





MEN OF THE STALIN BREED

**TRUE STORIES OF THE
SOVIET YOUTH IN THE
GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR**

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PREFACE

History knows of no other epoch, no other people, whose younger generation has been such a mighty creative force as our glorious Stalin generation, the youth of the Land of Soviets.

It was the Great October Socialist Revolution that laid the foundation for the development of a generation capable of overcoming all obstacles to the attainment of its objectives with such unparalleled heroism and Stalinist resolution. It is Stalin's leadership that has made for the steady growth of all that is best and most valuable for the new epoch, in the rising generation of our country. Only in the Soviet land could the loftiest youthful dreams of a life of creative endeavour, of prosperity and happiness for the people materialize not only for the chosen few but for all young people.

In the Soviet Union, in the great Stalinist epoch, mankind's age-old dream of justice and truth, the brightest, purest and loftiest aspiration of the young soul, coincides with the very tenor and essence of the life of the country. And our youth, the true sons and daughters of their native land, have always cherished and fought gallantly and selflessly to preserve the life they and their fathers built up, to be equal to the exalted ideas that enrich this life, and, having grasped them, to march forward, ever forward toward the radiant future.

The strongest influence in moulding this Stalin generation has been exercised by the Bolshevik Party founded by Lenin and Stalin. The great teachings of this Party light up the path of the people far into the future. Its history, a fiery chronicle of revolutionary struggle, boundless devotion and loyalty to the people's cause, shows that there are no difficulties that cannot be overcome, no fortresses that cannot be taken. The experience of this Party, the spirit of its struggle,

has enriched the Stalin generation and continues to do so. With the illustrious lives of the veteran Bolsheviks before them — the young Lenin, the young Stalin, Kirov and Orjonikidze, Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky, Frunze, Kuibyshev and many other glorious sons of the Bolshevik Party — this rising generation has been able to develop in itself the traits of these champions of the greatest ideals of mankind.

The Great Patriotic War the Soviet people are waging against Hitlerite Germany has put all the forces of the Soviet people, and primarily the youth, to a severe test. And the younger generation has passed this test with honour.

The heroism of the Stalin generation is revealed not only on the battlefronts and behind the enemy lines. Victory over the enemies of our country, over the forces of darkness and evil, is being forged also in the rear by the legions of heroic fighters on the labour front.

Our present conception of heroism is infinitely broader and deeper than any that preceded it. The heroism of Soviet men and women is devoid of self-interest, ambition and vanity — it is the heroism of a whole people, a heroism directed toward the good of the country. And because these traits are typical of our people they have become part and parcel of the spiritual make-up of our youth. High principled, strong-willed, resolute and purposeful are the young Soviet men and women reared by the Bolshevik Party, the Young Communist League, the Soviet people.

Such are the immortal heroes of the Patriotic War who are defending their native land arms in hand. Such are the young men and women whose indefatigable efforts and inspired labour are helping to win the war.

It is to these young heroes of today that the present volume is dedicated. They are one and all the bearers of militant socialist humanism; all of them cherish a sacred love for their

Soviet country, and are glad to be fighting for the freedom and happiness of the people.

E. Yaroslavsky

B. Lavrenev

INDOMITABLE HEART

Her childhood years she spent in the Ukraine, that lovable, bounteous land where the dawns are a sea of gold, and the cherry orchards are a mass of white blossom in May and the nightingales trill with such abandon in the depths of luxuriant gardens.

It was a migratory life. Her father worked in the countryside and kept moving from one place to another as his affairs demanded. Her mother was a school-teacher. When her father was transferred to a new district, the family would pack up their belongings and move together with him.

In Belaya Tserkov they stayed longer than usual. It was a quiet little town with streets lulled to sleep under a sultry sun. There had been a time when it had teemed with life and activity and served as a setting for many a stern event. That was in the golden years of the Ukrainian Cossacks, the glorious years of fierce, irreconcilable struggle for the freedom of the Ukraine.

In the drowsy streets of Belaya Tserkov lingers the memory of that romantic age — of mounted Cossack regiments clattering by in a cloud of dust, of gaily coloured Ukrainian coats flashing in the sun, of tunics with golden tassels fluttering in the breeze, of bright sabres darting fire, and of the *Getman* of all the Ukraine, Bogdan Khmelnytsky, that knight *sans peur et sans reproche* whose name has become a synonym of valour and glory, riding forth on a prancing Caucasian steed to review his regiments.

Those days of glory are no more... But on quiet moonlit nights, in the rustle of the leaves in the ancient poplars, lingers a faint echo of the ancient battle songs of Taras...

In this dreamy little town with its low cottages and ver-

dant gardens the romance of history transforms everything with its magic wand. The sun and the honeyed fragrance of flowers and leaves warm the heart like a sweet wine.

At midday the golden sunflowers gaze proudly at the sun. Happy-go-lucky sparrows perch on the wattle fences, chirruping merrily.

A thin, brown-faced girl crawls stealthily through the bushes towards the fence. The sparrows stop chirruping and cock their heads warily at her. But they are not very scared. If she were a boy, it would be another matter. Anything can be expected from a boy.

Suddenly the girl stretches out her left hand with a catapult held fast between the tightly clenched, tanned fingers. Her right hand draws back the rubber band as far as it can go. Closing one warm, brown eye, she takes aim. A stone whistles through the air. The sparrows noisily take to flight. But sometimes one of the grey-feathered tribe is caught napping and tumbles down onto the grass. Then the girl's eyes light up with the joy of success.

The catapult is a boy's weapon. Girls are supposed to play with dolls. But this girl prefers catapults to dolls. And she is proud of the fact that she can handle it better than many boys. She has a keen and unerring eye.

Sometimes a small pebble from her catapult would go flying not at the sparrows but at the back of some tousle-headed, barefooted Petro or Ivan. Boys were her enemies. They were rough and mischievous and derided her for a "young petticoat." They mocked and teased her whenever they could. After peppering the enemy she would dash madly into the heart of the garden where a clump of brambles grew in an impenetrable maze and wait with beating heart to see if she was being pursued.

She was small and fragile, but unyielding. She never gave

in to anyone. Clenching her fists, she would throw herself into the fray. Her enemies would pounce on her and pummel her and pull her hair until she was forced to beat a retreat. But even then she would never say die. She never burst out crying; only an occasional tear would well up in her angry eyes and, brushing it away angrily and wiping the blood from her nose, she would again be ready for battle. She would lie in ambush for her opponents and deal with them one at a time. Jumping out like a whirlwind she would bring her fists into play, silently and swiftly. She would pursue her stunned opponent for a long time and then return home triumphant.

Such was Ludmilla Pavlichenko's childhood — stormy, daring, a constant quest for new adventures.

Then came the years at school. When she entered school she was as untamed and independent as ever. Her classmates involuntarily bowed before her strong, fiery character. Straightforward, fearless and impulsive, she exerted an irresistible charm over the other children. Knowledge came easily to her. Persistence and diligence were words that did not exist in her lexicon. She mastered a subject not as a result of persistent study but thanks to her keen mind and quick perception, and she rapidly left her classmates behind. She regarded an apt answer in class as no less a triumph than victory in a scrap with a boy.

In school she acquired a passion for reading. She read everything she could lay her hands on. Books of adventure and travel attracted her most — books about striking, forceful people with big hearts and unyielding natures, about men of honour and action, who fought to attain their goal in the face of all opposition. She read during lesson-time holding the book on her knees under the desk, so that the teacher should not see it.

From the teachers' point of view she was a difficult pupil.

Her wilfulness, lack of discipline and order, refractory nature and unwillingness to submit to authority irritated them. Many times the question arose: "What is to be done with Pavlichenko?"

If Ludmilla herself were at fault in this, the teachers themselves were also to blame, for they were unable to find the proper approach to this girl who was so different from the others, and could not subordinate her impetuous nature to school discipline.

Although Ludmilla's behaviour was extremely trying at times, she was nevertheless a good student and so, when she passed to the last grade, the school authorities declared that Ludmilla Pavlichenko had by far outstripped her class in general development and knowledge and that further study at the school would be of no profit to her. As a result they decided to give her a certificate to the effect that she had finished the whole course.

And so she came face to face with the problem of her future course in life. She did not know exactly where and how to apply her talents, and it was here that the Young Communist League came to her assistance: it gave her what she lacked so far — a sense of comradeship and self-discipline, and directed her ebullient energy into the proper channels.

The economic life of the country was just beginning to recover at that time from the ravages of the Civil War. Ludmilla decided to enter a factory. It seemed to her important and interesting to make with her own hands things the country needed, to stand at a machine, learn its complicated mechanism and take part in the varied, workaday life of an industrial enterprise. This was in Kiev. As at school, she proved to be a very capable worker and rapidly mastered her job.

In her spare time she went in for all forms of sport. Once she and her friends went to a rifle club run by the Air and

Chemical Defence League. She threw herself heart and soul into this new hobby, just as she plunged wholeheartedly into anything that attracted her passionate nature. Perhaps she was spurred on by memories of her early childhood, the garden, the sparrows perching on the fence, the catapult, the joys of hunting...

Her first attempts with a small-bore rifle showed that she had a sure eye and steady aim. This success fired her with ambition. If she was going to shoot, then she must shoot better than everybody else, she must shoot better than her friends, and in particular outdo the boys who scoffed at the idea that “petticoats” could shoot.

And she did become the best. But this was not enough for her. She wanted something more. When she learned that the club was organizing a class for snipers she joined it, all afire with a new enthusiasm.

She must become a sniper, nothing else. It seemed to her that this was what she had always dreamed of. And at this sport she developed diligence and patience, qualities she had hitherto lacked.

To tell the truth, she herself could not say why she was so bent on becoming a sniper. Before this she had never shown any interest in military pursuits. Why devote so much effort to becoming a sharpshooter? Where and when would she have an opportunity of applying her skill?

Nevertheless she tried her utmost, happy in the knowledge that she could exceed in this field, too, which men were accustomed to regard as their own. When she received her sniper’s certificate she rolled it up and put it away in her drawer, together with other papers she expected never to need again.

She still continued to read a great deal. She began to realize that her beloved heroes — travellers, explorers and pros-

pectors, people, in general, with a creative turn of mind — owed their success above all to their vast store of experience and knowledge.

But all she herself had was a smattering of science acquired during her erratic studies at school. She wanted to know everything, in particular the history of mankind.

She decided to leave the factory and continue her studies.

Ludmilla entered the history faculty of Kiev University. Everything here seemed new and strange. After the very first lecture she realized that here she would not be able to study in the way she had at school. She realized that persevering and systematic work were the only means by which she could achieve the level of culture and knowledge she admired so much in the heroes of her books.

Ludmilla Pavlichenko could now frequently be found bent over a book in the reading room of the university or in the shady botanical garden, diligently copying out quotations and jotting down the notes she needed.

She was particularly attracted by the stormy, glorious history of her native Ukraine. She chose the life of Bogdan Khmelnytsky as the theme for her degree thesis — her first independent research in the field of history.

Nor was there anything surprising in her choice, for in this fiery warrior, statesman and diplomat, in his activity, so full of energy, in his stormy career, in his defeats and victories, was reflected the great and unconquerable spirit of the Ukrainian people.

And Ludmilla herself had this same unconquerable soul, a soul which did not admit compromise.

At night, poring over her books, manuscripts and charts, she would marvel at the stories of the great *Getman*, of his bravery and resolution, and of his stout heart which knew neither weakness nor fear.

She would go over to the window and look out at the starry Ukrainian sky. Legends of the past, of the glorious history of the Ukraine and the exploits of the Cossacks fighting for the freedom of their country, took shape before her eyes. And before her rose the *Getman* himself, standing before his regiments, an iron pike in his hand and a heart of iron in his breast.

And with exultancy and envy she would think: "If only I had such a heart!"

The work engrossed her more and more. But Ludmilla did not have a chance to finish her first piece of research. One quiet June night, as she stood at the window relaxing for a moment from her studies, her mind filled with pictures from the history of her country's past, the drone of aeroplane engines of Hitler's armoured vultures filled the sky, bringing death and destruction to her native land. From out of the silence of that last night of peace a thunderbolt hurled down on her beloved, smiling Kiev and the night was lit up by the blood-red glare of fires.

The next morning she saw bomb-shattered houses with chairs and beds hanging precariously over gaping walls. She saw gutted homes, deep craters filled with water from smashed mains, pools of blood on the sidewalk sprinkled with sand, and a tiny child's hand pinned to a blood-spattered wall by a shell splinter.

On that day her carefree, impetuous girlhood ended.

For a long time she wandered about the seething, anxious city, taking in the familiar sights with thoughtful eyes. As in former years, the chestnuts were in full bloom in the park overlooking the Dnieper and the lindens rustled in the river breeze. But today Red Army men marched through the streets, and they did not sing the familiar songs. They swung along silently, their steel helmets casting a shadow on their

dust-covered faces. They were moving to the west. Tanks rumbled down the streets. That day the city's countenance was furrowed by the grim lines of war.

The city itself, and her whole country appeared before her with new and irresistible force as real conceptions, as the most essential and dearest things in her life. Life itself seemed pointless without her native land, without that wonderful sunny city beside the broad river.

She lingered late in the empty streets, now plunged into complete darkness. The blackout was in force and not a single ray of light shed its warm golden stream across the asphalt. The whole universe seemed to have melted away in a black void. The enemy was seeking to throw this bright land back to the murky gloom of the Dark Ages. It was frightful.

In Ludmilla's soul a decision was slowly maturing.

At home her mother, as always, was bustling around. Here nothing had changed as yet. But casting a guarded look over the comfort of her home, Ludmilla realized that she herself had changed that day, and that her place was no longer here. She drank a glass of cold tea, engrossed with her own thoughts, and then said to her mother:

"Mama, I'm going to join the army."

Her mother looked at her with frightened eyes. But on her daughter's face, refined and lit up at that instant with an inner radiance, she read something that silenced the natural remonstrations of a loving mother. Without a word she went up to Ludmilla and embraced her.

But deciding to join the army proved to be much simpler than actually joining it. They listened to her — some disinterestedly, others in astonishment. They gave her sniper's diploma merely a cursory glance, shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders. Certainly her desire was praiseworthy enough, but unfortunately they had "no instructions" on taking women

into the army.

Ludmilla burned with anger and indignation. Her long-suppressed fiery temper came to the fore again. The officials she talked to about her desire to defend her native land appeared to her to be not human beings but things of wood and stone. She was astonished by their failure to comprehend that snipers, whether they were men or women, were equally needed on the battlefield.

Finally her indignation exceeded all bounds. She turned so furiously on the man who was giving her the usual refusal that he was shaken out of his official pose. He listened attentively to her, looked over her papers again, thought for a while and then suggested that she should come back the following day.

A week later Ludmilla Mikhailovna Pavlichenko, a rank-and-file soldier in the 25th Chapayev Division, was already on the firing line south of Odessa, on the Romanian sector of the front.

Here it was much simpler than in Kiev. Here no one asked why she had joined the army. No one was surprised to see a girl standing side by side with the men, a heavy service rifle in her hand. Here they were fighting, and there was no time to wonder about such things. Here every rifle in skilful hands was useful. Ludmilla was accorded a rough but warm reception by the men who were repulsing the attacks of the enemy in bloody battles along the steppes. They accepted her as a fellow soldier, as a fellow comrade in the difficult life-and-death struggle they were waging.

And so for the first time in her life she lay in a shallow trench, hastily dug in the clayey soil, side by side with Red Army men, peering intently at the stunted spurge beyond the ravine where the enemy lay.

All around rumbled the metallic, nerve-racking heavy

thunder of battle. The sky was filled with the drone of nazi planes. Black pillars of earth flew up and rained down in a shower of clayey lumps. Shell-splinters whined through the air; bullets whistled piercingly overhead and ended with a dull thud as they hit the ground.

This roaring inferno was terrifying, but Ludmilla did not feel afraid; at the beginning she was simply stunned.

She looked around her, listened to the deafening music of explosions, and gradually a cold and merciless anger filled her being. What was taking place here, before her eyes, on her native land? Unbidden and unwelcome, foreigners were riding roughshod over the historic soil of the Ukrainian people, blasting, binning, maiming and crippling everything in their path.

They were killing her brothers, friends and comrades, young Soviet people, full of vitality, who instead of peacefully labouring in the fields or in the factories, were being forced by them to roll in the scorching dust, choke in the smoke of explosions, groan with pain.

There not far from her a Red Army man writhed with pain, straightened out and lay silent. A shell splinter had hit him in the head. He dropped his rifle, and from his pale forehead a thin stream of red blood trickled down on to his shoulder. Only the day before yesterday Ludmilla had become acquainted with him, had got to know his name and where he came from. He had laughed and joked, had told her about his family and his little son. And now in the last throes of death his stiffening hands seemed to be caressing his native soil, over which he would walk no more.

And all this was the work of those hostile men who crouched in the undergrowth on the other side of the ravine.

They had brought death to the Soviet land, but they had forgotten the simple law that death engenders death. He who

lives by the sword shall perish by the sword!

She had no time to think of more just then. The spurge beyond the ravine moved and a man's head showed slowly above it. He raised himself up on his hands and, craning his neck, peered in front of him. It seemed to Ludmilla that he was looking straight at her and a shudder of disgust went through her.

She pressed the butt of the rifle firmly against her shoulder, parted her legs a little, as the instructor had taught her, and glanced along the sights.

In the lens she could clearly make out the green cloth of the man's uniform, the narrow shoulder-straps with yellow piping, and the red, sweaty face with its low forehead and watery eyes. She aimed between the eyebrows, took a short breath so as to feel freer at the moment of firing and gently pressed the trigger.

She was amazed at the simplicity of what happened next. It was just like the shooting range on the ground floor of the cinema on the Kreshchatik where they had fired with air guns at triangular tin targets which dropped down behind the board when hit. The enemy dropped down behind the spurge bushes in just the same way. And that was all.

So simply did she open her sniper's score in her first battle.

That night, after the battle, Ludmilla lay on the ground by the fire around which her comrades were sitting and talking, engrossed in her own thoughts.

One of her favourite books was *War and Peace*. And now, under the night sky in the steppe, with the smell of wormwood in her nostrils, she remembered the description of Nikolai Rostov's first attack and his mixed feelings.

It seemed to Ludmilla that she herself was experiencing something of Rostov's confusion when he unexpectedly met the enemy face to face. She remembered how vividly Tolstoy

had described the maelstrom of emotions, the awkward blow, the pitiful, frightened eyes of the Frenchman, his trembling lips and the childish dimple on his chin. Every time she had re-read those pages she had been sorry both for Rostov and for that unfortunate French soldier.

But why hadn't she felt anything like that in her first battle? Why had she witnessed the death of the first enemy killed by a bullet of hers with such a feeling of coldness, even indifference? Could it be that Tolstoy, her favourite writer, had not been writing the truth?

No, that was impossible! Suddenly the truth dawned on her.

Tolstoy had written about a war between people. The French had had human souls and hearts. They had been capable of noble deeds, of a humanitarian attitude toward their enemies. In that war man was pitted against man, and Tolstoy had written about people from both camps with an essentially human wisdom. For this reason Ludmilla, while filled with admiration for the Russian heroes of the War of 1812, could understand and even pity their enemies.

But the creatures pitted against her here were not human beings. They were goose-stepping, stupid, brutal, death-dealing automatons; they were dummies, with a hound's flair instead of souls, with a piece of offal for hearts; they were robots reared in the nursery of the Berlin hangman.

It was useless to try to fathom their feelings, for they had none. She could not pity them, just as she could not pity a crushed adder. Their death could arouse no more concern in her than the tin targets she had fired at in the shooting range.

By the light of the bonfire that evening, with her writing pad on her knee, Ludmilla wrote home to her mother:

"I've had a chance to see a thing or two. Their atrocities make my blood boil, and in war anger is a good thing. It is

sister to hatred and to holy vengeance.”

When she finished, she wrapped herself in her greatcoat and, stretching out just where she was, fell into the sound sleep of a soldier. She had entered into the life at the front.

He who has never slept on battle-scarred earth, wrapped in a greatcoat, has never tasted life. His memories in later years will be the more barren, for there are no more stirring or unforgettable moments in a man's life than those fleeting seconds before sleep under the dark bowl of the starlit sky, with thoughts of the righteous cause he is fighting for — thoughts of his native country, which has placed its destiny in his hands and expects him to do his duty as a son.

Ships were leaving Odessa. By order of the Supreme Command the Red Army evacuated the city.

The regiments of the Chapayev Division, which had won fame in the Civil War years and had added new laurels to its banner at Odessa, embarked on troopships and set out to sea, bound for Sevastopol. There the Division was to become the core of the Maritime Army.

Ludmilla left with them. She had experienced all the vicissitudes of army life and known the pain of a first wound. Her sniper's score of killed nazis had now run into two figures. She stood on the deck of the transport and gazed at the flamecoloured shore of Odessa receding and growing fainter in the distance. Tongues of flame and smoke pierced the velvet-grey mist that hung like a pall over the city.

So she bade farewell to the city she had defended so staunchly, the city where Pushkin had lived and *Eugene Onegin* had been written.

It was with poignant feelings that Ludmilla left Odessa behind her, for she had learned to love the city during the days when she had helped to defend it. Under its walls she had received her baptism of fire.

A trail of foam writhed in the bluish-green water in the wake of the transports. The Odessa shore became a barely visible blue line and finally disappeared from view.

The Division disembarked at Sevastopol.

Here Ludmilla for the first time really felt history in the making. In this city of glorious military traditions, her favourite subject made itself felt at every step. History was written here with the blood of heroes, with the immortal spirit of indomitable Russian men who had simply and courageously defended the sun-bleached crags to their last breath. Every stone here seemed to breathe valour, every stone seemed to urge her to follow in the footsteps of her immortal forefathers.

Soon the regiment left for Perekop, where the German hordes, supported by hundreds of tanks, were striving to break through to the Crimean stronghold.

Stern days of battle again set in.

Now Ludmilla was almost always to be found at the forward fringe or ahead of it, where sniper's nests had been hollowed out of the rocky soil. She would crawl forward, grazing her knees and elbows on the boulders, occupy one of the nests, camouflage the position with branches and leaves, and then lie in wait for the enemy for hours and sometimes days at a stretch, in all weather, drenched by downpours of rain and scorched by the hot Crimean sun.

She picked off the nazis coolly and unhurriedly. With each passing day her score mounted. She brought down dozens of fascist observers, scouts and officers with a bullet in the eye or between the eyes, exterminating them pitilessly and systematically.

Her old friend Alexei Kitsenko worked hand in glove with her. Together they formed a force that was worth a whole company.

The Germans hurled wave after wave of cannon fodder

into the offensive. Step by step they pressed the Maritime Army back to Sevastopol and gripped the city in a close ring. The defenders of Sevastopol were left with only one route to the Soviet mainland: the sea.

By this time all Sevastopol was talking about Sniper Pavlichenko's performance in action. Many could not believe that she was a girl. Sceptics visited the front line of the Maritime Army to convince themselves with their own eyes. Once a petty officer from a torpedo cutter, a huge, strapping fellow, came to see her. When Ludmilla was pointed out to him he gazed at her long and intently from a distance — he was too shy to come close — and then, tossing back the lock of hair from his forehead, said to his companions:

“Aye, she's a real corker, and no mistake! Just a slip of a girl to look at, but fights like a tiger!”

The Army command had already awarded her with her first decoration, a medal, in recognition of her services. People began to pronounce her name with admiration and respect.

More than everything else Ludmilla valued the praise of Matusевич, her regimental commander. He was an old soldier, a veteran of the Civil War, a commanding officer of unsurpassed courage who was ever to be found at the forward lines together with his men and who was devoted to them heart and soul. Both by his appearance and character Matusевич reminded Ludmilla of her favourite hero, Bogdan Khmel'nitsky.

For his part, the regimental commander acquired a strong, fatherly affection for his best sniper. A man with wide experience and quick judgement, accustomed to understand people at a glance and correctly size up their individual traits and capabilities, Matusевич was very impressed by Ludmilla. He understood her complex, impulsive and, at times, still uncontrollable nature.

At the front Ludmilla had remained true to her nature: she was as brusque and outspoken as ever. When she saw disorder, stupidity or muddle-headedness she could not remain silent, nor would she. In such cases she did not mince words.

Matusевич realized that this bluntness and vehemence did not denote lack of discipline, as some of the victims of Ludmilla's “sniper's tongue” tried to make out. He realized that the turbulent spirit of this YCL member who put all her heart in the struggle for her country's great cause could not reconcile itself to seeing others working sluggishly, indifferently, clumsily for this cause. When complaints about her alleged impertinence were submitted to Matusевич, he patiently and calmly investigated the circumstances and almost always found that Ludmilla's attitude, which had so aroused the ire of the complainants, revealed the correct reasoning of a good soldier with a clear grasp of army matters who was bent on setting things to rights.

A frequent visitor to the regiment's lines was Major-General Ivan Yefimovich Petrov, in command of the land forces defending Sevastopol. Stick in hand, erect, with a sensitive, ironical smile on his thin lips, he resembled both in looks and in character the man who was the heart and soul of the first defence of Sevastopol — Admiral Nakhimov. He too was simple and sparing of words and able to penetrate to the very heart of his men; and just as the sailors in 1855 had affectionately called the Admiral “Pavel Stepanych,” the men of the Maritime Army called the General — their friend and father — “Ivan Yefimych.”

He praised Ludmilla's work. His praise was restrained, but this restraint carried more genuine warmth than the flowery speeches of others.

After every conversation with the General, Ludmilla would return to her post with renewed enthusiasm.

The Germans already knew this elusive sniper who never missed her mark. They even learned her name. With typical Prussian obtuseness they tried to entice Ludmilla to come over to “their side.” From their trenches they would shout at her in broken Russian:

“Ludmil, chuck Bolshevik, come to us! We’ll feed you sweets. We haf lots of shocolate! You’ll be offizier mit ein Iron Cross!”

Ludmilla would patiently wait for one of them to poke his head inadvertently above the breastworks — and then press the trigger.

“Here’s a bonbon for you, Fritz!”

When they saw that the “Bolshevik Valkyrie” (that was what a captured German lieutenant had called her) could not be lured by such idiotic promises, the Germans became enraged. They showered her with abuse from their trenches and threatened to “hang up the bitch by the feet.” Ludmilla listened and her lips would curve in a disdainful, hard smile.

Twice she was wounded by stray splinters. The wounds, were not serious, however, and she barely waited for them to heal before she took up her sniper’s rifle again and carried on. Many people wondered how this frail-looking girl could stand the strain of the incessant fighting. But in her nervous, slim body beat the indefatigable heart of a young Soviet patriot reared by the Young Communist League. All her spiritual strength and all her energy she directed towards the great, sacred cause of exterminating the enemy.

She was promoted to the rank of sergeant, and soon after to sergeant-major. She became instructor of a sniper’s squad, training new cadres. Some of the men she selected herself from amongst her closest comrades; she studied them carefully, taking stock of their character, staying power, ability to adapt themselves to their surroundings and take swift, reli-

able decisions. Headstrong as a child, she had disobeyed her teachers in her school days, but at the firing line she became a persistent and capable teacher herself.

Sometimes men were sent to her from other units, men whom she most likely would not have chosen for training of her own accord — excitable, conceited, easily nettled.

One day two shipmates from a company of marines reported to the sniper’s squad. Kiselev and Mikhailov — those were their names — were a pair of young, unruly, swaggering “swashbucklers.”

When they saw their new sergeant-major for the first time they exchanged glances, spat on the ground as though at a given signal, unbuttoned the collars of their blouses and placed their hands on their hips with a devil-may-care air, as much as to say that they were as good as the best and that they weren’t the sort to take orders from a “skirt.”

When Ludmilla began to talk to them, they answered her questions listlessly, mumbling the words through closed lips.

“What d’yer think,” one of them asked ironically when Ludmilla ordered them to report to the company office and hand in their documents, “are we a going to be attached as pages to yer royal ‘ighness?”

Ludmilla surveyed the questioner through narrowed lids and answered in the same vein, even with a note of gaiety in her voice:

“Exactly! You’re going to hold my train on the forward fringe.”

The “swashbucklers” each undid another button and shuffled their feet challengingly.

Suddenly they heard the sharp, peremptory tones of a command:

“Do up those buttons! Hands at your sides! Stand at attention when you speak to a commander! Clear?... Well?”

The “swashbucklers” stood rooted to the ground. At first they did not realize that the words were addressed to them. Stunned, they did not change their languid stance but their swaggering smile lost its brazenness and became confused.

“Beg pardon, do you mean us?”

By way of an answer they saw the sergeant-major place her slender girlish fingers on her holster.

“I warn you that you are in a combat unit at the front. You no doubt know the consequences of disobeying a commander’s orders at the front. Do you understand?”

The marines looked at the pale face and deep-set, dark eyes of the sergeant-major and understood. In a flash they buttoned up their blouses and snapped to attention.

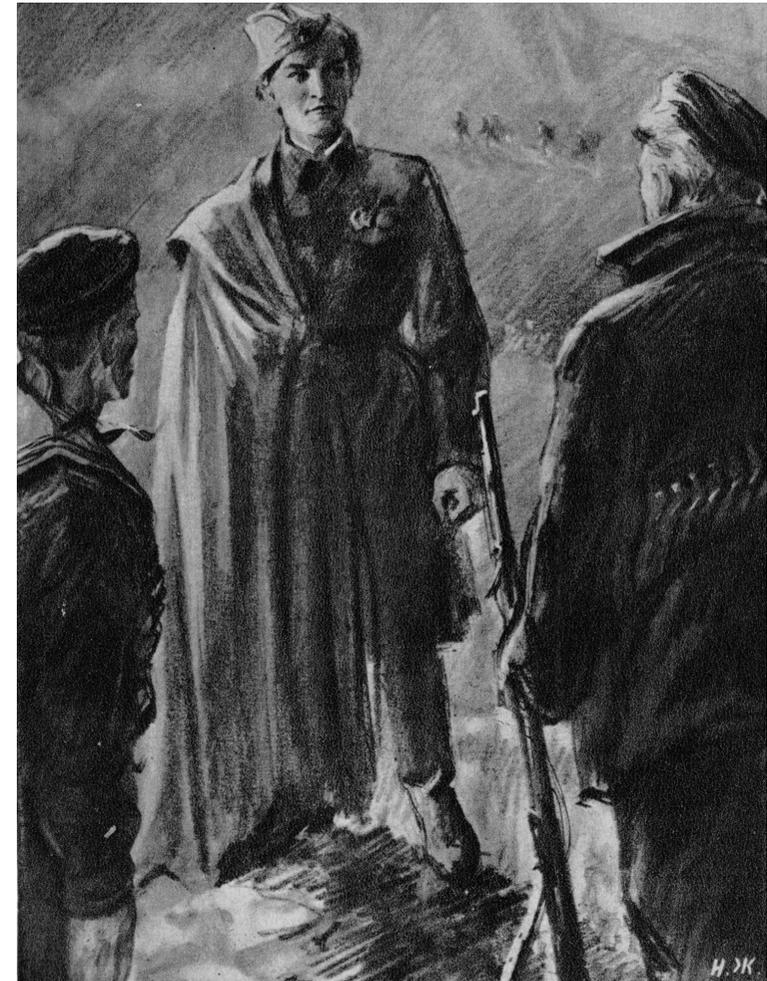
“Follow me!” Ludmilla ordered, and they walked meekly behind her, all the swagger knocked out of them.

She led them to an advanced sniper’s post, and then, indicating a bare crag, said:

“Here is your assignment! Make your way to that spot, take cover and observe the movements of the enemy along the gully. Bear in mind that you will be practically in full view of the Germans. So lie stock still. Be back at 17:00. And keep your eyes peeled!”

The two friends took a deep breath and wriggled off towards the crag. Careful though they were to conceal their movements, they were spotted. Bullets and mortar bombs began to rain on the summit. Earth and rubble rained down on them, but they kept on steadily, knowing that the sergeant-major was watching them from her vantage point. They could not dream of botching up the job in front of her and suffer the humiliation of reporting failure. As they lay there hugging the ground under incessant fire they suddenly heard a soft, solicitous voice enquiring from somewhere nearby:

“How’s things, lads? Hot?”



Wiping the dust from their eyes, they saw Ludmilla crawling towards them.

“Swell,” one of them answered buoyantly. “But what brought you here, Comrade Sergeant-Major?” Then he added in an apologetic tone: “Pardon me for saying so, but this isn’t a woman’s job, just the same.”

When the party crawled back both “swashbucklers,” as though by tacit agreement, did their best to shelter the sergeant-major from stray bullets with their own bodies.

From that day on Kiselev and Mikhailov became Ludmilla’s devoted friends. Once, while withdrawing to another position, she was surrounded by the Germans and cut off from her own lines. Her cartridges were giving out and she was already thinking of saving the last one for herself when Kiselev and Mikhailov, noticing the danger, broke through the German ring at the risk of their lives to their commander’s aid and, keeping up a running fire, fought their way back to their own unit.

The dashing “swashbucklers” not only developed into fearless fighters and excellent marksmen. They became models of discipline.

The fighting at the near approaches to Sevastopol became increasingly violent and stubborn. The German and Romanian hordes attacked the city with dogged persistence.

Ludmilla was transferred from one sector of the front held by the Maritime Army to another, wherever a steady hand and an unerring eye were needed to pick off an enemy observer or wipe out a scout.

Her experienced eye was proof against all the enemy’s wiles. In vain the German observers tried to draw her out with empty helmets on sticks and dummies rigged up in officer’s uniforms with arms and legs which moved like a puppet’s. All this was done to evoke a premature shot from her

which would give her position away and allow the Germans to settle scores with the “Cheka witch” who struck terror into their hearts.

But she was not taken in by any of these tricks. She patiently waited with bated breath and finger on the trigger until her quarry had become certain that he was safe and crawled out of his hole.

But an instant later he would receive Ludmilla’s inevitable bullet in his head.

Reloading her rifle she would make a mental note of the score: “Two hundred and seventy-three — and still going strong!”

The enraged nazis set special traps to catch her.

One morning she crawled out to a sniper’s nest where she had spent the whole preceding day, having left only after sundown for a brief rest in the dugout. When she reached the spot she looked around intently. Nothing apparently had changed during the night. In front of her was the same framework on the hillside on which hung withered, sun-scorched clusters of grapes. The road gleamed white under the slope. Ricketty telephone poles with smashed insulators and cable ends dangling from them lurched crazily over. Everything seemed so tranquil, and yet this familiar landscape had some indefinable new quality which gave her a twinge of anxiety. Employing the utmost caution she crawled from bush to bush.

Suddenly a tommy-gun burst tore into the rubble on the hillside near her temple. Ludmilla dropped flat and hid behind a slight mound. Her sixth sense of danger acquired at the front had not deceived her. Moving cautiously so as not to give herself away by even the slightest motion, she raised her field-glasses, a trophy acquired from a German observer she had sent to his eternal rest. Mentally tracing the direction of the burst from the marks on the rock, she spotted five tommy

gunners behind some prickly bushes. Four were crouching in a ditch, while the fifth had taken up his position in an old shell hole.

They were lying in wait for her, their eyes glued on the trellis, waiting for her to make the slightest appearance. She quivered with rage. She began to edge back slowly, inch by inch, to the cornel grove behind her and then, flitting like a shadow from tree to tree, she again moved forward, but this time to one side of her former position. The Germans, in the meantime, never took their eyes off the spot which she had just vacated.

The one closest was lying in the ditch with his side to her. Fat and clumsy, he resembled a greyish-green toad. Ludmilla took careful aim at his temple and pressed the trigger. He gave a slight jerk and his head fell heavily on to a stone. The other three jumped up and ran back. But after taking about ten steps they dropped flat and opened fire. Streams of tommy-gun bullets began to plough up the ground around Ludmilla.

From where she was she could only see the man who was shooting from the shell hole. A second later he parted forever with the tommy gun, which slipped from his fingers.

Ludmilla again started to crawl from one spot to another, the better to deal with the other three who were continuing to shower her with lead. The leaves of the prickly bushes hindered her from doing the job to her liking. Nevertheless, her next shot brought eternal peace and rest to still another German. The remaining two scurried off helter-skelter, stumbling over the stones in a panic-stricken attempt to save their lives. A second later Ludmilla picked off the fourth one. She was ready to burst into tears when the last one managed to dive into a thicket which hid him completely from view.

After waiting for about a quarter of an hour and making

sure that not a single enemy was in the vicinity, Ludmilla made the round of her morning's "bag," holding her rifle at the ready in case of emergencies. Collecting the tommy guns of the four Germans she had killed, she stuffed her pockets and pouch with cartridges and extracted such papers and letters as she found on the bodies.

She returned to the dugout tired, covered with dust and her clothes in tatters from crawling over the rocks — but happy: the "haul" had been excellent. The nazi "live bait" had fallen into the trap they themselves had set for Ludmilla. They who had come to mete out death had received death.

About her life at the front Ludmilla wrote to her mother: "I exchange 'greetings' with the Jerries with the help of my optic sights and solitary shots. I must say that it's the surest and best way of dealing with them. If you don't kill them with your first shot, you're liable to get into no end of trouble."

She remained true to this maxim, taking constant toll of the Germans whom she killed outright, like mad dogs who threatened to infect the world with their poisonous saliva.

Ludmilla's last sortie was with Alexei Kitsenko. They discovered a German command post and in half an hour, firing methodically and mercilessly, they wiped out the dozen officers and men who made up the entire staff of the post. Not a single bullet went astray.

Sergeant-Major Ludmilla Pavlichenko brought her score up to 309. She did not manage to make it a round 310. A shell splinter again put her *hors de combat*. By order of the Command Ludmilla was evacuated from Sevastopol to the rear.

* * *

"I owe everything to my country," Ludmilla Pavlichenko says, "so whoever threatens my country threatens me. We cannot rest until the last enemy on our soil has been destroyed."

And when she says this a hard, unsmiling look gleams in her eyes. You feel that in her breast beats the indomitable heart of a loyal daughter of the people, a passionate heart ready to sacrifice her last drop of blood for the honour and freedom of her native land.

Ivan Aramilov

OVER THE ENEMY'S LAIR

I

It was early morning when the alarm suddenly sounded on June 22, 1941. The men of the X. bomber command lined up in the quadrangle. The commander announced that the German army had launched an unheralded attack all along the Soviet frontier. The fascists had bombed Kiev, Sevastopol, Kaunas and other cities.

The men's faces set in stern lines.

The commander went on to speak of the seriousness of the war that had begun. The fate of the peoples of the Soviet Union was in the balance and it was up to the men and commanders of the Air Force to do their duty. The commander told them that they would make their first operational flight that very night. The hour for the take-off would be announced later on.

The pilots dispersed to their machines to make ready for the flight. One thought was uppermost in their minds: to take off as quickly as possible and come to grips with the enemy.

* * *

A very young sub-lieutenant with dark hair and brown eyes approached the commander.

"Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel," he began with a catch in his voice, "permit me to go up first."

The commander raised his eyebrows.

"So you want to go up first? I see! And who'll want to be the last, Sub-Lieutenant Molodchy? Can you name anybody? You can't? I thought as much. You may go back to your quar-

ters!”

Sub-Lieutenant Molodchy was an assistant squadron commander. Sub-Lieutenants Garanin, Sadovsky, Solovyev, Nechayev and Polezhayev, who were all about a year younger than he and still novices, shadowed him wherever he went and kept asking him excitedly whether they were going to take off soon. They, too, were anxious to get into action.

No one took off that night. The next day everybody went up, everybody, that is, with the exception of Garanin, Solovyev, Sadovsky, Nechayev, Polezhayev and Molodchy. They were considered too young. The “old hands” — the “hundred thousand’ers” and “million’ers” were first on the list. The fledglings — the Young Communist League members — were ordered to bide their time.

Tears welled up in the lads’ eyes. Damn it all! They had been born too late to smell powder during the Civil War. The “old hands” used to chip them good-naturedly:

“You’re just a bunch of suckers. You came on the scene when all the dirty work was over!”

“All right!” they would retort. “It’ll be our turn to play first fiddle when the next war comes along.”

And now that “next war” was on. So what? They were getting a back seat again.

Alexander Molodchy and the other young pilots were sent to an aviation plant. There they were given a new type of plane and formed into a special group. No one knew what the purpose of the group was. When they asked their commander: “When are we going off on a job?” he looked at them with astonishment and exclaimed: “On a job? Do you know your machines? Who’s going to let you hop off in a new make of plane just like that! You’ve got to sweat over her first!”

Day after day they were kept at it, making test flights, but not a smell of action. The planes were perfect! Now, if they

could only take off with a load of bombs! What lucky devils the “old hands” were! There they were pounding away at the Germans, while they, young and daring fellows, were being treated just like school-kids!

“Are they going to keep us training until the war’s over?” Molodchy demanded indignantly. “It’s a damn shame, mates.”

Yes, they felt hurt. They heatedly discussed the newspaper accounts of the feats of Soviet fliers. When Captain Nikolai Gastello’s plane was crippled in a dogfight over enemy territory, what did he do? Bale out? Let himself be taken prisoner? Not if he could help it! The captain directed his burning plane at an enemy column. He died like a hero.

“I want to live to see the day when we smash the enemy!” Molodchy would say. “I want to live to a ripe old age. But if it is my fate to die in action for my country, I want to meet my end as gamely as Captain Gastello did.”

They were assigned to a special bomber group, of which Colonel N. was in command.

Again they were set to work studying, training. Molodchy instructed civil air service pilots who had been called up from the reserve. He was bored to death and envied those who went up in fighting machines with their racks loaded with bombs.

He submitted a request to be transferred to the active air service. The colonel read the request with a smile and tossed it into the waste-paper basket.

“Patience, my lad, patience!” he said. “The war won’t be over in a day. Your turn’ll come yet. I want to go up too, but instead I have to obey orders and fuss around with you fellows here. D’you think I like it? I just have to grin and bear it.”

Molodchy left the colonel’s office in a towering rage. Everything boiled within him.

He wanted to write to Stalin. Surely Stalin did not know that they — the young generation — were being left out in

the cold? And yet, honestly, they would fight no worse than the “old hands”! All they wanted was to be given a chance, an opportunity to prove their mettle. He drafted one letter, then a second, then a third. But they all sounded flat. He had to express his feelings in a way that would be convincing, to the point.

“Dear Joseph Vissarionovich!” he began for the sixth time. “Please realize our unfortunate lot. Give orders to have us transferred from the preparatory class!”

But just then a difficulty arose which had completely slipped his memory when he sat down to write. He was in the army, consequently he had no right to lodge a complaint directly to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. That would be a breach of discipline. Should he send it through the regular channels? The colonel would only have him up at headquarters and give him a good dressing down:

“You’re a fine League member! You’re behaving like a baby!” he would say. “How dare you take up the time of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief with your requests! You’re only twenty. When I was your age I was afraid to approach the squadron commander with a request. The army employs its cadres according to a definite schedule. And it will manage very nicely without your reminders. About turn, dismiss!”

Molodchy laid down his pen and crumpled up the draft of his letter. Apparently he would have to let things take their own course.

All the young fliers were now besieging the colonel with requests to be sent to the front. He no longer smiled when he spoke to them, but grew angry instead.

“You’re too cocksure of yourselves,” he said, screwing up his shrewd eyes. “I’ve no doubt at all that many of you are brave fellows. But you’ve got to remember: not every brave flier makes a good army pilot. A designer once said that differ-

ent kinds of planes are as temperamental as horses, and when in the air they act just as differently. An experienced pilot needs up to thirty hours to break in a new type of plane. As for you, thirty days wouldn’t be enough. Do you know what branch of the air force you’re serving in? In the LRBC — Long Range Bomber Command. Understand? We will have to conduct operations deep in the enemy rear. The conditions will be exceptionally difficult. We’ll have to cover distances which only recently were considered records, and destroy heavily defended targets. Only first-class pilots with a thorough knowledge of aeronautics will be capable of carrying out such assignments. You may go.”

“But we already know everything there is to know, Comrade Colonel!”

“Everything?” he repeated ironically. “I have my doubts, lads. I myself don’t know everything. Very well, let’s see what you do know.”

And he proceeded to put them through their paces.

“Sub-Lieutenant Molodchy, tell me what you know about navigation, meteorological and aerological instruments.”

Molodchy answered without a hitch and the colonel nodded approvingly.

“And now tell me what you know about radio-navigation — flying and getting your bearings from radio-beacons.”

Molodchy answered this question too.

“What do you know about the gyroscope and gyropilot?”

Molodchy began to feel hot. He knew the subject well enough but the colonel kept staring at him so fixedly that he became flurried and began to muddle things. The colonel, as unperturbed as ever, continued to “feel out” the young flier.

“Assuming you turned over the controls to the gyropilot, how would you change course and altitude without touching the joystick?”

“Comrade Colonel, but there’s no gyropilot on the planes we’re training with!

“That’s so today, but for all you know you may get a plane with a gyropilot tomorrow. Your knowledge should always be ahead of what is required at the given moment.”

Molodchy made no reply. The colonel took a heavy blue book from the table and opened it at the book-mark.

“Now listen to what people who know what they are talking about have to say. They say that from now on the merits of a pilot will be gauged not by the old standard of ‘courage’ but by the new standard of ‘knowledge’ — knowledge of the plane itself, the element in which the plane moves, and everything pertaining to aviation, namely: aeronavigation, radio operation and maintenance, aerodynamics, and so forth. And whereas this knowledge is desirable for piloting a plane under peacetime conditions, it is a decisive factor in wartime. Do you know this book? It’s by Jordanoff, an American specialist.”

“Comrade Colonel!” Molodchy exclaimed pleadingly. “But we’re at war now! There’s no time to sit up nights swatting over books! We’ve got to fight! My fingers are simply itching to get at them.”

“It’s just because we *are* at war now that we must put only capable, trained men at the controls, and not half-baked pilots who think they can get away with it by mere cheek,” the colonel said impressively. “Suppose I were to let you get into a dog-fight with only the vaguest idea of what to do? Why, you’d ruin the planes and come to grief yourselves. More often than not you’ll be flying blind. It’s getting on for autumn. There’ll be fogs galore. And trying to fly in a fog without preliminary training is tantamount to diving into the deep end and then remembering you don’t know how to swim. What do I want of you, lads? I want to train you to be

first-class fliers, who can strike at the enemy without incurring a single loss yourselves. That is what we must set out to achieve. That’s all. You may go.”

Molodchy left the room. His desire to get into the thick of it at once had not cooled off. But he fully realized how right the colonel was. There was no place in the Air Force for apprentices. Only masters of the art could down the enemy. He had to become a master.

He recalled his school days. He had been born and bred in Voroshilovgrad. Like all the other local boys he had been fond of games, raced pigeons and made sorties into other people’s orchards. He had done everything most other children had, and yet he had stood out from among the other youngsters of his age. From his early childhood he had displayed an insatiable interest in aviation. He had begun by making model aeroplanes and gliders. How many failures and disappointments he had experienced!

But soon he had stopped “playing” at aviation. It had taken a firm hold on him. He had dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot. How he had envied Jimmy Collins and Valery Chkalov! He had read much and diligently. He had waded through difficult technical books and laboured with knitted brows over mathematical formulae. Physics and mechanics, aerodynamics and meteorology — everything had interested him. And it had seemed the most natural thing in the world that he, a Young Pioneer in the sixth form of a secondary school, at about fourteen years of age should automatically rise to the head of an aeroplane modelling class attended by people old enough to be his father. They had come to him for advice and consultation. And this had all happened not so very long ago. How much water had flowed under the bridge since then! An eternity seemed to have elapsed!

And now, here he was again studying hard, he and his

other comrades from the League, and getting down to it with a will. After classes they would check up on each other's knowledge.

One evening Sub-Lieutenant Garanin dropped in to Molodchy's room and asked for a packet of cigarettes.

"Describe the Heinkel-113," Molodchy said laughingly, "and I'll give you a packet of pre-war Deli's."

"It's a single-engined fighter with a low wing in relation to the fuselage, Garanin began without hesitating, "and it's fitted with two machine guns and a cannon."

He gave the main features of the Heinkel and stretched out his hand towards the small cupboard where the cigarettes were.

"Hi, hold on! Not so fast, my lad!" Molodchy stopped him. "You're not getting away with it as easy as all that. The Heinkel resembles our MIG-3. Supposing you were to meet a MIG at night, you'd fire at it, taking it for a German, wouldn't you?"

"What's that?" Garanin protested. "You can easily recognize which is which by the shape of the Heinkel's rudder, particularly when you look at it sidewise."

"But suppose the Heinkel were above you?"

"You can tell it from below by the contours of the wing and the tail. Beginning from the centre the wing narrows noticeably. It has a narrow elliptical stabilizer situated at some distance from the wing. On our fighter the line of the wing curves more gradually and is shaped in such a way that it seems to shorten the fuselage. And the stabilizer is broad and shaped like a trapezium."

"That'll do!" Molodchy said with a smile. "You've earned your packet of Deli's all right."

Whenever any of the "old hands" returned from a raid and described their encounters with the German fighters, Molod-

chy would ply them with questions as to how the Germans had behaved in the air, how powerful the fire of their fighters was, and what their tactics were. He would write everything down in his notebook. He had firmly resolved to master his profession, to become an ace, and there was no literature on the subject in question.

A navigator was assigned to him — First Lieutenant Sergei Ivanovich Kulikov, a thick-set, stocky fellow with steely blue-eyes and an obstinate set to his chin. Kulikov had also received his political schooling in the Young Communist League. He was slightly older than Molodchy and had already been awarded the Order of the Red Star for merit at Khalkin-Gol. He had seen service in the war against the White Finns. He knew his plane to perfection and was skilful at flying blind. The two young men had much in common and soon became fast friends.

"Will we be kicking our heels here for long?" Kulikov asked. "If they don't send you out on a mission soon I'll hitch on to some other pilot."

"No need for that, Sergei," Molodchy assured him with a smile. "The very fact that you've been appointed as my navigating officer means that we'll be going into action before long. Tomorrow they're going to attach a couple of radio operators and gunners to the plane — Sergeants Vasiliev and Panfilov. Both of them are League members. And that'll make the crew complete."

They began to practise night flying. What had seemed easy enough during the day was difficult in the dark. Every manoeuvre had to be learned anew as it were. Molodchy climbed, wheeled, dived, spiralled, made figures of eight, double-banked and performed every other trick he knew. He imitated a forced landing, glided along with the engines shut off at high and low altitudes, practised spot landing, landing

with the engines running, landing with a lateral wind, taking off with a lateral wind and making a landing while coming out of a corkscrew.

Kulikov insisted especially on repeating the manoeuvres connected with forced landings.

"I'm not making you do it just for the fun of it," he said. "It's absolutely necessary. Imagine for a moment that the plane's been badly damaged but still answers the rudder. You may have to land on some impossible spot. You corkscrew down, say. From a high altitude you can do it pretty steeply. But as you approach the ground you'll have to gradually increase the radius of the turns, while keeping your point of landing within the limits of the normal angle of gliding. That'll give you plenty of time for making the necessary number of observations and selecting a suitable spot."

"One would think we'll have to make forced landings every day, Sergei!" Mo-lodchy said sarcastically.

"There may be only one forced landing in a lifetime," Kulikov returned. "But neither I nor you, my friend, can tell when or where it will occur. In a thicket? In a tiny forest glade where even a truck would have a hard job to turn around? On a moss-covered swamp? On a snow field? You may have to land in any of a hundred different ways. On one wheel, or flat on your belly without letting out the landing gear. And, what's more, you'll have to land in such a way as to save the plane and our own skins as well."

"Right, Comrade Navigator!" Molodchy agreed. "I'll keep at it. Even though I have a good bit of experience and can go through many manoeuvres with my eyes shut and feel as if I'm just part of the machine, I'll go on practising."

"And have you put your gunners through their paces?" Kulikov asked. "What kind of fellows are they? For all you know they may be just robots who know how to press the

button, and that's all? We need first-class gunners. Make'em practise sighting. Let them train at the shooting range. Make'em score a bull's eye with every shot."

Day after day they practised manoeuvring above a given objective. Sergei was implacable. He made them repeat one and the same operation dozens of times.

"If you let the plane 'hop' or slip when you reach your objective, I won't be able to hit the target," he would say to Molodchy. "And when you're approaching your objective, and the enemy's taking potshots at you for all he's worth, you can twist and turn as much as you please; but when you're over the target — then be so kind as to remember: a horizontal flight and a constant altitude and constant speed. After I've dropped my load you're free again to do what you want: drop, climb, pick up speed or slow down."

They would pick out a spot in a field and approach it as if they were on a real bombing raid.

* * *

"Well, Sub-Lieutenant Molodchy," the Colonel said one day "I intend to let you have a smack at the Germans. If you're up to the mark I'll let the other young'uns try their hands too. Their fate depends on you. Get ready for the flight."

Molodchy dashed off in search of his navigator as if on wings, and told him of his conversation with the colonel. Kulikov smiled and said quietly: "Well, Alex, my boy, we'll show them what we're made of."

II

The squadron was assigned to bomb the German garrison in the town of P. They were to attack singly. They flew through heavy cloud against a head wind. The navigator set

the course by his instruments. For twenty minutes or so they circled about in the vicinity of the target, but there was no trace of the town beneath them. It seemed as if it had been swallowed up by the earth.

What happened next was hard to make out. They slipped past the town without releasing their load. It opened up to view so unexpectedly that they were past it in a flash. They should have bombed it on the go. Alexander had a glimpse of streets crowded with soldiers, tanks, trucks, carts, horses, high German vans covered with tarpaulins and columns of soldiers in field-grey greatcoats, lined up in a square. Maybe it was a parade; maybe a meeting. At all events it was a wonderful opportunity for a blow from the air. And the anti-aircraft guns too were silent.

“Alex, there they are!” Kulikov shouted. “Ekh, we’ve let them go!”

“I saw them!” Molodchy replied. “Don’t worry, they can’t get away!”

At the outskirts of the town Molodchy veered round and headed straight for the central square. A solitary AA gun opened fire, and following it all the batteries and machine guns in the town began to bark as if they had gone mad. Shells burst all around. The plane rocked and pitched in the blasts.

The columns of infantry drawn up in the streets and square stood motionless. No one even attempted to take cover. The Germans apparently imagined it was only a scouting plane because it had shot past the town the first time without bombing or machine-gunning them.

“A bit more to starboard, skipper!” came the muffled voice of the navigator over the intercom.

Alexander turned as requested and Kulikov dropped his load of bombs on the square. Explosions followed one after

the other. They burst in the very thick of the enemy columns. Panic spread through the streets. The soldiers and officers who survived could be seen running into courtyards and side-lanes.

The enemy anti-aircraft guns intensified their fire. The town was ringed round by batteries and the entire AA defence was concentrated on one solitary plane. The clouds dispersed. The Germans now were able to conduct precision fire. In front of the plane, to right and left rose walls of fire. Would the fascists really bring them down? Would this, their first bombing raid, also be their last?

Molodchy circled the town twice. He dived, then shot upwards, but try as he might he could not slip through the barrage. He realized he would have to resort to cunning. He side-slipped and hurtled down as if he had been hit. The ruse worked. The AA guns ceased fire: the Germans were under the impression that they had shot the plane down. Near earth, just above the roofs of the suburban houses, Molodchy flattened out and shot up into the clouds. The Germans realized what had happened and once again brought their guns into play. But they were too late. Their shells exploded wide of the mark. Molodchy continued to climb until he was clear of the danger zone. He now breathed easier. He felt as if he wanted to sing, shout and stamp his feet with joy. He had inflicted telling losses on the enemy, sent hundreds of fascists to their graves, while he and his crew had come through unscathed. This is what that simple, pleasantly ringing word — victory — meant. Over the intercom came an excited, boyishly resonant voice.

“Congratulations, Alex!” — it was the navigating officer’s voice. “Not so bad for a beginning!”

The little lamp on the pneumatic mail box flashed. Alexander took out a note. It was from Vasiliev and Panfilov, con-

gratulating both him and the navigator. The note was punctuated with exclamation marks. The gunners were jubilant.

“Why didn’t you rake the streets with your machine guns, you devils?” Molodchy replied. “What were you waiting for, orders? I’m surprised at you!”

“Sorry for letting the chance slip by, Comrade Lieutenant,” they replied. “We were watching out for German fighters and forgot to keep an eye on what was going on below. We’ll bear it in mind. Honestly, we will!”

They made a perfect landing at their ‘drome. The plane had no sooner stopped than they climbed out. Kulikov warmly shook Molodchy’s hand. Vasiliev and Panfilov hugged and kissed him. Their faces were beaming, their eyes sparkled.

“Heartly congratulations, old man! Our baptism of fire has certainly been a success,” Panfilov said. “Now that we’ve smelt powder, been tried and tested, so to say, we’re ready to take on anybody. I must say that before we set out I was a bit afraid, but now — never again. The Germans sure got it hot. But when we go for ‘em tomorrow we’ll give it to ‘em hotter still!”

“Now, none of that,” Molodchy said severely. “Don’t you go giving yourselves airs, my friends. What we did today was merely a lucky beginning.”

They examined the plane. She was simply riddled with holes. The fin and fuselage were shot through and there were numerous bullet and shrapnel “wounds,” besides huge holes in the wings made by direct hits. The ground mechanic came up and shook his head.

“You chaps had a pretty hot time of it, eh?” he asked.

“You have to take it as it comes,” Kulikov replied. “That’s war, brother. We also let them have it. If we reckoned up the score I guess it would be in our favour.”

“Well, so long as it’s in your favour then everything’s fine,”

the mechanic agreed. “You were mighty lucky though. The Jerries seem to have aimed at your most invulnerable spots. We’ll have her patched up and shipshape in two or three days’ time, and then you’ll be able to take off again.”

They went off to report to Headquarters.

“I like going up with you Alex,” Kulikov commented. “You’ve got a steady hand and strong nerves. The plane obeys you. I’ve faith in you. I wouldn’t even be afraid to fly to Berlin with you. It wouldn’t be a bad idea taking a hop to Berlin or Hamburg, eh?”

“If they let us, we’ll go to Berlin.”

“You’ve got the makings of a real ace, Alex,” Kulikov went on, unable to calm down.

Molodchy smiled. He understood why Kulikov was so lavish with his praise today. Their first successful flight had gone to his head. Why, only the day before the command had been afraid to trust them with a plane and a load of bombs! They were all a bit flushed with success and were naturally prone to exaggerate things. Tomorrow it would pass off and then they’d be able to talk it over calmly. For the time being, one thing was certain — they had earned the right to be sent out again.

Things turned out as Molodchy felt they would. After a good night’s sleep Kulikov was his usual self. All morning he kept nagging his friend — in his opinion Molodchy had not gone at his target properly.

“You went at it while losing altitude,” Kulikov grumbled as he paced the room. “And if we did happen to strafe them successfully it was in spite of you and your clumsiness. Remember once and for all, just as you remember that twice two are four: when you are above your target — a horizontal flight and a constant speed! Otherwise you’re liable to bungle the operation.”

Alexander fully realized all this. Why hadn't he followed this rule the day before? When he winged over to attack he had forgotten the navigator's instructions, had forgotten everything his more experienced comrades and commanders had taught him. He had eyes only for the German columns, which he was bent on exterminating. He directed his plane right at the enemy, he wanted to be closer to them, everything else ceased to exist for him in those few seconds. He did not realize he was losing altitude and listing. His navigating officer was right. He would have to keep himself in hand next time.

III

It was an important operation. They were heading northwest. They had been especially painstaking in their preparations for the flight. The plane was in A-1 condition. And yet suddenly, when they were about half way, something went wrong with the starboard engine. First wisps of smoke appeared, then tongues of flame. Molodchy tried to extinguish the fire by looping, but it was no easy thing to engage in aerobatics with a load of bombs on board. All his attempts failed.

"Spontaneous combustion," Kulikov diagnosed. "It's a rotten business."

The fire spread from the engine to the framework. The wing covering began to burn, then the smoke penetrated the cabin. Molodchy ordered Kulikov to jettison the bombs. They were still flying above their own territory. The bombs were sent pitching into a peat bog. The plane began to lose altitude. Flames were licking it on all sides. Molodchy ordered the crew to bale out at once. Vasiliev and Panfilov complied with the order.

"Are you going to jump too, Alex?" Kulikov asked.

"No, I'll land somewhere and try to save the ship," Molodchy answered.

"But the tanks'll explode and you'll be burned to death."

"We'll see!"

"Then I'm staying with you," Kulikov replied. "If we burn, we'll burn together. I'll not leave you alone in the plane."

"Navigating officer Kulikov, I order you to bale out immediately!" Molodchy shouted. "If you don't, I'll have you court-martialed!"

"I'll go right away," Kulikov replied. "But how about you, Alex..."

"Now then, out you go and don't argue!" Molodchy cut him short.

Kulikov fussed about for a suspiciously long time. The bolt, it seemed, had jammed and it was impossible to open the trap. Kulikov stamped on the bottom with all his might. At last it opened and Kulikov leaped from a height of 180 metres.

Here it was — his forced landing.

Molodchy looked around for a suitable landing place, but there was nothing to be seen — everywhere forest, shrubbery and hills. Behind him was the peat bog. There was no time to be lost. The tail unit was in flames; the plane was listing heavily. Somehow or other he managed to reach a grassy plot. His flying togs caught fire. He landed next to some hayricks. The starboard wing hit one of the hayricks, bringing the plane to an abrupt stop. Alexander bumped his head against the side of the cockpit. He crawled along the burning plane and dropped to the ground. There was no hope of putting out the fire, so he made off to a safe distance. A moment later the tanks began to explode, just as Kulikov had predicted. A column of black smoke rose high above the plane, which burned like a torch. Molodchy grit his teeth. He felt like crying.

Kulikov, Panfilov and Vasiliev came running up. They were a sight to behold! All three were covered with mud from head to foot. The poor fellows had plumped into a bog and were drenched to the skin. They were shivering from the cold. Molodchy suggested that they take their things off and dry them over the blazing remains of the plane.

“There’s nothing much the matter with us,” Panfilov said through chattering teeth. “But what about you? You haven’t broken a leg or something, have you? Thank heaven for that! We made for the spot as fast as we could. We didn’t expect to see you alive.”

They brought out some gauze and bandaged his wounds. They were discussing in what direction to strike out when two youngsters came running up. It appeared that they had landed in Rostov district, Yaroslavl Region, and that there was a village not far off. The children invited them to their home. Molodchy looked sorrowfully at his smouldering plane.

“Come on, chaps,” he said, “let’s go...”

IV

Then came the raid on Konigsberg. This ancient German city, founded by the Teutonic Order during its march eastward, now served as an arsenal for Hitler’s army, a basic centre of the German munitions, machine-building and ship-building industries. A city of obscurantism and reaction, it was a recognized hotbed of anti-Soviet intrigue even before the war. Such was the city that was to receive the first blow.

The meteorologists predicted bad weather. Nevertheless the bombers decided to take off. Bad weather had its good points as well: the Germans would not be expecting a raid, the Soviet fliers were hardly likely to meet patrolling planes on the route and the AA gunfire would not be so effective.

Molodchy flew alone, as he had been doing for some time. Behind him, at long intervals, followed squadrons of bombers. After Molodchy’s crew had set fire to and illuminated the target, the other planes would come up.

A cloud bank barred their way. Molodchy tried to skirt it by turning south, but in vain. Then he headed northward — it was still worse. The ground and stars were hidden from sight.

“We’ll have to go plumb through it,” Kulikov said.

They were flying blind. Snow began to fall. The temperature dropped to a dangerous level — from zero to seven degrees below. A thin coating of ice began to form on the wings.

Molodchy wirelessed unit headquarters:

“Continuing flight through cloud banks.”

They encountered a snowstorm. The snow penetrated into the cabin, melted on their faces, blinded their eyes. Time dragged slowly.

“How far are we from the target?” Molodchy asked his friend. “It seems to me we’ve already passed it.”

“We’ve still three hundred kilometres odd to go,” Kulikov assured him.

“I’m about done up, Sergei. And as wet as a drenched cat.”

“Stick it out, old man. We’ll be there soon.”

The other members of the crew tried to buck up their skipper with a few shop jokes.

“We’re over Konigsberg!” Kulikov suddenly reported. “Careful now!”

Their feeling of fatigue vanished instantly. Their goal was beneath them, hidden from sight by the clouds. They flew over with the express purpose of drawing the enemy’s flak and so convincing themselves they were not mistaken. And, sure enough, the ground batteries began to speak. So far so good.

The plane swooped down. They strung up a chain of flares

and dropped their load of demolition bombs. Flashes from bursting AA shells tinted the clouds. Time to head for home. The engines hummed cheerfully. Again they had to cut their way through the clouds. Molodchy began to climb but the wall of mist seemed to reach up endlessly. He turned north and ran into a storm. The plane tossed and pitched, making it difficult to keep her under control. Molodchy was dead beat. He sniffed at some spirit of ammonia, took out his thermos and drank a cup of hot tea with lemon. Feeling somewhat refreshed, he climbed to eight thousand metres.

They were now flying with their oxygen masks on. It was impossible to lose height because of the danger of the plane becoming encrusted with ice. The gunners reported:

“Only enough oxygen for another fifteen minutes.”

Molodchy gave orders to cut down the expenditure of oxygen and shut off their reserve supply. Flying became more and more difficult.

They fought their way through the clouds for about eight hours, flying blind just as on the outward trip. At last they crossed the line of the front. Dawn began to break. The clouds dispersed and the bright yellow sun appeared out of the orange-coloured haze. The ground beneath them looked like the sea seen through a faint morning mist.

They landed at a reserve flying field, rested and refuelled. Half an hour later they were back at their own base.

Congratulations awaited them at headquarters. The staff officers reported that the League crew had carried out the operation in record time.

“Rough going?”

“Rather,” Alexander admitted. “But we’ll do it again tomorrow if necessary. We’re as fit as fiddles and just as anxious to give the Jerries what for!”

* * *

Preparations were under way for a raid on Berlin. Molodchy and his crew had been training for it for a long time.

How many months had they dreamed of it! Kulikov went round with a perpetual smile on his face. They pored over maps and thrashed out their route.

A telephone call came through for Molodchy.

“Would you like to have a talk with some captured German airmen? They’re from Berlin. You might glean some information from them that would help you get your bearings.”

“Yes, of course!” he replied, and immediately fixed the appointment.

There were two of them — a pilot and a navigator. Neither was more than twenty-five years old. They had been shot down not far from the front. The navigator was a stocky, fair-haired man with shifty eyes. He readily answered all questions put to him. He had nothing but abuse for Hitler. He himself claimed to come from working-class stock, sympathized with the Russians and was very glad to have been taken prisoner. He had been shot down on his first flight on the Eastern Front and was overjoyed that things had turned out so well for him. He had not dropped a single bomb on the Russians. When he heard that Molodchy was interested in Berlin’s anti-aircraft defence he readily agreed to tell all he knew, frankly and honestly. But Alexander was soon convinced that the fellow was spinning him a yarn.

The pilot was a real die-hard, an experienced flier from Hermann Goring’s select band of air thugs. He looked sullenly at the Gold Star and other decorations pinned to Molodchy’s tunic.

“So you’re a Hero of the Soviet Union, are you?”

“Yes.”

“Planning to fly to Berlin?”

“I am.”

“I don’t advise you to,” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “I’m speaking to you now not as a German, as your enemy, but as one airman to another.”

“Why?”

“You’ll come a cropper.”

“I doubt it.”

“Well, you certainly will,” he repeated dully, without removing his furtive eyes from Molodchy. “Berlin is inaccessible from the air. It’s belted round with anti-aircraft guns. With luck you may manage to break in but you’ll never get out. Do you realize how many Britishers were brought down over Berlin? Yes, the Tommies won’t dare to attack the German capital anymore.”

“We’ll have a shot anyway!”

The German made a wry face and then smiled superciliously.

“It’ll be your last flight.”

Molodchy might have answered easily enough. But was there any point in disillusioning this prig? The German had had his day. He would never get another chance. As for himself, he, Molodchy, would go on flying and playing havoc with the German rear. No matter how the fascist dens were protected, he would get at them and give them something to remember Soviet aircraft by.

...The plane headed for Berlin with a full load on board. Storm clouds enveloped them all the way to the front. Then they found a rift in the clouds and made for it. To right and left were thunderstorms. Above them was a starry sky. Thus they flew on for about two hours.

The clouds dispersed and they had fine weather for the forty minutes they flew above the Baltic. The sea sparkled

in the moonlight. Then they reached the coast. Shortly after they passed Stettin. Soviet pilots were evidently pounding it. Fires raged, anti-aircraft guns spat out viciously, searchlights scoured the skies.

A fierce head wind rocked the plane and made flying difficult, besides increasing the fuel consumption.

“Careful now! We’re approaching,” Kulikov warned.

Ahead of them lay Berlin, enveloped in darkness. Molodchy seemed to smell its putrid, venomous breath, to see its furtive eyes, full of hate and fear. Berlin could not sleep peacefully. The throes of war held it in their grip.

Searchlights darted out towards the plane. Alexander pressed the left pedal and swerved to one side. Then he wheeled round in readiness for action. What worried him was not the possibility of being shot down. That thought never so much as entered his mind. He was afraid of botching the job, of making a hash of it at the last minute. He would never forgive himself if the bombs landed in the middle of a square or on a piece of waste land. He simply had to mark this first raid of his on Berlin with a smashing blow. The city deserved all it got. Tomorrow, the whole world would know about the raid. Millions of people who were being made to suffer untold torments by the nazi butchers would breathe joyfully. Mothers who had lost their children would bless the airmen as avengers and fighters for a righteous cause.

What if club-footed Goebbels did foam at the mouth denying the report of an air raid on Germany? What if he did try to hoodwink the world? Let him try to wriggle out of it! The inhabitants of Berlin would be treated to the music they liked best, to the symphony of bombs — bursting in the heart of their own city.

The bombs dropped away from the plane and sped straight for their targets. At six thousand metres searchlights caught

the plane. There were hundreds of them. The planes following behind were somewhat late; not one of them was yet in sight and Molodchy was all alone above the city, with the whole of Berlin's AA defence system concentrated against him, belching out a hurricane of fire.

For several minutes they cruised along in the rays of the searchlights. They had to get away from their blinding glare. The navigator, too, was lending a hand for all he was worth. The gunners kept reporting shell bursts to right and left. But after a while they stopped reporting. Molodchy manoeuvred as best he could.

"Hello there!" he shouted through the intercom. "Have you chaps gone to sleep?"

Alexander Panfilov's voice reached him:

"Comrade Skipper! There are hundreds of shell bursts on every side and below and above us. There's no sense in watching the air. Carry on as best as you can."

"Send a radiogram: 'Moscow, Stalin. Over Berlin. Assignment fulfilled. Molodchy.'"

Moscow answered. "Radiogram received. All clear. Wish you safe return." They flew on under enemy fire for many kilometres in the full glare of the searchlights. But finally they broke through and got clean away.

They were not able to check their bearings by visible landmarks. The gunners struck up a song. Kulikov joined in. Molodchy's legs felt weighted with lead. He was dead tired. He could hardly keep his eyes open and had recourse to his smelling salts. At last they crossed the line of the front.

They grounded at A. to refuel. They had just climbed out of their seats when Molodchy noticed fighters taking off. He immediately guessed what was up, ordered his crew back to their posts and nosed the plane up steeply. German bombers were over the aerodrome and our anti-aircraft defence was

opening up.

The Germans were driven off. Molodchy came down again. Where he had landed the first time was a tremendous crater, about thirty metres across. A 1000-kg. bomb had hit the spot.

"You were born under a lucky star," the ground mechanic said, coming up to them. "That bomb was already whistling groundwards when you took off. You beat it by a few seconds, and that saved you. Smart work, lads!"

At last they were back at their own base. They looked through their mail together. There were letters for them from total strangers, letters from all parts of the country, from women and old folks, Young Pioneers and men and officers at the front, congratulating them on their splendid feat.

"Our hearts are filled with joy when we read in the newspapers of how a large group of Soviet planes have bombed another German lair," Maria K. wrote. "Congratulations, dear comrades. I have two sons. Both of them are doing their bit at the front and I'm proud of them. I'm proud of you, too, our splendid airmen. Avenge the torments and sufferings of our country. Do not spare your bombs. Let the enemy tremble at the sound of your engines. My best regards to you, who are as dear to me as my own boys."

Molodchy's eyes were moist.

"What a large family we are, Sergei," he said. "The whole country has become our kith and kin."

"That's true," his friend replied. "The whole country is like one big family, and it expects us to hit out at the Germans, to hit out harder."

"We're doing what we can," Molodchy said quietly, "fighting to the best of our ability. We'll be meeting the New Year, 1943, before long. The results for this year aren't at all bad."

"We have 180 operational flights to our credit," Kulikov said, looking at his notebook. "We've done 190,000 km. over

enemy territory and dropped more than 200 tons of bombs on various targets. We took a hand in defending Moscow, saw action on the Kharkov and Voronezh directions and in the vicinity of Leningrad and Stalingrad, and took part in air raids on Germany, Hungary and Romania. I must say that the 'itinerary' of our League crew is quite impressive. I hope we'll be able to increase our score before the war is over." "We'll try," Molodchy smiled.

V

The days went by, mounting into weeks and months, grim, difficult months of war. And in the course of the war our people matured and became steeled. In the course of the war, too, Alexander Molodchy, an unknown sub-lieutenant at the outbreak of hostilities, became a Guards Major, a Hero of the Soviet Union, whose name is known and honoured throughout the land.

An assistant squadron commander, Alexander Molodchy devotes all his spare time to teaching and training young fliers. In simple, convincing, passionate words, he tells them how to act on a long distance flight, or in storm clouds, how to cope with icy conditions, flak, searchlights and enemy fighters, or how to manoeuvre above the target and how to bomb most effectively. In this way the fighting experiences of this famed YCL crew have become accessible to all Soviet long range bomber units.

On January 1, 1943, Alexander Molodchy was awarded a second Gold Medal for his distinguished services in the war and for heroism and valour displayed in action. A bronze bust of Alexander Molodchy will be erected at his birthplace. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union has also been conferred on Guards Major Sergei Kulikov.

Peter Skosyrev

THE LIFE STORY OF ZOYA KOSMODEMYANSKAYA

I

The life story of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya is very simple. An ordinary Russian girl, in the tenth grade at school, she was caught up in the maelstrom of the war and met her death at the hands of the German monsters. The story of her life and death has already been published in sufficient detail in the columns of the daily press. It comprises a stirring page in the chronicle of the struggle waged by the Soviet people against fascism. It is difficult to add anything to the reminiscences of her mother, Lyubov Timofeyevna, or to the eyewitness accounts of her execution given by peasants of the village of Petrishchevo, where the life of "Tanya — the girl guerilla" was cut short by the noose of a hangman.

It was a short life and a heroic death — but one that will go down forever in the annals of the most glorious deeds of the people of our land.

Zoya was born in Central Russia, in the Province of Tambov. Her parents later moved to Siberia, where they lived on the banks of the Yenisei River. She loved to pick mushrooms and to listen to the guerilla songs of the days of the Civil War. At home she would draw horses and pore over books such as you and I also read when we were her age. Moscow became her home from the time she was eight.

Before the war Moscow numbered upwards of half a million schoolchildren. We would meet them at every step — our own children, our nephews and nieces or grandchildren as the case might be. We knew their joys and their sorrows,

their problems and games, their hopes and disappointments. Laying aside our mundane affairs, we played with them, talked with them, argued with them, and from time to time were told: "Oh, papa..." or "Oh, uncle, you don't understand a thing..."

And true enough, we did not always understand.

Several years passed by, and the schoolchildren of yesterday became the college students of today. In the spring they would leave for a term of practical work and return home, bronzed and hardy, in the autumn, some from distant Tashkent or Khabarovsk, others from the banks of the Igarka or from the Pamirs. With the air of experts they would discuss the shortcomings of the spring sowing campaign, argue passionately about some new make of engine or go into raptures over the specific features of the oil bearing strata in the Ishimbayev district. And then one fine day you suddenly noticed a government decoration gleaming proudly on the breast of one of your younger relatives. Try to debate a point now with these recent schoolchildren of ours who have grown up to be full-fledged citizens of Moscow and know their own minds! We did, though, and took pride in them in the days of peace not so long ago.

And it was against our happy children, against ourselves, happy old folk that we were, against our Moscow, our own Russia, that Hitler suddenly unleashed the dogs of war.

Zoya was not quite eighteen at the time. When Molotov's speech was broadcast over the radio, Lyubov Timofeyevna was out. When she came home, Zoya met her with the words:

"Mama, we're at war! Hitler's attacked us. Do you understand? Now everything will be different."

That summer and during the early part of the autumn, she did what most of the other senior pupils of the Moscow schools did: first she extinguished incendiary bombs, then she

left for some state farm to help with the harvesting, and envied everyone who left for the front. But when the stern October days of the Battle of Moscow set in, she too took up arms. It fell to her lot to become a guerilla. Zoya carried out several difficult missions behind the German lines. She was on the point of returning home from her last operation when she was betrayed by some scoundrel. She was captured, flogged, tortured. She was subjected to the most monstrous cruelties that the depraved brain of the fascist Colonel Ruederer could devise. We are in duty bound to remember those names — those of Ruederer and his ilk. And until the court meets that will sit in judgement over these thugs and cut-throats, we have no right to forget a single one of those who have trampled, or are still trampling — defiled, or are still defiling — devastated, or are still devastating — our native land. But when they have received their just deserts, we will cast their names into the cesspool of oblivion.

Zoya was hanged, but before she died she gave utterance to words that we are also in duty bound to remember. I am confident that many years hence, when every single day we are living through now has become legendary to those for whose salvation Russia is now fighting on so many fronts, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya's last words will be read and re-read time and again, and will be learnt by heart.

The hangman had already placed the noose around her neck. It was the second or third day of December. A bunch of fascists crowded round the gallows. The villagers of Petrishchevo, herded to the spot by the police and the village elder, huddled together somewhere in the background. It was a cold winter morning. Some nazi blackguard with a camera suspended from a patent leather strap fussed about round the gallows in search of good shots of the "*Partisanen*." Her temple had been gashed open and on her breast hung a placard

with the inscription: "Incendiary."

While the photographer busied himself round her, Zoya roused herself from the stupor that seemed to have numbed her brain. She looked at the collective farmers — just such doomed captives as she herself was — and cried out in a ringing voice that did not betray the slightest note of despair or fear:

"Comrades! Why are you looking so downcast? Be brave, fight! Give it to the Germans, burn them out, hound them to death!"

The hangman seized her by the shoulders. Zoya shook him off.

"I am not afraid of dying, comrades! It is a great thing to die for one's people..."

People who knew Zoya intimately confirm that she was the soul of honour. And when she died we can truly believe that she was indeed happy to die in the knowledge that she was giving her life for the cause of the people — for the collective farmers who were witnessing her execution, for the men and women in Moscow, for all those who were fighting at the front, and for those who would live on when she was no more — for you and me.

Although she was only eighteen, death held out no terrors for her. Up to the very last minute she maintained her complete faith in life, with all our Soviet people's ardour and passion and understanding of the joy it brings. She lived, and she wanted to impart at least a grain of her faith in life to the peasant men and women who were looking with such distress at the gallows and the German officers.

The photographer, having taken a close-up from the front so that the rope was visible on the left side, darted off with professional zeal to another spot and began to focus his camera on the profile of the doomed girl. This gave Zoya an addi-

tional minute. Turning to her hangmen, she said sternly and contemptuously, in the only tone fit for addressing murderers:

"You are hanging me now, but I am not alone. There are two hundred millions of us, and you can't hang all of us. Revenge will be taken for me. Men! While it is not yet too late, surrender! Victory will be ours in any case!"

And a minute later, when the rope was already tightening about her neck, choking the life out of her, she still managed to cry out:

"Farewell, comrades! Fight on, don't be afraid! Stalin is with us! Stalin will come!"

All was over. Her body hung limply in mid air.

And that is the whole story of her life. It had begun eighteen years before. It came to an end in December 1941. There remain photographs of her, her simple, girlish belongings in the apartment of the Kosmodemyanskys on the Alexandrovsky Proyezd in Moscow, her school diaries and exercise books, and the reminiscences of her friends and relatives...

Had it not been for the war, we might have met her, if not today then tomorrow, in a tramcar or perhaps walking down Gorky Street, or near the Sretenskiye Gates — a tall, shapely girl with dark hair, carrying a bundle of books under her arm. And, looking at her, we should never have realized — it would probably never even have entered our heads — how profound a love for her country and her people, how passionate a love of life beat in her heart and filled her thoughts. How many boys and girls who are just like Zoya do we rub shoulders with in Moscow or are liable to meet anywhere in our great country? We know them, talk with them; at times we argue with them, criticize them, or even ignore them just as they do us.

Yet this mighty force, this profound love pulsates in every one of them, just as in every one of us. And if it has not yet revealed itself, the time will come when it will. And then, if

it is required of us, if we are called upon to do so, we will be ready to accomplish any deed, do everything our country expects of us and, like Zoya, be happy to devote ourselves heart and soul to the cause of victory. And we will triumph. And as for the “photographers,” the hangmen, the sadists from Berlin — those would-be aspirers to world domination — they will perish and rot, hated and despised, they will moulder and crumble to dust under the towering barrow of universal hatred, under the crushing weight of the blood and tears and anguish of all their innocent victims, under the ever-molten lava of Zoya’s simple words.

II

Zoya’s character was moulded in exactly the same way as that of any other Soviet adolescent. But the most important influence was books, without which life would have been empty for Zoya.

For Zoya, the world of books was a casement opening out on to a vast wide world, access to which was temporarily closed to her. Why temporarily? Because, as she knew, she would not always be sixteen or seventeen. While you wait for the performance to begin at the theatre, everything is temporary: the public in the foyer, the people jostling round the bar in the buffet, the attendants in their lace caps selling programs at twenty kopecks apiece, the half-empty rows of seats, the vast plush wall of the curtain... You are at the theatre — and yet you are not at the theatre. It is not really the theatre so long as the curtain is down. Then the lights go out, the heavy fabric creeps apart, and the parti-coloured light of the stage pours out into the darkness of the auditorium. You sit and listen. Othello converses solemnly with Iago, his heart full to overflowing with the poignancy of love and friendship;

Iago listens and nods, just as if he were a friend. But he is a scoundrel, a traitor, a coward. Astonished, Onegin stretches out his arms towards the Tanya that used to be, but Tanya is proud and worldly-wise, and will never break her troth.

To open a book is like throwing open a window on the wide world of reality. There was the life of Anna Karenina, of Pavel Korchagin, of Chapayev and of Till Eulenspiegel. And there would also be the life of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. She had not lived for so many years merely in order to grow tall. She had even suffered because she had grown so fast. At seventeen she was the tallest girl in her class. But what had she accomplished? Alexander the Great had lived thousands of years ago, in the age of slavery, but at the age of seventeen he was already leading troops into battle and was on the road to conquer the world. Lermontov had been little more than a boy when he wrote “Through the Midnight Sky,” but professors had been writing books about him for a hundred years.

Zoya read books as they ought to be read, forgetful of herself and completely oblivious to her surroundings, drawing from them knowledge which they seldom taught at school. In school they talked about Boyle’s Law, who Mariotte was, and what a “vector” is: in school they seldom talked about the primary things of life. But Tolstoy did, and so did Nikolai Ostrovsky, and Cervantes, and Mayakovsky, and Gorky.

As she read, Zoya would compare herself with her favourite heroes. Could she compare with Pavel Korchagin, the heroic Young Communist League member? When inflammation of the brain threatened to wreck her whole future and she underwent a painful operation involving injections in the spinal cord, she did not in any way betray the excruciating pain. The doctors looked with astonishment at this emaciated girl, who lay there with lips tightly pressed and did not utter a single groan. Zoya did not consider it necessary to explain

to them that it would have been a breach of faith on her part to set Korchagin up as an example of what a Soviet citizen should be like and then, as soon as something happened to her, to whimper and groan. (It was another matter when her mother came to see her. Zoya looked at her with stricken eyes and murmured through clenched teeth: "Oh, Mama! If you only knew how painful it was..." The doctor, however, remarked to Lyubov Timofeyevna: "Your daughter must have a will of iron.")

When she read Mayakovsky's poem dedicated to Nette, the brave diplomatic courier who was killed while stoutly defending the mail in his charge, she, too, wanted some ship, or perhaps aeroplane, or street, or road, to be named after her.

When Andrei Volkonsky fell mortally wounded on the battlefield and his love for Natasha remained unrequited, she believed that her love would be just as noble and — who knew? — perhaps unrequited too.

In the world of books Suvorov led the Russian troops across the Alps, and the whole of Europe marvelled at his genius and at the heroism of the Russian soldiers. In the world of books lived that astonishing knight, Don Quixote, Eulenspiegel led the Spaniards a merry dance, and the mighty Ilya Muromets, on his massive steed, performed deeds of prowess after three and thirty years of idleness. But she was only seventeen...

In the vast and glorious world of books men went to exile and prison and the scaffold for their convictions, without emitting a single groan or complaint. Chernyshevsky was pilloried in the public square to the beating of drums and the executioner broke a sword over his head. Zoya knew whole pages from *What Is To Be Done?* and wrote in her diary: "Die rather than give yourself up to a man without love."

In the world of books the finest people fought for the

honour and freedom of their people; when they fell into the hands of the enemy, they died without betraying their cause; they overcame insurmountable obstacles, made great discoveries and knew how to fight for their principles. Unrecognized by their contemporaries, ridiculed and alone, they knew how to fling down the gauntlet to the backward world, and more often than not they perished, like Othello, like Pushkin, like Lermontov or like Taras Shevchenko.

These all were people of a bygone age, but now the Soviet power was in force. Zoya earnestly believed that now people must be better than in former times. If there had been glorious heroes and martyrs in the past, people who had suffered for the truth, today every Soviet man and woman must be no worse than Pierre Bezukhov, or old Kloes, or Tanya in *Eugene Onegin*. But no, that would not be correct. *Eugene Onegin* was a wonderful poem, but Zoya simply could not understand Tanya: she herself would never have married Prince Gremin. Tanya had acted very foolishly. Although, who knows? That was a hundred years ago, long before Soviet times.

"How fortunate I am," thought Zoya, "to be living in Soviet times! Of course, it's a pity that the Revolution has already been accomplished and I cannot take a part in the struggle like Klara Zetkin, or Rosa Luxemburg or Krupskaya. Yet how fortunate I am that no one can make me marry a man I do not love, and no one can stop me from being a pilot if I want to, or an engineer, or whatever I like. What if I had been born a serf a hundred years ago? I should have been at everyone's beck and call, liable to be sold even, while my master and mistress might have had me flogged.

"No, I would have killed them first."

And so Zoya would spend her evenings when she came home from school, engrossed in a book, learning from the past, learning to live. Born seven years after the Revolution,

she was not prepared to be satisfied with the minimum that life could offer, and for this very reason she sometimes gave the impression of being somewhat aloof and even austere.

“How many people live without a thought of tomorrow, as if their one purpose on earth is to have a good time!” Zoya once said to a friend.

Incidentally, she was neither unsociable, nor was she proud. If she rarely danced, it was because she felt that her unusual height made her ungainly. She loved opera and the ballet just as much as books. Whenever she impersonated a friend, everybody laughed, and loudest of all the person she mimicked. She never received any notes from boys, such as girls usually do in the eighth and ninth grades, and none of her friends could ever remember her exchanging intimate confidences.

“Oh, how I would love to have a talk with Stalin!” she exclaimed one day. And, coming home from school, she took down the *Problems of Leninism* and “talked” with Stalin. And in the same way she talked with Chekhov and with Furmanov, with Goethe or with the author of some chance book without beginning or end and sometimes translated into the Russian from some unknown foreign language. Often, in just such a nameless waif of literature, she would discover ideas and thoughts that clothed everything around her in a new light, as if somewhere nearby music were playing, and then the world about her would become broader and larger, and the most ordinary table would be transformed into a magnificent festive board, and the words of one of her favourite songs would come to her mind. And Zoya, tossing aside the book, would give vent to her feelings by conducting an unseen orchestra and break into song, drowning out the radio. Her mother, smiling happily, would listen to her while her brother, Shurik, poring over his blueprints, would growl in a

matter-of-fact voice and without raising his head:

“There goes that madcap again, never letting a man work...”

So Zoya lived until the day she left for the front. She matured, as it were, in one day, when the Young Communist League assigned her for work in a guerilla detachment. Then the curtain rose, her real life began. Her mother wanted to see her off at the station. She replied: “Don’t, dear.”

It was a cold and lowering autumn day when she left for the front. Lyubov Timofeyevna could not hide her feelings. Zoya looked at her intently.

“There’s no need to be distressed, darling. You shouldn’t see me off with tears. You ought to be proud to have a daughter who’s going to the front. I’ll either return a heroine or die like a heroine...”

She gave her mother a last hug and, snatching up her bundle, jumped into a passing tramcar and rode off to where her real life was to begin, to the front, opening the chapter of a book that is yet to be written.

III

She passed through the German lines at Naro-Fominsk. She was seized in the village of Petrishchevo, not far from Dorokhovo railway station, after she had set fire to a number of cottages in which many Germans were quartered. The activities of the people’s avengers were beginning to alarm the fascists no less than the reverses they were beginning to suffer in the Battle of Moscow. Buildings, military stores and stables were burned down, trains hurtled from the tracks, bridges were demolished.

Zoya would have returned safe and sound from her last sortie had she not been betrayed by a despicable cur who had

wormed his way into the detachment. Anxious to get into the good graces of the Germans and save his own skin, he had sneaked off to the enemy's staff headquarters and warned them: "A girl guerilla is setting fire to your stables."

The Germans took immediate action, the officer first pinning the traitor's arms to his side as if he were afraid that the man would shoot him. The soldiers dashed off to the stables. The traitor and the officer stood where they were, trembling in every limb. Neither of them said a word until they heard the sound of shouting and the tramping of boots outside. The door swung open, creaking on its hinges, and a group of soldiers entered the room, pushing Zoya in front of them.

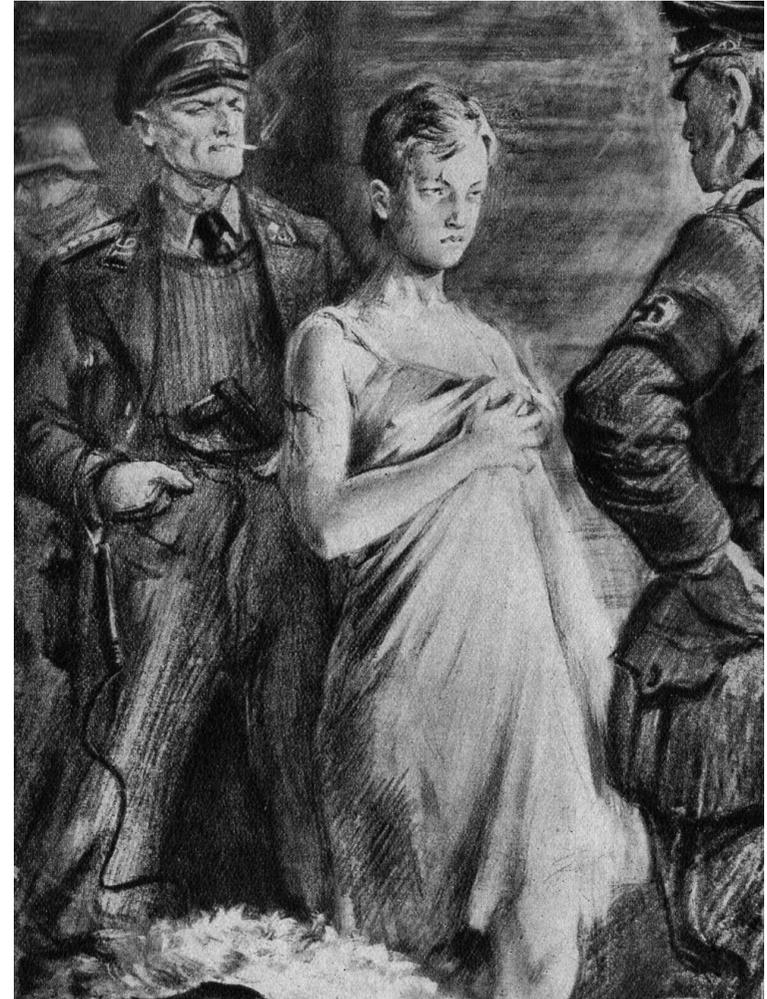
One of the soldiers carried the incriminating evidence that they had taken from her — a revolver, matches and an empty petrol tin.

"*Eine Partisanin!*" the soldiers shouted. "*Eine Partisanin!*"

Zoya looked at them from under knitted eyebrows.

They whipped her unmercifully. Zoya stood there biting her lips, a strange look on her face, her lips parted in what might have been a smile. Her eyes roved from one of her tormentors to another, but each time they rested for the fraction of a second on the sallow face of the traitor. Her whole frame quivered as each new blow of the lash cut into her body, and she tried to cover her bare breast with her chemise. The first blood had long ago appeared on the broken skin of the weals, but all they could get out of her was a terse, stubborn "I don't know." Not a single moan, not even a stifled cry escaped her lips. An hour later one of the scoundrels could stand it no longer.

Villagers who happened to be outside the cottage at the time Zoya was being flogged say that a young whipper-snapper of an officer ran out into the porch and, burying his face in his hands, dropped down on a bench, where he sat motion-



less until it was all over, as if he no longer had the strength to look on at the inhuman outrages being inflicted on the helpless young Russian girl inside the cottage.

Do not believe it! Do not imagine that this hardened young reprobate was sorry for Zoya, that he felt any pangs of remorse at that moment, that human feelings such as you and I have, or any Russian has for that matter, filled the heart of this fascist butcher. A fascist is ignorant of the feelings of people who have a conscience, a compassionate heart, a sense of justice or chivalry.

The officer had been watching the victim with lust-filled eyes when suddenly Zoya's glare had fallen upon him. What was it in her eyes? Hatred? But how many looks of hatred had followed the officer in Minsk, Smolensk, Vyazma, in every Russian village, every hamlet through which he had passed, in countless cottages such as this, where, too, lingered the odour of sheepskins and pickled cucumbers!

Suffering? But usually the sufferings of their victims only incited the fascists to stoop to actions of which those who had lived through the German occupation afterwards spoke in tones of amazement and contempt. Wrath? But in their conception, wrath and hatred were twin sisters. Would wrath unnerve a nazi officer, who had seen the Champs Elysées, Athens, Warsaw, Crete and the smoking ruins of Belgrade?

No, in the eyes of this Russian girl there was something so incomprehensible to him, so hostile and yet so simple that fear overwhelmed all other instincts in the officer. He cowered before her glance and dashed out of the cottage.

Out on the porch there was an odour of sheepskins and musty boards. Dropping down on the bench, the fascist buried his face in his hands and sat there with hunched shoulders for some ten minutes, while from the other side of the door came the shouts of the Colonel followed by the terse, obstin-

ate Russian "No," then the crack of a whip, then again: "I don't know; I won't say!" and then again the crack of the whip and the dull thud of lash on flesh. "I won't say!" — crack. "No!" — crack. Crack. "...to wipe you out!" — crack, crack...

What ailed him? Was he out of his mind? Dreaming? In a trance?

Yes, perhaps it was something in the nature of a trance.

In his mind's eye he saw a boundless Russian field like those around Smolensk. Russian silver birches with delicate green leaves lined the road, topped by Russian storm clouds scudding across the sky. Some German soldiers were cooking supper beside a barn that had miraculously survived the recent battle. Suddenly a dark object flashed through the air, thrown by an unknown hand. A hand grenade hit the field kitchen. The rich soup went flying into the air together with the kitchen. A birch tree snapped in two and fell against the wall of the barn. Two soldiers and the cook fell lifeless to the ground. The rest snatched up their tommy guns. A woman emerged from behind a nearby clump of birch trees. She held a bundle in her hands. She did not so much as glance in the direction of those at whom she had thrown the hand grenade; she appeared from behind the trees as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, adjusted the kerchief on her head and moved off briskly, carefully avoiding the ruts in the road. One of the two surviving soldiers took aim and fired. The bullets raised puffs of dust, and blood stained the road. The soldier dropped to one knee and fired again. The kerchief on the woman's head fluttered as if it had been caught by the breeze; she dropped the bundle, but her steps did not falter. On and on she walked. Then the soldier beckoned to his comrade, who had been gazing fixedly all the time at the spot where the field kitchen had stood only a few seconds before, and the two of them began to fire at the woman. She

continued to walk on. Bullets riddled her by the score. Blood showed on her blouse and on her bare arms which hung limply at her sides, but still she walked on. She did not so much as shrink back, or stop or make any attempt to wipe the blood that was dripping from her arms on to the dusty road. She walked steadily on, her eyes picking out the potholes in the road, while over her head the fluffy clouds of the Russian eventide passed rapidly on their way, making the translucent air in the gaps between seem blue in contrast to their white. "You're dead, drop down!" the officer mentally shouted and, judging the distance which was not yet too great, threw a hand grenade after her. The grenade dropped to a nicety. A column of dust, mud and earth shot up directly behind the woman. But when the dust subsided, the fascists saw her still walking on with the quick, steady stride of a peasant. They caught a fleeting glance of the heels of her bloodstained feet beneath the billowing hem of her skirt, of the kerchief fluttering on her bullet-riddled back... It was as though she were immortal...

The officer dropped the field-glasses through which he had been watching the woman and glanced at the soldiers. They lowered their tommy guns and returned his gaze. And then, throwing up their hands, with terror frozen in their eyes, they dashed off across the potato patch towards the wood where their unit was stationed. The officer, too, took to his heels. He ran on for all he was worth, stumbling over the broken earth; and from time to time he looked back to where, now far in the distance, the dead woman guerilla was moving along the road, no longer touching the ground with her feet. And although the distance between her and the Germans increased with every step, she had not become any smaller. In fact, she seemed actually to be growing larger, taller. It was just as if she were towering over the officer and the scattering

soldiers and the woods in which the staff headquarters of the "invincible" German army was ensconced in sturdy dugouts.

The officer had almost reached the woods when the woman guerilla suddenly looked round and he saw her eyes, and they were like those of the girl who was being tortured by the Colonel just then.

They were the ordinary eyes of an ordinary Russian woman, somewhat surprised and surveying the German officer without any particular animosity, but rather with curiosity, just as one looks at the animals in the zoo. And at this point the fascist, half beast and half robot, whose hands were stained with the blood of every European people, was suddenly struck with an irresistible and inexplicable fear. If he had had in his head even a scrap of grey matter, he would have thought: "There goes Russia, on and on, without faltering, and there is no force that can bring her to the dust. We thought that after the blows we dealt her at Kiev, at Smolensk, at Vyazma, we had pierced her through and through; it seemed to us that with the hand grenades we hurled at her near Volokolamsk and Istra, we had rent her to pieces; we were confident when we reached Pavshino and saw the chimney stack of a factory on the outskirts of Moscow in the distance through our powerful field-glasses that the victorious consummation of this protracted war was already in sight."

"Lie down; die; you're smashed, routed!" the fascists shouted. "You may not realize it yourself but you're already dead. You have nothing to defend yourself with! But still she did not fall or drop on her bended knees. She had been pierced with shot and shell but still she walked on amid the pine trees and birches, under the lowering sky — indestructible Russia.

The officer returned to the cottage after Ruederer had finished torturing Zoya. The girl stood breathing heavily, supported under the arms by two soldiers. And when the of-

ficer entered, she looked at him again. On her forehead was a crimson gash, and large beads of perspiration ran down her temples from under the tangled strands of short hair.

After being ordered by the Colonel to get the gallows ready, the officer went to his quarters in order to mix himself a strong drink and try to get some sleep before the execution took place.

IV

Among those who saw Zoya's dead body was a young country girl by the name of Galya. She had been born in Gribtsovp, which is the next village to Petrishchevo, and had lived there all the thirteen years of her life. She had been to Moscow perhaps no more than two or three times in all. She had very rarely been to the cinema and had hardly read anything that was really worthwhile.

She had never heard of either Chernyshevsky or Tanya from *Eugene Onegin*. In general, she knew very few of that galaxy of illustrious names that have done so much to add to the honour and glory of Russian culture. Even the fact that she was Russian was something that Galya had only very dimly realized and it was doubtful whether she had ever attached any particular significance to it. There was the sun in the sky and the earth under her feet. In autumn it rained, and in winter it snowed. These were things that she took for granted, just as the fact that she was Russian and that there were other people in the world who were French, German and so forth.

At first, when her village was occupied by the Germans, she could not understand what was happening. Only the night before Red Army men had passed through. The sound of distant shooting had reached them only faintly. Her old

grandmother had made the sign of the cross as she mumbled a prayer in front of the icon and after that had made the shutters fast over the windows. From the porch a huge crimson glow could be seen in the distance. There was a fire probably in the vicinity of Vereya. Then she had dozed off. Gruff voices speaking in a strange tongue and a dry rat-tat-tat had sounded outside the window, but she had heard nothing. She had fallen sound asleep. It was only early the next morning that a neighbour had run in and discussed something volubly in a loud whisper with her mother, repeating time after time:

"They're down at the Co-op, gabbing away in their own lingo. What's going to happen? They're down at the Co-op..."

A big batch of soldiers dressed in outlandish uniforms had gathered outside the Co-operative Store. They were Germans.

Before long a group of Germans had turned up at the cottage. They had walked straight in, slamming the door after them, and then carefully examined the windows and the ceiling. They had talked loudly, as people do in an empty house. They had not greeted anybody, taking no notice even of her mother, but had just jabbered among themselves. Then without touching anything they had gone out into the yard. One of them, much taller and more smartly dressed than the rest, had for some reason or other strolled over to the fence where the withered hollyhock was growing and fingered a yellowing petal. After that they had come back into the house, eyed the ceiling once again, and then went out into the road, leaving the door wide open as if there were no one living in the cottage. And yet it had been bitterly cold out of doors.

That day Galya had begun her life under the Germans.

Now, in September 1942, when she told me about those weeks, it seemed to her that even then she had sensed, had understood everything that she had afterwards come to understand. That, of course, was wrong. After so many

months of war, we were all of us under the impression that we understood everything from the very first day. But it was not so. During the first months of the war our hearts and our thoughts and conceptions of what was going on in the world were still influenced by our pre-war attitude. Our children, of course, understood still less.

It was only later that a day or, perhaps, a month came that marked a turning point in our lives and we tore everything peaceful from our hearts. We became sterner, grasped things better and became more sure of ourselves. This does not mean that we had grown older — no, we simply parted with the illusions of peace time and readjusted ourselves heart and soul — and not just merely our notions — to the stern demands of the war. With some this change took place at the front, amidst the bursting of shot and shell; with others, somewhere deep in the rear where they were evacuated and where there was even no blackout or ARP duty; with still others, at home, in their usual environment, while scanning the newspapers or poring over the map of our country, which we now study every day with as much attention as if we were preparing for an examination. During the past year the day came to each and every one of us when we realized that we were called upon to prove ourselves worthy of the title of Soviet patriot, that thus far we had held it only on trust, on our word of honour, so to speak, whereas now we had to prove our worth by our deeds.

And those people who have not yet realized their duty, who are not living up to it, are either cowards, or blackguards or just shallow apologies of men who have nothing in common with either their country or their people.

Such a day, too, came to thirteen-year-old Galya.

November was drawing to a close. It had been bitterly cold for several weeks, with hardly any snow. The ground was

frozen hard and rang underfoot like a bell. Leaden clouds hung low over the fir trees and bushes. Gusts of wind swept the ground almost bare of the dry, crisp snow. The front was receding ever farther towards Moscow and the rumble of guns grew more and more remote. Aircraft no longer flew over the village. At night the sole surviving cock would crow and if you chanced to wake up in bed and hear it, you might have thought that it was peacetime again and that there was no war on. And sometimes, it really did seem so to Galya; but when she remembered that every time she had to go to the well for water, a German sentry armed with a tommy gun would be standing there, her heart seemed to shrink inside her and she shut her eyes fast so as to fall asleep again quickly and wished that she could dream on and on and never wake up again.

That day she had to go to the woods to collect pine cones. She took a basket and ran off to the pine grove. There was no lack of cones, but they had frozen hard to the ground and the basket was only half full when Galya decided that it was time to go home. But before doing so she decided to rest for a while. She put the basket down under a fir tree, huddled up against the trunk and tucked her hands in her sleeves to get them warm. A crow flew past; a broken twig dropped down from a tree. The clouds opened up above a gnarled pine, and the clear sky peeped through. Galya could not tear her eyes away from the patch of blue. A smile played on her lips. For an instant it seemed to her once again that there was no war, that when she got home she would find her father somewhere about the house or busying himself in the yard chopping wood or fixing up the fodder grinder.

She was still smiling when a voice suddenly called to her: "I say, lassie!"

Germans? Galya started to her feet. Snatching up her bas-

ket, she shrank back as though someone was about to beat her. True, people were permitted to come into this wood. It was prohibited to enter the other one, beyond the stream; if anyone was found roaming about there they were simply shot. That was how their neighbour, Aunt Nyusha, was killed. And they had not even allowed anyone to bury her.

"Don't be afraid, lassie," the owner of the voice went on. "I'm a friend, a Russian."

The low-hanging branches of a tall fir tree parted, and a face showed.

"I'm a friend. There aren't any Germans here. I've been lying here for two days already. I know."

Galya approached the spot,

A girl was crouching in a hollow under the tree. She was dressed like a peasant. A sub-machine gun lay on the ground at her feet.

"I'm terribly thirsty," the girl went on. "All I've had to drink was a handful of snow I scooped up under the tree, but I finished that long ago. Are there many Germans in your village? You come from Gribtsovo, don't you?"

Galya answered she did and then asked:

"You're a guerilla, aren't you?"

"Uh-huh," the girl replied.

"What's your name? There are only a few Germans in our village. But there's a lot over at Petrishchevo. They've got stables and machine guns there. There are only a few sentries in our village. They don't trouble us much. Aunt Nyusha was the only one who got killed. It was her own fault, though. She shouldn't have gone where it's not allowed."

"Get me some water, will you? Only don't tell anybody I'm here."

Galya had a bottle of milk with her.

The girl began to drink thirstily. She took off her hat and

Galya saw that she was quite young and that her hair had been cropped short like a boy's.

"What's your name?" Galya asked.

"What do you want to know for?"

"Where do you come from?"

"From Moscow. My mother and brother live there. I'm going to visit them shortly. "

The girl smiled and put on her hat again.

"Now then, be off with you. Only don't tell anybody that you've seen me, not a word, mind. I was so thirsty. Thanks for the milk."

"But what about you?" asked Galya hesitatingly. "Are you going to stay here?"

"Now then, off you run. I'll go as soon as it gets dark. By the way, whose stables do they put up the horses in at Petrishchevo? It's the last house, isn't it?"

"At the Mironov's. They used to use the Voronov's stables, but they were burnt down. The guerillas set fire to them. The German officers were furious. They threatened to shoot everyone."

A slight sound reached them from behind the trunk of a neighbouring tree. The girl quickly ducked out of sight. A crow rose into the air, flapping its wings heavily.

"Aren't you afraid to be here alone?" Galya asked.

"What's there to be afraid of?" came the reply from under the fir. "We've got to smash the fascists. Every one of us must help to smash the fascists. Well, what are you waiting for? It's time you were off. Somebody might see you."

Galya turned to go, but after a few steps she came back and, peering through the branches of the fir tree, asked:

"What are you thinking of doing? Setting them on fire, perhaps? They have sentries everywhere nowadays..."

It was dark under the tree. Not a sound came in, reply,

just as if no one was there.

Galya roamed about the wood for an hour. There was something she wanted to ask the girl from Moscow but she did not quite know how to formulate it. And then she was suddenly comforted by the thought that here, in these woods, was somebody the Germans not know about, somebody hiding under a tree, who was not afraid of anything, and who was going home shortly to see her mother.

Galya spent a restless night. She fell asleep only just before dawn, after she had made up her mind to get some milk and pancakes in the morning and take them to the wood, to the place where the girl from Moscow was hiding.

But when she woke up, the one topic in the village was that the Germans had hanged a girl guerilla in Petrishchevo. They had caught her during the night, flogged her and then hanged her. And they had hung a placard on to her chest saying that she was an incendiary.

“People went about with a frightened look on their faces that day,” Galva told me. “Mother kept looking out of the window all the time just as if she was expecting to see something. But you couldn’t see a thing because the window panes were covered with hoar-frost. And still she stood there and didn’t even cry, just stood there. Then she came over to me and hugged me, and all of a sudden she burst into tears. I daren’t ask her anything. I was afraid to ask her about the girl who’d been hanged and what kind of hair she had, whether it was bobbed or whether it was plaited down her back. ‘If it’s bobbed,’ I thought, ‘then it’s the girl I met in the wood. But if it’s plaited...’”

Galya did not ask her mother about the girl’s hair. But when it grew dark, she threw a shawl over her head and ran all the way to Petrishchevo. Snow had fallen during the day, and it crunched underfoot. The moon seemed frozen in the

sky. The German sentries stood at their posts with their noses buried in the collars of their greatcoats. This prevented them from keeping a sharp lookout; otherwise they might have shot Galya. She reached her destination safely: Galya had gone to school in Petrishchevo for four years and knew every inch of the way, every bush and every tree. She flitted from tree to tree, until at last she reached Petrishchevo.

She saw the hanged girl from a distance. At the end of a short rope suspended from a cross bar hung a long shape. It was a bright moonlit night. Galya immediately recognized the girl. Standing in the shadow of a barn, she looked long and earnestly at the body of the guerilla girl. The girl’s head was thrown back, and her short hair, which hung down on one side, glistened like silver in the light of the moon.

MALIK GABDULIN

I

The dreams and aspirations of our people are instilled into us from our childhood. The stories and songs of our nurse as she rocks us on her knees — those are the songs of our country crooning over us, lulling us to sleep. The games we play, at leap-frog or being Cossacks bold — they, too, are part of our training for future battles in defence of our homes and our mothers. The tender look of a girl, a woman's caress, the love we hold for our family, our children — all that, too, is but a part of the unbounded love we hold for our native land, of the love that has ever dwelt in our hearts but has been brought out in all its magnitude only by the war.

This is the source of the comradeship born in the trenches, a comradeship that transcends death. This is the source of that heroism and gallantry that have amazed the world.

By birth Malik Gabdulin is a Kazakh, and the language of the folk-songs which lulled him to sleep in his infancy was the Kazakh language. His home is the boundless steppe — far to the east of Moscow. But it was not in his native plains, dotted with the tents of nomads and across which camels padded from village to village, that Malik Gabdulin won the highest military award in the USSR — the Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union — but on the roads which run towards the gates of Moscow from the west.

It was there that he won fame, on the roads where the German hordes rolled in 1941, seeking to rob the Russian people of their capital and, consequently, to deprive the Kazakh people of their happiness, their steppes and their right to sing in their native language, seeking to wreck for all time

the hopes and dreams of the Soviet peoples.

II

But what did Malik Gabdulin dream about in his childhood?

Childhood lasts not one year alone, but it sometimes happens that one day of childhood is worth many years of later life. In his childhood the future Hero of the Soviet Union dreamed about many things. During the winter nights he longed for summer, when the village would return to the *jailyau*. Kazakhstan is a land of stockraising, and to the Kazakh the *jailyau* (the summer pastures) is what ploughing, sowing and harvesting are to the Russian — the source of prosperity for the year to come. In the winter the Kazakhs live cramped and crowded in their dark tents, plastered with clay to keep out the cold. A white carpet of snow stretches as far as the eye can see, and the wind howls across the steppes. Keep your fire going day and night, but still the wind will steal away the heat. When anyone enters from outside, the frost sneaks in at his heels. In the Kazakh's tent the head of the family rightfully holds sway, but in winter his place is usurped by Jack Frost...

On particularly cold nights Malik's grandmother would take the infant into her own bed. With a tender hand she would stroke his hair. Malik slept, yet did not sleep; his eyes were shut fast — locked in slumber — but his ears remained awake. His grandmother's voice was soft but, listening to it, he heard neither the howl of the snowstorm, nor the barking of the dogs, nor even the horse stamping on the other side of the felt wall of the tent. His head would rest on his grandmother's breast, and before his eyes would rise scenes from the vast store of fairy tales of which she knew so many — as

many as there were grains in the sack of wheat his father had brought back from the market.

...Suddenly, out of a dark hole as black as night, a dragon crawls. Its gaping jaws bristle with jagged fangs, and fire belches from its throat. It has one eye in the centre of its forehead, but it has a hundred arms, and each is set with talons like a tiger's claws. "Bow to me!" the dragon roars to the people. But only cowards bend their heads, and the dragon seizes them and crawls on. It sees the sun in the sky. "Hey, you up there, in the sky! What are you looking at? Bow down before me, or I'll eat you up!" The dragon has a hundred arms, and the sun only one. And who knows, never perhaps would the sun have shone again in the sky, had it not been for one man — neither a prince nor a peer, but a simple shepherd — in whose breast beat a passionate heart as hot as fire and as strong as steel. He selects the fleetest horse from the drove, his crook is transformed into a golden sword, and he gallops off to give battle to the dragon.

Malik slept on, but his grandmother went on with the tale.

The boy awoke long after daybreak. The flap of the tent was open, and a glittering ray, like a golden sword, fell across the carpet and the iron bound chest. It was bitterly cold outside but the touch of the sunbeam felt warm on his cheek, and it seemed that winter was already ended and summer would soon come.

"Well, you one-eyed dragon? Who got the best of it? The sun's up in the sky, but where are you?!"

When he listened in his infancy to his grandmother's tales and songs Malik little-thought that the day would come when he, like the brave shepherd of the fairy tale would go out to give battle to a dragon. But now his country was at war with Hitler, and many a night, when his comrades were

wrapped in slumber, and he — Political Officer Gabdulin — was wide awake planning the next day's battle, he frequently recalled the tales his old grandmother had told him. Yes, he remembered them all and one by one they woke to life again in his mind and warmed his heart just as they had done in the days of his childhood.

...Gabdulin still remembers the happy days of the *jailyau*. After reading Turgenev, even those of us who have never camped out know the pleasures of nights spent beside the campfire. At night the baked potatoes taste sweeter, and the sky is lovelier, and the world around is veiled in secrecy and more beautiful. A horse's neigh at night is both more sonorous and more spirited. Night birds fill the air with their song, something hoots in the forest. Sit still and listen! Tiny lights twinkle over the river. Suddenly, raindrops patter down and the fire hisses out. You can live to be a hundred and still not forget the fun of it, or the creepiness of it, or the stories told round the campfire, or the silences. Or the singing of the birds, or the sweet, intoxicating scents that suddenly fill the air so that your whole breast opens wide to them, and you cannot tell whether you are really breathing or whether it is Mother Earth herself breathing in you, with all her meadows, forests, villages, with all her rivers and vast open spaces, which seem to be waiting for you to get up and go you know not where in pursuit of a fleeting dream...

For Russian children, it is the campfires; for Kazakhs, it is the *jailyau*.

Every summer the Kazakhs drove their huge flocks of sheep down to the succulent grass by the lake-side. Thousands of horses whinnied along the waters edge, and as many camels lay behind the tents, their heads turned towards the sun. A multitude of people rode to the *jailyau*, and with the grown-ups went a horde of children.

Malik was merry, bold and mischievous. A child of the Kazakh steppes how could he not but love the *jailyau*? During the winter hardly a soul visited the tent, but here, in the summer pastures, you were deafened by the neighing around the lake, the bleating, the shouting, the talking and the singing. The tents were pitched in a vast circle, and the master's horse was tethered to each tent, while the rest of the horses roamed the steppe or sunned themselves beside the lake. The entire steppe became one huge family. When Malik said "we" during the winter, he thought to himself: "We — that is father and grandmother and I." But here every strange face outside each unfamiliar tent, every man astride a horse, every boy running along the lake-side with a length of rope across his shoulder — everyone, everything that the ear could hear and the eye could see, even the wild ducks rising into the sky from the surface of the lake, and the sky itself, blue and round like a cup — it was all, all like one big family. The world of the *jailyau*, caressed by the wind and sun, was like one vast open tent. At the *jailyau*, "we" meant everything that the eye could see and the ear could hear.

Would that it might never end, this holiday of mirth, games and light!

Along with the other boys at the *jailyau*, Malik raced and fought amid the sandy hillocks, knowing both the sweetness of victory and the bitterness of defeat. At the *jailyau* he learnt that apparent victory can end at times in ignominious defeat.

One day a wedding was celebrated to which the boys were not invited. Malik and three other lads, Koshek, Davlet and Almai, decided to take their revenge. At night they stole into the tent where the young couple were asleep, drank their fill of the *kumiss*, poured out the rest on the ground, and made off with all the butter and pancakes they could lay their hands on. Glorifying in their victory, they went home, intoxicated

and sated. The next morning there was a terrible to-do. The young wife wrung her hands in distress, cried and tore her hair, while her husband, slapping his jackboot with his riding whip, swore to get even with the thieves. But how can you get on the track of a thief if it has rained all night and all the footprints are washed away? The boys' triumph was complete, but there was little joy in it. Three days passed, and then the mother of one of the culprits invited the whole gang to her tent. She placed a heap of freshly-baked pancakes and a basin of cream before each of them, pressed them to eat as much as they could, asking whether they had had enough and why they ate so little. Why, a brave man always feels hungry after some glorious feat of arms, and to have robbed a good young woman, was, of course, an outstanding exploit...

Koshek suddenly burst into tears and said that he had not done it. Then Malik spoke up and said that it had not been him; but he did not cry. Then the good woman poured them out some more cream and said that she was glad that they had not done it. At first she had her suspicions about them, she said, but since they denied it she took them at their word, for a real Kazakh never sullies his tongue by telling falsehoods.

In the end they confessed, and ever after that, whenever he was on the point of telling a lie, Malik always heard a gentle voice saying in his heart: "A real Kazakh never sullies his tongue by telling falsehoods."

Malik's grandmother was dead, but her lessons, like the words of the good woman, took deep root in the boy's heart. He was to remember those words for the rest of his life.

Many a time, musing during a lull in the fighting, Malik Gabdulin has a feeling that he and his comrades are not fighting alone against Hitler, but that fighting alongside him are his old grandmother, and his father and the good woman who had feasted him with cream and instilled in him a love of

the truth, and all the other splendid people he had met at the *jailyau* and later on at the village school and in the college at Alma-Ata, men and women who by their example and their words, by their straightforward and sincere human approach, had set the boys born and bred in the steppes of Kazakhstan on the path of valour and courage.

III

Gabdulin dreamt about many things when he was a boy, but least of all about martial glory. Nothing was further from his mind. Fond of reading, he mapped out his future course while he still attended school. He determined to become a scientist and writer. To read and write books — that, he felt, would come as easily to him as wood-cutting to the lumberjack or the sword to the hand of the soldier. Today, when Major Gabdulin makes the round of his units and the Red Army men see the military decorations pinned to his breast and remember his reputation as an unusually cool-headed and courageous commander who has been wounded five times, they can hardly believe that some two years ago there was hardly a quieter man in all Alma-Ata than Malik Gabdulin, student of literature and folklore, and associate of the Alma-Ata Institute. If, before the war, Malik ever gave thought to martial glory, it was not of any which was in store for him but of the glorious heroes sung of in the ancient ballads of his people. The tales he had heard from his grandmother had not fallen on barren soil. Giving full rein to his passion for literature, Malik, while still a student, began to collect and study the folklore of his native Kazakhstan.

Meditating over the words of folk songs, listening to the tales in which the old men passed on their wisdom and understanding of life to the young, he was strengthened more

and more in his love for the Kazakh people.

“If songs to the valour of Koblandy-*batyr* and Kozy-Korpesheh can live through the centuries without ever having been inscribed on paper, then the people who have learnt and remembered them must have preserved something of their valour and greatness. Only the circumstances in which they were placed can have hindered them from revealing this valour and greatness,” Malik thought. “Soviet power came to Kazakhstan to free the spirit of the people, hitherto fettered by darkness and want. We must support the Soviets and do everything in our power to help the people learn about the greatness of their forefathers.”

Among the many notable men of Kazakhstan, Malik was attracted particularly by the daring traveller and scientist — Chokan Valikhanov. The latter had lived long before the Revolution, in the years when the Tsarist officials had looked down on the Kazakhs as inferior beings. Nevertheless, Valikhanov had managed to obtain a good education and had become the most learned man in his native steppes. Possibly, the fact that he was regarded as a descendant of Genghis-Khan had helped him in this, since the local authorities were impressed by his ties of kinship with the fierce conqueror of the ancient world. Valikhanov had died at the early age of twenty-nine, but he had left behind him many volumes of valuable research into Kazakh history, literature, customs and folklore. He was an ardent advocate of western education for the Kazakhs, but being a contemporary of Nicholas I, he naturally conceived the union of the Russian and Kazakh people in a way that differed entirely from the fraternal ties instituted in our times by Lenin and Stalin.

Valikhanov attracted Malik as a striking proof of the unquenchable thirst for knowledge that dwells in every nation.

Malik was assisted in his literary researches by a Kazakh

novelist, critic and poet, Sabit Mukanov. A pupil of Gorky in his manner of viewing and depicting reality, Sabit Mukanov began, from the first years of the Revolution, to advocate the study of the Russian classics.

“Read, read Russian literature,” he told the young students of literature. “Accumulate knowledge. Without Russian literature, it is impossible to build up a culture for the Kazakhs. But, remember, you cannot just mechanically transplant in Kazakh soil everything that the Russians have done. You must take our past and our folklore into account. In Stalin’s time every nation must bring its honey to the hive of Soviet culture. And your job, Malik, is to help our young writers to gather their honey from the flowers of their own native fields.”

These words fully coincided with what Malik had vaguely surmised when he was still a child, and his grandmother had sung to him and told him the tale about the dragon.

Malik’s term of study was coming to an end. His diploma thesis on Valikhanov had been almost completed. The time had come for him to make his contribution to the common treasury of Soviet culture when, in June 1941, it was decided at a meeting of Party members at the Institute that six young communists, Malik Gabdulin among them, should be sent to the front to help defend the great Soviet confraternity of peoples against Hitler with arms in hand.

IV

And so Malik joined the Red Army. Hitler’s hordes were pressing on towards Smolensk. The fascist dragon was all ready to shout to the sun: “Come down from the sky and bow down before me” when the new recruits from Alma-Ata and Frunze were being formed into units that several months later were to win worldwide fame as the iron regiments of

General Panfilov.

The regimental commander, Colonel Kaprov, examined Gabdulin’s papers: “You’ll be Company Political Officer,” he decided.

Malik knew by heart seventeen versions of the legend about Kozy-Korpesheh and could repeat from memory every line written by the incomparable poet Mokhambet, but he could not imagine for the life of him what a company political officer had to do.

“What kind of a political officer do you think I’ll make?” he said. “I don’t know anything, and I’ve never been in the army before. I’d rather you let me be an ordinary private.”

The Colonel smiled and then added sternly:

“The army is the army, and orders are orders. Hand this note to Battalion Commander Lyssenko and take over the company.”

Malik took the note and went to the battalion commander. The latter assigned him to a company. Gabdulin then set off for the unit that he was now to lead. Platoon commander, Sub-Lieutenant Bobrov, was lining up the company in the barrack square. Seeing a soldier walking across the yard, he shouted:

“What are you strolling about for? Who gave you permission to leave the barracks?”

“I was sent for by the commander...” Gabdulin began to explain.

“Two fatigue duties out of turn for breach of discipline.”

The research student of yesterday was too timid to say that he had been appointed Company Political Officer and that the platoon commander would now be subordinate to him.

“Very good, Comrade Sub-Lieutenant,” he said, standing stiffly at attention. “Two fatigue duties out of turn, it is.”

“Fall in! At the double!”

“Fall in at the double, it is,” Malik repeated and thought: “Good man. It’ll be fun fighting together with chaps like him...”

Just then the company commander appeared. He had already learnt of Malik’s new appointment. Seeing his political officer falling in at the double and learning from Sub-Lieutenant Bobrov about the two fatigue duties, he said to the latter:

“It’s rather out of order giving fatigue duty to the company political officer... Don’t you think so, Comrade Lieutenant?”

A look of embarrassment appeared on Bobrov’s face.

“So that’s how it is in the army!” Malik thought as he stepped out of the ranks. “Only I must be careful not to bungle things. Being a company political officer is a bit different from telling stories about ancient heroes.”

But as it happened, even the ancient heroes came in useful. One of the soldiers returned drunk to the barracks one evening from town. He, like Malik, had been a teacher of literature in Alma-Ata. He had gone there to take leave of his family. He could hardly drag his legs along under him or utter a coherent word.

Under ordinary circumstances the teacher would have been laced with arrest. But as it happened no one saw the drunken man but Malik. In view of the extenuating circumstances Gabdulin took him to his quarters and talked to him at some length about literature and of how the heroes of old had served as examples of valour and uprightness to others.

“You probably taught your pupils at school to be like Mokhambet, but here you are almost grovelling on your hands and knees. The ancient heroes were men of virtue; but only a cur could permit himself to be seen in the condition you are in just now. Supposing you’d been seen by some of

your former pupils or the other soldiers...”

The teacher sobered at once and went red with shame.

“I’m sorry,” he kept on repeating, “it was a mistake on my part...”

“But can a soldier afford to make a mistake? Very well. I’ll let it pass but — the war won’t. To make a mistake at the front means to botch up everything and jeopardize the lives of your comrades.”

“I’ll never do it again. I give you the word of a Kazakh...”

The Political Officer went on to discuss the question of military honour at length. This was his first opportunity to talk with one of the men on the subject and, when he had finished the former teacher sat bolt upright in his chair, as if he had never touched a drop of vodka in his life. And later on, at the front near Volokolamsk, he showed that a Kazakh could keep his word by proving himself to be a disciplined and brave soldier.

Turning in that night, Malik thought to himself: “And I was afraid that I didn’t know a thing that would be of use in the army. It seems that everything a Soviet person needs to know is useful to the soldier too. My splendid old heroes will stand me in good stead in my job of political officer.”

Malik found that not only his knowledge of Kazakh folklore was useful, but also his thorough understanding of the specific features of Russian culture. Ukrainians and Russians were training in the same unit as the Kazakhs and Uzbeks. General Panfilov’s famous regiments had been recruited from the population of Kirghizia and Kazakhstan, and settlers from Russia had been living side by side with the natives of Asia for more than a century in the foothills of the Tien Shan Mountains. Look at the list of the twenty-eight Guardsmen who gave their lives for their country. You will see the names of Russians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Ukrainians side by side.

On that frosty day, when in the vicinity of Dubosekovo the fate of Russia was being decided, it was decided by men who, though speaking in different tongues had been reared by the October Revolution and had found a common language of the heart — that of Soviet patriots; and it was in this language that the words were uttered that are now inscribed in letters of gold in the book of the most notable utterances ever made on the field of battle:

“Russia is vast, but there is nowhere to retreat!”

Those words were uttered by Political Officer Klochkov. But the same words beat in the heart of Malik Gabdulin, who, when danger threatened Moscow had, together with his company, been transferred from the north-western direction to the vicinity of Volokolamsk.

V

Then came the first serious fighting in which the men from Alma-Ata participated. What can be more terrible than a soldier's first battle? He stands face to face with death: each bullet seems to be heading straight for him, and every splinter seems aimed at his heart. Helplessness, defencelessness, self-pity, despair, terror and the cold sweat and nausea of fear — every man who has been in action has experienced it all, and has overcome it. Gabdulin, too, experienced it.

In his first battle, he, like most of the other men, was first afraid of death and then afraid of his own fear. “So that's the sort of coward I am,” he thought. “And at home, in Kazakhstan, I always thought I'd plenty of grit.” And in order to cheer himself up and dispel the thoughts of death, he would recite the lines he had so often heard sung by bards and storytellers of his country:

“If ever on a stallion thou didst prance

Or cleave the air from horseback with thy lance.
Handling thy bridle with a master's skill,
Lashed by the wind, yet riding onward still;
If e'er the sweat did on thy saddle gather,
Thy saddle-cloth flaked with thy horse's lather,
While through the forest thou didst course amain,
Scarce time to eat e'er thou wert off again,
Thy rest so peril-fraught and brief that thou
All but forgot'st the lady of thy vows —
And then, or e'er saddle-girth was tight,
Across the boundless plains from morn till night
Thou rod'st again, thy face with vigil wan,
Wasted by war and darkened by the sun;
If e'er, enchanted by the starry skies,
Thou from thy bed at midnight didst arise.
While the bright worlds above that rule men's lives
Turned to thee for their rest with tired eyes; —
Then hast thou been a Kazakh true to clan,
Then hast thou been — what is far more: a man.”

But — such is the power of poetry — when the enemy had already surrounded his company and all hope of victory was lost, when the first deadly fear had passed but desperation and hopelessness still held heart and mind in their grip, when the enemy's tanks were rumbling to right and left and in the rear and half his splendid comrades lay lifeless on the frozen ground, when there was no more chance of pulling through than of moving a mountain from its bed with his bare hands, the breadth and spirit of his people's martial songs, passionate and age-old, handed down from father to son and pulsating now in his own brain, dissipated fear with a masterful hand and steeled every nerve and fibre of his body. Malik sized up the situation; his mind was made up and without the slightest hesitation he ordered his men to stand firm and not yield an inch until orders to the contrary had been received from headquarters.

“Private Kovalenko,” he said, “go to the command post

and report to the Company Commander on the situation. Tell him we are being hard pressed.”

Kovalenko crawled off in the direction of the village where the command post was stationed. He returned forty minutes later.

“Comrade Political Officer, allow me to report. The command post has been smashed up, the Company Commander has been killed and so have all the orderlies. I...”

Malik was fully prepared to grant that both he and his men might be wiped out but he could not bring himself to believe that everyone at the command post had been killed.

“You probably got cold feet and didn’t go all the way,” he said. “We’ll go together.”

And they set off together, two Red Armymen, a Kazakh and a Russian, living targets to the bullets and shells of the enemy that whizzed past them.

But what Kovalenko had reported proved to be true: the command post had been literally wiped out. The situation had clearly become desperate, but all the same Malik could not retreat without orders. Had he done so he would never have been forgiven by a single one of the famous warriors of his country’s past. He could never have forgiven himself.

The Germans launched another attack. And again the company of Alma-Ata men — Russians, Kazakhs, Kirghizians and Uzbeks — stood their ground. The afternoon gave way to evening, the evening gave way to night; and then another day came, and another evening, and night, and morning, and afternoon... Attack followed attack, each with its accompanying din of battle, with its bombs, and lead, and steel, and fire, and deadly exhaustion, and the scaring pain of wounds. Death thinned their ranks. Hardly a quarter of those who had held the line three days ago were left alive. But no order to retreat had been received, and the handful

of Red Armymen stood firm. It seemed as if the spirit of Ilya Muromets had come to life again in the five Russians there, that of Alpamysh in the three Uzbeks, that of Koblandy-batyr in the two Kazakhs and that of Manas in the three Kirghizians — all who remained of the gallant band.

Such were the men who, standing firm like the legendary heroes of old or as if they were immortal, shattered Hitler’s plans to break through to Moscow.

The company prepared to withdraw only after it had been ordered to by the sole surviving adjutant of the Battalion Staff. But there was nowhere to withdraw, for enemy steel and iron had closed the roads to the rear. Yet Gabdulin succeeded in withdrawing, and not only did he withdraw himself but instead of the twelve survivors of the battle, he brought back one hundred and fifty Red Armymen. He rallied around him all the soldiers who were wandering about the woods in the enemy rear searching for their own units, mustered them into a single fighting force and brought them through to the village of Spass-Ryukhovsky, where General Panfilov himself had his headquarters.

The General listened to the report of the former college student and embraced him. “Thanks, Gabdulin,” he said. “You’re a real commander, a real Soviet soldier. I was under the impression that you had all perished. See that your men are fed immediately.”

That was the sort of man General Panfilov was, a man about whom songs were already being sung in the army, acclaiming him as the father and protector of his troops.

“How tired he looks,” thought Malik. “He probably hasn’t slept for days on end. And his tunic looks rather the worse for wear. A simple man, like everyone else. And when songs are written about the present war, he’ll be likened to the defender of the sun. In songs, everything is always different. Although

come to think of it, everything now is like in the song.

“While the bright worlds above that rule men’s lives
Turned to thee for their rest with tired eyes: —
Then hast thou been a Kazakh true to clan,
Then hast thou been — what is far more: a man.”

Only from now on, after the fighting around Moscow,
they’ll probably alter the words a little:

“Then hast thou been a warrior brave and fair.
Then with Panfilov might’st thou stand compare.”

So ended the day that transformed Gabdulin from a college fellow into a fighter and commander.

VI

This battle near Moscow marked the beginning of Malik Gabdulin’s heroic exploits at the front. The list is long. Having conquered the fear that had gripped him in his first battle, Malik ceased to pay any attention to whether he was afraid or not. He realized that even when his body shrank back with fear, it was up to him to master it. In action you had to do everything that duty and honour and the assignment entrusted to you called for, and then fear would vanish. Perhaps it would be still lurking somewhere, in some hidden nook of your soul, but it could no longer exert any influence on your actions and reactions as the soldier.

On November 16 the Germans launched their second general offensive against Moscow. Thirteen tommy-gunners, with Malik Gabdulin in command, were ordered to take up a position in a small copse and ambush German tanks advancing from the direction of the village of Morozovo. Their task was to hold up the fascists as long as possible on the road from Morozovo to Shiryaev, beyond which lay Moscow. Or-

ders permitted them to withdraw when all hopes of further resistance were lost.

At eight o’clock in the morning the roar of engines could be heard from the direction of Morozovo, and soon after the first tank crawled into sight along the road. Behind it loomed four other tanks, their guns trained towards Moscow. For a minute they halted. Their guns rose slowly upward as though sniffing the air. Then the racket of the engines developed into a steady even roar and the column moved on towards Shiryaev. The tommy-gunners prepared for action and laid out their reserve discs in front of them. At the same time about a battalion of German infantry moving in the wake of the tanks appeared from behind a group of cottages.

“Thirty to one,” said Gabdulin. “Well, let ‘em come, we’re ready for ‘em!” “Germans in sight, Comrade Political Officer!” one of the Red Army men whispered excitedly, looking at Malik with eyes in which he could read only one question: “When are you going to give the order?”

“So I see,” Gabdulin said. “Let them come nearer.”

The Germans advanced along the road. Now they were only three hundred yards away, and drawing nearer every moment. Fear and impatience urged Gabdulin to open fire, but reason, which he was always accustomed to trust, cautioned him: “Wait! Let them get nearer; we’re only a few, and we must shoot to kill.”

“Comrade Political Officer, they’re coming on!”

“So I see.”

At last it was possible to distinguish the face of each individual German. In front of the battalion marched a lanky fellow in glasses, while the man at the end of the column limped on one foot.

“Oh, the swine!” thought Malik, and the next moment he gave the order: “Fire!”

Thirteen tommy guns poured a stream of molten lead at the enemy, and with it flew the burning hatred that had filled the hearts of the Red Armymen during those anxious minutes of waiting. The lame soldier dropped on the spot, as though he had suddenly renounced all intentions of going any farther. The lanky German jumped as though he had been shot and waved his arms. But he was uninjured. The column broke up, the Germans scattered in different directions. Shouts and groans filled the air. Dozens of figures lay huddled on the road, some on their backs, others on their sides, while still others squatted on their haunches as though rooted to the ground. The survivors turned face and took to their heels. Just then the lanky German popped up his head for a moment and fired from a rocket pistol in the direction of the copse. Almost immediately mortars opened fire at the men lying in ambush. The tanks stopped short, brought their guns round and opened fire at the copse. The enemy battalion deployed and began to crawl forward towards the copse.

“Fire!” Malik repeated.

The Red Armymen used their ammunition to the best advantage; but two discs are only two discs, and there were at least twenty German tommy guns to each Soviet tommy-gunner. The mortar shells were now landing unpleasantly close; three of the men, who only an hour ago had watched the road so intently for the enemy to appear, were already wounded. The situation was taking on a serious turn.

“Snappier, lads!” Malik ordered. “Pick off your men.”

But what sort of resistance could they put up when no more than five rounds remained for each disc? Meanwhile the enemy’s fire had reached maximum intensity. Judging by the way the Germans were hammering away, they must have imagined that at least a company, perhaps even two, was holding the copse.

“They’re not stinting their shells to dislodge thirteen men,” Gabdulin thought. “They’ll be launching an attack shortly. And that’ll be the end.”

And it would have been the end, of course, had they remained in the copse. But they had no intention of dying just then. It would have been foolish to do so when it was up to them to live on and fight to advantage. Gabdulin glanced at the men, who returned his look questioningly; they were waiting for further orders. And then all involuntarily looked towards the east, in the direction of Moscow, where the thunder of the guns of the withdrawing Soviet troops could be heard receding in the distance. It was too late to fall back in that direction, for beyond the copse was a field, and this field was covered by the guns of the German tanks.

“It’s time to be going, lads!” Gabdulin said. “We can’t fall back, so we’ll have to go forward.”

And they crawled forward along the bed of a stream in the direction of Morozovo, into the very thick of the German lines.

It was ten o’clock in the morning. The fascists seemed to have lost sight of Shiryaev and continued to pound away methodically at the copse in preparation for their attack. But the men who had been lying in ambush in the copse were already making their way through the vegetable gardens on the outskirts of Morozovo, half walking, half crawling, hiding behind every hummock and snow-covered knoll.

Suddenly a mortar battery opened fire at them from an adjacent village.

“We’ll have to use our last rounds against the battery,” Gabdulin decided. And so sharp were the men’s eyes and so keen their desire to take vengeance on the enemy that not a single bullet went wide. The battery was silenced.

A group of fascist tommy-gunners appeared from be-

hind a barn. They probably hardly expected to encounter Red Army men here. And suddenly meeting a dozen Russian soldiers, who greeted them with a concentrated volley, they completely lost their heads and with cries of dismay fled in confusion into the village.

“There’s heroes for you,” Gabdulin remarked with a contemptuous smile. And with their last bullets the detachment mowed down the fleeing Jerries.

But there was no time to be lost, for the tanks might show up again or a fresh batch of German soldiers might appear at any moment. The only way lay ahead, where the vegetable gardens dipped down towards a small hollow, beyond which loomed a dark wood.

“Into the wood at the double!”

All thirteen tommy-gunners were now safe in the wood. While the wounded men rested, their comrades camouflaged the hiding place. With a sigh of relief Gabdulin sat down on an ice-crusting tree stump, and one after another the men took a pull at the flask containing the emergency ration of vodka.

The assault on the empty copse had apparently already taken place. The rumble of guns and mortars from the east died away, shouts rang out, followed by an uproar and then silence reigned.

“We diddle the Jerries that time,” Gabdulin remarked. “We’ll have to look in at Shiryaevo and see how things are there. Our people there seem to have gotten away all right.”

Taking Sergeants Kovalenko and Ladnev with him he set off in the direction of Shiryaevo. Gabdulin led the way. It was not very cold, and they had been warmed up by the vodka. The way in which he had been able to outwit the Germans cheered Gabdulin up considerably, and the wintry Russian forest seemed as lovely to him as the steppes of his native Kazakhstan in bloom.

There were no Red Army men at Shiryaevo. Germans were hurrying about the streets, and on all sides could be heard the clamour of the Germans on their foraging expeditions.

“I wonder what happened to the Colonel? Let’s take a look at headquarters.”

Although there were fascists all round, the three men made their way furtively to the building where, only twenty-four hours ago, they had received their orders. They had carried out these orders explicitly, to the letter, that very morning.

Right in front of headquarters stood two German tanks. The hatches were open. A German soldier sat on one of them, one leg in a brightly polished jackboot dangling over the side. He held a mirror in his hand and was squeezing a pimple on his nose.

“Maybe we can get into the dugout. Perhaps they’ve left something important behind.”

The dugout in which staff headquarters had been located was in a vegetable garden. But just then the fascist finished his toilet, jumped down from the tank and, for some unknown reason — or perhaps sensing the presence of enemies — set off in the direction of the garden.

Once again they had to fall back. Crawling on all fours, taking cover behind fences and fallen trees, Gabdulin and his companions rejoined their comrades in the wood. The din of distant fighting receded further and further eastward. It was time to make their way back to their own unit, but Gabdulin could not and did not want to hurry. What worried him was that they had run short of ammunition.

By luck they chanced on an artillery dump that evidently had not been spotted by the Germans. That was lucky indeed. There was enough ammunition in the dump to supply a whole company. Taking with them as much as they could carry, the thirteen Soviet tommy-gunners set off with the in-

tention of reaching their own lines.

“I guess we’ve carried out orders,” Gabdulin thought to himself. “We held up the enemy’s tanks and a whole battalion of infantry for two hours. We wiped out as many as a hundred Jerries, with no losses to ourselves, and we’ve got enough ammunition to last us for another three scraps. We tricked the Germans into bombarding an empty copse for two hours and wasting tons of ammunition and shells. As far as I can see I’ve done everything necessary. The Colonel — and he’s one of the best — ought to be pleased.”

The march through the enemy’s rear lasted three days. When Gabdulin had first come to the front, the log huts of Russia proper, the low sky, the groves powdered with snow — the entire Russian landscape in November had seemed alien to him, just as if he were fighting there as a guest. But now, after he had seen the nazi bandits in field-grey uniforms running in and out of the Russian cottages, jerking open the farmyard gates, from behind which came the low, plaintive lowing of cows, after he had seen them conducting themselves just as though they were the bosses of the land, his heart had contracted with pain no less than if some bare-faced bandit had broken into his father’s or a neighbour’s tent in his own native Kazakhstan.

He looked at the ruddy, weather-beaten nape of Ladnev’s neck and thought: “Ai-ai, he’s a Russian. What must the poor chaps’ feelings be like at the sight of all this? It’s enough to break a man’s heart.”

They rejoined the Colonel on the third day. The regiment had withdrawn in perfect order and occupied a new line of defence. For three days now the Germans had been pounding the line with iron and steel, but to no avail.

“Comrade Colonel,” Gabdulin reported as he drew himself up to attention. “Your orders have been carried out.”

“Malik!” the Colonel exclaimed and embraced the Kazakh warmly.

“You’re alive?”

“So it seems.”

“And the others?”

“The whole group. Three men were wounded, but they made a quick recovery while we were fighting our way back.”

“I’m delighted to see you, man!” the Colonel exclaimed, pushing a sheet of notepaper towards Malik. “This is the report they sent in about you. Read it!”

Gabdulin read the report. It was in Jetpis Bayev, the Battalion Party Organizer’s, hand.

“To Colonel Kaprov.

Report.

On the 16th inst. at 10.00 hours thirteen tommy-gunners under the command of Political Officer Malik Gabdulin put up a staunch fight against advancing German units. Thanks to their courage and heroism they detracted the attention of a large enemy force, and wiped out as many as one hundred fascist officers and men. They were finally cut off by enemy infantry and tanks. Subjected as they were to a murderous barrage coupled with fierce attacks, they fulfilled their duty to their country and died fighting to a man. At the price of their lives they enabled N. Battalion to withdraw according to plan and entrench in new positions.”

“It reads quite smoothly,” said Gabdulin. He was wondering how it was that Jetpis Bayev, a plain Kazakh, who not so long ago could hardly speak any Russian, was now able to write so well. What possibilities were latent in his countrymen! “It seems to be all right — only we didn’t intend to die: there was no point in it.”

The battle near Morozovo brought Gabdulin his first military decoration, the first of many that he was later to win during his long period of service at the front as a political officer of a company of tommy-gunners.

VII

How does a man behave and what does he think about before a battle? It depends on the man. One man tries to think about nothing at all. He has tested his rifle and is confident that it will not let him down. He has tested himself and is convinced that he can rely on himself too. He looks over the battle-scarred earth. Low clouds scud across the bare stretch of No Man's Land. The ground is covered with shrubs, and on the horizon is a grove — that is where the enemy is. He is cool and collected, and awaits orders. That is one man. Another, on the other hand, seems to be distracted. His thoughts are like the clouds in the sky or the ripples formed when a stone is dropped into a pool of water. In his mind's eye he sees his home, his parents or his wife, or if he is single, perhaps his sweetheart, and she waves farewell to him from the railway platform with a girlish hand that, if it is not as yet his, is already dear and precious to him. Tales told by his friends, memories of the past, passages from some newspaper article, sentences from old letters, poems — everything that crowds a man's brain in moments of inaction, flit through his mind, although he, too, is ready and waiting for the word from his commander. A third feels a cold ripple of fear run down his spine, for it is terrifying to go into action. A fourth and fifth are keyed up for action, their nerves tense. The sixth, seventh, eighth... twentieth are filled with such burning hatred for the Germans who have wrecked their homes and outraged their families that there is no room in their hearts for any other

thought or feeling...

Malik Gabdulin is one of those who think about many things on the eve of a battle. He is at the front now, as I write these lines, and today, as in all the foregoing months of the war, he is fighting shoulder to shoulder with his old comrades of the Panfilov regiments. Perhaps at this very moment, when you are reading these lines, he is waiting to go over the top or making ready to beat off an enemy attack.

The Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to Malik Gabdulin after he had recovered from his fifth wound. And every new battle in which he participates reveals ever new traits in him — traits which, although inherent in him, had had no opportunity of manifesting themselves in the peaceful days at college. But circumstances changed, and these qualities have been brought to the surface. Yet, in spite of all he has been through Gabdulin has remained the same enthusiastic student of literature as before, and even now, at the front, he very often catches himself thinking that the one thing he would like more than anything else would be to get back to his desk as quickly as possible, re-open the manuscript of his thesis on Valikhanov and begin to prepare it for press.

“That is what we are fighting for,” he muses, “so that everyone can return once again to the job he likes best, work which he considers useful and necessary for himself and for the country at large. Kazakh and Kirghiz, Russian and Tatar, are all fighting to achieve this. And on the eve of a battle this is the one thought that lurks somewhere in the back of all our minds. We think about it each in our own way, in our own language; but if you gathered together all the thoughts and feelings of all the Red Army men fighting on all the fronts and examined this vast golden network of ideas and emotions, you would have in your hands the living spirit of our country at war against Hitler. Who can doubt that the light emanat-

ing from this spirit will illumine many lands and will shine through the centuries as the most glorious light ever created by any country in the history of mankind.”

S. Persov

KUCHKAR TURDIYEV

The flickering oil lamp only feebly lit up the living room of the large Ukrainian cottage. The room was crowded. A number of men from the new replenishment which had just arrived at the front had been billeted together with the “old timers.” Among the newcomers was machine-gunner Kuchkar Turdiyev, an Uzbek who had participated in the campaign in Iran.

“I say, Kuchkar, tell us something about Iran,” one of the men asked.

Turdiyev did not reply at once.

From what their political officers had told them, the men knew that, following the Soviet ultimatum delivered in the autumn of 1941, Red Army units had crossed the Iranian frontier. They also knew that, thanks to the arrival of the Red Army in Iran, a clean sweep had been made of the fascist saboteurs there, the activities of the nazi agents masquerading as representatives of German firms had been cut short and peace had been maintained within the country itself. But they knew very little about the life of the country, its customs and its people. They were eager to hear something about these things at first-hand from a man who had actually participated in the campaign there.

Turdiyev was a spare, dark-skinned man of medium height, with eyes that were slightly screwed up. He stood there in the middle of the room, his fur cap tilted jauntily on the back of his head, and shrugged his shoulders.

“Iran...” he said suddenly. “What is there to tell? Our own Uzbekistan’s got it all beat. It’s far better,” he went on slowly, trying to pronounce the Russian words correctly. “We’ve got a canal. You’ve heard about the Great Stalin Ferghana Canal,

haven't you?"

"Who hasn't!"

"Water..." Turdiyev went on, visibly brightening. "I also helped to build that canal. I worked as a navvy on that job. Yes, I did the work of two and three men..." And he swung his arms as if throwing up a spadeful of earth. "Yes, 160,000 people helped to build that canal. It stretches for almost three hundred kilometres on Ferghana soil alone. Not so bad, eh?"

He took off his cap. His black hair was damp with perspiration — he was flushed with excitement, carried away by his own narrative. He recalled the endless caravans of trucks and bullock-carts and waggons that had carted off the loose earth. A heavy pall of dust had hung over the road, rising so high that it almost hid the sun. But the golden rays had pierced the dark grey film and kissed the crimson banners that had fluttered over the tents of the collective farmers who built the canal. The men had worked to the sound of guitars, bagpipes and tambourins, keeping time to the music. Carts creaking under loads of fragrant musk melons and watermelons had filed down the roads to the construction site, and women had brought baskets of luscious grapes. The smoke of bonfires had drifted high over the bed of the canal.

"We shouted: '*Yashasun* — Bolshevik!'" Turdiyev continued, engrossed in his story. "I come from the Bolshevik Collective Farm. But the men of the Stalinabad Collective Farm worked as well as we did and they answered our greeting with the cry: '*Yashasun!*' — Long live!... Yes, I certainly did work!"

Turdiyev broke off suddenly and concluded as if in self-justification:

"They finished the canal without me. I fell sick and was taken to hospital in an ambulance."

"Yes, nobody can deny that you fellows did a splendid

job down there," Private Frolkov said admiringly. "But you haven't told us a thing about Iran."

"What is there to tell about Iran? We swung along in the good old Red Army way, and the people lined the road like two walls. The women held their children shoulder high and said to them: 'Look, my *jan*, look, the *kzyl askar* have come to visit us.' In their lingo '*kzyl askar*' means the Red Soldiers."

Just then the flame of the lamp dipped, almost plunging the room into darkness. Turdiyev climbed on to a bench and shook the lamp vigorously.

"There's hardly any kerosene in it," he commented. "The war's drinking up an enormous amount of fuel. The Germans wanted to grab our Baku by stealing in through the back door, from Iran. But we..." You could feel his hatred for the enemy in the unfinished sentence he forced out between gritted teeth and the threatening gesture of his fist.

In spite of his spare frame he had a punch like the kick of a mule.

Clapping his hand on Turdiyev's shoulder, Frolkov said warmly:

"You did a good job on the canal, all right. And at the front too, I'll be bound." "I haven't been on this one yet..." Kuchkar replied quietly.

"What one were you on then?"

"The Finnish."

"And how did you make out there?"

Turdiyev made no reply.

The men began to turn in for the night.

* * *

Kuchkar stood at his post on the outskirts of a small Ukrainian village. The endless steppe stretching out before him reminded him of Uzbekistan. The sky here was just as

blue as in his native land. Only here, wherever you looked there was snow, snow, snow. That was something you did not get in Uzbekistan. Whenever it snowed there, the snow melted quickly and turned into mud. Here it glittered so that it made your eyes smart. And the white-washed cottages at the edge of the village also glittered cheerfully in the sun.

Kuchkar recalled his native village of Aim, not far from Andizhan. In his mind's eye he saw again the lane where he had lived, the bridge spanning the irrigation canal, the high fences with their gates, and the little garden belonging to farmer Turdi Akhmedov. The banks of the canal were lined with apricot trees and quince.

Kuchkar's childhood had not been an enviable one. He did not remember his parents. His mother had died when he was only seven days old, and an elder sister, who had given birth to a son at the same time, had nursed him at her own breast.

Soon after, his father had died. His sister had taken the place of a mother while her husband, Turdi Akhmedov, who hired himself out as a farm labourer, had taken the place of a father to him.

That was way back in 1918. Akhmedov could barely make both ends meet, and yet he had brought up his adopted son just as if he were his own first born — he regarded both the boys as his own children.

Once — Kuchkar was only eight at the time — he was playing with some other children of his own age when the son of a rich man had poked fun at him. He had given the boy a sound thrashing. The boy's father had come to Akhmedov and warned him:

“Take heed, Akhmedov, and remember the old saying: ‘If you raise an orphaned lamb, you'll be up to your neck in fat, but if you raise an orphaned boy — he'll give it to you in the

neck!’”

To which Akhmedov had answered quietly:

“A *bey* has a blind heart, but I am not a *bey*. And both my son and his half-brother will begin life as honest men.”

Kuchkar lived up to Akhmedov's prediction.

It was not long before he was earning his own keep as a shepherd's boy.

A flock of sheep and the boundless steppe. Sultry days and cool nights. How pleasant it was to sit on a still night around a blazing bonfire and listen to the wonderful tales of the shepherds, about good and bad Tsars, about the mighty Tamerlane who, though a cripple, had traversed many lands and conquered them, about men who had sought for truth and happiness on Mother Earth.

One of the shepherds had known Frunze-*batyr** personally and loved to recall his deeds.

In those days the *basmach*** had roamed up and down Uzbekistan, robbing and killing all who crossed their path. Strangers had appeared in the villages and spread provocative rumours: “The Bolsheviks are infidels: kill them!” These rumour-mongers supported the *bey*s, who owned the water, the canals, the steppe and the herds. The *basmach* devastated the land. The soil grew barren and became overgrown with weeds. Night after night the glow of fires lit up the countryside.

“Our life was as bitter as the smoke from a gutted village,” the shepherd related. “It was then that Frunze-*aka**** came to our parts. On his head was a peaked hat as befits a real *batyr* but on his back was the greatcoat of a rank-and-file

* *Batyr* — hero. — *Tr.*

** *Basmachi* — counter-revolutionary bandits in Central Asia at the time of the Civil War. — *Tr.*

*** *Aka* — leader, commander. — *Tr.*

Red Armyman. He came on a sorrel horse that had a white star on its forehead, and a bridle jingling with bells. Frunze did not come alone — he had a countless host with him.

“And Frunze-*aka* said to the poor people:

“I have been sent to you by Lenin and Stalin. You yourselves must become masters of the land, of the water, of life itself.”

“The people felt that he was speaking the truth and they rallied around him.

“But the *basmachi* wormed their way into one of his units in order to devour it from within, like maggots. But Frunze had eyes as keen as an eagle’s, and he could see far and wide. And he said:

“You may dye a cotton thread a hundred different ways but that will never turn it into silk.”

“Frunze decided to pluck out the evil by the roots. He gave orders to have the unit with the *basmachi* sent to another city and reorganized there. All unreliable elements were to be disarmed.

“Akhunzhan, a man with the heart of a jackal, was in command of the unit. He came to Frunze with a bodyguard of fourteen Kurbashi. The Kurbashi kept their hands on the butts of their revolvers, ready to draw them at any moment.

“But Frunze spoke to them affably, as if he had not noticed anything. ‘Be seated,’ he said in a quiet voice. They sat down, only not beside him but on the opposite side of the table. Then Frunze said: ‘I order you to leave at once.’ But Akhunzhan replied: ‘I will not!’ Frunze-*aka* then stretched out his hand to Akhunzhan and said: ‘Surrender your arms!’ At that Akhunzhan jumped up, drew his revolver, and pointed it at Frunze’s heart...”

“Did he kill him?” Kuchkar asked in a frightened voice.

“The Kurbashi also drew their revolvers,” the shepherd

continued. “Frunze looked Akhunzhan straight in the eye and very calmly but firmly repeated: ‘Lay down your arms!’ Suddenly, the life died out in Akhunzhan’s eyes. The hand holding the revolver trembled. He threw the weapon down on the table.”

The shepherd ended his tale. Night had stolen over the steppe. The stars hung low in the sky. The fire was burning its last and the evening grew chilly. The shepherds turned in for the night. The man who had narrated the story also made ready to go to sleep, but Kuchkar stole up to him and asked in a whisper:

“Frunze merely looked at him and conquered him with a glance?”

The shepherd answered:

“Frunze-*aka*’s eyes reflected the truth, but in Akhunzhan’s eyes was written a lie. Falsehood ever cowers before the truth...”

Kuchkar never forgot the words of the old shepherd. Working as a groom in a collective farm stable and later on as a mason and a bricklayer, he held rigidly to the truth, and he never feared to tell people the truth to their faces. At the end of the season he returned home. He cut a fine figure in his new suit of clothes, his embroidered oriental skull-cap and his fashionable shoes. He made an immediate hit with the village girls.

“Where did you get the money to dress so well?” they asked him.

“I did an honest day’s work,” Kuchkar replied.

Honesty became his golden rule in life. And this attitude of his in everything he did manifested itself with particular clarity during the construction of the Stalin Ferghana Canal. Kuchkar would hold up the example of Frunze to those who lagged behind:

“Frunze-aka was not afraid of Akhunzhan’s revolver, but you are afraid to dig a shovelful of earth!”

In the autumn of the year when the great canal, which by popular consent was named after Stalin, was finished, Kuchkar Turdiyev was called to the colours. A little over a year later he saw active service in the Finnish campaign. It was not easy for this lad from sunny Andizhan to fight in the cold, bleak forests on the banks of the Sestra or in Finland itself. But he stoically withstood the ordeals of the war and, when he returned from the front, he was already an old campaigner. He had looked death in the face and had learned to scorn it, for he had fought for the truth, and the truth was invincible.

* * *

A biting, penetrating wind had been blowing all day, freshening by nightfall into a regular blizzard. The tanks, which had been painted white, set off on a night raid. The wind erased all tracks made by the treads.

They were to dislodge the Germans from a large village which the enemy had converted into a formidable stronghold. The tanks were to crush the enemy fire nests while the infantry, operating under cover of the tanks, was to launch a frontal attack on the village at dawn.

A group of observers, Kuchkar Turdiyev among them, had been sent out during the night to keep a watch on the flanks. Kuchkar dug himself into the snow. The bad weather was not without its advantages: the wind heaped up high snowdrifts all round him, affording him shelter from the storm.

Tanks went into action somewhere not far away. Kuchkar listened intently. He could tell that they were Soviet machines by the sound of the firing. The horizon was one line of fire — the thatched roofs of the cottages in the village were ablaze. The glare of the flames was so bright that he did not notice

that day was already breaking.

He felt hungry. He had a piece of bread in his pocket. All he had to do was to take it out and eat it. But he decided not to. He was afraid that the slightest movement might reveal his hideout to the enemy. The Germans were probably also keeping a sharp lookout.

Turdiyev’s black eyes peered intently into the gloom. A tank came speeding towards him. Although it was quite a distance away, he could distinctly make out the red star. “It’s one of ours!” he thought. “One of ours!...” The cannon and machine guns were firing incessantly. But why had the tank turned back after breaking through the German defences?

“It’s probably going back to refuel,” Kuchkar decided.

German anti-tank guns opened up somewhere quite close by. The shells fell nearer and nearer the receding tank, but by skilful manoeuvring it escaped being hit.

“That’s the style! Keep at it!” Turdiyev murmured to himself approvingly... “Don’t give in!... Now!... Quick!...”

But the shell bursts were creeping closer and closer to the tank. A final shot and the tank with a grinding rattle spun awkwardly round and stopped short.

“Ekh, what a shame!” Turdiyev blurted out. “They plugged you after all, my *jan!*”

A group of fascists came tumbling out of their trenches and made for the disabled tank in a series of short spurts. The tank crew gave no sign of life.

“Surely they haven’t all been killed?” Turdiyev muttered anxiously. “Maybe they’ve run out of ammunition? I’d better go and lend them a hand.”

He was about to crawl out from behind the snowdrift that the wind had piled up, but on second thought decided not to. He could not leave his post; besides it would be foolhardy to do so, for the fascists would plug him with the first shot.

The Germans in the meantime were steadily approaching the tank. Another minute or so and the machine and its crew would be in their hands.

“Not if I can help it!” he decided. “Here’s a ticket to hell for you!...” and he fired a burst from his tommy gun.

The fascists went down like ninepins in the snow.

“*Yashan, Urtak!** *Yashan*, my tank!” Turdiyev shouted in Uzbek, and treated the fascists to another burst.

The wounded Germans backed away from the tank in alarm, shouting frantically. Kuchkar could distinctly hear the groaning of the men who were badly hit. A number of those who sprawled on the snow-covered field would never rise again. He was on the point of firing a third burst when he thought better of it. “Now then, Kuchkar, my boy,” he said to himself, “go easy with your ammunition; your bullets’ll come in handy yet... And, what’s more, better change your hideout before the Jerries spot you...”

Taking advantage of the Germans’ bewilderment, he wriggled out from behind his snowdrift and, gathering up the skirts of his camouflage cloak, quickly crawled to some bushes on a neighbouring mound. The Germans made another attempt to reach the tank. But this time they looked around warily lest the invisible tommy gun should open up again. Kuchkar did not keep them waiting for long; no sooner did the Germans draw close to the tank than his tommy gun began to pump lead at them, pinning them to the ground.

And so it went for hour after hour. The storm had long since abated. The vast Ukrainian field was dazzlingly bright under the winter sun. Kuchkar recalled how he had learned to ski during the Finnish War — the men of the platoon had taught him.

“It’s a splendid sport — skiing,” he reflected. “What fun

* *Yashan, Urtak* — Live Comrade! — *Tr.*

it would be to go for a run across such an even, sunlit field.” However, this train of thought did not last for long, and he began to concentrate all his attention on how best to save the tank and its crew. The Germans kept advancing and falling back. Several were wiped out by Turdiyev’s bullets. Others crawled back, leaving a trail of blood on the white snow. Kuchkar went on sniping at them from behind his screen of bushes. With dogged persistence the enemy tried to reach the crippled tank many times during the course of the day, but each time Kuchkar raked them with his deadly fire and forced them to roll back empty-handed.

Dusk fell swiftly. Kuchkar suddenly noticed that he had only a few rounds left in the drums. “That’s bad, Kuchkar, my boy. They’ll get the tank at the next attempt,” he thought in alarm, wondering what to do. He decided to hold on until after dark and then slip off for help.

But just at that moment a hearty Russian cheer sounded from the direction of the village. At the farther end of the field Turdiyev saw the Germans making off as fast as their legs could carry them with Soviet riflemen close on their heels. Shortly after a truck drove up and towed the stranded tank away.

At last Kuchkar was relieved from his post. The engagement was over. The strongly fortified enemy junction had been captured by the Soviet troops.

Only now, on his way back to his unit, did Kuchkar realize how hungry and tired he was. He was not so hungry as thirsty. How he would have enjoyed a cup of kok-tea, with its refreshing slightly tart taste! But where could he get such a thing just now on the Southwestern Front? He gulped down his Red Army tea, crunching the sugar with pleasure between his strong white teeth.

One of the crew of the crippled tank recounted the events

of the day. An enemy shell had disabled the tank and put both the guns out of commission. The crew was powerless to defend itself. Through the observation slit the tankmen could clearly see the dauntless Soviet fighter who was engaging the fascist gang single-handed. The tankmen told how Kuchkar had courageously kept the fascists at bay and had saved both the tank and the crew from inevitable destruction. The Red Army men who had just ousted the fascists from the village, listened enthralled to the story of the young Uzbek Tommy-gunner's feat and Frolkov, who had chummed up with Kuchkar — they had been in action together already more than once — went up to him and slapped him on the shoulder:

“Good work, pal! Now let's keep an account — which of us can pop off the biggest number of Jerries.”

“I'm game.”

“You must have put in some pretty good work in the Finnish campaign too, only you keep mum about it...”

Kuchkar winked slyly at his friend and drawing his soup closer, fell to.

* * *

For three days the unit had been unable to locate the enemy's firing nests. Scouts would have to be sent out again that night. The men were certain that Rostoshvili, who was an experienced scout, would be selected for the job. Wonderful tales were told of his resourcefulness and daring. But to everyone's surprise the commander summoned Turdiyev.

“You showed that you've got stamina as well as pluck, when you defended that tank, *urtak*,*” the commander said.

“Anybody would have done the same, Comrade Com-

* *Urtak* — comrade — *Tr.*

mander.”

“How's your hearing?”

“During the Finnish War I located snowed-under enemy dugouts and underground communication trenches by the sound of footsteps and the tapping of rifles on the frozen ground, Comrade Commander.”

The commander explained the assignment to Turdiyev and, wishing him luck ordered him to set out at once.

It was pitch dark. The trees crackled slightly in the bitter frost. The crisp snow crunched underfoot. Kuchkar stopped at every sound and listened intently, unfastening the ear-flaps of his cap in order to hear better. His ears were immediately nipped by the cold and he rubbed them with his warm mittens but did not cover them up. He was all eyes and ears, and walked cautiously, trying to keep as close as possible to the road so as to leave no traces in the snow.

Suddenly he thought he saw someone coming towards him. He dropped flat on the snow and wriggled forward on his belly. But there was no one there. What he had mistaken for a man was a tree growing at the roadside. For precaution's sake he continued to crawl along on all fours.

His eyes in the meantime had become accustomed to the dark, and now nothing escaped his keen sight. Suddenly he noticed a footprint in the snow. He lay down to examine it until his nose almost touched the track. He made out the enormous outline of the sole and the line of dents made by the hobnails in the heel and toe.

“A Jerry's, all right!” Kuchkar thought to himself. “And Jerry doesn't like to wander far from home at night. He's too fond of his skin.”

But which way had he gone? Kuchkar crawled towards the right, but the snow there was untouched. Obviously he had not gone in that direction. He crawled for about fifty

metres in the opposite direction. Ah-ha! A path. The snow showed signs of having been recently trodden down. Nearby was another foot-path, and, further on, some deep tracks set wide apart — apparently someone had passed by there not so long ago.

Not far off a door creaked, then slammed shut. Kuchkar heard muffled voices speaking in German. He listened with bated breath, flattened out against the snow. The Germans passed by almost within arm's length of the scout without noticing him.

"Just as I thought! A dugout. Maybe even a pillbox!"

Ahead of him rose a small mound. Kuchkar crept closer. The excavated earth had been covered with snow so that it should not stand out against the white background. "They certainly know how to camouflage themselves," he thought. "But never mind..."

Making himself as snug as possible behind the mound, he began to study the disposition of the firing nest. Again some Germans passed by not far from him; once more a door slammed, and then a cloud of steam curled up from some underground shelter. Someone apparently had opened the door there too.

And so, lying there and making his observations, he at last determined the position of five firing nests.

"Good enough!" he muttered to himself. "Good enough, Kuchkar," and crawled back the way he had come.

Nothing escaped his observant eyes, not a tree, not a hill, not a ditch filled to the top with virgin snow. When he entered his commander's dugout he was covered from head to foot with hoar-frost. He rubbed his ears vigorously, in order to warm them somewhat, and then reported to his commander without even stopping to unsling his automatic rifle.

His commander stood poring over the map, and as he

listened to Turdiyev he made some marks on it. Then turning to the scout, he asked:

"What is the Uzbek word for 'friend'?"

"*Oshna*," Turdiyev replied, surprised.

"*Oshna*?" the commander repeated questioningly. "It has a pleasant sound. Well, *oshna*, take your things off and sit down to table." He poured him out a glass of vodka. "Bottoms up!"

Turdiyev looked at his commander and gave him a warm smile, but continued to stand.

"Do you call that being an '*oshna*'?" the commander said reprovingly. "We're going to pay those Jerries of yours a visit shortly." He made the scout sit down. "Here, try some of this. A hot meal won't do you any harm. When you're through you'd better take a nap."

It was indeed a short nap that Kuchkar had that night. He was awakened at dawn by the booming of guns. After the preliminary bombardment the tanks rumbled into the attack. The infantry pressed forward in the wake of the tanks, following the path which had been blazed by the dauntless scout.

Kuchkar advanced alongside his friend Frolkov and pointed out the place where he had first dropped on all fours and the spot to the left where he had discovered the prints of the German's boots with the hobnails on the heel and toe indented in the snow.

"And over there, where our shells are bursting, I spotted..."

He did not get a chance to finish. The commander's voice rang out:

"For Stalin, for Country — Forward! Hurrah-ah-ah!"

The men rushed into the attack. Kuchkar spurted ahead of the others. He had reconnoitred the locality alone at night, and now it was up to him to lead the way. His legs seemed scarcely to touch the ground. He did not notice how far he had left his comrades behind. Not far off was an enemy pill-

box. He jumped into the communication trench. Just then a machine gun began to chatter quite nearby. Kuchkar leaned against the wall and stood stock still. Apparently one of the firing nests which had been considered silenced, had come to life again.

The fascists were too busy repelling the attack to notice the lone Red Armyman. But Kuchkar had no intention of leaving them in possession of the pillbox. He decided to make an attempt to wipe out the machine-gunners and so enable his comrades to continue the attack.

Coolly taking aim, he fired two shots in quick succession, and two Germans crumpled up. The machine gun stopped speaking.

Only then did the fascists catch sight of the Red Armyman standing there in their pillbox. One of them quickly took aim and fired point-blank at Kuchkar, but the bullet merely smashed his rifle without doing him any harm. Keeping his presence of mind, Kuchkar threw his weapon aside, rushed at the German and grabbing his rifle, shot him on the spot. Then snatching out three grenades, he pitched them one after the other into the far end of the pillbox and dashed out into the open. He drew a deep breath of the refreshing air and cast a quick glance round. Only now did he realize the danger he was in — he was one against many and on the enemy's own ground. But there was no time for speculation — he had to act. He was unarmed — he had neither grenades nor rifle. "Maybe I ought to look in at the pillbox and get some. No... better get back to my own unit!" he decided.

And he started crawling off in the direction of his own lines. The fighting had moved off at a tangent. The pillbox was silent, and this silence worried Kuchkar. "The Jerries must be up to something," he thought. About half way to his unit he armed himself with a rifle he found in the field and crawled

back towards the enemy pillbox. Bullets whistled overhead and he hugged the ground. "Just what I thought. Some of the Jerries are still alive, or maybe reserves have come up." He lay there in the snow watching, waiting. His sharp eyes discerned two fascist snipers. He took careful aim and fired. That was one sharpshooter less. A few seconds later and the other, too, fell lifeless to the ground.

Kuchkar entered the German pillbox a second time. In the communication trench he saw a man in a Red Army greatcoat lying against the wall. The collar of his coat was turned up and his face was hidden.

"Wounded?" Kuchkar asked.

The man did not move.

"Dead," Kuchkar decided and bent over the man. A hand reached out from under the folds of the greatcoat and he caught the glint of the cold steel barrel of a submachine gun.

Turdiyev leapt to one side. Snatching out his entrenching tool, he lashed out and sent the weapon flying from the fascist's hand. The latter, a big, burly red-headed German, jumped up and bore down on him, trying to overcome him by sheer weight and brute force. But Kuchkar very neatly tripped him up. The struggle did not last long. A shot rang out, and the fascist crumpled up. He proved to be an officer.

Kuchkar took off his cap and wiped his wet brow with the back of his hand. Suddenly he heard a shuffling sound inside the pillbox. He decided to scare the Germans into surrendering.

"Halt!" he shouted — it was the only German word he knew. "Come on, comrades, pitch into them with your grenades, and machine-gun them!"

Frolkov, who happened to be not far off, came running to his help. The ruse worked. The Germans, a non-com and two men, thinking that a whole crowd of Red Armymen was

rushing to attack them, raised their hands and surrendered.

Frolkov looked over the pillbox.

“Not a bad job! How many did you lay out?”

“We’ll find out later... No time for that just now, we’ve still got some fighting to do!” Kuchkar replied hurriedly and dashed off to join the advancing Red Armymen.

Frolkov escorted the prisoners to headquarters.

The fighting died down. The advancing Soviet troops dug in on their new line. Kuchkar Turdiyev was summoned to the staff dugout, where he was warmly greeted by his commander.

“So you wiped out an enemy pillbox all on your own, did you? Well, you’re a real *oshma*, a real soldier!” he said, heartily shaking Turdiyev’s hand.

When the congratulations were over, Kuchkar said to his Political Officer:

“Comrade Political Officer, I’ve been wanting to talk to you about this for a long time... But one has to earn the right to be a member of the Party...”

“And you’ve earned it fully...” said the Political Officer encouragingly. “All the Party members in our unit would be only too glad to vouch for you.”

Kuchkar sat down and there and then wrote out an application to join the Communist Party.

* * *

The train rolled westward.

It was the month of March. In sunny Uzbekistan, where the train had started out on its journey, spring was in the air and the collective farmers were preparing to go out in the fields. Two or three days later, the train ran into a blizzard on the endless steppes of the neighbouring republic of Kazakhstan, and had to plough its way through heavy snowdrifts as

it pressed on towards the west.

It was carrying gifts to the front from the warm-hearted Uzbek people — carloads of rice, crates of delicious apples and grapes, canned foods, sacks of walnuts, wines of all kinds in casks and bottles, and a special present from the Aim members of the “Bolshevik Collective Farm” to their countryman, Kuchkar Turdiyev.

The train reached its destination. This was on Ukrainian soil, on a sector of the Southwestern Front. Everywhere were traces of bitter fighting with the Germans. The delegates bringing the gifts from the Uzbek people were looking forward to meeting Kuchkar.

It was getting on for evening. The delegates left the train to take a breath of the bracing Ukrainian air.

A troop train was standing on the last track. The men were singing:

“Now echoes down the battlefield
Our glorious heroes’ fame,
All fighters fearless, bold and skilled.
Then, comrades, be the same!
Your Motherland is dear to you
So strike and strike again,
And drive the foe before you
Like Turdiyev and his men!”

The delegates joined in the refrain:

“And drive the foe before us
Like Turdiyev and his men!”

When it was quite dark and the delegates were back again in their compartment, a young Red Armyman and several commanders came into the car.

“Kuchkar!” someone exclaimed.

The delegates jumped up to meet them. Lanterns and candles were lit. There he was! Among the Uzbek delegation

was the hero's uncle. He looked searchingly at his nephew and exclaimed with great gusto:

"You're a soldier to the fingertips! Everyone's proud of you, my boy — your brother and sister and Akhmedov and I, your uncle, and the collective farmers — everyone..."

The small compartment was crowded. An animated conversation began in which everybody joined. Kuchkar's uncle told him the latest news about his relatives and the collective farm, which was prospering and working hard to reap a bumper cotton and grain crop worthy of the men at the front.

Finally his uncle exclaimed:

"And here's something we've brought for you, for you personally, Kuchkar — a present from everyone at the farm!"

And his uncle presented him with two carefully packed boxes: Kuchkar opened them. The car was filled with the fragrance of his native Uzbekistan — amber-coloured apricots, juicy Ferghana pomegranates, tart quince, walnuts as big as chicken's eggs, dried musk melon, the sweetest of raisins and apples...

Kuchkar invited the commanders who accompanied him to try the delicious fruits:

"Help yourselves, please."

His thoughtful townsmen had not forgotten to include writing pads and pencils, needles and thread, and "Great Ferghana Canal" cigarettes.

"The Canal!" Kuchkar exclaimed, overjoyed, as he held one of the boxes in his hand. "How's it working? Is it helping the farms?"

"Couldn't be better!" his countrymen replied. "We've built a whole network of other canals since, and now we're digging the North Tashkent Canal!"

Turdiyev's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Lots of canals means lots of water... Frunze once said:

'Water is the source of life.' That was well said, very well said."

And there, in the compartment, his fellow countrymen learned that Kuchkar had joined the Party, and that he had been promoted to the rank of sergeant-major. He was now a platoon commander in a company of automatic riflemen.

There was much that they would have liked to talk over with their famous countryman, but the senior commander who accompanied Turdiyev asked them to postpone their questions for the time being, as the commander of the South-western Front had invited all the delegates to visit him at headquarters.

Seated at the commander's table, the delegates told him how overjoyed the Uzbek people had been when they had heard the news of the glorious feat of their son, Kuchkar Turdiyev of the village of Aim.

"In one of the collective farms, when the newspaper was read telling about Kuchkar's military exploits, one of the farmers got up and exclaimed: '*Yashasun*, Kuchkar Turdiyev. *Rakhmat** for bringing glory to the farmers of Uzbekistan! There will be no greater happiness for me than to learn that my son Rustam who is now at the front is fighting the German *basmach*i like *batyr* Kuchkar!"

"At another collective farm a very old man came to the general meeting of the farmers together with his youngest son. 'My boy, Tursun,' he said, 'is not due to be called up to the army till next year. But I say to him now, in front of everyone: Go now! Go, and be like that young farmer from the Bolshevik Collective Farm. And if you flinch in battle or turn your back to the enemy, my son, may the milk which you sucked at your mother's breast turn to poison in you!'"

"In honour of Kuchkar Turdiyev the collective farmers working on the North Tashkent Canal have undertaken to do

* *Rakhmat* — Thanks. — *Tr.*

the work ten times faster than scheduled in the plan.

“Mothers name their children after him.

“The girls of Uzbekistan write songs about him.

“Kuchkar lives up to his name!” his uncle said in conclusion. “His own father, Madraim Yuldashmatov, was a share-cropper, a very poor man indeed. The family eked out a miserable existence in a hovel together with the sheep belonging to Madraim’s rich master. One day there was nothing left to eat in the house, not even a cupful of flour. Madraim went to look for food. His wife lay in a cold dark corner in the throes of childbirth. But he found no food and came home empty-handed. When he entered the hovel he heard the loud wailing of his newborn infant. He went over to his wife and said: ‘May our son grow up to be a mighty man!’ And he called the boy ‘Kuchkar’ which means ‘strong.’”

The commander of the front slapped Kuchkar on the shoulder.

“Good lad, Turdiyev! You’ve fulfilled your father’s behest.”

“Kuchkar has two fathers,” his uncle remarked. “His real father, Madraim, and his real mother, died soon after he was born. Madraim’s brother-in-law, Turdi Akhmedov, who was also a poor man at that time, gave the boy a home and brought him up as if he were his own son. That is why his name is Turdiyev.”

The men raised their glasses to Turdiyev’s two fathers, his real father and his adopted father, who had taken the place of a real father for him.

The next day, the General in command of the front, in the presence of all the delegates, presented Kuchkar Turdiyev with the Order of the Red Banner. Pinning the Order to his breast the General said:

“All the men of the Southwestern Front know about Kuchkar Turdiyev. The Ukraine will always remember this

Uzbek hero. For us Turdiyev will always be an example of supreme service to our country, to our people. Sunny Uzbekistan can rightly pride itself on having reared a true patriot of our country.”

Kuchkar Turdiyev received the Order of the Red Banner in the beginning of March 1942. And at the end of the month, on March 27, to be exact, the entire country heard of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR conferring on Kuchkar Turdiyev the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Kuchkar Turdiyev is young and full of energy. He is still perfecting his knowledge of the art of warfare, for he realizes that to fight well means to destroy many Germans. To destroy many Germans is the great duty of a patriot. And Kuchkar Turdiyev is a true son of his country.

M. Tevelev

IVAN BOGATYR OF THE BORDERGUARDS

I

In February 1941 Ivan Bogatyr, who was then serving in the coast guards, was sent to the school attached to the Odessa Borderguards to undergo a course of training as a gunsmith.

The enrollment consisted of men from all the coast guard units on the Black Sea coast. Bogatyr sized them up and decided that they were on the whole a lot of fine, worthwhile chaps. He was especially attracted by a tall, strapping young fellow from the Romanian border. At dinner they found themselves next to each other. Bogatyr felt a strong inclination to strike up a conversation with him but could not quite make up his mind. Dinner was already over and they were washing it down with some tea when the young fellow suddenly turned to him and asked:

“Where do you come from?”

“Dniepropetrovsk,” answered Bogatyr.

“I see,” the tall one drawled. “Sounds familiar.”

“And you?” Ivan asked in turn. “From Moscow.”

“Seem to have heard the name of the place before,” answered Ivan mimicking the other’s tone.

The young fellow smiled.

“You’re a smart guy, I can see.”

“You said it,” Bogatyr retorted, taking a sip of tea from his mug.

“Well, in that case let’s be pals,” the tall one said. “My name is Nikolai Dolgov.”

“And mine’s Ivan Bogatyr.”*

“That’s a swell name!” Dolgov exclaimed in surprise. “Made it up yourself?” “No, a gift from the gods,” Ivan answered, smiling.

By evening they felt as if they had known each other all their lives.

The days and months of study slipped by quickly. Both Dolgov and Bogatyr found the school to their liking. They loved machinery with that boyish enthusiasm which made even the slightest article of their own workmanship an event in their lives and a source of boundless pleasure.

Arms of all makes and systems passed through their hands: tommy guns, submachine guns, rifles and machine guns. They were particularly interested in the latter. There was no doubt about it — life in the school was really first-rate.

But one day it was suddenly broken short by the shrill call of the bugle sounding the alarm.

The students formed up in the school quadrangle in full military kit.

This was on June 22, 1941, at four o’clock in the morning.

* * *

For a short while the students were stationed somewhere on the Dniester, guarding bridges and crossings over which troops and military transports heading for the Romanian sector of the front were moving day and night.

The front was approaching the Black Sea zone. Danger threatened Odessa. The students chafed impatiently at being out of it, but at last their turn came. They were transferred from the Dniester and sent to Odessa, where a borderguard regiment was being formed.

* *Bogatyr* — a legendary hero of Russian folklore — *Tr.*

In the school building where the enrollment was taking place Bogatyr met Yossif Petrenko, a fellow villager of his.

Ivan introduced Yossif to Nikolai Dolgov and the three decided to ask to be assigned to the same platoon. But nothing came of it. Petrenko's company already had a full complement of men and there was no place for the other two.

"Well, what's to be done?" said Petrenko. Then after a while he said resignedly: "Never mind, if we can't be in the same platoon then at least we'll be in the same regiment. We'll look each other up."

Meanwhile the forming of the regiment was proceeding quickly and efficiently. Uniforms and arms were handed out to the men. People worked day and night. But to Bogatyr it seemed that things were going at a snail's pace.

At last, one warm July evening, the regiment piled into trucks and started for the steppes, for their line of defence.

An hour and a half later the borderguards occupied the line assigned to them.

Bogatyr and Dolgov fixed themselves up comfortably together, machine gun and all, in a dry, well-built, machine-gun nest.

"And so here we are at the front," said Dolgov, lending Bogatyr a hand with the machine gun at the embrasure.

"That's so," answered Bogatyr. "But it's as quiet here as on the Dniester..." He took a step towards the embrasure and peered into the darkness.

The enemy was only a few hundred metres away.

Somewhere not far off was the enemy soldier whom he, Ivan Bogatyr, would kill in his first action.

"Maybe he'll get me first before I get him," thought Ivan, but the possibility of it did not arouse any sense of fear in his mind. He merely reflected how disappointing it would be to die with the knowledge that not a single enemy had been

harmd by a bullet of his.

At last Bogatyr stepped away from the embrasure and sat down on the straw matting.

"Look here, Dolgov," he said turning to Nikolai, "let's come to an understanding as to how we're going to fight."

"Well, what's your idea?"

"My idea's like this. First of all, not to shove our heads in front of a bullet when there's no need for it. We've only got one a piece and none in reserve. The essence of heroism is not to be killed but to kill... Secondly, we must stand by each other through thick and thin."

"That's right," agreed Nikolai, "absolutely right."

"Thirdly," continued Bogatyr, bending his fingers, "no getting into a panic, never and nowhere..."

The morning was as quiet and serene as the night. Through the embrasure the steppe stretched out before them — empty, deserted and silent.

Tired out after a sleepless night, Bogatyr lay dozing on the straw when a series of powerful impacts that shook the earth thoroughly roused him: the forward fringe was being shelled by the enemy artillery.

The barrage lasted for about fifteen minutes, then stopped abruptly. The two friends looked through the embrasure. Suddenly Bogatyr noticed a line of moving men. Then, against the background of the tawny earth, he could plainly see the even rows of enemy soldiers marching with measured tread. At the same time his ears caught the sound of music.

The Romanians were going into attack. They marched forward over the steppe in even, seemingly irresistible rows, stepping out as though on parade and holding their automatics at the ready. Over their heads a banner fluttered in the breeze. And heading them all was a military band.

"A 'psychological attack,'" thought Bogatyr, recalling

the film about Chapayev. In the film the whiteguards of the Kapellev unit had marched into action in just the same way as the Romanians were marching now.

When only four hundred metres separated the two friends from the Romanians, Bogatyr said:

“Well, Kolya, this is where the war begins for us too.”

As his finger rested on the trigger of the machine gun a strange calm possessed him. Nothing perturbed him anymore, not even the fear of death. Only one thought occupied his mind now: not to miss the right moment, not to allow the other machine-gunners to draw first blood. Ivan waited for another few seconds and then pressed the trigger. The standard-bearer lurched forward and fell to the ground, followed by one of the drummers, an officer and several soldiers. The bugles glistened in the sunshine as the band scattered in different directions, and the wall of soldiers which had looked so resistless and menacing, gave way and began to crumble.

And when an hour and a half later the battle had subsided and the Romanians had disappeared into their own trenches, Bogatyr, reeling from exhaustion, turned away from his machine gun, and, leaning against the wall, broke into a happy, relieved laugh, the laugh of a man who has withstood a supreme test in his life and has come to realize his own strength.

II

During the coming night twenty-five picked scouts received orders to cross the line of the front, penetrate into the enemy's rear and reach the farmstead where, according to information to hand, the staff headquarters of the Romanian division was situated. Twenty-two of them were to surround the farmstead while the remaining three, with Bogatyr in charge, were to enter the premises of the staff headquarters,

seize whatever documents they could lay their hands on and bring back a “tongue.”

Ivan Bogatyr and Nikolai Dolgov waited for dusk to fall.

Not so very long ago Bogatyr had been nothing but a machine-gunner. He liked handling a machine gun because of the power of this weapon. Here the score was not in units but in dozens. But for Bogatyr it was not enough. Kicking his heels doing nothing in the intervals of quiet was rather boring, and so he had become a scout, without, however, relinquishing his job as machine-gunner.

For over a month Bogatyr learnt the tricks of the trade from Sergeant Sundukov who had won fame as a skilled scout.

“Everything you do must be three times better than the average good Red Armyman can do,” the Sergeant told him. “A good soldier has to be a good shot but you, must be three times as good. A good soldier has to be daring, but you must be three times as daring — because the soldier on the battlefield has only one death hovering over him while the scout has three. This is the ratio you have to go by..”

At last it was time to go. Utter darkness enveloped the steppes. The scouts could not have wished for a better night for a reconnaissance job.

They crept along a deep dell. Bogatyr was next to the commander of the group, lieutenant Fursov. Behind him, at regular intervals, followed the other scouts.

The farmstead where the headquarters of the Romanian division was located was some twelve kilometres from the firing line. Both the Germans and the Romanians were keeping a sharp lookout. Patrols guarded the roads and lanes, and sentries were posted at the wells and at various points in the steppe. Every now and then the sharp challenge of a patrol broke the stillness of the night.

The scouts crossed the front at the junction between two

enemy regiments.

It was midnight when they reached the farmstead. Very little time remained before the moon was due to rise. It was necessary to hurry. So far everything had proceeded smoothly. The small house where the staff was quartered was silently surrounded from all sides.

The door leading to the staff room stood ajar. At the table, lit up by a kerosene oil lamp, sat a Romanian officer. Another lay on a couch near the wall, fast asleep...

Two other Romanian officers entered the room. One of them was a tall, broad-chested man, while the other was somewhat shorter. There was a frown on his swarthy, boyish face. They exchanged greetings.

"Well, Major," said the tall fellow, addressing the officer at the table, we have come for the information."

"What information?" asked the major with a note of bewilderment in his voice.

"What do you mean, what information?" retorted the tall one in surprise. "For the information we are supposed to get, of course."

The major half rose from his seat.

"You must be mixing something up," he said in a sharp tone to the tall officer.

"Not at all," the other answered, and suddenly dealt the major a powerful blow that stunned him. The major reeled backwards but Nikolai Dolgov caught him with one hand, and with the other, quickly took from his pocket a pair of steel handcuffs. Before the major had time to recover his senses the bracelets were on his wrists and he had been gagged.

When they had finished with the major, Ivan smiled.

"Neat job that," he whispered, "very neat!"

Coming from his lips this was the highest praise. He liked people to do their work neatly and well.

Back in the old days, when he had worked at the plant, he would stand for hours on end watching the master lathe-operators at work, admiring the skill, efficiency and ease which turned their labour into an art.

Half the job was done. Now only the sleeping officer remained to be dealt with. Bogatyr carefully turned him over on his side, pulled out a pair of bracelets from his pocket and handcuffed him. The officer stirred in his sleep and tried to stretch out his hands, but the jingling sound of the handcuffs woke him up. He looked at Bogatyr with sleepy, bleary eyes. Then his glance wandered towards the table and stopped, frozen with horror. He opened his mouth to shriek.

"Easy there," and Bogatyr calmly forestalled his attempt by stuffing a big piece of tow into his mouth.

Without losing a moment the scouts gathered together all the papers and files they could find and made them up into two bundles.

When everything was ready Bogatyr cast a last glance round the room.

"Come on," he said to the Romanian officers, emphasizing his order with a wave of his pistol. They got up. At that moment Bogatyr felt that he would have given anything in the world for his father, who had once been a sailor on the battleship *Prince Potemkin Tavrishesky*, to see him then, there, in the very room where the Romanian division had its headquarters. The old man would have grunted with pride and said: "Yes, you're a chip of the old block right enough..."

Holding the bundles under their arms and prodding the officers with their revolvers, Bogatyr and Dolgov stepped off the porch into the courtyard.

Some thirty minutes later the group of scouts was marching along at a swinging pace down one of the country roads leading to the front lines. The captive officers were in the mid-

dle. Dolgov gave his orders in Romanian and answered the challenges of the sentries.

The scouts had already put a good three kilometres between them and the Romanian staff headquarters when the hue and cry began. A company of Romanians set off in pursuit. The steppes echoed to the rattle of tommy-gun fire. For a time the scouts kept up a running battle, but they were outnumbered by the Romanians, who surrounded slowly the handful of Red Army men, who were forced to dig in and set up an all-round defence.

The rising moon cast a wan light over the scene of action. Lieutenant Fursov crawled over to Bogatyr and touched him on the shoulder.

“Vanya,” he said, “take one of the men and make a beeline for our site. Tell them we need help.”

“Right you are, Comrade Lieutenant,” answered Bogatyr.

“Whom are you taking with you?”

“Dolgov.”

“Very well,” agreed the lieutenant. “Go ahead.”

Bogatyr called Nikolai:

“We’re going for help. Understand?”

The two friends took out their knives and crawled in the direction of the enemy. They moved forward slowly, steadily, hugging the ground until they almost blended with it. Suddenly they leapt to their feet and hurled themselves at the Romanians ahead of them. A short, fierce scuffle, a spurt forward — and then Bogatyr stopped for a moment. They had broken clear.

“Kolya!” shouted Ivan.

“I’m here!” answered Dolgov.

They ran on.

Coming out on to a foot path, Bogatyr stopped for a moment to take stock of himself. His cap was gone, the Roma-

nian officer’s uniform he had on was in tatters. Dolgov looked no better.

Unexpectedly they bumped into a Romanian sentry. The man appeared suddenly from behind a clump of bushes, ordered them to stop and then fired a shot. Whistles began to blow. In the moonlight they could see shadows flitting down the road.

“They’re after us!” said Bogatyr.

They took to their heels. Only later did Bogatyr and Dolgov learn that they had stumbled on the command post of a Romanian battalion.

In the middle of an alley lined with saplings stood a German midget tank. The hatch was open. Bogatyr stole over to the machine and listened. There was no-one inside. The pursuers were coming closer, he could already clearly hear their voices.

“Hop in!” said Bogatyr to Dolgov. In another minute they had disappeared inside the tank. Bogatyr lowered the hatch and screwed it tight. The friends sat there motionless, hardly daring to breathe. The pursuing soldiers stopped near the tank. One of them started hammering on the armour plating, another tried to force open the hatch. Dolgov suddenly let out a loud yawn and began to shuffle about.

“What the hell are you hammering away for?” he yelled in an angry tone in Romanian.

“Say, pal!” a voice came from outside, “some Soviet scouts passed by this way...”

“Well, look for them,” Dolgov answered, “and let me get a snooze in peace.” And he treated them to a choice selection of curses. The ruse worked. The soldiers stopped banging on the tank and took themselves off.

Bogatyr waited a while and then opened the hatch and looked out. All around it was quiet and deserted. He was

about to scramble out when a thought struck him. "What if I get the thing going?..." At the plant before the war he had handled a car once in a while, and at the front he had often watched the tankmen fussing around their machines and had even tried his hand at driving a tank himself once or twice. He told Dolgov his idea.

"No harm in trying," said Dolgov, "so long as you can get the thing going."

"It'll go alright," answered Bogatyr, busying himself with the engine in the dark. The engine began to snort, as though waking up from sleep and then purred evenly without a stop. Dolgov stepped on the pedals and fiddled about with the gears. The tank twisted and turned and backed, but would not move forward. Ivan was wet with perspiration. With a muttered curse he leaned back in the seat, breathing hard.

"Hold on," he said after a moment's rest. "I'll have another go in a jiffy!"

All of a sudden the tank leapt forward at a breakneck speed. Dolgov was sent flying and bumped his head against the armour plating.

"Look out for your head!" Bogatyr shouted warningly. But the same fate befell him too. He received such a blow that for a moment he thought his skull must be split in half. The tank raced on, bumping over uneven ground. Ivan steered across country, straight for the forward lines. On the way he negotiated a Romanian trench. The soldiers did not shoot, obviously taking it for granted that this was one of their own machines heading for the Soviet lines. Ahead of them now stretched the Soviet trenches. A squall of well-concentrated fire met the tank, but Bogatyr did not stop. He negotiated trench after trench and manoeuvring as best he could dashed full speed ahead to the village where the regimental staff headquarters was located. "If only our anti-tank guns don't bust it up!" he

thought. At last the tank swept past the demolished barn, bringing down the wicker gate in its path, tore into the yard at regimental headquarters and came to a stop.

When Bogatyr and Dolgov entered the hut they were unrecognizable. Their faces were covered with bruises and black with soot.

After listening to their report the regimental commander quickly gave the necessary orders and told Bogatyr and Dolgov to have their injuries attended to at once.

Bogatyr's heart almost missed a beat.

"Comrade Major, can't we postpone that till later on? Permit us to go to their assistance in our tank."

"Get bandaged immediately," he insisted.

They were plastered and bandaged right there at staff headquarters, and shortly after the tank was speeding on its way to the Romanian rear.

Seeing what they took to be a German tank, the Romanians began to shout to the surrounded scouts.

"Kaput, Russians! Kaput!"

Waving their caps in high glee, they pointed to the road and made way for the machine. But to their great astonishment it suddenly slowed down and raked them with fire.

"Give it to 'em, Dolgov, give it to 'em!" yelled Bogatyr.

He opened the throttle. The tank leapt forward at the Romanians, crushing them under its tracks, bowling them over like ninepins. The battle was fierce but short. The remnants of the Romanian company scattered over the steppe, pursued by the fire of the tank and the Red Army scouts who only a short while ago had been surrounded...

III

The Crimean winter of 1941 was nothing like the tem-

perate southern winters of former years: it was bitterly cold and the winds were icy and penetrating. But, in spite of the winds and the frost and the incessant fire of the Germans, the borderguards threw up a line of defences on the heights of Balaklava, biting into the unyielding, stony earth with pickaxes and rending it with explosives.

Ivan Bogatyr and his machine-gun platoon took up a position on Hill 96.6. This height was the key point to a large district commanding the surrounding vineyards, Balaklava, a small workers' settlement nestling on the shores of the blue bay, and farther on, the road leading to Sevastopol.

On the crest of the hill they built a formidable pillbox and two others of equal importance to left and right of it. In between were several other fire-nests of a subsidiary nature. The entire system of pillboxes and earthworks was connected by deep trenches and equipped to withstand the strongest attack.

The Germans launched drive after drive on Sevastopol. Battles raged incessantly and all of them, whether of major or merely local importance, had one thing in common: they were both bloody and exhausting. Bogatyr fought with all the passion of his ardent nature, he led his men into counter-attacks, went with them on reconnaissance sallies and on raids into the enemy rear. He devoted himself completely to the cause of the war. He became expert as a machine-gunner and a scout. In Sevastopol he learned to be a sniper. He already had seventy-two fascists to his personal score, while another fifteen hundred had been accounted for by the one hundred and thirty snipers whom he had trained.

Yossif Petrenko was now in Bogatyr's platoon. The death of Dolgov, who had been killed in action near Gurzuf, brought the two men even closer and they became inseparable friends.

Once — this was in the spring of 1942 — Bogatyr, Petrenko and five other scouts went out in search of a "tongue."

Bogatyr and Petrenko wore German uniforms.

The scouts crossed the line of the front without any mishap and penetrated into enemy-occupied territory. They walked on for a long time, covering quite a distance, but not sighting a single German — it was just as if they had all died off overnight.

To return empty-handed was out of the question. That was something they were not prepared to do.

After a brief rest the scouts moved on. They passed through a gully and came out on a track which led up a hill. Moving in the shadow of the trees, the scouts cautiously climbed to the summit and looked down. The ground on the other side was covered with shrubwood and saplings, and sloped down gradually to a large clearing. In the centre of the clearing they caught sight of a building which looked like a tremendous shed. About seventy Germans were standing and sitting about. The scouts could hear them talking and laughing. German soldiers were constantly disappearing into the shed and reappearing fully armed. In all probability the scouts had chanced on a munitions dump.

Petrenko's head popped up from behind a boulder next to Bogatyr's. He took in the clearing at a glance and a frown clouded his face.

"Too many," he whispered.

"Yes, a bit too many," agreed Bogatyr. "But in my opinion, though, there's no sense in going any farther. We'll have to bag the 'tongue' here."

Petrenko nodded in assent.

"Look here," said Bogatyr to the other scouts. "You fellows stick here, while I'll scout round below and find out what they're doing inside the dump."

Suiting the action to the words, Bogatyr disappeared like a shadow amongst the bushes, moving so silently that Petrenko

could not hear a single sound. Making his way down to the road below, Bogatyr took cover behind a clump of bushes and waited to see what would happen. A group of German soldiers came in sight along the road. When they drew level with Ivan's hiding place, he jumped up and joined them. The group, about thirty men in all were bound for the shed. None of the soldiers paid any attention to him.

The shed was stacked with crates. An officer was sitting at a table, behind which the soldiers formed a queue. As each man approached the table he gave the officer his name and received from him a tommy gun, two drums of cartridges and a pistol, after which he signed his name on a list.

"What if I also try to get 'em?" the daring thought flashed through his mind. He got into line.

The queue moved slowly. At times it seemed to Bogatyr that someone was watching him and at such moments a shiver ran down his spine. Every now and then he glanced stealthily round. But the Germans were all busy with their own affairs.

At last his turn came. He went up to the table and said: "Adolf Hetz."

The officer wrote down something on the list, placed a supply of arms on the table and, pushing the paper towards Ivan, turned away to get a tommy gun for the next soldier. Bogatyr dipped the pen in the inkwell and signed his name. Then he took the arms from the table and mingling with the crowd of soldiers, quickly left the shed.

Several minutes later he was back on the hill among his own comrades.

"Slick work!" Petrenko remarked, not without envy after hearing his friend's story.

Shortly after Bogatyr again started for the shed, but this time together with Petrenko. The rest of the scouts took cover among the shrubs near the road.

German soldiers were constantly going in and out of the shed. None of them suspected that Red Army men were in the vicinity.

"Time to pitch into them," whispered Petrenko, getting his grenades ready, as agreed upon. "You send yours in through the window and I'll let fly at the door." He slipped away behind a corner of the shed.

Two grenades, thrown by Petrenko and Bogatyr, burst simultaneously inside the shed. The din of the explosion mingled with the cries of wounded soldiers. Petrenko sent two more grenades after the first. The Germans scattered in all directions. An officer and three soldiers dashed blindly towards the scouts who were hidden in the brushwood near the road. Bogatyr and Petrenko followed closely on their heels.

Down below, in the clearing, explosion followed explosion as the cases of grenades stored in the dump went up one after the other. At every burst the four Germans dropped face down on the ground.

Bogatyr easily caught up with the officer and ran alongside him. Only when they reached the top of the hill did the Germans stop to catch their breath. Panting heavily, Bogatyr also stopped within reach of the officer. The latter cast a side-long glance at him and then turned away to look down at the shed from which a column of black smoke was rising skywards. Seizing the opportunity, Ivan felled the officer with a smashing blow and pinned him down. This served as a signal to the other scouts to tackle the other Germans.

They had got what they had come out for — "tongues." Now they could go back with an easy conscience. They walked for the rest of the night and broke through the enemy lines after a short skirmish with the German outposts. Dawn found them home again on the heights near Balaklava.

IV

The Germans were making preparations to launch another drive on Sevastopol.

On June 3, Bogatyr woke up with a start. The air was filled with the roar and whine of aeroplane engines. He dashed out of his pillbox and looked up. Planes covered the sky as thick as locusts. Clouds of dust enveloped the height. The Germans were bombing the outer rim of defences and the battalion and regimental command posts.

"It'll be our turn next," thought Ivan. And true enough a number of dive bombers appeared an instant later over Hill 96.6. The planes were flying at a high altitude, dodging in and out of the white puffs of ack-ack shellbursts. Deploying suddenly, they dived down one after another with a deafening roar. The impact from the first stick of bombs was so terrific that it seemed to Bogatyr as if the earth had been rent asunder.

But this was only a foretaste of what was to follow. It was preceded by an artillery onslaught of unprecedented intensity. Guns of all calibres — from heavy long-range cannon to light, mountain artillery, unleashed a hail of destruction on the hill.

For three hours that seemed an eternity the bombardment raged with unabated fury. Then it stopped abruptly, leaving a tense, deathly silence as if the men's eardrums had finally burst.

Bogatyr walked over to the door leading to the communication trench and pushed it open. He fell back a pace as a dense cloud of white dust came rolling in. It had hardly settled down when the firing began again. The shells were now bursting at the approaches to the height.

"They're coming!" someone shouted.

The cry was caught up by the rest of the men:

"They're coming, they're coming!"

Bogatyr looked through the embrasure. Wave after wave of German soldiers in field grey were surging across the valley under a protective curtain of artillery fire.

"Get ready!" ordered Bogatyr.

The tommy-gunners ran out of the shelter and stood at their posts in the trenches. The machine-gunners settled down behind their guns.

"Fire!"

The hillside bristled with the sharp flashes of rifle-fire and machine-gun spurts.

The battle was at its height when a soldier came running into the central pillbox. Catching sight of Bogatyr he shouted:

"Petrenko's dying!"

Bogatyr swung round.

"What's that!" he exclaimed with a catch in his voice. Calling to his assistant to take charge, he dashed out.

Bogatyr jerked open the door of the neighbouring pillbox and stopped short on the threshold. An acrid smell of gunpowder pervaded the air. In the half-gloom inside he did not see Petrenko at once. His friend was lying in the far corner on a matting of dry heather. He was covered with a blood-stained greatcoat. Bogatyr bent over him.

"I'm out of luck this time," said Petrenko. "I'm dying!"

He said it so simply that Bogatyr was at a loss for a reply.

Petrenko closed his eyes and whispered:

"Good-bye, old man... Kiss me."

Bogatyr bent down lower and they kissed each other.

"Remember me always, Vanya," said Petrenko, "even when you are an old man. D'you hear me?"

"I hear you," Ivan replied in a choking voice and burst into tears...

When he went out into the half-demolished communication trench he felt as if all his senses were numbed. Bullets whizzed past him, but he paid no attention to them. His comrades shouted to him to take cover, but Ivan did not hear them. Peering over the breastworks he caught sight of the Germans; they were already quite close. His stupefaction passed in a flash. Drawing his pistol he took aim at a lanky soldier and fired. The soldier crumpled up. Bogatyr fired at a second soldier and brought him down too. And he stood there at full height, picking them off, taking aim calmly, just as if he were in a rifle range, until the Red Army men dragged him down under cover.

...The battle increased in intensity. Attack followed attack. The losses amongst the Red Army men in killed and wounded kept mounting all the time.

But not for a single moment did Bogatyr leave his machine gun. At about three o'clock in the afternoon he received a report that the pillbox on his left had been destroyed and that all the men in it had perished. Then the pillbox on the right was put out of commission. Of the entire platoon only Bogatyr and one machine-gunner remained. But Ivan was determined to stand his ground. He glanced at the man and was about to tell him something when a bomb dropped by a dive bomber exploded with terrific force somewhere behind his back and he was engulfed in a dense, scorching wave of air.

A far-off, reverberating cry brought him back to consciousness. Ivan raised himself to a sitting position. An excruciating pain shot through his right side. The machine-gunner was dead. He lay not far off, his glazed eyes staring blankly at the sky.

The cry drew fearer. The Germans were attacking again.

Bogatyr might have got clear away had he wanted to. All he had to do was to breast the ridge, crawl from trench to

trench and so make his way down to the bottom. But the very thought of it was repellant to him.

"I'll stop 'em!" he exclaimed, "even if it costs me my life."

Overcoming the pain, he crawled to the central pillbox and resolutely took his place at the machine gun. He was alone — the sole defender of Hill 96.6.

Encouraged by the fact that the Soviet fire had died away, the Germans came on rapidly, confident of success. There were many of them, at least four hundred. But their confidence was short-lived. Swinging round his machine gun, Bogatyr subjected their left flank to a murderous fire. Many of the Germans were mown down, the rest beat a hasty retreat.

Determined to settle with the machine-gunner, the Germans brought up an anti-tank gun to within three hundred metres of the pillbox. The first shell hit the wall of the shelter, the second and third fell somewhere beyond, while the fourth scored a direct hit on the embrasure. The force of the explosion hurled Bogatyr to the ground, but he was up again in a flash. He was wounded in the head by a shell splinter and the blood trickled down his face. But his first thought was for the machine gun. It proved to be intact, although somewhat battered. Ivan was ready to shout with joy.

The anti-tank gun had got the range of the pillbox. The situation was critical. He decided to resort to a ruse and ceased firing. The Germans continued to push on under cover of their gun. They jumped up for a last spurt. Bogatyr showed no signs of life. They approached to within ten metres of his position. Still he withheld his fire. At last the German anti-tank gun ceased fire, afraid of hitting its own men. This was just what Bogatyr was waiting for. His machine gun woke to life with deadly effect. Again the Germans rolled back, unable to face the withering fire. The hillside was strewn with their dead.

A bullet pierced Bogatyr's left arm. Groaning with pain, he hastily bandaged the wound and returned to his machine gun, swinging it round in the required direction with his chest and working the trigger with one finger of his right hand, which was almost paralysed. His forehead, lips and eyebrows were clotted with blood and mud. But still he kept on firing and it seemed to him that he would never stop even after he was dead...

Realizing the futility of a frontal attack, the Germans decided to take the height from the flanks. Three hundred tommy-gunners set out through a narrow defile, with the intention of rounding the hill. The success of this manoeuvre would have enabled the Germans to seep through to the rear. The entire defence zone was in jeopardy. But Bogatyr noticed the danger in time. For thirty minutes a hurricane of steel played havoc in the narrow defile. The German tommy-gunners stampeded terror-stricken

under the murderous fire. Of the three hundred tommy-gunners not more than forty escaped with their lives. From his position Bogatyr could clearly see them take to their heels, throwing away their arms as they ran...

The short southern dusk quickly turned to night, bringing the unequal battle to an abrupt close. Silence fell over the battle-scarred earth at the approaches to Balaklava.

But Bogatyr kept a vigilant lookout. In the deceptive moonlight the boulders resembled crouching enemy soldiers waiting for the signal for a new sally. He strained his ears, trying to catch the slightest rustle, thinking, thinking all the time. Here was he, Ivan Bogatyr, a Young Communist League member, twenty-three years of age, a soldier of a borderguard regiment, holding the line of defence single-handed. Forty-five of his comrades had paid the supreme sacrifice. A battered machine gun looked through the embrasure. His ammuni-

tion had run out. He did not have a single grenade left. What if the Germans launched another attack? He was ready to die, bravely, honestly, but after his death the grey-clad Germans would top the ridge and threaten battalion headquarters... He felt as if he were on fire. Beads of perspiration stood out on his brow. He wanted to wipe them off, but could not — his hands refused to obey him; they hung limply at his sides like broken reeds: one arm was pierced by a German bullet, the other all but paralysed. It was his duty to notify the command post that the hill was still holding out, that there were no Germans on it, that he, Bogatyr, was alive and holding it against all comers and that he was in need of help. But how could he get in touch with headquarters? Communications had been cut a long time ago. Send up a rocket? But the signal pistol was somewhere in one of the small, intermediary machine-gun nests. He got up with an effort and, overcoming the pain, staggered to the door.

Walking was sheer torture, ruts and boulders impeded him at every step. Even the dagger at his belt felt as heavy as a tommy gun. "What a wreck I am!" Ivan thought to himself. "What a wreck!... If the Germans only knew!..." He smiled wryly, the smile of a man who has outwitted a powerful enemy.

An enormous figure suddenly loomed up in front of him from a nearby crater. Bogatyr stood rooted to the ground. A German! He stood facing Ivan, hefty, broad-shouldered, his sleeves rolled above his elbows, his body inclined slightly forward, as if ready to pounce on him. In his hands he held a pistol and a grenade. The two men stood motionless, taking stock of each other.

"Is this the end?" thought Bogatyr, and a feeling of bitter resentment gripped his heart. Try and draw his pistol? But the German would get him before he so much as moved a finger.

“Russian,” the German asked unexpectedly, “are you alone?”

“Alone,” Ivan hissed.

“Hands up, Russian!” said the officer gripping his tommy gun.

“You damned fool!” Bogatyr screamed. “What did you come to our country for?”

There was so much passion and venom in his voice that the German fell back a step in terror. He made a move as if to raise his gun but Ivan forestalled him. Mustering his last strength he leapt at the German. Uttering a cry of dismay the German fell to the ground, with Bogatyr on top of him... And as he fell Bogatyr drew his dagger with his numbed hand and thrust it into the German’s neck...

It was long after daybreak when Bogatyr opened his eyes. Bending over him was his commander, Major Kekalo.

“How are you feeling, Vanya?” the Major asked tenderly.

“Still alive, Comrade Major,” Bogatyr replied in a whisper.

“You’ll pull through all right,” said the Major.

Bogatyr closed his eyes wearily. The Major moved away from the stretcher on which the wounded Red Armyman was lying.

“Tell me,” Bogatyr heard him ask the doctor, “of what precious metal are our Soviet people made?”

AN IMMORTAL NAME

Boris Safonov was only nine years old when his father, a compositor at a Moscow printing shop, died. The large family of thirteen soon found themselves in dire distress. Of his hungry brothers and sisters Boris was the most patient, gentle and reserved. He never complained to his mother when he felt hungry, he never bullied the younger children or complained about the elder ones. The cleft in his chin and his clear-cut, firm, chiselled lips were evidence of his resolute nature. His mother, looking at him, felt that no matter what difficulties life held in store for him, Boris would hold his own.

The Safonovs moved to the village of Sinyavino, Plovsky District, Tula Region, where Boris started work as a shepherd.

“I do hope you tend the sheep properly, Boris,” his mother said to him one day.

Boris glanced at her with a slightly astonished look in his big, blue eyes.

“Since I took on the job, Mum, of course I do it properly.”

In the winter, when he came running home from school blue with the cold, his mother would say to him:

“Frozen, sonnie? God gifted you with brains, but I’m afraid he didn’t give you a sheepskin coat and felt boots.”

Boris would just smile, and say nothing in reply. Neither cold nor any of the other hardships the family suffered could break his stubborn spirit. He would often sit up late over his schoolbooks and then not even the most exciting games could tear him away from his homework.

When he finished school, Boris announced:

“I’m going to Tula to enter a trade school. And after that, I’ll be an airman.”

And his mother knew that, once he had made up his

mind, he would achieve what he had set out to do.

He was fifteen when he joined the vocational school attached to the Tula railway depot. At the same time he began to attend a local gliding club. Two years later he distinguished himself at a gliding contest and was accepted into the flying school by the Air and Chemical Defence League.

* * *

...June 22, 1941. A theory class was in progress in the squadron leader's dugout.

Suddenly a clear voice issued from the loudspeaker:

"This is Moscow calling on a nation-wide hook-up..."

The men crowded round the loudspeaker, listening intently. They stood so close that they could hear each other breathing. Molotov was speaking:

"...German troops have invaded our country, attacked our frontier in many places and bombed our cities..."

Kiev... Kovalenko, one of Safonov's friends, came from Kiev... His friend's family lived there. Boris looked at Kovalenko. What they read in each other's eyes was a pledge to do their duty.

The planes were thoroughly overhauled. The mechanics tested them again and again. Boris took a final look at his machine.

"I say, Semyonov, you don't happen to have any white paint, do you?" Boris asked one of the ground mechanics.

The man handed him a tin of white enamel. On one side of the fuselage Boris wrote: "For the CPSU(B)!" and on the other: "Death to Fascism!"

This was not just a slogan, just empty words, but a sentence, and Boris immediately began to put it into effect.

On June 24 the Soviet observation posts reported that an enemy scouting plane had appeared over the coast of Kola

Bay. Safonov's fighter left the ground almost simultaneously with the discharge of the rocket pistol.

The German's target was the Soviet shipping in the Bay. The attack was beaten off by the ground defences. The Heinkel shot downwards and began to skim over the surface of the water in an effort to get away, but Boris spotted it in time and dived down after the fascist, forcing it to give battle.

By a skilful manoeuvre Boris sat on the Heinkel's tail. His machine gun worked faultlessly. At the second burst the lead-riddled tail of the Heinkel dropped away and the rest of the enemy plane crashed into the sea after it.

Boris had begun this lightning attack at 19:24 hours. At 19:25 the waters of Kola Bay closed over the Heinkel and soon the surface was once again as smooth and still as a mirror.

A few minutes later Safonov landed his fighter at his base. The men of his squadron, with Kovalenko and Pokrovsky in the lead, ran to meet him. They saw Boris stretch his left hand out of the cockpit, thumb down, and then draw a cross on the fuselage — his first...

Boris climbed out of the plane and took off his helmet. His thick, dark hair was wet with perspiration and matted to his temples. His blue eyes still shone with the excitement of his first battle, his first victory over the enemy.

"The way you downed him was a sight for sore eyes!" Kovalenko shouted as he ran up. "Let me go up with you next time. All right?"

"All right!" Boris agreed.

* * *

The fascists were active all along the front. Their aircraft began to appear more and more frequently, and the Soviet fighters made sortie after sortie.

That day the squadron received orders to intercept enemy

aircraft over the coast. Safonov decided that a flight of five fighters would be sufficient and ordered Kovalenko and three young fliers to take off with him.

They did not meet any fascists either over the coast or even some way out at sea. But Safonov was already familiar with the Germans' methods: he counted on finding them hugging the Great Coast Road on the lookout for detachments of Soviet marines.

And sure enough, a Henschel-126 was hovering over the Great Road. Boris went after it.

Seeing their commander going into the attack, Kovalenko and the rest of the flight covered his flanks and rear. The Henschel slipped past Kovalenko at close quarters. He was greatly tempted to wheel round and give chase, but he succeeded in repressing the impulse — the Henschel might be escorted by fascist fighters. This proved to be the case, as they soon found out. Two Messerschmitt-109's suddenly darted out from behind a hill and attacked Safonov.

Danger threatened the squadron leader!

Kovalenko peeled off to intercept them, but the first fascist plane evaded him. Kovalenko then turned his attention to the second and hung tenaciously on its tail, effectively countering all its efforts to sneak away.

"No you don't, you swine!" he muttered to himself. "You're not getting away scot-free!"

Kovalenko did not give the enemy a second's respite. He hung over it, spattering it with machine-gun fire, gradually forcing it down until it crashed nose first into the swampy ground.

"That settles your hash!" Kovalenko exclaimed with satisfaction.

In the meantime Safonov had settled scores with the Henschel.

"Good for you, Alexander," he said to Kovalenko when they landed once again at their own aerodrome.

Such clashes took place almost every day, and daily the fighting increased in intensity. Safonov realized that all the fliers had to be given an opportunity to come to grips with the enemy, particularly the young novices. In the course of their daily operations they had to be trained in all the different tactics of aerial warfare, learn to look danger in the face, and become accustomed to team work and helping each other out in a tight corner.

* * *

...Everything seemed to indicate that the dog-fight was drawing to a close when the fascists suddenly received fresh reinforcements.

Second Lieutenant Maximovich was so engrossed in hanging on to the tail of a Junkers-88 that he failed to notice that a German fighter had manoeuvred into position behind him. At any moment he was liable to be sent crashing to disaster.

Several minutes earlier Safonov had come to grips with a particularly stubborn and resourceful Junkers. It had taken him some time before he had finally sent the enemy bomber, enveloped in flames, to its last resting-place on the crags below.

Having settled with the Junkers, Safonov began to climb steeply. A quick glance round immediately showed him Maximovich's plight.

Safonov, however, had already run out of ammunition. But to return to his base for a fresh supply when a comrade of his was in immediate danger was, of course, out of the question. He swooped down to his friend's aid. Unnerved by the fury of the attack, the Messerschmitt scooted out of range.

Again Safonov shot up. Now apparently was a favourable opportunity to return to the base for fresh supplies of ammunition. But Safonov decided to wait a while longer. He was thoroughly versed in the enemy's tactics. How many times they had lurked in the clouds, evading open battle, waiting for a chance to swoop down on an unsuspecting Soviet flier.

He was not mistaken. A twin-engined Messerschmitt-110 dived down from under cover of a cloud and made straight for Maximovich. This new enemy was much more dangerous than the first. Maximovich was in deadly peril. But how was he to save his comrade, let alone his own plane and himself, when he did not have a single round of ammunition left? Safonov decided to wait for a suitable opening to make a psychological attack. Circling overhead, he followed the unequal duel with the closest attention. Suddenly Maximovich banked sharply and flew off at a tangent in an attempt to break away from his adversary: but another Messerschmitt-110 was waiting for him.

"Well, here goes!" Safonov decided. With lightning rapidity he attacked the fascist now from one side, now from another, persistently striving to hitch on to the Messerschmitt's tail. This daring manoeuvre decided the encounter. The fascist evidently considered discretion the better part of valour and veered off.

Now only one Messerschmitt remained to be dealt with. Safonov could not repeat the same tactic. The solution took shape in his mind instantaneously: "If the worst came to the worst — ram it!" And he came round to meet the enemy head on.

For a breathless second the two planes closed in on each other at a breakneck speed. Then the fascist's nerve gave way, and he banked violently. But he was intercepted by Flying Officer Sorokin, who darted out just then from behind a



hill. A short machine-gun burst at point-blank range riddled the German from stem to stern. The fascist machine, making convulsive evolutions in a frantic attempt to beat out the flames, crashed on to the rocks below.

Five fascist aircraft were downed in that dog-fight. The Soviet fighters returned without loss.

After a short rest Boris assembled the pilots and analysed in detail the day's fighting, criticizing the mistakes made by each of them. Then he gave them the benefit of his own experience.

"Both Junkers and Messerschmitt-110's are pretty tough customers," he said. "Their twin engines and the excellent armour which protects the pilot make them formidable opponents. It's useless opening up at them from four hundred to five hundred metres, because the bullets spray and there's small chance of scoring a hit. I always close in to two hundred metres, and sometimes even less. What should you aim at? At first I used to fire at the pilot. But even if you hit him, he may still get away by switching over to the gyro-pilot; at the same time, you yourself are liable to be picked off by his gunner. When I became convinced of this, I began to open up at the gunner first. He's nearer to the tail and easier to get at. And once you silence the gunner, it shouldn't be so hard to finish off the machine..."

* * *

The days passed in intensive action. Safonov became more and more exacting in his demands both on the fliers and particularly on himself.

He never stopped studying for a moment, learning the art of victory and sharing his knowledge with his comrades-in-arms. An exhaustive analysis of every encounter enabled him to evolve his own tactics. In details that at first glance seemed

trivial and unimportant he was able to discern what was vital and important, constantly developing his ideas and passing on his deductions to his comrades.

A day came when Boris said to Kovalenko:

"You know, Alexander, our chaps are not at all bad fliers now. I'm as sure of every man jack of them as I am of myself."

And, for their part, the fliers of the Northern Fleet would say with pride:

"Our Boris is the Chkalov of the North."

"Fight the enemy *a la Safonov!*" became the slogan of the Arctic naval fliers.

Boris and the men he trained never gave the enemy a moment's respite. In good weather and bad they were always eager for a scrap.

...It was an ideal morning for flying. Not a single cloud marred the clear blue sky. Reports came through that columns of German fascist troops were moving up to the front. Safonov's squadron was ordered to reconnoitre the enemy's strength and harass him.

Safonov took off in command of a flight of young airmen — Pokrovsky, Vinichenko and Maximovich — all of them members of the Young Communist League.

The northern hills stretched in an endless chain along and behind the front lines. Small glens and lakes flashed past at infrequent intervals among the crags. The possibility of making an emergency landing anywhere was entirely ruled out.

As the fliers passed over the forward lines of the Red Army forces, they were met with a fierce anti-aircraft barrage. But they stuck grimly to their course: the information required of them was of vital importance. Nothing, however, could be seen from their present altitude. Safonov began to dive down. His altimeter recorded two hundred metres... one hundred and fifty... one hundred.

The unexpected appearance of the fighters at a low altitude prevented the fascist anti-aircraft gunners from conducting an effective fire. But the barrage they put up was so heavy that it became increasingly difficult to make any headway. The range of hills ended. Ahead of the planes opened out a stretch of even ground. This enabled the enemy ground defence to raise a sweeping curtain of fire.

“Will the skipper turn back or climb?” wondered the other three members of the flight.

But Boris continued to streak along at a low level. Finally the target came in sight and he gave the signal. The men prepared for action. Boris himself was the first to attack the enemy.

His comrades saw the tracer bullets stretching out in a multi-coloured thread. The machine guns on their commander’s plane were working without a hitch.

Then Pokrovsky, Maximovich and Vinichenko furiously pressed the buttons of their own machine guns. They saw the panic-stricken Germans scatter in all directions.

The fearless four swooped down on the enemy like a tornado. Dozens of fascists were sent sprawling to the ground, never to rise again. Cases of cartridges and shells were blown up... A thick curtain of flame rose over the place where the enemy column had been.

After inflicting substantial losses on the enemy’s ground forces the flight reconnoitred the enemy’s lines of communication and duly handed in the required information to the Soviet Command.

* * *

In Captain Safonov’s opinion good work on the part of the ground crew was one of the chief prerequisites of success.

This is what he wrote on one occasion in a naval news-
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paper:

“Victory in the air is forged on the ground. I, for one, give the credit for half the planes I have shot down to my ground mechanics, Semyonov, Kolpakov and Krivikhin. No matter how badly my plane is hit during a sortie, it is always in perfect order by the next time I take off...”

You should have seen the faces of Semyonov, Kolpakov and Krivikhin when they read that article! And how proudly they showed it round among their comrades!

Safonov’s praise was indeed merited. The young mechanics were ready to do anything for their commander.

Usually the ground mechanics would take a rest when the squadron leaders took off. But Safonov’s men would scan the sky, while Semyonov, the senior mechanic, would climb to the top of a hill in order to see better...

Today, too, they were keeping a sharp lookout.

“The skipper always comes out on top!” Kolpakov said reassuringly to Semyonov.

“That’s so, but isn’t he overdue?”

After a while they got busy and prepared the petrol and lubricating oil for refuelling the plane the moment the squadron leader returned. Everything was ready, but Safonov had not come in yet. It was, in fact, too early, but it seemed to the mechanics that the scheduled time had long since elapsed. At last several dots appeared on the horizon... Soviet fighters!

The mechanics dashed off to the landing field. Semyonov could always pick out Safonov’s machine by the way it touched down: a smooth, neat three-point landing.

Boris leaned out of the cockpit, his face radiant and excited. Winking merrily to Semyonov and Kolpakov who came running up to meet him, he marked two more crosses on the fuselage of his plane. The squadron leader had added another two Jerries to his score.

The mechanics were overjoyed.

They bombarded him with questions, animatedly discussing the details of his latest encounter.

Semyonov was the first to get down to business. Fishing out his tools, with which he never parted, he set about examining the plane.

There were more holes than he could count at one glance. The fabric covering the wings was in tatters. The holes were caused by shells: the captain had been fighting at close quarters again.

A cursory examination showed that the lug on the connecting rod of the diving rudder was almost completely shot through.

Shortly after Redkov, the military commissar, came up, accompanied by Kovalenko, Pokrovsky and Maximovich. Kovalenko looked at the squadron leader's machine and shook his head:

"Why, it's holding together literally by a thread!" he exclaimed.

"You're right there!" Pokrovsky confirmed.

"Impossible..." But Boris' tone of exaggerated indifference deceived nobody. They could see by the look in his eyes that he was very well aware of the risk he had run.

For a moment they were all silent. Redkov's face was clouded. Finally Semyonov blurted out with undisguised resentment:

"Pardon me, Comrade Captain, for saying so, but you know yourself what Comrade Stalin told Chkalov: 'The life of a flier is more precious to us than any plane in the world.' He undoubtedly had cases like this in mind. By all rights you should have baled out. Why, it was next to impossible to land with the plane in that condition."

Safonov turned away from Semyonov and met Redkov's

eyes fixed on him.

"What's the matter, Commissar? Why so glum?"

"The regulations, Comrade Captain, categorically prohibit flying a plane with a defect like that. Your duty was to abandon the plane. To land it in that condition was a technical impossibility!"

"What do you mean — a technical impossibility?" Boris objected calmly. "I did land it, didn't I?... The main thing was to avoid bumps. And I did... I touched down smoothly enough. Why, I hardly dared to breathe," he added with a smile.

* * *

The Commissar was forever trying to persuade Boris to rest properly. The latter always turned in in his flying togs.

"What if there's an alarm?" he would say. "The enemy would be over us before I could get into my togs!"

During the very first days of the war he snipped off the buckles on his helmet and replaced them with snaps. He would hang his helmet up on a tree within reach of his plane. The effect of these and many other time-saving devices was really amazing: Safonov's fighter would always take to the air almost as soon as the rocket pistol went off.

And the men in his squadron considered themselves in honour bound not to lag behind their leader.

"When you go up with Safonov, you seem to feel more sure of yourself," Maximovich once said of him.

By dint of his personal example on hundreds of operational flights, Boris was able to communicate to his men something of his own daring, self-possession and intrepidity. These qualities, coupled with extreme skill in aerial warfare, made his squadron the terror of the fascists. Men like Alexander Kovalenko, or Pokrovsky, the YCL organizer,

who had already been twice decorated by the government, or Orlov, Maximovich, Romanov, Adonkin and Vinichenko were known far and wide among the sailors and marines as first-class fighter pilots. It was these men that the young fliers joining the unit tried to emulate, striving to become equally as skilled by studying their tactics in action. At the same time the men they looked up to steadily continued to perfect their own skill under Safonov's leadership.

Boris was popular not only amongst his own men and respected not only by fliers. There was something intrinsically Russian about him, about his whole appearance, that made people like him from the very first.

Always spick and span, always ready for action, Boris did not miss — in fact, could not miss — a single scrap. The first man of his squadron to down a fascist plane, he continued to keep ahead of all the other fliers. By the time the war was only three months old, he already had sixteen Junkers, Messerschmitts and other enemy aircraft to his score. During the same period his squadron accounted for forty-nine enemy aircraft without incurring a single loss.

The government was quick to recognize the courage and heroism of Safonov and his men. Two Orders of the Red Banner were conferred on Boris himself, and subsequently the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union were added to them. His unit as a whole was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.

When the celebration meeting, with its speeches and hearty congratulations, was over, Boris, still in a festive mood and flushed with excitement, went to pay a visit to the fuel dumps. At the entrance he met Semyonov. The latter's eyes, as he added his own personal congratulations, shone with such happiness and pride that Boris felt embarrassed.

"Thanks, old man," he said. "You know, when they were

presenting it to me, I felt as though the whole country were telling me: 'That's the way to fight!'"

* * *

One incident that cannot be passed over in silence is the occasion when Boris Safonov, at the head of a flight of six fighters, "surrounded" and dispersed fifty-two enemy aircraft. This incident is probably without precedent in the history of aerial warfare.

The German offensive on the Northern Front in August 1941 ended, like the preceding ones, in a complete fiasco.

In the middle of September, however, the enemy again concentrated a strong force on this sector. The orders of the fascist command were to capture Murmansk in four days. As a reward they undertook to give their soldiers three days in which to loot this northern citadel of the Soviet Union, to be followed by leave home.

It was evident that the Germans would try to ensure the success of their onslaught by an intensive air bombardment of the Soviet positions. A decisive struggle for supremacy in the air was impending. Enemy scouting planes were constantly appearing over the Red Army lines.

Safonov and Redkov called the pilots together before the take-off. Safonov spoke in his usual brief and jerky manner:

"On no account go off on your own. And see that you don't lag behind. Don't lose sight of each other. Watch your tails. Help each other out. We'll attack from the left against the right flank of the enemy."

The seven fighters soared into the air and headed westward in two wings. The squadron leader led the first, followed by Pokrovsky and Maximovich; in the second, Kovalenko took the lead, with Zhivotovsky, Semenenko and Polkovnikov behind him.

Beneath them flashed an occasional white island — snow-covered peaks — amid a sea of dark green — the birch woods clothing the mountain slopes. Away to starboard the smooth waters of the Barents Sea sparkled in the brilliant sunshine. Behind them glistened the winding reaches of Kola Bay.

Safonov dipped his wings in greeting to the Soviet ground troops and the men in the trenches waved their hats in reply. But soon the dove-coloured puffs of smoke from bursting shells could be seen. They were over enemy territory.

Columns of Finnish and German troops were moving eastward. For the first time Boris regretted that he was not a bomber pilot. He would have given anything for a load of bombs and the chance of sending these marauders, who were stretching out their grasping hands towards our sacred Soviet soil, to perdition.

No enemy aircraft were to be seen. They were lurking somewhere in the low hanging clouds, which stretched as far as the eye could see and enveloped the peaks and hill-tops. The enemy had plenty of cover. It was dangerous to fly low, but Boris skimmed along over the very crest of the hills.

They flew for about ten kilometres over the enemy's lines without meeting a single fascist plane. Then Boris wheeled round and they set off on the return course. Boris signalled:

“Break cloud!”

An unpleasant surprise awaited them. About thirty Junkers were circling above the clouds, heading steadily in the direction of the Soviet lines. And in a still wider circle hovered the inevitable escort of Messerschmitts. Boris counted at least twenty of them before he hastily dived back into the clouds.

In an instant the Soviet fighter pilots had followed their leader and were safely hidden behind the fringe of the clouds. Boris gave the signal to deploy, giving his men to understand

that he intended to tackle the enemy.

The squadron leader had made an unusually daring decision. “With the odds at about ten to one in their favour, they surely won't refuse to take us on,” he calculated. “And once we draw them into a dog-fight, we'll be able to prevent a large number of them from carrying out their direct mission, no matter what the outcome of the battle is for us.”

Boris kept the enemy grimly in sight. By now the leading fascist bombers were almost over the Red Army lines. Bombs burst far below as one of the Junkers dropped its load on the Soviet forward fringe.

Boris opened the throttle and zoomed upward into the very thick of the Junkers. His machine flashed through the air like a meteor as he attacked first one plane, then another.

Three Messerschmitts darted to meet him head on. A fourth approached from the side. Boris met them unflinchingly. He let loose a hail of fire at the leading Messerschmitt in front of him, and the German flier, unable to face the fury of his onslaught, dived out of range, followed closely by the other two fighters. Boris veered, round to meet the fighter approaching from the side. There were a few tense seconds as the two planes raced full tilt at each other. Then the same thing was repeated: the fascist lost his nerve and shot upwards like a rocket.

Detailing two wings to deal with Safonov, the Germans started another round about, this time right over the Soviet lines. Then their circle broke up and re-formed into wings with the intention of deploying and bombing the Red Army units along the line of the front.

The seven Soviet pilots timed their onslaught to the second and attacked simultaneously from all sides — inconceivable confusion broke out in the flock of enemy raiders. The fascists could hardly fire for fear of hitting their own planes. Man-

oeuvring with lightning speed, the Soviet fighters dodged out of range and raked them with fire.

The enemy's formation was broken up. The Soviet planes swept the Junkers and Messerschmitts with such accurate, deadly fire that a large number of enemy fighters hastened to take cover in the clouds.

The tactics adopted by Boris and his comrades consisted of sudden, lightning-like attacks, such as they had already employed successfully more than once against the Luftwaffe. Pouncing on their chosen victim, they opened fire from point-blank range, sowed panic and confusion in the ranks of the fascists and then vanished into the clouds as rapidly as they had appeared. A few seconds later they would appear from the opposite direction and, climbing to gain height, swoop down from above.

These tactics proved effective. Although only one enemy plane had so far been shot down, the fascists had been disorganized. The chief thing, however, was that Safonov had succeeded in carrying the battle over the positions of the German ground forces.

The enemy attacked furiously, resorting to the most cunning tricks. Profiting by their overwhelming superiority in numbers, the Messerschmitts would concentrate several wings against one of the Soviet fliers, while the latter would counter by grouping together and forming a circle of iron which not all the cunning of the fascists could break.

Then Zhivotovsky shot down a Messerschmitt-110. Soon after Alexander Kovalenko lured another off to one side and then skilfully proceeded to harry the life out of his twin-engined, armoured opponent. Finally, having gained a favourable position, he let fly with a long burst of machine-gun fire.

This particular German fighter was taking part in the raid as a bomber. Its load considerably impaired its manoeuvrabil-

ity. Realizing the predicament he was in, the pilot banked away from Kovalenko, shot up in a wide, steep spiral and then dived, evidently with the intention of jettisoning his bombs on the Soviet troops. But Kovalenko intercepted him in time. The fascist never came out of the dive, and an instant later there came a deafening explosion from the ground below.

Meanwhile Pokrovsky had taken on another Messerschmitt, which, however, retaliated with unexpected vigour. But Maximovich, who was covering his comrade, saw the German plane flash past Pokrovsky, and as it came within easy range he sent it hurtling to its doom.

The very next second, however, the two pilots found themselves in dire straits. A dozen enemy planes attacked them and cut them off from the rest of the flight. Undaunted by the odds they put up a staunch fight. But with every moment their position became more and more difficult, as fresh fascist fighters were continually coming up to take a hand in the engagement.

Boris left his opponent and sped to the aid of his comrades. He intercepted a Junkers just as it was about to sit on Pokrovsky's tail and opened fire. The German tossed and pitched. Boris increased his fire. The German began to twist and turn from side to side until finally, crazy with fear, it hysterically radioed: "SOS! We are surrounded!..."

Many stations picked up the frantic, uncoded message of the Junkers-87: "We are surrounded by Soviet fighters!"

This was the last message transmitted by the doomed Junkers. An instant later it crashed with its load of bombs on the German positions below.

Then something almost unbelievable happened: the fascist fighters, dismayed by the fury of the onslaught and alarmed by the way the Soviet fighters were strafing the Junkers, sheered off one after the other. The rest of the bombers

soon followed suit. In that unparalleled engagement the Germans lost ten planes while some fifty others fled from seven Soviet fighters.

The first thought that flashed through Safonov's mind was: "Can it be a ruse?" But the last Junkers were already disappearing from sight. Without a moment's hesitation he dipped his wings, signalling to his men: "Don't let the enemy get away!"

Seeing the seven fighters coming on in hot pursuit, the fascist bombers began to jettison their bombs in order to increase their speed. Most of the bombs landed in their own lines.

Once again Boris dipped the wings of his plane: "Return to base!"

Seven planes had gone into action, and all seven were returning home. The Red Army men and the marines gave the naval fliers a rousing reception as they winged their way back.

Boris' name was on everybody's lips.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War Boris Safonov was a sub-lieutenant. Today he is a lieutenant-colonel. He has taken part in upwards of three hundred sorties and fought in thirty-four air battles, in the course of which several Luftwaffe squadrons were wiped out, while he himself has personally accounted for twenty-five German planes.

On June 14, 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR conferred a second Gold Star on Hero of the Soviet Union Lieutenant-Colonel Boris Safonov for outstanding bravery in action in the war against the German invaders.

A bronze bust will be set up shortly in far-off Senyavino, the home town of Boris Safonov — the first Guardsman of the Far North, and twice Hero of the Soviet Union.

The day will come when the men of the Red Army will finally crush the fascists and return to their homes in the

Ukraine, in Kazakhstan, in Byelorussia, along the Volga, in Siberia or in the Transcaucasus. And there they will tell their children and grandchildren about the splendid young Russian fighter, Boris Safonov.

*A. Balodis,
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A TRUE SON OF THE LATVIAN PEOPLE

Lieutenant Janis Vilhelms stepped out of the People's Commissariat of Defence and crossed the street with the firm stride of an old soldier. It was a warm July night. For a moment he stopped and a happy smile lingered on his face as he glanced at the stars twinkling in the Moscow sky above him. The events of the whole extraordinary day were still jostling one another in his memory. He reconstructed them one after the other as clearly as if he were living through them again. About noon the coveted Gold Star of a Hero of the Soviet Union had been pinned to his breast together with the Order of Lenin. In the evening he had met and chatted with Stalin. Indeed, that day had been the day of the greatest events of his life, events that seemed to sum up everything he had accomplished so far and spurred him on towards new exploits.

Janis Vilhelms' heart was glowing with joy and pride. A sensation which he simply could not put into words had gripped him from the moment he had approached Stalin. He still felt the firm grip of Stalin's handshake and remembered — how could he ever forget it? — the friendly way Stalin had clapped him on the shoulder.

After his conversation with Stalin, a general there had asked him:

“What are you planning to do, enter the Military Academy or return to the front?”

“Return to the front,” he had answered simply.

What else could he do? His native Soviet Latvia was still occupied by the Germans. His friends were on the firing lines. No, there was no other place but the front for him. Through

him Stalin had greeted the Latvian riflemen and through him he had sent his command: to fight until complete victory had been won. It was up to him to convey this command to his comrades-in-arms, to the men who were bravely and resolutely fighting the relentless enemy of the Soviet people. He knew that Stalin's words would inspire his friends and spur them on to make even greater efforts in the struggle for the freedom of their native land.

Janis' military career had begun with the outbreak of the war. Hard pressed by the superior forces of the enemy, he and his friends had retreated from Riga, fighting stubbornly every inch of the way. At Balozkalna they held up the enemy. Their hearts contracted as they looked down on the city they loved. The German vandals had already managed to destroy the spire of St. Peter's. The houses on the banks of the Daugava were a mass of flames; dense clouds of smoke from the gutted district reached up to the sky. The enemy spared nothing in his path. With hate in their hearts the men of the Latvian Rifles fought like heroes. Many perished on the fateful field at Balozkalna but the enemy onslaught could not be stemmed, and the retreat went on with incessant battles. Step by step the nazi war machine devoured their native fields and towns.

Near Valmier, on the banks of the prettiest of the Latvian rivers, the Gaui, they engaged the enemy in one of the last battles they fought on their native soil. It was here that Janis was wounded the first time, while leading a small detachment of the Workers' Guards into attack. He hastily dressed the wound and continued to give battle. Nothing could deter him — neither the loss of the land of his forefathers nor the physical pain of the wound. A true son of his country, he was bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of his people. For seven centuries the German knights and barons had tormented and tyrannized the Latvian people. For seven long centuries

hatred for the German enslavers had rankled in the hearts of his countrymen. And now this age-old hatred asserted itself as a mighty wellspring of strength, demanding vengeance both for the sufferings of his forefathers and for the predatory seizure of free Soviet Latvia.

Anger and thirst for vengeance burned in the eyes of the Latvian riflemen as they witnessed the iron heel of the Teuton hordes once again trample underfoot the fruits of the labour of the Latvian people. The wounds inflicted by the German barons in the course of centuries opened again in their hearts; there was not a man there but felt with renewed bitterness the intolerable weight of the bloody German jackboot. And Janis understood and shared the feelings of the rest of his countrymen.

When he was three years old, a punitive expedition under the command of a German baron had shot his father and mother, leaving him an orphan. He had found a home with some relatives, but they were too poor to keep him and he had been forced to begin a cheerless and lonely life of penury. At still a tender age he had helped shepherds tend their flocks and then hired himself out as a farmhand. But the youngster could never reconcile himself to this fate. He was possessed by an irresistible desire to extricate himself from the clutches of want, to stand firmly on his own feet in the cruel and unjust world about him, and he determined to fight for his happiness.

So it was that Janis went to Riga, where he entered a printshop as an apprentice and learned the trade of compositor. It was here that he first met people who shared his opinion that things were far from good or just in the world they lived in. They gave him books to read, which he devoured eagerly, enchanted by the great, long-sought-for truths he found in them, books which helped him to understand why his father

and mother had been killed, books in which he rediscovered the folk songs that had warmed his joyless, lonely childhood, songs in which the people compared their bitter lot under the German barons with the fate of an orphan. Himself orphaned by these same barons, Janis believed with all his heart and soul, with every fibre of his being, that the magic castle of light and freedom sung of in the folk songs would some day rise from the depths of the sea, where it had been plunged by the powers that be...

Janis took the dangerous and difficult course of struggle for the happiness of his people.

Before long he was arrested and thrown into prison. When he was released he found himself blacklisted by the fascist rulers of Latvia. Nowhere could he find employment and his life became one endless struggle for existence. But no matter what privations he suffered, nothing could shatter his resolution to devote his whole life to the cause of winning a better future for his people.

And this struggle was not in vain.

In June 1940, the magic castle of light and freedom rose from the depths. The sun of a new dawn shone over the Latvian people, warming with its rays those who had hitherto likened themselves to orphans. Latvia became a Soviet republic and entered the fraternal family of nations of the Soviet Union. A new and joyous life of creative labour set in for her people.

A year went by.

In June 1941, the grim spectre of war cast its black shadow over the exhilarating joy of their newly-won freedom: the German hordes invaded Soviet territory. Janis took to the roads of war. They led him through the whole of Estonia. Shoulder to shoulder with Russians, Latvians, Estonians and other sons of the Soviet people, he fought at Tartu and Tallinn. At Tallinn

he embarked on a steamer carrying Red Army troops bound for Leningrad. On the way the ship was attacked by fascist aircraft; one bomb scored a direct hit and the vessel began to sink rapidly. Janis helped the crew launch the lifeboats and assign the troops on board to their places. Only when this was done and the ship was on the verge of going down did he and the sailors don lifebelts and plunge into the sea. The ship sank. Meanwhile the lifeboats had pulled off and were lost to sight. Together with another sailor, Janis swam through the bleak empty waste. The hours dragged slowly by. The cold water chilled him to the marrow, but Janis refused to consider himself beaten. He was determined to reach the shore and carry on with the struggle. And it was this firm resolution that helped him to pull through. Towards evening he and his companion were picked up by a steamer on which they met many of their friends.

It was late at night when they reached Leningrad, a Leningrad already menaced by the invading hordes of fascism. Everybody there capable of taking up arms was rallying to the defence of the city. New units rapidly sprang into being and were just as quickly thrown into action.

“Now is not the time to think of drying our clothes, chums!” Janis exclaimed passionately to his comrades. “Every moment is precious. They’ll dry on our backs in the heat of the battles ahead of us.”

Straight from the ship Vilhelms and his friends joined a unit heading for the front. He and his comrades had fought the enemy at Tallinn, they would engage him now at Leningrad. The enemy they were opposing here was their common enemy, and the land they were defending here was a part of their own native land. Vilhelms was appointed a section commander.

Days of bitter, hard-fought battles followed. Black swarms

of Nazi aircraft hovered relentlessly over the Red Armymen’s heads and showered them with bombs. Advancing against them overland came the fire-belching steel-clad monsters of German tanks. The incessant din of bursting bombs and shells rent the air at the gates of Leningrad. The earth seemed to boil as high explosives bit into it pitilessly. And into this raging inferno of fire marched the defenders of Leningrad, Janis Vilhelms and his squad among them.

During one battle Janis’ unit had to repel a German tank attack. The onslaught was preceded by a furious bombardment by enemy aircraft and guns. When the first German light tank approached the position held by Janis and his squad he had only three men left. He crouched behind a pile of rocks, while his men took cover in a clump of bushes to his left, some fifteen paces away. Sweeping the terrain in front with fire, the German tank headed for them.

Janis had only one grenade left. The tank was almost on top of him when he hurled the grenade at the oncoming machine and threw himself flat on the ground. The nazi machine spun round and stopped short, its track smashed. One of the Germans tried to scramble out, but a bullet fired by Vilhelms struck him down. In the meantime, his men caught sight of a heavy tank heading straight for their commander. They knew that he had used his last grenade. They had nothing left but a few petrol bottles. Anxious to lend him a hand, they made an attempt to reach the rock pile behind which he had taken cover but they were spotted by the nazi tankmen. A machine gun began its murderous tattoo. Janis saw his three comrades cut down by the hail of lead one after the other, leaving him alone to face the armour-clad enemy. It was possible, moreover, that some member of the crew of the disabled tank was still alive, in which case he would be at a definite disadvantage for he was now practically unarmed. He had to act at

once though, and so, running the risk of being hit by the machine-gun fire of the oncoming tank, he wriggled along the ground to where his fallen comrades lay, collected their petrol bottles and then took cover behind the disabled tank. There, at least, he would be out of danger from any chance survivor inside the machine since he would be out of range. The heavy tank came closer and closer, its gun barking viciously, its machine guns sweeping the terrain. Janis waited for it to draw alongside. Suddenly it swung round and rammed the disabled tank, propelling it in Janis' direction. The impact of the blow sent him flying; his left arm was broken, his clothes were torn to shreds, and there was an ugly bruise on his stomach. But his right hand tightened its grip on the petrol bottle. Just then the tank veered round, exposing a vital spot. Janis was quick to seize the opportunity. In a flash the bottle hurtled through the air and smashed against the armour plating, which was immediately enveloped in flames. The nazi tankmen scrambled out of the burning machine and took to their heels, but somewhere from the flank a Soviet machine gun opened up and they went down one after the other.

Welcome voices announced the arrival of reinforcements. The commander of the unit ordered Janis to leave at once for the field dressing station, but instead he bandaged his broken arm himself and returned to his place behind the pile of rocks, firing with his sound right hand. Only after dusk, when the din of the battle abated, did he ask for some water, which he poured on the injured arm to alleviate the pain. And even when a medical orderly remonstrated with him, he refused to leave his post, protesting that the injury was a mere trifle.

It was during this period, in the heat of the battles against the nazi aggressors, that new Latvian rifle corps began to be formed, upholding the ancient fighting traditions of the Latvian Rifles and the Latvian people. These consisted of vol-



unteers from among the civilian population, men evacuated from Soviet Latvia and Latvians serving in the Red Army. Janis requested to be transferred to one of these units.

The Latvian units went into action at a time when mortal danger threatened Moscow, at the time when the Battle of Moscow reached its climax and the Supreme Command of the Red Army issued the order to smash the fascist armies on the approaches to the capital. The Latvian riflemen proudly took their places among the heroic defenders of Moscow. They knew that the fate of the metropolis of the Soviet Union, the hub of all of its fraternal republics, had been entrusted to them. And together with his comrades, Janis fought at Naro-Fominsk and in a number of other grimly-contested but victorious battles against the fascist invaders.

During one of these battles on the approaches to Moscow, Vilhelms was ordered to occupy a railway station with his platoon and reconnoitre the enemy's positions. West of the station were three German pillboxes. At the station itself the enemy had concentrated a considerable force. Janis split up his platoon into four groups, ordering three of them to take up a position facing the enemy pillboxes while with the fourth he skirted the enemy fortifications with the object of seizing the station building by a sudden blow. At a given signal all four groups rushed at the enemy. It took them only a few minutes to overwhelm the fascist fire-nests. Janis' group wiped out the German forward posts and, dashing across the railway tracks, broke into the station building. Pistol in hand, Janis jerked open one of the doors. A German stood on the staircase similarly armed. For a moment the two stood there face to face as if transfixed. Janis fired first. The pistol dropped from the German's wounded arm. But the nazi had no intention of surrendering. A powerfully-built man, he took a flying leap at his opponent, and the two rolled on the floor locked in mortal

combat. But Janis overpowered him and turned him over to one of the Red Army men who had hastened to his assistance.

The railway station was taken. The Germans lost seventy-eight men in killed alone besides a large quantity of booty.

In the Staraya Russa area the Latvian units, for some time, remained on the defensive. After the days of swift offensive action this seemed dull and monotonous to the men. They tried to make up for it, however, by utilizing every opportunity to wipe out as many Germans as possible. Janis himself volunteered for twenty-two reconnaissance raids in the German rear, and each time came back with valuable information.

Whenever his men saw him packing a tin of bullybeef and some biscuits into his haversack they knew that he was again setting out on one of his expeditions. Usually he took one or two men along with him. They would cautiously thread their way through the snow-covered fir woods, flitting like shadows across the clearings, hugging the ground when German flares went up at almost regular intervals and utilizing every moment of darkness to press forward in search of a convenient spot to lay an ambush.

Janis kept a strict account of the number of nazis he wiped out and never failed to bring back proof from his reconnaissance trips to bear out his statement. His example was readily followed by the men, while his latest score was a popular topic of conversation among the other units.

On one occasion he took up a position in the snow on the fringe of a wood. About a kilometre away was a village occupied by the Germans. Despite the keen blasts of wind which soon covered him with snow from head to foot, he patiently withstood the cold for hours, waiting for an unwary German to make an appearance. It was getting on for evening and things were already beginning to look as if his vigil had

been in vain when two Germans in field-grey greatcoats and with mufflers wrapped around their heads suddenly appeared on the hillside. They were evidently sentries on their way to relieve the men on duty. The first of the two stamped his feet to warm them as he walked along.

“Cold? Never mind, I’ll warm you up!”

A shot rang out and the first German fell heavily to the ground. The other did not grasp at once what had happened. He apparently thought that the man ahead had merely lost his footing, for he called out something. A second shot brought the second nazi down alongside the first.

The darkness was thickening. Janis had added another two Germans to his score. His hands were numb with the cold, but still he stayed on. He knew that if the relieved German sentries did not return shortly someone would be sent to find out what had happened to them. And sure enough, a third German soon appeared. The man moved forward slowly, trying to penetrate the gloom. Catching sight of the dead bodies he made to turn back but at that moment a shot rang out and, throwing up his arms, he too sprawled face down in the snow.

On another occasion Janis was keeping an eye on a road along which the Germans brought up troops and ammunition to the forward lines. The spot was exceptionally good for an ambush. Dawn was already breaking when he saw a squad marching down the road under the command of a big, burly, heavily-moustached *Feldwebel*. Every now and then the *Feldwebel* snapped out an order in an angry, gruff voice. Suddenly a shot rang out and the *Feldwebel* dropped in his tracks. The soldiers turned and fled, only two remaining behind to drag the dead man away. Taking careful aim, Janis fired again, and another Jerry sprawled motionless on the road. The other took to his heels and plunged into a hollow, where he disappeared

from sight. Just then two bullets whizzed past Janis’ head. He burrowed into the snow and lay stock-still. He realized that things had taken a serious turn. The Germans had evidently spotted his position and were gunning for him. Now he had to be doubly cautious. For a long time he lay buried in the snow and waited. Then, removing his helmet, he shifted it to one side and raised it cautiously with his rifle. Almost immediately two bullets pierced it in quick succession. There was no doubt about it: an enemy sniper was after his scalp.

“We’ll see which of us can stick it out longer,” thought Janis, carefully scanning the terrain in front of him. The day seemed to drag on endlessly. It was bitterly cold. He could hardly suppress his desire to bend his legs. But he dared not — the slightest movement might spell the end for him.

German soldiers moved up and down the road. A runner went by. But Janis let him pass. The sniper was a far more valuable quarry than an ordinary soldier.

Evening came. Two Germans passed by carrying containers for food. Vilhelms now realized how hungry he was, and he stuffed a biscuit in his mouth and began to chew it. Only when it was absolutely dark did he leave his perilous position and make his way back to his own lines.

“If not today, then tomorrow!” he thought, mentally addressing the German sniper. “I’ll get you sooner or later!”

The following day he was out again on his vigil. But this time he was not alone. A Red Armyman who accompanied him lay in the snow some distance away. Once in a while he raised a helmet perched on the muzzle of his rifle. Janis waited. At last three bullets crashed into the helmet in quick succession. He noticed a wisp of smoke curling upwards near an old willow tree. That was obviously the hideout of the enemy sniper, but he had to make sure. Janis waited long and patiently for the man to reveal himself, his eyes glued on the

suspected spot. A fit of coughing wracked his body but he stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth to muffle the noise. At last the German betrayed his whereabouts; no sooner did the sun dip behind the pines than he decided to leave his retreat. But hardly had he taken a step when Janis' bullet bored into him. Vilhelms' vigil had come to an end.

Soon afterwards a Red Army front-line newspaper carried an article telling how Lieutenant Janis Vilhelms had wiped out forty-eight Germans. "Follow his example!" the paper urged. "Hunt down the Fritzes! Wipe them out!"

Janis' example spurred his comrades to become skilled snipers. The Red Army men made it a point of honour to shoot beyond reproach, vying with each other in sniping for the nazis. They began to keep a strict record of the fascists they had picked off. Every night many a man, following Vilhelms' example, set out to stalk the hated enemy and take revenge for the suffering inflicted by him upon their native land.

The sniper movement spread to other units and soon embraced the entire section of the front. The Germans' air of bravado melted away as soon as they came within reach of Soviet rifles. And even on days when it was comparatively quiet at the front, crawling on their bellies, as befits reptiles, became their usual means of locomotion in the vicinity of the front lines. But this too failed to save them from the well-placed bullets of the Soviet snipers.

The last days of March were sunny and warm. The Germans repeatedly attacked on the sector held by the Latvian infantry, throwing forces into action that far exceeded ours in number. Tremendous courage and staunchness were demanded of every one of our soldiers and commanders.

Janis and his men repelled one attack after another. And in between these attacks the German Luftwaffe furiously pounded the defence lines held by the Latvian rifle units. The

snow-bound country was perforated by the black yawning mouths of bomb craters.

During one assault the Germans subjected Janis' unit to a frontal and flanking fire. The position had to be held at all costs. His entire machine-gun crew was put out of action, so he himself manned the gun. Mounting it on the edge of a shell hole, he opened up at the Germans, who were trying to surround his small force.

Commissar Piessis came to his assistance. He refilled the ammunition belts while Janis kept the attacking Germans at bay. The unequal battle lasted for hours. Janis was wounded, but was too busy mowing down the nazis to pay any attention to it. One thought was uppermost in his mind: the Germans must be held up; they must not be allowed to advance a single step! When the Germans bombarded his shell hole from their mortars, he rapidly shifted to another and continued to fire. Powerless to overcome the resistance of the defenders, the Germans began to bomb the Soviet lines from the air. One bomb exploded quite close to Janis who was wounded in the head by a splinter. But in spite of the wound and the effects of shell-shock he refused to leave the field until the German onslaught was stemmed.

This was the ninth time he was wounded. Nine wounds and one hundred and fifty-two killed Germans to his credit — such is the record of Hero of the Soviet Union Janis Vilhelms, who has devoted his whole life to the great struggle for the honour and liberty of his native land.

N. Bogdanov

THE BROTHERS GLINKA

They were born on the right bank of the Dnieper, not far from Zaporozhye, where from time immemorial people have estimated the richness of a family by the number of its sons. The old miner Boris Glinka had three sons. Boris and Dmitri grew up to be strong and sturdy. The third, Misha, was a frail lad, who kept aloof from the boisterous games of his brothers.

"In the old days, you'd have been a clerk," Misha's father used to tell him, "but now you'll be a real scholar."

He decided to apprentice his first two sons to his own trade. Just as his forefathers had sent their sons to the Zaporozhye Setch to fight with might and main for their land and the Christian faith, so now the descendants of the Zaporozhye Cossacks sent their sons to the famous ore mines at Krivoi Rog to extract the iron that went to strengthen Russia's might. The Glinkas were a family of miners. And in all probability it was from their trade that they derived their name, for "glinka" is the Cossack name for the red ore of Krivoi Rog.

The old miner held that it was both the calling and duty of his family to extract this ore. He reared his sons with care and affection, and was overjoyed when they talked about mining and new mining machinery and planned to learn the trade by joining the local technical school and subsequently going to the Mining Institute. He approved of their joining the Young Communist League, which at that time assigned his sons to work in the mines.

But one day the local YCL branch was instructed to nominate one of its best members for enrollment at a flying school. The choice fell upon Glinka's eldest son, Boris.

The old man was in a quandary what to do, but finally he blessed his first-born just as his forbears had done in bygone

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days when they had sent their sons off to the wars.

"Well, go if you must," he said. "Do what you can for your country's sake, lad, and don't disgrace your father's name."

The old man always closely followed the news in the daily papers and magazines. He had all the issues of the old *Niva* and the *Ogonyok* for at least the last thirty years. He got out the copy of the *Niva* which contained a portrait of Staff Captain Nesterov and the story of his death, and told his son:

"Our Russian fighters have never given in to the enemy, either on land or in the air. This here German airman, Rosenthal, thought he was cock of the walk and nobody could touch him. But our men accepted his challenge and went for him. He didn't mince words: 'If I have to do it with my wings, I'll do it; if I have to do it with my wheels, I'll do it. I may die in the attempt, but I'll drive you from the sky!'"

The old man revered the great self-taught technicians of Russia, men such as Kulibin, and now, when his boy took up flying, he hung up a photograph of Nesterov beside their portraits.

When he allowed his eldest son to join the air force, the old man told his wife:

"We have to move with the times. One of the boys will be ploughing the air, another'll be hewing underground, and the third will go in for science. It's all necessary nowadays."

But shortly after his second son took a step which thoroughly aroused the old man's ire. An air club was opened in the district, and Boris flew back home to be the instructor. Dmitri, his second son, became one of the most active members of the club.

In less than a year he flew better than all the other lads and had given more than one display of his skill and daring in the air over the little town.

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But instead of praising him, the old man used to growl:

"All those fancy tricks you're doing up in the air are just a sheer waste of time... Is that what you've been given your health and strength for? Husky lads like you ought to work!"

"You can't call me a shirker, Dad," Dmitri would protest. "I fly only in my spare time..."

"But what's the sense of flying upside down?"

"There's plenty of sense in it," Boris would intervene. "Suppose there's a fight on. The enemy wants to tackle me this way, but I go like this... Then he does that, and I..."

By now Boris would be well launched upon a series of expressive gestures impossible to describe in words. The old man would watch it all sceptically, and when his son once said, "Nesterov also flew upside down!" he bluntly retorted:

"But he met the enemy head on, face to face, like a real Russian."

"He was just trying a new stunt, Dad, resorting to a dodge. The Zaporozhye Cossacks didn't always go for the enemy head on. They were famous for their military subterfuges."

And the brothers told their father that they dreamed of learning all the tricks of air fighting so that they would be able to down the enemy every time without coining to grief themselves.

The old man was carried away by such arguments, and he gradually outgrew his disappointment at the fact that his sturdy lads had not gone to work in the mines. It was a heavy blow to him, however, when Dmitri flew off to enter an army flying school. He felt uncomfortable in front of the neighbours, for he felt that their sons were doing hard, useful work, whereas his were frittering away their time in the air...

In the course of time Boris also left to become an instructor at a military school. The old miner felt lonely without

the two elder boys about the house.

It was a sad parting. In order to comfort their father somewhat the two brothers told him:

"Just wait and see, Dad! For all you know we may be able to give a better account of ourselves in the air than we would have done underground!"

"Forget about what might have been," the old man replied. "Only see that you make good at your job. Whatever a man does, he's got to know it to a T."

The two brothers took their father's instructions to heart. Nowadays when people discuss the Glinkas, the first thing everyone agrees on, is:

"They know their job to a T."

The brothers did not easily acquire their skill in aerial warfare.

"We owe it to Colonel Ibrahim Dzusov, who was like a father to us," they themselves declare. "He was the man who showed us the ropes."

And Colonel Dzusov, clean-shaven and bespectacled, looking more like a teacher than a flying ace, would retort with a smile:

"That's true enough. I've taught you everything... even how to be shot down!"

... It happened in the Kuban. Dzusov took off on an operational flight. He left in a plane, but returned on foot, grimy, bootless, but with his glasses intact and his parachute slung over his shoulder.

"Report to headquarters that Dzusov's back after being shot down," he said. "Here's my revolver and parachute. The plane's stranded in a bog. I was caught napping by a Focke-Wulf who straddled my tail..."

It was an object lesson to them all. A German pilot with his plane marked like a Soviet machine had sneaked up be-

hind Dzusov. Yakovlevs and Lavochkins were circling in the air, a real round-a-bout and no mistake. A number of Focke-Wulfs which look very much like these models, with Red Stars painted on them, had managed to hitch on to the Soviet formation.

The mistake which our men made was that they had allowed a strange plane to manoeuvre in to position behind the leader's machine.

When the details of this battle had been analysed, a rigid rule was enforced in the unit: "Every commander is to have his own permanent escort who alone may sit on his tail — and only then, in such a way, as to be always in view of the leader." The tail is the Achilles' heel of a fighter plane, the only spot from which it is vulnerable.

After that, the leading fliers in the unit began to stick closely to their "escorts." With the Glinkas flew Ivan Babak and Nikolai Kudrya, plucky young fliers who would have given their lives for their commanders.

Colonel Dzusov's careful coaching brought out the best in the two brothers. Once he noticed that Dmitri tended to minimize the value of precision firing. In a chat with some comrades, Dmitri had even gone to the extent of saying:

"Who thinks of taking aim in the middle of a dog-fight? You just let fly for all you're worth..."

When he came to hear of this, the colonel appointed Dmitri Glinka chief of the unit's gunnery service. Feeling responsible for the marksmanship of all the fliers in the unit, Dmitri discarded his former cocksureness, once again studied the theory of shooting and induced his comrades and subordinates to follow suit. He practised regularly and persistently on the ground, and the results soon made themselves felt. He began to shoot down two and sometimes three enemy aircraft in the course of a single raid. Moreover, he usually

had ammunition left over at the end of a battle, for one burst from his cannon and machine gun was sufficient to finish off any plane if he took careful aim and fired from close range.

"Be as generous as you like with your fancy tricks, but sparing with your fire," was what Dzusov had taught his men.

It is not easy to keep in hand and coach "youngsters" who have already shot down fifteen and more aircraft. And Dzusov had many such fliers under him, among them the Glinka brothers, Lavitsky, Fadeyev and Pokryshkin, to name only a few. And each of them had his own style and approach.

"Do you know why the Glinkas look on me as a second father, as it were?" Dzusov once asked, and then told the following story:

"I brought them together again. Before that they were in different units. Dmitri was downing Jerries with me, while Boris was training novices in the rear. Dmitri had a round dozen Jerries to his score. Boris had trained about a hundred fliers; but he was dissatisfied, he longed for a chance to fight. Whenever he received a letter from his younger brother, he nearly cried. He used to fret about him. To think of that 'kid' going up without him! And bagging a round dozen enemy planes, any one of which might have downed him instead!

"By a stroke of good fortune we went to get some new planes in the very town where Boris was serving as a flying instructor.

"The two brothers met in the street. They hugged each other. And then the elder brother blurted out appealingly:

"I want to have a smack at them! Can't you give me a leg up?"

"Dmitri decided to call in the aid of his comrades. They 'kidnapped' Boris, so to say, and took him to our quarters. There they stowed him away and told him:

"Sit tight and don't show your nose until it's time to take

off.’

“Then, right away, they came to me. Children don’t have secrets from their dads.

“We’ve kidnapped Glinka’s brother.’

“You can generally expect all sorts of escapades when fighter pilots are on furlough. Well, mine certainly outdid themselves that time: they had kidnapped a flying instructor from an aviation school! I confess I was at my wit’s end. The consequences might be very serious. What should I do? Send him back?... Two Glinkas would certainly be an acquisition to the unit!

“When I learnt that the head of the aviation school was a fellow countryman of mine, a Caucasian, I decided to go and pay him my respects and, what’s more, to take my lads along en masse. It was a grand occasion. The head of the school was delighted with his guests. Little did he know, of course, that we had his instructor locked up in our quarters and were proposing to carry him off by plane. But he was so emphatic in his protestations of friendship that I said outright to him:

“Well, as a test of your friendship, we’re going to ask you for something you hold most dear.’

“Naturally, he had no idea of what we wanted — it might have been a rug, a Caucasian cloak or a treasured cask of wine from his father’s cellar. Nevertheless, he replied from the bottom of his heart:

“Ask what you like, Ibrahim!’

“There and then I asked him for Lieutenant Boris Glinka. He went pale. But what could he do? He was a Caucasian, and it is not in the nature of a Caucasian to go back on his word. So he gave us Boris!

“You should have seen the stunts we did in those new planes! With two Glinkas! We went over that school in grand style.

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“And that’s how we got both the brothers in our unit: one who had already shot down a dozen aircraft, and the other who was dying to outdo him.”

Boris slogged out at the Jerries as though he was trying to make up for lost time. He quickly opened his account, and made every effort to outstrip Dmitri in the fighting over the Kuban.

“Don’t allow your feelings to get the better of you,” the younger brother cautioned him, “or you’ll get shot down yourself.”

“Well, war’s war,” Boris remarked.

“You pitch in as if it was a free-for-all fight. The art of war is to get the enemy without letting him get you.”

One day Boris was shot down. A German planted a shell right into the cockpit of his plane.

“He caught me napping,” Boris fumed. “If I’d seen him a second earlier, I’d have...”

“That’ll make you more vicious!” chuckled Dmitri when he came to see his wounded brother in hospital.

Dmitri seemed to Boris too cold-blooded and calculating. On *terra firina* Boris was an easy-going sort of fellow, perhaps even somewhat slow and sluggish. But in the air he was a different man. He could not bear to see a German without feeling an overwhelming desire to go slap-dash at him. Dmitri, on the other hand, would frequently streak past a German without seeming to see him. It was just as though he were saying: “Keep out of my way, and I’ll steer clear of you.” But that was just a favourite trick of his. Lulling the fascist’s vigilance in this way, he would suddenly appear right in front of him in the best possible position for an attack. He knew how to hide in the clouds and strike from the sun so that his opponent was dazzled by the rays.

Whenever he shot down a German, he used to say:

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“Let another German mother cry. That’s for the tears my mother is shedding now on the right bank of the Dnieper...”

That was the way Dmitri fought, and so far he had come through without a scratch. One day, however, even he went off the deep end. It was during the Soviet counter-offensive in the Kuban. Soviet planes were covering the advancing infantry from the air. Out with a small patrol, Dmitri saw a formation of German bombers on its way to strafe the Soviet lines. Down below, everything was in turmoil. The Red Army men had not yet dug in. Each bomb dropped by the enemy would have taken a heavy toll of the infantrymen.

The German bombers came on, wing after wing. Dmitri counted more than sixty planes before he gave it up.

“Into the attack!” he ordered.

Together with his partner, Dmitri swept down on the leading wing of bombers. The rest of the patrol covered them. The German fighters escorting the bombers were taken by surprise. There were so many of them that they never even dreamed that the small Soviet patrol would dare to attack such an aerial armada.

The leading German bomber burst into flames. Then the second plane in the leading wing was sent spinning to its doom. Now the planes in the second wing were already being raked with fire. The German fliers gave way before the assault and scattered... Panic seized them with the rout of the leading wing. The armada was escorted by twenty fighter planes, and if the Soviet machines had succeeded in breaking through, there must be a considerable number of them in the air. Wing by wing, the Germans changed course and, giving up all thoughts of precision bombing, dived or climbed to escape from the two Soviet aircraft.

Running out of ammunition, Dmitri’s partner withdrew from the battle, but Dmitri sped on alone through the thick of

the German bombers, attacking now one plane now another. He accounted for three before he himself was shot down. No one saw how it happened. But an hour later the news had spread throughout the unit.

“Dmitri hasn’t come back...”

A message of thanks was received by the unit from the commander of the ground troops; news poured in that the offensive was making splendid headway. Nothing, however, could cheer the fliers: Dmitri — their favourite — was missing.

Fortunately, however, their grief was groundless. By a miracle, Dmitri had come through practically unscathed. He himself could not remember just how he had managed to bale out. The ground had been very close. He had landed very heavily and had lost consciousness.

Dmitri was found by some local inhabitants of the mountains. He lay motionless on the ground, but his heart was still beating. When they found that they could not bring him to, they made a makeshift stretcher out of his parachute and carried him in the direction of the gunfire, giving the German guardhouses and strongpoints a wide berth.

Dmitri came to in hospital. His first words were:

“Where’s my parachute? Where’s my revolver?”

Having learned that they were safe, Glinka slipped away from the hospital that evening and turned up at the unit tired but happy, just like the Zaporozhye Cossack in the story who escaped from the Sultan’s prison.

Details of his attack on sixty enemy aircraft were already known in Moscow.

During the fighting in the Kuban in the spring the radio broadcast the news that Dmitri Glinka had been awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Before a month had elapsed, the same title was conferred upon his elder brother.

By this time the two brothers had accounted for almost an entire fascist aviation regiment — thirty German aircraft to be exact.

“A Cossak is a born fighter, even on a coffin,” joked Dmitri, recalling how, at the beginning of the war, he and his comrades had fought in slow training planes against fast German fighters.

Now the unit had the latest machines, which surpassed the best German models both in speed and manoeuvrability.

“How can you help beating the Jerries now?!” the brothers say. “It’s a pleasure to fight.”

They frequently go up together, and then they can be heard talking to each other over the radio:

“Have you spotted them, DB?”

“I see ‘em, BB!”

“Going in...”

“Covering you.”

“That’s settled Fritz! You take No. 2 .”

Then, after a while:

“Good work, DB!”

“Thanks, BB.”

The listeners-in understand that they have spotted and shot down two German raiders.

For brevity’s sake they began to call each other by the initials of their first names and patronymic: Boris Borisovich and Dmitri Borisovich. It baffled the Germans, and at the same time, it lightened the load, on the ether.

Now on the ground, too, they are known as BB and DB. Everyone calls them that, from the commander of the unit to Dusya, the messroom waitress.

“Today BB and DB downed a couple of planes each...”

“Today DB and BB got two dinners each...”

The whole regiment is proud of them. Every village and

hamlet where the men happen to be stationed is thrilled to see them. In less than twenty-four hours all the village children know DB and BB, and know all about their exploits and jokes. The youngsters follow them in a crowd, wherever they go; girls watch them shyly from behind trellises.

The two aces live quietly and amicably together on the ground, always kind and considerate to each other and to their comrades. But in the air, they are holy terrors to the Germans.

The brothers distinguished themselves once again during the fighting over Taganrog and the colliery derricks of the Donbass, when they shot down two and three aircraft a day. On the day when Dmitri had the title of Hero of the Soviet Union conferred on him the second time, they bagged a total of seven enemy machines.

Now the brothers have some fifty planes to their credit.

“We’re on our way to wiping out a second German aviation regiment,” says Dmitri, with an engaging smile.

“We’ll soon be seeing our mother and dad again,” Boris adds. “We must report to them how we’ve been making out, how many planes we’ve brought down.”

The two brothers are anxious to see their old people and their younger brother again. “Are they still alive, or have they been killed by the Germans,” the brothers wonder and their hearts contract and grow cold at the thought of the terrible plight of the people in German-occupied territory.

And looking westward, where the horizon is red with the glow of fires, they sing their favourite song:

My father is slain,
And all trampled the grain;
My sweetheart is vanished for aye...
Oh, my heart, let us fly
To where cold ashes lie
And the bank of the stream’s washed away.

The notes of the accordion rise and fall and tears come to the brothers' eyes. And suddenly, with a toss of their heads, they grimly say:

"Well, we wouldn't like to be in the shoes of anyone who makes orphans of us."

In the morning the two Russian airmen will go into action again, not in pursuit of glory or fame, but in accordance with their father's behest — to strike the enemy until he has been wiped from the face of their native land!

Lev Gumilevsky

THE MATHEMATICIAN

The old conception of mathematicians as gloomy, lonely and absent-minded people has long since been broken down. If it is to be met with at all today, it is only in caricatures of teachers of algebra and geometry at schools.

Consequently, we are not surprised to find that Sergei Lvovich Sobolev is a jolly, very lively and very sociable young man.

We should rather have been surprised to find the young Member of the Academy of Sciences — doctor of mathematical sciences as he is — morose, dry and stern.

But among mathematicians themselves, Sergei Lvovich included, there still lingers a belief that the public at large has nothing whatever to do with mathematics, that it is not interested, and cannot be interested, in the science of mathematics and that only a 'Varsity wrangler can possibly understand the essence of any modern mathematical discovery.

We cannot agree to such a separation of mathematics from the people's science, that science which K.A. Timiryazev called upon to share its joys and sorrows with the whole of society, "inculcating in it those mental appetites which, once aroused, are just as difficult to satisfy as material appetites."

We cannot but agree with K.A. Timiryazev that "science, by making society a partner to its interests, calling upon it to share in all its joys and sorrows, thereby acquires an ally, a strong support for its further advancement."

It would be a tragedy for both society and science if there were no language by which we could delve into the essence of scientific achievements without having to pass through a university course. Science needs the support of society, but society no less needs that of science.

Let us refer to the opinion of one of our great scientists, Professor N.E. Zhukovsky. Speaking at a special session of the Moscow Mathematical Society, he declared: "It can be said that a mathematical truth may not be considered definitely established until it is explainable to any member of the public who wishes to understand it."

Mathematical ability reveals itself very early, at the age when a child, who is accustomed generally to think only in concrete terms, first begins to make use of abstract conceptions.

Sergei Lvovich Sobolev is a pure mathematician. But in his ninth year, when he was a fair-haired, blue-eyed, quiet boy who until then had not stood out in any way from among his playmates, he became a kind of family wonder overnight. Unobserved and completely without guidance, he made his way independently through a four-year course in arithmetic, an achievement which moved his parents to raptures. Later, in between such juvenile occupations as building a Gramm wheel and reading Jules Verne, the thirteen-year-old lad studied algebra, geometry and trigonometry, and became so much at home in these subjects that he was able to help his student cousin with his mathematical exercises.

Let us grant that the ability for mathematical thought is inborn. But it can only become practice as a result of long and persistent training. Therefore it is important and interesting in the biography of a mathematician to establish the delicate, complex and elusive influences that first directed his youthful mind from the concrete to the abstract in search of a clear conception of things.

It is this quest which moves children to rip open the bodies of dolls and smash their toys to pieces — certainly no abstract method! Just what was it then that led one of these youngsters not to rip open the bodies of dolls, but to study al-

gebra and geometry — for the very same purpose of acquiring a clear conception of things, of his surroundings?

Largely on account of Sobolev's modesty, we know little of his childhood. He was born in 1908; in other words, his sudden interest in mathematics, his first strivings to understand the world by way of abstract thought, coincided with the years of the Revolution. At that time Sobolev lived in Kharkov, in that quarter of the suburbs where the city ended and the meadows began — the fields and hollows of the typical Russian landscape with its vast sky, soft breezes, boundless expanses and unbroken silences. The lad had to spend long hours in these meadows and under this sky in charge of four goats; for his mother, who was a doctor, was away from home most of the day at work.

Strange as it may seem, it is nature itself, so concrete and real, that inspires one more than anything else to contemplation, ever turning one's thoughts away from the concrete and towards the abstract. The most outstanding of our mathematicians — Lobachevsky, Ostrogradsky, Chebyshev — had lived amid these same Russian fields and under this same spacious blue sky during the years when their minds were being formed. N.E. Zhukovsky himself clearly realized this peculiar influence of nature on the mathematician's mind, and once related how the best solutions of the most abstract problems came to him in the countryside, in the meadows, fields or woods. For example, he unexpectedly solved the problem of the mechanical model of the Hesse Pendulum, sitting on a tree stump in a forest in the rays of the setting sun, silently contemplating the world about him as he leant on his shotgun.

Zhukovsky mentioned this elusive but very palpable influence in his speech at Ostrogradsky's grave, commemorating the centenary of the great Russian mathematician's birth:

“When one looks around at this peaceful place of rest, situated in the heart of vast fields stretching into the boundless distance, one involuntarily thinks of the influence of nature on man. Mathematics also has its beauty, just the same as painting and poetry. Sometimes this beauty reveals itself in the distinct, clear-cut delineation of ideas, when every detail of the conclusion is within view, and sometimes it astounds us with profound thoughts in which something as yet unexpressed but of great promise lies hidden. In Ostrogradsky’s work we are attracted by the sweep of the analysis, the underlying idea, which is no less broad than his own native fields.”

In contrast to his glorious predecessors, Sobolev’s creative personality was formed not only under the influence of the vast expanse of his native fields but also under the action of the revolutionary events taking place around him. The latter influence made itself felt later on, when we find in the person of Sobolev not only a brilliant mathematician but also a Russian scientist of the Soviet epoch, a scientist and public worker, a scientist and dialectician, a scientist who eagerly responded to the needs of the times and the requirements of social development, whether it was a question of a new textbook for secondary schools or the question of geophysical exploration for minerals.

At the age of sixteen, without even raising the question of his future vocation, which had determined itself so early, Sobolev went to Leningrad, where he won first place in the entrance examination held by Leningrad University for the Mathematics Faculty.

At the University it was not long before Sobolev combined his studies with independent research, chiefly in the field of functional equations, that is, equations in which the unknown is some kind of function or, in other words, a particular form of relationship between variable quantities. An

example of such a function is the relationship between the vibration of the rigid framework of an iron bridge and the weight of the train passing over it.

Functions are one of the basic conceptions of modern mathematics. The example cited above may suffice to show how vast, interesting and complex a field of applied mathematics is covered by functional equations.

Having finished his research, Sobolev, who was in his third year at the University at the time, took his manuscript to Nikolai Maximovich Guonter — the most authoritative of his professors. The professor, who was not accustomed to have students bring him their own independent scientific works, glanced over the manuscript and said:

“I like this very much... But what does it boil down to in the final analysis — that’s what interests me.”

Two days later he returned the manuscript to Sobolev.

“In general, it’s very good,” he said. “But, my dear friend, I must tell you that Abel worked all this out about a hundred years ago. You’ve only repeated his work.”

The young research student was not unduly disheartened. Rather was he elated at his success in carrying out independently a work that had occupied — albeit a hundred years before — one of the greatest mathematicians of the last century, the man who had laid the foundations of the modern theory of functions. The young man now had every grounds for confidence in himself. It was shortly after this that, while undergoing practical training at the “Electrosila Works,” he made his first attempt to put his theoretical ideas into practice. He made a mathematical study of the transversal vibration of turbine shafts and proposed a number of innovations rationalizing production on the basis of his theoretical conclusions.

The student turned in his report to the appropriate authorities — in this case an engineer whose name he is never

likely to forget, since he has not received an answer to his suggestion to this very day.

In 1929, Sobolev graduated from the University and was faced with the question of what to do next. This was a question which had always been a burning one with pure mathematicians on the threshold of their careers, on account of the difficulties they had in finding application for their knowledge and skill outside of teaching work.

In Soviet Russia, however, the doors of most scientific research institutes are wide open to the young university graduate. Sobolev chose the Seismological Institute in Leningrad, where he turned out to be the only mathematician and thus had complete freedom in the choice of his field of research.

The basic problems of seismology at that time and the personal interests of Sobolev coincided during the initial stage of his new work. The point was that seismology, as the science studying the phenomena of earthquakes, is extremely interested in the solution of a number of subsidiary problems generally bound up with the mathematical theory of elasticity, and in particular of the problem of the propagation of vibrations and elastic waves in the earth's crust.

Although the study of the theory of elasticity begins, properly speaking, with Galileo and although almost all the most prominent mathematicians of the past three centuries have had a hand in developing the theory of elasticity, many subsidiary problems still remain unsolved. Mathematics, so to say, has not succeeded in coping with all the tasks with which it has been confronted by industry and the natural sciences. It is true that the great mathematicians have elaborated methods for the solution of these problems with the maximum degree of accuracy provided no limit is set to the time and efforts involved. In practice, however, time and efforts are factors so precious that methods of solving problems of a

subsidiary type may acquire tremendous significance if they are simple and easy enough.

In seismology the most important mathematical problem is the transmission of waves in media, the structure of which changes continually, as in the case of the earth's crust. This was the problem now tackled by Sobolev.

It should be pointed out that the French scientist, Hadamard, had worked for many years on this problem before Sobolev. In fact, it was precisely for his work in this field that Hadamard, in all probability, was elected a member of the French Academy.

Hadamard evolved a method of solving problems of this class, but it was so cumbersome, obscure and complicated that if it was used in case of extreme necessity, it was only because there was no other method available.

Sobolev first learned about the existence of Hadamard's method from Professor V.I. Smirnov, whom he consulted regarding the line of research he planned to follow.

"Hadamard worked on the solution of this problem for a very long time," the Professor said, "but he didn't make much progress with it, I am afraid. I shouldn't advise you to start off with such a difficult subject..."

Sobolev listened attentively to Professor Smirnov's objections, but he stuck to his choice. He did not even study Hadamard's method, and in this he was absolutely right. The human brain is built in such a way that thoughts flow into it along definite channels, as streams flow along their beds; and to divert them from a channel that they have once taken is as difficult as to divert a stream or river from its course.

Such a process can only take place under the influence of a powerful external impulse, giving rise to something like an upheaval in the brain.

Academician P. L. Kapitza, that brilliant engineer, invent-

or and scientist, once made the following surprising statement:

“If I set my staff any new problem, I advise them first of all not to consult any literature on the subject. ‘When you have finished the work and have formed your own opinions,’ I tell them, ‘you can read up everything that has been written about it.’”

Such advice may seem strange at first glance. But then Kapitza’s only object was to protect young research workers from the influence of fallacious doctrines which were patently erroneous for the simple reason that the problem was not yet solved and still lay open to discussion.

The whole history of pure and applied science, backed by industrial practice in factories and mills, goes to demonstrate how obstructive a conventional prejudice may be when a new problem has to be solved; and, on the other hand, how easily the same problem can be solved by a fresh mind, untrammelled by the orthodox interpretation of the process in question.

The young scientist acted unconsciously, perhaps, in deciding to blaze his own trail, but it was a correct and wise decision.

For a whole year Sobolev worked earnestly and persistently; then he found a simple, clear method for solving wave equations in the case of a variable medium. This method proved to be much simpler than Hadamard’s. Most important of all, it opened the way for the solution of a number of general problems in this field.

Sobolev made a report on his method at the First All-Union Mathematical Congress, which took place in Kharkov in 1930. This congress was attended, among others, by Academician Hadamard as a delegate from France. The latter sent Sobolev a note in which he wrote:

“I should be very much obliged, my young colleague, if

you would keep me informed about your future work, which extremely interests me.”

Once he had found for himself a fruitful general method, Sobolev’s further contributions to the development of the dynamic theory of elasticity followed one after another. Applying the theory of plane waves to Lamb’s problem, Sobolev determined the elastic displacement inside a half-space, the boundary of which is assumed free from the action of external forces; the disturbance being caused by a concentrated force applied to several points on the surface of the medium. Lamb had established the displacement at certain observed points on the surface. Sobolev determined the displacement at an arbitrary point inside the medium. As we shall see later, this achievement is of significance not only for seismology but — to a still higher degree — for geophysics.

Working together with V.I. Smirnov, Sobolev later found a special class of solutions for equations of elastic movement. Thanks to these solutions, it has been possible to study the laws governing the transmission and reflection of elastic waves in a half-plane, in a half-space, and in an infinite strata bounded by parallel planes, as well as in a number of other cases.

It should be pointed out that, as a rule, Sobolev’s work presents wide possibilities of formulating and solving quite general problems, and consequently constitute fundamental works of great theoretical and practical significance. During the ten years of his scientific activity, Sobolev has come to the fore as one of the most outstanding of our mathematicians. He was awarded a second-degree Stalin Prize by the Council of People’s Commissars for his work in the field of the mathematical theory of elasticity entitled “Certain Problems of the Theory of the Transmission of Vibrations,” which was published in 1937, and for the work “On the Theory of Non-

Linear Hyperbolic Equations with Partial Derivatives,” which was published in 1939.

What are the main difficulties in mathematical physics to which Sobolev has devoted himself with such persistence and enthusiasm?

There is hardly a single field of physics which does not require the application of a developed mathematical apparatus. But the basic difficulty does not lie in the development of a mathematical theory and still less in the actual computation, which is now usually performed with the aid of arithmometers. The basic difficulty lies in the selection of premises for mathematical investigation and in the interpretation of the results obtained by mathematical means.

In principle, the field for the application of the mathematical method of research is unlimited: all forms of the motion of matter can be studied mathematically. However a man's creative ability is limited by conventional thought, conventional conceptions, which often arise by chance, are often erroneous, but nevertheless are very firmly rooted.

First of all, the mathematician must determine the general form of the phenomenon under study, then he must submit logical analysis. A mathematician studying, for example, the movement of the planets, disregards the size of the heavenly bodies, substituting for them “material points.” It is obvious that such an eduction of the general form of the phenomenon under study is possible only by virtue of a constant battle against conventional conceptions, against the ordinary processes of thought. Such a battle requires tremendous effort and, of course, does not always result in victory.

Sobolev's creative power lies largely in his public spirit, which serves him as an antidote against extreme specialization, against one-sidedness, against the unavoidable narrowing of his mental horizon, against the conventional run

of ideas.

Discussing Russian scientific thought, Timiryazev pointed out that “it moves more naturally and successfully not in the direction of metaphysical speculation but in the direction laid down by Newton, in the direction of exact knowledge and its application in life.”

Timiryazev further noted that in comparison with European science, “it is not in the accumulation of endless figures in meteorological logbooks but in the discovery of basic laws of mathematical thought, not in the study of local flora and fauna, but in the discovery of basic laws governing the development of organisms, not in an inventory of the mineral wealth of its country but in the discovery of basic laws governing chemical phenomena, that Russian science has mainly asserted its equality and, at times, even its superiority.”

These are the characteristic traits of Russian scientific thought that we find in the works of Sergei Lvovich Sobolev.

The diverse influences governing the trend of research thought are very complex and just as elusive as the influence of nature on the shaping of abstract reasoning. There can be no doubt, however, but that it was Sobolev's public spirit that drew his attention towards the most complicated problems of mathematical physics and lifted his very first works out of the narrow, specialized framework of seismology into “the wide expanse of his native fields” for practical application in real life in the field of mineral prospecting.

Among the various methods of prospecting for minerals, beginning with boreholes and ending with radiometry, the seismic method has been extensively employed in investigating the depths of the earth, particularly in recent years. This is largely a result of the theoretical bases laid down by Sobolev. The seismic method is based on the velocity of the transmission of elastic vibrations in the heart of the low-lying strata in

a given locality. The essence of the method is that a disturbance — in this case artificial, usually caused by an explosion — radiates elastic waves and that the vibratory process extends to the strata lying underneath, in which it is propagated at a different velocity from that in the upper strata. With a knowledge of the speed at which the waves are transmitted in different strata, it is possible to establish more or less accurately the location, and character of the bedrock, and the size of the bed.

Sobolev's works and the formulae he has evolved enable our prospectors to use the seismic method with great advantage.

It is possible, perhaps even probable, that when Sobolev undertook his purely mathematical research, he had no idea of helping our prospecting expeditions. But such is the nature of "pure science," even such an abstract branch as mathematics, that sooner or later the truths arrived at by this science will find practical application in the service of the people.

It matters little whether the research worker actually sets himself this goal. If not he, then others will make use of his labours and put his discovery to practical application. But the public spirit of a scientist is bound to tell whatever his work, however abstract it may be.

In this way, the creative biography of a scientist cannot be limited to an account of his training and discoveries. If it is to be a real *creative* biography, it must also cover his personal life, and his environment and his social activity.

After all, we are describing one of our contemporaries, a product of the Soviet school, of Soviet science, moreover a man who has hardly begun his career.

At the age of twenty-five, Sobolev was elected a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. When the Academy was transferred to Moscow from Lenin-

grad, the capital became the scientific centre of the country. Here Sobolev at once came into his own. He was given a chair at the Moscow University. The Mathematics Institute of the Academy placed him in control of the Department of Differential Equations and Functional Analysis. The voters of the Herzen constituency elected the young professor as their deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. At the general meeting of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in January 1939, Sobolev was elected a full member. The Moscow Mathematical Society has since made him its vice-president.

In that very real, very concrete world, the premises of the mathematician remained just as rigid and well-founded as ever. Conclusions are reached only as the outcome of profound logical analysis, and there is no power which can confuse the logic of an exact intellect.

Sobolev told his audience at a meeting of electors of the Herzen constituency: "There are more students in the Soviet Union than in the four largest countries of Europe and Japan put together. Soviet science must take its place in the vanguard of science."

And every obstacle in the path of our science found a bitter opponent in Sobolev. With the ardour of a born polemist, he took up the cudgels against semi-literate textbooks that found their way into the schools. He attended school examinations in order to check how the foundations for our future science were being laid. He was present at the presentation of degree theses, in order to ascertain the present state of our science.

And when, looking over a thesis prepared by a certain professor of unmerited popularity, he found that the solution of the problem was both hackneyed and impractical, Sobolev hurried off to the University Hall where the commission was in session and voiced his biting opinion of the thesis, sparing

neither the judges nor the professor.

When the commission decided to award a scientific degree to the author of the thesis, Sobolev promptly protested against the decision and fought until a second commission had returned a more correct and impartial verdict on the work.

On the other hand, everything capable of advancing mathematics to the forefront of Soviet science to the slightest extent, received Sobolev's deep, personal interest. He called scientific conferences, arranged reports, took part in discussions, read lectures and gave consultations to students.

And soon this academician with the youthful face of a member of the Young Communist League, this professor of Moscow University with the clear voice of a schoolboy, stood at the head of a whole scientific school, surrounded by his own pupils and followers.

It is easy to understand what a black and terrible enemy the agitated mind of Sergei Lvovich Sobolev saw in German fascism when it threatened the Russian people with disaster. But even on this occasion his emotion did not perturb the calm logic of his mind. At the call to arms, Sobolev placed his talents unreservedly at his country's service.

Sobolev laid aside his work on hand and devoted himself to studying the phenomena which take place in the barrel of a gun when it is fired and to establishing the laws governing the flight of a shell — the ancient science of ballistics. We cannot add anything to this brief conclusion, not that any addition is really necessary: in times like the present, the heart and brain of each one of us speaks for us, and perhaps so much the more eloquently for, the fewer the words said, the more each one of us feels and understands.

DOCTOR CHUMAKOV

I

The mice suffered the most from the bad weather. The expedition had procured them in Moscow at the cost of considerable trouble: fine, white specimens they were and absolutely essential for the experiments that were to be conducted in the taiga. They had travelled more than seven thousand kilometres in the Trans-Siberian Express. And now they were on the last lap of their journey — some seventy or seventy-five kilometres to go by truck. But it was precisely these last few kilometres which proved to be the most nerve-racking for Dr. Chumakov, the leader of the expedition.

The tarpaulin with which the mice were covered did not afford them much protection from the cold and the two hundred small white balls huddled close together for warmth. As the truck lurched heavily over the bumps in the road, the mice slid across the floor of their cages with a piteous scratching and squeaking. Dr. Chumakov tried to steady the cages with his knees. It would never do to let the mice perish now when their long journey was almost at an end.

Over a good road it would have been only a matter of one and a half or two hours' ride at the most to the lumber camp, but the trucks moved slowly to avoid the ruts. The weather was vile. A fine drizzle had been falling since morning and cold gusts of wind lashed the doctor's face. The rain trickled down his upturned coat collar and formed puddles at his feet.

Dr. Chumakov peered impatiently ahead. On either side of the rain-swept road stretched the taiga, sullen and powerful, but richly green and beautiful even on this dull rainy day. But Chumakov had no eye for the landscape just then. He pulled

his sodden overcoat more tightly around him and thought gloomily of the cosy, warm sleeping car on the train he had been obliged to leave and of his fellow travellers comfortably continuing their journey eastward. The gramophone would be playing in the borderguard major's compartment; the oil men from Sakhalin Island would be at their cards again, the big game hunters from the Commander Islands would be singing their favourite song about Old Yermak, while the girl from the Geological Survey Department devoured the last pages of *Journey to the End of the Night*. Chumakov remembered the pitying look she had given him when he told her he was on his way to the taiga to make an "epidemiological study" of a lumber camp! The only kind of expedition which interested her was geological prospecting. But what would she have said if he had been able to tell her the whole truth about the disease he was to fight in the taiga?

Yes, this local encephalitis was no joke — it mowed down husky lumberjacks, overthrew hardy hunters and did not stand on ceremony even with geologists. The death rate was as high as fifty per cent; a student on a geological expedition, whose case history had been described by Dr. Panov in his report to the People's Commissariat of Health, had also died of encephalitis. The girl geologist's profession was thrilling and romantic enough: during the past three years she had been to the Tien Shan mountains, the Ridder ore mines and the lower reaches of the Yenisei River, and now she was off to prospect for gold in Kolyma. That was all very well. But he, a member of the staff of the Central Virus Institute — wasn't he also something of a prospector when it came to that?

How much, for instance, did he know about the encephalitis that was raging in the settlements of the Soviet Far East? He knew the death rate, knew of the terrible aftermath in those who survived the dread disease — paralysis, deafness,

purblindness. But that was all. Nothing else was known about the disease. Its real nature had not yet been studied.

Dr. Panov had called it encephalitis. But clinical experience alone was not sufficient to ascertain its exact nature. Was it Economo encephalitis, or Japanese encephalitis, or the Saint Louis variety? And even if it were possible to establish exactly which variety of encephalitis it was would that mean that the goal had been achieved? No, it was necessary to discover the cause of the disease and its carriers. Only then would it be possible to find methods of treatment. But in the meantime the disease would continue to take its toll: now it was nesting in the taiga settlements, but at any minute it might break into the big towns, as had been the case in Portugal in the sixteenth century and North Italy at the end of the eighteenth century. One did not even need to go so far back as that: from 1917 to 1920 an epidemic of sleeping sickness had broken out in France, Austria and Belgium and finally penetrated to South America. During the ten years from 1924 to 1935 encephalitis had been the cause of the death of thousands of people in Japan. It was possible indeed that the epidemic had filtered through to the Soviet Far East from Japan, but scientists never took anything on faith and...

A sharp jolt interrupted Chumakov's reflections: the truck nosed heavily into a rut. The rear wheels spun helplessly in the air, throwing up a fountain of mud. The driver jumped out of his seat and swore good-humouredly:

"That's done it! You'll have to hoof it the rest of the way, I'm afraid. But it's not far to go. A couple of kilometres and you'll be there!"

II

The expedition reached the settlement on foot. It was

growing dark by the time they arrived. It had stopped raining and the low sun was reflected in the dark pools of the marshes, amid which stood a number of rugged, new log cabins. Narrow duck-boards had been laid across the swampy ground between the cabins. The forest, fringed with tree stumps and stunted shrubs, hemmed in the settlement from all sides.

Their arrival was long overdue. A man in a raincoat hurried to meet them as they entered the settlement. Introducing himself as the forestry engineer, he offered to show them to the living quarters which had been prepared for them. The third cabin from the end, with new gates and a rather decorative porch, was assigned to Chumakov and two of his colleagues, Zorina and Levkovich. In answer to the engineer's knock a thick-set, blackbearded man opened the door and bade Chumakov and his fellow-travellers welcome.

Chumakov pointed to the cages with the mice.

"I'm afraid these will have to come with us," he said with an apologetic smile.

"That's all right," said his host. "Bring them in."

A half an hour later Chumakov and his companions were sitting comfortably round the table, drinking tea from a boiling samovar. The blackbearded host and his wife, a tall, slightly pock-marked woman, either from diffidence or cautiousness sat somewhat apart from the newcomers and maintained a respectful silence. In answer to Chumakov's questions they vouchsafed monosyllabic replies. Later on, however, when it grew dark and a light appeared in the window of the cabin opposite, they became more talkative.

Naturally the conversation turned to encephalitis.

The man and his wife had nothing new to impart. They were as much surprised as the members of the expedition at the fact that the disease carried off mainly adult males.

"It's like a visitation!" remarked the host, stroking his

beard. "It doesn't seem to touch the youngsters or the old folk. And the womenfolk also rarely get it... It goes for the healthy, strapping fellows anywhere between nineteen and forty. A fellow may be as strong as an oak, with both feet planted firmly on the ground, when all of a sudden the sickness gets him and in three days he's gone. First it's the fever that burns him up, then his arms get paralysed, after that he can't lift his head and pretty soon it's all over. Many a good lumberjack has gone that way. Where could it have come from?"

Chumakov ventured the opinion that "the visitation" came from the taiga. The nest of the infection was in the forest, he said, and that was why the disease affected persons connected with the forest — hunters and lumberjacks.

"You're right there," agreed the host. "We've also noticed there are tainted spots in the taiga. Anyone who chances their way is bound to get sick."

The man cited a case in point. It was the brief story of an inveterate drunkard who had been turned out of doors by his irate wife and gone off in a huff into the forest. His wife had not worried at first but when he failed to put in an appearance by evening she relented and went to look for him.

She found him lying in a hollow in a drunken stupor. With great difficulty she managed to drag him to his feet and bring him home. The next morning he got up, feeling as fit as ever. Five days later, however, he fell sick. He burned with a high fever, then lost the use of his arms. Later his head began to droop and he died, simply wasted away.

A few days after his death the woman also fell ill. She was more fortunate than her husband, however: she recovered, but remained a cripple for the rest of her life. And all because she had visited the same "tainted spot" as her husband.

Chumakov asked his host whether he would be able to show him the hollow in question. The man said he could.

"Today a lumberjack died in hospital," the wife intervened suddenly. "He was only sick for two days, poor devil."

Levkovich rose quickly from the table and went over to the window-sill. Taking down her small attache case she walked with a business-like air to the door.

"Where are you off to?" asked Chumakov.

"I'm going to the hospital," she replied.

Chumakov asked no more questions. He knew that his colleague had gone to perform an autopsy on the deceased lumberjack.

Levkovich returned after midnight and the following morning the first five mice were subjected to a painful operation: the sharp needle of Levkovich's hypodermic syringe injected into their brains an emulsion obtained from the brain of the man who had died the day before.

Thus began the extermination of the mice brought to the taiga from the Moscow Institute, and thus, too, began the hunt for the mysterious, deadly enemy.

III

A few days later tractors hauled three frame houses to the settlement. They were erected on a site some distance from the settlement proper. The virus group headed by Chumakov occupied the smallest of the three buildings; the second cottage housed the remaining epidemiologists, while in the third they opened a hospital with twelve cots. The local inhabitants were afraid of the hospital and always gave it a wide berth. But Chumakov's cottage was the cynosure of curious eyes. Children especially were constantly to be seen crowding round the windows, fascinated by the merry antics of the white mice. The latter were none the worse for their journey. They scampered about in their cages, nibbling straws and

scrambling playfully over one another, their little tails wiggling comically.

The five mice that had undergone the operation could not be distinguished at first from their fellows. But by the seventh or eighth day they began to droop, their fur stood slightly on end and they grew quiet. The next day they were dead with all the symptoms of paralysis. The autopsy revealed that they had suffered the same internal pathological changes as the men and women of the lumber camp who had fallen victim to encephalitis.

The mice did not die in vain. An extract from their brains was injected into the brains of another group of mice and on the ninth day all the mice of the second group were dead. Mice subsequently infected with the germ of encephalitis died on the fifth day after injection. It was clear that the root of the trouble lay in certain elusive infinitesimal bodies seated in the brains of the infected rodents.

To lay hands on these bodies and examine them under the microscope was impossible because of their size, which varied between 5 and 170 millimicrons. They were invisible and even porcelain filters could not hold them. But Chumakov and his colleagues were hot on the trail. The enemy was a filtrable virus, which could be transferred from a diseased brain into a healthy one. More than that. The scientists were able to capture the virus in test tubes and cultivate it for several days in glycerine.

The enemy had been discovered.

All that remained now was to find the carrier of the disease. Studies on encephalitis found in abundance in the medical literature of America and Japan had established that the carriers of encephalitis were parasitic insects. But there were myriads of such insects in the taiga. Midgets, mosquitoes, gadflies were a constant nuisance to the local inhabitants,

who applied to them all in general the disgusted and irate epithet of "pests."

The taiga literally teemed with "pests" of all kinds and to such an extent that, during the summer months, people could not work without mosquito nets and the cattle could not graze unless the pastures were protected by smoke screens produced by bonfires continually fed with damp twigs. The question that now resolved itself to the research workers was how to find the true carrier of encephalitis amid the myriad of "pests" which infested the taiga?

Japanese encephalitis is spread by mosquitoes. But the first cases of encephalitis invariably occurred locally, in the taiga, in the first ten days of May each year, in other words some ten days before the mosquitoes hatched. Moreover, this disparity in time became larger when additional allowance was made for the incubation period. Consequently, mosquitoes had to be eliminated from the list of "suspects."

Nevertheless, since a scientist's deductions must needs be confirmed by experiment, Chumakov's colleagues planted mosquitoes on infected mice, allowed them to suck their fill of blood, and then transferred them to healthy mice. The latter did not contract the disease.

The mosquitoes were accordingly found "not guilty." And gadflies, which appear still later than mosquitoes, were likewise acquitted.

Chumakov then advanced the opinion that ticks might be the carriers of the disease. The biological development of these parasites fully coincided with the seasonal features of encephalitis. And when the research workers applied ticks to healthy mice, the latter contracted the disease and died on the fifth day. Again the brains of these mice were used to infect others.

There was no longer any doubt that ticks were the carriers

of encephalitis.

It was now possible to tackle the problem of curing the disease.

IV

Now that the mysterious carriers of encephalitis had been traced, the task of Chumakov and his friends was considerably simplified.

"Ticks are the cause of the trouble," the entomologists warned the lumberjacks, "hence steer clear of ticks."

It was not easy for the lumberjacks to avoid contact with ticks. But the danger of infection could be reduced. Twice a day, before dinner and supper, the lumberjacks and their clothing were subjected to a thorough inspection. Overalls were issued to them designed to make it as difficult as possible for the ticks to penetrate to their bodies. Spraying the sites of the lumber camps with a special solution and scorching the grass were other precautionary measures. To a certain extent these measures served to lessen the danger of infection. But what was to be done if in spite of these precautions someone again contracted the dreaded disease? How was he to be saved from death or disablement for life?

The literature on Japanese and American encephalitis referred rather vaguely to the treatment of encephalitis with a special serum. American neuropathologists, however, were inclined to be rather pessimistic with regard to this method of treatment. The distinguished Soviet neuropathologist, Astvatsaturov, was quite definite on the subject; once the disease has taken root in the nervous system, he maintained, serum can no longer combat it. Such was the opinion of the authorities. Nevertheless Chumakov and his colleagues decided to test the efficiency of serum for themselves.

Their first experiments in this direction were again performed on mice. The active virus was introduced into the organism of a group of mice in what might be called a "pure" form. At the same time another group was injected with virus combined with serum compounded of the blood of a recovered victim of encephalitis. The first group of mice perished on the fifth day, the second survived. The serum had counteracted the disease in its early stages. If the antibodies that accumulate in the blood of a patient recovered from any disease could be compared to dogs, serum might be likened to a pack of hounds, and introducing serum into the organism would be equivalent to unleashing the pack. As well-trained hounds attack their prey, so do the antibodies attack the disease microbes in the body. It is on this that the treatment by serums containing the antitoxin formed in the bodies of convalescents is based.

In the experiments on the mice the serum treatment gave excellent results. Consequently, when the expedition chanced upon a serious case of the disease, Chumakov decided to take a risk. The circumstances were as follows:

A weeping woman brought her young son to the settlement. Only the day before the boy had romped and played at the lumber camp. Now he lay on the straw-covered bottom of the cart in a high fever, limp and inert. The patient was carried into the house which had been set aside as a hospital.

The boy's condition grew rapidly worse. His right arm grew numb, his lips were covered with a white foam, his head drooped helplessly on his shoulder. The mother refused to go home. She hung miserably about the hospital, peering through the window and sitting on the front steps weeping silently. Her grief was so great that Chumakov made up his mind to take drastic measures. With the help of Dr. Shapoval he injected two cubic centimetres of serum into the blood of

the patient.

Several hours passed. The scientists watched anxiously over the patient. After a time his giddiness decreased, the vomiting gradually ceased and he asked for food. When his mother was told she crossed herself. But she still hardly dared to hope. All night long she hovered about the building.

In the morning the boy's temperature was normal, his giddiness had disappeared altogether and he ate a hearty breakfast.

When the mother was told the good news she whispered her thanks through white lips. Tears coursed down her cheeks. Dr. Shapoval said a few encouraging words to her and returned to the ward. He had not slept at all that night and now, watching by the bedside of the patient, he fell into a doze. A faint groan awakened him. The patient had relapsed into unconsciousness: his face was flushed again with fever.

Dr. Shapoval measured the patient's temperature. It was alarmingly high. He sent for Chumakov and after a short consultation they decided on a second injection of serum.

Two hours later the boy's temperature dropped, although evening was approaching, and he fell into a calm sleep.

By the following day a marked change for the better set in. From that time the boy was well on the road to recovery. A fortnight later he went back to his mother, somewhat thinner but otherwise in good health.

Chumakov was overjoyed at this success.

His work was by no means over. As a matter of fact it had only begun. But the expedition now knew that it was on the right road, and to have found this road among the maze of possible paths and traces had been no easy task.

How, for instance, to solve the problem of the origin of encephalitis in the taiga? He knew that the tick was the carrier of the disease, but how had the parasite acquired it to

begin with? Nothing was easier than to chart the movement of virus.

But nature is more complex than any chart — a maxim that scientists always be in mind. It required tireless experimenting and observation. It required resolution combined with extreme caution. Caution, of course, in drawing conclusions.

In their everyday work Chumakov and his companions could not afford to be too cautious. Theirs was the lot of the pathfinder. They explored the unknown and danger stalked them at every step.

The local inhabitants avoided the hospital: Chumakov and his friends worked there. The local inhabitants steered clear of ticks: Chumakov and his friends collected them. Their vivarium literally seethed with insects. It presented a rich variety of ticks, mosquitoes, midges, gadflies and all the other insects which abound in the taiga. It sometimes happened that while one of the research workers was piercing the brain of a mouse with a hypodermic needle, a mosquito would be stinging his hand and the worker would be unable to drive off the mosquito which, for all he knew, might be infecting him with encephalitis at that very moment. And there was no reason why Japanese encephalitis, which was spread by mosquitoes, might not break out as well as the taiga variety of the disease.

Then again there was their work in the hospital. Direct contact with the patients might appear to be harmless at first sight, but could they be absolutely sure of this? Yet the patients had to be treated and studied. It was all part and parcel of their day's work and they had to risk the consequences.

They had to risk their lives as soldiers do at the front. What they were engaged in was in every respect a war. True, there was no shooting, for the enemy fought with silent weapons; there was no gunpowder smoke, for the enemy crept upon

one unseen.

A mere scratch while dissecting mice which had succumbed to encephalitis, a microscopic bite of an infected tick, dozens of other unforeseen occurrences — such were the dangers amid which the taiga experimenters laboured and which threatened them with calamity at any moment...

V

It is impossible to understand a phenomenon of which the cause is unknown. A research worker must probe to the very roots of the problem, he must discover the original cause which gives rise to the phenomenon. Hence the question as to how and whence the ticks acquired the infection was by no means an idle one.

It is not easy to perceive every link in the chain of cause and effect. But no phenomenon can be properly grasped unless all the pieces in the jigsaw fit. There is nothing unknowable in this world. And Chumakov was aware of this.

There were scientists who believed in the "unknowable." True, they were few. But their scepticism aroused Chumakov's indignation. All his life he remembered the joke made by an elderly microbiologist who in his opening lecture at the institute had said:

"The Almighty alone knows all there is to know about microbiology. I perhaps know a little. You, my friends, know nothing at all about microbiology and I am afraid you never will."

Such jokes irritated Chumakov. He had a healthy contempt for people who had no faith in what they were doing. His belief in science was implicit.

Yet his was not a blind faith. He realized that knowledge was not easy to acquire. And, realizing this, he had unhesitat-

ingly chosen research for his life work.

The son of a veterinary surgeon from the town of Yepifan, he had been fascinated by biology ever since he had attended secondary school. When the Yepifan District Committee of the Young Communist League had given him an opportunity to continue his studies at the First Moscow Medical Institute, he had distinguished himself at once among the student body by his unusual diligence. He was never content to rely on the textbooks alone; he waded through all the available literature on a given subject. He did not, like other students, prepare for examinations solely with an eye to marks: examinations in his opinion were primarily a self-imposed test and an excuse for discussing his subject with his professor.

When after graduation Chumakov stayed on for post-graduate work he drew up a program of study that covered considerably more ground than the official syllabus. His passion for learning was trebled. No obstacles daunted him. Take foreign languages, for example. He applied himself to their study with such zeal and enthusiasm that in an incredibly short time he was able to read English and German books with only occasional recourse to the dictionary.

At the same time he was no bookworm. A young man of athletic build, he was an all-round sportsman and ranked as one of the best volleyball players in the Institute. He lived the full life of a strong, healthy and purposeful Soviet youth.

And now, on his first scientific expedition, Chumakov realized that the years spent at the Institute both before and after graduation had not been in vain. His first steps had been successful, it was necessary to proceed further. He was twenty-seven, he was on the threshold of his scientific career and, who knows, perhaps it would be given to him, a Young Communist from Yepifan, to learn all there was to know about microbiology? That, of course, would mean indefatig-

able experimenting, patient observation, study and research...

VI

Disaster came suddenly. The scientists had no time to think about the risks they were running, their work absorbed all their time and attention. The entomologists of the expedition studied the biology of ticks and other blood-sucking insects of the taiga; the pathologists performed autopsy after autopsy; other research workers were busy locating the invisible enemy in their test tubes...

Dr. Shapoval was waging a successful battle with encephalitis. The number of cures increased, as did the evidence of the effectiveness of the serum. What they needed above all was a plentiful supply for the hospital. This meant infecting some large animal with encephalitis; for the bigger the animal the more blood and, consequently, the more serum.

They eventually decided that a goat would serve the purpose. They chose a large well-fed animal. It was not an easy matter to quiet it, and when finally Dr. Chumakov did manage to insert the needle into its body, the goat struggled free and butted him. The virulent fluid splashed in his eye. But not until the operation was over did he wash his face. Later on he forgot the incident. At first he experienced a twinge of anxiety but soon the rush of work claimed all his attention and the whole affair slipped entirely out of his mind.

The rainy season had set in. Downpour followed downpour in rapid succession, turning the clearing in which the settlement stood into a vast swamp. Going out one morning, the members of the expedition found that the water had risen to their very doorstep. The wooden duck-boards which were their sole means of navigating the mud, were floating down the street. Only the tips of the bushes were visible above the

water. By evening the rain turned into a heavy downpour and the water began to invade the laboratories. The members of the expedition rushed to save their precious instruments and papers. They worked all night up to their knees and sometimes their waists in water.

The next day Chumakov felt too ill to get up. He had a high fever, his limbs ached and his head reeled giddily.

Chumakov believed, or rather he persuaded himself to believe, that he had an attack of rheumatism, and he said as much to Dr. Levkovich who came to visit him.

"It's nothing much! A slight touch of rheumatism, that's all."

To Shapoval, who came shortly after, he said the same:

"It's nothing much! Just an attack of rheumatism brought on by pottering about and getting soaked through and frozen stiff last night."

Shapoval agreed with him reassuringly. Why, of course, it was rheumatism. A dose of salicylate and the pain would go.

They took his temperature.

"Who's that hammering out there?" he demanded suddenly. "What an infernal racket! It sounds like people hacking away with axes."

Levkovich and Shapoval exchanged anxious glances. Abnormal sensitivity of hearing was a symptom of encephalitis! Could it possibly be that Chumakov was the latest victim of the dread disease?

"What do they keep on hammering for?" the patient repeated irritably.

Outside all was quiet after the heavy rain. Levkovich and Shapoval could hear nothing but the distant murmur of the forest, but they dared not say so to the patient.

"What on earth are they doing out there? Please tell them to stop that hammering," Chumakov begged again.

...A dead silence hung over the settlement. The gramophone with which the entomologists used to idle away an hour or so of an evening was now silent. The members of the expedition hurried to and from the office with anxious faces. They expected a telegram any minute from the nearest town, telling them that a Red Cross plane had been dispatched for Chumakov.

They prepared the patient for evacuation. He already knew that he had encephalitis. He himself had diagnosed his disease. And when Shapoval and Levkovich had tried to argue with him he had smiled and said calmly:

"You can't deceive me. I know the symptoms too well. I already have difficulty with swallowing."

"How many cases of serum treatment have we had?" he inquired in a matter-of-fact voice after a pause. "Six, you say? Give me an injection. I'll be the seventh."

They gave him the injection. He was taken to town and placed in a separate ward. Opening his eyes, he saw the white ceiling, the window and the hospital cot, but he had only to close them again for the cot to be transformed into a berth, the wide soft berth of a sleeping car. The springs sagged gently under him, and the blue night lamp glowed dully just over his head. It was all very comfortable except for the fact that his legs simply wouldn't fit in on the berth. He bent them at the knees, hunched them up to his stomach, but nothing helped.

And on top of it all there was a perpetual buzzing noise in his ears that almost drove him to distraction.

"Room, room, room!" went on the noise.

He could not get away from it. It kept on ringing in his ears. What can it mean, he wondered with anguish? Suddenly he remembered: Why of course, "room" was an English word. "Zimmer" was the German equivalent. *Das Zimmer*.

But what was the use of his knowledge now?

He had learned to read English and German, he had intended studying French as well... But what was the use of it now?

All that didn't matter anymore. He was in a bad way, very bad indeed! He would never rise from this hospital bed, never return to his laboratory on the outskirts of Moscow. How still and quiet it was there! In spring, when the windows were opened, the trees added their whispering to the steady hum of the burners. And one could catch the rhythmic drone of aeroplanes at the aerodrome nearby.

Yesterday his swallowing was affected, today his hearing was impaired. The next stage was blindness. And after that — oblivion...

VII

The list of Stalin Prize winners for 1942 includes the name of Mikhail Petrovich Chumakov. He and his six colleagues were awarded the prize for outstanding successes in the field of medical research. These seven men stand at the head of dozens, perhaps hundreds of other research workers who have finally conquered their invisible enemy.

A vaccine has now been found against encephalitis. This important victory was scored in an incredibly short time. Encephalitis killed with impunity for no more than three years. In order to realize how brief a period this is, it is worthwhile recalling the history of smallpox. Before Edward Jenner discovered the vaccine against smallpox, the disease carried away an untold number of victims. It is estimated that in Europe alone more than one hundred and fifty million people died of smallpox during the past four centuries. Encephalitis too might have taken toll of millions of human lives. Hence the discovery of a vaccine against encephalitis cannot but be con-

sidered as a major victory for Soviet medicine.

The search for the vaccine also claimed its victims. Dr. Nadezhda Kagan and Natasha Utkina, a twenty-five-year-old laboratory worker, perished. They died at their posts, like soldiers at the front, as a result of laboratory infections. Dr. Kagan's work on the vaccine was completed by Professor Smorodintsev and Dr. Levkovich. The People's Commissariat of Health had refused permission to test this dangerous vaccine on human beings, but Smorodintsev and Levkovich were prepared to risk their own lives in order to verify the results of their work.

Later on the vaccine was tested in the taiga localities where the disease had its seat. It was found that the vaccine reduced the incidence of encephalitis to one-tenth and completely eliminated the danger of fatal consequences arising from the disease. Encephalitis was conquered. The danger is no longer a menace to the lumberjacks, trappers, hunters, gold prospectors and other workers of the taiga.

Those who perished in combating the disease did not die in vain.

Chumakov himself did not escape from the fray unscathed. For some time he remained an invalid. But he overcame the disease and is now back at work.

His laboratory is housed in a small mansion hidden away on the grounds of an old Moscow estate. In front of the house stand ancient maples. On sunny days men in blue pyjamas rest there in the shade. They are wounded soldiers, who now are patients in one of the best hospitals in Moscow. They are undergoing treatment here, gathering strength for new exploits on the battlefield. From time to time groups of men are discharged from hospital, and new patients take their place on the benches in the sunny garden.

Walking along the shady paths of the hospital grounds

the wounded men often meet Chumakov. From the older patients they learn that the doctor spends most of his time in the house at the back of the hospital grounds. But few know that Chumakov's right hand, which hangs limply at his side, was paralyzed by encephalitis.

"The doctor has evidently been in action," they say as they watch him pass.

And, after all, they are right.

Lev Gumilevsky

A QUESTION OF HONOUR

No matter what trade or calling a man may follow, he has his own sense of professional pride and honour. This may at time be naive or highly laudable or even dangerous, as the case may be. The Russian carpenter, for instance, takes pride in the fact that he can build a wooden house without using a single nail. That may be naive, but it is an interesting accomplishment and no one is the worse for it.

When the Siberian hunter goes out after squirrel, he loads his rifle with a single shot and aims straight at the eye in order not to damage the skin.

That is an excellent thing and shows a high degree of professional skill.

There was a long period when some of our airmen considered it "the thing" to go up without a parachute, courting certain death should anything untoward happen in the air.

Now that is a false and extremely dangerous conception of professional honour.

A tradition of that kind has tenacious roots. It is passed down from master craftsman to apprentice for generations; it persists even after conditions have changed and it no longer symbolizes professional skill and honour but the very contrary.

From time immemorial our engine-drivers had a deep-rooted conviction that repairs were no affair of the driver's. Whatever repairs the driver deemed necessary he entered in a special repair book which he turned over to the mechanics when he brought his locomotive in to the railway depot. He would have considered it "bad form" to do any of the repairs himself, however urgent they were, and on no account would he sully himself by crawling into the furnace or under

the wheels of the engine. A first-class engine-driver stood at the throttle with gloves on, and took pride in the fact that his hands were soft and clean. And the more entries a man had in his repair book, the better driver he was considered to be.

The result of this professional snobbery was that the locomotive crew was frequently idle and the engines themselves spent at least half of their time in the repair yards. This conception of professional honour among engine-drivers had been formed under the conditions of private, capitalist ownership of the railways, when such an attitude was quite natural and was regarded as the normal thing.

Under Soviet conditions this sort of snobbery among locomotive drivers became foolish and ridiculous but it continued to persist, even though it was sharply criticized by railwaymen of other categories. The drivers in gloves became popularly known as “coachmen” — and there was more truth than fancy in the name, for the coachmen of the old days, who drove their master’s horses would turn the animals over to the stableboys on reaching their destination without taking the slightest further interest in the condition of either horses or coach.

True, there were a good many Soviet engine-drivers who strove to steer clear of this stupid kind of snobbery, but it was not always an easy thing to do. Regardless of good intentions, habit binds a man hand and foot. It is not given to everyone to start out on an entirely new course, which no one has taken before. Desire alone is not enough. One must first of all revise one’s whole mode of thinking, and for that help is needed from outside, help which is sometimes slow in coming.

Engine-drivers like Krivonoss, Ognev, Yablonsky, Papavin and many others, men who knew their jobs to perfection, rose up in arms against this “coachman” tradition. These men were not mere engine-drivers in the ordinary sense of

the word. No, they were people who were in love with their profession. And it was this factor that enabled them to accomplish so much: they set speed records, increased the loads pulled by their locomotives and raised the general efficiency of their engines. Papavin, for example, upset all previous conceptions of railwaymen by working twelve years on his engine without a single capital repair. In that time his locomotive covered eight hundred thousand kilometres, and even after that, as was shown by a thorough overhauling, it needed only medium repairs. The records might be searched for a hundred years, but it is doubtful whether another such case in railway history could be brought to light.

Such a thing cannot be done in gloves! The old traditions of locomotive drivers were undoubtedly delivered a severe blow. But in order not only to smash the old conception or professional skill and dignity, but to create a new one, a man of a completely different stamp was needed.

That man was Nikolai Lunin.

It is both difficult and easy to tell the life story of a man while he is still alive and active. Difficult because one does not have the historical perspective that is necessary if what is important and vital is to be separated from what is non-essential. And easy because one can always get a direct answer to any concrete question.

I asked Lunin:

“What do you do in your spare time?”

But he evaded my question with a smile:

“How much spare time do you suppose we get nowadays?”

“Very well, not nowadays, but in general,” I persisted.

“Do you go out fishing or hunting?”

It was almost with an air of embarrassment that he replied:

“No, I’ve got kind of a one-track mind.”

Lunin may have infused a tinge of irony into his reply, but actually it was a remarkably correct self-evaluation, answering as precisely as a mathematical formula the interesting question of why it was precisely Lunin who was destined to bring about a revolution in the ideas prevailing in his particular branch of work, why it was Lunin who introduced an entirely new conception of professional skill and honour — a conception, indeed, which went far beyond the bounds of his own special branch.

What Lunin calls a “one-track mind,” we would describe as being concentrated, purposeful, clear-sighted. But he does not use that simple phrase because he has any contempt for our literary language. On the contrary, he would probably like to master it, were it in his nature to do so.

* * *

Nikolai Alexandrovich Lunin was born on May 22, 1915, in Ryazhsk, while his mother was on a visit to her parents. He grew up in Siberia, on the Tomsk railway, where his father had been employed for more than twenty years, at first as a telegraph operator and then as stationmaster.

In those two score years the elder Lunin had worked at several different Siberian railway stations but his little son's surroundings at all of them were very much the same — the same tracks and sleepers underfoot, the same switches, the same dense taiga which stretched on every side and the same big turntable under the windows of the stationmaster's house.

The boy had neither sisters nor brothers. Nor was he always able to find, among the children of the station employees, playmates with whom to explore the dark thickets of the silent taiga. What else was there to occupy the child's imaginative mind, but the wonderful big machines steaming into the depot or pulling out of its huge gates towards the long

caravan of waiting cars? It was small wonder that, in his circumstances, he became such an authority on locomotives, a skilled mechanic and engine-driver.

It is rare indeed to find surroundings that will play so direct a role in forming a man's character. The stationmaster's little boy, while doted on as an only child, was not spoiled. Half his life was spent near the wheels of railway engines three times as tall as he himself was. He was allowed to go in and out of the depot at will and always received an answer to the questions which constantly rose in his mind.

In the summertime, his hands in the pockets of his homespun trousers and in the winter, tucked inside his heavy coat, the boy would spend hours watching the repair gangs busy on the engines or listening to the talk of the engine-drivers who would roll themselves a cigarette while they waited for the finishing touches to be put to their locomotives.

The boy learned that a good driver will bring his locomotive up to the hydraulic column for water without uncoupling it, even though this is forbidden by the regulations; he knew that to do a thing like this one had to be a master hand with the brakes in order not to shake up the whole train. He learned that, in general, it is by no means as simple to drive a train as it seems to most passengers, and that probably not one in a hundred engine-drivers can start his train up so smoothly that not a drop will be spilled from the well-filled glass of water on the little droptable under the window in the first-class coupé.

Young Lunin learned too that the movement of trains depends also on such factors as the weather, the lay of the tracks, the length of the train and the weight of the cars, to say nothing of the quality of the fuel and a great many other things all of which the engineer must keep in mind when he puts his hand on the throttle. But all this did not impress

the boy whose acquaintance with trains thus far was not in motion, but while they were being prepared for motion. On the whole, the lad was better friends with the depot workers, with their machines and tools, than with the engine-drivers and their mates and firemen.

When Nikolai reached school age, his father was transferred to Novosibirsk, where the boy entered a secondary school. When he left school in 1930 there was no question in the mind of the fifteen-year-old youngster as to what profession he would follow. He enrolled at the Novosibirsk factory trade school which he finished two years later with the certificate of a third category mechanic and engine-driver's mate. Then Lunin took courses for mechanics and drivers, and after a short period as a repairman at the Novosibirsk depot, he received a job as a fireman. A few months later Lunin was appointed engine-driver's mate on an "OV" locomotive.

The "OV" locomotives are jokingly referred to as "Ovechki" or "sheep." And indeed, in comparison with the powerful "JS" and "FD" series of the present day, these little engines seem as mild and gentle as a lamb. Yet not so long ago they were the principal type of engine used for freight haulage. Later they were improved when Joy's old-style throttle cam was replaced by the Wahlshardt cam.

Just about the time that the young assistant engine-driver was working steadily and happily at his job at the Novosibirsk depot, the local branch of the Young Communist League, which Lunin had joined in 1931, decided to organize a number of railway engine crews composed entirely of YCL members. In December 1934, when Lunin had shown himself to be a capable and qualified assistant engineer, he was selected to attend a course for engine-drivers at Taiga railway station. It was not until August of the following year that he returned to the footplate and himself began to drive a train that was

manned by an all YCL crew.

A new engine of the "FD" series — No.-20-1242 — made its appearance in Novosibirsk in 1936. Made at the Voroshilovgrad car-building works, it has been repeatedly described in the press both in the USSR and abroad. This was a powerful and speedy engine designed specifically for freight haulage. It was the first Soviet locomotive equipped with an automatic stoker. There were few railroadmen in the Novosibirsk depot at that time who were familiar with this innovation in railroad construction, and it required time and effort to master this new engine. It was decided to turn it over to the YCL brigades of Lunin and Chirkov and to make Lunin chief engine-driver.

Genady Veniaminovich Chirkov, who had been a fellow student of Lunin in Novosibirsk, was a first-rate engineer, and the new engine fell into excellent hands, hands without the support of years of experience, true, but also without gloves and all they implied.

And so Nikolai Lunin became the senior locomotive driver of a first-class engine.

The simple and unaffected way in which Lunin took over his new and responsible job may and sometimes does give rise to the assumption that already at that time certain innovations had already matured in his mind which he immediately began to put into practice. To men who are reluctant to break fresh ground themselves, to men who are ready to espouse and acclaim other men's ideas as their own or who follow with varying success a trail blazed by others, it often appears that probing in the realm of ideas is much the same everywhere. That is comprehensible, for after all, the most ingenious conjectures always appear simple enough after they have been advanced.

Actually, however, things are not so simple by a long

chalk. A long and arduous path leads to even the simplest of solutions, for habit and custom will only too often blind one from arriving at the easiest and plainest conclusion.

When years ago, Henry Ford decided to introduce the conveyor system in the production of bullet-proof glass, he was everywhere assured by experts in the trade that it was out of the question to work with glass on a conveyor inasmuch as the glass would cool on the way.

Ford evidently knew or at least surmised what an obstacle stereotyped ideas might be in such matters, and he put some young engineers on the job, men who had never worked with glass before. The result was that these engineers, unimpeded by old, hidebound ideas, solved the problem without any special difficulty and built Ford the conveyor he wanted, one that would keep the glass at the desired temperature as it moved along the conveyor.

The great advantage which Lunin and his comrades enjoyed over the old-time engine-drivers was their youth, their training as mechanics, and the absence of diehard tradition in their mental make-up.

When Lunin began taking his big "FD" engine on regular runs, much the same thing happened to him as had happened to Alexei Stakhanov five years before at the "Nikanor Vostok" coal mine in the Donbass.

Stakhanov first came to the mine when he was a twenty-three-year-old village lad fresh from the country. He was struck at the very outset by the fact that, after the miners had hewed a pile of coal, they would drop their picks at the very peak of the work, take axes and saws, drag heavy beams to strengthen the props of the tunnel, and then go back to their cutting. Fresh from the countryside, Stakhanov had different ideas. Back home the hay-makers went ahead and behind them came the women who bound up the sheaves. If a man



during the hay-making season should abandon his thresher and begin himself to bind up the sheaves or rake up the grass, he would be ridiculed or regarded as a simpleton who was only making more work for himself. And here were old and experienced miners doing by force of habit something that was both absurd and foolish, doing the timbering themselves instead of having it done by special workers, and attending solely to their own jobs.

Stakhanov went down into the mines untrammelled by the habits which hampered the old-timers, and what he did started a veritable revolution.

No less revolutionary an innovation in his own particular sphere, with consequences no less profound and far-reaching, was initiated by Lunin.

Nothing, however, was further from the young engineer's mind when he took over the big "FD"-20-1242 — notwithstanding the tendency to credit him with this aim that is to be found in practically all that has been written or said about Lunin. The fact simply was that by his very nature he looked after his engine with the greatest care and taught his fellow-workers to do the same. If the truth were known, it never entered his head, on noticing something wrong with his locomotive, to call a mechanic or bring the locomotive to the repair depot. He himself was a mechanic, as were his comrades, and so it was perfectly natural that he would pick up his tools and repair the damage himself.

Lunin admits now with a smile that he felt rather embarrassed in those days when he brought his engine in to the depot to be washed, and could not even enter ten items in the repair book, whereas the old and experienced drivers were jotting down fifty or sixty.

Every four or five thousand kilometres the locomotives were brought in to have their boilers washed out. The boil-

ers were cooled and then washed with warm water and thoroughly cleaned out. In the meanwhile repairmen would be busy on the repairs designated by the engine-driver in his special book.

Then, following a run of thirty to thirty-five thousand kilometres, the locomotives were given a thorough overhauling, the locomotive was jacked up, the wheel rims machined, complex repairs made and worn-out parts replaced.

There was one occasion, shortly after his locomotive had been given such a thorough overhauling, when something went wrong with the stuffing box. This was in the middle of a run. The matter was so urgent that, despite the inconvenience of doing the work on the spot, Lunin made the necessary repairs then and there. Afraid that the stuffing box would not hold out for long, he kept a watchful eye on it. But despite his fears, it continued to work without a hitch and no further repairs were needed.

It was probably at that time that the thought entered the young engineer's head: "It ought to be possible to take your locomotive in for washing without a single repair being needed."

Had Lunin possessed the turn of mind of an old-fashioned engineer instead of that of a young mechanic, such a thought would never have entered his head, or if it had, he would have dismissed it immediately as absurd and ridiculous. For to bring in his engine without mentioning a single repair needed would, to his mind, simply expose his inexperience and inability to recognize flaws in the machinery when they existed.

The idea of handling all current repairs himself intrigued Lunin and without stopping to consider to what consequences it might lead, he put his idea to his comrades. The crews headed by Lunin and Chirkov became interested and agreed to

make an attempt at reducing the repairs list when the engine was brought in for washing to zero.

There was doubtless more of pure youthful ardour in this initial proposal of Lunin's than of a deliberate attack on the traditions of the old school. You could see this ardour in the humourous twinkle in the eyes of the chief engine-driver, still very young in years, in spite of his unsuccessful efforts to assume the mien and bearing of a doughty Siberian.

Be that as it may, this was something after Lunin's own heart, and he began with all the tenacity in the world to put his idea into practice. It goes without saying that both he and his comrades had much to learn before they could master the various types of repairs that were needed. Both Lunin and Chirkov were highly resourceful men who could thrash things out for themselves, but once in a while they would run up against some particular knotty problem.

"At one of the very first halts to have our engine washed," Lunin relates, "it turned out that the spiral spring of the wheel had to be changed. We did it all right, but not without a struggle. Up to then none of us had ever changed a spiral spring before, and we weren't sure how to go about it. We didn't feel like asking the mechanics since it seemed too simple a matter to bother them with. And actually it is a trifling affair: changing a spring for us now is as easy as pie. But that first time we fiddled around with it for two and a half hours. That taught us a lesson. After that we asked the ex-foreman of the shop to tell us the best way of changing the spiral spring without jacking up the engine. He advised us, on the side we had to remove the spring from, to fasten the spring with, at least, an ordinary brakeblock placed between the end of the spring and the frame. Since then we have had occasion to change the spring two or three times — and we did it in twenty to twenty-five minutes."

Lunin no longer hesitated to ask the advice of experienced workmen.

His first experiment was a complete success. Not only did the YCL crew of the "FD"-20-1242 itself take care of all the repairs ordinarily handled by the repair crew, but they also did the more complex work that, until then, had been done by special mechanics at the depot. And the result was that they were able to bring in their train for washing without a single item written down in the repair book.

In May 1940 Lunin's train was given one of its regular overhauls, and when he took over the locomotive again, Lunin thought:

"If we can run from one washing to another doing all the repairs ourselves, it certainly ought to be possible to run the train sixty thousand kilometres between general overhauls, instead of thirty thousand."

Lunin had been driving his train for nearly eight years by this time; he knew his engine down to the very last cog, and had learned not only to make the repairs himself, but to prevent a good deal of the damage hitherto caused by wear and tear on the engine, putting a good deal of his own initiative into the job. He could not understand how it was that among all the engine-drivers of the Novosibirsk depot, no-one had ever thought of such a simple thing before. It should certainly have been obvious to them all.

The crews running the "FD"-20-1242 locomotive — by now there were three of them — undertook to increase the distance covered between general overhauls to sixty thousand kilometres.

Day after day for half a year the crews running the train never for a moment forgot the obligation they had undertaken. They had now not only to make all the necessary repairs themselves, but to keep the locomotive running without

an overhauling for sixty thousand kilometres.

Just how Lunin and his comrades succeeded in attaining that goal despite all the difficulties they had to overcome is probably something that only people like them, with “one-track minds,” can understand.

Lunin had a twinkle in his eye when he recalled the following incident:

“We were taking an incline, which meant that the boiler had to give all it was worth. Suddenly I heard my assistant shouting that the stoker had got clogged up and the flow of coal had stopped. I immediately recalled a number of cases of Novosibirsk engine-drivers stopping at the first siding they had come to and simply abandoning their trains when their stokers went out of commission. ‘Try to put her in reverse,’ I told my assistant, ‘but be careful.’ A minute passed, and then he shouted: ‘I can’t do anything with it!’ We had to decide on some course or other right away, but what? While we were investigating the reason for the breakdown, the heating would stop too. The coal in the fire-box would immediately burn up and there would be trouble there too. If the stoker was inactive for any length of time, the fire in the boiler would soon grow black and the temperature begin to drop, and with it the steam pressure. So I ordered the fireman and my assistant: ‘Begin to heat the boiler by hand.’ Well, to feed the boiler of an ‘FD’ locomotive by hand, and on an incline into the bargain, isn’t exactly an easy job. The crew had to roll up their shirt sleeves on that trip all right. But as a result we prevented the train from stopping en route and saved the stoker. When we arrived at Novosibirsk we found that a hammer had dropped into the tender along with the coal at the fuel dump at Bolotnaya. Somewhere along the way the hammer had become jammed in the stoker. If the stoker had been allowed to work at full blast, the pressure would have been

nearly the same as in the boiler and, inasmuch as we should have been doing our best to get the stoker going again, there would certainly have been some serious trouble.

More often than not Lunin encountered difficulties where he least expected them.

There was one occasion — this was after the train had topped a long incline and the going was already easier — when Lunin took hold of the regulator in order to decrease the steam pressure. He could not make the handle budge. He tackled it with both hands, but with no result. The train was picking up speed by now, travelling slightly downhill, but further on there was another steep incline. To lose control of the engine at a moment such as this meant, at the very best, that the train stood in danger of being decoupled.

Lunin told the fireman to climb up and close the main steam dome valve, and then wait for orders to open it up gradually all the way.

After the fireman had closed the valve and no more steam could get into the cylinder, Lunin, by manipulating the brakes, began to slow down somewhat. The incline came to an end, Lunin gave the signal to the fireman and the latter opened the valve slowly.

Now it merely remained for the driver to regulate the speed of the train, which he did with the aid of the reverse. And so, by making use of the closing valve of the steam dome, Lunin brought the train a distance of ninety kilometres into Novosibirsk. This was a dangerous course of action. Lunin instructed the fireman to open the valve and go back to his cab while he himself kept busy with the reverse and brakes.

And so he brought the train to its destination with the regulator open all the way. One is not likely to find a similar instance in railroad history.

When the lid was opened they ascertained that the end of

the fifth valve had been broken off and choked the regulator.

Lunin is a Russian to his marrow, that same Russian who, in the words of Maxim Gorky, is “fantastically talented.” And, we might add, fantastically unassuming. If you ask Lunin whether he has any particular idea in mind, be it of a technical, rationalizing, inventive or creative nature, he will be sure to answer you with an embarrassed air:

“Well, you see, I’ve got no ability in that line.”

But immediately, continuing his reminiscences, he tells of five, ten, a hundred instances from his own experience which give you a picture of his fine, vigorous mind — supremely enterprising, inventive and capable.

Present-day reality has a place all of its own for the creative activity of Nikolai Lunin, a place that is away from the well-beaten paths where one is accustomed to meet outstanding men. Lacking the necessary historical perspective, we are not yet able to give a correct estimate of his contribution. But it is not too early today to recognize the historical necessity of his work and the fact that Lunin himself was without doubt just the man for that work.

In November 1940, when Lunin’s “FD” was run in to the depot for repairs and overhauling after 62,700 kilometres on the road, during which it had been jacked-up for washing only nine times instead of the standard fifteen, nobody even dreamed that the news of this event would ever spread beyond the walls of the Novosibirsk depot.

Least of all did Lunin himself think so.

But immediately after the first reports of Lunin’s method of running a train had appeared in *Gudok*, the special newspaper for railroadmen, and then in *Pravda*, and subsequently throughout the whole Soviet press, the genuine meaning and significance of his accomplishment became evident.

Down the long ages of the history of its development,

mankind has constantly tried, sometimes through particular peoples or classes, sometimes through individuals, to change unbearable conditions of labour, to become liberated from them.

Not until our own time did labour actually become free, and this took place in Lunin’s native land; mankind slowly but surely began to regard labour as just as natural a need of the mind and heart as, say, love.

All this has taken place before our very eyes. However, to break down the thousand-year-old, antediluvian views of labour as something that is a curse and a punishment, and replace that view by a new one, cannot be accomplished universally at one blow. For this help from the outside is required, a push from the side, as it were, a change in surroundings, as in the case of any creative spiritual or mental achievement.

It sometimes happens that as a social advance matures or is already imperceptibly verging on culmination, it is embodied in the life-work of a particular man, who subsequently exerts a colossal influence in forming people’s minds and outlook and, hence, on their activity.

Such an influence in the formation of a new attitude to labour and creative work was exerted by Alexei Stakhanov.

Such an influence on the attitude to labour and the natural aspiration of mind and heart was the contribution of Lunin.

True, there were many before Lunin who consciously or unconsciously voiced their new attitude to labour. But Lunin, in distinction from them, not only gave concrete form to such a new attitude, but expressed it in clear principles. The old snobbish attitude to labour — a direct outgrowth of the antediluvian view — was also, of course, a matter of principle, and was by no means confined to engine-drivers.

Thus it was that the events taking place behind the walls of the Novosibirsk depot were bound to have their repercus-

sions in the world outside and extend far beyond railroad circles, becoming something in the nature of a universal phenomenon. And it all happened with the greatest rapidity, in much the same way as a saturated solution will rapidly crystallize when a last crystal is dropped into it.

That is what happened in this case too.

At the end of January 1941 Lunin received a telegram of congratulations from the People's Commissar of Railways, with an invitation to take over the new three thousandth "FD" locomotive, just built by the Voroshilovgrad Works.

Early in March Lunin's crew, on their way to take over the new locomotive, went to Moscow to receive a whole series of awards from L. M. Kaganovich, the People's Commissar of Railways.

1942 saw Lunin awarded the Stalin Prize. In August of that year the Order of Lenin was conferred on him.

These outward signs of recognition conferred by society and the government showed how quickly the public was grasping the importance of what this Novosibirsk engine-driver had accomplished. Lunin was now fast coming to be recognized as the creator of a new conception of professional honour, and the professional dignity of the working man, as a stimulus to a new movement in transport.

The war, which brought home to every worker his own personal responsibility for his job, showed just how timely this new conception of professional honour was, and how integral a part of history.

The war has placed the professional honour of Soviet people at the service of their country. It is wartime professional honour that demands that munition plants be built and put into operation at lightning speed, and produce a constant stream of planes, tanks, guns and shells for the front. It is because of wartime professional honour that trains are not

hamstring on the line when a bullet pierces the brake tract.

In the working man's professional consciousness the war has necessitated a radical and irrevocable turn. The sort of snobbery which was responsible for an engine-driver to abandon his train en route rather than repair a damaged tender, or a bricklayer to remain idle on a construction job for months at a time rather than do any other necessary job such as plastering, and the plasterer in his turn, to sit with folded hands waiting for the bricklayer to put up the walls — this sort of snobbery has vanished in the fires of the war.

The model of professional honour, the leader of the working masses, is now the man who can operate several machines simultaneously, who can get along himself and dispense with the assistants formerly allotted him, the man who can fill the breach at any time and at any job to replace a comrade called to the colours.

Will this new conception of professional honour be lost after victory over the enemy and the return to peacetime labour, when the wounds of war have to be healed and the world enters upon a new historical phase of development?

No, the new attitude towards professional honour will then gain in strength, it will develop into a firm tradition whose inception will be ever bound up with the names of such men as Nikolai Lunin.

FOUNDRYMAN SHARUNOVA

Whenever I see the tall, steel-clad tower of a blast furnace, I involuntarily recall one of those vivid impressions — or, rather, discoveries — of childhood that engrave themselves on one's memory for the rest of one's life.

My grandfather was the superintendent of one of the smaller foundries of the Putilov Works in the Finnish Woods. I remember what pleasure we grandchildren of his used to get out of accompanying him to work. We would walk along the high bank of a turbulent river. Shouting at the top of our lungs to make ourselves heard above its incessant roar, we would keep at granddad with an endless series of childish "why's," skipping and hopping up to him every minute in order to catch his deep, bass voice. Once, after I had walked him as far as the foundry gates, I asked:

"Where are you going now, Granddad?"

To my boundless amazement he replied that he was going to see *domna*.*

I was nine years old at the time, and I knew only one *Domna* in all the world. This *Domna* was a jolly little old woman with a surprisingly pleasant, pock-marked face, as round as a child's. She lived in a quiet street on the outskirts of my home town in the Urals, and we used to buy our milk from her.

"Oh!..." I exclaimed. "But whatever does she do at the foundry?"

"Smelts iron," grandfather replied. "Our *domna* is a great big furnace."

"A great big furnace?!" I gasped. "Oh, Granddad, please show me!"

* *Domna* in Russian means blast furnace and is, at the same time, a proper name. — Tr.

So one hot summer's day granddad took me by the hand and led me into the foundry yard.

"Get up there," he said. "You'll be able to see everything from there."

I scrambled up a big heap of stones and saw, not far below, the conical tower of the blast furnace, looking for all the world like a giant locomotive standing on end. At first sight, it seemed incredibly tall to me, as if it were holding up the sky. I did not understand what the men who were bustling around the huge black structure enmeshed with thick pipes, which looked just like snakes, were doing, but one thing was clear to me: something quite out of the ordinary was going to happen!...

And it did! The men suddenly fell back along both sides of a small channel. The air above it seemed to catch fire as a raspberry-red stream of metal began to crawl along the channel bed, steadily growing thicker and glowing more and more fiercely all the time. Somewhere in front of all these men blazed a smokeless, reddish-gold flame that flowed evenly, smoothly on, now golden, now rosy... I climbed higher and saw the ruby-coloured streams of metal overflowing from the main channel into a whole network of little conduits. The sun-drenched air seemed to be dancing in flames, as in a fairy-tale, and the men too, who looked so small from where I was standing, looked as if they had stepped out of a fairy-tale — incredible men who controlled all this fire and metal, and this steel-clad giant itself whose name was so amazingly *Domna*.

"But Granddad," I asked wonderingly that evening, "aren't they scared? Suppose they catch fire all of a sudden and burn to death?"

"What an idea!..." chuckled granddad in his deep voice. "Those men know their work. That's why they're foundrymen..."

I still remember how amazed I was at these words. How simply granddad had said about these magic beings that they “knew their work.” As far back as I could remember I had heard that word repeated in the family: work. So that ruddy glow, that fiery stream of metal and all that hustle and bustle about the giant tower was just ordinary, everyday work!... Those men were not afraid of the fire or of the incandescent metal just because they “knew their work,” as granddad had so simply put it. The fairy-tale faded. But the impression that man’s work with metal is something portentous in its grimness and might has remained with me always.

It was with a reference to this little incident that I began my first conversation with Faina Sharunova, the woman blast-furnace worker of Nizhni-Tagil.

“Yes, skill is particularly important in our work of iron smelting,” she said, raising her smiling blue eyes to me. “Once you’ve made iron your trade, you have to be like it yourself. A blast furnace, you know, doesn’t tolerate lazy, slipshod work; it demands patience, perseverance — and speed, too, when necessary. When the metal’s time is ripe, everything has to be worked out to the split second and everyone has to be on his toes. That’s the only way to get anywhere with it.”

I had been told about Faina Sharunova back in Sverdlovsk. The steel workers there had called her “a hardy body,” a woman with “plenty of grit in her.” And so, when I had occasion to visit Nizhni-Tagil, I decided to make the acquaintance of this woman blast-furnace worker.

“You absolutely must!” I was told. “She’s one of the best workers in Nizhni-Tagil.”

“I suppose she must be a pretty hefty woman, this Faina Sharunova of yours, eh?”

“No, just the usual size, nothing out of the ordinary, and no stronger than the average either, just a healthy woman,

that’s all.”

“How does she do it then? After all, a foundryman’s work is no cinch!”

“She manages all right! And she’s quite active publicly into the bargain: she’s a deputy to the city Soviet and chairman of the council of the local branch of the Air and Chemical Defence League, and she frequently speaks at local meetings in her district. She’s young, full of life and energy, and finds time for everything.”

Indeed, if you were to meet Faina Sharunova in the street, you would hardly notice anything particular about her. She is of medium height, with thick, fluffy, fair hair, with a touch of auburn, blue eyes, a smooth white skin radiant with health and a calm, typically Russian face. But when she smiles, she reveals a row of even white teeth, a quick, frank smile full of youthful audacity. She speaks in brief, terse sentences which seem to complement her quick, vivacious smile: “You don’t say?” “There you are!” “What a job!” “Yes, yes.”

“How did I come to be a blast-furnace worker? Many people have asked me the same question... I know it’s not only a question of myself... (A quick, roguish smile lights up her face.) After all, there aren’t so many women throughout the whole of the Soviet Union who are doing this job. People ask me: ‘How did you happen to become a blast-furnace worker? Were you offered the job, specially trained for it...’ Nothing of the sort! No one offered me the job, no one even so much as hinted the idea to me. It was all my own doing, my very own. I was just bent on becoming a blast-furnace worker, and I did!...”

“Character?... It must be pretty rotten for a person if his character interferes with his work!”

As she tells me about herself, Sharunova keeps on pacing the floor round the table — from the habit, no doubt, of

walking round the blast furnace. In her manner, in the way she tosses her head, shrugs her shoulders and shrewdly screw's up her eyes as though preparing to debate a point, there is a dash of that gay audacity and courage which had so struck me during the first minutes of my acquaintance with her.

"Why did I want to become a blast-furnace worker?... Well, what shall I tell you?... It's a long story and I assure you it didn't happen in a day. I'm absolutely convinced that if a man has never put up a fight in his life and has never overcome a single obstacle, he'll never want to strive after anything out of the ordinary!..."

Sharunova had certainly had to fight in her childhood. "Well, of course it isn't worthwhile writing home about, but after all I was only a kid with a kid's strength." Losing her father at an early age, she was left with a mother and a handful of brothers and sisters. Her mother had been overjoyed when some distant relatives, well-to-do people without any children of their own had taken Faina into their home. At first they had fussed over her, stroked her flaxen curls, went into raptures over her lisping childish speech and quaint little songs. But later on, when she grew up, her "benefactors" began to make her help more and more frequently with the housework — "to keep her out of mischief." They did not deem it necessary to send Faina to school: "a girl doesn't need an education in order to get married." Her playmates went to school and shared their simple news with her; but all she could do was to envy them in silence. Unknown to anybody, Faina bought an ABC and, watching how her playmates did their homework, traced the letters with her finger. But they took the ABC away from her and ordered her sternly "to stop playing the fool." Faina could not bear to think that all the children of her age knew more than she did. She managed to get hold of another ABC and secretly taught herself to read. "I

will read, I will study," she decided. Her childish will rebelled against the misery, the injustice of it. "I will read at night — whether you like it or not!" And read at night she did, by candlelight.

Faina felt more and more "cramped" living with these narrow-minded, shallow people, whom she dubbed "gadflies." She won for herself the right to read whenever she liked and whatever she liked. Sharp-witted and observant, she was still young when she sensed that "Uncle was rotten to the core and definitely anti-Soviet." When collective farms began to spring up all over the country, her "Uncle" predicted poverty, discord and misery for them, to be followed by the "certain collapse" of the Soviet system. "You can't get along without bosses," he said, "life was better when we had them."

"What are you always whining about 'better, better' for?" Faina daringly retorted one day. "Why did the workers and peasants make the Revolution then, and fight for it, and give their lives for it?"

Her "Uncle" almost fell off his chair in surprise. After this conversation her relationship with her "benefactors" became so strained that Faina realized that it was high time to leave "home."

She wanted so badly to begin an independent life that she added two years to her age. ("I fibbed I was sixteen") and went to work in a dining-room. Her job was to slice bread. In the course of the day she had to cut up hundreds of loaves of bread. Her hands, unaccustomed to the work, became numbed, her fingers ached; but never for a moment did she lose heart: she was earning her own living.

Soon Faina made a name for herself for her efficiency and her conscientious attitude towards her work. But, though she tried hard all the time, the work somehow did not seem to her to be "the job for her," something she could really devote

herself to heart and soul.

Life in the large industrial town of Nizhni-Tagil was utterly different from what she had been accustomed to in the quiet Urals village that she had left. Nizhni-Tagil grew under her eyes; old factories were modernized and extended, and new ones built. She loved to hear the deep blast of the factory siren of a morning, watch the endless stream of people going to work. And the factory workers had so many friends and acquaintances, people with whom they had worked together, stood alongside of each other, perhaps for years, like brothers. The dining-room also began to seem “somewhat cramped,” “uninteresting” for Faina. By this time she was acknowledged to be one of the best workers; she represented her shop at delegate meetings, and was commended several times for her good work. Finally she was given an opportunity to go to Nizhni-Salda to learn to become an instructor in rabbit breeding.

She readily agreed. Studying came easily to her. She finished the course and qualified as an instructor. At the state farm to which she was sent, Faina eagerly set about her duties. But again she had a disturbing feeling in the back of her mind that this job, too, was not “the job for her,” only something temporary. And now, as Sharunova recalls those days, her lips part in a quick, frank smile, displaying her white teeth.

“I would get such an attack of the blues that I would be sick of everything. ‘Now look here,’ I would say to myself, ‘what do you want now; why can’t you ever be satisfied?’ I wanted to work at a factory, be among people. I had a heart-to-heart talk with the management of the state farm, they understood my feelings and let me go. I returned to Nizhni-Tagil and got a job in the machine shop of the Kuibyshev Works. I was dying to do something big, something useful...”

“Then the war with Finland began. One of my brothers

left for the front. My blood was boiling. ‘I must fight for my country. I’m going to the front, too!’ But at the recruiting station they told me: ‘You can do much more useful work here, in the rear. You must do what is best for the common cause!’ ‘But supposing I have a feeling that I can do something more important than what I’m doing now?’ I asked. ‘Well, in that case, choose something else, try a harder job.’

“It was just as if they could read my mind: I had already picked on a profession which was really to my liking! For a long time past I had been watching the foundrymen at work. ‘If only I could do what they are doing,’ I would think. ‘That’s just the thing for me, just the thing!’ And in the morning, on my way home from the night shift, or in the evening, on my way back to work, I would linger beside the blast furnaces and find it positively impossible to tear myself away!”

Faina smiled and even shut her eyes, as children do when they talk about something that they particularly love.

“At first I was thunderstruck: the iron flowed in fiery streams and overflowed into narrow channels; the sky above the furnace was rosy, flushed, ominous, as though lit up by an enormous conflagration... It was beautiful, magnificent!... The furnace towered high over the factory, huge, black, imposing!... And when you looked down from the top the foundrymen bustling around below seemed so tiny, just teeny-weeny things — but it was they who were masters of the furnace!... That’s what appealed to me: the furnace was such a tremendous thing, but man so puny in comparison, made it do his bidding, was its master. He, man, said — decided: ‘It’s time to tap it.’ He read that in the flames. He wouldn’t let the furnace hold the iron a moment longer than necessary.

“‘You’ve had it long enough, furnace,’ he seemed to say, ‘out it comes!’ And the iron began to flow, and more and more of it came, but the men just stood and watched... for all

the world like kings... It was wonderful!..."

Faina tosses back her head, strands of reddish-gold hair fall on to her flushed cheeks, her even, pearl-like teeth flash and her blue eyes sparkle audaciously, gaily and dreamily by turns. She does not suspect that, speaking now of the beauty of labour, she herself is really beautiful, with the intelligent beauty of one who creates.

To run a little ahead of my story, I remember discussing Faina Sharunova and a number of other well-known Urals iron and steelworkers with a comrade who knew very little about factory life.

"What interests you chiefly is the story of people who make good," my friend said to me in the grumbling tone of a sceptic. "But have you ever considered the shortcomings of such people as, say, this Sharunova of yours. Why don't you study them, concentrate on them. You are definitely biased where iron and steel workers are concerned."

"Yes, I am, and I make no secret of the fact! Work with metal, white-hot metal is hard work, heavy work, intense labour involving difficulties that call for efforts of the will and muscles unknown to the men in, say, light industry. As for shortcomings, as you are pleased to call them, Sharunova, of course, has them too... What do you expect? She probably cuts up a bit rough every now and again, or is ready to lash out when she flares up. People with spirit are often short-tempered, and sometimes unjust in jumping to conclusions... Who can tell what they are liable to do? But just imagine the power of her labour, as though she were always at the front — those tense hours of work, when a person is governed by the strongest traits of his character, his experience, his endurance, his convictions, his habits, his will... Well, these fundamental traits are more important to me than anything else: they constitute the essence of a person. In these days of the Great

Patriotic War a soldier of industry is characterized by his will to win, to push ahead and not to yield. This is the breed of people which Stalin called innovators, people who are always searching for new things, constantly on the quiver. Our epoch will go down in history as an epoch of glorious resistance and offensive. What interests me most of all is the way people think and work."

To return to Faina Sharunova. She had to begin by attacking, to fight her way from the very outset.

"When I revealed my intentions of working at a blast furnace my comrades simply wouldn't take me seriously: they thought I was joking. But when they saw that I meant it, they tried to ridicule me out of the idea: 'What's that you're hankering after — you want to operate a blast furnace?!' As for the old workers, they were downright indignant: 'You'll certainly come a cropper, my dear,' they said. 'You're too cocksure of yourself, that's what's wrong with you! A blast furnace isn't a lathe. You're not strong enough to handle such a monster.'"

"There were some who didn't mince words: 'She's only a blasted skirt; long hair short wit!' It was all very unpleasant, but I knew what I would be up against. The old traditions had to be smashed, and the only way of doing that was to show them results. 'So stick to your guns, Faina!' I kept repeating to myself."

And Sharunova makes a rapid gesture with her small, strong hand.

Yes, that was the only way the old traditions could be smashed. It was doubtful whether any of her opponents clearly realized how eagerly, greedily this young, twenty-six-year-old woman had looked at the black, steel-clad tower of the blast furnace, how she "had made a note" of everything, beginning with the controls of the blast furnace and ending with each bracket in the pipes through which day and night

bubbled and gurgled the water that cooled the walls of the blast furnace. Now the blast furnace of the Kuibyshev Works is considered small compared, for example, with the new ones that have been built at Magnitogorsk or Chusovo since the beginning of the war. But at the time when Faina Sharunova was appointed moulder's assistant, it was considered big enough. And when Faina, the former lathe operator from the machine shop, dressed in quilted breeches, a fur jacket and a wide brimmed hat which looked like a mushroom, went to take up her new job, she had to listen to many a spiteful joke from the scoffers and the "guardian angels" of the old Urals traditions. She would walk on with compressed lips; she felt like quickening her step, but by an effort of will, she suppressed the impulse and forced herself to walk nonchalantly along as though nothing was the matter.

"Your job isn't much," she was told at the blast furnace. "Just stand and watch. See how people go about the work."

She obediently stood where she had been told to, but all the time she tested her knowledge, trying to predict what the furnace man or his assistant would do next and when.

"She's certainly wide-awake!" laughed the foundrymen, seeing how intently Faina's blue eyes followed every movement they made.

A couple of days passed, and the new moulder moved about the cold, windswept terrace like an old hand.

Eight days later she was made first assistant.

"See, you're going ahead already, Wide-awake!" they said to her.

"I'm doing my best," she would answer quietly, although her heart would leap with joy.

"That's right, do your best, do your best," they replied condescendingly, as though to a person who was obstinately trying to realize a clearly impossible dream. But one day this

condescension vanished as though swept away by the wind, and instead of saying, "We've got a... woman working in the blast furnace here," they began to talk about her as "our foundryman Sharunova." Something very serious happened. Even now Faina recalls it with agitation.

"It happened on No. 1 furnace, while it was being tapped. The clay plug in the tap-hole should never be less than 1.2 metres thick, and the thicker it is, the better. But on No. 1 this time the tap-hole had not been filled in deep enough, and the molten iron broke through the clay and began to run out of the furnace. The man in charge was an old, experienced operator, but — who doesn't have a turn of bad luck sometimes? — got flurried and lost his head. People were yelling and rushing about all over the place. I noticed that our neighbours were in trouble! I ran over there and ordered: 'Signal to the furnace!' That meant — reduce the blast so that the iron flowed quieter. They reduced the blast, and the iron quietened down and ran slower. Then I ordered: 'Fill in the syphon!' They filled it in, and so got the runaway metal under control."

Faina first began to operate a blast furnace herself in war-time.

"I've been asked many times how the war affected me. It put my back up, just made my blood boil. I've come to hate the German fascist scum so that when I look at the stream of molten iron, I want it to flow on to the heads of the skunks. More, more iron for the front! That's the way I feel about it — and I feel as if I am also wiping out the fascists with my own hands here. I go home — and all the time I think about my furnace! What a character this furnace has... If you don't look out it can act like a wild beast! But I keep a strict watch on it!"

Clenching her fist, she paces the room for several minutes, walking round the table which is covered with a snow-white cloth. On the way she stops to pluck some dry leaves from the

perennial flowers which fill the wide window of her warm, spacious and meticulously clean room.

“Do you feel just as much at home at the blast furnace as you do here, Faina?”

“That’s putting it mildly — ‘at home’... Why, I love my furnace!”

She smiled thoughtfully, serenely.

“Yes, I love my furnace. Take my work at the furnace away from me, and I would just pine to death... Really and truly!...”

She changed the subject, and we began to talk about the “heartaches,” as she calls them, in her beloved work of iron smelting.

“Take steel smelters, for example. I know you have a soft spot for them, but you must agree that we, blast-furnace workers, have a harder time. Steel smelters also have to deal with fire, but they have the whole furnace under view. The furnace-man raises the oven door and he can check and see how the furnace is behaving. But we blast-furnace workers have to walk round the furnace and listen to it, like a doctor examining a patient. ‘Now,’ he says, ‘let me see your tongue!...’ In just the same way we can’t see anything inside the furnace except through the ‘peephole,’ and that’s no bigger than a pin prick. The steel smelter can see how the smelt is going and when it is ready to be poured, but we blast-furnace workers can only see what we’ve done when we break through the plug. The blast furnace is an awkward customer to handle... And yet...”

Once again a quick, roguish smile lit up her face. “And yet I love my furnace and my work.”

Everything lofty and noble, everything which inspires this young woman in all the major events in her life, she attributes first and foremost to her work. Her work determines her tastes and reactions, just as it determines the traits of her

character and of her life itself. She is accustomed (“I’ve been like that ever since I first joined the YCL!”) to appraise all the phenomena of life primarily from the point of view of work. She is incredulous of the loftiest speeches unless they are backed up by deeds.

“When the war began, we had meetings at our works at which many people spoke. Some splendid speeches were made. Of course, they were important, necessary; in those first grim days we bucked each other with a brave word. But if you make a speech and promise to help the Red Army, Comrade Stalin and the country with all your might and main, you’ve got to keep your word!”

And in her eyes there again appears for an instant that warm, yet serious smile.

“I heard Stalin’s speech over the radio, then I read it in the newspapers... I kept on thinking about it all the time, both at the blast furnace and here, at home... I realized that the one purpose of my life now was to help Stalin, to help the country. We all had to do what we had been doing day in and day out, only from now on we had to do it better and better, produce more and more — that was how to help Stalin and the country. And then I thought to myself that when you study hard and want to go on knowing more and more — that is also helping the country and Stalin.”

Long hours were spent in study in this clean, light room, with the cushions piled high on the roomy bed under a lace coverlet, with its flowers on the spacious window-sill and a stack of books arranged neatly on the table. Faina read popular handbooks and textbooks on iron smelting.

“I love the hours I spend in studying, and in general, I’m very fond of reading. Only I read in my own way,” Sharunova added somewhat shyly. “I don’t remember everything I read. There are books which pass me by just like the people in the

street. The books I remember best are those with which I heartily agree or disagree. I can read Tolstoy, for example, by the volume. When I read *Anna Karenina*, I wanted to protest — why did Anna end her life under the wheels of the train? She was a beautiful woman — and clever — and then to throw her life away like that... Ekh!... And she thought only about love, day and night, only about love; she even took morphine — what an unhappy woman! And why did all that happen to her? Of course, society was different then, and she had a hard time... But there was also another reason: she was not skilled in any work. She was just a beautiful woman, that's all! She was rich, moved in the highest circles, but when you have nothing else to uphold you — then you're a doomed soul!..."

And Faina concluded with the same enthusiasm:

"But let a woman like Anna undertake some real work — something that appeals to her, just as my furnace appeals to me, show her that she is strong, useful, necessary to society. Oh, ho!... What heights she wouldn't rise to then."

Suddenly, remembering something, Faina smiled and then chuckled.

"Not long ago I saw a play at the theatre. It was called the *Invisible Lady*. It was about a Spanish widow who loved and fought, and led everyone by the nose. That woman was clever and gay. I drew a conclusion for myself right there while I was watching her: life is such a complicated thing that you can't get along without being gay and lively. When you're having a hard time of it — grit your teeth and show a merry front. Even if you feel as if someone were tearing your heart out — don't knuckle under. And then you'll see that you'll win the day. Here, take this simple example: my arm is a woman's arm, a weak arm, without hardly any strength. And yet physical strength is absolutely necessary when you

work in a foundry."

"I suppose your opponents had a lot to say on that score."

"Oh, ho, I should say so! Once I shut the jokers up with this: 'Eh, you smart Alecs, men aren't born with biceps. I knew what I was taking on, don't you worry, and guessed that things would go bad with me at the blast furnace if I wasn't up to the mark.'

"At first I grew terribly tired, but then I learned how to conserve my strength. Some of our men just waste their strength: they don't give their hands a moment's rest, slog away at the clay plug in the tap-hole with all their might. They strain so hard that their faces grow red and they're a terrible sight to look at. Then they rest and let off steam. 'All right,' I thought to myself, 'you're as strong as an ox, but I have to conserve my strength.' And that's how I work. I really don't know what there is so surprising about it all: any healthy woman can do everything that's required to run a blast furnace!"

It is really a pleasure to see this twenty-six-year-old foundryman on the job. Legend has it that the first smelting oven in the Urals stood on the very same spot in the days of Nikita and Akinfi Demidov. How many generations of furnacemen have trod the ground around this steel-clad tower, how many iron slabs in the floor have been worn away by the feet of men, by the incessant labour of Russian furnacemen? And now to the present generation has fallen the honour of smelting iron for the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War; in the person of this resolute young woman it is carrying out the smelt with the sure, firm hand of a master. The boldness and fervour of a member of the Young Communist League and later the courage of an adult; the perseverance of a communist, the strivings of a Soviet patriot to help Stalin and the Motherland by deed, by valourous labour; and spanning everything like the arch of a rainbow, the dream of devoting

one's strength and life to something "big and useful," love for the bold skill of man, and the clear power of his intellect and experience over the raging storm of metal and fire inside the blast furnace — all this is reflected in the measured tread of foundryman Sharunova as she moves round the blast furnace at the Kuibyshev Works.

Looking like a boy in her broad-brimmed, mushroom hat, padded jacket and quilted breeches, Sharunova straddles the narrow "gate," or more simply, the earthen gutter that leads up to the tap-hole of the furnace. With blow after blow, she smashes through the clay plug in the tap-hole of the furnace. Blow after blow rings out while the heavy hammer drives the crowbar into the neck of the tap-hole until it finally breaks through. Now a flame shows itself — green as a parrot's tail. Another blow and yet another — and again a tongue of green flame darts out, but this time shot with red. Now it bursts forth from under the steel-clad edge of the furnace tower, rust-red, gay, yet angry. And now the first thin stream of molten metal, like ruby wine, spurts out into the channel. Not enough, not enough! And like some gigantic needle, the iron crowbar probes deeper and deeper into the heart of the furnace — until suddenly, with a roaring whistle, a broad stream gushes out, bubbling and hissing, and the stream of pig iron flows farther and farther, spreading out along the channels. The frosty Urals sky becomes bluer still over the ruby-coloured layers cooling in their narrow beds. A rosy haze hovers over the fresh pig iron. A shimmering film is already beginning to cover the lamina, and while it is cooling and darkening in some gutters, a molten, ruby-red stream of metal is still flowing into others.

Her face flushed from the heat, Sharunova watches the flow of metal with a fixed, intent gaze. It must all run out; not a single drop must be allowed to fall into the heart of the

slag. The longer the smelt continues, the more the slag that comes out, and it is directed into a side channel. Sharunova methodically "wrings out" her oven like a sponge — that is how she manages to turn out one hundred and fifty per cent and more of her production schedule.

... During the smelt a tall, dignified old man with long red moustaches came up to the furnace. When I heard his name — Ivan Grigoryevich — I suddenly remembered his moustached face, which I had often seen reproduced in newspapers and magazines. This was the head of the Korobovs — a famous family of foundrymen, who was known throughout the country. The old man stood and watched the smelt silently, but with the eye of an expert.

Strolling with Korobov in the factory yard after the smelt, I could not restrain my curiosity and asked his opinion of Faina Sharunova's work.

Without a moment's hesitation, he replied:

"She works conscientiously, and she's a capable, bold woman."

Wishing to please Sharunova, I told her soon afterwards what Korobov had said about her work. Faina only raised her eyebrows, blushed and said nothing. But her shining eyes showed how dear to her was this praise from the old furnace-man.

Travelling from Nizhni-Tagil to Sverdlovsk by electric train, I had a long conversation with an elderly engineer, who told me many interesting things about the history of the Kuibyshev Works, which is one of the oldest in the Urals. Then, when the conversation had turned to the present, the engineer asked me:

"What would you say, if you wrote, for example, about foundryman Sharunova and then, some time later, right there in Nizhni-Tagil there appeared another foundryman who was

perhaps, even better than Faina?"

"I should be very pleased if another foundryman did appear! Let it even be on the same blast furnace at the Kuibyshev Works. Alexei Stakhanov's records have long been surpassed by men who followed in his footsteps, and his glory is only all the brighter because of it. Let another foundryman appear alongside Sharunova, let her even surpass Faina, and this would not detract one whit from the significance of the latter's achievements. Stakhanovites, innovators in labour, men and women of the Stalin breed, don't work for their own personal pride and glory, but for the common weal, for the advancement of society. And Shatunova realizes this perfectly well. She loves to say that she is working 'for the people.' Many guides in the hill country know the paths leading to the summit of a peak. And honour and glory falls to the guide who by his daring, teaches others to climb and conquer new mountain paths."

Victor Shklovsky

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

St. Petersburg in 1906 might be called a city within a city.

The outer city began at the waterfront with the coal harbour, the flat islands and the port. Vessels left St. Petersburg loaded with Russian timber and flax bound for England. Vessels moored at St. Petersburg with English coal in their holds as ballast. The coal was transshipped up the Neva to feed the plants and factories which stretch in an endless line towards Schlüsselburg.

The inner city, at the heart of which stands the long yellow building of the Admiralty with its imposing entrance adorned with plaster-of-Paris figures supporting a huge white globe, was known as the Admiralty District.

Here, in the Admiralty District, on the vast Palace Square with the Alexander Column, was the Winter Palace. Behind the Alexander Column was the winding arcade of the General Staff, the aristocratic Morskaya Street and, to the left of the Palace Square, the Hermitage, with its polished granite caryatids and its broad, parchment-like marble staircase which, people said, was without its peer in all the world.

Close by the Hermitage, just beyond the arch spanning the Zimny Canal, began Millionaya Street, no less aristocratic than the Morskaya; it led from the Marble Palace to the broad Field of Mars which was fenced off by a heavy chain strung through striped posts. Here parades were held to the accompaniment of martial strains, the beat of drums and the shrill piping of fifes.

Ahead were the Summer Gardens, to the right the dark, pink building of the Engineers' Castle, and to the left the sharp rise of Troitsky Bridge.

All this was a part of the Admiralty District. Here also

stood the Senate, the Synod and the triangular building of the War Ministry with the two lions guarding the entrance. And here, too, were the monument to Peter I, the Headquarters of the General Staff and St. Isaac's Cathedral.

Here, finally, were the museums and the home of music.

Music reposed here as in a treasure casket — in the building of the Philharmonic Society facing the Mikhailovsky Palace, in the Mariinsky Theatre and, across the way, in the Conservatory.

The Nevsky Prospect ran through the Admiralty District. This broad avenue with its smart shops ever flooded with light, its array of gas lamps suspended from tall white poles and the squat pile of the Gostinny Dvor, was ever thronged with fashionably dressed shoppers.

In those days carriages and doubledecker omnibuses with the coachman perched on a level with the roof still coursed the Nevsky Prospect.

And from the district beyond the Neva, right up to the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, beyond the elevators on the Schlussemburg highway, from the Vyborg Side, came the whirr of wheels, the piercing whistle of factory sirens, the hum of machinery.

The Neva and the factories intersect the whole of the Admiralty District, the Liteiny District and the whole business quarter of the city.

Here, in this city by the river, the old Russian government and the young Russian proletariat stood face to face with each other.

At times the Admiralty District would be filled with shabbily dressed people carrying banners. But more often than not the factory folk would be herded away from the centre of the city.

It was the year 1906.

On September 25, a child was born in the family of Dmitri Shostakovich, a St. Petersburg petty official. The boy was named Dmitri after his father. He was fair-haired and blue-eyed like his mother.

The Shostakovich home, with its grand piano in the drawing room and the inevitable array of photographs on the walls, was typical of the lower middle class section of St. Petersburg.

Music was the main topic of conversation in the Shostakovich home. Little Dmitri's mother played the piano and taught music. The boy himself learned to play at an early age and at nine he was studying regularly, first under the guidance of his mother and later in the Glasser School.

When he was ten the World War was already at its height and column after column of troops was being despatched to the front. But in spite of everything music went on in the Philharmonic Society, famous pianists and conductors were frequent visitors to the capital, huge orchestras thundered, old instruments came into their own again and new ones made their *début*.

“On the one hand you have a tremendous musical apparatus that has broken down the boundaries of harmony...” wrote one eminent critic in the magazine *Muzikalny Sovremennik*, “an unparalleled mobilization of the orchestral army and a doubling of the normal number of orchestral voices. At the same time you have the addition of both obsolete and newly-invented instruments, and as a consequence of these innovations absolutely unique sound effects, diverse novel methods of operatic production... and on the other hand... a general anaemia and poverty of feeling, coupled with a musical conception which is fragile, ephemeral, detached from life and bereft of the slightest dynamic, creative significance. This atmosphere is full of such amazing contradictions as to give musicians cause for serious anxiety. Whither is music head-

ing?”

It was in this musical environment, in the city now re-named Petrograd, that young Dmitri Shostakovich went on with his studies.

He was already composing. Influenced by the war, he wrote a long musical poem entitled *The Soldier*.

Meanwhile the war drew closer and closer to the city. Then came the February Revolution. The streets filled with men in grey army coats. The working-class quarters invaded the Admiralty District.

Gendarmes in black greatcoats, perched on the roofs, fired on the crowds.

February 1917. Spring came unusually early that year. The potholes in the streets were filled with melting snow, and under the blue skies marched dense crowds of people carrying red banners and gaily coloured streamers.

The bands played the *Internationale*.

The people sang revolutionary songs.

And wherever a crowd gathered, there young Shostakovich would be bound to be. He had not yet turned eleven. That February he saw a gendarme kill a boy in the street.

When the men and women who fell in the February Revolution were buried, he too attended the funeral, paying in his heart silent homage to the memory of the unknown boy who had been shot.

The streets seethed with life; mass meetings were held at almost every corner.

October 1917. A fog twined its cobwebby fingers round the city. Chaliapin sang in the Grand Opera House on the Petrograd Side.

There was shooting in the city. Red Guards stood at the crossroads, warming themselves at huge bonfires.

The bridges over the Neva were raised. From the distance

came the muffled booming of guns, echoing against the sides of the houses and the squat walls of the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

Workers from the Putilov Plant in black caps and overcoats with velvet collars, with rifles slung over their shoulders, marched on the Winter Palace.

The next morning the bridges were lowered and the street cars ran as usual.

Dmitri Shostakovich, the eleven-year-old boy pianist, roamed the streets, listening and observing.

Petrograd steered towards the future.

The city was a riot of colour, a mass of posters, streamers and banners; it steered towards the future, bedecked as at festival time, hungry and sunny.

Russia rang to a new music.

The theatres produced Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Othello* and Schiller's *Robbers*.

Red Armymen cheered Karl Moor when he said: "Bullets are our amnesty." Human culture was being re-studied with new eyes.

It was in such an atmosphere as this that one of its children, a young Russian pianist, was growing up and writing his own music.

In 1919 Shostakovich joined the Conservatory. That same year the well-known Russian musician, Glazounov, heard the music composed by this thirteen-year-old lad and advised him to study composition.

Shostakovich began to attend the composition class conducted by Professor Steinberg.

At the same time he continued his pianoforte studies. He worked hard. A musician has to work untiringly; the story that music came easily to Mozart is no more than a legend. Mozart, like Pushkin, Mayakovsky and Tolstoy, worked un-

ceasingly. Real art always means hard work.

Petrograd was snowbound. There was no one to clean the streets. People hauled little sleds along the narrow tracks beaten in the deep snow.

Life was no easy matter for Shostakovich in those days. At this period he happened to meet Glazounov again. The famous old composer listened to the lad play in his huge, dark, unheated apartment on Kazanskaya Street. He listened in silence and amazement. In the fragments of melody he caught the sound of a new music, a step into the future, a new tendency in music. He was astounded by the new values which the lad discovered in musical instruments.

Glazounov decided to discuss the boy's future with Gorky. At that time scholars and scientists were supplied with special ration cards. These cards entitled them to additional supplies of sugar, flour, fish and sunflower seed oil. Glazounov requested that the same conditions be given to the talented boy. Gorky, tall, broad-shouldered, listened attentively to Glazounov, stroking his long brown whiskers thoughtfully and then, with a happy smile lighting up his face, wrote the required note.

Shostakovich made himself a sled, using the back of an old chair for runners, in order to cart the food home from the store.

He stood in queues with old men who spoke to him in a kindly, old-fashioned manner, and helped elderly ladies in heavy sheepskin coats to load their rations of dried fish on to their sleds.

The Scientists' House was in Millionaya Street. His road home from there led across the Palace Square and wound amid the piles of unswept snow past the silver angel-tipped column that rose from the ground as startlingly beautiful as a sudden chord of music that seemed to fill the whole square

with melody.

Under the arch of the Headquarters of the General Staff, like the triumphant tutti of the full orchestra, rose the bronze quadriga of four horses.

The makeshift sled trundled along behind him, crunching faintly as it slid over the trampled snow.

On the Nevsky Prospect an old beggar was playing a cornet, the sound rose poignantly over the city and people thrust coins into the old man's pocket as they passed.

The buildings divided into blocks and interspersed with an occasional church or a columned facade, moved past in a long stream like a symphony.

The lad with the cleft chin, small sensitive mouth and high forehead walked on with his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

His native city stirred slowly around him as he went...

Dmitri Shostakovich worked much and ate little. The country was blockaded. Tuberculosis gained a foothold in the lad's undernourished organism. In 1922 his father died. To support his family, the boy began to play the piano in a local cinema.

Those were the days of the silent films, swift-running affairs consisting of a string of ingeniously connected episodes. In the larger cinemas an orchestra played during performances but the smaller picture palaces had to make do with a piano. A mirror attached to the piano reflected what was passing on the screen. In the mirror people hurried and scurried to and fro, waves tossed, the countryside streamed by. The pianist, with his eye on the mirror, improvised music to suit the action on the screen.

The young Mozart played in palaces, the young Shostakovich played in a cinema, learning to keep pace with the rapidly shifting scenes, learning the art of background, learn-

ing to listen for the reaction of his audience.

It was not exactly drudgery, but it was hard work nevertheless.

In 1923 Shostakovich graduated from the Conservatory as a pianist. He was composing all the time. All he knew he put into a symphony in which the main role was given to the kettledrums, the rest of the orchestra merely providing an accompaniment. The young composer perceived the world of sound differently from his older comrades. The symphony was young, fresh, still amateur but full of promise.

At the age of twenty Shostakovich wrote ten brief sketches which he entitled "Aphorisms." This was rational, schematic music, offering a new solution for everything.

It was already clear that a new master had entered Russian music, a master of great power, one who had the old technique at his fingertips and who poked fun at it. There have been many such young and powerful jesters in Russian music and literature. Young musicians, even those who subsequently "settle down" and become staid and comprehensible, are given to jesting in their youth.

In Rossini's opera *The Silken Staircase* the violinists stop abruptly in the middle of the overture to tap with their bows on the tin lamp shades of their music stands. Shostakovich, too, indulged in a little jesting. He jested, and at the same time strove to become the voice of his age. That seemed simple enough, provided one selected a new theme and so Shostakovich wrote a piece called "Symphonic Dedication to October." At the same time he returned to the cinema but now already as a composer, to write the music for the silent film "New Babylon." That was in 1929. Then he wrote the music to one of the first Soviet talkies and to the pictures "Golden Mountains" and "Counterplan." The theme song in the latter picture



“Be up and doing, Curlylocks
To meet the rising sun”

is popular to this day.

It was about this time that Shostakovich began to write his first opera. He turned for the theme to Gogol, choosing one of the queerest of Gogol's stories — *The Nose*.

The Nose was a parody. All the characters on the stage wear large false noses, the leading man wearing the largest of all and singing Italianized arias in a high falsetto. This was the jest of a big master, but a master who spoke in a falsetto instead of his real voice. Shostakovich jested for the benefit of Petrograd and for his own sake as well because he felt that he needed a quaint libretto to express the new quaint, schematic music he had to offer. The opera included a service in the Kazan Cathedral and a chorus of Persian eunuchs.

After fifteen performances *The Nose* was taken off.

It was extremely characteristic of the Petrograd opera of the period and of the prevailing taste for Western music and formalism.

After *The Nose* and his music for the screen Shostakovich felt a desire for something more national and emotional. He had already acquired a name as a composer of songs, but what he set his heart on was to write a new opera based on old Russian love songs, something that would at the same time be vigorous and dynamic — an opera, in a word, endowed with that musical “gesture” that was so much in vogue among the younger generation of the period, torn as it was between the strangely contrasting currents of formalism, naturalism and parody.

That is how Shostakovich came to write “Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk.”

In the libretto Shostakovich sides with Katerina Izmailova, whose boredom and wretchedness are elevated to the heights

of an achievement. Katerina's environment is presented in a deliberately distorted and contemptible light.

Katerina Izmailova is a romantic figure who struggles in her own way for beauty. The stifling philistine, bestial life around her merely accentuates her own vibrant vitality and the people she murders seem to be not human beings of flesh and blood but lifeless caricatures of people. This world of caricature is given naturalistically.

There are passages in the opera, as for example the song of the prisoners, which approach some of Moussorgsky's best.

In Leningrad the opera was well received. Samosud conducted the orchestra. In Moscow, however, a different reception awaited “Lady Macbeth.”

In Moscow it was produced by a theatre accustomed to realism.

But it was naturalism that lay at the root of Shostakovich's opera, and the theatre emphasized this tendency.

The young composer was influenced by a theory current in those years amongst a good many people. According to this theory, there existed two kinds of art — art for the benefit of the people and pure art, the direct continuation of the old art, just as there are two histories — the history of Russia and the history of the USSR. Our history turned out to be a mere twenty or twenty-five years instead of reaching back far into the ages.

This was a mistake of course. It is necessary not to parody the old art but to continue the old art while marching in step with the people: it is necessary to take the path Blok groped for and chosen by Mayakovsky.

Thus, the street had its place in Shostakovich's new music as it did in the music of Chaikovsky. But Shostakovich introduced it for its bizarre effects, while with Chaikovsky it added to the expressiveness of the music.

The melody in “Lady Macbeth” was broken, disjointed, fragmentary and the opera as a whole was pessimistic.

Pravda published an article entitled “Not Music but Confusion.” The author of the article criticized the opera sharply in a tone which took Shostakovich by surprise. Nor did the latter spare the critics. He pointed out that while in theory they extolled socialist realism, in practice they praised naturalism and formalism.

The criticism was severe, but it was just and convincing.

Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich is a man of the Stalin epoch. His art belongs to the Stalin epoch. He saw the future as the development of the Soviet present.

He worked hard for the next two years. He withdrew his Fourth Symphony from rehearsals. He was not satisfied with it. He laid it aside and began the Fifth Symphony, into which he put all his efforts. “The theme of my symphony,” he wrote in an article, “is the assertion of the individual; man with all his emotional experiences is the centre of this piece, which is lyrical in mood from beginning to end.”

The finale of the symphony raises the tense tragedy of the opening passages to a joyous, optimistic plane.

To the accompaniment of kettledrums the theme of the finale asserts itself — it is new, resolute and major in tone. The composer glimpses it as we glimpse the starry sky between the dark clouds.

But the stars are storm-washed and austere.

Mayakovsky’s poem *At the Top of My Voice* serves, perhaps, to explain Shostakovich’s idea.

“Die my verse,
die like a private,
like our unknown soldiers
died going into attack.”

But Mayakovsky’s verse did not die. Neither did the poet-

ry of Shostakovich’s music.

Shostakovich wrote a Sixth Symphony. His fifth was heard by the whole world.

The sixth was a disappointment to many. The impression it created was that the composer had stopped short in his development.

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Shostakovich was living in Leningrad when war struck suddenly and devastatingly from the west in the summer of 1941.

The Germans broke through to Leningrad through the spy-infested Baltic.

The Germans advanced over rivers and across lakes, the very lakes on which they had once been so ignominiously beaten by Alexander Nevsky.

German tanks rolled across land that had been ours for centuries, the land for which the people of Novgorod, Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great had fought. German tanks rolled past the grave of Pushkin, past the lakes of the Pskov region.

The existence of Russia, her future, the culture she had created, was in the balance.

The day after war was declared the young conservatory professor, Dmitri Shostakovich, volunteered for service in the Red Army. He was rejected.

After Stalin’s radio broadcast of July 3, 1941, in which he called upon the whole people to take up arms against fascism, Shostakovich applied a second time. Again he was rejected. “We will call you when we need you,” he was told at the District War Commissariat. “In the meantime go on with your work.”

The season in the Conservatory was drawing to a close.

The composer spent all his time there, not even going home to sleep. He volunteered for the army a third time. This time he was accepted and placed in charge of the musical sector of the People's Guards' Theatre.

The Theatre left for the front and Shostakovich went with it, but there was very little for him to do, since the orchestra consisted of accordions only.

The local authorities proposed to evacuate Shostakovich from Leningrad, but he stayed on.

The Germans cut one road after another. They occupied Peterhof, the palaces of Detskoye Selo, the town that now bears the name of Pushkin. The Putilov Works came within range of the German machine guns. The Finns advanced from the North. Battles raged on the sand dunes of Sestroretsk. The Germans were trying to break through from the direction of Schluselburg. Their shells burst in the heart of the city.

German shells chipped the age-old plaster of the Admiralty, tore ugly, gaping wounds in the side of the Winter Palace, pounded Kirov Street, the bridges, Mayakovsky Street.

The city was in flames. Detachments of Putilov workers marched off to the front — men and women in black hats and field-grey greatcoats.

German technique is extremely precise and uniform. The Prussian war machine was developed in the days of Friedrich II. Its underlying principle is to deprive the soldier of all capacity for thinking, to turn him into an automaton. It dragoons the soldier to walk at a definite speed and with definite movements, until it becomes second nature to him, as it were, to load his rifle and pull the trigger, to launch an attack on the flanks and break through — the invariable German methods, repealed from decade to decade.

Every quarter of a century or so Germany plagues man-

kind with the dread disease of war. It is a sort of recurrent German typhus.

The Germans set all their hopes on winning the initial battle. They believe that winning the first battle is tantamount to winning the war.

The German armour-plated monster crawled over the map of Europe, devouring cities, reducing countries to a mere shadow of their former glory.

It broke through our frontier and threatened our capitals.

The Germans did not doubt for a moment that the leading Russian cities, Moscow and Leningrad, would surrender just as Paris had surrendered. But the Germans reckoned without the Soviet people, without the organized might of the Soviet people, without the devotion of the Soviet people for their country. The Germans closed in on Leningrad, their eager, grasping fingers were already tightening on its buildings, but the city stiffened and began to defend itself. Only then did they realize that every house would resist them, that this city was not only a citadel of Russian culture but one vast anti-tank fortification.

The Germans were brought to a halt. They had no ready-made recipe with which to counter the moral qualities which were pitted against theirs, which transcended theirs by far — the moral qualities of man. And so the monster came to a standstill outside of Leningrad, its steel claws tightly encircling the city.

The Germans were determined to subdue Leningrad. They began to bombard it with their long-range guns. They bombarded it with typical German precision and regularity.

Their shells killed people in queues, killed people in side streets, killed people in their homes.

The people of Leningrad took to walking on the side of the street where shells were observed to fall less frequently.

Formerly people used to speak of the sunny or shady side of a street; now they spoke of the “safe” side and the “dangerous” side.

The city suffered considerably. Warehouses stacked with food on the Neva burned down. Hunger stalked the city. The plants produced nothing but arms; fuel went for defence needs only. The trams stopped running. The pressure in the water mains dropped so low that the supply of running water in the houses was literally cut off. The armourplated German monster squeezed Leningrad tighter and tighter in its deadly embrace.

Shostakovich was busy on a new symphony. In it he described the onslaught of the Germans, the grinding of the joints of the German army. He laid bare the whole frightful mechanism of the German mind.

He showed that the German army is deaf, blind, obsessed with an insane hatred for everything.

Shostakovich wrote about the war, about the resistance, the anguish of the Soviet people.

There are many kinds of simplicity. There is the austere simplicity of the flint axe. A locomotive is complex, but a turbine is simple, simple with another kind of simplicity, a simplicity of form. The conception of a savage who imagines that the sky is a roof hung with stars is simple. The system of Ptolemy in which the stars move in complex orbits intersecting one another is complicated and involved. The system of Copernicus is simple.

Shostakovich’s new music has the Copernicus quality of simplicity.

No music was ever written under such tragic circumstances.

The Soviet land was fighting alone, help was far off, the enemy was at hand. The armour-plated spider spun its deadly

web of fortifications around Leningrad. Every day there were dozens of alert signals. Mothers wore themselves out carrying children to the bomb shelters. And in between the air raids the German artillery bombarded the city. There was no night. Flares, pinkish-yellow and bluish-white, turned night into day.

German planes hummed in the clouds. Searchlights shot probing white fingers into the sky. They crossed, catching the shining steel bodies of the fascist planes in their beams, chasing them over the heavens like a finger chasing a fly across the windowpane.

Streams of tracer bullets soared upwards. The anti-aircraft guns gave tongue with a noise like the popping of corks, and splinters of steel pattered on the roofs like a summer shower.

Shostakovich looked out of the window. A house was burning in the Liteiny District; red flames and the dark silhouettes of people on the roofs stood out against the cold, blinding glare of the magnesium flares.

The air reverberated with anti-aircraft fire, the ground shook to the discharge of distant heavy guns, the house trembled. In the light of the flares Leningrad’s avenues resembled dark rivers running toward the Admiralty. The asphalt was lit up in the nearby streets, the Neva gleamed like asphalt.

Those days were a grim test for all. Leningrad, the whole country, rose in arms against the invader. And in the ranks of the fighters stood Dmitri Shostakovich. His weapon was his art. The source of his inspiration was the superb courage, valour and glory of the Soviet people defending their native town, their native land. And in the thunder of battle he heard the strains of a majestic music, the hymn of coming victory, towards which his country was marching through trial and suffering.

Shostakovich spent many nights in beleaguered Lenin-

grad. Our ack-ack guns flickered on the horizon all round. The whole city was encircled by a flame-shot wreath of artillery fire and the black feathery smoke of shell bursts. The cannonade never ceased. The house hummed, every window-pane rattled, and the echoes reverberated from street to street down to the broad-bosomed Neva, striking an answering chord in the piano, inside the musician's breast.

Sometimes, toward daybreak, the bombardment would die down. Then the sun would sparkle on the spires of the Admiralty and the Fortress of Peter and Paul and gild the round dome of St. Isaac's Cathedral.

Shostakovich worked at his symphony night and day.

He began it on July 19. On September 3, the first movement was finished; the second movement was completed by September 17.

September 25 was Shostakovich's birthday. He worked all day long. By the 29th the third movement was ready.

Already fifty-two minutes of music had been created.

Leningrad, his own beloved Leningrad, was fighting.

Dmitri Dmitrievich loved not only the Nevsky Prospect, not only Rossi Street and the Smolny, he loved Podyacheskaya Street, Pushkarskaya, Zelenina, Yamskaya — the whole variegated conglomeration of the city.

Over the Neva a solitary groyne stood boarded up.

Instead of concrete the scaffolding concealed a pile of sandbags and Falconet's statue of Peter the Great.

Behind it stood the shell-scarred Senate with its half-gutted roof.

Warships rode at anchor on the Neva. They fired across the city.

Bomb-shattered houses within the city exposed to view the private life of the people who had once inhabited the wrecked apartments. Portraits still hung on the papered walls.

Here and there hung a towel, or an overcoat, or a stove clung to the wall like a swallow's nest.

The city was invested by the enemy; men and munitions moved in a steady stream towards the front.

Shostakovich, alone with his music, pondered on the future.

Into the serene music of his symphony crept the hoarse, discordant German theme — the rust that threatened to cover and corrode everything in its path.

This theme, that strives to dominate everything, marches deliberately toward you, at you, on you like a metal octopus with hinged legs.

The composer counterposes it with the theme of our grief, our common cause.

The symphony tells how our country stands like a bulwark against the storm.

Shostakovich's music tells of a country that became aware of herself in her hour of trial, a country which was girding her loins for victory.

The Germans tightened the ring around Leningrad.

One day Shostakovich received a telephone message from the Smolny ordering him to leave the city.

A large aeroplane took him on board with his wife and two children and the Seventh Symphony.

The plane circled over the city and headed South.

From the air they could see how severely the city had suffered.

Before long Leningrad began to disappear in the hazy distance.

Two fighters escorted the passenger plane. They flew over forests and, wherever they looked, they saw men and women digging lines of fortifications...

Shostakovich settled in Kuibyshev. While there he played

his symphony to his fellow musicians for the first time.

In his preface to the symphony he wrote:

“I have put much strength and energy into this composition. Never have I worked with such enthusiasm as at present. There is an inspired saying: ‘When the cannons roar the Muses are silent.’ This is true of those cannons whose roar crushed life, joy, happiness and culture. Those are the cannons of darkness, violence and evil. But we are fighting for the triumph of reason over obscurantism, for the triumph of justice over barbarism. There are no tasks more noble and lofty than those that inspire us to fight the dark forces of Hitlerism. Our writers, artists and musicians in the Great Patriotic War are working hard, intensively and fruitfully, because their art is backed by the most progressive ideas of our epoch. And when the cannons roar our Muses raise their mighty voices. Never will anyone succeed in dashing the pen from our hands.”

The symphony went the round of many Soviet cities. It was played in Sverdlovsk, it was played in the Urals, it was played in Leningrad, it was played in Moscow, played without interruption from beginning to end in spite of the fact that an alert was sounded in the middle.

And everywhere, in Leningrad and throughout the whole country, the symphony found a ready response.

Shostakovich’s music tells the story of the invasion, of the strength and fortitude of our people. The music is Russian, the music of a nation that is bearing the brunt of the struggle with the worst enemy mankind has ever known.

“Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony is a perfect composition, it is a triumph for Russian music. It is a magnificent continuation both of Chaikovsky and Moussorgsky, who differed so radically from each other in all but their genius. It is at the same time the whole of world musical experience conceived by a remarkable Russian composer, an intelligent,

subtle, noble musician reared by the Soviet land in the spirit of respect and love for all world culture,” such was the opinion of Yevgeni Petrov.

The symphony crossed the boundaries of the Soviet Union and received a hearty welcome in America.

America is the home of some of the finest conductors in the world, the home of Arturo Toscanini.

Musicians studied the symphony and contested for the right to perform it.

It is now being interpreted by twenty-two conductors.

The verdict of the musicians is that on the smoking fields of the Second World War has been born one of the greatest pieces of music ever written. They realize that here is a symphony that expresses the voice of the Russian people, a people whose strength is as vast as their country, that this music is boundless and human and that our country may now lay just claim to that foremost place in musical culture that once belonged to Beethoven who, too, effected a revolution in music in his day.

The metal with which victory is to be won is still being mined; the future victors are gripping their weapons for the first time.

The face of Russia is seamed with trenches. Russian cities have been reduced to mere shells; through the paneless windows of roofless houses one can see the dull leaden sky of the second winter of the war. But we know on whose side is right, we know to whom the future belongs.

Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich, son of the Russian people, Stalin Prize laureate, is fighting to the best of his endeavour. Shostakovich has created a piece of music of tremendous artistic force. In the fire of war his talent has matured. In his new symphony he has expressed the thoughts and emotions of millions of people who had war forced on them, but

who found in themselves the strength and courage to wage an implacable struggle against the darkest and basest enemy that ever threatened the happiness of mankind.

He has created a musical monument to the just war that humanity is waging, a musical monument that is comprehensible to all.

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