions, part of Lvov and Kamenets-Podolsk Regions and thoroughly frayed the Germans' nerves. They went charging on lorries from one region to the other, often dealt blows at blank spots and were unable to feel out our main forces. The initiative was again in our hands. We travelled the return route the wiser for a great deal of experience.

It was a great day in our partisan family when all the groups at last met. We had to blush for no one—on the contrary, independent action had strengthened our detachments still more.

And so our raid into the far off Carpathians came to an end. Only six months had passed when the Red Army entered the foothills of the Carpathians. Over those towns and villages on the banks of the Desna and Pruth where not so long ago we had fought hard, bitter battles deep in the enemy rear, the Soviet flag now flutters in the breeze.

Major-General SIDOR KOVPAK

Translated by T. G. Harley

THE SCHOOL OF COURAGE

The loan figure of an aged man, seated in an armchair. In his hand he holds a human skull. His head is turned to the left, with a glance full of kindly attention. Examine his features closer—those square-cut side whiskers telling us of the past century, his high forehead accentuated by thinning hair—and you will understand clearly the sculptor's idea. What is it, this walking, talking and thinking miracle called Man? Such are the thoughts on which the seated figure ponders. This is a statue to the founder and genius of Russian military field surgery Pirogov, erected at the entrance of the First Moscow Medical Institute

on Pirogov Street in Moscow. All the inward surge of this motionless figure speaks of an inspired desire for knowledge. Many a generation, on entering the First Moscow Medical Institute for the first time, experienced a suppressed excitement on passing the statue of this aged physician, the first to envisage war as a great experimental field of surgery. But it is only the new generation of our youth, who have passed through the stern school of war, who are capable of coming really close to him, of valuing at their real, high worth his achievements during the Crimean campaign, of feeling him their teacher in the real, essential sense of the word.

BUTTERCUPS AND DAISIES

On June 23rd, 1941, Oxana Pashchuk passed her exams in therapy; despite her youthful age of nineteen summers this was her third course at the Odessa Medical Institute. That same day she volunteered at the local recruiting station and was rejected.

"We don't need babies, thank you," she was told by the second officer in charge, and Oxana was so upset that she did not even ask what his objections were—was she too young or too small.

Very well, once I'm rejected, I'm rejected! The war won't end tomorrow. Oxana volunteered for trench-digging outside Odessa and continued studying for exams. Incidentally, she went on working for her exams right through the war.

In December she at last got her way. But war met her harshly. During the defence at the Western front Oxana spent more than twenty-four hours in deep snow, and fell sick with pneumonia. Having lost consciousness at Rzhev, she came to in Stalingrad. The first thing she saw were two or three undernurses standing near her bed with weeping eyes. At first Oxana could not understand the cause of these tears.

"And there was no reason for them to cry," Oxana laughingly declares, "because two months later I was working in that same hospital as head nurse."

Faithful to her habit of working for her exams, whatever the circumstances, Oxana managed to pass her fourth course exams in Stalingrad, to which the front-line had by now drawn very close. She was only just in time, as the hospital where she was undergoing practical training was bombed and destroyed by the nazis. Oxana helped to carry the wounded out of the flaming building and send them to a fairly safe place on the other side of the Volga. That was how Oxana began working as war nurse at the river crossing.

Is there a man, woman or child in Russia who has not heard of the famous North Crossing at Stalingrad? Everything needed to support the immortal tenacity of the Stalingrad divisions, all the sinews of war, came streeming across this North Crossing. Shells and cartridges, food and supplies, tanks and guns, men and machines. Hardly would dusk fall when all this would be loaded onto barges, boats, launches and cutters and at night, under the blind fire of German guns, be shipped over to Stalingrad on the other bank. And on the return journey these craft would carry wounded men, and it was Oxana Pashchuk who helped to look after these men to protect their lives, and make them as comfortable as possible.

The tiny dugout which, with one bedsheet, she had somehow managed to rig up as something faintly resembling an operating room, was situated about one hundred and fifty feet from the forward lines. Enemy aircraft constantly hung over the river crossing. There were days when our men counted more than one thousand sorties by the nazis; from dawn till dark clouds of earth and dust went flying skyward under the burst of enemy bombs. But despite the hell let loose by the Germans, despite the continuous din and thunder of exploding bombs and sputtering of machine-guns, this small-built girl carried on her duties, dressing wounds in the makeshift "operating room", making the men comfortable in various dugouts near the moorages, chatting and joking with them, admiring the snapshots of the folk at home they showed her, writing letters home for them, to their mothers, wives, sweathearts or friends.

In this life of hers, which Oxana would have exchanged for no other, there was an incident which she recalls with a feeling of pleasant surprise.

On reaching the Volga, the Germans cut off one of our regiments and hemmed it in against the river. For two weeks no wounded could be removed from the

encircled unit, and no supplies delivered. It was November and ice was already forming on the Volga; the launches and unwieldy Volga barges made an odd picture in this "arctic" scene of slowly floating ice. A small tug was about to leave the moorage, to make a journey of five miles, steaming passed German batteries which had every square inch of the river under firing range. Aboard this tug, which was setting out to bring back the wounded men from the encircled regiment, was Oxana.

The flash of bomb explosions turned the moonlit night into day, making the gaunt factory buildings loom blacker than ever; the whole world seemed engulfed in flames—the earth, the sky and the water. The tug carried a cargo of thousands of shells, drums of fuel, cartridges and so on. The water boiled and seethed all around as the small craft nosed its way through the floating ice, manoeuvring here and there, puffing along as though in no particular hurry.

"The skipper was wild at me," Oxana related. "He was an old man, and very superstitious! Think of it: a woman on board! Sure sign of bad luck. And all the time I kept on humming to him the popular tune "Smile, Captain, smile" from the film *Captain Grant's Children*, and tried to prove that I'm not the sort of woman who brings bad luck. Anyway, we reached our destination. Maybe it was downright good luck. Or perhaps we got there safely because we really wanted to."

One can imagine the hearty welcome given by the medical station of the encircled regiment to this small figure of a girl clad in a huge greatcoat!

"You've no idea how many wounded we have!" exclaimed the head surgeon, after every person in the dugout had embraced Oxana and given her brotherly kisses on both cheeks.

That night Oxana supervised the embarkation of three hundred wounded, of whom half were serious cases, and the tug cast off its moorings for the return journey.

As the day before, with the same stolid fury the Germans sent a hail of shells and bullets down on the tug. But luck is with the brave. . .

Her friends on the other bank met her safe return with more than surprise. None of them dared hope to see her back safe and sound. The chief of the Army medical station, a Ukrainian by nationality—compatriot of Oxana—laughed gleefully as he cried out:

"What a girl! Wherever she treads buttercups and daisies spring up!"

And since then this longish nickname of "buttercups and daisies" has stuck to war nurse Oxana Pashchuk.

THE "KIDNAPPED" MAJOR

At the battles of Bryansk in the autumn of 1941 Major V., chief of divisional staff, was posted as missing. The major was a brave and able officer, highly appreciated by the Red Army command. Staff H.Q. received information, rather vague and uncertain, though, that the major had been wounded in both legs and was now somewhere in the area of Belyov.

Assistant military surgeon Lena Lundberg went to see the divisional commander and volunteered to set out to find the major and bring him back to safety.

It may be assumed that the D.C. thoroughly weighed all the pros and cons of the feasibility of this undertaking. Lena stood before him as he gazed thoughtfully at her—a girl twenty years of age and sportsmanlike. She could speak German—this would help in her perilous venture. Her eyes wore a pleasant look, her lips pressed together in a determined manner. The D.C. thought a while, and then gave his consent.

"You know the saying—God protects the brave," he said, as he firmly clasped her hand, "and we need the major badly, the army needs him, beyond all question."

Lena was faced with a two-hundred kilometre hike behind the German lines. Staff H.Q. furnished her with two "addresses". One was the cattle-yard of a collective farm some twenty kilometres from Belyov. Wounded Russians were lying in this cattle-yard. The second address was a little shack somewhere in the woods—the major was being sheltered there by the forester. This was all Lena knew of her vague destination. But for a girl with gumption like her's this was not so little, nor so vague.

After many long days of wandering and uncertain roving she finally reached the forest shack, where, it was rumoured, the major was being sheltered. Without even opening the door, a woman, who

seemed scared to death, told Lena that her husband, the forester, had been taken by the Germans. The major was not here, she had heard of him, but knew nothing of his whereabouts. Yes, she heard he had been wounded in both legs, and the Germans had shot him.

This could be true. Very likely it was true. Lena could have returned empty-handed with a clear conscience. But she determined to continue the search. She had to check up on every possible "likelihood" standing between life and death.

Again long days of roaming fraught with danger, nights spent in the woods, questionings by enemy patrols. Lena was now looking for the wounded Russians. The place here had been the scene of the division's battle action, and surely at least one of the wounded men would have heard, or know something, of the major. And as though following a barely visible thread, she went from one to another, until the grandest day in all her life when at last, in some filthy barracks crowded with wounded and dying men, she found the major.

She had achieved the first part of her task, and now Lena pondered on the second part, more difficult and complicated, if anything. First she must "k dnap" the major, then set him on his feet again, and then see him safely back to the Soviet lines.

It would take too long to tell of the wiles and stratagem to which Lena had recourse in getting the major out of the barracks. But by hook or by crook—next day the major was resting on a clean bed in a clean hut and Lena was feeding him with food concentrates which she had brought along with her.

Three weeks later they both set out on the return journey. At first the major limped badly, and had to walk with a stick. But his health and fitness gradually improved.

The line of front had receded, and they covered five hundred and sixty kilometres. Winter had come, with blizzards and snow. It was too risky to enter villages, so more often than not they went hungry spending many a night in the rye-fields. Once they nearly froze to death.

But they got back, they reached Plavsk, which had only just been liberated, and were met by their own people.

Presenting herself to the divisional commander, nurse Lena Lundberg reported that she had carried out the order.

These two simple little stories are of two girls now studying—and studying very well—at the First Moscow Medical Institute. Many of the forty-three front-line students who returned to the Institute to study could tell absorbing stories of how they won the battle orders they wear.

On the pedestal of the Pirogov monument are inscribed the following great words:

"Not only for battle deeds on the field of strife, but also for activities in the field of science and civic spirit."

Could he have forseen that a future generation of Russian students would so gloriously combine the one and the other?

. . . The little garden in front of the statue is filled with the gay chatter of young voices. Youthful faces, weather-bronzed and eager-eyed, bend over manuals and textbooks; pleasant laughter is heard, and one small group is engaged in a desperate argument as to whether to go to the theatre tonight, with such an important exam tomorrow morning as psychiatrics. . . Someone's beret, sent whirling like a discus, cuts through the air, accompanied by general laughter, And you involuntarily feel a shadow of doubt—impossible!—can it be that these eyes have seen that, which for the first time in the history of mankind, has happened on our earth. Yes, these eyes have seen it. On the threshold of life these young men and women met all the ordeals of war and marched forward with open eyes to meet it and give it battle.

B. KAVERIN

THEY STUDY IN LENINGRAD

A bell rings, a door bangs somewhere, then another, and another, and soon the whole building is filled with the quick patter of footsteps and a hum of high melodious voices. This hum swells and spreads till it reaches the door of the

teachers' room. The woman sitting there listens closely with raised eyebrows. The expression on her face reminds me of that of a doctor examining a patient. Then she nods her head with a look of satisfaction.

"They're running about," she says. "And very quick on their feet too! If you only knew how painful was the one-time silence during recesses. . . After lessons the children used to remain in their seats resting, and conversing in a mumbling undertone just like old people. And the first day in the Pioneer Palace..."

Then she told me of the day the Pioneer Palace had reopened after the blockade of Leningrad had been raised.

The days of famine and darkness were still all too fresh in everyone's memory. And here was the kiddies' palace of happiness open once again! The children trudged in, all bundled up, sluggishly moving their feet, tightly gripping shopping bags containing soup dishes. Entering, they stood gazing around at the white-columned hall. A burst of music welcomed them. In an agitated voice an instructress said: "Let's dance."

And the children burst into tears.

They wept, afraid and ashamed of their feebleness, accustomed to carefully nursing their strength. Now here for the first time in many, many months they encountered a joyful welcome. The tears rolled down their cheeks. They were afraid to dance, afraid of this music. They hugged their soup-pots close to their little bodies. And at the sight of these children the instructress too could not restrain her tears.

Such was the reopening day of the Pioneer Palace. It took several days and even weeks before the children regained that happiness and lighthearted gaiety which had always accompanied our youngsters.

And here was this elderly schoolteacher of Leningrad School No. 365, listening to this common-place noise and patter filling the whole school building during recesses with a happy smile on her face, declaring:

"They're running about—very quick on their feet. A lovely noise, don't you think so?"

This school was one of the few which managed to carry on its work without a single day's interruption right through the worst months of the blockade. Today it is the usual kind of school. I was present at one of the lessons and in the class I saw gay, rosy-cheeked little girls, their hair dressed in tiny plaits, sitting in a clean class-room, following the lesson, answering the teacher's questions, and wearing attractive new dresses. And were it not "For the Defence of Leningrad" medal which many of the pupils wore pinned to their breasts one might think that these girls had never experienced anything extraordinary in their young lives.

But I would like to tell you something of what this school has lived through. It is worth hearing and unforgettable.

These were the days when the city was slowly but inexorably freezing, coming to a stand-still. The tram-cars stopped running. The water-mains didn't function. The electric supply ceased. Cruel frosts gripped the houses both inside and out. One after another the schools began to close down in the famished, frozen city. But School No. 365 still carried on.

Every morning the teachers entered the cold teachers' room, where there stood a heated samovar in which thawed snow for water. Many teachers had to walk long distances, and utterly worn-out and enfeebled, they dropped down on the couch to rest a while. So weak were they that they could not even carry their brief-cases in their hands, and used to tie them round their necks with string. And there they sat, breathing heavily, their eyes half-closed with fatigue. Then when the bell rang, they would painfully rise to their feet and enter the class-rooms.

Here small iron stoves were rigged up, all the pupils sitting in a circle around them. And not one of them but had suffered grievous sorrow at home. During those days I spoke with one of the girls whose mother had just died. Absolutely unaided the child had hauled her mother's corpse on a small sledge to the other end of the town, dug a grave as best she could and buried her. I saw a little boy whose father had died in bed by his side, and the poor mite had spent the whole night trying to warm and revive the lifeless body. And every morning these children would get up and go punctually to school. It was not

Leningrad schoolgirls, Galya Smirnova and Larissa Novozhilova, decorated with the "For the Defence of Leningrad" medal, at a physics lesson

that tiny crust of bread which sustained the life in them, it was their indomitable spirit. Had any of these children, succumbing to their feebleness, remained lying in their icy beds in the morning, covering themselves with all the blankets and coats available, most probably they would never have got up again. But every morning rise they did, and went to school. In the evenings, by the flickering light of a wick-lamp, their hands in mittens as a protection against the frost, they sat writing a composition on a Tolstoy novel or a poem of Pushkin.

The principal of this school, Serafima Kulikevich is a woman of undaunted optimism. She has worked here for thirty years, and is still there. In those gruelling months she stood at the head of the small but plucky group, heartening it with the warmth of her strength and personality. Every day after lessons, the pupils and teachers would set out with crowbars and axes to the demolition site of some bomb- or shell-wrecked building to rake together a few boards for heating the tiny-stoves in the class-rooms. What tremendous will-power was required of them—frozen, famished and utterly worn out as they were—to plod through the streets battling against an icy wind, dragging crowbars and axes, and returning to school with their load of firewood? And this kind-featured elderly woman would trudge with her group through the desolate streets, now and again heartening them with a cheery word. When one of the youngsters would falter from weakness she would encourage him with such words as:

"Come on, my son; you're a man. It's for you to show the little girls how to work. . ."

At that time only the four senior classes were being held at the school. There were only five pupils in the ninth class. Later, when four of these left the city, only one girl, Veta Bandorina, remained. Veta, however, continued her lessons, passing on to the tenth class. Whatever the circumstances, Veta carried on with her lessons, studying with her teachers regularly in the freezing class-room, the walls of which shuddered from the burst of heavy shells. They prepared this girl for a sure and worthy future, a future of joy and happy work.

Veta's mother—Anastassya Yakovlevna was a teacher in the same school, and every morning mother and daughter would leave home together. Finally came the day when her mother said:

"You go yourself, my dear. I'm too weak to walk."

I see Veta right now—her healthy, rosy-cheeked, steadfast girlish countenance with clear brave eyes. She helped her mother down to the street, made her as comfortable as possible on a small sledge and hauled her right across town, to the school. She did not want to leave her mother at home, all alone. Slowly, very slowly, Veta pulled on the ropes of the little sledge where her mother sat crouching, all bundled up in shawls and blankets—a wizened,

prematurely-aged woman. Veta then helped her mother up the steps and into the teachers' room. Here Anastassya Yakovlevna sank down wearily onto the couch. The bell rang—and the teacher rose to her feet and went to the classroom to give her usual lessons.

These people who have lived through every conceivable hardship were safeguarded by their mighty strength of spirit and by sheer pluck. This protected them and saved their lives.

Had the nazis looked into their eyes they could never have withstood their gaze, just as the wild beast flinches from the gaze of human eyes.

The Germans tortured the town with famine and darkness. They ravaged it with their heavy guns and bombs. But they did not, and never could have understood those people against whom they were firing their shells and on whom they were dropping their bombs. Mathematics may tell you how many people can be killed by a heavy shell, or on what day a person will die after being deprived of the necessary quantity of food. But how can one ever estimate the strength of a Russian soul?

TATYANA TESS

SPRING IN LENINGRAD

Spring is here, the spring of 1944, spring in liberated Leningrad! A kindly, bright, clear light of freedom shines over the whole city, and over every smallest detail of its life. The streets are no longer so painfully empty of life like last year. Many people have arrived, there are many new, unfamiliar faces. Previously, during the last year of the blockade, one knew by sight nearly everybody one met in the street as one does in a village. There are much fewer men in uniform among the crowds in the streets—for after all, the front has moved a long way from us now—except for the Finnish front. But to make up for that, large numbers of military men of a special kind have appeared this spring—the Leningrad partisans. True, some of them visited the city before, but that was when they had made their way secretly across the front-line, through the enemy ring. In the evening they would broadcast from the Leningrad station under assumed or shortened names.

But now the partisans have come freely into liberated Leningrad from the liberated Leningrad region, large numbers of them, and they walk openly about the streets in their thick rough coats and tall sheepskin caps with the red ribbon. And everywhere they are greeted heartily and congratulated on the orders and medals awarded them by the government.

This spring the streets of Leningrad are not only more crowded and lively, they ring with new sounds. They are filled with the living, busy, pleasant noise of a normal city.

The word "noise" no longer means enemy firing. How good it is! Not long ago another tram line was reopened—linking the Baltic and the Finnish Railway Stations. This summer all stations will be working, preparations are already in full swing for that, whereas just three months ago, there was only one roundabout route linking Leningrad with the rest of the country. Trolleybuses are being repaired and will soon start running.

All this strikes one as simply amazing! Here and there buildings wrecked by bombs are being cleared up, the bricks stacked in neat piles—they will do for repairing other houses. All iron scrap is carefully put aside, for open-hearth furnaces or factories, for guns to continue the battle.

Even in those days when the town was daily being ruined, devastated by enemy shells, we stubbornly dreamed of the way in which we should restore it.

But as always happens, reality is more severe and more generous than dreams. No, we are not yet beautifying the city, we are not yet raising new buildings of unsurpassed loveliness, nowhere are we setting up memorials to our living and dead heroes. Our task is simpler: we must heal the gaping wounds of our beloved city, we must restore Leningrad. And now, as we undertake this work, we feel that Leningrad itself, which was never for one moment sullied by an enemy foot, which we shall

restore in all its mighty strength and beauty—is the best memorial to its defenders, and its resurrection to its former powerful life is the highest honour we can pay to the memory of those who gave their lives for it.

Indeed, to restore Leningrad means to beautify it. It is with a feeling of excitement that one thinks how lovely Leningrad will look when glass has again been put into the windows! How much light in the houses that means, how much brightness on the streets when instead of the present gaping openings or plywood sheets, the "Petersburg" windows will shine again beneath the blazing sun, the "white nights" or under the bright stars. The whole city will seem to have recovered its sight, looking out through hundreds of thousands of bright eyes.

The third war-time spring in Leningrad is the spring of its great restoration, the spring of a new world forged in the heat of battle.

Every day now when they return from work the people, almost without stopping to rest, set to work on the repair of their homes. It is happy work, but hard work, too. For they must do everything with their own hands. The city is being restored almost exclusively by the people themselves. A typist becomes a plasterer, a turner—a plumber, an engineer—a chimney-sweep. They themselves are mending the holes in the walls, plastering, whitewashing, laying floors, repairing pipes, putting glass into the windows. Many people have learned dozens of trades during the blockade—they teach one another while learning the trade themselves. And in every house one can witness mutual aid on the broadest scale—a fine tradition that arose and spread in besieged Leningrad.

This friendly mutual aid is a simple, exacting and business-like matter. I, for instance, do not know how to plaster a wall, but can set glass in windows. My neighbour, on the other hand, a lawyer, is a splendid plasterer, but absolutely helpless with window glass. Then she plasters my walls, and I glaze her windows. After people have finished repairing their own apartments, they help their neighbours, and in almost every house the people have undertaken to repair, in addition to their own apartments, two or three belonging to servicemen or disabled men living in the same house. And all this in addition to the general repairs of the houses in which literally everyone of the inhabitants assists.

In a city of the front-line, where apartment houses were no longer simply houses, but "residential objectives", where bombs and shells fell continually, and the walls and ceilings of the apartments every day threatened to crush every living thing within, one realized, as nobody else ever could, the meaning of the words "domestic comfort", "hearth and home", and learned to prize what one had hardly valued before the siege. Even then, during the blockade, everyone tried to save all he could, and now it is with a particularly warm feeling that they are restoring our homes. But if anybody thinks that this is easy work, like decorating a Christmas tree, then he is gravely mistaken. No, this longed-for work is hard, exacting, exhausting, and as a rule, it is in addition to everything else; because these same people are also working at their ordinary jobs, and first and foremost they must restore that without which there would be no Leningrad—its industry, its factories and plants.

In September 1941, a group of veteran workers at the Kirov Works sent out a flaming appeal to the Leningrad people to defend their city to the last drop of blood, ending with the words: "Death will be afraid of us before we are afraid of death."

And now the workers of this same factory—veterans of labour, sprung from generations of Petersburg men, those same workers who in those days of storm and stress vowed to have no fear of death and nobly kept their word, working and fighting throughout the nine hundred days of the siege—these workers have issued another appeal now, in the spring of 1944. And this call, summoning the Leningrad people to the restoration of their city, is filled with that same ardent, exalted spirit, the same pulsing life as the first, which called for the defence of the town.

The appeal begins with a brief reference to the days when the city was being stormed, and the days of the first war-time spring in Leningrad, 1942. It speaks of that which is now filling

every heart—the victories of the Red Army, and calls on the people to "keep pace with our beloved men at the front not only in output of goods, but in the restoration of the economic life of the city as well".

They put it well, these wise old people. Yes, to keep pace with the men at the front, to keep pace with victory—that means to restore everything, to resurrect everything.

The old men proposed working twenty hours a month on restoration, in addition to everything else that needs to be done.

And on the very next day after this call had been read at workshop meetings, all the people stayed after work to repair the shops.

And what does it mean, repairing the shop of a factory, which in nine hundred days and nights of the blockade was hit by thousands of shells and bombs—high explosive, shrapnel, incendiary? First of all it means clearing the shop of fallen bricks, beams, and rubble, demolishing the dugouts where the workers took refuge during the worst barrages, and taking down the barriers criss-crossing the shop. To restore the shop means starting from "scratch" and continuing until the only thing left to do is to set the machines working.

It would be futile to attempt to reckon how many years it took to build this plant, to equip it and perfect it, because, in any case, its restoration must be accomplished within one year. For the war continues, and we must keep pace with victory, many decades' labour must be completed within one year. And that is the miracle of resurrection.

"But after all, it's really very interesting," said sixteen-year-old Victor Yefimov, an apprentice in one of the shops, "to restore the shop ourselves, right from the very beginning, and then work in it ourselves too."

And these young people working in the plant have been promised that in the shop they have restored, at the lathes where they work there will be metal plates artistically engraved: "This section was restored in 1944 by Victor Yefimov, working here."

The splendid appeal of the Kirov workers has been taken up with acclamation, and in a most business-like manner, by all who are restoring the city's industry. At the Kirov Works each worker already has a booklet recording the number of hours he works on repairs. On the back of the cover are the words: "Comrade! Take care of this document. It testifies to your participation in the restoration of the factory, in repairing the damage worked by the German-fascist monsters during the blockade of Leningrad."

This unassuming little booklet is a worthy companion to the "Leningrad Defence" medal. He who can show both medal and booklet has every right to say to his native city:

"I did not surrender you to the enemy, and the deep wounds which he inflicted on you I tended and healed with a strength increased tenfold by my love for you. . ."

Thus in the third war-time spring, liberated Leningrad and the whole of its people are swiftly following up the victories of the Red Army, crowning the triumph of these victories with the miracle of resurrection.

OLGA BERGHOLZ

BOOKS AND WRITERS

ANTON CHEKHOV

Four decades have passed since the day Anton Pavlovich Chekhov died; nevertheless every time we read, or see on the stage, the works of the great writer and playwright, the sweeping panorama of the original and exciting world of Chekhov's characters opens up before us.

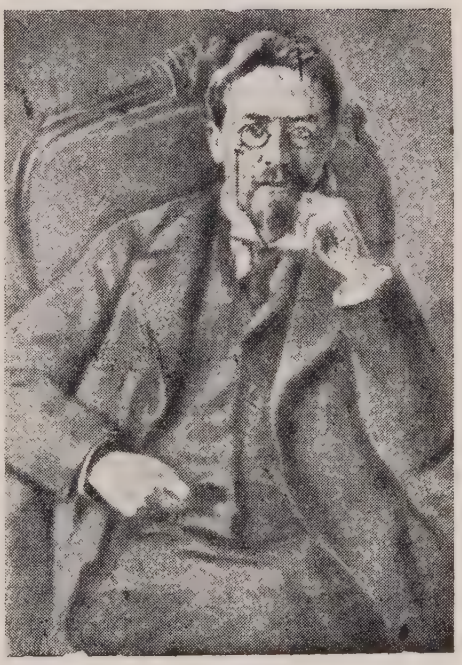
Chekhov first entered the literary world in the eighties of the last century, a period of widespread political reaction. All progressive and socially-minded representatives of Russian society strongly felt its effects.

Even those of weak will, who did not possess the temperament of the fighter, who were often dragged down into the morass of their hopelessly miserable existence, found that strength to hate their environment.

Anton Chekhov gives us a masterly picture of the tragedy of these people, their fall and their rise, and of their antithesis, the world of stagnation and misanthropy that was responsible for so many everyday moral catastrophes that passed unseen and were for this reason but the more terrible.

Chekhov hated vulgarity. He reacted to its presence, however trivial, with the greatest fastidiousness, made mock of it and made an exhibition of the abominable side of stagnant thought—its cold disregard for the fate of the country and the absence of any ideals.

Chekhov had a kind of brotherly sympathy towards those people who, though unable to escape the clutches of passivity and inactivity, still did not lose faith in the future and retained their dignity as human beings. Chekhov was sorry for them and he suffered their pains but he also realized that anybody who went forth armed with a wooden sword to battle was not only a tragic figure but often a pitiful and comical one. This is why Chekhov's sorrow often becomes ironical ridicule. He was not amongst the "provincial Hamlets" principally because he hated passivity and lack of will-power. His



life was one of activity, ever seeking in work an outlet for his strength.

Anton Chekhov was a doctor bu education and when he became a writer he never broke off his connections with science, placing a wery high value on the social mission of the doctor and his role in improving the life of the people. He had an excellent knowledge of his vast country; he not only knew Ukrainian and Russian villages but also the Urals and the Far East; he spent two months on the island of Sakhalin where he studied the life of the convicts, both as a doctor and a writer, for Sakhalin was a place to which criminals were transported in tsarist times.

Wherever Chekhov lived, even for a short while, he entered into close relations with the most diverse types of people; everywhere he was always active. In 1892, the cholera year, he worked tirelessly in a village hospital. He took great interest in the school which he opened on his little estate at Melikhovo, near Moscow.

Life and reality, which many writers, inclined towards decadentism, tried to escape, were for Chekhov an inexhaustible source from which he drew his stories.

He believed in art's mission to fight the ugliness and distortion of the philistine and property-minded way of life; this he considered the major ethical task of the writer. "The man of letters," he wrote, "is not a pastry shop or beauty parlour keeper, nor is he an entertainer; he is a man bound by his duty and conscience."

Independence in his strivings and his judgements, sincerity and honesty, determined the character of the writer's work. "Chekhov lived his whole life on the resources of his own soul," said Gorky. "He was always himself, he was inwardly free and never took into consideration what some people expected and others, more vulgar, demanded of Anton Chekhov."

Unrivalled as a portrayer of downhearted and sorrowful creatures, Chekhov, the man and the artist, was an optimist. Letters to his friends and many other statements made by him speak of the joie de vivre with which he looked upon world. He made the same impression on those around him. "A never ending stream of the wit and direct joy which fills his stories seems to flow from his eyes. . ." wrote Vladimir Korolenko, a well-known Russian writer, describing his first meeting with Chekhov. To Korolenko Chekhov was "a man filled with the joy of living".

Constantine Stanislavsky, the founder of the Moscow Art Theatre stressed the characteristic feature of Chekhov—the directness of the way in which he received impressions. He also wrote: "Only the direct spectator can laugh as Chekhov does." In summing up his impressions, Stanislavsky asserted: "Anton Pavlovich was the greatest optimist that I have ever met."

"Every new story which Chekhov writes serves to strengthen a note that is essential and of the greatest value to us—cheerfulness and love of life," wrote Gorky. He made a point of the fact that this note was present even in Chekhov's most tragic stories.

A great lover of life, Chekhov hungrily imbibed many and varied impressions; his observations covered a very wide field; with great penetration he disclosed the meaning of the most trivial events in the lives of people.

With Chekhov's appearance in literature a new era began which bore witness to the fact that the tradition of the great school of realism in Russia, far from being exhausted, had taken on a new and promising lease of life. "Chekhov, as an artist, is not to be compared with former Russian writers, with Turgenev or myself," wrote Leo Tolstoy on this subject. "Chekhov has his own form, just as the impressionists have. As you look, the artist seems to plaster on whatever colours come to his hand with apparently no relationship whatever between the colours. You step back some distance and look again and you get an astonishing impression. You have a vivid picture from which you cannot tear your eyes."

2

Anton Chekhov was born and raised in Taganrog, in the South of Russia; his father was as unsuccessful grocer, and in the writer's own words "there was no childhood in his childhood". The sole subjects of conversation at home were money and expenses, losses and needs; the children were brutally punished. Then came the father's ruin. The unhappiness of his childhood, the sufferings of his father, who fled from a debtors' prison, the rapacity of the usurpers, the treachery of people who called themselves friends, the helplessness of his quiet and inoffensive mother burnt deeply into the writer's soul and were always appearing in his work.

Years of study in the gymnasium with dull and pedantic provincial teachers—Chekhov later introduced them into his stories—the journey to Moscow and his entry into the medical college, all this preceded Chekhov's debut as a writer. He began writing for humorous papers and magazines and had a dozen noms de plume: The Hothead, The Patientless Doctor, His Brother's Brother. . . His favourite pseudonym, however, was Antosha Chekhonte; this was a gymnasium nickname that aroused fond memories in Chekhov.

Necessity compelled young Chekhov to write much and write it hurriedly.

Work came easy to him: "I wrote like a bird sings," Chekhov recalled, "I sat down and I wrote. . . I was like a young calf or a colt let out in the green open spaces, I jumped and leaped, neighed, shook my tail and my head. I laughed myself and made my audience laugh. I took life without thinking and hustled it here and there."

At first there was neither malice nor insult in Chekhov's response to the insults of life. His jolly stories were filled with invention, sparkling humour, love of the anecdote and the curious. He seized on amusing events, funny names, aphorisms and turned them into literature.

3

The nature of Chekhov's laugh changed very, very soon. Chekhov realized that vulgarity is not only funny. He saw in it a menace that could devour all that is good and bright.

He told amusing, successful stories, laughed at girls hooking their beaux but in his portrayal of bribe-taking officials we already feel the strength of real social satire.

A foolish barber in a bath-house thought a naked church deacon was a political suspect and reported him to the police and when the mistake was explained went and apologized to the ecclesiastic for having suspected that "he had ideas in his head".

In a theatre a minor official accidentally sneezed on a general's bald head. He went to apologize several times but could not regain his peace of mind and died of fear.

In Antosha Chekhonte's jolly stories we see the philistine, the official, the merchant, the dry-as-dust pedagogue, coarse and brutal policemen and out of this mass of appraisals and pictures a brilliant and merciless comedy of morals is built up.

"In his first stories Anton Chekhov succeeded in exposing the tragic, dismal jokes of the sorrowful world of triviality," said Maxim Gorky "Chekhov had an enemy who embodied stagnation, misanthropy and indifference to the present and future of the country. This enemy," writes Gorky, "was the well-fed and self-satisfied citizen, the material and spiritual philistine, the philistine in the ecstasy of his rapacious money-grubbing, the philistine holding a university chair, the philistine in society and in literature, the man who did not go outside his own self-centred limitations and who kept his tiny truth in his pocket."

In depicting those who carried this "tiny truth" with them Chekhov succeeded in showing an anger which was not usually present in his reticent and kindly nature.

Take for example the portrait of Belikov, the teacher of Greek in the *Man in a Case*. He was noteworthy for the fact that he always wore galoshes and carried an umbrella in its case. He had a watch and a penknife, also in cases. It seemed that his face was also in a case for it was always hidden by a turned-up collar. He made tremendous efforts to surround himself with a cover, to put himself in a case which would protect him from outside influences. More than anything else in the world he loved circulars which forbade things and his greatest fear was that something might happen. Everybody shunned and feared him, and for fifteen years, until he finally died and got his case, he held the gymnasium and the citizens of the whole town in fear.

The figure of Belikov, so masterfully drawn by Chekhov, has become the symbol of spiritual paralysis with which the old regime tried to tackle the forces in Russian society that were dangerous to it in the hard days of the dawn.

"Is not the fact that we pass our whole lives amongst idlers, quibblers, foolish do-nothing women, that we say and hear nothing but nonsense, is not that a case hemming us in?" asked one of the characters of this story.

The writer's attitude towards such "men in cases" was one of contempt which he could not hide. His sympathies were on the side of pure and noble people whose lives were trampled down in the philistine morass. The hero of his *Teacher of Literature* was one of these. This was not the self-satisfied and horribly limited Belikov, but a free thinking intellectual who suffered from a vulgar and aimless existence. "My God, where am I!" he groans. "I am surrounded by vulgarity and triviality. Boring insignificant people, little pots of cream, pitchers of milk, black-beetles, silly women... There is nothing more terrible than pitiful vulgarity. I must fly from

here, fly today or I shall go mad!"

Chekhov produced a gallery of pictures of his contemporaries from all walks of life and everywhere, even in the most ossified surroundings, Chekhov, with that patient sympathy for mankind which is typical of him, sought for some signs of dignity and nobility.

The chief characters in his *Three Years*, the millionaire Laptev's family, are despotic and self-willed. The young generation of Laptevs, however, have no taste for the life of provincial capitalists and can find no justification for it. The story of Alexei Laptev's unsuccessful life and unfortunate love shows us Laptev as a man of great, even if thwarted, feelings.

Those of Chekhov's stories which charm the reader with their lyricism, in particular the lyricism of love, are the expression of his faith in man and the beauty of life.

If we imagine Chekhov's favourite characters as a sort of huge, composite figure then the essence of their dreams so frequently commented on, becomes quite clear. In addition to the regular dreams of the future they have another, extremely important feature—their love of life, their faith in the power of labour and creative effort to change the world. Creative effort in the miserable present is a guarantee of the future. It is interesting that the scope of this creative effort was, for Chekhov's characters, always the scope of the life of the people, the country and the epoch.

Chekhov despised poverty of the spirit and saw better than anybody else the tragedy of people doomed to "petty things". But he also saw something else, the real greatness and heroism hidden in the unseen everyday labours of the Russian who was working for the good of his people and his country. This contradiction, the great and the small, the present and the future, sometimes gave Chekhov's characters the psychology of sacrifice, although it is a psychology which also contains great courage.

Vershinin in *The Three Sisters* says: "We shall have no share in that life, of course (i.e. the future.—*A. D.*), but we are living for it, we are working and suffering for it, we are creating it—and that alone is the purpose of our existence, and our happiness, if you like."

Chekhov's characters were mistaken with regard to time. The new life did not come in two or three hundred years as Astrov in *Uncle Vanya* thought, but much sooner. And Anton Chekhov himself, working for the brighter future of his country lived almost long enough to see his dreams fulfilled.

There was a time when official reactionary critics accused Chekhov of laying the dark colours on heavily in order to compromise the tsarist political system. The conservatives, therefore, were wild with anger because they felt the high explosive force of Chekhov's work. When they shouted about "the corrupting influence of sorrow with which Chekhov's stories are flooded", it was because it was not the fruitless painful sorrow of the decadents but the incorruptible feeling of discontent which "first and foremost corrupted dying forms of life and aroused a feeling of indignation".

Chekhov's readers finished his stories with the feeling: "it is impossible to continue this life". This was exactly the feeling he intended to arouse in his readers. "The main thing is for people to realize this and when they realize it they will most certainly create for themselves another and better life. I shall not see it but I know it will be quite different, in no way resembling life as it is." One young theatre-goer, a gymnasium pupil, wrote the following emotional lines to a well-known theatre critic after the first performance of *The Three Sisters* (1901): "I trembled with anger. To think what people have been brought to, how frightened they are, so isolated from life! And they are good people. These are noble creatures, they could be happy and bring happiness to others. They could at least hurl themselves into a selfless struggle against the evil that is stifling everybody. Instead of that they whimper and shiver. . .When I was going home after the theatre I clenched my fists till they hurt. In the darkness I had a vision of that monster at which we must strike the death blow even at the cost of our lives!"

During a conversation with that wonderful actress Vera Kommissarzhevskaya, Chekhov said that the time had come to work in another way. "There is great ferment amongst the people. . . Russia is humming like a beehive. . . How much energy and faith there is in the people. . . It is really astonishing! . ."

In premonition of the revolutionary storms of 1905 Chekhov had an ever increasing feeling of the spiritual "ferment" going on in Russia and her people.

To quote Chekhov's own words he visualized "the triumph of beauty and youth, the flourishing of strength and a passionate hunger for life"; the time would come when "the spirit responds to a beautiful and stern homeland" *(The Steppe)*.

In the story *Betrothed*, written in 1903, a year before his death, the writer outlined the new people who were replacing the old generation with its grey backwaters of life.

The girl Nadya was born in an affluent and idle family and seemed to be deeply attached to them. She came to the conclusion, however, that one should despise such a senseless existence and should learn and improve oneself. The worker Sasha, a sickly and tormented youth, dreams of so transforming life that not one stone remained on another in that musty, sleepy town: "Then there will be huge, magnificent houses, wonderful gardens, uncommon fountains, fine people. . ." Sasha explains to Nadya that "the main thing is to turn life over, nothing else is necessary".

Obeying the dictates of her heart Nadya leaves her family and the vulgar lover for whom she has no use, and goes to Moscow to study. "Ahead of her there was a new, broader and more expansive life, a life that was still unclear, full of secrets which attracted and captivated her."

The student Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* also belongs to this new type of people. He feels that happiness is near, is coming to take the place of dismal greyness: "Mankind is moving towards the higher truth, to the greatest happiness that is possible on earth, and I am in the front ranks. . ."

Sasha, Nadya and Trofimov do not know how to achieve this happiness but they, like their creator Chekhov, instinctively feel its coming. The main thing is that they want to create actively, that their efforts should be linked up with the labours of those who are building the future.

4

Anton Chekhov is a profoundly national writer. "You are a Russian! Yes, very, very Russian!" Leo Tolstoy once said to Chekhov, embracing him. Chekhov is an artist who draws Russian people, and Russian life; he is a master of Russian landscape. At the same time he is one of those XIX century Russian writers whose work has become the property of world culture. Chekhov has been translated into the principal European languages, especially English and French. Chekhov's plays have frequently been shown with great success in London, Paris and Prague and are now running in London and New York.

Without claiming to discuss the significance and influence of Chekhov's work in foreign literature and drama I will mention a few facts.

"The Stage Society", a progressive London theatre company produced *The Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya* with great success. An influential critic, Desmond MacCarthy wrote an admiring review of the performance and, after a detailed analysis of the play, called *Uncle Vanya* an unforgettably good play.

Among other British theatres the Scotch Repertory Theatre in Glasgow played *The Seagull* in 1909.

In France we will mention only Pitoyev's productions, especially *The Three Sisters*, which was highly praised by the Paris press.

With regards to British opinion on Chekhov's work I will quote the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

"England has proved particularly sensitive to his charm. He is universally regarded as the greatest Russian writer and as the greatest story-teller and dramatist of modern times. English critics have even called him the greatest dramatist since Shakespeare. Nor can there be any doubt that English literature has profited by his example as Russian literature never did and that if there is to be a school of Chekhov it will be in England" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. XXIX, p. 573).

The prominent American critic, Alexander Woollcott, in answer to a question put by the best playwrights, said: "First Shakespeare, then Chekhov and then the others." Anglo-American readers have the whole of Chekhov's works in Constance Garnett's excellent translations. The tireless translator has given the reader Chekhov's stories, plays and letters. V. Gerhardi's monograph, *Anton*

Chekhov published in London in 1923 is one of the most important works on the Russian writer which has appeared in the West

It is difficult to estimate Chekhov's influence on various English writers. Traces of his influence are to be found in the works of Galsworthy and Somerset Maugham, and Gerhardi considers Katharine Mansfield, with her "chamber lyricism", to be the closest of Chekhov's followers in England. Amongst writers who have to some degree or another come under the influence of Chekhov mention may be made of W. W. Jacobs, the humorous writer, E. M. Forster and Robert Hichens.

Sherwood Anderson, the American who writes of small-town life, is also close to Chekhov, chiefly in his methods of portrait sketching.

5

However closely great writers may be associated with their own times the strength of their talent goes beyond these bounds in order to say something new to each new generation. In the Soviet Union Chekhov is tremendously popular. 15 million copies of his works have been published in 54 of the languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. The theatres of the capital and the provincial cities invariably have Chekhov plays in their repertoires.

It is of interest to note that the new productions of Chekhov's plays in the Moscow Art and other theatres sound differently from what they did in Chekhov's time. *The Three Sisters* was produced anew in 1940 in the Moscow Art Theatre and impressed the audience as an optimistic play, a call to action and at the same time true to Chekhov. The author's text was not veiled in any way.

For Soviet literature and for the whole of our culture, Chekhov is one of our great teachers and a spiritual forerunner.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his death I would like to repeat the words of Maxim Gorky, a colleague of Chekhov's who became the father of Russian Soviet literature. Gorky wrote shortly before Chekhov's death:

"When Chekhov dies, one of Russia's best friends, a clever, impartial and just friend, a friend who loved her and suffered with her in all things, will die, and Russia will shudder with sorrow and will not forget him for a long time, will for a long time learn to know life from his writings."

ALEXANDER DEUTSCH

THE TALE OF JACK STRAW

For some years before the war Zinaida Shishova, author of *Blockade*, that splendid poem of Leningrad and its defenders, was already known as a children's writer. Her historical novel on the discovery of America was a favourite with the young Soviet reader.

The Tale of Jack Straw, her latest book, another historical novel for children, is also taken from West-European history, this time England of the XIV century, its heroes the participants in Wat Tyler's peasant uprising.

The historical path traversed by the freedom-loving British people is filled with dramatic moments showing with great vividness the activity of the people, the courage inherent in men of the people, and their respect for their own personal dignity. In our day, when progressive humanity is engaged in the struggle against Hitlerism, the educational value of these traditions is particularly evident.

Who are the heroes of Zinaida Shishova's book? The peasant, the descendant of the free yeomen in green doublets who put the French knights to flight at Crécy; the fisherman, the town artisan, the village blacksmith, the country apothecary, the village priest. Their destinies are indivisibly bound up with the fate of the common people whom they serve.

Through the pages of Shishova's book pass dozens of workers whose hands have created wealth in an hour difficult for their country; they are the heroes, who, arms in hand, go to defend their native shores from enemy invasion.

There is the blacksmith, Jim Straw, a village hero, skilled in labour, faithful

in friendship and in love for his wife and family; the old fisherman Andrew Tippot, his wife, his daughter Jane, and his son-in-law John Johnkinson; then there is the wise village apothecary, the dwarf Snape. In all these people, so different in age, character and occupation one may see a common feature—love and respect for labour, both their own and that of others, combined with a simplicity and strength of feeling, and a deep sense of the brotherhood of those who toil. In the fisherman's hut or the peasant's cottage there is always a corner for a comrade who is ill or has fallen on evil times, and a piece of bread for the wandering labourer.

In the late feudal period in which the scene of Shishova's novel is laid, the working people, the flower of the people and support of the country, were defenceless, deprived of all rights, before the stubborn and despotic gentry.

Squire Hugh Drurickome can sweep the house of Jim Straw, the smith, from the face of the earth, although Jim's family has lived in that house for generations. The servant of the squire, who has bought the right to collect a new illegal tax, can demolish Tippot's home, and drag his son-in-law John Johnkinson to prison. The cruel, dissolute knight Simon Burley, who needs money for women and dice, can sell his serf, and artist and gold worker Tom Backston, to a neighbour. The whole weight of feudal oppression lies heavy on the working people, it is ruining them and forcing them to suffer a thousand insults and miseries. Homes are broken up, lives are ruined, men and women perish who are worthy of a free and happy life. And then the people's healthy moral and social feeling, their innate pride and self-respect shows them the right path. The people take to arms to defend their human rights and dignity. A popular revolt breaks out, flames consume the oppressor's manor, thousands of peasants march to London, arms in hand, to demand justice of the young king, Richard II. And as always happens in such decisive moments in a nation's life, men emerge from the heart of the people, ready and able to take the lead in defending their rights.

In Zinaida Shishova's book we find several such portraits. There is Wat Tyler, for instance, a natural strategist,

a brilliant organizer, a stern and resolute man. The second popular leader the book shows is the rebellious Kent priest John Ball, the people's voice and conscience, who wanders through the country preaching against the gentry, charging them with cruelty, rapacity and idleness.

The third leader of the uprising, the hero of the novel, is young Jack Straw, the son of the blacksmith, who died in the unequal struggle for his rights against Squire Hugh Drurickome.

Like Wat Tyler and John Ball, Jack Straw is a historical figure. The story of his lofty but terrible destiny is based on facts and documents. And these real facts are a splendid basis for the moral and social lessons of Zinaida Shishova's book.

What is the essence of these lessons?

The destiny of a participant in the great cause of the people, a real maker of history, is a high destiny whether it brings happiness or not. "Life is beautiful even in bloodstained garments," wrote Maxim Gorky during the hard days of reaction after the revolution of 1905. Historical optimism, faith in the final victory of wisdom and common sense, of goodness and justice are of value only after they have been tried and tested in the flames.

This path of greater resistance Jack

Straw followed with courageous consistency.

From the very first chapters of the book the reader realizes that a dreadful fate awaits Jack Straw- hideous torture and death.

Jack is a deliverer, a consistent participant and leader in the popular movement, ready to pay any price for the right to take up arms against feudal oppression, for the right to be a human being in the full sense of the word, during the dark Middle Ages.

The author could have given Jack Straw at least personal happiness. But here too Shishova remained true to the "line of greatest resistance".

From the ordinary point of view, the love of Jack Straw, the blacksmith's son and Joanna Drurickome the squire's daughter, is an unhappy love—a chain of misunderstandings, born of insulted pride and separations, inevitable in those terrible times. Complete happiness, complete harmony Jack and Joanna find only at the moment when there is no longer time for it, when Jack is going to his death.

What then is the glory, truth and happiness of this unhappy love? Why does the story of it ring with joy and faith in life? The clean, strong love of Jack and Joanna is firmly linked with their common faith in the victory of right and justice. It burns like a torch in the darkness of feudal society.

Of course the victory which Jack and Joanna win in their personal life is one on the romantic plane. But Shishova's book contains not only a romantic truth. Tortured by the hangman, Jack wins a victory, historical and civil, over the evil and lies of feudal society, which is based on a firmer foundation.

In depicting the beginning of the people's historical activity and that of the leaders who arose from their midst, Shishova correctly understood the main features distinguishing the meaning and importance of popular movements in the past.

Behind all the multi-coloured events and human lives crowding the pages of the book, behind the inevitable historic limitations of the movement, we never fail to see its historic greatness. And in the very foreground of this tale of a popular movement in the beginning of XIV century, we seethe idea of the continuity of humanity's struggle fors liberation.

That is why in Shishova's book, features showing the historic limitation, of the movement (as for instance the naiveté of the people's demand for the English crown) do not indicate that their movement is doomed from the historic point of view.

Yes, Richard II lulled the people with fair words and promises, deceived them, and crushed the movement. Wat Tyler fell at the hand of a hired murderer, and Jack Straw perished in hideous torment. But young Jack went to his terrible end like a victor.

The menacing words of his testament, shouted from the scaffold, were heard by many who had come not from mere curiosity. And Jack, knowing that by the lessons he was giving to future rebels, he was making his own lot the harder, nevertheless continued to speak. "If among a thousand, two can understand you aright, you have not spoken in vain."

Shishova's book is stern and courageous. It has been born in our stern and courageous times. And it contains that which we expect first and foremost from the writings of today—heroic optimism, that is to say, faith in the final victory of the people's just cause in the teeth of all sufferings and even death itself.

EUGENIA KNIPOVICH

YAKUB KOLAS, POET OF BYELORUSSIA

Forty years ago, Constantine Mickiewicz, son of a landless Byelorussian peasant, printed his first poem—*Native Land*, under the nom de plume of Yakub Kolas.

He wrote it in his native tongue, Byelorussian.

Robert Burns was accepted by England in his day as a "regional" poet. In Russia, conservative critics regarded Taras Shevchenko's first works in the Ukrainian language as an "oddity".

But actually Burns, Shevchenko and Yakub Kolas used their own, native language as a matter of principle. They wanted to create for the people, to develop their language, thought and art.

Already in his childhood, Yakub Kolas knew all about grief and suffering, and realized the hard lot of the fettered peasant life.

At the time when Yakub Kolas took up his pen, Russian poetry was in the thrall of symbolism and romantic exoticism. But Kolas had no intention of singing of knightly journeys or the beauties of nature under the romantic southern sky.

The poet wished to tell of his own people's life, the life he knew—of the need of the poverty-stricken peasantry, of their hard, monotonous existence, of the pale Byelorussian landscape, which is so dear to the heart. . . Of what could the Byelorussian poet dream as he commenced his work? Of opening the gates to study and going out into the world to make a career as a respectable intellectual, or perhaps become a "well-behaved" writer?

Had Yakub Kolas chosen this path, he might perhaps have become the "peasant poet" of Russia, something like John Clare in England, the stonecutter who fascinated his patrons with beautiful descriptions of nature in the country and its elegiac peace.

Yakub Kolas was a man of another kind. If one seeks his parallel in English poetry, one might recall Robert Nicoll, the "second Scottish Burns".

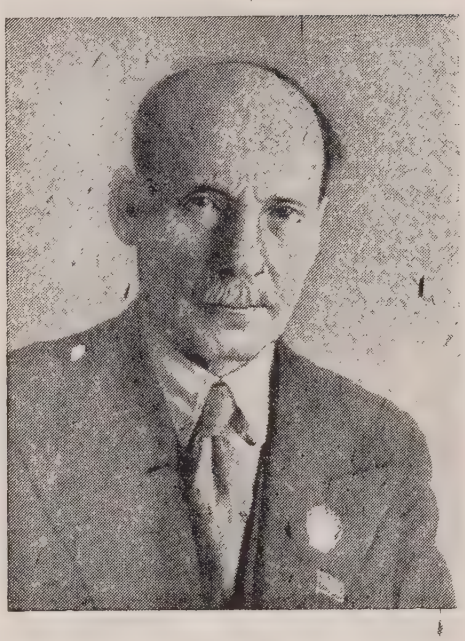
Surprisingly enough, many verses from Nicoll's *Poor Folk* are echoed in the best lines of Yakub Kolas' early works. Of course, this is simply a case of the natural coincidence of feeling between two peasant poets of different peoples, and of the similarity of their artistic methods.

Yakub Kolas, like his English contemporary, wrote tender lyrical verse lamenting the wretched fate of the Byelorussian poor peasant, and biting satires exposing the oppressor.

A great heart and dauntless courage were needed to illuminate the people's path to freedom and happiness in those grim days of reaction.

At about the same time when Kolas' first lines were written, another famous Byelorussian poet, Yanka Kupala (died 1942) first took up the pen. He too devoted his talent as a poet and publicist and all the ardour of his heart to the people, and became the spokesman of their loftiest thoughts and aspirations.

Yakub Kolas' and Yanka Kupala's poems are sincere and human. Written in simple language they became immensely popular in Byelorussia. Peasants, workers, students learned them by heart, copied them on pieces of paper which they carefully concealed from the tsarist gendarmes.



The first Russian reader and critic of the young Byelorussian poetry was Maxim Gorky. He valued the simplicity, warmth and sincerity of Yakub Kolas' lines; in 1911 he wrote: "Byelorussia has two poets—Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas. They write simply, tenderly, sadly and sincerely. I wish our poets had a little more of these traits. . ."

These last words seemed to be contrasting the mannerism and bookish language of the decadent poets with the courageous simplicity of the democratic poetry.

2

Yakub Kolas writes with particular mastery of the Byelorussian countryside. His palette is filled with the tender hues of Byelorussian nature.

We seem to see the cornflower blue of the swift-flowing rivers and the waters of the lakes, whose heavenly blue vie with the rich colouring of the abundant flax fields.

We accompany the poet into the shadow of the green tabernacle of a Byelorussian grove, filled with the chorus of flocks of bird; we are drawn by the tall emerald grass, the brilliant colours of the golden cornfields and the dew-washed meadows.

The poet has wonderful descriptions of sunrise and sunset, of the coming of spring, of brilliant summer days, of autumn storms, and frosty winter nights.

His pictures of nature are always drawn with a wide sweep of colour. His forms are brilliant and transparent, without the slightest hint of anything far-fetched or pretentious. For the most part he uses a simple, singing rhythm, close to that of folk song:

Far above, the quiet moon
Sails mysterious through the sky.
What does it see, as it swings onward,
Strange and lonely there on high?

As in Wordsworth's lyrics, man and nature comprise one indivisible whole. The countryside, the fields under the summer wind, the lark floating in the sky—all these fill the English poet with thoughts of the fate of humanity, of happiness, of life and death.

Kolas is a stranger to dialectics. His lines are realistic and at the same time full of lyricism, telling of the people and countryside of Byelorussia. His pictures of women are particularly well drawn—the widow whose only son has been thrown into prison by the gendarmes; the young girl, the village teacher in a god-forsaken spot among impoverished peasants; brutal servants of the tsar, who "like savage wolves rob the blind peasant". The poet depicts the sufferings of the old mother on the background of a rainy autumn day, her groans mingle with the howling of the wind. In the verses about the teacher, the darkness of night and the lonely half-demolished school strengthen the impression of desolation.

But Yakub Kolas is no pessimist. The battle of the brave, the toil of the teacher, the words of the poet—all lead to one end: "Land and people will not perish. . . The bright rays of freedom will strike to them through the clouds."

Yakub Kolas awaited the cleansing storm. He came in contact with the revolutionary minded peasantry, and in 1906—1908 he wrote a number of political poems-proclamations calling for open struggle.

Yakub Kolas is one of those poets with whom the personal lyrical theme is insolubly linked with the general, social theme. The Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko once said: "The story of my life is part of the story of my country." Yakub Kolas might with every justification have said the same. Very early he realized that he was called upon to sing "a song flashing like lightning, burning away human misfortune, thundering in rage".

A real cultural leader, an educationalist, Kolas drew his themes and the ideas for his work from direct intercourse with the people. For some time he was a village teacher and was sentenced to three years imprisonment (1908—1911) in Minsk for participation in the Teachers' Congress prohibited by the tsarist authorities. It was here that the passionate lines of his prison verses came into being. "Do not fear, brother," he wrote, "this terrible silence; let it not quench your fire. The night will pass. The shadows will flee the dawn."

That day dawned some years later, when on the territory of Polessye, the former "lost corner" of tsarist Russia, there arose the Byelorussian Republic, young and filled with creative force.

Yakub Kolas became the poet of this new Byelorussia, her towns, universities, factories, of her fields no more strictly divided into narrow strips, the sign of a poverty-stricken existence.

Nevertheless, the former life of vegetation led by the Byelorussian peasant did not disappear from Kolas' poetry. As can be clearly seen from his poem *New Land*—an epic of peasant life. It is not for nothing that *New Land* has been called an encyclopaedia of peasant life.

The central figure, typifying the peasant, is the small owner, Mikhail, who dreams of a life lived on his own patch of land. Kolas shows the illusory nature of his hero's dreams, when he seeks egoistic happiness in his own "little heaven". The poem is written with masterly skill, in broad epic style, simply and profoundly.

In another poem, *Simon the Musician*, Yakub Kolas drew the fascinating figure of a shepherd boy, a gifted musician, and showed his roamings and sufferings in a world of hard, prosaic people, in the pre-revolutionary landlords' villages.

But Kolas' most popular work in our day is *The Marsh*, a simple story, sparing of words, of the fate of seventy-year-old Vassili Talash. It is 1920, the Civil War period in Byelorussia. Talash, who had never stood out in any way from the other peasants around him, became the organizer and leader of a partisan column during the German-Polish occupation of Byelorussia.

Yakub Kolas has devoted many vivid lines to the new man in the collective-farm village and flourishing towns of Byelorussia. The peasant woman and her place in the new life, the youth before whom all roads are open, the joy of creative labour experienced by the people—these are the subjects of Kolas' poems on modern Byelorussia.

One of his recent poems well reflects the feelings of the poet, no longer young, who has not only seen his country's development, but has himself been a participant in its construction work:

"I no longer pine at the flight of summer as once I did," writes Kolas: "the joyful song is not lost; in the rustling of autumn leaves I hear the coming spring."

Taras Shevchenko in his poem *Caucasus* once symbolized the people as Prometheus bound to the rock. Yakub Kolas has shown the mighty strength of the people as a Prometheus unbound.

In October 1936, the whole country celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of Yakub Kolas' literary work, and he received the honoured title of People's Poet. As vice-president of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, Kolas takes a notable part in the development of scientific thought and national culture in his country.

Kolas is carrying on important scientific work, occupying himself first and foremost with problems connected with folk art. Byelorussia has a variegated and rich folklore—songs, stories and legends, picturing the history of the people, their lives and customs. Drawing on the wealth of folk poetry, Yakub Kolas' writings possess great originality and freshness.

Yakub Kolas is known far beyond the bounds of Byelorussia. His poems and prose have been translated into many languages of the peoples of the Soviet land.

During the period of peaceful construction the poet was delighted with the iron will of the people who knew no limits, "storming the heavens, linking sea with sea, penetrating the wilds of the Pamirs and the far Pole".

Now, when the storm of war has broken, he is inspired by the same dauntless people, resolute in struggle, the people's avengers, the partisans. "Our people," he says, "never bowed, but as of old, sent its sons along the road of battle."

In his story, *Partisan Kuprei*, Kolas draws a striking picture of the old invalid, the lame Uncle Kuprei. This is a peaceful, kindly collective farmer, whom one would think devoid of anything warlike. But fate brings him up against the fascists, and the German cruelty awakens in Kuprei such hatred that with the aid of his friend, a forester, he kills the German guard. Thus begins his life as a partisan.

In vivid songs Kolas expresses that depth of human feeling, that love for Byelorussia which leads the partisan column through the dark pine woods and the swamp grass. Not for a moment does the poet forget his tortured but not subdued country. Always he hears the voice of his native soil, "and the rushing river, and the splashing of the brook, the sough of the grove and the rustle of the thicket".

Yakub Kolas is true to himself. He does not give way to despondency, to spiritual weakness he is a stranger. Too well he knows his people's will to victory, knows that Byelorussia's "heroic sons" will "come along the path of high noon".

Yakub Kolas not only awaits with eager anticipation the day of liberation. He is working actively to help in bringing victory.

A. OSSIPOV

NEW BOOKS

"His boundless love for ships surprised me. He seemed to regard them with the rapture of an heir looking on his future fortune," late Novikov-Priboy writes of the hero of his new novel *Captain of the First Rank* (The State Literary Publishing House).

Novikov-Priboy is true to his theme to the very end of his life. His new novel deals with the life of Russian seamen. So far only the first part of this book had appeared, depicting the life and people of the pre-revolutionary Russian navy.

The hero of this novel—Able-bodied Seaman Psaltyryov—is the personification of the tenacity, daring and talent inherent in the Russian who even under the harsh conditions of tsarist reaction overcame difficulties and humiliation, moved ever forward, mastered his chosen calling, making himself useful to himself and his people.

For seven years he served in the tsarist navy. The sailor's life was a hard one: endless drilling, reprimands and beatings. "It seemed that we ceased to belong to our own selves, that we were no longer human beings," writes Novikov-Priboy, who himself went through this gruelling school. "Service seemed as dreary as an autumn drizzle and incredibly long like the convict road through Siberia." But Psaltyryov showed no despondence. "His eyes gazed on everything with eagerness, so keen was he to grasp the new life as quickly as possible."

Novikov-Priboy draws a most vivid picture of a self-made man, Psaltyryov who "reveals a passion for assimilating everything by means of self-education. His mates were astonished by his skill in repairing their boots for he had never been a cobbler, at his dexterity in remaking regulation trousers and flannel shirts so that they were a perfect fit for those to whom they had been issued. He could fashion a new key to any lock and repair watches and clocks of all makes and design."

"A universal handy-man; and a real expert at that!" his comrades declared of Psaltyryov.

And it was self-education that helped him master nautical matters and get to know every inch of his ship.

The book has another chief character, the author himself who narrates the story, but only in the passive role of onlooker and listener. The novel consists of a series of tales told by Psaltyryov, which unfold the story of his life and of the people surrounding him, their personal affairs, domestic dramas and service intrigues.

Fate parted the two friends. Novikov-Priboy was posted for service of the seas, in a cruiser, while Psaltyryov, who cherished dreams of a life on the seas, had to spend his naval service as cabin boy to various naval officers. Whenever the cruiser on which Novikov-Priboy served returned for a short while to Kronstadt, the two friends would always get together, and each time meant a new story from Psaltyryov, whose tales bring to life a range of vivid figures—from seaman to admiral. With innate humour, Psaltyryov shows up all kinds of crankish, unlucky and pig-headed people in these tales.

The novel has its love story—Psaltyryov and Valya, the girl whom he marries.

A lucky chance helped Psaltyryov to gain promotion in the service, and he was posted to a cruiser setting out on a long voyage. The story of this cruise ends the first part of the novel. The two friends part for a long time.

"Came wars and revolutions," are the words with which Novikov-Priboy closes his book. "Events swept by like a tornado, changing not only people but also, so it seemed, the very face of the earth. . . I often remembered Psaltyryov in those years, and continuously asked after him, but no one could tell me anything about him." But the author never lost hopes of seeing his friend again.

"The youth which comes home from the war will bring a new word and a new theme into literature," the well-known poet Nikolai Tikhonov said at a recent conference of Soviet writers. The young poet Private Dudin of the Red Army, author of the collected volumes: *Verses 1940—1943*, *Soldier's Flask* and *Military Neva*, is representative of this younger generation. Dudin participated in the gallant defence of Hangö Peninsula which was besieged by the whiteguard Finns from the first days of the war.

The verses by this young Leningrad poet, who found himself taking part in epoch-making events, present a sort of lyrical narrative of this period of his life. In his different verses one finds a description of the men and events of Hangö (*Antonenko and Brinko, Gridenko*, etc.) All his poetry breathes the very air of war, of the Leningrad front.

Dudin's verses unfold the inner world of the young man of today, who has matured at the front. Those of his age went to the war "half educated, their books half read, their loves cut short". But the war gave life to new great feelings: loyalty to their country, mercilessness towards the enemy, faithfulness to their comrades-in-arms. And these feelings form the themes for Dudin's war lyrics. They are filled with an overpowering love of life, that extraordinary "thirst for living" and, at the same time, that simple, manly attitude towards their own death that universal life—the life of the people might continue. Of this the poet speaks in one of his best lyrics entitled *Nightingales*.

In the poem *The Cuckoo*, which may be regarded as a statement of the author's views on art, Dudin demands that the artist be truthful about the war and the enemy. Truth is essential for a correct grasp of events. Honesty, poetic veracity and realism are salient features of Dudin's verses.

More than half the partisans in action behind the enemy lines are young people. Over fifteen thousand young partisans have been cited and hold orders and medals for courage when fighting against German invaders, eight thousands of them having been awarded the "Partisan of the National War" medal.

The collected volume *Behind the Enemy Lines*—brought out by the Young Guard Publishers—tells us about these fearless young men and women.

A number of partisans' diaries, documents and letters, as well as sketches by writers, deal with the struggle waged by young heroes in the stone quarries of Kerch, the forests of Smolensk, the swamps of Byelorussia and the steppes of the Ukraine.

In his sketch *Your Brother Volodya Kurilenko*, with which this volume opens, Leonid Leonov writes of a seventeen-year-old youth who becomes the terror of the enemy at Smolensk. Many an enemy troop-train was derailed and sent crashing by Volodya, scores of Germans fell victim of his sniper's rifle, and more than one nazi in a hand to hand fight. And, when the life of this fair-haired, smiling, blue-eyed young man was cut short, his name lived on in the Volodya Kurilenko partisan detachment, in which the Smolensk partisans fought better than ever against the nazis.

The diary of the Bryansk partisan-girl Olga Karpova is a human document telling of the fate of an eighteen-year-old army-scout whose family perished at the hands of the Germans. Olga saw the death sentence carried out on her mother and seven-year-old brother, she saw her father's dead body swinging on the gallows, and her heart hardened, all that was left being a thirst for vengeance and retribution. Olga writes about the partisan raids on railway stations, of the fires and explosions which she organized and in which she participated, and side by side with such entries, she writes of her dreams of a future happy life and of her own personal happiness in days to come.

In *The Violin*, the writer A. Drozdov gives us the story of the thirteen-year-old boy Ilyusha, a native of Western Ukraine. Ilyusha is a gifted musician and when the Soviet government was established he got the chance to study. The invasion of the nazis robbed him of home, family and music. Ilyusha joined the partisans. He manages to get into a café for German officers of the high ranks in one of the towns of Western Ukraine and entertains the drunken "rulers" with melodies by Chopin. Late at night, when returning from the café, he leaves his violin behind, hidden in a closet, so that next day he can bring his violin-case, packed with a batch of explosives. This goes on for several weeks, Ilyusha patiently and pluckily carting in his daily loads of T.N.T. And one evening, soon after Ilyusha the fiddler had taken his leave, the café, with all the representatives of the German command who frequented it, went flying sky-high. By that time sturdy partisan horses were swiftly bearing Ilyusha to safety in the woods.

This book tells us of many a gallant deed, and is well illustrated with portraits of young partisans and reproductions of partisan newspapers, leaflets and posters.

Moscow, 1920. The battles on the Civil War fronts had not yet subsided. The blockade had not yet been raised. Counter-revolutionary gangs were still riding rough-shod in the Ukraine, the Crimea, Byelorussia and Siberia. Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, was without fuel and a sufficient stock of provisions. At night troop-trains would leave for the front one after another, and during the day the city population would come out to do volunteer work on the socialist "subbotniks" [1].

It was during these days, on May 2nd, 1920, that an unusual procession appeared along one of the streets of Moscow. Carrying a big strip of bunting, the actors of all the Moscow theatres, with the troupe of the Maly Theatre at their head, marched along. On the bunting were the words: "Yermolova is our banner!" The demonstration halted outside one of the houses on a balcony of which there appeared the tall, slender figure of an elderly lady who was met with an outburst of applause.

The same evening, at the jubilee gathering in the Moscow Maly Theatre in honour of the great actress, the first to ascend the stage and take the floor was Vladimir Lenin. From the stage was read out the decision of the Council of People's Commissars to confer on Maria Yermolova the title of People's Artiste of the Republic. This title of honour was instituted at the initiative of Lenin, for the jubilee of Yermolova, who was the first to receive this title as a mark of the artiste's close ties with her people.

In what respect was the life of this exceptional woman and great actress so remarkable?

Maria Nikolayevna Yermolova was born

[1] Originally—saturdays of volunteer work.—*Ed.*

in Moscow on July 3rd, 1853. Her father was a stage-prompter at the Maly Theatre. The representatives of several generations of the Yermolov family, which was of serf peasant origin, had worked on the stage, as actors, scene-painters or musicians. At the age of nine Maria Yermolova entered a theatre school and made her debut when thirteen years old as Fanchette in the vaudeville, *Scrambling for a Bridegroom*. At the age of seventeen she won repute as a great actress and throughout the whole of her career lived up to her well deserved fame. The role that brought her this fame was that of Emilia Galotti in Lessing's drama of the same name.

Half a century in the Maly Theatre, on the same stage, every nook and cranny of which was so familiar to her, and in those fifty years a tremendous number of roles, each a masterpiece in stagecraft! Katerina in Ostrovsky's *The Storm*, Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, Laurencia in *Fuente Ovejuna*, Lizaveta the Russian serf woman in Pissemsky's *Bitter Fate*, Judith in *Uriel Acosta*, Klärchen in *Egmont*, Mary Stuart, Joan of Arc, the actress Neghina in Ostrovsky's *Talents and Admirers*, the actress Kruchinina in *Innocently Guilty* by the same playwright.

"In portraying the sufferings of Mary Stuart, the inspiration of Joan, the passion of Phaedra, the sorrow of Queen Marguerite, the patriotism of the Corsican woman—it is impossible to recount them all—Yermolova's great power showed itself in that 'universal humaneness' which lies at the roots of Russian life. . . In the Russian language Yermolova brings to life all the stirring and monumental figures of foreign peoples and foreign writers. . . With consummate skill she availed herself of the Russian actor's right to transform characters taken from the creative works of the whole world so that they are understood by the Russian soul just as the writer translates these works into the Russian language. . .", Alexander Yuzhin-Sumbatov—one of the leading figures of the Russian stage—wrote in his reminiscences.

"Why did you never visit Europe? Every one would then have known that it was not Duse who was the world's leading actress, but our Maria Yermolova," Constantine Stanislavsky, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, once wrote to Yermolova.

Maria Yermolova's great career as an actress can be found in the book *Maria Nikolayevna Yermolova*, which recently appeared under the "Popular Library" series brought out by the Art Publishers.

AFTER THE CRIMEAN CAMPAIGN

The Berlin radio announced that Marshal Antonescu visited the front in order to "give decorations to the courageous Rumanian warriors".

Marshal Antonescu decorates those "members" of the Rumanian army distinguishing themselves by efficient service in the Crimea

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

ARTS

AMERICAN FILMS ABOUT SOVIET PEOPLE

The Soviet cinema-goer has shown great interest in two American films: *The Battle of Russia* and *The North Star*, which both deal with the Soviet Union in war-time.

The Battle of Russia is mounted almost exclusively from Soviet newsreels. This film was sponsored by the United States War Department, whose officials took an intimate part in the mounting of the film, one of the series in *Why We Fight*.

The North Star, made in the Samuel Goldwyn's Studios, is an all-American production. The scenario is by Lillian Hellman and the producer is Lewis Mileston. This is a feature film and depicts a collective farm. The scenario writer, producer and actors could only get knowledge of their subjects from books, newspapers, photographs and pictures.

Although the sources of the two films as well as their contents are different, yet *The North Star* supplements as it were *The Battle of Russia*. A feature common to both films is their veracity. The high level of production, mounting and acting greatly attract the Soviet onlooker though he does not share in the feeling of novelty which the American experiences on seeing these films about the U.S.S.R. The American learns of a remote country, of a distant people whose struggle is of decisive importance in the World War. In the American picture, the Soviet onlooker encounters familiar material. But it is interesting and important for us to know how our allies regard us, what is their conception of what place the Soviet Union and the Soviet people hold in the American people's thoughts and feelings.

The documentary film *The Battle of Russia* is significant and powerful in that it not only shows how the war in the Soviet Union began and progressed, but explains by a strictly objective collection of facts, how and why the Red Army is victorious. It is known, of course, that German fascist propaganda tried in every way to explain the Red Army's victories as vagaries of chance in no way connected with the strategy of the belligerents. Nor was this nonsense entirely ignored outside Germany. Military observers in the United States like the not unknown Mr. Baldwin of the *New York Times* spread this German invention. Part of the American press, true to its anti-Soviet traditions, absolutely refused to admit that the Red Army might prove stronger than its German adversaries, since they were loath to confess their own short-sightedness.

The Battle of Russia not only shows but proves convincingly that the German defeat in the Soviet Union was no accident but perfectly logical. The Red Army proved stronger than the German Army. The Soviet people proved to be the rock on which the German war machine met disaster. The American film reveals the sources of Soviet strength which go back far into the past, into the history of the Russian people,—roots nourished by the vital forces of the young Soviet state.

The film depicts the fate of past invaders who tried to penetrate deep into Russia and subject the Russian people to foreign rule. The German "dog-knights" of the XIII century, the Swedes in the XVIII century, Napoleon and Wilhelm II, all suffered the same fate: they not only met defeat on the Russian plains but paid for a transitory triumph by the collapse of their power. The historical episodes in this film stress the fact that "the Russian people cannot be conquered". The film goes on to show us the significance of Soviet power in the material and intellectual development of the Russian people and the other peoples which it carried along with it as senior in the family of Soviet republics. To the old traditions of independence it added new traditions formed during the years of Socialist construction. An impression of strength and power is produced by this film which depicts the Soviet people as its chief hero.

All this is shown in reels mounted by the American producers very successfully and thoughtfully. The picture not only explains the Red Army's victory by the strength and superiority of the Soviet people, but the audience also senses the sympathy for the allied peoples. The fact that this film was sponsored by the American Army's circles refutes the stupid invention of the American journal *Life* that apparently, even today, the American Army does not know what it is fighting for. *The Battle of Russia* shows both the rapacious nature of the enemy of the freedom-loving peoples and those lofty tasks which have united progressive nations in this second world war.

In this, too, lies the merit of the feature film *The North Star*. It does not delve far back into the history of the Russian people; neither does it show the war on the broad Russian plains. The entire action is confined to a single collective farm during the first weeks of war. The artistic portrayal is powerful enough for the American onlooker to realize why Hitler Germany found itself shaken to its very foundations by blows received on the Soviet-German front. In a fictional film, of course, the ideas and sentiments of the authors and producers usually count. In this case, too, they reveal their sympathy for their heroes and their regard for the Soviet collective farm, their confidence in the vitality and essential strength of the new social system in the country.

It is clear that those concerned in depicting

the collective farm "know what they are talking about", despite one or two errors inevitable under the circumstances. The Soviet onlooker smiles at collective farm horses that look as if they have been brought straight from the racing stud; or if ordinary collective farm lads sometimes look more like romantic cowboys. After all, these are mere details and are not "the life and soul" of the film. The main thing is that the portrayal of Soviet peasant character is genuine and consequently reveals to the American how and why the Soviet people are victorious and the source of the strength of the Red Army.

Not only has the collective farm system stood the stern test of war, but has stood it with credit, we may justly add. This is beyond dispute although the facts in this respect have been attacked by foreign economists and publicists more than any other, and, perhaps, are more difficult for the average American to grasp. Anti-Soviet propaganda has asserted that collective farms are an artificial growth, that, ostensibly, they clash with the "nature" of the peasant. Remorseless war has put an end to this dispute. In the first world war the Russian peasantry did not and could not cope with economic collapse. In this second world war, which has fallen on the people with incomparably greater force, agriculture, under the Soviet system, knows no collapse. More than that, as was said above, the collective farms have successfully coped with the unprecedented difficult tasks caused by the war. Foreign observers have repeatedly noted that the collective-farm peasantry has helped the war effort with the same recognition of patriotic duty as other strata of the population in the Soviet state.

From what source has the new Soviet peasantry drawn its strength? Who are these collective farmers? Why didn't the Germans encounter in the Soviet countryside the dull, submissive "muzhiks" painted by the German fascist press and echoed by a section of the American press instead of the formidable, untamable and proud partisans, heroic defenders of the Soviet homeland?

These questions are answered by the heroes of the American film about a collective farm. Only talented and keenly observant artists could have produced such a film. But their success also means that the truth is overcoming anti-Soviet lies.

Undoubtedly American cinemamen had the interests of their patrons in mind when making this film. One realizes that the American wants to know the people who are so near to him through the events of our times, people who proved stronger than the Germans. It is unlikely that Americans viewing this film will regret the former ready-made productions from so-called "Soviet life" with "landscapes à la Russe", the "mysterious Russian soul", troikas and tinsel Russian princes suffering from Bolshevik "ferocity". *The North Star* shows us genuine Soviet people—despite an American accent which the Russian captions cannot hide.

We shall not give a detailed account of the story of the film. It is told very well, in distinct bright tones and with great artistry. The film introduces the onlooker into the intimate life of three families. The old folk hold a respected place on the collective farm to which they are devoted. They built it, developed it, and by their labour won fame for the kolkhoz at exhibitions. The kolkhoz has secured for the peasants a prosperous life.

The collective farm youth are excellently depicted. Great credit should be given to the producer and scenario writer that they have not produced a standardized Soviet youth (and girl), but have endowed their characters with vital individual features. The children are lively, witty Soviet kiddies. The Soviet onlooker is a bit taken aback at their speaking English. Their pronunciation of Russian names is outlandish. But the Soviet audience soon gets used to all this. The dramatic development of events pushes these peculiarities into the background, and generally speaking, we are presented with a picture of genuine Soviet life. Looking at the screen, the onlooker recognizes that the heroes' attributes—their nobility of thought and deed, their moral purity and sentiments expressed in simple and unassuming forms—are not sheer idealization but reality grasped and felt by American cinemamen. From this follows the convincing performance of the actors. They have succeeded in showing how from those jolly kind-hearted youngsters busy with work and study, came

A poster of the film "The North Star"

those formidable fighters, "the people's avengers", the partisans.

These gay and apparently happy-go-lucky youngsters have a highly developed sense of personal and national dignity. The film reveals this not only by the remarks of the head-master of the village school, not only in words about military duty to the homeland and the recognition that service to one's people comes before everything else. This sense of independence reveals itself in every word and deed. These people are peaceful folk, but they are also proud. The Soviet men and women portrayed by the American screen radiate assurance in their strength and the might of their people. There is no need to state this specifically, since it is part and parcel of the people, revealed in their way of speaking, listening and thinking. You can tell a free man from a slave by the very way he walks. The man shown by this film could only be the product of a great democracy, proud of its traditions of independence. *The North Star* is a film dealing with Soviet democracy.

The bombshell of war bursts. We are recalled to that unforgettable day of June 22nd, 1941. The treacherous and robberlike nature of the onslaught is vividly shown in the American film. All details are excellently done. In one small episode, the eyes of the onlooker are held by the self-satisfied smile of the German airman shooting Soviet people on the road. Murder for him is an amusement, a sport.

The savagery of the Germans shown without any special emphasis is all the more vile. They demolish the collective farm with business-like efficiency and in the same passionless way torture the wife of the collective-farm chairman. In depicting the German invaders the film does not give prominence to Hitlerites by conviction, to SS butchers, but to a non-party German doctor who knew other times in Germany. It is he who directs the most terrible villanies shown in the film. Calmly, efficiently, without emotion, he drains blood from Soviet children for transfusion to wounded Germans. When the children die, the German doctor cooly tells a Soviet doctor that it is required by the German order of things, that it is the law of German warfare.

At first, the Germans leave the Russian doctor in peace. He seems to them a harmless old fellow. The German doctor even takes his part when a young German officer wants to shoot him for an angry protest against the murder of the children.

The German Von Harden says:

"Doctor Kurin is a famous man of science. He is not a man who kills, and therefore, no danger to us."

In the contrast between the Soviet doctor and the German doctor we find the political point of the film.

It also contrasts Soviet morality with German amorality. The Soviet doctor is a humanitarian, the German doctor a brigand. The film ends with a partisan attack on the German-occupied village, during which the Soviet doctor seeks out the German doctor revolver in hand. He says of the Hitlerites:

"That, that kind, is nothing. They will go when their bosses go. But men like you, who have contempt for men like him, to me you are the real filth! Men who do the work of fascists and pretend to themselves they are better than the beasts for whom they work. Men who do murder while they laugh at those who order them to do it. . . He was wrong about many things, Dr. Richter, I am a man who kills."

The Germans are killed by all the collective farmers who have become Soviet fighters. Many of the latter also perish but the Germans suffer defeat in clashes with the partisans. They fail to crush the Soviet countryside. The partisans have right and might on their side.

Such is this American film, full of dynamic exciting action and liveliness of dialogue which is a feature of good American pictures.

German-fascist propaganda is doing its utmost, using every and the dirtiest of means to blacken the name of the Soviet Union, to diminish the importance of her victories, to slander, distort and finally, to scare folk with the strength of the Soviet people if it fails to convince them of their impotence. One cannot say that German-fascist propaganda found no abettors in the United States. We are not speaking of those direct Hitler agents who from time to time appear in the dock, but of other agents who masquerade as American patriots. These disguise their anti-Soviet sentiments. The Hearst, McCormick and Paterson press respond to the Goebbels' mouthings from Berlin. The slanderous trash of cowardly and dishonest pygmies, however, is impotent against Soviet truth. This truth has lent brilliance to these American films about Soviet people.

DAVID ZASLAVSKY

NEW RUSSIAN ORATORIO

The first performance of Yuri Shaporin's new oratorio completed this year, *The Legend of the Battle for the Russian Land* was recently given in Moscow. The performance lasted an hour and a half and formed the greater part of a symphony concert.

The development of the cantata and oratorio in Russian music can be traced from the works of the early part of the XIX century, through the operas of Glinka and Borodin and the cantatas of Taneyev to present day compositions.

Listening to this new oratorio, one recalls the prologue to Borodin's *Prince Igor*, one of the finest examples of the cantata-oratorio style. Shaporin's oratorio once more proves the revival of Borodin's heroic traditions in Soviet music—a point to which the present writer drew attention in previous articles. The works of Borodin influenced Rachmaninov's style directly, or indirectly through Taneyev (it is interesting to compare, for example, Rachmaninov's famous *Prelude in C sharp minor* with *In a Monastery* from

Borodin's *Short Piano-suite*). Myaskovsky, Glière, Shebalin, Lyatoshinsky and especially Shaporin were also influenced by Borodin.

The link between Borodin's heroic compositions and the music of Shaporin became apparent in the latter's *First Symphony* completed in 1932; and this link became still more obvious in the symphony-cantata *On Kulikovo Field*, which was awarded a Stalin Prize in 1941.

In a letter written June 1st, 1876, to Lyubov Karmalina, Borodin declared: "My opinion is that opera, like theatre decorations, must avoid small details, minutiae. Everything should be painted with broad strokes of the brush, clearly, vividly, and wherever possible, in a way practical both for vocal and orchestral performance."

The manner of painting with "broad strokes of the brush", al fresco one might call it, is characteristic, to a very high degree, of Shaporin's music with its relieved dramatic conceptions.

The Legend of the Battle for the Russian Land is built around the events of the present war and our people's experiences.

The theme of Shaporin's earlier symphony cantata *On Kulikovo Field* is the defeat of the Tartars by Prince Dmitri Donskoy at Kulikovo Field in 1380. The pivot of the new oratorio is the battle for Stalingrad. Battle scenes in the strict sense of the word are absent here, just as the actual battle between Russians and Polovtsy on the River Kayala is absent in *Prince Igor*. To Shaporin the battles of Kulikovo and Stalingrad are first and foremost symbolic instances and incarnations of Russian heroism, in which he sees the source of his country's might and greatness.

The *Legend* is divided into twelve episodes. The text has been written by Michael Lozinsky, a poet well-known for his translations of Dante and his collaborations with the composer in the cantata *On Kulikovo Field*. Three other poets: Constantine Simonov, Alexei Surkov, and the youngest of them, Sergei Feinberg, as well as the composer himself, shared in the work on the text.

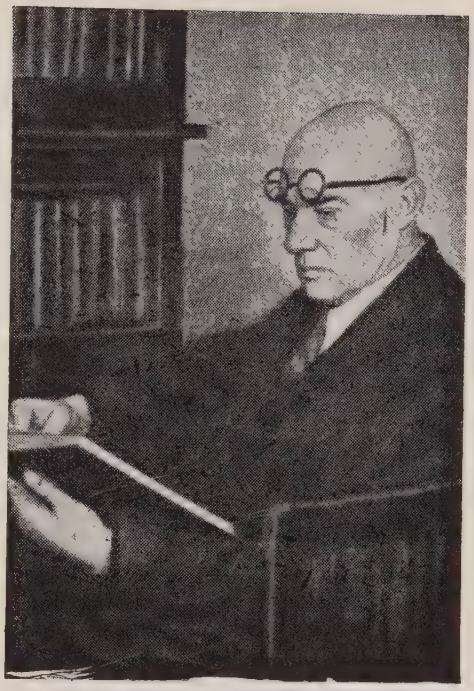
The score is written for a mixed chorus, in which groups of male and female voices come to the fore in certain episodes, and also for soloists and a grand symphony orchestra.

The first part opens with a short orchestral prologue, epic in character. The solo clarinet sounds from afar, then gradually other instruments join in, although the orchestra is still restrained. This is a poetically expressive and concise picture of the spacious Russian land.

Then the chorus joins in, singing of flowering gardens, of the vast distances of the steppes, of the forests and nature's exultant spring mood. "Oh, Russian land!"—there is deep feeling in this exclamation from the ancient Russian *Lay of Igor's March* which the composer uses as an epigraph.

The next episode forms a dramatic contrast and is entitled *Invasion*. Through the orchestra runs an undercurrent of alarm, the panorama of invasion is unfolded, the enemy approaches "with fire and clangour". So sing the chorus as the orchestra reaches the tragic culmination.

The third episode, the *Lament of the Women* is an emotional response to the invasion. It is written in a style closely resembling ritual



The composer Yuri Shaporin

laments, a mournful melody against a background of the measured whisper of violas in the orchestra. Russian women are mourning "the unburied dead", "the embers of ruined homes", when the voice of an aged man is heard (the fourth episode) bringing words of comfort telling of the unity among all the peoples of our country, and summoning them to wreak vengeance on the foe and to win victory.

The idea of vengeance dominates the next episode opening with *The Song of the Red Army Men* who march to the battle against their enemies and foretell their deserved doom: "The ravens shall pluck out their eyes."

The Red Army men sing of their country, of what they are out to defend. This music has a martial sound gathering power and intensity. The song gradually subsides as the moment of battle approaches.

The sixth episode, the *Letter to a Friend* is an aria for a bass voice, a soldier's reminiscences of the hard campaigns and the battles for Smolensk. He is proud of his country and his people; the music in this episode has a warm, lyrical character. Then the colours alter, grow sterner, as the chorus sings the *Ballad of the Partisans*: "More resounding than the storm will be the blow we'll strike at daybreak," the male voices sing. The rugged strains are softened by the women's voices swelling to a mighty chorus in which the whole chorus joins. This is a song of the joyful future, of victory to be won over the enemy.

Thus ends the first part of the oratorio; these episodes introduce the listener to the atmosphere of war, the great ordeal of the people.

The second part begins with the eighth episode *On the Banks of the Volga* and consists of the *Chorus of the Oldest* and a *Mother's Aria*.

The Germans have reached the banks of the great Russian river but further they cannot go. The battle for Stalingrad begins, the first stage of which is unfolded in the ninth episode *On the Don Steppes*. The full orchestra takes part in this symphonic picture, in which the melody rises to a pitch of great intensity, an emotional preparation for the soldier's exclamation: "Oh, Russian land!" This is the central episode of the oratorio both as regards range and dramatic significance. The women's chorus, the *Chorus of the Oldest*, the chorus of the soldiers, and also the soloists personifying the parts of mother and warrior join in a vocal ensemble, of which the exclamation: "The enemy will fall and become as dust!" is the dominant motive. This precedes the ensemble's further development, which culminates in a song of jubilation over glorious Stalingrad and the whole Russian land.

The tenth episode *Eternal Remembrance, Eternal Glory for Our Fallen Heroes!* is a solemn commemoration of the fallen. In full chorus, the manly voices of the soldiers merge with the mourning of the women.

In theme and content the eleventh episode is closely related to the soldier's vow that precedes it and which is taken up by the entire chorus. It is a vow to build up the country's splendid renewal, to reconstruct ruined cities and villages. These will be the fruits of victory.

The twelfth and concluding episode bears the poetic title *Spring's Return*. The orchestra, repeating the closing exclamation of the vow, thunders forth. Then the chorus and soloists sing of gardens that will bloom again, and of the great exploits of the people in the name of the spring flowering of the whole country, in the name of the life and victory over the death which was brought by the German invaders.

Shaporin's oratorio describes the historic battle for Stalingrad not as a mere struggle for a city, but as a struggle for the whole Russian land, for its existence and liberty.

Hence, the monumental style, the solemnity and majestic measure of the musical language, in which, by the way, archaic modes are observed. These were introduced by the composer to emphasize the ancient traditions of the national heroism vividly displayed at the dawn of the Russian state.

It is for this reason that *The Legend of the Battle for the Russian Land* is considered as the second part of the cycle that opened with the symphony cantata *On Kulikovo Field*.

Whether the cycle is to be a trilogy or not remains to be seen. The composer, who is working now on vocal ballads dealing with the National War, intends to write a third part, based on future events.

Shaporin's new oratorio is undoubtedly a work of significance. Although the same high level is not maintained throughout the lengthy score, episodes like the commemoration of the fallen heroes leave an unforgettable impression. Shaporin cannot be called an innovator; his music does not strike one by its novelty of media or treatment. But the composer's sincerity, his range and the penetrating knowledge of the people's emotions permit him to be regarded as one of the formost composers of our day, a day which casts its glory over the best pages of the *Legend of the Battle for the Russian Land*.

Professor IGOR BOELZA

ART NEWS

"Yesterday I arrived at Pyatigorsk. I have engaged lodgings at the extreme end of the town, the highest part, at the foot of Mount Mashuk... Branches of bloom-laden bird-cherry trees peep in at my window, and now and again the breeze bestrews my writing-table with their white petals. . ."

This is how Mikhail Lermontov, the famous Russian XIX century writer, begins his novel *A Hero of Our Time*, written in the form of a diary of the Russian officer, Pechorin.

Lermontov's classic novel has been staged by the Moscow New Theatre, the youngest theatre of the Soviet capital, founded in the grim days of 1941. Under extremely difficult conditions the theatre rehearsed the plays of Shakespeare and Schiller. They staged *Othello* 120 times and *Love and Intrigue* 160 times at the front and the front-line districts.

Lermontov's play, as staged by the New Theatre, bears the stamp of daring and originality. V. V. Fotiyev, director of the theatre and author of the stage adaption of *A Hero of Our Time* has displayed great ingenuity in staging the play. In the play, Pechorin, the leading character is also the author's "reader"; whatever occurs on the stage serves as an illustration, as it were, to the pages of his diary. Thus the entire fervour and spirit of Lermontov's original is retained. Every word in the play belongs to Lermontov, and the spectator, delighting in the expressive "tableaux vivants" which he sees on the stage gets the impression that he has just perused a richly illustrated edition of Lermontov's novel.

K. V. Vakhterov portrays Pechorin's tragedy with great force and sincerity. It is the tragedy of oppressive solitude and spiritual duality, the tragedy of a talented personality who could not find an outlet or application for his "boundless powers". Ivan Turgenev said of Lermontov: "To a certain extent he gave a picture of himself in Pechorin." K. Vakhterov has succeeded in conveying this. In his presentation of Pechorin one feels Lermontov's qualities: his cool disdain for the "society babble", his profound dissatisfaction with life and the secret tenderness of his solitary and proud spirit.

The stage decorations, by B. Klushantsev, are modest but original: several small trees in barrels, a green garden bench and two or three pillars, a bright Caucasian rug—all these cursory details, and an excellent musical score by N. Mikulin—recreate the atmosphere of Lermontov's novel.

The press, which warmly received the play pointed out among its shortcomings a weakness

in the presentation of the female roles and the lack of vividness in the ball and duel scenes. And yet one feels that the New Theatre is treading along the right path; one feels in them the pulse of creative effort, youthful enthusiasm and an ardent love for the great Russian poet.

The child's imagination is inseparably linked up with the characters in ancient fairy-tales, which incarnate the people's ideas of good and evil, of courage and bravery, of injustice and violence.

Popular heroes of Russian folklore are once more revived in the fairy-tale *Ivan-Tsarevich, His Native Country and Beloved Mother*, as staged by the Central Theatre of Railway Workers. V. Goldfeld, the author, presents the play in a new light, and makes it breathe with the stern realities of today.

Three sons of the tsar—Dmitri, a glutton and lazybones, Vassili—curious and compassionate, and Ivan, the embodiment of the best in the Russian people—are the centre of the fairy-tale. Vassili, out of compassion and curiosity, frees Kashchei, the traditional fairy-tale symbol of violence and evil. Kashchei at once calls upon his brown hairy-legged slaves to attack the peaceful kingdom. They follow him; they capture the beloved mother and steal the nightingale in the golden cage. The people's sufferings begin. . . The three brothers set off in their hunt for Kashchei. They come to a cross-roads. . . Dmitri chooses the road which promises sweet food; Vassili takes the path leading to a "wonderful prodigy", Ivan-Tsarevich fearlessly marches on along the narrow, straight path, which promises him victory or death.

Dmitri lands into the country of plenty, whose peaceful inhabitants consider themselves safe from Kashchei. But Kashchei attacks them without warning and conquers their land. The same fate overcomes the country where curious Vassili finds the wonderful prodigy. Kashchei establishes his rule over all.

Fearless Ivan-Tsarevich meets with faithful helpers: Little Jacob, a seasoned soldier, and Tatyana, a brave girl who wishes to avenge her country outraged by Kashchei. In their struggle against Kashchei's evil forces, they meet with many adventures and hardships, but in the end they beat their enemies, free the prisoners, and return home, conquerors.

The analogy with modern times is not forced on the audience—the text of the fairy-tale does not contain a single line referring to the war; the fairy-tale develops on the stage as a naive, merry tale whose beauty delights the eye. Children find it a captivating play; adolescents and adults, however, sense in it a second theme, a theme of modern times.

The Central Theatre of Railway Workers was organized several years ago in Moscow to cater for the cultural needs of transport workers. Its repertory includes plays of Russian and world classics as well as plays of contemporary Soviet playwrights. Now it has made an attempt to attract children.

The thousands of children who crowd the theatre follow the development of the play with true emotion; they warmly sympathize ith the heroes and from the bottom of their little hearts hate the enemies of Ivan-Tsarevich. The heroic feats of Ivan-Tsarevich and his followers evoke in them a desire to be just as fearless, as steadfast and as faithful to their country. Herein lies the educational significance of the play.

The Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator has staged E. Schwarz's *Far Away Corners*. The play, written during the first months of the war, is the story of a Leningrad Children's Home, which was evacuted in 1941. The central idea—how the character of a young Soviet citizen is formed—is happily stressed and brilliantly conveyed by the entire troupe, headed by the producer, Krichko.

The theatre succeeded in giving a faithful picture of a children's home with its atmosphere of solid friendship, romanticism and splendid humour.

The plot centres around the youngster Lyonya who wants to go back to Leningrad to fight, with the grown-ups, for his beloved city against the Germans. Yulia Yulskaya gives an excellent portrayal of a charming boy with a strong willful character. Lyonya's younger brother, Misha, the favourite of the children's home, is a clumsy, good-natured lad. G. Burtseva, who specializes in children's roles, plays the part of Misha with gentle humour and great warmth.

The Magic Rivulet—the latest radio-broadcast play—is dedicated to the friendship of Soviet children in war-time.

The composer Leo Schwarz has presented the theme in the form of a musical fairy-tale. The libretto, by E. Ognetsvet and S. Tsenin, serves but as a connecting link between the arias, duets and choruses, which tell us about the touching friendship of the Byelorussian boy Vassilyok and the Uzbek girl Jannat.

The Magic Rivulet brings together these children, living thousands of miles apart, by its supernatural powers. In the transparent, clear streams of the Magic Rivulet, Vassilyok sees the blue sky of Uzbekistan, the flat-roofed house and the little brown girl standing in the shade of a tall poplar. And Jannat, the little Uzbek girl, sees in the river waters the wicked monsters who have burst into Vassilyok's village and threaten to kill him and kidnap his little sister, Nadeika.

Fearlessly the children start their struggle against these wicked monsters. Vassilyok lures them into a bog, to an impassable marsh, where he himself is threatened with death, but Jannat saves Vassilyok. At night, in the thick forest, Vassilyok courageously withstands all the terrible hardships and releases his sister, Nadeika, from captivity. A flock of white geese carry her on their swift wings to Jannat's homeland, and Jannat becomes her sister.

The music is highly expressive. The composer who has lived for a long time in Uzbekistan has ably and skilfully assimilated the richness and originality of the Uzbek melodies, which run through the entire play.

The Magic Rivulet was produced by P. Zlatogorov, noted Byelorussian actor.

The Theatre of the Baltic Fleet has recently staged Vsevolod Vishnevsky's new play *At the Walls of Leningrad*.

The time is September 1941; the characters are the sailors and officers of the Baltic Red Fleet. The producer is A. Pergament; decorations are by S. Vishnyevetskaya.

The play was warmly received by the audience, many of whom were eye-witnesess and participants in the memorable events of autumn 1941.

In one of the few clubs which escaped destruction by the Germans in the old Russian city Orel, the Dramatic Theatre has resumed its activities over the production of Maxim Gorky's *Smug Citizen*.

The Moscow State Kamerny Theatre celebrated the 750th performance of E. Scribe's famous play *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, first performed by the theatre twenty-five years ago. Alice Koonen, People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R., plays the role of the famous French actress.

The national ideals and culture of the Czech people are vividly expressed in their music.

A concert of Czech music organized by the All-Union Radio Committee in Moscow, was broadcast all over the country.

The greater part of the programme was devoted to the works of Smetana, the famous Czech composer, whose music is very popular in the Soviet Union. The overture to *Libussa* forcefully reflects the Czech people's faith in their happy future. The choruses from the opera *Prussians in Czechia* sound very tense in these days. The first chorus calls the people to arms against the Germans while the second sings of victory. Smetana's third composition—*The Bartered Bride*—one of his most popular operas, is permeated with the optimism which has not forsaken the Czech people during the years of heavy trials. In the overture and the polka, orchestra and chorus mingle in happy jubilation.

Dvořák—another great Czech composer—was represented by his excellent trio—*Dumka* and by the finale of the violin concerto.

Stefania Petrova, the Czech singer, popular among the Moscow public, sang three Czech songs. The programme also included three choral compositions by the young Czech composer and conductor, Vit Nejedly, now podporuchik in the Czechoslovakian Brigade in the Soviet Union. This grand concert, which is proof of the interest the Soviet people have for Czech music ended with Nejedly's symphonic march—*Victory Will Be Ours*—a call to the Czechoslovakian Army to fight for the liberation of their native country.

Other participants in the concert were: the orchestra and chorus of the All-Union Radio Committee, the Soviet conductors Professors N. S. Golovanov and A. I. Orlov, the chief choirmaster o the All-Union Radio Committee—I. Kuvykin, Stalin Laureates—Professor L. N. Oborin (piano), Professor David Oistrakh (violin), G. Barinova (violin), S. Knushevitsky (violoncello), K. Palyaev (bass) and V. Nechayev (tenor).

The Musical Ensemble of the Estonian Republic held a successful concert at the Chaikovsky Hall—one of the largest concert halls in Moscow.

The first part of the concert was devoted to the music of E. Kapp, E. Arro and H. Lepnurm, well-known Estonian composers; the second to Estonian folk songs and dances. The orchestra was conducted by N. Kubli and the chorus by G. Ernesaks and Y. Variste, Artists of Merit of the Estonian Republic.

Soviet musical critics remark on the excellence of the choral ensemble. "The concert of the Estonian Chorus," writes Professor Martynov, a well-known musical critic, "is an outstanding event. The chorus distinguished itself by purety of tone, by its manysided interpretation and excellent style."

The concert hall was crowded with an audience which, though it did not know the Estonian language, was carried away by the charming sincerity and expressiveness of the chorus.

Songs were followed by folk dancing led by ballet-master N. Taarn. The light movement, rhythm and smoothness of the dancing ensemble was a treat to the eye. The Estonian dances are restrained and measured, forceful and expressive. The men's dance, performed with poles and the effective *Labayala Valse* and *Hiyu Valse*, executed to the accompaniment of the choir and orchestra, were greeted with warm applause.

The Estonian Concert has shown that the artists, torn by the war from their native country, are carrying on the best traditions of their national art, a fact which evokes a lively response and understanding on the part of the fraternal Russian people.

Forty-five years ago, the Gnessin sisters organized a Music School in Moscow, which soon gained wide popularity. The school, still directed by its organizers, has trained generations of talented musicians, prominent players and experienced teachers. In recognition of the outstanding services of its founders, the Soviet Government officialy named the School the Gnessin State Musical Pedagogical Institute.

The Institute has five faculties: pianoforte, orchestra, vocal, composition and choral conducting. Helen Gnessina, who has devoted her whole life to training young musicians, has been appointed director of the Institute. Prominent Soviet professors and music teachers have been invited to teach at the Institute.

The Armoured Cruiser "Petropavlovsk", hit by an enemy shell, was slowly sinking. Sailors were working hard to stop the leaks, the wounded were moaning... and on the deck of the sinking ship stood a handsome silver-bearded old man, calmly entering notes in a little book. The horror of an imminent death seemed to have no effect on him.

Such were the last moments of the famous Russian painter V. V. Vereshchagin.

The name of Vereshchagin (1842—1904), the famous battle-scene painter, is written in golden letters not only in the history of Russian art, but also in the annals of Russia's military glory, which he depicted on his canvasses. In his pictures, Vereshchagin told the truth about war, showing that it is the people as a whole that plays in it the main part. Vladimir Stassov, the eminent Russian art critic, in writing about Vereshchagin, said: "His soldiers, like those described by Leo Tolstoy,

are men who never for a moment cease to live the life of their people. . ." The artist's keen eye saw a great deal in life.

Vereshchagin's biography is extraordinarily interesting and rich. He was General Skobelev's permanent companion and participated in all his campaigns. Vereshchagin was an untiring traveller. He carried his album with him during his travels along the North-Dvina, Central Russia, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Turkestan, the Balkans, Turkey, India, Syria, Palestine, the Phillipines, Japan. . . Wherever he went he always made sketches and drawings, noting down the customs and manners of the people, their dress and architecture. In 1901, he set out for the Spanish-American war. And here he paid great attention not only to fighting episodes, but also to what happened behind the front-line, reconstructing on his canvasses the life of the soldiers.

Vereshchagin is the author of a series of monumental historical canvasses dedicated to the National War of 1812, on which he worked ten years. His paintings are permeated with a captivating stern and fearless truth about life and in all his works one can see the portrait of his central hero—the Russian people.

An exhibition of decorative textile opened in Moscow. During the war, the Soviet textile painters and embroiderers have designed new art-panneaux, textiles for dresses, carpets, curtains, table-cloths, pillow-slips, kerchiefs.

The majority of the work displayed is based on popular art motifs, on national ornaments and patterns. Many of the exhibits are complete thematic compositions in themselves. For instance, a big embroidered hanging designed by S. Veprinskaya and D. Slavina, entitled "Valeri Chkalov" is dedicated to the famous Soviet flier. Beautifully executed is a carpet-panneau—"Sixteen Republics of the Soviet Union". The large kerchief, embroidered by A. Agayan, entitled "The Friendship of the Peoples"—with the coats of arms of all the Soviet Republics, united by a common ornamental motif, attracts general attention. M. Inozemtsova's decorative curtain—"A Russian Fairy-tale", is exceedingly interesting.

The exhibition has evoked general interest, especially among the women. The mark of taste, patience and care which each exhibit bears, shows that the war has not interrupted the creative endeavour of the Soviet decorative artist.

An art-exhibition, dedicated to the theme: "The Urals—the Foundry of Soviet Arms", has been opened in Sverdlovsk. The exhibits by Ural artists were created during the war.

Several large canvasses are devoted to the industrial Urals forging powerful weapons for the front. The very titles of the paintings—"At the Press", "The Shop", "Production for the Front", "The Rolling-mill Operator", "Gifts for the Front"—speak of the artists' efforts to portray the strenuous heroic labour of the workers, their selfless work in war-time.

Much space is devoted to portrait painting. The best portrait is that of the famous Ural folklorist—Pavel Bazhov painted by Merited Worker of Art Bershadsky. There are numerous portraits of Ural workers who have won their laurels on the industrial front.

Ural landscape painters, whose canvasses depict the stern, majestic beauty peculiar to Ural scenery, are also well represented at this exhibition. The canvasses of Denissov-Uralsky—"A Forest Fire" and "An Ural Landscape", and of Slyussarev—"Sunset", "A Winter Scene" and "A Fire"; the pictures by the graphic artist, the late P. Staronossov—"Taiga in the Urals" and "Lake Chebarkul"—are unusually fine. Doroshevich, who exhibits two forceful canvasses—"The Pashi Mountain Chain" and "Bannaya Mountain", and Lakov, the graphic artist with his "The Chermosski Mill" and "Winter Day" are most outstanding among the younger landscape painters.

A TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN INTO POLISH

As reported in London, General Anders delivered an anti-semitic address before his troops.
From newspapers

GOEBBELS: Your written work, my dear pupil, deserves top marks. You show great gifts.

Drawing by Boris Yefimov

NEWS AND VIEWS

An event of public interest was the opening in Leningrad of an exhibition devoted to the heroic epic of the city's defence against the German invaders. The opening was attended by generals and other officers, people prominent in public affairs, partisans, Red Army and Navy men, workers of Leningrad factories; in short, all those to whose courage and self-sacrifice the city owes its preservation, and whose feats have been registered by numerous exhibits, constituting a singular record of the Soviet people in the defence of their native city.

P. S. Popkov, Chairman of the Leningrad Soviet of Working People's Deputies, cut the ribbon at the main entrance, and the visitors poured into the halls of the exhibition. Over 10,000 exhibits are contained in the thirty halls of the exhibition which covers more space than the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition in 1937. Fifty artists and five hundred building workers, guided by the artist Suyetin, spent four months, planning, arranging and making preparations for the exhibition, which in a blaze of light from searchlights and chandeliers, scintillates like a monument to the heroism of the people of Leningrad.

The exhibition, in its entirety, presents a harmonious picture of the history of Leningrad, past and present, of the great creators of this beautiful city, and its builders and defenders today. It depicts the hundreds of thousands of Germans who fell at the approaches to the city and the hundreds of thousands of tons of essential supplies delivered to the blockaded city by intrepid Russians over the ice of Lake Ladoga. As you visit one hall after another, the heroic epic of the defence of Leningrad unfolds day by day, step by step, recent events are revived, and the gallant airmen, sailors and partisans, whose courage formed an iron wall blocking the Germans' path to Leningrad, are recalled to mind. Automatically, the radio is switched on, and we again hear the warning signal of a shelling and the even tones of the announcer repeat the portentous words that the city heard hundreds of times between September 1941 and January 1944. The city was struck by over 150,000 heavy German shells and more than 100,000 high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on Leningrad from September to December 1941 alone.

An enormous electrified map indicates by pulsating red lines the events of June, July, August and September 1941. The enemy pressed forward, struck again and again, but finally, towards the end of September, stopped exhausted. Leningrad was the first to check the Germans' advance.

The Germans' losses at Leningrad, in 1941, were over 245,000 officers and men, 1,024 guns and 920 tanks.

A silence, more hushed than anywhere else, reigns in the hall devoted to the blockade period. The city was defending itself more and more stubbornly. Seventy percent of its citizens were engaged in anti-aircraft defence work or enrolled as air-wardens. Bombs and fires proved unable to break the will of the people. It was then that the Germans resorted to the blockade.

One exhibit consists of a pair of scales, and on them the rations of the Leningrader in December 1941—one hundred and twenty-five grams of bread made of substitute ingredients.

Another exhibit shows the hungry Leningraders working at their lathes. There is no electricity. Everything has to be done by hand. We see the paraffin lamps, sticks of wood for candles and the home-made stoves. There are photographs of emaciated people stoically carrying on, producing munitions and other supplies and rushing them to the front. We see the ice road over Lake Ladoga, which the Russians crossed, undaunted by ice blocks, frost or hardships, and braving enemy bullets and bombs, rushed 361,109 tons of supplies to the blockaded city during a single winter under the very noses of the infuriated Germans.

The ground floor of the exhibition shows the conditions they were up against on Ladoga. In April 1942 the lorries sped through the water which covered the ice. Later the Ladoga

The exhibition "The Heroic Defence of Leningrad". The sepulchral mound of German helmets crushed and bullet-ridden during the fighting in February, 1944

flotilla continued the work and from May 24th, 1942, to January 1st, 1943, transported 1,080,000 tons of supplies to Leningrad.

The hitlerite plan was frustrated and hunger conquered.

Leningrad factories began to operate again and tramcar traffic was resumed. Leningrad was again producing hundreds of articles from heavy guns to "Leika" cameras. . . The exhibition shows us the Leningrad machines, electric apparatus, cables, optical goods, all marked: "Made in Leningrad during the blockade".

Victory drew nearer and nearer. . . Before us stands a canvas by Savinov, a participant in the battle, depicting the Leningrad troops forcing the Neva in January, 1943. Nothing could stop them!

The breaking of the blockade is the subject of a reproduction in miniature of the "Battle on the Neva", the work of Major Rakov and Colonel Lushkovsky. On the ice of the frozen river there are about 4,500 figures and hundreds of guns, tanks and planes. The location of the units, the details of the defence line and other military equipment, are depicted with the utmost precision. There is a Baltic bomber which raided Berlin in 1941. This was Leningrad's reply! We see too the Guards Captain Kostylyov's destroyer with forty-two stars denoting the number of enemy planes brought down. Among other exhibits are the guns of the warship "October Revolution", the motor-boats which sank and blew up the German ships, and the weapons of the partisan heroes of Leningrad who succeeded in wiping out 104,242 Germans from 1941 to 1944.

And, finally, there is an enormous sepulchral mound, reaching to the ceiling, of German helmets, crushed and bullet-ridden, reminiscent of Vereshchagin's picture of a heap of skulls. Soiled and crumpled German banners droop here and there, and from the lowest layer of this frightful pile protrude the Germans' graveyard crosses and rusty barbed wire. On display too are the remains of "Panthers", "Tigérs" and a heavy gun which shelled Leningrad and which was captured by us.

Then comes the last stage. The Germans have been defeated near Leningrad. The great hero-city is victorious. Electric illuminations reproduce the triumphant salute fired over the Neva.

The results of 900 days of the Hitlerites' campaign against Leningrad are eloquently expressed in the concise figure: 600,000 Germans killed, wounded and taken prisoner.

The Hitlerites lost 1,642 tanks, 3,144 planes, 3,644 guns and 5,873 mortars.

Vsevolod Vishnevsky, the Soviet writer who took part in the defence of Leningrad, says of the exhibition: "As you pass through the many halls you realize how carefully prepared were Leningrad's blows against the enemy, how well thought out and patient were the preparations carried out by people strong and staunch. . ."

In his memoirs, Maxim Gorky gives a tender picture of his grandmother, protectress and companion throughout his childhood years, and whose counsel and stories nourished the imagination of the future writer.

"She had such an odd way of speaking," writes Gorky, "almost singing her words, and they promptly impressed themselves in my memory, like flowers, so tender and vivid and full of feeling."

This picture of an old woman with a gift for telling stories is drawn from and is true to Russian life. There are just such folk poetesses in all parts of Russia, whose stories and songs reflect the thoughts and aspirations of the people.

In the epoch of the National War, new motifs have appeared, fresh themes and images have arisen in the stories of these original poetesses, most of whom are self-taught.

Yelena Vassilyevna Volkova, seventy years old, lives in the village of Petushki, Moscow Region. This energetic Russian peasant woman is endowed with an extraordinary talent for songs and stories. Last winter, during a country-wide review of amateur art activities, Volkova appeared on the stage, amidst the young singers, dancers, and accordion-players. The large audience listened with emotion to her simple and heart-felt tales of Moscow threatened by the Germans, of the Russian soldier heroes, of the Red Army, of Russia's natural beauty, so dear to them. . .

Eh, life, so dear, so free!
Golden nature of my native land!

she chanted in melodious accents, and then went on to talk about the subjects so close to the heart of every Russian—the war and our beloved country. This popular seventy-year-old story-teller has been at the front twice, on the Central and Western sectors. She has covered 500 kilometres by plane in order to tell her stories to the soldiers. And these trips have inspired new tales filled with poetry and emotion. Even in conversation, this Russian story-teller talks in verse, so full of song is her very soul.

At the All-Union House of Folk Art, an organization formed to aid the development of amateur art activities, among the people, a cycle of tales written by Alexandra Petrovna Anissimova, of the Penza Region, was recently considered by a conference of folklore specialists. The songs and tales of Anissimova who has lived all her life in the village are in their very essence the expression of the poetic utterances of the people. Each of her stories is a vivid narrative in the first person, with corresponding dialect and intonation. Her *Joy-Bird* is told in typical manner by a collective-farm woman. In the tale *Birdie out of a Gift Egg* we hear the voice and expressions of a peasant, now a Red Army man of experience. The story *Death of a Master* is told by a factory worker. Anissimova is not only an author, but also a connoisseur and collector of folklore. She has prepared for the press a large collection of songs, tales and refrains of the people of the Penza Region.

In her home village on the shores of the White Sea, lives the well-known story-teller Marfa Semyonovna Kryukova, who has been decorated with a government order. Despite her advanced age, she continues to create new poems and stories. During the years of the war she has composed many epic works on the heroic struggle of the Soviet people against the nazi invaders.

Over twenty works of Marfa Kryukova were published in various periodicals during 1943 alone. Not long ago she completed a long poem entitled *Return of Ilya Muromets* in which Kryukova's favourite theme, the awakening of the heroic knight of the past, was developed anew. The poem is built around events of the National War with the legendary knight Ilya Muromets fighting against the Germans who have attacked his native land. In the tale entitled *Kremlin Salutes* Marfa Kryukova tells about the victorious offensive of the Red Army.

The Archangel Publishing House has already prepared for the press a collection of Marfa Kryukova's latest works.

The home of the late V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko who together with Stanislavsky was the founder of the Moscow Art Theatre has been converted into a museum.

The first room contains a large collection of family portraits, photographs of Nemirovich-Danchenko's friends and of himself during various periods of his life.

Then there is his study. The very last telegram received by him, still unopened, lies on his desk. Here too are his pencil notes on questions of art, made shortly before his death. The room contains a huge book case built according to his own plan. It is decorated with portraits of writers and inside are numerous autographed books, including some with the autographs of Anton Chekhov and MaximGorky. Portraits of outstanding people of the Russian stage, among them M. Yermolova, G. Fedotova, A. Yuzhin, A. Lensky, C. Stanislavsky and others hang on the walls. Rehearsals were often held in the study and actors, producers and artists used to come here for advice and instructions.

78 *The story-teller Marfa Kryukova*

The third room, his bed-room, contains among other things the death mask of Nemirovich-Danchenko.

During the war the Institute of History of Material Culture, named in honour of Marr, and affiliated to the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. conducted some interesting archaeological undertakings. Soviet archaeologists visited Central Asia, the lower roaches of the Lena River, the Kama River and Moscow Region. According to B. D. Grekov, the director of the Institute, the expedition to Uzbekistan is the biggest of all. Here, archaeologists and historians are making a study of ancient settlements and tombs of the bronze age, of ancient civilization and the early middle ages. They have already studied about thirty burial places of the III and IV centuries of our era.

On the left bank of the Syr-Darya, excavations are in progress of the ancient settlement of Munchak-Tepe. Long and painstaking work has brought to light the well-preserved remains of a monumental castle belonging to the middle of the first millennium of our era. The gallery of the upper floor and several interior halls have already been unearthed. The gallery contains fine vaulted ceilings and a number of other architectural details testifying to the skill of the ancient builders.

Superb examples of glazed ceramics, large golden earrings, studded with pearls, a bone-knife with fine carving and a decorative clay fireplace, were unearthed here near the remains of a large ceramic oven, in an excellent state of preservation.

Archaeological excavations being made in the Moscow Region helped to unearth a layer of cultural objects of the XII and XIII centuries in the town of Zvenigorod. Of great value are fragments of vessels of that epoch many of which still retain the marks of the skilled potters who made these vessels for the princes. It has been established for the first time that the old town of Zvenigorod existed before the Mongolian period. Until lately historians claimed that Zvenigorod was founded in the XV century.

The Institute is engaged in ascertaining the damage inflicted by the German barbarians on historical monuments of the country. Lists have been compiled and scientific descriptions made of over 200 valuable monuments of archaeology and architecture in Istra, Volokolamsk, Smolensk, Novgorod, Kiev, Chernigov and other places liberated from the German aggressors.

Before they fled the Germans demolished the museum of the Josefo-Volokolamsk monastery and burnt the interior of the Herman Tower. Heavy damage was suffered by the Yaropolets mansion near the monastery. This once belonged to Ataman P. Doroshenko, an important figure of the XVII century, and later to Goncharova, Pushkin's mother-in-law. The Germans also laid waste to the estate of General Field Marshal Chernyshov under whose command the Russian troops captured Berlin in 1760.

Three years ago great interest was aroused by the excavation of the tomb of the Timur dynasty in Samarkand. The opening of the sepulchre in the Gour-Amir mausoleum not

only provided Soviet science with many new facts concerning the great Asiatic empire of the XV century, but made it possible to reconf struct the portrait of Timur himself, two o- his sons and his grandchild, the great Uzbek astronomer Ulug-bek.

This problem was solved by the sculptor and anthropologist M. M. Gerassimov, a scientrfic worker of the Institute of Material Cultuie. With the aid of the skulls of these four representatives of the Timur dynasty he has recreated their portraits in sculpture.

. . . Mikhail Gerassimov was neither scientific archaeologist nor sculptor in the days when he visited for the first time the excavations near Irkutsk in 1925. It was then that he felt the urge to solve the question of how these people of the ancient times looked.

As he scrutinized the blackened semi-ruined skulls, in his mind's eye he clothed them with flesh and endowed them with expression. It seemed to him that a direct connection existed between the facial features and the outlines of the skull.

Gerassimov resolved to verify his ideas in practice. For the past eighteen years he has been studying the head—face and skull—of man with a view to the numerous governing conditions such as individuality, age, ethnical and other peculiarities and changes.

These observations convinced Gerassimov that the skull of man and his appearance were definitely linked. The face of man seems to repeat the features of the skull, while the changes of the human face evoke in turn corresponding changes in the construction of the skull. The skull is constantly changing, reflecting all the "expressions of life", all emotions, ailments, even habits. It seems that even a single sclerotic vein in the temple leaves its trace on the skull.

The sculptor and scientist has, during the many years of his work, made tens of thousands of careful calculations, and measurements of sections of the skull.

His observations led Gerassimov to form the theory that it was possible to "build up" a human portrait, using the skull as a base, and he then proceeded to make his experiments.

The albums of the sculptor contain photographs of the entire history, step by step, of this persistent and critical verification. Take, for example, his first experiment. It was not without irony that anthropologists handed Gerassimov a skull suggesting that he "clothe" it and restore the image of the man to whom it had belonged. Gerassimov did so, according to the method worked out by him, and the result was a clear, expressive head of a Papuan. This skull had actually belonged to a Papuan who died in Moscow in 1912 and there was a startling resemblance between the bust made by Gerassimov and available photographs of this man.

Another control experiment was submitted by the department of forensic medicine of Moscow university. Gerassimov who lived in Leningrad, received ten skulls, all of them numbered. According to these Gerassimov reconstructed ten likenesses and brought them to Moscow. At a gathering attended by numerous scientists, and in the presence of anthropologists, medical men and criminal experts, these

A bust of Timur made by Mikhail Gerassimov

sculptures were compared with photographs bearing the corresponding numbers. In everyone of the ten instances, the sculptures bore a striking resemblance to the photographs.

When the last doubt of the reliability of this method had been dispelled, Gerassimov decided to restore the true portraits of great historical figures, whose appearance was unknown to this day.

In this manner sculptural portraits of Yaroslav the Wise and Andrei Bogolyubsky, famous princes of ancient Russia, were made from the actual skulls of the princes.

How are these remarkable sculptures created? The skull to be restored is placed in a special box, a "kubus-craniophor" where it is subjected to careful study and measurement. With the aid of a special instrument, a diagraph, Gerassimov outlines and drafts the basic sections. The result is a coordinated system of lines and dots, determining the proposed structure and the thickness of the flesh and muscles of head and face.

Putting down on paper all these computations and notes, the sculptor painstakingly builds a scheme for the "revivification" of the head, its horizontal and vertical measurements, and the features of face and profile.

When the scheme of the future portrait is ready, Gerassimov transfers it directly to the skull which is set up on a wooden "neck" support. First of all there is placed on the skull the basic muscular material moulded of solid wax, and the neck and jaw muscles of the face are replaced. Then the skull is "dressed" in a wax net, which reproduces the fundamental sections of the scheme. Finally all spaces between these sections are filled in with wax. There you already have the human profile, half of the face.

The other half of the skull is not "clothed" for a long time, as it is needed for constant control, corrections and for precision purposes.

But finally this half too is covered with wax "flesh" and the head is sculptured, the portrait finished. Only the finishing touches remain, "make-up" and "dressing" in the fashion of the given epoch. For this purpose Gerassimov calls a consultation of museum experts, historians and art authorities.

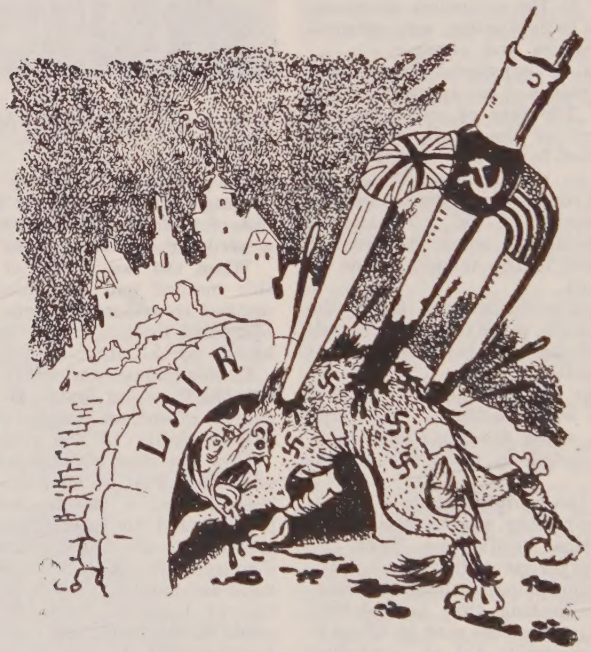
When this too has been done, the reconstruction may be considered complete. The wax model is covered with plaster and casts obtained. Then the model is taken apart and the skull may be returned to the tomb or museum.

Such is the technique of reconstructing the human portrait from the skull. It is a combination of science and art.

Gerassimov plans to create a portrait gallery of many great ancestors of the Russian people.

"The German troops can now be compared with a wounded beast which is compelled to crawl back to the borders of its lair—Germany—in order to heal its wounds. But a wounded beast which retires to its lair does not cease to be a dangerous beast. To rid our country and the countries allied with us of the danger of enslavement we must follow hot on the heels of the wounded German beast and finish it off in its own lair."

Josef Stalin, *Order of the Day*, May 1, 1944



To finish off the German beast in its own lair!
Drawing by V. Fomichov

Editor-in-chief: HELEN STASSOVA

CONTENTS

No 8, Vol. XI August 1944

Address: "International Literature", P. O. Box 527, Moscow
Cable address: Interlit, Moscow