

THE WRITER
AND
THE TIME

THE PULSE OF TIME



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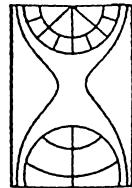
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THE PULSE OF TIME



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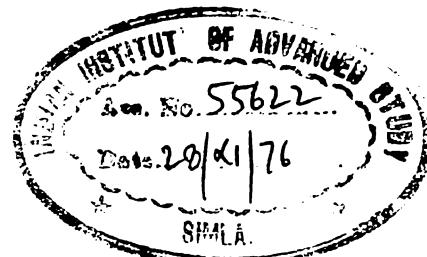
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«ПИСАТЕЛЬ И ВРЕМЯ»

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THE STORMY SEA

There is a special place in the boundless ocean of Soviet Literature for the large number of essays and articles it has produced. This sea is never calm, but always pulsing with storms of ideas, discussions and discoveries. It is fed by the innumerable rivers and streams of our creative times, bringing in the most topical questions and problems for debate.

It would be impossible in one anthology to show all the different types of writing to be found in the work of our essayists and journal-

ists, to go into any of these trends in depths or to represent faithfully their wide variety of subject-matter. But we can dip with the reader into this sea for a moment to feel the beating of the pulse of time.

Sergei Obraztsov, creator of the famous Puppet Theatre, gives us some of his travel impressions. And he certainly has something to tell, having as he does friends in every country in the world. But this is not simply the diary of a tourist. Far from it. This is a record of his thoughts on the great battle for

friendship whose first weapon is Art.

*An eagle I should be, to cleave the air
With a space-mastering wing; and boun-
teously*

*I should sow songs like corn seeds every-
where
That they might grow and ripen pas-
sionately.*

Man and the earth, and above him the clear crystal sky. And suddenly the simplicity of these few words: "For courage and valour demonstrated in the protection of communal property, Anatoly Alexeyevich Merzlov, tractor driver at the Chapayev Collective Farm, Mikhailovsky District, Ryazan Region, to be awarded the Sign of Honour (Posthumous)." Why the frightful word "posthumous"? Long ago, in 1941 war correspondent Konstantin Simonov wrote of the battles fought near the ancient Russian town of Mikhailov, and now he discussed what drove an eighteen-year-old youth to such a feat of bravery. "There are moments in life when the idea of one's country becomes totally concrete. Sometimes it is in the form of a rifle which the soldier does not let out of his grasp even when he loses consciousness, sometimes it is the person to whom you donate your blood, and sometimes it is the harvest which you save from the flames."

The war. . . . It is long since over, but it keeps coming back to haunt us and open up old wounds. Tatyana Tess tells the story of the hard-won happiness of two people no longer young whom the war would seem to have robbed of everything they had.

Having shared the sadness and the joy of these two good people we pass on to another article, one so fantastic that it is hard to accept.

In his article "What Is the Earth Like?" Nikolai Bodnaruk offers us a hypothesis that turns upside-down all accepted theories on the subject. Today it is but a theory; tomorrow we shall see. . . . But there is no point in trying to look into the future; let us leave that to qualified futurologists. Instead we will return to the past, to the Munich Olympics, and the last few seconds of the match between the basketball "greats", the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

Anatoly Pinchuk's article is called "Eight Seconds", though it is not so much an article as an unusual interview given by people who were watching the match from three different viewpoints: the court, the substitutes' bench and the stands. Looking at the game this way enables the author to build up a composite picture from the point of view of players, coaches, umpire and the public, and show not only the dramatic course of events but the psychology of each category of people depending on where they were watching from.

The pulse of time throbs on, and this time we catch up with it in the Santiago stadium, where instead of the U.S.S.R.-Chile World Cup match events are taking place so awful that they bring to mind the very worst periods in the history of the human race. The football world will never forget that Soviet footballers refused to play in a stadium that had been transformed into a concentration camp and stained with innocent blood.

There is nowhere we cannot travel in the world of the essay. We have already passed through Moscow, Munich and the little Russian town of Mikhailov and now we set sail again, no longer figuratively, but on the Arctic Ocean. As we leave Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky, the green water sprays over the bow of the ship and white seagulls wheel over the frozen masts. Yury Teplyakov's article tells of the courage demanded in the everyday life of the people of the North where each new day means new problems to be overcome. It is not modern technology which wins the day but these same people, devoted as they are to their austere homeland.

"Rostov Affair" looks like a simple detective story at first glance, a story of cops and robbers. The robbers commit a crime and the cops catch them. But both the "robbers" and the "cops" live in a society that is made up of individuals, and the moral tone of their society depends upon how these individuals behave. If they are indifferent to the common good, if they try to pass by on the other side when it is violated and live by the principle of "It's nothing to do with me", then that society is dangerously sick and any number of Inspector Maigrets will be powerless to do anything to cure it. But if people regard the troubles of others as their own, if they conquer their fear and stand in the path of the bandits, then Mafias or organised bands of gangsters will never exist among them. Human dignity will hold sway.

It is about human dignity and the high standards of a master-crafts-

man that both Boris Gussev and Anatoly Pristavkin write. The place is different, the problems different and the life-stories of their characters are different too, but they are one in their creativity and pride in their work. Georgy Ivanovich Tishkin and Pavel Timofeyevich Nedaihleb are two master-craftsmen for whom communal property is as precious as what they personally own.

Compared with the topics touched upon by Gussev and Pristavkin the question of whether the Opera is becoming extinct, whether it is obsolete in these days of radio and television, seems hardly significant. But Elena Obraztsova and Boris Pokrovsky touch upon several very important points in their dialogue on this theme, from the relationship between actor and producer to the formation of a national repertoire for the Bolshoi Theatre. In their words too we see the same pride in their work for the state as we saw in the two previous articles dealing with a wider sphere of questions.

And so our "moment" is over. The reader, wherever he is, is an experienced helmsman, and in this sea of ours he is bound to have discovered something for himself. This anthology contains only a tiny part of what we might have included, and each new day brings new subjects and new questions to write on. Our country is never at a standstill and this is what these writers try to reflect in all that they offer their readers.

Eduard Tsipin

Sergei Obraztsov was born in Moscow in 1901. An outstanding actor and director, he is the head of Moscow's unique Puppet Theatre. As its administrator and chief director, Sergei Obraztsov has with his theatre been a welcome guest in many countries. Many of his books and articles have been translated into scores of different languages. His main works are Actor and Puppet, My Profession, The Theatre of China, a scholarly work on the Chinese theatre, The Baton of the Arts, about the social significance of art. He has written

articles about bringing up children and about the love of nature.

Obraztsov is a People's Artist of the Soviet Union, a Hero of Socialist Labour and the bearer of many other decorations, as well as the State Prizes of the U.S.S.R.

SERGEI OBRAZTSOV, *People's Artist of the Soviet Union*

How many times have you been abroad?" "I haven't counted. . . . I suppose about fifty or sixty." "So you've seen sixty countries?" "No, less. Twenty-seven." "Why only twenty-seven?" "Because I've been to some of them more than once. Some I've visited three or four times, some as many as five." "How lucky you are, to have seen so much. Have you been to Italy?" "Yes." "And the USA?" "And the USA." "And Japan?" "No, not yet." "Oh, you must go to Japan. They say it's such

a beautiful country." "It doesn't depend on me; I don't go as a tourist, but either as a delegate to some conference, or with the theatre. Most often with the theatre, of course." "And who did you like best?" "That I couldn't say. You can't generalise about whole nations like that."

That is the kind of question I have to answer all the time. But hardly anyone ever asks the most important question of all: why does my theatre travel, and who needs it?

The first time I went abroad was forty-seven years ago, on a trip by the Musical Studio of the Moscow Arts Theatre to Czechoslovakia, Germany and the United States of America, in the autumn and winter of '25 and '26. Emigrés from various periods appeared from nowhere on Wenceslas Square, in Charlottenburg and on Broadway.

"Where are you from?" asked a man with a Russian-American accent. "From Moscow." "You can't be!" He dropped his packet of sausages in surprise, and went on: "Are you going to live in New York?" "No, we're off home in May." "Where's home?" "Moscow." "Whyever should you go back to Moscow? We've got prosperity here. Say, are you a Communist or something?" "No, I'm not a Party member." "But even so you're going back?" "Of course!" He picked up his packet and went off through the swing doors. I went up to the counter and with a great effort managed to get out "Giff me pliz two hot dogs". I had already learned that Americans call sausages "hot dogs".

English sounded to my ears like it sounds to a year-old child, but after five months of touring I had picked up enough to pass the time of day with café-owners. In Germany everything I heard brought back dimly-remembered German lessons from my days at the "Realschule", and day by day my store grew bigger, words growing together and forming whole sentences, plusquamperfects and all. I could go out to dine or joke with children in the street. I even taught them how to play some games.

The first air-raid on Moscow took place in July 1941. My neighbour the film producer Sergei Yutkevich and I shared a watch on the roof of our block of flats on Nemirovich-Danchenko Street. If a fire-bomb landed on the roof, we threw it down into the courtyard. I was born in this city and know every inch of it, so I could tell whether it was Nikolskaya that had been hit, or the station district, or Zamoskvorechye. Parachutes with flares hung over the streets like gigantic chandeliers, and machine-gun fire flashed through the sky after the silver birds caught by the probing fingers of the searchlights. Each bird held a pilot who was raining bombs down onto the city, and I kept wondering if among them there weren't some of those same Berlin boys I played with in '25.

Straight after the war our Puppet Theatre was sent on tour to Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig. I knew, of course, that it was no longer the same Germany as the old one, but one couldn't forget the war all at once, just like that. Why should we entertain people among whom might be sitting those who besieged Leningrad or those who bombed Kiev and Moscow, and thousands of other Russian towns and cities?

We were met with flowers and smiles at the station. But it is not very difficult to buy a bunch of flowers. Or to twist the features into a smile. The way we were met at the station did nothing to convince me that this tour was something necessary.

In the evening we had our first performance. I wandered nervously about the stage and into the wings. The auditorium was full of people.

Who were they: friends or enemies? The actor must feel a partner in his spectator for him to be able to play, and a partner is always a friend. This is the unique strength of the contact between them, and the play arises out of this contact. The third bell had already sounded.

So, who was it out there in the darkness of the hall? Could we really expect this kind of contact, with laughter and joy?

Overture, curtain up, applause ... but that doesn't mean anything. I waited for the first funny moment, and when it came there was a burst of joyful laughter.

They didn't sound like enemies....

When the performance was over the stage filled with curious spectators. The atmosphere was one of joy and pleasure, without a hint of tension. Some of them had children with them, and we spent almost an hour showing how the dolls worked, to the sound of murmured *wunderbar's*, *wunderschön's* and *unmöglich's*. In my pathetic German I held a conversation with a man who invited me to his house, saying "It's not too far". "Nicht zu weit." Even if it was "zu weit", I would still have wanted to go. And that's the way it should be.

When I arrived I found a small room, with a canary in a cage and a table at which a little schoolgirl of about eight was doing her homework with Mummy. The mother got up and greeted me, looking at me kindly. The daughter's eyes when she frowned up at me were harsh and angry. It was understandable: for the whole of her short life she had been taught that "Russian" was synonymous with "enemy".

One of the doors of the wardrobe was broken, and the canary had lost an eye. When I asked why, the host explained with some embarrassment that one night on returning from the air-raid shelter they found the house next door flattened, all their own windows broken, the wardrobe overturned and the cage smashed under the table.

This explained the girl's reaction to me, and I felt I had at whatever the cost to take away the conditioned reflex that she had grown up with. But I could do so only on one condition: that of first removing from myself the corresponding reflex that "German" equals "enemy".

And so I became convinced that there was a reason for going on tour, that it was something necessary both for the Germans and for us. If we really long for peace and friendship, then we must banish from within ourselves all such conditioned reflexes, for it is impossible to be friends or work for peace in theory only, making impressive declarations of intent: we must see eye to eye, meet face to face and stand hand in hand.

Since then I have often been to Berlin as the capital of the German Democratic Republic. Not long ago, at a reception put on by the Society of Friendship with the Soviet Union, a strange woman of about thirty or so came up to me with a jar of tropical fish and said: "Here, these are for you. You have an aquarium, haven't you? These are my guppies. You know, we've already met ... a long time ago. You came to see my parents, remember? And asked about the canary."

Now I have scores of friends in Berlin, and in Dresden and Leipzig.

And the Berlin Academy of Arts has elected me an honorary corresponding member.

I remember our first performance in West Berlin. Herr Barlog, who was the then director of the Schiller Theatre, suggested that we give a few performances there. At the first performance we didn't know what to expect. Would we be received politely but coldly at the beginning and applauded equally coldly at the end? On the contrary, we were a wild success, with twenty-four curtain calls, and when the reinforced concrete safety curtain came down the applause continued, so they opened the tiny door in it and we all squeezed through to go out and take a last bow.

The next day there were write-ups in all the papers. There was not a single bad or even sceptical one, and one even wrote: "This was not simply a theatrical success, but a political one as well. For two hours Russians and Germans lived as one."

And the same thing happened in Munich during the Olympics and in Dortmund at the Festival of Soviet Culture that took place during Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's visit to West Germany.

But why was it in West Germany that we were so struck by the especially strong emotional effect we had on our audiences? Because that same old conditioned reflex, that "Russian" equals "enemy", is still consciously cultivated in some circles, and when in the course of the performance this reflex dies away and the Russian becomes a friend there is such a feeling of joy. This joy is the most natural thing in the world, for there is not a single

country whose people actually wish for war. No mother wants to hear her child cry from fright. No wife wants to become a widow....

Our productions are both for grown-ups and for children. When we were touring Canada, we happened to be playing *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* on New Year's Eve, and although it was still day-time in Montreal, midnight was already approaching in Moscow. I came out in front of the curtain and said to the children: "This evening you will be celebrating the New Year, in which I wish you all happiness. But the sun sets earlier in Moscow, so that back at home it will be New Year in only an hour's time, when we play the scene in the Magrib Desert and the lion comes out into the stage."

We had champagne prepared in the wings. There were tears in the actors' eyes, for everyone wished he was back at home, sitting down to a slap-up meal with his family instead of playing here.... The Magrib Desert scene. On went the lion. And suddenly a chorus of children's voices from the auditorium: "Happy New Year!"

For me this is what we mean by "friendship between nations".

Many years ago I was wandering around Calcutta with a camera, and a curly-headed little beggar of about ten wanted to help me so as to earn something. He showed me the most interesting things to photograph, in his opinion. I took him to see our theatre, where it was again *Aladdin's Lamp* that was showing. It was his first visit to a theatre, and he heard eastern music, like that of India, and saw a palace like the Taj Mahal, as well as an ele-

phant like they have in India. After the performance was over he ran away and soon reappeared with another little boy, also a beggar, to show me off to him. And to prove that he wasn't lying. I wanted to give them bananas, oranges and peaches, for we had lots of fruit, but they wouldn't take anything. It was enough for them just to have met us, Soviet Russians. They must both be about twenty by now, and I am sure they have not forgotten that day.

In India we performed in many cities, and in each one they built specially for us a whole open-air theatre and put out rows of benches which filled at once with both grown-ups and children. When the performance finished they rewarded all the actors with huge garlands made of gold thread and real roses. Once we caught sight of Nehru amongst the children, and he invited us all to visit him. I will never forget that evening. In official circles they call that kind of thing "cultural contacts", but for me it was much more: it was part of the joyful struggle for peace, standing hand in hand and seeing eye to eye.

My wife and I travelled ten and a half thousand kilometres through the United States giving solo performances in various colleges. After each performance we sat into the small hours either in the students' hostel, or in the flat of one of the lecturers, drinking Coca-Cola or whisky-and-soda and answering thousands upon thousands of questions. We were the first Soviet people they had ever seen in the flesh. In the canteen of one of the

colleges they hung up a notice saying, "Today everything is à la Russe", and served borsch and pieces of meat which they imagined were Russian shashliks, while the chef was wearing a *tubeteika* hat and a red belt on his white shirt.

We have been in France and Italy, in Finland and Yugoslavia, in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, England, Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon, India, Holland, Belgium and Denmark, and in each country the wings filled with spectators after the performance, both grown-ups and children, and each time we show them how the puppets work, sign autographs for them, answer their millions of questions, and consider these "contacts" no less important than the performance which has just ended. Scores of times we have been through the sheds in the border posts at Brest and Chop where they change the bogies because of the narrower gauge outside the U.S.S.R., or presented our "hammered and sickled Soviet passport", as Mayakovsky put it in his poem, for inspection at various international airports.

Our theatre's tours go to make up only a fraction of all the touring abroad done by Soviet companies. What does it mean, when a theatre goes on tour? It is not doing so to see the sights of a country, the Eiffel Tower and Trevi Fountains or Pyramids of Cheops.

It is part of the struggle for peace and friendship, a wonderful struggle whose chief weapon is Art. Art is a weapon priceless in value, and priceless too are the victories it brings.

ABOUT THE NORTH

Yuri Teplyakov is a popular Soviet journalist who has written many excellent articles on the Arctic.

He knows the Arctic and the Far North not simply as an observer, but as one who has taken part in many expeditions. A member of the Union of Soviet Journalists, Yuri Teplyakov is even now back on his travels, collecting materials for a new book on the unceasing labours of the Soviet people.

YURI TEPLYAKOV

I would never have known the North, never have fallen head over heels in love with that amazing land, if it weren't for....

A hundred years ago the industrialist Sidorov wrote a report called "The means of bringing the North of Russia out of its poverty", and General Zinoviev made a very "profound" comment on this work:

"Since the North is under a permanent cover of ice and there can be no question of growing grain there or of it being put to any other

use, my friends and I are of the opinion that the population should be moved from there to the central regions of the state; and yet you are seeking just the opposite, telling us about some 'Gulf Stream' which is a sheer impossibility in the North. Such ideas could only lead to madness."

Mere decades later the taming of the North has become the everyday business of hundreds and hundreds of thousands of our contemporaries. Man has ceased to be an exceptional

phenomenon up there. But what he does is still exceptional, for even in the age of technological miracles the Arctic remains the Arctic.

So off I set for the North. One journey was quite enough to make me one of the most enthusiastic admirers of this wonder.

The wonder of the North, its mystery and its beauty are its people. Their endless courage and devotion to their harsh northern land, a noble awareness of their responsibilities and of their brotherhood, these are the particularly northern traits of character which you find among them.

It is about this character that you will learn on the next few pages, written up there in the frozen wastes.

Once I had fulfilled my commission for the newspaper, I had to get back onto the mainland from Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky. But as though to spite me, there was no transport to take me there.

But that's our reporter's life....

In fairy tales it's always when he's right down on his luck that the wizard comes to the aid of Tzarevich Ivan (or just plain Ivan). Have you noticed? Always at the moment when you think it's all up with him, then suddenly....

Suddenly my personal wizard stuck his head out of the porthole of a ship standing at the wall.

"Why so glum, brother, have you missed your ship? Come on board with us. We're going west. Can you jump it?"

"Would that be all right?"

"I can see you're still a green-horn. I'll go to the captain and straighten it all out, everything'll be fine, just fine...."

I could see my wizard was a little under the influence, and thought it was all just tipsy good-heartedness.

But the head disappeared, and I decided to wait and see what happened, just out of curiosity. Either way I had nothing to lose.

Five minutes later there was a shout from the deck.

"Hey, you, Admiral, come here, the captain wants to see you."

I went up on deck along a wide cracked plank that led up from the shore.

"Sorry we haven't got the best gangway out, we weren't expecting you," said my shaggy-headed wizard as he met me. "Go along to the wheel-house. And if you're a spy, don't tell the captain, else he won't take you."

The lad burst out laughing and clapped me on the back.

On the bridge I saw the young captain. He didn't look older than twenty-eight. He was dressed too well for such a down-at-heel little boat, with a white starched shirt and an immaculate suit. He looked like everyone's idea of the navigation officer from a comfortable passenger liner.

The captain was evidently tired, for as I knew there were always a lot of details to be settled before setting off.

His long fingers played with the pencils on the chart unfolded in front of him. I took a dislike to him, perhaps because of the look of boredom with which he hardly deigned to notice me, or perhaps because I was in a bad mood myself and so thought badly of him too; I decided he had ended up by chance on a fishing seiner and was just waiting for his chance to get off this boat

with its smell of borsch, herring and rubber. Or simply a sea-dandy, who had never seen the real sea; nothing but a lot of tabs and scrambled egg on his uniform.

I expected him to sense my hostility and kick me off his ship, but he dropped the pencil and said:

"So, you sailed to Bristol with Kalashnikov? And what ship are you on now?"

I was taken completely aback.

"Are you talking to me?"

"Who else? We're alone here, aren't we?"

I had to tell him who I was and what I wanted.

"That son of a bitch Kalashnikov, at it again," laughed the captain without seeming at all angry. "He came running up here saying that he'd met a friend and we just had to take him on. He'd rather lie than eat, that lad. O.K., since you're here, you might as well stay. Only don't expect any kind of comforts. You'll sleep on the couch in my cabin. Show your documents to the first mate. We're setting off right now. Go up to the radio room, they're having a farewell party in there. Don't take any notice that they're all drunk, they're going to be tee-to-tallers for five months now. All right? Fine."

He saluted politely and forgot all about me at once, absorbed in his charts again.

There was quite a party going in the radio room. It was not more than five metres square, and completely crowded. But naval hospitality is such that they not only squeezed me in, but even found room for me on the bunk, by the porthole.

My lie-loving wizard Sasha Kalashnikov hugged the sparks, Vas-

sya Haritonchik, a tall thin young man in a check cowboy shirt.

"Vassya, mate, remember how they nearly got us by Iturup? Don't you remember?"

"Of course I remember, Sasha, of course I do," nodded Vassya, sniffing hard in an attempt to push his steel-rimmed glasses back up onto the bridge of his nose.

I looked at the sparks and sympathised greatly with this obvious landsman. He was in no state to "remember" anything. If Sasha asked whether he remembered how they had dined in Capetown, he wouldn't disagree although he'd never seen Capetown in his life, except on the map.

But today he could "remember" anything. Tomorrow, with nothing but the boundless sea all round, and two hundred miles to the nearest bar where he could get a hair of the dog, he would curse Sasha and his Capetowns, and even me when I dared to mention the night before. His only reference would be to the captain:

"Sorry, Captain, but you know how it is."

But that would be tomorrow, and for today it was his face in Sasha's bosom while they remembered Bristol and the wave that swept up even higher than the bridge, so that only the radio antennae stuck up above it, and the girls they knew, and how much they spent last time in the Petropavlovsk restaurant, the "Ocean", and how there's someone sitting at their table this very minute, but they've got to leave for the West....

Yes, time to set off for the West. The plank is gone, the jetty has glided away and the black stripe be-

tween us and the shore is getting wider and wider. Perhaps it's only me, though I don't know, who wants to touch this shore for the last time, as though to gather a little bit of strength from it for the journey. But the stripe gets wider and wider, and it's too late now. They thought we'd be back in half a year. Half a year....

The lights of Petropavlovsk, like a bright horseshoe, swam noiselessly away astern. The crew said goodbye to the shore, standing silent on the deck and looking back. Each one was no doubt looking for the light in the window of his own house, but how could you make out your own house from that distance?

The harbour-mouth beacon winked at us for the last time, and disappeared. Ahead lay nothing but the black sheet of the ocean.

The crew went off to their bunks. Tomorrow they started work, tomorrow they started the endless shifts....

Before we set sail, the captain had a storm warning.

"Twelve-force winds at sea. If there's any danger, shelter in the Russkaya Bay."

Other fishing vessels would not have left port with a weather forecast like that. But for this class of vessel absolutely no seas were out of bounds, it was as straightforward as that, so that she could visit any point of the ocean she desired. But would she get anywhere at all, if her crew were to sit and wait for good weather? Fishermen have a norm to fulfil too!

The free watch was asleep. The bridge, however, was alive. At two in the morning our captain asked a ship that had put out before us

how the weather was out there. The answer was encouraging.

"Full steam ahead. Everything's fine. Force six winds. No need to shelter in the Russkaya. Good luck!"

So, off we go. Time is precious for a fisherman.

By morning the navigators had already decided as they pored over their charts which of the Kurilsky straits we would take to get through to the West. The air survey showed that the first was blocked with heavy ice. The second was a little better, but still dangerous. The wind might change and we'd be trapped, like mice, so we were to try the third. A longer way round, but surer.

"General eighty!" ordered the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir, general eighty," echoed the sailor at the helm.

The captain looked like the navigating officer from a passenger liner again today, as though he were on an international cruise, his shirt and uniform freshly pressed. Only his face looked a little pinched. I tossed all night alone on my narrow couch, for he did not come to his cabin to sleep.

Everything was put in order on board. I looked in at the radio room, and found it as tidy as a hospital. Even Vassya Haritonchik's glasses glistened especially brightly.

After dinner I stood on the bridge by the open window. The ocean was like a field of winter wheat, the wind wandering through its green waves. A force six storm. Bowing monotonously down to the sea as far as the decks, our little trawler hurried westwards.

Soon the Krestovy Cape appeared on the beam.

On the right we caught glimpses of its heavy, cold cliffs through the white fog. The sea seemed as safe as your own hearth in comparison.

Then suddenly.... I well remember how sudden it was—suddenly the ice came sleetting down on us, as though it was buck-shot from a thousand cannons shooting down from the cliffs.

The cliffs themselves disappeared, the daylight faded and the waves stirred up as if boiling with hail. They went mad, and seemed to be trying to drag our little ship away into a whirlpool. The world ceased to exist. There was nothing but the wind, stronger with every second, tearing and howling at the antennae.

"Captain, Northwester!" cried the navigator.

"I know, keep to the general."

"Aye, aye, sir, keep to the general."

"Alyosha, you keep an eye on things up here. I'll go and get changed. It looks as though things are beginning to warm up."

The Northwester! I had heard not a few accounts of it up here in the North, the sort of stories that you do not forget in a day. I had seen widows, widowed by a winter Northwester. They always hurry past the port in Petropavlovsk, never glancing at the long row of fishing boats huddling close to the wall, so as not to reawaken old memories. I had seen old women stand silent on the hill above the jetty for hours on end in their faded black kerchiefs. These old women of the Russian North, women who had lived the whole of their harsh lives without God, now murmured a prayer and made the sign of the cross over

each vessel setting out to sea from which the Northwester had claimed their husbands and sometimes their children as well. I had seen the young men of Petropavlovsk, for whom the words "winter Northwester" rang like the word "war", for their fathers never returned after it. And yet in spite of everything, boys from fishing families go to the fishing college and then give up the land for the unsteady deck of a fishing boat. The land is surer than the sea, so why do they go? Nobody knows, but nobody can stop them, not even the heartless winter Northwester that had now come down so suddenly upon our *Semipalatinsk*.

We tried to stay on course for a whole hour. But the vessel rolled more and more, and more and more often it was the stern that took the full force of the waves. And sailors know very well what a battering to stern means.

"Bows into the wind, heave to...."

Those were the captain's words. He was in a leather hat with ear flaps and black sheepskin coat. As he passed the helmsman, he put his hand on the sailor's shoulder:

"Borya, you know the ropes. Keep about fifteen degrees to port. Keep your eye on things."

And to a free sailor he said:

"Old man on deck!"

The "old man" arrived, a puny little boy who had probably only just finished college. He didn't even seem twenty-five yet, but all the same he was the "old man", for every senior mechanic at sea is called the "old man".

He arrived, wiping his oily hands on a coloured rag, and waited.

"Well, old man, how's the engine?"

"Going O. K., Captain."

"Still, look over it one more time. We're heaving to, and by the look of things, Alyosha, for a long time. Well, off you go."

"Fine."

The wind howled, and there was no telling where was sea and where was sky. Everything had intermingled and darkened to one and the same black.

The windows of the deck-cabin were covered in a thick film of ice; it was about twenty degrees below, with water all around. The frost was transforming our little ship into a skating rink. There was just a little embrasure left on the bridge, and that we already had to break through by force, so as to be able to watch the waves and keep into the wind. As the captain stuck out his head, the wind filled his throat and covered his face with salty ice. He could see nothing, but see he must. The only thing that could save us was to keep into the wind and the water. If we turned just a little to the side, the mast would be pulled inexorably down to the water.

The radar was looking for the shore. We soon worked out where we were; the Krestovy Cape was on the beam. For a moment we saw it on the green screen, and then it disappeared. The radar had stopped working, covered in ice. We were now blind.

At three in the afternoon we lost all the antennae. There was so much ice on each cable that a hawser would have given way, let alone a delicate cable.

Hanging onto the rail like a child to its mother's skirt, I stood beside

the captain. My only thought was not to let go, otherwise I would fly off head over heels. I didn't know with what to compare the experience. Everything was spinning and turning about me. I lost all sense of space. It felt as if I were in a rotor, spinning in every plane.

In the evening Vassya Haritonchik stretched a wire across his radio room like a clothes line and with the aid of this home-made antenna tried to get in touch with other ships and find out what was going on around us.

From the snatches of conversation and radio telegrammes that we managed to pick up we started to understand just how dangerous our position was.

Kavran, who had left port ahead of us, was also lying to. They had already started to freeze up. *Kit* was luckier. She had reached as far as the Kurils, and got stuck in an ice sheet where all was calm. She had tried to move forward, but not managed it and returned. We listened with envy, for we had nowhere to hide.

Vassya looked more and more depressed and increased his efforts to find the voices of other ships.

Suddenly he started writing convulsively. The *Tuloma* was calling Petropavlovsk.

Tuloma: I last spoke with *Karaga* at one thirty. I asked for her position.

Karaga: Three miles from Utashud, heavy frost. Listing up to 60 degrees, taking water, crew is hacking away the ice, desperately require assistance. Request establish contact with factory ship *Desna* and send her to us. Also request you yourselves to come.

Tuloma: Is engine working, can you move? Advise you to get in under the shore.

Karaga: Making for shore, engines working, shore visible on radar, keep in constant touch on frequency 3120. Hurry the *Desna*.

Tuloma: Trying to call *Karaga* every 10-15 minutes. Could not get on touch again. Captain Leizerukov of *Tuloma*.

Silence from the *Tuloma*. Silence from Petropavlovsk. We can no longer hear them. Contact is lost.

And what about the *Karaga*, what about her crew who were standing with us yesterday on the jetty, joking though they felt a little sad at such a long journey ahead? Perhaps Vassya made a mistake, perhaps he got it all wrong? No, alas! Later, on shore, I checked the *Tuloma*'s message to the last comma. All correct: "Trying to call *Karaga* every 10-15 minutes. Could not get in touch again."

To the right of the embrasure the captain, to the left, Vassya, bent triple over his key. Who was he calling? I don't know, but he called and called as if he wanted to let every soul on earth know about the Northwester.

But the world lived on, unknowing....

I heard a snatch of quiet music and a languid voice on the short waves, and imagined a scene with elegant gentlemen sitting at a table with a starched tablecloth, assuring exquisite ladies, between two glasses of champagne, of their readiness to go through fire and water for them. They sit, listening to the languid voice, and don't care a damn that by the Kurils young men are drowning.

At last the captain reached his decision.

"Vassya, call up Petropavlovsk. It's time."

And the voice of our *Semipalatinsk* flew hundreds of miles from the little piece of wire: "Northwester of hurricane strength. Heavy frost. Request keep in constant contact. Keep tuned in on us. Request assistance."

I know how hard it was for the captain to write that radiogramme. But the wind really had reached hurricane strength. There is a thing called the Beaufort scale. To give some idea of what went on during those few hours, I will give the reader some figures for comparison. A force twelve gale on the scale is a wind of from eighteen to twenty-one metres a second. A bad storm is twenty-nine metres a second. Above thirty metres is a hurricane. And our ship was under attack from a wind of more than fifty metres a second. Later we were to learn that on shore that wind was tossing about fuel tanks with seven hundred kilograms of fuel in each one.

Vladimir Petrovich Zenkov of the Petropavlovsk Marine Department only shook his head when I stood in his office, miraculously alive after this epic, and said:

"In Severo-Kurilsk ships were torn from their anchors and hawsers like toys. And you were just opposite the valley through which the Northwester was being funnelled down onto the sea."

This grey-haired old captain, who must have sailed thousands and thousands of miles in his time, turned to the window so that I should not see how heavily he took it all.

"In thirty years, do you understand, in thirty years I don't remember there ever being such a wind near the shore. You were right under the cliffs, and even they did not shelter you. We did everything we could from the shore."

But on the night of the storm, how were we to know that they were doing everything they could on the shore. *Zeus, Chernyakhovsk, Desna, Hatangales, Tuloma, Sergei Lazo, Kuindji, Bolid, Kustanai, Alaid* and *Abagur* all altered course to stand by in the danger area. And each of them was ready to drop everything else and search, search, search all over the heaving black sea for the little lumps of ice that our trawlers had already become.

If it were just for the hurricane, then we would have been only half in trouble, and wouldn't have had to call land. But there was the frost as well. Freezing up is the worst danger for a small fishing vessel. Our *Semipalatinsk* was now a solid block of ice. From bow to stern, everything had frozen up. She no longer surged up out of the waves, throwing off white spray, but came up laboriously as though she were sticky onto the crest of the wave and seemed to want to lie down on her side all the time, as though to take a rest.

Losing stability! It seems a prosaic word, but in that word is all the life of a ship, the life of her captain, the life of Vassya the sparks and of Sasha Kalashnikov, the life of our boatswain Grisha Gabdulin and of the cook, Borya Shevtsov.

I knew that even now Borya was polishing his saucers that might never be of use to us again.

Borya Kiselyov was frozen at the helm. He had not let go of the wheel for ten hours. Through the embrasure I saw the boatswain in the bows, now disappearing in the waves, now back in the light, hacking away at the ice. He hacked with a crow-bar that no wave could tear out of his hands.

"All hands on deck!" cried the captain. "All out there with your crow-bars."

Tied together in groups of five, for one alone would be swept overboard at once, the crew went out on deck in their yellow life jackets like a platoon on the attack.

Their crow-bars glistened in the light from the searchlight. Then a black wave swept down and I saw how, clinging together, they were swept down to the bulwark, then struggled back up again to wield their crow-bars anew. Ten minutes later they tumbled back into the corridor and collapsed to get their breath back right here, by the door through which the next shift had disappeared. They sat wordless, grasping greedily for their cigarettes with frozen fingers.

Keeping stability! Not letting the ship over! They had thought for nothing else as they went back to that hell outside.

It was not only ice that they threw overboard. It was followed by barrels and sacks and even a crate of butter that had been tied to the roof of the bridge. Butter, at a time like this! Everything was to be thrown overboard. Anything to make our *Semipalatinsk* a bit lighter, albeit by just a single kilogram, to keep her from listing.

We had been right over twice, with the masts almost touching the

water. The first time we listed like that I was standing in the corridor with the boys who had just come back from the deck. Suddenly the bulkhead crept slowly up until it became the ceiling, and we were lying on the wall, hanging onto each other as though for protection. I saw the look in the boys' eyes. It was a look not of terror, but of a kind of sadness and the calm expectation of something final and irreversible. But just what they were expecting, and how it would happen, there was no way of knowing.

...None of us was more than thirty and everyone had someone waiting for him back on shore. The essence of man is his courage. In the final moment he can forget all about himself and simply murmur the names of those he loves.

Water was lashing off the deck, but it got no further than wetting the floor. The ship righted herself and the masts pointed back up to the sky.

I looked down through the open hatch of the engine room, down to the shudder of the diesels and flashing hands in the steam. The mechanics were fighting as hard as the sailors, though when the ship keeled over all their instincts would be to get up out of the hull. It could well be all due to the fact that they stayed at their post, that the *Semipalatinsk* managed not to roll over and show her keel to the black sky.

At two in the morning the old man came up onto the bridge and told the captain:

"Under these conditions we can't keep going for more than fifteen minutes. The temperature's up to 600 degrees. And anyway there's no hope of making any headway. All we're

doing is holding our ground, we're not getting any nearer the shore."

"Alyosha, you know what you're talking about. I'm no fool either. If we stop the engines, we'll be over in a minute. Do whatever you like, but keep up the revolution."

No sooner had the old man said "Aye, aye" and gone back down to the steam and clanking of his engine room than we went over on one side again.

The masts dipped slowly down to the waves. We had already taken in water on one side, and it had gone away somewhere inside the ship, making the list even worse. Then the masts struck the water. Just one second more!... It only needed one tiny extra gust of wind, and we would be over. The captain hung above me, clinging onto some piece of the ironwork, and shouted into the embrasure:

"Come on, old girl, hold out! Keep it up, my darling!"

He was shouting to the ship.

And the ship heard the shouts of her captain. Throwing off the water as though it were a heavy, sticky mass, she slowly lifted her masts.

"One more list like that, and we're done for. She's given everything she's got, now."

The captain was talking about the ship as if she were a real person. Perhaps that's why the *Semipalatinsk*, that peeling blue hulk, heard his words in the direst hour. Perhaps she, as a living person, wanted to die no more than he did.

"You know what I thought when the masts went down?"

The captain was talking to me this time.

"I thought, 'Now, should I take off my felt boots, or shouldn't I?'

Isn't that funny? What a stupid thought—and yet it came into my head. You could be a champion swimmer, but you'd still freeze in twenty minutes out there in that water. If it comes to the worst, don't jump overboard. There's no point. It'll happen again in half an hour."

"Listen, Andrei, perhaps I should write a note? You know, to my family, to say good-bye and so on...."

"Stop snivelling. If we don't make it, they won't find a matchstick from this ship. And you can talk about leaving notes...."

And the captain spat blood. His lip was split, and you could hardly see his face for the layer of ice on it.

The ship heeled over to port again.

Up rushed a sailor.

"Well, how are the boys?" asked the captain.

"About five are badly frozen. The rest...."

"Get the rest out on deck with crow-bars."

The ship heeled over to port, the bulkhead went up and became the ceiling again, and again we had to hang onto something so as not to fly out of the cabin.

"Right, Vassya, time to call up Petropavlovsk."

"*Semipalatinsk* calling, *Semipalatinsk* calling. The ice is gaining on us all the time. Cooling main engine with seawater. Almost lost stability. List critical. Obliged give distress signal. Ship hardly under control. Main engine about to give out. Frost."

The captain waited for the sparks to tap out the last word. Then he seemed to be taking a decision.

"And now—give the S.O.S.! Somebody might hear. Go ahead!"

I looked at my watch. Two a.m. And in distant Moscow, it was only five in the evening. People were pouring out of work into the metro, queueing for sausages for their supper, hurrying to a rendez-vous. Surely you can hear us calling for your help? Surely you can hear our sparks calling breathlessly into his microphone:

"*Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.! *Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.! *Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.!"

He was calling because our boys, frozen and worn out as they were, were still hacking away at that damned ice. But they were already falling, like soldiers in battle, at the end of their strength. And each time fewer and fewer of them went out to the attack. But it wasn't our fault that there were only twenty-four of us, while the ocean was so huge and heartless against us!

"*Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.! *Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.!"

A tiny piece of wire was our only connection with the world. And all our hopes were on Vassya Haritonchik, on whether his shouts would get across the ocean....

"*Semipalatinsk* calling—S.O.S.! *Semi...*"

Vassya broke off half way through a word and crouched up to his receiver. Through the crackling and squeaking we heard the sound of a faint voice.

"*Abagur* calling, *Abagur* calling. Receiving you, *Semipalatinsk*. Inform position."

The captain grabbed the microphone. How he, standing at the embrasure, heard the voice of the other ship, God only knows.

But he was already shouting in answer.

"*Abagur, Semipalatinsk* calling, receiving you. Radar out of action since morning. Last known point—abeam Krestovy Cape. Four miles from shore. Don't know where we are now. Trying to reach shore, but seem to be being dragged out to sea. Look for us by Krestovy Cape. Over."

"*Abagur* calling, receiving you. Am thirty miles from your last known position. Full steam ahead. How long can you keep afloat? Over."

"*Semipalatinsk* calling, the engine may give out at any moment, we're cooling it with seawater. Last list was sixty degrees. Can no longer keep ice clear. If it comes to it, pick the crew up from the water. Give us your course. Over."

Crackle, squeak, rumble. Silence from the *Abagur*. Surely we hadn't lost her?

Abagur was silent for a whole hour, for a whole eternity. And then she seemed to spring back out of the emptiness.

"*Abagur* calling, *Abagur* calling. *Semipalatinsk*, you keep disappearing." (We keep disappearing!) "Why don't you answer, why don't you answer? Our radar also out of action. So switch on all your lights. Fifteen miles. Soon be at your position. Keep afloat. We're very near!"

I never saw war, I've only seen old newsreels: a lieutenant, covered in blood, bringing in his platoon for the last attack.

I remembered that lieutenant as I looked at our captain, also covered in blood. He was the first to go out on deck and hack away at the

ice. He was a soldier in battle, and it makes no difference that instead of a rifle he was holding an iron crowbar. And his crew went out after him. For them, too, it was the last attack. The *Abagur* was nearly there. We *must* keep afloat. . . .

Sailors are born several times over, and the dates are noted down in the ship's log and nowhere else.

"21st February, seven thirty-five, came alongside the tanker *Abagur*...." That was from the log of the *Semipalatinsk*.

At that minute, we understood that we were being born anew. It was a Monday.

. . . No doubt our *Semipalatinsk* was a sorry sight. Listing right over to port, covered in ice, she was hardly afloat. Twenty-five men jumped down onto the deck from the tanker, armed with spades and crow-bars, to break the ice.

Andrei, the old man, and I got over onto the *Abagur*. There we stood in our felt boots and sheepskins with swollen red eyes, standing there strangely as if we had been brought out of a black hole into the sun. We felt quite dizzy in the captain's warm cabin with its walnut pannelling, dizzy at the beauty of the world suddenly so dear to us.

We sat huddled together, gulping down the warmth and peace and unaware of the great dirty puddles forming round our feet.

We huddled together from habit. We couldn't believe it was all over, that there wouldn't be a sixty-degree list any more, that we no longer had to wait in trepidation for the moment when the engine would give out. . . . for the moment when we

would jump overboard without worrying whether we had kicked off our felt boots or not, for in that black water you'd soon be frozen like a fish on ice anyway.

We believed we were safe and yet couldn't believe it. And only when a girl came into the cabin, sleepy, in her dressing gown, so ordinary and so calm (she had probably been sleeping so soundly that she never even suspected that the ship had changed course to pick up these frozen men) we looked at her and laughed. For the first time we felt free, as though we had gulped the sunny wind into our lungs and were drunk on it. It was all over! What dangers and lists were there, when here beside us was a sweet and slightly annoyed little girl, who could hardly imagine that people sometimes lost their lives in the ocean....

"Tamara," said Pyotr Semyonovich Schwartzman, captain of the *Abagur*, "lay the table. And find something nice to eat for these re-born tramps."

The girl went off, and Pyotr Semyonovich laughed.

"Do you think she understood? Not a bit of it! Our stewardess hasn't a nerve in her body."

You're right, Captain. You're absolutely right.

"You old rogues, let's drink your health. Let's drink to everyone born today."

He poured us each a glass of pure alcohol and put a tin of fish on the table. Tamara brought some potatoes. Real potatoes, steaming hot.

"I think the second toast is traditionally to the parents?" said Andrei, with a smile.

"Right. What a pity our sparks has flaked out with exhaustion. It's him you owe your lives to. He shouted his lungs out for five hours. But let him have a little nap after giving birth to so many. We'll pour him some later."

And so we drank to our "parents", the crew of the *Abagur*.

Pyotr Semyonovich pushed away his empty glass and lit a cigarette.

"I might well not have made it. But I saw what happened two years ago at Bristol in the same kind of hurricane and knew what would happen to your little boat in that kind of mess.

"There are people who imagine that the bigger the ship, the better the sailor, that all you have to do is go abroad a couple of times on a big liner, and you're a sailor. You'd soon find out who's who on the deck of your trawler on a night like this! Fishermen are the hardest workers. But why am I going on like this.... We'll hack all the ice off her, then put her on a hawser and tow her back to Petropavlovsk. Now let's have a last round and turn in. There's lots of room. Make yourselves at home."

"Thanks, Captain, but we'd better be on our way back. The boys are down there alone."

"Right. We'll come alongside. There's no hurry. I've had the weather forecast; it'll all be quiet in a couple of hours."

We shook the captain's hand.

"Let's hope we don't meet again like this. Better on shore, right?"

"Right, Captain. Well, thanks again!"

I slept till evening, and then it was the silence which woke me up. I went up on deck.

Semipalatinsk was lying close up to the tanker, pressing up to her like a frightened child to its mother. But there was no longer any fear. There was nothing left of the night. Just the sun picking out the blue of the snowy cliffs to the left and the green water licking at the bows of the ship, with the silent seagulls wheeling above our masts, still green with ice.

The radio was on in the tanker. It was good to stand in the silent sea, leaning on the side, and listen to a song from the land.

*"Ships don't sleep in port,
They dream of seas,
They dream of woods...."*

And I suddenly wondered what our crew were dreaming of at that minute.

*"The ship is sad.
The siren sings,
it's time to go back out, back out...."*

The song flew up with the sea-gulls.

We were on our way to Petropavlovsk. And it was Monday. A lucky day!

After that hurricane in the ocean I decided that there is no greater test for the human frame. I decided it sincerely and categorically. But soon I was convinced that everyday courage, the courage with which we faced yesterday's tasks, and today's, and the courage with which we will face tomorrow's is always worthy of admiration and praise. It is in these everyday tasks, neither particularly exotic nor impressive but demanding colossal efforts of will, that the Northerners' love of their land is formed. This love is the life of the North, where every day means some difficulty to be overcome. And difficulties are overcome not by technology, but by people themselves.

HARD-WON HAPPINESS

Tatyana Tess was born in Odessa, and many of her articles, published in Izvestia, are devoted to her native city.

Tatyana Tess studied at the Odessa Conservatoire, and is well-known to a wide circle of readers for works like The Bycicle, Plus Enthusiasm, Yakov Flier, The Voyage of Captain Scott, Your Friends, Immortality, Beneath Our Skies, Editor-in-Chief and so on.

Tatyana Tess is a member of the Union

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TATYANA TESS

People from the town used to take cottages for the summer in the village of Vertushinka, and I often met one of them in the woods, a tall middle-aged man with glasses and a grey goatee. He limped a bit and had to use a stick, but nevertheless strode along as sprightly as any younger man when he was on the road. In the woods it was another matter; there he wandered along unhurried, often stopping to examine a bush or a leaf, or the water in a spring.

It was in the woods that I made his acquaintance, and after that we would walk along together when we chanced to meet.

His name was Ivan Valerianovich Kuznetsov, and he was a doctor. He had been a military surgeon right from the beginning of the war until the very day our troops entered Berlin; in Berlin he had been wounded in the leg, and had used a stick ever since.

He now worked in a local hospital near Moscow.

I learned all this the first day we met. On our walks we talked mostly about birds and trees, but two days before he was due to go back to town he told me the story of his life.

To tell the truth, I never thought at the time that I would ever write about it. But a few days ago fate brought us together again, and the sequel to the story was so unexpected that I just had to write about it.

Ivan Valerianovich Kuznetsov married a schoolfriend not long before war broke out. He showed me the photograph of a face, with huge eyes full of a kind of joyful surprise as though their owner were in a state of permanent astonishment at the beauty of life as it unfolded before her. The girl was standing on a mountain road in an anorak and hiking clothes, carrying a heavy rucksack. Ivan Valerianovich explained that his wife had been a geologist. Her name was Olga.

The year the war broke out their daughter Ira was three. Olga had decided to take her for a month's visit to a friend who lived in Byelorussia, in a quiet little town not far from the frontier. Ivan Valerianovich took them down there himself, and came back with delightful memories of the beauty of that dreamy countryside, with its green empty spaces and clear lakes.

That was on 19th June, 1941.

None of us who were grown-up at the time will ever forget hearing that war had broken out, or what we were doing at the time. Ivan Valerianovich was washing his shirt when he heard. He could look after himself perfectly well, and now that he was so to speak back to being a

bachelor, he started to wash his shirt. It was a blue shirt; he never forgot that either. This was the shirt in which he turned up to enrol in the army a few days later.

He had a letter from Olga.

It was a short note saying she was writing from the station, where she was trying to get on a train for Moscow. Her tone was calm, and she begged him not to worry about her and Ira but to trust in her for as he knew, this was not the first sticky situation she had been in, and she had always managed to get out of them.

That was the first and the only letter he received.

And from that time on military surgeon Kuznetsov knew nothing about what had happened to his wife and daughter. All through the war he was one of those who stood aside when they brought the mail, unable to bring himself either to go away, or to ask if there was anything for him, or to stop hoping altogether.

After the liberation of Byelorussia, Doctor Kuznetsov's hospital was stationed not far from the town where he had last seen his wife, and he managed to make the journey there. In the few hours at his disposal he made the rounds of everyone who might possibly know something about his family.

But he met no one who had known his wife and daughter. The house where Olga's friend lived had been flattened by artillery fire, in fact the whole street was razed to the ground. All that was left was a board with the name, nailed to a post, and that looked completely strange being written in German.

He was already going to leave, and had told the driver to turn the car round, when he had the idea of finding the local doctor. Perhaps the doctor was old enough not to have been called up; perhaps he had stayed here all through the occupation.... A tiny spring of hope welled up inside him, but it was at once dampened by a feeling of icy despair in the very depths of his soul.

Suddenly he was afraid, more afraid than he had ever been in his life before. He was seized with a desire to turn the car round at once and get away without asking any more questions. But he regained his self-control and leaned out of the car to ask the first passer-by where the doctor lived.

The doctor, a sad old man, invited him in and sat opposite him, hunched into the raised collar of his warm jacket made out of a worn-out overcoat, blinking at him with tired, short-sighted eyes. And there he learned, from a stranger in a strange house, all that he had been so afraid to hear.

They had started to bomb the railway station from the very first, and no one had been able to leave the town. Olga and her daughter had to turn back, and very soon the town was taken by German troops. They went on living with her friend in the same house, both women working as orderlies in the local hospital. The doctor knew them, and knew that Olga was a doctor's wife and her friend an officer's. A few other people knew as well.

And so life went on—the hard, alarm-filled life of a town under enemy occupation. It went on until the day the enemy kommandant

was found dead in his bed, and an order went out in retaliation that unless the assassin were given up, the families of Party members would be shot. A week later a list of those condemned to death was put up in the main square. The names of both Olga and her friend were on it.

...While Ivan Valerianovich was telling me all this, I could not bring myself to look him in the eyes. We were walking side by side through the woods with their smell of pine needles, in the shining midday sun and the clear beauty of the silence.

"And then I asked him," went on Ivan Valerianovich slowly, looking ahead. "And then I asked, 'But what about my daughter? What about Ira?' If I believed in God I would have started to pray that he would answer she was alive. But the doctor got up and went to the window. Standing there with his back to me, he said: 'The wives were shot together with their children'."

...We went on through the wood, but it seemed a different place, as though darker and suddenly deathly cold. Ivan Valerianovich went on at his usual pace, leaning on his stick.

"And that isn't the end..." he said slowly.

And told me what happened later.

A year after the war had ended, when Ivan Valerianovich was discharged from the hospital and demobilised, he went back to the town. He covered the whole place on foot, going from house to house to ask after his family. He found a few people who had known Olga, but they told him the same story as

the old doctor. The day he was due to leave, he was sitting alone in the station buffet, his tea growing cold on the table in front of him. The woman behind the counter, an elderly lady in glasses, was counting on an abacus. For some reason he decided to approach her too. She repeated his question twice over, then her mouth fell open in surprise and she stared at him in consternation, then said "Sit down" and started to cry.

As it happened she had been standing in the street when they brought out the column of arrested women and children. She knew Olga and noticed her there amongst the others. Olga was leading her daughter by the hand, but at the moment when the column turned the corner, she pushed the girl away from her with such force that she fell back behind an advertisement stand. One of the women standing in the crowd took her into her arms at once. The girl struggled and cried, but the woman pressed her to her breast like a mother her frightened child, and took her into the house. This waitress knew the woman, Evdokia Philippovna, a cleaner at the textile training school. They were neighbours, and their children went to the same school.

"Children?" asked Ivan Valerianovich breathlessly.

"Why, yes," said the woman. "My Gena and Nadya and her Ira. She's only got the one."

By evening Ivan Valerianovich had found the house where Evdokia Philippovna lived.

He knocked at a door padded with felt. The old man who opened it looked him over without particular interest and called in a croak:

"Dusya, someone to see you about the washing...."

And Kuznetsov went into a small, cluttered room. There was a woman ironing at the table, her back to him. She turned and looked at the newcomer calmly, with an expression of slight surprise. She had a round, pale face and an untidy knot of fair hair. There was a little girl of about eight doing her homework at a table by the window, his daughter.

He spent several hours in this small room that smelt of washing. Ira went to the neighbours' to finish her homework, then played outside, while Ivan Valerianovich sat and talked to this woman with hands rough from washing floors. She had lost her two front teeth which gave her a lisp, and her face was worried, pale and miserable. She had saved his daughter from death, brought her up and taken the place of her mother. And she, like him, had no one else on earth besides the girl whom he as her father had come to take away.

At this point Ivan Valerianovich interrupted his story and set to examining a wild raspberry bush. He looked at it long and closely without saying a word, and I did not dare to break the silence. At last I could contain myself no longer and asked:

"So what did you decide to do?"

"What did I decide to do?"

Ivan Valerianovich took off his glasses and blew on them. "I married her," he answered, and put them back on.

"Good Lord!" was all I managed to say.

"Yes," he said, "I married her. No doubt you'd like to know how it all turned out...." He turned to

me and shrugged. His face was soft and thoughtful. "Children grow up quickly," he said. "Ira decided to become a geologist, like her mother. At first she went on long hikes, then on even longer expeditions. Then she got married, very young, as young as her mother married me, and now she lives with her husband in Novosibirsk. We see each other once a year, when she comes on holiday with her children. She has her own family, her own work and life and that's the way it ought to be."

There was a moment of silence.

"And what about you?" I brought myself to ask at last.

"Us?" He shrugged again. "Dusa and I still living together as we did before," he answered briefly and relapsed into silence.

I asked no more questions.

It was three years since I had been there, but at last I went back to Vertushinka, and this time it was summer, too.

As I walked from the bus-stop through the woods, over the ravine and past the silver-birch grove, I could not help remembering Ivan Valerianovich and our conversation. And for some reason I was sure that he was back in Vertushinka.

An elderly woman got out of the bus with me, carrying two bags stuffed with smoked sausage, bread and poppy-seed buns. At first she fell behind, but when I sat down on a stump by the ravine to rest, she caught me up and we went on together. I gathered that she had been shopping in town and was now on her way home.

"I've got some herring," she said. "salted, Astrakhan. I've always been mad on everything salty, ever since

I was a child. And my mother loved herring, too." She fell silent and smiled to herself, a row of metal crowns glinting in her mouth. "All her life the only parts of the herrings she got to eat were heads or tails, for she always gave the backs to my father or elder brother. Then Father died, my brother was killed in the war, and Mother ate backs for the first time ever and discovered how good they were. I remember her eating a back, and starting to cry: 'I don't want this back! Let me eat tails all my life, if only everything could be like it was before, if only your father and Fedya were still here . . .'"

She sighed, straightened her packets, and frowned up at the sky.

"Look, that hawk's caught a mouse . . . look, there, he's flying away with it . . . I'm not afraid of mice! I think that's really funny, that some people are afraid of them. I think they're sweet. Maybe you've seen a little trail on the snow in winter, looking as if it's been drawn in with a pencil? That's a mouse. You look closely; first there's a trail, then a little hole, as though made with the back of a spoon. That's where he lay down in the snow to warm his feet. Otherwise they would freeze. He runs through the snow, then lies down and draws his feet underneath him to warm them. He's so small, yet he knows just what to do . . ."

She laughed and set off down into the ravine.

The narrow, fast-running river with its clear cold water rushed murmuring between its low fragrant banks. We crossed the bridge and started up the other side. Above us

the first houses of Vertushinka looked down onto the water.

"I'll go to Katya, the milk-woman, and ask her whether Ivan Valerianovich is here this year," I thought. "She knows everyone in the village...."

I reached the top and helped my companion up the steep path. She was out of breath, and her greying hair was dishevelled. When we had got up onto the village road, I looked ahead and almost cried out in amazement.

Straight in front of me was Ivan Valerianovich, sitting on his porch in a linen summer shirt and reading the paper.

Just as though he could read my thoughts, he turned, put aside his paper and took off his glasses.

"Dusya!" he said suddenly, looking over my head. "My dearest, what made you so late? I was already beginning to worry...."

I looked round.

My companion put her bags down on the dusty road and looked at Ivan Valerianovich. Her face was full of such warmth and such motherly tenderness that I was rooted to the spot.

She passed me and ran as lightly as a girl up onto the porch.

OUR BUS GOES TO SCHOOL

Victor Telpugov was born in Moscow in 1917. He studied at the Gorky Literary Institute which he left for the army, to fight at the front. He fought as a parachutist, and was decorated for his efforts. After the war he worked in the Central Committee of the Komsomol and on the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda. He started writing at the end of the fifties. His main works are A Russian Street, The Ice of Mozhaisk,

The Morze Alphabet,
The Wooden Boat,
The Parachutists,
Back to Your Places!,
Snow Mountains,
Lights at Night and other prose.
U. Telpugov lives and works in Moscow.

VICTOR TELPUGOV

Bus number 18 starts at Butyrsky Khutor, goes through the centre and ends up by the multi-storey building on the Kotelnicheskaya Embankment. I am very fond of this route. Butyrsky Khutor is a district full of student hostels, and of a morning the bus fills with a gay crowd of young people, almost all of whom are travelling to the centre with their books and briefcases. From the very first stop more than half the bus is students, and by the Zelyony Dom even more get in so that it

turns into an enormous beehive on wheels, voices buzzing and ringing and pages rustling as though as soon as they got out they were about to take off en masse....

When I go to work in this company it puts me in a good mood for the rest of the day.

And today that was just what I did: I got up early, so I could walk at leisure to the corner of Dobroliubov and Rustaveli Streets, where there's always a bright blue bus waiting to set off along the route.

I sat down, looked around and nodded in greeting to those other passengers whom I already knew and to those whose acquaintance I hadn't yet made. The usual picture, but nothing boring or mundane about it: arguments going on all round, people making their point in a gay crowd of noisy boys and girls. Someone new to the scene would take time to get used to the bustle and hubbub and to the books and papers perched like birds on the knees of those about him.

By the Savelovsky Station an old lady got in, looked around in astonishment and addressed a sly question to no one in particular:

"What on earth is all this?"

"Have a seat, granny, here you are, by the window, and please excuse all the noise: you see, this is the bus for the University, our bus goes to school," said a bright-eyed brunette who always sits by the window.

The old lady sat down and asked no more questions, but something kind and thoughtful appeared in her face. She seemed to be smiling, with the sort of smile you get only from very old or very kind people.

The bus went on. I had long lost sight of the bright-eyed brunette and the old lady herself seemed to have got off at some stop along the way.

Another young girl who had seemed totally absorbed in her text-book caught sight of a war-veteran getting onto the bus and at once jumped up to give him her comfortable seat.

Someone somewhere helped his neighbour to change a three-ruble note so that the latter could, as he put it, "pay his debts to the state" (it was the kind of bus without a conductor, where you put the exact change for your fare into a box and tear yourself off a ticket).

Somebody explained at great length to a visitor to Moscow how to get to the industrial exhibition, even going so far as to use the slightly dusty window to draw a sketch-map of the shortest route.

I looked around and listened to those about me, and gradually I started to see how much the words of the brunette meant. At first I had not payed much attention: "Our bus goes to school."

But suddenly I noticed I was reciting the words, as though they were a song or a poem:

*"Our...
bus...
goes to school...."*

It may seem ridiculous, but I started to think that our driver was driving with unusual care, smoothly, with no jerking and jolting, as though he was thinking, "Why not let the old ones doze and the young people read their books and look through their lecture-notes, let the bus go to school...".

And in the driver's compartment, I'm almost sure of it, the dark sun-shade on the windscreen was holding up an algebra text-book or a "Teach Yourself English."

After all, our bus goes to school!

EIGHTEEN

*Konstantin Simonov
was born
in 1915 in Leningrad. He started
writing in 1934,
when he entered
the Gorky Literary Institute.
He writes poetry,
prose and drama
and is well known for Battle
on the Ice, Suvorov, Notes from
the Front, Russian People,
Days and Nights,
The Russian Question,
Friends and Enemies,
Strange Shadow, The Living
and the Dead, and many other works.
Simonov has won six State Prizes
and been awarded many*

*war decorations and medals.
He is Secretary of the Board
of the Union of Soviet Writers.
He lives and works
in Moscow.*

KONSTANTIN SIMONOV

It happened on July 3rd 1972. Anatoly Merzlov was out in the wheat fields with his colleagues. It was his second harvest after finishing training and starting work as a tractor driver. Anatoly was working on his old tractor, picking up straw, when the straw caught fire from a stray spark. Anatoly lost his life fighting the fire, trying to save his tractor.

Anatoly Alexeyevich Merzlov was born in 1954. After finishing school

in the village, he was trained as a driver. He was a Komsomol member.

DECREE

**of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of
the USSR. Award
of the "Badge of Honour"
to A. A. Merzlov.
For courage and valour demonstrated in
the protection of communal property,
Anatoly Alexeyevich Merzlov, tractor**

driver at the Chapayev Collective Farm, Mikhailovsky District, Ryazan Region, to be awarded the "Badge of Honour" (Posthumous).

Chairman
of the Presidium
of the Supreme Soviet
of the USSR
N. Podgorny
Secretary
of the Presidium
of the Supreme Soviet
of the USSR
M. Georgadze

The Kremlin, Moscow, December 13th 1972.

The Bureau of the Central Committee of the Komsomol (Young Communist League) passed the following resolution: to make a mention in the Komsomol's Book of Honour of Anatoly Alexeyevich Merzlov, Komsomol member and tractor driver of the Chapayev Collective Farm, Mikhailovsky District, Ryazan Region, for selfless courage and heroism in protecting the harvest and an item of agricultural machinery (Posthumous).

I had already read in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* of the courageous act which cost Anatoly Merzlov his life and of the fact that his name had been entered in the Komsomol Book of Honour when my colleagues from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* invited me to their editorial office and placed before me all the letters they had received about Anatoly.

They all gave Merzlov's courage its due. But some of them went on to question it:

"It was, of course, an act of courage, but was it worth it under the circumstances? Was it worth taking

a risk that turned out to be mortal just to save a tractor from fire? Can you really compare the value of a tractor with that of human life? A tractor can be replaced, but a human life that ends in the flames can never be restored."

My colleagues from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* asked me to write an article on how I, as a man who had written on the war and met many people who had often willingly risked their lives, reacted to letters in that vein.

As I thought it over I realised that I couldn't come to a really personal conclusion without making the journey down to the scene of the event, so off I set, two hundred and twenty kilometres from Moscow to the village of Prudskie Vyselki on the outskirts of the ancient Russian town of Mikhailov which I had last visited almost thirty-one years ago in December of 1941, on the morning when General Golikov's army cleared the city of Guderian's troops.

It was only on the way to Mikhailov that I realised the reason my colleagues from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* addressed their request to me rather than to some other journalist of my generation: it must have been because someone there remembered the reports I had sent back from Mikhailov in '41 as a war correspondent.

"Well," I thought, "they're right in their way. Places we know from the war sometimes bring back not only memories, but also prompt us to make comparisons which at times come in very useful."

I will come back to this later. The first thing to do is to try and give an idea of what I felt in Prudskie

Vyselki, in one of the little rooms of the Collective Farm office, where I talked with the boy's mother and father who had come there during the lunch hour, and later in their silent bereaved home, where we held the rest of our conversation.

As I talked with these two people I was haunted by a feeling of guilt, as though it was I who had broken the news of their son's death to them, even though their son had now been dead for more than two months. With my questions I was taking them back to that day when their son did what he did, to the day when he died and to the two weeks in between these two dates which were taken up with the fight for his life.

It was only half way through the conversation that I understood that my guilt in "interrogating" the parents of the dead boy was not as great as I had first imagined. Their grief was so immense that one conversation more or less in which they were asked to talk about their son could make no difference to it: the pain was there whether they expressed themselves or not.

Nina Petrovna and Alexei Mikhailovich Merzlov, the boy's parents, are people of deep and staunch feelings, and in talking to them, in getting the feel of their personalities through their outlook on life and the way they spoke of what their son had done, I felt that I was also getting to know the son himself, that son whom I would never be able to ask how he himself looked upon his actions and whether it had been worth risking his young life for "a piece of metal" as the writer of one of the letters called the tractor.

The "staunch" are not those who do not allow their voices to falter or their tears to flow freely. The "staunch" are those who do not falter themselves at a difficult moment, those whom misfortune cannot bring to their knees.

Nina Petrovna did not hide her tears as she spoke of her son, and her eyes filled with them more than once. Sometimes she unexpectedly smiled through them as she remembered something dear to her from her son's childhood, and the smile appeared through her tears because she remembered not only her son's death but the whole of his life, recalling it with the maternal respect that she had for him all through his childhood and youth.

For it was with respect that his parents spoke of Anatoly Merzlov, and it was this attitude which illuminated all that they had to say about him. Not compassion, nor admiration, but respect. He had grown up amongst them and become a person whom they could respect. They respected his attitude to people and to work, to his younger brother and sister, to his young wife and to his friends. And they respected his attitude of love and responsibility towards his work and towards that integral part of it, the old and much-repaired tractor which he operated himself and which ran for him like a charm and which he had resolved to save from the flames. His parents expressed no surprise or admiration at what their son had done, but something much stronger: this feeling of the deepest respect.

His father, Alexei Mikhailovich, showed no sign of tears as he spoke of his son, but his voice was slow and laboured as though he knew

that he could keep his self-control but did so with difficulty and was therefore constantly on his guard.

He had seen his son straight away, only ten minutes after the latter managed, after a losing battle with the fire, to crawl out of the flames where it was incredible that anything should have stayed alive at all. And when he crawled out, he tore the charred remains of his clothing off his skin and walked as far as the motorbike and sidecar before anyone got near him, saying but three short words to the other tractor driver, "Uncle Kolya, drive...".

His father, who was also working in the fields, got onto the back and while they sped the few kilometres to the local hospital, Anatoly neither cried out nor even moaned. He uttered no complaints the whole way and his only two words were, "Cover it," pointing with a burnt hand to his burnt face which was in pain from the wind.

His father folded a newspaper in four and held it in front of his son's face to shield it.

And when they had got to the hospital he said another two words, "By myself...," when he was helped out of the sidecar and they wanted to carry him up to the operating theatre on the first floor. He walked up by himself and lay down on the operating table, where he suffered in silence, and continued to suffer in silence for two weeks, right up until the end when he lost consciousness. And his sufferings were enormous. There is no more terrible pain than that from burns like those.

The self-control which Anatoly Merzlov demonstrated in the first terrible minutes and with which he

fought death for two weeks without complaining once to anyone convinced me in retrospect that the risk which he took in saving his tractor was not simply a matter of boyish daring or a moment of thoughtlessness.

This was a risk taken by a person of strength and self-control who had resolved to do his duty as he saw fit and in the hope that he would succeed in this struggle with the element of fire.

Self-control was something he had been brought up to. The split-second decision he had to take was a product of the circumstances, for there are circumstances in which there could be no other decision than a split-second one.

He was afraid of no one, but never misused his strength. A quiet boy, he liked music and machines.

The last time he had repaired his tractor himself, he parked it by the house after work.

His mother was annoyed: "Why should we have that tractor standing in front of the windows?"

He didn't start to argue, but simply answered:

"Let it stand here."

When Anatoly's colleagues were putting out the remains of the fire in the fields, one of them burned his shin. When he came to visit Anatoly in hospital, the latter said:

"Show me your burn."

No doubt he wanted to see what a burn looks like on another person. He had a look but didn't say anything. The friend couldn't stop thinking about it when he came out, and kept saying:

"I only burned my leg, and the pain is terrible, but he's got such huge burns and yet he puts up with

his. How can he stand the pain? I can't believe it!"

On his first day in hospital Anatoly asked about his tractor:

"How's the tractor?"

They hadn't been able to save his tractor, but they told him a lie quite understandable under the circumstances, that the tractor was more or less all right and would be good for work again.

"Was the fan-belt burned?" asked Anatoly.

"Yes, it was," they answered.

And of course compared with the struggle between life and death that was going on in the boy's body the fate of the tractor was of no importance at all. Those around him were ready to sacrifice their own blood and skin to save his life: and what is a tractor worth in comparison?

But for him who lay dying in that hospital, the fate of his tractor was of the utmost importance: otherwise he would not have asked. In such situations people do not often ask questions about things to which they are indifferent.

The boy who had thrown himself into the flames heedless of his own safety, was not a suicide and valued his own life as highly as do other people. But evidently he considered that an inviolate part of the value of a human life, including his own, was the value of the work that he had taken upon himself to carry out and which was not yet completed.

He wanted to save his tractor and was sure he could succeed in doing so. And whether the risks which we all take at one or another moment in our life are mortal or not is usually not clear at the time: it becomes clear only later.

Sometimes the risk is less than at first appeared, and sometimes it is the other way round. The thing is that a risk is not something that can be calculated unhurriedly in one's own time: he who starts working out whether it is worth taking the risk or not usually ends up by being too late to take any risks at all.

It may happen that those who have taken a risk and then suffered for it recall what they did in a moment of weakness with the words, "Oh, I shouldn't have done it!"

But from all the conversations I had there in the village of Prudskie Vyselki with so many different people, I don't remember anyone recalling that Anatoly ever said "Oh, I shouldn't have done it!" which seems perfectly in character with his personality as I imagine it from what I have heard of him.

He said something completely different to one of his young colleagues who came to visit him in hospital:

"I should have taken the seat from the tractor, that would have been much better."

The friend did not understand what he was talking about, and thought that maybe he hadn't heard aright.

Anatoly explained that he should have thought of taking the seat with him into the flames so as to shield his face with it on the way out: that way his burns would have been less severe.

That was the only regret of this strong, staunch young man as he lay dying: not that he had risked his life, but that while doing so he had made one small mistake.

Let us make a small diversion into the past. Prudskie Vyselki is only a few kilometres from Mikhailov, where I had been some thirty years ago.

To tell the truth I could not remember in detail, looking at the Mikhailov of today, what happened where in and around it in 'forty-one. The summery town of today, with its green gardens that the sun had not yet had time to yellow and the little river running through its centre crossed by bridges, large and small, had little in common with the scene of wintry desolation that I remember. Then there had been no river, only the ice, covered like the streets with burnt and abandoned German cars and tanks, while the air was full of the smells of war: fire, petrol and gunpowder.

And then there had been no concrete wall at the entrance to the town, with the words: "To the troops of the 10th army, who liberated Mikhailov on 6th-7th December 1941, 328th and 330th divisions." Through the town, in a temperature of several degrees below zero, their earflaps pulled well down and their collars turned up, marched the soldiers of those 328th and 330th divisions, soldiers whose names are now engraved for ever in the history of the town.

And then there had been no tank on a pedestal standing in a high spot above the river.

On the pedestal is written the number of the tank, 3312, with the information that it was made at one of the armament factories in the Urals, that it took part in both the battle of Stalingrad and that at Kursk, and then with an even more powerful gun was part of the Fourth

Guards Tank Army and entered first Berlin, then Prague.

As I went up to the tank it was approached from the other side by a man of about my age in ordinary trousers but an old military tunic without shoulder straps, with a little boy of five or six who must have been his grandson. He started to read what it said to the little boy, but the latter was interested in something quite different.

"Are there people in it?" he asked, looking at the tank.

"Not any more," said the old soldier.

And I started thinking of the people who had been in the tank. Maybe some of them were with it throughout the war, while others joined it half-way through to replace those who were killed or wounded. It was hardly possible that the same crew remained intact all the way from Stalingrad to Prague. But it was because of the people in it that it had been through so much: a tank without its crew is no more than a huge piece of scrap-iron.

This tank had been put up here on the promontory not because it had taken part in the liberation of Mikhailov. As far as I remember, there had been hardly any tanks in the 10th army in December '41. The photographer from the newspaper *Red Star* travelling with me had found one and photographed it with its crew, but I myself saw no tanks near the town at all. The infantry and artillery fought alone and even so succeeded in driving the Germans before them at the rate of fifteen or twenty kilometres a day.

No, the tank stood there simply as a war memorial, to remind us

that three and a half years later the invaders who got as far as Mikhailov had been forced to sign an unconditional surrender in Berlin.

On my way back from Prudskie Vyselki I went to the Mikhailov Military Commissariat where I learned that 246 men had lost their lives in the battle for the town, that they were buried in twelve communal graves in and around Mikhailov, and visited every year by about a hundred relatives from all parts of the country.

I also learned that in the course of the war, from Moscow to Berlin, about ten thousand local men gave their lives for their country.

And the tank stands there as a memorial to all the lives, lost not only here but also all the way from Stalingrad to Berlin.

On my way back to Moscow via Mikhailov I stopped by this tank a second time, thinking that what I have heard about Anatoly Merzlov means that I will always associate with him in my memory not only the freshly-painted ochre-coloured fence around his grave in the village cemetery where they hadn't yet had time to put up the headstone, but also this much-travelled tank. Because something in what he did connected him in my mind with those soldiers, I thought of him not only as someone ready to be the first to throw himself into the flames to save his tractor, but also as the kind of man who in other circumstances would have been the first to run into the attack.

And, by the way, to be first in the attack is almost the most difficult role, if not the most difficult of all, when it comes to fighting. And Mer-

zlov was a decisive enough lad for this most difficult role of all.

His friends told me that he was soon to be called up, and that he, a tractor driver, dreamed of joining the tank corps.

As I stood looking at the tank, I could not help thinking: "Man does not live in a vacuum."

He grew up in a family where they were used to work from childhood, and worked well and conscientiously, putting into it all they had. Both his parents are people used to taking full responsibility for the work they do, and their son grew up like them, in the spiritual atmosphere of this family.

But besides the spirit of the family there is also the spirit of the country in which a person lives and works. '41 and '45 are of course long since passed, but ten thousand people from the region where Merzlov was born and bred gave their lives so that this land should remain ours and we should not become mere slaves of the fascist Reich. And although all that was so long ago, their sacrifice has also become a part of the atmosphere Merzlov breathed all through his childhood.

And finally, we must not forget the atmosphere and spirit of that unusually difficult summer, and the battle for the harvest, a harvest for which there was such a struggle that the word "battle" ceases to be a metaphor. I do not mean "atmosphere" in the sense that the summer was exceptionally hot and the straw they were gathering with their tractors as dry as tinder; I am talking about the "spirit" of that summer in a different sense, in the sense that it put something of the military spirit into people like Anatoly Merzlov and

made them ready to give their all in this battle for the harvest.

And so the spirit of his family, and of his country with its traditions of heroism, and of that summer with its battle for the harvest—all these factors contributed to the moment when Merzlov acted as he did.

There are moments in life when the idea of one's country becomes totally concrete. Sometimes it is in the form of a rifle which the soldier does not let out of his grasp even when he loses consciousness, sometimes it is the person to whom you donate your blood, and sometimes it is the harvest which you save from the flames.

I have no intention and indeed no right to put into the mind of someone already dead, and whom I did not have the opportunity to ask what he was really thinking of in those last moments, my own thoughts about what he did. But I am absolutely convinced that for Merzlov, as he ran to save his tractor, that tractor was a little piece of his country or rather of his attitude to that country.

Within his heart the two were indivisibly intertwined, and the bonds between them did not break during one of those moments when we are tested by fate to see whether we will stand firm.

As I thought of Merzlov, I could not help thinking of what took place on Damansky Island; not of the whole story, which is also relevant here, but of the conversation I had with the soldiers who were then about the same age as Anatoly Merzlov when he died.

The circumstances were of course completely different, but there was

the same split-second decision to be made, and the same decision was made, which is probably the reason why the one event brought the other to my mind.

Tractor team foreman Pavel Agafonovich Sapozhnikov, who had gone off to join the war at Merzlov's age, been wounded but still got all the way to the Baltic, said the same thing sadly over and over again as he talked with me:

"If only I'd been there! I'd only just gone away, only half an hour earlier. Only just...."

And in that "only just" there was so much below the surface, something that I had heard so many times in war, that if it were not for that "only just", if he had not gone away, then everything would perhaps have been different....

Sapozhnikov and I talked about the "piece of iron" and of all the letters from readers who considered that it was not worth risking a human life for a "piece of iron". Sapozhnikov squeezed his big hands and laughed bitterly.

"Huh, a 'piece of iron'! A tractor is a 'piece of iron', so is a crane and so is a turbine. Russia would be nothing without the three of them, and that's what you should keep in mind if you want to decide whether it was worth it or not...."

Remembering Sapozhnikov's words I think that of course it is inhuman to cheapen human life, that of course a human life is more precious than a tractor or some other piece of iron.

But on the other hand, one thinks of the question of what this human being is capable of if he thinks only of the fact that his life is more precious than anything else in the

world? A man who starts thinking at the moment of decision of relative values, of whether it is worth taking the risk, is he capable of saving anything, or anyone, be it a rifle, a tractor, an aircraft or, most important of all, another human being who needs his help?

I suspect that such a person not only would not save a tractor from fire but would not save a child from drowning while still clinging to his opinion that human life is the most precious thing in the world, with of course his own life foremost in his thoughts.

Nina Petrovna, Anatoly's mother, showed me the letters they get every day from all parts of the country. She is a milkmaid with a lot of work to do and a large household, with a husband and two children to look after, but even so she finds time every evening to answer at least a few of the letters. She writes at a table beside the empty bed where her son used to sleep, regarding it her duty to those who sympathise with her in her loss and share her view of her son, that however hard it turned out in the end, he did as he ought to do.

I sat in this room and read the letters, and indeed there were many of them that it would be impossible not to answer. I even copied out some of them, but I will quote only one, the letter of a young woman:

"I sit writing with tears in my eyes. My brother is also eighteen and also a tractor driver, doing his military service. What a pity it is that people like your son lose their lives. I don't know how to thank you for bringing up your son to be so true to his country and to himself."

"True to his country and to himself." These words express exactly the spirit of Anatoly Merzlov. In his tractor he saw an expression of the country's common property, and therefore something of his country itself and to be true to himself he could not have acted differently.

These letters, full of moral support, are written in the simplest of kind words, straight from the heart, and they keep arriving to the Merzlovs from all parts of the country.

But however much moral support they receive, his parents' grief can never be abated, and this is all part of the bitter price to be paid for the heroic deed of their son. The first time I was in Mikhailov, during the war, I wrote a poem:

*"The mother's tears of grief go on for many
a day,
Even victory will not bring back her son..."*

These lines come back to me now, and, alas, they are true. That's the way it is. . . .

*Prudskie Uyselki—Mikhailov—
Moscow*

THE SESTRORETSK AXIS

Boris Gussev was born in Leningrad in 1927. He took part in the defence of the city during the Second World War, and has seven decorations. He is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and of the Union of Soviet Journalists, and author of the books Death of a Commissar, Sleepless Night, Life on the Threshold, Three Hours to Dawn, Follow Your Star, and The Axis of Life. He now lives in Moscow.

BORIS GUSSEV

As he set off his wife asked: "Maybe you'll change your mind, Georgy? If it's me you were thinking of, then there's really no need...."

"I've already changed my mind too many times as it is. I don't want to wait till it's too late, you know, I'm not as young as I was," he replied.

And he really was tired of thinking about the subject. It was all decided, and he was leaving. He had never been flighty, oh no, forty years at the same job . . . but he had

had enough. Other people gave up their jobs and found new ones without making any fuss at all over it. It's only natural to change until you find the best place.

"And where is it best? Huh! The grass is always greener on the other side of the street," he thought angrily. "There's no point in grubbing about in all these sentiments. I've made my decision, and that's all."

He went off to the station, bought a ticket for Leningrad, and stood waiting for the train. It was the be-

ginning of the week, only Tuesday, and the train was empty. He sat down by a window. How fast these trains went now! Before the war it used to take an hour and a half from Sestroretsk to Leningrad, and now they did the journey in thirty-five minutes. Even less if it was a non-stop. And if you think that some people live within the city itself and still take over an hour to get to work, there's nothing so awful in having to make the journey every day. Of course, it was much more convenient the way he lived at present, with his work only a few minutes away on foot, and coming home for lunch without having to rush it. Hmm . . . yes, you couldn't come home to lunch from Leningrad.

He sighed, and his thoughts returned to the same old topic. Well, what was so extraordinary about it? Forty years. . . . He could easily have stayed at the factory. It wasn't as if they were trying to kick him out. On the contrary, when they found out, they would be shattered. Well, let them be.

And he imagined what it would be like: he collects his papers and leaves the factory. Other workers run up to him:

"Georgy Ivanovich. Are you really leaving?"

"Why not? Look, I've got all my papers."

"No, say it's a joke! However will we get by without you?"

"Oh, you'll manage all right, you can be sure of that."

Before that, of course, he would be pleaded with in the workers' committee and the director's office. The last thing they were expecting was that he would leave.

What he had to do, of course, was find a good job in Leningrad, not too far from the station. He had an excellent work-record, nothing but bonuses and prizes for excellent work. And as for his age . . . well, what about it? He was only fifty-five. Sometimes when he couldn't be bothered fiddling about with the crane or calling one of the workers to help him, he handled a couple of hundredweight without making a fuss about it, except that his hands shook for a little while afterwards. Of course, his sight wasn't what it had been once, but there was nothing to stop him getting a pair of glasses. Lots of people have glasses by forty, and anyway sight doesn't have much of a part to play in his kind of work. He could take any machine-tool he liked to pieces and put it back together again with his eyes shut. Experience, that's what counts, and it's something he had plenty of, after forty years as a fitter and mender. He'd been over so many tools, Swiss German and French. . . . But that was all over now, the times when we used to import them. We make them ourselves, now, it's Georgy Ivanovich who makes them. Who else? Like the rolling mill, for instance. True, it was designed in Moscow, but they built it here in Sestroretsk, and when it was already put together a team came from the institute to put the finishing touches to it. They spent ages touching it up, but at last it was ready to go onto the production-line.

There it stood, shooting out its accurate little drills as small as nails. What a sight! The place was crawling with reporters and film-men, and not surprising, since it was the first of its kind—almost the first

in the country, you could say. By the old methods they used to spend ten minutes milling each drill separately, with a third of the metal lost as shavings. Now it took only seconds, with no losses at all. Incredible! Real technological progress, as they say, with a saving of millions of rubles if you count it all up.

Hmm.... But when they started testing the "nails", what a fuss there was then. They found that they were off axis. A drill is a delicate instrument, not a nail. So the team spent another six months at the job, working out what was wrong, bringing specialists and scientists in to advise them....

Georgy Ivanovich glanced out of the window. What a view! The gulf with throngs of visitors winter and summer, in all weathers. A famous beauty-spot, the Sestroretsk coast. Actually it was officially a part of Leningrad, and the local people had every right to call themselves "Leningraders". But they didn't. They said, "I'm from Sestroretsk", because they were proud of the fact. Way back in history Peter the Great established the armouries of his master-craftsmen out here, and now the local people were well-entrenched. They regarded outsiders with suspicion. "Who are you?" they seemed to ask. "Will you understand our ways?" And then there's the mill: of course, it's nothing compared with the Kirov mills in Leningrad, but still, people all over the country have heard of the Voskov Mill in Sestroretsk. Before, it had made weapons—pikes and sabres, Russian rifles.... Peter himself had been in charge in those days, and thought up his inventions here, and afterwards came Toka-

rev, Degtyarev and Raschepe, all of them Academicians and famous, and all of them started out at the Sestroretsk Mill. Now the mill made tools—drills and screw-taps, tools to cut diamonds to hair-breadth accuracy. Soon it would be celebrating its two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary, but he, Georgy Ivanovich, wouldn't be there to share in the celebrations. They would have to make do without him.

But that tool, what a job he had with it! He didn't like sticking his neck out, but he was asked to do the task by the young and energetic Chief Engineer himself, Igor Andreyevich Ordinartsev. He invited him into the office and said:

"Georgy Ivanovich, help us out. The place is full of research scientists, but the drills are still faulty. They can't get the axis right.... Find out what the matter is."

There stood the tool, a complex machine, with dozens of assemblies, different parts and connections, and he had to find where it was fraction of a millimetre out of true. You could spend a year on a job like this, for you've got to know where to look. George Ivanovich started by getting to know how the thing was constructed. Everything was all right there, but that was only half the matter. Like with people: you get someone who's talented by nature, but who's somehow been set up the wrong way and all his talent is wasted. One has to tighten up all the assemblies and connections in the tool, and only then start looking for the axis. He had been looking for his axis all his life, and perhaps had let himself forget something very important from the world of practical matters. Just to think that he,

who had been through the seige of Leningrad, who had lived in Sestroretsk all his life, a skilled worker the like of whom there were not many at the mill, he had been one of the last to get a new flat, although one of his boyhood friends had been the chairman of the local Executive Committee for many years. He had never been one for making use of what strings his friends could pull for him. It wasn't ethical, somehow.

But now he had a wonderful three-room flat, now that his children had already grown up and left home. Everything comes in the end to those who wait, even if it does so somewhat late in the day.

They passed through Lakhta, from which there was a clear view of Leningrad over on the other side of the gulf. There was the dome of St. Isaac's and the spire of the cathedral in the Peter and Paul Fortress, which seemed to float in the air. That was an axis, too. Once the architect had found it, it was fixed in the spire for ever and ever.

His axis, Georgy Ivanovich's, was minuscule. And he had to find it. . . . He remembered how he had taken the whole tool apart, piece by piece and screw by screw, and then put it back together again. The assemblies were as tight as he had been taught to make them by the old Sestroretsk master-craftsmen way back at the beginning of the 'thirties. Then he, Georgy Ivanovich, had started to teach others. He had been half way around the world, and all to teach the business of correlating two spindles, in other words of finding the axis. That same old axis. . . .

And with this tool. . . . It happened quite simply. As soon as he put it back together, he found the

axis at once. He didn't even have to measure it, for he knew in advance that the drill would fit exactly into the cartridge, and so it did. They all said:

"Georgy Ivanovich, aren't you marvellous. We don't know how to thank you."

It wasn't thanks he wanted, it was simply a question of what was fair. Without that you didn't know where you stood. There they were, always on about upbringing and training. . . . Fairness and justice were things that had to be inculcated by training. True, they were getting stricter, and things were improving. . . . But still; it was easy to calculate the worth of work like, say, sharpening a thousand drills. But how are you to assess the business of finding a fraction of a millimetre in a complex instrument? There was a way of assessing it. That was what the reforms they were putting through were all about, and they had affected the majority at once. But they somehow managed to bypass unique craftsmen like Georgy Ivanovich and the few men in his class at the Sestroretsk Mill, as though they didn't exist. That was the point of the whole business. Did Georgy Ivanovich fulfil his "norm" by finding the axis? Or perhaps he fulfilled it five times over? Nobody seemed to be able to work it out, or perhaps nobody could be bothered to. All they could talk about were the plan, the programme they had to stick to. . . . And who had put right the instrument they were going to fulfil their precious plan on?

Take the stripper. He does a necessary job, a far cry from looking for fractions of millimetre. He easily fulfils his norm two and a half

times over, and they already call him a "hero", even though he's only been working there a year.

"Georgy Ivanovich, we think very highly of you."

Maybe they do. That's as may be. But that lad Vassya left the job. Of course, if he had been brighter, he wouldn't have been attracted by the prospect of more pay as a bus driver, but would have stayed on, apprenticed to Georgy Ivanovich.

He had said as much to Vassya. And what did he get for an answer?

"Of course you're right, Georgy Ivanovich. But, as they say, it's the deepest spot in the river that the fish always make for...."

"Do as you like, of course...."

"Don't take offence, please! Are you satisfied with the position you're in? You've been flogging yourself to death for forty years! (Look at the word he chose, the rascal.) "You're famous throughout Sestroretsk, but what's the good of that to you? What's come of it?"

"That's none of your business."

"Well, I wouldn't say that...."

Not much respect for his elders, but the boy's right! It's not only Georgy Ivanovich's own personal business, everyone's in the know, and everyone thinks to himself: "An ace worker, spent his whole life at his machine tools, and what's he got for it? Just the basic rate, that any workman gets. No respect for a master-craftsman nowadays, no respect for his profession." He couldn't claim that he really needed those extra twenty or thirty rubles a month. They would of course come in useful, but it wasn't because of them that he was leaving. His wife worked too, they could get along. But his ears stung to hear,

"You've been flogging yourself to death for forty years, and all you get for it is the basic rate."

And so there he was: the basic rate, an unpleasant conversation with his foreman and the Vassya business—and Georgy Ivanovich, could you believe it, followed his apprentice's example.

"A middle-aged man, but as green as a youngster. Well, I'm paying for it now."

He got off at the Finland Station, near which stands the LMC, the Leningrad Machine-Tool Company, the first firm of its kind in the country. And Kulagin was looking for highly-qualified workers. He had his little group of good ones, like Paukov and Alimpiev, and he was holding on to them. This would seem to be the place to start. What reason should he give for having quit his old job? They would be sure to ask.

A few minutes later he was sitting in the Personnel Department; while the manager looked carefully through his papers and then asked:

"So, Georgy Ivanovich, you've decided to come and work for *us* now. You're not put off by the distance?"

"People travel much further than I would have to...."

"Yes, of course they do," smiled the manager. "But tell me, have you got a glut of highly-qualified fitters in Sestroretsk or something? You don't find one with your qualifications on every street corner...."

A pause. The manager sighed.

"Well, let's be honest with one another. Are you a heavy drinker?"

Georgy Ivanovich burst out laughing.

"Do I look like one?"

"No, you don't, but I don't get it; forty years in one factory and suddenly you leave at what the documents call 'his own request'. Well? Why?"

"I'm not payed enough...."

"And how much is 'Not enough'?"

Georgy Ivanovich named the sum.

The manager couldn't believe his ears: "Strange way they have of running things out there in Sestroretsk. There's something very odd here."

The strangest and funniest thing was that the management of the Sestroretsk Mill, too, wouldn't have believed it if they heard that Georgy Ivanovich, their best machine-tool man, earned the same as an average workman. They simply wouldn't believe it. When they got over the shock they would probably see to it that the situation was righted, but for that to happen, Georgy Ivanovich would have to go to the Director or the Chief Engineer, show them his pay-packet and tell them all about it, and that he wasn't prepared to do. He had never in the whole of his life raised the question of his pay, and now that he was getting on he was not going to go asking for a rise.

Then he went to another factory, a smaller one. The head of the Personnel Department studied his papers for ages, then handed them back and said with a sigh:

"Mmm, yes... it would be quite something to have a worker of your calibre here.... But it somehow wouldn't fit in. You wouldn't be prepared to work for less than double pay, for a start...."

Georgy Ivanovich was on the point of objecting: "Why double pay?" But he decided that there was

something not quite right in laying down your own conditions, so he gathered up his papers in silence and went off to a third factory.

"I'm a fitter."

"Yes, we need fitters. What grade are you?"

"Grade six."

The manager looked at him in astonishment. "Really? And you've got your papers on you to prove it?" He grabbed the telephone and dialled a number: "Yury Sergeyevich? I've got someone here with me.... A grade six fitter.... Yes, I've already checked...."

He hung up and started to write down where Georgy Ivanovich was to go.

"Go to shop number 3, and ask for the boss. He's expecting you. Only, a piece of advice: don't demand too much at first. He'll offer you double pay of his own accord...."

Georgy Ivanovich went out and stood still for a moment. To his right was the entrance to this new factory, and to his left, the way out to the street. A tram happened to have just come up to the stop, tram number 18 that doesn't run very frequently....

Twenty minutes later he was already back in the train. New housing estates, fields, strips of woodland and stations flashed past the window, and soon he was back at Sestroretsk where he had grown up. He got out and wandered towards the mill. Nearly everyone he passed greeted him with a "Hello, Georgy Ivanovich!"

There was the mill, with its little yellow workshops that had been there since the time of Tsaritsa Elizabeth. A huge new block had been

put up next door to them, the sort of building even the Kirov Mill might envy. When you went in you could hardly see the other side, the span of the roof was so wide. It was soon to come into use.

There was something pleasing about the surrounding countryside, too. There were the smoking chimneys, and right next to them grew pine trees. You came out of the factory, and there was the gulf, waves and stones and the shore beyond, the shore he knew so well. If you stood looking out to sea, over on the left, on the distant Leningrad shore

shone the dome of St. Isaac's visible even from here, a beautiful sight. And to the right you could see the island fortress of Kronstadt if the weather was right. In a storm it was hidden by the waves.

“Well, have you calmed down?” he asked himself. “You've been into Leningrad, found a job.... But I can see that I'll never leave this place. My axis is here.... And my stimulus? Maybe my turn will come even in that. And if it doesn't, I'll have to jolt someone's memory, and about others as well as myself. After all, isn't it *my* factory?”

MASTER-CRAFTSMEN

Anatoly Pristavkin was born in the town of Liubertsy, near Moscow, in 1931.

In 1959 he received the diploma of the Gorky Literary Institute, and in 1961 was accepted into the Union of Soviet Writers.

His many books have been published both in the Soviet Union and abroad.

His main works are Siberian-Stories, the novel The Dove, and a volume of poetry. "Master-Craftsmen" was published in Literaturnaya Gazeta

and won a prize as one of the best articles about the working class.

Anatoly Pristavkin now lives and works in Moscow.

ANATOLY PRISTAVKIN

The incident with the pipe happened three days after Dima left the fittings department. They were hoisting it up when suddenly it fell, stupid black thing, bringing down the roof of the superintendent's office as it came. Thank goodness, it didn't hit any of the workmen. They tried to hoist it up again, but again they had no luck.

Dima had moved to another department, having filled in all the necessary forms and handed over the work in hand to those who stayed

behind. But suddenly there was a hold-up with the new job, and he hung about aimlessly, getting up in the morning purely from force of habit and then going back to bed again, and I could hear his wife Tamara telling him off:

“That's right, take it easy! What have you got to worry about, you don't work there any more!... It's only a pipe! As though pipes were hard to come by. You'll have more pipes in your life....”

"I know," said Dima. "Nobody asked me, and it's none of my business. I've always been one to stick my neck out...."

"That's it exactly! And you get no thanks for it."

"But I left of my own accord," answered Dima.

As it turned, the boss, Andrei Alexeyevich, had called him over and said:

"Dmitry Sergeyevich, we need to put a chimney-pipe on the boiler-house."

"What boiler-house?"

"The supplies office boiler-house. The food is freezing and perishing over there. The contractors refuse to do it: they say they've no one qualified."

"We'll give it a try," said Dima.

"Can you do it in two days?"

"No," Dima had answered. "I need ten days, including preparations. Well, perhaps I could do it in a week."

"Where will I find all that time for you?" Andrei Alexeyevich was genuinely surprised. "They ring up every hour. I told them tomorrow... well, at most the day after... otherwise they'll have my head."

"I need at least a week for preparations," repeated Dima.

"Three days." It already sounded like an order. "And I'll hold you responsible."

"All right," agreed Dima. "I have a proposition to make."

"What proposition?"

"Andrei Alexeyevich, take a week off without pay and come and join my group as a foreman, and I'll make you responsible for hoisting up the pipe in two days."

"Words, Dmitry Sergeyevich, just words. You don't want to be like everyone else, that's all."

"I can't, Andrei Alexeyevich. Hoisting pipes isn't something I do every day, and I don't take it lightly. You have to plan it all out beforehand."

"Everything turns out some sort of a trick where you're in on it, Dmitry Sergeyevich!" cried the boss in anger. "You can start philosophising over a pin-head, but we have deadlines to meet. If you can't do it, refuse, and I'll give the job to someone else."

Dima had sat down at once and written out a memorandum: "Since you do not trust me to carry out my work I request a transfer to somewhere else where I can be trusted as a master-fitter."

At the bottom of the sheet Dima added: "Andrei Alexeyevich! I beg you, if you have any respect for my experience, not to rush this work in case of an accident. It's no pleasure for me to request a transfer like this, but it's the only way I can see to prevent you from taking a false step. If I am wrong, prove it to me and I will recall my memorandum at once. Minin."

And suddenly his busy life came to a halt, and his days became as calm as if there had never been any building or rush to fulfil deadlines in spite of the autumn rains, with fussing and nerves.

He walked about his room, at a loss for something to do, repeating over and over the phrase I had so often heard:

"The paradox of KamAZ*. . . This is the paradox of KamAZ."

* KamAZ—Kama Automobile Works.

That morning they rang him up again. Dima answered and then told me: "They've brought down the roof of the superintendent's office. Thank Heaven, no one hurt."

"What happened?" I asked.

"What do you expect, with craftsmen like that?" shrugged Dima. "They tried to lift it with three tractors, all different makes and different gear-speeds, so what else could it do but fall?"

"Are they asking your help?"

"What difference does it make?" answered Dima shortly. "In any case they're angling for advice. . . . It was the workmen who called, as if to say 'We'll never get it done without you, Dmitry Sergeyevich. . . . But Andrei Alexeyevich hasn't rung.'"

"You'll be a fool if you go," said Tamara.

Dima frowned, putting on his gumboots. Then he got up and said:

"Damn the lot of them! I'm off to the woods."

"I've been here in Naberezhnye Chelny eight and a half years," said Dima. "Exactly; it was March 25th, 1965 that I started."

We were going down the main street, and Dima changed the subject: "I was rooting out bushes with a bulldozer here but a few years ago. There were hares about, and once I even met a fox. And over there, on Mussa Djahil Avenue, we used to plant potatoes. . . ."

People said "good-day" to Dima, and he answered without stopping. Some halted and started talking but though no one mentioned his having given up the job, I was sure that their heartiness was a sign of some sort of sympathy, not over-welcome to Dima.

We got onto the bus, but Dima couldn't stop himself from getting out at his old site to "clear up", as he put it, "a few matters". We passed through a large muddy courtyard and Dima went straight to where the great clumsy iron pipe lay like a tree brought down by the wind. He looked all round the pipe, muttering something and shaking his head, then beckoned me to follow and went into the narrow wooden prefab of the superintendent's office.

The workmen were sitting at the table, and Dima joined them, taking a piece of watermelon and some bread and starting to chew, talking about every conceivable subject except the pipe.

"Well, Dmitry Sergeyevich?" asked one of the workmen at last.

"Well—what?" asked Dima. "Well, where am I bound for, or well, how's the watermelon? If you mean the watermelon, it's very sweet. How much was it?"

"Twenty kopeks a kilogram. We bought it in Sidorovka."

"Melts in the mouth. . . ." Dima went on praising it.

"And how about the pipe?" they asked gingerly. "Did you see how the bolts broke loose?"

Dima finished his piece in silence, cut himself another and then as though in passing:

"I'm leaving you, brothers. In fact, I've left already."

He was silent, and they all fell silent, nobody hurrying to express their sympathy. It was obviously no news to them.

"Where will you go?"

"Where? I'm a builder, aren't I? I'll find somewhere. I might even call you to join me."

Dima got up, but then slowed

down and started to say his good-byes.

"Well, we're all friends, I hope. I think we'll meet again. Good-bye." He stopped at the door. "Your bolts couldn't help breaking loose. Think for yourselves: seven tons to six metres, triple it for the moment of strain... that makes a hundred and thirty tons per metre. You could have pulled out the foundation...."

We came out to the cool autumn sky and walked to the bus stop. Dima didn't give the pipe so much as a glance.

•

We got off the bus near a village and went off on foot.

After wandering about in the wood for a long time, we came towards midday to a tiny farmhouse. Dima said we could have a drink and eat our lunch here.

And there, straight ahead on the rise, a spring bubbled out over the stones and tinkled down into a wooden gutter that led it away towards the road. It roared along through its gutter, spilling over the sides, and splashed into a deep-looking stone well. The water in the well was dark and quiet.

We drank our fill slowly and sat down on the grass, getting out the sandwiches and onion that we had wrapped in a piece of newspaper. We watched the water flow as we munched. You can watch moving water for hours, just as you can fire. But what interested me was the guttering, so cleverly gouged out of the wood.

"Who made it?" I asked Dima. He answered that he didn't know

But he often came here, and had a rest by this stream each time. He liked the taste of the water.

"You can see it's a real craftsman made the gutters," added Dima. "Look how carefully he worked. He squared each section of the wood and planed off the corners. To make it stronger, and look good."

"He was probably making it for himself," said I.

Dima didn't agree:

"You think he lived here? Nothing of the sort. I remember when they built these houses. There was nothing but the woods here before. The woods and this road. No, he did it so well not for himself, but for those who would pass along the road."

Then he added:

"A craftsman is a craftsman whoever and whatever he's working with. He respects his own work over and above all."

Then Dima got up and walked along the guttering right to the top, leaning down to touch the damp wood with his hand, which shone with drops of water. Then he sat down again to finish his lunch.

He turned to me with a smile:

"Why aren't you eating onion? It's very good for you. Afraid of the smell? I love it, must be the peasant in me. I'm taking after my father, I suppose... he was a shepherd once."

I knew that Dima's father really had been a farm-hand in his youth, but that after the revolution he had become a leading diplomat, an ambassador, until he died before the war. Dima and his elder brother, with whom we were friends, grew up with their mother and did not, as they say, live off the fat of the

land. Dima used to train his will, running about barefoot in the snow, swimming through a hole in the ice and leaving his overcoat at home in winter. He used to take a six-pound weight to lectures in his brief case.

Then I got to know Dima at another period, when he had finished his studies and was working as a master-fitter on the Votkinsk Power Station. It was the beginning of his working life, and all ran far from smoothly. He used to get very worked up, quarrelled with the chief engineer and once lay down in the path of a tractor they were trying to take away from him for another part of the site.

There was even one occasion, albeit exceptional, when a group of self-seeking workmen whom he didn't allow to shirk lay in wait for him by a concrete block and tried to topple it down onto him. He'd been through everything, and when I came to the site to write an article for the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (I called it "Hello, Dima!") there was an accident on the sluice and some of Dima's friends lost their lives. Among them was his especial friend, Ignat Ivanovich, a real master-craftsman. Dima took his place at work. That was ten years ago.

"All those romantic illusions have left me now," said Dima. "My only working principle is to use my head, now. I work because I like my work. You were asking about the guttering.... I'll give you an example. There are two master-craftsmen working in my group. We call one of them uncle Vassya, and the other one by his surname: Chertov. They're both experienced workers, and know what they're about. But it's their style that's completely dif-

ferent. Chertov is a sharp lad, no flies on him. He keeps things on the boil, and everyone's always pleased with him."

"Except you?" I suggested, taking my cue from something in the way he said it.

"Why, no, I'm pleased with him too. I have to be pleased. He's a good and experienced worker. But Chertov not only keeps things on the boil, he lets it show. It's an understandable and a forgivable fault when a man's good at his job. Then take uncle Vassya. He uses his head, thinking everything out carefully before starting on a job. And then he works slowly and carefully, in silence. There's no show about him. Not long ago I had them both fixing girders. Chertov had them done in a trice, not as firm as they might be, but they're still standing and he's got his money. Uncle Vassya, on the other hand, took ages. He put them in as though they had to last for centuries. He started by checking the drawings himself with a slide-rule, making some alterations. And time was ticking on, and the boss getting jumpy about deadlines. Slowcoach! Dawdler! What can you do with him? No money till the job's done.... And I'm midway between the men and the boss, I have to be the buffer and the diplomat between them, and see and hear everything that goes on. And I can see that uncle Vassya's work is on a different level from Chertov's. He won't get anything done in three days, and it's not his fault that he's used to working with such care. How can I penalise him for having such good habits?"

"And yet there's nothing in the rule book about paying for the care

put into something. There's the reason why they can't get that pipe up...."

He just couldn't forget that pipe.

"It's not that they don't want to, it's simply that they can't!" he went on. "There are people who say, 'Give me the money, and I'll do anything.' But that's not the case, and I can prove it. I have a shirker on the job, and I appeal to his conscience: 'Aren't you ashamed? How long will this go on?' And he answers: 'Why should I put in more effort? However hard I try, I won't get more than a hundred and twenty rubles. If I got two hundred then it would be another matter altogether. Then I'd have some material motivation!' and he goes ranting on like that. Well, I'm a soft character, and I always want my men to work their best and know it's appreciated. So the next month I get his pay up to two hundred. And do you think it has any effect? None at all! And not because he doesn't want to work well; he's simply forgotten how to."

Dima got up, brushed off the crumbs and started to fold up the newspaper.

"I can't stop thinking about that damned pipe. After all it's no skin off my nose, nor off Andrei Alexeyevich's. It's the vegetable store and the warehouse that bother me: if there's no heating, all those goods will perish and the whole town relies on them.... Oh, never mind! Come on, I'll show you a beautiful spot. You remember Levitan's picture *Eternal Peace*?"

"Of course. Only he painted it on the Pless."

"All right, so he painted it on the Pless, but it's no less beautiful here,

as you'll see for yourself in a minute."

We came out onto the bank of the Kama and saw a little promontory, a church and a bright expanse of water. Some barges passed us, their black smoke reeling out over the water. The wind was blowing the waves towards us from the opposite bank, and there was an even line of flotsam all along the sand.

"I love the Kama," said Dima. "I came here from its source, from Perm where I worked on the Votkinsk Power Station, and now I'm working down here. Thirteen years.... And I love it more and more...."

"I often remember the Votkinsk," said Dima, frowning and looking into the distance. "There was a man I knew there, working as team leader on the next site, Pavel Timofeyevich Nedaihleb. He was the same kind of worker as our uncle Vassya, and earned as little. The interesting thing is that he was quite indifferent to money, and so he couldn't keep his workers. He was constantly being given the little jobs, and that always leads to friction. They'd give him a depot to build, for instance, or a little ditch to dig. And the workers could see that the next team were overfulfilling the norm by fifty per cent and getting paid for it while they were barely doing the basic, and so of course they all started thinking of a transfer....

"And Pavel Timofeyevich didn't put pressure on anyone to stay with him. And so his team was tiny, just three or four men, and they did their work in no hurry. Others didn't think much of him: 'What kind of a worker is that? Give him a ruble

and he'll do you a ruble's worth,' but didn't expect anything really worthwhile out of him.

"After Votkinsk I went over to Perm, to work on repairing the sluice. The sluice at Perm is unique. It's got several gates of a very unusual construction, and they're not all they might be. They say it was put up in a hurry, and the job didn't get done properly, so that they were giving out one after another and needed to be mended in a hurry. The chief engineer had even been heard to blow his top about the fact that more had been spent on repairs than the cost of the whole sluice. . . .

"We were working on one of the gates where the central girder had come away. Taking the gates down was a long job, but we couldn't manage it if we kept them in place. A whole group of engineers was called down from Leningrad, who spent a month looking at the gates, doing calculations and then finally they, too, said: 'They'll have to come down.' Our boss said, 'Things are looking bad, Dmitry Sergeevich. I've summoned a man I know from another job; if he can't do it, then nobody can and we really will have to take them down. . . .'

"And would you believe it, it was our Nedaihleb who turned up, and went straight off to look at the sluice, his two suitcases in hand. I thought it was clothes he had in there, and offered to help him to the hostel with them so that he could settle in first and then get down to the job tomorrow. But he'd have none of it: 'That can wait. Business first: where are these gates of yours?'

"He opened his suitcases and started taking out . . . tools! In one he had spirit levels, measuring rods

and various other things I'd never even seen before. And the other was full of even more tools, all of them the best to be had. . . . He set himself up beside the sluice, asking only for one fitter and one welder to help him, and got right on with the job.

"I had a biggish site, so I didn't go down to where he was working that often. And there wasn't that much to see when I did go down, nothing seemed to be showing any kind of progress from day to day. There weren't even any signs that any work was being done. For a week or two I was just surprised; then it started to get on my nerves. At last I couldn't stand it any longer, so I dropped everything thinking, 'Damn it all! I'll sit there and watch him for a day, and see what he's up to.'

Dima shrugged and peered absently ahead. We were sitting on the shore, on an earthy bank. Suddenly he smiled:

"I hung about the whole day and still didn't see anything. He sat writing some sort of figures with a piece of chalk, then rubbing them out with his sleeve. Oh, and he'd hung a row of plumb lines on the girder that had come away, that dangled there like pears on a tree. He'd look at it, hand a plumb line, note it down and then rehang it. It went on like that all day. He didn't even glance at me. And so I went off absolutely sure that it was all useless.

"But that wasn't the way it turned out. At the end of the fourth week he called the chief engineer, me and the rest, and said: 'There you are, it's done.'

"'Is that all?' I asked.

“‘What do you mean, ‘All’? That’s for you to judge, whether it’s ‘All’ or not. I did what I could.’

“I blush to recall what I then thought to myself: ‘Huh, what you could. And was there much you could do, Mr. Nedaihleb?’

“Everyone gathered round and the order was given for the gates to be opened. We couldn’t believe our eyes; they slid open like a dream, then shut, then open again. We were like children at the circus; we even forgot what we’d come for! We stood hypnotised, and couldn’t tear ourselves away. They were working like a charm.

“I have to admit that later, when they had all gone, I went down and felt over the sluice with my hands. I couldn’t get it at all. I wrote him out his money-order for three hundred rubles for a month’s work, and while I was writing it I couldn’t help thinking: ‘Good God! Only three hundred for a job like that! We fed and kept ten engineers for a month, and would have gone on for another.... And all he gets is three hundred rubles? If he were paid in gold for work like that it wouldn’t be enough.’

“And you know he didn’t even bother to count the money when he got it.

“After that I went over to have a proper talk with him. It turned out that he was from the town of Sumy, like my wife. He was even some kind of distant relation. When we found that out, he seemed to warm up, got more open. It turned out he had no family, he just moved from site to site. He talked about his work with real feeling, you know, because it was his whole life. He didn’t simply love it, he worshipped

it, talking about it as though it were something sacred.

“I eventually asked: ‘Pavel Timofeyevich, I can’t for the life of me make out how you did that gilder....’

“‘There’s nothing in particular to make out,’ he replied. ‘All you need is to respect your own work, Dima. In point of fact,’ he said, ‘I worked on this site before and put up one set of gates with my own two hands. It’s true, they were always after me for not meeting my deadlines, but you know how they try to rush you with these things.... Other team leaders put three sets up in the time, while I was still struggling on with my one and that hardly finished in time. I didn’t get any bonuses, Dima. But I know one thing: my gates won’t crack up like the ones I was repairing this time.’

“‘Can you really be sure?’

“‘I’m sure all right,’ he said, ‘and I can back my words up. You just look at the log-book of repairs, all the gates that fail are recorded there. I’d be interested to know myself,’ he said, ‘even though I’m quite sure.’

“I went down to the office the very next day, got out the log-book and found the number of the gates he’d put up: not a thing wrong with them in all the years they’d been standing. Some of the gates, you could see, had had to be repaired several times. Some had even had to be replaced. But his were still working, and would obviously go on doing so for a long time.”

Dima got up:

“I’ve already worked out how to raise that damned pipe. I’ve got the kind of tackle they need worked out, and the mast timber, and the force needed on the winches.”

"Without tractors?" I asked.

"You could use tractors, but psychology comes into it here. Those who have already tried using tractors don't trust them any more. So we'll use a rigging timber, with three tension wires set at proper angles and a quadruple polypast.... All the greatest buildings were got up with masts or gantries."

Dima started to tell me how they put up the Alexander Column in St. Petersburg, telling me about all the levers and winches they used, while I looked at him in bewilderment until finally I asked:

"So you're going to, after all?"

"I don't know," he said, sighing. "It's a matter of more than just two or three days...."

As we came back out onto the road we drank our fill once more of icy water from the spring and listened to its gurgling. As he put his hands in it, Dima wetted his sleeves and his watch. That reminded him:

"By the way, when I had only just met Nedaihleb I noticed his watches. Not just one, but two on each wrist, like a pickpocket. I was surprised, but didn't say anything. But when we'd got to know each other better, I asked him: 'Why so many watches at once, Pavel Timofeyevich?' Instead of answering he took one off and handed it to me. Perfectly ordinary watch. Then I turned it over and there on the back was engraved: 'To Nedaihleb, for excellent work'. And the name of a chief engineer I

knew. And the same with the second, third and fourth watches. Different sites, different donors. You must know, of course, that although the Chief Engineer is an important person, even so he hasn't the authority to hand out medals. He can hand out bonuses, but what is there in a bonus for Nedaihleb? Or he can give a personal present to show his appreciation, like those watches.... So I understood that Pavel Timofeyevich was wearing his awards and decorations on the hands that had earned them.... Golden watches for golden hands."

"Where is he now?" I asked. We were standing on the road, waiting for someone to give us a lift. It was getting towards sunset, and quiet all around.

"I don't know," answered Dima. "He took his suitcases and left, and I never knew where for. We usually get to hear about each other, who's doing what and where.... But I've heard nothing about Pavel Timofeyevich Nedaihleb. Maybe he'll turn up again. Many paths have crossed here at the KamAZ, there are a lot of interesting people working here...."

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I had a letter from Dima not long ago, and he sent me his memorandum which they had returned. The chief engineer had written in at the bottom in green ink: "Your arguments were correct."

WHAT IS THE EARTH LIKE?

A HYPOTHESIS FULL OF INEXPLICABLE THINGS, STRANGE COINCIDENCES AND MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES, WHICH IS EVERY BIT AS GOOD AS A FAIRY TALE

Nikolai Bodnaruk was born in 1942, in the village of Bukatinka near Vinnytsia in the Ukraine. He studied at the college of applied arts in the town of Chernovtsi, and was then called up. After doing his military service he studied in the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow University. Since 1969 he has worked for the Soviet youth newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda. He is Editor of the section for schools,

higher education, science and technology.

His article What Is the Earth Like? was published in Komsomolskaya Pravda and received hundreds of readers' letters.

NIKOLAI BODNARUK

You can expect any reaction except delight from a scientist if one fine day his study door opens to admit someone who declares he is "a simple man, far from the world of science", but that he has "worked out a hypothesis which will change everything". The "someone" is lucky if he is not thrown out of the study in under an hour. But if he manages to take the look of suspicion off the

scientist's face and, moreover, is taken off to tell his story in another study and is then asked to repeat it before a crowded auditorium, you can be sure that you are dealing with something really amazing.

It is about just such an event that I would like to tell you (with only one variation: here the authors of the "mad idea" knocked on the

door very timidly and made no grandiose announcements at all).

When people want to poke fun at a truism, they say "Two and two makes four" or "The earth is round." With this latter assurance, you may find geologists and geophysicists disagreeing with you; that is, they have to admit that in principle you are right, but that to be quite honest they aren't completely satisfied with the idea of a completely round world. What, you might ask, would satisfy them? An angular world. What? Angles? Why angles? Science, they would answer, demands angles, to prove or disprove the widely-held theory of the formation of the Earth which states that our Earth was formed from the fusion of asteroids. If that is the case, then it started as something formless, broken and angular. It was only billions of years later, moulded by movement, time and the many forces acting upon it, that the Earth became a sphere, and it could have been a huge crystal in the beginning.

Scientists consider that the "facets" of the crystal could well be buried within our planet, in places even appearing on the surface like bones through tight skin. It would be marvellous if someone were to discover something of the sort.

Nikolai Fyodorovich Goncharov knew nothing of the scientific debate on the subject, for he had never been interested in geology or geophysics. He worked in a fine arts extra-mural department and was seriously interested only in ancient civilisations. He started to mark the various cradles of ancient civilisation on a map and the more he marked in, the

more he had the feeling that there was some geometrical pattern in the way they were situated. It was merely a feeling, something that made him think, and it was only much later, when fate brought him together with Valery Makarov, an electronics engineer, and Vyacheslav Morozov, a building engineer by training, that all these guesses became a well-defined hypothesis.

They spent five years studying subjects worlds apart, from archeology and geochemistry to meteorology and ornithology, and only recently did they decide to submit their "mad idea" to the experts. We must start by warning the reader that this hypothesis proves nothing: all it does is make a suggestion.

Look at the photograph of a globe with a network of light and dark lines. They denote two different ways the Earth might be made up. The white lines give us a globe made out of 12 pentangular surfaces. This duodecahedron was the first, oversimplified, model of the Earth. The strangest thing of all is that one of them while reading Plato not long ago came across the phrase: "If you were to look at the Earth from above, you would see a ball made out of twelve pieces of leather sewn together." It was not only Plato but all the followers of Pythagoras who saw our planet this way. But we can leave our astonishment for later and turn to the other, darker lines, which divide the "ball" into twenty triangles, into an icosahedron. If you draw both of these schemes onto the globe, as the authors of the theory did, you will get an idea of the "framework" on which the Earth is built.

Mathematicians will at once raise the sceptical objection that there are a thousand and one other ways in which a sphere can be made up, but the interesting part comes when we look carefully to see where exactly it is that the "seams" come and which regions of the Earth stand on the points where all these lines cross.

If the crust of the planet is made of these huge flat blocs, then the "seams" between them must be noticeable through the surface, and here the first interesting fact came to light: the lines on the globe coincided with many underwater ridges in the oceans, geological faults in the crust of the earth and areas in which the surface is unstable.

Look at the points where the triangles meet. Something very strange happens here. One of them is in the region not far from Florida which contains the notorious "devilish Bermuda triangle", notorious because ships and planes have been known to disappear there mysteriously without even having time to give the distress signal. They do not sink or lose altitude, they simply disappear, leaving no trace. The American scientist T. Sanderson collected all the available information on these strange disappearances and, according to him, these catastrophes all took place on much the same spot, with the radio usually giving out at the moment of tragedy. And this is not the only sinister part of the world: Sanderson collected all the data he could find and discovered to his astonishment that there are exactly ten such regions on the earth and that they are spread symmetrically over its surface, five above the equator and five below it.

If the American scientist had named two more points, the North and South Poles, then his map would have coincided completely with our model.

Many scientists are inclined to think that the volcanic and seismic activity of the Earth takes place along the "seams" or to put it in terms of our hypothesis, along the ribs of the geometrical figures. When its authors looked at charts of the Earth's magnetism they found that the centres of all the Earth's magnetic anomalies coincide with the places where the "seams" meet. They explain it with reference to the chemistry of the crystal, in which interesting processes take place along the ribs and in the corners where they meet. If their guess is correct, then the system of lines they have set up may be of truly global significance, as though, for instance, it were a reinforcement, like the steel wires under the surface of reinforced concrete, determining many of the phenomena to be observed on that odd piece of crystal which we have come to call "the Earth".

But the authors decided to go even further. They took meteorological and geological maps too, drawing in the "net" on them as well to see what results they would get in these fields.

What they found was that the areas of both maximum and minimum atmospheric pressure fell on the apexes where the "seams" joined, as did the places where hurricanes usually start up, and that there are many winds blowing along the length of the ribs.

They also compared their model with charts of solar activity, and

found that the regions most radiated lay at one group of apexes of the crystal while another group coincided with the giant whirlpools formed by ocean currents.

Next, they studied ornithologists' maps, to find that the places most favoured by birds for winter migration were once again at the apexes of the crystal.

The world's deposits of natural resources also formed part of the scheme. You can see on the map that the oil-bearing regions of North Africa and the Persian Gulf, the ring in the Pacific that is rich in metals and the strip from California to Texas that also has many oil deposits are likewise on the "seams". And look at the apexes: in the north of the Soviet Union the lines meet in the huge Tiumen oil field, on the underside of the globe in the rich mines of southern Africa, in South America they meet in the Sierro de Pasco, where rich deposits were discovered, and in North America—in Alaska and Canada, testifying here too to the presence of oil and other deposits. Let us imagine for a moment that the system has been worked out exactly.

As for those disappearances, they do not happen automatically when a ship crosses an apex, but are as difficult to fit into a pattern or system as are so many other phenomena. The authors of our theory suggest that the apexes are like traffic lights; sometimes one set is working while another lies dormant, and sometimes it is the other way round. As for the scientists, they regard it as proven fact that from time to time in the history of the Earth it has been through periods of tectono-magnetic activity.

When speaking of the Ice Age, the experts always use the term "asylums of life", and there were three zones in this country where life took refuge from the ice. Strange as it may seem, these zones also turned out to be at the apexes of the crystal.

Supposing, then, said our researchers, that the forces radiated by the earth's skeleton do have an effect on plants and animals; could man really be an exception? After all he is nothing more than simply another form of life. And so they went back to the first map, and found that some of the most ancient cradles of civilisation—Egypt, the early Indian civilisation in Mohenjo-Daro, Northern Mongolia, the ancient culture of Ireland, the Easter Island, ancient Peru, Kiev and many others—are not simply scattered over the surface of the earth at random, but also situated on the apexes. There have moreover been some sensational archeological finds over the past few years, like the remains unearthed in Thailand and Vietnam of a culture dating from 7,000 B. C. which started tilling the soil two thousand years earlier than the inhabitants of the Middle East which had always been considered the cradle of civilisation up till now. And these new finds also fitted into the system!

Thirty strange objects, made of gold, were found in Vietnam, and another, a bronze one, in France. Scientists are baffled as to what they were made for. Some say that they are calendars, others that they are astrological symbols. As you can imagine, our investigators have their own views on the subject, for the objects are

like simplified models of our system, both in the number of facets and of apexes.

And so I have passed on what the authors told me about their theory, and it only remains to add that it has already been made known to many scientists: Goncharov, Makarov and Morozov have spoken about it to audiences from various Moscow scientific societies. In reports on their work, both official and unofficial, the authors are highly praised for their erudition and although, of

course, not all their conclusions find favour, the important thing is that they are argued about seriously, with no question of condescension on the part of the scientists.

It could be that after thorough and complete analysis the scientists will find nothing and be forced to shrug and say, "Sorry, but we are unable to prove your hypothesis...."

But it could be the other way round....

THE ROSTOV AFFAIR

*Olga Chaikovskaya,
great-niece
of the composer,
was born in the village
of Zolotovo near Moscow.
In 1941 she received
the diploma
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She started to write
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She is the author
of many publications,
including Marsh Lights,
Against the Sky on Earth,
and so on.
Olga Chaikovskaya
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OLGA CHAIKOVSKAYA

When I arrived in Rostov I understood that what had happened here was extraordinary, but I never dreamed to what extent. It was not simply that we had not heard the sound of gunfire for many years, while here it resounded in the streets with a multitude of pistols and a machine-gun, followed by a six-kilometre chase. The whole business was unusual, from that machine-gun to the human qualities displayed, the excess of cruelty and the heights of nobility that were exhibited side by

side. And the greater the contrast between people the greater as a rule the scale of the events to which they give rise, as the reader will be able to see for himself.

The gang started up some years ago and "worked" with unusual boldness. Three men in masks or dark glasses would grab cars, rob shops, attack money collectors and kill when resistance was offered; one of their victims was I. Zyuba, a collector, who shot courageously at the

bandits and wounded one of them. Of course, the whole of the Rostov militia was on the alert, with most of the burden falling on the shoulders of the local Criminal Investigation Department. They had some success in their search for information. A witness of one of the raids, for instance, reported that he thought he recognised one of the criminals: he was a friend of a certain Valya, a prisoner in such-and-such a prison camp put away for such-and-such an offence. This Valya was soon found, and he admitted that he had a friend called Vassya living in Novocherkassk. They found Vassya in Novocherkassk, sleeping in a boiler-house, and checked him out; he was obviously the wrong person, but all the same they showed him to the witness, who said, "No, that's not him, but he looks like that." It was a step ahead, and they based the identikit picture on Vassya's photograph. And of course, they checked out everyone who turned up at the first-aid point or who did not turn out for work. The picture built up of the criminals was studied carefully. A whole series of theories was suggested and worked through. And all to no avail.

One might think that it was lack of the cunning on the part of the men of the investigation department. But no; that was the point, that these were professionals, used to success, even when working on a hard case that it seemed almost impossible to solve. The reader, of course, is impatient to hear all the details of this unique business, but I beg him to be patient and if I start by telling a completely different story, something which took place in

Bataisk, near Rostov, it will show you how they can work in these parts.

The cashier brought the pay-packets to a certain factory, went into the pay-office, put the sack of money on the table, locked the office and went calmly off to have a bite to eat. The pay-office was a brick bunker, its doors faced with metal, a grille on the window, the safe fixed to the floor, and everything wired with burglar alarms: door, window and safe. A queue of people from each shop had already formed in the corridor to get their pay packets. When the cashier came back, there was no money in the office at all! Impossible! They had all been watching, and no one had entered the bunker. A rumour even went the rounds that she hadn't brought any money in the first place.

A group from the Rostov Criminal Investigation Department came to Bataisk, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Dmitrievich Titarenko. It was clear what had happened: someone had got down into the ventilation shaft from the attic, sawn out a piece of the plastering, climbed down into the office through the hole and made his way out again by the same route. In the attic they found a pair of gloves, a jack and two crumpled newspapers, one of them *Evening Rostov*. But that was all that was clear. The dog lost track of the scent, and with hundreds of thousands of people around, working in hundreds of different places, you wouldn't know where to begin looking. So they started with the newspaper, which turned out to have been torn from a reading-room file. They looked in all the reading-

rooms in Bataisk, but that issue wasn't missing in any of them. And so they started looking in Rostov; you can imagine what a task it was, a newspaper with a circulation of tens of thousands, and the search through every reading-room of every factory and organisation which took it. They had to match up exactly the holes in the newspaper with the reading-room clipper that made them in order to put it in the file. Finally they narrowed it down to seven places, and out of the seven, to a factory making electrical goods. One of the C.I.D. men, a lieutenant-colonel, went to work as a workman at the factory and found out that it was from here that the jack had been stolen. He watched carefully, listened, took part in conversations and finally one of the drivers told him that he had taken a young workman called Pavlik Kalinin to the doctor to have a cut foot treated. They found the doctor who said yes, he had had a visit from a young workman, and that strangely enough in his foot they had found not a piece of glass, but the eye of a needle with a bit of thread still attached. Full of hope (and of fear that the whole thing would fall through) the C.I.D. men went off to see the cashier. Yes, she always kept a needle stuck in the wall just under the ventilation grille, but the wall had recently been plastered, and you couldn't see the hole. They squared off the piece of wall she pointed out, scraped off the plaster and held a magnet to each hole and, would you believe it, from one of the holes (it had been painted over, but a crack suddenly appeared in the paint) the magnet pulled out a piece of needle: the point.

The management of the factory were very indignant when the C.I.D. came to see them. Pavlik! But Pavlik was a good lad, always full of suggestions for improving productivity, with his picture on the board where they displayed the portraits of the best workers. He himself denied everything flatly, and his foreman upheld his alibi: at the time of the crime Pavlik had been on the job. But it was already obvious to the C.I.D. man who had gone to Bataisk that the needle had gone into Kalinin's foot when it brushed the wall as he jumped from the ventilation shaft. Meanwhile forensic scientist Sofia Denisovna Kolembet had been working on the newspaper and had found the print of a fourth finger which she was able to prove was Kalinin's. And one morning Pavlik at last said "O.K., let's go!" and took them to a place where a viaduct crossed the railway, a place so crowded and admirably suited for making getaway that Titarenko asked Pavlik whether he wasn't thinking of "pulling a fast one". But the latter climbed a little way up the embankment, pulled away one concrete slab after another, started to scrabble in the sand and finally disclosed the sack of pay-packets.

You will agree that these are real professionals and that there is much artistry in work like this, where the C.I.D. have to build up a mosaic of information into a complete picture. But as for the business of the gang—there was nothing doing.

And how they worked on it! They knew that one of the bandits was tall, fair, daring, and a sportsman. They found a man just like that: Savin, the head of a small gang of

thieves which in this way they disclosed, as it were, "by-the-by", as they did a second gang later. But the three they were looking for remained elusive.

The Rostov militia said goodbye to peace and quiet, sleep, days off and even to the very idea of ever having days off. Since they hadn't been able to catch the bandits the usual way, they had to try unusual ones. That's another point, and here I must side-track once more to tell of the huge process of reorganisation that is taking place in the militia at the present time, a process that is directly related to our subject and without knowledge of which we cannot proceed.

About the town drives a militia car, there for effect—everyone must see it—the blue light on its roof flashing brightly. It drives slowly, going into all the back alleyways and dead ends. This is a car from the Mobile Militia Group, and the men inside it look carefully about them to make sure that everything is as it should be and that there is no need of their help. The car keeps to a specific route, known to the man on duty back at the station, and is in touch by radio with the Car Control operator, who does much more besides merely keeping a check on all the cars.

There he sits, a young man at a desk—I saw only young men at this post, and even then they needed all the quick wits they had. By his left hand he has the speaker which keeps him informed of what is going on, in front is the log-book where he writes it all up, and by his right hand stands the microphone with which he communicates with all the cars cruising around the town flash-

ing their blue lights. In front of him is a plan of the town, and if he presses the button, one square or another lights up and beside it the number of the Mobile Militia Group controlling that area. The man on duty knows which car is where because from time to time the men in them get out in a place where there is a button in a box on the wall and press the button; when they do so, it shows up on the plan as a pinpoint of light in the place where the car is. The MMG drives on, but the man on duty knows which point of its route it has just left.

MMGs do not always simply cruise. If anything happens, the duty officer calls up the car nearest the scene of action, and then the driver puts his foot down; the routes are planned so that the car can be at any spot in its duty-area in under three and a half minutes.

And so the reorganisation of the militia is being carried out on a huge scale, with new headquarters and stand-by service, equipped with all kinds of technology, information centres and ~~tar~~ indices where processing and analysis are all done by computer. I am no expert to describe it all in great detail, but I would just like to note one thing, that the object of all this reorganisation is speed. To be on the scene of the crime in a few minutes, while the scent is still hot and the criminals have not had time to scatter and hide their loot. And speed is possible only through good organisation and a high degree of professionalism, which in itself presupposes conscientiousness.

There was a young man living in a little house a quiet modest life

with his old mother, and working on a construction site as a builder's mate, earning little and spending little. He wasn't altogether clean; as a boy of eighteen he had forged a few ten-ruble notes and been to prison for it, but when he came out again he was as good as gold. The local inspector, now retired, sometimes popped in to see him and have a chat, and never suspected that in this sparse little room, behind the mirror, was the door to cache of pistols, machine-guns and hand grenades, as well as a hidden lathe. So far so good. But in the inspector's pocket, like in those of all militiamen, was an identikit picture, and it looked like the owner of the room....

So, the reorganisation which is transforming the militia throughout the country became a question of life and death in Rostov. They introduced cruising MMGs and teams that were on call twenty-four hours a day. They worked out a way of covering all the main roads in the city within minutes, and every man knew exactly what he had to do in case of emergency. They worked without pausing to rest, and under conditions of extreme nervous tension: any "02" (the Soviet "999") call could be news of another incident.

One "02" call came in the lunch hour: a raid on a savings' bank. MMGs and the special teams, and C.I.D. men all rushed to the scene, but when they got there, everything was quiet—there had been no raid.

Among all these standing watching was a young man who looked at his watch. It was not purely by chance that he was on the scene.

"They've made it in four minutes!" he remarked to himself. "Then we will be through in two." And went home, to that little house, to his sparse room with its mirror.

The nervous tension among the militia passed all bounds. Trial alarms followed hot one upon the other, until the entire force was as tense as a wound spring.

And when on June 7th a distraught woman's voice reported a raid on the cashier at the "Yuzhgiprovodhoz" Institute, the duty officer, First Lieutenant Stanislav Ivanovich Scherbakov, at once called up MMG-16 which should have been stationed near the "Yuzhgiprovodhoz". But there was silence from MMG-16.

The silence was because its crew, Second Lieutenant Evgeny Kubyshka and Junior Sergeant Alexei Russov, were already on the tail of the bandits.

It was like this: MMG-16 fulfilled its task of covering that day's objective, i. e., those institutions where the staff were receiving their pay today, and saw the cashier to the door of the institute. When they were certain that all was well, they suddenly received orders over the radio to deal with a small disturbance not far away, and set off to do so.

But as the cashier and the two colleagues accompanying her passed down the corridor, our threesome appeared from round the corner, took the money and, brandishing their weapons, went out into the street. The money was in a rucksack, and they walked along at the unhurried speed of hikers, two of them carrying the heavy rucksack while the third kept them covered. There was no sign of the militia,

and people shouted, but did not dare give chase: one of the bandits had a machine-gun.

And so the bandits with their rucksack walked leisurely past a block of flats and a little garden with a line of washing, children playing and some old men at dominoes. The bandits only had to get out onto the street which was full of people, and they would have been lost in the crowd. At that moment Volodya Martovitsky ran out through the garden towards them, shouting "Stop!", and the bandits fired into him without slowing up. He carried on running, and they shot him dead without changing pace. MMG-16 was not far off; Kubyshta was in a workshop, arguing the toss with a group of youths, but Junior Sergeant Russov ran at once to the sound of shots. By now the bandits were running too, shooting back as they ran, with Russov, also shooting, running after them—only they didn't hit him, and he did hit them. But when he took cover round a corner to reload his pistol, the criminals managed to get into a "Moskvich" car from which they ejected the driver and passengers.

Let us stop the "film" at this point to look at each sequence more closely.

Much has already been written, and in great detail, about the fact that Alexei Russov, with but one pistol at his command, took on three bandits with five pistols and a machine-gun, as well as a reserve store of hand grenades. They say that Russov acted exactly as they are taught to act, that he is a militiaman of excellent training and steel nerves. Running out of the bushes, he shouted "Stop!" and fired in-

to the air. And when they started to fire at him as they ran, he aimed at their legs, hoping to take them alive. Two witnesses recounted that they saw with their own eyes how Russov went down on one knee and fired steadyng his pistol on his left hand. It was only when it was obvious they were getting away that he started to aim at the chest. I was of course eager to hear from Alexei Russov himself how it all happened.

He is small and boyish, still only twenty-one, with a dark complexion and bright grey-blue eyes with black lashes, handsome—he would be really striking if he were not so shy.

"They say you're a good shot?"

"Oh," he waves aside the praise, "no better than anyone else."

"But to aim and hit in the legs...."

"The legs?" he frowns.

I asked about how he went down on one knee and steadied his pistol on his left hand, as all the witnesses had said. He frowned again. He didn't seem to remember anything of the sort.

But of course! He couldn't have. Alexei was firing as he ran and dodging to evade their bullets. And he was in constant danger of hitting some passer-by, for at first they were in the garden, then by the pavement, and the last shot he had had to fire up into the air because when he took aim, a woman suddenly appeared out of nowhere and came between him and the bandits. So there was no question of aiming at their legs. But it was in the legs that the majority of his shots hit them.

"And is it true," I went on, "that when you saw there was a woman

between you and the bandits, you had already pressed the trigger but managed after that to point the pistol upwards?"

At this he leant back and laughed out loud.

"But the bullet would have gone straight anyhow, it would be too late to do anything with the pistol."

Oh, brother journalists! When will we stop writing things that are just laughable to anyone who knows anything at all about the subject? Why do we do it? Real life is much more interesting than all these decorations. In the little open space between the houses and the striped fence of the building-site, not far from the vegetable stand and the table where the old-age pensioners were playing dominoes (and, by the way, when the shooting started they all crawled under the table), something serious took place, a battle to the death, not something that needed "brightening up" by journalists.

I started to understand why the whole of the Rostov militia was so taken with this boy; it was his total simplicity, without the slightest desire to think he was something important, forgivable though that would be under the circumstances.

"Were you afraid?"

"I wanted to catch them," he replied.

And so, the bandits were getting away in the "Moskvich", while Alexei stood watching in horror. His own MMG-16 was a long way away, but suddenly out from the courtyard behind him drove a jeep belonging to the local fire brigade.

"Over here, quick!" cried its occupants.

It was far from a mere "passing car". Two militiamen, Engineer-Captain Victor Salutin and Junior Sergeant Gennady Doroshenko had heard the shooting. Gennady turned on the siren and took a concrete-lined ditch before them at a leap, breaking a spring and denting the gear-box. The old jeep, which had already been in three times for a complete overhaul, gave chase.

In spite of everything they managed to catch up with the bandits... but when they did so, they saw the barrel of a machine-gun trained on them through the rear window.

This is the best point to tell you about Gennady Doroshenko. Of course everyone who took part in the chase was a hero, but he really deserves special praise, for he drove his car under threat from a machine-gun. Both Salutin and Russov could duck and did so, but he at the wheel could not. He drove six kilometres under constant threat from a wicked, stream-lined weapon sparkling with heavy steel, that had been carefully made and lovingly polished by the assassin.

I asked him, too, whether he had been afraid, and he too answered:

"I wanted to catch them."

As I said before, the entire militia force was like an overwound spring.

And at that moment Volodya Martovitsky lay dying on the grass outside the block of flats.

But back to the chase. The bandits sped along a crowded Rostov street, and after them screeched Doroshenko's jeep, not giving an inch. Behind them was Evgeny Kubyshta, who had also come running at the sound of shots, stopped a minibus

and given chase too. Back at the control centre they did not know at once of the chase as the jeep's radio didn't work and the minibus didn't have one at all. Russov and his companions called to passers-by to inform the militia of the chase, and Kubyshta sent two women to dial "02". As soon as the duty officer, First Lieutenant Shcherbakov, knew which way they had all gone, he sent other cars to head the bandits off. The main streets were blocked and the town cut off in the space of those few minutes in which so much had happened.

The bandits, however hard they tried, could not get away, and their threatening machine-gun kept pointing backwards, but did not fire. And Russov and Salutin (who, they said, was a first-class shot) could not shoot at the car because the street was so crowded. The getaway car broke all the rules of the road, turning suddenly left, and the militiamen followed suit. They passed some road-layers, and Russov was going to get out and take a lorry to use as a battering-ram against the "Moskvich" when suddenly he saw that the bandits had stopped. They had mounted the curb and were stuck on it, resting on two springs.

Two men got out of the "Moskvich" and walked—walked, not ran—towards the fence. Kubyshta ran up to them from the right and Russov from the left. The bandits motioned that they didn't need to shoot, and when both militiamen shouted "Hands up!" they raised their hands. Kubyshta disarmed them. The tall, fair sportsman was half lying on the back seat, wounded in both legs and in the chest (by Russov's shots), delirious. In the car they

found the machine-gun, pistols and home-made hand grenades, three in the money-sack and the fourth on the seat, the safety-catch already off.

And then one after another the other militia cars started to appear, including those which had been sent to head them off and which had seen the bandits being taken prisoner.

At six in the evening Alexei Russov sat down to supper and suddenly noticed that his hands were trembling. Then they wrote out their reports until eleven, after which he went to bed. But he could not sleep till morning.

"Were you upset?" I asked.

He looked at me from beneath his brows.

"Well, what do you think?" he frowned, almost aggressively. "It was people I was shooting at."

I could see that in his thoughts he was back there in the battle, and before his eyes he could still see the wounded bandit, delirious, on the back seat of the "Moskvich".

He has of course heard more than once that he has no need to be troubled, that he was shooting at bandits and not at people. But Alexei Russov evidently sees the question in a different light.

"And did you feel bad about it for long?" I asked.

"I still feel bad about it."

Yes, a serious business.

None of them wanted to die, they were all young and all had loved ones; Salutin had three children, and young Gennady Doroshenko a little three-year-old daughter called Lara.

And none of them wanted to kill. It was not so much they that fired, but well-organised necessity that was firing through them. And however well Russov hit his target (out of eight bullets two were fired into the air and four hit the bandits), he did not want to kill anyone. He understood the incident far more fully than those who afterwards rejoiced over it: as a tragedy, not a victory. For him, the bandits were people who had perished long before he started shooting at them; people who had lost their humanity, become animals and forced other people to shoot at them like animals. And it was this that was so frightful to Alexei Russov.

Well, that is what happened in Rostov. The city was shaken to its core, both shocked and overjoyed, and fairly buzzed with all these events. The famous bandits, who had become a legend in the last few years, were at last handcuffed and behind bars. The families of the heroes heard what had happened much later and took fright after the event, so to speak, some of them so badly that they could not sleep. Gennady Doroshenko's relatives were shocked and exultant along with the rest of the population of Rostov, but they had no idea that it was their Gennady who drove the car after the bandits for six kilometres. They found out only when they saw his picture in the local paper. That's the kind of person he is.

Zoya Medvedeva, on the other hand, Volodya Martovitsky's wife, learned what had happened straight away.

Now let us go back to the morning of that day, June 7th. Volodya Mar-

tovitsky had a day off, he went down to the river Don with Zoya, after which she went to work on the evening shift, and he popped off to the shop where he worked. He soon had something to do: he went to the storehouse with the storekeeper to get some foodstuffs, for he could never refuse to do anyone a favour, he was one of those who find pleasure in helping people.

To convey the kind of man Volodya Martovitsky was I will take into account not only my own impressions, gained from talking with his wife, colleagues and friends, but also the notes taken by Eduard Barsukov, an instructor at one of the offices of the local Department of Internal Affairs, who spoke with his mother and other relatives.

Volodya Martovitsky was 27, tall and handsome, with very fine eyes according to all accounts. His parents met in a military hospital not long after the war, and his father died there, so that Volodya never knew him. Volodya was a responsive person in the fullest sense of the word: he responded to life. Once he came home to his mother not alone, but with a little boy that he had picked up in the road. The little boy did not have enough money to get home, and Volodya was afraid he might start to steal. His family was by no means well off, but even so he asked his mother for 30 rubles out of her savings, which he promised to earn and repay.

One example is not enough to demonstrate the moral atmosphere in which the boy grew up. When Volodya was already quite big, his mother decided to remarry, and both she and her future husband asked

Volodya for his permission. How well this request demonstrates the family atmosphere in which the boy grew up! Everyone recalls how Volodya loved children, reading to them and playing with them. And they loved him. I know that no one speaks ill of the dead (and especially of someone who died in that way) but everything that I heard about him spoke of unusual charm. He apparently had a great sense of humour, and loved to give people presents. In everything else he was like everyone else: in his free time he watched television, went to the cinema, read straightforward books and was an ardent fan of the Rostov football team, "Torpedo". Zoya and he rented a room, dreaming of having their own flat, and now she was to be given a flat where she would have to live alone, without him.

He hated unfairness, and never stood for it, which is the reason why he comes into our story. His wife said: "He looked after me, never let anyone hurt me." He always stood up for the underdog, and you can see it in his face on the photographs that have remained of him. It is an open face.

So, off he went with the store-keeper to fetch the foodstuffs. Volodya was in high spirits, having just had a good swim in the Don, and met another friend (he had many friends whom he greeted with his usual joke, "Hey, don't you know me any more?" when suddenly women's screaming announced the robbery. He ran out through the bushes in the garden and coming out onto the path the bandits were following, a few yards from where they were, he cried: "Stop!"

"I'll shoot!" warned one of the bandits.

Volodya answered something, demanding presumably that they hand over the bag. The bandit shot at him and wounded him in the thigh. Volodya swerved and staggered. The witnesses said he stopped, as though making a decision—what was he thinking and feeling at that moment?—and then carried on. He took eight more steps: his last. The machine-gun fire ripped through him, from left to right. As the witnesses put it, he "wheeled round" and fell onto the grass. The bandits walked on at the same measured, unhurried pace.

Was it heroism or recklessness? And was anything gained by this death, or was it simply a tragic loss? He doesn't seem to have slowed them up even for a few seconds.

But that is not the case. He was for them the first blow, for they were counting on inaction, fear and general paralysis of the will all around, and up until now their expectations had been justified. When people are afraid they are quiet, and all the bandits needed was two quiet minutes to get out onto the crowded main street. As it was, they had to shoot and to shoot more than once.

Alexei Russov was running blind from his car, since he could not see what was going on for the bushes and trees in the garden, but by the shots fired at Martovitsky he could tell where the bandits were, and that is why they did not get away.

But this is not, of course, simply a question of pragmatics. What Volodya Martovitsky did was something of far greater importance. If someone were to ask you or me whether we would be prepared to

see the 125,118 rubles that were in the rucksack burnt and the ashes scattered into the Don if it would mean that Volodya could come back to life, is there any question of our not agreeing to it? Of course there is not. And although Volodya was running after the bandits to take the money from them, the money is not the real issue. Martovitsky would find it impossible to stand and simply watch as someone walked off in broad daylight with a sack of pay-packets that had been earned by others. He couldn't take such bare-faced violence, such certainty that might is right and that every living creature should kowtow to brute strength. Until the moment when he was shot at, we could still consider him merely rash. But when, wounded, he took his last eight paces towards them. I think the question becomes completely unambiguous. His human dignity was faced with death and yet still refused to submit. The awareness that these men were murderers, that they could kill him and get away with it, still did not stop him.

I often heard it said of him that he was fulfilling his duty as a citizen. But that is not the case. There is no such duty as the duty to run unarmed at a machine-gun, and never will there be either. Only those who have been specially armed and trained can enter into a fight with armed bandits, as was the case here, and there is no justification for blaming those who saw the bandits but made no move. But after Volodya fell, they say that many people gave chase, up to thirty of them and most of them women: it is his effect on these people that is important. At this point the bandits slowed up and

fired over their heads and the people stopped, just as I think my readers or I would have done.

But Volodya Martovitsky did not stop at the sight of a machine-gun, and that is why I speak of what he did as a feat, and a feat in the fullest sense of the word.

The militia consider Martovitsky's role in the capture to have been of paramount importance. I interviewed Commissar Boris Elisov, head of the Rostov district office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, under whose leadership the reorganisation of the Rostov militia was carried out. I had been told about Boris Elisov in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, that he was a perfect combination of long years of experience and a fine grasp of contemporary problems. He told me about the bandits after he had interviewed them.

"I started working in the militia a long time ago, but it's the first time I've seen anything like this. These men are extraordinarily hard-bitten, and made a conscious choice to lead the kind of life they led," he said. "Though their leader is evidently a somewhat gifted lad."

I heard the same intonation in his voice that I had heard in Alexei's words ("Well, what do you think? It was people I was shooting at!"); he, too, understood the tragedy that there were people who had turned into animals.

"A capable lad," went on the commissar, "and all his capabilities put to the service of evil."

Alexei Russov, who couldn't sleep because he had shot at a human being, and this bandit who killed Volodya Martovitsky without even slowing down are on two different

levels of existence with nothing in common between them except their ability to shoot. And the reason why they have nothing in common is their totally different attitudes to human life. I heard in the militia station that when asked whether he regretted having shot Volodya Martovitsky, the bandit answered scornfully: "Why did he interfere?" For him, a concept like the value of human life, the thousands of precious ties that join one life to another, simply did not exist. He had no understanding of it. But what did he understand?

"And then that militiaman got on our tail," that, according to Boris Elisov, was how one of the bandits put it. "Slippery as an eel. We shot at him, but we kept missing, though when he shot at us he hit every time."

This is a rare opportunity to see the militia through the eyes of the enemy, eyes that couldn't help being observant, for the bandits kept watch on everything that went on, noting and evaluating all the phases of the militia reorganisation that was going on. They were good at waiting, and had unlimited patience, but were pulling off less and less jobs and their situation was getting worse. When in 1968 they robbed a shop in the village of Mirny, it took the militia forty minutes to get there: they had picked on Mirny especially to find out how long it would take. Now, however, the militia are there in three or four minutes, as they found out for themselves when they rang "02" and gave a false alarm. They watched the MMGs carefully, noting that the cars each had a radio and that all

in all the militia's organisation had changed beyond all recognition.

And finally they started operations, but nothing came of it since it turned out each time that there was one or another car watching in the vicinity. "Our operations are being curtailed one after another," writes the head of the gang in his diary. "And time won't wait for us." And later: "The ring is getting tighter and tighter all the time," and "They are after us, and they are certainly using all the brains they've got."

Even so, they hoped that they would get away with it through speed, by doing the job in one or two minutes, at the most, but they didn't get even their two minutes clear. They relied on their firearms, but when it came to the day their huge armoury did not have its desired effect of quietening any opposition.

"If we were still working as we did six or seven years ago," said Boris Elisov, "they could have got away. But now...."

Now the rounding-up of the gang took only seventeen minutes. But a lot was condensed into those seventeen minutes: the reorganisation responsible for new methods, as well as the energy that put them into practice... to say nothing of the courage which opposed violence to the death, the courage of the man responsible for shaking the passers-by out of their torpor at the sight of weapons, of Volodya Martovitsky (and of the people who ran shouting after the bandits), the courage of Alexei Russov who shot at them, that of Gennady Doroshenko who drove the jeep and of all the others who took part in the struggle.

RECITATIVE FOR SOLOIST AND DIRECTOR

A DIALOGUE ABOUT OPERA

Elena Obraztsova was born in 1939 in the city of Leningrad. She studied at the Leningrad Conservatoire and in 1964 joined the Bolshoi Theatre. She has played many mezzo-soprano roles during her time with the theatre. She is a People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. and has won the State Glinka Prize as well as many prizes at international competitions. Among her roles have been Marina Mniszek in Boris Godunov, Polina and the Countess in The Queen of Spades, Amneris in Aida, Liubasha in The Tzar's Bride and Carmen.

Boris Pokrovsky was born in Moscow in 1912. In 1937 he received the diploma of the Lunacharsky Theatre Institute, and since 1942 he has been the chief director of the Bolshoi Theatre. People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., four times winner of the State Prize, he has also been decorated with the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. For his work in Bulgaria he has been awarded the Order of Cyril and Methodius, first degree.

ELENA OBRAZTSOVA,
People's Artist of the Russian Federation
BORIS POKROVSKY,
People's Artist of the U.S.S.R.

Is the opera dying? Is it not true that this genre has become obsolete in the day of radio and television? Readers often ask such questions. Critics debate the future of the opera. Today we publish this dialogue between Elena Obraztsova, soloist of the Bolshoi Theatre, and Boris

Pokrovsky, chief director of the theatre, about the opera in our day and age.

B. P. In my personal opinion, opera is only just starting its existence. The whole of the period from the 17th century, which is when we

reckon opera to have been born, to the present day is a period of preparation and of "feeling out" the genre. This "feeling out" process was going on in many different spheres at one and the same time.

Take, for instance, the vocal. At the beginning of the 17th century the opera was not an independent form, but simply a vehicle for the soloist to demonstrate his talents. We know of composers who wrote solely to show off a particular singer's vocal gifts.

That was the opera's period of infancy. Then appeared the great composers. For them all the drama had to come through music, and through the medium of music they brought out the consistency and inner logic of the plot. The music is the chief means of expression in opera. But I think that the music can be beautiful. . .

E. O. . . . and the directing perfect, but you still won't have an opera, if you haven't got a singer.

B. P. But if the singer plays a badly-tuned instrument, as can happen to a pianist, he will never reach artistic perfection.

E. O. A professional singer must be able to do anything the director asks him.

B. P. Yes, on a particular professional level, which can vary very greatly.

E. O. But each one has his own level. Some of your productions are outstanding, but others for one reason or another do not succeed. They do not astound one. And yet there is nothing in them that you could call work below the professional level. Isn't that so? I can sing better or worse, but I have my professional level below which I do not fall.

And it is about professional singers and directors that we are talking.

I don't remember why I interrupted you, but in my opinion it is quite wrong to raise the question, as is so often done, of the ability of opera to survive. The opera came into being because there was a spiritual need for it, and so it will never die; the development of all the arts lies within this dialectics.

And to judge from your introduction, you have in my opinion already made one mistake: you said, insofar as I understood, that at first the opera was for the singers, but that now it is a vehicle for any kind of drama. . . .

B. P. No doubt you decided to take my words like that so as to be able to indulge in your favourite occupation of arguing. But you won't catch me out here. Singing or music, music or drama? There's nothing to argue about. Moreover, in a successful performance by an opera singer I often find it impossible to decide how far he is a good singer and how far a good actor. In an excellent opera I cannot even divide good music from a bad libretto. . . .

E. O. That's very easy to do.

B. P. I don't agree. For me there is only one author: the composer. Because he writes a drama in music which was merely suggested to him by the libretto. That is why Pushkin's and Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* are two completely different things, and even more so their *Queen of Spades*. Gounod's *Faust* is not Goethe's *Faust*, and I am always surprised to hear Gounod accused of "not being true to Goethe". Gounod was "true" to Gounod, and this is one of the greatest works of art in the operatic repertoire.

We could name many operatic works where the music is excellent. But these are not operas, insofar as the music is not expressing something dramatic. Taneyev's "Orestieia", for instance, is not something that will remain in the repertoire for ever in spite of its excellent music. And operatic composers—Mus-sorgsky or Prokofiev, Bizet or Ger-shwin, Shostakovich or Britten—are for me first and foremost dramatists who wrote their dramas in music. Why music? Because they are com- posers, because through music you can show...

E. O..... more, than through the drama?

B. P. And something quite differ- ent.

E. O. That's certainly true.

B. P. And that is why it's inad- missible to judge the art of the opera according to the canons of the dra- ma theatre.

For instance, in pre-revolutionary days there was a theatre called "Die Fliedermaus", a crooked mirror of parody and so on. They put on the opera *Vampuk* there; no doubt you have heard of it. A long time ago, when becoming an opera director was still my dream, I got hold of the file on *Vampuk*. At the time I thought it very witty, but now it simply seems boorish. I remember how the chorus was made fun of. It all seemed very funny, that they sang "Hurry, hurry, run, run" for hours and nobody showed any signs of running until the chorus had sung to the end of its piece. Then I really did find this stupid ... but now it seems very wise, insofar as this is the hallmark of opera, I mean of that kind of drama that through the ma- gic power of music can stretch time

and make it stand still. "Halt, o mo- ment, you are divine!" like in Goethe's *Faust*. There is no other art where that is possible.

In the opera, on the contrary, you can halt the moment and disclose a "mini-feeling" if you wish. What happens when suddenly the Countess, Liza, Eletsky, Tomsky and Herman meet by chance in the Sum- mer Garden? When they exchange glances? In life it would be but a moment. But in *The Queen of Spades* it is an emotional peak, a fore- taste of the interrelationships be- tween characters that are to come. Just you try to throw out the quintet, that great dramatic tool that Chai-kovsky put to use here....

So if the singer has a beautiful voice of which he is in perfect con- trol, that is not enough. The ques- tion is, is he a musician? A piano on its own, or a pianist on his own, are nothing; music is born only when they meet. Just try and throw out one part of the whole, singer, musi- cian or actor....

I have known singers of whom you could say: "They were bad ac- tors, because they were hopeless mu- sicians." Even though legends still circulate about the quality of their voices. But if you listen to their re- cordings today you will notice that the technology, as it were, the voice production is very fine and true while the rest....

E. O. Recordings more than any- thing else convey the mind of a sing- er. On stage and with the help of a director one can hide one's empty- ness with a filigree of acting, dim the lights and so on but in a re- cording all is laid completely bare.... When I hear old record- ings I can reconstruct for myself just

what kind of a person the singer was.

B. P. In a recording you can hear at once whether he was an actor or not.

E. O. So we have come after all to the conclusion that in opera everything depends on the voice, on the singer.

B. P. No, you're looking through your own spectacles again. The director uses not only the singer's voice to create a character.

E. O. Tell me then, what need is there for a director in opera? I ask this question after working for ten years in the opera, and under you alone. What need is there for him?

B. P. I would do better to ask *you* that question. If you can't answer it yourself, if you personally have no need...

E. O. . . . to be directed? Of course I have.

B. P. In that case you know why he is needed. One could write twenty volumes on direction.

E. O. But what are the main points?

B. P. The following. Firstly, the artistic organisation of the production, its "intonation" in the sense in which Chaliapin used the word. This includes the idea contained in the work, the emotions, its plot and the philosophy upon which it is based— everything. If all these facets are to coexist in one interrelated whole, they need a centre round which to focus, and in theory the director must be this kind of centre, taking into account the artistic needs of each individual with whom he works. If he is not developing the unique artistic qualities of one singer or another, then he is not being this kind of centre.

E. O. Then there's no need for him at all.

B. P. Then you must look for another director, not simply try to do without. Maybe you can do without a director, and the production will go on, but can you really call that a production?

By the way, the greatest triumph for a director is when the actor is perfectly convinced that everything is all his own work, when he makes completely his own everything that the director ever dreamed of.

I remember one famous singer. At the start of every production he was like wax in my hands. But if afterwards I felt anything needed to be changed, he would cry: "Let it alone—that was my idea!"

In general the relationship between actor and director, at least as far as opera is concerned, is a complex process to which very little study has been devoted. The director brings his actors a quite specific concept from the very start. This point of departure is however very different from what they will work out by the end of the period, by the time of the première.

E. O. You're speaking, of course, of a good director.

B. P. But you were talking just now of "professional levels"?

E. O. All right. But what have you to say about "interfering directors"? I have just sung *Carmen*. At the very beginning, during the first duet between Mikaela and José, there is an old woman sitting in the corner knitting a sock. She is in my way, because she's a distraction. It's just a small point, but tell me: why did they put her there?

B. P. Unfortunately, that doesn't prove anything. The old woman has

every right to be there, as have ten old women or a whole crowd. There are intimate scenes, like that between Carmen and José in the third act, where the stage is full of people like the crowd of smugglers in that instance. That is not the question. The real point here is that if the old woman at the back of the stage distracts you from the duet, then perhaps the fault is in the duet? Perhaps it is not interesting or significant enough?

E. O. But this is opera. Opera! I have come to hear the music, this exquisite duet!

B. P. Look, I can't help pointing out that you have just taken a leap into another sphere, that of the concert-hall. You have come to hear the music; but the composer wants you to be aware all the time you are listening that in José's pocket is a flower from Carmen.

E. O. But what connection has the old woman knitting with the rest? Tell me simply; is she necessary on the stage at this moment, or not? I chose a very obvious example on purpose.

B. P. You can't judge on one example like that. After all, life doesn't stop in the town all around the characters.

E. O. But opera is a very conventional genre. Why can't the conventionality stretch to leaving Mikaela and José alone together? There's no hint of the old woman in the music.

B. P. Sometimes the music reminds us of Carmen when she herself isn't on the stage.

E. O. You know very well what I'm talking about, but you don't want to discuss it because it was not your production. But directors

always "stuff" the stage with too many people.

B. P. It's not only directors who resort to "stuffing". I keep a notebook of wise sayings, and one of the things I wrote down was how when they asked Academician Landau whether he liked opera, he answered: "No, too much yelling." And that was not only because they sing loud; you must see the wider meaning of his words. Singers, too, "impose" more sounds than they need to.... I remember how in Stanislavsky's *Boris Godunov* when the curtain went up there was an old beggar sitting on the stage. Then on came the chorus, and the prologue began. There are two points of view here; on the one hand, you might ask why the old man is sitting begging... he isn't in the music, and I came to hear the music. But on the other, the beggar unites the visual aspect with the drama of the music. It creates an image, one that you do not forget.

E. O. But he doesn't get in the way by sitting. Let him sit, then... if he's necessary.

B. P. You see how funny it sounds: "He doesn't get in the way by sitting." Then he shouldn't be there. He is necessary only if he is helping in an active way. I can't say why they put the old woman with her knitting into *Carmen*, but I think there was a meaning in it. It's not so cut and dried as you make out, Elena Vassilievna. The opera is a complex genre.

Here is a simple example. Rigoletto must hit top G — it is a note loaded with emotional significance. "Oh no, no need for fear!... Di-da-da-da-da-dum... da," where after all his doubts Rigoletto at last takes himself in hand. If you can't get this

note just right, the emotional logic of the act is flawed. So here the top G for the singer is not simply a vocal *kunststück*, but an expression of the depth of his emotions. Details of this kind are extremely important and significant. But it is not so simple, a question of taking the note or not taking it. This is drama, the operatic theatre. This is the particular quality of the composer's dramatic method, the specific nature of his talent.

You know that Chopin did not write a single opera. Nor did Liszt, nor Myaskovsky. That is because they were not dramatists, but "simply" musicians. Verdi's *Requiem*, on the other hand, is much more an opera than merely a set of prayers.

It must be said that real operatic composers are directors as well. I always dreamed, for instance, of being the kind of director Verdi showed himself to be in the judgement scene in *Aida*, where he not only wrote the music and thought up a scene but created an event. And you know what Verdi said when he was given the plot to read? He wrote a letter in more or less these terms: "Read an Egyptian scenario, fairly interesting; two or three good situations." So there! That's what a great operatic composer starts to work from.

But I've side-tracked, there was something I wanted to prove.... You're always asking me questions, so now I'll put one to you: tell me, what do *you* need a director for?

E. O. That really is a difficult question, that was why I asked it in the first place....

I feel that the director is not at all for bringing the mass of people

on the stage into some sort of harmonious combination. I need a director to tell me all the unspoken thoughts and ideas that have come to life and live within me. If we take the last opera I did, *Carmen*, which I love so much.... I had not sung it for ten years, just imagine! Maybe this will sound funny, but I was afraid of being vulgar. I dislike vulgar women in life, and the stage is full of vulgar Carmens. I don't see how it's possible to love a vulgar woman, but everyone loved Carmen. And when I decided to do a different Carmen, I was torn by doubts, and this is where I needed a director, a person of great erudition and intellect to make all the necessary adjustments. That's what I seek in a director, but there are so few of those about, too

B. P. "Too"!

E. O. You're the last person to say all this to, Boris Alexandrovich. Erudition and intellect is the minimum demanded of a director. And the maximum is, of course, talent.

I always find working on a character a difficult and complex process. I can't just write "First day of term" in a clean exercise-book like a schoolgirl and start rehearsing a new role from scratch. I can't come and say to the director: "Since you've given the word, I'm ready to start." For anything to work for me, I have to get completely into the part I am to play, and that doesn't come about at once.

I resisted the part of Froska in *Semyon Kotko* for so long! You started to "feel me out" two years before the production, do you remember? "What a wonderful part, Froska!" I was singing Marina Mniszek, Amneris and so on, and was

suddenly faced with the part of this 14-year-old busybody Froska.

I simply couldn't imagine myself in the role. The rehearsals were in full swing, and my attitude was still sceptical, I was still throwing tant-rums and resisting with all my strength. But now I'm in love with my Froska. I know that I'll soon have to stop playing her—it's getting harder and harder to play a 14-yeah-old girl—but I also know that I'll miss her very much. I love her because I have felt her out in my own experience. I needed time to feel her out, and you had the patience to wait.... And then I can't do without arguments and debates—that's an indispensable part of our work.

B. P. If somewhat one-sided.

E. O. Nothing of the sort!

B. P. But I don't argue with you, it's you who argue with me.

E. O. You just stand there with your maddening little "hm-hm".

B. P. I have a right to react how I feel....

E. O. But I have to disagree, I need to be argued with. Then all the clutter is sieved out, and the important points remain. Though I'm far from ready when we get to the first night. Only then do I begin to "accrue" the tiny details that go to make a living character. There was so much in my Froska that I didn't find at once, wasn't there?

B. P. Here another question arises: what is an operatic actor? You sing Froska in a reedy little voice, your pronunciation changes and even the timbre of your singing. You are not at all afraid of someone saying "Obraztsova seems to have a lisp". It's Froska lisping, not Obraztsova. I've never heard anyone say

"Why has Obraztsova got such a squeaky little voice?" The idea never entered anyone's head, because if you sang Froska at the same volume which you give Amneris....

E. O. Impossible.

B. P. But if these intonations weren't in Prokofiev's music, where would you have got the idea from? So the question is not "What is more important?" The relationship between the vocal side, the way you act on the stage and Her Royal Highness the Music creates a character: that is the most important thing. We should study Chaliapin, make him into a text-book; what he said was "The intonation of the character is the essence of the opera." Your intonation as the Countess in *The Queen of Spades* is one thing, and as Marfa is completely another. And so on. And what you do with the character goes before your arguments with the director; it doesn't come into the debate.

E. O. I would like to add that our repertoire is getting stale. It's no more interesting to sing the same thing day in and day out than it is to hear it.

B. P. That's changing the subject. But if you want to, I don't mind; I'll start by saying that any theatre exists for its audiences, not for its actors.

E. O. And we need to educate our audiences through the repertoire. I can't watch the same thing five hundred times over.

B. P. But why "I"? People come to the Bolshoi maybe once a year. At most. The Bolshoi, like any opera house, is for a wide public. And above all it must preserve our specifically Russian repertoire for which it is so famous. This is our national

opera, our Russian opera, and has been so for over 200 years, which makes it something of a voice of authority in the development of our national culture. I, for instance, would be delighted at the chance to put on *Don Giovanni*....

E. O. And so you should. While you're interested, while you want to do it....

B. P. And there was a time when I really wanted to direct *Carmen*.

E. O. Then you should have directed *Carmen*.

B. P. But the interests of the theatre were at variance with my own. Because if the Bolshoi Theatre does not put on *Boris Godunov* and *The Queen of Spades* then it is no longer the Bolshoi Theatre.

E. O. No, you didn't get my point. Let *Boris Godunov* and *The Queen of Spades* stay, but look: besides *Faust* and *Carmen* we haven't a single French opera.

B. P. You know, there are so many productions on at the theatre at the present time that each one can be shown only once or twice every six months.

E. O. That's what I'm talking about: the repertoire should be rotated.

B. P. It's unthinkable that the Austrian opera should exist without the works of Mozart, or the German without *Fidelio* or Wagner. And I cannot imagine the Russian opera without its Russian repertoire.

E. O. Did I say that it's that which we must drop?

B. P. Then say which opera we should drop so as to put on another one?

E. O. I can't, just like that. I'll think about it, then answer.

B. P. I can answer you at once. Take a pencil and a piece of paper.

E. O. Very well....

B. P. Now count them up: *Boris Godunov*, *Prince Igor*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Eugene Onegin*, *War and Peace*, *The Tale of the City of Kitezh*....

E. O. They could put *Kitezh* on every two months.

B. P. But it has to go on only twice a year, because there are so many other operas. The Bolshoi has a bigger repertoire at the moment than any other theatre in the world: fifty-six productions. Which opera or ballet should be dropped to make room for another? Name one and you'll see at once that an opera is put on because there is a need for it. It's only natural.

E. O. A need to hear one great opera and not another?

B. P. Try and drop *Eugene Onegin* for a season, or *Boris Godunov*, or *The Queen of Spades*; it's impossible! There will be thousands of letters of protest! Just imagine: no *Prince Igor*....

E. O. But you could replace some of them. And then people would love to hear *Othello* or *Lohengrin*. The latter I would really be delighted to hear, or to sing in myself.

B. P. I consider that *The Gambler* is more important than *Lohengrin* at the moment. Because *The Gambler* is a development of the traditions of Russian drama, and an outstanding opera.

E. O. But why can't we have *The Gambler* and *Lohengrin* on at the same time?

B. P. I didn't say that. You said that everyone must be allowed to put on what he likes. I have no desire to direct *Lohengrin*. Have you?

E. O. Direct? That's not my job.

B. P. You want to sing. There are only two of us, right? But in the Bolshoi Theatre there are probably fifty people who could say "I want" and who would have to be listened to. So it would be much better if at a general meeting you were to say "I propose *Lohengrin*". I would say: "Go ahead." Then what?

E. O. I would say "Direct it, then".

B. P. But I won't direct it, because I consider *The Gambler* more important. Why do I insist on Prokofiev? Three operas: *War and Peace*, *Semyon Kotko* and *The Gambler*. And three ballets: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella* and *The Stone Flower*. And you have Prokofiev, our great Russian composer, presented in the round: a Prokofiev theatre. It is the simplest thing to grasp.

When I had only just raised the question of *War and Peace*, what I heard was "No". But I knew I would get this contemporary classic through into the repertoire. Some time passed, and the turn of *Semyon Kotko* came round. Do you think they all started shouting "Yes, direct it!" at once? Nothing of the sort. They dug out all the old critiques of the opera. They were awful. They reminded me how many times it was played, and what the audiences were like. In fact to put it in a nutshell, they started off by saying "No" again....

But *Semyon Kotko* is now in the repertoire. I propose *The Gambler*. But Alexei Maslennikov and I were left alone two years ago. That was when I directed *The Gambler* in Leipzig. When I came back Molchanov, the new administrative direc-

tor of the theatre, asked: "And why isn't *The Gambler* in our repertoire?" He's a composer, he knows a great work when he sees one. This time the soloists said "Yes".

I must admit that I couldn't have raised the question of *The Gambler* if *Semyon Kotko* were not in the repertoire already. And I would not have insisted on *Kotko* if we did not have *War and Peace*. And I would never have raised the question of *War and Peace* if it were not for *The Queen of Spades* and *Boris Godunov* in the repertoire.

So you see these things must be brought up gradually.

In other opera theatres around the world they do things differently: five productions for the epicures, who buy a ticket for a small fortune and go along in evening dress to hear the famous Obraztsova... But in all its 200 years the Bolshoi has never been like that. That kind of theatre abroad sickens me, I call it anti-art. Those aren't the kind of gods that I'm ready to pray before. I know that the Bolshoi has its problems but the idea behind it is sacred for me. And has been ever since childhood. That's the way my life turned out.

E. O. You know perfectly well what I'm talking about, but you just want to toe your own line.

B. P. No! After all, I'm not against developing our repertoire.

E. O. That's why it seems so strange that you should be objecting like this.

B. P. No, it's not strange, because it's in reaction against an attempt to criticise the Bolshoi in the light of the mistaken practices of other theatres.

E. O. Nothing of the sort. I'm talking about having a cycle of pro-

ductions. About the fact that you can't have one and the same poster for ten years.

As you said, the Bolshoi is for a wide public. But if an opera is put on three or four times a year, and our auditorium seats two thousand people, then we have 6-8 thousand spectators for it a year. Even so this is just a drop in the ocean, and not a justification for leaving 56 titles in the repertoire and putting on only one or two new works each year. A repertoire must be changed.

B. P. It's difficult to decide by taking a vote: I consider that I have answered your question, in view of the particular conditions at the Bolshoi Theatre. Whether this state of affairs pleases me personally or not makes no difference. I work here, and am very happy that that is so.

But there is another side to the question. I, for instance, greatly regret that we play *Boris Godunov* in Rimsky-Korsakov's arrangement now that Shostakovich's orchestration has appeared. And the same goes for *Khovanshchina*. But *Khovanshchina* was produced before Shostakovich wrote his version, and the theatre had to choose between Rimsky-Korsakov's arrangement or not putting on this great opera at all.

Furthermore, I consider that widening the repertoire is to a great extent the responsibility of the singers as well. What do you mean by "Let me sing Dalilah"? How often have I suggested that you do a concert evening?

E. O. I'm ready.

B. P. What do you mean—"ready"? You must do at least the second act for your concert. I re-

member my conversation with Atlantov, when we proposed him for the part of Semyon Kotko. He answered: "I can learn it and sing it, but I'll never make a Semyon Kotko." To which I replied: "That's my business, I'll take care of that." "Well, if that's the case, then certainly...." Then he seemed not to be learning the part, and I asked what was the matter. Atlantov replied: "You told me 'not to worry' about the character of Kotko, and I trusted you. Now you trust me that everything will be ready in time." And it was. Ready, and perfect. That's what I call a conversation between professionals. That "level" of which you spoke.

E. O. That's right.

B. P. Why can one never have that kind of "professional conversation" with Obraztsova? If I can produce any production in a month and a half, then why not the second act of *Samson*? I can start rehearsals right now, if you like. That's not the problem. The problem is in the lack of initiative on your part. It's easy to sit there cross-legged and play with—what's that in your hand?

E. O. Your pencil...

B. P. . . .with a pencil, much easier than taking the bull by the horns.

E. O. A bull I could easily take: he'd be much less of a formidable objective than our administration.

B. P. You know, you're convincing only when you're on stage. Go to the administrative director and say: "I have a tenor and a baritone, and we want to put on a concert evening." There in front of you sits Molchanov, Pokrovsky by his side, and you sing the second act. What will he say? "No, ladies and gentle-

men, not just now?..." No! He'll say "Yes!"

E. O. Well, I'm ready. I'm going to sing *Dalilah* in Spain in January.

B. P. It's not a question of you personally, but of the whole lot of you; you should feel your active responsibility for the development of your art. We must never forget that our fate is the fate of the Bolshoi Theatre, and that its interests are our interests. And it is because of this that each one of us has received

and continues to receive in his work so much more than a singer touring on his own, even the most famous, ever could. And so I am always ready to hail our collective work within the walls of the Bolshoi.

E. O. And so am I! But I still say that we should renew the repertoire somehow. . . .

Conversation taped

by *Grigory Tsitrinyak*

AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SOVIET FOOTBALL FEDERATION

The International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA) has announced that the World Cup qualifying match between the U.S.S.R. and Chile is to be held on November 21st 1973 in Santiago, Chile.

It is no secret that as a result of the fascist coup and the overthrow of the lawful Popular Unity government, Chile is suffering a wave of terror and repression, civil rights are disregarded and a campaign of unbridled provocation is being waged against socialist countries and all those who stand for democracy; the regime is whipping up anti-Soviet feeling, and there

is evidence of acts of violence against Soviet citizens resident in the country.

The National Stadium, where the football match is to be held, has been transformed by the military junta into a concentration camp and an arena for the torture and execution of Chilean patriots. In the stands and other parts of the stadium thousands of innocent people are being held by force. Among the prisoners of this stadium-prison are dozens of foreigners, including Cuban coaches who came to the country at the invitation of Chilean sports organisations.

The Soviet Football Federation approached the International Federation of Football Associations with the proposal that the match be staged in some third country since it would be impossible for Soviet sportsmen now to play in a stadium stained with the blood of Chilean patriots.

The FIFA, however, took no notice of the monstrous crimes perpetrated by the military junta—even though the whole world is aware of their existence—and basing its decision on the words of the self-styled Chilean Minister of Defenc, announced that there were no obstacles in the way of the qualifying match being played in Santiago.

The Soviet Football Federation

wishes, in the name of Soviet footballers, to make a strong protest and to announce that in view of the circumstances—that the International Federation of Football Associations, against all reason, should kowtow to the Chilean reactionaries—it is forced to refuse to take part in the qualifying game of the World Championship on the territory of Chile and to lay all the responsibility for this at the feet of the organisers of the FIFA.

At the same time the Soviet Football Federation confirms that it is quite prepared to play against the Chilean team in some third country if the International Federation of Football Associations is prepared to review its decision.

THE STADIUM, OR TWENTY DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A UNITED NATIONS OFFICIAL

Henrich Borovik was born in Minsk, in 1929. He studied at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, finishing in 1952 when he started his writing career.

His main works are Far Away, a collection of articles, Report on the New Burma, How It Happened in Cuba, The Story of a Green Lizard, Met Your Special Correspondent, The Year of the Unusual Sun and other prose works. He is also the author of plays and filmscripts like Revolt of the Unknowns, Before the Shot, Three Minutes of Martin Grow.

Henrich Borovik spent many years in the U.S.A. as a special correspondent for the Novosti Press Agency and Literaturnaya Gazeta. He has been decorated with the Order of the Red Banner of Labour and the Vorovsky prize. He is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and of the Union of Soviet Journalists. He lives and works in Moscow.

HENRICH BOROVIK,

APN and Literaturnaya Gazeta Special Correspondent

The man whom I am to follow through twenty days of his life is not Chilean. He is an Argentinian, working in Chile in the local branch of the F.A.O. (the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation), that is to say a U.N. official with the relevant international legal status.

His name is Luis Carlos Marin. *First day.* (11 September 1973.) He learned of the start of the coup by radio, twiddling the knob of his receiver to change the frequency as he sat at breakfast. The stations he usually listened to in the morning were strangely silent, while others played military marches. Then be-

tween two marches he suddenly heard:

“...in order to prevent civil war and the total economic collapse of the country, to restore the norms of democracy and preclude the monster of dictatorship which the present president is eager to establish in violation of the constitution, representatives of the armed forces and the carabinieri have decided to form a junta and take power into their own hands. We advise those inside the presidential palace, ‘La Moneda’, to leave the building immediately. If these instructions are not complied with by 11 a. m., the junta will submit the palace to bombing from the air and artillery fire. . . .”

That was how Luis first heard that there had been a military coup.

He lived with his wife and two children, aged two and three, in a rich middle-class suburb of Santiago favoured by U.N. representatives and not far from Tomás Moro where Salvador Allende had his personal residence.

He did not go out onto the street, nor did he allow his wife or children to do so, following to the letter the junta’s instructions that people were to stay at home and go out under no circumstances.

These orders were given out over the radio between marches, and Luis counted up to 25 such orders during the course of the day. Besides orders, the junta also broadcast explanations.

The people of the district where Luis lived did not, by the way, regard these instructions as pertaining to them. The bourgeoisie came out of their mansions and rejoiced openly at the sound of shooting firstly

from the direction of Che Guevara, the working-class district, then from Tomás Moro and finally from Constitution Square in the centre where the presidential palace is situated.

When they learned that the presidential palace had fallen and word went about that Salvador Allende had committed suicide, the bourgeois embraced each other in triumph and brought bottles of “Gato negro” wine and champagne out onto the street.

And although the streets of the suburb were patrolled by officers and soldiers, those who disobeyed the junta’s orders that no one was to appear on the streets were overlooked in the well-to-do districts.

That evening the houses were brightly lit and inside each one there was celebrating and music. At the same time reprisals against the local population were going on in the working-class districts.

Second day. Luis spent this one at home too, in accordance with the junta’s orders not to go out into the streets. At ten in the evening, as his wife was putting the children to bed, there was a sound of squealing brakes and shouting outside the house. Luis lifted the blind and saw a stream of soldiers with machine-guns pouring from a large covered military lorry that stopped outside their house. Under the orders of its officers, one part of the group surrounded the house while the other, led by four officers, set off for the front door at a run. A few seconds later they were already knocking.

Luis went up and opened the door.

The soldiers rushed headlong into the house, machine-guns at the rea-

dy, the first few armed even with hand-grenades. Four of them grabbed Luis, dragged him into the drawing-room, put him face-up against the wall and searched him deftly. This all took place almost without recourse to words, the operation carried out with professional efficiency. The other soldiers occupied the whole house, from attic to cellar. They brought his wife and children out of the nursery and shoved them into the drawing-room too, searching them in the same way. Even the children, who were crying in fear.

"I am an official of the United Nations and an Argentinian citizen. You have no right...."

"We know you're a foreigner. But you're a Marxist and a trouble-maker and we've orders to arrest you, interrogate you and search your house," answered one of the officers.

"My convictions are my own business; I have done nothing illegal and broken none of your country's laws."

"Undress him," said the officer.

The soldier standing beside Luis grabbed for his shirt and started pulling it off.

The children cried out.

The officer looked at them and at Luis' wife and said:

"Take them off to the lorry, lock them in the driving compartment and set a guard over them."

One of the soldiers stuck his machine-gun into the woman's back and took the three of them outside.

"I'm seeing them all for the last time," thought Luis, and turned away from the wall towards them. A soldier gave him a karate-blow on the back of the neck with the side

of his hand. His head suddenly felt infinitely heavy.

A minute later he had been undressed. They turned him round to face the officer, with two armed soldiers standing behind him. The others went carefully through the house, tapping over the walls, tearing down the curtain-rods, taking up the floorboards, moving and overturning the furniture, tearing open cushions, leafing through the books and tossing them into an untidy heap.

"Where do you hide your weapons?" asked the officer.

"I have none," answered Luis.

The officer nodded, in agreement, as it seemed to Luis, but suddenly he was hit on the head from behind. He tottered.

"Where's your Marxist literature?"

"My whole library is here, in this room."

"And there's no more anywhere else?"

"No."

The officer nodded again, and Luis was struck once more, only this time not from behind but from the side, in the face. The officer's nod was obviously the signal for a blow to be delivered. Luis felt a salty taste in his mouth—they must have split his lip. His hands had been handcuffed behind him.

Through the window he saw how a group of about ten soldiers had formed a team and were digging by torchlight. They moved slowly forward, taking off an even layer of earth. Two more followed behind with some kind of apparatus equipped with ear phones, "sound-ing out" the earth.

"So, you have no weapons."

"None."

"And you know nothing about any weapon-dumps?"

"Nothing."

"Hold him fast," said the officer, and the soldiers grabbed him by the arms, the shoulders and the legs, squeezing his head. The officer took his pistol from its holster, let off the safety catch, got up and approached Luis. He pointed the pistol at his face as a neuro-surgeon would point his pencil at the patient's eye and tell him to follow the point as it moved through the air. Luis shut his eyes. Even so he could not help feeling the hole of the barrel cold before him; he seemed even to be able to smell the mixture of burned oil and gunpowder that would suggest the pistol had been in use today, and more than once. But without seeing the officer's face, Luis could not tell what he was about to do and this he could not bear. It was easier simply to open his eyes and look at the pink finger with its pink nail resting on the trigger.

And so he opened them. He looked past the pistol at the officer's face, or rather, at part of it, since the latter was standing so close. All he could see was an ear that looked as though it were nailed to its owner's head. He was afraid. But not as much as he had been when he shut his eyes.

"Which of your friends in the government had caches of weapons?"

"I don't kn..." Luis did not even have time to get the words out when he became aware of a pain in the teeth and the jaw, in the roof of his mouth and the back of his head. The officer had shoved the pistol into his mouth and was twisting the handle to left and right. Luis choked and turned involuntarily away or rather

tried to, but was held fast by the soldiers. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed that they stood no longer behind him, but at his sides, evidently afraid a bullet might pierce his skull and hit them, or maybe they did not want to be spattered with blood. Luis registered all this in a matter of seconds, remembering that the safety-catch was off and the officer's finger on the trigger. One jerk, and he was done for.

He felt a terrible emptiness inside, as though his guts had disappeared. But the officer did not shoot. Instead he put away the pistol and asked again:

"But who among your friends in the government had a cache of weapons, and where did they keep it?"

Luis spat blood, breathed deeply a few times and suddenly whispered—for he found he had lost the strength to speak in his normal voice—that he had no personal friends in the government and knew nothing about any caches.

The officer shrugged and nodded to the soldiers, who started to beat Luis once more. The pain did not grow greater with each blow, the heaviness in his head and body merely increased. He did not lose consciousness, which surprised him greatly. It seemed to surprise the soldiers but did not annoy them for they did not increase the strength of their blows. This was probably not their first beating that day, and they were no doubt tired of the whole procedure. The officer too seemed tired of the whole business. At last he made a sign and said:

"Back to the wall."

Luis' brain, which seemed to have escaped from his body, registered the fearful meaning of these words,

but they made no impression on his nerves, as though it was not him being addressed. And when it transpired that the officer did not intend to shoot him, simply to return him to his previous position facing the wall, he felt neither joy nor relief at the circumstance. He just registered this fact as he had all the others, as though he was putting a tick against it on some list. He stood as he was told to and his eyes, swollen and bruised, could just see how the heavy dark drops falling from his face made little red stars as they hit the floor.

The officer made a phone call and when he had hung up ordered Luis to get dressed. They took off the handcuffs and shoved him toward the pile of clothes that had been pulled out of the cupboard onto the floor. He dressed haphazardly, sitting on the floor and picking his warmest things out of the pile. He was frozen, though he understood this only when he put on his shirt and his teeth started chattering from cold. When he was back in the handcuffs and led to the table where the officer sat, he caught sight of his watch. He couldn't work out how long he had been interrogated for, although he knew for sure that it was ten in the evening when the soldiers had burst into his house. Only a few days later did he manage to work it out, because he remembered with confidence that when they had stopped the interrogation and ordered him to get dressed, it had been one o'clock on his watch on the table. So by now it was already September 13.

Third day. The officer talked no more. The soldiers, led by a sergeant,

took Luis out of the house where those who had been digging had finished their work and were standing leaning on their spades, some of them smoking, some chatting, and they did not stop while he was led past. As he stood on the pavement near his car, he clearly caught sight of his wife's face pressed against the wind-screen. Her lips were moving, she was obviously saying or shouting something to him. The children were nowhere to be seen. The first thought that came slowly into his head was that they had been taken away somewhere but then, so slowly that he could almost feel the impulses moving along his nervous system, he found it was replaced by another, that they were probably asleep on the back seat, and the likeness of this relieved him a little. He forgot about the handcuffs and tried to wave but all that came out of it was a jerk of the shoulder from which he almost lost his balance.

Two soldiers took him by the arms and pushed him into the back of a small lorry with bars on the windows, where he gave his head a painful bang on the metal roof. The soldiers got in behind him and sat down on the bench opposite, training their light and convenient machine-guns at his stomach.

The windows were painted over, so he did not see where they were taking him. As soon as they stopped, however, he recognised where they were: the O'Higgins Military Academy.

They took him into the building and turned him over to the duty-officers at the door, and after a phone call led him along a cold empty corridor, stopping in front of one of the doors. "A cell," thought

Luis with relief. "Maybe they'll leave me in peace now." But when they led him into the room, he realised that it was not a cell at all, or at least not a prison cell, but rather an office. He was right. On the table there were two lamps, one of which was trained onto the table and the other onto his face. They led him nearer and the man standing behind the table, whose face Luis could not see, adjusted the second lamp so that it shone straight into the prisoner's eyes.

Luis did not wait for the questions but started to speak as loudly as he could, stopping to take deep breaths in an effort to speak louder than a whisper:

"I would like to repeat ... when your soldiers burst into my house ... I ... I am not a citizen of Chile, I am an official of the United Nations, of which Chile is a member ... I am a citizen of Argentina. Your men are effecting ... a violation of the rules of the United Nations and International. . . ."

They started to beat him before he could finish, from behind as they did at home when they arrested him, but much harder. As he fell to the floor he saw that there were three soldiers beating him. The officer at the table paid no attention to what he said about the U.N., and without even waiting for Luis to get up started to fire questions at him. They were the same questions he had been asked at home, about literature and weapons, together with new ones about his political friends and contacts. Luis answered that all his contacts were through his work as a U.N. official, and that all the literature in his possession was at home on the shelves of his library.

He did not deny that he was a Marxist and that this had an influence on the kind of books he owned. . . .

They beat him, stopping only for short pauses. They beat him when he answered a question with silence, at the end of his strength, and they beat him when he spoke. They undressed him here, too, but not completely as they had at home; only down to the waist. He lost consciousness for the first time in all the hours of interrogation, and realised that he had done so when he came round on the floor and felt his cheeks being slapped: that was the way they revived him.

He did not know how many times and for how long he was unconscious. But when at the end of the interrogation they strung him by the handcuffs from a hook in the ceiling, his body hung limp and he hoped that he would black out again so that the terrible pain in his hands and shoulders would go away, but for some reason he did not do so this time. Consciousness did not leave him and neither did the pain, but on the contrary it worsened. He thought he was on the point of crying out, but did not. When they let him down again the officer at the table asked no more questions but ordered them to "Take him away".

Two soldiers dragged him along the corridor of the O'Higgins Academy, but he managed to stand up and walk as far as his cell without their help.

(When Luis Carlos Marin told me all this in Buenos Aires, more than a month and a half had passed since that night in the O'Higgins Academy. He showed me his hands, and I saw dark-brown "bracelets" on his wrists as though he had been in

handcuffs ever since, only they had exchanged the nickel-plated pair for rusty old iron ones.)

On the same day, September 13, they transferred him from the O'Higgins Academy to Santiago National Stadium.

When he was pushed out of the lorry in front of the stadium he was surprised. Why bring him here? He had not heard of its new notoriety. He even raised an ironic smile at the fact that he still had the strength to express surprise.

And he smiled a second time in pleasure when he realised that he was strong enough to walk on his own, without help from the soldiers. He must have seven lives, although a skinny little weakling to look at, devoid of any external signs that he was of particular strength or stamina, but he walked up to the stadium on his own and faster than anyone else from his lorry-load. Even though when they pushed him out of the lorry he had not been able to stand but had fallen, thinking he would never be able to get up, up he had got. He was still handcuffed and his hands hurt almost as much as they had when they hung him up.

They took them all onto the stadium grounds and motioned to the entrance under the stands, and then led them along corridors with "Gymnastics", "Showers", "Changing Rooms", "Heavy Athletics" and "Basketball" on the doors. The words meant nothing to them in their present state, they were merely a configuration of letters from some other life, long since past. He was pushed into a small room, empty and unfurnished, without having time to read what it said on the door. Along the wall, leaning hand-

cuffed on it, stood a row of people with their backs to him, and he was also ordered to stand face to the wall, not to move, not to sit on the floor and not to talk.

The people who had brought him went away, leaving one soldier with a machine-gun by the door to make sure that no one disobeyed instructions. If anyone did so, by trying to squat, turn to his neighbour or say anything, he went up and kicked him in the legs. If a prisoner fell after being kicked, he went on kicking him until he got up.

He stood like that all afternoon and evening, until he was called up anew for interrogation at about midnight.

Fourth day. This time the interrogating officer was in the uniform of the naval intelligence.

This time they were calmer, too. They did not shout and besides questioning him about Marxist literature and caches of weapons they asked other questions by which the naval intelligence officers seemed to be trying to get evidence out of Luis of "an international Marxist plot to aid the Allende government bring off a political coup".

The interrogation went roughly as follows: "You know Altamirano, of course? Yes, of course you know Altamirano. We know all about the fact that you have met him more than once, and went to Argentina quite a lot. Whom did you meet in Argentina? Your friends, right? Marxists like yourself, to whom you brought instructions from Altamirano, there can be no doubt about it. And from there you brought all that Altamirano needed, instructions, information letters, money and

weapons, right? We know that you carried all these things."

They were not so much asking as asserting. Once they had finished with Altamirano they started on some other name, Vuskovich or Corvalan, and the whole thing started up again: "You know Vuskovich, of course?" and so on.

Luis was still unclear as to how his answers could be used against the Popular Unity Government and so tried to answer monosyllabically, confident that the interrogation room contained a dictaphone to take down all that he said.

His short, negative answers, although they annoyed the officers, did not break up the pattern of their questions and if to their half-question, half-statement "You know Pedro Vuskovich, of course?" he answered with a curt "No", they went on without stopping, "Yes, of course you know him, and met him many times in secret. We know all about it, so we don't even insist that you answer the question...". They paid almost no attention to the fact that he answered in the negative.

When he understood this, Luis decided to try something else.

"You know Miguel Enrico, of course?" was the current question, and Luis answered it with: "I know a Miguel, but he's Viña, not Enrico. I'm good friends with Miguel Viña."

Pause.

"Who? Who's this Miguel Viña?"

"A friend of mine."

"A member of the Popular Unity Government?"

"No, but a Socialist."

"What position does he occupy in the party?"

"None. He's an old man, living in Buenos Aires."

A burst of annoyance:

"We're not asking about some stupid old man. Answer the question you're asked: Do you know Miguel Enrico?"

"But you asked me what position Miguel Viña held in the party!"

And so on. The thread of their interrogation was broken, and Luis sometimes even felt master of the situation in the little room, hard as it is to imagine.

This maddened them, so they beat him even more here than they had previously. But they didn't hang him from the ceiling.

They had other ways here.

About an hour after the start of the interrogation a soldier came up behind him and blindfolded him as though he was about to have a game of "blind man's buff".

Hands forced him down by the shoulders to a sitting position on a chair that was pushed up from behind.

The first thing Luis felt was how they pulled up one trouser-leg, and then a sensation of cold by the ankle, as though they had stuck a leech onto it.

"Two." He did not understand the officer's command.

And suddenly there was a cold, searing sensation in his ankle, and it felt as though needles were running up his leg and through his body, as though they had put gas in his blood and it was bubbling and frothing like soda-water.

Electricity! As he came in he had seen something oblong on the table, covered with a piece of cloth, no larger than a medium-sized suitcase. It must have been the apparatus for torture by electricity. He knew that this apparatus, camouflaged to look

like the little attaché cases that businessmen take on short trips, were manufactured in the U.S.A. and supplied to the police and military intelligence of many South American countries. The Chilean military, with their direct contacts with the U.S.A., had no doubt been supplied with these "attaché cases" by the Pentagon.

Luis tried to still the tremor in his body by will power, and seemed to succeed.

"Three," said the officer, and Luis felt at once how the sensations of needles and bubbling grew stronger and it became harder to control the tremor.

And what if he were, on the contrary, to relax his muscles and let this damned electricity have its will with his body? Luis gave it a try, but realised at once that he mustn't: his body started to writhe convulsively, completely out of control.

Suddenly it stopped. They had turned off the current, and Luis felt totally weak. He was aware of the silence all around and of a metallic buzz in the back of his head as though it were host to the mechanism from a clockwork toy.

"What instructions did you take to Argentina from Altamirano? Answer. Don't stop to think. Answer at once."

Even if he had wanted to answer at once without stopping to think as the voice demanded, he could not do it. He found difficulty even in shaking his head, let alone saying anything. But he gathered up all his strength, shook his head and croaked weakly "None at all".

"Four!" said the officer's voice.

Again the unbearable burning sensation and the jolt through his

entire body. Only this time the jolt came not from his ankle, but from his groin.

So as not to lose the last vestiges of control over body and will power, Luis started to count in his head. He clenched his teeth and started silently: "One ... two ... three...." He counted up to twenty before the officer said "Stop".

Again the weakness, even worse than before, and again the questions whose meaning he did not even try to understand by this time, trying merely to shake his head. Then again the order to turn on the current, this time not on four but on five, stopping after twenty seconds for more questions. Then six, the current going up each time.

And each time the electric leech crawled further up his body, onto his belly, his chest, his neck, his chin.... Finally he felt them put the terminal into his mouth with the order "Nine". For a moment he comforted himself by imagining that it was not an electrical terminal in his mouth, but the barrel of a pistol, and that in a few moments he would lose consciousness and it would all be over....

He does not know how he was brought back to consciousness, but as he came round he noted without any particular surprise, as though merely establishing a fact, that he was alive.

He was still sitting in the chair, but no longer blindfolded.

And the officer at the table was still demanding answers to his questions about Luis Carlos Marin's activities as the link between Allende's government and the "international Marxist plot".

After about half an hour had

passed they blindfolded him again and the whole process started anew....

Fifth day. When he came to, it was already night. He was lying on the cement floor of the same cell to which he had been brought the day before, while beside him lay (he did not know whether they were asleep or unconscious) its old inhabitants. The light was on, and by the door sat a guard with a machine-gun on his knees.

The clockwork mechanism was still buzzing in the back of his head which felt weighed down, as though it had been filled with some heavy liquid which beat against the sides of his skull with all the force of ocean waves whenever he tried to move or even turn his head. He tried to lift his hand to his head; the hand obeyed him, but as soon as he lifted it off the floor it started shaking as though the current were still passing through it although there were no wires here. Still, he managed to lift it and ran his fingers over his face as though to check that it really was him, Luis Carlos Marín, lying here on the concrete floor of this cell beneath the stands of the stadium, and not someone else.

He was dying of thirst.

He turned to the guard who was not asleep, but watching him intently.

"Drink," said Luis. "Please, may I have some water?"

"Just lie there," said the sentry, "and try not to move."

"Drink..." asked Luis again. There was nothing else he wanted, not even to sleep.

The guard got up and came over to him, holding the machine-gun in

one hand. He squatted down beside Luis, glanced towards the door and said quietly:

"I'll give you some water, but only a very little. And don't drink it, just rinse your mouth and spit it out."

"Yes, yes, anything you say," said Luis when he heard the word "water". "A drink."

"Listen...." The guard put his hand on Luis' shoulder. "Did they use electricity on you?"

Luis nodded.

"You mustn't drink after the electricity, it's dangerous. I'll give you a little, but please don't drink it, I beg you. I know what happens to those who drink afterwards. O.K.?"

Luis nodded again, but he could not take his eyes off the flask of water the soldier was unstoppering. The latter had been going to hold out the whole flask to him, but seeing how he was devouring it with his eyes he thought better of it and shaking his head he poured a tiny drop into the cap.

"Listen, don't drink, I beg you. You mustn't, it'll do terrible things to you."

It was only then that the guard's words got through to Luis. He shook his head to show that he had understood and the soldier held out the cap with half a mouthful of water. Luis took it but spilt it on the floor at once, his hand shook so much. So the soldier took the cap back and refilled it patiently. This time he wanted to bring it to Luis' lips himself, but the latter shook his head stubbornly and held out his hand which did not shake this time. The soldier looked at the Argentinian with admiration. At last Luis felt the blessed sensation of water in his

mouth, but although dying to swallow he forced himself simply to rinse his mouth and spit it out. The soldier, impressed, nodded:

"Good lad. You're a strong character. Now go to sleep."

It was already dawn when Luis was woken up with a kick. He was made to get up, face the wall and lean on it with his hands, monstrously swollen and bruised from the handcuffs and running with blood. The night guard was gone, replaced by another who spoke only the language of boots and rifle-butts.

Having to stand all day, handcuffed, with hands raised and feet tied at the ankles, was probably no less cruel a torture than the electricity and the beatings.

They were fed once a day. The food was dished out on the other side of the door and brought to them in little dishes the size of a small ash-tray. The prisoners gulped it down in seconds, but Luis forced himself to spin it out for as long as ten minutes. He chewed everything, ruminating each piece until it was completely gone. His little piece of boiled celery he mashed into fibres and chewed each fibre separately. He broke tiny crumbs off his bird-sized portion of bread and those too he chewed and chewed....

He ate like this and looked expressively at his cell-mates as he did so. Those who had even the smallest crumb left in their "ash-trays" followed his example and also started to chew slowly.

That day he suddenly felt as though he was getting his second wind, discovering a strength he never knew he had in him, although physically he was even weaker than the day before. He felt stronger than

the officers whom he had been able to distract from their set scheme of questions, stronger than the machine that stood on the table looking like a suitcase, stronger than the day guard who had unlimited physical power over them and tried to kick them every time he had the opportunity.

Sixth day. They interrogated him again today. This time it was not naval but army intelligence men, but they went through the same procedure, with the same blindfold and the same figure "nine". The only difference was that before the second round of shocks, one of the officers said:

"If you think that your stubbornness is bringing all this suffering to yourself only, then you are very much mistaken. Your wife and children are going through it too."

Luis had long been expecting them to say something about his wife and children. He was expecting threats that if he continued to refuse to answer they too would be arrested and tortured, and prepared himself for the threat. When he heard these words he did all he could to prevent their speaker from seeing how much they frightened him.

"Maybe you think I am deceiving you?" said the officer. "I would advise you not to make that mistake."

He nodded to the sergeant standing in the room.

"Go and get her."

Luis was at a loss. When preparing himself for this he had been through all the methods to which the junta might resort, including the most terrible: they might bring him to a room where they were torturing his wife and children. Intellec-

tually, he understood that the junta was quite capable of this. But in his heart he could not imagine it happening. It wasn't that he could not believe that the fascist regime would sink so low, it was just that he could not believe that it might happen to *him* to be tried in this way. And although he was prepared for the worst, he tried not to think of what might happen if he saw his wife and children beaten and tortured. He did not know whether he could hold out and keep his head as he had been able to do under torture. And now it was as though he suddenly understood that it really was him all this was happening to, his children and his wife that they were about to bring in....

The officer pulled aside the curtain at a little window. Daylight seeped into the room.

"Look," he ordered, and the soldiers shoved Luis towards the window.

There he saw his wife, being led between two soldiers. She was walking away from the room where he was. She walked without needing help, as he noted in a flash, almost with joy. He called her name with all the strength he had, but she did not turn round although she must have heard. At that moment the officer gave a jerk to the curtain and the soldiers started to beat Luis.

They dragged him away to the chair.

"Well, now you see," said the officer, looking inquisitively at Luis' face, "we weren't lying to you.... So I earnestly advise you to give up your tactics of silence."

But Luis noticed that there was no look of triumph in the officer's eyes.

Seventh to twentieth days. That night he was transferred to another cell, a largish one which had been a changing-room for the sportsmen before becoming a prison cell.

It now contained a hundred and forty people, crowded in to overflowing. Soon Luis found out that about 20 per cent of the prisoners here were Communists, 40 per cent Socialists and the rest of no particular affiliation or not Party members. 80 per cent of them were workers, and the rest members of the intelligentsia.

They were allowed to speak in this cell and not forced to stand face to the wall; there would not have been enough wall for that. People were taken from here for interrogation as from his previous cell, and returned either mangled and bloody or else did not return at all.

Some were taken away at night, never to be seen again. Their places were taken by others, though in this context the word "places" carries a purely symbolic character; it would be more correct to say that each one to leave made it possible for them to stuff another prisoner into the cell, already full to overflowing. By night they could hear the sound of shooting and sometimes by day too, though more rarely. It came from the football field.

Not far from the changing-room were the lavatories, to which they were taken under guard. Because there were so many of them, the queue for the lavatory never got any shorter day or night. It was the main way in which prisoners from different parts exchanged information.

Luis soon discovered that there were about five thousand people in

custody on the territory of the stadium. 80 per cent of them were Chileans, the rest foreigners, most Latin Americans. But there were also about 20 North Americans and 40 Europeans—French, Swedish, Swiss and Belgians. He also found that there were another 9 U.N. representatives; there had been 11, but two died under torture, including Professor Rios, a Bolivian working for UNESCO. Luis also learned that at night they shot people in groups of 10-15, incinerating part of the bodies in a rubbish incinerator and taking the rest away in lorries.

Among the prisoners in Luis' cell was Corvalan, son of the General Secretary of the Chilean Communist Party. He had been arrested on September 15, on the fourth day after the coup (two weeks before his father).

The young Corvalan (Luis guessed he must be about 25-26) had already been in this cell a few days, and had been interrogated many times in an attempt to find out the whereabouts of his father.

The interrogations went on every day and every night. People were taken away in groups and brought back one by one. Those cell-mates who could walk rushed to help them in as they returned, and it was often the sight of this offer of help that pushed a man over the edge so that he came to the end of his tether and sometimes lost consciousness and fell down by the door.

Once Luis expressed out loud the opinion that they were wrong to rush to help those brought back to the cell after interrogation, for it is just at that moment, when he relaxes, that a man loses his self-control and his will power. And if he loses

them, then he has to start all over again from the beginning the next day. But if he has shown strength and courage at the interrogation, then he must be strong to the end so that next time his strength will be redoubled.

There were some who had no confidence in Luis' words, but others, including the young Corvalan, upheld him and they were soon convinced that it really was better that way both for those returning from interrogation and for those awaiting their turn.

The awareness of his own strength which had been born in Luis and strengthened over the past few days of its own accord seemed to define the attitude towards him of all the other prisoners. It was he who prepared newcomers for interrogation.

"Try not to let the blow fall on you from behind. Discover what is the signal by which the officer gives the order for it, whether he nods, makes a sign or says something, and turn your face towards the soldiers behind at once so that you catch at least a glimpse of where they're going to strike and the blow does not come as a complete surprise. Try and evade, if you can, blows aimed at the back of your head; let them get you on the cheekbone, the nose or the jaw, anywhere rather than on the back of the head. Never mind they beat you on the chest, on the side or in the stomach; anywhere is better than on the backbone."

That was his constant message, "never mind...", and at first they listened to him with astonishment and mistrust, wondering how it was possible not to "mind" when you're being beaten in the face. But it is possible, if while they smash your

face you are occupied with preventing them from getting you in the back of the head or the spine.

"Now, electricity," Luis went on.

"They start with the legs. Never mind the pain. It's unpleasant, extremely unpleasant, but not dangerous. Then they move on to the groin, the stomach and the chest. Again, never mind. Concentrate all your attention on keeping yourself together and your thoughts clear. You're being tortured not only to give you pain, but also to break your spirit so that you will give them the answers they want. Start minding when they put the terminal in your mouth or onto your throat: this is dangerous, for it can make you choke. Open your mouth as wide as you can and breath with all you've got."

Those were the instructions he gave them, often sharing the job with the young Corvalan. They all knew Corvalan. By his very presence in the cell this young man (and in Luis' opinion, he was the strongest-willed and best-disciplined person in the cell) lent authority to Luis' "preparatory lessons". These efforts had an immediate effect on cell morale.

The hardest task was to prepare women, who were kept in this common cell with the men from the start, for interrogation, beating and torture. If it had been merely a question of physical pain, there would have been no problem, for women can demonstrate even more stamina than men. But the women were often raped during interrogation, when no one could help them.

On one occasion when a group of soldiers came to fetch some women every man in the cell got to his feet, including both those who could

stand and those who could not, and, bloodied, maimed and sick as they were, made a screen around the women. The soldiers tried to threaten them with weapons, prodding them with their machine-guns, but the prisoners did not give an inch or let the soldiers through to where the women were standing. Another moment, and there would have been dozens of corpses on the floor, their skulls burst open by machine-gun fire, but the soldiers were not expecting resistance and had no orders as to what they should do in an eventuality like this, so they stood for a while with guns at the ready and finally stepped down.

The next day all the women were taken to a separate cell, and the men feared that they would now be even worse treated than before. All five thousand prisoners were ready to rise up together in revolt if a single case of violence against a woman came to their knowledge.

And the rapings stopped.

They did not know what was responsible for this victory, their decisive action or the circumstance that foreign correspondents had at last been allowed into Santiago. But whatever the contributing factors, it was a great victory over their armed captors.

There was another victory, too. As I said above, they were fed once a day, from a thing like an ash-tray. It was unbelievably little, far too little to support human life (during his 17 days in the stadium Luis lost 12 kilograms from the mere 60 he started out with). But once they brought them even less, only half an "ash-tray". Corvalan and Luis, when they caught sight of these half-portions, stood up and declar-

ed: "We will not eat this. Nobody will eat until you at least give us what you used to give us before." And nobody took the smallest crumb from the sergeant who was dishing out the food. The sergeant started to threaten them with a machine-gun, but that changed no one's mind. Then came an officer, who threatened, shouted and tried to persuade them. They ate nothing all day, but towards evening they were brought a whole "ash-tray" full, as much as they had had before.

That was also a victory, one of great importance for them....

The subject of Allende often came up in the cell; what had happened to him? Nobody believed that he had committed suicide. They were all convinced he died fighting. But there were those who found it strange that he should have gone to the palace to fight, and who considered that in itself an act of suicide. Maybe it would have been better to fight in one of the working-class districts, at a factory where he would have had the support of the workers, or to go underground and lead the struggle against the junta from there, or at least to go abroad and head a government in exile....

The majority disagreed with them: he could not have gone to a working-class district to fight with the support of the workers, for he knew that would have meant the deaths of thousands of workers and their families (there would have been mass shootings afterwards). He could not have gone underground, for every living soul in the country knew his face. He could not have gone abroad, for that would have meant capitulating to the junta. He had decided to fight in the palace not so

as to cut a romantic figure, but because that was the only just and truly *political* solution, and Allende was a sober politician through and through....

On October 1 Luis Carlos Marin was released from custody, without any explanation of the reasons for his arrest or his release. No explanations were given whatsoever. They simply came into the cell, called him by name, took him to the main gates, and let him go: "You're free."

On the other side of the gates he was met by those representatives of the F.A.O. who had engineered his release and that of the other U. N. representatives.

They took him straight from the stadium to the airport, where a plane was waiting to take off for Buenos Aires.

He walked up the steps and the moment he had entered the aircraft he was embraced by his weeping wife. Beside her stood the children.

It turned out that after he had been carted off, she had taken the opportunity afforded by the guard's momentary absence to seize the children and run to the house of a good friend of theirs who lived not far away. She did not know to this day how she had managed to evade the night patrols. That day she and the children were dispatched with every precaution to the Columbian Embassy where they had remained in hiding, as ignorant of his fate as he was of theirs. It was only today that they had let her know they could send her back home to Argentina.

So, it had been another woman in his wife's dress whom they pointed out to him under the stands in the stadium! It would have been no

problem to take a dress from the ransacked house. Luis shuddered as he thought of what would have happened to his wife and children had the junta officers arrested them....

It was in Buenos Aires that I met Luis Carlos Marin. He now works in one of the Argentinian agencies of the U.N.

When he told me about the time of horror, he said:

"I would like to explain the state I was in then, as I understand it now. When on the evening of September 12 they burst into our house I decided at once that this was the end and that they were going to kill me, and it was this pessimistic conclusion, paradoxically, that gave me strength. I decided that since I had to die, I would do so as a human being, not a cowering animal. There was, of course, nothing I could tell them under interrogation about an 'international Marxist plot against Chile' because there was no such thing and I had never been employed to convey political instructions of any kind. I only did my job. But that is not the point. I was af-

raid that if I told them anything about any meetings with members of the Allende administration in the course of doing my job, it could be used by the junta for its own ends. I make no secret of the fact that I was on the side of the Popular Unity Government and detest everything the junta stands for. I could not allow myself, albeit unwittingly or against my own will, to do anything which might harm President Allende, even after his death."

Although nobody asked him to, Luis Carlos Marin wrote a report for the U.N. on the subject of the junta's illegal atrocities, basing it on his own eye-witness account. He wanted as many people as possible to be informed of what was going on.

I do not know what happened to his report, or whether it will be published anywhere. But it is my desire also that the testimony of U.N. representative Luis Carlos Marin should become known to as many people as possible, and that is why I have written this article.

Buenos Aires—Moscow

EIGHT SECONDS

Anatoly Pinchuk was born in 1930 in the town of Dnepropetrovsk. After the Second World War he moved with his parents to Moscow and since then has lived and worked in the capital. He started writing in 1954, when he finished his studies at the Institute of Jurisprudence. He has published many essays, stories and articles. His main subject is sport, which he knows and loves, with its relevance to human life and its power

*to unite people of completely different outlooks. This article was published in the magazine *Yunost* ("Youth") in 1973.*

ANATOLY PINCHUK

This game, played on the court of the Munich "Basketballhalle" between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. on the night of 9th-10th September 1972, was perhaps the most dramatic in the whole history of basketball. It goes without saying that it was one of the high spots of the whole 20th Olympic games. While it was in progress, we were concerned with who was going to win. Now, many months later, it is what stood behind that victory and what it cost that interest us.

It takes time to interview twenty-two people, all living in different parts of the country. One of them, Olympic Champion Anatoly Polivoda, I did not succeed in finding, either in Kiev, or in the cities where they played the latest national championships; Polivoda was ill and not taking part.

The last eight seconds of the match are retold from three viewpoints: the court, the substitutes' bench, and the spectator stands. All those who took part and the specta-

tors whom I selected readily agreed to answer my questions. Only the Bulgarian Artenik Arbabajan, one of the two umpires of the match, had reservations about his right to answer them all:

"Artenik Arbabajan remembers everything and could tell all about it, only not to a reporter, because Artenik Arbabajan was the umpire. But dentist's technician Artenik Arbabajan was also watching, and he knows what he's talking about too when it comes to basketball, having played in the Sophia team 'Spartak', been Bulgarian champion four times, and represented his country too. His memory is not too bad, either."

Seven of my subjects speak from the court: Alexander and Sergei Belov, Modestas Paulauskas and Zurab Sakandelidze were on court for the whole eight seconds; three seconds before the end Ivan Edeshko replaced Aljan Zharmuhamedov; and the seventh was Artenik Arbabajan.

On the substitutes' bench sat Vladimir Kondrashin, the Soviet team's chief coach, his partner Sergei Bashkin, Valery Krylov, the team's masseur, team members Gennady Volnov, Alexander Boloshev, Mikhail Korkia, Sergei Kovalenko, Ivan Dvorny, and for the first five seconds Ivan Edeshko, for the last three, Aljan Zharmuhamedov.

On the stands were umpire Gabdlnur Muhamedyanov from Kazan, Yury Rost, a correspondent from *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, Vassily Zhiltsov from the magazine *Smena*, Gunnar Hololei, sports commentator from Estonian Radio, and Soviet tourists like Yury Ozerov, former player and then coach to the

Soviet team, Vytautas Bimba, coach of the "Zalgiris" team from Kaunas, and Alexander Klimenko, from Voroshilovgrad's "Avtomobilist".

It was the end of the second time of the basketball final of the 20th Olympic Games. The United States team had just managed to get right up close to the Soviet side, with a neat goal by Jim Forbes bringing the score to 48:49.

The ball was in the hands of the Russians, with thirty-eight seconds to go. Thirty-eight seconds is a lot of time, far too much in fact. The ball can be held by one side for not longer than thirty seconds. If within that time there has not been a try, it is given to the other team, and then....

The last attack was on, and they had to carry it out to the end.

10 or 12 seconds towards the end Modestas Paulauskas passed to Alexander Belov, who was covered by the Americans. Belov shot, but didn't make it. He grasped the ball that hadn't made it into the basket and....

WHO AND HOW DID ALEXANDER BELOV PASS TO?

Sergei Belov (*court*): There were only eight seconds left, I remember clearly that I had time to glance at the clock. I was also standing opposite, about four metres from Alexander, with no one between us. I was sure he'd pass to me, because there was no one else there to pass to. I already had a feeling we had won, which was maybe the reason for our mistake: overconfidence. But Alexander passed to Zurab, almost diagonally across the court to where there were two Amer-

icans, as though the ball was red-hot and he just had to get rid of it. I was stunned....

Bashkin (*bench*): Alexander was almost over the line, and there was no time left to think calmly who he should pass to. He was falling as he threw it to Zurab, but if Zurab had got out ahead he would have caught it! I can't imagine how Alex didn't see Sergei ahead of him. Look, this is how it was: here was Alex and here, also by the foreline, Sergei, and not a single American near him!

Muhamedzhanov (*stands*): I was sitting just behind the American board, so I saw everything. I had the feeling Alexander was afraid of running or stepping on the line, that is, breaking the rules and having the ball given to the other team. That is why he tried to get rid of the ball as quickly as possible. He looked to one side, saw that there were none of our players near him, and threw the ball into the centre of the court in the hope that it would be one of ours who caught it. What he should have done, of course, was pass it to Sergei Belov, who was standing not far from the place where a corner is formed by the foreline and the sideline.

Alexander Belov (*court*): When I got the ball from Modestas, I could do nothing but go into the attack. There were two Americans, whom I managed to get round, but it wasn't an attack as such. There were obvious fouls, and after the match the Bulgarian umpire said that he'd never forgive himself for not having whistled. (*I asked the umpire what he'd said to Belov and he answered: "The dentist's technician didn't hear, and the um-*

pire Arabadjan doesn't want to answer."—A.P.) The ball left the basket, I got to it first as I was on the foreline, and it nearly bounced off court. I had to pass it on somehow. Sergei Belov said later that he had been next to me, but I didn't see him and passed to Zurab.

Zurab Sakandelidze (*court*): Alex wanted to pass to me, not seeing, no doubt, that I was well-covered. I don't know whom he should have passed to. Anyone but me....

COULD SAKANDELIDZE HAVE GOT THE BALL?

Bashkin (*bench*): If he had got out in front, he would have got the ball. He missed his moment.

Korkia (*bench*): Even Zurab could never have caught that pass.

Edeshko (*bench*): Yes, I think he could have.

Kondrashin (*bench*): No, he wasn't ready, and Collins has a good feel for that kind of backward pass, and happened to be nearer the ball.

Klimenko (*stands*): Zurab would have got that ball if he hadn't been under attack from the Americans. They almost had him down. It came out that one American attacked Zurab while another, number five, made for the ball.

Zurab Sakandelidze (*court*): As I said, I was well-covered. That is why I never dreamed he would pass to me.

AND IF SAKANDELIDZE HADN'T MADE A FOUL, WOULD ANY OF THE SOVIET TEAM HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PREVENT THE AMERICAN FROM SCORING?

Muhamedzhanov (*stands*): No. Our only hope was that Col-

lins would bungle it, a faint hope....

Paulauskas (*court*): No.

Kondrashin (*bench*): The only person on the court who could have done it was Zharmukhamedov, or even better, Alex Belov. But they would have had to be nearer to our board for that.

Dvornyy (*bench*): In general, Alex is a wizard in that kind of situation. It's a pity he was so far away....

Edeshko (*bench*): They were all as far away. There was no one near at all.

Bashkin (*bench*): Theoretically, you could pass. But who to? There was no one nearby.

Boloshev (*bench*): No, nobody could have stopped the American goal. Both our tallest players, Zharmukhamedov and Alex, were well-covered by the Americans.

Kovalenko (*bench*): And there was no one near.

Volnov (*bench*): No, if it wasn't for Zurab, we'd have lost that match.

Sakandelidze (*court*): If Alex Belov had been near, he could have....

But he wasn't?

No.

What about Zharmukhamedov?

He wasn't either.

DID YOU THINK COLLINS WOULD GET THE PENALTY GOALS, OR NOT? IF SO, ONE OR BOTH OF THEM?

Paulauskas (*court*): I thought he'd bungle at least one of them, but he got them both. "That's it," I thought.

Volnov (*bench*): For some reason I was sure that number five would get both goals, and they were beautiful goals, clean in without

catching the edge, very deft. I decided that the game was up for us.

Boloshev (*bench*): Collins fell, he was pale as death, so I thought he'd never get them in. Then when he came out to take the penalties he looked so bad-tempered that I was sure he would. He got them both in, and I sat down and hung my head thinking: "We've lost, fancy losing a game like that...."

Kondrashin (*bench*): I felt what a good player he was, and was very much afraid that he'd get both. But when he got them, there was no time to stand being afraid....

Alexander Belov (*court*): I really wished he would bungle at least one, but he put them in so deftly! By the end he had got six goals out of six tries. Then I saw how calm Kondrashin was looking and suddenly thought that perhaps we hadn't lost, perhaps we would be saved by a miracle.

Kovalenko (*bench*): I really wished with all my heart that he would mess up at least one, that I could put him off by will power. Then I fell into a kind of apathy and despair, as though I had seized up. When you lose, it's easier for those on court than those on the bench.

Korkia (*bench*): I was sure he'd get them both. He'd played well the whole time, taking on nothing that was beyond him, playing logically and efficiently.

Sakandelidze (*court*): I thought he'd mess one of them up. When he got them both I thought "That's it, we've lost". I was sorry then that I hadn't fouled earlier. If it had been six seconds left... but I only had three....

Edeshko (*bench*): Players of his calibre always get it in if they

have one penalty goal, and usually both if they have two. So that was the only question, whether he would get them both in. What astonished me was not so much the fact that he got them both in, but the way he did it. Do you remember? Without pausing to think or wavering, without any visible signs of emotion. He's probably the kind of person who never gets worked up. How bad I felt, watching him! I felt it was my fault we had lost.

But you weren't on the court yet at that point!

No. But it all started long before Alex made his mistake. When we felt that there was a chance of winning and becoming Olympic champions, we all got a bit worked up. Alex's mistake was the third in a row, and it was me who made the first one. There were no flies on the Americans: they reckoned quite rightly on the specific tactics of European basketball. All Europeans—well, nearly all—are one-handed, that is, all except the left-handed are better with their right. So are the Americans, but they use their right hand more and use it better, twisting and turning.... And they also work better with their left than we do. All in all I hold the highest opinion of American basketball, and I do not think that their domination of the sport is at all at an end. But I'm getting side-tracked. The Americans were aware of this weakness in their opponents, and kept our right hands tied. And when your opponent does that, sticking to it like a limpet, then you're afraid to pass the ball to your left. I had it in my right, and Collins got up closed. I should have taken it over into my left, but

didn't through a kind of cowardliness. I was afraid of losing the ball, but what in fact happened was much worse. I barged into Collins, it was a foul and they were already being penalised (according to the rules we played by then, any time during the last three minutes that the referee had to speak to a player meant that the other side automatically got two penalty points). Collins got them both in; we had been five points ahead, now we were only three. Then Sergei made his mistake. He's not very good with his left hand, either. They knocked the ball out of his hand, and it was his own foot that sent it off-side. That was when our three-point lead went down to one. I made a mistake, Sergei made a mistake, but for some reason it's only Alex's mistake that got noticed and talked about.

Sergei Belov (court): I didn't think about that at the time. I had other things to think about, and I hadn't got back my nerve yet. We had practically won, and now....

Bashkin (bench): I hoped he would bungle at least one. And when he got the second one in, I was too upset to go making any kind of forecast. I was already by the table raising hell with the secretaries for having stolen our time-out.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TIME-OUT?

Bashkin: When they gave Zubar a foul, Kondrashin asked for time-out. There's a sort of long wire, you press a knob at the end, and a light comes on by the table. He pressed the button and got up from the bench.

Perhaps the electric signal wasn't working?

Kondrashin: Of course it was. When I was in Geneva not long ago I saw a film of the match, not the television replay we saw yesterday but a real colour film. They showed it when they were debating the Americans' protest. I promise you, I saw the lamp bulb on the table light up and saw the secretaries nod. They wanted to give me time-out before the first throw, but I of course refused. (The coach has the right to take time-out either before or after the first penalty shot. In a situation like the last three seconds of the U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. match even a less experienced coach than Kondrashin would have taken time-out after the penalty rather than before, one of the reasons for this being the simple fact that it's easier to plan your further strategy when you know whether the ball went into the basket or not.)

Bashkin: After Collins got the first goal in, the secretaries could do nothing; they hadn't given the signal, the referee had already put the ball in Collins' hands, and that was that. (The moment the referee gives the ball to the player for the second penalty throw, the coaches of both teams lose the right to ask for time-out.) I rushed to the table and said "But we asked for time-out!"

Volnov: They stole our time-out and two more seconds. Modestas threw in the first ball. As soon as he had thrown it in, the signal went. How there was only one second left instead of three, I really don't understand.

Bashkin: We were lucky that Jones was standing at the table, on the side nearest our bench. (Since

1932, when the FIBA, the International Federation of Amateur Basketball, was founded, William Jones has been its General Secretary.) He didn't see but went up to them with three fingers raised, saying "Drei Sekunden!" But you probably saw that for yourself on the television screen.

Arabadjian: The first person to point out that it was three seconds was Bigot. (Those who saw the 1953 European Championship will remember Bigot, the expansive French referee who went straight to the hearts of Moscow basketball fans.) He was the match commissioner and the first to raise three fingers. Jones supported him.

Muhamedzyanov: The whistle that the majority of viewers both at the stands and on television took for the final whistle was in fact the tardy permission for time-out coming through. The secretaries turned out not to be in command of the situation, which is not surprising, for they are traditionally from the country where the match is being played and basketball is not a German sport. Arabadjian and Rigetto were good referees, but they are also somewhat to blame in this question of the time-out. It was obvious to everyone that Kondrashin was going to take time-out, including them, and moreover the bulb on the table had lit up, and they must have seen it. In cases like that the referee is usually in no hurry to give the ball to the player for him to shoot the second penalty, but here they did it in a hurry. Nerves were beginning to tell.

WHAT DID KONDRASHIN SAY IN THE TIME-OUT?

Kondrashin: I told them that you can get a goal in three seconds,

but you can miss one just as easily. Word for word, it went like this: "What are you getting worked up about? There's loads of time. Time to win, and time to lose." To tell the truth, I was relying on Modestas for the pass at first; then I remembered what a strong pass Ivan had developed while the lads were playing handball in training, and knew that if the pass was successful and the ball got to Alex, he would win the game for us. It's true that I thought the Americans would get it out of our hands, foul it. If that happened Alex would be unlikely to get them both in, but one he would be sure of getting. I was more worried about whether Ivan would get the ball over to him, and Ivan didn't pass at once. He stood looking at me, shouting something, but there was such a row you couldn't hear a thing. I yelled "Go on!", I don't know if he heard or not, and pointed at Alex.

S a k a n d e l i d z e: He calmed us down, said there was still a chance of winning.

B a s h k i n: I wasn't there. But before the time-out he said "Keep cool, Sergei, everything's O.K." And I found out later that he had said to Edeshko: "Ivan, go three metres back from the line and shoot the ball straight over to Alex!"

Z h a r m u h a m e d o v: I didn't hear. I had already been replaced, and I was on my way back to the bench when Kondrashin started talking to them. After the time-out he shouted to Alex: "Up to their board! Up to their board!" Alex stood looking flattened in the middle of the court, but he heard and ran up to the board. Then Kondrashin yelled to Edeshko: "Ivan, pass to Alex!"

P a u l a u s k a s: That Edeshko should pass the ball to me—I should be standing on the circle—and I to Alex Belov.

E d e s h k o: I'll tell you, but don't write down. I'll tell you why later. Kondrashin said: "You'll pass to Paulauskas, and he to Sergei Belov, who will get it in, or try to. Otherwise they'll foul it." I saw that Alex was badly off, a player in front of him and the defence behind, caught Kondrashin's eye and shouted "To Alex?" He took a quick look and yelled "Right!", while calling Alex to get his attention. I threw it over with everything I'd got. But either Kondrashin has forgotten how things were, or else I—but no, I couldn't have forgotten, I spoke about it on television too.... Though Kondrashin couldn't have forgotten either. He's very cool-headed, with lots of self-control, and I think he was the only one of us who kept his calm, passing it on to us. I remember how decisive his face was: "You'll stand there, and you there." The game wasn't over for him, he still believed in victory. But he wrote in his article in *Sport and Games* that he had told me to pass straight to Alex, so perhaps you'd write that in your article too?

It's a contradiction, and not the first one, but I am in no way put out by it. I didn't seek out different contradictory readings of what happened, but when they came up I didn't iron them out by asking leading questions. I took what I was given, and am glad I reached an objective picture without making it my aim to get to the "truth".

Journalists often write about how tense the game was, how feelings rose to fever pitch, etc. Even if you wrote to the point, without using clichés, it would still be impossible to convey the atmosphere as it was for the reader. Just to say that a

game was tense is hardly enough to give the feel of what that in fact means.

That is why I feel that the objective truth is perhaps to be found in these contradictions, for through them those who took part give us a feeling of what it's like when although it's the same set of events that are taking place before everyone's eyes, everyone sees them in a different way.

So, there was the ball in the hands of Ivan Edeshko. What was going on back on the bench while he prepared for his great pass?

Ozerov: By that time I had already crossed over from the stand to the bench where our lads were sitting. Edeshko took the ball, and we jumped up as one man, shouting "To Belov! To Belov!" We forgot that there were two Belovs in the team, and both in the court at the same time.

Which Belov did you mean?

To be honest, Sergei. I remembered how we did it in Tbilisi. (In the 1970-1971 U.S.S.R. basketball championship the Red Army team and "Spartak" from Leningrad ended up with an identical number of points. They played an extra match in Tbilisi, where seven seconds before the end "Spartak" was one point ahead. Ivan Edeshko passed to Sergei Belov a moment before the final whistle, and Belov took a shot. It was successful, and the Red Army team became U.S.S.R. champions.)

Boloshev: They gave us back our two seconds, but I still.... I hung my head as I sat in silence.... I came to my senses only when the ball fell through the basket.

Volnov: I shouted "To Belov!" meaning Alex. It wouldn't do to give the ball to Sergei. In Tbilisi there had been eight seconds, but here there were only three in hand.

It was too risky to shoot from the centre.

On the stands:

Muhamedzyanov: I thought they'd attack through Sergei Belov. The match in Tbilisi was fresh in our minds.

Klimenko: I didn't see the last three seconds, because I was sitting down again and not really looking. I thought it was all over and we had lost.

Bimbala: All I could hope for was a miracle or a foul on the part of the Americans.

Hololei: No hopes left. It was agony....

WAS THE PASS EDESHKO HAD TO MAKE A DIFFICULT ONE? HOW MANY SUCH PASSES OUT OF TEN WOULD HE HAVE GOT RIGHT?

Korkia (*bench*): If he could get even one out of the ten I'd eat my hat.

Alexander Belov (*court*): Before the Olympics we all spent a lot of time on long passes, all of us worked really hard on them, and didn't do badly at all. But Ivan's were the best of the lot. More than half his passes were perfect, six or seven out of ten.

Kovalenko (*bench*): It was a very difficult pass. And then it's much easier to do a good pass in training than to do one at the game, especially in a situation like that. In training, I think he'd have got three or four out of ten, but in match, I'm not even sure he could do it again. He got up momentum with both arms, but threw with only one. I can't really explain it in words....

Show me then.

I couldn't show you very easily, either. I'm not left-handed, and he threw with his left hand.

Bashkin (*bench*): I think he could get seven or eight out of ten. Maybe you don't believe me? We played with the Americans in Moscow before the Olympics, on April 22nd, and Kondrashin took a minute off two seconds before the end of the first time. Edeshko passed and Alex got the ball into the basket from above. Two days later we played in Kiev, same situation and same combination of players. Number five—I don't remember his name—pointed angrily at Alex: "How can you throw like that?" It's true that on neither occasion was Ivan throwing from behind the foreline; in Kiev it was from the middle, and in Moscow half-way between. But his pass at Munich was something special, even for him. Master sportsmen must be able to throw the ball right across the court, but to pass to a moving player, and get it so exactly right! I can still see in my mind's eye how the Americans jumped for it, how it was too high for them to grasp and flew straight into Alex's hands.

Sakanelidze (*court*): A very difficult pass. Edeshko could get two out of ten, but he could just as likely not get a single one out of a hundred.

Kondrashin (*bench*): It all depended on that pass. Playing in "Spartak" Alex learned to catch any kind of pass, and Ivan's was dead on. Out of ten, I really think he could have got seven or eight.

Muhamedzyanov (*stands*): That pass was a great rarity. Right across the court, and accurate to a millimetre. He was right to throw with both hands.

Are you sure he threw with both hands?
Of course. It's the only way to make a pass like that.

Edeshko (*court*): Kondrashin must have felt it was my lucky day or something. I still don't know what made him substitute me for Zharmuhamedov. Zharmuhamedov is taller, he could have got the ball under the board, or given it a header; the pass was in the direction of the circle and it's not difficult to hit the board. They let the defence out when they're ahead and want to keep their advantage, let him out twenty seconds before the end to hold the ball back.

What was so difficult about this pass?

It's easy to do in a small hall, where walls are right behind the boards and you can sense the distance. But in somewhere that size.... When you're used to a small hall you often throw too far, too high or not far enough, because you lose your feeling for space. The hall in Munich is enormous, and the court itself two metres longer than ours are.

And how many like that could you get out of ten?

I really don't know! How can I say for myself?

But the others said that in the plane on the way back from Munich, you were saying it was one in a hundred.

Well, I was a bit merry then.

How did you throw the ball?

First I took a run. Then threw it like this. (He gave a demonstration, as though he was putting the shot or making a pass in handball.)

So it was with one hand, not two?

Of course.

And without hooking your arm?

It was just like I showed you.

Right hand or left?

Right, of course. I couldn't have done it with my left, I'm not left-handed after all.

You remember it all clearly?

Of course.... What a question!

Krylov (bench): A great pass by Edeshko. He threw from the spot, hooking his arm.

Edeshko says he took a run....

Either you misunderstood him, or else he forgot.

And Edeshko says he didn't hook his arm....

No, he's mistaken. He must have forgotten.

HOW WERE THE AMERICANS PLACED AROUND ALEXANDER BELOV WHEN EDESHKO PASSED? AND HOW DID BELOV ATTACK?

Sergei Belov (court): He started in a sandwich between number fourteen, a white, the defence, and number ten, the centre, a black. When Alex started running, first towards his own goal and then towards the American, the sandwich fell apart. They made the mistake of falling for his trick... and anyway, it would take three men to keep tabs on Alex.

Volnov (bench): Alex was about four metres from the goal, with both Americans beside him but a bit nearer the centre. They started to move backwards to catch the ball, and when you come at it like that, you usually miss it. The ball fell down behind them, right into Alex's hands. The Americans wouldn't have made such a mistake if they didn't think by then that the game was already in their pocket.

Edeshko (court): The Americans were in front of Belov. Both? Hang on, there was only one there.... No, perhaps both. I only remember how Alex broke away to-

wards me and then back to their goal. And how he shot very carefully, with both hands.

Bashkin (bench): They were in a straight line with Belov. Belov between them. It was an obvious mistake: they should have stood one in front and one behind. That way he wouldn't have shaken them off so easily. Belov shot accurately and carefully, with both hands. I asked him later why he didn't put it in from above with both hands, and he answered, "I was terrified of missing, and that way it was for sure." There were fouls there, too: they grabbed at him, and he tore away from them.

Korkia (bench): Alex aimed beautifully. He could easily have put it in from above, but didn't. He wasn't taking any chances, he arranged his feet, stood and thought for a moment, lifted the ball in both hands and then put it in with just the right. Afterwards he said that he was terrified, and so would anyone have been in his shoes.

Bimba (stands): The Americans were where they ought to be, one in front and one behind. But they should have been looking at the ball, not at Belov.

Kondrashin (bench): I really don't remember who they were. I just remember that two of them stuck fast to Alex, one from in front and the other from behind, just as they should be. It would be hard to imagine a better position for them. But they shouldn't have let the ball out of their sight, and they didn't take into account his advantage over them in the jump.

Alexander Belov (court): I stayed in the middle to put them off the scent and get nearer to the goal.

There were two Americans, number eleven a bit nearer the middle than I was and fourteen between me and the foreline, nearer to me. I pretended to be moving the other way, then turned sharply and made for the goal. It was a magnificent pass, and I was quite alone in the goal. I even glanced round to check. A nagging thought crept into my mind: "And supposing I bungle it?" I threw the ball very carefully with my right hand. In any other match I would never have dreamt of throwing like that, I'd have done it much more confidently and with more force.

Were there any fouls?

No, there was no one there to foul me.... It was their mistake. Macmillan should have been standing next to me. He's over two metres high, the tallest American on the court. And someone else should have been standing as near as possible to Edeshko. The rest should have been putting our team off their stride by pressing close, though not too close, otherwise there would have been a foul.

WHAT DID YOU FEEL AND DO IN THE MOMENT OF VICTORY?

E d e s h k o: I stayed where I was. It was only when I saw Alex score and run back that I set off towards him. I was the first to reach him.

Z h a r m u h a m e d o v: I jumped for joy and shouted something unintelligible. I rushed into the crowd of players. Alex was running towards us and we to him, and I ended up on the bottom of the scrum. Only later did I have the sensation of something heavy on top of me, and realise that I might get crushed. I decided to get out of there, and

managed it thought it was no easy task.

S a k a n d e l i d z e: I was by our goal and I fell over. I don't remember at all what I did. They all tumbled on top of me, hugging each other, and I hugged them too. I don't remember who, exactly. I only remember Misha being there.

P a u l a u s k a s: Nothing.

What do you mean, nothing? Weren't you overjoyed?

There was such a lot of noise, and I couldn't understand what was going on. It was only when I saw them all embracing and congratulating one another that I understood.

Did anyone congratulate you, or you anyone else?

Of course!

Who?

I don't remember.

K o v a l e n k o: At first I was in a state of shock. I didn't register; I didn't know whether we really had won, or whether I had just imagined it. Maybe it was all a hallucination? When I saw Bashkin and Yury Ozerov in tears I understood that we really had and ran out onto the court. There was a pile of bodies with Alex Belov at the bottom. I fell onto the floor and that's all I remember.

K o r k i a: I set off at a run. I remember running about the court with a bottle of mineral water, then embracing Alex Belov. I ended up on the floor with him, and a pile of players on top of us. Then I remembered Volodya Andreyev, which made me sad. (He was a player who collided with Korkia during training and did not recover from his injuries in time to take part in the Olympics.) I thought of how he'd never forgive me.

M u h a m e d z y a n o v: I ran up to the umpires' table to make sure they filled out their report right, for only the result in the report is valid, not what is up on the board or what the television commentator says. When I saw Rippetto, as senior judge, sign that the U.S.S.R. team had won 51:50, then I calmed down a bit. Victory was ours.

A lexander Belov: I threw my arms in the air, jumped and ran towards our bench. The team's faces were transformed.

Who was the first to congratulate you?
E d e s h k o and M i s h a K o r k i a.

And did Kondrashin do so?

No. He told me off, no doubt for the ball I threw to Collins.

What did he say?

I don't remember. I only remember sitting on the bench in tears beside Sergei, and Kondrashin chasing everyone else away.

V o l n o v: Everyone rushed to congratulate one another, and I looked for Kondrashin at once. He was standing on his own down below, no sign of joy on his face, nothing but curiosity as he watched them on the court. I lifted him up in my arms and put him back down again, without him expressing any emotion at all.

K l i m e n k o: I ran out onto the court like all the Soviet spectators, and saw that while everyone had rushed to congratulate the players there was no one doing the same for the coach. And I—though I'm not boasting—was the first to congratulate Kondrashin. It's true; I grabbed him, turned him round and embraced him. He was like a strange person. I'm glad to have been the first to ~~congratulate him~~.

K o n d r a s h i n: Nothing. Reg-

retted that we'd played so messily. Of course, it's not worth talking about it now, but I would have wanted to win without those last three seconds. Then I called over Alex Belov and told him off as hard as I could: "How could you have thrown away that ball like that? When you get the ball, hang onto it! If it's doubtful, never mind. Five seconds would have passed...."

You shouldn't have done, Kondrashin, really shouldn't. You shouldn't have regretted that the match was a mess, and you shouldn't have told Belov off like that. That bad pass did more in the final analysis for basketball in our country than hundreds or thousands of good ones would have done. That pass was just what it needed, for without it our victory would have been less memorable. And they would write even less about basketball in the press than they do now thanks to it.

So that bad pass turned out to be a very good thing. Two or three more like that and they'll suddenly start putting out a Basketball Weekly. I'm exaggerating, of course, there's no hope of such a thing, but what's wrong with dreaming?

THERE WAS A REPORT PUBLISHED IN "KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA" BY YURY ROST, WITH THE AUTHOR'S OWN PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN THE CHANGING ROOMS SOON AFTER YOU HEARD THE AMERICANS HAD LODGED A PROTEST. DID YOU KNOW YOU WERE BEING PHOTOGRAPHED?

E d e s h k o: I saw him, but it was all the same to me.

P a u l a u s k a s: No, I didn't see him.

K o r k i a: I was so stunned that I didn't see anyone. Only later I saw that there was a young man with a camera there, but I didn't stop to wonder who he was or what he wanted.

V o l n o v: I don't remember being photographed and I didn't see

anyone with a camera, though if there was anyone hanging around I would have been sure to see him. He probably had a hidden camera.

R o s t: No, it wasn't a hidden camera. They were in such a state that it was all the same to them whether they were being photographed or not. It was like this; after the game was over and they heard about the protest, they stayed in the changing rooms. I saw that they were sitting in silent suspense; I had one film left in my camera, and a telefoto lense with me. I was so afraid that there wasn't enough light that I didn't even develop the film there in Munich.

So they could have seen they were being photographed?

They saw it and were well aware of it. I told Volnov, Sergei Belov and some of the others that I was taking their photo. Nobody objected, only Sergei Belov said "Why bother? Nothing will come out, you know, Yura...."

Did you take Kondrashin and Bashkin after the game?

It was impossible to take Kondrashin, he was pacing up and down the corridor the whole time. And Bashkin had disappeared altogether, he was off doing something....

B a s h k i n: When we heard that the Americans were protesting, we went straight off to see them. "What's up?" we asked. "Why the protest? You yourselves know very well that everything is as it should be. Why put the added strain on both our lads and your own?" They didn't answer any of our questions. They had nothing to answer, of course. We got our medals exactly twenty-four hours later, at the third try. They should have given them

to us on the spot, but at the end of the day they were still sorting out the protest. They gave them to us in the hall where they held the gymnastics and then the handball. The boys were already back in their suits, no longer in sweatshirts. Though that's all, of course, unimportant....

None of the players and spectators I interviewed will ever forget the last seconds of this game. It was also watched by Vassily Zhiltsov, a special correspondent from the magazine *Smena*. He has even more reason never to forget it....

Z h i l t s o v: That Collins got his two penalty goals and it was our ball. The whistle went, and play stopped, with the Americans jubilant. I went out cursing. I was practically beside myself and that is probably why I was not surprised no one else came out of the hall. I got back in a filthy mood to the Presstadt where I waited for more than an hour for my neighbours Filatov and Likhodeyev. They didn't know I had gone off early, and Filatov asked: "What happened to you?" "I left early." He obviously thought that "early" meant five or ten minutes before he did, and asked "Well what did you think of the game?" "Isn't it awful! To lose a game like that!" "What do you mean, lose? We won!" "Go on, pull the other one...." Filatov called Likhodeyev. "Hey, he missed the replay of the last few seconds!" And they started telling me, with constant interruptions from one another, what had happened. I saw that it wasn't a joke and torn by conflicting feelings ran to the television. It was three in the morning, and on the screen they were showing Edeshko's pass to Alexander Belov over and over again....

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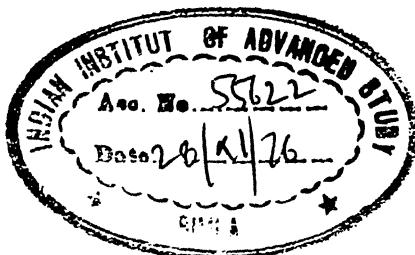
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