A. Fyodorov

THE UNDERGROUND COMMITTEE CARRIES ON



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TWICE HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION

THE UNDERGROUND COMMITTEE CARRIES ON



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

Moscow 1952

Translation edited
by
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BOOK ONE

THE COMMUNISTS GO UNDERGROUND

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The four years of the war against fascist Germany were the most difficult and the most important years of my life. And not only of mine. Most of my fellow citizens can say the same about themselves.

Many experiences fell to my lot; I saw many things, and I did a great deal of thinking. I kept no diary. That is a pity, of course. But I have a good memory, and what I have forgotten was most likely either not very important or else something I knew little about. I have decided to put down only what I saw with my own eyes or at least have from absolutely authentic sources.

The war brought many changes into my life. I was secretary of the Chernigov Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine, and on enemy-held territory I became secretary of the Chernigov underground R.C.* and, later, of the Volhynia underground R.C. as well. I also became commander of one of the largest partisan units in the Ukraine.

The Chernigov and Volhynia regional committees embraced several thousand Communists and Komsomols** who for one reason or another had remained in the enemy rear, hundreds of Communist and Komsomol nuclei and scores of partisan detachments and resistance groups. This was a potent force.

* Regional Committee.—*Trans.*

** Members of the Young Communist League.—*Trans.*

The unit under my command exterminated alone more than 25,000 German invaders and their accomplices. It derailed 683 trains carrying enemy troops and tanks, planes, trucks and ordnance, 8 armoured trains and their crews also flew into the air The dynamiters of our unit blasted 47 railway bridges, 35,000 metres of railway bed, 26 oil bases and fuel stores, and 39 ammunition and outfit depots; mines planted by our partisans destroyed 12 tanks and 87 trucks. This is a far from complete list of the damage our unit inflicted on the enemy The Government has given a very high appraisal of our activity: suffice it to say that the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred on 19 of our men and commanders, while several thousand were decorated with Orders.

By offering armed resistance to the invaders, by entering into an unequal battle with them, the members of the Communist underground movement and the partisans buoyed up the spirit of the people, showed them that the Party and Soviet power were alive in the Ukraine, that the day when the sun of the Stalin Constitution would again shine over the Ukraine was not far off.

My story of how the underground workers and partisans of Chernigov and Volhynia regions fought for the freedom and independence of our country may lack polish and colour, but I shall try to tell it with all Bolshevik sincerity.

CHAPTER ONE

BOMBS FALL ON CHERNIGOV

It was Sunday when I returned from a visit to a big construction site about two hundred kilometres from Chernigov

On the way back we were caught in a downpour. The road turned muddy, and the car started to skid and finally got hopelessly stuck. And then we discovered that we had forgotten to buy cigarettes We felt we were suffering terribly: there we were, stranded amidst the fields under a pouring rain, with the prospect of a sleepless night, and to top it all we had nothing to smoke.

We made several attempts during the night to push the car out of the mud. Everybody got soaked and filthy. By the time I reached home it was almost ten in the morning. I was sleepy and hungry. My mind was still full of the impressions of the trip: my meetings with the builders, the neat dormitories, the walls of ripe wheat lining the road, the fields covered with low shrubs of koksaghyz, the rubber-bearing plant we had just begun to cultivate in Chernigov Region and of which we were so proud....

I had started pulling off my wet boots in blissful anticipation of stretching out on the couch when my wife ran in from the yard.

"At last!" she cried. "A man's been calling you all morning. He wouldn't leave his name. He first called at seven and he's called at least a dozen times since—"

The telephone rang before she could finish the sentence. I picked up the receiver

"Alexei Fyodorovich, you see, Alexei Fyodorovich. .." The man at the other end of the wire was obviously excited He kept repeating my name and patronymic over and over again and then hemmed and hawed with such parentheses as "you see," "and so" I grasped his meaning with difficulty. He just could not get himself to say the word "war"

I pulled my wet boots on again, took a piece of meat pie from a plate and gulped down some milk right from the pitcher. I probably did not look my usual self, for my wife gazed anxiously at me. I told her what had happened, said goodbye to everybody and set out for the R.C. headquarters.

I did not set foot in my house again until the war ended.

There was nobody in the R C. offices but the man on duty I put through a call to Kiev, to Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine. My head was in a whirl. "War with the fascists.... Of course, it had to come sooner or later. Must keep cool and collected! Will their planes break through to Chernigov?... Oh, what a crop, what a wonderful crop!" I recollected the walls of wheat lining the road "Who will harvest it now?..."

"Nikita Sergeyevich, is that you? This is me, Fyodorov, from Chernigov...."

Nikita Sergeyevich spoke in a calm and somewhat quieter voice than usual He told me that the Germans had bombed Zhitomir and Kiev and that some of our forward posts had been crushed

Then he switched to instructions.

Half an hour later the members of the R.C. bureau met in my office.

At twelve o'clock Comrade Molotov spoke over the radio

I took part in several meetings that day

Early in the morning of June 23, enemy scout planes appeared over Chernigov.

* * *

The first days of the war were particularly tense. Mobilization moved on at a fast pace both in the town and region, and units were formed in Chernigov. Thousands of people poured into town from the districts on trucks and carts, by train, or simply on foot.

Everybody worked without thought of self. About one hundred and fifty thousand collective farmers, factory workers, office employees and housewives went out to build defence lines, according to plan. In addition, in every yard bomb shelters were arranged and slit trenches dug, and sand was stocked up in all the attics.

I spent a great deal of my time touring plants which were converting to war production while continuing operations, and every day I visited the district military commissariats. I had to speak so frequently, explaining the situation and rallying the people, that by evening, as a rule, my voice gave out.

The evenings and the nights were also taken up with conferences and meetings with commanders of army units, factory directors and secretaries of district Party committees. I never got more than three hours' sleep a day, and then only in snatches. Days passed without my seeing my wife and children.

I could not manage to be with my family even on the day they left Chernigov. I arrived at the station a bare minute before the train left, and it started to pull out in the middle of my parting words to my wife and children. I had to jump off the moving train.

The main feeling that gripped all of us was the feeling of responsibility.

We reasoned this way: we were Communists, and leading functionaries besides, and hence we were responsible for the people, for the public property, for the people's freedom. That is why only in work could we find satisfaction. Our conscience would not let us take it easy. There was a man I knew, a fine, sincere man, who said he was ashamed to go to bed.

More and more frequently enemy scout planes appeared over Chernigov. The first place to be bombed was the railway junction. That was on the night of June 26. Half an hour after the raid I was on the spot. I saw the first victims of the fascists: two dead women and the mutilated body of an infant I tried to keep calm but a chill went down my back. I could not yet grasp what had happened. It seemed to me that there had been some terrible mistake, an accident, and that if only steps were taken nothing like it would ever occur again.

On June 28 Comrade Malenkov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), and Marshal of the Soviet Union Budyonny arrived in Chernigov. The conference, or rather our talk, lasted more than three hours. We made the rounds of the city and inspected the strategic objects. When we returned to the R C. office Comrade Malenkov received a telephone call from Comrade Stalin. That same evening Malenkov and Budyonny, the representatives of General Headquarters, departed.

I mention this meeting because it had both an inspiring and sobering effect on me and the others who were present. We were gradually coming to realize that war *meant work*—systematic, methodical and carefully planned work of unprecedented scope and intensity.

* * *

Nikita Sergeyevich suggested that we begin immediate preparations for a Bolshevik underground movement and organize a partisan detachment in every district in good time.

"On your return to Chernigov get down immediately to the selection of people, set up bases in the forests for the partisans and start on the military training of the people you have chosen. You'll get detailed instructions from Comrade Burmistrenko."

Mikhail Alexeyevich Burmistrenko told me how to choose people for underground work, what a partisan detachment ought to be like and how it should be formed and gave me the codes

What amazed me was that the Central Committee had already mapped out the entire organizational scheme of an underground movement.

"Remember," said Comrade Burmistrenko in parting, "that only tried and tested people, who are daring, staunch and self-sacrificing, should be selected for underground Party work. Warn them of all the dangers ahead. Tell them to make sure they possess sufficient courage. If not, let them not go. . . Whom do you recommend as secretary of the Chernigov underground R C.? Have you considered the question?"

I do not know whether I turned white or red at this question; I only remember that my heart started beating fast.

"I ask to be left to work in the underground," I said.

Comrade Burmistrenko did not answer at once He gave me a searching look and repeated his question:

"Have you considered the question?"

"Yes, I have!"

"I cannot give you a final answer at the moment," he said "In any case, when you get to Chernigov line up another candidate I shall inform Nikita Sergeyevich of your request"

I continued to insist. I pointed out that another candidate would have to be sent to Kiev for instructions, that this would take time. I had already received the instructions and could start on the organizational work....

Comrade Burmistrenko cut me short.

"Go back and do as you've been told. You'll get the decision of the Central Committee by telephone."

A few days later, back in Chernigov, I learned that my request had been granted, the Central Committee recommended that the Chernigov underground R C. elect me secretary.

* * *

Did I realize then what I was going into, what hardships awaited me? I was no longer young and I had not done any physical labour for years It was quite a time since I had last engaged in athletics Why, twelve years had passed since I mounted a horse!

Driving back from Kiev I reflected upon my decision I reflected but I did not waver I felt that I was suited for underground work, that I would be of more use to the Party doing this work than any other

On my arrival in Chernigov I called a meeting of the R C. bureau. My announcement that an underground movement was to be organized came like a bolt from the blue to them

Organize an underground movement! The very words sounded bookish, unreal "The Bolshevik underground"— why, that was something out of the history of the Party Yet there we were, men past the first flush of youth, true enough, but Soviet-bred, and we were to prepare to go underground.

When I asked: "Now, then, comrades, who agrees to go?" it grew so quiet in the room I could hear people talking in the street, although the windows were shut

I was surprised to see Nikolai Nikitich Popudrenko raise his hand first. It surprised me because we knew him to be a devoted family man Whether on a trip or in the R.C. office he never missed a chance to mention his wife, his son, his stepson, his daughter Popudrenko, third secretary of the R C, was a splendid Party worker, very honest, straightforward and principled. Later, in his underground activity, and particularly in the partisan unit, he proved to be resolute, infinitely brave and, at times, even rash. But more of him later.

After Popudrenko the others raised their hands. All the members of the R C bureau decided to remain in Chernigov Region At the same meeting we nominated an underground R.C of seven

We also named substitutes in case any of us were caught; that, too, was taken into account. Then we assigned the functions and discussed a preliminary plan of action.

Everybody soon became accustomed to the new situation. There were now two regional Party committees: the legal and the underground The existence of the second was known only to its members. A few days later an underground R.C. of the Komsomol was organized in a similar way. This was headed by Comrades Boiko and Krasin.

Technically I remained secretary of both the legal and underground regional committees, but at the very outset I transferred almost all my legal work to other comrades while I got busy preparing for the new, unknown life.

* * *

The Central Committee of the Party demanded that we members of the R C. make thorough preparations. We had to provide for every detail, including the everyday needs of the partisans-to-be.

The future partisan commanders were already attending special courses where they were taught to blow up bridges, fire tanks, steal German staff documents. They had already taken leave of their families, while the underground Party workers had taken leave of their real names as well; they trained themselves not to respond when hailed by their old names.

All through the second half of July and part of August the underground R.C. was busy preparing for its work on an illegal footing and forming detachments

We divided up the work among ourselves. It was my task to organize the underground district Party and Komsomol committees. I also handled the evacuation of the population and the wealth of the region

Nikolai Nikitich Popudrenko was put in charge of the training of sappers. Petrik, the secretary for propaganda and agitation, was given the job of selecting literature, setting up a printshop, collecting and packing newsprint. Novikov, Yaremenko and Rudko picked and checked on the fitness of people for the primary village and factory underground nuclei. Kapranov set up food dumps.

Every day we summoned some ten to fifteen people from the districts to the R.C I knew almost all of them, had met them in the course of my work Yet it appeared that I did not know them all as well as I thought About some I was mistaken. The war compelled us to reconsider our former opinions of some people, and not infrequently to revise them.

I called the comrades in one by one. The interviews began pretty much in the same way. Or rather, the same way for me—for I interviewed many people—but to each person my words came as a complete surprise.

"How do you do? Sit down, comrade Do you know why you've been asked to come?"

"No"

"Have you ever thought of the possibility of your district being occupied by the Hitlerites? What do you intend to do if that danger arises? What would you say if we asked you to head an underground district committee?"

As a rule a long pause followed. I continued:

"Think it over carefully. I'll wait."

If the comrade agreed immediately I elaborated on the dangers that awaited him.

"Remember, you may be betrayed, be caught unawares. You will have an assumed name, different identification papers. Coded instructions or lists of organizations might be unearthed during a search. You would be tortured. Are you strong-willed enough to stand up under it all and die for our people, for the cause of the Party of Lenin and Stalin?"

There were some who shrank back. And the instant I noticed a man's face fall I sent him back. What good was he to me? What sort of an underground worker would he make?

And suppose he fell into the hands of the SS?... A man like that might be honest enough, but he would hardly hold out when they began lashing his back with red-hot irons.

That is why an early diagnosis, so to say, of cowardice was most important. It was this initial diagnosis that I made while choosing the men. Politically the people I summoned had already been tried and tested. What interested me primarily was their resolution, their staunchness

How painful it was to discover a good man and excellent worker infected with that terrible bacillus of cowardice. There was a secretary of a district committee in whom I had the greatest confidence; now he's the kind that can be relied on, I thought.

I summoned him and sounded him out. But what came over the man?

In a month we picked and sent off more than 900 people to the districts for underground work.

• • •

Active preparations for underground and partisan operations were under way in the districts. Alongside the telephone and telegraph reports on the evacuation of industrial equipment and the harvesting of the grain crop, the R.C. received daily reports on these preparations—in code, of course.

By the middle of July it was evident that Comrade Kurochka, secretary of the Kholmy District Party Committee, was handling his job better than anybody else. He himself had asked to be assigned to underground work and he carried out everything connected with this work, which was new to everybody, with the greatest zeal.

There was an extermination battalion consisting of volunteers operating in his district. Comrade Kurochka correctly decided that the men of this battalion, who had already acquired a certain amount of experience in fighting the enemy in the woods, under conditions approximating those the partisans would be in, might make up the core of a detachment. All the two hunderd and forty men of the extermination battalion agreed to remain behind in the enemy rear and enlisted as partisans.

In Kholmy District all the Party members of the district committee, the district executive committee and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs joined the detachment in a body. The detachment had begun target practice and grenade drill and was studying partisan warfare tactics. In the machine shop of the distillery the local Osoaviakhim* training machine gun was remodelled for combat use. (Incidentally, practically all the train-

* Society for Air and Chemical Defence.—*Trans.*

ing machine guns in the region were thus remodelled Of course, the result was not particularly impressive—only thirty or forty machine guns in all—but even these wiped out no few enemies and saved the lives of scores, if not hundreds, of our partisans.)

Fifteen days before Kholmy District was occupied, the extermination battalion and all the volunteers who had joined it took to the forest to allow the front to pass them by.

In Koryukovka District, where Comrade Korotkov was first secretary of the Party committee, the entire district *active* left for the villages directly after Comrade Stalin's radio address to the people. Without waiting to be called by the R.C., they went to prepare the Communists and the leading collective farmers for the eventuality of German occupation and partisan warfare against the enemy. They organized eleven underground Communist nuclei in good time Everybody who agreed to remain behind in the enemy rear received detailed instructions.

Comrade Stratilat, secretary of the Nosovka District Committee, later one of the gifted partisan commanders, made a very interesting decision long before occupation of the area. All recent arrivals in the district and all the young Communists were called to the district committee. Those who agreed to remain in the underground and were suited for the work, were sent to villages and small towns where no one knew them. On their arrival they took minor jobs in the village Soviets, the kolkhozes, hospitals, etc. They organized secret meeting places and built up resistance groups.

Oster District reported that a base for one hundred partisans had already been outfitted. Enough food for approximately eight months, arms, ammunition and many other supplies were cached there. Two detachments had been organized in the district. One of fifteen men and

the other of twenty, and a meeting had been held of all the Communists in the district who were to go underground.

There was not a single district that did not send in similar reports.

* * *

Vasili Logvinovich Kapranov, former vice-chairman of the Chernigov Regional Executive Committee and now a member of the underground R.C., was in charge of outfitting the partisan bases.

The work of this small, rotund man with the kinde of hearts was shrouded in the deepest secrecy.

Tons of flour, cases of canned goods and barrels of alcohol were turned over to him at the warehouses. Trucks drew up, loaders piled heavy sacks on them, bookkeepers made out invoices. But Kapranov alone knew what these supplies were destined for.

A truck would stop somewhere in a field, at the fringe of a wood, unload and turn back... When the empty truck had driven out of sight a cart would come out of the wood and men would load the supplies on it. The farm horse at first moved along the cart track and then would turn off into the wood The men who accompanied the cart covered the wheel tracks with twigs and grass. But more frequently there was no cart. The men lugged the supplies on their backs.

These were partisans-to-be at work. They received a great variety of goods sugar, biscuits, cartridges, machine guns, felt boots, printer's type.

But before this Kapranov's trusted men* had done a great deal of work: they had dug deep trenches and reinforced the walls. ..

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* Kapranov's best assistants were Comrades Afanashchenko and Pavlin

Only the members of the underground R.C., and not all of them at that, knew where Kapranov's supplies were stored. Later, when the comrades left on their assignments, each was told the location of the nearest dump

I made several trips hundreds of kilometres out of Chernigov with Kapranov. He would stop somewhere in a thicket and say

"Now here, Alexei Fyodorovich, I think, is a suitable spot The nearest village is ten kilometres away and no cattle is grazed here."

"What's the forester like?"

"Tested A reliable fellow. He's remaining with us"

Men would come up with gauges and drills to discover at what depth the subterranean waters lay We were greatly pressed for time. If we dug haphazardly and then water seeped through, it would mean looking for another place and digging all over again No doubt about it, Kapranov was worth his weight in gold. He took no chances.

The typical dump was an excavation three metres deep and some thirty to forty metres square. The walls were reinforced with heavy logs in best sapper fashion Of course, the trees for the logs were cut down at some distance from the dumps, at least three hundred paces away. The floor was rammed and then covered with branches as a protection against the dampness The waste was carried off as far as possible and scattered or else thrown into a stream or a gully.

Such a dump—actually a sturdily built underground warehouse—was roofed with logs, covered with earth and levelled to the surrounding surface. The next step was to cover it with turf or moss and plant bushes or small trees on it.

Kapranov often led me to such camouflaged dumps and not once was I able to detect them. He showed me notches on trees and various other signs by which I was to find them.

Kapranov's men built nine of these dumps. And they did the job well. Subsequently the fascists uncovered only one of them, and that by accident.

In the region as a whole there were about two hundred dumps, built by the district detachments.

If this work had not been done, the partisan detachments would have had a hard time of it, particularly in the initial organizational period. The dumps saved many detachments. The population could not always feed us and we only began to capture food stores from the enemy after we had armed ourselves at his expense.

* * *

On July 18 the R.C. received new instructions: to organize, in addition to the district detachments, a regional detachment of one hundred and fifty to two hundred men with cavalry, sapper and infantry units.

We began to register volunteers. Within a few days one hundred and eighty-six picked men gathered in the hall of the city Soviet to receive their final instructions.

They came from all walks of life: there were Party workers, engineers, office and factory workers, collective farmers, actors, musicians, cooks.... And they were dressed differently, each in his everyday clothes. I shall not undertake to describe any of them now. Many I met later behind the German lines; with many I covered thousands of kilometres of battle-scarred Ukrainian soil.

And so the people had been picked, the bases outfitted. As far as we could see we were prepared to receive our uninvited "guests." But had our underground workers come to realize that the most important thing was the support of the people, that it was our sacred duty to be with the people, to stir them to resistance when the enemy would be lording it in our region? After all, we Commu-

nists, the organizers, were only the core. This we had to bear in mind always. And if we did, no hostile force could break us.

* * *

On the morning of August 8 the first group of the regional partisan detachment left Chernigov for the woods. It was a warm, muggy day with a promise of rain.

I saw them off—seventy men, some in padded jackets, others in topcoats, leather coats or heavy winter coats

They were only going for training, to get accustomed to their new surroundings. Yes, that is just how their task had been defined. The commanders and the men were to imagine that they were really partisans. They were to learn to conceal themselves, to shoot, to crawl up unseen to "enemy objectives."

I stood looking in their direction long after they disappeared around a bend in the road.

By August 10 the entire regional detachment had already arrived at its destination—Gulino, near the Snov River in Koryukovka District. We had chosen this place because we did not expect any big battles here: the partisans could let the front move past them without being observed

The natural conditions were an added inducement. The thick growth of bushes lining the Snov could conceal a whole army, while a forest began only two or three hundred metres away.

I visited the comrades the following day.

The commander of the group, Captain Kuznetsov, a former Osoaviakhim official, and the commissar, Comrade Demchenko, head of the military department of the R.C., had already issued arms to the future partisans. The men trained regularly in target practice and the cleaning of the rifle, and studied the drill regulations and garrison service regulations ... It was a typical

Osoaviakhim camp. Food galore and not the slightest danger for the time being. Just as if there were no war.

In Chernigov the men had been told not to mix with the local people, not to draw attention to themselves. But it seems they looked upon this as a formality, for they had begun to go to the villages to get milk, and some of the young men had gone strolling with girls.

In the evenings there was singing and dancing in the camp to the strains of an accordion. Yes, the surroundings were picturesque, the weather warm. If not for the stacked rifles, you could have taken it for a rest home.

After eleven the men sauntered in groups into the barracks. This was a large, well-equipped forestry building. The commanders lay down in beds and the men on dry, fragrant hay.

But no sooner had everybody stretched out—some had already fallen asleep—than I had an alarm sounded. I made the sleepy men line up and ordered them to leave the barracks immediately and never to return. Their place, I told them, was among the bushes, in shelters made of branches. Until the enemy forces came they were to conceal themselves from the local population.

"You must learn to live in such a way that not a soul will know of your existence!"

Someone came up and began to argue hotly:

"There's a swamp there, the men will catch cold."

But when German planes droned overhead and sent down flares, the men shrank back and fell silent.

The Hitlerites were on their way to bomb Chernigov.

* * *

Never in my life have I been in such a blue mood as in the days between August 23 and 29, 1941.

On the way back to Chernigov from a trip to the War Council of the Central Front I met a column of passenger cars. I stopped the first and asked the men in it who they were and where they were bound. We examined each other's identification papers and I discovered that the men seated in these cars were the administrative heads of Gomel Region. With them was Comrade Edinov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Communist Party.

"Our army has left Gomel," Comrade Edinov told me. "The Germans are advancing on Chernigov."

I arrived at the R C offices very tired and hungry. Someone brought a plate of borshch to my room I sat down at the window and set the plate on the sill

The siren wailed. Alerts were now sounded about twenty times a day. I was already used to them and often did not bother to go to the shelter We had not yet had any heavy bombing.

I sat there eating and gazing out of the window I had a view of a large part of the town In the distance, over the roofs, I noticed several planes Then another black flock dived out from behind the clouds, and a minute later the Germans were over the city I saw the bombs falling. I could even place the direct hits the first to fly into the air was the theatre; after it came the building of the regional militia, then the post office Mechanically I continued to eat. The bombers sailed over the R.C. building. Explosions, the rattle of machine guns and the anti-aircraft fire merged into a fearful din.... People rushed helter-skelter along the streets. There was a horrible scream; I could not determine whether it was a man's or a woman's voice.

I left my office for the bomb shelter, stunned. Some of my R C. colleagues came up to me; I answered their questions mechanically. I felt as if some incredibly heavy weight were pressing down on my shoulders....

A stranger stopped me in the blacked-out hallway.

"I have been here since morning, Comrade Fyodorov. I've come in from out of town."

"Well?"

"I was expelled from the Party and have appealed to the R.C. There is a war on, Comrade Fyodorov. How can I be outside the Party?"

"But you heard the siren. To take your case up I would have to speak to people and look into the papers. Everybody's in the shelter.... Please come tomorrow."

"Tomorrow will be too late. The Germans are approaching our district. . ."

Just then a bomb exploded so close that the floor shook under our feet.

This made no particular impression on the visitor. I quickened my steps. He continued to walk at my side.

"But you must realize, comrade," I said, "that under the present circumstances it's impossible to do anything."

"Yes, of course," he agreed sorrowfully and gave me his hand.

I do not remember his face but he had a good grip. I sincerely regretted that I could do nothing.

That was the first time I spent a whole night in the shelter. The Germans came over twelve times. A humiliating occupation it is—to sit and wait passively, seeing nothing, knowing nothing.

In the morning, although the alert was still on, I returned to the R.C.

Black clouds of smoke hung over the roofs; tongues of fire licked the sky. Fires were raging on all sides.

The firemen tried to extinguish the flames, but what could they accomplish when more and more fires were breaking out every minute? The fires had got out of hand.

By this time there were only a few hundred people left in Chernigov; almost the entire population had been evacuated

The German command could not but know that there were neither any military units nor military objectives in the town. Yet the German flyers destroyed every building that in any way stood out; they pursued every person who came within their range They acted in line with the brutal policy of fascism

In an interval between raids I decided to inspect the town.

We drove along Shevchenko Street. Flames were tearing out of the windows of every third or fourth house A lame horse galloped straight towards us The chauffeur had to swerve onto the sidewalk to avoid the crazed animal.

Behind us, no more than fifteen metres away, a wall collapsed, crushing the horse under its burning beams

A man in a felt hat and eyeglasses was crawling along the wide sidewalk on all fours I called to him He did not answer. The chauffeur stopped the car and I shouted to him again

"Comrade!"

This time he stood up, looked at me with unseeing eyes and then dashed through the gateway of a house There was no sense in running after him

We drove onto Kuibyshev Square Here most of the houses were burning, some had already collapsed Even in the middle of the square I could feel the heat

In the centre of the square stood a tall, husky man with arms outstretched His face was black with soot I called to him.

He paid no attention Again I called to him, but it made not the slightest impression The chauffeur drove right up to the man and I took him by the arm Obediently he climbed into the car. It was a long time however, before he would answer my questions

When I told him later how we had picked him up he shrugged his shoulders

"I don't remember a thing."

We went down several other streets. When we were near the city square Heinkels appeared again. One of them tried to strafe our car, but the bullets whizzed by overhead.

We picked up two other men One of them had to be bound: he had lost his reason

We rode around about an hour. During that time two groups of bombers dropped their loads on the city. We turned back to the R.C. I was afraid I would find nothing but ruins. But no, by some miracle the R.C. building was intact. Not a single house within a radius of two hundred metres had escaped damage, yet in the R.C. offices only the windows had been blown out, and not all of them at that.

That very evening it was decided to evacuate. The regional Party and Komsomol committees and the regional executive committee were to move to the district village of Lukashovka, fifteen kilometres away. There was no sense whatever in remaining where we were: with the electric station out of commission and telephone and telegraph communication cut, Chernigov was isolated from the outside world. There were practically no people left in the town and the factories and institutions had also been evacuated.

It was with a heavy heart that we left the city, now empty and in ruins.

When I rode past my house I was amazed to discover that it was intact. My first impulse was to stop the car and get some things, at least a change of underwear and a pair of boots. . . . But I waved the thought aside. Incidentally, I was very soon to regret it.

I was in a tunic, army breeches, heavy top boots and a leather coat. At my belt hung a map case. These were all my belongings.

* * *

On August 26 a new group of twenty-six partisans and some members of the underground R.C headed by Comrade Popudrenko left Lukashovka for Kholmy District in one passenger car and one truck. It had been decided that I was to remain behind a little while longer

On parting I embraced and kissed each of them.

"I'll finish up the work of evacuating the people and the factories, go along with the Red Army up to the border of Chernigov Region and then come back to you. And you can be sure I'll find you!"

The next day we heard that Kholmy and Koryukovka Districts were already occupied by the Germans. The men of the 18th Division stationed in that locality helped Popudrenko's group cross the front line

I had no inkling then of what I would have to go through before I met my comrades again

* * *

I shall tell something about my childhood and youth I was a foundling, adopted—my gratitude to him—by Maxim Trofimovich Kostyrya, a Dnieper river pilot and ferryman.

Everybody knew that I was a foundling, and the boys naturally teased me, even though they were afraid of me, for I had a good pair of fists If not for the Revolution I would have had a bad time of it in my youth No respectable girl would have married the likes of me—an illegitimate child.

I lived on the outskirts of Yekaterinoslav, now Dnepropetrovsk, in the village of Lotsmanskaya Kamenka People there still remember me

I attended a two-year school I tried hard Despite my mischief-making I was eager to learn—perhaps because already in early childhood I understood that I would have a hard life

When I was twelve I went to work as a herdsman's helper for a rich farmer in the locality. By fourteen I had left my foster father and begun to live independently. I worked as herder, horse driver in a mine, and for a building contractor. Things went on like that until I was nineteen.

At the beginning of 1920 I was working at a hospital as handy man. I swept the yard, chopped wood, tended the stoves, carried out the dead. Occasionally Red Army men landed in this hospital. It was probably from them that I got the idea of volunteering for the Red Army. I was no longer a child—it was high time I realized that my place was in the Red Army Yet I did not. I was attracted more by the clothes, the boots and the good food.

I had a six-month course of cavalry training and finished with the rank of assistant platoon commander. I was assigned to the 54th Cavalry Regiment of the 9th Kuban Cavalry Division. In those days I was a dashing fellow and rode my horse well. But Kuban Cossacks were not to be impressed by snappiness They were all grown men who had fought in the German and civil wars. I could not be an officer among such men, not even a petty officer, and therefore I became adjutant to the troop commander.

I participated in several engagements At first our unit retreated, then it took the offensive. Nothing of importance happened to me personally, unless you count the fact that I became an ardent horseman; I fell in love with horses, my sabre and my spurs It was then I decided that the cavalry was my destiny and my calling.

However, I did not become an officer of the regular army I caught cold during a sally against the Tyulyunnik band and went to hospital with pneumonia. Complications set in that kept me in bed over half a year. When I recovered the military commissariat assigned me to a railway regiment as platoon commander

Here I served and fought the bandits until 1921, when I was demobilized. With that my military career ended.

I was 23 years old but I had no trade, not even any particular goal Yet one thing I knew, and knew for sure. I would make my way in life. I had a strong body and the army had bred in me a strong will.

I was very eager to study but no technical school or institute would admit me. I did not know enough. I decided, therefore, to go to work and study in my free time.

I succeeded in getting a job as timberer's helper on a tunnel construction job on the Merefa-Kherson railway. I say "succeeded" because there was still considerable unemployment at that time.

It was here, on the tunnel job, that I acquired a real working-class schooling and a Bolshevik education.

My work was hard: in the damp and dark. But I liked work and liked master workmen

I rented a room in the village of Mandrikovka, not far from the tunnel. Not long after, I got married there. I had to settle down and start a home, and so I worked hard.

What were my dreams and aspirations in those days? I was already a grown man, married, and soon father of a baby girl. If anyone had said to me then· now there, Alexei, think it over—why not aim to go into Party work, to become secretary of a district committee, and then, before you know it, secretary of a regional committee, I would have shrugged my shoulders and laughed At that time I was not even a Komsomol.

Although I myself was eager to learn, the Soviet Government and the Party were even more eager to have people like me study and develop.

My dreams were modest enough: to become a foreman in a mine. And so I zealously watched my seniors, my

more experienced mates, and never turned down any work .

That was many years before the Stakhanov movement; even the shock workers' movement developed later. If a worker greatly exceeded his quota some of the old workers would growl "Want a cut in rates?" Already then this went against my grain. Sometimes trade union functionaries drew a sharp dividing line between themselves and the management, saying: "Let the management answer for the plan ."

No, that was not to my liking.

I took as an example those workers who were highly conscientious

I remember particularly liking two shift foremen, the Grigoryan brothers—Artem and Joseph. Openhearted and helpful, they were always ready to give counsel, and if necessary, a loan of money, to old or young. They were fine workmen and readily shared their experience and knowledge Besides, they were jolly fellows, good mixers, who loved to dance and would not refuse a drink, though they knew when to stop. I liked the way they dressed: well but without ostentation.

My closest friend and mentor was Ivan Ivanovich Bobrov, who worked on the same shift with me. He was also a timberer but one category higher. Bobrov was a Communist and was engaged in many public activities. He was in charge of the production sector in the local trade union organization.

It was Bobrov who trained me to read the newspapers daily and cultivated my taste for political literature; thanks to him, reading became a real necessity for me. He took me along to meetings of the trade union committee, drew me into discussions of production problems and was the first to speak to me about my joining the Party.

A clubhouse was built in Mandrikovka at that time. While before we had spent our evenings at home, gone

visiting or else strolled along the village streets in groups, now we acquired new interests. In the clubhouse there was a library, a drama circle and a music circle.

The Soviet person will find nothing particularly novel in my biography. It can be summed up in a few words. I was educated and led forward by the Party, by Soviet power. My mental horizon and my interests broadened hand in hand with the cultural development of the country.

A year later I was elected to the trade union committee and became an active member of the club. On June 27, 1926, I became a candidate member of the Party and exactly a year later, on June 27, 1927, I was admitted to full Party membership.

By the end of 1927 the tunnel was finished. I was working as mine foreman, drawing tenth category wages and was, on the whole, a serious young man of twenty-six. As for public activities, I was supervisor of the club-house, and chairman of the educational commission of the trade union committee. I was also member of the bureau of the Party organization.

Then I was summoned to Moscow and offered a job on the Rion Electric Station being built in the Caucasus where there was a considerable amount of tunnelling to be done. There, too, I worked as a foreman. Later I returned to the Ukraine.

When I reached thirty, after I had returned to the Ukraine and had worked on a construction job in Dnepropetrovsk, I was at last able to realize my old dream of studying. I entered the third year of the Dnepropetrovsk Railway Transport Technical School. A year later I graduated, received my diploma and had already begun to think of going further, to college, when my life took a different turn. I was called to the city Party committee and told:

"People like you are needed for work in the rural districts."

"What are 'people like me'?"

'Of proletarian origin, reared on the job, devoted to the Party. We haven't enough such people in the rural districts."

That is how I came to be sent to Koryukovka District, Chernigov Region, where I was elected chairman of the district trade union council.

After that I was elected chairman of the control commission in Ponornitsa District of the same region. Somewhat later I was elected second secretary of the district Party committee.

The Party continued to keep an eye on me and helped me to develop What theoretical background I lacked was supplied at courses for Party secretaries arranged by the Central Committee in Kiev and subsequently at courses maintained in Moscow by the Central Committee of the C P S.U (B)

At the beginning of 1938 I was elected first secretary of the Chernigov Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine

I am a full-time Party worker. That means that I devote all my time, all my thoughts and all my energies to the Party of Lenin and Stalin And no matter where I am sent, or what I am ordered to do by the Party, I carry out the assignment without reservation

As I look about me now, studying the comrades with whom I work shoulder to shoulder, I see that the vast majority of them spring from the people Their life stories are different but their interests and their aims are the same, and these aims are determined by the program of the Party of Bolsheviks

CHAPTER TWO

HARD TIMES

Our troops withdrew, battling all the way. The whole of Chernigov Region except for Yablunovka District was occupied by the enemy Dozens of army units, hundreds of motor vehicles, carts packed with refugees and groups of mysterious characters were congregated in Yablunovka, a cosy little town, set in green German bombers droned overhead day and night. They would dive down over the clusters of trucks, set fire to villages, go hedgehopping to strafe the crowds and cattle plodding along the dirt roads.

Some thirty representatives of Party, Soviet, Komsomol and other public organizations of Chernigov Region met for the last time on September 15 in this small town

The meeting took place in the district Party committee headquarters The windows were heavily curtained. The chimneyless kerosene lamp on the table smoked heavily. The rattle of carts, the wrangling of drivers and the hum of auto motors penetrated from the street

The house shook from the explosion of bombs and artillery shells.

I examined the faces of the people gathered there and waited for them to settle down Of course, this would only be after a manner of speaking. No one could sit absolutely still and quiet. I knew practically everybody there

personally, but many of them I did not recognize. They were unshaven, with eyes inflamed from weariness and anxiety.

I rapped on the table for attention. What I said amounted approximately to the following:

"There is one question on the agenda. You all know what it is. Tomorrow our army is to withdraw from the last district of Chernigov Region. But we are Chernigov men, comrades! On Chernigov land the renowned Shchors* detachments fought the Germans. . . . I don't think you need any pep talks. The decision has been made. All of us go underground tomorrow. Everyone knows his duties, his place, his new name, his Party nickname. The decisive hour has struck, comrades! . "

I was interrupted by a shrill voice from a dark corner.

"No, Comrade Fyodorov, that's wrong!"

"What's wrong? Come out here, into the light!"

But the speaker preferred to continue his "discussion" from the dark corner. He spluttered and stammered over the words:

"It's still an open question as to where I'll be more useful. Of course, there's the decision, but I don't understand why. We're not properly armed. The Party and Soviet leaders of the region can be wiped out one by one by mere chance. As secretary of the R.C. you should be concerned about safeguarding . . ."

It required considerable effort to control myself. Even now, five years later, my blood boils when I remember that contemptible voice out of the darkness.

I banged my fist on the table and tried to speak quietly and impressively, with what success I cannot say.

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* Nikolai Shchors (1895-1919) was a Civil War hero, one of the organizers of the partisan movement of the Ukrainian people during the German occupation in 1918.—*Trans.*

"Now see here, that's enough! Don't trouble yourself about the leaders. Be so kind as to come over here to the table. And speak only for yourself. What is it you want?"

He came up, or rather, crawled up, clutching at the backs of chairs, and when he reached the table he leaned his hands on it. Not once did he look me in the face It was Rokhlenko, former chairman of the regional consumer's cooperative board and—future cowherd He went, so far as to pretend insanity, deceived the doctors, was exempted from army service and took to herding cows somewhere in the vicinity of Orsk.

But that happened later. At the meeting he said, glancing up from beneath lowered brows

"I'm prepared to defend my country to the last drop of blood. But I ask to be sent to the army I don't want to die pointlessly, like a dog I don't want to, I can't...."

"I don't want to, I can't " I can still hear his quavering voice, see his unshaven, distorted face Later I was told that in a frank conversation he had come out with a program of his own. He said: "The main thing is to live through this war!"

Well, it seems he did.

Looking back and calmly weighing everything I witnessed during the war, I realize that such, putting it mildly, regrettable mistakes in the selection of people were inevitable in that preliminary period

After Rokhlenko had "had his say" we quickly settled with the comrades on how to reach their various destinations.

We divided up into groups. Comrades Petrik, Kapranov, and Kompanets, Syromyatnikov, secretary of the Zhitomir Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine, and Rudko stayed with me

• • •

On the morning of September 16 the Germans opened mortar fire on Yablunovka.

At that moment the Chernigov R.C. of the Party became the underground R C But did it exist at all then? The assumption is that once a regional committee exists, then naturally district and primary organizations also exist. That they did I never for a moment doubted, but where were they? How was I to contact them, direct the work? These questions troubled me greatly.

The entire well-ordered system of legal Party organizations in the region was broken up. And we ourselves the top leaders, were a small group of inadequately armed people without headquarters and without any means of transport or communication.

But faith in the strength of the Party, in the people's power to resist, was our moral support.

Our goal was clear: to make our way to the northern forest tracts where our bases and the regional partisan detachment headed by Popudrenko were located. From there we could establish contact with the district committees and nuclei Our goal was clear but how were we to attain it?

In the evening we decided to go to the village of Bubnovshchina. There we intended to get clothes that would allow us to pose as Red Army war prisoners who had escaped from the Germans

But in the morning we discovered that the enemy had occupied Bubnovshchina For the last time we climbed into our R.C. car and headed for Piryatin, a district centre in Poltava Region.

Piryatin was surrounded. The town and a large part of the district were caught in a German pincer. Two or three of our divisions were maintaining a circular defence and trying to break through the enemy ring.

Much has been written about the German encirclement of those days. I was neither an officer nor a soldier

of the surrounded army group, and it is not for me to judge the merits or demerits of the Piryatin operation I shall, therefore, deal only with what happened to our small group.

The day we arrived in Piryatin the Germans bombed the town so heavily that we had to spend several hours in a slit trench But depressed as we were, I want to say, in passing, that we did not forget how to laugh on that day either.

As we dashed from our car to the trench one of our group, the most level-headed of men, suddenly pulled out a hand grenade from under his belt and brandished it at a low-flying German plane We had to catch hold of his hand, for he really meant to fling that grenade at the plane He immediately came to his senses and joined us in our laugh

There was no sense in our remaining in Piryatin and so we decided to leave the town and make our way to our own Chernigov territory

Our comfortable Buick was of no use to us now We tried to turn it over to some officer but could find no one interested in acquiring this urban handsome but impractical car There was not a drop of gas left in the tank

We had a gallon of alcohol in reserve I poured it over the seats, the engine and the top and applied a match and tall blue flame danced in the wind

Kaprenov, Rudko, Kompanets, Petrik, Bobov, Bogatets, Svetovanov and I set out along the road leading to the forest beyond the town

* * *

Although the Germans had surrounded Piryatin Dis trict they had set up no solid front line At that time the German command was employing light and mobile

effects as well as surprise attacks and a profusion of pointless fire

There were no regular army men among us and we were not very good judges of what was going on.

What I remember of that day was the large number of all kinds of people I met, both acquaintances and strangers. And the continual round of questions: one asked the directions to some village, another whether we had seen a company of sappers; a third asked for a smoke and then tried to ferret out who we were and what we were doing there.

The traffic at the fringe of the forest where we settled ourselves reminded me of Gorky Street in Moscow on a fine day. It was not so well-regulated, true, but far noisier.

Shells whistled overhead, machine guns rattled to the right and left. And out of the blue came Rokhlenko. He walked up rather brazenly but did not proffer his hand.

"Aha!" says he. "Comrade Fyodorov! I see you've left Chernigov Region too! Well, shall we move on together?"

I cut him short sharply. However, what impressed Rokhlenko was not the names we called him as our unbending resolve to push through to the German rear He immediately took leave of us.

But there were pleasant meetings as well. The pleasantest of all was with Vladimir Nikolayevich Druzhinin.

It was one of our group, Kapranov, if I am not mistaken, who said. "Look, there's Druzhinin!"

I called out to him We embraced, then breakfasted on the remains of the canned food and had a drink. We were great friends but we had not seen each other for a year. We had become friendly back in 1933, when I was working in Ponornitsa District. He was then head of the organization department of the Novgorod-Seversk District Committee, our next-door neighbour. What drew me to him were his unfailing good spirits. Whatever he did, he did with quips

d jokes. Energetic and bubbling with the joy of life, he
s, moreover, an excellent organizer. Vladimir Nikola-
vich had an easy and natural way of talking to various
ds of people, to workers, peasants and to intellectuals
We had worked together in the Chernigov R.C from
38 to 1940, when he was head of our organization
partment. He had left before the war for Tarnopol Re-
n, where he was elected second secretary of the R C
Fate now brought us together again. Vladimir Nikola
ich wore an army greatcoat with two "bars"—a bat-
on commissar. He had taken part in battles. We start-
talking him into joining us, into going underground,
become a partisan.

The proposal was to his liking. His unit had already
de its way out of encirclement, the division headquar-
which he was sent to contact had been transferred to
ther place by plane, and Druzhinin was left alone, his
commander, with no one to report to

"All right, Comrade Fyodorov, I put myself under your
mand. We'll hammer a partisan division together in
rear."

And indeed we did hammer out a unit together, he as
missar, I as commander. But that was much later
time he disappeared just as suddenly as he had
e.

Someone happened to have a map of the district We
ied it, did some scouting on our own and then decid-
o move toward Chernigov in a body along a round-
ut route via the village of Kurenki.

We set out at dark, along the road It was foul
ther: a cold rain and an annoying, gusty wind. The
t was pitch black but for a glow in the sky from the
ing town and villages. Battles were going on in front
s, behind us and on either side. There was firing
y now and then, but who was shooting and why was
e then we could say.

"What the hell is this!" he yelled. "Sprawled all over the place! Get up! The encirclement has been broken, we've got to make our way out!"

We turned a flashlight on him and saw he was a colonel. He was a high-ranking officer. We had to obey.

Again we moved on in the dark, ploughing through the mud. At dawn we saw that a rather large army unit was moving along with us. There were no few civilians, but they were all men. No women or children were to be seen. Like us, the civilians either had holsters at their belts, or else pistols bulging in their pockets.

Some three hundréd metres to the leit of the road stretched a forest.

The forests in Poltava Region are small and sparse but even so it was wiser to follow them in the daytime than the fields, let alone the road. This idea evidently struck many at the same time Somebody sent some men to reconnoitre the forest. They came back with the news that it contained small groups of Germans. And we on the road were no fewer than a thousand, all told, both army men and civilians

The officers gathered, took counsel, and decided to drive the Germans out of the forest. The command was given to fan out. Our group did likewise

The Germans tried to beat off our attack with mortar and tommy-gun fire but the superiority was clearly on our side. We took the forest. Small as it was it nonetheless meant trees, bushes ... The man next to me in the skirmish line was Rudko. Him I found, but Druzhinin, Kapranov, Kompanets and the others disappeared without leaving a trace.

We had left the road in the nick of time Half an hour later German motorcyclists came down it, followed by about thirty tankettes. An encounter with them might have ended badly for us.

• • •

Pavel Rudko was many years my junior, far healthier and far more agile. While I contemplated a jump that had to be made from one hummock to another as if it were a plunge into an icy river, and came down heavily, Rudko hopped across with the ease of a goat, smiling all the while. My raw heels hurt excruciatingly, yet he was gladder of a halt than I was

For how Rudko loved to talk! The minute we sat down somewhere Rudko would start off.

'How awful! Alexei Fyodorovich, did you notice the dead kolkhoz peasant near that oak stump? With his clenched fist and eyes wide open he was the image of a fiery orator speaking to the people."

A momentary pause. Rudko looked around.

"Now take that bird. A plain sparrow twittering away without a thought of sorrow. Tweet-tweet. And while he's singing his little song hundreds—no, thousands—are falling under a hail of bullets!"

"See here, Rudko, cut it out. Shut up!"

"Why, isn't that so, Alexei Fyodorovich? My heart aches, Alexei Fyodorovich, I can't keep quiet!"

Once as we were moving along we noticed a hut some two hundred paces away. It might have been a forester's lodge. A peasant in a Ukrainian coat was on the porch. And all of a sudden that peasant levelled a tommy gun at us.

We realized that he was a disguised German and dropped to the ground. Then the Fritz opened mortar fire. He placed the shells checkerboard fashion, and Rudko saw that a fragment might get him any minute.

"Alexei Fyodorvich," he said, "Alexei Fyodorovich, if you are humane let me have your pistol. Let me shoot myself!"

I did not give it to him. We crawled back, doubled on our tracks and found ourselves in the spot where the shells had fallen earlier. Everything ended well.

could be of great use to the partisans. And without any further ado, I said:

"What do you think, Comrade Grigoriev, about organizing a small partisan detachment?"

The colonel did not answer immediately. He put his hand to his brow and walked up and down, thinking.

"Yes," he said after a couple of minutes. "I had already thought of it. You are a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S S R. and the Ukrainian S.S.R. and secretary of the R.C. of the Party. Just the man to be commissar. I'll take the command."

Although I did not particularly like the colonel's manner of talking, I had no choice. I had to begin with something.

We went through the forest collecting men. Several score men, most of them privates, joined us. They lined up and counted off. It turned out that we had ninety-six men. We made an inventory of our possessions: 83 rifles, 2 light machine guns, 46 hand grenades, 12 tommy guns, 23 pistols, 40 tins of meat and four and a half loaves of bread.

The colonel announced to the men in line that we were a partisan detachment.

"Anyone who refuses to operate with us, two steps forward!"

No one refused. Then the colonel assigned the duties, appointed scouts and quartermasters, divided the detachment into two platoons and chose a group of officers for his staff.

* * *

German units were moving along the Kurenki-Kharkovtsy road in an almost unbroken line: there were tanks, singly and in groups, motorized infantry, motorcyclists and supply trains. A conference of the commanders, which, besides myself and my strict and pompous chief,

was attended by two lieutenants, decided it was time to withdraw from the forest. The Germans would soon be combing it.

Another forest began about two hundred metres away on the other side of the road. We discovered a local man in the detachment, an ex-tractor driver. He said the best way to get to the German rear was from that forest. I do not remember just what other considerations moved us at the moment, but anyway, we had to leave immediately.

"We'll cross the road in small groups," the colonel ordered "Comrade Commissar, give me your tommy gun I'll cross with this tractor driver first, get the lay of the land, and then return. I think I won't need more than two hours for this bit of reconnoitring."

I obediently handed the colonel my tommy gun and wished him good luck. Then I ordered the men to scatter and take a rest under the bushes. We were all thoroughly exhausted; we had not slept at all the night before and had had only short naps the preceding nights. We made a fair division of the food that remained, put aside the share due the colonel and his companion, and began to wait.

I fell asleep. About three hours later the man on duty shook me awake.

"Well, the colonel returned?" I asked.

"No, Comrade Commissar, no sign of the colonel But heavy rifle fire has started in the west It's time to clear out."

"We'll have to wait for the commander. Didn't you hear the order?"

We waited another hour, but no colonel. He had crossed the road safely, we saw that

The disappearance of the colonel* had a depressing

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* I met Colonel Grigoriev after an interval of more than two years under circumstances which I shall describe later.—*A. F*

effect on everybody I felt worse than the rest for it left me without a tommy gun.

Someone built a fire in the forest This drew machine-gun and mortar fire from Germans driving past. We crawled deeper into the forest. Rudko had disappeared and I grew uneasy.

"Rudko! What'd you do with the horse?" I shouted using a peasant accent.

The Germans sent several long bursts in the direction of my voice.

I crawled away a bit farther and again began to shout: "Rudko!" Again I drew German fire. The men began to grumble, and rightly so Why should I give them away by my shouting?

I had to reconcile myself to the loss of my comrade. Later it turned out that he had simply run away.

Our detachment dispersed. Only seven men remained We took no oaths and did not call ourselves partisans, but we kept resolutely together.

We seven hungry men tramped through the woods of Chernukhin District in Poltava Region for five or six days. We lived on woodsorrel and roots. Once we struck luck: some herders brought us a pot of boiled potatoes and half a loaf of bread. That was a real feast. But instead of appeasing our hunger this only whetted it.

* * *

When it grew dark we decided to enter a village. A broad, dirty street; houses set far apart, with gardens between them. It was early evening yet there was not a soul to be seen. A vile, oppressive silence, a silence born of fear, hung in the air. In the houses, of course, there were people. Usually if you strolled down a village street in the evening a pack of dogs would come yapping

at your heels, but here were seven of us, and not a sound!

We walked along in single file, two paces apart I went first, then came the lieutenant followed by the others. Perhaps we should have spaced out more, but each wanted to be close enough to the man ahead to hear his breathing

My feet still hurt intolerably I walked with a stick My leather coat was heavy and hot Now whoever wears a fur-lined leather coat in September? But winter lay ahead, and where would I get another?

We walked in silence I was leading, but where to? "If only," I thought, "I'd meet some woman or an old man " The next instant I saw the silhouette of a man on a porch. He was standing motionless

I had already opened my mouth to hail him when he turned. Now, against the light background of a poplar trunk, his helmet and the outline of a tommy gun hanging against his belly stood out in bold relief

"A German!"

He was the first live German I had seen at such close quarters.

Without realizing what I was doing, probably out of sheer fright, I pulled my pistol out of my pocket and fired I do not know whether I killed him or not. Crouching, I dashed past the side of the house toward the vegetable gardens, shouting to the boys:

"Germans!"

Firing began immediately A tommy gun chattered, then another and a third, a flare soared up. I flew as fast as I could over the bumpy vegetable plots, stumbling and falling but rising and running on again. A board cracked under my feet and I fell into a hole Somehow I clambered out and ran on farther A tall spiked wattle fence barred my way I took a running jump, caught my pants on a spike and almost split them in two

"Halt!" came an order in German.

I fired twice in the direction of the "halt" and stumbled on, down a hillside to the bank of a river.... Then again came flares and bullets. For some reason my knee began to pain terribly. "They wounded me, the bastards," I thought, but I could still run. And with one great spurt I splashed into the river.

It had turned up where I least expected it. We had crossed the river in the daytime; but here, it appeared, it made a bend. I swam for the opposite bank. My coat billowed out on the surface; my cap was carried away.

"Halt! Halt! Halt!" now came from both the left and the right.

Two Fritzes spotted me and raked the river with their tommy guns. And then those damned flares. When they soared skywards I ducked underwater. But how long can you stay underwater? A flare holds out longer.... This river, known as the Mnogo, is not very wide, but it is deep enough, and swimming in a coat and boots is terribly difficult. When I reached the opposite bank I did not climb out but made my way upstream in the shadow of the bushes. I kept my head just barely above the surface. One of my boots had got stuck in the clayey bottom and come off. I discarded the other. I was about to do the same with my coat when I got a good idea. I thrust my stick into the river bed (I had simply forgotten to throw it away) and hung my coat over it. My despatch case with the maps and papers I buried in the mud, and just to make sure, I stamped it down. Then I crawled off on my belly into the bushes

Crawling was a hard job. My elbows immediately began to ache My knee continued to hurt unbearably. I touched it but could feel no blood. Evidently I was not wounded

I sat down under a bush, pulled up my legs and rested The target now was my coat. Every time a flare

soared up the Germans riddled the coat. Soon it fell into the river and floated off.

There I was sitting under a bush and, believe it or not, I burst out laughing. I could just see myself, a fat man with an Order pinned on his tunic, sitting all doubled up, coatless, hatless, and wet to the skin. "Well, well," I thought, "fine commands you can issue, here, under this bush...."

When the firing ceased I left my bush and quickly set out across a field. I soon discovered that I was walking on sharp stubble. How I now regretted the loss of my boots! My footcloths and socks were in shreds before I had taken a hundred steps The stubble pricked and cut my feet. But what choice had I? I kept moving. I do not know whether I had covered one kilometre or two when I saw the outlines of some tiny cottages and, a little way off, a rick of wheat. I headed for it. There was a smaller rick beside it and I fixed myself up between the two, pulling down some straw to cover myself, my feet probably stuck out. I fell asleep immediately; you might even say I lost consciousness.

I came to only about four hours later I curled up as I used to as a child when I did not want to get out of bed and lay there shivering with cold. In one hand I held my pistol while with the other I pulled the splinters out of my feet. There were some spare cartridges in my pocket. I reloaded my pistol and lay there between the ricks, not even daring to peep out. I reflected upon recent events, upon my flight from the Germans. And I had always condemned cowardice..

I upbraided myself for a long time. Then I began to consider my next move.

There were some cottages about five hundred paces away, and in them were kolkhoz folk. How would they react to me?

By nature I am a sociable person, I am meant to be

among people. I have never known solitude, never sought it or felt a need for it. I say this because it was not in me to hide all alone just to preserve my life. The very idea was obnoxious to me

But at the moment, I admit, I was at a loss. And then there was my physical infirmity: my feet were swollen and bleeding. I had no confidence in myself.

A rooster crowed. "So," I thought, "it's going on morning." Suddenly there was a rustle and a movement nearby, and the sheaf with which I had covered myself trembled and fell over. . .

I kneeled, clutching my pistol and pointing it in fro of me. It was already growing light yet there was not soul about. Only hens, clucking hens. What a fright tho dratted fowls had given me!

* * *

I was never so near death at any time during the wa as I was in those days. My appearance was both pitifu and ludicrous I say this without a feeling of shame fo I think that anyone who began the war as I did will ad mit in his heart of hearts that he also had a moment o physical exhaustion.

But let us turn back to what was happening to me. I repeat: never was I so near death. I had let exhaustion get the best of me Just imagine—I slept in that stack of wheat almost four hours; what could have been easier than to capture a sleeping man? In my tunic pocket were my Party card, credentials certifying that I was secretary of the R C., member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine, and a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U S.S.R. and the Ukrainian S.S.R., and my Order certificate.

And so, when the chickens disturbed me at dawn there was not a soul in the vicinity.

I stood up but before I took a step forward mortars began to shell the field; no more than three hundred metres away from me tommy guns went into action. I had no idea who was fighting whom, but I had already learned to be wary. It would have been idiotic, moreover, to enter that skirmish with my miserable pistol.

I lay down again and buried myself in the rick. Beside me the hens pecked busily, clucking away, while the roosters crowed proudly and independently. I was beginning to hate them for I already knew how the Germans loved chicken and eggs. "They'll come here, start a hunt for white meat and stumble on me."

I was dying for a smoke but I was so thoroughly chilled that I could not stir . Besides, my cigarettes were wet, and so were the matches

The firing soon died down I heard the shuffling of feet and a cough, clearly an old woman's No one was speaking, that meant she must have come into my neighbourhood alone.

She began to call the chickens, muttering to herself.

I stretched my numbed legs, turned over resolutely, threw off the straw and jumped up

"Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!" she cried, waving her arms

The sudden sight of a man like me—barefoot, unshaven, wet, straw in his hair—must have been a shock

She crossed herself and froze. For half a minute I also stood silent, adapting my eyes to the light: it was a sunny morning.

"Listen, Granny," I said as calmly as I could, "don't be frightened. I don't bite. Are the Germans far away?"

"No, in the village They're stealing the grain and cattle."

"Could you give me something to eat, old woman? Some bread? Or a bowl of milk?"

I glanced about me as I talked What I had taken in the darkness for cottages proved to be chicken coops The

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kolkhoz had brought the fowls out into the fields to fight pests and had built them large coops. The old woman was evidently the poultry woman

"And so, Granny, haven't you anything for a Russian soldier?"

"I have nothing, my dear Is it right to frighten a body so?"

"Are there Germans there too?" I pointed to the fringe of a wood about four hundred metres away from my rick

"There are Germans everywhere," she said.

Someone else appeared from behind the coops. It was a decrepit old man with a long greenish beard. A hood was wound around his throat

"Here's a man, Grandad," said the old woman, "asking for a bite to eat"

The old man looked up at me from under lowered brows, said nothing and began to unwind his hood. This took a long time Then he pulled out a big chunk of bread and some pork fat and just as silently offered them to me He sat down on the ground The old couple kept their eyes fixed on me as I hunted down the food.

"Listen, young fellow" said the old man, breaking his silence at last "Nearby maybe a hundred steps away, there's a dead soldier He's wearing a greatcoat, a real good greatcoat Go and take it that's better than shivering like that"

I chewed my bread as I chewed

The old man gave me a questioning look

"Is there the sound of gunfire?" I thought

He got up and went over to the rick where I had slept He returned with a filthy and unbelievably ragged greatcoat

"If you don't want a dead man's coat maybe you'd like to exchange it for a live one, save your life"

I thought it was, I came at all down the back I [illegible] and tore it in two from half I

threw over my shoulders; the other I again ripped into two and wound the pieces around my feet.

The old people watched me in silence. I made no attempt to continue the conversation either. How could I? My teeth were chattering, my hands and legs were trembling. My clothes were still wet from my swim the evening before.

In that costume I rose, took my leave of the old people and moved toward the wood.

"Say, fellow!" the old man shouted.

I turned around.

"God help you.... Are you armed?"

I nodded.

"Well then, before you die maybe you'll lay out at least one German, eh? Well, what are you standing there for? Go on, go on, at least don't die for nothing!"

I could see the outlines of figures at the fringe of the wood. They looked like Russians. I very much wanted to meet the lieutenant and the rest of the group I had lost the day before.

To the right, half a kilometre away, lay a small village

* * *

A little girl was running across the field from the direction of the village. Barefoot and coatless, she was running as fast as she could and screaming

When she saw me she came to an abrupt halt about five steps away and stopped screaming. I also stood still She was a flaxen-haired little peasant girl of about nine. She stood there looking at me with wide-open eyes.

I stepped toward her, and put out my hand to pat her on the head. She backed away, her lips quivering

"Soldier dear!" she said, still panting from her run "Come with me Oh, soldier dear, come quick!" She grabbed my hand and began to pull me "The Germans are

hurting Mummy, the Germans are dragging Mummy away! Oh, Uncle, hurry!"

I could not walk fast but the child wanted me to run. "Save Mama!" she kept repeating.

After taking about fifteen steps I realized that I could not go with her, that I had no right to give in to my feelings. I stopped.

"What's the matter?" the girl shouted, tugging at my hand. Then she looked into my eyes and her cheeks twitched convulsively. She dropped my hand and ran toward the wood again, screaming.

There was such anguish and despair in her voice that I rushed after her.

"Stop, stop, girlie!" I shouted. "Let's go to Mama!"

But she did not turn around. She ran so fast that with my sore feet I never could have caught up with her. She was screaming all the time, and her voice reached me for several more minutes. . It rang in my ears the next day and the next week. I can hear it now:

"Soldier dear, come with me!"

* * *

In the bushes at the fringe of the wood I saw three Red Army men. All three had big, bulging sacks on their shoulders. They were pretty dishevelled but their greatcoats were whole though dirty, and their boots looked strong.

All three turned out to be truck drivers. They gave me a brief account of how they had been surrounded. I told them that I was a regiment commissar. I do not know whether they believed me or whether they did not care what I was but they took me in and put me on their "retreating list."

"Come on, Commissar, we're going to talk things over," said one of them, a stout, tough-looking fellow with a fleshy face.

He winked to his friends as he said this. They walked over to a big haystack. I followed. Someone had made a roomy hollow in it, something like a cave. We crawled in and made ourselves comfortable.

The surly-looking driver opened his sack, took out two tins of meat, a flask of vodka, and a big chunk of bread. Leisurely he sliced the bread, opened a tin with a skilful twist of his knife, spread the meat on the bread, poured some vodka into the empty tin and offered me the first drink.

Then the rest drank in turn. We ate. One of the other drivers, a dark-haired, mercurial fellow who looked Jewish, said to his morose companion:

"Well, Stepan, are we going to keep hiding like this in ricks?"

Stepan threw him a quick glance but said nothing.

The third driver, a pock-marked fellow with a Vyatka accent, slapped Stepan on the shoulder.

"Come on, Stepan," he said, "let's make our way across the front to the army. We have a commissar with us now. He seems to be a husky fellow, we'll take him along."

Stepan stared at me. He stretched out a long, hairy hand and touched the Order pinned on my chest.

"Sure, all we needed was a commissar." The vodka had evidently gone to his head fast. "What'd you put that on for, you idiot?" he said eyeing the Order. "Take it off or I will!"

"Oh no you won't," said the man with the pock-marked face. "Don't act up, Stepan! Let's talk business."

"Business? What's our business? Our game is up!" muttered Stepan. He poured out some more vodka, gulped it down, wiped his mouth with his hand and continued less as leisurely. "Our business is simple enough. We'll turn this commissar over to the commandant of the nearest village and then let him decide who to ship to a

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"Come on, Commissar, we're going to talk things over," said one of them, a surly-looking tough with a puffy face

The dark-haired fellow's sack contained a raincoat It was short and old but I was glad to put it on, for it offered some protection against the wind and the rain They also gave me a shabby garrison cap. Now I was really beginning to look like an escaped war prisoner

We discovered we were soon to part. The pock-marked fellow had decided to cross the front line come what may. He was looking for companions My resolve to get to Chernigov Region was unchanged. Yakov Zusserman—the dark-haired fellow—was bent on reaching his home town of Nezhin. Since it lay in Chernigov Region our path was the same for the time being.

Many men were wandering about the woods. Most of them were probably rovers like ourselves. Often at the sight of us a man would start our way, but when we hailed him, "We're friends, come on over!" he would suddenly turn and run off. Single wanderers were particularly afraid. This was understandable: all kinds of men were about.

We spent the night in a hayrick in a meadow. We slept in turns. In the morning I was glad to see that my feet were a little better.

After breakfast we resolved to look for men more persistently and muster a group, if not of partisans then at least of allies In numbers there is strength

As we were talking it over I noticed a boy running past. We called to him He came up rather boldly.

"Seen any partisans about, boy?"

"What are partisans?"

The boy was being foxy. Incidentally, two huge army boots were slung over his shoulder.

"Where'd you get them?" the pock-marked fellow asked. "Might give them to our commander. Don't you see the man's without shoes?"

The kid took the boots off his shoulders without the slightest sign of regret. Both were for the left foot but

camp and who to hang. The Germans'll treat us better if we bring a commissar along." Noticing my hand steal inside my tunic, he grabbed it. "Hold on, brother, don't try to scare us. There'll be plenty of time to fight. I've got a toy like that too. Chuck your tin medal into the hay. And here's credentials for you."

With these words he pulled several German leaflet "passes" out of his pocket. With an effort I freed my hand from his strong fingers and took out my pistol, but the pock-marked fellow, who was sitting at my right knocked it out of my hand. I wanted to fling myself on him, but with the swiftness of a cat he pounced on Stepan.

"Sold out, you rat?"

The dark-haired fellow sprang to his assistance and together they pinned their companion to the ground.

"Wait, buddies, wait!" cried Stepan, fighting them off with his fists, kicking and biting. Suddenly there was an unnatural rattle in his throat and he began to drum his heels on the ground.

A minute later it was all over. I crawled out into the fresh air and inhaled deeply. The dark fellow and the one with the pock-marked face followed at once, dragging their sacks. The latter said, looking off to the side and addressing no one in particular:

"A dog's death for a dog!"

Wiping the sweat from his face with his sleeve, he turned to me:

"Why shoot unnecessarily, Comrade Commissar, and make a rumpus? Sometimes it's better to do it quietly. . . ."

We did not refer to it again. We moved into the heart of the forest, each engrossed in his own thoughts. I was thinking about the lesson in resoluteness and necessary ruthlessness those two Red Army men had taught me

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they got on, and since they were roomy I wound the remains of the greatcoat around my feet. I thanked the boy and repeated the question:

"Well, how about partisans? Seen any?"

"There's some men back of the gully but how should I know who they are? Go that way." He pointed out the direction. We headed for it.

Now I felt in seventh heaven. My feet were warm. Every ex-soldier knows how important that is. True, I often stumbled, but my heart was lighter anyway.

And I became happier still when in the gathering beyond the gully I found two Red Army men from our little group which I had lost two days before.

They told me that only one man of the six had been wounded and captured in the encounter that night. The others had got away. They had thought me dead. In the morning the lieutenant and one of the men had gone out to reconnoitre but had not returned....

All in all there were seven of them seated around the fire near the gully. Two were bent on getting to their homes in Kiev and Zhitomir regions, while the others were firmly resolved to cross the front. The driver from Vyatka joined the latter group.

None of us around that fire really knew the others. Our mood was naturally far from gay, but can Russians gathered around a fire keep quiet? And so we talked

"Yes, it's a big country, ours," said a giant of a man in an army coat. He was lying on his back gazing at the sky. "The country will weather it, no doubt about that, but the question is...."

He did not say what the question was.

Actually our conversation consisted of nothing more than such vague exclamations and remarks. Every now and then we stopped to listen to shots in the distance or to the rustling of the leaves. We were also wary of one

ier. Frequently I caught attentive, appraising glances
cted at me.

What a mess!" exclaimed a short Red Army man
ly belted in at the waist. "Vaska Sedykh was killed
splinter but I was spared. I guess my time hasn't
e.... What are we outside the army, boys? What are
y ourselves? We know how to sing songs about our
try all right, 'Vast is my native land,' but as soon as
e left all alone the country is about the size of our
."

That depends on who," objected the giant, gazing up
e sky. But the words had got under his skin. He rose.
at's that nonsense? What do you know about your
try? I ought to knock some sense into your head!"
started rolling a cigarette. He evidently wanted time
ollect his thoughts. "I was lying here just now won-
ng about—what do you think it was?"

That's easy," replied the short Red Army man. "About
wife and kids, the rotten fix you're in, and where
next meal will come from."

Now I know you're a dumbhead. Look, there's ten
s here. Ask each one and you'll see he's not thinking
t his needs. Just the opposite, he waves them aside
I was thinking about the Urals Machinery Works
in Sverdlovsk and how many tanks it can put out....
what are you thinking about?" he suddenly asked
man on his right.

The latter was sitting with one boot off, warming a
ering toe at the fire His tired face was ashen and his
colourless from exhaustion.

"Me? I'm not thinking, my dear comrade, I'm dream-
In general I'm a dreamer. I was wondering how to
ke this Germany useful—for all they're doing.
nean the Germans, is wiping out mankind. Now
en my foot eases up a bit I'll pull on this boot some-
, sling my rifle over my shoulder—and off I go And

no matter how long it takes or how many zigzags or detours on the way, I'll get to Berlin! When we grab Hitler by the throat, then we can talk . . " He started coughing. He was so weary that even speaking was an obvious effort.

"Why, buddy, you'll die seven times over before you get to Berlin!" the little soldier shouted to him.

"No, I won't die. I may fall in battle, of course. But even on the eve of my last battle I'll dream and make plans . . ."

Although he said all this in a calm, quiet voice, such conviction was written on his face that you could not help believing him.

"That's so, friend. That's so!" came a joyous voice from the other side of the fire, and the man it belonged to grew radiant as he spoke. "For us, for people like you and me, I mean for Soviet people, there can be no life without thoughts of the future. I'm a technician, worked on the Dnepr Electric Station. I studied there, too, while I was rebuilding it. Not a while I lay on the ground last night with eaves for a blanket and my teeth chattering with the cold I was thinking about how we're going to restore it when the Germans are driven out. It's clear they'll blow everything up, it's clear that after that they'll run away, and it's clear we'll build even better than before. It's really a great task to dream of!"

"You dreamer!" He grew embarrassed and blushed like a young girl.

"No, I'm serious. There's nothing to be said about it, but you've got me all excited. The conversation's over, but I'm going to stay up. Can't you hear the [illegible]"

Somewhere [illegible] was coming closer and closer. The [illegible] began to comb the woods.

"Well, [illegible] We two of us kept together

er two days more. We reconnoitred and asked people we met where the Germans were and how best to avoid them.

The forest we were in was sparse and dotted here and there with glades and marshes. Birds kept flying overhead, southward bound.

With the yellow leaves falling and a drizzle coming down the forest was a mournful enough picture, and most of us were if not mournful then certainly depressed.

About ourselves we spoke little and reluctantly. Only on the second day did I discover that Lieutenant Ivan Simonenko, one of our group, was a member of the Party. He said that he had worked as instructor under the Volhynia R.C. before the war. I mentioned some mutual acquaintances and described their appearance and mannerisms. Gradually our relations grew easier; the wariness disappeared. I discovered that Simonenko was a native of Chernigov Region and that he was on his way there to see his mother, who lived in Malaya Devitsa District. What good luck! It lay on my route to the regional detachment. We were both delighted. We exchanged a firm handshake, called over Yakov Zusserman and decided that the three of us would set out that very night for Chernigov Region.

* * *

We roamed together along the roads of Poltava and then Chernigov Region for some eight days. A detailed description of those days would probably make a book in itself. Both my companions were fine, responsive men. Yakov Zusserman was the youngest, twenty-six.

"Yakov, don't go to Nezhin," I told him. "Of course, I understand, your wife and children, but what can you do for them all by yourself? You'll be caught and dragged to the Gestapo. Anyone can see you're a Jew. Stay with us. We'll become partisans. If your family is killed you'll at least be able to avenge them."

"I see that. Maybe you're right; maybe there's nothing for me to do in Nezhin. But my heart is on fire. I want to see my mother and my wife and my little sister. And most of all, my little son. He's so little, only four years old, yet he's already written me a letter, 'Papa, Vova good boy.' Now how can I, alive and so near to them, keep away? Let me go!"

Let him go? What did he mean? I was not his chief. I had no power to detain him. But as he considered himself a member of our group he probably would have given in had I insisted. But I did not want to insist. The man had his heart set on going to Nezhin. He raved about his family and his home. You could see that nothing in the world meant as much to him. "Even if I die afterwards, even if they torture me, how can I stay away once I've a chance to go?"

Simonenko understood him better than I did. He himself was trying to get to his mother. He had firmly resolved not to remain in the rear under the Germans but to cross the frontline whatever the cost. He was going into the rear only to "quiet the old lady."

There we were—three chance companions, three Soviet men. In the daytime we slept in wheat ricks or haystacks, and as soon as night fell we set out.

We marched along Ukrainian soil which had just been seized by the Germans. Even on the dirt roads there were German signposts. When there was no one around we tore down the markers, broke them into bits and scattered them over the field

Late one afternoon we found ourselves on a rather wide and even road It was a warm, calm day. The sun was warm; everything around was pleasant. We walked leisurely, as if out on a stroll. On either side of the road stretched a dense growth of bushes; red and yellow leaves carpeted the earth. In the distance were the white patches of homesteads; the cottages were surrounded

by poplars and the thick, already denuded branches of fruit trees.

It was quiet, the air was balmy, and we had fine appetites. It did seem that all we had to do was to enter the nearest village or homestead and some good housewife would serve us borshch....

Yes, strange as it may seem, such peaceful scenes were to be found even in the enemy rear.

This was our native landscape, our native area. And now we had come to a district which had known no battles, where war had left no black scars

We walked no less than an hour and a half along this road fringed with bushes and here and there with young trees. We hardly exchanged a word. We were all three probably in the same mood.

On either side of the road, in the shadow of the bushes, there were shallow ditches Few leaves were left on those bushes, and that is why all of us saw the body lying in the ditch at the same time It was a Red Army man. We had seen many corpses before, but here, in this quiet, peaceful spot . We looked for papers to discover the dead man's identity but found none The pockets of his tunic were unbuttoned and his trouser pockets were turned inside out He had been shot in the back of the head.

Some twenty steps farther on we saw another body, also in the ditch and with a bullet hole in the back of the head. We quickened our steps. We said nothing of what we had seen, but not a trace remained of our tranquil mood All at once we realized how frightfully tired we were.

A little later Yakov picked up a little German package of chlorine pills He opened the package, sniffed it and was about to throw it away when Simonenko, joking, said:

"Hold on, there, Yakov It may come in handy You

drop it in a puddle and then you drink without danger *to your health!*"

Yakov took offence.

"You think I care about my health?" He flung the package angrily into the bushes.

About twenty steps farther Simonenko picked up a spoon and examined it· German. He threw it away. Then we saw underfoot a metal button with an eagle gleaming on it.

"It does look, boys," I said, "as if a Fritz was undressed here."

We took some fifty steps more and saw a little cross on a mound. With a German steel helmet stuck on the cross, it was a most pleasant sight. But that meant those who had buried him were somewhere in the vicinity.... However, a long stretch of road was visible, and it was deserted.

Still we decided to leave it. We moved ahead through the bushes. A few minutes later we heard a rustle and a moan.

A lad in a faded Red Army uniform was making an effort to rise to his knees, clinging to the bushes with blood-covered hands. Simonenko ran up and caught him under the arms. He wanted to help him but the fellow let out an unearthly cry, tore himself away and fell back; he continued to scream as he lay there. His eyes were wide open but he evidently neither saw nor understood anything. His hair, chest and arms were all covered with blood. The right side of his face had been bashed in so that the jawbone was exposed.

Simonenko pressed his flask to the Red Army man's lips. The water spilled over but several drops did get into his mouth. He took a few swallows. He continued to scream but not so loud. An intelligent expression came into his eyes. Wheezing he began to say something in a quick whisper.

"The pea-jacket, Mama, cover me!" I remember those words because he kept repeating them. Then his eyes grew quite clear. "Brothers, I'm dying! My name is Nikodimov —from the 6th Company—give me more, another drink." Now he sucked avidly at the flask. "Save Seryoga Nikodimov." He began to gulp faster. Simonenko supported his head off the ground. "Put me down!" ordered the wounded man. "Put me down! It's more than I can stand!"

Simonenko lowered the man's head to the ground. Zusserman and I stood there shifting from foot to foot and exchanging glances.

"A bite to eat. Oh, couldn't swallow it, the skunks knocked out my teeth. Boys, tell them how Seryoga Nikodimov was a prisoner of the Germans.. ."

He spoke disjointedly. Sometimes his story was a delirious jumble. But we nonetheless made out from his disconnected words that a group of prisoners, himself included, had been convoyed for four days without food. The corporal in charge had beat them with whatever was handy and a short while before had shot two of their party, one after the other, for falling behind. Then Nikodimov had smashed the corporal's head in with a stone.

"I knocked him down and tore at him with my teeth. They kicked me and beat me with rifle butts and they took that skunk away from me I'm still alive, eh, brothers? Why? What am I holding on for?"

Then he sat up, semi-delirious, bracing himself on his hands. He cursed us and himself and everybody who surrendered to the Germans He took us for prisoners, of course Suddenly he began to roll on the ground; blood spurted from his mouth When he grew quiet we understood that it was all over.

We would have buried him but we had nothing to dig with We wanted to know details, find out where to write to, where his family lived, but we found no papers on him

We removed our caps and stood silent for a minute. I looked at Zusserman. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. Catching my glance, he covered his face with his hands and ran away, breaking the branches of the bushes. Twenty minutes later he caught up with us. One of his cheeks was twitching convulsively "I got upset, boys," he said, trying to act calm.

* * *

The districts we were then passing through had not yet felt the full brunt of the war.

No battles had been fought there.

The front had rolled on some one hundred and fifty kilometres. The German garrisons were just being billeted; the Gestapo and the other punitive organizations had not yet put in an appearance

Once an old kolkhoz peasant gave us a ride in his cart. He was in an amazingly peaceful frame of mind.

"You see, the sails of the windmill are turning and I'm on my way there for flour. Now did I ever imagine I'd mill grain under the Germans? There's only three Germans in the whole district. We have our Red Banner Kolkhoz, just like before the war. The same chairman, the same bookkeeper.... There, look, the wheat's still standing, and the ripe grains are falling. Come along, comrades, and work with us. We've got pretty girls, and the older women are nice too. We're short of hands."

We asked the old man what made him so kindhearted and why he liked the Germans so much. He reasoned this way: what's to be done? Once we couldn't hold our own, gave up the Ukraine and Moscow and Leningrad to the Germans, we might as well make the best of the situation.

"I've never seen those Germans yet. What are they like?"

"Then how do you know Moscow's been taken?"
"The starosta said so"
"And you believe him?"
"Who else is there to believe? Before the newspapers ed to come and we listened to the radio Now what the rosta says must be the truth."
We could not make out whether the old man was being nning, pretending to be simple-minded, or really had en taken in by the propaganda of the German hench-en.
When the old man said he was from the village of zeryane, Varva District, Chernigov Region, I got a tock.
"Then we're on Chernigov land?"
"Of course."
"There was a leading man here named Fyodorov aven't heard what's become of him, have you, ad?"
"Fyodorov? Alexei Fyodorovich? Why, before the war saw him as close as I see you now. He often came this ay. But who knows where he's now? Some say he sold ut to the Germans, others say he's been killed.... Maye he's a starosta here ..."
This was more than I could stand. I felt like throttling he old man.
"You old devil!" I said angrily. "Why do you lie that ou knew Fyodorov? I am Fyodorov!"
But instead of growing embarrassed the old man flushed angrily, turned to face me and shouted:
"I'm lying?! Never known to lie in all my sixty-four years and I don't mean to start now Think that once you've got pistols inside your shirts you've got me scared? I'm an old man, death doesn't scare me What d'you mean you're Fyodorov?! If Fyodorov came to us the people would go with him as partisans, the people wou'd burn down the mill and hang the starosta No, fellows,

you can't pump me.... Now get off the cart, get off, I say!" he yelled fiercely, poking me in the ribs.

What could we do? We had to climb down. The old man unwound his whip and lashed the horses, and off they dashed. When he had ridden off about a hundred paces he shook his fist at us and cursed us roundly:

"Damn *polizei* swine!"

He immediately crouched low, as if expecting a bullet to follow. We did not shoot, of course.

He straightened up and again started cursing us for all he was worth.

Thus did we enter Chernigov Region.

* * *

We headed for Ignatovka, a village in Sreblyan District where I knew some people. Here Yakov Zusserman left us.

"Now then, Yakov, don't let the Germans catch you,' I said in parting. "If you manage to save your family, or at least to come out alive yourself, go to Koryukovka District, to the partisans. We'll meet there."

We kissed, never expecting to meet again.

Late in the evening on September 27, Ivan Simonenko and I entered a human dwelling for the first time in twelve days of wandering.

We knocked at the window of schoolteacher Zakharchenko's cottage. I knew him slightly; he had been accepted into the Party not long before the war broke out.

We were not admitted immediately. Someone turned down the light, came up to the window and pressed a palm against the pane. No one here observed the blackout regulations.

"Who's there?" came a man's voice.

"Friends, Comrade Zakharchenko. Open up."

About five minutes passed. Then we heard the bolt being drawn back and the door was opened to admit us.

Zakharchenko's wife turned up the light. Our host scrutinized us long and silently.

"I seem to remember seeing you somewhere, but I certainly never set eyes on your companion Oh, Comrade Fyodorov." He flushed a fiery red, shrank back and lowered his voice. His wife immediately began to curtain the windows.

"Nobody noticed you, Comrade Fyodorov, did they? Otherwise—well, you understand.... Yes, yes—what a surprise! You know, comrades.... You understand.... The starosta knows that I am a Communist. Well, I'm under special observation, of course. True, there are no Germans in the village now—but. "

"Is the starosta the only one who knows you're a Communist? I do too. I know that you are a member of our Chernigov organization. I shan't stay long. Tell me how things are, what steps the district committee has taken, how you've distributed the underground work among yourselves. And while you do that, maybe your wife will warm up some water for a wash and get us a bite of something to eat... "

I acted offhand. Well, my confident tone hit the right note.

"Let the people here regard my arrival as natural and ordinary," I thought. "The secretary of the R C. making the rounds of the district to acquaint himself with the activity of the primary organizations"

I said nothing of our long days of wandering. "The work is beginning," I decided. "From now on I am no longer a hunted animal. No, now I am the hunter. And let the German beasts put their tails between their legs. For the time being I have to hide, to be on my guard. But let them just wait, when we start displaying our strength ..."

I began to question Zakharchenko.

"You haven't registered at the district commandant's office, I hope?"

"How could I, Comrade Fyodorov?..."

But his answer plainly said that if he had not registered he had, at any rate, contemplated it. Never mind, after this evening he would start thinking differently.

"Very good. That means you're an underground worker! Your district committee secretary is?..."

"Comrade Gorbov. I haven't seen him yet.... No, unfortunately I don't know where he's lying low. That is, I mean hiding."

"Which other Communists have remained in the district?"

"I have heard from acquaintances that a group is operating in the village of Gurbintsy. It is headed by the former district chief of the NKVD. I don't remember his name."

"Anybody else you know anything about? No information about other groups? They're probably well concealed . Now then, Comrade Zakharchenko, tomorrow morning, or even better tonight, you will go to Gurbintsy, find this group and tell them to send someone for instructions."

Here the schoolteacher's wife intervened:

"You mustn't send Kostya."

"Why not?"

"We have children. If my husband is caught...."

"What if he was at the front?"

"The front's different."

Her husband had long been making energetic signs to her not to butt in.

"Run along, run along," he said. "You'd do better to get them something to eat."

When she left I winked at Simonenko He followed her into the kitchen She fired the stove, put up water for our wash and started to fry some eggs, wiping away an unending flow of tears

The schoolteacher had already taken himself in hand

He now asked practical questions about what he was to do and how. I advised him to move as soon as possible to a different village, the farther away the better, where nobody knew him.

Zakharchenko supplied me with a pair of trousers and a padded jacket such as workers wear. He also gave me a cap, but it proved too small I had to let it out in the back. I did not shave, deciding to grow a beard as a disguise.

We washed, changed our clothes, had a bite and went to sleep on the warm stove shelf. The night passed quietly.

In the morning my host had a hard time waking me. Three comrades had come with him from Gurbintsy

So the work was really beginning!

* * *

Zakharchenko plunged headlong into the work He was a healthy man of about thirty-five, and before we came he had suffered because of his enforced inactivity Just because he had nowhere to apply his energy his mind had preyed on lurking dangers. Passive by nature, he needed a push from without There are many people like that. Outside an organization they become lost. Only an organization bolsters them up, infuses courage and energy into them.

Zakharchenko launched into a detailed account, gesticulating all the while, of how he had made his way into the village of Gurbintsy unnoticed through vegetable patches and back yards and how he had found the secret meeting place all by himself

But I cut him short. I was impatient to hear what the other comrades had to say.

They told me that an underground group had been organized. It consisted of four Party members and seven

Komsomols. No wrecking or partisan activity had been carried out yet.

They were obviously upset about something. It turned out that the group had suffered a big loss recently: one of its members, Logvinenko, the chairman of the kolkhoz, had been killed in the village of Demeyevka.

"We don't know, Comrade Secretary, how to regard this event," concluded one of the men. "Of course, Logvinenko died like a hero, sacrificed himself, but it was a rash and unorganized act."

What happened was this: as a German car with several officers in it was driving past the village Logvinenko pulled a grenade from his belt and hurled it at the Germans with the cry: "Long live the Soviet Ukraine! Death to the German invaders!" The explosion killed two soldiers. The others jumped out and dashed after Logvinenko. He did not get far away. He was shot down right there in the field. This all happened in broad daylight.

"What do the people say?" I asked.

"They're terribly sorry. Some censure him but everybody admires his daring."

"What do you think about it?"

I asked questions because I had no ready answer myself. Logvinenko's act was understandable. A few days earlier I myself had almost given way to the first impulse of my heart when the little girl had asked me to save her mother. Of course, Logvinenko, a Party member, an ardent patriot and the head of a kolkhoz, would have done much more good if instead of yielding to impulse he had acted with deliberation, in concert with his comrades. But the feeling that moved him was love for the people and hatred for the people's enslavers.

We discussed the heroic act of the chairman of the Demeyevka kolkhoz for quite a while. We decided to find his body and give him a ceremonial burial in a conspicuous spot near the village. His heroic death had to be

kept fresh in the minds of the people. In his epitaph we would call him an avenger of the people, a partisan.

These comrades gave me a detailed description of how the Germans were bossing their district.

The Germans had found eleven Red Army men sleeping near a hayrick and shot them all without even waking them.

Starostas had been appointed in many villages. Most of them were ex-kulaks and their ilk In Ozeryany, for example, the starosta was a German, one of the colonists. Here and there, however, some honest Soviet people had accepted this post in order the better to fight the invaders. The underground group was contacting them. To those definitely known to be scoundrels and traitors it had sent notes of warning.

"The time for threats and warnings is over," cut in Zakharchenko. "Comrade Stalin gave clear instructions to destroy the enemy's accomplices."

"That's right," I said. "But with your small group you cannot kill all the starostas who are traitors. Now let's list those to be put out of the way first. And let the people know that not a single accomplice of the enemy will escape his doom! Start explaining it immediately. Has anyone managed to save a radio set? No? Find one. You must pick up the Soviet Information Bureau Communiqués regularly and pass them on to the people. List all instances of German atrocities, remember them and inform the kolkhoz people of them through leaflets or in private talks."

I gave the comrades a number of other instructions and told them approximately the route I expected to follow.

"Try to keep the district and regional Party committees informed of everything."

This first conference lasted several hours. Meanwhile Zakharchenko's wife sat on the porch to prevent any outsider from surprising us. Like the day before she con-

tinuously wiped away the tears and just as continuously nibbled sunflower seeds. "Keep nibbling seeds," her husband had advised her "You'll attract less attention."

The schoolteacher's children—one a year old and the other two—remained inside with us. When the little one began to cry I picked him up and rocked him as I went on with the meeting Zakharchenko was busy taking down the minutes.

After dinner, at dusk, Simonenko and I got ready to leave Zakharchenko's wife stuffed our pockets with fresh-baked meat pies and again burst into tears as she said goodbye.

Zakharchenko shook my hand a long time.

"Don't mind her tears, Comrade Fyodorov," he said. "It took even me a long time to get used to them."

"See that you don't drown in the woman's tears."

"No fear of that now. There'll be no time. Only I don't know what to do about the school. I've decided to follow your advice and move away from here. But there is a rumour the Germans are allowing elementary schools to open I feel sorry for the kids!"

What could I answer? Many things had not been thought out thoroughly at the time One thing alone was clear: once the Germans were "allowing" a school it would not be a Soviet school.

"No matter how sorry we are for the kids, they'll have to go without schooling this winter. After all, we can't have them follow a fascist program!"

The three underground workers from Gurbintsy set out to accompany us to the neighbouring village of Sokirintsy.

* * *

I am writing not a novel but reminiscences, and so I beg my readers' pardon beforehand. Some of the characters drop out of the book, never to return. I do not know

what became of them and would be grateful to anyone who could tell me. I should very much like to know how Zakharchenko and his tearful wife behaved subsequently, and what happened to Ivan Simonenko.... We parted a few days later.

I left Ignatovka that evening in a different mood The consciousness that we were active again was both inspiring and enheartening.

We had to cover about twenty kilometres across fields Our comrades saw Simonenko and myself half the way. A wretched drizzle was falling and the clay stuck to our boots, but I walked along cheerfully, telling the comrades our plans:

"There will be a partisan division in Chernigov Region. The task of the underground workers is to prepare people, arm them ideologically, stir them to action."

In parting we shook hands. Our palms were wet, the mud squelched underfoot; the wind carried away our words and we had to repeat them. The steppe presents a mournful picture in the autumn, particularly in wet and windy weather. At such a time one feels like sitting at home with a cup of hot tea in front of a blazing fire....

"Well, comrades, let's say goodbye. I hope not for the last time!"

The words were no sooner out of my mouth than a light flashed on the horizon, then another. We heard the whirr of motors, and a minute later five German trucks rushed past us, headlights glaring. They bumped over uneven road, splashing mud far and wide. German soldiers were standing up in the trucks bawling some war song....

We had to run off into the fields and hug the wet earth. I held my pistol ready, with the safety catch released.... Oh, how I wanted to shoot them!

The underground workers from Gurbintsy went off and

Ivan Simonenko and I were alone again. More than two weeks had passed since, we two Soviet men two Party workers, had set out together, tramping along the roads and hiding from German bullets and the eyes of traitors. But we had not become real friends.

Years will pass, but I will never forget Simonenko. Should we meet I would be delighted; if I learned that something had happened to him I would take it very much to heart.

We shared every piece of bread, and sometimes it was the last I would sometimes be sitting somewhere beside a rick, sheltering myself from the wind, while Ivan went on a search for food. My appearance was against me in such matters. Simonenko looked more like an ordinary soldier. People took pity on him, but me they invariably scrutinized. With the best of intentions, perhaps, but with heightened interest. And he never once reproached me for leaving all this work to him.

Then why did we not become real friends? I urged him to join me. I wanted to make an underground worker, a partisan, of him He did not actually refuse but not once did he say outright: "I will." He did not argue with me but I could see that the man had no faith in the power of underground resistance "I'll see my mother," he said, "and then go back to the front."

But he was a wonderful comrade.

We would stretch out somewhere beside a haystack, gaze into the morning mist and roll one cigarette for the two of us.

Incidentally, in Chernigov Region we no longer slept in haystacks. We found a shelter in Sokirintsy, where we soon arrived, just as we had in Ignatovka.

We knocked on the door of the first cottage we came to and told the old woman who admitted us that we were war prisoners who had managed to slip away from our column and hide in a rick....

At that time we used to go to great pains to concoct long stories. Later I realized that you cannot hide a cat in a bag. While the people heard us out, they did not particularly believe us In those days I would have been horrified to know that people guessed my identity. But now I think that that was for the best. They guessed, and even knew, but they did not betray me.... Indeed, it would have been strange if they had not recognized me. I had run for deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian S.S.R. in these districts and made speeches there, I had visited them frequently as secretary of the R.C.

In Sokirintsy I found the former head of the Varva district department of education. Through him I passed on instructions to the secretary of the underground district Party committee.

We spent the day in the village and left at dark It was an unusually fine night, with a full moon and no wind Our clothes had dried during the day, and although we had slept little we were in good spirits. Lisoviye Sorochintsy was now quite near.

Simonenko suggested a short cut. I assumed he would not lose his way so near his native village, but he did He blamed it all on the moon, objects assumed different shapes in its uncertain light, he said We had to skirt a wide anti-tank ditch filled with water. This took a long time. On the whole we circled about for three hours ...

We crossed a small wood and, to our surprise, saw the bright light of a bonfire in the distance. Now who lights bonfires in the steppe at such a time?

As we came a bit closer we made out a solitary figure dashing about near the fire Simonenko, whose eyesight was better than mine, also saw something like a horse or a cow not far away

"I'll creep up and have a look," Simonenko said "If he's a local man maybe he'll show us the road to Lisoviye Sorochintsy."

Crouching, he ran a little ahead, then turned and beckoned to me. We then approached the fire without any attempt at concealment.

A tall, gaunt old man with a tangled beard was throwing armfuls of weeds on the fire. He was dressed in narrow trousers, old-fashioned boots and a long city-style coat. He wore a pince-nez. His head was bare and his hair dishevelled. He was so engrossed in his work that he did not notice us immediately, but when he did his pince-nez only flashed in our direction and then he turned away without answering our greeting. I exchanged glances with Simonenko and tapped my forehead with my finger.

Some thirty paces away from the fire an extremely lean cow was nibbling at the meagre grass.

A grass-fed fire in the steppe is anything but cosy. While it gives a bright light and a hot flame, the grass burns quickly. There is not a moment's rest near it, for it must be constantly fed. Still we sat down and stretched our wet feet toward the fire. The old man threw another armful into the fire Without looking at us he muttered:

"Modern upbringing!"

We said nothing After a pause he continued:

"Every decent tramp knows that you may warm yourself at a stranger's fire only if you contribute your share. You, citizens, came from the wood. Toward my fire. Isn't that so? It is. Undoubtedly so! Therefore you could have brought some firewood. Ever read Maxim Gorky? I assume that you will answer in the affirmative for you look intelligent And if you've read him then you should know the ethics of vagabonds. Who are you? Where are you from? Where are you bound for?"

We told him we were war prisoners returning home.

"That's a lie!" the old man said "But that, after all, is your own concern. You consider it necessary to conceal the truth Allow me, under the circumstances, to preserve

my incognito." With these words he turned away from us and said nothing more.

We gathered some weeds and dry brush. But this did not make the old man unbend. He would not even answer when we asked where we were.

A little later he brought his cow closer to the fire. With his foot he drove a stake into the ground and tied the cow to it. Then he spread out his long old coat on the lee side, where the fire had dried the ground, and wrapped himself in it.

"Be so good, citizens, as to see that I don't catch fire," he muttered.

The heat made us sleepy. I do not remember who fell asleep first. We dozed off in a sitting position with our knees drawn up to our chins.

A loud guttural cry woke us I jumped to my feet. The fire was out, but the moon had not yet gone down and it was light. German heavy bombers were flying over very low, making an ugly snarling noise.

The old man, his face turned skywards, was shaking a fist at them and cursing furiously. He cursed the flyers in German: "*Verfluchten!*" and some other words....

He ran across the field waving his long skinny arms so wildly that it seemed he would take wing and catch hold of a plane.

Noticing me, the old man shouted

"Hey, you, shoot! Shoot! There's an order to fire at enemy planes with every type of weapon. Shoot, damn you!"

When the planes had disappeared the old man dropped to the ground exhausted and hid his face in his hands.

"Is there anything we can do for you?" Simonenko asked compassionately.

"Leave me alone," replied the old man. Then he added in a softer voice: "Don't pay any attention to me. I am beyond all help. And I can't help anybody in any way Now I am a vagabond—nothing more "

Well, we left him alone and went on. Once or twice we glanced back. The cow was lying near the heap of ashes; beside it sat the old man with the beard. Simonenko noticed that his shoulders were shaking.

It was quite clear that the old man had experienced a great shock. But what had it been? Why did he curse in German? The very fact that he had cursed the German planes with such vehemence showed who his enemy was.

"Where'll he find a shelter?" Simonenko asked softly.

He soon recognized the road to Lisoviye Sorochintsy and then stopped short.

"You know, Comrade Fyodorov, I'll go back and take him along. My mother will take him into the house and make him welcome. Wait for me, Comrade Fyodorov, all right?"

"All right, only see you don't warm a snake in your bosom. Who knows what sort of man he is...."

But Simonenko only waved his hand and ran back.

I sat down to wait behind a bush by the road. I waited a long time, got chilled, curled up and, before I knew it, dozed off again.

Simonenko had a hard time waking me.

"Come on, Alexei Fyodorovich!" he shouted into my ear.

"But where's the old man? Couldn't you find him?"

"He wouldn't come. He was very much moved by my offer—but evidently he really must be touched. He said the same thing over and over again: 'They'll find me everywhere.' Who are they and why will they find him? I couldn't make head or tail of it. He flatly refused to go with me. When I left he shook my hand. Shook it warmly. 'Thanks,' he said, 'for your kindness.' What can you do with a man like that? If the Germans find him they may shoot him People say they kill all lunatics."

* * *

The next halt, this time quite a lengthy one, was in Lisoviye Sorochintsy, Simonenko's birthplace Here a bit of maternal tenderness fell to my share too.

Two wet and hungry men stumbled into the cottage of a solitary old woman at night.

"Oh, my son, my boy!" the old woman cried out, throwing her arms around Simonenko's neck.

I stood off to the side, waiting. The son and mother feasted their eyes on each other. She asked questions and he answered, and then he asked questions.... I basked in the warmth of the well-heated cottage, grinning very foolishly all the while

The old woman heated some water and gave us clean underwear, and we washed from head to foot. Then we sat down to the table We had chicken. There was a plate of freshly-pickled red tomatoes and firm little cucumbers.

Almost the whole next day we rested to our heart's content How I slept that night! A sheet under me, a sheet over me and a quilt on top. The rain tapped on the windowpane and the wind whistled in the chimney, but I slept on. I would wake up, listen, remember that there were Germans somewhere in the vicinity, and then turn on my other side to sleep again In the morning we again ate our fill.

Simonenko's mother, after eyeing me critically, declared:

"Such an important man, and so ragged."

She took a length of sturdy black cloth out of her chest of drawers to make me a tunic and a pair of trousers She marked out the pattern but was afraid to cut, and went out with the cloth

When she returned she said

"Come along to the tailor, Alexei Fyodorovich. He's waiting."

According to the rules of strict conspiracy I should have been on my guard, of course After all, I did not

know the old woman particularly well, let alone the tailor. Now what moved him to agree to make me a suit, and in one day at that, as my hostess assured me? Was it a trap? My pistol was under the pillow. But would not my hostess take offence if I went for it?

However, the desire to get a new, clean suit prevailed.

"Very well," I decided. "No one remembers my face here. And if he does he won't recognize me in this getup."

I shall never forget the suit made for me by the village tailor in Lisoviye Sorochintsy.

I could immediately see that the tailor guessed the identity of his customer, and that it was no secret to his wife or daughters either. Everybody in their family did tailoring. The reason why the suit was finished so quickly is that everybody in the house had a hand in it. And so everybody in the family, from the oldest to the youngest, knew that they were helping a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, the secretary of the R.C. of the Party. They knew they were risking their lives but no one gave any sign of it. The master of the house took my measurements and asked the regular questions: had I cloth for the lining and pockets, and buttons?

"No? Well, then, we'll find something of our own. Come for the suit tomorrow morning."

"But how about payment?" I asked. "Now or later?"

"Why, Comrade—" Here the tailor almost pronounced my name, but his wife looked at him so indignantly that he caught himself. "We'll settle up after the war," he said simply.

I lived in Lisoviye Sorochintsy some six days. I did nothing much in the way of work. I stored up energy, observed the people, appraised the situation, pondered over events.

Ivan Simonenko would go off somewhere; his mother would be busy with the chores, and I would be left alone

in the room. It was a clean little room: flowers, an embroidered towel under the ikons, the even ticking of a clock. I had never lived for long in such surroundings. When I had visited villages in the course of my work I naturally often put up in such cottages, but then things had been quite different. The cottages were always crowded with people: district and village officials used to come and we talked and argued into the wee hours. In the morning we would leave for the fields.

Now I sat there all by myself with no one seeking me out, no one coming to me with his problems.

I would walk up and down the room humming, then stop, press up against the warm stove, and again resume my pacing. Sometimes I sat at the window gazing out into the village street There were no books. Write a letter? Nothing to write with and no one to write to. It was ages since I had last seen a newspaper or listened to the radio

Yet I had to act, guide people. The situation had changed but the Party remained the organizer and leader of the masses, of the people.

No one had relieved me of my responsibilities. Suppose the Central Committee sent for me and questioned me? They would naturally ask me first of all how the people were living in the occupied villages, the economic conditions there, the mood of the people, how they were resisting the invaders And I would, of course, be asked: And you, Fyodorov, what are you doing? What are your plans for the future? How do you plan to arrange the work of the underground organization?

These were precisely the questions I asked myself in the quiet of Simonenko's cottage, and I was dissatisfied with myself I was not prepared to answer them.

I noticed I was still in the grip of my old habits, that my mind still often ran along the prewar, or rather, the legal, channels.

I looked through the window. A drizzle was falling. Far off in the field several women were stacking grain. As I looked my mind registered the fact that it was promising weather for the coming harvest but that they were late with the stacking. And suddenly I stopped short: now everything was the other way round. Now the Germans were here. The weather was in the Germans' favour, and they would take the stacked grain away from the peasants.

I recalled that three days earlier I had noticed the bottom of a broken bottle on the road. I had kicked it aside mechanically. A natural enough gesture. Any decent person would do the same: why, a passing car might run over the glass, cut a tire and ruin the tube. But now only German machines used that road. When I remembered this I returned and put the broken glass in a wheelrut.

I had to train myself to utilize every possible occasion, no matter how slight, to thwart and harry the enemy.

And there were the women stacking grain. I threw a jacket over my shoulders and quickly strode out into the field.

"Who ordered you to stack it?" I asked the women.

They ran over and gathered around me.

A tall, sturdy young kolkhoz woman answered with a question:

"Why not? The grain will rot otherwise."

"Who gave the order?" I asked again, irritated.

"The team leader."

"Where's that team leader?"

Everybody pointed to the young woman who had answered first.

How strange! Not a single woman had asked what business it was of mine, no one had even enquired what I was doing there or wondered at my tone.

The team leader explained in a businesslike way that she had received no orders from anybody but, as a Stakhanovite, had called the women together for work.

When I asked whom she was saving the grain for the team leader saw my point. She grew terribly upset; tears rose to her eyes.

"How can you, comrade?" she said. "I'm a Stakhanovite. I was at the agricultural exhibition in Moscow How could you possibly think that now I'm working for the Germans! We're simply accustomed to working Our hands won't stay still."

We got to talking. I advised them to distribute the grain among the households, thresh it on the quiet and then hide it properly—bury it in pits

"And not a kernel for the Germans! Clear?"

"Yes, comrade."

The women told me that there was no starosta in the village but only an assistant, the former kolkhoz chairman, Bodko by name He had been a member of the Party but was expelled—for failing to meet the grain deliveries, they thought.

"He's a good man, doesn't treat people badly."

"How about the Germans? Doesn't treat them badly either?"

It appeared that the Germans had not stopped in the village but only passed through. They had swooped down on the chickens and pigs, confiscated five horses and now came to Bodko when they needed anything.

I asked whether there were many people in the village, whether there were any men and what they were doing.

"They're thinking," the team leader replied unexpectedly. "Sitting at home and thinking what to do next All of them, our own men and the newcomers, are brooding...."

Our group attracted attention in the village. Another woman ran up to us. Then some little boys popped up out of nowhere. I decided the wisest thing to do was to say goodbye. When I had gone about a hundred paces away the team leader caught up with me.

"Comrade Fyodorov," she said breathlessly. "Is it true people say you're asking everybody to join the partisans? Take me along too!"

"I am not Fyodorov!" I said as convincingly as could.

"I understand you're not Fyodorov now, but there's one around. Take me along. I'm a Stakhanovite. I was the agricultural exhibition in Moscow. I can't bear it a longer here."

I advised the girl to get a group of young people t gether and make their way to the Ichnya woods.

Yes, things were definitely in a bad way as far concealment of my identity went. Some state of affair The tailor had recognized me (true, Simonenko's moth may have told him), and now this girl team leader. Mo likely nobody in the team had believed particularly th before them was a war prisoner who had slipped awa from his column. And some "war prisoner" this was: h carried all his documents on him and spoke in a tone c command....

Reproaching myself in this way I returned to the quie little room. Yet at the bottom of my heart lay a grain o joy: since they had recognized me and not only not hand ed me over to the Germans but listened to me attentive ly, it meant the people were waiting for the Party t speak, awaiting guidance.

The time had come to hoist the banner of partisan warfare.

Simonenko entered the house in the company of a thick- set, neatly-dressed man of about forty-five. He stretched out a hand in greeting as Simonenko introduced him:

"Comrade Fyodorov, meet my good friend, the chair- man of the kolkhoz, Yegor Yevtukhovich Bodko."

I was about to clasp his outstretched hand but on hearing his name I involuntarily recoiled. So this was the local boss, the favourite of the invaders. I put my hands

behind my back and quite unceremoniously looked him up and down.

This was my first eye-to-eye meeting with a traitor. Expelled from the Party? Probably for sabotage. These were just the people the Germans recruited as henchmen But why on earth had Simonenko brought him here, and told him my name, besides? What the devil kind of secrecy was this?... My hands involuntarily closed in fists. I wanted to hit this Judas.

But Bodko's gaze betrayed neither embarrassment nor triumph. He looked at me frankly and simply.

"I see, Comrade Fyodorov," he said, "that you don't trust me. That's right. Allow me to report. I accepted the job of assistant to the starosta with the approval of the underground district Party committee. True, I have not been a member of the Party for some time, but the Germans appointed me just because I was expelled. The starosta here is the same kulak who's starosta in the neighbouring village of Kolesniki. I was not acceptable as starosta: don't meet the German standards. After all, I was chairman of the kolkhoz, and the farm was counted one of the best."

So I was mistaken. But that was an agreeable mistake. Bodko proved to be a serious, thoughtful and observant person. He had one big fault, though. Honest and straightforward himself, he attributed these same qualities to everybody and was too ready to trust people

"I have many pressing questions to ask you, Comrade Secretary," said Bodko. "The district committee didn't have a chance to instruct me in detail. I have to act on my own. And I'm in a very ticklish position. I've never been an actor and I'm not much good at pretending. Besides, the lines for this role haven't been written. I puzzle my way through the best I can. I can't call the people together and talk frankly. There are some skunks among them, Comrade Secretary.

"Yesterday a fellow comes in and asks, 'How can I register for the police force? People say the district commandant is taking on policemen but that I need a recommendation from you.' What could I say to the likes of him? Punch his face in? He'd get the wrong idea. And I couldn't just let him go. Well, I smacked him, of course. Right in the ear. 'Why you so-and-so,' I said, 'under the Soviet government you turned in an application to join the Komsomol and now you're aiming for the police force!' And he says 'Comrade Starosta, I wanted to worm myself into the Komsomol.' 'Some comrade you've found! Mr Assistant Starosta is the way to address me!' Then I smacked him in the other ear and, with the law behind me, kicked him in the pants.

"The minute he went out another walked in. He came from Priluki. The heir of Shokodko, a kulak we had in our village. 'Allow me,' he says, 'to introduce myself. My father was exiled in 1932 by the Soviet government and is now in Siberia. I worked as inspector in the district savings bank. Now I think, justice will be done. And I, as heir, [illegible] into possession of our real property. I've got a letter to take to the letter addressed to you by the district bank master. Master so-and-so. You are ordered to [illegible] Now his real property' is the library in the village and the children's nursery just about the two best houses in the village. Now what was I to do with him? He's a kulak. He's a heir and was polite. Hit him over the head? Not good practice.

"I [illegible]

"Not [illegible] the first," he continued after [illegible] kulaks and two kulaks' heirs [illegible] Let the labor people [illegible] I'm a writer, after all. The last [illegible] have everything back.' I [illegible] library cottage. And I [illegible] I [illegible] library [illegible]

sate him for his suffering. I advised him to hide them properly, and so he even hid the political literature, books by Lenin and Stalin. There's a kulak nature for you! Hoards everything. Well, let him hoard it. Our army will return and we'll take it back. But I'm still leading the others who have a hankering for the houses of the kolkhoz people by the nose. The villagers have it in for them. They disfigured one of them a bit without exposing themselves. He naturally came to weep on my shoulder. 'Now what can I do?' I said. 'The people here have no conscience. I have no police force yet. Be patient a while until German order is consolidated.' And I think, Comrade Secretary, that it's even a good thing kulaks are returning. The people will hate the Germans more.

"The authorities in Priluki are already asking how much provisions we can supply, how much grain and how many pigs there are in the village. 'Calculate it all on the quiet,' they say, 'but if you underestimate, it's curtains for you!' Well, and so how do I calculate? I come into a cottage and if the owner is on our side, a Soviet man, I say 'Got a spade? Then why aren't you digging? Remember that everything must be hidden away. Especially the grain. Kill the cattle, sheep and hogs, salt them, and the deeper you bury them the better.' A religious old woman here has become one of my best assistants. When the first Germans arrived in the village, a bicycle platoon, she went out to meet them with bread and salt. She put a white starched kerchief on her head and bowed low. But two days later motorcyclists came. These took away her suckling pig. Well, the neighbours had a good laugh on her! Now she's become an agitator. She goes around cursing the Germans everywhere. 'Bandits!' she cries, 'tyrants, they took away my last suckling!' I do everything, good people. It's Satan himself has come.' I can see my way out in such practical, little things, Comrade Secretary, and I trust I won't miss my step. But my present li

tle job is a pretty rotten one. No matter what I say to the people and no matter, how hard I work for them, many think I'm a scoundrel. My only consolation is that history will give me my due." Bodko said this with a wry smile. "I can't complain about my health: my arms and legs are strong enough and my head doesn't ache, but my heart does, Comrade Secretary. But why talk about myself. Who and what am I?"

In this self-disparaging question I caught a note of bitterness. After much questioning Bodko finally said that he could not possibly reconcile himself to the district committee's decision to expel him from the Party. He did not enlarge on the question of why he had been expelled.

"This isn't the time to discuss it, Alexei Fyodorovich," he said. "I remain a Bolshevik at heart. We'll finish the war and then decide whether my sins against the Party can be forgiven, whether I'm worthy. And now, as an expelled member, I can be very useful to the Party.... But let's better get down to business.

"First of all, what's to be done with the kolkhoz? That is, with its property. What we could we've already divided up among the various households. All the cattle, the seed and the small implements. But we have threshers, hulling mills and seeders. Destroy them? Can't make myself do it. Then, secondly, the skilled farmers. Our people are of quite a different calibre nowadays. We have tractor drivers and team leaders and record-holding milkmaids. Their little household farms offer them no scope, bore them. German instructions do not call for a complete division of the communal property. And it is said no such instructions are expected. They're leaving the cooperatives intact to squeeze them dry easier. But we're working halfheartedly in the cooperative. However, the people are used to working properly, to putting their hearts into it. Take a thing like this: one evening I dropped in to see a

tractor driver—noticed a light in the window. She was sitting with her girl friends gathered around her in a circle. Telling fortunes? But no, I looked-down and saw a book. 'What are you so interested in?' I asked. And what do you think? They were reviewing the course on tractors.

"Now what was I to do, Comrade Secretary? Scold them? Praise them? Or cry? The people are used to books, the radio, the cinema. Our village used to have a different film twice a week.

"And here's an important question, Comrade Secretary, a most important question. I know what Comrade Stalin teaches us: people are the most valuable capital. I'm the local administrator here, placed supposedly by the Germans but actually by the Soviet government and by the underground Bolshevik Party. I've been trained to work on planned lines, to keep strict accounts. I've been trained to count. Well, I've counted two hundred and six able-bodied men and five hundred and twelve able-bodied women in the village. That's without the old men and women and the youngsters. The men are of different kinds: there are newcomers, doubtful characters, and passing escaped war prisoners and refugees. Naturally I hide them from the Germans and will continue to hide them This is by the way But there are no few of our own, regular local men. And the women are local almost without exception.

"You will ask: why did I count them? This is why: after all, they are a force, both from the peacetime and wartime point of view. And this force is sitting at home. Sitting with folded hands and looking out of the windows. Now how can I, Comrade Secretary, turn this force against the Germans, get every single one of them to fight?"

Bodko spoke from the heart; he was almost shouting He would sit down, then jump up and pace the room. And

you could see that he asked these questions not so much to get an answer as to pour his heart out.

Simonenko's mother brought in a pail of water. Bodko picked it up, raised it to his lips and took a long drink. I noticed his big, work-scarred hands. Here was a man eager for life and labour. Yet fate had assigned him the role of a supposed traitor.

There were some things I had to put him right about.

"You just said, Comrade Bodko, that everyone should fight the Germans. Not everyone—that won't work out. At the present time everybody must be examined with greater caution then ever before. You yourself say kulaks are returning. You told me how many men and women there are. Let's see what they're thinking and dreaming about, sitting at home. . . ."

Bodko listened abstractly. He was craving action.

We met several more times before I left Lisoviye Sorochintsy. I also visited him at home. His wife and grown daughter gave me a warm welcome. They sat me down at the table and urged me to eat.

"Taste this home-cured ham. We slaughtered a suckling. My husband said to slaughter everything so the Germans don't get it."

Bodko had some guests seated around the table. I asked him quietly who they were.

"Don't worry, Alexei Fyodorovich, these are friends, Soviet people, hiding from the Germans."

One of these "friends" did not suit my taste at all. There was something hypocritical about his face, something sectarian. He was a man of about forty-five with small, shifty eyes and a wispy, colourless beard. I dubbed him "Baptist." He was in a Red Army uniform but he fidgeted all the time as if he had on a hair shirt under his tunic.

"Many thanks to my hosts for their shelter and friendship," he said with an exaggerated bow.

Then he launched on a long and piteous tale

"Far, far away, across the line, my little ones are waiting for their daddy. But their daddy has fallen into the hands of the Germans, their daddy is shedding tears for his little ones...."

"Look here, friend, what did you do before the war?" I burst out, in spite of myself.

"And what did you do?" he countered and hurried to set his mouth in a grin

"I've come out of a prison", I said as a joke. Suddenly I noticed him wink cautiously, as if to warn me against revealing too much. He answered my question rather nervily:

"My labour was not one of love, and now, as you see, I'm a tramp, live by begging"

While we ate he kept pressing closer and closer to me, and when no one was looking he whispered.

"Looks like our host is strongly Soviet"

"What makes you think so?" I whispered back, playing up to him.

"There was some talk. .. Whoever only appointed him starosta?"

"I did, and without asking you!"

That squelched him. He asked no more questions

There was always somebody or other stopping over at Bodko's He willingly took people in, fed and nursed them, and gave them clothing. Probably no less than twenty-five people had stayed with him, for which he deserves praise, of course. Most of his "boarders" subsequently joined partisan detachments But Yegor Yevtukhovich was an impulsive soul who opened up his heart to everyone and anyone. I cautioned him against this but it did not help.

At my request Bodko went to Priluki to contact the underground workers there. He failed in this but he learned some interesting news.

"At a conference of starostas," he told me, "it was said that more than thirty active Party and Soviet workers have been arrested in the district and in the town. Eighteen of them have already been shot. It was also said that Fyodorov had appeared in the region. All starostas and policemen have been instructed to report immediately anything that might lead to the discovery of your whereabouts."

Bodko's voice dropped to a whisper. But this man's whisper was so loud that he could probably be heard in the street.

"The district burgomaster called me in separately. 'I have heard,' he said, 'that Fydorov is moving in your direction. Show your stuff. If you and I could catch him!...' And he was so lavish in his promises that I ran almost all the way home. You'll have to move to another place, Alexei Fyodorovich...."

* * *

My host, Ivan Simonenko, was also getting ready to leave. His mother baked some meat pies and made sausage for us to take along. I continued to urge Ivan to come with me to the partisans but he stuck to his decision. "That partisan business is obscure, uncertain, and how can you fight with a stick or, at best, a rifle or tommy gun, against tanks, planes and artillery. No, Comrade Fyodorov, this ancient method of making sallies out of a forest has outlived itself; it won't lead to anything good."

So I had to part with the companion of my wanderings.

He went east, to the front, and I to the west.

The last thing we did together was bury our identification papers, a sad and unpleasant but necessary job.

We went into the garden late in the evening, dug a little grave about seventy centimetres deep under an apple tree, and buried them.

It was not an easy thing for us to resolve upon Although the Central Committee had issued definite instructions that all papers which might expose Party workers were to be destroyed or safely concealed, it was exceedingly painful to part with them. Painful because each paper was a part of our past, of our life

Ivan and I spent no less than three hours getting ready. . Actually, there was nothing to get ready about We looked through the papers, examined them, shared reminiscences Here was my Central Committee membership certificate It was stained and yellow, like a last year's leaf It had had a bath when I swam across the river The other papers had not suffered as much My red-leather, gold-embossed card of deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U S S R had only gotten a little wet It had been given me by the people, by the same people that now surrounded me By Stepanenko's old mother by Yegor Yevtukhovich Bodko, by the tailor whose suit I had put on the day before All of them were my constituents The scarlet card, the testimonial of their trust in me would now have to be buried in the ground World I ever get it out again?

We wrapped each document carefully in newspaper and covered the lot with a strip of rubber from a gas mask After that we dropped it into the hole we had dug and covered it

I kept only one paper It was to certify that Kovtyukh Vitaly Mikhailovich was exempted by embarkment to the end was released from prison on August 15, 1941. [illegible]

In the event of [illegible] to let me

Ivan was [illegible] At the period [illegible] me

"Where [illegible]

"In shop No. 16, Gorlovka, the Donbas."

"What kind of shop was it, grocery or general merchandise?"

"It was a bread shop I was manager."

"And what did you do, steal or give short weight."

"Both, Mr. Inspector I stole and I gave short weight."

"How many years did you get?"

"Six."

"Only six years? What kind of court was that? He stole and cheated the people and only got six years!" The old woman's indignation was so genuine that I decided to cut the examination short. I had evidently learnt my role well; my answers were quite convincing.

I had no other occasion to test my acting ability or to present my certificate as an embezzler. Those who are interested may see the certificate in the Partisan Museum in Kiev

* * *

More than two weeks had passed since I left Piryatin and already a week since I entered Chernigov Region I had met no few people during this time, yet I was not actually working This thought rankled.

I was so eager to get down to real work, to a direct struggle with the Germans, that I was already considering whether it was worth while continuing my journey There were plenty of people right there in Lisovlye Soroshyntsy who wanted to fight the invaders Why not muster a partisan detachment there? At the beginning it would be a small group, then the adjacent villages would join forces with us This idea pleased me more and more, and once I mentioned it to Bodko He, of course, became enthused He said he could dig up a dozen rifles and that one of us would have a tommy gun and several spare drums The temptation was great but I had to give the idea up My first job was to gather together the threads

of the entire regional organization. That an organization existed was beyond all doubt. Quite some time later I learned that at the end of September and the beginning of October, while I was wandering about on my own, many underground district Party and Komsomol committees and hundreds of nuclei and resistance groups were already operating in Chernigov Region. The Party's work had not been wasted.

At the beginning of the book I mentioned the secretary of the Kholmy District Party Committee Ivan Markyanovich Kurochka, who had volunteered for work in the underground. The reader probably remembers how vigorously he prepared the work of the underground organizations and partisan detachments The underground movement in his district functioned so well right from the beginning of occupation that practically every village was under the influence of the Communists. The peasants resisted the Germans, refused to carry out their orders, killed German henchmen, and helped Red Army men who had been surrounded or taken prisoner. Every inhabited point in the district had its secret meeting place; everywhere representatives of the underground leadership found people they could trust

The village of Kholmy alone had four secret meeting places. These were ordinary kolkhoz cottages. Their owners kept a stock of tea rusks and corned beef should an underground worker have to make a hasty flight to the woods. Some even had a supply of clothes. A man like me would come in a padded jacket and leave in a sheepskin coat, and before you knew it the enemy spies had lost track of him.

The German authorities demanded that the cows, draught animals and hogs, the supplies of grain, fodder and vegetables, and the other kolkhoz property be collected and inventoried Then they would come and distribute it, they said.

The underground workers took a bold decision: to convene the Kholmy District Soviet to discuss how to save the kolkhoz property from the Germans. Notices and invitations were sent out and on September 16 the deputies, active workers and chairmen and members of the kolkhoz boards met in Kholmy in broad daylight, as if there were no Germans about.

Comrade Vodopyanov, secretary of the District Party Committee, presided. He made a brief report on the progress of the war and the tasks of Soviet people who have remained behind on enemy-held territory.

The session resolved to disregard the German orders and instructed the kolkhozes to divide the property among the peasants without delay. They should bury what they could and destroy everything else After the session, meetings were held in the kolkhozes. The secretaries of the district Party committee and deputies to the Soviet attended every such meeting The population saw for itself that the Party and the Soviet government were alive, were functioning and were countering the German orders with orders of their own in the interests of the people.

The first secretary of the Kholmy District Party Committee, Ivan Markyanovich Kurochka, personally guided the resistance movement through trusted men. At that time six small partisan detachments were operating in the district, which was one of the first to be occupied by the Germans. The partisans lay in ambush on the roads, blew up bridges and exterminated small enemy groups Particularly important was the fact that immediately after the occupation the Kholmy organization had arranged to pick up regularly the Soviet Information Bureau Communiqués broadcast over the radio. At least twice a week Communists, Komsomols and other active resistance workers conducted talks in the villages, telling the peasants about the situation at the front and exposing the German propaganda lies.

Thanks to able leadership, all strata of the district population were drawn into underground work. The village intellectuals did a great deal. Schoolteachers, doctors, agronomists and veterinaries became fiery agitators and propagandists; they took down the radio communiqués, copied and distributed them among the people, and read them aloud in the cottages.

Here is a brief account of the work carried out by the Malozhen family.

Savva Yemelyanovich Malozhen, a schoolteacher in the village of Zhukli, was not a member of the Party. A sick, lame old man who had difficulty in getting about, he practically never left the house He wrote leaflets, wrote them in prose and in verse. His biting, sarcastic songs and limericks passed from mouth to mouth. They were sung and recited not only in Zhukli but in adjacent villages. The old man did the writing and his daughter Oksana and niece Irina the distributing. Both girls were daring and resourceful Komsomols.

The teacher was arrested by Gestapo agents. He was in danger of being executed. Oksana came to see the commandant and succeeded in convincing him that a pitiful sick old man like her father could not be a Communist agitator. He was freed, but soon after, his niece was caught. The Germans tortured her but she did not betray anybody. Not long before her execution she managed to send two notes to Savva Yemelyanovich. The first read:

"Dear Uncle,

"I am not afraid to die, only I'm sorry I've lived so little and done so little for my country."

Her farewell note said:

"Uncle,

"I've got used to it here. I am not alone; there are many of us. I don't know whether they'll let me out.

Maybe not. I was interrogated. They showed me a statement by the starosta, A. Ustizhenko. He betrayed us, Uncle. But just the same I'm not afraid to die. Tell Mama not to cry. I wouldn't have lived with her much longer anyway. I had my own life to live. Let Mama hide the grain or else the Germans will take it away.

"Farewell, your niece,

Irina."

In September 1941 that same Kholmy District saw the birth of an underground Komsomol organization with the romantic name of "Thus Life Began." At first it was a small Komsomol group but it gradually expanded as all the finest young people of Kholmy joined it. Everyone who joined the organization took a solemn oath:

"On joining the ranks of the underground Komsomol organization 'Thus Life Began' I swear before my comrades, before my Country before my long-suffering nation that I will fight the brutal enemy, the fascists, to the death. I will fight them without sparing life, until our land is freed of the German filth. I swear that I will honestly carry out all the assignments given me by the underground organization and I will die rather then betray my comrades."

Kolya Yeremenko, a political education inspector before the war, led the group. The boys and girls got down to work with a will. They wrote and distributed leaflets, served as messengers between the district Party committee and the partisan detachments, acted as scouts, and collected arms and ammunition for the partisans.

The members of this group are known in Chernigov [illegible] as the Young Guard. Yes, they fought [illegible] and most of them

* [illegible]

tled like heroes. In my next book I shall tell about them n greater detail; at the time I am now speaking of they iad only begun their work.

In Kholmy District both the partisan and underground Communist activities had been well prepared, and that is why they developed faster and more successfully there han anywhere else in the region.

By this time the people's resistance to the German nvaders was already making itself felt in many other histricts as well.

In Oster District two partisan detachments had waged heir first action against German tommy gunners on September 15, helping a group of Red Army men make heir way out of encirclement

The Gremyach Underground District Committee or- ganized a boycott of the "elections" of starostas. The people stubbornly refused to attend election meetings. Then the Germans decided to get along without the farce of elections and themselves appointed the starostas. But n five villages—Gremyach, Buchki, Buda, Vorobyovka, and Kamenskaya Sloboda—the appointed starostas re- fused to carry out any of the enemy's orders. The Germans shot Comrade Ivanitsky, the starosta of Gremyach: hanged Comrade Kalabukha, the starosta of Buchki and whipped Comrade Fedorenko, the starosta of Voro- byovka

News of the German terror spread like wildfire throughout the district and people began to go off into the woods

The first secretary of the Kozelets District Committee Comrade Yarovoi, combined several small detachments and fought the rural garrisons, the police and the staro- sts who were traitors

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[illegible] in the Gestapo dungeons. The leaders of the Young Guard were posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union by the Government of the U.S.S.R.—Trans.

In Semyonovka District the Komsomol underground workers collected several dozen rifles, five thousand cartridges and hundreds of grenades and turned them over to the partisans.

In Ivanitsa District the partisans became so active that the Germans were afraid to enter the villages. Soviet administrative bodies functioned in all the villages and hamlets.

The combat group of the Dobryanka Underground District Party Committee derailed two troop trains, destroyed a German rail car and blew up several enemy trucks.

In the town of Nezhin Yakov Batyuk, a blind Komsomol member who subsequently became famous, founded an underground organization.

But all this I discovered only later. The night I left Lisoviye Sorochintsy I felt that I was alone.

I walked along the railway tracks. The night was moonlit but very cold and windy. Somewhere nearby wolves were howling, but maybe it was not wolves at all; at the moment it seemed to me that the very earth must howl.

After walking a kilometre or so I came up to the ruined Kolomiytsevo station The tracks were all twisted. Not a light gleamed anywhere The scene was one of utter desolation. I passed the station and crossed a small bridge. Suddenly I heard footsteps: someone was trying to overtake me.

"Master! Hey, master!" came a voice that had a familiar ring.

* * *

Hurrying towards me was a gaunt man in a greatcoat and cap with the earflaps lowered. He limped along with a stick. His face was covered with a wispy beard.

To be on the safe side I fingered the trigger of my pistol in my pocket. As he came up he said, breathless from walking fast:

"I recognized you, friend, recognized you easily. By your confident stride. You're just the same in the moonlight as in the daytime: every inch a master!"

He was that guest of Bodko's whom I had dubbed "The Baptist."

"Allow me to join you, Alexei—I don't remember your patronymic. . . ."

"Maximovich," I answered curtly.

"The Baptist" laughed.

"Where're you bound for? But why ask? No matter where you go there'll always be a welcome and a corner for you. Anyone can see you're a master. It's different for us strangers. Going to your native parts?"

"If this bird has been sent after me all by himself, I can easily handle him," I thought "But he seems to mistake me for one of his own kind." I decided to let him have his say.

He chattered willingly and much more openly than at Bodko's. I noticed he was slightly drunk.

"I've put up here at the station," he continued "An old habit of mine. . . . How much ground I've covered in my day. . . . There are two little rooms there undamaged by the fire. It's cold so I warmed myself up with home-brew liquor. Where can I go? The villagers are suspicious Won't sell a thing but home-brew. Won't put you up for the night. . . ."

"But they let me in."

"So I see. I've been looking for such a companion high and low."

"What do you mean by 'such'? What's biting you?"

He gave another chuckle, eyed me quickly and waved his hand. He had a repulsive laugh. It is true that you can size up a man by his laugh.

"Shall I tell you?" he asked, looking around.

"Why not? Not a soul about Go ahead."

"I see you're a real master . . . I was like that too, once. Well, not so much I as my father. I've had the misfortune to live in Soviet times. But even I kept my head up. At one time I leased a bit of land and built a mill. Not a windmill, like you have in Malorussia, but a watermill. . ."

"Why the hell Malorussia?"

"I understand and sympathize. Only I can't help using words forbidden under Soviet power. But what does it matter whether it's called Malorussia or the Ukraine. The important thing is that at last we will again make the laws! You're in luck. But who knows when the Germans will come to our Kostroma Gubernia?"

We were standing near a small railway bridge. Behind us lay the ruins of the station and around it a few service buildings, deserted as far as I could see. Beyond the bridge stretched the steppe. Some three kilometres away were the dark outlines of a village in which was a secret meeting place whose address Bodko had given me. I looked at this Kostroma kulak wondering what to do with him, while he continued to pour his heart out to me:

"I walk through this Ukraine of yours, Alexei Maximovich, and see that there's still much to be done before order is restored. At first I tried to tell people openly that I used to be a rich man, that I welcomed the new order. They almost beat me up and never a bite to eat would they give me. Maybe it's because I'm a Russian? But no, that's not it. Some fellow from Ryazan can get himself fixed up in a jiffy. Once I tried to force them: 'Come on now, here's a German pass Otherwise I'll complain to the authorities.' That was even worse. No, Alexei Maximovich, they're begging for a whip across their hind parts to make them remember the tsar!" His voice rose to a screech, so full of venom was it.

He plainly counted on my sympathy. How I wanted, right there on the spot.... I recalled the truck drivers how simply they had fixed the traitor. Why, this one was itching for the Germans to put a whip in his outstretched hand. But there, practically at the front, where there were hundreds of dead bodies around, the incident with the truck driver had attracted no attention. Now I was already about a hundred kilometres behind the lines. Before you knew it German investigators would come from Prilukl. I pondered the question. The kulak evidently sensed something and stopped short

"How's your health?" I asked.

He did not answer. He realized that something was wrong. His face changed colour

"So you're from Kostroma, you say? Don't be afraid Let's go on together. You can't go wrong with me!"

I placed my hand on his shoulder I had decided to lead him out into the steppe. There, away from the buildings, there would be more elbow room to finish our conversation.

Suddenly he crouched, twisted out of my grasp and jumped into a ditch lying in the shadow of the bridge I immediately sent several bullets in his direction and also jumped down. He let out a yell, groaned and unexpectedly returned fire The dry weeds crackled, and just then, as if in spite, the moon slid behind a cloud. For another minute or so I crawled along the bottom of the ditch, I fired again The ditch proved deeper than I had thought, with water at the bottom and such a dense growth of nettles on either side that it was impossible to make out anything in the dark Besides, I was blinded by rage I pushed on and got entangled in the nettles He had probably crawled off along the bottom of the ditch, near the water

"I'll wait until morning, until it gets light, and you won't get away, you skunk!" I shouted into the darkness,

beside myself with rage. But when I cooled down a bit I realized that I had been rash.

I climbed out of the ditch. The moon was hidden behind clouds; it began to drizzle. But my eyes had already grown accustomed to the dark and I could make out the road. I stood for another ten minutes at the bridge with my pistol cocked. Oh, how I cursed myself! But what choice had I? I had to go on.

The fact that he did not shoot at me again led me to suppose that I had wounded him, perhaps even mortally. I kept the incident to myself. It had turned out so stupidly. Even now my conscience bothers me for letting an out-and-out traitor slip out of my hands.

I walked through the steppe in a wretched mood and a vile temper. The drizzle was turning into a downpour; a wet wind slapped my face. I never imagined that another unpleasant incident was in store for me that night.

At about four in the morning, making my way through the back vegetable gardens, I entered the village of Levki, Malaya Devitsa District, and tapped at the window of the house Bodko had described to me.

Inside, a man and a woman were quarrelling. The woman's voice was determined and domineering, the man's irritated and shrill.

They did not hear my first knock.

"Oh, you saphead!" shouted the woman. "A saphead you were and a saphead you've remained. What's in that head of yours? Well, why don't you answer? Tell me, what's your head stuffed with—manure or sawdust?"

The man preferred to let this direct thrust pass unnoticed.

"Now there, Marusenka, look into the root of the matter, concretely . . ."

I knocked louder. The disputants immediately grew quiet. Then came a whispering. Then some heavy object

was moved about. A minute later the woman's voice said, with an attempt to sound gentle:

"Who's there? Kulko is sick in bed."

"Open the door! Open it, and hurry It's a friend Tell Kuzma Ivanovich it's his old friend, Fyodor Orlov."

Fyodor Orlov was my Party underground name Everybody who had been left behind for underground work in the region knew it.

The woman went off, evidently to talk it over with her husband. She soon returned and opened the door. Without greeting me she pointed to the stove

"He's lying over there!"

Kuzma Kulko was lying on the stove shelf wrapped up to his chin in a blanket. His wife lifted her little oil lamp higher, almost shoving it into my face.

"So you are," said Kulko. "Fyodorov, true enough. And here we were, my wife and I, expecting the Germans We'd concocted a special story for them: I'm supposed to be sick with typhus. People say they don't billet anybody in a house where there's typhus and in general avoid it like the plague."

"Quite right," I answered gravely. "They board up the houses of all people with typhus, tuberculosis, dysentery and other infectious diseases, throw straw on them and burn them down with everything in them "

I do not know whether Kulko believed me, but anyway he jumped down from the stove like a man stung by a bee. He quickly pulled on his trousers and shirt, sat down at the table and began to scrutinize me in silence His wife also kept silent but I noticed a rather malicious little smile on her face.

By that time I had warmed up a bit and I began a leisurely inspection of the room. My hosts were behaving strangely, and before I said anything to them I wanted to know what kind of people I was dealing with. I knew Kulko in an official way, so to speak. I had met him at

various regional conferences in Chernigov and on my visits to Malaya Devitsa District. An ordinary functionary. His appearance, too, was ordinary enough: average height, average weight, and a bald spot on the top of his head. He dressed like everybody else. He had been sent to the village of Levki from the district centre by the underground district committee. This house belonged to his parents, or his wife's.

Badly lighted though the room was I could see from many signs that my hosts were either dividing up their property or else getting ready to move it. A large trunk was crammed so full that the cover would not close. Several new sheepskin coats lay piled up on chairs. New pails, about ten in all, stood in a corner, one set in the other, and nearby lay a heap of harnesses and bridles. A box filled with laundry soap had been hastily shoved cornerwise under the couch. Children's coats lay in a disorderly heap on a big bed. To cap it all, a ram suddenly stuck its head out from under the bed and bleated.

I turned to my host. "And so, Comrade Kulko, tell me what's going on here How's the work progressing? Where are the Germans? And in general, everything...."

"There are," Kulko began rather uncertainly, "some people in Levki. Some are newcomers; others are local Communists. We're getting ready little by little.... The work is new, in its organizational stage, so to say. We propose calling an enlarged bureau meeting."

His wife interrupted him "Stop talking rubbish, Kuzma. An enlarged bureau, meetings! You think we're going to stay put here? Are we any worse than anybody else? Now what are you goggling at me for? Tell me straight, Kuzma: Is he a friend of yours?" (This last remark referred to me.) "What's the matter, swallowed your tongue?"

Kulko blinked in confusion.

"A friend, a friend," I said to my hostess. "You can be sure of that."

"Well, if you're a friend, then let's talk Now you, I don't know your good name, maybe you're a bachelor, without a family, but my man has a lot of children. He may be hung. Let him at least provide for us before If you're a friend, then hammer it into his empty skull that while we're sitting here talking the Germans may come. "

"Of course, everything should be hidden," I said "Why is everything scattered about? I see you have kolkhoz property here, too. The Germans may really pay you a surprise visit. . ."

"But Comrade Fyodorov, don't I understand that?" shouted Kulko, waving his arms "We just lugged all this up from under the floor Anybody can see right away it's empty." He stamped on the floor boards. "The Germans are no fools either. They'll jump about on the floor and say. 'Come on, open it up!' "

"And that's how we've been arguing back and forth for two weeks, the devil take him," his wife began again "First we hide it, then we drag it out.... You know what this mean creature wants? 'Let's take it,' he says, 'to the other end of the village, to my father....' If the Germans catch you a fat lot I'll get from my father-in-law. . He'll keep everything. A fig for your father, two figs!"

"My father's a hundred times more honest than you "

It was not part of my plans to get into a family squabble. I got up and put on my cap Kulko, following my example, also began to dress. But his wife caught him by the sleeve.

"I won't let you out—forget about it. Haven't you spent enough time in that district Soviet of yours? Now you're off again?"

"Tell me, Comrade Kulko, whom can I go to here? Where can I find some sane people?"

He tried to free himself from his wife's hands, and grunted something inarticulate. I went out, slamming the door in vexation.

An icy wind enveloped me. "Well, I got into a mess there," I thought. "To hell with both of them. What shall I do now? Knock at the first house I come to? Or look for a rick as before?..." I had already turned off the street into the back yards to look for a hayrick when the door of Kulko's cottage opened again and Kulko dashed out, wails and threats following him.

"Satan's wife herself!" he cried, panting. "Come along, Comrade Orlov. I'll take you to some real people. I'm evidently a lost soul. Oh, Alexei Fyodorovich, if only you'd advise me what to do...."

And as we walked on, and we spent no less than half an hour together, Kulko kept bewailing his fate. He had never been happy with that wife of his, he said.

"Wait and see, Alexei Fyodorovich, you'll get to know what she's like. Mark my words, she'll run to the starosta tomorrow and tell him the secretary of the regional committee is here"

"What, are you crazy?"

"The honest truth, Alexei Fyodorovich, even though she is my wife," he said. "I've been living with her fifteen years. She's spiteful. You can expect anything from her."

"How could you stand living with her?"

"Live? I didn't live, Alexei Fyodorovich, I just suffered."

The moon set and we tramped on in absolute darkness, buffeted by the cold wind.

"Now listen here, Kulko," I said in the darkness. "As soon as you get me to the place—do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Yes, Comrade Orlov."

"As soon as you get me to the place you go back and make your wife keep mum."

"I'd better not go home, Alexei Fyodorovich...."

"No, you will go home! You'll go home and do as you've been told!"

"Yes, Comrade Orlov."

"Does she know where we're going?"

"Yes."

"And does she know all who belong to the underground organization?"

"Not all of them, but a good many."

"Do you know them all?"

"No, I don't either."

"Tell me, did you realize what you were undertaking when you remained behind in the enemy rear?"

"Why, of course I did. And I still do. I evacuated my wife. Put her and the children on the cart myself. Well, she rode off about thirty kilometres, turned about and came back. 'Damn it,' I said, 'the devil take you! What's brought you back? Go wherever you like. I have work to do.' But she was as stubborn as a mule Couldn't budge her. Meanwhile the Germans surrounded Levki and the front moved ahead. What can I do now?"

Kulko's voice was quivering another moment and, it seemed, he would burst into tears of vexation and impotence I felt no pity for him, however

"Do you know your way about here?" I asked. "Tell me how to find this secret meeting place and don't come any farther with me. My order to you is you can do whatever you like but you must see to it that your Marusenka keeps her mouth shut. Don't let her out of your sight for a minute, the devil take her!"

Kulko muttered something for a minute or two and then turned back I waited for his footsteps to die away and then I faced about and went in quite a different direction. I set out straight across a stubble field, walked for about two hours and by morning reached the village of Sezki. Fortunately for me there were no Germans there

* * *

When the underground R.C met in my office in Chernigov and we discussed the situation should the region be occupied by the Germans, we visualized an ideal scheme of organization. Every village, or at any rate almost every village, would have underground nuclei, resistance groups. Every district without exception would have a partisan detachment and district Party committee. There would be a first secretary, a second secretary and substitutes should they be caught. Daily contact was to be maintained between the detachments, district committees and nuclei. The regional committee was to instruct the district committees, which in turn were to pass on instructions to the primary organizations. Conferences would be held from time to time Naturally, the greatest secrecy was to be observed.

Even later, after the meeting in Yablunovka, after the Piryatin mess, after many days of solitary tramping, I still imagined that I only needed to reach Chernigov Region, reach any district in it, for me to find people at their posts and seething activity.

Incidentally, it had seemed to us that the Germans would organize themselves faster on the territory they occupied. I had never imagined that I would be able to walk openly, in broad daylight, along the roads. Roads? Why, I walked along village streets. I had thought I would have to think up a new disguise almost every couple of hours; that spies would dog my footsteps and that I would most cleverly lead them by the nose....

The timely preparation of bases for partisans, the confirmation of the underground district committee secretaries and the organization of underground meeting places, played a tremendously important role. The vast majority of the people left behind in the underground began their activity on the very first day. Only the work and the conditions were quite different from what we had imagined they would be

For example, we had not allowed any time for the underground worker to find his bearings, to get used to the new conditions. We had not realized that he would have to reappraise even the people he knew best, recast old relationships into a new mould. We had not taken into account the fact that the underground worker would come face to face with the Germans for the first time, would have to go into hiding for the first time.... Yes, the number of things he would have to see and learn for the first time defied enumeration.

We must also remember that the Communists who remained underground had held responsible positions under the Soviet Government. Some had held higher offices, others lower ones but most of them were known in their districts. Any child might point them out; and not only the children—kolkhoz women might come up to them and simply address them by name..

That is why at the beginning the underground worker did not so much work as go through an ordeal And every man needed a certain amount of time to become adjusted Some needed more, others less. It depended on the man's character. If the man was with a group he took himself in hand more easily. But if he was alone he found it harder Some simply began to suffer from a persecution complex.

But enough philosophizing I have already described my own emotions in rather great detail I must admit that by that time I was surfeited with them

I started to look for Comrade Pryadko, first secretary of the district committee, and Strashenko, former chairman of the district executive committee now commander of a partisan detachment

In the village of Sezki I came across Belovsky, former manager of the organization department of the district committee. I shall not give a description of our meeting He gave me a tolerable enough reception and told me what

he knew. But unfortunately he did not know much. He had only arrived a day ahead of me. He had been in encirclement near Kiev and had made his way to his native village to see his wife He had no intention of remaining there. Like Simonenko he was bent on getting back to the front.

Belovsky had already tried to find the secretary of the district committee. He was told that Pryadko had evacuated his family, abandoned his apartment and was tramping from village to village with Strashenko, chairman of the executive committee.

There seemed to be a partisan detachment in the district, he said, but nothing was heard about it at the time.

"There seems ... maybe ... somewhere. ..." Such information did not answer my purposes. I thanked my host and went to sleep in the hayloft

I was dead tired. I had walked far the night before, had exchanged shots with "The Baptist," argued with Kulko and had had no rest during the day. I ought to have fallen asleep like a log But either the hay was a poor protection against the cold or I was nervous and irritated, for I could not close an eye. It was really an impossible situation· I had passed through four districts without finding a single properly organized underground. "And what does a properly organized underground mean?" I asked myself. In Chernigov all the codes, all the passwords, all the secret meeting places had been decided upon with my approval. Of course, I could not remember every individual but I knew the secretaries of the district organizations, and before going into the German rear I had mapped out the tentative route I would follow to get to Popudrenko's regional detachment and listed the secret meeting places and code names of the people, which I alone could decipher.

But I had had to change my route somewhat, and the list and certain notes I had made to guide myself by had

been buried together with my map case at the bottom of the Mnogo River.

That was my own hard luck, an accident. What right had I to complain that I had found no organized underground? What about Bodko? What about the comrades from Ignatovka? Were they not members of an underground organization? I was indignant at Kulko's behaviour, indignant that he had no intelligent knowledge of anything. But the district underground organization was probably aware of Kulko's family troubles and consequently did not inform him of its activity and plans

So I reasoned as I lay in the hayloft, shivering with the cold. Much later I came to understand that "accidents" and failures of individuals, even of sizable groups, are no tragedy if the big plan has been well mapped out

The big plan of the underground R C. provided for a definite number of primary organizations in every district and a definite number of secret meeting places in the various inhabited points. This big plan had been carried out The district organizations existed; so did the secret meeting places. And, of course, the underground worker did not always chance upon a domestic drama. But it was useful to realize that a secret meeting place was not a railway station with all its conveniences, such as a buffet, tea and clocks.

The ability to keep out of hot water depended on the experience of the underground worker or partisan And the experience I gained as I made my way from the front to the regional detachment served me well later. I learned to make my way about, to look and to listen. I learned that the art of underground work consisted precisely in understanding the nature of the "accidental," and in making the "accidental" event serve the big plan of the struggle against the enemy.

The fact that I had buried my despatch case in the clayey bed of the Mnogo River did not, of course, result

in my losing my way. If not every footpath, then at any rate I knew very well every byroad and every farm village in our Chernigov Region With the addresses of the secret meeting places I would have found our men sooner. But the delay worked in my favour. I obtained a good idea of the life of the people under occupation; I learned the sentiments of the people and learned to find the right approach to different persons

I tossed and turned for a long time. Just as I was finally dozing off I heard footsteps and voices. I pricked up my ears, but I soon realized that the conversation did not concern me I pulled my cap over my ears the better to sleep. It did not help. Sleep had vanished and I involuntarily eavesdropped on—a loving couple.

A rather picturesque path wound in and out among the bushes near the barn where I lay. The moon that night was unclouded, but the wind continued to bluster. The lovers, who, judging by their voices, were in their late teens or early twenties, first walked up and down near my shelter and then sat down right nearby.

"How unlucky we are," said the girl "If not for the war we would have finished the house, got our share for our work and moved in ."

"Uh-huh," agreed the boy He confined himself chiefly to such brief remarks, and every now and then he interrupted the girl to kiss her This did not, incidentally, prevent her from having her full say

"Listen, Andrei," she said in a honeyed voice, "But when you return from the war for good, will we get married?"

"Of course!"

"And we'll buy a radio, like Karpenko's?"

"Uh-huh"

"And you'll let me go study at the teachers' institute?"

"To Dnepropetrovsk?"

"No, in Chernigov."

"Only in Dniepropetrovsk. There's a metallurgical technical school there. But every town has a teachers' institute I'll go to the metallurgical and you to the teachers'...."

"No, Andrei, lets go to Chernigov."

These young people seemed to have lost all sense of reality. They spoke of their future studies with such a natural confidence that you might think neither the war nor the occupation existed The argument of whether they would go to Chernigov or to Dniepropetrovsk lasted quite a while. It was, evidently, one of long standing. The parties came to no agreement and the girl changed the subject. After the next kiss she asked even more sweetly.

"Andrei, do you love me?"

"Of course...."

"Will you take me along?"

"I'll send a plane for you."

"No, seriously, Andrei, don't joke. Send me a note and I'll come by myself. After all, I'm a Komsomol member, Andrei. Tell your commander you have a fine girl who can shoot, cook borshch, care for the wounded."

I was growing more and more interested in the conversation. I wanted to climb down and ask them point-blank what detachment they were planning to go to, where was it located and, incidentally, what successes it had had But after a moment's thought I decided that I would either frighten them terribly or, if the lad had any courage I might get it in the neck And that he was not chickenhearted I gathered from the conversation that followed.

I must have moved, or else some other sound reached the ears of the loving couple, for all of a sudden the girl grew alarmed and began to urge Andrei to hurry and leave.

"Oh, Andrei, my heart is uneasy How they poked your friend with their bayonets Themselves on horse-

back and he on foot. They'd come up to a house and say 'Search!' and poke their bayonets into his ribs...."

"He's no friend of mine. If I'd had a whip I'd have given it to him good and proper."

"But the Germans shot him. If he was on their side they wouldn't have shot him."

"They shot him because they were mad he couldn't find me. But if he'd brought me to their commandant they wouldn't have shot him...."

So that's who this swain was. Now my impulse was to climb down if only to shake his hand.

That day Belovsky's wife had told me of an incident that happened in the neighbouring village the previous morning. I had listened with but half an ear. "She wants to frighten an uninvited guest and get rid of him as soon as possible by hinting it's dangerous here," is what I had thought, but it turned out that she had not invented the story.

Some details of this story I gathered from the conversation of the couple. While Andrei tried hard to change the subject, either out of modesty or to avoid speaking of unpleasant things, he and his girl nonetheless mentioned some of the facts.

Here they are. In the village of Olshany a small German detachment had caught two Red Army men. One of them was Andrei.

The Germans liked the village and lingered on for several days gorging and swilling at the expense of the population. They made the prisoners do the filthiest menial jobs. When drunk they beat them and mocked them. And they never let them out of sight.

The morning before, a corporal had sent both prisoners to the garret for "wood." The convoy gave Andrei an axe and ordered him to chop down the roof supports Instead Andrei hit the German on the head with the butt end, took his pistol and shouted to his mate:

"Beat it!"

But the other only grabbed Andrei by the arm and began to shout for the Germans. Andrei gave this "friend" a good kick, freed himself from his grip and jumped out of the dormer window. By the time the Germans had collected their wits and saddled their horses Andrei was half a kilometre out of the village. Some kolkhoz people were at work on the threshing floor. Andrei threw off his greatcoat and cap, took up a flail and lent a hand. His pursuers rode past without recognizing him. In their haste they had not taken Andrei's "friend" along.

Later they realized their mistake. They bound the fellow's hands behind his back and went, as Andrei's girl had said, from house to house, poking him with their bayonets, punching him in the face and kicking him in the stomach. After passing through a couple of villages the Germans shot the "friend" in the middle of the street in their rage at not finding Andrei.

Now Andrei was on his way to the Ichnya detachment. "He'd make a fine companion," I thought. But how glad I was I had not climbed down from the hayloft and spoken to him.... Andrei would have undoubtedly sent a bullet through me. In his position that was the only thing to do After all, he was a hunted man But how wonderful that after those experiences of his he could still speak about the future, about studying, and not only about this....

The loving pair continued to bill and coo for a long time. Not only did they keep me from sleeping; they made me suffer by compelling me to lie motionless.

The hayloft was not locked, and the two went into the barn to hide from the wind. They talked on about everything under the sun. They estimated when the war would end and agreed that in two or three months the Germans would be driven out of the Ukraine They sized up the strength of the Urals industry. They argued about whether

the English would open the second front soon. I lay there and mused. Now how do our writers describe the conversation of people in love? Birds, the moon, the sunset. Yet it appeared that neither politics nor economics were foreign to love.

Their leavetaking was most touching. The lad promised—for the girl insisted on it—to send her a message as soon as he reached the detachment. Then she would make her way there.

"Well," I thought sceptically, "nothing will come of that." But I was mistaken. Later I met many young couples in the partisan detachments. There were boys and girls who risked their lives to be able to be together and to fight together.

* * *

In the morning there was a knock at Belovsky's door. I heard a familiar voice from the hallway as Belovsky opened the door. It was Kulko.

"Allow me to report," he said. "Your orders have been carried out: I have made my wife harmless. What next?"

Kulko's arrival came as a total surprise. I thought I was rid of him and that he had been glad to be rid of me. Yet there he was, and asking for work.

"What a time I had finding you. Had to go through three villages. I thought you'd do as we agreed in—"

"Just a minute, Comrade Kulko. Tell me first what you mean by 'harmless.' "

Kulko shot a side glance at Belovsky. He leaned over to my ear but then waved his hand and said:

"That's not important, Alexei Fyodorovich. I'll tell you later. She's alive and kicking. But she'll hold her tongue. That's a sure thing."

I left Belovsky's house together with Kulko. He asked me to take him along as guide. He thought Pryadko and Strashenko might be in Pelyukhovka, a village some

twelve kilometres from Sezki. On the way he told me that he had left his wife all the property to hide or bury where and how she liked. He had asked his neighbours, three fine, husky young women, to keep an eye on her and not let her out of the village, tying her up, if necessary.

"She won't take a step away from those rags of hers She doesn't need anybody," he concluded bitterly. I could see the man was deeply hurt.

Kulko described the situation in the district in some detail; it turned out that soon after occupation a small partisan detachment had pitched camp in a wood near the village of Buda. The Germans had got on their trail and sent something like a company or a platoon of tommy gunners and dogs after them. Then the partisans decided to change their tactics. The secretary of the district committee instructed them to disperse to their homes and act like peaceful inhabitants. They were to hide their guns and, later, as the need arose, wage partisan action in groups.

When we reached the Kamenka forestry station Kulko went to Pelyukhovka to look for the secretary of the district committee. I waited at the edge of the forest. He soon returned. He had been informed at the secret meeting place that the boys, that is, Pryadko and Strashenko, had been there the day before but that now their whereabouts were unknown.

We went to the forester He had also seen both Pryadko and Strashenko the day before He advised us to go to Buda; they might be there, he said. But the leaders of the Malaya Devitsa underground movement were not in Buda. And that is how it went Everywhere we went we were told: "They were here not long ago. Didn't say where they were going." We got the impression that the people were shielding them from us That must have been the case. Possibly some people suspected us of being German agents sent to ferret out the underground work-

ers and partisans. And so Kulko and I tramped about for four days until I met an old acquintance of mine, Vasya Zubko. That was in the farm village named Zhloby.

I was overjoyed to see him. Here at last was a man I knew personally, a man I could trust fully.

Vasili Yeliseyevich Zubko had been secretary of the Malaya Devitsa District Komsomol Committee and then assistant secretary of the district Party committee. He had been sent to study, and later was assigned to work in the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

Vasya Zubko was no better informed of the actual state of affairs in the district than I. He had served somewhere near Kiev in a unit consisting entirely of NKVD men. The enemy had mauled them up badly and they had made their way out of encirclement in small groups. After many trials and tribulations Vasya found himself alone.

"I was told there was lots of action in Chernigov Region and so I came here."

We had a long talk about mutual friends and our impressions and observations. Zubko, like myself, had for a long time wandered alone through occupied territory. And what was most important, he had thought not about his own fate but about the people, about how to organize a mass resistance movement among them He reasoned like a real underground fighter. In him I sensed a comrade-in-arms.

Now the three of us began to look for the Malaya Devitsa District Committee. To save time we divided up: Kulko went to Malaya Devitsa, while Zubko and I went to the large village of Petrovka, where a distant relative of Vasya's lived.

CHAPTER TIN

THE R.C. CARRIES ON

Vasya Zubko's distant relative was a certain Semyon Goloborodko, a rather cultured man of forty-five. He had been director of a sovkhoz, and though in recent years a rank-and-file kolkhoz member he lived in better style than the average peasant I do not know why he remained behind in the enemy rear. Vasya Zubko did not know either.

An ex-director of a sovkhoz—probably a Party member in the past, but now expelled This supposition was later confirmed

"Even though he is a relative you'd better not disclose yourself," Zubko cautioned me

I pulled my cap further over my eyes and, while Vasya and Goloborodko were expressing their delight at the meeting, I sat on a bench, a living picture of exhaustion

Our hostess soon set the table Vasya and I had some bean soup Vasya spun a rather intricate tale; I must admit he showed great skill at invention In the meantime I studied my hosts Their behaviour made me feel that they were hiding something from us. They were nervous, exchanged too frequent glances

When no one was looking I whispered to Vasya

"I'll go out for a smoke and you ask outright if it's a trap the sooner we pull our guns the better"

A minute later Vasya called me in and Goloborodko, looking mysterious, led us to a small door He tapped on

it in a peculiar manner. The door opened and we saw a tall, black-bearded individual in an army coat. A rifle was slung over his shoulder. Another chap, with a sprouting red beard, was holding a Nagant revolver.

I glanced quickly around the room. It was a large storeroom crammed with junk. A lampion stood on a box; in the corner glimmered a little green eye....

Suddenly the man with the revolver rushed forward.

"Fyodorov, Alexei Fyodorovich!" he cried.

He threw his arms around me and kissed me hard three times, Russian fashion.

"Hold on there, who is it? Let's have a look!"

I studied the man with the red beard for a long time in the dim light of the lampion and with great difficulty made out an old friend—Pavel Logvinovich Plevako. I knew him from Oster District, where at one time he had been a representative of the State Purchasing Committee.

The blackbeard proved to be a functionary of the Chernovitsy R C—Pavel Vasilievich Dnieprovsky. I had never met him before but had heard of him. He had been described to me by a friend as a most efficient fellow.

"That's fine!" were Dnieprovsky's first words. We also kissed, after which Dnieprovsky added in a bass voice, just as matter of factly

"Very fine!" And without changing his tone, he grumbled on "Fine, fine as can be I see before me the secretary of the R C But does the secretary of the R C. know what is going on in his districts? It's just the time to deploy our forces—before the Germans, with their Gestapo and gauleiters and burgomasters show up Just the time!"

But I was listening to him with half an ear. The blinking little green eye and the dry crackling in the corner of the storeroom held my attention That must surely be a radio I made a dash for it and caught hold of the dials

"Now, there, comrades, where is Moscow? Let's have Moscow!"

I simply hung on to the radio, listening with both ears to the static. I all but banged my fists on it I stood on less ceremony with Plevako and Dnieprovsky, poking them in the ribs.

"Let's have it!"

Then, at last, came the magic words:

"This is Moscow calling!"

I was dying for more, but the announcer with unruffled distinctness listed stations and wave lengths, and when I had already broken into a cold sweat of expectation, said:

"We now present a program of light music . . ."

"Turn it off! Come on, now, try another wave length! Can't you understand, comrades, that it's over two weeks since I've heard anything. Just deaf, dumb and blind Not a single communiqué, not a single article about what's happening in the world. . ."

But my heart was already leaping with joy Moscow calling!

"Can you get Leningrad?" I asked hesitantly.

Dnieprovsky grinned

"I understand you, friend. I was like that myself; dreadfully nervous as long as I was in the dark. Don't worry. Leningrad is securely ours, and here's the communiqué for today . . "

But I wanted to hear it myself, with my own ears Why, even when someone starts to tell you what is going to happen next in a film you ask him to keep quiet And here I had finally got to a radio, and then to have to listen to somebody's recital of the communique

The music continued I resigned myself After all, it was coming from Moscow If Moscow was sending marches and songs into the ether that meant we were sure of ourselves

To the accompaniment of the gay music from Moscow Dnieprovsky continued grumbling in a monotone:

"We're dilly-dallying; a few are doing things but hundreds are just worrying. There are enough woods around here for a partisan army; the Germans shouldn't be left a single bridge. . . ."

"You don't know anything yet. Come to Koryukovka District with me," I said. "Popudrenko is there with the regional detachment, and I'm sure—"

Goloborodko, who had also come into the storeroom interrupted me.

"Comrade Fyodorov," he said, "there's a report tha Popudrenko has abandoned the detachment and fled—

"Popudrenko—run away? Are you in your right mind Where does this 'report' come from? I vouch for Popud renko as I would for myself."

Zubko, who had been silent all the while, said quietly

"Such rumours have reached me too, Alexei Fyodoro vich. People say that the regional detachment has gone to pieces. They say that Popudrenko—"

"I don't believe it! I won't believe anybody! Why, I was even told myself that I had become a starosta—"

Plevako stopped me. "Alexei Fyodorovich, just a minute. The communiqué of the Soviet Information Bureau"

Everybody remembers what difficult times those were Our troops were engaged in fierce defensive battles at the far approaches to Moscow, and in some places at its immediate approaches. Here is the Communiqué of the Soviet Information Bureau which we then heard:

EVENING COMMUNIQUÉ OF OCTOBER 13

In the course of October 13 our troops engaged the enemy along the entire front, with particularly stubborn fighting on the *Vyazma* and *Bryansk* directions. After many days of violent fighting, during which the enemy suffered tremendous losses in men and armaments, our troops left the town of Vyazma.

On October 11, 122 German aircraft were destroyed, 16 of them in air battles and 106 on enemy airdromes. We lost 27 aircraft.

In the course of October 13 seven German aircraft were shot down near Moscow.

Throughout the day the enemy, throwing a large number of motorized and mechanized units and aircraft into action, attempted, in spite of tremendous losses, to develop an offensive against our troops on a number of sectors of the Western Direction. The attacks of the Germans on our positions were stubbornly resisted by the Red Army units.

Our aircraft dealt the enemy heavy blows throughout the day. By their unceasing attacks our aircraft actively assisted the operations of our land forces and successfully bombed enemy reserves and ammunition columns on their way to the front.

The fascists are paying for every inch of soil with mountains of corpses and large quantities of armaments. On one sector of the front alone the Germans lost on October 13 more than 6,000 men and officers in killed and wounded, 64 tanks, 190 trucks with infantry and ammunition, 23 guns and several dozen machine guns.

On the Southwest Direction the Germans continue to throw new forces into action, employing Italian, Rumanian and Hungarian troops, which they send chiefly to sections where heavy losses are inevitable. Countering the enemy attacks, our units are holding back the enemy and inflicting heavy losses on him. On one of the sectors of this Direction the air unit of Captan Melikhov destroyed in three days 2,500 men [illegible] tanks, 7 armoured cars, 9 guns, 122 machi[illegible] 20 trucks carrying troops and 20 carts w[illegible] n the air battles on this sector of th[illegible] aircraft were shot down and 21 [illegible] the ground.

Una[illegible] waged against the [illegible] town of Dniepro-

petrovsk where strong mobile partisan detachments are operating. The detachment commanded by Comrade M. is tirelessly dogging and destroying small enemy units. The following is a brief review of the activity of this detachment for three days only. Vigilant scouts reported that two platoons of German soldiers were to pass somewhere near the village of L. The captain of the scouts took the partisans by a short cut to meet the fascists. The partisans lay in ambush and prepared for battle. They let the Germans approach to within 15-20 metres and then hurled grenades at them. Only very few of the Germans managed to escape. The next day the scouts cut in 30 places a telegraph line which the Germans had restored only the evening before. On the way back to their camp the partisans seized and killed a signalman, a motorcyclist and a German official.

A small group of partisans led by Comrade Ch. made their way into Dniepropetrovsk. Under cover of darkness they approached the dormitory of the Metallurgical Institute, where a German military unit was billeted, and flung several bunches of grenades through the windows. Dozens of fascist soldiers were killed or wounded.

As we sat there listening someone else entered the storeroom. He stopped near the door. I did not make out immediately who he was: I was absorbed in the broadcast and, moreover, the light was bad. Dnieprovsky went over to him and started whispering; he evidently knew him.

The news broadcast ended.

The new comrade walked over to me and shook my hand warmly. He was a bony man, stooped and grey-haired. He immediately assumed a confidential tone and spoke hurriedly, enthusiastically. Either he had been told who I was or else he had recognized me for he called me Fyodorov straight out and used the intimate pronoun.

"It's fine that you've come, for our Communists are

floundering. By underground some understand burying themselves as securely as possible. But now I know that things will start moving. People will begin to believe in themselves: the secretary of the R.C. isn't afraid, is going about, is directing activities. . . ."

He introduced himself in one word: "Chuzhba," and then continued:

"I've found Pryadko and Strashenko. They'll be here tomorrow. . . . Come on home, that is to my place," he said. Chuzhba did not, however, invite Goloborodko. Evidently the latter did not inspire any particular confidence in him either.

As we walked along the street Chuzhba said several times in a voice full of enthusiasm:

"Ah, friends, friends! Now things will get moving, things will get moving for sure. I tell you once the regional head is here everything will be in order."

His enthusiasm was even somewhat embarrassing, but it held a challenge. He seemed to be teasing me and his eyes had a sly glint: "Well, we still have to see how you're going to work."

He made his wife get out of bed, light the stove and prepare us some cheese dumplings. Then he sat there all evening listening in silence to my conversation with Dnieprovsky and Zubko.

Before we left Goloborodko's it had been decided that Pryadko and Strashenko were to come over to Chuzhba's at eleven in the morning, and we would hear their report.

All evening we were under the spell of the Soviet Information Bureau communiqué. I said that I envied the Dniepropetrovsk partisans.

"You know, it's harder for them than for us. There are no big woods around the town. And what courage the raid on the dormitory shows! Yes, we too must immediately get started. We must form no less than a partisan regiment in every district. The rumours that Popudrenko

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

What particularly worried me was the news I had heard over the radio. I very clearly visualized the gigantic scale of the battle the Red Army was waging. Once again I realized what a terrible threat was hanging over our Socialist State. A doubt arose in my mind: was I standing apart from the war? What a wretched feeling is the sense of one's uselessness. Had I been on our side of the front, the Soviet side, I would undoubtedly have become a commander in the Red Army. At any rate, I would have been earning my bread. But here.... Could it really be so? Again my thoughts turned to the regional detachment. But I simply could not picture Nikolai Nikitich Popudrenko disbanding the detachment, or even using the Malaya Devitsa tactics. I knew him to be a man of extreme courage, a fighter. He had been fascinated by books about the Civil War partisans and had regretted that he was born too late to be one. At home, long before Germany attacked, he had even been dubbed the "partisan."

I recalled with what dash he drove his car. Once as he was driving near a railway line he noticed a passing locomotive set fire to the chaff in a field. The fire spread quickly. Popudrenko turned off the road and made straight over the grass and ruts to overtake the locomotive, which had water and a pump. He raced along for about fifteen minutes, caught up with the locomotive, turned it back and made the engine driver extinguish the

flames.... Of course, he also broke the springs of the car and got bumps on his forehead.

An impetuous man, easily carried away, courageous. But could all this be only outward courage? No, that was not so. We had had a long talk before parting. The front was already near The waverers, the windbags and the cowards had already shown themselves up in one way or another. Popudrenko's behaviour had been just as straightforward as before, he had been just as eager to take part in the fighting. I mentally went over all I knew about Popudrenko, every side of his character, of his conduct, in order to find his Achilles' heel, so to say. I recalled his tender devotion to his family. We, his comrades, used to chaff him about it sometimes Maybe he had grown lonesome for his wife and children?... No, again not that. I recalled the following incident One day at the very beginning of the war Nikolai Nikitich came into my office looking morose, almost bad-tempered "What's the matter?" I asked What had happened was that at his wife's birthday party she had proposed a toast "That Daddy remain with us all through the war." "Daddy" had grown furious. "Can you conceive me, a Communist, a man in sound health, not going to fight? . " He had stormed out of the house. And he had been seriously upset. "How is it possible for my family to have such ideas?"

And at our last meeting Popudrenko had spoken with such enthusiasm and fire about organizing a large number of detachments, of derailing German trains one after the other....

That night's reflections ended in my dismissing all doubts and reveries and in my tackling, so to say, practical problems. I definitely decided on the suggestions I would make the next day and the questions I would ask the district leaders, and mentally drafted a decision of the R C. True, the R.C. was represented by myself alone, yet the district committees needed leadership: they had to

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[illegible]

[illegible]

manner of his own. He managed to hide away so thoroughly that no one ever got a glimpse of him in the two and a half years of German occupation. Only when the Red Army came did he creep out of his underground And then it was discovered that he had dug a deep vault beyond his vegetable patch, connected it by an underground passage with his house and, while other people were fighting, he lived there When he finally came up to the surface in 1943, on the fifth day of freedom he died. .. Alas, this is no idle tale but a deplorable fact.

At the moment, in Chuzhba's hut, we had no such striking example to cite But Pryadko and Strashenko got a severe calling down for their penchant for "secrecy."

Zubko said indignantly:

"Where are we—in our native land or on alien soil? Why do we hide from our own people and even from one another? As long as we are united and stick together we are a force. Everyone capable of fighting will rally around us Communists who have chosen to remain behind on enemy-held territory. But if we stay apart the Germans will catch us one by one and kill us!"

I was in full agreement with Vasya Zubko but I spoke with less restraint Toward the end of the meeting feeling ran high. The mistress of the house later told us that a neighbour had asked her: 'Somebody drunk at your place?"

Pryadko, in general a mild, reticent man, was very depressed and kept quiet. Strashenko was more temperamental and voluble When one of the men present said that the tactics chosen in Malaya Devitsa were equivalent to the self-disbandment of the organization and bordered on treachery, he grew indignant

"Isn't the fact that we knowingly went to work in the rear proof of our devotion to the Party? I insist that such tactics ... have their place too By taking fewer risks we'll accomplish more!"

Pryadko stopped him.

"Comrade Strashenko, we have to admit that we lost our bearings."

We decided to call together the active Party and Komsomol members within the next few days and prepare for a district meeting of all Communists.

* * *

We learned that a German commandant had arrived in Malaya Devitsa, the district centre, and was setting up a district administration. Naturally, we learned at the same time that arrests had been made there. The arrival of German authorities entailed arrests, executions, confiscation, looting and violence. We had to make haste and take advantage of the fact that the Germans did not have their hirelings in every village, which meant that the system of espionage and denunciation was still poorly organized.

Dnieprovsky, Plevako and Zubko now joined me. They decided to go along with me to Koryukovka District, to Popudrenko. For the time being we constituted an R.C. group.

I cannot find a more suitable name for it. Dnieprovsky and Plevako were not members of the Chernigov organization. But at the moment I myself did not know where the other members of the underground R.C. were. And what I needed were assistants for work on a regional scale—at first to collect information on what was going on in the districts.

As we learned subsequently, many Communists were making their way at this particular time to Koryukovka District, where the regional detachment was stationed. Khrushchov's injunction that we organize a regional detachment in addition to district detachments gave very effective results from an organizational point of view.

When some district detachments fell to pieces for one reason or another their staunchest members, devoted to the partisan movement, went off in search of the regional detachment. People learned that regional leaders were in command of the detachment and gravitated to them

I held it my duty not simply to go to the detachment but to muster the regional forces. What this amounted to in practice was that instead of heading straight for Koryukovka District I circled and detoured in order to bring as many districts as possible within my field of vision. Many of the comrades who left Piryatin with me had arrived at their destination long before. I continued to wander on, and now I had found companions, colleagues

"Of course, you'll get there faster by yourselves," I told them. "But if you want to help, then remain with me We'll be a sort of mobile R.C."

They agreed. We spent most of the time on the march

There would be no point in relating everything Besides, it would make dull reading Even in the underground there is no getting away from dull, humdrum, routine work. We wanted to learn in as great detail as possible what was happening in the districts, what kind of people had remained behind, what the Communists and Komsomol members were doing

In every village we found several helpers, for the most part among the young people They would fan out to the neighbouring villages and bring in the information we needed It was something like a relay reconnaissance

After circling around in Losinovka District we went back to Chuzhba in the village of Petrovka He had made some visits in the meantime and even dug up fire grenades and a Browning for us From his place we went to a meeting of the *aktiv* of Malaya Devitsa District, held in the farm village of Zhovtnevo A new underground R.C., in which our group as a whole was included, was constituted at this meeting

Our scouting "expeditions" through the districts stood us in good stead. We already had quite a clear idea of the defects in the work of the underground organizations, of who was to be found and where, and of the people's state of mind. We knew, therefore, how to begin, how to develop underground work so as to link it up closely with the people and make them feel that the Party existed, would protect them and rouse them to action. This was the idea behind the first Party documents of the R.C.: "Directives to Secretaries of the Town and District Party Committees," and "Call to the Working People of Chernigov Region." Our messengers distributed this call in thirty-six districts.

In Zhovtnevo we stayed with Yevdokia Fyodorovna Plevako (not related to our comrade) an elderly kolkhoz woman, not a Party member. She hospitably put her cottage at our disposal and shared her scanty stock of food with us. We offered to pay, but she flatly refused to take payment; you could see that this offer offended her.

Need I say that Yevdokia Fyodorovna might have paid with her life for her hospitality? Had the Germans or their henchmen learned that the active Communists of the district had gathered in her house they would, of course, have hanged her. Yet Yevdokia Fyodorovna did not betray in any way that our presence constituted a danger for her. She quietly went about her chores in the house or in the vegetable garden as if no Germans existed or any danger threatened her.

Once I took a spade and went out into the garden to help her. She refused my offer.

"You better help the Soviet government and the Red Army! And when our victory comes then I'll slaughter a calf for you and we'll celebrate."

I well remember how these words moved me at the time. She said them quietly and simply. I felt in them a great firmness of spirit, an unshakable conviction that

victory would come, and readiness to do everything possible to hasten the coming of that day, to help everybody who had risen to fight the hated enemy.

Every day more and more people came to the hospitable shelter of this remarkable woman. These were Communists and Komsomol members who received assignments from us and left to carry them out: to distribute copies of our call, to pass on the directives of the R.C., and to make preparations for the general meeting of the Communists of the district.

We, the members of the R.C., did more than just issue instructions and compose leaflets. We had to make copies of these leaflets of ours. But how were we to copy them if we had no paper? It was a far from simple matter to get hold of any. We had a schoolteacher named Ivanenko to thank for it. He went around to all the children and brought us a score of notebooks, and another good soul brought us several sheets of carbon paper.

The actual copying was not easy. My handwriting is not very good, and I had to write not only legibly but economically—every sheet of paper was worth its weight in gold.

Soon our R.C. group received fresh reinforcements: Nadya Belyavskaya, a Komsomol member and ex-schoolteacher, and Fyodor Ivanovich Korotkov, a "shoemaker."

"Shoemaker" Korotkov, first secretary of the Koryukovka District Party Committee, had been assigned to the underground as a member of the R.C. After many trials and tribulations he had "settled" in Voznesensk farm village, not far away.

He came to this village under an assumed name, with corresponding identification papers. He had learned shoemaking in his youth and now had decided to pass as a shoemaker. As soon as his trade became known in the village Fyodor Ivanovich was swamped with orders. He had had time to make only one pair of boots, however,

and pretty crude they were they kept toppling over, and nothing could induce them to stand upright. Korotkov laughed as he told us all this, although he had little reason to: If anybody were shadowing him such boots might have constituted serious evidence against him.

We were overjoyed to see the "shoemaker" but he did not remain with us long Korotkov left together with other Communists to distribute our first Party documents in the districts. He was assigned to cover fourteen districts, and twenty-eight copies of the instructions and the call of the regional committee were wrapped around his legs. Subsequently he became commander of a large detachment and waged partisan warfare for three years. Yet to this day he holds that he lived through more in his nineteen days as messenger of the R C. than in all the three years put together

Messenger! Throughout the three years of German occupation scores and hundreds of Bolshevik messengers, risking their lives and often following unfamiliar roads, fields and woods, made their way from *the towns to the* villages, from the villages to the partisan detachments and then to some farm village just captured by a punitive detachment. Some even penetrated into concentration camps and prisons where Gestapo men were torturing their comrades.

And those who think that the messenger's job is purely technical, that all he has to do is keep walking, are quite mistaken It would be more correct to say "keep looking." Death lurked around every corner, behind every tree and bush. And death from a bullet or bayonet was not so bad. More likely was an agonizing death after torture.

How many of our messengers lost their lives! And how often, when we learned a messenger was killed, the first thing we did was blame him. Yes, blame him, because he had bungled the job and jeopardized the organization

Later, of course, we found kind words to say of him, drank to his memory, and shed the rare tears of a Bolshevik. But the cause always comes first with a Bolshevik, and therefore the messenger did not even have the right to a heroic death. His duty was to live

It was hard at the beginning. There was no one with experience, no one to learn from. Later on we had our secret meeting places, codes and "post boxes": a tree hollow, or the brick stove of a burnt-out cottage.... But at the beginning it was only an oral address: "Sosnitsa District, Secretary of the District Committee" This secretary of the district committee, however, was in hiding and moved from village to village or went off into the woods. And the messenger could not give himself away either. If he found a Communist in a certain village, why should that Communist reveal the secret meeting place to him? The messenger did not even carry a Party card

* * *

We prepared intensively for the coming district meeting. We sent everybody we possibly could to the villages to notify the Communists. On their return to the farm village our messengers gave detailed reports of what they had seen and heard. We could sense that the district was in a state of ferment, that the people were not knuckling under to the invaders. Particularly heartening was an incident in the village of Malaya Devitsa, the district centre. We heard about it from Kulko, who had been sent there to notify the Communists of the coming meeting

This is what happened. Kulko was in the house of one of the underground men, a mechanic of the machine and tractor workshop, when there was a knock on the door and two strangers, not local men, with arm bands and with automatic pistols at their hips, entered They ordered both Kulko and his host to go promptly to the square in front

of the theatre, where a meeting to "elect" a burgomaster and rural starostas was to be held.

They had to go How could they refuse with those *polizei* standing over them?

About three hundred people had been driven to the square.

Kulko stood somewhere in the back. A car rolled up. A German colonel got out and climbed the platform, followed by his adjutant. They beckoned to a woman teacher of German and three Russians in the crowd to come up to them One of them Kulko recognized as a former official of the district executive committee.

The colonel, without looking at the people, mumbled something in the nature of a speech in a monotonous and indifferent voice. He started out by speaking of Greater Germany, of the New Order, and of an end having been put to Bolshevism and Marxism; there were also some promises thrown in. In conclusion he listed the candidates for starostas, burgomaster and chief of the district police force appointed by the commandant.

The crowd heard him out in apathetic silence. Suddenly the mechanic dug his elbow into Kulko's ribs. The people around them were also nudging one another. The crowd livened up; there was whispering, then chuckles, and finally someone cried out in a ringing voice· "That's something!"

Behind the platform two large portraits—of Lenin and Stalin—were being run up among the trees, like flags on a ship

Quite a while, perhaps five full minutes, passed before those on the platform gathered what had happened. The German officer glanced frowningly at the crowd, then looked to either side and finally turned around, everybody at his side following suit. Someone in the crowd availed himself of this opportunity, and a youthful voice cried out·

"Long live the Soviet Ukraine! Long live Comrade Stalin!" And several voices broke into quite an unmistakable:

"Hurrah!"

The German soldiers guarding the car opened fire from their tommy guns. But the people broke through the police cordon and quickly dispersed. Noticing that the young fellow who had called out was running along beside him, Kulko asked: "Who hoisted up the portraits?" The lad, sizing Kulko up and evidently concluding that he was one of them, answered: "Pioneers! Well, now look out!" he added as he turned the corner of a house.

Kulko, of course, did not wait to be caught. He hid in the mechanic's icehouse and that evening left the village. In general Kulko had changed beyond recognition—he was apparently working with all his heart.

I learned that he had never once gone home since the day he caught up with me.

"We'd only start quarrelling again. Better to stay away. Alexei Fyodorovich, give me a difficult assignment—to keep me from thinking," he pleaded.

We readily granted his request and sent him to Yablunovka for liaison work.

* * *

Communists and Komsomol members were not the only ones to come to Yevdokia Fyodorovna's house. Non-Party people also came. I do not remember all of them now but there is one man who imprinted himself in my memory. He said he was a sovkhoz agronomist. He had come, he told me, because it was said that one could get moral support and guidance here. Yes, that is approximately how he put it.

I ought to note that we did not particularly try to keep visitors away. The village was surrounded by

swamps and could be reached only by one road, which was visible for a long stretch. If a detachment of police or Germans headed for the spot we could see it a long way off and have time to take the necessary steps. But when a man came along the road all by himself, and unarmed to boot, there was nothing to fear.

That is how the agronomist came. He knocked at the door, open though it was, and asked someone to come out I went out. He proffered his hand.

"Hello," he said, "Comrade Fyodorov."

Being recognized again came as a bit of a jolt. But I gave no sign.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I came," he said, "to get advice and to give you some advice. May I speak frankly?"

"Go ahead."

He launched into such a rigmarole that I began to wonder whether the man was sane. He spoke a long time We sat smoking on the porch steps while the "frank" fellow set forth his point of view on the current situation

His reasoning ran along the following lines: there he was, Soviet from top to toe, certain of victory over Germany and understanding that the occupation was something temporary, even short-lived. He knew, of course, that the Communists were mustering resistance forces to strike at the German rear. And so he had come to us with his "frank" viewpoint:

"Why stir people up, Comrade Secretary of the R.C.? Why turn the German war machine against the unarmed population? That would lead to more bloodshed. As it now stands, the Germans will only rob us, but if we begin to resist they will start killng us."

"Quite right, so they will!"

"But neither I nor my children want to be killed."

"Then resist, join the partisans, fire five shots to their one!"

"No, Comrade Fyodorov, I don't agree The time will come and the Red Army will break the German machine. That is inevitable. But what are we with our pitiful forces?... It's suicide. Why, a man like you will be needed after the war, too. But you are going against tanks with bare hands. And what's more, you are dragging the bravest, boldest, most honest and soundest people along with you under the treads of the German tanks. But I, you see, am not chicken-livered either and have decided to speak to you frankly. Come to your senses! I beg you, explain to the Communists of the region...."

I could not stand it any longer: my hand slipped into my pocket and I began to toy with my pistol The "frank" fellow noticed my movement. He paled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not a traitor," he said. "There's no reason to shoot me."

Then I pulled the pistol partly out of my pocket.

"I think I'd better go," said the "frank" fellow. "You evidently can't understand me. But think my words over anyway."

With this our conversation ended. The agronomist left. Later I made enquiries about him "A harmless soul," I was told. "He was evacuating with his family but, as was the case with some, he fell behind the column and found himself stranded" At the beginning the propaganda of such "harmless souls" had some success. We had to counter it with our Communist influence.

Then came the final days before the meeting. The active workers dispersed to the villages on various commissions connected with preparations for the meeting. Our R.C. group again began its nomadic existence, on the quest for information. Besides, it was time we moved. Once propagandists of non-resistance to evil had put in an appearance, before we knew it the Germans might pay us a surprise visit.

Vasya Zubko and Mikhail Zinchenko, chief of staff of the Malaya Desna detachment, set out for the village of Buda, where we meant to hold the meeting; Nadya Belyavskaya and I stopped in the village of Grabovo to draft an order of the day. Dnieprovsky and Pievako went off in the direction of Lisoviye Sorochintsy. Dnieprovsky knew Yegor Yevtukhovich Bodko well; he wanted to see him, and also invite him to the meeting.

• • •

Dnieprovsky returned with dreadful news: Bodko had been killed.

On October 25 a passenger car drove into Lisoviye Sorochintsy. The starosta, two SS men and two *polizei* entered Bodko's house. They ordered his wife and the other members of the family outside. A minute later several shots rang out. Then the Germans and the starosta climbed into the car; the *polizei* threw the body of the kolkhoz chairman into the vegetable garden and forbade its being buried. Without assembling the people or offering any explanations, the butchers drove off. The Germans left behind three huge vicious dogs: bristling, they savagely jumped on anyone who tried to come near Bodko's body.

So that's how things happen!

A man had been alive, had served his people faithfully and honourably, given his all to them, and now his body lay on the ground and dogs brought over from Germany did not allow his family to approach it.

Dnieprovsky told the story as briefly as it is recorded here. He did not cry but was more taciturn than usual: he had known Yegor Yevtukhovich and been his friend since their teens, since Komsomol age.

It was a long time before I could say a word either. Our hostess sank on the bed and burst into tears.

"Oh, woe to us, woe!" she wailed "What have the hangmen done? Why did they kill such a good man?"

I felt uncomfortable. I went out of doors—the house seemed stuffy I recalled the Kostroma kulak, "The Baptist." Could he have had a hand in it?

Dnieprovsky followed me out. For some time he stood there silent. Then, without looking at me, he began to tell me about Bodko in a hollow, monotonous voice. Actually he seemed to be thinking aloud rather than telling a story

"What was he like? A man of a special mould The world—all those foreign countries, and old Russia too—never knew men like him He was a partisan in the Civil War. Well, all right, nothing new about that There were lots of partisans... And then somehow we got used to noticing only those comrades of ours who were studying and moving ahead But Bodko belonged to a different category. The Revolution appointed them to work in the district and they are still there; besides, in positions of secondary or third importance.. "

I interrupted Dnieprovsky.

"You knew him well How did he come to be expelled from the Party?"

"Be patient, Alexei Fyodorovich I've thought about that too. I'll come to it... And so, in positions of secondary or third importance, that is, not as first or second secretary of the district committee but as manager of the public works department or judge, or somewhat earlier as chairman of the committee of the poor peasants, or in the social security department. And how many of them, Alexei Fyodorovich, are chairmen of kolkhozes? They haven't had any formal education but they do not lack knowledge. Dig down a little deeper into a man like Bodko, go below the surface. How much he has thought over how much he has seen and how much diverse knowl

edge he has accumulated! It goes without saying that he is a progressive agriculturist. And as far as our new, Soviet system is concerned, its laws and customs, you can be sure Bodko knew them inside and out, knew them and felt them No one could trip him up there. No, not a single professor.... The Revolution found him an illiterate peasant boy and the Revolution, the Party, made a man of him And there was nothing he held dearer than the Party, Alexei Fyorodovich, nothing; that is, the cause of the Party, the constructive, creative spirit of our Party. For many years he was chairman of a kolkhoz.... I have just come, Alexei Fyodorovich, from the place where Bodko lived and worked and where he was murdered, right in his own home.... I walked along and thought. To be chairman of a kolkhoz is not merely to hold an office. The chairman is a new type of statesman. He is a public figure never known before, one raised out of the midst of the people by the genius of Stalin. But that is beside the point, by the by. Maybe it is because the murdered man was my friend that I've gotten onto such a high plane I admit that before the war I thought he and men like him were little people But these people are the bulwark and the foundation of our whole Soviet system"

I cannot guarantee that these are the exact words Dnieprovsky used I have tried to convey his thoughts and his mood as fully as possible. As he spoke I recollected my meetings and talks with Bodko He was a man with a will, a very strong will, a man with a great heart! I pictured myself in his place: a Communist at heart who had to pose as a starosta. And all those skunks who came to him as to an associate who shared their views. Oh no, it was more than I could have done I would surely have exploded.

Dnieprovsky went on:

"Just before occupation, Alexei Fyodorovich, I was assigned to the political administration of the army. I was

nstantly on the move, marching through swampland, d I got a bad attack of rheumatism. The political admin- ıration was stationed in Priluki. There was no hospital :arby. The doctors advised me to go to some kolkhoz was taken to Lisovlye Sorochintsy and there—after any years—I met Yegor Yevtukhovich again. Of course, : took me to his house. I come from Malaya Devitsa)o. We were admitted to the Party almost on the same ay. Only on the fourth day that I was there did Yegor :ll me he'd been expelled from the Party. I know you'll nd it hard to believe this because you've seen the man ourself, but he actually cried There were tears in his yes. 'What am I to do, Pavel?' he said to me. 'I can't ive without the Party, Pavel. It was the words of Lenin imself that drew me to the people's cause And I fol- owed Stalin along the whole road of collectivization And ow this had been done to me I was at fault, I'm not rguing—I'm a Communist, I don't deny my guilt. Punish ne, but I just can't live outside the Party!' I told him that If there had been a mistake he would be reinstated It needed time, the matter had to be looked into. 'But, Pavel, is now the time to look into it? The Germans are pushing, the enemy is right on top of us, and I'm outside the Party' What should I do? I can't get into the Red Army—they're giving me a deferment I wanted to join the partisans but I can't do that either; the district Soviet says I can't quit the kolkhoz I went to the district Party committee Pryadko says, "Don't give up, don't lose heart We sent your case to the R C" I went to Chernigov to see Fyodo- rov; the Germans are bombing the place and he's busy sav ing factories and public property How can he be both- ered with my case? Oh, Pavel, it's hard for me outside the Party.'"

Here I interrupted Dnieprovsky

"Bodko told me he became starosta on instructions from the district committee"

"Yes, of course Yegor went to the district committee. After all, he wasn't really a non-Party man but just temporarily without his Party card. Where is a Communist to go when he's in difficulty? Naturally, to his own comrades."

After a moment's thought, I said to Dnieprovsky:

"Yes, it's clear he remained a Party man.... Something's wrong about his expulsion His case didn't get to me in the R C I don't remember.. ." is what I said then. However, I recalled a man coming up to me in the hallway of the R C during an air raid and asking me about his appeal. His name was also short and Ukrainian. Maybe that was Bodko

"Comrade Dnieprovsky, on October 25 a Communist, a member of the Party of Bolsheviks, lost his life in Lisoviye Sorochintsy. We shall forever regard him as being on the rolls of our Chernigov organization, as a hero!"

I hoped that these words sounded as solemn as I felt when I said them

Originally we had planned to hold the district meeting of Communists in the house of Zina Kavinskaya, a schoolteacher in the village of Buda, who was a Komsomol. But Vasya Zubko returned from a scouting trip there and told us that her son had scarlet fever In spite of her son's illness Kavinskaya had undertaken to find another place for the meeting in the village but had returned alarmed strangers had appeared in Buda; they were making enquiries about her; she was evidently under observation

"I checked up on it," said Vasya. "I thought maybe Kavinskaya had simply funked. But it turns out that some long-nosed creatures are really snooping about the village and asking questions. One even came up to me in the street. A nasty character, about forty-five and looks like a retired sexton. With a saccharine voice, a sparse beard...."

"The Baptist?" I involuntarily cried out.
"What is a Baptist, Alexei Fyodorovich?"
"A good scout must be familiar with religious questions too, Vasya What's important is not what a Baptist Vasya, but whether he's the bird I'm thinking of. hat is he doing there?"
"He approached me as I was leaving the village. Where are you bound for, master?' he asked."
"Is that what he said, 'master'?"
"Just that"
"Ah, Vasya, that's the kulak from Kostroma. Yes, he's definitely the one who sent the Germans to Yegor Yevtukhovich Well, what did you do? Is he wandering about there alone?"
'He was alone, but there are two more like him, just as seedy, roaming around the village They don't seem to know one another but even the women say it's one gang The Germans are expected to come and set up their administration, and so they sent these fellows on ahead to prepare public opinion and find out if there are any partisans in the neighbourhood. They're afraid"
I wanted to catch this traitor so badly that I almost suggested that the three of them—Dnieprovsky, Plevako and Zubko—set out immediately for Buda to grab him and finish him off But I restrained myself
A painful business, caution is I did not want to be cautious then To know that the man responsible for Bodko's death was roaming about with impunity a few kilometres away, and do nothing about it! No matter how much I thought it over and how many plans I made, I came to the conclusion that in the position we were in we could not hunt that fellow down We had no right to jeopardize the coming meeting Neither did we have the right to disclose ourselves
So Buda's out," I said with a deep sigh "The meeting will have to be held in Pelyukhovka."

But our scouts also found suspicious characters in Pelyukhovka and we had to change our meeting place again. And so on the appointed day, October 29, some comrades (including Komsomol members and Young Pioneers and, incidentally, one decrepit old woman) took up posts along the roads leading to Pelyukhovka. They were given the parole, and to passers-by who knew the countersign they said:

"Don't go to Pelyukhovka. Kamenskoye Forestry Station at eleven in the evening."

* * *

This was the first large meeting of Communists called by the underground R C. True enough, it was still on a district scale, but we attached great significance to this first meeting. It was a test of our organizing abilities and of the cohesion of the Bolshevik ranks.

It was pouring. Late autumn though it was, the rain came down heavily. Actually, it had been raining almost continuously the last few days. The ground was soggy and the roads one revolting mess. The homespun woollen jacket I wore had not been dry in days. It weighed, without exaggeration, about fifty pounds. Occasionally I took it off and wrung it out—it was like squeezing a sponge.

I mention my jacket because all the others got just as soaking wet and, of course, so chilled that they could not warm up even indoors I remember having jotted down in indelible pencil something in the nature of theses for the meeting. I thrust these notes as far away as I could, right next to my body. Though I only had to walk about five kilometres in all, the notes got soaking wet and the words became stamped on my chest.

Yet many of the comrades came from distant parts of the district, some from thirty kilometres away. Every

single one came on foot and most of them alone In those days the likelihood of encountering Germans was less than later on, but the fear was greater. The front had only recently passed through here.

The forester may have been all right, but we could not let him into the secret beforehand When it grew dark several persons knocked and asked him to open the office building.

Vasya Zubko, who had been assigned the job of getting the "meeting hall" ready, did the negotiating with the forester. He quickly talked him around. Then he dug up a couple of crude lamps in the house and set them on the table, found several sheets of plywood, asked the forester for a blanket and covered the windows to make a thorough blackout.

The forestry building was new. Unpainted log walls, homemade furniture, benches, a table still innocent of inkstains. They brought in several benches from outside without even troubling to wipe them dry

All the while the rain continued to pour down, beating a monotonous tattoo on the windows and roof. The people were slow in gathering. I remember sitting for quite a while in the office without warming up in the least, and then going outside again. I no longer bothered about the rain—my clothes could not absorb any more water. Although I knew we were in a forest the night was so black I could guess the existence of trees only by the faint creaking of branches. How did people find this house, what sixth sense guided them? Now and then I heard the squelch of clay, the splash of puddles and muffled, irritated oaths

"This way, this way, comrade!" I would cry into the darkness. "Follow my voice!"

The forester, a black-bearded man of uncertain age, apathetically carried out Vasya Zubko's orders: he splashed through the mud from his hut to the office and

groped about in the garden (there was a little garden laid out near the office) for benches. He asked no questions and received no explanations

At last about fifty persons had crowded into the room We seated ourselves. The members of the regional and district committees took seats around the table. The forester stood leaning against the doorjamb, apparently dozing He should, of course, be sent away.

I raised my hand for quiet, although the people were talking in whispers as it was.

"Comrades, permit me to declare the meeting of the Communists of Malaya Devitsa District open!"

I glanced at the door. the forester was gone; he had slipped away. That was good. But before I had finished my opening remarks the door suddenly opened and he returned carrying a long white bundle He made his way along the wall, skirted the table of the presidium and began to unroll his bundle in front of everybody. It was a large coloured portrait of Comrade Stalin. You surely remember it, the one where Joseph Vissarionovich is shown seated at his desk; at the left stands a table lamp, and in the background, beyond the window, is the Kremlin tower with the clock

We all rose and removed our hats. The forester took advantage of my rising to stand on my chair and hang the portrait on the wall Probably just where it had hung before the German occupation.

"Thanks, comrade!" I gripped the forester's hand. "I thank you in everybody's name!"

"Don't mention it"

"Are you a Communist?"

"I'll go right now. I won't interfere. I'll tell my old woman. We haven't got cups for everybody," he said apologetically, "but for the presidium anyway we'll make some hot tea."

He again slid along the wall and went out.

Not long before, Young Pioneers in Malaya Devitsa had run up portraits of Lenin and Stalin in the village like banners; now this non-Party forester had brought out a portrait of Comrade Stalin which he had hidden. Was this not evidence of the people's profound loyalty to Communist ideas and to the Soviet power?

Later we discovered that portraits of our leaders were hidden away in every village, almost in every cottage. The partisans needed only to occupy some inhabited point for people immediately to bring the portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchov out of their hiding places and hang them in places of honour. They had not only portraits but red flags, posters and red calico strips with slogans. The people treasured and saved everything representative of Soviet power.

The forester left. I read aloud the directives of the R C and an order of the day of the regional partisan headquarters, the one we had drafted the day before in the village of Grabovo. This order has been preserved. Here it is:

ORDER OF THE DAY No. 1

OF THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE CHERNIGOV PARTISAN MOVEMENT

October 30, 1941

The bandit troops of German fascism which have invaded our sacred Soviet land, and occupied the territory of our Chernigov Region among others, are with the assistance of brutal naturalist methods carrying out mass terror against our people, executing, torturing and murdering.

On October 25, 1941, in the village of Lesnoye Sosnitsky, Gestapo men and policemen shot four

among former local kulaks, murdered a fine son and patriot of his Soviet Motherland, kolkhoz chairman Yegor Yevtukhovich Bodko.

2. In October 1941, in the small town of Ichnya, Gestapo men subjected Comrade Tsarenko, a former partisan, the holder of two Orders, to unheard-of mental and physical torture

3 In the village of Zaudaika the police, recruited from among former kulaks, on October 14 murdered a Red Army man who had not wished to give himself up to the German invaders and had been hiding from them.

4. In October 1941 Soviet officials in the town of Priluki were brutally executed, supposedly for their refusal to betray partisans

5. Under the guise of banning work on Sundays and religious holidays the Germans and their agents are killing off the finest types of Soviet people.

6 The German commandants are requiring Communists and Komsomol members to appear for registration in order subsequently to exterminate them.

The Chernigov Regional Headquarters of the Partisan Movement appoints the following to head the partisan movement in Malaya Devitsa District: D. Strashenko, detachment commander, Comrade Pryadko, commissar, and M. I. Zinchenko, chief of staff

and *orders*

1 The formation of a united partisan detachment in the district consisting of Communists, Komsomol members, the Soviet *active*, kolkhoz members and intellectuals

2 The task of the detachment is to cripple the Priluki Nezhin Railway Line, to this end blowing up the bridge between the Gaika and Priluki stations; to destroy German trains, trucks, dumps; to develop an all-out struggle against the German invaders

3. The confirmation of an Extraordinary Commission of Three, consisting of Strashenko, Pryadko and Zinchenko, for the prosecution and punishment of traitors to the Motherland.

4. The confirmation of the groups formed to exterminate the traitors to the Motherland who have entered the service of the German fascists. The following operations for the extermination of traitors are to be carried out in the district between November 3 and 10:

a) The district starosta Neimesh and his assistant Lysenko—to be put to death;

b) The starosta and the landlord Domantovich, in Lisoviye Sorochintsy—to be put to death;

c) The starosta of the village of Redkovka—to be put to death.

5. One Communist and two Komsomol members are to be left in every village to carry on daily mass political work among the inhabitants of the district. Members of the Soviet and kolkhoz *active* who have remained behind are to be utilized for the same purpose

6. After the assignments had been carried out the entire detachment is to gather at a designated place on November 11 in order to follow a route which will be indicated

7. The present order is to be brought to the knowledge of all the commanders, political workers and fighting men of the detachment, the groups, the Communists and the Komsomol members.

8. Comrade Pavlovsky is made responsible for checking up on the execution of this order.

Chief of Staff, Regional Headquarters
of the [illegible] san Movement,
Fyodor Orlov.

An order is an order. " [illegible] ssed. It was
accepted for gul' [illegible] on. We had,
of course, p' ['sts of the

district had again managed to come together. For a while they had tried to live and work separately. And now everybody admitted that the tactics chosen by the district leaders had been wrong.

"Why, if we were surrounded now, this very minute, right here in the forestry station," said Ilchenko, a young harvester combine operator, "all together we could break through. But what can a man do all on his own, like Bodko?..."

The rain continued its noisy downpour outside. Suddenly I detected some strange noises above the patter of the rain. It sounded like someone moving near the window. Everyone grew tense. Naturally, the first thing that came to my mind was "The Baptist."

"Now there, show your stuff," I ordered the combine operator, who had the floor.

He instantly produced a pistol from inside his shirt and ran out. A minute later we heard the following conversation:

"What are you doing here, you fathead you? I might have shot you!" said our combine operator.

"But I only wanted to listen. There's nobody on the road."

It turned out that one of our sentries guarding the approaches to the forestry station could not stand the solitude and, moreover, wanted dreadfully to hear what was going on—and so he had deserted his post.

This incident served to introduce the subject of discipline.

It is hard now to remember all the details of this meeting. I remember that is was far from decorous and tranquil. People at times interrupted one another; everybody was eager to pour his heart out. In the months of occupation they had accumulated many questions, impressions, ideas and feelings, and this was the first large gathering of its kind. The meeting—it would be more correct to call

it a comradely exchange of opinions—lasted all night. The forester brought us a pail of boiling water and those who were chilled through and through each received a mugful.

We discovered, incidentally, that there were no professional military men among us; and in all only three reserve officers. The rest were people with rural occupations: tractor drivers, combine operators, field team leaders, stock breeders, stablemen, secretaries and chairmen of village Soviets and, of course, kolkhoz chairmen. Although most of them had had some military training, not everybody even knew how to handle a rifle well.

"We'll have to learn. And remember that we'll be using mostly weapons captured from the enemy."

Some one enquired:

"The German authorities are registering specialists—agronomists, financial workers and mechanics—very likely to utilize them, and many they'll force. What should our attitude to these people be?"

This topic aroused a lively discussion, in which different opinions were expressed. Soon the question was put on a broader plane: the comrades told how Soviet people were living, what policy the invaders were pursuing, and so on.

"The Germans, of course, will try to penetrate every aspect of the people's life. They will set up an organization to pump out everything of value, resorting to open thievery and also using persuasion, trying to poison the minds of the people in every way. We Communists have gone underground. But the Germans have only seized the territory. The spirit of the people, their convictions, their national dignity and self-respect are something the Germans were not able to seize. The people continue to believe in us, the Communists; they follow us, await our word. The partisans are our underground army, the army in the enemy rear. The Communists who have remained behind

on the land seized by the Germans must not confine themselves to partisan matters. It is our duty to see and to know everything. Our people must be everywhere. To be successful in our struggle against the enemy we must study his weapons

"In peacetime the regional committee, the district committee and the primary Communist organizations were closely connected with the people; they headed every sector of socialist construction. Today, under occupation, we, the Communists, must also know absolutely everything going on on the territory where we operate. That will enable us to take measures everywhere to counteract the German orders and German agitation and propaganda. The Germans will try to get agricultural and industrial production and the transport and communication systems going. And this is where our peacetime occupations will be most useful. The doctor, the pharmacist, the agronomist, the tractor driver, the secretary,the actor, the charwoman—are all needed; we call on all of them to join the struggle against the fascists, against fascist ideology and against the so-called 'new order,' which the Germans will try to introduce. Sabotage, diversion and surprise attacks are the legitimate weapons of a people threatened by enslavement. We need have no doubt: every truly Soviet person is inwardly bristling. Every Soviet person wants to fight the enemy. We, the Communists, must see to it that people not only want to but get the chance to fight We must show them they are not alone, that a powerful underground organization of Communists exists; that it is leading the people to their liberation."

It was getting on for five in the morning when this first large meeting of the Communist underground workers of Chernigov Region ended. We rose and sang the *Internationale*. At parting we embraced; some of the men kissed. Each one knew that he was risking his life. But no one spoke of the risk, of death, or of danger.

Our R.C. group—Dnieprovsky, Zubko, Nadya Belyavskaya, Plevako and I—decided to set out in search of the Ichnya partisan detachment as soon as it grew light

Until then we allowed ourselves the luxury of a short rest; in the village of Pelyukhovka the wife of a Red Army man put her cottage at our disposal. The cottage was cold but it was dry. We lay down on the floor side by side and awoke only at nine o'clock in the morning.

And so we resumed our wanderings. Our object was to find the Ichnya detachment, the nearest functioning partisan detachment in Chernigov Region.

Here is what we looked like:

Four men and one young woman walking along a drab and very muddy autumn road. They also present an extremely drab appearance. One of the men is thickset and bearded, carries a stick, and has on two huge boots, both for the left foot, soaking wet and turned up at the toes. He wears a coarse homespun wool jacket belted with a saddle-strap. His jacket pockets are bulging. On his head is an old and warm cap; something inside his shirt makes his stomach stick out in sharp corners. . . . It would appear simple to guess that there are hand grenades inside his shirt, but strange as it may seem, passers-by do not guess Yet who knows what the passers-by think. The thickset man is me, Fyodorov, at the time Fyodor Orlov, and according to my identification papers, Alexei Kostyrya

The second is a tall, dark-haired, and rather heavy man in an overcoat and army boots. His cap is pulled down over his forehead. He looks impressive, morose, even sullen. He takes long steps. At deep or wide puddles he waits for the thickset man who climbs on his back. Then the tall man carries him across in silence, unresponsive to the jokes of his living burden. This is Pavel Vasilievich Dnieprovsky, alias Vasilchenko

The third is a young man in an old quilted jacket, breeches and rusty calfskin boots And although his

breeches are bespattered with clay, his jacket torn in places and his face long unshaven, the young man has miraculously retained an air of elegance, of swagger, as if out on a stroll. The impression is that his quilted jacket covers a natty uniform jacket with gleaming buttons. Since the road passes mostly through groves and thickets the young man is constantly wandering off, now to the right, now to the left, running on ahead, climbing little hills, looking around to see if there is any danger afoot, and then rejoining the others. This ragged dandy is our scout and wonderful comrade, Vasya Zubko.

The woman is dressed in a dark cotton skirt and a leather coat. A red kerchief covers her head. She is the type long familiar in literature as the women's organizer. She probably went to great trouble to acquire these togs to look more the type She is dark, of average height, and twenty-three or twenty-four years old but looks older because her hair is bobbed and because of her clothes. She considers gravity the chief attribute of a Bolshevik—and anxiety the chief attribute of gravity. She carries a white bundle, so white it looks starched. How she manages to keep it always immaculate is her secret. What the bundle contains is also her secret. The young woman zealously guards her secret, though none of her companions tries to discover it. Often walking apart with one of us, either behind or ahead of the group, she argues some point, shaking her head disapprovingly. Probably expressing her displeasure with one of us to another. When people are sighted on the road in front the woman in the leather coat walks on ahead to meet the strangers. If they are Germans or suspicious characters she slings her bundle over her shoulder, a sign for us to be on our guard. This is Nadya Belyavskaya, our loyal companion.

The fifth, who used to be a fat man but is now almost skinny, is red-haired and amazingly cheerful. He is always ready to sing and invites the others to join him. He is

always joking and teasing. Nadya, of course, does not approve of such behaviour. He is dressed in a long grey jacket and canvas boots. This is Pavel Logvinovich Plevako.

To an onlooker our group would appear to be moving in the following manner: in circles and loops, returning to where it was before, its members fan out in different directions and then close in again ... When people cross their path they either sit down and talk for a long time or else suddenly turn aside and walk off quickly in the opposite direction to disappear in a thicket or a wood. On entering a village they closely study the cottages before knocking at a door. They leave the cottage suddenly, in the middle of the night. And in the daytime they burrow into a stack of hay or wheat and sleep there

It was a queer life, one might even say an uncivilized life. We became rough and wind burned and acquired thick callouses on our feet. On the whole these endless wanderings toughened us. No one ever caught cold, took any powders or drops, or even got the blues. We learned to sleep under any conditions and to be in good spirits as soon as we opened our eyes

For several days Vasya Zubko had been trying to discover the whereabouts of the detachment through two Communists of Ichnya District Neither of them could tell us anything definite, although they spent no little time in the search. This infuriated me. "What kind of scouts are they if they can't do anything in their own district!" The only thing they did discover was that the detachment really existed, was operating and was named after Khrushchov.

Even before occupation, while still in Chernigov, we knew that the Ichnya detachment had chosen Ombishi Forest as its initial base We decided to begin our search with this forest.

On the morning of November 1, our group entered

Ichnya District and became, in spite of itself, a participant in some strange and very intricate game. We knew that the detachment was somewhere nearby, perhaps no more than fifteen kilometres away. We looked for the detachment, while the command of the detachment, informed by the messengers we had sent out from Zhovtnevo village with the directives of the R.C., knew that we were wandering about in the locality and was looking for us. The Germans and their nationalist lackeys were looking for both us and the detachment. Everybody tricked everybody else, kept a sharp lookout, covered up their tracks. In a word, it was just like in an honest-to-goodness detective novel

For nine days we circled around the district and, I must say, our adventures irritated rather than amused us as for the difficulties—yes, there were occasions when w even rejoiced at the difficulties....

But I'd better tell the story consecutively.

By this time the invaders had already organized som *kind of administration in most of the districts.* The com mandants had brought in all kinds of nationalist riffraf and criminals from the western regions which had beer seized earlier. This "personnel" went to make up the po lice force and the starosta body.

And while only two weeks earlier the population hac given roaming Russians a rather cordial reception, now it began to be wary of them.

We stepped in to see one of the Ombishi foresters and asked him about the partisans. Instead of answering the old man demanded to know who we were.

"War prisoners, making our way home to Repki District."

"Well, make your way instead of asking about the partisans."

His son, a fellow of about twenty-five, came in. This one openly said he did not believe us.

"Stop playing the fool. Can't I see the kind of war prisoners you are? Tell me what you want the partisans for."

We hinted that we had some connection with the partisans and wanted to get in touch with them. The chap was delighted. He asked his mother to feed us and busied himself with seeing to our comfort. Then he ran off somewhere—said he was going for homebrew vodka, but he stayed away about forty minutes. He did not bring any vodka but he did discover something most important.

"Follow this road across the Udai River to the village of Priputni and ask there how to get to the farm village of Petrovskoye where you'll look up the forester, Grisha. He should know where the partisans are."

We thanked the father and son warmly and shook their hands. But from that moment on our luck turned against us.

We took the road indicated and after a while saw a river and a bridge. There was a cluster of people near the bridge. Nadya Belyavskaya went on ahead.

Since she did not raise the bundle to her shoulder we came on.

The bridge, we discovered, had been blown up by Red Army units during their retreat. Only the piles remained, sticking up out of the water. The people there came from nearby villages. The district authorities had driven them to the spot and ordered them to plank the piles for a foot bridge.

There were about fifteen woman working there and one man, the team leader, a fellow of about twenty-two who was a carpenter.

The kolkhoz women, glad of a chance to rest up, sat down on the bank around Nadya, who was talking excitedly. We also seated ourselves. Nadya was urging them to sabotage all the instructions and orders of the new authorities.

"Why are you building a bridge, repairing the roads? You're establishing communications between the villages and the towns, facilitating transport. But that will help the Germans. Now go home this instant! Drop everything! And better still, tear up the planks you've put down. Then you'll prove you're with the Red Army, with the partisans!"

The women listened to Nadya eagerly. Most of them were young and enthusiastic. As for the young team leader (we already knew that he was called Misha Gurin), he hung on her lips, every now and then putting in:

"Oh, that's right, just right! That's grand!"

On the other side of the river, about a kilometre away, we could see the village of Priputni, the one we were headed for. The bridge was almost finished. If another dozen boards or so were nailed down on the piles we could have crossed right over on it

I tugged Nadya's sleeve on the sly and gave her a look intended to mean. "Nice words, those, but we have to get to the other side. Come to your senses!" But she went on.

The fellow set the ball rolling. He ran up to the bridge with his axe, quickly ripped off one board and then another and kicked them into the water.

"Now, girls, all together! The devil with it! We'll all answer for it!"

The girls did not need to be coaxed. With shouts and jokes and laughter they took the whole bridge apart in half an hour. But this did not satisfy the young man. He ordered his team to fling all the building material that lay on the bank right into the river.

I took Nadya aside.

"Now, my dear, what in the world have you done!"

She was not the least bit put out. My question even surprised her.

"But Alexei Fyodorovich, if we ask the peasants to make sacrifices we should set them an example."

Well, of course, that was logical enough. But I would have preferred it if Nadya had begun her propaganda on the other bank.... The river was dreadfully cold We got wet to the waist fording it.

* * *

We did not enter Priputni. Zubko had gone ahead and reported on his return that something had happened in the village.

"The people are excited. They're gathering in groups, the women are waving their arms...."

We were such a sight after our forced bath that we preferred not to be seen. Although it was growing dark we decided to go straight to Petrovskoye. We learned that it was only about four kilometres off. And there, in Petrovskoye, was Grisha the forester.

It was already dark when we knocked at a wretched-looking, lopsided hovel thatched with straw. The mistress of the hut admitted us reluctantly. But Pavel Logvinovich's jokes soon put her in a good humour and she grew markedly kinder; she even offered to boil us some potatoes. Naturally, we did not refuse She set the pot of potatoes on a very low table. The lampion gave such poor light that we could barely even see one another

In putting my feet under the table I struck a basket. It turned out that a large straw basket covered with a board was serving as a table

"How come, hostess?" I said. "Don't you even own a table?!"

"I'm poor. I've no husband I take in sewing—and it needs more than a needle to make a table with..."

We would have to stay on there at least a day or two and here was a good excuse

"Now that's something we can do," I said to our hostess. "Why not make a table for a good soul? I'm a

carpenter. Pavel Logvinovich and I will make you such a table in one day that you'll be able to dance a jig on it. And Nadya in the meatime will do a little wash. One good turn deserves another: you'll warm some water for her, won't you?"

That is how it was settled. Our hostess got some carpenter's tools from a neighbour and in the morning we set to work. Nadya busied herself with our laundry, while Vasya Zubko went off in search of Grisha the forester.

Though he had found Grisha he came back looking glum. Grisha turned out to be a lad of seventeen or eighteen but incredibly secretive and obstinate.

"I couldn't drag a thing out of him, Alexei Fyodorovich," said Vasya. "Trust my scout's nose: it's my opinion that not only he but his mother and his kid sister all know where the partisans are. I gave him the broadest hints, told him I was a Communist. 'I don't know a thing, Uncle!' he swears."

Our hostess found some boards in the kolkhoz yard and work on the table began to hum. Plevako worked with the hammer while I planed. Pug noses pressed up against the windowpanes, and then women appeared There were even clients among them.

"Come over to me, too. My door needs fixing for the winter...."

"And my bed's in a pretty bad way. Could you make a new one? I have the money but where can I find a carpenter in the village?"

A sullen-looking fellow also came in and practically started an interrogation:

"Been a carpenter long?"

"It's my trade. Worked in a furniture factory in Chernigov. And then the war started.... Coming from captivity now...."

I had never really been a carpenter but I was not bad at the trade. I had some experience on the tunnel

job. A timberer, after all, is nothing but a carpenter. Plevako also knew how to handle a hammer and chisel.

That fellow pretended to believe us, but we realized that we had better not linger on there.

Dnieprovsky and I went to see Grisha the forester. We hoped that the two of us would get more out of him than Vasya had Nothing of the kind. He was as stubborn as they come. He did not look us in the eye and answered our questions as if we were not Communists but German investigators. I even began to suspect that the people on the other side of the river had sent us here to sidetrack us.

Dnieprovsky lost his temper and blurted out: "You're a funny one, you are! We know for sure that you're a Komsomol member and that you're in touch with the partisans. We're Communists; we have to find them without fail, otherwise the Germans...." Dnieprovsky drew an imaginary noose around his neck....

Grisha fell to thinking. We kept quiet. He was clearly in a quandary. Indeed, the problem was one even an experienced Bolshevik could not have settled right off. Later we learned that there were added complications: the previous evening the partisans had executed a traitor in Priputni, while in Petrovskoye they had broken into a warehouse locked up by the Germans and carried eight sacks of flour off into the forest.... Now then, go and decide who these strangers were: actually Communists or *polizei* sent by the Germans!

"You know what, comrades.... There's a man named Didenko in Priputni, the head of the kolkhoz. He's home now. He really might tell you something.... The third house on the left. Only don't go along the street but take the back yards ..."

Both Pavel Vasilievich and I admitted that Grisha had done the right thing in sending us to an older comrade rather than deciding such a difficult problem

by himself. The name of this kolkhoz chairman was familiar; I had met him. We set out in the direction indicated by Grisha.

But we had no luck in Priputni either. Didenko was not home; he had gone off somewhere the day before. His wife met us graciously enough, even too graciously; and she spoke in a honeyed voice. But she avoided our eyes, never used the word "comrade," left the door of the house open, did not offer us a seat: a blind man could see she was afraid of us.

When we left her I said to Dnieprovsky:

"They must be taking us for *polizei*. Yes, those *polizei* are having a rotten time. Wonderful, isn't it, how the people protect the partisans against outsiders? Go ahead and threaten them with a pistol: think they'll tell?"

"Grisha was evidently here already and warned them. And we, two old fools that we are, went and believed him."

Now what next? We hung around awhile on the village street and were about to turn back to Petrovskoye when we suddenly noticed a crowd near the stables. We headed for it. And there among the local men stood Grisha. Beside him was his horse, all in a lather. I called him over and, to tell the truth, lost my temper:

"What's this game of yours, young fellow? Think we're fools to be lied to and led by the nose?"

"Go on, shoot me! I don't know anything," replied Grisha defiantly, his eyes full of resolution.

A frank face, flashing eyes—that one would not say a thing even if faced with the firing squad. Now it was absolutely clear he was a partisan and a staunch, reliable lad.

I whispered into his ear:

"I'm Fyodorov, secretary of the R.C., understand? I must get in touch with the commander of the detachment today!"

Grisha eyed me up and down and the shadow of a smile flitted over his face. Then, with exaggerated gravity, he said·

"I myself know nothing, Comrade Fyodorov But if you like, there's the kolkhoz bookkeeper here, Stepan Pogrebnoi. Maybe he can tell you something"

"Well, but if you're fooling us again, just take care...."

Of course, he fooled us again. Warned by him or not, the fact was that the bookkeeper was not at home. His wife said:

"Maybe you know Didenko? He's at a meeting of starostas in the schoolhouse The district burgomaster came and called together the starostas of all the villages."

I was fuming. For more than two days we had been going around in circles and all for nothing After all, I could not go out into the middle of the street and yell I'm Fyodorov, show me the way to the partisans! Before, when there was no need for it, any number of people had recognized me. But now.... Had I really changed so much? Before the war I had been in Priputni at least half a dozen times.... Would we really have to return to Petrovskoye with nothing to show for our pains? Why, it even made me feel ashamed of myself And suddenly I got an idea which at first glance seemed wild, the nerviest ever.

"Listen, Pavel," I said to Dnieprovsky "Let's go—let's go to the schoolhouse, Pavel Yes, yes, to the meeting of the starostas! Come what may! There we're sure to see some of our men Besides, we ought to make the acquaintance of the burgomaster some time or other, have a look at that skunk"

Dnieprovsky did not answer right off His misgivings were well-founded: it was a risky enterprise and if we failed we might imperil the whole regional organization

"Well, Alexei Fyodorovich, if you find it necessary.... I'm with you, of course."

I did find it necessary. We decided that if anything happened we would use our hand grenades. We had five each. In addition, I had two pistols and Dnieprovsky had one.

* * *

In front of the school stood a rubber-tired carriage on spings harnessed to two sleek but not well-matched horses. On the seats of this antediluvian box coach lay red cushions. Dozing on the coachman's seat was a bearded old man wrapped in a sheepskin. This vehicle had in all probability been extracted from the district museum.

"Dad," said I, addressing the old man. "Is the starosta here?"

He smiled slyly, winked and, with a comical air of importance, said.

"What do you want the starosta for, young man, once the assistant district burgomaster, Pavel Glebovich Guz himself, has come to make an inspection?"

In the corridor dusty school desks and benches were piled to the ceiling The doors of the classrooms were closed. Voices came from one of them and we knocked We went in with an exaggerated show of humility and removed our caps.

Behind a long table, probably intended for physics experiments, was a man of about fifty He sat sprawled in an armchair, fingering his moustache. His face was in no way remarkable, but then his clothes .. He clearly did not feel at home in his jacket of glossy black broadcloth, also quite possibly a museum piece, and embroidered Ukrainian shirt Over the back of the armchair hung a fur coat It s lord was undoubtedly playing the grand gentleman—if not the landlord, then at least the important pre-revolutionary official It was, of course, a good

five minutes before he deigned to notice us He was holding a sheaf of papers out before him with a supercilious expression on his face

There were three others in the room. One was a plump young woman with a surprisingly stupid face, powdered to the tips of her lashes. She was evidently the secretary But there was absolutely nothing for her to do She was drawing flowers on the table.

Behind the "important official," near the window, sat an elderly German soldier. He glanced apathetically in our direction, yawned and turned away What was his role —bodyguard, or representative of authority? Who could tell? He was bored

The fourth was probably a local man, a striking example of the old drunkard a red nose, forelock dangling from under his hat, and bleary, hang-over eyes All his face expressed was a desire for drink. He stood leaning his hands on the table, evidently waiting for orders The whole thing was like a scene from some idiotic vaudeville

There were no school desks in this room. Instead, there were benches lined up along the walls and in the middle of the floor. In the far corner a pot-bellied iron stove was burning

We stood in silence, shifting from foot to foot These people roused in me a feeling of aversion mingled with bitterness.

At last "Mr " assistant burgomaster deigned to noticeus

"What do you want?"

In answer I would have liked to pick him up by the scruff of the neck, drag him out into the street and give him a good beating for all honest people to see, but I only said meekly:

"We're looking for the starosta There's a German law that all released war prisoners should be helped. And so we've come to the starosta ."

This pompous ass was drunk with his own importance. He did not even give us a good once over, let alone question us He was bursting with the desire to edify us

"Am I the starosta? There's the starpsta." He pointed to the sot "He knows the laws and he'll do what's required."

"All right," muttered the starosta.

But once started the "mister" could not stop. He spoke bombastically, with sweeping gestures.

Dnieprovsky asked him a few questions. He said that we were making our way home and did not know what was happening at the front, or how to live in the future.

"The invincible, glorious army of Greater Germany is finishing off the last units of the Red Army in the foothills of the Urals. Moscow and Petersburg have put themselves at the mercy of the conqueror. The Ukraine has been liberated. . " Overcome by his own eloquence he even rose and threw back his head, glancing every now and then at the German soldier sitting at the window. But the latter was unmoved he continued yawning and drumming on the windowpane.

People began to come in Guz suggested that Dnieprovsky and I remain for the meeting

"Get an idea of how the new life has to be built!"

Of course, we readily agreed I sat down on the edge of the bench near the stove. Dnieprovsky seated himself a few paces away No sooner had we taken our places when who should enter but Didenko. He recognized me and for an instant was so taken aback that he paled. Then he took himself in hand and quite casually asked the starosta who we were When he got an answer, he said he would arrange to put us up for the night next to his place.

Carts kept driving up to the school. They brought what might be called a group of "activists" from the

neighbouring villages. Guz had summoned not only the starostas to the meeting but kolkhoz chairmen, teachers and agronomists. Most of them acted constrained No one spoke in a loud voice; not a single person even smiled. I noticed also that the people avoided each other's eyes—as if they were ashamed of themselves. Yes, most of them undoubtedly felt ashamed at having complied and come to listen to that character

Then a disgraceful scene occurred. As another cart drove up to the school building we heard loud swearing followed by a commotion and the sounds of a scuffle

"Oh!" came a muffled yell. "Oh, don't hit me, good people!"

There was a long rumpus in the corridor, then the door flew open and several flushed and excited villagers pushed a bound man into the room.

He was a tall husky of about thirty. He stood with his head lowered like a bull, staring at the floor. His hands, tied behind his back with a rawhide thong, were blue from the strain. His hair tumbled in disorder over his forehead and blood trickled from the corners of his mouth. His swollen cheek showed the impress of a heel.

Guz made an imperious grimace

"Now what's all this about?"

The bound man rushed toward Guz, who raised his hands to his face as if to ward off a blow

"Oh, you skunk!" shouted one of the men who had led the fellow in, landing him a blow that brought him to his knees. Another villager ran up and kicked him in the ribs; an old woman with a bundle in her arms spit in his face several times We could not make head or tail of it.

When things had quietened down a bit and the bound man had been dragged off into a corner. Guz asked hopefully:

"Who is he, a partisan?"

Everybody started to answer at once, again raising a din. Guz made a grimace of disgust. Ten minutes passed before the matter was made clear.

After the Red Army's retreat Spiridon Fedyuk, nicknamed "Boar," had returned to the farm village of Glukhovshchina. A long time, probably no less than eight years, had passed since he had last been seen in his native village. He was known as a hopeless case—a thief and a bandit serving a seven-year prison term for robbing a laundry in Voroshilovgrad. The first thing "Boar" did on his return to the village was to set up a still. He drank steadily and kept threatening to show everybody up. The night before, cries had come from the outlying house, belonging to Maria Kalyuzhnaya, the wife of a Red Army officer. The peasants who hurried to the scene saw her run out of the house with a knife in her back. She dropped dead at their feet. Inside they found her seven-year-old daughter, Nastya, strangled, and her three-year-old son, Vasya, badly bruised and frightened.

The peasants rushed to search the forest and there they caught "Boar."

Guz started to question him. Everybody listened intently. Even the German opened his eyes wide and gaped. Then he came up to Guz and whispered something. Guz jumped up with alacrity and shouted:

"Is there a German teacher here? We need an interpreter."

An old woman got up. She was seated alongside the German.

"Well, what have you to say?" asked Guz with feigned severity.

"Untie my hands. I'll show you my papers," said the detained man.

When the red-nosed starosta had untied the bandit's hands he dug inside his jacket, produced a rumpled paper

and held it out to Guz. The latter studied it for quite a while and then handed it over to the German. The German nodded and returned the paper.

"Well—" said Guz. "Well, well," he repeated and frowned prodigiously. He was plainly at a loss. "It's like this. This citizen, named Fedyuk, is an agent of the German commandant. . ." Turning to the man, Guz said:

"This is a misunderstanding. You will be freed right away."

The bandit rose to his feet and looked around brazenly.

"Mr. Burgomaster," he said in a loud voice, "I caught Maria Kalyuzhnaya: she was connected with the partisans. Her husband is a Communist. The whole village, Mr. Burgomaster, is partisan!"

"Lies! He's lying!" shouted the villagers

There was a ripple of excitement in the hall. Everybody was whispering and talking. Someone shouted:

"Hang the murderer!"

The German, who had been following everything closely, jumped up and emptied his automatic into the ceiling. The hall instantly fell silent. The German sat down again and pulled his interpreter by the sleeve.

"I'm a *polizei*," repeated Fedyuk "Partisans used to visit Maria Kalyuzhnaya every day."

"If it was order you wanted to introduce, then why did you take these things?" With these words the old woman threw a large bundle on the table

"That's confiscation," said the bandit, not the least abashed.

The word confiscation had a magic effect on the German soldier. He spoke excitedly to his interpreter, prodding her to rise She got up and said in a choked voice, stuttering

"Mr. German Soldier says to remind you, Mr. Assistant Burgomaster, that existing instructions require all precious meta's as well as jewels and works of art and sculpture confiscated by the municipal authorities to be turned over to the Göring Fund . . ." While the old woman spoke the soldier kept hurrying her on with angry shouts

A tense silence reigned in the hall. I kept convulsively clutching the handle of a grenade inside my jacket. I glanced several times at Dnieprovsky. Never had I seen him in such a state before. If Guz or the German or that detained *polizei* had not been so absorbed in their own "business" and had paid any attention to Pavel Vasilievich!... He was pale, and shivering with fever. He kept his right hand in his pocket. He threw pleading glances at me. "Let's start, let's get started, Alexei Fyodorovich!" His glances could have meant nothing else. The temptation was indeed great To fling a grenade and then.... How difficult it was to hold back! But no, we could not afford to act rashly.

I noticed that Didenko was not the only one who had recognized me. At least eight people kept looking now and again in my direction. Maybe they were also waiting for my signal. But there were no fewer than thirty people gathered in the room, almost all of them men. I confess I was terribly excited; my nerves were on edge. I examined those at my side. What were their thoughts? Were they armed? Whose side would they take if we came to grips?... The German coolly reloaded his automatic.... What would the line-up be like? What if twenty-five of the thirty resembled this Fedyuk?

Guz took his time. Finally, with the air of a Solomon, he said:

"Free this champion of the new order! Everyone should know that the Bolsheviks and all their kith and kin are outside the law!"

He picked up the bundle from the table and turned it over to the German.

"Now," continued Guz, "we shall get down to the agenda of our meeting."

One of the villagers suddenly yelled:

"Troop, to horse!!!" and dropped to the floor. He went into an acute epileptic fit.

The German shouted something in a rage and stamped his foot Fedyuk and the starosta seized the unfortunate man by the arms and dragged him into the corridor His fellow villagers followed.

Neither Fedyuk nor the red-nosed starosta returned to the room. A minute later we heard the clatter of hoofs; the epileptic was evidently being taken away.

Guz began a speech He shouted, grimaced, spluttered, threatened the partisans, laughed hysterically No doubt his ideal speaker was Hitler

The old teacher, whom the German had relieved of her duties, sat down beside me She was shivering and leaned towards the stove. She roused a feeling of distaste in me; I turned away. And whom did I see near the door but Misha Gurin, the young carpenter who together with the women had taken apart the bridge across the Udai River. He stood there rolling a cigarette I rose, went up to him, and said in a loud whisper·

"A bit of paper, young fellow"

He tore off a strip of newspaper I began to roll a cigarette and at the same time squeezed his leg with my knees and made a sign with my eyebrows In a barely audible whisper he said:

"After the meeting, at Didenko's!"

I returned to my place near the stove As I sat down the pocket of my jacket caught on the bench This pocket was filled almost to the top with pistol cartridges, and one of them fell out. I looked down quickly; the old interpreter had already put her foot on it Her glance revealed

nothing Like all the rest, she kept looking at Guz with the same vacant expression. "Aha," thought I, "there are no few good people even here."

Guz clowned for probably no less than an hour and a half. Toward the end he turned from hysterical bathos to the "business part." He began to demand that the roads and the bridges be repaired, that everybody register with the starostas, that no able-bodied people leave their villages without permission. He waxed indignant because studies had not yet begun in the elementary school

"Now we've got the programs and the outlines. Classes must start tomorrow!"

Someone asked naively·

"How can they? Why, tomorrow's November 7, a holiday."

Guz turned purple. He jumped up:

"What do you mean holiday? What's this, Bolshevik propaganda?. ."

It passed off without arrests and without shooting. But Guz took advantage of this to speak another fifteen minutes.

After closing the meeting Guz beckoned me and Dnieprovsky over. He introduced us to Didenko:

"This citizen will fix you up for the night."

When Dnieprovsky and I left the room we were surrounded by a compact body of about ten. In the dark corridor we had no way of telling what sort of men these were who had closed in on us. Only out in the street did we sigh with relief. They were a volunteer bodyguard.

We scattered in two's and three's. But an hour later we met again; not at Didenko's as had been originally planned but in an isolated and abandoned hut on the outskirts of the village in which two Uzbek cowherds were then living

They were Red Army men who had been assigned to guard a rather large herd of cows and sheep during the retreat. They had fallen into encirclement together with the herd, and then found themselves in the rear For over a month now they had been tramping through the forests and coppices of Ichnya District. The Germans had registered them with the Priputni starosta. But the cowherd Red Army men did not always spend the night in the village, and the herd in their charge was gradually diminishing.

"In forest is commander, good commander," one of the cowherds explained in broken Russian, smiling. "In Uzbekistan no wolves. Here—oi, so many!" he said with comic gravity.

The cowherds promised to connect me the next day with the commander in the forest and with the "wolves" through Didenko.

No less than half of the men who had been at Guz's meeting gathered in the hut of the Uzbeks Here they were different they spoke freely, simply, animatedly How I regretted not having known there, in the school, how many good men were present We could have settled with Guz and his bodyguards right on the spot But even so their number was up from that moment on We decided to be on the lookout for Guz, Fedyuk and the red-nosed starosta of Priputni

That same evening Dnieprovsky and I went back to our comrades in the village of Petrovskoye Didenko promised to come to the village, to Grisha the forester, the next day or on November 8 at the latest, and guide us to the Khrushchov detachment

* * *

Now it was absolutely clear that Grisha had fooled us, had misdirected us; and not only he—everybody had

shied clear of us. The villages had already worked out secrecy methods of their own. Many people were tramping about. Though the villagers realized that most of these "tramps" were Soviet-minded people, they had no way of determining who was who right off. And so they examined and studied each individual. Later we learned that in villages closely connected with the partisans the arrival of every such newcomer, and particularly groups of newcomers, was reported to the commander or commissar of the detachment.

Now that everything had been cleared up it seemed no more difficulties would arise The next day we would be with the detachment And the next day was the anniversary of the Great October Revolution. We would spend the holiday among our own people. Maybe the detachment had a radio, and then we would hear the broadcast from Red Square, hear Stalin.

When we returned "home," that is, to the widow's place in Petrovskoye, we found the table finished. Pavel Logvinovich had taken to carving thingumbobs on the legs. After all, he had to keep up a semblance of working.

In the morning we set to mending our footwear—everybody's was in a sorry state. But our main object was to kill time until Didenko arrived.

We noticed, by the way, that there were few people out in the street that day Only children dashed outdoors now and then. They were neatly dressed, both the boys and the girls. No one worked. No demonstration was arranged, yet everybody celebrated; and, actually, this constituted a demonstration Our hostess told us that even those who cringed or prostrated themselves before the Germans were not working on that day rather than run counter to the community at large.

We also had a small feast around the new table. Our hostess and Nadya cooked a rich borshch; some home-brewed beer and beetroot wine were dug up. While we

sat there eating, in came the same fellow who had asked us where we were from and what we planned doing in the village.

It appeared that he had also been at the meeting held by Guz the previous day.

"Enough is enough," he began brusquely "You've stayed here a while, and that's enough." Then he explained: "Three mounted men have passed through One is from the district police, another is dressed like a peasant but obviously is a German, and the third is that Fedyuk, the bandit. They're probably planning a raid"

But Didenko had not shown up. And to make it worse, Grisha had left, most likely to contact the detachment It was impossible to stay any longer We thanked our hostess and set out for the neighbouring farm village, Glukhovshchina, some five kilometres away We left word for Didenko to look for us there.

We did not dare go along the road Instead we followed footpaths, and we blundered into a swampy thicket from which we barely managed to drag ourselves out. All evening and part of the night we wandered through the swamps. We got wet, dirty, chilled and dog tired. We reached Glukhovshchina only towards morning And it was our good luck that things had turned out that way.

Day was breaking when we saw a large mounted group enter the village A minute later firing broke out We heard German voices shouting It is quite possible that this detachment had set out in pursuit of us.

We plunged back into the swam[illegible]. Soon we came out on the bed of an adandoned [illegible]uge spur It started in Petrovskoye, but we [illegible]ere it led to. But there was no c[illegible] [illegible]land. We decided t[illegible]

V[illegible] returned

[illegible]d.

We hid in the bushes. When the horse came abreast we jumped out of our ambush. The rider threw up his hands in confusion. Though he was dressed in a peasant's homespun jacket he immediately began to mumble something in German. We dragged him off his horse, disarmed him and led him off to the side; we also led the horse away from the railway bed.

"Thaelmann, Thaelmann," the German kept repeating.

But when we removed his outer "sheep's" clothing and dug the muzzle of a pistol into the SS insignia on his collar he stopped saying Thaelmann and fell on his knees.

Under the circumstances, shooting was risky. I recalled the advice of the Vyatka truck driver: "Sometimes it's better, Comrade Commissar, to do it quietly!"

For the first time in my wanderings I mounted a horse. It seemed a pleasant change, but unfortunately the horse was skittish; it kept neighing and trying to throw me I had to dismount Vasya Zubko and I led it farther into the wood and hitched it to a tree; it might come in handy later.

We returned to the appointed spot about twenty minutes later to see a campfire with five people around it Instead of three If not for Nadya's kerchief we would have taken them for strangers We came up and saw two young men, besides our own people, seated at the fire. Each had a large sack. The sacks had wet stains; evidently they contained meat

The conversation that followed was rather queer

"Who are you?"

"And who are you?"

"We've come from the war."

"So have we."

"What are you doing here?"

"And what brought you here?"

I finally got fed up with this endless wrangling

"This is who we are!"I said, pulling my pistol out of my pocket and balancing it on my palm Know who Sychov is?" (Sychov was the commander of the Ichnya partisan detachment)

"We do."

"And do you know Popko?" (Secretary of the Ichnya District Party Committee)

"We know them all right, but you—where did you pick those names up?"

"Well, I'm Fyodorov. Ever heard of him?"

But still they did not believe me. I had to go into a detailed description of both the commander and commissar. Then, I recollected a detail which finally convinced the comrades, and made them laugh, too This was Sychov's funny habit of repeating the word "good."

"Comrade Sychov, your neighbour's cow pegged out "

"Good, good."

"Comrade Sychov, your wife's fallen ill "

"Good, good, good!"

Well, after I mentioned this detail the boys accepted us as their own. We lingered a while around the fire Vasya Zubko went to get the German's horse. Then, on a wooden spit, we each roasted a chunk of meat from the sacks of our new comrades. We ate, rested, up, and then set out along tangled partisan trails.

* * *

Later I had occasion to see dozens of detachments and units and was able to draw comparisons and pass judgment. But on November 9, 1941, I first encountered a functioning partisan detachment, made my first acquaintence with this unique body of men.

The last few days had been very wearying, in fact, exhausting. In the swamps we got wet, chilled and famished. As soon as we landed in the camp of the detachment

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Later I had occasion to see dozens of detachments and units and was able to draw comparisons and pass judgment. But on November 9, 1941, I first encountered a fledgling partisan detachment. I made my first acquaintance with this unique body of men.

The last few days had been very wearing, in fact, exhausting. In the swamps we got wet, cold and famished. As soon as we landed in the camp of the detachment

my companions and I for the first time experienced a feeling of personal security. We could "give our nerves a vacation," that is, we did not have to strain our eyes and ears, did not have to regard every individual with suspicion. We had landed in a community of co-partisans, in a community with an armed defence and internal rules and regulations.

And so, our nervous tension relaxed. We had, of course, kept going on our nerves, and we immediately wanted to rest, wash up, get a real sleep.... We were welcomed cordially. But no, cordially is not the word for it: it was a rapturous welcome, with embraces and kissing and hand-pumping Everyone wanted to drag us into his shelter first. We found many acquaintances, and the sincerity of their feelings was not to be questioned. But—

Yes, there was a "but." We had to check the enthusiasm of our hosts a bit and take a different line, put on a more dignified air, so to say. I have already described my appearance in rather great detail, and by this time I was even more ragged, so that the word "dignified" no doubt sounds funny But it was absolutely necessary, and this is why·

It was not to rest up or to feel safe that I had come to the Ichnya detachment. And no matter what I looked like, no matter how much I needed to gain strength, I did not have the right to forget my responsibilities for a moment. I am not afraid of being misunderstood. Every commander will know what I mean.

As chief of staff of the regional partisan movement I demanded a report in due form. And before resting I inspected the camp.

Twelve shelters built of branches stood under the trees a few paces apart. The men had fixed up their shelters to suit their tastes and according to the resources at their disposal. Some had straw mattresses, some a bed of moss, not overdry, and some slept on sheepskin coats

In three or four places campfires were burning. At one, women were cooking cereal in a big cauldron. At the others, people were simply warming themselves. Incidentally, freezing weather had already set in. It was about four degrees below, but no snow had fallen yet

All the men went about armed. I inspected several of the rifles and pistols. They had been poorly cleaned. Many of the men had never even once tested their weapons

A company mortar stood absolutely idle and neglected It turned out that nobody knew how to handle it or had even tried to learn. We tested it then and there, on our first round of inspection, discharging several mines

While making the rounds of the sentry posts and the inlying pickets I suddenly saw the half-crazy old man whom Simonenko and I had met a month before not far from Lisoviye Sorochintsy; yes, the one who had been grazing a lean cow and had shaken his fist at the German night bombers He was sitting on a tree stump questioning a prisoner and taking notes The German soldier's greatcoat, jacket and trousers were all unbuttoned He stood at attention with his hands, at his sides, trembling, his legs pressed together to hold up his pants Two partisans sat on the ground with their pistols trained on him At sight of the commander the old man jumped up, saluted, and rapped out, with a good deal of aplomb

"Comrade Detachment Commander, fighter interpreter Sadchenko reporting On orders from the commissar I am questioning a captured bandit, called a soldier of the German army . "

His manner of speech proved beyond a shadow of doubt that he was the same old man But he either did not recognize me or else preferred not to

"Who's that?" I asked the commander when we had walked off "And where's his cow?"

"How do you know about the cow, Comrade Fyodorov? Yes, he actually did come to us with a cow Said he ..

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a teacher of German from Poltava. He has an interesting story and it's the same every time he tells it, without contradictions, so we've no reason to doubt him."

Sychov launched into the details.

The Germans had bombed out his house in Poltava, mortally wounding his wife, who died in his arms. His son was in the Red Army and his daughter studied at an institute in Moscow. As soon as the Germans seized Poltava they registered all teachers of German. They appointed him to work in the commandant's office but the same night he took his only remaining possession, his cow, and left the city.

In every place the old man came to he was forced to register. The Germans would learn that he knew their language and insist on his working as an interpreter. The old man would take his cow and set out again. He began to avoid people, to skirt the villages and towns. That is how he stumbled upon a partisan outpost

"He's been a great help; he's the only person in the detachment who knows German"

After my tour of inspection I heard an official report of the command. Then we sat down to dinner

At the table we were showered with news .

I learned that Kapranov and Druzhinin were alive and well and, like myself, had come through safely from Piryatin. They had been here, stayed awhile, and then gone on to Popudrenko, to the regional detachment.

I also learned that the regional detachment was functioning, and that the rumours of its having disbanded had been spread by an insignificant handful of deserters

Popudrenko had already become known for his courage and his daring raids. People from all over were making their way to the regional detachment It was expanding and growing, but—and then came a talk on various controversial questions *And since disputes should be settled in* the presence of both sides, we shall deal with them later.

"How did it happen, after all," I asked the heads of the detachment, "that you sent your men, out to meet us in Malaya Devitsa District and they failed? We held a large conference there; people gathered from all parts of the district. Some scouts! Let's have a look at them."

The commander's summons was answered by a tall, thin young man of about twenty-three, in Red Army uniform, who announced himself as Andrei Korytny. His voice sounded familiar.

"Comrade Korytny, how come you didn't manage to find us, and in your home locality at that?"

It appeared he had been captured by the Germans. Why, of course, this was the Andrei who had conversed with his sweetheart near that hayloft in Sezki.

"See here, my friend," I said, "maybe you really did crown a German with an axe, and maybe you really are a brave fellow, but you went to meet not me but your fiancée."

He blushed furiously and started to deny it, but I continued

"Well, going to Dniepropetrovsk to study or to Chernigov? Have you sent for your beauty?" The chap probably took me for a magician He looked so flabbergasted that everybody burst out laughing "Well, since you gave your word, then bring her to the detachment We'll talk the commander around"

I also saw here the girl team leader from Lisoviye Sorochintsy. The next morning a lad handed me a letter, my first letter in the underground.

"I was asked to give it to you personally, right into your own hands," the lad said

It was a neatly folded triangle I opened it and glanced at the signature—Yakov Zusserman

"Where is he?"

"He's gone to join Popudrenko Five of our men have left already"

This is what Yakov wrote:

"Alexei Fyodorovich,

"You may think me touchy and too capricious a nervous. I really have become disgustingly nervous went to Nezhin but, as you said, for nothing. The Je there have been driven into a ghetto, behind barbed wi From what people told me, I gather my wife and lit son may have been killed already. I walked along t barbed wire fence twice, at night. I was fired at and most caught. What was I to do next? I hid with frien for five days but couldn't stand it any longer. I saw Ge mans through the window, saw how arrogantly they behaving, how they're lording it. They beat an old m on the street with their rifle butts and looted a store. Th I remembered that you urged me to join the partisan but I still hoped to learn something about my family.

"I met an acquaintance of mine, blind Yasha Batyu He recognized my voice and took me home. Alexei Fy dorovich, this affected me more than I can say and mad me feel ashamed of myself. Here I am, strong an healthy, while Yasha Batyuk has been blind since chil hood. Yet he and his sister Zhenya and their father writ leaflets and distribute them in the town. Komsomol mem bers meet in Yasha's house at night. You probably kno that he has remained behind to work in the underground He is so full of energy; he is not afraid of death; every body respects his authority. I wanted very much to re main in Nezhin to help but Yasha ordered me to leave be cause of my nationality. He explained to me that I was more suited for partisan work. In town I would be rec ognized and soon arrested. When Yasha learned that had been with you and knew where you'd be, he was overjoyed—it was a chance to get in touch with the secre tary of the Party R.C. He even thought of coming with me to meet you but his father and his comrades talked him out of it. Then he wrote a letter and ordered me to

set out. I was given arms, and the lad with whom I am leaving this letter for you came along with me

"I did not show anybody in the detachment what Batyuk wrote to you; but maybe you'll get here too I want you to know that I've taken your advice and gone on farther, to the regional detachment. I think the men in command here are not leading properly, are very flabby I've already seen such German atrocities that I can't watch a whole detachment doing nothing but hide in the woods or else make only one or two little raids a week. Blind Yasha Batyuk and his Komsomol members are doing more and acting more boldly than the leaders here.

"Maybe this is none of my business I have gone on farther as a messenger. I would have written in greater detail, but I'm leaving this letter just in case I do not see you at Popudrenko's If I do, I'll tell you everything in more detail.

"I'll be seeing you, Comrade Fyodorov—if I'm not killed on the way."

"Did Yakov leave long ago?" I asked the lad who had given me Zusserman's letter "What happened here? Did he fall out with the command?"

No, it seemed that Zusserman had conducted himself with reserve and had not had any arguments with anyone. He had left approximately a week before, saying that he had to deliver a message to the regional detachment

"I'm from Nezhin too," the lad said. "I came here with Zusserman. But I like it better in town; I want to be with our Komsomol members. Working with Comrade Batyuk is so interesting! Everybody in town knows him, and everybody there respects him He was a lawyer already before the war.... What do you think, Comrade Fyodorov, is it all right for me to go back to Nezhin?"

* * *

The situation in the Ichnya detachment at that time was to be explained by the fact that here, as in many detachments, the partisans had not yet found the correct path to follow.

Zusserman and his Nezhin comrade were not the only ones on tenterhooks. There was a Red Army man, an escaped prisoner of war whose name, or nickname (now I do not remember which), was Golod. He was a very boisterous, impatient and reckless chap.

"What are we hanging around here for, saluting, cooking mush and drilling?" he would yell. "If we're going to die then let's die fighting! Once we've named ourselves partisans, then come on, let's use our swords, let's have a good time!"

He was a representative of the most extreme group. These were the fellows who thirsted for "autonomy." Reckless adventure, a desperate raid—and then eat, drink, and be merry That was their idea of partisan life. They had already heard that Dnieprovsky and I had attended the meeting of starostas, just the two of us. Golod concluded from this that I also stood for such a reckless line He came over to me and complained about both the commander and the commissar

"Nothing but drill and drill . "

The other extreme was we have to build up our forces, wait until the time is ripe, train some more, study the enemy carefully and only then, depending on the possibilities, make raids The group that held this point of view did not have a leader but it was numerous The command —Sychov and Gurbaty the commissar—followed a middle course, taking between the two extremes And internal friction, debates and meetings consumed a great deal of time

The command had no clear-cut plan of action Where and when to strike? Where was the enemy most vulnerable? Which villages would support the partisans more

reliably? These questions no one could answer Contact with the peasants had been established, the detachment had dependable people in almost every inhabited point, but these people played a passive role They would open their doors to the detachment messenger, feed him and put him up for the night. Of course, they would also tell him about when the Germans had passed through But these people did not carry on any agitation or propaganda work, did not even do any real scouting

Moreover, the leaders of the Ichnya detachment did not yet realize that their district partisan group was part of a big underground army, that they had to establish daily contact with the neighbouring detachments and regional headquarters, that they had to coordinate their plans

True, the detachment was only two months old, and it did have something to its credit. It had wiped out three enemy pickets, executed several traitors and mined a highway. It had given refuge to six Red Army men who had escaped from German captivity and were now on its rolls. Then, the very existence of the detachment meant something. The command was also right in holding that time, and no little time, was required for the organization of a detachment.

Yet the Ichnya detachment was more like a haven or, at best, a group of people who were only defending themselves against the enemy. The command had obviously drawn out the organizational period. It was time to change the situation Many members of the detachment saw this and expected us, and particularly me, as leader, to take resolute measures Our arrival acted like a tonic on the partisans; it brought home to them that the detachment was not alone

Next morning an order of the day was read out to the line.

ORDER OF THE DAY

OF THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE CHERNIGOV PARTISAN MOVEMENT (OMBISHI FOREST)

November 9, 1941

The regional headquarters of the partisan movement notes that the leaders of the Ichnya detachment—Comrade P. P. Sychov, commander of the detachment, Comrade V. D. Gorbaty, commissar, and Comrade Popko, secretary of the underground district Party committee—have carried through organizational work resulting in the establishment of a firm core of a partisan detachment capable of developing effective combat operations against the German fascist invaders. But the leadership of the partisan detachment has not yet exploited these opportunities: it has not launched extensive Party and mass political work among the population; has not launched extensive recruiting of the finest men and women into the partisan detachment; has not organized good intelligence; is not waging an all-out ruthless struggle against the German fascist invaders; has not taken the initiative in fighting the German invaders; has not replied to the terror perpetrated by the fascists and their agents with Red terror and powerful blows at the fascist invaders, who have already killed dozens of totally innocent people in Ichnya District political instructor Comrade Yaroshenkov in the village of Buromka, a kolkhoz member in the village of Rozhnovka, a Red Army man in the village of Zaudaika.

The regional headquarters of the partisan movement *orders the command of the Ichnya partisan detachment:*

To cripple the Kiev-Bakhmach railway without delay; to blow up the railway bridge between Kruty and Plisky; to derail German trains without letup; to destroy motor

the conduct of political educational work among the population the partisan must enhance his ideological and political level, maintain close contact with the population and help them in every way, and everywhere and always wage a ruthless struggle against the German invaders

Fulfilment of this order is to be reported to the Regional Headquarters of the Chernigov Partisan Movement

Chief of Staff, Regional Headquarters of the Chernigov Partisan Movement.

Fyodor Orlov.

Guz's secretary had run away from him This news was brought by Grisha the forester. He had seen her himself, had even talked to her At first we turned a deaf ear to Grisha. So what of it? Of what interest could it be to us if that plump, powdered young woman had left the assistant burgomaster? But it turned out to be a case worthy of attention. The girl had not left but had actually run away She had been a victim of blackmail. It seemed that either her father had been a high official and a Communist, or she herself had been an active Komsomol member before the war. Grisha had not quite made out.

He had been called in by women neighbours who had sheltered the girl The girl had wept hysterically and told a very confused story, evidently concealing many things. But Grisha had felt that her tears were genuine. This Guz had once been a teacher in the school she attended. After the arrival of the Germans he summoned her and said he wanted her to work in his office. When she attempted to refuse, he threatened to tell on her and have her arrested. This had frightened her Now, after she had seen all the villainy of the Germans and their henchmen, she had grown even more frightened. And to top it all, it turned out that Guz was "in love" with her.

"I can't, can't, I'd drown myself before I remained with them Hide me from them, please hide me!"

She wanted the partisans to know that Guz would be riding along the Priputni-Ichnya road the next day.

"Kill him, capture him," she said. "I'd do it myself but I'm weak. You don't believe me, I know Now I'm rotten, a traitress But you'll see that I'm not lying. Find out for yourself and then judge, do what you like with me, hang me, shoot me. . . ."

But this might be a trap The Germans may have sent the girl over. I recalled her behaviour at the meeting. She was drawing something Then, I also recollected that just before the meeting, when Guz had been talking to us on "general topics," describing the future Ukraine under the aegis of the Germans, the girl had asked:

"And how about higher education for women?"

He had turned a flushed face to her and, spluttering, had shouted:

"We've bothered enough with you! What education for women? A husband, children, cooking! You'll finish elementary school, with courses in needlework and cooking thrown in."

The secretary had then made an attempt to smile but the result was such a miserable, servile grimace that it was nauseating. And now this creature was rebelling?

"Why didn't you bring her here?" we asked Grisha "Here we'd find out what sort she is."

"She was afraid to come; and if I'd tried using force —why, she might have started screaming. . . ."

We weighed the pros and cons and decided that although there was a chance of its being a trap, a picket should be posted on the road. Besides, a well-armed group was to hide in a nearby grove.

The next morning Senior Lieutenant Glat, Red Army man Golod and three tommy gunners hugged the frozen earth near the road a full four hours all for nothing. Guz

did not drive past. But no detachment of German showed up either.

The end of this story reached me much later. At the time we were indignant and scolded Grisha for letting himself be taken in. Grisha got a good calling down—and undeservedly.

When Guz discovered that his secretary was missing he organized a search in all the neighbouring villages and remained in the countryside for several days.... But the people who had undertaken to help the girl were more loyal and stronger than the scoundrels who were aiding Guz. The girl managed to get away. About a month later she made her way to the Ichnya detachment and then to the regional detachment. Guz, however, did not escape the people's vengeance.... But that came later.

Our R.C. group spent three days with the Khrushchov detachment. We rested up, changed our linen, and I finally got a pair of boots to replace my two left-footed clodhoppers The tops of the boots were very tight and pulled over my calves with difficulty. The breeches made in Lisoviye Sorochintsy lapped over them. I shaved off my beard but left a moustache. Nadya Belyavskaya surveyed me and remarked disapprovingly that I looked like a kulak. All the better a disguise. We had to cover about a hundred kilometres more to get to the regional detachment.

Our group was joined by Stepan Maximovich Shuplik, a partisan poet, and Vasya Poyarko, a young partisan. Two tommy gunners were assigned to escort us to the Desna River

* * *

Not long ago Stepan Maximovich Shuplik sent me a gift of a thin volume of verse published in Kiev *Songs of Grandad Stepan, Partisan*. This volume contains the following poem:

Daylight waned, the stars shed light,
On we journeyed through the night
Heads were heavy, feet afire,
We felt sleepy, we felt tired.

On a village house we lighted,
But inside were not invited.
Just as soon as we had halted
All the doors were firmly bolted.

Still we stayed, and made so bold
As to say: it's very cold,
So, good woman, don't be frightened,
Can't leave partisans benighted

My best verses I recited,
And our hostess was delighted.
Soon the wood was sent a-prancing
And the pots and pans a-dancing.

Then with supper we were treated
And with vodka we were feted.
Thus we spent the night full well
And we rested for a spell,
And at dawn beheld on looking
Our kind hostess breakfast cooking
At the gate—here ends my story—
She bade us come back with glory.

This poem tells about an actual adventure of ours in the village of Volovitsy.

We arrived in Volovitsy, as the poem says, after dark. We were frozen, hungry and terribly tired after our day's tramping. Almost all of us were dead sleepy. We felt that if we sat down we would never get up again. We knocked at the first cottage we came to. A woman opened the door

a crack and I immediately shoved in my foot. She slammed the door against my foot and let out a yell. But through the crack came the marvellous warmth of a heated cottage and the smell of borshch and freshly baked bread. This lent me strength. I forced the door open and entered the cottage, followed by my eight companions.

What a clamour the mistress of the house made! You might have thought we were highwaymen. Incidentally, that is just what she took us for—a band of desperadoes. We tried to explain that we had come in only to warm up and had no evil designs either on her or her belongings. She was deaf to our words and continued to let out fearful cries. What made this all the more unpleasant was the fact that, according to our information, a rather large supply unit of Germans was billeted in the village.

My comrades unslung their tommy guns—they were tired of carrying them—and the woman took this as a threat and promptly fell silent. Only when she had stopped yelling did she begin to understand what we were saying. We spoke in turn, explaining who the partisans were and how they defended the interests of the people, and quite unexpectedly she said

"Why don't you take your things off?"

A little while later she offered us some borshch. And when Stepan Maximovich read her some of his poems she broke into tears and said she had some vodka too.

"Like some to warm up?"

As you see, it all happened exactly as the poet described it. Only Stepan Maximovich left out an important detail. Since Dnieprovsky does not touch vodka our hostess served some homemade wine especially for him. This was undoubted proof that we had won her over.

We got to talking. Our hostess, it appeared, was the wife of the ex-chairman of the village Soviet; he would soon be coming home himself, she said.

She told us that Germans were billeted at the other

end of the village As she said this she looked at us expectantly.

What followed is something the poet either forgot for some reason or else could not rhyme.

There were nine of us in all, while the Germans, our hostess maintained, numbered no less than fifty men, armed, moreover not only with tommy guns but machine guns too. Attacking them with our forces would be senseless. But doing nothing at all would be equally senseless.

"The Germans hung up notices that two hundred and forty cows and eighty hogs had to be turned over to them tomorrow," our hostess said.

"Where are the notices posted?" I asked. A plan was forming in my head to give the Germans a little scare.

Our hostess told us that the notices had been put up on posts and on the former kolkhoz office

"Listen, boys," I said to my comrades "Let's write out an order!"

I explained my idea to them. Our hostess did not quite grasp what we were planning to do but readily supplied us with pen and ink Now no one wanted to sleep. We set to work and soon the "order" was written and ten copies made

ORDER OF THE DAY

OF LIEUTENANT-GENERAL ORLENKO,
COMMANDER OF THE CHERNIGOV REGION
PARTISAN MOVEMENT

Chernigov, November 1941

I had barely dictated these lines when our hostess asked ecstatically "So you have big forces?"

The German fascist invaders, with the help of their menials—the police, kulaks, Ukrainian nationalists and

other riffraff—are plundering the Ukrainian people, exacting contributions of grain, cattle, potatoes and other produce from the peasants.

To put an end to the depredations of the German fascist invaders and their servants, I order:

1. That all citizens be categorically forbidden to deliver contributions of grain, cattle, potatoes and other produce to the German invaders.

2. That persons who violate this order by delivering grain, cattle, potatoes and other produce to the German fascist invaders be punished with revolutionary severity as foul traitors to the Soviet Motherland.

3. That the commanders of partisan detachments post secret details on the roads along which deliveries are made.

4. That starostas and policemen who carry out the German orders regarding the delivery of contributions (grain, cattle, potatoes, etc.) are to be immediately wiped out together with their foul haunts.

Comrade peasants, men and women! Not a single kilogram of grain, meat, potatoes or other produce for the German fascist brigands!

* * *

Our hostess could find no nails; neither did she have any glue. Nadya Belyavskaya noticed a box of phonograph needles on the window sill, and we decided to use them. Right after supper Vasya Zubko and Plevako set out, with our hostess acting as guide. They tore down all the German notices and tacked our order up in their place.

Our hostess settled us all very cosily. Dnieprovsky, who was tormented by rheumatism climbed up on the stove-shelf. We had a marvellous sleep. Our hostess wakened us when it was already light. We learned that her

husband had returned and reported that not a single German was left in Volovitsy; they had fled.

I confess that when we composed our order we had not calculated on such results. We had simply wanted to show that the partisans were not napping. And then this unexpected result. That meant the enemy felt very unsure of himself on Soviet soil.

True, our host told us that the supply unit was headed by a puny and cowardly little quartermaster. As soon as he learned about the "order" he went into a dither and declared that his scouts had long since reported the approach of a large group of partisans.

We were given a fine breakfast and then our host guided us to the bank of the Desna and showed us a narrow and well-frozen crossing. He also showed us the shortest way to the village of Reimentarovka in Kholmy District.

"Goodbye, comrades," he said in parting. "There's people in Reimentarovka who know Mikola Napudrenko...." For some reason many peasants of the nearby villages distorted Nikolai Nikitich's name in this manner.

It is a pity that I have forgotten the names of our hosts in Volovitsy. Both are unquestionably very fine Soviet people.

Here, at the Desna, our tommy gunners were to leave us. Ahead lay rather dense forests in which it would be easy to hide, and we could get along without them. As we were taking our leave one of the tommy gunners suddenly said that he wanted to have a talk with me in private.

We walked aside into the bushes. It was a while before this comrade started speaking and I had time to study him. I confess that although we had been together about three days and had talked to one another, I had not paid any particular attention to either one of our guides. They were rank-and-file partisans—one younger, the other

older. Now, my curiosity aroused, I surveyed him mo closely.

Before me stood a tall elderly man in an overcoat city cut. On the bridge of his nose were the marks pince-nez. I recalled that he had kept shifting his tomm gun from shoulder to shoulder on the way. All sig pointed to his being a city man, a white-collar worke "Well," I thought, "he wants to complain about the con mand of the detachment."

"Comrade Fyodorov," he began uncertainly, but ver officially. "I address you in your capacity of deputy t the Supreme Soviet and member of the Government. Th point is that I may be killed...."

"By whom? Why?"

"I think by the Germans or the nationalists—an in general, you know, this is war."

"Yes, of course, it's possible," I was compelled t admit. "Only please get to the point. I have no office, a you see, and we cannot shut ourselves in. Out with it, let' have your secret."

Then he quickly unbuttoned his overcoat and turned up the bottom. He ripped the lining with his finger and extracted a rather large flat package.

"There," he said, extending it to me. "This contains twenty-six thousand four hundred and twenty-three ru- bles. The money belongs to an office of the People's Com- missariat of the Meat and Dairy Industry. This was the cash on hand on the day we evacuated Kiev. I was head bookkeeper, my name is ..."

I wrote down the name of this comrade but have since lost the slip—nothing surprising, with three years of par- tisan life intervening.

After telling me his name, the bookkeeper continued:

"I evacuated with a group of co-workers but the Ger- mans bombed our train on the way; then I landed in encirclement and then—how much I lived through before

I got to the detachment! I beg you, please take it In these conditions I can't keep it. It's state money, and I haven't even got a suitcase to say nothing of a safe, and besides, I might get killed. . ."

"But why didn't you turn it over to the commander of the detachment? If you'd been killed or even seriously wounded your comrades would have looked through your things. . They would have taken you for a marauder or. . . ."

"That's just it! But I can't give it to the commander, Comrade Fyodorov. A cash transfer list must be signed and he hasn't the right. . . "

"See here, comrade bookkeeper, I can't understand why you've made a secret of it. It would seem just the opposite, that you'd want witnesses. "

"No, you know, it's a big sum, and we don't know who's who, and with the situation what it is. . . ."

"All right, let's have the list, where must I sign?"

"Right here, only please count the money."

"What for? I'll burn it right up anyway."

"But it has to be counted, Comrade Fyodorov You have no right to take my word "

"You have been trusted with more You have been trusted with arms and the safeguarding of people. I see that you're an honest man, why waste an hour or more counting the bills?"

"Comrade Fyodorov!" exclaimed the bookkeeper, and a note of irritation crept into his voice "I understand, but I can't have it otherwise For thirty-two years I have handled money as cashier and as bookkeeper. . . "

I shrugged my shoulders, sighed, and started counting. It did indeed take more than an hour Everything, of course, was there, to the last kopek To any onlooker we would have presented a curious picture: two men well on in years sitting on the bank of a frozen river, under bushes sprinkled with snow, counting money.

Then we burned it and I warmed my fingers over unique fire: they had got chilled counting.

Our comrades also got chilled waiting for us—e cially Zubko and Plevako. Disturbed by my long abse they had crawled along the cold ground to where bookkeeper and I had taken cover.

"You were away such a long time, we alre thought.... But when we saw you were counting mo we calmed down," said Plevako.

The bookkeeper gave him a surprised look; it w evidently hard for him to understand how anybody co be indifferent to money. In parting he shook my hand long time.

"Thanks, Comrade Fyodorov! Now I'll feel easier won't be so afraid of being killed and I'll fight bette

* * *

While with the Ichnya detachment we learned th Popudrenko and his men had moved from Koryukov District to Kholmy District. That is why we headed f Reimentarovka, a village located on the fringe of a lar forest. There were undoubtedly people in the village wh were connected with the regional detachment. Howeve our previous experience made us realize that it would n be so easy to find the partisans

In the Ichnya detachment we had rested up an changed our clothes, and now we felt stronger. Pleasan weather had set in. a mild frost, with occasional snow it was the middle of November. Walking was easy our feet did not sink into mud I noticed that my com rades had grown more silent We all had much to think about.

I had been on German-occupied territory two months What had happened in the rest of the country? How was the war progressing?

In all this time I had listened to the radio only twice In Goloborodko's house and in the Ichnya detachment I had listened with bated breath, trying to picture the course of the war as a whole from the fragmentary news of two or three Soviet Information Bureau communiqués Fighting was going on at the near approaches to Moscow, grave danger hung over our capital, the heart of our country. And nowhere, perhaps, did this news cause such heavy heartache as in the occupied districts.

The men and commanders of the Red Army, the workers and executives of industry in the Soviet rear, the kolkhoz people in free Soviet territory—all these had concrete jobs, clearly and exactly defined But we underground workers were still only groping our way about looking for organizational forms, we were still only accumulating strength and arms

What had I seen and what had I learned in those two months?

I had seen a great deal, had met hundreds of people and talked with the most diverse types

And so I began to sum up to generalize my observations, to appraise my meetings and talks with people and their ideas, to single out what was most important and typical For otherwise we could not possibly arrive at the right tactics for the underground and partisan fight

What my memory has retained are the episodes recorded here Naturally, at the time I remembered far more, everything was fresher and sharper But the most important episodes are precisely these

Incidentally, I can't help myself in my memory It retains the facts and observations that are the most essential, the typical ones

For example, shortly before the Germans occupied Chernigov I attended a course in shorthand with a

group of future underground workers. At one of the classe I had some specially-treated matches in my pocket. accidentally slapped my pocket and the matches caugh fire and burnt my leg badly. This is something I coul hardly forget. Yet when I wrote about my last days i Chernigov the incident slipped my mind.

As I cudgel my brains I recollect that during m wanderings in the early days of German occupation came across a case of murder. It had happened in the village of Voronovka. The people who had taken me in spent the evening and part of the night in an animated discussion of the details. The grounds for the murder had been jealousy. I listened quite attentively but now I cannot even say who killed whom· the man his wife, or the wife her husband.

But here is another episode I remember in every detail. Once, as I was sitting on the porch of a cottage in Petrovskoye two women, all excited, came up to me.

"You a member of the Party?" one of them asked.

I said no. Both were disappointed. When I asked what the matter was, they reluctantly told me that they were quarrelling over a suckling. Marusya was charged with having stolen it from Pelageya. But Marusya insisted that Pelageya's son had stolen the pig from her sister when it was just a tiny thing.

I was puzzled. "But what do you need a Communist for?" I asked the disputants.

"Who else are we to turn to? There's no court now, or militia either. There's a starosta, and in the district centre there's police, but what kind of judges are they?!..."

The bookkeeper I mentioned above had turned the money over to me not because he had taken a liking to me personally as Fyodorov but because I was a deputy, a representative of the people.

And I remember this case of the disputants, too, not so much because it is amusing as because it is characteristic of the people's attitude toward the Communists.

I shall cite one more incident. It was told to me by Yevdokia Fyodorovna Plevako. Later I heard it from others as well.

At the time of the enemy offensive a kolkhoz woman had gone to the river to rinse her washing when suddenly she heard the cries of a drowning man. She pulled him out, to discover that she had saved a German officer. He thanked her profusely. But she was terribly put out. And no sooner had the German turned his back than she hit him over the head with a rock, and pushed him back into the river, with a kick to make sure

This might, of course, have happened But what is more important is that the story was told in different places; it became a folk tale, as it were. What is characteristic is that no matter where it was told, the story always ended the same way: the woman joined the partisans.

In the Ukraine at that time there were neither underground radio stations nor Bolshevik newspapers. We underground workers learned of the life and mood of the people only from the men and women we met, from personal observation. And limited though our observations were, and at times even casual, we nonetheless grasped the main thing.

The vast majority of the Ukrainian people hated the Germans. The Germans were hated by the women and the men, by the youth and the children. They were hated by the workers and the kolkhoz peasants, by the intellectuals and the housewives.

The Germans were leaning upon corrupt, base cowardly and worthless individuals. They were playing on the seamy side of the weak and the wavering: on greed, ambition, ignorance, anti-Semitism, nationalism, tattletelling, servility. But there are very few in our country

who thirst after such pleasures The Germans do not understand the character of our people at all.

I became convinced by examples from life that in the exceptionally difficult conditions of enemy occupation the people continued to regard the Communists as their leaders. And wherever the Communists were active, the population was also active; wherever the Communists were organized, the population was also organized.

I became convinced that the timely preparation of the Bolshevik underground and partisan movement had undoubtedly yielded positive results.

The Communists in Chernigov Region were carrying on, their organizations existed. Around me were colleagues, members of the Bolshevik organization; and it was no mere chance that had brought us here—we were fulfilling the will of the Party, the will of the people.

Now I was thoroughly convinced that we had excellent conditions for developing a mighty partisan movement.

* * *

My train of thought was interrupted by Vasya Zubko

"Alexei Fyodorovich, look!" he exclaimed, pointing to a crossroad about three hundred metres ahead of us "Those are our people! Honest, they're ours!"

About ten riders were galloping along the road intersecting ours. They looked like partisans some were in greatcoats, others in padded jackets One was a woman

"Look, look, the woman has a sabre and a tommy gun! Partisans for sure!" Vasya shouted jubilantly He whistled with his fingers and ran on ahead.

There could be no doubt about it I also shouted but immediately realized that neither our cries nor whistling would be heard by the partisans I pulled out my pistol and fired three shots into the air Nadya Belyavskaya also pulled the Browning out of the pocket of her leather jacket

and pulled the trigger; the pistol flew out of her hand at the recoil. It turned out that this was the first time she had fired a pistol

The horsemen could not help hearing the shots, of course, but they gave no sign, and not a single one of them turned in our direction. They were evidently busy on a mission and had no time for us.

It was a pity, but what could we do about it? We continued on our way The incident provided a topic for conversation I thought I had recognized one of the riders to be Vasya Konovalov, an actor of the Chernigov Drama Theatre, while Nadya swore that Popudrenko himself was in that group.

Then we began to argue about whether the partisans had been right in disregarding our shots

"It's a good thing they did!" muttered Dnieprovsky "Otherwise it would have been too bad for us Who could be shooting? Obviously Germans Why should they have shot back into the air? Their answer would have meant goodbye for us!"

Yes, that was possible too. But still it was a pity they did not stop Why, what if they had been sent out to meet us?

We reached Reimentarovka late, after nightfall, the village looked uninviting. Tall trees swayed in the wind, a dog was howling, and there was not a soul in sight While passing by one of the cottages we heard an old woman's monotonous voice praying loud and earnestly. I rapped on the window She fell silent. I rapped louder. The small ventilation window opened and I saw an outstretched hand.

"Take this," the old woman whispered.

I did. It was a big chunk of bread.

"No, grandma, what we want is a place to sleep the night," I said, embarrassed

"That is impossible"

We went farther. It was already quite dark.

"Have a look to the right," said Shuplik.

In the darkness gleamed bright pin points, like wolves' eyes.

"Men smoking," Plevako conjectured.

He proved to be right. A group of about eight old men sat smoking near the kolkhoz stable. They heard our footsteps and fell into a guarded silence.

We struck up a conversation, asking when the Germans had been there and how things were in the village. The answers from the darkness were evasive; we were advised to go to the starosta. One of the old men stood up, swore, and walked off. We heard him quicken his step and then break into a run

All of this boded us no good. The moon rose over the forest. I knew approximately where the house of Naum Korobka, chairman of the First of May Kolkhoz, was located.

Korobka was not at home and his wife refused to open the door. We knocked at the next house. And since we were thoroughly worn out by this time, our voices were pleading and uncertain.

The man of the house came out on the steps and quite rudely told us to get going.

"There's lots of you tramps!"

Just then a cart rattled down the street It came closer and closer and stopped near us

"They've brought potatoes," the man said to nobody in particular

Three men sprang from the cart Before I could look them over they surrounded me and one of them shouted:

"Hands up!"

And then, in practically the same breath:

"Comrade Fyodorov! Boys, Fyodorov has come, Alexei Fyodorovich!"

Before I knew it I was being hugged The first who managed to hug and kiss me was the same man who had sent us packing His house, it appeared, was a secret meeting place.

Vasili Khmury, the actor, Vasili Sudak and Vasili Mazur—three Vasilis—had arrived from the detachment in the cart. The kolkhoz women of Reimentarovka baked bread for the regional detachment, and this was what the cart had come for.

I said, "Yes, your bread is ready," and showed Khmury the chunk, still warm, which the old woman had given me.

And I was not wrong The old woman did indeed bake for the partisans. The whole village was partisan. The Germans were afraid to show their faces in it.

The partisans tried to talk us into starting out for the detachment immediately—it was only fifteen kilometres away

But we preferred to have a sleep first

Next morning, before dawn, we climbed into the cart and slowly moved off into the forest.

* * *

Magnificent, fragrant loaves of wheat bread lay on the cart under a tarpaulin The ten of us seated ourselves on either side and a shaggy pony pulled the cart over a narrow forest track at a leisurely gait, twitching its ears as though listening to our talk. And we talked tirelessly, breathlessly, with frequent bursts of laughter. Our voices woke the birds. Jackdaws took wing and cawed in displeasure, probably abusing those unreasonably noisy people, altogether unfit for the forest.

Stern men with tommy guns came out from behind bushes and trees. The minute they learned who was in the cart they rushed to shake our hands and say a few words to us. They were also Chernigov men.

"Comrade Fyodorov, do you remember the send-off you gave us there in the theatre before we went into the woods?"

"I remember, of course I do."

"And somebody asked you what he should do about an ulcer of the stomach? You told him, 'leave the ulcer here and you go off and fight!' That was me," said a sentry at outpost "And here I am, fighting, and I've forgotten all about the ulcer. . . ."

And at another outpost a sentry asked:

"Come to us for good, Comrade Fyodorov?"

"Until victory!"

"I'm from the music factory, a cabinetmaker, do you remember me?"

"Of course!"

Day was just breaking when the cart pulled up beside a passenger car in a clearing. Beneath the thick, low-hanging branches of fir trees little mounds—the roofs of dugouts—were visible. Near one of them a rotund little man was busy with a crate. He raised his head and surveyed us

"Kapranov!" I shouted "Vasili Logvinovich! Don't you recognize old friends?"

He rushed up to us and said excitedly:

"You devils, never even warned me! I would have put up a samovar and got a snack ready. . . . We're at home here, quite at home . . . And in that dugout you'll find Nikolai Nikitich and the commissar. They're sleeping. Sure, that's right, wake them up!"

We stooped and entered the dugout.

"You certainly sleep late!"

Popudrenko did not recognize us right away. But when he did he even shed tears of joy. We kissed, of course. Then everybody else got up. We, the new arrivals, were examined, and our costumes and beards commented on; we were slapped on the shoulder, hugged and

squeezed. Then we were led to a big table Gathered around it were all Chernigovites: familiar faces, friendly smiles....

A cloud of steam rose from a big pot. Everybody stretched out his hand and took a potato. Vasili Logvinovich poured alcohol into the mugs.

"A speech, Alexei Fyodorovich!"

I was very excited

"Well, comrades," I said, raising my tin mug. "We are alive and that in itself is good! Neither you nor I have failed or deceived each other. We agreed to meet in the woods and we have kept our word! While I was making my way here gossipmongers told me that you had disbanded. I didn't believe it They probably told you all sorts of nonsense about me, too But in these two months we have grown wiser, learned things. The Germans and other skunks won't catch us old birds with chaff! You have learned here and I while on my way here. And now let's start fighting properly Fighting together with other detachments, together with the whole Ukrainian people, together with the Red Army under the supreme and wise leadership of Comrade Stalin!"

The dugout was jammed. Men and women were also standing around in the clearing; everybody who could had come over. Nikolai Nikitich and I went out into the clearing. Spontaneously a meeting started.

Kherson,
January-August 1946

BOOK TWO

THE BIG DETACHMENT

CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE TO BATTLE

The regional detachment was stationed in Reimentarovka Forest in the District of Kholmy. Our group arrived here on November 17, 1941. This was now our base, the regional centre, the place where we were to live and work.

The 17th of November, 1941, was a very happy day for me. I shall never forget it. I met Chernigov men, my friends and comrades-in-arms; I saw with my own eyes that the regional detachment was alive, was carrying on, and that the members of the underground R.C. of the Party—Popudrenko, Kapranov, Novikov, Yaremenko—Communist colleagues whom I had known for years—were each at his post. Druzhinin, who like myself had crossed the entire region on foot, was there too, but I did not meet him until somewhat later. Popudrenko had appointed him commissar of the cavalry group, and it was still in Gulino where the regional detachment had been stationed at first.

I have already related that immediately our group arrived a gala breakfast was arranged, followed by a meeting. After the meeting we newcomers were rejuvenated by the barber.

At around twelve o'clock the R.C. met.

We got together in headquarters—a roomy dugout with a high ceiling and a glass window. In the middle

there was a table with legs imbedded in the earthen floor. In a frame in one corner stood a bicycle which had a belt running from the rear wheel to a generator. The comrades rode this bicycle for hours, charging the radio battery. The radio itself, a receiver taken from a plane, stood on a box nearby

A section of the dugout was partitioned off by a big grimy curtain behind which wooden bunks with pallets of hay could be seen. This was the "bedroom" of the top-ranking personnel. Quilted jackets, horsecloths and blankets lay on the bunks; there were even two pillows. On a stool in the corner stood a water pail Portraits of the leaders adorned the walls

The R.C members wore quilted pants and quilted jackets, like the rest of the men and commanders. Only a few sported leather coats or windbreakers.

A dozen of us had gathered around the table. First to take the floor for a report was Popudrenko. What he delivered, though, was sooner a narrative account of the activity of the detachment and the R.C. than a report

As I listened I could not help drawing a comparison between the Popudrenko of today and the man I had known in Chernigov His expression, his bearing and everything else about him now bespoke a partisan commander He was obviously proud of his new position. His clothes showed it too A tightly-belted leather jacket, a brand new shoulder strap, a tall fur hat cocked like Chapayev's, two pistols and a grenade at his belt. His brows were knitted, his gaze was steady ... Frankly speaking, there was a hint of affectation in Popudrenko's new appearance.

I knew Nikolai Nikitich Popudrenko well, and I believe I took the real reason for this new propensity of his for show by nature a very kind person, he evidently feared that people would quickly catch on to this kindness

of heart and take advantage of it—and hence the striving to look stern.

I must add, however, that this man's mildness and kindness went hand in hand with a strong will and sharp irreconcilability toward everything that ran counter to his conscience as a Bolshevik.

Nikolai Nikitich spoke with fervour, like an orator at a rally:

"We have no right to hide from the R C , from our own selves, that winter is approaching and our food and clothing stocks are running low, that we're out of tobacco already. We know, too, that a brutal, crafty and ruthless enemy is hunting us, has surrounded the forest. Now he has put forward fifteen hundred men against our detachments. Tomorrow he may throw four or five thousand into action against us. Well, we are proud of that! Each partisan is worth ten fascists! And the more forces we draw toward ourselves here, behind the enemy lines, the less there will be of them at the front Daring, daring, and again daring—that's what is demanded of us, comrades! The partisans—the people's avengers—scorn death. With each passing day the boldness of our thrusts will increase Dozens of the enemy s trains will be derailed, his staff headquarters will fly into the air

"Explosives are needed for that," someone remarked in an undertone.

I asked Nikolai Nikitich a few questions Why had the detachment moved from Gulino? What was the R C doing? How efficient were the communication and intelligence services? How were things in the districts?

I was not overjoyed by the answers The detachment had had quite sound reasons for moving the forests here were thicker, and hiding from the Germans was easier But only part of the detachment had moved The cavalry group was in the old place. And it was now a cavalry group in name only. The comrades had felt it risky to

keep horses and had turned most of them over to Soviet troops which passed through those districts.

"A man on foot can hide behind a bush if he has but a horseman can be seen a long way off."

There was another unpleasant piece of news: it peared that part of the men had left along with the R Army. This had naturally led to a certain amount of co fusion The men who went away had said that the par sans wouldn't hold out long, that the Germans had m teriel, that they had artillery, that they were better orga ized...

The communication service was in a very bad wa The radio station lay buried in the Repki detachme cache and now nobody could find it because the rad operators had fallen into the hands of the Germans.

"We've kept the food caches," Popudrenko said. "The aren't any complaints about the feeding. We've g arms too But the communication service isn't any goo We listen to the war bulletins and there's more tha enough music, but we haven't any contact with the arm or with the Soviet home front. We've sent out nine group —some seventy of our finest Communists and Komsomo members—on missions to cross the front and contact th army command. So far there are no results. We know tha two of the groups fell into the hands of the Germans. Wit the district detachments and the others we're in constan touch: mounted and foot messengers. There are four de tachments in these forests of ours the Reimentarovka Kholmy, Perelyub and Koryukovka

"What is the R C. doing? All its members are fully occupied with detachment duties Yaremenko is the com missar, Kapranov is the quartermaster, I'm in com mand.... Bear in mind that the people of the region don't know where we are. Not even all the Communists know. Can we direct the whole region from here, especial ly with our means of communication such as they are?

Can we extend our influence to all the Communists, all the Komsomol members, all our Soviet men and women? Should we strive for that? Let's discuss it. As for myself," Popudrenko wound up, "I doubt it."

It was apparent that Nikolai Nikitich did not have very much faith in the feasibility of combining Party and military, that is, partisan, work.

"Our basic task," he said, "is to support the Red Army from here, from behind the enemy lines. We must harass the fascists daily on the roads, blow up trains and railway bridges. Strike in small, light, mobile groups, and then take cover. We can't operate with big forces, we can't base ourselves in one place...."

From the way he spoke it seemed at times that he was not certain he was right. He seemed to be trying to convince not only me and all the other members of the underground R.C. but himself as well.

The man on duty burst excitedly into the headquarters dugout.

"Permit me, Comrade Commander. Scouts report German units moving from the direction of Novgorod-Seversk toward Kholmy. Motorized and cavalry. . "

Popudrenko adjourned the meeting. I had the feeling he did it with pleasure. He summoned the commanders and ordered them to have all the effectives of the detachment form ranks. Placing the scouts at the head of the column, he mounted his horse and commanded:

"Forward, double time, march!"

We who had arrived that day did not go out on the operation; we decided to rest after our journey and wash up in the steam bath. Only about thirty-five people in all remained in the camp. We certainly would have had a tough time of it if the Hitlerites had thought of raiding us then!

After a bath and a rest I decided on a tour of the camp. It had only five dugouts: headquarters, three lodg-

ings and a hospital. The excavation for a sixth was bei dug. Here a printing press would be installed and a new paper and leaflets would be put out.

The roofs of the dugouts were barely noticeab mounds. They had been sodded, and some even ha bushes planted on them. A passenger car had been du half into the earth and camouflaged with branches. was not easy to spot the partisans from the air.

From the ground, however, there was nothing esp cially difficult about discovering them, or penetrating in the camp as well. Three sentries were on duty at a radiu of one hundred to one hundred and fifty metres from th dugouts, and they didn't camouflage themselves or tak cover in foxholes.

Two carpenters were making a bed for the printin press. I struck up a conversation with them. Then severa more partisans came up. From what they told me I sav that things in the detachment were going none to smoothly.

The men were dissatisfied. With what? They them selves could not say offhand. They liked Popudrenko and they had full confidence in the other top-ranking com rades. But they were indignant about Kuznetsov, the chie of staff: he drank to excess, was rude to the partisans and, worst of all, was incompetent.

Of Popudrenko they spoke with admiration: he was a brave, sensible and clever commander. True, at times he overdid things, was rash. But he was just, and kind and attentive too. Toward the enemy he was as aggres sive as anybody could desire, and yet—

It took me quite some time to grasp what lay behind that evasive "and yet."

The men told me about an incident that occurred while the detachment was moving from Gulino to the new place. On the way it was decided to wipe out the starosta in the village of Kamka, who was a traitor. He

ran away, however, and the partisans weren't able to catch him. In his shed they found one hundred saddles which the Germans had left in his care. The saddles could have been taken along—they would have come in handy in the detachment—but they were burned either out of mischief or in disappointment at the starosta's escape.

"Why destroy things for nothing? It'd be different if we really couldn't take them along.... Comrade Fyodorov, are we actually going to remain without any cavalry? Do small-time fighting? Hop-skip and blow up a motorcycle here, kill a German there, and before you know it poison a bloodhound and have a drink to celebrate: my, what fire-eating partisans!"

This was said by a sober, moustached chap of about forty. He was working on the excavation. Thrusting his spade into the earth, he wiped his hands on his pants and went on:

"Just take a good look at how we're living, Comrade Fyodorov, how we're fighting and what we're looking forward to. We're living off what was buried in the caches. We even cart flour to the neighbouring village. Out of our flour the women there will bake us bread and biscuits and pies with the greatest of pleasure, any time. Well, and what when our flour gives out? Are we going to go begging from the women?"

"What d'you mean give out?" one of the cooks, a cheerful-looking woman, put in with a wave of her hand. "There's stocks, they say. You, Kuzmich, how long do you reckon on fighting?"

"If we go on fighting like this there'll be stocks left over. Only the question is—for whom? The way I see it, for the Germans, or those Magyars. They may be dumbheads, but they aren't going to stand for us any too long. First they'll polish off Balabai, then Kozik and then before you know it they'll tackle us Just look how many

of those punitive troops have come! A battalion's arrive in Pogoreltsy."

Several more people came up from different parts o the camp and joined in the conversation. These question worried everybody.

"Why talk about flour and bacon? Look at the going on here! What's the sense, say, of where they're going now? They'll be lucky if they have a good look at thos Germans on the road. Maybe they'll even fire a few rounds. Just as likely there'll be nothing. Just an excursion!" a machine gunner who was wounded in both arms spat out. "The scouts reported the Germans were in Orlovka But that's fifteen kilometres away. Cover that on foot, at doub'e time all the way, besides, and with a full kit and a light machine gun. There and back makes thirty kilometres, and with detours and bypaths all of forty And the result's three dead Germans."

"But all that's not the main thing," Kuzmich muttered

"Well, what is?"

"What do you mean what?" he said in surprise. "Everybody knows the main thing is to hold out. The Red Army'll slam 'em, and then we pitch in The army from the front and we from the rear And will we fight! We've got to save our strength That's the main thing!"

"Do you intend saving it long?"

"It's hard to say how long, but about three or four months anyway We've got to go easy on food. If we go easy, ration it, then we'll hold out."

I interrupted the speaker "Just a minute, comrade How long do you reckon on fighting? Three months? And what's your opinion?" I asked the others.

It appeared the others didn't figure on fighting long either.

Only one said eight months The others shushed him up and called him a nut.

Frankly speaking, I myself did not believe the war would last longer.

After thinking over what I had heard, appraising the first part of Popudrenko's report and recalling the impression left by the Ichnya detachment, I saw that the main trouble lay exactly in those words "*hold out.*"

The men too were evidently beginning to understand that for small and scattered groups even holding out was impossible; that the tactics of minor, sporadic, unplanned raids was dangerous tactics.

And as if in confirmation of this, Popudrenko returned toward morning empty-handed

"The Germans rode while we walked," the men, wet to the skin and dead tired, said irritably. "How could we ever chase them?"

The operation fell through, naturally, because it was faultily planned. Popudrenko himself was dissatisfied with the outcome but he did not want to admit it in so many words. He took a drink to drown his disappointment and then stretched out next to me and said he was going to go to sleep.

"Ah, Alexei Fyodorovich," he said a minute later, with a forced laugh "I thought a drink would put me to sleep. But no—even liquor doesn't help . We're wrong somewhere, Alexei Fyodorovich Something's got to be changed "

I told him frankly that I considered the line the command of the detachment had been pursuing hitherto to be incorrect. The forces had to be united, not divided. Singly we would be smashed before we knew it A big detachment could carry out substantial operations, crush enemy garrisons, could attack the German fascists instead of simply defending itself against them

At first we spoke softly so as not to wake our comrades. But the topic was so absorbing we raised our voices without being aware of it, and soon we noticed that

everyone lying on the bunks was listening to us. And since here were all the R.C. members, it turned out to be a natural continuation of the morning meeting.

Without lighting a lamp or getting up Kapranov and Novikov, and then Dnieprovsky (whom we had co-opted into the R.C.) took the floor.

A very serious threat already hung over us, it appeared. The Germans and Magyars had virtually surrounded our groups. It was not that they had set up an unbroken frontline, but there were German garrisons in almost all the district centres and villages within a radius of thirty to forty kilometres; in some the enemy had already massed special units to combat the partisans.

The nearest place was Pogoreltsy, in which a punitive detachment about the size of a battalion had arrived a few days before. Enemy scouts had begun feeling out the forest and were giving the Perelyub detachment trouble daily.

"Balabai asked Loshakov for help," Kapranov said, "but he answered, 'It's none of our business. Do your own fighting.' And what's Balabai got? Only twenty-seven partisans."

The majority of the comrades agreed on the need for merging all the detachments stationed in the Reimentarovka Forest. Popudrenko did too, and having done so he wasted no time—he was not that kind of man. He got out of bed, lit the lamp and wrote out an order for the commanders of all the detachments to report to headquarters in the morning.

"What do you think?" I asked. "Will they all consent to a merger?"

"Why, Alexei Fyodorovich, they dream about it themselves," Popudrenko replied.

We decided to discuss another question with the commanders too, one which could no longer be put off: what

to do about admitting new men into the detachment There were many applicants—big groups, small ones and simply unattached men.

* * *

On November 19 the commanders and commissars of the detachments gathered: Balabai, Nakhaba, Vodopyanov Kurochka, Kozik, Korotkov, Loshakov, Druzhinin and Bessarab. All the R.C. members as well as platoon commanders Gromenko and Kalinovsky of the regional detachment took part in the conference too.

On my own responsibility I invited another person. This was Lieutenant Rvanov, whom practically nobody knew as yet. He had come to the detachment shortly before us.

Rvanov, a shy-looking, soft-spoken man of medium height, made a far from striking first impression. He had a wounded arm, besides, and one would have thought he should be having it treated instead of holding a position of command. For all that I introduced him to the comrades as the chief of staff of the future united detachment

Why had I appointed a total stranger to a position of command? Nobody asked me this question, but I could read it in the eyes of the majority of those present I had good reasons, of course, which I had told only to Popudrenko and to Yaremenko, the commissar of the detachment. They agreed with me.

It was quite hot in the headquarters dugout. The gathering was a large one, and some had to sit on the floor. I advised the comrades to take off their coats, which they did. All but Bessarab, the commander of one of the local detachments. For him this was easier said than done, so bedecked was he with gear: two pistols, several hand grenades, a map case, field glasses, a compass and so many belts one wondered how he kept from getting tangled up in them.

Stepan Feofanovich Bessarab, a thickset man of about forty, was chairman of a kolkhoz before the war. Although he had not made a go of his job, he was widely known in the locality and carried a certain measure of weight. He was well known, too, because in the collectivization period a kulak had tried to kill him—had fired through a window and wounded him in the head

Bessarab was a sluggish fellow He didn't much like to get about, or to open his mouth either.

When circumstances did compel him to say a sentence or two, he invariably cleared his throat, paused, started off with "ahem" and "er" and then freely sprinkled his speech with these two interjections When people thought of him, the first thing they remembered was his "ahem" and "er."

"Ahem, er, I guess I won't take off my coat. Er, don't feel well. Afraid, ahem, of catching a cold."

I must stress at this point, though, that Bessarab became a partisan on his own initiative. And the people of his kolkhoz had followed him, acknowledging him as their commander. There was no doubt about his being a loyal Soviet citizen.

Practically everybody I met at the conference had been interviewed by me in Chernigov before he became a partisan commander or member of the R.C. I have already told about the change in Popudrenko's appearance and ways. All the others dressed and acted differently too

It was still too early to speak about changes in character. Yet to a certain degree the new outward appearance reflected each man's inner state. By his clothes and his gear—to be more exact, by the way he wore his quilted jacket, hat and pistol, the comrade seemed to be saying: this is what I want to be like among the partisans.

Popudrenko's cocked fur hat, Bessarab's collection of belts, Fyodorov's moustache, the white collar band on

Balabal's army tunic, the rough manner adopted by Kurochka, secretary of the Kholmy district committee, who was the kindest and friendliest of men—all this seemed somewhat ostentatious, as is always the case with novices.

Yes, as partisans and underground fighters we were novices. First-graders. Most of us had no few years of work behind us, had long since found our place in life, and now here we were in the forest, in a dugout, surrounded by enemy troops. .

My attention was drawn to the agronomist Gromenko, now a platoon commander Before the war he worked in the Chernigov Regional Land Department, and now he looked as if he were at some conference there. His appearance was absolutely unchanged. This struck me as being even more deliberate than Bessarab's belts I asked him the usual question:

"How're things?"

He was pleased by my attention. "Things are all right, Alexei Fyodorovich," he answered eagerly, "except that I didn't have time to evacuate my wife And she's about to give birth She's with her folks in the village There are Germans there "

"So that's what's on your mind,' I thought It was only natural for Gromenko to be thinking about his wife But I had expected him to speak about his platoon or about the condition of the detachment

Meanwhile Gromenko continued

"You don't remember my wife from when we lived in Chernigov, do you? Well, I suppose one can't remember everybody She's in a village about forty kilometres from here I ought to pay her a visit, but on the other hand I think maybe not Just extra heartache . . "

To tell the truth, I couldn t advise him It had never entered my head that such questions might arise at this conference

"All right," I said. "We'll discuss it afterwards. We'll think of something."

Popudrenko told the comrades why they had been called together and asked each commander how he looked upon merging the detachments into a single one under my command. The majority said they were for it.

The opinion of the majority was, "It's high time. Otherwise we're done for."

Only Bessarab announced, after some meditation, that he would have to talk it over with his detachment comrades. When we told him the R.C. of the Party recommended the merger, he said:

"I'll, ahem, er, think it over a bit. Let you know tomorrow morning."

"Don't forget, then, Comrade Bessarab. We'll be expecting you at nine tomorrow morning. When you come we'll sign the order."

We went over to the second question: our attitude toward the individuals and groups that wanted to join the detachment.

Quite a few of them were roaming about the forest; there were the remnants of smashed units, escaped prisoners of war and men making their way to the front out of encirclement. All were armed. One group even had a heavy machine gun. But these men felt like outsiders in the Reimentarovka Forest: they had difficulty finding their way about, by far not all of them dared to mingle with the inhabitants of the district, they had no ammunition, their uniforms were in rags, they suffered from the cold, and, worst of all, they were starving. Almost all of these groups were asking to be taken into the detachments.

An argument flared up. Ryanov, flushed with agitation, indicated the door with his eyes, as much as to say to me, "Wouldn't it be better if I stepped out while this question is being discussed?" It was indeed a matter con-

cerning men in his position. He was the only representative at the conference of the "strangers," that is, the men not yet admitted officially into the detachment.

"Stay where you are," I told him. "It'll be interesting to hear your opinion too."

Loshakov, the commander of the cavalry group, a big sullen-looking chap who was as dark-skinned as a Gypsy, said:

"What do you mean admit them? I don't see why we ought to side-step vigilance all of a sudden like that. In Chernigov you yourself, Comrade Fyodorov, and the other secretaries of the R.C. warned us to maintain the strictest secrecy. And now? It turns out vigilance goes by the board. Let in everyone who wants to.... What's a guy who came out of encirclement, anyway? That means he didn't die in battle. Take him into the partisans here in the forest and he won't want to die here either, he'll begin hiding behind somebody else's back And that goes double for a prisoner of war. Once he was a prisoner it means he surrendered. No, we don't need that kind. The Party *picked us and confirmed us You I know, Kurochka I know,* and Bessarab and Kozik too. I've got every right to depend on them The same goes for the men We know them all; we know all about them "

Next to take the floor was Balabai. He countered Loshakov heatedly. To tell the truth, I had not expected such fire from him. Alexander Petrovich Balabai, a history teacher and principal of the Perelyub school, had been described to me as a retiring fellow given to an even-tempered, well-ordered life. He had been appointed principal only a short time before. People praised him for the order and cleanliness in the school and its fine educational methods. "A young but thoughtful and reliable educator" —that was the appraisal I heard most often when Balabai's name came up Besides, I had been told that he was a happy newlywed. Involuntarily I had pictured him

to be a quiet, blissful soul entirely taken up with his school, his wife and a little house with a garden.

He turned out to be a man of powerful build, in a Red Army officer's uniform which suited him very well. He held his head intentionally high; his white collar was no accident either, and he had come to the conference closely shaven It would have been fine if all the comrades took him as an example. And although he blushed like a girl while he spoke, I could see that this shy-looking fellow knew how to stand up for himself and his principles. This is what he said:

"What of it we've remained behind voluntarily? What special merit is there in that? We'd have to fight anyway, and it seems to me it's always better to fight as a volunteer than as a draftee That means we're the same kind of soldiers as the Red Army men. What's there to be especially proud of? Comrade Popudrenko reprimanded me because our detachment took in five men who'd been in encirclement. But they've shown themselves to be good fellows; they've proved it in action. A group of twenty-six men headed by Avksentyev is hiding out in our forest. And we all know they're good men. Their division received an order from the command to break out of encirclement in small groups. They're carrying out that order. But if they push on farther to the front many of them will perish. In my opinion it would be more correct to take them in. In my opinion we ought to take in everybody who genuinely wants to fight the fascists. And as for those who were in encirclement, as a rule they're men who don't want to surrender, who hold out to the last. They're partisans already. Only they're not organized. We have to help them organize. They're armed men and this isn't their first day in war. They'll be useful to us...." At this point Balabai took a long pause. He ran his eyes over the gathering, gave a deep sigh, and added in a tone of regret, "In my opinion it would be a crime

not to take in the men who were encircled Yes, a crime!" he concluded firmly

"Well, ahem, er, Alexander Petrovich went off the deep end," Bessarab remarked, shaking his head

"Do you want to speak?" I asked.

Bessarab looked up at me, thought for a moment and then said importantly

"I can. I hold that if the encircled men feel like it, let them, ahem, organize themselves. It's not for them we, er, made the preparations and hunted for equipment, and especially food. I say out and out—I'm against it."

"And what if the R.C asks you very much?" I could not refrain from putting in. "What then, Comrade Bessarab? Will you comply with our request?"

"About taking in men?"

"In general, what's your attitude toward the R C. of the Party directing the partisan movement in the region? You're a Party member, aren't you?"

Bessarab went into a sulk. His eyes reddened Knitting his brows, he said glumly:

"I know the Party Rules. But on the matter under discussion my opinion is no. The only exception can be on the territorial principle I can, ahem, er, take an encircled man into the partisans if he used to live in our district, seeing as we're called upon to defend our district It can't be that everybody who wants to should be taken in. . . ."

As he said all this Bessarab stared sullenly at Rvanov. Everyone understood this was the man he saw at the bottom of the trouble. The other commanders also surveyed the unknown lieutenant with none too friendly eyes.

I intended issuing an order appointing Rvanov chief of staff of the united detachment without giving any explanations, thereby at the same time preparing the men for the introduction of army discipline. Naturally, before taking that decision I had questioned Rvanov about his

previous army service and had seen from his answers that he was a man of staunchness and, most important of all, an officer of the regular army with a splendid knowledge of military tactics. Another thing I liked about Rvanov was that despite his harrowing experience he had retained his officer's bearing, had not ripped off his insignia of rank and had somehow even managed to keep his tunic, breeches and boots neat.

Actually, what I had called was neither a military, partisan nor even a Party conference; it was simply called out of habit. I had not yet got used to issuing orders, and the comrades weren't used to the idea that I was not only a Party leader but a commander as well. Before me sat Soviet and Party officials, agronomists, engineers, a kolkhoz chairman, a schoolteacher. . . The majority of them, and in particular those who objected to taking in the encircled men, had not yet experienced at first hand either the real hardships of war or actual danger. They knew only by hearsay what encirclement was, who the men who had been in it were and what trials had befallen them. It would do them good to find this out. And at the same time they would realize why I had appointed Rvanov chief of staff.

"Dmitri Ivanovich," I said to Rvanov, interrupting Bessarab, "I will ask you to tell us how you landed in this forest."

My addressing Rvanov by his name and patronymic* evoked surprise among the comrades. And surprise, as is known, heightens attention. Rvanov was surprised too. But he rose with alacrity and threw back his shoulders.

"Is my biography wanted?" he asked.

"No, the purpose is this: by your example I want to show the comrades who the men that were encircled are and why they should be taken into the partisans."

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* This form of address is a sign of respect.—*Trans.*

"All right. I'll be as brief as I can I was in action from the first day on. My last post, since the fifteenth of July, forty-one, was chief of staff of an infantry battalion Was cited twice for efficient operations, by the regiment commander and the division commander. On the ninth of September, at nine-thirty, the Germans outflanked the village of Luziki in Ponornitsa District where we were stationed. I was in headquarters with three messengers The Germans opened up machine-gun fire at the headquarters hut. We only had tommy guns, pistols and a carabine. The boys gave me a cover of tommy-gun fire. I took the most important staff papers, ran across the street and dropped down in a patch of millet. Began returning fire from my carabine Laid low five Fritzes. They were drunk. That helped me wipe them out. But a bullet got me in the arm. I crawled over to a hole There was manure and garbage in it. I buried the papers in the garbage, strapped my wounded arm and crawled off toward a house. I crawled along a fence. Came to a hole in the fence. Here lay assistant platoon commander Kiselev. He was wounded in the left shoulder and the right palm. He had managed to knock a board out of the fence but didn't have the strength to crawl through the opening. 'Comrade Lieutenant, save me,' he begged.

"Somehow we crawled into the yard Meanwhile the Germans had taken full possession of the village. We crawled into a shed. Inside was a suckling in a stall and some hay. Kiselev began feeling very bad. I covered him with hay and dug myself in too. At eleven hours Kiselev turned limp He asked for water. At thirteen hours an old woman came in to feed the suckling. I asked her for some water. When she saw how much blood there was she advised us to surrender. We told her that was impossible. At sixteen-twenty, some Germans came into the yard and started talking to the old woman, Kiselev and I agreed that if they came, we'd do them in first and then

ourselves. We heard the Germans ask her, 'Mamka, any Rus?' 'Two officers,' she said, 'were here and went away.'

"When it got dark, we climbed through the hole in the fence and crawled through the millet to the forest. The reg'ment had been set the objective of capturing Ponornitsa. I laid our course accordingly. Kiselev and I walked all night. At dawn we were fired upon as we came out into a clearing. I laid a course west. There were lots of tracks and the marks of Russian boots on the road. We followed the road and came to a village. I learned that our men had passed through four hours before. A woman gave us a piece of cloth and a little bread and makhorka. We had a bite and a smoke, bandaged our wounds and set out again, to catch up. We went through Reimentarovka. Almost ran into a German scout patrol there. Then we went on to Savenki, seven kilometres ahead. Now Kiselev had to rest every fifty metres. It took us five hours to get to Savenki. The Ubed River lay along the way. We forded it at a cart track. I carried Kiselev so he wouldn't drown. Entered Savenki at twenty-two fifteen. Knocked on the door of a house. Kiselev was bleeding to death. He fell against the door."

Rvanov spoke in the jerky, terse style of a report. He stood erect, without leaning on anything, while we who listened either sat or reclined. From his manner of speech and his bearing we could see that before us was a seasoned officer who under no circumstance would forget that he represented the Soviet Army. Druzhinin walked up from behind, bent close to my ear and said in a loud whisper, so that many others heard:

"It's not for Bessarab or for Loshakov to judge whether Rvanov should be taken into the partisans but rather for Rvanov to decide who of us is any good."

Meanwhile Rvanov continued to report. He told how an elderly kolkhoz woman, Natalia Khavdei, and her fifteen-year-old son Misha had given Kiselev and himself

chiefs know me. Some say we took in Dnieprovsky as one of our own for the same reasons. Bessarab has even proposed taking in only Chernigov men, or, for that matter, only residents of the district in which the detachment was formed. That idea is wrong and harmful. That kind of localism won't lead to anything good. Our native land is the whole Soviet Union and not Reimentarovka District or Ponornitsa District. On the instructions and at the call of the Party, partisan detachments were formed and left behind beforehand. Why was it necessary to pick for these detachments men the R.C. knew? Because they were to make up the core, the foundation of the partisan movement. It's naive to think we can do anything by ourselves without the support of the people, without reserves, without replacements. . . ."

"The question seems clear, comrades, eh?" I asked, and although not everybody answered affirmatively, I promptly closed the conference. "Tomorrow you'll get the order."

Bessarab gave me a puzzled look and whispered something to Kapranov, who sat next to him. Then he turned to Loshakov and whispered to him.

"*Isn't everything clear, Comrade Bessarab?*" I asked.

He made no reply. An awkward silence set in. Kapranov answered for him:

"He asks how come there isn't any decision. He says how is it we don't adopt a resolution. Why was *he* disturbed, summoned here?"

I burst out laughing. Several others joined in. But by far not everybody.

I had to repeat that they would receive the order the next day.

* * *

That night Rvanov drew up the order. Instead of signing it at once I decided to wait for Bessarab. He had promised to come by nine o'clock in the morning. But

here it was ten already. Popudrenko recollected that a month before he had asked the commanders to send in lists of the Party members, and everybody had done so but Bessarab. He did not refuse but simply kept putting it off. When Popudrenko sternly demanded as R C. secretary that his instructions be carried out, Bessarab grumbled that there was no peace for him any place, even in the forest he wasn't his own boss....

We were in no special need of Bessarab's consent. It was not for the sake of democracy that we were waiting for his decision. We saw that at heart he was balking, and we wanted to know how far he would go. And why use compulsion before the proper time? Maybe the man would think it over, would realize that he was on the wrong path.

At eleven o'clock, when I saw that Bessarab wasn't coming, I ordered a horse and set out for his place together with the commissar and a group of men.

"Well, boys, we're off to subdue the duke," I joked.

At the approaches to Bessarab's camp a sentry stopped us As we later learned, he had been instructed to detain anybody who came from the regional detachment and to sound the alarm if they tried to force their way in. He knew us, however, and let us through. We rode into the camp and found it in a peaceful, sleepy state.

It was a serene and prosperous manor. Laundry was drying on lines strung up between trees: shirts, foot cloths and even bed sheets Opposite, carcasses of beef and mutton hung from branches. A young fellow sat on the ground dressing a freshly slaughtered hog. There were many carcasses, far more than in the regional detachment; yet we had three times as many men, and Kapranov, our quartermaster, knew his job too.

Smoke curled up from the kitchen, and such a tantalizing smell was wafted over that my adjutant shifted his eyes in that direction and wet his lips

We rode up to the kitchen—a high, roomy dugout. In the middle stood a big table with a stack of juicy hamburgers. A young partisan and two cooks were in charge. One of them, a pretty, vivacious girl named Lenochka, struck a proud pose at the sight of us.

"Doing well by yourselves," I said, pointing to the hamburgers.

"Yes, not like you," Lenochka chirped back. "Should we starve? You think you're going to feed yourselves at our expense and then send us begging? Popudrenko tried to tame us but it didn't work. We like freedom. . . ."

"So that's how Bessarab's trained you to dance to his tune? Well, all right, we'll pay him a visit. Where does he live?"

Lenochka showed us Bessarab's dugout. "Nothing'll come of it!" she shouted after us.

At the entrance to the dugout we were met by Stepan Ostatny, Bessarab's deputy. He measured me with a frowning look and in reply to my greeting gave a nod. He let us pass into the dugout, however. The dugout was a mess. Papers, slices of bread and chunks of potato were strewn on the table. The floor was littered with cigarette butts. The benches and stools stood every which way. Obviously, after a conference here the previous evening, they had all got up and left the place as it was. They had made no preparations to receive "guests."

The chief was in bed behind a calico curtain. Our arrival had roused him.

"We got to bed late last night," Ostatny thought it necessary to explain.

"Don't offer any explanations," a woman's voice spoke up from behind the curtain. "You're not in a militia station."

My adjutant drew aside the curtain. Bessarab, in boots, breeches and tunic, lay on top of a blanket on a trestle bed. He turned his face to the wall. We greeted

him. He mumbled something but showed no desire to turn around. On the edge of the bed, next to Bessarab, sat his wife. She looked sleepy and dishevelled

Two more of Bessarab's right-hand men, Jan Polyansky and Shkolyar, came in. They assumed challenging poses.

Without waiting for an invitation I sat down on a stool.

"What decision have you come to, Comrade Bessarab?" I asked. "We waited all morning for you. After all, it's very important for us to learn the results of your meditations"

Bessarab went on lying with his back to us and wheezing.

"I'm speaking to you, Comrade Bessarab Do you think we've come here to ask for your daughter's hand?"

His wife replied for him. "Who invited you? You can go, we're not holding you back."

"She your deputy, Comrade Bessarab?"

"Yes, his deputy. What's it to you?"

I could not refrain from saying a few strong words. The woman gave a screech and ran out of the dugout

Bessarab rose lazily. "You've got no call, ahem, er, chiselling in on somebody else's glory."

"What kind of glory have you got anyway? Sitting here and eating the kolkhoz folk out of house and home? Comrade Yaremenko," I said to the commissar, "while I have a talk here with the chief will you please assemble the whole detachment?"

Bessarab looked surprised but said nothing.

"Well, now," I said when Yaremenko had gone out, "tell us about your glory."

I knew, however, what Bessarab had in mind. Little though the regional detachment had accomplished in this period, its men were not sitting with arms folded Now a bridge caved in, then a German truck blew

up on a mine; now a traitorous starosta vanished without a trace, then a group of invaders landed in a roadside ditch with their heads smashed in.

The people of the surrounding villages knew that on instructions from the district committee of the Party, Bessarab started forming a partisan detachment even before the Germans came.

His detachment was made up entirely of local men. Every now and then they dropped in on their relatives and friends, and naturally they never objected when the operations of all the groups and detachments based in these forests were ascribed by the population to Bessarab's partisans.

"Out with it, don't be bashful," I urged.

"I operated on the flank of the 187th Division.... I, ahem, er, have a citation from the command...."

Meanwhile Yaremenko had assembled about twenty partisans and lined them up near the headquarters dugout.

We stepped outside. I made Ostatny and Shkolyar and Bessarab himself join the line.

"From now on, comrades," I said, "all the detachments based in this forest are merged into one That is a decision of the R.C. of the Party and of regional headquarters. That is what life demands. Does anybody have anything to say?"

Bessarab made a move forward.

"Wait. We've done enough talking with you already. We know your opinion."

Shkolyar, Polyansky and a comrade I did not know spoke. Like a lesson learned by heart, each maintained that a merger would be fatal. Stocks were giving out fast, and soon there wouldn't be anything to eat. If the detachments were merged, they would lose the main advantage of partisans: mobility and the possibility of concealment.

Polyansky bent over backwards. "What's the use of talking?" he said "It's clear what's behind all this It's all clear to us. The R.C. needs to lie low. The R C. needs a guard. It hasn't enough men of its own, and they're all city fellows besides—first thing you know they'll get lost in a clump of three pines.... You want to get into heaven at somebody else's expense."

I had to cut the meeting short. Yaremenko explained the aims of the merger to the partisans and reminded them about partisan and Party discipline. I read out the order to the line:

"As of today the district detachment, formed at the initiative of the district committee of the Party, is incorporated into the united partisan detachment and will henceforth be called the 3rd Platoon. I appoint Bessarab commander and Grechko political instructor. Polyansky is placed at the disposal of detachment headquarters."

I told Bessarab to appear the next day to make a report. Polyansky I took along with me

That was how the existence of the duchy came to an inglorious end and the combat history of the 3rd Platoon began.

That evening all the commanders received the order uniting into one the regional, Koryukovka, Kholmy and Reimentarovka detachments, as well as the groups of men who had broken out of encirclement and had taken the path of partisan struggle.

The combined force was named the Stalin Partisan Detachment

* * *

The order went into effect. I became the commander of quite a sizable partisan detachment.

But issuing the order was not enough. Now we had to start organizing the regional detachment We had to demonstrate by deeds that we did not merge in vain. As

for myself, I still had to win a commander's prestige in the eyes of the comrades.

I had never been in command of an independent military unit in my life. After the Civil War I commanded a platoon in a railway regiment for a while. But that was almost twenty years ago. What comparison could there be, anyway? There I reported daily to experienced commanders, the regiment had a coordinated, well thought-out structure and long established order. The enemy we fought in those bygone days were insignificant bandit gangs But some of the knowledge I acquired in the cavalry school in 1920 came in good stead now. I called to mind pointers from my combat experience, and some of the information I had picked up during the short-term training periods in army camps stuck in my memory....

It later transpired, however, that a military schooling was not the only thing needed to make a good partisan commander. Some officers of the regular army felt lost under partisan conditions and were unable to command. The men who had studied in special military schools spoke regretfully of the fact that little or nothing had been taught about the tactics of partisan warfare.

It was not without misgivings that I took the post of commander upon myself. I feared that daily operative leadership of the detachment might interfere with my main work—that of secretary of the underground R.C. of the Party. Popudrenko had already had a taste of combining the two jobs It hadn't been to his liking.

But the R.C. members had come to a unanimous decision. the first thing was to consolidate the detachment.

This was correct, of course. It was time to get down to real work. Myriads of problems were arising. There turned out to be any number of men desirous of talking things over with me, seeking my advice, and even of gossiping. And some came to me and demanded, "Once you're

the commander—shell out! Give us guns, give us ammunition, give us men, give us food!"

First of all a precise assignment of duties had to be made.

In the legally-functioning R.C., in peacetime, the study and selection of people for leading posts is a big collective job. Before the R.C bureau recommends this or that Communist for a leading post, it studies *him* a *long time*, gathers the opinions of other comrades about his abilities, his knowledge, his integrity It weighs all the pros and cons Sometimes transferring a person to another post or removing him because of unfitness takes no little time too.

And under partisan conditions? People had to be studied, the principles remained the same—our Bolshevik principles But it was of course impossible to convene the R C. every time to confirm an appointment

"They appointed Rvanov chief of staff. Why Rvanov? We've got old and experienced Party workers. Chernigov men. We've got secretaries of district committees, chairmen of district Soviets. And all of a sudden, if you please, a youngster of twenty-four. A lieutenant. An expert indeed! Kuznetsov at least was a captain. ."

There was some talk of this kind. But you can't listen to everything people say.

About Bessarab having been left in command of the platoon, too. I shouldn't have done that, of course. But so far I had no reason to consider him a poor commander. The man had to be tested in battle. He had chosen the men for his detachment himself, he knew them and they knew *him*.

Now, looking back, I sometimes think: "It certainly was a strange situation in that first period As commander I answered to nobody. There were no ranking officers over me. Without a support like the R.C it would have been easy to lose my bearings."

But I couldn't turn to the R.C. too often either. The comrades themselves said, "You're the commander—make the decision. Our job is to obey."

I won't hide that occasionally I thought I really had had an easier time of it when I was wandering about in search of the detachment. Then I answered only for my own conduct and my own life.

The day after the order was issued Bessarab came up to me.

"I'm, ahem, er, waiting for your combat instructions."

"You read the order? Carry it out."

"The boys are at loose ends. They want to meet the damned invaders in battle."

"How come you weren't hankering after action before?"

"We were waiting for the commanding officers to come. Ahem, er, for their orders."

"'Ten-shun! About-face! Forward march!" I was forced to command.

This was probably just what Bessarab had been after. He went to his men and said: see?—instead of combat operations the chiefs are busy selecting personnel, studying something or other, holding conferences, ahem, er.

Quite a few of the men, especially those in the regional detachment, I knew from Chernigov. Now I renewed my acquaintance with them. I visited the dugouts and lent a hand in the construction work which was begun before the arrival of our group. I was not certain the work was necessary, but meanwhile I did not discontinue it. The men had to be occupied. There is nothing worse than idleness. Soon drill was started. At these exercises, too, I studied the men.

I rarely went about alone but either with Popudrenko, with detachment commissar Yaremenko or with Rvanov; my adjutant accompanied me almost all the time. Popudrenko and Yaremenko knew the men well. Rvanov was

much younger than I, but then he knew military affairs In that way I learned something from the comrades while on the go. I watched how they behaved toward the men, how they sized up a situation.

Nothing, of course, was ever done without jokes and wisecracks. That was a must among the partisans. In the daytime and at night, in battle, on a mission and on the march the men always bantered Some even joked at their own expense—anything for a laugh. This was understandable: the men had to bear a host of deprivations, and laughter buoyed them up.

At that period the men displayed a great deal of nervousness.

Never in my life had I come across so many engrossed people. True, when they gathered of an evening, the men sometimes danced and sang. But both the one and the other they did very badly. Popudrenko, who was very keen on soldiers' songs, once remarked to me

"What kind of a crowd is this anyway? Not a single decent dancer, not a single accordionist. And when they strike up a song, you'd better run. ."

Only much later did it come out that they sang and danced badly simply because thoughts were preying on their minds. If one could only write out an order. "From today on I forbid anyone to go off by himself and ponder over our situation."

At this time I had quite a noteworthy conversation with partisan S. He is not, I think, a stupid person; he used to be the head of a district board of education He took me aside and said:

"Look, Alexei Fyodorovich, help me figure it out This idea came to me: what if I were lying ill and the doctors sentenced me to death?"

I become wary. What was the man driving at?

"One shouldn't put any stock in such sentences," I replied.

He went on:

"But still. If it's really beyond all doubt. Then what? I, for one, would rather not wait. I, Comrade Fyodorov, would prefer to die right after the consultation, to shoot myself!"

"What's behind this graveyard talk?" I asked.

"This " Now S. began to speak with genuine fervour. "That if the Party placed us here as a sacrifice, for a sacrificial deed, then let's quick think up that deed and do it."

And this comrade, bear in mind, was sober, he wasn't delirious. I had to tell him that he was a whiner and a pessimist.

"What do you mean? Say the word and I'm ready to blow myself up together with an enemy headquarters!"

A year passed, and this comrade learned to blow up German headquarters and trains without getting a scratch. In 1944 the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred on him. One day I reminded him of this conversation.

"I confess," he said, "that I didn't believe we were able to offer the Germans any serious resistance. I thought that once we were fated to die, we might as well die quickly and beautifully."

At just about the same time I had a memorable talk with Gromenko.

He had returned from his "furlough." After the conference with the commanders I gave him leave. He had been considering, if you remember, whether he ought to visit his wife and find out how the confinement had passed. He set out for his wife's place with gifts from the partisans. We gave him honey, butter, candy and cookies He also had a hundred rounds of ammunition, two pistols and a pair of grenades.

Gromenko was away five days. Two days there and two days back, and only one night at his wife's place. He reported briefly:

"Gromenko, commander of the 1st Platoon Back from leave. Everything is in order. May I take up my duties?"

A couple of hours later I caught sight of him among the men of the 1st Platoon He had settled them in a circle and was enthusiastically telling them something I sat down to listen. Gromenko explained that he was conducting a political talk.

"Comrades," he went on, "each one of us has to look back at his whole life from a new angle. ."

"What's he driving at?" I wondered "What's this philosophical talk with the men?' But I held my tongue and listened further, especially since the men were engrossed in his words.

"Whether we want to or not, we're all doing a great deal of thinking nowadays And how could it be otherwise? Our normal life has stopped, our families are broken up; the occupations for which we trained for years aren't needed now. Until victory, anyway And so we feel bad. Many do. I hear that Comrade Martynyuk told a dream he had—how his daughter ran up to him to be petted, and she hugged him and cried. Then Comrade Martynyuk woke up to find himself stroking the sleeve of his padded jacket, and the sleeve was wet with tears Tell me, Comrade Martynyuk how old are you and what did you do before the war?"

Martynyuk, a thickset man with a straw-coloured moustache, rose from the log on which he was sitting, blinked, and said:

"It's true."

"I asked you to tell your age and occupation There's nothing to be worried about I'm not reproaching you for dreaming about your children I dream about the old days too For more than two months now I'm either pickling seeds or pruning an apple tree or —"

"And yesterday," a lad of nineteen suddenly interrupted the platoon commander, "I played soccer against a

German team. And the ball was like a mine—it could blow up. Honest...."

Everybody laughed. Martynyuk's face brightened too, and he said:

"I'm forty-four, Comrade Commanders. I'm a moulder—cast iron. I beg your pardon for telling my dream to others and upsetting them. I'll absolutely look back over my life, and I call upon others to do the same. You see, our daughter was born when I was thirty-eight and my wife was thirty-four. She was our first child. And a German bomb killed her.... May I sit down?"

I rose and went away without saying anything to Gromenko, although I thought he was wrong in getting his men worked up. That evening Gromenko approached me himself, choosing a moment when I was alone.

"Alexei Fyodorovich," he began, "can I have a talk with you as with an older comrade? I have the feeling you didn't like that talk I conducted this morning."

"Come, Comrade Gromenko, let's take a stroll in the woods."

He agreed readily. We went about two hundred metres from the camp and sat down on stumps. This is what he told me:

"I'm an agronomist, Alexei Fyodorovich. That you know. I used to be an ordinary peasant. Peasant blood and peasant upbringing. In general, an intellectual sprung from the people. I think about things—can't help thinking. And when I worked in the seed control station, I didn't see grain as bread only. No, I saw it even more as the people's labour. Michurin dreamed of making wheat a perennial plant, and if he couldn't do that with wheat or rye, then maybe develop bread nuts.... I've always understood that dream very well.

"But actually I wanted to speak to you about something else. To tell you about my trip to my wife.... But I can't without prefacing it.... I felt, Alexei Fyodoro-

vich, that I could be a good Communist only if I buried myself in my profession. I worked conscientiously, gave myself up completely to my work. I considered myself a happy man. No, not only considered myself happy but really was, because at home everything was very fine too.

"I remember that a tremendous impression was made on me by Comrade Stalin's answer to the letter from Komsomol member Ivanov, at the beginning of 1938. Then, for the first time, I not only thought but actually felt that a struggle was inevitable, that the capitalists would attack us absolutely But you know how it is. I thought about it but I went on living the same way. I even justified my indifference to the future clash by the fact that I was working and thereby making my country stronger. I didn't picture myself as a soldier and I didn't prepare to be one. That's the point

"I volunteered into the partisans You know that too. And so we landed in the forest After all, you can't say, Alexei Fyodorovich, that we didn't do anything before you came. How Comrade Yaremenko threw himself into setting up the printshop! The boys sneaked type out of Koryukovka—a heroic piece of work. Right from the start there's been any amount of heroism. And it's sincere heroism.

"Balabai almost got killed in a fight with ten Hitlerites. Balitsky posed as a schoolteacher and went unarmed through villages in which there were Germans; he called upon the population to resist and he collected intelligence information. Popudrenko—in him I see not so much the big commander he is, but rather an embodiment of the people's hatred. He's a barrel of energy. And if not for his sense of responsibility for the detachment, for the men's lives, I'm sure he'd throw himself headlong into the hottest fight.... But that's discussing a commander, and I won't continue it. Let's get back to myself.

"Why hide it? I came to feel that our partisan efforts were insignificant. No, it wasn't a case of faint-heartedness or cowardice—that wasn't it. And then that business with my wife I didn't manage to evacuate her. To tell the truth, she was near her time and didn't want to risk a long journey in her condition. She was very angry at me for joining the partisans and leaving the family at a time like that She was angry with me, but just the same she realized it couldn't be any other way. And to give me a free hand she packed all of a sudden and left for the village. What happened to her after that I didn't know. Now the torture of uncertainty was added to all my other worries."

Gromenko drew a sigh. He asked me if I wasn't tired listening. We lit up, he was silent for a moment, and then he went on:

"Before I left we agreed I wouldn't tell anyone there in the village what I was doing. Remember, you forbade me to carry on any agitation? And that was right. Before beginning that sort of work you have to look around, get to know the people. I won't bother you with the trip. I got there fairly successfully. To be sure, there was a bit of shooting, but that doesn't count.

"I knew the house my wife might be in. In general, I've known that village since childhood. Everybody there calls me by my first name. I made my way to the house in the darkness by way of the back yards. I was sure no one had noticed me Then the reunion, with tears and embraces. The boy was already a month and three days old. It was decided he was the 'spit and image of his papa'. The partisan presents came in handy. But on the whole the wife isn't too pinched for food yet They've got some supplies We cried, we laughed, we related what had happened to each other. But, you know, there was one strange thing—from the very beginning it was all in whispers

"At first the boy slept. So I thought it was not to wak-

him. Then he woke up but the wife went on the same way Besides, she hurried to make the bed. Once or twice I spoke aloud. She waved her hand at me and immediately blew out the lamp.

" 'What's up?' I asked. 'Just listen and take a look out of the window,' she answered. 'It's dark and quiet all over Everyone's afraid' 'But there aren't any Germans in the village' I had just got these words out of my mouth when a drunken band came galloping down the street, whooping it up They were swearing for all they were worth, threatening somebody.

" 'Who are they?' When my wife began naming the men who were lording it in the village, I tell you I saw red. Well, you know, Alexei Fyodorovich, we had a fellow by the name of Ivan Drobny. A rat, a miserable sponger and a drunkard Everyone had forgotten long since that his father used to be the landlord's bailiff That Drobny was a half-wit and a souse of the lowest kind When he was broke the morning after, he used to fall to his knees before people and beg a three-ruble bill. And now they're afraid of him.

"Sanko turned up from somewhere During the NEP years he blossomed out, had a tannery in Chernigov Lately he was a bookkeeper at a musical instruments factory or some other place, I don't remember exactly where. Whenever I ran into him in town he was just so meek."

I interrupted Gromenko.

"I don't know what there is to be surprised about. You didn't really think the fascists would appoint you and me to run the village, did you? Naturally, they're collecting all kinds of skunks Who else would go to work for them?"

"That's not the point, Alexei Fyodorovich That's not what I wanted to tell you about. This is what upset me: here in the forest, Soviet life goes on—the people and their relations to one another and everything else is

Soviet For a few hours I was in a village I know, a
which I look upon as my native village. I didn't even
those rats, I didn't knuckle under to anyone. But just
fact that all night my wife begged me not to talk
loud, not to move, kept stopping up the child's mouth, a
trembling all over.... And toward morning she beg
hurrying me to leave. Just that alone, you'll agree, is ki
ing. Who was I supposed to be scared of? The low
skunks ever! In a word, I got a real idea of what ener
occupation is."

"That's right," I said. "But I still don't quite unde
stand what you wanted to talk to me about."

"We must act, and the sooner the better. We, that
our platoon, have decided to ask you to send us on a
important independent operation as soon as possible..
Allow me to make a suggestion, Alexei Fyodorovich. Aft
I told my men all about those rats who are bossin
our village, about each one, we're just itching to g
at them."

"In other words, you want your platoon to make
partisan raid on that village and wipe out the starost
and the police?"

"That's right."

"That is, propaganda by deed?"

"Something like that. I know all the approaches to th
village. On the way back I talked with some of the people
We came to an understanding. I studied the lay of th
land. We wouldn't need much time or many weapons fo
this operation...."

"Think of what you're saying, Comrade Gromenko
You started out right. Your heart told you that actior
was required. But what's the result? Each officer wil
lead his men to his village because he knows the name
of the scoundrels who are bossing it. If we're going to
act along those lines I'd have to take you all to Lotsman-
skaya Kamenka near Dniepropetrovsk."

"The comrades will be terribly disappointed, Alexei Fyodorovich. We've already mapped out the route, fixed the time and assigned the duties. Your refusal will hurt the feelings of a lot of them, Comrade Fyodorov You see, the boys are itching for action...."

"And will you feel hurt too?"

"That's not the point, Comrade Fyodorov. You don't need to pay any attention to my feelings. But you'll agree that one of the advantages of partisan warfare is that we operate in our own districts ..."

I explained to Gromenko that the operation he thought up didn't enter into the plans of the command He protested that since plans are drawn up by human beings they can be changed. He went so far as to accuse me of lacking resolution, and said I didn't know how to follow up the initiative of the masses.

I had to cut short the talk which had begun so well and explain to Gromenko in no uncertain terms what partisan discipline is

He went off vexed. In parting he said I couldn't take criticism and that I lacked feeling, but that nonetheless he would obey the order.

That talk left me with mingled feelings at the time It was good that our officers were thinking men It was very pleasing to have them come to share their thoughts and feelings with me.

I liked Gromenko's genuine ardour, his burning hatred of the invaders, his thirst for action. But at the same time I was astonished at his light-minded attitude toward partisan warfare and was disturbed by it Like many another, he still could not realize that a partisan detachment was a military organization and not just a voluntary society or artel for the extermination of the first invaders that come to hand.

* * *

One of the main tasks the R.C. set the Communists and Komsomol members at that time was to fight for the strictest partisan discipline and against laxity, slackness and irresponsibility.

To some we had to make it plain that the Party could not let the partisan movement take its own course, drift along. The Party demanded discipline, planned action and organization from the partisan just as from the soldier, it expected the various detachments and men to help each other out.

A Communist is everywhere a Communist. Whether in the forest, or in underground work, or among his friends, or in the bosom of his family a Communist may not forget that he is a Communist, he may not take a vacation from his Party responsibilities or violate the Party Rules.

In some detachments, mainly those organized after occupation had set in, there arose the practice of electing officers, a practice long since condemned by the Party.

The R.C condemned this practice and required that all detachments operating on the territory of Chernigov *Region be connected with regional headquarters* and coordinate their actions with it.

Simultaneously the R.C. worked to strengthen one-man leadership and the authority of the commander. The commander's word was law. The R.C. promptly nipped any attempts to hold meetings to discuss decisions taken or the orders of a commander.

The partisans were free citizens in the occupied regions. But this was not freedom to wander through the *woods at will. The partisans in this war* had to look upon themselves as fighting men of the Red Army.

"You serve in the army because the fundamental law of the Soviet state obliges you to do so," we told each partisan. "And don't forget, dear comrade, that although the enemy has entered the Ukraine it remains a part of

the great Soviet Union. You are a partisan because the conscience of a Soviet citizen obliges you to be one. And so observe discipline willingly and conscientiously. The fact that you volunteered does not mean you are free to be undisciplined."

Some of the comrades were very much surprised What's this, anyway? We don't wear uniforms, we seem to be civilians; there are even people not liable to military service among us—old men, women and plain youngsters. And they have to submit to army discipline too?

I was told that one of the most fiery advocates of partisan free-lancing expounded the following ideas·

"Maybe," he said, "I stayed behind here in the forest on purpose when the Red Army retreated. I'm crazy about *partisaning it*," he said, "*about freedom* without any buts! What d'you mean this one or that one's a commander? The commander's the one the men follow into battle. A partisan can't be fenced in. A partisan's like a forest animal, like a wolf. They get together in a pack when an enemy's got to be fought, and when the fight's over each one's his own boss again!"

We summoned this "wolf" to headquarters.

"Are you in earnest when you say you stayed in the forest on your own initiative, so to speak?"

"I'm a Chernigov man," he replied "I didn't feel like *going beyond the bounds of Chernigov Region. I decided* I'd fight and take revenge only on my native territory."

"What do you mean you didn't feel like it? So you deserted from the army, is that it?"

"With my character I'll be of more use as a partisan Army discipline crushes my personality."

"No, you answer the question· did you desert from the Red Army?"

The champion of "personal freedom" looked a bit nonplussed. He thought for a while. Then he looked around but saw that no one was going to support him.

"I didn't desert; I just switched to another branch the service."

"Did you receive an order to this effect?"

"My conscience gave the order. . . ."

"What rank has this conscience of yours that it c countermand the orders of the Supreme Command? Tu over your arms and off to the guardhouse!"

I must say to the credit of this lover of "wolf freedon that in time he became wiser; when he realized th speeches of that sort would lead to no good he stopp making them, and fought well.

The R.C. required every Communist to inculcate lo and respect for the Red Army in the partisans. Ever one of us would have been happy to become a soldier officer in the Red Army. When with our help the Re Army liberated the enemy-occupied territories we woul gladly join its ranks.

The comrade I have just mentioned came to the parti sans from the army. He knew what army discipline was All we did was to remind him that laxity was impermis sible. The majority of the partisans, however, especiall in that initial period, were civilians through and through It was difficult for them to get out of the habit of criti cizing and discussing, or to remember that what they were before the war was unimportant now.

Somehow it came out that by hook or by crook some of our men were getting out of sentry detail and various camp duties. A certain highly respectable person had not been on sentry duty once, I was told.

"Yes, it's a fact," the comrade confessed. "But they themselves offer to take my place: 'Look here, Sergei Nikolayevich, we'll go on duty for you You're along in years, its hard for you. . . .'"

"How noble of them!"

"Yes, they're noble, all right, only the devils make me pay through the nose for their nobility."

"How much? What's the rate these days?"

"It depends for what. If it's standing guard at the food stores, for instance, that's a measure of makhorka or two slices of bread. Peeling potatoes in the kitchen costs a little less. It depends, though, on how you bargain and who the other fellow happens to be."

"Isn't the bread ration really enough? And where do you get your extra bread?"

"Well, you see, for me personally it's enough. Then, I only started smoking here in the forest, and I don't smoke much Don't eat much either. .."

"Naturally, if you don't work much you don't eat much."

"That's partly true too. But those who need more bread are mainly the newcomers, those who were in encirclement or were war prisoners. They're starved from wandering around in the woods . . Well, you feel sorry for them. Honestly, they want to do it themselves."

When we scolded the comrade and disciplined him he became insulted.

"Now look," he said, his voice trembling, "I've been holding down responsible Soviet posts. It's true, I joined the partisans on my own free will If I'd known I would have joined the army instead You don't know how to make use of your men, comrades. To make me an ordinary private.... Of course, if they made me a private in the army I would have to obey all the orders too.... But you'll agree that in the army no one would know me. And here we have all our own people Honestly, they make fun of me. 'This is no swivel-chair job,' they say."

During that organizational period what we suffered from were growing pains. They were due to lack of confidence in ourselves, to an extremely vague idea of how long the war would last, and to lack of ties with the masses. Yes, we were undoubtedly cut off from the people For some three months the detachment had been hiding

rot in the forest. The partisans had insufficient conta with the local population. They had little knowledge how the inhabitants of the occupied villages and town lived and what their interests were.

This lack of contact with the masses, with the peopl might prove disastrous for us. The R.C. adopted a dec sion to get the men used to the idea that the partisa struggle would be a long one. The German invaders ha gone deep inside the country. We would surely have t spend the winter where we were. The sooner the Re Army went over to the offensive and cleared our regio of the Germans the better. But meanwhile we had t put a stop to talk about when the war might end, sto thinking of how to hold out, stop worrying and star acting.

The R.C. instructed headquarters to plan a substantia offensive operation. It was to show what our men and our organization were worth.

In fulfilment of the R.C. decision on the need for closer contact with the population and more propaganda among the masses, a group of comrades left for the village of Savenki one evening.

I went too. This was the first meeting of peasants I took part in during the occupation. Probably that is why I remember it so well. Subsequently I had frequent occasion to speak at such meetings. But at that time it was all new to me.

My companions later confessed to me that they too had had a queer feeling of uncertainty, even nervousness. Because of danger? No, for we knew that there were no large enemy forces in the neighbourhood. Preliminary reconnoitring had been carried out. Our people, that is, the Communists working underground and the activists living in Savenki, had let the inhabitants know in good time and had stationed sentries all around.... But just the same we were anxious.

What worried us, naturally, was the peculiarity and novelty of the situation. How would they receive us? How should such a meeting be conducted? Even the organizational side was not clear. Should such a meeting be conducted with the solemnity characteristic of peacetime meetings? Should we have a presidium?

Still more important was to determine what was really the main issue to take up. Before the war each meeting was devoted to certain specific questions: discussion of the kolkhoz production plan, or a summing-up of Socialist emulation among the brigades and teams, a report of the kolkhoz board, a subscription to a new loan.. There were all kinds of agendas. Even if it was a lecturer coming to talk about the international situation, the kolkhoz people knew what it was going to be about and prepared questions for submission to the speaker.

But we were going not to discuss any particular issue but to get acquainted, exchange news, find out the mood of the people. Of course, first and foremost we intended speaking about a war to the hilt against the invaders and about support of the partisan movement. But we were not yet able to present the kolkhoz people of Savenki with a concrete plan of action.

When we came to the schoolhouse we found a table with a red cloth on it set up in the big hall. Above the table hung a portrait of Stalin. A meagre light was afforded by two lampions. The men who had fixed up the hall apologized· "Can't get kerosene anywhere, so we filled the lampions with ox fat."

The people gathered singly or in pairs. Some felt it necessary to pretend they had just dropped in to see why the hall was lit up. Others, on the contrary, entered with a show of resolution: they strode firmly, looked straight before them, and spoke louder than was necessary.

The girls and young women hung around the entrance for a long time, whispering and peering into the hall

When they were invited to come in they said no. Only later after the meeting was well started, did they make their way in softly.

Commissar Yaremenko said:

"Now I will give the floor to the commander of the partisan detachment and secretary of the underground R.C., whose name I won't tell you for reasons of secrecy. . . ."

I rose and was just about to begin when someone in the hall giggled. I wondered why.

"Why, that's Fyodorov."

"Of course it's Fyodorov."

"Where's the secret? It's Fyodorov!" someone shouted from the back rows.

Yaremenko frowned, but I burst out laughing. My feeling of constraint disappeared at once.

I told briefly who the partisans were and how and for what they were fighting. I related the contents of the latest Soviet Information Bureau communiqués. They listened eagerly.

"Any questions?" Yaremenko asked the meeting when I had finished. The questions started coming immediately. They were important questions which were not easy for me to answer. After all, there was much I myself didn't know.

A tall, elderly, grim-visaged peasant asked:

"What, Comrade Fyodorov, does the Communist Party think about the other powers, like, for instance, America? What about the bourgeoisie of America? Are they helping us from the bottom of their hearts or have they got a dagger up their sleeve? And what about Japan—will she start squeezing us from the Far East?"

"That's a lot you've bitten off, Sidor Lukich!" the man sitting next to him exclaimed, in admiration or else ironically.

"No, it's to the point ... It's an important question"

"And how about our planes, will we have more of them? Are the Urals and Siberia working?"

Suddenly above the buzz of deep masculine voices rose a thin childish voice.

"Uncle chief, may I ask a question too? I am eleven years old and just went into the third grade. Are we going to study in German schools or will we be with our fathers and the partisans?"

Everyone laughed, but the boy seemed to have given the cue: the people began to ask questions connected with life in the village itself. They began to speak more softly, instinctively moving closer to the light as though members of some secret society were meeting in that hall. A robust, moustached old man asked in what was almost a whisper:

"Tell us what we're supposed to do Say tomorrow the Germans come—either punitive or food supply units.... And one of those Germans is billeted in my house. He knows I'm a peaceful man, not a partisan at all, or yet, God forbid, a Komsomol member, but just a peaceful old villager.. ."

"Hurry up, Stepan, get to the point."

"Wait a minute. So it's like this, Comrade Commander. a German or maybe two of them are quartered in my house. Will you give me poison for them, or dynamite, or should I just apply the axe when they're asleep?"

I barely managed to hold back a smile But his fellow villagers regarded this as a perfectly serious question and expected a serious answer.

"It depends on the circumstances," Yaremenko said

This reply did not satisfy the meeting Eyes turned to me. I had to put my brains to work

"Dynamite, or TNT, to be exact," I said, "we won't give you to use on two Germans We don t have much of it. As for poison, you wouldn't be able to poison all of them, and we don't have any anyway But all weapons

are useful against such a vicious enemy. In the first place we invite anyone who wants to fight the enemy in earnest to join the detachment. Secondly, you can help us a good deal right here, on the spot, by giving us intelligence information and hiding our messengers when necessary.... And if we have to annihilate a garrison of Germans or a punitive detachment in your village—then, we hope, you'll put both axes and rocks to use. Well comrades, will you support us?"

A general buzz of approval was the answer to my question.

Natalia Khavdei, member of the kolkhoz board, a woman of about forty, said:

"Comrade Secretary, we've learned to decide questions as a kolkhoz community instead of each by himself. We still have the board. And we've got kolkhoz grain too. Don't worry, it's safely hidden. One pit contains grain due us for our workday units; in the other pit is the grain we must deliver to the state. How shall we turn it in? Will you come for it yourself, I mean your men, or shall we deliver it to you? The Germans took almost all our horses...."

"The grain should be distributed among the population."

"That we know. That's not the grain I'm talking about, the grain for the workday units. I mean the grain due the state. We discussed it at a board meeting yesterday. The crop was a rich one, there's a lot of grain coming to everyone for the workday units. Sell it to the Germans? It's no secret, there are some snakes who'd sell to anyone, just to get the money. But the Germans aren't going to pay for it. They know their business: they poke a tommy gun at you and say, 'Let's have it!' They'll take what we've earned for the workday units too So how can we distribute the state grain?... And so we decided who's our government, our state, our Red Army now? Of

course, the partisans. That means the grain due the state belongs to the partisans."

We saw that the kolkhoz board had prepared to make us an extremely valuable present.

Sooner or later our food stocks were bound to give out. In some detachments they already had. A serious and ticklish question now arose: Where to obtain supplies? Of course, our main source had to be German warehouses and supply trains but from time to time necessity would force us to turn for help to the local population What forms should this help take?

The gift of the kolkhoz people answered this question in considerable degree It was especially gratifying because it revealed the new traits of the Soviet peasant, Socialist traits.

"We won't refuse," said Yaremenko "Thank you We'll let you know later how to get the grain to us or how to keep it for us Only you must hide it in such a way that if there's any danger of a German raid it can be destroyed at once."

The meeting lasted more than two hours. We were asked a host of questions And there was only one person who tried to steer an underhanded course This was a skinny, poorly-dressed chap of about fifty with a keen, intent, but slufty look In what seemed to be a very friendly and intimate tone he said·

"And may I ask you whether you're Ukrainian?"

"What's the point?" I rejoined, on my guard.

"Nothing special ... Your name's Fyodorov, but you look like one of us ..."

"I'm Russian," I said (although actually I consider myself a Ukrainian) "Does that make any difference? Just what do you mean—one of us?"

"Why, nothing," he answered evasively, and pretended to smother a yawn

"No, you go on please. You started it, now finish it"

Just before the meeting ended the moustached old man who had asked whether to use an axe or dynamite spoke again. This time too he began with a question.

"Now here's what else I'd like to know: what are we going to do, comrade partisans, if the Germans burn down our village?"

Voices shouted at him: "Don't go borrowing trouble there, Stepan!"

"Hold on. There, they won't let a man speak. I'm liable to get balled up even without your butting in. The Germans are going to set fire to us—we know that for sure. If there's a wolf he's got to eat. But I'll say this to you, comrade partisans: don't feel bad about it. This is war. The worst ever.... I'll answer the question myself: we'll get ready for anything, for fire, for a cruel death, for agonizing torture. But there's one thing we're not good for, and that's licking the German's backside or pulling his plough. You tell that to Stalin, Comrade Fyodorov."

"Thank you, friend, we partisans thank you from the bottom of our hearts.... Only the trouble is we have no radio yet, no way of getting it to Moscow yet."

"That's your worry, how to do it." He grinned slyly "One heart can get a message across to another heart. And Stalin, I reckon, believes in us the way we do in him."

* * *

On the twenty ninth of November Yaremenko woke me at about five in the morning

"Alexei Fyodorovich, there's shooting! Alexei Fyodorovich, get up!"

We had learned the day before that a fairly large group of German occupants had mounted an offensive against the Perelyub detachment. The detachment had been forced to retreat into the heart of the forest. The

"The devil take you!" shouted Popudrenko "The way he twists and turns you can't get a straight word out of the man! Speak up now: did you fire?"

Yurchenko nodded.

"Why did you fire, why did you alarm the camp?"

The evening before, Yurchenko's group had been ordered to reconnoitre the forest in the direction of the village of Samotugi. It was not at all surprising that he should come across German scouts. So what if there was a little shooting? Yurchenko was no timid soul.

But it was not the echoes of distant firing that had roused the camp. No, the point was that several shots had been fired right here in camp, practically next to the headquarters dugout.

"My fault, Comrade Commanders," Yurchenko finally managed to utter. "I emptied my pistol into the air out of excitement."

"What'd you get so excited about?" Kapranov asked impatiently.

Interrupting him, I asked some of the comrades to step out. Only Popudrenko, Novikov and I remained in the dugout. Yurchenko continued to breathe hard and could not find the words he needed to make his report. I gave him a shot of liquor.

"Oh, Comrade Commander, Alexei Fyodorovich, there's a traitor among us!" he exclaimed "Honest to God, a traitor. You call in the boys. They'll tell you."

"Wait a minute. Where are your boys? Comrade Novikov, please round them up at once and tell them to keep quiet until we get to the bottom of this."

"Oh, that's right, they might babble," Yurchenko agreed.

He was a young squad leader and had not realized that such information had to be kept secret. And indeed, his men had already spread the news through the camp.

Yurchenko reported that about ten kilometres away

his group had noticed some Germans. They were moving in our direction.

"We opened fire and they answered, but the rats turned tail right away.... It was moonlight, and we noticed—it looked like one of our detachment fellows was with them—"

"Who was it? Speak up!"

"And who do you think it was?"

"Come on, cut out the riddles!"

It was not without reason that Yurchenko spoke evasively: like us he was hoping that there was a mistake somewhere.

But when he gave the man's name we no longer had any doubts.

It was Isayenko, a schoolteacher from the village of Syadrino.

Yurchenko explained that the boys had noticed a scarf on the man who had been with the Germans, and they were all used to seeing this scarf on Isayenko. He wore it in a special way, too.

"Go now," I ordered. "Go, and keep silent. Not a word to anyone."

I had been told several days before that partisan Isayenko often left for Syadrino to see his father. He asked permission, of course, saying that his father was ill and required attention. But then we received reports from the underground workers in the village that the schoolteacher's father was in favour with the Hitlerites and the *polizei*, that the starosta had given him a bullock and two sheep from the confiscated kolkhoz livestock.

I called in the son, of whose guilt I had no proof. Before me stood a thin man of about thirty with an ingratiating voice and a shifty manner. He answered my questions with exaggerated eagerness:

"I'll tell you everything, honest to goodness.... I'll explain, and if there's anyone who'll understand me I'm

sure it's you. You see, Comrade Detachment Commander, my Pa's a very religious man. He's a conscientious objector, so to speak .. He's ridiculously kind to everybody. He received the Germans very politely Maybe even too politely. The officers, you understand, liked that. They rewarded him for it. Pa didn't dare refuse. And now he wants to turn that bullock over to you, that is, to us, to the partisans ..."

"Look here, you're a schoolteacher, after all, and you ought to understand that these doings with your 'Pa' may turn out bad for you. Quit it. Drop it!"

"Allow me, Comrade Commander. I understand everything, honest to goodness. But why draw such conclusions? I'm thinking of drawing Pa into underground work. He's a patriot, I swear it. You know there are even priests who.... I'm even sure his air of submission ought to be used for intelligence purposes. What do you think?"

What Isayenko said made sense. His record was clean, but something told me he was a low-down character. I simply didn't take to him, didn't like him But that, after all, was no proof of guilt. Nevertheless I gave him a warning.

"Bear in mind that you'll have to put an end to your frequent absences from camp. And leave your 'Pa' in peace. We don't need his services "

We kept Isayenko under observation For several days he didn't go anywhere. And now, here you are .

We were all certain he wouldn't return to camp. Yet an hour later he came back, and he even wore that same scarf. He was brought to headquarters at once, of course

"Where did you go?"

"I found out my father was dying I ran over to see him."

"What's this? Got a private radio service? How'd you find out?"

"My little sister came to tell me. And so I was held

up at my father's bedside. I realize it was a breach discipline, I should have asked my commander's permi sion. But after that talk with you I was afraid he wouldn let me go. I deserve to be punished, I understand that, an I give my word of honour that I—filial feelings are out place when—"

"Did you come back alone?"

"What?" Isayenko instinctively glanced at the doo near which stood Popudrenko and Novikov.

"You rat, you were seen with a group of Germans! Popudrenko burst out. "Led them to the camp, you snake Speak up: did you?"

"No, honestly, I—"

"Eight men recognized you. Out with it!"

"I'll tell you, of course I'll tell you.... There were Germans. But I wasn't leading them. They were leading me ... Believe me. I'm not lying.... They caught me when I was returning....

"And then you managed to escape?" I asked.

"Yes, then I escaped," he hastened to agree, "I took advantage of the mix-up and slipped away...."

Novikov suddenly grabbed at his bulging pocket and drew a pistol out of it.

"And the Germans left you this as a keepsake, did they? Oh, you.. The whole truth! The whole of it at once!"

Isayenko crumpled to his knees.

Half an hour later I issued an order for the execution of the traitor in front of the line.

There was whispering throughout the camp.

"There, you see," said Bessarab's supporters. "We warned them.... We shouldn't have taken in outsiders."

"But look," the more sober-minded replied, "that's no argument. According to you, if a traitor crops up among us that means we should close the doors of the detachments to all honest people who want to fight the fascists?"

Meanwhile our position grew increasingly grave.

The enemy had established himself in all the towns and large villages around us. Well-fed, well-clad, healthy Germans rode about in cars, talked over the telephone, slept in warm beds beneath stout roofs. There were thousands of them right near us, all around our forest And if need be they could call out tanks, planes, artillery .

The sentries lead a youngster of fifteen up to the headquarters dugout. His clothes are covered with ice. He talks in a loud voice, almost in a shout.

Men come running out of the dugouts

"What's happened?"

"Who's come?"

"From Kozlyanichi, I think Name's Vasyuk."

"Which Vasyuk's that?"

"Brother of Fyodorov's adjutant"

"Why's he wet?"

"Swam, he says. Says things are bad there. SS punitive men have come. . . ."

A shaggy pony covered with hoarfrost is drawing a cartload of brushwood Two old men walk beside the cart. The commanders step out of their dugout to meet the cart.

"Who are you?"

"Going for brushwood."

The sentry interrupts:

"Don't listen to them. They're going into the forest with brushwood."

"Excuse us, sir. We lost our axe so we're going back for it. . . ."

"What's the matter, lived twenty-four years under the Soviet system and forgot the word 'comrade' after three months of occupation?"

"For that word they beat us—the starosta does and the Germans too."

"Then how does your friend get along without 'sir'? Or don't the Germans beat him because they think he's on their side?"

The second old fellow grins. "Got no teeth. Shed 'shir' once, and they beat me up."

Beneath the brushwood we find a thin Jewish lad and a dark-haired girl of sixteen holding on to one another. Both are trembling....

"What's this, eh, 'shir'? Out with it!"

"Are you really the partisans?"

Then the old men tell their story. The two youngsters ran into their village. Said they were Komsomol members. Brother and sister, Nepomnyashchy by name. From Mena. SS men came to Mena and began to shoot and hang people and rape the girls. And the local partisans were poorly armed, they'd broken up....

Messengers come running in. Scouts return....

The invaders have occupied Gulino. The cavalry group under Loshakov and Druzhinin has fallen back without offering resistance.

From Dobryanka, eighty kilometres away, arrives a group headed by Marusya Skripka. Marusya also brings bad news. The Dobryanka detachment has been routed after stubborn fighting. Commander Yavtushenko, who was also secretary of the district committee of the Party, was killed in action. The chairman of the district Soviet, Epstein, is gravely, perhaps mortally, wounded.

From Chernigov comes the report that Comrade Tolchko's group fell into the hands of the Gestapo. All were tortured for a long time and then shot. There are scores of gallows in the town. On one of them hang a man and a woman with sacks over their heads, to hide their faces.

and with signs on their chest: the name Maria Demchenko on the woman's body and Fyodorov on the man's.*

"How's that? Why, here's Fyodorov, standing before you. And Demchenko doesn't come from Chernigov anyway. Besides, she's in the Soviet rear."

The bearers of the news shrug their shoulders. "We don't know."

Balitsky and his men are back from Koryukovka. The fascists set fire to the place. On the way back the scouts visited the spot where the Koryukovka detachment had been located. They found the dugouts smashed and the bodies of several dead partisans lying among the ruins. Where were the others? Had they gone off? Or been taken prisoner?

From all parts of the region people come to us, to our snowed-under dugouts. All we hear are the words: shot, killed, arrested....

* * *

What with the unavoidable upset caused by the bad news in those difficult days, an outsider might not have noticed our fighting spirit or the existence of premeditated action and a firm and coordinated plan

But in the privacy of the headquarters dugout the commanders were stubbornly toiling over the plan of an offensive operation The top men, myself among them, naturally could not remain calm in face of the alarming reports brought in by the scouts and messengers. There was only one way out of the situation: to take the offensive

Strange as it may seem, our trump card was the enemy's self-confidence. Reports came from Pogoreltsy that

* Later we learned that the Germans "hanged" me three times in Chernigov, twice in Nezhin and many more times in various district centres.—*Author's note*

the German garrison had settled down there with ever comfort. The Germans ate and drank a lot, caroused a night, and undressed when they went to bed.

A large number of them were stationed there—no les than five hundred men. We were highly pleased to lear that our scouts had found the Pogoreltsy population pro foundly sympathetic and burning with desire to help th partisans. It was only thanks to the kolkhoz people tha more and more reconnoitred spots appeared on the plan Rvanov was drawing up: the headquarters, machine-gun nests, parking places, ammunition depot, fuel store and the quarters of Major Schwalbe and Lieutenant Ferrenc

Our greatest helper was Vasya Korobko, a 14-year-old Pogoreltsy schoolboy This thin, dark-haired peasant lad had long been begging to be taken into the detachment. Several times he came to see Balabai.

"Take me in, Alexander Petrovich," he would say. "I'll stand up under anything. I'm small, and I can crawl through any place. I'll never be afraid of anything!"

Still Balabai could not make up his mind to take him into the detachment. Then Vasya begged for at least an assignment. He was advised to fix himself up in the German commandant's office, which was located in the building of the village Soviet.

"Shining the Germans' boots?" Vasya asked glumly

"But you yourself said you were ready for anything."

He really did take to shining the Germans' boots, and he so managed to worm his way into their confidence that they never suspected him when a leaflet from our forest printshop made its appearance on the very door of the commandant's office

After that there was a terrible rumpus in Pogoreltsy. The fascists tore up the floors in five peasant houses. For some reason they decided that if it was an "underground" printshop then it must really be under the floor.

Through Balabai Vasya sent us a most detailed plan of Pogoreltsy that he had drawn himself. The house in which the commandant lived was depicted in cross-section in this plan.

"That's the bed," Vasya explained. "And this is the commandant himself lying in the bed with his head toward the window. I drew a swastika on his forehead so you wouldn't make a mistake."

The night of November 29 a Young Pioneer named Galya Gorbach came to the camp and in frightful excitement told us:

"The most mysterious German's staying at our house. He's an officer. And his orderly is as good-looking as an officer. When the rest are asleep these two whisper about something all the time. They've got a special suitcase and they hide it from everybody, sometimes they cover it with rags and sometimes they put it under the floor boards Yesterday they took it to the stable and buried it in the manure."

"What do you think is in this suitcase?"

"I don't know. Mama doesn't either. When they whisper to each other we stand by the window and listen Only it's in German and we don't understand it."

We thanked Galya, of course, and told her to convey thanks to her mama from the partisans. We wanted to send someone to accompany her back but she refused. And she couldn't have been a day over fourteen. Before she left she said, her eyes lighting up:

"Could you give me a grenade? Just one. Polya Gorodash has three of them only she's stingy. She's my best friend, but she won't give me one for anything."

"What do you need a grenade for?"

She smiled slyly. "People say you have forty boxes of those grenades, and maybe more They're just lying around, but I'd throw—"

Kapranov roared with delight. Wiping away the tears, he said over and over again:

"There's a girl for you, a real partisan!"

I called him over and told him in a whisper to give her some candy. He immediately turned serious.

"There isn't any, Alexei Fyodorovich."

I had to repeat the instruction. He carried it out unwillingly. Oddly enough, the girl wasn't pleased with the candy. She took it, it's true, but she seemed really hurt that we hadn't given her a grenade.

It was a great temptation to tell Galya that we would soon be seeing her again.

On the evening of November 30 an alarm was sounded in the camp and the order drawn up long beforehand went into effect: all the platoons were to pick up and march during the night to the positions of the Perelyub detachment in the Topolev woods for concerted action.

The weather favoured us. A blinding snowstorm arose. The moon came up only after midnight. The march was an extremely difficult one, but then it was just what we had wished for—a complete secret.

At noon on December 1 the partisans of four detachments joined up near the Topolev woods. The men started making friends. At last the amalgamation had really taken place. Now there were some three hundred men in the united detachment.

But the enemy gave us no chance to rest after the difficult march. An hour later a force the size of a company arrived in trucks, fanned out and began combing the woods.

Of course, the fascist scouts were nowhere around that night. The Fritzes were sure that they would still find Balabal's small detachment here. In ten minutes our joint forces routed the enemy. Leaving sixteen dead on the field of battle, he turned and fled.

Here is where we found out we had a lot of brave men among us. Our boys counter-attacked with such fury, so spiritedly and so noisily, that the fascists took to their heels without a glance backward. An especially good showing in this battle was made by Artazeyev, who had come to us from Dobryanka with Marusya Skripka. At first he fired from behind cover, but when the Hitlerites bolted he rose to his enormous height and set off after them on his long legs And was his dander up! Before overtaking the fascists he suddenly somersaulted at full speed. We all thought he was wounded. But he jumped up again, ran on, caught up with two Fritzes and belaboured them with his rifle butt and bayonet until both were laid low.

Later we found out that Artazeyev had stopped to take off his boots, which were too large and bothered him, and then barefoot pursued the Germans through the snow.

Then there was Yuly Sinkevich, who had seemed a quiet, modest chap. To tell the truth, we all thought him a coward, but in this night battle he killed three Hitlerites. And what a change in the man! He kept thumping Artazeyev on the shoulder, began to eat more, and demanded a double ration of liquor from Kapranov. That evening, while the rest were singing and dancing around the campfires, Sinkevich gave his rifle a thorough cleaning.

The men did not yet know what awaited them that night. Many were surprised when at ten o'clock they were ordered to throw snow over the fires and take a nap.

At two a.m. we roused everybody. Each company, each platoon and each squad was given a specific assignment. At 4:30 on December 2 we all crawled up to the assault positions. At 5:00 Ryanov pulled the trigger of his rocket pistol.

CHAPTER TWO

FIRST SUCCESSES

The Pogoreltsy operation does not belong to the category of major military operations or very skilfully conducted ones. It was simply a bold raid that took the enemy by surprise. Although we spent a fairly long time preparing for it, I am not sure it went off without tactical mistakes.

However, the operation was of very great importance to us. Later both officers and men often recalled it around campfires and told the newcomers about it. Even now we invariably go over the episodes of that engagement when we get together.

As we crawled toward the village of Pogoreltsy that early morning the commanders and the members of the R.C. were more nervous than anybody else. They realized that the loss of this battle might mean the failure of the partisan movement in the region or at any rate a serious blow to it. If we failed we would have to start all over again from the beginning.

Before us in the snowy steppe lies a large dark village. Through it runs a highway. Seven kilometres from the village the forest from which we emerged two hours before looms black. A late moon hangs low in the sky. It is frosty and there is a moderate wind.

The group with which Popudrenko, Yaremenko, Rvanov and I are crawling is stretched out in a line along the bed of a gully. There are sixteen in our group. In the

four groups surrounding the village there are 242 partisans in all We try not to talk or even to whisper All the men and officers know the exact location of our command post. This is the kolkhoz storage yard, now neglected, in which a broken winnowing machine, the flywheel from an engine, a heap of rusty gears and a worn-down millstone were lying about in disorder.

We peer at our watches. They all say something different. We decide to synchronize them by Rvanov's. Just a few minutes left before the signal.

These few minutes are the tensest. We stare at one spot. A peaceful wisp of smoke curls up from the tall house in the centre of the village in which the enemy headquarters is located. Not only this wisp of smoke but the village as a whole looks as though there were no war going on. Yet there are more than five hundred enemy soldiers and officers in the village, sent here especially to wipe us out. At the moment they are sleeping, snoring, scratching themselves in their sleep Or so we imagine. But who knows, maybe they have long since prepared to meet us and are sitting in ambush snickering as they wait for us to give the signal and go into attack .. Twelve persons in the village know that Rvanov will send up a green rocket at 5 00

Rvanov raises the rocket pistol and pulls the trigger. But there is no report. And just at that moment someone strikes a gong in the centre of the village

"An alarm, the rats!" Popudrenko cannot contain himself and jumps out of concealment.

I pull him back. A second strike of the gong, then a third. But the village remains as quiet as before Rvanov astonishes me at that moment: his rocket pistol misfires, but he swears only in a whisper A fourth strike, a fifth.... Rvanov swings the firing-pin of the rocket pistol down on the millstone with all his might. With a hiss and a sputter the green light soars into the sky.

Later we learn that the gong had not been an ala
but merely the striking of the hour.

A second passes, two seconds. Shots ring out. T
partisans rise and run toward the village. To the rig
near the church, there is the blast of an explosion. A hu
flame shoots up. It leaps higher and higher, lighting
the village. Now we see the Germans too. Glass tinkl
and white figures tumble out of windows. A Germ
machine gun starts chattering but immediately pete
out. Half-dressed Hitlerites by the score dash helter-sk
ter, all of them shouting at the top of their voices. Th
cries merge in an unbroken wail that reaches
through the continuous crackle of tommy guns a
rifles.

Fascists run toward us, too, straight toward o
command post, screaming one and the same words ov
and over again:

*"Russische partisan, Russische, Russische, Russisch
partisan!"*

We were to hear this wail fairly often for the ne
three years. From out of smashed tanks, burning hea
quarters buildings, wrecked railway coaches terro
stricken Hitlerites will run shouting as today:

"Russische, Russische, Russische partisan!"

The flames leap higher and higher: the boys of Gr
menko's platoon have set fire to the fuel dump.

The fascists who run toward us in panic fear we la
low to the last man. After that we cannot hold ourselve
back and we follow Popudrenko into the thick of the bat
tle. Now our command post is on the main street of th
village. Here it is light and lively. Trucks are burning
Hitlerites jump from them. The battle begins to subside
We go on and suddenly by the light of the fire we catch
a glimpse of a girl standing on a porch in nothing bu
a dress. Damn it if it isn't Galya!

"Galya!" I shout. "Go and hide!"

She turns to me and says gaily:

"But there aren't any more Germans—they're all dead."

A woman comes running up. "Follow me, I've got three Germans in the bathhouse."

Our men toss grenades into the bathhouse. The firing dies away.

I look at my watch. The fighting has been going on for forty minutes

Kapranov shouts, calling for people to help collect the booty captured from the Germans and load it into trucks Novikov comes running up to me. Recognizing Galya, he asks:

"Well, where are your handsome Germans with the suitcase?"

Galya is very much put out. they ran away. She goes down the street with us, examining the twisted bodies. There are many bodies. Two men are counting them; they were specially detailed to do so. Suddenly Galya dashes ahead:

"There's the one, that's him, help me!" she shouts, trying to pull a suitcase out of the stiffened hand of a huge, red-headed nonoom.

I lift the big duralumin suitcase which looked like imitation leather, and Balabai opens it with his bayonet as he would a tin can. Women's collars, karakul pelts, watches, silk garments and even brassieres lie neatly folded inside the suitcase. People gather around us. Here is an occasion for a meeting.

Yaremenko mounts the porch of a house. Partisans and villagers come running up from all sides. Women come running too, many of them with loaves of bread and pitchers of milk.

"This is what the fascist invaders want from us," says Yaremenko, and lifting the suitcase high he shows everybody the contents.

This is more impressive than any speech.

Among the partisans I see newcomers, Pogoreltsy peasants. They stand out because they carry only captured tommy guns and rifles.

Rvanov comes up. "Time to withdraw," he says. "We planned the operation for half an hour and more than an hour has already passed."

But just at that moment up runs Yemelyanov, our feldsher. "Three wounded. One fracture. We need a cast, but we haven't any plaster.... I ran to the hospital—a few Germans with a machine gun are there."

The battle for plaster lasted eight minutes. Rvanov sends up a white rocket from a new German rocket pistol. Cease fire! The partisans come running up. We form into a column and march out of Pogoreltsy.

Half a kilometre out of the village we all begin hugging and congratulating one another and talking nineteen to the dozen.

Above us all towers Popudrenko, mounted on an enormous and very vicious German stallion.

"Call this a horse? It's a devil!" Popudrenko tells me, pounding the stallion on the head with his fist. "Careful there, Alexei Fyodorovich, step aside. He bites like a crocodile."

At my request he orders in a stentorian voice:

"Stop the chatter! Hustle along!"

Someone strikes up "Through the Valleys and Over the Hills." And now we suddenly discover that our boys are splendid, simply marvelous, singers....

* * *

Such is my general impression of the operation. Of course, I haven't told everything. Group leaders came running up to our CP several times. Rvanov reported indignantly that Bessarab's platoon had not managed to straddle the road in time and a good three hundred fascists

had got away in the direction of Semyonovka Every ten minutes messengers reported on the progress of the operation. All three of us—I, Rvanov and Popudrenko—issued instructions.

The actual results of the battle were the following we destroyed the ammunition depot, fuel dump and supply and provisions stores, two guns, nine trucks and eighteen motorcycles. The enemy lost more than a hundred in killed. Our casualties were three wounded.

The detachment carried through the operation to wipe out the German invaders in the village of Pogoreltsy with a rating of "good" Eighteen men were cited in an order of the day. We drew the special attention of everybody to fighting man Arsenty Kovtun's heroic deed.

A man well on in years, before the war chairman of a kolkhoz, Arsenty Kovtun signed up for the detachment and went off to the forest even before the occupation. His seventeen-year-old son Grisha joined the partisans at the same time. Both were enrolled in the Perelyub detachment.

Arsenty Kovtun was a calm, silent, powerfully-built man who called himself a soldier and really did carry himself like an old, experienced soldier. He didn't push himself forward but when he was given a job he did it well, no matter what it was—whether peeling potatoes, chopping down a tree, digging an excavation for a dugout, or bringing in a "tongue"....

In this battle Kovtun was ordered to remove the sentry before headquarters quietly. He crawled up only to discover that there was a pair of them. two German sentries were marching around the house Kovtun waited for the signal. When the rocket rose over Pogoreltsy he flung himself at the nearest sentry, who succeeded in firing a shot, however. The bullet smashed the binoculars hanging about Kovtun's neck but this did not stop him and he came to grips with the German. They crashed to

the ground, the German landing on top. The second se try danced around, not daring to shoot. Later Kovtun sa he had deliberately let the German remain on top of hi

When partisans ran up Kovtun instantly threw off t German, sprang to his feet and gave him a tremendo blow over the head with his rifle butt. The butt burst in splinters. The second sentry fired several times; two bu lets went through Kovtun's greatcoat. He charged an plunged his bayonet into the German. Then Grish ran up.

"You all right, Pa?" he asked, excited.

"Yes, son, I'm all right," Kovtun answered as h wrenched the rifle from the stiff fingers of the sentry an dashed into the thick of battle.

All day long the partisans kept telling one anothe about this encounter. Kovtun himself did not say any thing, but when persistently urged he gave sober an precise answers.

"That German that lay on top of you, Uncle Arsenty was he heavy?"

"He didn't lie on me. He was rolling on me."

"A big guy, was he?"

"Big all right, but that wasn't all of it. He smelled like a distillery. Loaded down with rum, and his tongue hanging out like that dog's over there."

"How did you break the butt? Was his head as tough as all that?"

"He wore a helmet. And his head was hard too. Well, and I had an Italian rifle—the quality's not all it might be. . . ."

Some fifteen kilometres out of Pogoreltsy we heard the echo of distant firing. First machine guns opened up, then came several dull heavy explosions.

"Germans fighting Germans," the scouts soon reported. "Reinforcements for the Pogoreltsy garrison came up from Semyonovka. The Germans that remained in Pogo-

reltsy thought the partisans had come back and opened fire. And the Semyonovka Germans thought the partisans had entrenched themselves in the village. They began smoking them out with artillery They fought half an hour"

"There's a just war for you!" said our hero, Kovtun.

Every time we managed to set the fascists against one another after that our men said

"There's a just war!"

* * *

We returned to the forest in which the regional detachment stood before the Pogoreltsy engagement Where one hundred men had lived before we now had over three hundred—all the platoons plus the Pogoreltsy reinforcements. It was freezing weather, with a fierce icy wind blowing often. Winter was just setting in. The real frosts were still to come; and besides, the food situation was definitely growing worse—our supplies were coming to an end

But it was as if we had received a new set of men They were more disciplined and carried out all orders quickly and willingly. Evenings around the campfires they took apart and studied German rifles, tommy guns and machine guns

"That's right, comrades. No one will be giving us any weapons within the immediate future. Fighting man Kovtun, answer this question: Who's the main provider of weapons for the Ukrainian partisans?"

"Hitler!" says Kovtun, rising to his feet and saluting

"As you were. You don't know the subject Malchik, what do you say?"

Scout Malakh Malchik* was actually around seventy. He had been a member of the Party since 1917. An ex-forester and ex-carpenter, he was agile, quick, efficient

* Malchik means "boy" in Russian —*Trans*

and could turn his hand to anything. He came to th
detachment with two grown sons, a daughter and a son
in-law. He was thoroughly at home in the forest. In every
village he had friends.

"Our main source of supply, Alexei Fyodorovich," he
answered with a grin, "is partisan bravery."

"No," Semyon Tikhonovsky interrupted him. Semyon
was always sure to think up something. "The main parti-
san provider is confidence. If you're confident of victory
you'll win, and live a hundred years after the war."

"Huh, isn't he the confident guy!"

"Absolutely! Ever hear the story how the partisan and
the German argued about encirclement?"

"Tell us, Semyon Mikhailovich."

Tikhonovsky didn't have to be asked twice.

"Well," he began, "a German meets a partisan.
Surrender,' the German says, 'because I'm going to sur-
round you and wipe you out.' 'You're just a stupid parrot,
that's what' the partisan says. 'How can you surround
me when you're all surrounded yourself and haven't any
place to go?' 'Ha ha ha,' the German says, but he takes
a look around. 'I'll get to the Urals,' he says, 'the Fü-
rer's leading me!' But again he looks around. 'How can
you encircle us and win,' says the partisan again, 'when
all you do is keep turning your head, shooting your eyes
back all the time? And you can't help looking back be-
cause bullets every-[illegible] your surroundings on all sides, and
there's anger in the eyes and fear and death.' The German
[illegible] 'Shut up or I'll kill you!' But he can't help
turning around and looking back again. And here the partisan
[illegible]

"I was [illegible] to fire I should be
[illegible] looking back [illegible] the camp. How easily
[illegible] partisans say, the Germans were
[illegible]

And now even the forest seems different. Evenings the light of the fires reveals a magnificent, even a majestic, scene. The air is crisp, faces are rosy, there is laughter, noise and gay ringing voices. Some wrestle in the snow, some strike up a song Steam rises from the kettles —supper will soon be ready....

Bessarab comes up. " Folks, ahem, er, are in a good mood!"

"What do you think is the reason?"

Bessarab twirls his moustache thoughtfully

"I think, Alexei Fyodorovich, this phenomenon is to be explained by the fact that we, ahem, er, joined forces and struck at the enemy with our combined efforts . "

"So we were right in uniting?"

The man is extremely conceited, he feels he should admit he was in the wrong but he wants it to appear as if he were doing me a favour.

"Labour picks a man up. Now we've laboured That's why, I think, the men's mood is up to the mark "

"That means we did right in uniting?"

"We chose the right moment. At that moment, ahem, it was necessary to act together "

That ends the talk with Bessarab Deep down in his heart he still clings stubbornly to his previous views But the facts are so obvious that he has to make a temporary retreat.

We considered the main result of the Pogoreltsy operation to be a general rise in morale The men began to have respect for themselves, to have confidence in their strength Now we frequently heard talk about the need for still bolder and bigger raids However, in reality our success was much broader and much more significant than we believed.

As I have already said, 242 partisans took part in the Pogoreltsy engagement. Besides, several villagers helped us spy out the enemy's strength A number of the men

who guided our companies to the village were also local people. After the battle almost all of them joined the detachment. But it was not only scouts and guides who made up the reinforcements from Pogoreltsy.

During the engagement we had many helpers whom we did not know and upon whose help we had not counted.

Later we became accustomed to having scores of nameless helpers fighting alongside with us in every community. A battle is exciting, it stirs even timid souls. When the German flees he is pursued not only by the partisan's bullet. Old women fling pots at him from windows, boys fire slingshots at him from attics, the lame trip him up with their crutches. In this way they give vent to long-suppressed hatred for the enemy.

It was in the Pogoreltsy engagement that we first came to know such helpers Some of them grew so bold they came out into the open and joined the fight. They snatched up guns dropped by the Germans and used them to kill the enemy.

After the battle many of these comrades came to the detachment. "We simply can't remain in the village any longer," they declared.

The Pogoreltsy reinforcements were quite sizable—more than fifty people.

But as a matter of fact, actually this figure was considerably greater. The day after the operation more than ten volunteers came to our camp. The next day twenty-two came. People came on the third day and on the fourth. And not only from Pogoreltsy but from Bogdanovka, Oleshnya, Chenchiki and Samotugi. Old men, women, girls and even children of twelve and thirteen came and asked if they could "sign up with the partisans."

In all these villages located within a radius of ten to fifteen kilometres from our camp people tumbled out into the streets that early morning of the Pogoreltsy oper-

ation, looked at the glow in the sky and listened with hope to the sounds of battle. Everybody realized this could not be punitive detachments out on a sadistic spree. What could have happened then? Did the Red Army break through? Or did it drop paratroopers? There were all kinds of guesses

And, of course, the news spread like wildfire. Without newspapers or the radio the people of the remotest villages learned that the partisans had finally emerged from the forest and were giving it to the Germans. The Hitlerites and their henchmen had just been trumpeting high and low that there were no partisans anywhere "Small groups of Bolshevik bandits are hiding in the forests They will soon be caught and wiped out," is what they said. And now the Germans were fleeing in panic across the fields and down the roads. Attacking a garrison that size was no joke! No, those were no small groups in the forests but hundreds and maybe even thousands of partisans. And they had machine guns and mortars and cannon!

The fascists themselves set up a howl that they had been attacked by a powerful, well-armed detachment. They couldn't, after all, admit that the garrison had been routed by a group of partisans.

This was the first outstanding partisan action in Chernigov Region. It showed the people that, living and operating side by side with them on enemy-occupied territory, were their defenders, avengers of their trampled honour. Soviet men and women began to lift their heads.

* * *

We fortified our forest positions. Almost daily either Hitlerites or Hungarians attacked us from one side or the other. Sometimes the enemy flung newly-formed police units against us. An alarm would be sounded in camp

around ten or eleven in the morning, and two or three companies would set out to meet the enemy.

Occasionally we made raids on enemy garrisons. Not all of them were as successful as the Pogoreltsy raid, but all were sufficiently telling. The invaders seemed to have resigned themselves to our existence and for the time being recognized the forest as a partisan zone.

We soon gathered, though, that at that period the German command was deliberately refraining from throwing large forces against us. It was confident that it would not be difficult to ferret out and annihilate the partisans at any time. It saw its primary task to be the organization of its rule, total enslavement of the population. "Inspire fear in all who survive. The stamp of the German boot must make the Russian heart quake." Such was the task Alfred Rosenberg set the soldiers in the army of occupation.

But this program of terror suffered a fiasco, as, indeed, did everything else the arrogant and insolent fascists thought up.

One day our men brought a "tongue" into headquarters. He was a noncom of the SS troops. We called in Karl Shveilik, an interpreter from Balabai's company, to help with the questioning. Karl was a native of the Ukraine and a real Soviet patriot.

During the interrogation the SS man asked our interpreter if he was a German.

"Yes," Karl answered, "I'm a German but not one who's been doped by Hitler."

The SS man, whose hands were tied, tried to kick Karl. Even after he was given a slap in the face he kept spitting and shouting.

"Fools! You'll all be caught in two weeks and hanged!"

"Why in two weeks? Why not now? Scared?"

"Right now you are useful to our command."

We burst out laughing. But there was a grain of truth in what the SS man said: the occupation authorities thought they would be able to turn the population against the partisans.

In some places the Germans themselves formed partisan detachments.

They issued arms to released criminals and inveterate bandits and gave them a free hand to plunder and kill the population. The bandits were ordered to pretend they were partisans.

This provocative plan was as stupid as it was insidious. Only the very naive fell for it. The majority of the population was able to distinguish unerringly between real partisans and agents provocateurs .. It sought protection against these bandits not from the occupation authorities or from the police but from us.

With the help of the population our reconnaissance established that one such band was operating in the village of Lukovitsy in Koryukovka District. The platoon commanded by Comrade Kozik and my R.C. aide, Comrade Balitsky, were given the assignment of wiping out the agents provocateurs.

Our men took the bandits by surprise and after disarming them led them out into the street All the village inhabitants gathered to watch the trial Balitsky read aloud the R.C. leaflet "Who Are the Partisans." Then all the loot found on the bandits was distributed among the victims The bandits were shot on the spot, in the presence of the villagers.

After the Pogoreltsy operation the German garrisons in the neighbouring hamlets and villages received sizable reinforcements. According to our intelligence reports, the enemy had some three thousand men concentrated around Reimentarovka Forest. They were in no hurry to fight the partisans, preferring the easier "job!" of taking reprisals against the population.

Villages went up in flames. In their posters and leaflets the invaders wrote that they were "wiping out partisan nests." Actually they conducted no investigations whatsoever. Punitive units would break into villages and drive all the people from their homes. Those who tarried to snatch up some necessary articles, or who put up resistance, were shot on the spot. After taking the warm clothing, bicycles, phonographs, watches, money and other valuables and driving off the cattle, the punitive expedition would set fire to the houses one after another.

Burgomasters appeared in the district centres nearest us—Kholmy and Koryukovka Field and economic commandants' offices began "working." The Gestapo arrived and settled down in houses with big deep cellars. Pan Dobrovolsky, chief of police for the Ukraine east of the Dnieper, and his staff took up residence in the resort town of Sosnitsa, at the confluence of the Desna and the Ubed. In all the inhabited points police squads were set up and starostas "elected" in quick order.

The majority of the starostas put into office by the occupants were bitter enemies of the people. The partisans fought and exposed them and mercilessly put to death the basest and cruelest of them. Sometimes, however, the Hitlerites were unable to find an out-and-out traitor in a village and were forced to appoint as starosta a man they had not fully probed, just so long as he was not a Communist or an especially active supporter of Soviet power. And so, before taking any measures against a starosta we first found out from the inhabitants what sort of man he was. If he proved to be wavering in the least we sent people to him to try and win him over to our side.

Besides, we endeavoured to get our own, tested, men appointed to the post. The reader already knows that one such agent of the Bolshevik underground was Yegor

Bodko who had been left behind in Lisovlye Sorochintsy by the district committee of the Party. Now we continued selecting new people for this work.

One night as I was returning to the headquarters dug-out after making the rounds I heard the loud laughter of Nikolai Nikitich Popudrenko; his laughter was always very hearty and infectious. Upon opening the door I found Popudrenko sitting by the lamp with two old men whom I did not know.

Popudrenko threw me a glance and again roared with delight.

"You just listen to this, Alexei Fyodorovich!" he exclaimed. "Here's a deputation that's a deputation!"

It was evident the old men didn't share his gay mood. One of them looked downright gloomy. The other rose when he noticed me and declared in a hurt voice:

"If we're weak in the head then explain us what's what. We've come to you for help, for advice"

Popudrenko immediately became serious.

"Repeat it, dad," he said. "Tell it to our commander Don't feel hurt. It really is an important matter, and you can be sure we'll settle it one way or another. I wasn't laughing at you... I was simply tickled by what you told me."

The old men exchanged glances. I sat down at the table opposite them and offered them some makhorka.

"We come from Guta village—" one of them began

"You ought to give orders, Comrade Commander," the other interrupted, "so it'd be easier to get to you. The sentry held us up two hours. And this is urgent."

"We come from Guta village," the first one repeated. "A speaker of yours came to our place—I don't know whether from the Party or from the partisans. That speaker read us the war bulletin—our thanks to him—and told us how things were going at the front and how we ought to fight the Germans and fool them.

"He was a tall fellow, and dark. We don't know his name. But he's a good speaker, gets at your insides....

"Well, how to fool the Germans so they won't pinch us too hard. That speaker said the Germans would come to our village soon to choose a starosta. That they'd hold something in the way of elections. And so your speaker told us to pick one of our men beforehand. For starosta, that is. So that the Germans would think that man of ours was for them but really he'd be for us. That right, Stepan?" The narrator asked his companion, throwing an angry glance at Popudrenko, as much as to say, "What's funny about this, anyway?"

"That's right," Stepan answered. "Exactly right. And he said, besides, that our man ought to go to the commandant and lay it on thick as he's a kulak and all for the fascist order. Is that right, Ivan?"

"Right it is."

"Seven of us got together. We started talking each other into it: you go, Stepan; you go, Ivan; well, then, you go be the starosta, Sergei Vasilievich! Every one refused." The old man inhaled deeply and made a significant pause.

"Yes," I remarked cautiously. "It's a complicated matter. A tough matter. It has to be pulled off so the fascists believe it. Otherwise it's the rope! It's a dangerous job! A very brave and self-sacrificing man is needed."

"What kind, do you say?"

"A self-sacrificing man, I say. A man who's ready to die for his people."

I gave the old man a brief account of the life, work and heroic death of Yegor Yevtukhovich Bodko.

The old men, deeply moved, were silent for a while. Then Stepan said:

"What you said is right. Nowadays death goes around carrying a German tommy gun instead of a scythe. Dying is easy. The hard thing is not to die for nothing. Com-

ade Bodko who became an assistant starosta had a good tory. They checked up on him—and sure enough, here's i man expelled from the Party, so he can be trusted with German affairs. That means he was brave and had brains too. But with us it's different, Comrade Commander—"

"I see you think we're all cowards, eh?" the other old man interrupted. "But that's not so. The Germans aren't so dumb they'll just put anybody in that job. They'll look around and ask questions. And that's what we did—we sized up our men the way the Germans would. How many men are left in the village? Well, Yeremei, we didn't count him: he isn't all there. Vasili Kozhukh we crossed off the list too: home-brew's the main thing in his life. Without them, these batty ones, there are forty-two men. . . ."

"And the men are all right. Good men, all for the Soviet system. Some are better, others worse. Well, we'd help him out. That's not the trouble, Comrade Commander. . . ."

Here Popudrenko smiled again. The old men fell silent. I looked at him and shook my head. He got up and went out.

"What's he laughing about?" one of the old men asked. "Now you, I see, are looking at it seriously."

"Listen some more. . . . So some of us got together with the ex-chairman of our kolkhoz, and started going over the men—what each one's like. Just like we were filling out a questionnaire for each one from memory. will he do for a German flunkey, will they believe he's loyal or will they find him out and hang him?"

"First we wanted Alexander Petrenko."

"Fellow with a head on his shoulders, and young, not yet forty."

"He ran the kolkhoz auditing commission. And before that, fifteen years back, he was one of the chiefs

in the Komsomol, a member of the Bureau, or something...."

I interrupted the old men. "Too prominent a man. *That kind won't do*, comrades. *He'd be found out right off.*"

"That's just what we say too. It can't be done—out of the question! So we tried another one—Andrei Khizhnyak. He was head of the commission on state credits and loans. And was active in fighting the kulaks. We voted him down.

"Then came Dekhterenko. He's a quiet man, real old, and he's religious. But his head works all right. 'I don't refuse,' he says. 'I'm for the people. Only there's a hitch.' 'What's the hitch, Pavel Spiridonovich?' 'The hitch is,' he says, 'that my eldest son Mikola's a colonel in the Red Army, and my middle son Grigory worked in the district Party committee in that town called Vilnius, and my daughter Varvara Pavlovna, you know yourselves, was assistant manager of the street railway department in Kiev. So now figure it out for yourselves if their father's fit to be *starosta*.' So we *decided he wouldn't do either.*"

"Yes, it's a tough situation," I agreed. Now I knew why Popudrenko laughed. I was having a hard time holding back a smile myself.

"Just wait, Comrade Fyodorov. We pick on Gerasim Klyuchnik. He's a gloomy guy, with eyebrows like a visor. Just the right looks for the job. So Ivan and I go to his house. But he's not in. We ask his wife where he is. 'Don't know,' she says. Just as we come out we see him heading through the gully for the woods carrying a bundle. We shout, 'Gerasim!' He turns around. 'What do you want?' 'Gerasim, serve the people. You've kept quiet all these Soviet years, didn't speak for or against. You're just the man for *starosta*. You just run things with your mouth shut, don't say anything to the Germans and don't say anything to us. And if it's got to be done, then punish

someone as if it's for violating the fascist rules. The main thing is not let the Germans know what the people are doing. If a partisan comes or a war prisoner son returns to his mother—to keep him out of German sight'

"Gerasim thinks a while, scratches his head and then he answers, 'I can't' 'Why not?' 'I can't, and that's all What are you pestering me for? If I could I'd be glad to' And again he's silent. 'But tell us, Gerasim, we're your friends.' 'All right,' he says, 'I'll tell you! You know Sokolenko?' 'Which Sokolenko? No one of that name in the village.'

"And Ivan and I look at each other. Why'd he bring up Sokolenko now? All through the Soviet years this Sokolenko used to write things for the papers about our village. There used to be items signed by him in the district and Chernigov papers and even in a Kiev paper. If there was an embezzlement or if the chairman worked bad or if there was something else fishy—bango, a little article And he wrote poetry, too, that Sokolenko"

"'Funny guys you are,' Gerasim says to us. 'That Sokolenko was me! Sokolenko was my pen name See? So what kind of starosta can I be? There's just one thing for me—to join the partisans!'

"And so, Comrade Commander," Stepan continued, "no matter who we take he has the Soviet stamp on him this one was a deputy to the district Soviet or a member of the village Soviet, that one was a Stakhanovite, the next one a brigade leader .. No matter where you turn they're all unsuitable."

The old man fell silent. He glanced at me reproachfully and then rose. But I managed to repress a smile.

"Believe me, comrades," I said, "what you've told me is simply splendid. . . ."

"What's splendid about it? The Germans'll put up Petro Gorokh, or even worse, Ivan Solomenny. Why, that one's a thief Such a rowdy he is, he even breaks his own

windows, to say nothing of other people's. He'd agree to be starosta, that one. He likes the Germans."

Popudrenko returned.

"Well, Nikolai Nikitich, what advice shall we give the comrades?"

We puzzled over it a long time and finally came to the conclusion no better candidate could be found than Sokolenko, that is, Klyuchnik. The more so since he really did come to the forest the day before and was enrolled in one of our companies.

The orderly summoned Klyuchnik. He turned out to be a kolkhoz man of fifty-two with a big, heavy face, a sombre, beetle-browed look and compressed lips.

"Too bad you revealed your pseudonym, Comrade Klyuchnik. We've just come to the conclusion that nobody can handle the job of starosta better than you."

He nodded silently.

"What do you think—the people to whom you revealed your pseudonym won't give you away?"

"But there were just the two of us, Comrade Commander!" one of the old men exclaimed.

"Well, that means they won't," said Popudrenko.

Klyuchnik nodded again.

"So you agree it's a job that has to be done and that there's no one else to give it to?"

"Now I see it."

"Then go and get to work And the main thing—don't get caught Good luck!"

On that we said goodbye. When a printed partisan newspaper began coming out a few months later it carried fairly frequent items about rural life which bore Sokolenko's by-line. No one ever found out that the author of those items was the man the invaders had set up as the starosta of the village of Guta.

* * *

The survivors of burned-out villages scattered throughout the entire region. Hundreds of families dragged along the roads seeking refuge with relatives, friends or simply kind folk.

But by far not all the homeless turned to relatives or friends for help. Very many went off into the forests "There's lines at our pickets like outside a box-office," the partisans joked.

Those who came to us were the very Soviet people whose hearts Rosenberg had figured the stamp of the German boot would cause to quake They brought pistols, grenades and bullets with them And every one who came promptly told the reason for his indignation

From the village of Maibutnya came an old kolkhoz peasant named Tovstonog. Some of our men knew him. He rendered the partisans various services such as sheltering our scouts and messengers in his home He knew the way to the camp. Early one morning he appeared with three girls. One of the girls was leading a cow

I was asked to come to the picket The old man demanded to see the chief himself.

"So you're Fyodorov?" the old man asked as he stretched out his hand "I've heard of you Your detachment has a fine reputation Your boys have been at my house Good boys they are. I'm sorry I have no sons or I'd give them my blessing and send them to you. I'd come myself but I'm getting on in years, feel weary."

As I listened to him I kept glancing involuntarily at the girls They were all strong-looking and rosy-cheeked. The youngest—she couldn't have been more than sixteen —held a rope the other end of which went around the cow's neck. The cow was tossing her head.

"Rosie," the girl whispered, "you be quiet, Rosie."

"Your Rosie's upset," I said in an attempt to draw the young people into the conversation. "She's not used to wandering about in the woods in winter."

The girl [illegible]

[illegible] she [illegible], her eyes downcast.

Well, what [illegible] of my girls, Comrade Commander? Here, let me tell you. Nastya, my eldest, finished the [illegible] school. And the next one, Pasha, she's eighteen but was a group leader in the kolkhoz already. And then there's Shura, her mother's darling, with her [illegible]

"Do," the girl protested, "don't make fun of me...."

Here now, we didn't come to cry, did we? It's a gay crowd here. Shura. Anyone here play the accordion? My girls, Comrade Commander, are rare singers.... Well, will you take them in place of sons? And take the cow too. The old woman and I will get along somehow."

I didn't answer at once.

"Don't mind their not being talkative, Comrade Commander," he said in alarm. "They're strong girls."

We enrolled all three girls in the detachment. The two older ones got used to the life quickly, went scouting and took part in battles side by side with the men. They all proved to be fine singers, Shura even became our song-leader. But she was unable to overcome her shyness. Whenever the men began to tell earthy partisan stories in her presence she would get up and go off into the woods. At the beginning we made her a medical orderly. She didn't refuse but she was obviously disappointed. She wanted desperately to take part in the fighting. Thi. small, apple-cheeked girl always walked around with a medicine kit slung over her shoulder, and the kit was always filled to overflowing.

"What have you got there in your kit, Shura? It's awfully heavy!"

She would redden, avert her glance and say softly:

"Those are bullets!"

Finally Shura got her way: a rifle was issued to her. In her first engagement, when the commander gave the

order to retreat—the enemy outnumbered the group of partisans five to one and threatened to encircle it—Shura did not crawl back with the rest but continued firing away from behind her stump.

"Come on, Shura, over this way!" the commander shouted. "What're you waiting for?"

When she joined the others she said by way of excuse:

"But nobody called me. The commander said, 'Boys, retreat,' but I'm not a boy, I'm a girl."

While our detachment stood near Maibutnya old Tovstonog visited his daughters regularly. He always came in to see me, too, bringing a gift—a few eggs, or a pouch of makhorka. I might say I drew my makhorka ration from him. He always questioned me in minute detail about his daughters' behaviour.

"Anybody would think you'd sent your daughters off to school instead of to a detachment, dad."

"Why, certainly," he answered without turning a hair. "Let 'em learn!"

At about the same time a man of sixty-five, a village schoolteacher named Semyon Aronovich Levin, who was not a Party member, joined the detachment. For two weeks he wandered through the neighbouring villages and woods in search of the partisans. And when finally he came upon our trail and reached the camp he was so hungry and tired it looked as though he would be good only for resting and eating and eating and resting. But to everyone's surprise, the very next day he demanded work. He was sent to the kitchen to help the cook. For two or three days he obediently peeled potatoes. Then he went to the company commander.

"Take me on a combat operation," he said, "give me a chance to fight. I know I'm old, but that's all right, try me out. . ."

Later he fought in several engagements. I recall that when we went on an operation to Semyonovka, over

thirty kilometres away, the old man marched the entire way.

"Get into a sleigh," we told him. "You're not a young man, after all. Nobody'll think the worse of you for it."

"Leave me alone. I'm as good as you are," he answered irritably. "Why should I have privileges? Once you have accepted me as a fighter then let me be on an equal footing."

Only after he had chalked up a score of six fascists killed did Levin consent to a transfer to the quartermaster service.

We had scores of elderly assistants. Not all of them joined the detachment, nor did we strive to draw them in. They could render us much greater service in their native villages their homes were often used as secret meeting places.

In the village of Balyasy in Kholmy District lived a foxy old fellow by the name of Ulyan Sery. At that time he was seventy-six. He is still alive today, and tells his great-grandchildren about his partisan adventures.

Ulyan fell into the hands of the Germans and the police three times Each time they beat him up cruelly.

"Go on, ask the people!" he would shout. "They'll tell you I'm a quiet man! How could I be a partisan at my age, or with my strength? Never set eyes on those forest bandits." Ulyan's abuse of the partisans sounded so sincere that in the end he was set free.

The next day he would again set out for the forest to get in touch with the partisans. I remember the time he came into headquarters terribly angry, fairly shaking with indignation.

"What kind of order have you got here! Just making game of old people, that's what you're doing! If there's an arrangement carry it out, otherwise what kind of a military man are you?"

It turned out he was angry at Balabai They had agreed that Ulyan would come to the edge of the forest at two in the afternoon and play on a shepherd's pipe.

"I'm not a kid, I'm an old man. It's hard for me carrying sacks in the snow. I played that pipe and played and played, got up to my chest in snow, and still nobody came I've brought eight kilos of onions and two of makhorka. Was all in a sweat. Lucky I didn't catch cold after that. You give him a reprimand, Alexei Fyodorovich .. "

"But maybe he had a valid reason for not showing up?"

"Well, you find out That's what you're the boss for."

When he learned that Balabai's men had been busy building a dugout and the sound of the axes had prevented their hearing his pipe, Ulyan agreed to a lighter punishment.

"Still, he ought to have remembered. And don't you give him a single pinch of that tobacco I brought you"

In the village of Perelyub in Kholmy District the landlady of our secret meeting place was a kolkhoz woman of eighty named Maria Ilyinichna Vashchenko, who also collected intelligence information for us She rarely came to the forest, but scores of our men stayed at her home and she fed them and washed their clothes There was a supply of our leaflets cached in her cellar, and people from distant villages came to her for them.

One day the man on duty reported to me that a picket had stopped four boys in high boots and camouflage capes, with knives and spoons tucked into their boots I had them brought to headquarters. The kids had really wrapped sheets and diapers over their jackets. The oldest, a boy of fourteen, put his hand to his cap and reported:

"We place ourselves at your disposal as total orphans.. ."

The youngest, a thin little fellow, imitated the older ones by standing at attention, but he trembled, either from the cold or else because he was on the point of crying. A long drop hung from his nose. Noticing my glance, the "commander" of the group ran up to the little one, wiped his nose efficiently with the corner of a diaper, and coming to attention again, continued his report:

"As total orphans from Ivanovka village, Koryukovka District· Khlopyanuk, Grigory Gerasimovich, born in 1926, my brother, Khlopyanuk, Nikolai Gerasimovich, born in 1930, his friend, Myatenko, Alexander, born in the same year, and Myatenko, Mikhail, who doesn't go to school yet, six years old...."

I stopped the "commander," pulled all four into the dugout and after seating them ordered hot tea.

A crowd gathered in the dugout and began showering the boys with questions The boys bolted their food and nodded but did not reply to the questions, casting glances at the older one. The latter did not know what to do. He had made his report already, and he had not come prepared to tell a story. The "commander" broke down first, before his "soldiers" did True, he had time to flee outside into the forest and only there, with his head pressed against a pine tree, did he give way to tears.

The children told a gruesome story. The chief of the Koryukovka police, Moroz, and policeman Zubov killed Praskovya Yefimovna Khlopyanuk, the wife of a Communist who was a Red Army sergeant, in her own home They stole everything of value in the house. The children they did not touch, probably because they were too lazy to chase after them. The boys returned home only in the morning.

They dug a shallow grave in the vegetable plot and without the help of adults, without asking anyone to the funeral, covered their mother's body with frozen earth

and snow. They had no relatives near-by. The two brothers began to live alone. The small supply of flour and potatoes quickly melted. How were they to go on living? Where could they go?

One night a group of our partisans broke into the village The boys watched the battle. They witnessed the death of one of their mother's murderers, policeman Zubov They watched the partisans set fire to the starosta's house. Later, together with the kolkhoz grownups they ran to the granary the partisans broke open. They dashed home a good ten times carrying pails of wheat; they fell asleep right on the grain heaped up on the floor of the room.

In the morning they learned that the partisans had left the village. That same day their neighbour, Natalia Ivanovna Myatenko, was taken to the police station. She did not return. Now there were two more orphans: Shura and Misha. Then word came from the neighbouring village of Sofievka that there the police were killing adults and children indiscriminately.

At this Grisha gathered together his younger comrades in misfortune and made a short speech.

"Let's go to the partisans," he said. "Or we'll be shot dead."

The children were quite practical in preparing for their departure. Into their bundles they packed two changes of underwear each, some wheat and salt, a frying pan, knives, needles and thread and a box of matches. The two middle boys spied out the lay of the land for the best way to go. At night all four put sheets over themselves and crawled through the vegetable gardens out into the field and from there to the woods.

They wandered in the woods three days, lighting fires and sleeping by them nights. And if they are to be believed they did not cry once until they reached our dugout.

Nor did the boys cry long here. They were very pleased when we played the phonograph especially for them ... The youngest fell asleep first. And before Shura Myatenko fell asleep he declared in a very serious tone:

"That's all right, kids. If we die here it'll be for our country!"

Two of the children, Grisha and Kolya Khlopyaruk, remained with us as scouts. But when things got tough for us we had to leave the Myatenko brothers in the care of some kind folk in a village.

Not everybody who came to the detachment had a clear conscience, however. Just about this time a fellow named Timofei turned up. I won't tell his last name—why spoil a young man's life by recalling an episode?

Timofei was a tall, broad shouldered lad of seventeen. When he came to us he burst into tears.

"What're you bawling about, you fool?"

"You're going to beat me."

"That means you deserve it, eh? Come on, brother, tell us what we're to beat you for."

"Lead me to the commander."

He was taken to the special counter-espionage department we had set up by that time. This department was headed by Novikov. While Novikov asked him general questions—where he came from, how old he was, what his parents were—Timofei answered quite blithely.

"Now," Novikov said in conclusion, "tell us why you've brought your here."

Here I—[illegible] burst into tears.

"What's the matter, want your mama?"

"Take me out, the partisans, I can't stand it with the Germans any more."

"There's a war [illegible] you are over there. I'm, my boy, [illegible] with them. You joined the [illegible]."

[illegible] was taken [illegible] was [illegible].

He was [illegible]. [illegible] burst out.

"I'm guilty Beat me. I whipped him, so you whip me"

"Did your chief send you to us?"

"No, I came myself."

He swore by all the gods there be that he had been forced to join the police and that he hadn't done anybody any harm, had just drilled and cleaned his rifle.

"But yesterday the chief called me in and sent me to the shed. There were five or six Germans standing around, and Vasil Kotsura was strapped to a bench He's a good fellow, Vasil is, a pal of mine He's our blacksmith His face was all smashed up and his nose was bleeding I felt so sorry for him—"

"So you're a soft-hearted fellow, eh?"

"I can't stand fighting, comrade chief When any of the boys in our village start a fight I always separate them. And the women come to me 'Go and separate those drunks fighting over there, Timofei, they say to me?"

"So why did the Germans call you to the shed?"

"The moment I walked in the senior German tells the starosta 'Call the people' While the people are gathering he mumbles something to the other Germans in his own language, pointing to me Then he tells me to take off my jacket and he rolls up my sleeve Then he puts a whip into my hand with the rolled-up sleeve and says 'Beat him!'"

"And you, dirty dog, you beat your friend!"

"But listen," Timofei said, and again a quaver crept into his voice "I say to that German 'He's my pal, I can't beat him' Then the German pokes a pistol in my face?"

"And so you beat him?"

"What else could I do? The German's got the pistol in front of my nose and he stamps his feet. And the way he barked—my heart sank into my boots I whipped and cried at the same time. I felt so sorry for Vasil"

"Why didn't you beat him, what had he done?"

I don't know. He started to say what, but I was so upset I didn't get it."

Nosikov brought him to me.

"You decide what to do with this creature, Alexei Tyomofeyevich."

Later quite a few repentant policemen came to our partisan detachments. But he was the first one. His agitation and his tears may have been naive and foolish but they were genuine. He repeated his whole story to me.

"Well," I said," "so you left your whipped friend there? Is that so?"

"No, uncle. I brought him with me."

"Then where is he?"

"In the forest. He was awfully tired. 'Put me down, Tim,' he says. 'I'll rest a bit. Meanwhile you go on to the partisans yourself.' I carried him on my back more than a kilometre. Then he yells: 'It hurts bad! Put me down.'"

"Wounded, is he?"

"No, it's that I beat him so hard. . ."

When he noticed our cold glances he hastened to explain:

"The German kept poking the pistol in front of my nose. 'Beat him harder!' he said. I beat him as easy as I could. But I've got an awfully heavy hand. . . ."

I sent out stretcher-bearers, and they found Kotsura lying under a bush and groaning loudly. Our feldsher put a compress on his welts. Later Kotsura told us how it had all happened. Despite the strict ban he had played his concertina after dark. The Landwirtschaftsführer had ordered him whipped.

We asked him his opinion of Timofei.

"Tim's a harmless fellow. If he hadn't whipped me they would have whipped him and maybe shot him."

A month later this "harmless" fellow had three dead fascists to his credit. Besides, he had brought in two

"tongues." "Tongues" became his partisan speciality. Timofei and Vasil always went out scouting and hunting for "tongues" together.

* * *

Our scouts and messengers and the newcomers who had been in encirclement told us in detail about the fascist terror, which they themselves had witnessed. But if we asked them how the invaders were administering the occupied territory, what methods they employed to enslave the population economically, they gave us only the vaguest information, taken from German newspapers and leaflets.

Still less did we know then about the mood of the German fascists and their vassals, the Hungarians. To the partisans the enemy was a soulless creature. The appearance of the German fascists, their clothing and everything else about them, roused disgust in the partisans

One day an odd specimen fell into our hands. Although he was only a lieutenant, and of the quartermaster service at that, the men knew instinctively they had caught a pretty fancy bird.

He stood out from the usual run of German lieutenants by his clothing, his manners, and, I might add, his greater cowardice. His jacket, trousers and boots were all brand new and made to order Over his regular coat he wore a long fur coat with a beaver collar. He smelt of perfume a mile away. Under his uniform we discovered he wore fine silk underwear bearing a French trademark

The lieutenant was a short man of forty-five with thinning hair, he wore gold-rimmed glasses and had a little moustache with a frozen smile beneath it. His life was so precious to him that he agreed with absolutely everything we said to him. After ten or fifteen minutes'

questioning almost all the German prisoners usually told us that Hitler was a scoundrel. But this specimen didn't make us wait a minute: he immediately declared the Russians were wonderful, that Hitler, Göring, Ribbentrop and their entire band were long since doomed and that the defeat of Germany was inevitable. "Believe me, I know it well; I can sense the odour of decay myself," he said. He answered all questions eagerly, but he tried so hard to please us that believing him was impossible

When the interpreter pulled a thick sealed envelope out of his huge billfold, the lieutenant shrank back as though dodging a blow.

Incidentally, here I should mention that the lieutenant was not captured during a battle. He was travelling in an automobile, accompanied by a German civilian and an orderly. The car skidded off the road and got stuck in the snow His companions and the driver climbed out to give it a push—and were laid low by partisan bullets. The lieutenant was the only survivor.

On the way to camp he told our scouts in quite passable Russian that he didn't serve in the army. He repeated the same thing when he was questioned at headquarters.

"I am a businessman, I represent commercial circles. Is that clear to you? I am a peaceful civilian. I hold no military position The uniform is only for convenience in travelling through the districts near the front. I represent a big firm. My job is to establish business connections in the occupied countries—commercial reconnaissance, if you wish."

The letter we found on him was addressed to his father-in-law in Berlin, who was a partner in a commercial house. Our prisoner apparently also had a share in the firm. He was reporting to his chief and head of the family, giving news about the occupation and sharing his

mpressions, thoughts and business plans The letter was rank in the extreme, showing no concern for military ensorship

"After three months in the Ukraine," wrote the lieutenant, "I have finally come to realize that my knowledge of men extending over many years and my business experience mean nothing at all in this country. All thinking people admit this Officers too. I mean Nazi officers, up-to-date men who understand that war and personal profit are inseparable

Everything here is absurd. You have to stand on your head to get an idea of what is going on In France, in Belgium and in Poland you could find people ready to do business two days after the army went through Clever, efficient businessmen who understood that time does not wait and capital must not lie idle The Frenchman, Belgian, Norwegian or Pole may be a patriot at heart and hate me because I am a German, but if he is a trader or a manufacturer or a banker or even simply an official you and he can always find a common language.

"He needs me as much as I need him. I offer a consignment of dry goods for the countryside I promise to take care of rail transportation And I ask what can you offer our firm? He offers wool or butter or, as happened to our colleague in Athens, a share in establishing brothels for the soldiers

"In Russia nobody offers me anything except their services I find no businessmen, I find no manufacturers, not even officials with business ties. I cannot sell our line of dry goods for peasants There are no contractors. It is simply unheard-of! I have not found a single Russian wholesale dealer, not a single man with capital During these three months I have not met a single decent Russian, the kind of man for whom the firm might open a credit. The Russian administration, or rather the Ukrainian, as it is considered necessary here to call it, that is, the

people whom our army has drawn into participation in governing, is made up of swine to a man!

"They are criminals and bandits who have come back from exile or been freed from prison. All of them or almost all say they were once rich. Some call themselves nobles. Not one of them is in a position to entertain a decent man in his home. They have no homes. They are a hungry crowd, eighty percent alcoholic. They smell bad."

The lieutenant wrote his father-in-law a good deal more about various types of traitors, from a village starosta to a pretender to the post of governor. He poked bitter fun at them; and it was clear he knew what he was talking about. And we received indirectly an unexpected confirmation of the amazing resistance our social system is capable of; a resistance stemming from the vast economic and social transformations accomplished during the twenty-four years of Socialist upbuilding.

The lieutenant wrote of the fruitless efforts of the Gebietskommissars to get agricultural production going to prepare for spring sowing and to organize a steady flow of produce to the fatherland The conclusions he came to were sad·

"We have introduced a card-file system in the Gebietskommandanturs. This may be very good. There will be order. Everything is being registered. houses, cows, half-wrecked tractors, boys and girls, geese and chickens But, you see, nothing here is permanent Houses go up in smoke, old people and children die of hunger or from our bombing. Why are our bombs exploding hundreds of kilometres from the front, you ask? Take my word for it —it is necessary. These villages make splendid targets for our young flyers. And the more of these hotbeds of resistance are wiped out the better The geese, chickens and sucklings also become fewer with each day Our officers and soldiers and our officials eat them, I suppose

them every day. The army confiscates the cows for meat. The population slaughters them to prevent our getting them and gives the meat to the partisans

"Oh, those partisans! Hasn't our glorious army wiped them out yet, you ask? My reply is that they are increasing in number all the time! And not because we are plundering. We plunder everywhere. We cannot but plunder. What else does the soldier fight for? No, the whole trouble is that we are unable to come to terms with a single authoritative person among the people It's the same old story.

"In France and in Belgium, in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia we have at the head of the government and as burgomasters politicians whom the man in the street knows. Members of parliament and ex-ministers urge their people to obey us.

"Our occupation authorities have not found a single popular Russian or a single politician the least bit known who would come over to our side The deputies to the Soviets and the Party functionaries are either underground, in the army or else head detachments of partisans We appeal to them, we promise them land and estates, we promise them power and wealth But these men are politicians without property. They have been brought up to despise it, the only thing to do with them is wipe them out!

"I look into the future and involuntarily turn to the past Nobody—neither the British in India, nor the Dutch in Indonesia nor the Americans in the Philippines—faced such problems as will fall to the lot of our countrymen after the war Trade with the Russians, or colonize the Russians? That is a utopia There is only one course to annihilate them Let a few score Russians remain on reservations Let everything happen the way it did with the Indians in America. This is the best solution to the problem

"I am now near an ancient Russian town, Chernigov. Right after Christmas General Fischer's troops launched an operation for the ruthless annihilation of the local partisans. For two weeks now their main forces, together with their Bolshevik leaders, have been surrounded in the forests. During this period there has not been a single day when the temperature was less than thirty degrees below zero. The general told me that bonfires prolong the agony. He assured me that the Chernigov partisans do not have a thousand men left without frostbitten hands or feet. 'I'm very glad,' the general said, 'that they're not surrendering. I would have to waste ammunition on them and then bury their corpses. The ground is too hard; it would mean a lot of work for our soldiers. In the forest they themselves bury those who freeze to death.'"

The letter was a long one. We published excerpts from it in our wall newspaper

The lieutenant offered to pay ransom. He assured us that his father-in-law had very close connections with Krupp, was practically a relative of his. But no connections of any sort could now save Mr. Businessman from execution.

During an engagement in Savenki we captured a suitcase belonging to a staff officer named August Tulf. It contained plans, maps and various official memoranda There were photographs in a big dark blue leather album of a plump lady in lace, men in evening dress, several skinny young misses, groups of children in thin white dresses, and of the owner of the album from the age of one to thirty. One of the last pictures taken before the war showed him with a sugary smile on his face and his arm about the waist of a lean maiden with a long, doleful face. Then there was a heap of unmounted frontline photos. They showed August Tulf fixing a noose about the neck of a Polish peasant woman; August Tulf shooting a bound

man in the back of the head; August Tulf standing among a group of officers toasting Hitler's portrait And, finally, a big enlarged photo of Tulf making merry with about a dozen friends Tulf was the oldest in the group The others were Hitlerite youth. It was apparent they were officers from the abundance of drink and variety of food shown. As for the "pals," they were naked to a man. And they had taken the most unnatural and disgusting poses: one held a knife between his teeth, another had rumpled his hair and was spitting furiously, a third was urinating into a carafe, a fourth—well, even the memory of it is revolting.

That Hitlerite officers went in for pornography was by no means new to us But this was no longer simply pornography. The character of the fascist officer, his entire rotten being, lay revealed in that photograph

At that time we had not yet heard of Majdanek and Oswiecim, nor did we know that the Germans had invented the murder wagon. But we had seen villages burned down by punitive units, the bodies of army men and peaceful inhabitants who had been tortured to death, and slaughtered children Each one of us knew that if we fell into the clutches of the enemy we would be inhumanly tortured before being killed

In the early part of December a group of our scouts found the body of a woman in the forest It was Marusya Chukhno, an employee of the Koryukovka sugar refinery, a Communist and an underground worker Partisans of the Koryukovka detachment used her apartment as a meeting place. It was the burgomaster of Koryukovka, Baranovsky, a former engineer at that refinery, who gave her away to the enemy.

We counted sixteen stab wounds on her One eye had been gouged out The butchers had taken her body to the forest to inspire fear in us partisans and underground workers.

We gave Marusya Chukhno a solemn burial. Hundreds of partisans attended her funeral. I saw no signs of fear on their faces.

No, we could not see anything human in the invaders, nor did we want to. As long as they were here, on the territory of the Soviet Union, they were not human beings but only enemies.

But one must know the enemy in order to fight him successfully. We required the chiefs, and especially the political workers and men of the intelligence department, if not all the partisans, to make a careful study of every German document that fell into our hands. How could we enlighten the inhabitants or penetrate into the apparatus of the occupation authorities without knowing their ways?

The majority of the comrades studied this subject most unwillingly. "What the devil kind of laws are these?" protested those who were against such studies. "The 'new order' means plain arbitrary rule. Any commandant can do what he wants. Take the law on the disbanding of Communist organizations and the confiscation of their property. Why study it? Isn't it clear to every Soviet person this isn't law but lawlessness?"

That was true. Here is a document very indicative of that period, a notice issued by the military commandant and posted in Kholmy:

"NOTICE

"1. Going into the woods is forbidden. Whoever does not obey this *will be shot.*

"2. Whoever maintains contact with the partisans, feeds them or gives them shelter, *will be shot.*

"3. Whoever does not immediately report to the nearest military unit the names and places of residence of partisans whom he knows or the arrival of strange partisans or Communists *will be shot.*

"4. Whoever has weapons or any other military equipment in his possession *will be shot.*

"5. Whoever spreads false rumours tending to alarm the population, or prevents people from working, or *in any other way* interferes with the common good *will be severely punished.*

"6. All starostas must promptly submit lists of strangers to the commandants's office in Chernigov.

"7. Parents, teachers and the village starostas are held responsible for the youth They will be meted out the full measure of punishment for all crimes committed by minors.

"8. Whoever does not prevent sabotage when he is able to do so *will be punished by death*

"9. *Severest measures* will be taken against villages failing to obey this order, and their inhabitants *will be held responsible collectively.*

"Military Commandant"

What this meant was that anybody might be shot at any moment The occupation authorities issued a multitude of instructions, orders and laws Some of them promised various benefits, such as security, fixed rates of taxation, and so on. But the only promise the Germans kept was the one about hanging, shooting and punishing in other ways.

For all that the R C. adopted a decision obliging the officers to study the invaders' system of military, economic and political organization A special study circle was arranged As I recall the studies in that circle I cannot help laughing Weary partisans, with faces red and sweating from the effort, sit memorizing:

"The Gebietskommandant's office is in charge of agriculture. The Landwirtschaftsführer has charge of four agricultural artels or associations The Landwirtschafts-

führer is subordinate to the Gebietslandwirt. The Gebietslandwirt is subordinate to the Kreislandwirt. The Kreislandwirt is subordinate to the Gebietskommissar. The Gebietskommissar is subordinate to the Gauleiter...."

After a lesson in this circle the men were wild with rage; they could be sent out on the most risky operations.

* * *

There are still people today in the district centre of Koryukovka, Chernigov Region, who are ready to take an oath that on December 6, 1941, partisan planes dropped hundreds of leaflets on the town.

We ourselves learned of this raid made by "partisan aircraft" from documents captured from the enemy. A report by the district commandant, couched in highly alarming tones, told of the partisans having not only light arms but also machine guns, artillery and aircraft. As proof of this were cited depositions made by German soldiers and officers and the records of interrogations of Koryukovka residents.

Later we really did have machine guns and ordnance, captured in battle from the German invaders. Later planes did come over to us from the Soviet rear. They took our leaflets and scattered them over villages and towns in the region. But all this took place much later than December 1941. And so when we read the Hitlerite report we had a good laugh, and nothing more. Fear has a thousand eyes. commandants and garrison chiefs often exaggerated the strength of the partisans in their reports in order to get reinforcements.

But after a while we learned what it was all about. Our leaflets really did drop from the sky over Koryukovka on December 6. The day was overcast, and it was easy to assume that planes had flown past high above the clouds. A noteworthy detail is that Koryukovka was filled to

overflowing with occupation troops at the time Hundreds of Germans and Magyars had arrived the day before And on December 6 the Germans drove the entire population to the town square to present the new district authorities: the burgomaster, the police chief and the commandant.

It was then that hundreds of partisan leaflets showered down from the sky calling upon the people to fight the invaders

This was the work of Petya Romanov and Vanya Polishchuk, two daring scouts of ours

On December 5 they were sent to Koryukovka on a liasion assignment, and were given a thousand leaflets run off in the forest printshop of the underground R.C

Petya Romanov himself gave us an account of this mission, and he enjoyed universal confidence, rightly being considered one of the boldest and most resourceful scouts in our detachment. Petya was not what you would call a quiet or over-modest person, but like many men of true courage he simply couldn't stand exaggeration. He was all for justice, and always demanded that everyone receive what he deserved In appraising both his own exploits and those of others this young partisan was always very restrained.

Petya Romanov met his death in June 1942 when he and two of his comrades were surrounded by several score Hitlerites They fought off the enemy to the last Petya's comrades were killed, and his last bullet he put into his own temple But that was later Here is his account of what happened at Koryukovka·

"We had several jobs first, to go to Doctor Bezrodny in the hospital for prescriptions for our sick men; second, to stop at the drugstore to have them filled and get bandages, third, to hand over leaflets at our secret quarters. Besides, we had to find out how the Germans were acting and whether they intended attacking the detachment

"The doctor took care of us in a jiffy. As usual, he was worried. 'Why do you come to see me with such a quantity of weapons?' he says. 'Get it through your heads I'm not a partisan, and I'm scared.' But he gives us the prescriptions all the same. In the drugstore we have to raise our voices a bit to get them filled fast. They fill them, all right. We go farther. The next thing is to go to the secret quarters and turn in the leaflets.

"'Look,' Ivan says, 'they look like Germans to me'

"He's right. There's no less than a company down at the end of the street. We turn around, and we see Magyars on horseback. This doesn't suit us at all. And we can't run because our pockets are full of bottles of medicine, and we've got grenades and pistols at our belt. And then there's the leaflets. What's to be done? It doesn't look so good. There's a lot of them and only the two of us.

"'Ivan,' I say, 'let's try this gate.'

"'That's dangerous,' he says, 'what if a stinker lives there?'

"'I don't think so,' I say. 'As I remember it, a machine and tractor station mechanic and a baker lived there before the war. Come on.'

"We go in. There's a dog in the yard. Comes for us, the devil. 'Susie!' I say to her—but the devil only knows, maybe she's Rover or something else. All of a sudden she begins wagging her tail and we go by right under her nose. Everything's fine. She doesn't bite. But they won't open the door for us. Some woman or girl there. Screeches and doesn't open up. And we can already hear the Fritzes going into the other yards.

"'See, Petro,' Ivan says, 'there's a hole in the fence. Let's crawl through.'

"'Let's,' I say.

"Crawling through I tear my pockets bad and the bottles fall out. But how can I leave them there? The sick men need them Ivan gets nervous 'Just the same,' I say,

'if we've got to die then it'll be right to die for medicine too. You do what you want, but I'm going to pick them up.'

"He grumbles a bit but he helps me pick them up Then we land in another back yard. Here it's quiet We come out into a side street. From here I know the road to Bukhanov's. He's a worker, an old fellow. Worked all his life at the sugar refinery. He can be trusted. I used to go around with his daughter at one time Doesn't matter what her name is, it wouldn't make any difference to you anyway.

"Ivan breaks a bottle. I give him hell. I give him such hell he even gets sore

" 'You blockhead,' I say, 'don't you see, if we lose all the medicine and the leaflets besides, what kind of partisans and scouts are we? We won't be worth a kopek then. Right?'

"The medicine turns out to be the kind that smells strong. It's clear if they put bloodhounds on our trail we're sunk.

"But we're lucky Simply in luck. Bukhanov's home Just imagine—all that going on around him and he's sitting there swigging home-brew 'Don't you fellows feel bad if I don't give you any,' he says to us. 'Little enough for myself as it is.'

"He's a funny guy! Always talks that way Then he loosens up and pours us out a glass apiece.

" 'Well, boys,' Bukhanov says, 'we won't lose any time I'll help you out of your fix.'

"We do as he says. He takes us through back yards and along paths. All of a sudden we see we're on the grounds of the refinery. How'd that happen?

"Bukhanov laughs and says, 'The devil himself couldn't find you here. Not even Baranovsky.'

"The refinery was hit by fire pretty bad Ruins all over, and soot And they were looking for us, they were defi-

nitely after us How come they recognized us right away and started after us? That I don't know. Probably somebody in the drugstore said suspicious-looking characters had been in A customer there got sore when we pushed him aside and were served first 'What's the matter,' he said in a funny way, 'trying to act like partisans?' I gave him a proper answer, and then Ivan added a few strong words.

"I guess he's the one who set the Germans after us.

"'Let yourselves down here,' Bukhanov says.

"There was some kind of ladder in the ruins. And then pipes Under the refinery there's all kinds of corridors and big underground pipes. I don't know the mechanics of it. But the fact is there's passages and exits and some kind of furnace doors Bukhanov knows them all. But he had to get back in a hurry, the kids were home.

" 'You fellows go in as far as you can,' he says. 'Sit tight and you'll be as safe as can be. But don't leave the place without me.'

"Well, all right. He goes away. But our position is not so hot. For one thing it's blowing hard from some place. For another, it's as dark as the inside of a sack. No matches, and the lighter won't work in the wind. No, it wasn't only we wanted a smoke, but we wanted to see something. We didn't know anything about the place, might drop through somewhere.

"We couldn't sit there and wait, and so we felt our way to the end of the tunnel There we saw light.

"'Let's take a look out,' Ivan says

"'Right you are!' I say. 'How long are we going to sit here? I want a smoke, and we haven't eaten a thing since morning. Let's go.'

"Everything's quiet. Ahead there's clean snow. But the minute I poke my head out there's a shot. I back up. Then another shot. So of course we go in deeper. And then the

devil knows how many of them come running up We squeeze into the tunnel or pipe or whatever you call it.... So do those rats They tell us to surrender And so far the pipe is without a turning, so if they begin to shoot we're done for.

"We have to go in deeper and find a turning.

"'I'm going to throw one,' Ivan says.

"'Go ahead,' I say.

"I pull a grenade off my belt too. But there's no room to swing. We take off the rings and pitch the grenades underhand in turn and start running back on all fours The air wave catches us pretty hard, but up ahead we hear screams and groans.

"'You just catch us!' we yell. 'Just try it! Partisans die but they don't surrender!'

"It turns out that Baranovsky himself, the burgomaster, is with them. Before the war he used to be an engineer at this refinery

"'Crawl out!' Baranovsky yells 'I know this place backward and forward I'll smoke you out of here!'

"We answer and lay it on in a way a sailor would envy. He's afraid to crawl in, though, and so are the others We go in deeper, how far I don't know We crawl around in those pipes and tunnels a couple of hours The trouble is we've got pieces of glass in our clothing. The blast broke almost all the medicine bottles in our pockets We empty our pockets along the way.

"'How's Bukhanov going to find us?' Ivan says

"'Let's go back to the place where he left us,' I say

"We crawl back But we forget about the broken bottles, and I cut my hands.

"In a little while we smell smoke.

"'They're burning straw,' Ivan says.

"'No, I say, 'I think it's manure.'

"We get into a big argument. We crawl on and we keep arguing

[illegible] you know about [illegible]' I [illegible] 'Many [illegible]

'What kind [illegible] up [illegible]' I [illegible]

'The [illegible] [illegible] Barracks [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"'Any doctor'll tell you,' I say, "that you mustn't eat after coal gas poisoning.'

"'My organism can take food at any time,' Ivan says, 'even before execution.'

"But it's time to put an end to the show some way or other. No Bukhanov. Maybe he got caught. When he left he told us Baranovsky trusts him. But suppose they asked him, 'What are you doing here in the ruins and why did the partisans run through your yard?' Ivan and I, we argued a lot, but this doesn't mean we weren't worried

"Meanwhile there's light coming into the boiler room through the cracks. And when you looked up the stack through the broken part you could see a white spot way up. And the draft's still whistling through

"'You know, Petro,' Ivan says, 'your whole face looks dark You probably cut more than your hands You can get blood poisoning. Wipe yourself with this gauze'

"He tears off a piece from what we bought in the drugstore and without asking my permission starts wiping my face.

"'I'm very grateful to you,' I say. 'Only I think it's blood from my hands.' I snatch the piece of gauze from him and throw it away. The draft catches it right away and pulls it up inside the stack It disappears in a flash, right into the sky.

"'Now if we could fly up like that and right into the forest,' Ivan says.

"'Wait a minute, wait, I say, and I start unbuttoning my jacket.

"He laughs; he thinks I'm really going to try it But I'd got a real good idea. I was unbuttoning my jacket so as to get out the leaflets from under my shirt

"And what do you think! I take a handful of leaflets and throw 'em down. Ivan stands there watching. The leaflets whirl around and fly up. Ivan catches on and unbuttons his jacket too

"We throw up a little at a time, about thirty. It's clear the leaflets are flying out, and at that height they'll scatter all over Koryukovka.

"We laughed so much and felt so good our heads stopped aching. Ivan forgot all about eating.

"That was the way Bukhanov found us. We were so excited we didn't hear him coming. True, he was in felt boots.

"Bukhanov laughs. 'They're going crazy out there,' he says. 'They're saying the partisans are flying over Koryukovka. The police are hiding. They expect a bombing. That was a marvelous idea of yours.'

"Then we had a smoke. Bukhanov didn't have a lighter but a flint and steel. That's the best thing in a wind.

"Ivan says, 'I'm completely happy, comrades.'

"Bukhanov and I, we laugh at him. Some happiness! How're we going to get out of the place? If we fall into the hands of the fascists they'll make mincemeat of us.

"Bukhanov becomes serious and says, 'I'll have to get out a different way now myself. They've got suspicious of me. Probably they're watching me. I'll crawl out with you. But it's a very nasty exit, and besides we'll have to wait till night.'

When he tells us what kind of an exit it was, Ivan and I start feeling blue.

" 'That's out of the question,' I say. 'The boys'll make fun of us.'

" 'Nothing will happen, I swear,' Bukhanov says. 'It's all frozen over.'

" 'You can do as you like,' Ivan says. 'I'm going to fight my way out before I go crawling through muck.'

" 'That's dumb,' Bukhanov says. 'The sewer hasn't been working for months. You boys are young, you have a long time to live yet. You've got a lot of fascists to wipe out. You're just prejudiced. How about the plumbers? Come on, stop being fussy.'

"Just the same we checked on the other exits and saw or ourselves there were Germans all over

"'They're waiting for me, the rats,' Bukhanov says 'hey're sure you fellows choked to death in the smoke'

"Ivan takes a grenade in his hand and starts moving o the edge of the pipe like he's made up his mind But Bukhanov jumps at him and pulls him back. He got so ore he wanted to punch his nose for him.

"'You,' he says, 'are still wet behind the ears. You're going to listen to me. I'm the head of a family and a man of experience. I'm going to give the orders around here!'

"He tells Ivan a thing or two, and Ivan gives in Then I decide I'd better listen to Bukhanov too.

"The sewer was fairly dry but still it wasn't pleasant We crawled *maybe an hour. Crawled out into a swamp.* And when we reached the forest you can imagine how happy we were! Not only because we'd escaped. No, the main thing was we'd put one over on those rats

"We cleaned up with snow and went to the camp Bukhanov went home to Koryukovka"

And that's Petya Romanov's story. A few days after this adventure he went off to Koryukovka again with leaflets. He wanted to distribute them in the same way and was terribly disappointed when he learned the Hitlerites had blocked up all the pipes and tunnels of the refinery

* * *

The man in charge of our radio news was Yevsei Grigoryevich Baskin. Every morning he read the Soviet Information Bureau communiqué out loud to the line Then he summarized the other news and the main newspaper articles. Baskin was no less popular with us than the well-known radio announcer Levitan.

When he caught a good piece of news in the ether he would come running to headquarters with it at once.

Then we ourselves went from dugout to dugout; spreading glad news was a very pleasant occupation indeed.

I recall the memorable day of December 13. There was a blizzard blowing and the temperature was twenty below. That day we learned that German punitive detachments had destroyed Permentarovka and occupied Savenki. The men were in pretty low spirits.

At two o'clock in the night Baskin came running in.

"Alexei Fyodorovich, Nikolai Nikitich, Comrade Yarmenko! The latest news! Several German divisions have been routed near Moscow. The Fritzes are running for all they're worth."

You can imagine what happened. Of course, we roused the entire camp. The men went around hugging one another and tossing their caps into the air. Kapranov issued a glass apiece above the ration without a grumble.

It was a full two hours before we went back to our places. Now no one could fall asleep. Everything pointed to the fact that the Red Army had taken the initiative and started a big offensive. Somebody—I don't remember who—suggested we immediately form several groups of fifteen men each and send them off to the nearest villages that very night.

I went along at the head of one of the groups. We rode into the village of Khoromnoye on horseback and started pounding on doors and windows. Everybody's nerves were on edge; trembling voices asked who we were and what we wanted.

But in some fifteen minutes a crowd had gathered around the bonfire we lit before the building that used to house the village Soviet. It turned into a sort of meeting. I announced the news. Then came a shower of questions. There were no Germans in the village and the few recently-recruited *polizei* were hiding. One of them ran off to the neighbouring village where there was a com-

pany of Magyars. But by the time the Magyars arrived there was no trace of us.

Almost all the groups had already returned to camp by the time we reached it. The men were in high spirits. Our news-spreading sally proved extremely effective Everywhere the peasants thanked the partisans, begged them to come again and said that if the news was good they might wake them up at any time.

Of course, it didn't go off without some incidents. At first everything went well in the village of Churovichi, which Druzhinin's group visited The villagers began congratulating one another, and someone even struck up "Land of mine, Moscow mine, you I love the best," accompanying himself on a concertina, when suddenly a shot rang out. All were put on their guard. The partisans took cover to be ready for battle, and the local girls ran off into the gardens About three minutes later came a woman's cries from the same direction as the shot. Then some children came running up laughing

"The starosta's shot himself!" they announced

"When he heard the Red Army was advancing he probably decided forward units were already in the village and so he grabbed up a pistol and put a bullet through his head. That's his wife bawling"

Popudrenko was the last to return to camp. His group had gone to Radomka. On entering the village they saw lights in a big house, and since they knew that neither Germans nor Magyars were in Radomka they boldly went up to the house. Popudrenko told the others to go rouse the villagers, while he himself pushed open the door and walked in There were some young men, eight in all, sitting around on benches. At the sight of Popudrenko they sprang to their feet and gaped.

"Comrades, the Red Army is chasing the fascists for all it's worth!" Nikolai Nikitich cried. "Five enemy divi-

sions laid low near Moscow, and the offensive goes on Hurrah, comrades!"

"Hurrah..." the young fellows muttered timidly.

"What's the matter, had no oatmeal for a week? Repeat after me: Hurrah for the Red Army and Comrade Stalin!"

This time their "Hurrah!" was louder.

When the meeting began Popudrenko noticed that the fellows who had repeated "Hurrah" after him were not present. He asked the kolkhoz folk where they were.

"The oldest had a moustache and wore a tall fur hat."

"We don't have any boys like that. He's an instructor from the district police office. He's here recruiting and training young policemen. They were holding a conference. They're afraid of the partisans and meet mostly at night."

Popudrenko was furious.

"It can't be. That fellow with the moustache shouted 'Hurrah' louder than anybody else."

"You just take a look at yourself: five grenades on your belt, a tommy gun over your shoulder, and a Mauser in your hand. Yelling 'Hurrah' if you meet a guy like that is nothing—you're more likely to yell for help!"

"Follow me!" Popudrenko ordered his men and ran toward the house. "Give 'em grenades, the rats!"

But the house was dark and empty.

When he had finished his story Popudrenko shook his head and said vexedly:

"Not enough vigilance, comrades!"

CHAPTER THREE

THE R.C. IN THE WOODS

What actually was the underground R C of the Party at that time?

An outsider would have said it was a small group of people who didn't seem any different from the several hundred partisans about them Not all the members of the R.C. held high positions In dress, in bearing and in mode of life they were partisans just like the rest

But when this group got together in private everyone around knew it was deciding questions vital to the entire detachment, and perhaps more than just the detachment, questions not necessarily of a secret nature, but certainly highly important.

When the R.C *summoned a partisan*, whether he was a Party member or not he would pull himself together collect his thoughts, look through his notes . And if he felt he had done something wrong he was apt to shake in his boots.

When a summons came to a meeting of the R C not only *rank-and-file partisans but officers too, intrepid* fighting men, would promptly put aside whatever they were doing and set out, no matter what the time of day or night or how far away they might be.

The R.C. might even summon a man from a detachment not under our command or from villages near which there were no partisans whatsoever. *And if the man really* hated the fascists and loved his country, if he wanted to

take an active part in the fight against the enemy, would leave his family and, at times at the risk of his li make his way to the forest where the R.C. was then locat

Just who were they, these R C. members? Who ga them such a hold on the minds of men?

Of course, of no little significance was the fact th the members of the underground R C. had been membe of the peacetime Chernigov R C, and that later many them were confirmed by the Central Committee of t Party as leaders of the people's struggle in the enem rear. However, this only partly explains the authorit and influence they acquired among the masses.

The overwhelming majority of the Soviet people wh for one reason or another had remained in occupie territory realized that there was only *one force, one organ ization,* capable of rousing the millions of Soviet me and women for a heroic struggle against the invaders That force was the *Communist Party.*

That was why the members of the underground R.C of the Party enjoyed such authority among the partisan and exercised such a strong influence on the masses.

Communists were the commanders in thousands o partisan detachments and resistance groups If there were Communists among a group of men who had broken out of encirclement, or of escaped war prisoners, or of peasants who, outraged at the atrocities of the Hitlerites had taken to the forest, then as a rule it was they who became the leaders.

Life in occupied territory brought out with especial clarity the qualities of a true Bolshevik in a man; it was a test of his convictions and his devotion to the Communist concept.

The people understood this very well; they always appreciated the Bolsheviks' frankness, daring and consistent pursuance of the program they had marked out.

war prisoners who came to join the detachment we knew nothing.

Questioning newcomers was not among the duties of the sentry at the picket: all he had to do was bring them to the officer on duty or else summon the commander Nevertheless the sentries usually did put a few questions to the newcomer, and the first was:

"Are you a Party member? Or a Komsomol member?"

All the partisans, including those who were not Party members, were sincerely glad when the answer came in the affirmative. They were glad because a Communist meant a staunch and devoted comrade; and also because in the affirmative answer they sensed courage and nobility. After all, it would have been quite a simple matter for a newcomer to hide his membership in the Party. He would only have to say he was not a member. Admitting that he was a Communist immediately placed special obligations on a man. Everyone knew that the Communist always received the most difficult assignment. And in the event of capture he would be the one to get the first German bullet.

Party membership did not give a partisan any advantages over those who were not members We did not even have such an elementary mark of membership as the Party card By a decision of the R C all who came to the detachment with Party or Komsomol cards turned them over to the commissar. We put all the Party papers into a safe and buried it in one of the caches The secretary of the detachment Party organization, Comrade Kurochka, had a list of the members and candidate-members of the Party, and the secretary of the Komsomol organization, Marusya Skripka, had drawn up a list of the Komsomol members.

Entry in one of these lists meant a newly-arrived comrade was recognized as being a Communist or a Komsomol member.

During the whole war we had only two cases of m
hiding their Party affiliation when joining the deta
ment. Usually Party members and Komsomol membe
went to the secretary of the primary organization a
asked to be registered just as soon as they were enroll
in the detachment.

A fairly complicated procedure had been establish
for this. As a rule, the newcomer did not have his Par
or Komsomol card with him. He was not blamed for thi
But to prove his membership the comrade had to fir
three Party members who could testify to his having b
longed to this or that primary organization.

One day four men from the 1st Platoon came up
me with an odd complaint. A dark haired young fello
was the first to speak:

"We've come to you to complain about Ivan Markya
novich Kurochka."

"But Kurochka isn't your commander. What've yo
got against him?"

"We've come to you as the secretary of the R.C. . . ."

They were all non-Party men. I expected to hear a
complaint about some shortcomings in the camp or some
personal wrongs. But it turned out they had come about a
Party matter, an inner-Party matter, in fact

"Do you know Vlasenko, Alexei Fyodorovich?" asked
the dark-haired fellow

"Yes. The machine gunner?"

"That's the one Petro Vlasenko from Karpovka."

"We all come from the same village," a second man
put in. "He's been in the detachment almost a month
now. He was put in our unit and lives in the same dugout
we do. We notice Vlasenko's going around looking down
in the mouth. One day passes, then another, and he's still
the same. Even in battle he's a different man. As fellow
villagers and friends we question him: 'What's the matter?

Maybe you're seeing Marusya the cook in your dreams?' He doesn't give us a straight answer, tells us not to pester him. But we finally got to the bottom of it 'Remember, boys,' he says, 'how I was taken into the Party in '39?' Sure we do. 'And now,' he says, they don't consider me a member. Kurochka won't register me. I buried my card when we were getting out of encirclement I'd go back there and get it but it's a good three hundred kilometres, no less.' "

The third man took up the story heatedly.

"Kurochka's just indulging in a lot of red tape"

"He ought to see it hurts the man, Comrade Fyodorov. We confirm it he really was a member. He was active in village affairs· spoke at meetings, explained current affairs from the newspapers to the truck garden brigade, was always ready to help a man out. I, for one, saw Petro studying the History of the Party before the war. We told Party secretary Kurochka all this. But that made it even worse."

"He didn't take your word?"

"No 'You haven't got the right,' he says. 'If Petro Vlasenko was really in the Party he wouldn't come to you non-Party members on such a matter.' "

I said· "But you don't know the circumstances Vlasenko was in the army. Maybe he did something wrong and was expelled from the Party then "

The fourth man, who hadn't said anything until then now decided it was time he had his say:

"I was with him when we broke out of encirclement We were in the same platoon I didn't hear anything about any expulsion Your supposition isn't right, Comrade Fyodorov. Vlasenko didn't get reprimanded either."

I asked the men why they so ardently pleaded Vlasenko's case.

"First," they said, "because the man's upset. We sympathize with him."

"And secondly?"

"Well, and secondly, the main reason is because we don't have a single Party member in our squad. That's of some importance to us, isn't it, Comrade Fyodorov?"

I told them the procedure by which Communists were entered in the list. "Unfortunately, comrades, there's nothing I can do about it either. I have no right to break *the rules laid down by the R.C.*"

It seemed I hadn't convinced them. They went off dissatisfied Five minutes later the man who had come out of encirclement together with Vlasenko returned

"Tell me, Alexei Fyodorovich, if I join the Party may I speak for Petro then?"

"Is that the reason you want to join the Party?"

He gave me a surprised look and answered in all seriousness.

"I guess you're joking, Comrade Fyodorov. You'd have to be pretty stupid to apply for Party membership just because of that. I wrote an application back in the regiment, but I didn't have time to hand it in I still have my recommendations"

"Where were you surrounded?"

"*Near Kiev. Petro and I wandered around more* than three months before we found the partisans"

"And you carried those recommendations around with you all the time?"

"*I did*"

"So Vlasenko buried his Party card and you kept your recommendations?"

"That's right"

Realizing that this put his comrade in an *unfavourable* light he hastened to add

"But *there's a difference*, Alexei Fyodorovich Petro had a membership card and all I had was an application for candidate-member"

He took off his coat, ripped open the lining on th back and took out his papers, neatly folded and wrappe in waterproof paper. Among them were three certifie recommendations and an application for candidate-mem bership of the Party

"They got crumpled, Alexei Fyodorovich," he sa apologetically. "That one was written by Lieutena Voronko; he's dead now. That one the colonel himsel Comrade Gotseridze gave me, and the third Vlasenko's He was No. 1 man in the crew and I w No. 2 He's the one who persuaded me to apply for mem bership"

I examined the papers and then looked the man in t eye No, it couldn't be that all this had been thoug up beforehand, the more so since together with t application and the recommendations were a phot graph of his wife and children and an honour certifica from the district Soviet for excellent work in the k khoz.

"Well, you boys are certainly simpletons. Look, her the proof" I showed the man Vlasenko's recomm dation 'There's even the number of the card and the y he joined– it's all here Call your pal and tell him ought to thank you'

You should have seen how happy these words m him

'Yes yes, we really are fools You can see why were so upset, Alexei Fyodorovich He's a good fell and it wasn't fair to be counted out of the Party that"

When he left me he walked slowly at first, then quickened his step and finally broke into a run

'Petro!' I heard him shouting 'Come here, Pet

* * *

About the middle of December the political instructor of one of the platoons came to detachment commissar Yaremenko with the question:

"What is a partisan?"

Yaremenko gave him a puzzled look.

"You're kind of late in asking," he replied. "But if you want it in a few words—an avenger of the people."

"That I understand.... But you see, Comrade Commissar, it's this way. I was having a talk with the men about the tasks facing us today, what we are to strive for. You say—avenger of the people. That's the way I explained it too. But some of the men don't quite get it. They think the partisans are in a special position. One of them put it this way: the partisan has no future, and compared with the Red Army man's his position isn't worth a thing. Besides the fact the partisan has no place to retreat to, he has no place to advance to."

"But that's not so. We do carry out offensive operations. There's Pogoreltsy...."

"I said that. They protest. That wasn't an offensive, they say, but a tip-and-run attack. We make an attack and then hide in the woods. And then what, they ask? The forest is surrounded, after all. And again the comparison: now the Red Army's conducting an offensive at Moscow and is developing it from day to day. There the men are having a busy time."

"As they see it, the partisan has nothing to do with what the Red Army does, is that it? You should have explained, Comrade Political Instructor, that although we're not in touch with the army, right now just the same we're a part of it. The Red Army offensive is our offensive too."

"The men realize that, Comrade Commissar. But take Nikifor Kallistratov, for example,—he's a machine and tractor station mechanic. His questions always go deep. Before the war, he says, everybody knew his production

plan and he worked to fulfil it. Now, he says, he doesn't want to depend only on the Red Army; as he puts it, he wants to have his own dream, a plan for partisan development with a specific task for each man."

Comrade Yaremenko told me and the other members of the underground R.C. about this conversation There was something to think about here. Indeed, our Soviet man cannot live without a plan, without a clear prospect Planning has become a necessity, a habit and second nature to him This is one of the main differences between the Soviet man and the man in capitalist society This necessity is felt to a greater or lesser degree depending upon a person's development. Mechanic Nikifor Kallistratov was quite right in fusing dream and plan The Soviet man is already used to the idea that his dream is feasible and can be expressed in figures and time limits.

The difficulty was that many simple truths self-evident under army conditions had to be revised as far as the partisans went

For instance under our conditions the size of a detachment did not always determine its strength. At times a small group of bold and skilfully concealed men could deal the enemy very telling blows

This gave rise to the question: should we, or should we not acquire horses and carts Riding was certainly far more pleasant than walking. But perhaps there was no need to ride anywhere at all? Wouldn't it be better to operate in our own district as a small close-knit group? We had an excellent knowledge of the district, had studied all the forest paths ..

Now not only ex-partisans but indeed everybody who has read books about the partisan movement in the Great Patriotic War knows very well that partisan detachments were either local or *mobile* The first operated within their own districts, while the second were constant-

ly on the move, making marches of hundreds and even thousands of kilometres

But in 1941 not even the commanders knew of such a division. The tactics of constant movement, in other words, long-distance raids, were prompted by circumstances.

Occasionally people say that some partisans sat tight in the forest over long periods. Yes, there were instances when small detachments limited themselves to defence and did not appear in inhabited points or on the roads for months. But I do not know of a single detachment of Soviet partisans that spent all the years of the occupation in the forest simply hiding and not doing anything.

Naturally, not all the detachments were equally active, not all fought equally well.

The main prerequisite of success was political organization of the masess. The districts in which the invaders received the most telling blows were those where the Communists succeeded in maintaining their leading position, where they did not lose touch with the people but called them, rallied them to the struggle. In such districts the partisan detachments became an impressive military and political force.

It goes without saying that the detachments in which the Communists were organized and united never simply lay low, were not inactive.

Popular resistance to the German invaders increased in direct proportion to the strengthening of the Communist influence among the masses, the expansion of underground agitational work and the intensification of partisan blows at the enemy. And these blows were nothing more nor less than *Party military activity* in the enemy rear.

We didn't get the idea of how best to carry on underground work right off. Far from it In the first period of the struggle, when many counted on its lasting a short

time, there were among us some who would have liked to hide, to wait, sit it out. This mood began to pass after our first few offensive operations, when confidence in our strength became greater.

The turning point for us was the Pogoreltsy operation

By the middle of December there were more than five hundred men in the united detachment, with more and more desirous of joining. Everywhere our speakers were calling upon the people to resist the enemy. The first R.C. leaflet, which our printshop put out in an edition of several thousand copies, was entitled, "Who Are the Partisans and Whom Are They Fighting?" In it we said, "Fight the fascists, join the partisan detachments." And people did join us.

However, there came the time when we could no longer take in new people without the risk of *depriving the detachment of maneuverability and combat efficiency*.

Most newcomers brought their own weapons with them. They came with grenades and pistols and other arms easy to conceal. But we already lacked automatic weapons and even rifles. There was an acute shortage of bullets. Our supply of TNT was also running low. Most of those who joined us had not had any training and had not been under fire. A good deal of work had to be done with them before they could be all set to go into action.

The cold grew more severe, and by no means all the new arrivals had warm clothing. There were more and more cases of frostbite. Building dugouts to keep us warm took less of our energy than combat activity.

A radio apparatus had been established at the base of the Pepel detachment. The radiomen had been briefed, and knew where to find us. But we mentioned hunting. Our best guide soon avoided the west of the forest where the base was located and kept something like twenty to thirty kilometers away.

There was no sense in sending men across the front-line. It was too far away. Not one of those we had sent earlier had returned.

We needed instructions from the Central Committee of the Party and the Supreme Command; we needed to be sure our actions were coordinated with the actions of the Red Army, that we were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the entire Soviet people. And then, we needed ammunition, modern arms, TNT and mines. The German invaders were restoring the railways; the first enemy trains were already moving past us toward the front. Yes, contact, contact at all costs!

Using insufficiently trained reserves in battle increased the number of wounded. And medical aid was our weakest spot. I must confess that when we were forming the regional detachment back in Chernigov this angle had slipped our minds; we had even taken very little gauze and medicine with us. That we had no doctor with us we discovered only when we were in the forest. We had a pharmacist, Zelik Abramovich Yosilevich, and we had several trained nurses, but we had no doctor, not even an inexperienced one, not even a young one fresh from school, and there was nowhere to get one

The Perelyub detachment had a feldsher, Anatoly Yemelyanov, whom we appointed chief of the medical and sanitation service of the united detachment. He was very painstaking and willing, but he was only twenty-five. The wounded appreciated his fine character, but what they wanted from him was medical assistance, not kindness

Thus, three important problems stood before us: to ensure manoeuvrability for our detachment, to establish contact with the Mainland, and substantially to improve medical aid to the sick and wounded. And solving these problems would mean carrying out the plan of partisan development which the mechanic Nikifor Kallistratov rightly demanded of us.

First of all the detachment had to be ensured maximum mobility. I obliged the platoon commanders to acquire one horse and one good sleigh for every five men.

At first this order was carried out poorly. Not so much because acquiring horses and sleighs under our conditions was no easy matter as because many simply failed to understand *why* the order had to be carried out, did not understand it was part of a big plan and that fulfilling it meant beginning *our offensive*.

Only after solving the main problems facing us could we permit a further increase in the size of the detachment.

I use the word *permit*, though as a matter of fact, we wished to form a partisan division In addressing the men and in talks about our future, the R C. members and officers not infrequently said!"

"Just wait till we number several thousand!"

Meanwhile, however, we numbered only a few hundred, and some of the officers already feared a further growth As for the Hitlerites, there were thousands of them around us After the rout at Moscow the occupation authorities received orders to do away with the partisans as quickly as possible reinforcements were needed at the front And so they brought up artillery, tanks and planes against us Their hopes that we would fall to pieces by ourselves had miscarried, just as had their hopes of isolating us from the population

The German invaders had brought up hundreds of pairs of skis for their soldiers, the *polizei* were teaching the Magyars how to ride in sleighs, German range-finding shells were landing on our camp grounds The Hitlerites felt so strong they didn't even trouble to hide from us their preparations for an offensive They dropped leaflets advising us to cease our "hopeless resistance, come out of the forest and surrender"

Not a single one of us was frightened by the enem threats. The leaflets were used as cigarette paper and various other purposes.

However, we could not help but realize that to rem where we were was becoming more dangerous with e passing day.

At this time the underground R.C of the Party h a meeting that determined our path of development a long period ahead.

* * *

Besides the R.C. members—Popudrenko, Novik Kapranov, Druzhinin, Yaremenko, Dnieprovsky and m self—meetings of the R.C. were attended by chief of st Rvanov, by Balitsky, who was assistant to the secretar and sometimes also by platoon commanders and secr taries of district Party committees

The R C met in the intervals between operations. W held our meetings in most unexpected places. Most ofte we met in the dugout; when the detachment was on th march we would hold a meeting beside my sleigh, aroun a campfire or simply as we walked along

One or another of the comrades would sometimes hav to break off to issue orders, or leave the meeting Ever now and then one of the men would come running up t tell us about some event.

The meeting I shall now describe was held with in numerable interruptions during which we took part in battles.

I shall not weary the reader with details of the situa- tion, nor shall I recall the various speeches made. The ques- tions we discussed were very serious ones There were no few arguments, but the decisions we took were unanimous

Experience had shown us that by uniting, the detach ments had gained in fighting efficiency The successful Dyatkovitsy operation had inspired and heartened many

But when it became clear that expansion of the detachment necessitated constant movement, when it became evident we could no longer remain at the old place without running the risk of complete rout, many began to grumble.

"We're giving up our native places, ahem, er, our bases!" Bessarab cried.

Gromenko unexpectedly sided with him. "I won't go anywhere! We know every spot around here, it's all explored Leave me here my boys and I'll get along by ourselves...."

He was all worked up, and in a voice quivering with emotion he cried "Only over my dead body Better to die in an unequal battle!" and so on and so forth But when we told him that anarchistic behaviour might force the R C to raise the question of his Party membership, Gromenko pondered over the matter

"Comrades," he said, "I submit to Party discipline"

But restraining people only by the force of an order or a Party decision, that is, relying exclusively on the discipline inspired by the authority of the command and the Party leadership, could not be done for long in underground work.

We had resolved to create a big detachment. When I say "we" I have in mind the R.C. of the Party. But perhaps there were some who regarded this decision as a whim of the chief, as a desire, contrary to all common sense, to subordinate as large a number of people as possible to himself? Yes, there were such comrades, and they said

"Fyodorov's head has been turned by the scale of his work before the war He's an ambitious man, and he can't reconcile himself to having only such a small group as the regional detachment under his command."

"Why Fyodorov?" others protested "The decision was taken by the R C of the Party"

"We know that," answered those opposed to am
mation. "All the R.C. members are subordinate to
dorov because he's the commander of the detachmen
holds first place in the R C too. Who'd dare go ag
his opinion?"

Only people who lost their heads in the heat c
argument and who did not understand the basic princ
of Party leadership, could reason that way.

No, it was not anybody's vain whim that made
Chernigov underground R.C. hold firmly to strengt
ing the detachment. In taking this decision the R.C.
foremost in mind the main organizational task set b
the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party: draw
the largest possible number of Soviet people into
struggle against the invaders.

Comrade Stalin teaches us that it is necessary:

"To locate at any given moment that particular l
in the chain of processes which, if grasped, will e
ble us to hold the whole chain and to prepare
conditions for achieving strategic success

"The point here is to single out from all the pro
lems confronting the Party that particular immedi
problem, the answer to which constitutes the cent
point, and the solution of which will ensure the su
cessful solution of the other immediate problems

At that moment the particular link for us was *the cr*
ation of a powerful partisan formation This had to b
a formation whose actions would be known to tens
thousands of people in the occupied districts and whic
would attract the largest possible number of Soviet me
and women to join the partisans at the call of th
Party

Naturally, no one had the intention of merging *all* th
detachments in the Ukraine, or even *all* the detachment

in a region, but at least one partisan unit in the region had to be strong enough to:

1. Deal the enemy heavy blows

2. Maintain constant contact by radio with the army and with the Soviet rear.

3. Have a landing field for planes sent from our Soviet rear.

4 Have groups of capable speakers who could grasp the complicated political situation of that time, explain to Soviet people the tasks facing them, and keep the population well informed of the real situation at the fronts

5. Maintain a printshop and print and distribute leaflets and newspapers

6 Serve as an operational base for the Party political centre directing the entire underground and partisan struggle in the region

7 Serve as a model of staunchness and discipline for all the local detachments and the resistance groups in the surrounding towns

It was clear that all these problems could not be solved by small detachments, which had only one advantage over big ones the possibility of hiding easily

Some of the comrades, expressing the opinion of politically backward partisans, objected to the intention of the R C. to take leadership of the partisan movement in the region upon itself "If you set up a big detachment," they said, "you'll attract the attention of the German command and make it concentrate punitive and regular forces in the area where the detachment operates. In this way you only increase the burdens and sufferings of the population, you increase the scale of executions, incendiarism and plunder The value of the partisan movement," they said, "lies just in the fact that it's a movement of the people arising spontaneously and suddenly out of indignation at the atrocities committed by the invaders Knowing how bitterly the occupation authorities hate

the Communists, the peasants will be afraid to help p
tisan detachments which are openly led by the Part

Here we had to remind these advocates of spontane
of the following words of Comrade Stalin:

"The theory of worshipping spontaneity is d
cidedly opposed to lending the spontaneous mov
ment consciousness and system. It is opposed to t
idea of the Party marching at the head of the workir
class, *of the Party raising the masses to the level*
class consciousness, of the Party leading the mov
ment; it stands for the idea that the class-conscio
elements of the movement must not hinder the mov
ment from taking its own course; it stands for the ide
that the Party is only to heed the spontaneous move
ment and follow in its tail. The theory of spontaneit
is the theory of belittling the role of the conscious
element in the movement, the ideology of *'khvostism*
—the logical basis of *all* opportunism."*

The R.C. condemned the "khvostist" mood of certain
Communists. It recommended that I, as commander of the
united detachment, should act with a view to the further
growth of the detachment and take all measures to make
it mobile and ready to pick up and leave at any moment

* * *

On the night of December 21 the detachment set out
for new positions. With the men all in sleighs and the
commanders on horses, it moved in a column. For an
hour and a half we kept winding through the deep snow
When we had gone a good fifteen kilometres from the old
camp the guides led the head of the column out onto the
road and the well-fed horses started off for all they were
worth.

The sleighs coming in our direction swerved off the
road. They probably took us for Magyars. It was no jok-

ing matter: more than one hundred and twenty sleighs dashing down the road, and in them men armed with rifles, tommy guns and machine guns Besides, about seventy men on horseback. At that time neither the enemy nor our friends ever dreamed the partisans could move in such a powerful column.

Under the pressure of superior enemy forces we were withdrawing from our old positions, from our accustomed places, but this withdrawal was at the same time a victory for us.

When we called a halt in the morning, some thirty kilometres from our old camp, we heard the distant rumble of gunfire.

I called over Gromenko and Bessarab "How many guns firing?" I asked.

There were a lot of them Then five bombers went over in the direction of the forest, and we felt the earth shake The planes flew over us, but the fascist pilots had no way of knowing, of course, that it was partisans moving along the road in such a column

There had been no such partisan detachments before

I asked Ryanov to give Gromenko and Bessarab the information brought in by the scouts. More than two thousand Hitlerites had set out to attack our deserted camp Let them try and catch us now

"Do you see now that a withdrawal can be a victory too?"

"Ahem, you should have said it before! We'd have, er, got it. . "

"The detachment commander isn't a kolkhoz chairman and isn't obliged to render you an account, understand?"

We made a brief halt in a grove and ate without lighting fires. The men gathered around the headquarters sleigh and listened in silence to the crescendo of the artillery preparation.

"Who's got good eyes?" Popudrenko asked when grew quiet. "Who can see what's doing there?"

With a serious mien Vladimir Nikolayevich Druzhi pressed his binoculars to his eyes.

"They've gone into a skirmish line," he reported without a trace of a smile as though he really saw something. "They're hiding behind trees. Now they're diggi in They're up, now they're running, they're crawling No they're down. They seem surprised nobody's answeri their fire An insignificant-looking officer is calling ov some men Three are crawling up to him They're probably the bravest He is pointing out something them. . "

We could just picture the duped enemy, and ever word of Druzhinin's called forth a roar of laughter.

"There, the Germans are finally in the camp," he went on. "They see the half-naked corpses of their fellow countrymen tied to trees In their fury they throw grenades into the empty dugouts. The enraged officer slaps his scouts on the cheeks and then sends them off in all directions And when the Germans get ready to bury their brothers-in-arms, the ones staring at them with their dead eyes, when they start untying the bodies from the trees they'll be blown to pieces by mines!"

Yes, that was a victory for us The morning of December 22 the Hitlerites hurled an entire regiment against our abandoned dugouts Artillery, tanks and planes were all brought into action And telegrams had been sent off to Berlin beforehand announcing the rout of a big detachment of "forest bandits "

By noon we were already more than fifty kilometres from the old camp, and we moved into the villages of Malbutnya, Lasochki and Zhuravleva Buda Without stopping to find out what it was all about the inhabitants had

starostas came out to meet us and wished us "Guten Abend!" with a Ukrainian accent

The *polizei* lined up before us Their chiefs stretched forward arms with armbands above the elbow and togeth er with their subordinates chanted:

"Heil Hitler!"

They were quite surprised, of course, to find themselves face to face with partisans.

When the inhabitants learned the villages had been taken by partisans they immediately returned to their homes The children poured out into the streets. The girls dragged their finery out of their hope chests And our boys got out their concertinas Singing and dancing began in the homes and out in the streets

We had not expected such a reception. It was a real holiday both for us and for the peasants. It was a long time since we had eaten such delicious borshch and such wonderful cheese dumplings served with clotted cream It was a long time since we had enjoyed ourselves so wholeheartedly. And although every inhabitant knew that we were sure to be followed by the occupants, no one mentioned this or even appeared to think about it.

We did not celebrate long, though. On the very next day the peasants saw that the partisans were serious folk We set up positions, sent out pickets and began drilling and conducting political talks. We remained in those villages two weeks. From that new base of ours we carried out several attacks on enemy garrisons in the neighbouring villages

It was from Zhuravleva Buda that on January 3, 1942 we sent our first radiograms, contacting the Southwestern Front and Comrade Khrushchov personally

* * *

What I have now set down in a few words was really the result of a big collective effort

Where did we get our sleighs and horses? How did w at last acquire a radio transmitter?

In Book One I noted that in their call to the popula tion the underground R C. and the regional headquarter of the partisan movement had advised the kolkhozes t distribute the collectively-owned livestock among th peasants and to give their best horses to the partisans Many kolkhozes did just that Knowing that the occu pants would take the best livestock, the chairmen of kol khozes turned over the most spirited, best-fed and strong est horses to the partisans.

Unfortunately, however, the invaders were sometimes quicker than we While arguments were still going on in the detachments about whether they should be mobile or local, whether they should have cavalry and baggage trains or limit themselves to horses for the scouts, the Germans and Magyars were confiscating hundreds of kolkhoz horses

Of the two hundred-odd horses we possessed by the end of December approximately one-half had been cap- tured from the enemy. Our booty included not only peas- ant horses but dock-tailed, fat-rumped Hungarian and German horses. They were pampered and capricious, and in the forest they died off as monkeys do in the North. The partisans couldn't stand them, especially because they had to talk to them in German or Hungarian. They willingly exchanged the well-fed "foreigners" for ordi- nary peasant nags.

The other half of our horses we got from the kol- khozes. Our "contractors" rode out to surrounding villages in which the fascists had not yet had time to settle down. For the most part they returned to the detachment with sleighs as well as horses. Peasants in Yelino and Sofiev- ka started making sleighs especially for the partisans.

However, there were instances when our men encoun- tered unexpected resistance. Who does not know the peas-

ant's attitude toward horses! And now he had to part with the very best of them. The majority of the peasants understood that this was a military necessity and that in the hands of the partisans the horses would serve the cause of the people, but still . .

In the village of Perelyub the head of the kolkhoz stables was a man named Nazar Sukhobok, an evil-tempered, self-willed fellow. I knew him before the war In fact, almost all the regional officials who used to visit this district in line of duty knew Nazar as a squabbler and a gossipmonger. Many even thought he had kulak leanings.

Indeed, every time regional or district representatives were carrying out some measure or other in Perelyub, Nazar Sukhobok was sure to come forth with a malicious speech at the meeting. Still, he was a good worker and—this was the main thing—people respected him and feared his sharp tongue

He was close to fifty and for that reason had not been taken into the army Balabai's men made their first attempt to get horses in that kolkhoz back in November The chairman gave his permission, and two of the men went to the stables Nazar met them with a string of oaths When the partisans began unhitching the horses just the same, the old man let himself go in earnest and went at them with a shaft

"Partisans -huh!" he shouted "You're just a gang of deserters and idlers out there in the woods! Didn't join the army and now you want to get onto the neck of the peasants! Come on, get going!"

They retreated before Nazar that time

The next time they came to him was at the end of December The kolkhoz people, Nazar included, now knew that the partisans were fighting the Germans in earnest Just the same Nazar again refused, although this time he was approached by Balabai himself and five

decidedly determined lads And Nazar's horses, incidentally, were splendid ones.

"Look here, Sukhobok," Balabai said to him. "We've got an order from the chairman, so don't you go stringing us along. I've known you going on for ten years. You always did love to cook up something. . . . You know me, too. Step aside, now, while you're still in one piece. Take the horses, comrades!"

Nazar grabbed a shaft to try to frighten them off again But when he saw no one was paying the least attention to him he calmed down

"What am I going to do here in an empty stable?" he muttered "If you take the horses take me along with them I promise.. "

He did not finish saying what he was going to promise.

Balabai told me afterward that he agreed to take Nazar along with them against his better judgment, so sincere and touching had he felt Nazar's mutterings to be The old man said farewell to his family then and there—and there were eight members in it—harnessed the horses to sleighs and moved off with the partisans to the forest at the head of the column

I want to note here that Nazar looked after the horses in the detachment as zealously as he had in the kolkhoz. He also proved to be a brave and resourceful soldier. A month later he perished when he went to Perelyub to visit his family The Hitlerites captured him at home during the night He put up a stiff resistance he managed to bash in one Fritz's head with a stool and to maim two others with his legs In the end he was overcome and was executed that same night

And as not infrequently happens, it was only after Nazar's death that we saw the man in his true light His fellow villagers now recalled that Nazar had never deceived anyone Whenever he undertook a job he always

completed it on time. As a young soldier in the first imperialist war he had won a reputation for bravery. He had never been rich. During the long time he had been a hired labourer, he was as industrious as ever and obeyed his master unquestioningly; that is why many had considered him to have kulak leanings. He bore a grudge and began to go around saying that horses were better than people. Nazar was gentle with horses, but with people he was deliberately sharp and rude

The memory of himself which Nazar Sukhobok from Pereluyb left behind among the partisans was a good one.

Incidentally, in the partisan detachments not only every person but almost every object too had its own history, and quite an involved history it often was

This holds good for the way in which we obtained our first radio set. There are some who will say "Accident, luck, a happy coincidence." It seems to me that "accident" is like the ball coming to the player.

After we took up our position in the village of Zhuravleva Buda scouts reported that there was a small partisan detachment commanded by Vorozheyev on the other side of the Snov River, in Oryol Region We had known about the existence of this detachment before Soon the commander himself and his staff called on us Later we often received such partisan guests Vorozheyev was the first of them He was an excellent conversationalist and boon companion, and after dinner he dwelt at length on the way Alexander Vasilievich would have acted in our place

"Alexander Vasilievich, you know, wouldn't bother with trifles You know, he'd tackle the main German commandant's office in these parts Alexander Vasilievich would make a bold and proud assault!"

Only after about fifteen minutes did it come out that the Alexander Vasilievich to whom Vorozheyev referred so

often and with such familiarity was none other than the great Field Marshal Suvorov.

About the doings of his detachment the guest spoke mostly in general terms I had already marked up the evening as hopelessly wasted when suddenly Vorozheyev told us that in the village of Krapivnoye, some thirty-five kilometres away, a scout from the Southwestern Front, a captain, had been hiding out for more than two weeks now with a group of men, a radio transmitter and an operator. Vorozheyev even described the house in the attic of which the captain had taken refuge against the occupants. They were hunting for him, and Vorozheyev thought they had already got on his trail.

"Have you tried contacting him?" I asked, concealing my excitement.

Here was a real chance of finally getting in touch with the front and perhaps with the Central Commitee of the Party too.

"Yes, we're never at a loss, you know. I sent a few of the boys over, but it turned out the transmitter doesn't work. No juice."

Talk of the captain soon bored Vorozheyev and he began telling anecdotes about Suvorov.

I excused myself and stepped outside. To make a long story short, by morning our boys had brought Captain Grigorenko, the two solidiers accompanying him, the operator and the transmitter all to Zhuravleva Buda.

Captain Grigorenko turned out to be a close-mouthed fellow. He wasn't at all sure we were the right kind of people. His main argument against us was this:

"The command of the front knows nothing about the existence of detachments in these parts. I'm under no obligation to believe you."

"You mean to say that if the intelligence service of the front has no information about us we aren't a partisan detachment but a mirage? Is that it?"

"Maybe even something worse than a mirage ."

Meanwhile some lads had been sent out on a new assignment: to get batteries for the transmitter at all costs. It took us two days to prevail upon Captain Grigorenko to report our existence to the command We resorted to everything from tender words and pure alcohol to flattery and curses.

"I'd be glad to," Grigorenko said finally. "But you can see for yourselves there's no juice."

He was astounded when we confronted him on the spot with about thirty batteries from smashed German trucks. Our boys had scoured the locality over a radius of twenty kilometres and loaded up their sleigh with batteries

Then the captain demanded we give him special quarters and that no one should come within thirty metres of the transmitter while he was working We fulfilled all his demands.

The next time we met, Vorozheyev said bitterly:

"You made use of my information and got Grigorenko away right from under my nose You know, I call that some cheek Suvorov would never have done a thing like that."

On January 9, 1942, Grigorenko picked up an answer from the Southwestern Front The radiogram addressed to me was signed by Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov and Marshal Timoshenko

* * *

The impression made by the radiogram from the Mainland was one of the most powerful we experienced in all the time of our partisan life.

While up until this time we had been alone and dependent only upon ourselves, now that we had got in touch with the Red Army and the Central Committee of

the Party we became part of the common anti-Hitler fro not only morally but organizationally as well.

The text of my radiogram was as follows:

"N.S. Khrushchov

"Chernigov R C. carrying on on own territory. De tachment of 450 under R C. Report on results of struggl will follow

"Fyodorov."

The reply read:

"Fyodorov.

'Convey greetings to men and officers. Report require ments We await details.

"Khrushchov, Timoshenko."

These few words called forth wild rejoicing in all our units. Although we got the radiogram late in the evening, hundreds of men came running up to headquarters To gether with the partisans came civilians—old men and women, young women, boys Many of them didn't even know what it was all about but they couldn't help being affected by the general mood of rejoicing.

Incidentally, someone had already managed to spread the rumour that Fyodorov had spoken to Khrushchov by radio telephone for a whole half-hour There were even "witnesses" who related the contents of this imaginary conversation in full detail The audibility, they declared was bad and Fyodorov had to shout so much he lost his voice

Several days later our scouts intercepted an amusing document They caught a messenger on his way from the village of Yelino to the district centre, and in his pouch they found the following memorandum from the starosta to the district burgomaster:

"I wish to report that on the night of January 9 there was a great deal of noise and shouting in the villages where Fyodorov is now staying, namely, Zhuravleva Buda, Lasochki and Maibutnya. Many bonfires were lit, there was a lot of dancing and singing, hats were thrown in the air and there was also kissing I took steps to find out the reason. Trustworthy people inform me that Fyodorov will receive strong support in arms and also men from the front. Planes carrying infantry and guns are expected To mark this occasion the partisans were celebrating Another trustworthy person supplied the information that Fyodorov is in constant touch by radio with Stalin and with Khrushchov, who promised all this. That person said planes had already landed and brought some things On the other hand, no one has seen any planes yet

"Hence urgent steps must be taken to surround and exterminate these bandits; otherwise it may be too late

"Starosta Ivan Klyuv."

At first this memorandum had us considerably worried Novikov decided that there was a traitor among us; one who, moreover, had access to the detachment headquarters

But it wasn't, of course, that the starosta had received any secret information from our headquarters The hopes of the partisans, voiced loudly at meetings and in talks among themselves and with the peasants, and the great uplift everybody had experienced—that is what gave the starosta his information. Hiding such "information" was impossible, and indeed, was it worth while hiding?

When I received the radiogram in reply I underlined the words "We await details," and in my own radiogram the words "Report on results of struggle will follow" These two phrases became the subject of an animated

discussion first at headquarters and then at a speci meeting of the R.C.

We had kept some sort of account, but to tell the truth only from time to time. During the Pogoreltsy engage ment I assigned two men to count the number of German killed. However, no count at all was kept during many other engagements. We kept no account of the materie captured from the enemy, and we probably wouldn't hav been able to say offhand how many operations our unite detachment had conducted. As for what each detachmen had done in the "pre-historic" period, so to say, most likely no one could remember.

We hadn't felt it especially important to keep such an account. The results of the offensive operations naturally interested everyone. Everyone wanted to know what we had achieved in them. In the defensive engagements, which usually broke out unexpectedly, we were happy to beat off the enemy's attack and simply had no time to estimate the losses we inflicted on him and the number of his men and officers we killed.

In short, we had not yet really begun to keep an account of the captured materiel. Some got called down for this. At the R.C meeting the comrades told me a thing or two also. They were right when they said that this was the business of the detachment headquarters. I attempted to shift some of the blame on Rvanov. But it turned out he had been trying to establish it on a proper basis for a long time but had received no support from the commanders, Fyodorov included.

We admitted our mistakes and resolved to keep a scrupulous account of the number of Fritzes killed and the amount of materiel captured. And in order to draw up a record of what had been done up until that time, we called in the officers and instructed them to question the men immediately and borrow their diaries, in this way collecting all the information possible.

By the evening of January 11 we had all the figures.

We approached the matter very cautiously. The figures handed in by the officers known to have a predilection for boasting were cut, sometimes by half Unfortunately, we were able to collect information only from the detachments which had joined ours And even after cutting down every figure which seemed the least bit exaggerated we were amazed at the total

On January 12 we radioed to Comrades Khrushchov and Timoshenko in care of the Southwestern Front the following summary of the combat activity of the regional detachment and the detachments which had united with it:

"In the course of four months the partisan forces killed 368 Germans. We captured rich booty. We wrecked 29 motor vehicles, including 2 staff cars containing documents, also 18 motorcyles and 5 ammunition depots. we captured 100 horses and 120 saddles; we blew up 3 railway bridges The R C. printed and distributed 31 leaflets comprising a total of 40,000 copies "

We asked Comrades Khrushchov and Timoshenko to send us arms Our modest request was as follows 20 trench mortars, 15 heavy and light machine guns, 1,000 anti-tank grenades, explosives, and tommy guns and as much ammunition for them as possible.

In reply we received a long congratulatory radiogram in which Comrade Khrushchov promised that all our requests would be granted

* * *

A much more difficult job was summarizing the activity of the underground groups and individual underground workers scattered throughout Chernigov Region We did not receive bulletins, accounts or monthly reports from them, nor could we. About some of them we either knew

[illegible] a great deal less than [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] would find only ashes and [illegible] where a secret meeting place had [illegible] village [illegible] and [illegible] to [illegible] the group [illegible] but the village itself [illegible] would be safe, now turned will. The [illegible] would go in search of the underground district committee only to learn that the organization had fallen through, the secretaries had disappeared without a trace and the district committee members had long since been captured and executed by the Gestapo.

"Here, read what the German commandant says," he would be told by trustworthy people. And they would show him a poster or a leaflet naming the leading Communists of the district and telling when and where they were hanged. "We saw the bodies ourselves, with name plates on their chests."

"But their faces were hidden by sacks, weren't they?"

"We didn't see the faces," the witnesses would admit.

We were not the least surprised when a month later the "hanged" secretaries of the district committee let us know they were residing and operating in another village. Circumstances sometimes forced an entire district committee to abandon its district, go off deep into the forest and there start working all over again.

This was natural and quite logical. If a traitor gave away your bases, meeting places and the organization's roll to the fascists it would be foolish to wait until they caught you and really took you to the gallows.

The R.C. learned that in the village of Buda or the little town of Mena, let us say, leaflets appeared regularly on the walls of houses and a German ammunition depot

recently went up in the air. As far as we knew there weren't any underground workers in either of these places. That means a new group has been organized there But the messenger we sent returned to tell us that they were old friends who have moved in from the neighbouring district.

However, new underground groups did spring up, of course. Let us suppose that a small number of men who were in encirclement, or escaped war prisoners, find shelter in some village. There are sure to be energetic men among them, Communists and Komsomol members They want to fight. And they recruit supporters in the village, they arm themselves.

We naturally didn't shy away from such groups On the contrary, we endeavoured to help them by word and by deed. We demanded that the Communists and Komsomol members take the lead and set their comrades an inspiring example

The most favourable conditions were enjoyed by the underground workers in districts where partisan detachments operated It was for this reason that the Central Committee had recommended beforehand, even prior to the occupation, that not only underground Party bodies but also partisan detachments be formed They helped and complemented each other The underground workers obtained weapons for the partisans and collected important intelligence information for them And when faced by the threat of exposure and arrest they could always take to the woods and stay with the partisans

At the beginning of 1942 there were three underground district committees the Korsukovka Kholmy and Semyonovka operating in the forests of Kholmy District with the support of the regional detachment Their secretaries, Korotkov, Kurochka and Tkhorovsky and also their members served in the detachment and at the same time directed the underground groups in their districts

The underground workers of these districts carried a bold, lively and varied activity.

Underground worker Matsko, who really was excellent cook, managed to get a job as chef in Koryukovka restaurant in which burgomaster Baran sky, Moroz, the chief of the district police, and the Germ commandants drank and gorged themselves almost eve day. They used to call on Matsko to bake and fry a cook for them at home. When in their cups these loc chiefs blabbed incessantly. Matsko tucked it all away his mind, and as a result we came to know all the pla of the traitors and the invaders beforehand.

Not a single punitive expedition undertaken by t Koryukovka police came to us as a surprise. In the en the partisans killed police chief Moroz himself

Our first printshop owed its existence to the Koryu kovka underground workers. They stole type in th district centre and turned it over to us.

In addition to their intelligence and agitational wor and the collecting of arms for the partisans, the member of the Koryukovka group succeeded in arranging sub stantial aid for the wives of Red Army soldiers and officers who had worked at the sugar refinery before the war.

This is how they did it: several of the boys, dressed as peasants, would drive up to the market on Sunday with about twenty sacks of flour.

In those days barter had replaced money transactions at the markets. The townsfolk offered bed linen, lamps, tables and chairs, and in exchange the peasants gave them meat, flour and potatoes. The families of factory and office workers still had some money. before the men went off to the army they had collected their regular and dismissal pay, and this they left with their wives; when the refinery closed down its entire personnel received three months' pay, in addditlon to the current pay.

As soon as the cartload of flour appeared at the market customers lined up. But the "peasants" announced they weren't taking any articles, that they weren't bartering their flour but selling it, and only for Soviet currency. The customers dashed home for money And since the refinery settlement was near the market, it was the refinery folk who got back first

The underground workers sold no more than ten kilograms of flour to a person and kept strictly to the prewar state price A remarkable thing is that every time they did this, the peasants who had brought in flour also began selling it for money. A rumour immediately went the rounds: "Once they're taking Soviet money that means it's curtains for the Germans soon"

Where did the underground workers get this flour? At first from the partisan caches, and then from outlying flour mills after doing away with the German guards

In the course of September, October and November 1941 the underground workers and partisans of Koryukovka District supplied the families of servicemen with more than 48,000 kilograms of flour, 1,600 kilograms of meat and other provisions

With the coming of winter these "supply" operations unfortunately had to be stopped The stocks at our caches gave out, and the number of partisans was growing steadily The provisions we captured from the Hitlerites were no longer enough to feed even ourselves

With each passing day the activities of the Komsomol organization in Kholmy which called itself "Thus Life Began" grew more extensive The nine members of the committee of this organization—Kolya Yeremenko, Nastya Reznichenko, Shura Ornelchenko, Fenya Vnukova, Katya Dyachenko, Leonid Tkachenko, Fenya Shevtsova, Nadya Galnitskaya and Fedya Reznichenko—became a real headquarters of the young underground workers, agitators and scouts.

They printed leaflets containing the Soviet Informati Bureau bulletins and news of district life with the regula ity of a newspaper and faithfully delivered them to speci addresses. There more copies were made by hand an passed on. In the course of the previous few months the had printed and distributed thousands of such leafle newspapers.

Sixteen-year-old Lena Tkachenko, a ninth-grade pup who headed a group of scouts, managed to establish relay system of communication with us. In each villag en route to the detachment Lena had her boys and girls when they received a message they would immediatel set out and pass it on to the runner in the next village All the while we were in Kholmy District they knew ou whereabouts.

The latest assignment of the Kholmy Komsomol mem bers, set by the Southwestern Front and transmitted through us, was to reconnoitre the enemy's lines of communication. They coped with this job brilliantly too, although there was not a single army man among them.

During that time the group sent us several revolvers, about a hundred grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition. At the request of the district committee of the Party they dug up four radio sets and batteries for them and turned them over to the partisan detachments.

At the beginning of January, Katya Dyachenko and Fenya Shevtsova came to the detachment bringing bad news. Gestapo agents had got on the trail of the group. The youngsters had decided to go off to the forest for the time being, but on the way had been caught by the police. Katya and Fenya had escaped

A few days later, however, messengers reported that the others had managed to save themselves. They had been detained not by the district police but by the village police, who let them go on the condition that they return

home. They actually did return to Kholmy and resumed their work....

In the same month of January a young Communist named Nastya Patanok, a veterinary's assistant from the village of Syadrino who had not managed to evacuate into the Soviet rear, came to us. There were no other Communists in that village At the beginning Nastya did not know anything about the existence of an underground organization in the district and she operated on her own She wrote leaflets by hand and pasted them up in prominent places at night.

Oblivious of the existence of an underground Party organization, Nastya signed her leaflets "District Party Committee," "Red Partisans," and "Red Avengers" She sent notes to traitors threatening punishment To waverers on the point of joining the police force or going to work for the district commandant's office, Nastya sent letters in the name of the partisans advising them to stop and think before it was too late.

Nastya showed us some of her leaflets They were naive and often unconvincing. One said the fascists were fleeing from Kiev and Red Army units were approaching Chernigov.

"The fascists lie, so I do the same Only my lying helps our cause and comes from the bottom of my heart"

We explained to her that there was no need to resort to lying. The truth, no matter how bitter it might be, always worked for us and against the invaders. We gave Nastya several leaflets for distribution among the population of the villages near Syadrino A short time later she organized a small underground group

* * *

We were told that in the home of an old woman on the outskirts of the village of Alexeyevka, in Koryukovka

District, a Jew who had escaped miraculously from t fascists lay dying of typhus. In his delirium he was sa to have often repeated the names of Fyodorov, Batyu and Popudrenko.

Could that be Yakov Zusserman?

I had made inquiries about him a long time befor immediately after coming to the regional detachment. N one knew anything about him. I had since reconcile myself to the thought that he must have fallen into th hands of the Hitlerites on his way from the Ichnya de tachment to the regional detachment and been killed. Thi was a very painful thought indeed, but a war was on, afte all, and many were meeting their death . .

One evening when matters were not so pressing I took a group of men and together with Gromenko, the com mander of Company One, set out for Alexeyevka, which lay thirty kilometres from our camp

The scouts we sent ahead reported there were no Germans in the village and the *polizei* were keeping quiet like the cowards they were We went straight to the in dicated house. A dim light was burning in the window. I told the men to take up posts around the house and then I knocked.

The door was opened by a girl of twelve. She looked out and planted herself on the doorstep to prevent us from entering.

"Grandma Sidorovna's sick," the girl said. "She's shaking all over and she told me not to let anybody in. Who are you? The police?"

"We're relatives," said Gromenko

The girl threw him a suspicious glance.

"That's not true. Sidorovna hasn't got any relatives except mama and me You'd better not come in, there's typhus here My mama left me to take care of Grandma Sidorovna. I feed her, I cook porridge for her."

We went in just the same The girl followed us stea fily

with her quick, unusual eyes. It was cold and dreary in the house The moon furnished more light in the house than the lampion. The walls were smoke-stained, and the stove had not been whitewashed for a long time In a dark corner someone stirred. A senile voice queried hoarsely·

"Is that you, Nastya?"

"Some men have come, Sidorovna They say they're relatives."

"They're not Chase them out."

Without saying more she turned over with a sigh, rustling her straw pallet, and again either dozed off or else fell into a coma.

"See?" the girl said

"Who else lives here?" And without waiting for an answer I sang out in a loud voice· "I am Fyodorov, Alexei Fyodorovich Fyodorov, and my comrade here is a partisan too "

A pair of thin bare legs promptly swung down from the stove shelf

"Oh, it's you!" I heard a weak voice say. "Alexei Fyodorovich!"

Yes, it was Yakov Zusserman, the comrade of my wanderings. He climbed down from the shelf with difficulty, and supporting himself against the stove with long, weak arms, managed somehow to creep over to the bench It was apparent the short walk had exhausted him He gasped for breath and smiled a timid shaky smile His huge eyes gazed upon me with joy

I looked at him with involuntary horror. Before me sat an emaciated old man with a long beard And Yakov was only twenty-six at the time.

"Alexei Fyodorovich," Yakov repeated. "So you're alive I'd heard that but I didn't believe it Some one came in and said Fyodorov wasn't far from here, but I'm very sick and afterwards I thought it was my delirium "

As we listened to his words Gromenko and I looked Yakov as one looks at a doomed man, with sympathy a ill-concealed pity. Yakov must have noticed this.

"Don't think I'm dying," he said. "I was on the po of death twice and was almost killed about five times, I now I think I'm getting better. Typhus. And they're kind," he went on, trying to say as much as possible one breath. "The old woman and this girl."

He took a few deep breaths, wiped the sweat from h face with his sleeve and went on:

"I swallowed Batyuk's letter. There was nothing el to do. I'm very sorry it turned out that way; the guil deserve to be punished, but I guess I'm too weak fo that."

We had brought a little flour, a chunk of salt pork an some sugar, of which Kapranov still had half a sack i his storehouse.

Yakov laid out these riches on the bench, stirred hi hands and then said with unexpected desire in his voice

"May I eat a little now? You know the appetite one has after typhus "

He sank his teeth into the pork The paper package o sugar he handed to the girl.

"Here, Nastya dear, this is for you ..."

I asked Yakov, if he had the strength, to tell us in con secutive order all that had happened to him. He began at once. Every once in a while he would catch his breath and get down to the pork, then he put it aside again and talked, talked and talked

Gromenko said he would wait for me out in the street The room was stuffy and had the sweetish smell of a poorly-ventilated hospital ward. I didn't feel so well my self I suggested to Yakov that he leave for the camp with me on the spot.

He shook his head "I don't think I have the right Now to support and nurse this woman who's been so

good to me. Don't go thinking Yakov doesn't want to be a partisan. I want to live so that I can avenge the sufferings of the population, and my own too I don't believe any longer that my wife and son are alive. No, don't try to persuade me they are. I'll be sure to come to you just as soon as the old woman gets well.

"Anyway I haven't the strength yet to lift a rifle, to say nothing of firing it Now just stay and listen, if you can This'll be a story of such suffering!"

I sat down on a wobbly stool. I had to hear Yakov's story. His garrulousness irritated me, but I realized this was a result of his illness and his long solitude

"Isn't there any danger?" asked Yakov "Or have you got a guard? Why any more victims? If you get caught because of me it'll be the most awful thing in my life But of course I don't want you to go It was like this When I left the Ichnya detachment I happened to remember that Israel Finestein, my wife's uncle, lived in Koryukovka He was a harness-maker at the sugar refinery He used to come to Nezhin on his vacation, and the two of us put down a lot of vodka together. We were gay in those days. He was the picture of health and had an iron constitution He was an elderly man. He'd taken part in the October Revolution, had seen Shchors and even helped him by supplying information. I got the crazy idea in my head that maybe my wife had gone to him from Nezhin and hadn't been captured by the punitive expedition at all. So I turned off to Koryukovka. The peasants told me there were no Germans there and the partisans had the upper hand That made me terribly happy But it turned out just the opposite. Actually the partisans had been forced to retreat under pressure of superior forces. There were no fascists there, though. They didn't show up for another few hours. Maybe they were afraid to come in right away. There wasn't a soul on the street—just like before a big storm when the lightning's flashing.

"I went into the drugstore. 'If Israel's still in tow I thought, 'they're sure to know it in the drugstore.' T druggist was a good friend of his. But the druggist was there. 'Hide, quick,' the old watchwoman told me. 'All t Jews are hiding at home, they're afraid of atrocities 'What about Israel?' I asked. 'Do you know anythi about him, maybe?' She told me Israel and his wife a kids had left for Nezhin. It was just the other way aroun like in a novel.

"Just as I was thinking that, motorcycle troops can down the street You know, at that time I didn't have beard yet, and with my moustache I looked more like t Ukrainian type. I remembered from Nezhin that th motorcycle troops race along to make a lot of noise an scare people, but they don't stop for trifles. So I steppe right out into the street again Where should I go? I won dered. I went to Israel's house. It's right next to the hos pital. Are you listening to me, Alexei Fyodorovich, or hav you gone to sleep already?"

"You'll get tired, Yakov," I said. "Eat, and don't hurry."

He wiped the sweat from his face again, then chewed on the pork for a long time. Sidorovna groaned in her corner. The girl placed a few sticks of wood in the stove and asked me for a match I gave her my cigarette lighter. When she got the fire going she stretched out her hands toward it and stood that way for a long time without looking around

"The terrible thing is that the landlady's caught it from me," Zusserman said. "She's paying a big price for being kind. She's over sixty, and what kind of a heart can she have! There's nothing worse than a bad heart when you have typhus. She may die That's some sacrifice on her part. But you note, Alexei Fyodorovich, that I warned her. But she said only God knew the answer to such a problem. If he wanted to take her soul then it couldn't

be helped. I'd have gone away, only I couldn't move because of the fever."

Yakov talked for no less than an hour. He didn't omit a single detail. In brief the rest of his story is like this

The very next day the invaders posted an order for all the Jews to gather at an appointed place, taking all their valuables with them. A lot of troops had arrived, and getting out of the town was extremely difficult.

The drugstore watchwoman's sister, who was an attendant at the hospital, persuaded Doctor Bezrodny to let her put Zusserman into the hospital. At that time he was still entirely well

But it so happened that that night the fascists decided to inspect the hospital with a view to turning it into an army hospital. They pushed aside the man at the door and started going through the wards. Zusserman heard them questioning the patients in the neighbouring ward

"Where are you from? What's your nationality?"

Running away was impossible. The window opened onto the street, and the door led into the corridor, where Hitlerites were milling around.

"I'd already said goodbye to life for good, because I knew what appearing for registration meant I quickly ran my eyes over Batyuk's letter to remember what he wrote you and then hurried to chew it and swallow it down I choked over it but the Germans didn't hear Just then in comes the relative of the drugstore watchwoman with another attendant and a stretcher. Get on, you're a dead man now!' they whispered I did They covered me with a sheet and carried me past the Germans and the policemen. Who's that?' I heard a voice ask. 'Just died of typhus,' one of the women answered calmly, just as if she was speaking to somebody at home A policeman lifted the sheet I was so pale I must have really looked like a corpse, because he said 'Ah,' indifferently, and I was carried out into the yard There were soldiers there too

"She fed me milk and she fried potatoes for me. And now she's caught it. Ah, Alexei Fyodorovich, I know I'm to blame all around. When I get well and join the detachment you'll give me a talking to, or maybe something stronger."

He told me the contents of Batyuk's letter

"Yasha, that is, Comrade Batyuk, dictated it in front of me. His sister Zhenya took it down. She told me it would be better if I could learn it by heart, like an actor, but there wasn't time then. While I was on the way I really did try and I managed some of it but not all Before I got sick I knew the beginning like I know the multiplication table. Wait a minute, Alexei Fyodorovich, maybe I'll recall it."

Zusserman closed his eyes and was silent for a long while. I sat there in silence too The girl continued to stand with her back to us, warming her hands over the stove. We could hear her sucking on a lump of sugar Nothing seemed to concern her

Zusserman still said nothing. I was already wondering whether he hadn't fallen asleep when suddenly Nastya turned, hastily swallowed her sugar and said in a calm, businesslike tone

"It begins like this 'Comrade R C secretary, our organization is in the embryo stage. .

Zusserman sprang from the bench and stared at Nastya with unconcealed horror

"What?" he exclaimed. "How do you know it?"

Nastya immediately saw the reason for his fear.

"Uncle Yakov," she said hastily, "you've forgotten When you were sick and thought you were going to die you yourself asked me to learn it by heart You said it out loud so that either I or Grandma would remember it and then would try to pass it on to this uncle in the detachment." She pointed to me

Yakov sat down again and smiled faintly. Wi
sigh of relief Nastya sat down beside him.

"Poor girl," said Zusserman. "You can imagine, v
two sick people in a row. At least Grandma's quiet.
I was violent."

"Just like you were drunk," Nastya confirmed. "
wanted to run away, but I put you to bed."

"So I read the letter out loud, did I?"

"Yes, you did. And then once you went on as thou
Uncle Fyodorov was here in the house and you read
out loud again. I wanted to write it down but y
wouldn't let me, you said I was a fool. But one must
get angry at sick people."

"Well, thanks, Nastya, thanks. That's right, it do
begin like this:

"'Comrade R.C. secretary.' At first Batyuk dictat
your name, Alexei Fyodorovich, but then he had her ta
down the letter from the beginning again. He said men
tioning it was dangerous 'Our organization is in th
embryo stage. So far there are twelve Komsomol member
and other young people in the group. There are older
people too. They are all burning with a desire to work
Unfortunately we have lost touch with the district com
mittee of the Party. We take down and distribute Soviet
Information Bureau bulletins, print leaflets and carry on
agitational work—among our acquaintances for the time
being. We feel this is not enough and hope that soon we
shall be able to do more. We sincerely ask the R.C. of the
Party to count on us for anything it may need. Only
death can halt us. . . .'"

Zusserman fell silent.

"I don't know any more by heart, Alexei Fyodorovich,"
he confessed.

"Do you remember what it was about?"

"Batyuk asked me to tell you that you should absolute-
ly take his physical condition, that is, his blindness, into

consideration. No, he's not asking for easier work. Just the opposite. He says he's got an advantage in secret work. Because he's blind they think he's a helpless invalid. 'Let the R.C. give me any assignment,' he said. 'I'm young and strong and I've got stamina.'"

"But what else was there in the letter? Only what you recited and nothing more?"

"Oh, no, Alexei Fyodorovich, of course not! There were important questions. It's hard for me to recall them but I'll try. Here's one thing that comes to mind, for example. The first question was like this. The Germans are letting people go in for handicraft industry, all kinds of artels—food products, woodworking and things like that. The army supply department and the commandant's office promise orders. So Batyuk asks if they should make use of these workshops. He himself wants to organize an artel so as to group his people around it. Would that be the right thing to do? Especially because after all they'd have to turn something out and hand it over to the Germans."

"In other words, should legal forms be used for rallying our supporters? Is that right?"

"Exactly. Then there's another question. They, that is, Batyuk's group, could carry out terrorist acts against the commandant, the burgomaster and other German henchmen. But Batyuk said in his letter there were comrades who objected to this. They pointed out that Marxists-Leninists are against personal terror."

"Individual, you mean?"

"Yes, that's right, that was the word. And at the end Batyuk again says that he's waiting for your instructions. They'll do everything the Party orders them to."

The old woman stirred in her corner.

"Water, Nastya dear," she whispered. Nastya jumped up and handed her a cup. After swallowing noisily a few times the old woman muttered in a fairly loud voice.

"Third time you've woken me up. Is that proper? me die in peace at least. . . "

"Forgive us, Grandma," I said. "We're leaving r away. Maybe you'll come with us after all, Yakov, e I proposed again. "It's not bad at our place. We're stay in a village. Our feldsher's got a whole cottage. When get well we'll fight the enemy together. For we may p up and leave one of these days—and then just try find us"

'I really do want to, that's my dream, but you und stand . " He nodded toward the corner where the woman lay

She could not have seen his nod but she guessed wh we were talking about

"Go, go, Yakov You've lain around here enough. off with the partisans Take him, chief, we haven't g anything to eat ourselves" After these rude-sound words the old woman added in the same tone of voi "Only you have to wrap him up His coat's too thi Yakov'll catch cold in the frost '

I said I had a long sheepskin coat in my sleigh

'Then go, and God be with you Give him h's cannon Nastya It s wrapped in a rag behind the icon of t Chernigov Virgin

The girl brought a pistol from a dark corner, han it to Zussermin and helped him put on his coat He pul down his garrison cap with trembling hands and to several steps toward the old woman

D n t [illegible] she warned him

'Prashchaya Stranna' Yakov exclaimed 'Y ve been a real sister to me! I'll never forget

"All right Yakov, answered the old woman "I

The girl came outside too to help us get Zusserman into the sleigh. But the men came up, and she stood silently on the steps, shivering in her shawl.

"Goodbye, sister of mercy," I said.

"Goodbye, Nastya dear, thanks again. And if we meet again whatever I have is yours!" Zusserman said with feeling.

Nastya shook hands ceremoniously with Yakov, myself and all my companions. Then she said softly:

"Uncle Fyodorov . ."

"Speak up, speak up," Zusserman said encouragingly

"You're in the woods... If you only can send Grandma in a little firewood. 'If only,' she says, 'we could have it warm once before I die' I'd go myself but it's not good to leave her alone"

I promised to send some firewood the very next day, of course But it so happened that the next morning the occupants went at us hot and heavy We fought them till late at night The day after was a very tense one too I was able to send some men with firewood only two days later. Besides the wood the men took her half a sack of flour, some rusks and some meat.

On their return they reported that the old woman had died and her house was boarded up

And so I never had a chance to see her. I had only heard her hoarse senile voice. I was terribly conscience stricken at not having carried out her last wish on time.

* * *

Batyuk's letter reached me two months after it was written, and even then it wasn't the letter itself but a recital of its contents What had happened in Nezhin during this time? Was the group organized by this brave and gifted blind man still operating? Was he still pon-

dering over the questions he had asked the secreta
the R.C. of the Party to answer? And, finally, w
still alive at all?

Neither I nor the other R.C. members knew.

If we answered Batyuk today and gave him
instructions when would *he receive our answer? We d*
have either telephone, radio or mail service Our mes
ger couldn't get to him either by train, automobile o
horseback. He would have to go on foot, and not so m
go as make his way, risking his life at every step.

For this reason our underground R.C. wasn't alw
able to give operative guidance, that is, react quickl
events in remote districts, furnish advice, men or a
in good time. We ourselves, together with the regio
detachment, were forced to change our whereabouts f
time to time. Messengers from district committees w
to Reimentarovka and some even to Gulino, only to f
traces of our having been there and nothing more
deserted dugouts, empty cartridges and German corps
Some messengers gave up their search for us as hopel
and returned; the more persistent questioned the peasa
about where we were, but as the reader already know
the peasants did not supply such information very wi
ingly.

Only at the beginning of January, after a thre
months' absence, did Kuzma Kulko return from Yabl
novka District. He reported that Comrade Boiko, a
underground worker appointed by the R.C., was headin
a small group of Communists and Komsomol members i
the district. They printed leaflets on a hectograph an
distributed them, conducted oral propaganda among th
peasantry, and regularly cut the telephone and telegraph
wires between Yablunovka and Piryatin. The group had
put to death two starostas who were traitors. Just recently
someone had informed on Comrade Boiko, and the Ger-

caught up with him in the forest and shot him on the spot.

Now a candidate-member of the Party named Zlenko was head of the Yablunovka primary organization. The group was small and was having a hard time. Its activity was limited at the time to tuning in on the radio and putting out leaflets containing Soviet Information Bureau bulletins. It was hard for the comrades not only because the Germans and the police were after them but also because there were many out-of-towners in the group.

"They want to know this," Kulko said in his report to the R C. "How can they earn a livelihood? The partisans can capture supplies from the Germans But the underground worker, if he doesn't have a little plot of land or a craft—what can he do? He has to go to work. But where is there work nowadays? It'd be all right on a sovkhoz or in a factory, where there's a chance to conduct agitation, to explain the real situation to the masses, to go in for sabotage, and so on But the trouble is no factories or mills are working in Yablunovka The Germans closed down the sovkhozes too They've turned the kolkhozes into communes consisting of ten families each, and they only take in local folk So what's to be done?"

"What did you advise them?"

"There's only one way out—and that's help from the people. Like the way you get food on a journey: either you beg your way or else you take advantage of the generosity and hospitality of the peasants. Only remember, it's one thing when a man's passing through a place and another when he's settled down to stay."

Incidentally, Kulko had changed greatly by this time; he had lost weight and grown coarse. Now he smoked a lot, and since he was a guest it was not polite to refuse him; he smoked up my ration for two days while he was making his report.

A few days later Kulko went off on another liaiso assignment. Zusserman went with him. Though he ha barely got on his feet, he himself volunteered to go t Nezhin, pointing out that no one knew the road bette than he. At first I hesitated, but he persuaded me. It wa indeed easier for him to locate Batyuk's group than fo anyone else.

I let Zusserman go with a heavy heart. But he wa in good spirits, seemed fit and was very eager to set ou on the assignment.

At the beginning of January, after wandering about a long time, Savva Grishchenko, a member of the Oster underground district committee of the Party, stumbled on a picket of the regional detachment. He was worn out, ragged and hungry But when he learned the underground R.C. was with the detachment he immediately brightened up. Food was brought to headquarters for him, and he told his story while he ate.

Grishchenko described the difficult position of the Oster underground district committee. A partisan detachment had been organized in the district before it was occupied. It helped Red Army units emerge from the encriclement but then was unable to make its way back into occupied territory. Most of the comrades went off with our troops. Only a small group, headed by the district committee secretary, Glushko, crossed the frontline and returned to the Oster woods.

There they learned that the location of the food caches and the secret store of weapons had been betrayed to the police by a truck driver who had turned traitor. This made it impossible to form a new partisan detachment, and the district committee directed all its efforts to building up rural underground groups. It set up six groups, each consisting of four to eight members. These groups copied

out Soviet Information Bureau bulletins by hand and distributed them Actually, they were the core of a future partisan detachment They foraged for arms in the woods and in the fields They already had twenty boxes of grenades, more than one hundred rifles, two hand machine guns and more than ten thousand rounds of ammunition at their common forest depot

Ah, comrades,' Grishchenko said, if we knew for sure that the R C was carrying on as before, how much easier it would have made our work'

"Why?" asked Popudrenko How could we have helped you?"

'Is help everything? Look you've just told me you got a message from Comrade Khrushchov But so far you haven't received any help either have you? It's the same with us Communists in the districts It's very important for us to know that the R C exists Why you must see that yourself don't you Nikola Nikitich?

'And you really didn't hear a thing about our detachment?'

We did in fact we heard about two big detachments Orlenko's and Lyubavin's* After the R C we last received a directive from it back in November

Did the directive contain anything what you needed?'

'A lot of new things have cropped up since then For instance, there are Communists and Komsomol members in the district who don't belong to any groups Some of them have registered with the police Those who did this voluntarily are cowards and traitors but there are some who just couldn't help registering

'Well look here nothing would ever force me to register!" Drozdenko exclaimed indignantly

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* On more than one occasion I heard that there were two detachments operating in the region Orlenko's and Lyubavin's [illegible]

The same with me . . . in our case it's different," Grishchenko protested. "But take the following case. Remember the mechanic at the *Chervonoarmeyets* Kolkhoz? You ought to remember him—Nikanor Stepanovich Gorbach. An A1 mechanic. He made an appeal last year through the regional newspaper on the pre-schedule repair of farm machines for spring sowing. His picture was on the front page with a moustache, a pipe in his mouth and a big mole near his nose. That's the man. A candidate member of the Party. But the main thing is he's known everywhere for his skill. And besides being a mechanic he's a blacksmith and a turner, a self-taught craftsman. He knows tractors inside out, and he can fix any motor, any machine. A born mechanic. Many's the time the machine and tractor station asked him to come and work for it but he wouldn't go. He liked his village; he had beehives there. And the main thing was he loved the kolkhoz and was proud of it. A real Soviet man, anybody would say, and then he goes and registers."

"That means at heart he wasn't that. You Communists of the district failed to see he was a kulak at heart."

"That's not it at all, Alexei Fyodorovich. He even shaved off his moustache and wanted to have his mole removed to disguise himself. But nothing can help him, the same way it can't help you, say, or Nikolai Nikitich either. Once the people know a man, that's all there is to it! No matter what you put on they'll always recognize some part of you. I, for instance, would remember Nikolai Nikitich's nose, if you'll pardon my saying so, and you his ears. If one doesn't recognize you then another will. Besides, you can always tell an old blacksmith by his hands. Right?

"Nikanor Stepanovich didn't want to evacute into the interior. Said he'd rather be a partisan. But we had to return from the woods, as I already said. We told him that since he was in the public eye we'd send him to some

remote village. He didn't argue He picked up his old woman and went off to live with relatives in Zelyonaya Buda. They took him in, of course. In the kolkhoz, or the association, as they call it now, they were simply overjoyed at having him. What did that mean? That they'd recognized him of course But then he told them he couldn't work He bandaged up his hand on purpose 'That's nothing, you'll get well,' they said to him. He let us know he wanted leaflets 'There are good folk here,' he said. 'And if you need it, I have a big cellar that'll do for a printshop' When he met one of our men he suggested they bring him the printing press from the woods piecemeal. He'd figure out how to make it work The press, by the way, was intact. When the police raided the caches they only damaged it a bit They threw rocks at it.

"To make a long story short, just at that time we learned he'd registered He went to the police and said he was a candidate-member of the Party and signed a statement saying he gave up all resistance And according to the rules, he promised to inform them about everything he learned

"When we heard all this we felt pretty bad Whom could you believe then, if not a man like that, one of the most devoted kolkhoz men, so to say, and a member of the board! It turned out we had to take revenge on him, we had to kill him. After all, Nikanor Stepanovich knew the addresses of the meeting places Beside the members of the district committee he knew the relatives of all the members Suppose he took it into his head to do what he promised the Germans in that statement?

"But none of us wanted to kill him We couldn't conceive of his being a traitor. And naturally he wasn't He came and hunted us up of his own free will and explained it all. But we expelled him from the Party. We refused to recognize him as one of us

"How did all this happen, you ask? One day the Landwirtschaftsführer and a fellow who used to work in the district land department—now he's fixed himself up in the economic commandant's office—came to see him 'You're so and so, aren't you?' they say. He tries to deny it but that fellow knows him by sight, it turns out. 'You shaved off your moustache,' he says. 'Well,' says Nikanor Stepanovich, 'you've got me there.'

"They put him in their carriage and take him to a threshing floor thirty kilometres away. There they order him to repair the stationary engine at once. They'd started threshing. A German soldier—he was a mechanic too—is poking around the engine but it seems he doesn't know the workings of our machine. He can't do a thing with it. Nikanor Stepanovich points to his hand to show them he can't work They say he doesn't have to do anything himself. All he has to do is tell them.

"And can you imagine, the old fellow got carried away. 'I don't understand how it happened myself,' he said later 'Why, I kept saying to myself, you bald-headed devil, don't you do anything They fuss around the machine this way and that way but they can't get anywhere Then they start making fun of me. how come a famous mechanic like you and you can't fix it either, they say. I couldn't stand it and I played right into their hands; or maybe it was I wanted to show the Germans who was better My hands reached out by themselves, so to say, and before I knew it the machine was going. Think what you want of me,' he says,'I was never an underground worker before in my life, but I've been handling machines more than thirty years.'

"After that matter of the engine they tell him the occupation authorities know he's a Communist but that doesn't count, all he has to do is register. They take him to the police station. And there he signs that paper I told you about A couple of days later he comes to us

and asks us to consider it all a trick, and says he hates the fascists and is ready to give his life for our cause So you see, comrades, how it turns out sometimes"

"But that's a rare case, after all," we protested

"Each case is rare in its own way A certain comrade, also a new Party member, a schoolteacher, looks us up and says, 'I may be guilty, I may not be worthy of being called a Party member, but don't let me stop being called a human being Give me an assignment, try me out. I confess that the whole picture of the retreat crushed my spirit at the beginning, and I lost my head But when I thought it over, when I saw the strength of the people's spirit, I realized death was better than this sort of life'

"We told him to get the lay of the land on the railway. For some wrecking work, we said, although we had nothing to do such work with And so we sent him to the station, which was under a very heavy guard Just think, he crawled under the barbed wire at night and afterwards drew us a detailed map of where the sentries stood, where the shells were stored . We felt sorry for the man—all that crawling for nothing No, after all, you can't go calling everybody a rat just because he got scared once. As time goes on more and more people like that schoolteacher will come over to us"

"But what about the mechanic?" asked Druzhinin, whose interest had been aroused "So you expelled him from the Party and drove him away?"

"The old man's taken to drink It's just terrible the way he's drinking. He's set up a still and makes real 100 proof stuff. And he's learned how to get the rawness out of it When you add a little water it's just as good as Moscow Extra Refined"

"So you've tried it, eh?" Popudrenko put in with a laugh. "And yet you say you have nothing to do with the old man. It appears he's still useful to you in some ways, doesn't it?"

We joked a bit but the questions raised by Grishchenko, and before that in Batyuk's letter and in Kulko's report, were without any doubt serious questions which agitated the minds of all underground workers.

Indeed, just who were the rank-and-file underground workers in the Patriotic War? What were they supposed to do? Whom might they accept into their groups? Should they become professionals, that is, devote themselves exclusively to underground activity? What material conditions did they have for this?

In the towns the underground groups were made up of factory workers and office employees, students of higher schools and school children. In the rural areas they consisted of kolkhoz members, workers of machine and tractor stations and sovkhozes, doctors and schoolteachers, and school children too. The groups were headed by comrades sent by the R C or the district committees

Practically nobody had any experience in underground work, except for older men who were Party members before the Revolution or were Civil War veterans. But in the first place they were just a handful, and secondly the present conditions in the underground had little in common with the conditions under which these comrades once worked.

I imagine Batyuk's question as to whether they should go in for territorist acts was suggested to him by one of the older people

To get down to it, were we fighting to overthrow a social system? The German invaders hadn't introduced the bourgeois system in the occupied Ukraine, nor could they introduce it, although of course they were trying to. All they had succeeded in doing was occupying territory, and at that only temporarily. The war was still going on. The fascists were fighting not only the Red Army but the entire Soviet people. We partisans and underground workers were all soldiers. We were fighting. Wiping out

commandants, Landwirt-, Gruppen- and all other kinds of führers was our duty as soldiers. Was wiping out traitors to the people—starostas, burgomasters and *polizei*—was that terrorism? Those dregs of humanity were criminals whom we were putting to death according to the laws of our country

The underground workers in the Patriotic War were partisans just like the rest. This division into partisans and underground workers meant simply that the former lived and operated in sizable military groups, while the latter had to live separately and operate more secretly.

The Soviet people in occupied territory knew very well who their enemies were. Even the most backward peasants couldn't, of course, take seriously the attempts of the Hitlerites to put themselves up as "liberators." There was only one thing the Hitlerites did succeed in doing, and that was to impress a considerable part of the population in the occupied countries with an exaggerated idea of their strength.

This they managed to do to a greater degree in the countries of Western Europe than in the occupied districts of the Soviet Union. But it must be confessed there were people, especially during the first year of the war, who had too high an opinion of the enemy's strength and clearly underestimated their own strength

We paid very dearly for this horrible mistake

The resistance of our men and women who remained on occupied territory would have been many times greater if they had known the entire truth about the fascists at that time, if they had known, at least, that already in the first year of the war there were more dead Hitlerites in the Ukraine than live ones.

Hence the main task of the underground workers, that is to say, the Communists and Komsomol members who had not gone off to the woods but had been left in the towns and villages, was *to spread the truth*

By telling the population the real situation at the fronts, by regularly distributing Soviet Information Bureau bulletins, by exposing the tactical manoeuvres of the occupants, such as their land laws, their playing at being "friends of free Ukraine," their nationalistic propaganda and their other moves, the underground workers raised the people's spirit and helped build up partisan reserves.

The underground workers in the towns and villages had to do everything in their power to prevent fascist laws, orders and instructions from being carried into effect, they had to plan acts of sabotage at the factories and in the agricultural communities; they had to expose traitors; they had to collect arms and ammunition and turn them over to the partisan detachments; they had to carry on intelligence work for the headquarters of partisan detachments and for the Red Army.

I would hardly be able, though, to enumerate here all the duties of the underground fighter. His rights and his concrete opportunities were quite another matter; they were much more limited Our reply to the underground workers of Yablunovka as to how to make a living could only be: Seek work, comrades, and don't look down on any kind of job Lead the same sort of life as the people, always be with the people. If need be, become hired labourers for the newly-baked kulaks and landlords, join artels, go to work on the railway or in the Hitlerite administrative and economic institutions – we have to have our own people everywhere if we want to blow up the German occupation machine from within But remember, you may go to such places only if the Party assigns you

As for those Communists and Komsomol members who out of fright or because of some kind of "personal reasons" registered with the Germans and went to work for them, there can be no justification for them and never will be. No matter how likeable the mechanic Nikan.r

Gorbach was, the Oster Party organization did quite right in refusing to consider him a Communist. The schoolteacher whom Grishchenko told us about also had to be expelled from the Party at once

There was only one way for them to redeem themselves in the eyes of the people, and that was by joining a partisan detachment. As for reinstatement in the Party they should not even dream of that for the time being

* * *

Why such strictness? the reader will ask After all, both Nikanor Gorbach and that schoolteacher who admitted he had been lacking in courage came to the district Party committee of their own accord to confess their guilt. After all, they had wavered for only a moment Should they be considered traitors?

If they were traitors they would have been shot The question of allowing them to fight in the ranks of the partisans would not have come up, then. As for the men about whom Grishchenko told us, we not only confirmed their expulsion from the Party but asked the district committee to make as public as possible the fact they had been expelled A Communist may not strike a bargain with his conscience Not for a moment has he the right to forget that the people see in him a representative of the Party at the helm.

The fascists made a big show about registering Communists They posted large signs saying "Registration of Party and Komsomol Members Here" The purpose, however, was not to list the Communists Only a handful came to register. The fascists naturally knew that only traitors and the faint-hearted would come, and that these weren't dangerous anyway There was quite a different purpose it was an attempt to strike at the Communist Party's authority among the people.

Later on the mechanic Nikanor Gorbach did prove that not only wasn't he a traitor but that he was even a brave man. He joined the detachment and despite his advanced years acquitted himself well in action. He told us later how his touched pride would not let him bow to the German mechanic. His professional pride as a mechanic, it turned out, had been stronger than his pride as a patriot and a Communist.

But what the people prized most highly in those days was the indomitable civic pride of the Soviet man. How could we forgive a Communist even the slightest wavering toward the side of the Hitlerites when hundreds and thousands of nameless heroes, workers and peasants who were not Party members went to their death simply to show their scorn for the invader.

In kolkhoz cottages, at the ashes of burnt-down villages and around partisan campfires one could hear the deeds of these heroes recounted. I have noticed, incidentally, that the people dearly love to hear stories about selfless courage, stories about men and women who meet their end with a supreme scorn for death, stories about what Maxim Gorky called the madness of the brave. The people told such stories over and over again, built them up, passed them on from mouth to mouth.

There was, for example, the story of old man Mefodyevich of Orlovka, I myself heard this story no less than ten times. It is based on an actual case which took place at the beginning of 1942. Mefodyevich's last name, however, I never did find out.

Once three of our scouts, Komsomol members Motya Zozulya, Klava Markova and Andrei Vazhentsev, set out on a tour of some villages to collect information the command needed. With them they had about five hundred leaflets, some of which they were to scatter on the way and the rest hand over to trustworthy people for distribution

In the big village of Orlovka they walked down the street—two ordinary peasant girls and a young lad. They met old men and women, and girls and fellows just like themselves. The scouts greeted them, asked the way to the flour mill and inconspicuously thrust little squares of paper into their hands.

When they asked how far from there the Germans were they were told that everything was all right, that those fiends hadn't been around for a long time

Just at that moment several trucks filled with German soldiers burst into the village with the speed of fire engines. Our trio of scouts couldn't run away. If they tried they would be sure to attract general attention, and then, of course, the Germans would start out after them. They continued strolling down the street, hoping the fascists would take them for ordinary peaceful villagers

But the German soldiers behaved very strangely They sprang out of the trucks, scattered to all sides, grabbed whomever they could lay hands on—old men, old women, youngsters—herded them to the trucks and with their rifle butts forced them to climb in They didn't search anybody, didn't ask any questions or give any explanations. When they had filled the trucks they set out at full speed in the direction of the town of Kholmy, the district centre.

The scouts landed in the last truck, in which about twenty-five pale and frightened villagers stood holding on to one another. At first they only exchanged glances, but after about five minutes they began whispering, "What can it mean?" "Where are they taking us?" "Why did they grab just anybody?"

They were tossed from side to side in the speeding trucks; they fell against one another; they were flung to the floor. Girls shrieked, old women complained.

"Nadya, stop bumping into me so hard!" a woman cried. "You know I've got a bad knee, you devil."

[illegible] "[illegible]" came a cracked old man's voice. "Be thankful they're not collecting fire for the ship. You'd have to hand out thirty rubles to get to Kiev. But our German benefactors are delivering us to the rear at their own expense."

"There's not a bit started off again," a woman's voice reproached. "Be better if you shut up, Mel'nikovich, it's bad enough without you."

The old man retorted with a joke. Several of the villagers burst into peals of laughter. That Mel'nikovich must have been one of those jolly old fellows who never lose their heads and are never short for a word.

The scouts were not listening, they had other things on their mind. They stood by the sideboard discussing in a whisper what they were to do. Each had more than a hundred leaflets in his breast. There wouldn't even be any need to search them: a shake of the collar would be enough.

The trucks were making no less than forty kilometres an hour. They raced through the villages with horns tooting. There were no soldiers in the back of the trucks, but tommy gunners stood on the running-boards. They chatted with the men inside the driver's cab, but every once in a while they glanced back, and of course they would have noticed anyone trying to jump out.

Motya Zozulya was more experienced and more resourceful than her companions. She studied the people standing around her, then, winking to her friends, she cautiously pulled out a pack of leaflets, held her hand over the side and flung them to the ground. The wind suddenly caught them up and whirled them about behind the truck.

Motya blushed and shrank back as though expecting a blow. No one in the truck said anything. The leaflets disappeared from sight, but the people in the truck kept silent, casting searching looks at one another.

The old man spoke up again in his cracked voice

"So besides arresting people the Fritzes spread leaflets at the same time eh? Like a factory on wheels!"

The engine was roaring and the truck creaked as it jounced over the ruts, yet it seemed to the scouts they could hear a general sigh of relief.

It is doubtful whether anyone in the back of the truck believed that it was a German soldier who had flung out the leaflets. But be that as it may, the tension was lifted. They started talking again

Meanwhile Melodyevich had risen from the floor of the truck and crawled over to the scouts. He proved to be a skinny little old chap. The wind toyed with his short grey beard and his nose was red from the cold, but he wore his cap cocked, one side of his moustache curled upward belligerently, and there was a twinkle in his eyes He went off into a long monologue again, apparently saying anything just so as not to keep quiet.

"Why, gentlemen," he exclaimed, twirling his moustache, "we're now having a ride together with foreigners! Did I ever even think or dream of such a new order-o?"

While someone rejoined he quickly moved over to Motya and whispered

"Don't throw them out into the field for nothing, child They're intended for the people, right? So you scatter them where there's people. Throw 'em out next time we go through a village"

When the truck entered a village Melodyevich began poking Motya in the ribs excitedly.

"Throw 'em, what's the matter with you! Don't be afraid, I'll take the blame!"

The trio scattered part of the leaflets in the village But this time everyone in the truck knew what was up, of course, but as though by common consent they pretended not to notice anything

Boys ran after the truck, trying to catch the sheets whirling in the air. The people in the truck roared with laughter. All of them, young and old, were enjoying the game. When the Germans on the running-board turned suspiciously, a woman with a long sad face shouted:

"Watch out there!"

"The head of a soldier appeared over the side of the truck. The German understood nothing. He stared in wonderment at those queer Russians. "What're they laughing about?" He spat angrily, swore, and then turned around. But now they couldn't throw out any more leaflets. The occupants felt something was wrong and kept a steady eye on them.

Melodyevich let himself go. He was in his element.

"Give them to me," he begged when he learned that the scouts still had three hundred leaflets. "Now don't you be afraid, I'll get away with it somehow, give them to me hurry up now. They'll read them in our village."

He thrust the remaining leaflets inside his shirt, buttoned up his leather jacket and smiled a satisfied smile. He screwed up his eyes in such a sly manner that everyone could see he was up to something.

Indeed, he made a scramble for the front of the truck, practically climbing over people's heads.

"Let me through!" he yelled. "Let me get past, good people, I can't wait any longer."

Nobody knew what he had in mind, yet they made a path for him. When he reached the front he pounded madly on the roof of the cab. Everyone fell silent. The truck braked sharply.

Fields lay on either side of the road, and near the roadside ditch grew a few scraggly snow-covered bushes. The soldiers jumped down from the running-board. The men in the cab hopped out too, and they all gave vent to guttural shouts.

Mefodyevich nodded toward the bushes, bent over double, clasped his stomach and twisted his face into such a pitiful, suffering grimace that even the Germans couldn't help bursting into laughter.

"Wait a minute, wait, *bitte, bitte,* it'll just take a minute, right away," he mumbled as he hastily climbed down from the truck.

The Hitlerites continued to laugh. They stood and waited, and meanwhile Mefodyevich hid the leaflets behind the bushes, squatted there a minute or so and then returned with a happy, naive expression of satisfaction on his face.

One of the Germans went so far as to pound him on the back. "*Gut, gut,* good kolkhoz," he said "Fine!"

When the trucks drove into Kholmy and stopped at the square it turned out that on orders of the Gebietskommissar peasants had been picked up at random in dozens of villages of the locality and brought to town to hear him deliver a speech. The scouts, realizing that they were free, tried to slip away from their companions they preferred to be as far away as possible from people that might be witnesses against them.

But a cordon had been set up around the square, and the orders were not to let anyone out until the meeting was over. The scouts moved over to the side, choosing a spot from which they could make a quick getaway. Some ten minutes later several Hitlerites mounted the wooden platform. One of them began to speak

The Gebietskommissar swore, waved his fists, threatened someone. He held forth in German but the people knew very well that he had nothing good to tell them. Then the interpreter, also a German, spoke:

"We call you here for you to tell your relatives and friends that we Germans absolutely do not like jokes." Someone in the crowd gave an unnaturally loud sneeze. "We do not like jokes," the interpreter repeated. "Our

agents when they go to the villages do not get a happy welcome from the peasants What is this? This is a sign there is agitation by the forest bandits who do not advise them to give the Germans food products, hogs and grain. This is considered by us sabotage This is considered by us a sign of obedience to the destroyed Bolshevik government We do not desire to pardon such signs any longer and we hasten to destroy the nests mercilessly. Shoot down Execute—"

In exactly the same tone of voice, just as though he were continuing the interpreter's speech, someone in the crowd said:

"Chop up and pickle. . ."

"What was that said there?" the interpreter asked sternly

Nobody uttered a word

"I ask emphatically to repeat. I did not hear enough. Who said that?"

A hand was raised in the crowd, and the scouts saw it was Mefodyevich's. The old man had got into the spirit of the thing, apparently, and couldn't stop. His success in the truck had inspired him.

"It was I who said that, Herr interpreter."

"What meaning did you wish to give those words?"

"I wished to support your idea. You said 'shoot down and execute,' but I think that's not enough, because there are people who obey incorrectly, who mix things up a bit, who swing to the opposite, and so on. They're harming the peasantry and the new authorities, who.... In general I support your measure with all my heart...."

It's unlikely the interpreter understood everything Mefodyevich said. But he evidently decided there was nothing objectionable in the old man's words.

He went on with his speech, and Mefodyevich shouted from time to time, with a singularly solemn face:

"That's right! Let it be like that! Very *gut* Very *bitte*!"

When he finished the speech the interpreter discussed something in a whisper with the Gebietskommissar, the burgomaster of Kholmy and a policeman. Then he beckoned to Mefodyevich with his finger. The old man climbed up on the platform. He stood before the Gebietskommissar like a tsarist soldier, with his chest out and his eyes glued on the authorities. The interpreter whispered something in his ear Mefodyevich's face expressed agreement and willingness. Then he turned to face the crowd and began to speak

At first the peasants took him for a German toady and listened sullenly.

"Citizens!" exclaimed Mefodyevich in the best oratorical style, but then suddenly turned to the interpreter and said, "Excuse me, it popped out out of habit Gentlemen!" he began again "Respected peasants! What are we told? We are told that Germany wishes to do the people well by ending the war fast and smashing what's left of the Red Army Herr German commissar is right when he says to do this we must all put our shoulder to farming and spit on politics But what do we see? We see the people are helping the forest bandits, brothers and sisters and children of ours Do you call this a new order? I propose we support the Herr commissar's proposal and from today on if one of your kin, or my son or brother comes from the forest then grab him by the collar and drag him to the police And if he resists wipe him out on the spot as a bandit who interferes with our benefactors the Germans"

All this Mefodyevich said with an amazingly serious expression on his face, every once in a while glancing at the Hitlerites He had noticed, of course, that the interpreter knew Russian poorly. The people quickly caught on to what the orator was up to Faces brightened up

Here and there people smiled. But some with more prudence made signs to the orator not to put his foot in it not to go too far, or else.... But Mefodyevich did not heed the voice of reason

"I feel," he went on, "that though we have become gentlemen now, still we don't understand yet that the Germans have brought us liberation. It's time we stopped hating, and instead give the victorious German everything he wants. When the Germans came to take my cow, my pig, my geese and my chickens do you think I fought with them? No, I gave it all away cheerfully. And yesterday they came asking for warm clothes so the German soldiers wouldn't freeze fighting near Moscow. So I understood and I gave them a pair of my pants gladly, and if the Germans need them I'll give them my underdrawers. Because I'm proud the German will fight the Red Army and the partisans with my hen in his belly and wearing my pants."

Almost everyone in the crowd was now smiling, and some could barely refrain from laughing. The Gebietskommissar kept throwing puzzled glances first at the speaker, then at the interpreter Mefodyevich turned to the Germans and said·

"I ask you, Herr interpreter, to tell the chief that the Ukrainians won't begrudge either their pants, their hens, their wives or their children for the victory of the German army. .."

He waited while the interpreter fulfilled his request The Gebietskommissar evidently regained his composure; he smiled and clapped his hands. Mefodyevich smiled too. Then, raising his voice, he went on:

"As a truthful old man I've got to tell you in a spirit of self-criticism that I myself haven't shown the Germans as much love yet as I ought to. If I were younger, say, like that fellow over there, or that girl," he pointed to persons in the crowd, "I'd go to the forest and

start wiping out the rats who are destroying our happy life!"

Now no one in the crowd was smiling. They listened to the speaker attentively and very earnestly. The interpreter glanced questioningly at Mefodyevich, but the latter said:

"I'd volunteer for the police force. I'd get a rifle or a machine gun, and I'd show those Bolsheviks who are hiding in the woods that they're not the only ones who can use a gun. If I was younger I wouldn't sit at home with my old woman putting down vodka like some of those *policei* do. I'd show the Germans that we Ukrainians know how to treasure liberty, that there are still brave people among us!"

The burgomaster, who was a Ukrainian from some western region, didn't understand the old man's mixed Russian and Ukrainian too well but still he sensed there was something wrong about the speech. He bent toward the interpreter and whispered to him. The interpreter gave him a scornful smile. He was convinced he had a splendid command of Russian. Meanwhile Mefodyevich got more and more into the part he was playing and forgot all caution. There were several *policei* with armbands in the crowd. That they went in more for sprees and robbing the population than for fighting the partisans was a fact, and the old man's words stung them to the quick.

"Hey, old man, what are you shouting against?" one of those standing not far from the platform yelled. "You cut out that self-criticism!"

But Mefodyevich wasn't flustered. He turned to the interpreter and said indignantly:

"Here, officer, isn't what I said right? We've got to fight more for our victory, right?"

"Very fine," answered the interpreter, [illegible] enough. He motioned to Mefodyevich to get off the platform.

But the old man pretended he hadn't understood and shouted triumphantly to the *polizei*:

"See? I'm right when I say they shouldn't have given you rats any guns. You're afraid to go out and fight the partisans. All right, what are you shaking your fist for? Maybe you'll tell me that's not true? Why were the pants they took from me not sent to the battlefield near Moscow but instead are covering the backsides of the chief of police? You don't know, do you? Why did they take old woman Filipenko's down shawl? For the German army, was it? No, you can't fool me!"

"Stop!" the interpreter said irritably. "Complaints against the police are received at the commandant's office from one to two in the afternoon on Tuesdays."

"Tell him not to butt in, Herr interpreter. I'm talking to the point, and he butts in. I tell you right out loud in front of everybody that the police are nothing but crooks and rats. If they were honest men they wouldn't be afraid of self-criticism and wouldn't try to shut me up."

The *polizei* gathered in a group and started up to the platform after the old man, but the Gebietskommissar motioned them away.

"Excuse me, I got excited," Mefodyevich murmured ingratiatingly. "May I continue?"

"*Nein, nein*, go away."

Mefodyevich marched past the *polizei* with a triumphant, self-satisfied smile. The crowd made a path for him and then immediately closed in. The small thin figure was quickly lost in it.

"The meeting is finished," the interpreter shouted.

The people began to disperse. The scouts didn't lose any time either, naturally. They had already gone some two hundred metres when a shot rang out on the square. They turned around to see *polizei* running—obviously after Mefodyevich. The old man was zigzagging away from them like a fox.

The *polizei* shouted and fired after him

The old man ran up to a high fence and started climbing over it, but he was felled by a bullet He managed to straighten up and shout·

"Butchers, Hitlerite scum, damned rats!"

The *polizei* were now near him Several more shots rang out. The old man fell silent.

On the way back the scouts picked up the leaflets Mefodyevich had hidden behind the bushes.

Not a single one of them went for naught

* * *

Every time this story was told around a partisan campfire arguments arose.

Some said the old man shouldn't have let himself go, that he shouldn't have stuck his neck out He had forgotten all about the leaflets, hadn't he? There hadn't been anything sensible or sound about his behaviour

"But it was grand!" others exclaimed. "He put it over on the Germans and on the *polizei* too!"

I remember how Sanin, before the war a militia officer and now a political instructor in one of the platoons, got a good calling down from Popudrenko

"If I were in the leadership," Sanin had said impressively, "I'd issue an order putting an end to such demoralizing stories. It's got to be stopped, comrades. There was a total lack of consciousness and discipline in his actions. . ."

"Go on, go on," Popudrenko shouted to him "Go on, let's hear your reasons."

Sanin didn't grasp the challenge in Popudrenko's words. He thought the latter agreed with him, and went on with even greater importance:

"That old man, he's simply, what would you say—"

Popudrenko could not restrain himself. "Give us your reasoning instead of calling him names," he said. "Any-

body can do that. What did you want to say? That the old man acted on his own, that if he'd lain low he'd have lived to be a hundred? Can't you understand that spitting in the fascist's mug in front of a big crowd of people is educational work, and then some!"

Sanin rose and waved his hand, but then he caught himself and walked slowly away from the fire.

"No!" Popudrenko shouted after him. "Come back here. Argue it out with me, have the courage to go on."

"I haven't got the right to argue with you in front of people," Sanin said sullenly. "I'm a politically educated man and I'm disciplined."

"But I give you permission to argue; I order you to!" Popudrenko exclaimed. "And if you can't argue then listen. And get this through your head, political instructor, that scorning death, that dying for the truth in front of the people is a great deed. And it takes brains, too. That old man Mefodyevich had brains, and that he died a splendid death is a fact. Could you go into a battle without hoping to live through it? Have you got that gift? You're keeping quiet. Well, he had that gift. Maybe he spent his whole life cracking jokes in public. But he died a hero. And the fact we're telling what he did means he's made a place for himself in history!"

Popudrenko wasn't given to talking calmly and dully. He loved drawing people into an argument. I saw that Druzhinin was losing his patience, and that Yaremenko was getting ready to pitch into the debate too.

But just at that moment the man on duty cried out:

"Planes!"

When we heard the drone of enemy planes approaching the village we extinguished the fires.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BIG DETACHMENT

Our detachment was on the brink of disaster on several occasions. And I mean the detachment as a whole, not separate platoons or companies.

Each time we found ourselves within a hair's breadth of utter rout we were saved not by some miracle or, it goes without saying, by any display of indulgence on the part of the enemy. What saw us through was cohesion, native ingenuity, the skill of our officers, mass-scale heroism, conscious discipline—in short, everything that can be defined in the two words: Bolshevik organization.

The reader already knows that the first time the Chernigov detachments landed in a desperate situation was at the end of November 1941 The reason was not so much an actual threat of military defeat as our organizational weakness and lack of confidence in our own powers. It was then that the R C. united the small partisan groups into one large detachment and led it into an offensive

Now began our second and far more serious trial, which lasted until the spring of 1942.

We had established ourselves most satisfactorily in the villages of Maibutnya, Lasochki and Zhuravleva Buda, from which we had made quite a few successful raids lately on neighouring police garrisons We had succeeded in contacting the Mainland; in totalling up the results of our combat operations and reporting them to the Central Committee of the Party. Additional arms had been promised us by plane.

There was no doubt that we had become stronger. Our men were seasoned fighters; they had gone through a good practical school of partisan warfare. Many had finally torn themselves away from their wives and children. This was of no little importance, for a soldier always fights better the farther he is from his family.

Our officers had accumulated substantial combat experience. The incompetent ones, appointed only on the basis of the positions they held before the war, had been weeded out As for the majority of the officers, they had passed the grim test of battle with flying colours; and most of them fought well right through to the end of the war. The five months of partisan warfare had not been a waste of time for Bessarab either.

It was at this point that the occupants began pressing us. They made several air raids on the villages in which we stood and began shelling us from heavy guns.

After a sober appraisal of the situation, headquarters decided that the detachment had to quit the villages and go off into the woods. Some were against this decision, though Indeed, leaving warm houses and ploughing through the snow with the thermometer at thirty below wasn't easy. Without saying that out and out, some of the comrades began to assert that we had no right to leave the villages we had lived in so long without putting up a fight, that we should defend both ourselves and the inhabitants. If we went away, they said, we would be leaving old people, women and children to the mercy of fate.

Putting it mildly, this "theory" was not valid. The enemy possessed such superiority in men and materiel that to entrench ourselves in these villages, which were exposed on all sides, meant running the risk of complete annihilation of both the detachment and the local population.

We got into our sleighs and set out for the section of the Yelino woods where the detachment of our new comrade, Vorozheyev, had been stationed for some time From what he said there ought to be dugouts there Our scouts, though, had already found out there was nothing except a long and not too well-built trench—but that was better than nothing. The main thing was that the trees there were dense and tall, mainly firs. The Germans would have a hard time spotting us from the air, and driving us out wouldn't be easy either.

We let the horses go at a trot, and from time to time at a gallop. At that snappy pace we covered a good twenty kilometres. The officers wore sheepskin coats or else good leather coats, and felt boots The wounded were covered up warmly too But not all the rank and file had warm clothing. Some wore torn boots or shoes and puttees They would jump out and run along the road, holding onto the sleigh A few began asking that we stop for an hour to build fires and warm up. But here circumstances suddenly arranged themselves in such a way that we warmed up without bonfires

At the edge of the forest Hitlerites blocked our path They had camouflaged themselves well, and our scouts had let us down This time the fascists used our own tactics They hid in the forest and attacked suddenly

However, either they weren t used to these tactics, or else they felt ill at ease in the Russian forest, for one way or the other they opened fire two or three minutes before they should have And there was another thing these gentlemen hadn't taken into consideration the cold had so roused our boys that far from wavering they were overjoyed at the chance of a fight

It was not so much the cold, though, that helped us as Dmitri Ivanovich Ryanov. During our stay in those villages he had not wasted time but had required the company commanders to conduct systematic combat training

those days the cold launched such an offensive on us that we had to keep a firm hold on the commander's reins.

When I now recall those few days and nights of bitter struggle to clear the snow I somehow picture them as being cheerful, practically gay. Man's memory readily casts out dramatic episodes and, on the contrary, long retains all that is happy and amusing.

When we ex-partisans get together now and recall how frozen, hungry and ill-tempered men burrowed in the snow, for some reason we become uncontrollably hilarious.

"Remember how Bessarab yelled? Icicles hanging from his moustache, his beard white with frost, steam pouring out of his mouth, and he yelled. 'I, ahem, don't want this! What did I ever get into this for? We've got fine dugouts back in Reimentarovka!' "

"And remember how Arsenty Kovtun dug himself a bear's lair in the snow, sealed up the entrance, lay down and began to snore? By morning it was all snowed over and we couldn't make out what had happened to Kovtun. We only found him by his snoring."

"And remember? Kapranov got the nurses together and said: 'Whoever of you girls starts crying won't get any liquor. So keep a stiff upper lip, girls, and show you're as good as the men!' "

And in truth, not once did a single one of our girls give way to tears. They weren't interested in the liquor, however; they used to hand over their ration to the men.

Yes, now we recall only the lighter side. But actually, at times we were in a very difficult position. In the entire detachment there were only seven shovels, five axes and one crowbar—and the earth was frozen more than a metre deep. The men would build bonfires, keep them going for a couple of hours, then move them to another spot and attack the warmed ground. After digging down half a metre and striking a frozen layer they would again light

a bonfire, and so on endlessly. This was good training in the development of patience.

Short of hands though we were—for men had to be sent out on picket duty and on scouting and supply missions—in the course of slightly over a week we built sixteen roomy dugouts outfitted with bunks, stoves, benches and tables.

To be quite candid, living in those dugouts wasn't any too comfortable. They were dark and crowded. For lighting we used oil lamps or spills, or simply sat up close to the stove. Evenings, even in the heaviest frosts, we gathered as usual around campfires and talked.

We lived in the Yelino woods, which went down in our annals as Forestville No. 2, until the end of March. That winter, as everyone recalls, was a severe one. It was almost always more than twenty below. We had no thermometer, but among us for a short while was an old granddad whom we called our thermometer. I don't believe he had ever seen a real outdoor thermometer in his life and probably had a very vague idea of degrees in general. But if you asked him what the temperature was, he would answer without hesitation: "Twenty-four degrees."

"How do you figure that, old man?"

"From what the frost fastens onto. If it's my ears then it's twenty degrees, if it's my nose, then twenty-three, and when the big toe of my right foot starts tingling I know it's over thirty."

That winter dragged on for an agonizing length of time. There had been long, snowy winters in Chernigov Region before, but I couldn't remember one as long as this.

To all the rest of our deprivations was added humiliating poverty. I have already told how we worked with just a few axes. But I forgot to mention that we had no nails at all.

We didn't have enough pails. Almost every day the officers had to settle arguments between squads as to the

ownership of a pail. Cups, spoons, pots—all these had to be picked up during the heat of battle. The partisan always bore in mind that besides the dead Hitlerite's tommy gun, boots and overcoat it was a good thing to take his matches, knife, spoon and flashlight too.

We washed using snow, most of the time without soap. Washing clothes was simply agony. We couldn't do it out in the cold, of course, and it was also out of the question in the dugouts, where people sat almost on top of one another, and as it was the air was foul. We built a combination bathhouse and laundry but for a long time we couldn't get either a boiler, a washtub or basins. Finally we began to use German helmets for basins; washtubs we fashioned out of thick logs, and a boiler from an iron gasoline drum. All this cost us a tremendous amount of time and labour.

It was very hard on our women and girls. I must confess that not all of us realized or wanted to realize that they were in a special position. Upon returning from an action the men would go off to rest, while the girls got down to cooking or washing clothes. The men had been ordered to do their own laundry, but the girls didn't like to have them washing clothes in the bathhouse side by side with them. It embarrassed them, and some felt sorry for the men. They would smile at the way the men fussed helplessly around the tubs and finally would drive them out with: "We'll manage ourselves." This was just what the men had been waiting for....

It was in the Yelino woods that we had our first taste of hunger. True, later on there were worse periods, but then we were still accustomed to a plentiful and varied diet, and we had a hard time enduring the long stretch of underfeeding. Our supplies had come to an end. There was nothing left at the partisan caches, not even salt.

Of course, if we hadn't taken newcomers into the detachment we could have undoubtedly held out until

spring. The comrades who had been against taking in new men now tried to prove to us that they had been right. But for this kind of being right they got it good and proper from the command, and they voiced their thoughts only in whispers. However, even this had highly disagreeable consequences: our first cases of desertion. We had to issue an order warning that desertion would be punished just as it is in the army—by the firing squad.

Justice requires me to note that men like Bessarab, Loshakov and Sanin did not lend deserters the least support.

Naturally, there was no sense to their losing men. And going off with their companies was something they did not consider seriously, for they realized very well that under the existing conditions it was better to be part of a large body. But from time to time they did talk about it being easier to get provisions at the old places, near their "own" villages.

But here too the local residents didn't refuse us support. For example, the peasants of Yelino gave us everything they had, including cattle and stocks of potatoes and extra clothing. A heroic village it was! The most unanimous of all those I came in contact with. The German invaders didn't get a single kilogram of grain out of Yelino. Not a single Yelino inhabitant joined the police. When the invaders burned down the village the entire population went with us. The children, old folk and others unable to bear arms were later settled in other villages. The able-bodied men and women remained with us as partisans until the Red Army came.

In the Yelino woods our detachment increased to 900 people in one month, the reinforcements comprising mainly residents of Yelino.

The people of the other villages in the locality also supported us the best they could. But the Hitlerites had picked them so clean that they themselves lived exclu-

sively on potatoes They were ready to share even their potatoes with us, but getting them to the detachment was extremely difficult, almost impossible, in fact Yelino stood at the edge of the forest, and the occupants made raids on it but were afraid to station troops there However, in Turye, Gluboky Rog, Guta Studentskaya and other villages within a radius of twenty to sixty kilometres from us they had concentrated a total of about three divisions.

There was a battalion of Magyars in Ivanovka, and a strong police detail in Sofievka; these policemen, incidentally, had been recruited in outlying districts, so that the population wouldn't be able to strike up any friendships with them.

This time the occupation troops drew a rather tight ring around the forest and patrolled its edges. We obtained provisions only by fighting for them, and to get two bags of potatoes we sometimes had to lose three men in killed. Naturally, it would have been unwise to embark upon a large-scale operation, say raiding a big enemy garrison, just to get food. We preferred lying in ambush and falling upon German supply trains The Germans avoided using forest roads, however.

Feeding 900 people was not so simple, the more so since they worked a lot in the open air and didn't suffer a bit from lack of appetite. Even the frailest fighting man easily put away a kilogram of bread, and if you gave him as much horse meat he would eat that too Vegetables came our way less and less frequently It was a long time since we had tasted milk or butter. We were forced to live chiefly on horse meat; there wasn't anything to feed the horses.

At this time our pharmacist, Zelik Abramovich Yoslevich, began brewing a drink from pine needles. I issued an order obliging absolutely everybody to drink it. In this way we safeguarded ourselves against scurvy.

This pine needle brew was our only inexhaustible supply of medicine. A few months later when the snow melted Zelik Abramovich began to gather grasses, which he boiled and then steeped in alcohol. Meanwhile, falling ill simply wasn't advised.

Actually, though, cases of illness were quite rare. Even old ulcers of the stomach left their owners in peace. Hardly anyone ever came down with such common illnesses as the flu, malaria or angina. Before the war, I, for one, used to have angina every once in a while. After the war, incidentally, it began again. But during the entire time I was in the woods I never had it once. Like winterers in the Arctic, our most frequent ailments were rheumatism, scurvy, pellagra, boils and toothaches.

Oh, those toothaches. We didn't have anything to pull teeth with, let alone treat them. Once I didn't have a second's sleep for five days in a row. The gum was already becoming inflamed, and I don't know what else. The feldsher, the pharmacist and various self-taught medicos from among the men hovered around me and poked all kinds of junk into my mouth. I was saved by Georgy Ivanovich Gorobets, our gunsmith, ex-director of a ship-repair yard. My thanks go to him for getting the idea of using a pair of blacksmith's pliers; he pulled out two teeth in one jerk. I fell asleep almost at once and woke up twenty-four hours later a new man, refreshed and unusually gentle.

Indeed, Gorobets did a lot for our sick and wounded. When we were threatened with typhus he fixed up a clothes steaming machine out of a gasoline drum. This enabled us to delouse the entire detachment in two days.

Gorobets was a carpenter, cabinetmaker and mechanic. With the help of several partisans he dismantled a roomy peasant cottage in Yelino and brought it to the camp. We set it up in the midst of our dugouts and turned it into a hospital with beds and clean linen and im-

proved feeding. Unfortunately, this was not enough, however. Not only didn't we have a surgeon then, but we didn't even have instruments for the simplest operations.

It was at this time that an event occurred which may be cited as an example of boundless courage and iron endurance. Fighting man Grigory Masalyka blew up a headquarters bus on the highway and wiped out thirty German officers. However, one of them managed to fire at him, fracturing a bone in his left hand For some reason or other Masalyka didn't go to the hospital at once He continued to go out on demolition jobs with his injured hand, and he came to the feldsher only two weeks later, when his arm had turned black to the elbow.

The only hope of saving him lay in amputation That meant sawing the bone, but with what? Gorobets learned there was a blacksmith in Ivanovka, made his way there at night and begged a hacksaw from him The hacksaw proved to be rusty. The feldsher and Gorobets polished it with ashes, boiled it and then sawed off the lad's arm, without any anesthetic, of course. They sawed in turn When the patient could endure it no longer he took the saw himself and finished the job in a few strokes. I was present at the operation Masalyka scowled, sighed and sometimes groaned, but not once did he cry out. Two weeks later he was back in action again

This incident, I repeat, is a singular example of courage and endurance. Still it would have been just as well to get along without such examples How much better when there is a skilled surgeon, proper instruments and reliable anesthetics. The soldier fights more boldly if he knows that should he be wounded a competent doctor will treat him and that the doctor has everything he needs for any kind of operation.

* * *

People who are encircled in the forest and forced to exist almost exclusively on booty risk more than just their lives. No less frightening is the danger of demoralization. This applies first of all, of course, to weak-willed, unstable people with a poor or insufficient political education.

By this time the partisans who had been chosen by the Party to remain in the enemy rear were a minority in our detachment. It now consisted in the main of men who had broken out of encirclement, escaped war prisoners and peasants from the neighbouring villages. These newcomers were by no means an inert body. They produced fine officers and excellent fighting men.

But there were all kinds of men among the escaped war prisoners Some had voluntarily surrendered to the Germans. Later, when they saw what the fascist promises were worth, when they had been eaten up by lice in the camps and had become sick and tired of being punched in the jaw, they repented and escaped to join the partisans. Not all of them, by any means, told us the whole truth. And of course very few of them admitted they had surrendered of their own free will.

These men joined the partisans only because there was nothing else for them to do. They didn't want to go back to the Germans, but on the other hand they didn't fight them any too energetically.

Some of the formerly encircled men who joined us had been "hubbies" These were soldiers who for one reason or another had fallen behind the army and been taken in by peasant women without menfolk. There were some fine fellows among them I recall one of them, a wounded lad whom a kolkhoz family had given shelter. Immediately he recovered he started searching for partisans, and he joined our detachment as soon as he could. However, among the "hubbies" there were specimens who would have been glad to sit the war out behind a woman's

skirt, but the Hitlerites would either drive them off to work in Germany or else make them join the police. After turning this over in his mind such a guy would come to the conclusion that, after all, joining the partisans was more advantageous

Repentant *polizei* began to come to us too. We ourselves invited them through leaflets. If they didn't leave the police force, we wrote, we would shoot them down like dogs. When they came to the detachment they were held under special observation for a long time The men kept a watchful eye on them

Unfortunately, these were not the only ones whom the danger of demoralization threatened

Necessity forced us not merely to take booty in battle but to go *hunting* for it especially And this is where the trouble lay.

The partisan, it goes without saying, went into battle not to enrich or feed or clothe himself. He was a warrior in the people's cause, a people's avenger How often in those days did we dream of the partisans being supplied the way the army was But that was out of the question, of course.

It was very hard for the men to get used to wearing German and Magyar outfits. Later, when planes began to deliver Russian clothing, they joyfully threw off the green jackets and breeches and stamped them into the mud or tossed them in the fire.

But at the time about which I am now writing planes weren't coming to us yet We lived exclusively at the expense of the Hitlerites. When we captured a food or a goods train we felt we had won a battle And we actually did, for the enemy had been dealt a blow and we got weapons, uniforms, flour, rum, chocolate and cigarettes.

The main body of the men usually realized this was not looting but warfare. But there were specimens among us whom the actual process of taking booty afforded

pleasure. This was especially dangerous whenever an operation was conducted in an inhabited point. Taking things from the home of a policeman or a starosta was capturing booty, but taking even a jug of milk from an honest peasant was the lowest form of plunder. It had to be punished mercilessly, and publicly, to teach others not to do the same and to show the population that the partisans were honest people.

Recalling it is unpleasant, but there were cases when men took a pig or a calf from a peasant's barnyard. We first came up against this in February 1942. The worst thing was that some defended these marauders. "What's all the fuss about?" they said. "The boys are hungry What difference does it make who takes the peasant's cow—the Germans or the partisans?"

It was in that phrase "what difference does it make" that lay the main danger. Such unprincipled views were preached by one of Bessarab's former friends, Jan Polyansky. He was a platoon commander. Once one of his men stole a suckling from an old woman. I demanded the name of the offender. Prompted by a false sense of loyalty, the men with whom the thief had shared the suckling resolved to conceal the crime.

I summoned Polyansky.

"Demote me," he said, "punish me any way you want, but I won't tell!"

We demoted him to the ranks. But in the eyes of the platoon he had "suffered for a just cause."

It was only about two weeks later, when Polyansky himself had been caught showing an excessive fondness for watches, that the men realized that their former commander was a marauder who had been leading them along an abominable path

We had to execute him, of course I was drafting an order to this effect when Polyansky shot himself

After this it became especially clear to us that the

only way to inculcate in the men an abhorrence both for marauders and for their protectors was through a well-organized system of political instruction.

The R.C adopted a resolution to intensify educational work in the detachment, especially among the new contingents. That winter, when the Yelino woods lay deep in snow, our printed militant sheet *Death to the German Invaders* began to appear once a week. No less than once in ten days each company issued its wall newspaper.

I feel certain that the reader will find my telling about wall newspapers rather boring. "What's special about this?" he will say. "Where aren't there wall newspapers, anyway? Every kolkhoz has one, every tea house, every children's nursery and, of course, every company in the Soviet Army."

But let the reader imagine for a moment that he lives in a village occupied by the fascists, that day in and day out toughs with swastikas on their sleeves jeer at him and the traitorous starosta and the police dog his every step. They have ordered him to forget all about the Soviet system and its ways. But finally he succeeds in running away. He goes to the forest to join the partisans, he freezes, he flounders in snowdrifts, he hides behind every tree. Men with red ribbons in their caps lead him to a small clearing where the snow has been stamped down by hundreds of boots. There in that clearing his eye is immediately caught by a big sheet of paper covered with writing in coloured pencil, on a board nailed to a tree. A wall newspaper, a modest, familiar particle of Soviet life! And he immediately feels that he has reached home, he has reached Soviet soil.

The first wall newspapers made a tremendous impression on our men. Afterwards they took a calmer view of them, but still they impatiently awaited each issue, actively contributed items, and were very much afraid of being the subject of a cartoon in them.

Toward spring we—that is, our actors, poets and journalists—began putting out a talking newspaper too, which was merciless toward slackers, cowards and would-be parasites. This was a regular variety program, gay and electrifying.

* * *

We received a report from Moscow that planes carrying men and arms would soon be reaching us. Hence a landing field had to be built But while everything could be put into code and radioed to us, the art of building a landing field could not.

We all saw that the first thing to do was smooth off a field. It had to be carefully concealed from the enemy, which meant it must be far from any inhabited point. But what size should this field be? How should the landing marks be laid out? Could planes land in soft snow? About all this we knew absolutely nothing.

At this point we remembered that lying in our hospital under feldsher Yemelyanov's care was a real live pilot, and a plane commander besides. The only trouble was he hadn't been able to walk a step for five months.

The story of Volodin, the commander of a heavy bomber, and the three members of his crew was indeed a remarkable one. In our detachment they were called the men who dropped from the sky.

On October 3, 1941, that is, before I came to the regional detachment, the partisans noticed three heavy bombers with red stars on their wings flying in the direction of Gomel.

"Comrade Balabai," the man on duty reported excitedly to the detachment commander, "our planes!"

The partisans had not seen any Soviet planes for a long time. These they followed with ecstatic eyes; they shouted and waved their caps, although they realized the flyers couldn't see them.

Balabai was about to start out to hold a meeting in a neighbouring village, and the planes had come over at just the right time. The Germans were ranting that they had destroyed the Soviet air force. Now the inhabitants could see for themselves that the Soviet air force was alive and was fighting!

The detachment commander had mounted his horse when our bombers again appeared overhead. Now they were returning, but there were only two Five minutes later the third came into view, flying at an altitude of no more than two hundred metres Its right wing was dipping. The partisans noticed one of the motors was not functioning

The frontline was no less than one hundred and fifty kilometres away.

"Will they make it or not?" the partisans wondered

The plane disappeared from view and the men went about their affairs. Balabai and the commissar went off to the meeting.

Half way there, anxious partisans caught up with them and announced that the plane had crashed some fifteen kilometres from the camp, near the village of Pogoreltsy

The meeting was cancelled, of course Balabai took a group of men with him and galloped off to Pogoreltsy. At the edge of the village, not far from the church, they found a big, twin-engined plane with its nose buried in the ground. Both wings had been torn off by trees on the way down. The fuselage had split down its entire length, and white bundles lay scattered on the grass. Every once in a while the wind would lift square sheets of paper and send them flying up

The youngsters were gathering them up by the armfuls. They were leaflets.

Balabai immediately stationed a guard near the plane. Feldsher Yemelyanov crawled inside, but the flyers were no longer there. It appeared that some peasants had taken

them to the village hospital. A messenger returned from there and related:

"Blood all over the place! Two of them got busted heads, and their chief's legs are like macaroni. Only one can walk around. But he acts as if he's got the plague; he screams and keeps shaking his head and his eyes are like a dead man's, like buttons.... The fourth one just grinds his teeth. Oh, it's awful! No doctor, and the nurses are all scared."

A crowd had gathered outside the village hospital.

"Any Germans around?" Balabai asked.

"A car drove up, but as soon as they heard partisans were here they turned around and went back."

The elderly feldsher told Balabai that the plane commander's condition was very grave.

"Both legs are fractured and he has deep head contusions. He's been unconscious forty minutes now. His comrade is unconscious too; his spinal column is injured."

A young fellow in peasant dress came to attention at the sight of Balabai, who wore a Red Army officer's uniform but without insignia.

"Permit me to address you, Comrade Commander," he said. On receiving permission he uttered in a pleading voice: "Take us to the woods, Comrade Commander. Don't abandon us. Look, the boys are in a bad way."

"Who is 'us'? And who might you be?"

The fellow snapped to attention again, saluted, and said:

"I am gunner-radioman Maximov."

"Why aren't you in uniform, Comrade radioman?"

The fellow glanced down at his clothing, blinked, remained silent for about five seconds, then seized Balabai by the hand and said hurriedly, in a quivering voice:

"You don't believe me, do you? Come with me and I'll show you the house. Come, come, oh please, Comrade Commander! My papers are there, everything's there—

my uniform, my watch, with an inscription on it. I'm gunner-radioman Maximov."

"Calm down, Comrade Maximov, and tell me it all from the beginning."

Maximov himself, however, didn't know any too well what had happened to him, how he came to be in that village or when he had changed clothes. But when he had calmed down a bit he told Balabai the whole story.

Just after the plane crashed to earth and Maximov realized he was alive and could move his arms and legs, he squeezed through the cracked fuselage and ran off to the nearest house at breakneck speed. He dashed in and without answering the owners' questions quickly stripped to his underwear.

"Come on!" he yelled.

He flung his watch and his billfold with his money and papers on the table "Come on, give me something, quick! Save a Soviet flyer's life, what are you standing there for?"

They gave him a pair of old pants, a cap, a pair of torn boots and a quilted jacket He climbed into these and raced back to the plane. He must have been acting not quite consciously, under the effect of a nervous shock.

Now he was himself again and able to give Ba'abai a coherent account of the crash.

"At fourteen hours today our flight of bombers took off from an aerodrome near Ivanovo We had orders to bomb enemy trains on the Gomel-Bryansk line. We bombed them and were on the way back when we noticed the right engine was in flames The commander of the plane managed to put out the fire by banking sharply, but the engine went out of commission We began losing altitude. We saw we wouldn't make our side of the front. 'Better let's crash than fall into the hands of the Germans,'

our commander, Comrade Volodin, proposed. We agreed. Volodin steered the plane toward a wood. But it turned out to be a thin orchard and we weren't killed...."

Here navigator Ragozin interrupted. He had got away with only bruises, but he couldn't walk yet.

"Comrade Commander, how many men are guarding us?" he asked softly. "Just three? Should be more. Please give orders to reinforce the guard—"

"Comrade Commander, set up a machine gun on the hospital roof, take it from the plane," Maximov broke in. "We've got a large-calibre gun there.... Don't you see, we're flyers, and the Germans'll tear us limb from limb. And there's a radio set in the plane. Take it and send a report...."

Anybody might have taken the gunner and the navigator for frightful cowards. But as we later learned they were seasoned army pilots who had been on twelve bombing missions deep behind the enemy lines. Their state is to be explained simply by ignorance of the situation. They had a completely distorted idea of the situation in occupied territory. They thought the place teemed with Hitlerites, that they would have to keep looking behind all the time, and dropping to the ground and crawling. And now they were certain the Hitlerites would break into the hospital any minute.

This ignorance cost us dearly. There were cases of flyers taking their own lives after a forced landing on occupied territory because they didn't have a clear picture of the situation there. Volodin and his comrades had been seeking death too; it was only by a miracle that they were alive.

An hour later Yemelyanov, the detachment feldsher, arrived with two carts. Balabai ordered all four flyers to be taken to the camp. He also had all the armaments removed from the plane. The radio set unfortunately proved to be shattered.

Volodin came to beside the campfire. When he realized he was among Soviet people his joy was boundless. He wanted to express his gratitude to the partisans in some way, and asked that his suitcase be brought. Fighting down excruciating pain, he opened it and took out *cigarettes, chocolate and recent Moscow newspapers.* After distributing these gifts among the partisans he lost consciousness.

Maximov and Ragozin soon recovered. They were sent back across the frontline. Ryabov, the second pilot, was walking about, but not Volodin; after four months his legs were still in casts.

We put a horse and sleigh at his disposal, and thus, reclining, Volodin rode out to the forest clearing in February 1942. From his sleigh he directed the construction of the airfield.

Two months later Volodin was getting around with a cane He had become very attached to Yemelyanov, whom he called his saviour. Our young feldsher has spent many a night by the flyer's cot and indeed had saved his life. But unfortunately he hadn't been able to put the cast on right and Volodin's bones knitted improperly

In November 1942 he was flown to Moscow There skilled surgeons broke his legs again and reset them correctly.

Volodin returned to the front in 1943. By the end of the war he had flown hundreds of missions.

* * *

The landing field was ready We had cut down a couple of dozen trees, levelled out the snowdrifts, and appointed guards and equipped them with little flags But then we realized that planes weren't likely to come in the daytime, and so we armed our guards with lanterns. Volodin vetoed the lanterns. He advised plenty of torches instead.

"That's simple," he said. "Wind some rags around sticks and soak them in oil or kerosene."

He himself laughed as he said this. We had all the sticks we wanted, of course, nor were rags hard to find, but as for kerosene or oil———The men spent several days scraping resin from fir trees, then melted it down and dipped sticks with rags wound around them into it. If Volodin had said that rugs had to be spread out all over the field or else planes wouldn't land, we would have managed that too.

We laid out heaps of brushwood according to a design transmitted to us by radio. The branches, you may be sure, were the very best obtainable, and beneath them lay the very best straw, ready to flare up at the slightest spark. Then, a cup of alcohol stood next to each heap. The guards had strict orders not to drink a swallow of it: they were to pour it over the dry brushwood as soon as they heard the drone of planes. . . .

We waited a long time. Several nights in a row all the members of the R.C. and headquarters rode out to the landing field, which was located five kilometres from our camp. But no planes appeared.

It is rather quiet in the forest in winter, especially at night. But when a person has been waiting tensely for several nights running he is apt to take for the hum of an approaching plane the wind tossing the treetops, or the subdued conversation of the guards, the ticking of a pocket watch, or even the thumping of his own heart.

Despite all his experience, Volodin himself made a mistake. On his orders the alcohol was poured over the branches one night and bonfires flared up.... All except one. It turned out that the man on duty beside that heap had fallen asleep, and Volodin had taken his snoring for the drone of an aeroplane engine.

"Expect plane tomorrow," we were informed over the radio. "Why didn't it come yesterday?" we asked. The

answer to that was, "Expect plane tomorrow." We realized that there might be various reasons, and that we didn't have to know all of them.

The night of February 11 we heard a loud, steady drone. A joyful alarm was sounded in the camp, where volunter lookouts had heard it too. The wounded, even the severest cases, made their way out of the hospital in order not to miss the long-awaited moment.

Rockets shot up into the night sky two green ones, one red and three white. This meant: "Aerodrome in order, landing is possible." It also meant that if the planes didn't land we would have to engage the Germans in battle the next day to get more rockets

For some reason the planes didn't land. They came down low, circled twice over the forest, turned around and flew off. We saw nine bright, twinkling little stars fade away from us. The hum of the departing planes was dying away, and someone had already sworn in disappointment, when suddenly a voice shouted:

"Parachutes!"

Heading straight for one of the bonfires, and fairly fast, was a man in new white felt boots, a padded suit and a big fur hat. He was shouting something and waving his hand to us.

Then we noticed another man He was pulling at the shroud lines of his parachute in a frantic effort to avoid the crown of a fir tree.

"Keep to the right!" we shouted.

Nevertheless he got caught on a branch and hung there, three metres from the ground He also wore a padded suit and white felt boots. When the men ran up to him he asked in a dispirited voice:

"You partisans?"

"We're friends, brother, friends!" they replied.

We could hear him heave a sigh of relief.

"Well, then get me down, damn it!" he barked in quite a different tone, "and let me warm up at the bonfire. Those planes aren't heated."

After the men, boxes, bundles and bags began descending from the sky. They had been dropped with good aim, within a radius of no more than two kilometres. We picked up twelve packages that night.

Both parachutists proved to be radio operators, fine young lads. Did I say fine lads? Why, they were angels in padded suits, they were simply a miracle. We all hastened to slap them on the shoulder or at least to pinch them and convince ourselves that they were really ordinary human beings. Only Kapranov maintained complete composure: he promptly ordered the parachutes folded; he counted them, and I'm not sure but what he ticketed them too. On finding holes in the silk he shook his head in distress. As for the boxes and bags, he forbade anybody to touch them.

Only after all the packages were piled together in one place did he allow them to be opened.

We received many fine gifts They included two latest model radio transmitters with batteries, eight light and three heavy machine guns, several anti-tank guns and a dozen tommy guns. We got bullets, grenades and rockets of various colours.

On learning that most of the packages contained food and clothing, the men were a bit put out. After all, we realized that people in the Soviet rear were by no means getting all the things they had sent us as gifts. They sent us real smoked Moscow sausage, fresh caviar, canned fruit and excellent cigarettes Of course, we would not have minded getting makhorka instead of the Kazbek cigarettes, the more so since it would have taken up less room than the attractive boxes with the picture of a horseman in a tall Caucasian fur cap galloping against a background of blue mountains. What did we need such

boxes for anyway? I must say, though, that later on they came in handy, and strange as it may seem, for agitational purposes. . . .

Once wh le on the march we rode into an unfamiliar village. When a group of old men had gathered around me I opened a new box of Kazbeks. It made an enormous impression. I let the box travel from hand to hand so that they all could read the trade mark "Yava, Moscow" on the back.

"So that means you're really in touch with Moscow, eh?"

A single concrete piece of evidence is more convincing to the peasant than a thousand words.

Of the gifts we received that time, the five boxes of TNT and three bundles of recent Moscow newspapers gladdened us most of all

Among them was that day's *Pravda* No, that's not right, the paper was dated the 11th and we opened it at five in the morning on the 12th But since no one in the camp had slept that night we felt it was one and the same day, a happy day, filled with anxiety though it had been.

This was indeed magic There we were in the forest, heaven knows how far from Moscow, and we were reading the latest *Pravda* Even in Chernigov in peacetime we rarely got the Moscow newspapers that fast And then *Pravda* and *Izvestia* were printed from matrices flown to Kiev

I hadn't seen any newspapers of any kind for more than half a year and I couldn't tear myself away from these until I had read them from the first to the last line

The partisan camp turned into an enormous forest reading room The very next day I ordered three hundred and fifty of the four hundred copies of the Moscow papers that we had received to be sent out to the various districts Fourteen messengers departed with a special issue of our leaflet announcing that contact by aeroplane

with the Mainland had been established. They also carried that most powerful of explosives, our Bolshevik newspapers.

Our other explosive, TNT, made it possible for us to start planning substantial demolition operations on the railways. We formed a special demolition squad, which set out soon after for the Gomel-Bryansk line.

* * *

The German invaders continued drawing up troops toward our forest. German and Magyar units were rushed in by train and in trucks from Novozybkov, from Gomel and from Chernigov. Our scouts reported that they didn't tarry in Shchorsk, Novgorod-Seversk and Koryukovka: after a day's rest they were promptly sent out to villages in our vicinity

It was not hard to guess that a decisive attack was in preparation.

At Rvanov's proposal we decided on the following tactics: to tackle the enemy groups singly, and in the main newly-arrived units which had not yet had time to acquaint themselves with the situation.

On the night of March 7 we routed the police garrison in Guta Studenetskaya, a big village six kilometres from our forest. In this battle we captured and executed Moroz, the chief of police of Koryukovka District. Among his papers we found instructions from a German major pointing out that the police units were to act under Senior Lieutenant Kemeri, the commander of a Magyar battalion, who would have his headquarters in the town of Ivanovka.

Our scouts went there at once. They brought back the news that there were no less than 200 Magyars in Ivanovka.

On March 9 and 10 a fascist scout plane appeared over our camp repeatedly. I forbade bonfires to be lighted and stoves heated.

At four in the morning on March 11 three of our companies headed by Popudrenko climbed out of their sleighs some seven kilometres from Ivanovka. From there the men went on foot through the deep snow. Most of them had to plough through snow up to their chests; we didn't have enough skis to go around. But all these difficulties were more than worth it, for the Magyars were taken by surprise. It took a full forty minutes before the enemy began putting up a stiff resistance

It was a very tense battle. The enemy had at least six heavy machine guns, two small-calibre field pieces and several mortars. Besides, they had many more tommy guns than we. And by the end of the battle they had managed to summon planes and reinforcements from Shchorsk.

The reinforcements got a good drubbing too. The Magyars and the *polizei* fled. We gained complete control of Ivanovka and captured rich booty: four heavy and eight light machine guns, twenty thousand rounds of ammunition, a good supply of provisions, and, what came in most handy, some hundred and fifty wool blankets.

We counted more than one hundred and fifty dead soldiers and *polizei* on the streets and in the houses.

Our losses were twelve men, among them Gromenko, commander of Company One

He was killed while leading his men into attack A bullet pierced his forehead, and he fell on his back into the snow.

Lysenko, the company's political instructor, took over command and led the men forward The company carried out its assignment brilliantly.

On the night of the eleventh we buried our comrades-in-arms.

The coffin containing the body of Sidor Romanovich Gromenko was wrapped in parachute silk Pine torches lit up the forest. All the R C members and the officers took turns standing in the guard of honour

After speeches about the lives of the dead comrades had been delivered, volleys fired by four hundred rifles rang out over the open broad-based grave.

Then the men went to the dugouts, and an unusual silence fell over the part-ash forest. They were exhausted after the many hours of fighting and the difficult march. But deep in their weariness they couldn't fall asleep for a long time.

The general mood of solemn grief was especially marked in the dugouts of the company Gromenko had commanded. The women wept. On the faces of many of the fighting men, both young and old, one could read puzzlement, and even dismay.

Popudrenko, Yaremenko, Druzhinin, Ryanov and I went into the dugout in which Gromenko had lived. His papers had to be collected and looked over. But to tell the truth, we simply wanted to imagine Gromenko alive again, to have another look at the little corner that had been his.

In the dugout, which housed forty men, a rough-hewn trestle bed stood separated from the common plank beds by a passage one step wide. One corner of the bed was trimmed unevenly. Near its head the round side of a grey boulder stuck out of the earth.

A pine root jutted out near the boulder. It had been scraped clean and its ends trimmed, but it was still alive. It branched out and curved upwards, looking like a pair of antlers. Popudrenko recalled that Gromenko had said the root continued growing, and had grown five centimetres in two months.

On the root hung a map case and the grey summer cap Gromenko used to wear back in Chernigov when he was manager of the seed control station.

A few books on the bed took the place of a pillow. They were covered with a clean, though unironed, tunic. A length of black cloth served as a blanket. On it lay a

plastic soap-dish he had forgotten to take along in his hurry before the battle. In it, besides a little makhorka, was a short piece of a file, a charred, tightly twisted bit of cloth and a fragment of quartz this was a common contraption for making fire

Here lay all the property of S'dor Romanovich Gromenko, in peacetime an agronomist, in wartime a partisan officer.

In the map case we found a copybook half filled with brief pencil notes, a photograph of his wife and a copy, folded in four, of *Pravda* of July 4, 1941, with Stalin's speech and portrait.

On our return to the headquarters dugout we looked through Gromenko's books They had all ev'dently been picked up in wrecked houses after battle There was the second volume of *War and Peace*, a book on bee keeping, Fadeyev's *The Nineteen*, and an agricultural handbook....

The copybook contained outlines of talks Gromenko had del.vered to his men, plans of operations which we had conducted, and brief personal notes, obviously jotted down in haste. I at once rec'led conversat ons I had had with h'm long ago. The first t me I met h m I saw noth ng of the partisan in him, and I decided he would never make a real officer

I must admit I was mistaken

Gromenko proved to be a very brave, resolute and intelligent officer. What I want to stress, however, is not so much th's as the fact that he was a comp'etely new type of partisan officer.

By calling Gromenko was ne ther a partisan nor an officer. He was an agronomist, a builder of life It wasn't the war that had pushed him forward or that had revealed his abilities. But in the war he cont'nued serving the people the only way in which he could—honestly selfless ly, heart and soul

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I must admit I was mistaken.

Gromenko proved to be a very brave, resolute and intelligent officer. What I want to stress, however, is not so much this as the fact that he was a completely new type of partisan officer.

By calling Gromenko was neither a partisan nor an officer. He was an agronomist, a builder of life It wasn't the war that had pushed him forward or that had revealed his abilities. But in the war he continued serving the people the only way in which he could—honestly, selflessly, heart and soul.

After speeches about the lives had been delivered, volleys fired rang out over the open brotherhood

Then the men went to their dug silence fell over the partisan forest. after the many hours of fighting an But despite their weariness they coul long time.

The general mood of solemn gl marked in the dugouts of the company c manded. The women wept. On the fac fighting men, both young and old, one ment, and even dismay.

Popudrenko, Yaremenko, Druzhinir went into the dugout in which Gromen papers had to be collected and looked ov truth, we simply wanted to imagine again, to have another look at the little been his.

In the dugout, which housed forty me trestle bed stood separated from the com by a passage one step wide. One corner trimmed unevenly. Near its head the roun boulder stuck out of the earth.

A pine root jutted out near the bould scraped clean and its ends trimmed, but it w branched out and curved upwards, looking antlers. Popudrenko recalled that Gromenk root continued growing, and had grown fi in two months.

On the root hung a map case and the cap Gromenko used to wear back in Cherr was manager of the seed control station.

A few books on the bed took the plac They were covered with a clean, though u A length of black cloth served as a blank

he says. 'Just listen to him—has a dissenting opinion, the supreme court justice has ... Ryanov gave you the order about getting ready to leave, didn't he? Then why are you delaying?' But I stuck to my opinion and said I wasn't going to leave. Fyodorov turned his big eyes on me and said: 'Admit you don't want to leave because your family's not far from here Comrade Gromenko, don't you go thinking up reasons Keep in mind that if you do you may find yourself out of the Party' Well, of course, I put up my hands.

"Why? Did I get scared of Fyodorov? At that moment I myself didn't realize clearly that the reason I wanted to stay was that the family was near I gave other reasons, but it was in the back of my mind that I had to go see the folks every once in a while Nothing for it, the diagnosis was correct After the RC meeting a wise guy came up to me and whispered 'What's it matter if they expel you from the Party? They'll be the losers Your platoon's one of the best The fellows'll go with you You'll be your own boss' I cursed him up and down Don't know why I didn't sock him As to organizational measures, that's up to the RC

"January 9 Gave it to the *police* in Pogorelitsy This was the second time we looked in there Population met us like brothers The ceiling of the room where the platoon commander lived was full of bullet holes 'What kind of men are these police, Grandma?' I asked the woman who owned the house She twitched her mouth and said, 'They're shameless bandits, they've drunk away their conscience and forgotten their God Look what mischief they've got up' She pointed to an icon riddled with bullet holes 'That Nikita any relative of yours?' I asked her 'We shot him, you know, Grandma' 'He died the way he lived,' she said 'He used to be a grandson of mine So you're mourning him, eh, Grandma?' She looked at me gravely and answered 'I used to curse him Even when

he was just a boy he used bad words. They threw him
of school, the scoundrel, and out of the Komsomol
He was the laziest fellow in the whole kolkhoz. Only pl
he was a member was the sa'oon.'

" 'You talk about God all the time, Grandma,' I sa
'I don't believe in God either. Communists and Komsom
members, you know, don't believe in God.' 'Everybo
knows that,' she said 'The Tatars, they have a differe
God, but some of them are real good folk.' 'We don't re
ognize the Tatar God either,' I said. 'That's all right. Yo
recognize human beings See how nice you're talking t
an old woman. How we waited for you, waited and wai
ed and waited! Sit down now, please, and try som
cheese. . .'

"February 1 Had a talk with the commander o
Company Two, Balabai A good person The war hasn't
unhumanized him one bit. He's got a dagger more than
half a metre long, and I've seen him run it right through
a fascist, slaughter him like a pig. 'What do you think is
the war spoiling you, roughening your character?' I asked
him. 'After all, you never killed people before.' He smiled
He has a kind smile He answered like this: 'I couldn't
kill a man now either Do you understand?' I asked him
to explain. He thought a bit and then added 'Let's
suppose I become terribly poor. Even so I couldn't
become a bandit or a murderer Or if I quarrel with
a comrade I'm not going to attack him with a knife,
nor would I kill a woman out of jealousy, or hurt a
child' I presisted 'In that case what influence has the
war had on you; has your character changed?' 'What
a question, of course it has.' But here he was called
away I thought about it afterwards: just how have we
changed?

"I never imagined I would make a partisan In the
first place, I was happy to find out I wasn't a coward.
In the second place, that I can take orders, acknowledge

the authority of a superior officer. Even when it's very difficult and I think he's wrong I fight down this feeling and afterwards I don't let anybody complain T. was egging me on against Fyodorov, trying to start a squabble. I told him to stop it. And the main change is that all of us, even Fyodorov and the commissar, who are Party workers, have become still better Communists We're going through a course in practical political education.

"February 2. No, it's time and love of country that are making commanders of us Take Fyodorov Was he ever a commander? He's a working man; when he was trimming logs with the men for the dugout yesterday he fell into a gay mood right away. The worker and the peasant, they're always builders. And besides, we've been taught to see the future. The war, of course, isn't the main thing in our lives, and I won't tell my grandchildren about it on principle.

"February 8. Am rereading *War and Peace*. Don't understand those people. They don't think about the future at all, about how to build life after the war.

"March 3. Mishka brought me a chicken he'd roasted over the fire. That was about three hours after the battle. He'd fought like a lion and I praised him in front of his comrades. Was this the reason, I wonder? He gave me the chicken on the quiet. 'Where'd you get it?' I asked him. He said it was running down the street without its head; probably a mine splinter'd taken it off. He forgot that about two weeks ago he told me the same story about a goose, that a mine had taken its head off too. I took the chicken and went over to the fire. I told the boys I thought the matter was a political one. I asked them what they thought. All of them were hungry, and they looked at that chicken with shining eyes. Kotsura spoke up. 'That's a double crime on Mishka's part,' he said. 'A lie, and then trying to make up to his officer.'

'What about chicken stealing, doesn't that count?' 'Befo the war a chicken cost three rubles in the village,' Ko sura answered. 'Didn't we earn that three rubles in t battle?' Then political instructor Lysenko took the flo and spoke long and convincingly about how the peasan ry judges us partisans on the basis of trifles like tha Everyone agreed. Mishka asked to be forgiven. Then asked the men what to do with the chicken. They al yelled, 'Eat it, Comrade Commander, no use dividing it. I threw it into the fire. Mishka snatched it out and ran off. The fellows ran after him but couldn't catch up with him. Later we learned he took the chicken to the hospital and gave it to the wounded. Try and figure it out.

"March 4. I told my young men about Academician Lysenko's experiments, then about the harvests of the future in general and of how the Soviet Government was working for high productivity of labour. I quoted Lenin about labour productivity being in the final analysis the most important thing for the victory of the Communist system. That brought us up to what Communism is. They listened very attentively. Svistunov, a boy of nineteen, said, 'Now I or Vasya Korobko, maybe we'll live to see it. But you and Popudrenko and Fyodorov can hardly hope to. Fifteen five-year plans, no less, is what is needed to reach Communism, isn't it?' 'Less, what d'you mean, Svistunov!' the fellows yelled out right away. Vasya Korobko quickly multiplied 'Fifteen by five makes seventy-five, and so you won't live to see it either, Svistunov.'

"'Each five-year plan will be fulfilled in four or maybe three years, so I'll live to see it,' Svistunov protested. Then Vasya Korobko added, 'Scientists are working for longevity. You'll be sure to live to see Communism, take my word for it, Comrade Commander.' I caught on: the boys wanted to smooth over Svistunov's tactless words

and comfort me. 'Thank you, comrades.' I said. They thanked me too, for the talk. One really does want to live to see it!"

* * *

On March 23, after blocking off all the roads and paths leading out of the Yelino woods, the German invaders launched a decisive attack against the partisan camp. Seven thousand Germans, Magyars and *polizei* went into action to encircle and wipe out nine hundred partisans.

The command of the occupation forces had spent a long time preparing this blow We had prepared for it too. However, there was quite a big difference in the preparations.

I was told about the Bessarab's gloomy witticism on this account. He compared the Hitlerites with hangmen and us with the victims

"Both, ahem, er, are preparing, but the difference is one is soaping the noose and the other is twisting his neck."

That the Hitlerites were hangmen was beyond all doubt. They called their offensive against the partisan camp a punitive expedition, of its success they were certain; and they really were soaping nooses for us. But we had no intention whatsoever of putting out our necks.

What were the preparations of the fascists? During the previous months of occupation they had established their commandants in all the district centres and large villages, set up a police force and woven an espionage and intelligence net. They now had a starosta and a deputy starosta in every village Groups of auxiliary police had been formed in almost all the villages

The enemy's attempts to send spies into the partisan detachments and establish a regular contact with them had invariably ended in failure We caught the spies in

short order. The Germans didn't know the plans of command, the location of our headquarters, landing fi or radio station, or the secret partisan paths.

Concerning the detachment's size, armaments a organizational structure they had highly contradicto information.

They knew, of course, approximately where the borde of our domains were. Such information could not be co cealed. The plan of the German command was extreme simple: to cut off the district in which we were stationed mass forces, draw a tight ring around us and comb th forest, thus putting an end to the largest group of Cherr igov partisans.

Our intelligence service operated with much mor success than did the German. We almost always had most accurate information about the invaders' intentions and even about the dates set for the operations they planned. They themselves admitted as much. Here, for instance, is what Colonel General Szambathaj chief of the Royal Hungarian General Staff, wrote in a letter of instructions which we intercepted.

"The intelligence, information and communication service of the partisans is well developed. It works with exceptional speed and reliability. They receive information about what is going on at the front sooner than the units guarding the occupied territory, and the smallest movement of our units is no secret to them whatsoever."

Elsewhere this letter reads:

"There is no need to obtain detailed and thorough information about the partisans because by the time the intelligence data reaches the command of the units assigned to clear the given territory and the units go into action, the various partisan detachments are sure to be notified through their exceptional information system of the approach of our units and will no longer be found in their previous locations anyway."

We learned of the enemy's intentions on March 22, ut instead of slipping away in good time we decided › give battle.

The Germans and Hungarians may really have imag-ıed that more than three thousand partisans were con-entrated in the Yelino woods Actually there were 923 of s, counting the wounded and the sick We were hungry nd poorly clad, and we were short of ammunition.

How could we have let things go so far that the Hit-erites were able to surround us and launch an opera-ion to wipe us out? Was this an error of judgment on he part of our command, the result of carelessness, or, still worse, a realization that our position was hopeless?

If these questions had been put to the Hitlerite officers who were throwing their soldiers into action against us, they would have answered, of course, that the partisan tactics had failed and that the partisan's hours were numbered.

This was just what we wanted. Let the fascists think we were stupid and overconfident

The basis of partisan tactics is movement; not simply movement from one place to another but movement which the enemy doesn't expect Always in the minority, the partisans can't get along without using cunning Not only their offensive must be unexpected but their retreat too.

The word "retreat" as understood in the army, though, was not applicable to the partisans. We had nowhere to retreat. We could only *slip away.*

This is easy for a small detachment of up to a hundred men. But how is a detachment of almost a thousand fighting men, with machine guns, trench mortars, a hospital, baggage train and a printshop, to slip away unnoticed?

If such a detachment were in a forest stretching for hundreds of kilometres it would be able to make a night

the big detachment had to be preserved. And as if to confirm the correctness of our stand, we received a radiogram from Moscow saying that on the night of March 22 six planes would bring us ammunition, guns, provisions and reinforcements. We were told to keep the landing field in full readiness.

At an RC meeting and later in headquarters we adopted the following plan We would let the enemy units penetrate into the forest We would set up three defence lines. On the first two we would open fire after letting the enemy come within fifty to seventy metres. We would mine all the roads, paths and lanes Mines going off would be the signal the battle had begun. Only after the enemy reached the third defence line, that is, the very camp limits, would we begin to withdraw The companies would withdraw in turn, according to an order issued, at intervals of no less than fifteen minutes

Yes, we decided to go away, after all Since, according to our calculations, the majority of the village garrisons of Germans and Magyars would be taking part in the operation, toward the end of the battle we wouldn't be apt to meet especially active resistance along the path of our withdrawal Besides, we planned to confuse the enemy and give him a false idea of the route by which we were withdrawing.

The main thing, however, was to give the Germans a reception that would kill any further desire on their part to try and encircle our detachment We had to deal the enemy a powerful counter blow, spread confusion in his ranks and take advantage of this confusion to move to new positions in full strength

Spring usually begins in Chernigov Region at the end of March But that year there were no signs of it yet. Of course, it was milder than in February, but still it never got milder than fifteen below. The cold served our purpose, though. If a thaw began we naturally wouldn't have

been able to make a quick move, for we were planni
use sleighs; we hadn't had time yet to acquire a si
cart.

All the men knew of the coming battle. Each unit k
the exact section it would defend. Naturally, we coul
say we were planning to withdraw, for that might h
put the men in a bad frame of mind. The order re
fight to the death, defend the camp to the last bullet.

By the way, a few words about bullets, and about a
munition in general. In recent battles we had capture
considerable number of guns, but we had very few R
sian cartridges and mines left. We kept informing Mosc
that we weren't complaining about food and expec
more guns and ammunition.

But no planes had come to us for about a month.

The night of March 22 none of us closed his eyes
a minute. Actually the fighting began on the 22nd.
about three o'clock in the afternoon a group of *poli*
approached the camp from the direction of Yelino. W
sent out Bessarab's company to meet them. He outflanke
them by a clever manoeuvre, took them by surpise an
mowed down almost the entire group with machine-gu
fire. Thirteen *polizei* surrendered. When questioned the
confirmed that the occupants were launching an offensiv
not later than the next morning. Toward evening the ene
my occupied Yelino.

All of us were on edge. The men were nervous. There
was a crank who started saying goodbye to his comrade
as though he were going to his death. To do the comrades
justice, they gave this panicmonger such a workout tha
he groaned all night long. This funereal mood may have
gripped no more than two or three persons, but they kept
their mouths shut. Bessarab was so raring to go after
his success that he suggested going out and attack-
ing the Hitlerites first instead of waiting for them to
attack us.

The men were nervous chiefly because they had to wait patiently; this had to be done to give the enemy the impression we didn't know a thing Toward morning we lit bonfires on the landing field. There and then the men slaughtered three horses, boiled big chunks of meat in pails and ate almost their fill before the battle True, there was nothing else to put in the soup, nor did they manage to salt it properly. Nonetheless, they had a square meal. There was just one fellow, poor chap, who couldn't stand horse meat in any form He had begun to swell from hunger. Luckily the captured *politzei* happened to have a little bread.

German planes appeared above the bonfires and dropped a few bombs. Fortunately there were no casualties. The German flyers must have thought us complete idiots that night. But we couldn't put out the fires The previous time we lit them when we heard the sound of our planes, but now German planes were droning constantly overhead and we feared we wouldn't hear ours.

Meanwhile time was passing. Dawn was drawing near and still our planes hadn't come. Though we tried to keep up our spirits, we realized very well that if they didn't come and drop us ammunition our position would be desperate.

We did not admit this to one another at the time. Not even at the conference of officers or among the R C. members had anyone mentioned the fact that our only salvation lay in support from Moscow. Our aeroplane contact with Moscow was not yet regular and we had no right to pin our hopes on it. But hope we did Everyone gazed up into the black starry sky and listened intently. On all sides the men could be heard saying:

"Ours aren't like that; ours hum quietly, without a whine."

"Fritz goes ooo-ooo-ooo but ours make a nice cheery sound."

The sky began to pale. Now we all realized no would be forthcoming, that we would have to hold with the forces we had. I caught myself thinking that all it was a pity we hadn't moved away in good tim the detachment had mustered all its forces that night struck on one sector we would have broken through ring and would now be a long way off, in compara safety.

But I said nothing to the comrades and they said no ing to me. Only a few days later did they admit they h been thinking the very same thing at that moment.

Shortly after six o'clock explosions rang out on side of Guta Studenetskaya. That was the Hitlerites stu bling on a mine field. Nikolai Nikitich immediately jump on a horse and galloped off in that direction. The hus and bustle of battle started. Solitary rifle shots rang o on all sides. A gun boomed The first shell sped by ov our heads A machine gun began chattering. The sour told us it was our Maxim. And suddenly from m command post I saw a parachute floating slowly earth wards.

No one had reported yet that the planes had come How did I miss them? Rvanov, Ba'itsky and Yaremenk who were at the CP with me, missed them too.

"Maybe it's a German landing party?" someone crie out.

The parachutes came down in a bunch That meant they had been dropped from a low altitude. Two messen gers ran up to us at the same time One of them said th German scout planes had turned tail the instant our planes appeared. The other, coming from Company One, re ported that Hitlerites were marching along a forest lane at full height and were yelling; they were clearly drunk No less than fifty of them had already been laid low

Still another messenger came running up, from Ba's bal at the first defence line He said the boys were holding

out well and swore our planes had dropped several bombs on an enemy group.

"One of them came hedge-hopping and opened up with a large-calibre. Did he give it to those fascists with tracers!"

The men instantly picked up this news and spread it through all our units I could judge by my own reaction how heartening it was That really was something— planes from the Mainland joining in the battle together with us!

The bags and boxes that fell from the sky were opened in a flash. The machine guns and trench mortars were put together right on the spot and moved up to the firing line at once.

They were heavily greased, and each part should have been carefully cleaned with a rag before assembly But in the haste and general excitement no one looked for rags The men threw off their padded jackets and caps and hurriedly wiped the guns with them then put their grease-stained things on again and plunged into battle.

The ammunition carriers took mines and bullets right out of the boxes that had dropped from the sky One machine gun in a thick canvas bag got stuck in the top of a tree. Three men climbed up after it at the same time

The boys fought well that day! Every tree, every little hollow became a pillbox of ours We had no snipers in the strict sense of the word, but we had plenty of good shots They scrambled up trees like squirrels and fired at the enemy from there

The Germans and Magyars advanced from all four sides After about two hours they forced us to fall back from our first defence line But this compelled them to raise artillery fire lest they hit their own men Even so they had lost no less than two hundred in killed by that time We also lost many men Among Fenton's dead

So was squad leader Mazepin. One of our best nurse Klava Markova, brought in nine gravely wounded me and when she crawled out for the tenth she was cut dow by a bullet.

The Hitlerites pressed forward stubbornly regardles of their losses They drove the *polizei* and the Magyar into the line of fire and moved up under cover of thei dead bodies The battle had already been going on fo several hours We had no opportunity whatsoever to prepare anything to eat. No one opened the food packages the planes had dropped. Kapranov had difficulty finding men to gather them up and load them into sleighs. The wounded suffered most, of course There wasn't even time to bandage them properly.

By two o'clock we had succeeded in finding a gap in the line around us and in getting our baggage train out through it. We led fifty sleighs out of the forest and sent them to Gulino, the first stopping place of the regional detachment. We managed this only because at the same time twenty sleighs moved off in the opposite direction, toward the Bryansk woods, thus distracting the enemy's attention.

In those twenty sleighs were only sixty men, headed by the political instructor of Company Two, Nakhaba. A team of our best horses was harnessed to each sleigh, and they carried them along at a spanking pace. This group had a special mission. Much depended on how it was carried out. Scouts brought in the news that the group had managed to shake off the Germans following it. So far everything was going as planned.

The fascists continued to advance. Around three o'clock they succeeded in breaching our second defence line. However, they didn't dare to comb the forest; they preferred to keep to the lanes and paths.

A little past four, when it began to grow dark, the fascists cooled down. After ten hours of fighting they still

hadn't managed to reach our camp The fact that the attacking forces preferred to keep to the clearings and lanes resulted in the German command not knowing where their front or their rear was, the more so since our men made their way fo sections the Germans had passed through and fired at them from behind.

And now the final part of *our plan* began to go into operation.

The Hitlerites started hastily drawing back some of their companies and massing them in the northeastern sector. This meant that political instructor Nakhaba's group had fulfilled its mission.

This group had been ordered to drive through six or seven villages on the road to the Bryansk woods, start a panic there and spread the rumour that Fyodorov had been smashed, that he and Popudrenko had flown off to Moscow in the morning and that the remnants of the routed partisans were fleeing in disorder toward the Zlynka woods.

The Hitlerites fell for this. They packed several companies into trucks and sent them to cut off the "flight."

Now we could breathe more freely. I issued an order for the men to withdraw from battle platoon by platoon with the fall of darkness and make for Gulino in the wake of the baggage train.

Since we had mined all the exits from the forest and it was impossible to look for the mines in the dark, each group of partisans drove a horse and sleigh ahead of it. The unfortunate horses were blown up, thus clearing the way. The men were so famished that they cut off chunks of steaming raw horseflesh and ate it.

Some twenty-five kilometres from the Yelino woods we halted in a deep gully overgrown with bushes to wait for all the units to come up. The men were completely exhausted Kapranov ordered his commissary platoon to

open the food boxes. This time he himself went aro
distributing makhorka, canned goods and smoked s
sage. But more than anything in the world the men wa
ed to sleep. They flung themselves down on the snow a
went off to sleep at once

We had to appoint special sentries to nudge the sle
ers, for it was more than fifteen below. In the heat
battle many of the comrades had thrown off their quil
jackets and left them in the forest. Fires were out of t
question. When they lit cigarettes the men covered th
heads with their jackets, for German planes were st
circling in the dark sky.

Within two hours all our companies had gathered. W
should have moved on without a minute's pause, but th
men were completely worn out. Even the hardiest bega
to beg for a rest.

And here a miracle occurred.

Men lying flat in the snow, weak and numb wit
weariness, rose; the wounded stopped groaning, and som
of them surmounted their pain and climbed out of th
sleighs. I was so exhausted myself that I felt I couldn'
lift a hand or turn my head, but a few minutes later I wa
up and dancing with the young ones. . . .

This is what happened Our radiomen had been grop
ing around in the ether, trying to pick up the news, when
suddenly they tuned in on a request concert for partisans.
This was the first time we had picked up a concert of this
kind. The loudspeaker was at once fastened to the nearest
tree, of course, and a crowd gathered around it in an in-
stant.

We had sent in requests by radio long before, and our
impatience as we waited to see if they would be played
was understandable.

The announcer said: "We're playing Dunayevsky's
Song of My Native Land for partisan Semenisty, of the
detachment commanded by Comrade Kovpak."

After that: "We're playing *Kakhovka* for partisan Pyotr Glushik, machine gunner in Batya's detchment"

Piano chords floated to us through the ether from Moscow. The Pyatnitsky choir sang for the partisans Valeria Barsova trilled like a nightingale, and Konstantin Simonov recited his poetry "We're playing for the partisans of Saburov's detachment; of the Shchors detachment commanded by Comrade Markov; of the Khrushchov detachment commanded by Comrade Sychov . "

The concert lasted a long time After each number came the name of another detachment Only at the very end did the announcer say:

"For Karpusha, platoon leader in the Stalin detachment commanded by Comrade Fyodorov, we're playing a Ukrainian hopak."

And then it began! The boys yelled "hurrah" cleared away a square of snow in an instant and pushed Karpusha into it. A few minutes later practically the entire detachment was dancing It was a good thing the hopak was soon over, otherwise I'm sure our fellows would have danced till morning I'll confess I loosened up my limbs too and clicked my heels against the frozen ground a few times. Where on earth did we get the energy?

If only the fascists could have seen how the partisans whom they were pursuing in exactly the opposite direction were now dancing by the light of the moon!

When the concert ended we climbed into the sleighs, gay and excited, and pushed on to the site of our new camp. By morning we were already in the Gulino woods, where we picked up this radio report from Berlin:

"On a sector of the Central Front a powerful group of forest bandits numbering 3,200 men has been defeated and wiped out. Twelve commissars were taken prisoner The leaders succeeded in escaping by plane "

This was us, of course. The occupation authorities ha reported an obvious lie to Berlin. They had not taken single prisoner. They had not accomplished what they se out to do; they had not managed either to encircle us o comb the forest. As a result of almost twenty-four hours fighting they lost around five hundred men in killed and succeeded only in having us move from one forest to an other.

But this was what *we had wanted, not they.* We had carried out our plan.

At roll-call we found our losses amounted to twenty-two men killed and fifty-three wounded.

We had got away from the enemy and covered our tracks. Now we could light fires, rest up and eat, and tackle our next problems.

* * *

Thus the *big detachment* was built up.

The March battle was the decisive test for our big detachment. It was a very tough battle, that one. But now we all knew for a fact that the invaders could not get the better of us.

We had become a strong military *organization* that acted according to a plan, received aid from the Red Army and the Soviet rear, and constantly drew reserves from the population at large.

Above I have cited excerpts from a letter of instructions written by Colonel General Szambathaj, the chief of the Royal Hungarian General Staff. We seized this highly confidential document at the beginning of April when we blew up a Hungarian staff car on the Gomel-Chernigov highway. After reading it our self-respect as partisans rose considerably. We discussed Szambathaj's instructions at political classes in all the units of our detachment.

Here are these instructions in a somewhat abridged form:

"Fourth Department

No. 10

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENT WAR IN BRIEF

(Through March 1942)

PARTISAN WARFARE

Chapter 1

A General Outline of the Partisan Movement

"The struggle against the Soviets has brought us face to face with a peculiar and ruthless means of warfare—the 'partisan' movement. The fanaticism, scorn for death and endurance which we have seen the Russian people display in this form of struggle are amazing; the scale on which the Russians are employing this form of struggle is staggering.

"The partisan movement, spreading over more and more territory, is already assuming the form of a people's movement.

"The partisan movement is a people's movement behind our frontline; not only immediately behind the front but several hundred kilometres behind it, in the rear.... Partisan warfare flared up with special intensity when the Russian army launched offensive operations at the beginning of the winter. Defence against the actions of the partisans means difficult days, weeks and even months for us."

We were particularly pleased by this admission that the invaders had to defend themselves against the partisans.

In the section entitled "Types of Partisan Detachments, Manpower Reserves, Replacements," Szambathaj wrote:

"The soul of the partisan movement are the Communist leaders who were left behind deliberately.... They strong, purposeful and fanatical Communists ... are exceptionally dangerous In the districts where partisans are operating a lenient attitude toward Communists is absolutely impermissible.

"... Every Jew, regardless of sex or age, sympathizes with the partisans. There is no place for mercy toward the Jews either!

"The women who help the partisans must be put down as a separate group. The young generation of women brought up by the Communists is a determined stratum of assistants of the movement who do not give in before anything."

In the second chapter, entitled "Defence Against the Partisan Movement," Szambathaj presented a cynical program, which boils down to the usual principle of the fascist invaders: "divide and rule." He recommended impressing it on the Ukrainians that they were more cultured than the Russians, that "in origin and traits they are much closer to the cultured peoples of the West than are the Russians. Under the new order in Europe a lofty calling awaits the Ukrainians ... They can reach a finer and happier destiny only on the side of the axis powers."

Further, in the section on "How to Fight the Partisans," he said:

"It should be clear to us that the patriotically-minded strata of the Ukrainian population do not feel they have any common destiny whatsoever with the authorities of the central powers In the final analysis our authorities and units are enemy invaders and foreign masters to them....

"Fighting the partisans means not only destroying separate partisan detachments. They must be deprived of the possibility of further organizing, of acquiring supplies and of replenishing their manpower and material

esources. Such being the case, there is no room for mercy toward anyone at all. Only a merciless annihilation of the population will lead to achievement of the goal...."

How could it happen, people often ask, that an army which had conquered so many countries, which was equipped with first-class armaments, and which had already acquired substantial experience in occupying other countries, did not nip the partisan movement in the bud? Why did the invaders allow the partisan movement to grow into a formidable force?

It is easier to answer this question today than it was in 1942. Many partisan commanders now publishing their memoirs are attempting to do it. I am also trying to answer it in this book. Of course, at the period of which I am writing we pondered over this question too.

There was a skit composed by an unknown partisan author and staged by our amateur theatre in which two German commandants meet and have a talk. The skit was rather amateurishly written, but the partisans enjoyed it.

The first commandant favoured all kinds of promises, persuasion and "reforms." All the second one knew was "shoot 'em down." They got into an argument as to which method of struggle was the more effective, as to which of them would finish off the partisans first.

Toward the end it turned out that both methods were worse, as they say. The partisans kept growing in number in the districts governed by both the commandants. They attacked the village, and the commandants clutched at their heads and fled with cries of *Mein Gott!*

The partisan movement arose and developed not because the invaders allowed it to—they did not give us any opportunity at all, of course—but because, no privations or difficulties halted the Soviet men and women, because the people did not wish to endure fascist slavery and they rose to fight the invaders. The number of

detachments and their size increased with each pas
day.

After the March battle the regional detachment
countered a series of new difficulties. The enemy
discovered us and started after us again. We took a
cision not to settle down in the Gulino woods, and a
days later we moved over into the Relmentarovka For
From there we returned to the Yelino woods. Now
didn't remain in any one place more than five or six d
following the tactics of almost constant movement.

Spring came, and the rivers rose. We had to get b
at once acquiring carts, carriages and drays This t
no little time and energy Only by the end of May did
have enough wagons

Instead of improving in the springtime, the partis
food situation became still worse The peasants w
hardly able to help us at all. Their stocks had given
too Planes now came to us very rarely because of
mud and the almost incessant rains

Nonetheless, the detachment grew For a time
even had to limit the number of new people we took
We were short of ammunition, chiefly for Soviet weap
as always, yet we clashed with the enemy almost dail

The tactics of frequent movement confused the H
lerites They thought partisans had appeared in all t
Chernigov forests, while really it was our regional d
tachment on the move When the snow disappeared
[illegible] our transport much more difficult Then, at
the end of May the leaves came out, making it eas
[illegible]

The first time we learned for certain that the num
of partisan detachments was very large was when we
heard the partisan request program after the May bat
[illegible] Of course, we had presumed that there were
[illegible]
[illegible]

Oryol, the Kiev and the Byelorussian forests, in a word, wherever a group of armed men had the barest possibility of hiding from enemy eyes.

After the March battle the invaders realized they weren't able to surround and comb the forest The only thing left for them to do was set up a blockade around the places where the partisans were massed. From the summer of 1942 on, the experienced, so to say, seasoned, occupation officers in the captured Soviet districts understood they wouldn't be able to wipe out the partisan movement, as Hitler demanded.

From time to time, after receiving orders to that effect, the invaders tried to attack us. But now they bent their efforts in the main toward controlling at least the towns, villages and the roads. They worked out an intricate system of guarding the railways and the main highways In the towns and villages, especially in those where occupation units were quartered, they cut down the trees and bushes; they broke down the fences and replaced them with barbed wire.

Now the Hitlerites were compelled to keep quite large forces in the rear and along the roads leading to the front. Each post was guarded by no less than a platoon At the railway junctions, even such secondary ones as Priluki, for example, there was an entire regiment

At the beginning of the war German soldiers considered it great luck to land in a rear unit Now the situation had changed radically. Now it was those guilty of infractions of discipline who were sent to serve in the punitive and guard duty detachments And particularly unwilling were the German soldiers to go to rural localities or small district towns, which the partisans raided frequently.

The partisan detachments had become a formidable force. At the beginning of 1942 a Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement was set up in Moscow Every

sizable detachment in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Or and Kursk regions, and later on in the southern distr as well, established regular radio communication w Moscow, with the Red Army Supreme Command, a received instructions and the needed aid from there.

I have not set out to write a history of our deta ment. This book tells only how the Chernigov Communi who remained behind to work in the underground ov came all difficulties and organized and headed the pe ple's resistance to the invaders, how the R.C. of the Par *built up a big detachment.*

At the end of March the detachment of Oryol par sans commanded by Markov joined us. To be more exac it was not Markov who came to us but we who came him in the Zlynka woods. There we met up with anothe fairly large group of partisans, under Levchenko. Th group also began operating in coordination with us. partisan garrison had been set up for the first time.

We adopted this name in order to preserve interna autonomy for the detachments that had just joined us Both of them had come into being long before, and ha their own traditions. Besides, we didn't wish to take th step of merging detachments from various regions righ off, although this wasn't of great importance as a matte of principle. Since I commanded the largest detachmen I was made chief of the garrison; Yaremenko, Markov and Levchenko were appointed my deputies.

At a joint meeting of all the commanders and the Chernigov R.C. of the Party it was decided that our main task now was to organize attacks on the roads feeding the front.

At the head of the demolition squad we placed Alexei Sadilenko, the tallest man in our whole detachment. He had come to us from an encircled army unit, in which he had been a mine layer and demolition man too His squad was subordinate directly to headquarters. The

core of the squad was made up of volunteers, men of reckless courage. The first volunteers were Sergei Koshel, a twenty-two-year-old sapper and a Komsomol member; Misha Kovalev, also a sapper and Vasya Kuznetsov, a nineteen-year-old lad from Siberia, a gold prospector.

Others to sign up were secondary school principal Tsimbalist, paratrooper Nikolai Denisov, Vsevolod Klokov, a senior lieutenant of the engineers, our old friend Petya Romanov and Volodya Pavlov, a student of the Moscow Institute for Transport Engineers.

For demolition operations a group of twenty to twenty-five men headed by one of our officers was usually set up to support the two or three or, at the most, five men who planted the mines. They went long distances from the camp, sometimes more than one hundred kilometres, and going out on such expeditions without a supporting group was too risky. Besides, the German trains were accompanied as a rule by a guard of thirty or forty tommy gunners and two or three machine gunners. Hardly any of our railway operations ever went off without a skirmish.

Grigory Vasilievich Balitsky, a man of exceptional bravery, became the moving spirit of the demolition expeditions. Sometimes he went off for two or three weeks with his group. Once he didn't return for over a month.

In May and June 1942 our demolition men derailed twenty-six trains. Balitsky's group accounted for eleven of these.

At first some comrades were opposed to demolition activity. "Of course, if we have the chance, why not blow up a train," they reasoned, "but it's no good to do it often. The Germans won't stand for it. It'll be the same as telling them: look for us here. The detachment gets nothing out of it anyway. Blasting and burning don't bring it any booty."

It was true that the demolition operations did not bring us any large booty. The mines usually exploded, and

most of the time the provisions went up in smoke. Eve
something did remain intact, the demolition men coul
take it with them. Besides, they had to leave as soon
they completed the operation: the invaders immediat
sent a trainload of troops to the scene of the catastrop

After all, however, we were carrying on demolit
work not in the interests of the detachment but of
country. Each train we derailed weakened the enemy co
siderably. Everybody understood this, of course; but
was necessary that everybody feel it in his heart, becor
enthusiastic about each demolition operation our m
successfully carried out, take pride in it.

After its first big successes the demolition squad wa
flooded with applications, especially from the youth,
course.

In 1942 our demolition operations were as yet weal
we were just learning. It was a different matter in 19
and 1944, when we began working according to
schedule and derailed as many as ten trains in one day
But that is a topic for the next book. In the summer o
1942 we couldn't even dream of dealing such powerfu
blows.

Even at that time, however, our demolition men ac-
complished quite a bit. In March, when the snow was still
on the ground, they set out for the railway line at points
dozens of kilometres from the camp and under difficult
winter conditions waited for trains for days on end. At
that time traffic had practically stopped because of snow-
drifts. The demolition men had to occupy themselves with
what they called "common labour," which they didn't
like: blowing up bridges, the railway bed and drain
pipes.

This, of course, also inflicted telling losses on the in-
vaders' economy. In March and at beginning of April
our boys blew up five bridges and more than three hun-
dred sections of railway bed.

In May we took up positions in the Zlynka and Novozybkov forests, not far from the railway. The snow was gone by that time, and traffic was normal. Up to sixty trains were passing along the Gomel-Bryansk line daily in the direction of the front. The activity of our demolition groups forced the Germans to cancel night traffic and reduce the daytime schedule to eight and at the most ten trains.

Our demolition men steadily extended the scope of their sallies. Whenever the detachment raided a town of any size they put the industrial enterprises, power stations and warehouses that were housed in brick buildings out of commission.

During an operation in the district centre of Gordeyevka which lasted only half an hour the demolition men blew up the distillery, creamery, electric station, a food warehouse and several tractors and trucks while the other companies and platoons were waging battle.

In Koryukovka, men of the demolition squad wrecked the railway station, blew up the railway track in twenty-four places, destroyed all the frogs, switches and communications and signalling apparatus, and blew up and set fire to the sawmill, lumberyard and fuel and fodder stores.

• • •

After planes started coming to us the men began to write letters. For a single sheet of writing paper some of the comrades offered enough makhorka to roll a big cigarette. A tremendous number of letters had collected but not once did a plane land. Meanwhile many of the partisans wrote serial letters to which they devoted all their free time. I had occasion to read one of these serial letters, written by Volodya Pavlov, one of our intrepid demolition men.

Volodya was not yet twenty at the time. He came to us from Markov's detachment, and before that he had been a paratrooper, a member of a group which met with misfortune. Left alone, he wandered about for two months and finally landed in the Oryol woods, where he joined the partisans.

Before the war Volodya had been in his first year at the Moscow Institute for Transport Engineers. With us too, as you see, he dealt with transportation problems, only not with the building and operation of railways but their destruction.

After the war, a Hero of the Soviet Union, he resumed his studies at the institute.

At the time, I kept the letter from which I cite excerpts below. Volodya gave too many "technological" details about demolition in it. Now, of course, the letter contains no military secrets of any sort.

"June 14, 1942.

"Dear, precious Mama,

"I don't know whether I'll ever be able to send you this letter or whether it will go on lying around in my pocket.

"I remember you always loved details and said I should describe my surroundings to you. I am writing this in a tent. Only it's not like an ordinary tent, the kind you've seen in army or Pioneer camps. Our tent is small and very low. You can't stand up in it, and even when you're sitting your head touches the top. I live with Volodya Klokov. He's a grand fellow. That is, he's an engineer, not just a fellow. He's a few years older than I am. He's gay, clever and lively, and the main thing is he's brave. He's friendly and treats me like an equal. That's very pleasant. I can learn a lot from him. By the way, his name is Vsevolod, but somehow everyone here calls him Volodya, and so do I.

"He was the first one to tell me about demolition operations. I'm grateful to him no end It's interesting and absorbing work. The demolition men are looked up to here more than anybody else. Not just because it's dangerous Don't you think for a minute, Mom, that it's any more dangerous than other partisan work. We're looked up to because we deal the enemy heavy blows.

"Don't fret because I jump around so. It's hard to concentrate. Next to me the boys are sitting playing cards. Only please don't go thinking it's for money That can't happen here. We don't have any money at all It's absolutely unnecessary.

"I *started telling you about the tent. It's made like* this: wooden posts with parachute silk stretched across it, and on top of the silk there's fir-tree bark We cut off the bark this way: one of the boys stands on another's shoulders and makes a deep cut almost down to the bottom with a sharp knife. Then we cut around the tree at the top and the bottom. We chop off all the branches flush Then we carefully take off the bark together with the skin—you know, that slippery stuff underneath.. . The bark turns out to be like a sheet of bent plywood It has holes in it from where the branches were, but we stuff them up. Then we put the bark on top of the silk No downpour can get through a roof like that. The tents are made very low on purpose. I'm writing lying down..

"Now, Mom, I want to tell you about how I went on my first distant railway operation. You doctors call an operation intervention with the aid of the surgeon's knife. We cut the railway track—not with a knife but with explosives.... Before that I'd taken part only in blowing up bridges and German cars. I'd already been assigned to laying mines to blow up German man-power, that is, infantry. But that's easy. You could learn how in half an hour.

"I went on my first railway operation not as a demolition man but as a plain fighter. Fyodorov went with

us. But the head of the group, its commander, was Grigory Vasilievich Balitsky.

"He's a very brave man. A regular daredevil. The only thing he's really afraid of is that someone sometime might suspect him of being a coward. Besides us, there were twenty more men in the group. All different kinds There was one girl among us, and a wonderful guide, an elderly kolkhoz man named Pankov. He knows all the forests and all the roads, paths and animal tracks. Like Leatherstocking. Remember Fenimore Cooper?

"When we were seen off on the operation the girls cried. Why? Because, Mom, they're more sensitive than men. 'It's just as easy for women to cry as to sneeze,' Pankov said. When we'd gone about four kilometres from the camp Balitsky told everyone to sit down on the grass. He sat down himself, remained silent for some time, and then told us to listen to him attentively.

"'I warn you Whoever isn't sure of himself, go back to camp. Afterwards it'll be too late. We can't have any unnecessary talk or any complaints about difficulties. Boldness, discipline, and unconditional fulfilment of all my orders! Is that clear? For the slightest violation, for cowardice—execution on the spot. I'm not trying to frighten you; it just can't be otherwise. So please, whoever wants to can go back; no one will hold it against you, and no one will laugh at you.'

"Not a single person said he wanted to go back. Even though Balitsky assured us no one would laugh at those who returned, nobody believed him. Actually, everybody in the camp scorns and even hates cowardice. Going back would mean confessing you were a coward For that you might get it in the wall newspaper.

"Then we stood up and went through the forest, along paths. We had to cover twenty-five kilometres in all In some places we crossed highways and dirt roads We crossed them walking backwards We were specially

taught to walk that way. We had to walk fast, without stopping, and so there would be normal steps Do you know why? If the Germans saw the footprints they'd think we went in the opposite direction.

"Once we had to wait while some German trucks passed. There was a whole column of them We didn't bother to get into a fight with them We had a different job

"Each one of us carried the charge of explosive in other words, the mine, in turn It doesn't weigh much—twelve kilos. But a partisan doesn't like to have his hands occupied. Each one tries to arrange his load so that it's on his back or else at his belt Your hands have to be free so that you can open fire at any moment We don't carry tommy guns the way the Red Army men do either. Ours are slung over the left shoulder, handy, with the muzzle facing ahead.

"The homemade partisan mine is simply a wooden box about forty centimetres long and twenty centimetres wide and high. Inside the box there's a chunk of explosive about the colour of dry mustard, only it's not a powder So that you won't be afraid for me, I'll tell you it can't explode by itself. It explodes by detonation A square or round hole is cut out in the charge, and just before the mine is planted a detonator pin is put in there Then there's a spring, a firing-pin and a capsule . You wouldn't understand all this business without a drawing and besides you don't need to It's unlikely you'll ever be using one of these things

"We halted about six kilometres from the railway, not far from the village of Kamen A messenger of our detachment serves in the police force there It's a rule that the group mustn't go into any town or village under any circumstances when it's on the way to an operation

"But one or two scouts had to go into the village absolutely. This time Pankov went. He found out from our messenger that it was fairly quiet at the moment on the

Zlynka-Zakopytye section, and there weren't many Germans there. Besides, he learned the safest route to the railway.

"Balitsky was very upset by one thing Pankov told him. It seems that just a short while before a gasoline train had passed on the way to Bryansk. You see, Mom, it makes a difference to us what kind of a train we blow up True, even if a train with not a very important load goes up on a mine it puts the line out of commission for a few hours. But we are economical with explosives—each kilogram counts. It's considered a big thing to blow up a troop train or one with tanks, trucks, planes or gasoline. That's why Balitsky was upset. He thought that if one gasoline train had gone through another one wouldn't be coming along soon.

"We reached the line safely. The forest ended about two hundred metres from the track. We lay down and hid in the grass and bushes along the fringe of the forest. Balitsky had us lie ten metres apart. That's so if we had to open fire we could cover the entire length of the train at once.

"You see, blowing up the engine and derailing the cars isn't enough; the freight has to be destroyed. And if the train is carrying Hitlerite soldiers, we have to kill off as many as possible. The minute the engine jumps the track and the train stops, we all open fire at the cars—and mainly at the last car, especially if it's a freight train. because the guard always rides at the end of the train.

"As you read this now in Moscow you're probably anxious to know how I conducted myself, whether I didn't disgrace myself that first time. If I was alone maybe I would have been afraid. But all the boys were fine fellows. We had a good time on the way and joked a lot.

"'Mama, if only you could see your Volodya now! I look just about as much like a city student as a bear looks like a lamb. I have a dashing appearance. I'm dressed

in the partisan fashion: a Hungarian fur-lined vest—what's called a 'Magyarka'—high boots with the tops rolled down, and over them hang wide wine coloured pants made out of a German woolen blanket I wear a cap with a broad red ribbon on the crown There are grenades at my waist and a tommy gun on a strap It would be fun to have a look at myself in a full-length mirror.

"Now I'll tell you a funny thing, by the way Once the partisans attacked a German garrison in a village, and while the fighting was still going on several of the boys got stuck in the starosta's house for a long time The orders were to set fire to it, but the biggest partisan dandies had got into that house They crowded around a full length mirror and kept pushing one another aside to admire themselves I didn't take part in that operation But Fyodorov gave those boys a laying-out I didn't envy He called them coquettes, and that's what everybody calls them now; they get teased every evening

"Stop. Can't write any more An alert

"June 18

"You know, Mom, the minute I start writing to you I think of Moscow. What's it like now? Several paratroopers were sent to us, and two of them had been in Moscow They said there was a fuel shortage in the wintertime Poor thing, you must have frozen! Just the same I miss Moscow very much I'd like to take just one look at it And if I was allowed to go on the condition that I crawl all the way there on my belly, I think I'd do it

"I just reread the first part of the letter and will go on I hadn't seen a railway for several months We'd just lain down and taken cover when along came a trackman, an old fellow with a beard He had a rifle over his shoulder but when the boys went up to him he put up his hands and didn't even try to unsling it From where I was I

watched them searching him. Suddenly everybody began running toward him. But there hadn't been any order. Balitsky ran too, swearing all the way.

Half a minute later there was a thick cloud of smoke above the whole group and everybody had a happy face. Now do you get what it's all about? It turned out the trackman had a full pouch of makhorka. And we'd been smoking all kinds of junk for a long time. We'd tried smoking moss and buckwheat straw and dry oak leaves. When we manage to get hold of some makhorka or tobacco or a cigarette we smoke it in turn, each one taking a couple of puffs. We have expressions like 'cover my lip,' 'leave me the butt, I'll throw it away,' and 'it's burning my lip and roasting my nose but it's a pity to throw it away.' We've even written a song that goes like this:

Good tobacco is a treat,
But we haven't any,
Oak-leaf dried and rolled up neat
Fills the pipes of many
Birch-bark, buckwheat, straw or hay.
All the woodlands tender
Smoke to drive the blues away,
Spirits buoyant render

'Don't be surprised, Mom, that I write Ukrainian. I've learned it. Incidentally, you could learn all the languages of the USSR here. We have Georgians, Armenians, Kazakhs and even a Yakut. Everyone has to know Ukrainian. Otherwise how'd we get along in the villages?

'Well, we all got it from Balitsky, of course. It was lucky for me I was dying for a smoke. We tied up the trackman and took away his rifle. We didn't kill him. He said the Hitlerites would have shot him if he hadn't taken the job.

"Then we lay down again. After lying there an hour and a half we heard a train coming. It was still far off but we couldn't mistake that click on the rails. My heart began pounding; I never was so excited waiting for a train before. My heart was beating all over my body, I could even feel it in my fingertips, I was squeezing my tommy gun so hard.

"Seryozha Koshel dashed out to plant the mine. He dug it under the rail very fast and ran a fuse to the forest to set it off. Planting a mine is an honour but it's not very pleasant. In your excitement you may get tangled up in the fuse and blow yourself up.

"Seryozha had just managed to hide when the engine appeared around the bend. That's the tensest moment: will it come off or won't it? Your nerves are as taut as strings. The mine may fail to explode. There's all kinds of reasons.

"Writing it takes much longer. There it all happened in a second. The train was coming fast. It was a very long one.

"The explosion wasn't so loud. There was a burst of flame under the engine, and the engine went over. Then there was an awful crash and grinding from the cars piling up on each other. We all opened fire right away, at the drums. I forgot to say that it was a gasoline train again. We were lucky. It was the second one in a row. The Germans ship gasoline to the front not in tank cars but in iron drums because it's easier to fill tanks and trucks from them. The drums are piled up in several layers on flatcars with high sides. We fired at the bottom drums. They exploded and threw the top ones up a couple of metres into the air. Everything was in flames.

"Suddenly I saw Balitsky running up to the rear of the train, looking gruesome against the background of the fire. He ran shouting 'Follow me!' As soon as he came near the last car he began shooting. He doesn't have a

tommy gun but a light French rapid-firing carabine, and he holds it not pressed to his shoulder but in his outstretched arm with the butt against the inside of his elbow. Very dashing indeed.

"The Germans were in the last car, a passenger coach. They fired out of the windows from tommy guns and machine guns The flames went higher and higher, and the whole train started burning and crackling. The passenger coach caught fire too. On top the flames were black. They gave off tongues fifty metres long in all directions, like solar prominences. They went fifty metres straight up too.

"The German guards screamed in agony. They began firing less and less Then Balitsky ordered the withdrawal, and we ran off.

"When we got together in the woods we found only two of our men were wounded. Our nurse quickly bandaged them. We marched back singing, simply drunk with joy.

"We were in marvellous spirits. On the way back we kept turning around to look at the fire It was blazing stronger and stronger. Imagine, even in the camp they saw the smoke. We marched along fast, talking loud, each one trying to outshout the other. We hardly tried at all to escape notice. We were all in a fighting mood, raring to go; we were ready for anything.

We walked into that big village of Kamen. There's a mill there. We made straight for it. Without taking any precautions—right down the street. The *polizei* all ran away; I don't know how many of them were there. But at the mill we shot two who were guarding it. We broke the locks on the grain and flour warehouses and called the inhabitants. They came running up to the mill and dragged the stuff away in bags, boxes and pails; women took it also in the hems of their skirts. The kids hung around too; they poured it into their caps.

"We shouted, 'Take it, comrades, and hide it! When the Nazis come put all the blame on us partisans! We can stand it!'

"We held a meeting. I took the floor too. You wouldn't even suspect what a fine speech I got off. Honest to goodness, when I'm excited I'm a regular orator. They congratulated me and said I ought to be transferred to speaking. That's nonsense, of course Now I wouldn't give up demolition work for anything

"But you don't worry, Mom, it's not at all so dangerous. I think watching on the roofs in Moscow for them to drop bombs is lots more dangerous. There it comes so suddenly, doesn't it? And there you can't answer the enemy's fire. No, don't you worry Honest, nothing'll happen to your Volodya!"

CHAPTER FIVE

UNITED FORCES

THE German invaders were waging an offensive in the south, and the radio brought us sad tidings. The Red Army was withdrawing to Stalingrad. One would think that the invaders might feel more at ease in the Ukraine than ever before. One would think that so deep in the enemy's rear the population might finally submit.

But instead of submitting to fascist slavery, Soviet men and women were increasing their resistance. More and more partisan detachments were rising to fight the German invaders.

The Germans were advancing on the Caucasus, but the people felt they would soon be routed and put to flight. Every Soviet person who was in the enemy rear at that time could not help but note numerous signs of the military and economic weakening of the German army.

Now our detachment, or, to be more exact, the several Chernigov and Oryol detachments which had linked up their destinies, very frequently made long-distance raids in Chernigov and Oryol regions and the northeastern districts of Byelorussia. The total number of fighting men in our detachment had long since topped the thousand mark. When local partisans joined in with us we numbered no less than two thousand men On the march our column extended a kilometre and a half. Sometimes we made our way surreptitiously, through swamps and for-

ests, but more often we moved about openly and we readily halted in villages In almost every village we held rallies, distributed leaflets, and went into the houses and talked with the peasants.

The peasants met us with open arms. They were proud of the partisans, and at times they exaggerated our strength. Meeting us raised their spirits, they admitted This was indeed so. Our meetings with the people gave us, in turn, greater confidence in the righteousness and invincibility of our cause.

I remember once talking with an old man and half-jokingly reproaching him for not joining the partisans He was a strong healthy man of about fifty-five My reproach apparently cut him to the quick

"That's not true, chief, that I'm not a partisan," he said in a hurt voice: "Take a look at our fields, chief. Look at how the people are working in the communal yards. They're doing only half or a quarter as much as they could and sometimes the opposite of what should be done Why aren't we partisans, chief, when the enemy can never let go of his tommy gun or his whip?"

The old man spoke the truth A glance at the peasant fields was sufficient to show how badly things were going for the invaders. Traces of wholesale sabotage lay over everything. A year hadn't passed since the German invaders entered these districts, yet agriculture was so rundown it was clear it was being laid waste deliberately.

The story of this devastation is as follows Before the German fascists came the kolkhoz folk managed to harvest and ship out part of the 1941 bumper crop. The grain remaining in the fields was trampled and burned down by the armies. There was so much of it, however, that the Hitlerites got some. They didn't harvest it themselves, of course They made the peasants do it by threatening them with all kinds of punishment. Then they confiscated it. The pea-

sants were left only with what they had managed in one way or another to conceal from the invaders and traitors.

In the autumn of 1941 the front was still close and winter wheat was hardly sown anywhere. But when the front moved on the Hitlerites consolidated their rule, put through a so-called reform and began organizing agricultural production their own way.

The peasants followed the efforts of the Gebietskommissars and the newly-baked landlords with puzzlement and with steadily growing scorn. In their newspapers and leaflets the invaders ran down the kolkhozes, sovkhozes and the entire system of socialist agriculture as much as they could. And, of course, they lauded their own organizational abilities.

"Just watch how we'll get things going on the basis of German experience, German industry, German accuracy, precision and culture," they told the peasantry.

All this turned out to be blather, of course. First of all the invaders took the grain. Then they took almost all the draft horses, leaving the peasants only oxen. But how many oxen are there in a kolkhoz village? Could spring ploughing ever be done with them? Could the vast kolkhoz expanses be harrowed and sown in this old-fashioned way?

The machine and tractor stations had been evacuated, and almost all the tractors that hadn't been shipped east had been put out of commission. During the winter the invaders tried here and there to get tractor repair shops going, but they didn't succeed. In their newspapers they wrote that thousands of splendid new machines would soon be coming from Germany. A general mobilization of tractor drivers, mechanics and truck drivers was announced.

But when spring came the Gebietskommissars and Landwirtschaftsführers demanded that the peasants work the fields with oxen and cows. The invaders shipped in no

ther tractors nor trucks, of course. As for the truck drivers, mechanics and tractor drivers who had been mobilized, they were herded into freight cars and transported to Germany under guard.

"What kind of managers are they?" said the peasants. "They fight for land because their Germany is too small for them and now it's lying fallow and growing over with weeds, and they're shipping our boys and girls to Germany to plough the land there."

The Hitlerites did bring in seed grain to some associations and appointed controllers to supervise its expenditure, but it was inferior, poorly selected seed full of mites and weeds. The peasants worked in the associations only when forced to. Some sabotaged deliberately, because they didn't want to work for the invaders, others simply didn't see any sense in working. The invaders had promised to give the best plots of land to those who distinguished themselves and who fulfilled the sowing quota. But no one any longer believed a single word of theirs. The Hitlerites forced the *polizei* to till the associations' fields. But even the *polizei* worked indifferently.

Harvest time came. Passing across the fields in the summer of 1942 we saw a scene of frightful neglect. The crops of the associations hadn't been weeded. Besides, no more than half the former kolkhoz acreage had been sown. Only in their back-yard plots, and then not everywhere, had the peasants tended their crops, and then surreptitiously harvested the grain and threshed it with flails in their yards or even in the cottages. They staked their hopes on potatoes, which the invaders went after less eagerly.

The peasants said.

"They're a flop, those Hitlerite snakes. They don't know how to manage. What kind of managers are they

if all they do is grab and they don't look after the land? They came and they grabbed everything, trampled and burned everything. They can't even handle what they've got yet they're going to other places to steal."

The fascist economic policy in the towns also amounted to plunder. All the big factories and mills were closed down. A few of their departments now housed tank, auto and aeroplane repair shops. In the summer of 1942 the invaders began mobilizing young men and women wholesale for shipment to Germany. The first to be sent were skilled workers.

This was a sign of the obvious weakness of the fascist state. The Ukrainian people were living through a tragedy, but at the same time they couldn't help seeing that the Hitlerites were growing weaker day by day.

The people were stiffening their resistance to the enemy. New hundreds and thousands of men and women went off to the woods to escape mobilization, transportation into Hitlerite slavery, slave labour on German estates.

Not everyone who came to the woods joined the partisans, however. Some groups had simply run away from the invaders Lacking the strength and the resolution to attack enemy supply trains, they turned to the villages for food, and the peasants found themselves with a fairly large number of dependents. The trouble was that some of these groups were led by men who weren't politically staunch. Sometimes they stole chickens, geese and even calves from the peasants, thereby unconsciously doing the partisan movement great harm.

The R.C. discussed the problem of these groups. It was a dual situation. The very growth of the forest population testified to increasing resistance to the invaders. But people who simply hid in the forest weren't yet partisans. We decided to draw them into the regional detachment and conduct political education among them.

On July 28 the uniting of the partisan detachments was officially completed in the Reimentarovka Forest

Already back at the end of 1941 life had pointed to the need for uniting the groups of Chernigov detachments. First they became platoons and later companies in one big detachment named after Stalin In March 1942 we operated in the Zlynka woods in conjunction with the Oryol partisans under Markov, Vorozheyev and Levchenko. We set up a partisan garrison at that time to coordinate our defensive and offensive operations Vorozheyev and his detachment left us But from that time on Markow and Levchenko accompanied us everywhere. Then another fairly large detachment, commanded by Tarasenko, joined us In addition, as I have already said, small groups of forest dwellers joined us, but it was too early to call them partisan detachments.

Why didn't we just make them companies or platoons of a single detachment? This, after all, would appear to be the simplest and most natural solution, the more so since some of the independent detachments were smaller than a company and some even smaller than a platoon

It wasn't advisable, however. The point is that many of the detachments had been formed outside of Chernigov Region. Each had its glorious history. Each had ties with the district of its origin and often received replacements from there. Kolkhoz peasants who went off to the woods searched for their "own" detachment. This alone was reason enough for us to have all the detachments joining up with us keep their old names.

A second and no less important reason was that the words *"united forces"* showed the small detachments and groups which were operating separately in the nearby forests that they too might *unite* with us. This name contained a formulation of our constitution, as it were.

I was appointed commander of the united forces, Druzhinin commissar and Rvanov chief of staff. Popudrenko became commander of the Stalin Regional Detachment, of which Yaremenko remained the commissar. The united forces comprised the Stalin Regional, the Voroshilov, the Kirov and the Shchors detachments. The following services were set up in the united forces' demolition, reconnaissance, mortar battery, quartermaster department, special department, communication department, propaganda section and cavalry group.

On the establishment of the united forces a ceremony was held at which all the detachments took the partisan oath.

By this time some of our men and officers had been cited by the Government: on May 18, 1942, forty-six of our partisans were decorated with orders or medals; the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred on me.

At the end of July we learned that Hitler had ordered the partisans to be wiped out by August 15 and had specially assigned sixteen divisions with tank, air and artillery support for this purpose.

New fascist units indeed soon began arriving in the Ukraine. Now there were not only Germans and Hungarians among them but also Finns and Italians.

Naturally, Hitler's order wasn't carried out. But the enemy now began to hunt us with large forces. Clashes became more frequent and more violent. Besides, the newly-arrived troops set about burning down villages and plundering the population with special vigour, which immediately aggravated the devastation and famine. Hence our food situation grew worse too.

Beginning with the latter part of July the enemy gave us no respite. We were almost constantly on the move, and now and then we landed in a bad fix. In the second half of August we had a particularly hard time of it. We

lost a good number of our horses in the swamps, and many of them we were compelled to eat Lack of batteries deprived us of contact with Moscow and the front for some time. Yet we didn't slacken our blows at the enemy

On orders of the command, an operations journal was started in each detachment of our united forces "Chroniclers" were appointed by the detachment commanders to serve for a period of a month, but there turned out to be some who liked the job so much that they became full-time historians, so to speak, of the struggle we were waging. Naturally, they weren't able to do their writing at any regular hours or days but only when the situation permitted. In choice of facts they had freedom. All the command required of them was absolute veracity.

At the halts our "chroniclers" would interview men and jot down notes; then at the big stops they would write them up. We managed to preserve the journals of almost all the detachments Establishing who is the author of one or another excerpt, however, is now absolutely impossible.

The journal of the regional detachment describes the period from the end of July to November 1942 in sufficient detail. I shall cite it, beginning with the noteworthy day of July 28 when the united forces were set up and the oath was taken

OPERATIONS JOURNAL

OF THE STALIN UNITED REGIONAL PARTISAN FORCES UNDER HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION A. F. FYODOROV

"*July 28* After the orders were read out and the oath was taken there was a home talent program It was got up by partisans Khmury, Konovalov and Isenko, formerly of the Shevchenko Regional Theatre in Chernigov

[illegible] that evening and [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] that a large [illegible]
[illegible]

out to be there. It had to fight its way back It manoeuvred all night long and reached the woods toward morning.

"Men dropped to the ground from exhaustion and fell asleep. No one had eaten anything for twenty-four hours

"All of a sudden we heard a German command yelped out. The enemy had come right up close to us, but before he had time to open fire the partisan guns went into action. The Germans fired haphazardly. Finally they fled, leaving behind their loud-mouthed officer with a bullet hole in his head.

"The order came to set up a defence ring We could hear the rumble of trucks around us all the tim as the enemy prepared to attack the camp from the direction of Zhukli. Mounted scouts came into sight They took a look through their binoculars and returned to the village.

"At around eleven o'clock a German column came into sight.

"The men camouflaged themselves well Vaska Pugnose (everyone called him that—only headquarters knew his real name) of the Kirov detachment froze to the grips of the heavy machine gun Avksentyev had captured from the Magyars some time back

"The column came closer and closer We let loose a hurricane of fire. The Germans fell, ran, crawled, searched for cover. The men went into attack and drove the Fritzes to the village of Zhukli

"On the way back we picked up enemy equipment and peeled the uniforms off the dead Fritzes.

"We picked up two company mortars, three light machine guns and about two thousand rounds of ammunition We counted more than sixty dead Fritzes There were no losses on our side.

"A gun began shelling us from Zhukli The shells fell not far from the camp. Nobody paid any special attention

Army would be coming soon. They were happily surprised to see so many of us.

"Balitsky was the officer of the day When the column had passed out of Solovyovka he returned to make sure there were no stragglers in the village He ran into an old woman and said to her:

"'Auntie, were there any partisans here?'

"'There were'

"'How many?'

"'A million'

"'Say, auntie, do you know how to count to a thousand?'

"'What are you pestering me for? Maybe it wasn't a million, but the earth shook anyway.'

"That day in the woods we discovered holes in the ground in which bullets lay hidden. Soon their owners, a group of paratroopers who had recently come down, joined us.

"At nightfall we moved on and we pitched camp between Sofievka and Velikiye Lyady

"Through August 14 there was fighting on various sectors of our defence positions. Our supply of ammunition dwindled The enemy occupied all the surrounding villages.

"Our provisions ran out We ate horse meat Two hundred grams per person.

"Morning of August 15. Before we had time to finish off the next horse the Germans began artillery preparation from three sides at once. They pounded us from mortars and guns. Then soldiers with bloodhounds appeared.

"We gave it hot to the Fritzes and their hounds and didn't let them get to the camp.

"The commander of the united forces, Hero of the Soviet Union Fyodorov, issued an order to abandon the

to them because dinner was just ready and everyone was busy appeasing his hunger.

"At nightfall we broke camp. The artillery intensified its shelling of the place where we had spent the day. The boys showed the Fritzes what part of their anatomy to kiss.

"There were some cry-babies and they got scared We laughed at them and didn't answer their many fear-inspired questions. Most of the cry-babies were newcomers.

"The old-timers were sure the command would get us out of the encirclement. There'd been worse times.

"*July 31.* We took up positions between Kister and Zhukli. The day passed quietly.

"An order was issued to put aside carts for the wounded, abandon the rest of the carts, and set out at nightfall, without making a sound.

"We passed between Bogdalayevka and Chentsy and halted at the old camp near the village of Budushcheye.

"At noon we heard shots and the roar of motors from the direction of Radomka.

"The enemy was pursuing us.

"*Night of August 1.* Followed our old route to the Bleshnyansk woods and stopped for the day. Around twelve o'clock we heard artillery fire. The Fritzes were shelling the Topolev woods thinking we were there.

"'Keep it up. You've got enough ammunition,' the boys joked.

"*August 3.* We crossed the Snov River and came out into the Solovyovka Forest, in Oryol Region, where we called a halt. We were following an old and familiar route.

"At twenty hours we set out through Solovyovka. The inhabitants gave us partisans a hearty welcome. The peasants treated us to bread and tobacco and asked if the Red

Army would be coming soon. They were happily surprised to see so many of us.

"Balitsky was the officer of the day. When the column had passed out of Solovyovka he returned to make sure there were no stragglers in the village. He ran into an old woman and said to her:

" 'Auntie, were there any partisans here?'

" 'There were.'

" 'How many?'

" 'A million.'

" 'Say, auntie, do you know how to count to a thousand?'

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"We gave it hot to the Fritzes and their hounds and didn't let them get to the camp.

"The commander of the united forces, Hero of the Soviet Union Fyodorov, issued an order to abandon the

carts, put everything into packs, and make stretchers for the wounded. The order was quickly carried out.

"When it was all dark we set out. We crossed the Voronova Guta-Sofievka road and made our way through a swamp.

"We carried the stretchers with the wounded on our shoulders The wounded groaned and begged us not to jolt them

"We crossed a road and halted in the woods. We all immediately lay down to rest after posting pickets and patrols. The cooks began boiling horse meat. They had to go to a ditch two kilometres away for water.

"After resting and eating some meat, many went to the ditch to wash up and do a laundry.

"Quartermaster Kapranov was happy. 'I certainly did feed the boys today—gave them five hundred grams of horse meat each!' he said.

"Meanwhile Goebbels' pals were running around in our abandoned camp and photographing the carts we had left behind so they could publish their current fraud in their newspapers: 'The partisans are wiped out to the last man. This is all that remains of them.'

"*August 18.* Scouts got the lay of the land along our further route. We halted for two days and then struck north through a thick swampy forest. We crossed the railway line at the village of Krasny Ugolok.

"While we were crossing an eastbound train passed but the situation was such we couldn't even fire at it.

"We halted in the village of Medvezhye to dig potatoes. We dug them out with our bare hands and filled our pouches, sacks and pockets. We hadn't had potatoes for a long time.

"*August 21.* The scouts spent a couple of days looking for a place to ford the Iput River. We finally had to turn to an old forester. We watched his every step because he had a son serving in the police force.

"On orders of the command the united forces push on farther. A group headed by Balitsky is being left here to divert attention and to carry out demolition work.

"*August 23.* We said goodbye to Balitsky's group By 19.00 we were ready to set out. At 19 30—forward march.

"The column advanced in complete silence; only the crackle of dry twigs underfoot was to be heard every once in a while. We marched through swampy terrain. It was hard going; each partisan carried his own gear, and ammunition and weapons. After eight kilometres we made a halt near the forester's lodge. Here the crossing of the Iput began.

"The horses, exhausted from their heavy loads and the march, gave out and floundered in the swamp Some of them were unable to get out at all The packs were taken off these horses and distributed among the men.

"Around midnight we reached the river. The men stripped to the skin. The river was more than a metre and a half deep, and they had to carry everything above their heads.

"We got safely across the river and came out on Byelorussian soil.

"Morning came. The men gazed hopefully at a village, where a chunk of bread or a boiled potato might be obtained. But no one had the right to leave the ranks without permission.

"Soon we reached our stopping place for the day. The detachment began to pitch camp After that we dug wells and peeled potatoes. Some lay down to rest.

"A detail sent to the village surrounded the *polizei* dormitory and opened fire at it. The *polizei* were taken unawares. The partisans' accurate fire wiped them out mercilessly.

"Political instructor Leonenko was killed in this skirmish Misha Yegorov was wounded and machine gunner Yesentimirov was missing.

"The men took rich booty: butter, bread and honey. We had an abundant and tasty breakfast.

"On the way we came across a lot of ashberries. We picked them hungrily and ate them.

"*August 25.* We crossed the Besed River. The detachment didn't call a halt in order to get away from the enemy, who was bringing up forces. The boys could hardly move their feet. Every 200-300 metres they dropped to the ground from exhaustion.

"The command premitted a four-hour halt to make dinner.

"We had chopped firewood and dug wells when suddenly the order came. 'Stop cooking dinner; the halt will be only two hours.'

"Not knowing what was up, the men began swearing. But orders are orders. There was nothing for it but to lie down on the wet ground. Just the same we slept like the dead.

"An hour and a half later the order rang out: 'Get ready to move.'

"That was the third day we'd been marching and fighting day and night without hardly any food or sleep.

"Fyodorov, Popudrenko, Druzhinin, Yaremenko and Rvanov were marching along with us. They had given their horses to men who couldn't walk.

"Around ten kilometres from the Chechersk woods a village came into sight. The command decided to put through a foraging operation.

"A detail leaded by Kudinov, political instructor of Company Three, was assigned this job Despite their extreme weariness the men went into action with joy. After the very first shots the *polizei* fled. The men found

out from peasants where the house of the *polizei* and the house of the starosta were.

"In the deputy starosta's house the scouts discovered a barrel of honey. In the storeroom they found two more barrels. Then another five They brought the honey to the camp, where it was distributed among the units.

"*August 26.* We entered the Chechersk woods and pitched camp between the villages of Yamitsk and Vysokaya Griva. Untended cows were wandering about in the woods. Quartermaster Kapranov greatly rejoiced at this.

"The owners of the cows proved to be Svetilovichi and Chechersk partisans whose commander had crossed the front line after a lost battle. Left without leadership, the detachment had broken up into small groups which were hiding from the Germans.

"The commander of the united forces managed to round up these groups and form a Svetilovichi and a Chechersk detachment. They joined our forces.

"*September 3.* Crossed the Pokot River.

"We blew up several German trucks on the Chechersk-Sidorovichi road.

"*September 11.* Had a skirmish with the enemy. We took cover at the edge of the woods south of the village of Sidorovichi. Soon a column of Hitlerites came out of the village. We let them come within fifty metres and then opened up machine-gun, tommy-gun and rifle fire They took to flight. We mowed them down; the wounded screamed.

"Nurse Valya Protsenko kept a close watch on the Fritzes crawling across the field and shouted 'There, there's one, shoot him!' Valya was wounded in the shoulder. A bullet rent machine gunner Sasha Shirokov's ear.

"On the road, near the bridge, we planted a mine in

such a way that a peasant cart could get past safely but a truck would be sure to be blown up. Machine gunners lay down in ambush. A truck appeared. Its left rear wheel ran over the mine.

"There was a deafening explosion and the truck, carrying ammunition, flew into the air.

"*September 12.* Our column moved northward in pitch darkness and a pouring rain. We halted several times along the way to wait for the laggers. Not to get lost we had to hold on to the horses' tails.

"The rain kept up in the morning. We halted near the village of Guta Osipovskaya to cook dinner. A cloud of smoke rose over the forest. The Fritzes noticed it. Shells began flying into the camp. One of the men from the supply unit ran over to the demolition squad and hid from the shells behind some boxes of TNT. That made everybody laugh.

"In the evening the column set out again. We marched through the settlement of Krinichny, south of Mikhailovka. German horses were grazing out in the meadow there, and the boys took advantage of the opportunity to exchange their worn-out ones.

"We skirted Larnevsk on the south, turned northeast, skirted the village of Medvedi on the south and captured flour from two windmills there, as well as the *polizei* on duty.

"*September 15.* Stopped in the woods southeast of the village of Poporotnya. There was no water and we had to dig deep wells and wait until water flowed in. Fighting man Lopachev related: 'I was down in the well, and on top there was a pail almost full. I'll put in one more dipperful, I thought, and then I'll take it to the kitchen. I dipped it out, straightened up and saw a skinny nag staring at me. Beside her was an empty pail....'

"*September 16.* The woods ended. On a clear moonlit night we came out on a field and went on to the Besed

River between Khotimok and Kiselevka. The grass was white with early morning frost. We started crossing The men quickly stripped and entered the water without making a sound. All that could be heard was the water splashing, and some of the fellow's teeth chattering

"*September 19.* Rested two days and began preparing for a big operation. Everybody was eager for action, those who for some reason or other weren't allowed to take part were very disappointed.

"*September 23.* In the evening a group of about 300 partisans under Popudrenko left camp with the objective of routing the garrison in the district centre of Gordeyevka

"Besides, they had orders to destroy the distillery in the settlement of Tvorishino.

"A Voroshilov detachment company headed by Markov set out for the distillery.

"The main blow at Gordeyevka was dealt by Company One and Company Two of the Stalin detachment Several groups from the Shchors detachment lay in ambush by the road.

"*September 24.* By 4:00 the units were at the jump-off line. Telegraph poles were toppled to the ground and communications cut.

"There were still two hours before the beginning of the operation. Almost all the men lay down in a roadside ditch to rest and to get some shelter from the cold autumn wind.

"The officers gathered around Popudrenko, who gave them last-minute instructions.

"Soon they got their units up. Shivering with the cold, the men took their places.

"At 6 00 our battalion mortar opened up. This was the signal for the attack. The men broke into the village and scattered down the streets. A window in one of the houses crashed and a policeman jumped out of it. He ran

a little way and then hung on a fence like a dress put out to dry.

"The partisans ran up to the house of the chief of police. He dashed into the next apartment and jumped out of the window.

"Vasya Kozlov shouted: 'Stop, don't shoot, boys!' and ran after him for all he was worth.

"The traitor was caught and executed on the spot.

"Company One came up to the commandant's office. The Fritzes, hiding behind a brick garage, started throwing grenades over it.

"Mazepin cleverly picked off one of the Germans who had been throwing grenades and shouted: 'Boys, the Fritzes are beating it! Follow me, quick!'

"They took the commandant's office.

"The remaining fascists fled to the mill, where they too met their death.

"In the main the battle was over. In the back gardens and at the edge of the village partisans were still smoking out Fritzes and their henchmen. A beer-bellied burgomaster was caught too.

"We freed the people who had been arrested. Among them was a schoolteacher whom the Hitlerites had arrested for playing Soviet songs on a phonograph to schoolteachers whom he had called together for a district conference at their orders.

"Almost all the inhabitants came out into the streets without waiting for the battle to end. The peasants eagerly asked us about the front, about the Soviet Union and the Red Army and willingly helped us ferret out Nazis. One resident stuck a pitchfork into a Hitlerite examining judge.

"They showed us an enemy leaflet promising 50 hectares of good land and 50,000 in cash for Fyodorov, dead or alive. Besides that they promised salt, matches and a choice of an unlimited quantity of rum or vodka. For

Popudrenko—30,000 in cash. For medium officers—10,000 apiece. For a rank-and-file partisan the price was 5,000 plus salt, matches and kerosene.

"'Who wants to make some money?' Popudrenko asked the people gathered around. They burst out laughing.

"We opened the warehouses and distributed salt, matches and other items among the population.

"*October 3.* Rested after the operation and turned back. The enemy fired at our column from ambush Companies One and Two of the Stalin detachment immediately deployed.

"Avksentyev's machine guns opened fire Seryozha Mazepin peppered the enemy accurately with his mortar. The enemy fled, leaving behind forty dead and four trucks on fire.

"Our losses were two killed and three wounded

"After quickly crossing the bridge and then the railway our column bypassed the hamlet of Soko'ovsky and halted at the camp of local partisans commanded by Shemyakin.

"We remained there about ten days Everybody rested up. In the evening the partisans danced to an accordion and sang songs. The propaganda department put out a new issue of our talking newspaper.

"Everyone especially enjoyed the couplets about a man from the supply department, Zyama Davidovich, who had shown fear during the operation but had gone around collecting eggs and chasing chickens when the enemy was smashed.

"For a long time after the men chanted.

"'*Zyama chick-chick, Zyama chick-chick.*'

"Companies One and Two of the Stalin detachment wiped out an Italian garrison in the village of Botayevo

"They captured a lot of wine, cookies, candy and the like from the Italians.

"A neat and foppish Italian came riding into our camp. From his saddle hung a shiny nickel-plated coffee pot. He had come to join us in fighting against the Hitlerites but that coffee pot prevented us from taking him seriously.

"Here too a group of war prisoners headed by Kostya Lysenko joined us; they came with thirteen rifles and three light machine guns.

"Soon we left that hospitable forest and set out via Osinka, Vyukovo, Sadovaya and Kotolino, where we again crossed the Iput.

"October 27. Balitsky's group caught up with us. We hadn't seen our tip-top demolition men for more than two months, and of late hadn't even had any news of them. We gave them a grand welcome. The officers kissed each man in turn and presented each of them with some Italian wine: those who asked for it got alcohol too.

"The intrepid commander of the demolition men read out his report to the command of the united forces in the presence of all the men:

" 'Between August 23 and October 25 the demolition group which you assigned to the Bakhmach-Bryansk and Gomel-Chernigov lines accomplished the following: 1) Killed 1,487 German invaders, including 327 officers and one general. 2) Wounded 582 enemy soldiers. 3) Destroyed 9 enemy trains, 10 locomotives and 125 railway cars. 4) Held up traffic on these lines for a total of 191 hours. 5) Blew up 5 trucks and 1 passenger car on the highways. 6) Executed 10 starostas and policemen.'

"November 3. The forest we entered is called the 'Kletnya Woodlands' by the local people.

"It is fairly big and is solid, merging on the north with the Mukhin woods and on the east with the Bryansk woods.

"As soon as we arrived we began building dugout and auxiliary structures.

"Besides our united forces there were many othe detachments based in this forest, forming a huge partisa camp.

"On all sides roads and paths led to the neighbourin detachments: Shemyakin's, Shestakov's, Apanasenko's Zebnitsky's, Yeremin's, Gorbachev's, Antonenko's, th Kletnya district detachment, the Mglin district detach ment and others.

"We saw with our own eyes the sweep the partisa movement in the enemy rear had taken Thousands o indomitable souls had gathered here to take vengeanc on the hated enemy for their defiled land, for the bloo of their people

"An area of several hundred square kilometres wa a veritable partisan region In dozens of villages and se tlements people lived the life of free Soviet citizens, im mune to fascist oppression.

"The population helped the partisans out with food warm clothing and means of transportation

"A watermill in the village of Kotalin with a dail capacity of almost five tons catered to all the partisa detachments.

"In the village of Nikolayevka a wool-carding plan had been set up. The inhabitants of the villages in th locality gladly gave the partisans grain, potatoes an hay, and milk for the wounded. Partisan hospitals wer quartered in village houses.

"In their turn the partisans did garrison duty in al the villages, safeguarding the labour and the tranquillit of peaceful Soviet citizens.

"The village lads helped the partisans do garriso duty. The girls knitted mittens and made camouflag cloaks.

"The partisans delivered newspapers to the population, regularly supplied them with Soviet Information Bureau bulletins, and when contact with Moscow was established began demonstrating films and arranging lectures by qualified speakers who flew in from the Soviet rear.

"An aerodrome was laid out on a field near the village of Nikolayevka. The 2nd Platoon of Company One was put on guard there. At an agreed signal bonfires were lit at the aerodrome every night.

"November 10. All the preparations had been made to receive the first plane to land. At eleven in the evening came the drone of an approaching plane. The gigantic silhouette of an aircraft was outlined against the dark sky. After circling several times in greeting the huge craft landed on our aerodrome. A loud 'Hurrah' rang out.

"The partisans rejoiced. The flyers eagerly told them about the Mainland, about Moscow, about the factories and kolkhozes, and treated them to Moscow cigarettes.

"At the height of the conversation the commander of the united forces, Hero of the Soviet Union Fyodorov, rode up.

"He took in the gathering with a happy glance.

" 'Well,' he said, 'goodbye and good luck,' and he quickly climbed up the steps into the plane.

"The engines roared, and the plane's bright lights flashed on. The plane ran down the level white length of the field, took off easily and after circling several times in farewell headed east."

* * *

The gunner-radioman lifted in the ladder and slammed the door. I rushed to the window but only had time to catch a glimpse of a bonfire. The engines started

roaring and the plane gave a jerk and began bumping over the snow mounds. Our aerodrome, after all, was very far from perfect A few seconds later we were off the ground.

We had taken off from Little, or partisan, Land, and if the flyers were to be believed we should be in Moscow in three hours.

I found it very hard to believe this even now when the plane was picking up speed and the icy chill of the heights was penetrating to my skin.

My feelings at the time were much more complex than that, though. Wild joy, exultation and gay boyish enthusiasm were somehow illogically mingled with thoughtfulness and even fear.

Yes, I was afraid—not of an accident or of death, but that I might not reach Moscow Closing my eyes, I saw Red Square, the Bolshoi Theatre, Gorky Street.. I saw Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov rise from his desk I saw the door open and Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin come in.

To tell the truth, I had greatly envied Kovpak, Saburov and all the other partisan commanders who went to Moscow in August. I knew that I too had been among those invited to attend a conference of partisan commanders at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) But there was no radio communication with us at the time, as the reader knows The Central Committee and partisan headquarters sent two groups behind the enemy lines one after the other especially to locate our detachment. One of these groups landed in the enemy's positions and went heroically to its death the other, after wandering about in the woods for a long time finally managed to find us at the end of October These comrades brought us a new portable radio transmitter and it was they who told us about the August conference in the Kremlin with Comrade Stalin. But even i

the messengers had arrived in time I still wouldn't have been able to fly off to Moscow: the enemy was pressing us so hard at the time that we couldn't have taken the chance of letting a plane land.

Of course I, like all of my comrades, had been greatly excited by the news that a conference of partisan commanders had been held with Comrade Stalin. The messengers naturally coudn't give us any details of this conference. But we saw that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine were worried by the break in radio communications with us and the absence of regular information about our situation and our operations. We also saw that the Party and Comrades Stalin and Khrushchov personally were awaiting a detailed report from us.

We all realized that in a week or two, or in a month, as soon as there was an opportunity, a plane would come to us from the Soviet rear, take on the heavily wounded and perhaps bring me an order to fly to Moscow to deliver a report.

Indeed, no more than two weeks had passed, and I was already on the way to Moscow.

In the heavy map case resting in my lap I was carrying a report to the Central Committee of the Party on the combat and political activities of our underground R.C. During the previous two weeks the R.C. had met frequently, despite difficult marches and constant clashes with the punitive forces that were pressing us hard. Now *in a farmhouse on the outskirts of a village*, at night, now around a fire out in a field, we had discussed each page of the report at length. And once, when we had taken shelter from the autumn rain in an abandoned Italian van, we had gone off into daydreams.... Yes, daydreams, although we were drawing up a report. We already knew

by that time that Kovpak and Saburov had received some sort of new assignment from Comrade Stalin. We realized that a report is not only a summing-up of the past but a glance into the future as well Upon how the Party, how Comrade Stalin, evaluated our combat activities and our work among the population would depend what we could be entrusted with in future

I opened the map case and leafed through the report In its terse and laconic lines were embodied all our thoughts and feelings, our hopes and our dreams . I again saw Moscow in my mind's eye, and again fear gripped me at the thought that something might happen to the plane

Meanwhile, however, all was going well we were flying through inky darkness inside the cabin a tiny bulb burned dimly; I could hear the muffled voices of my companions.

I kept glancing at the dial of my watch but I couldn't make out how much time had passed No matter how hard I tried to remember the time, when I brought the watch to my eyes I saw I had forgotten again

The co-pilot opened the door of his cabin and announced that we were flying over the frontline I went in to the pilots, and all of a sudden I saw the front We were flying at an altitude of four thousand metres It was a clear night but there were no stars - or perhaps I didn't notice them for the many bright lights flashing above the earth. On all sides green, red, violet and yellow rockets were streaking through the darkness Long sharp beams crept along the ground in various directions I didn't immediately grasp that these were headlights Never in my life had I seen such a blinding display of fireworks....

The co pilot shouted something in my ear, and at the same instant a whole sheaf of rays rose in the air The silvery wing of our plane glistened and red globes

began bursting around us, quite close. I gazed at them in fascination for quite some time before I realized they were anti-aircraft shells—the very thing we had to fear most!

The plane was evidently climbing. It became unbearably cold. I returned to the big cabin and knelt beside a window. All the rest, except the severely wounded, also had their faces glued to the panes. Soon the bursts became fewer. Now breathing was easier: the plane was losing altitude fast. My heart stopped hammering, but I suddenly felt all my muscles aching.

Another forty minutes passed. The co-pilot again opened the door of the cabin and said we were approaching Moscow.

The aerodrome was lit up very dimly. Strange faces surrounded us. I kissed someone with whiskers, then everybody moved aside and a woman in uniform stretched out her hand: she evidently didn't intend to kiss me. Her handshake was abrupt and firm. She introduced herself in a loud voice:

"Lieutenant Colonel Grizodubova"

We went with her down a park lane lightly powdered with snow. A door was opened, and I saw a bright light, dozens of tables covered with white tablecloths, and a crowd of men in flying suits and fur jackets ... Everybody shook hands with us. We ate, drank toasts, answered a multitude of questions, laughed heartily.

This was the airmen's messroom at an aerodrome outside Moscow. Here, it appeared, men returning from distant missions could get a hot meal at any hour of the day or night.

A little after six in the morning Lieutenant Colonel Grizodubova told us that cots had been made ready for us and we could take a rest. I asked her how our wounded had been fixed up and said I would like to visit them.

She replied that all of them were now asleep in the aerodrome hospital.

In my little room I undressed and lay down between two amazingly white sheets, though I knew very well I wouldn't be able to fall asleep As I stretched out and breathed in the fresh smell of clean linen I felt extraordinarily light. And then I burst into laughter: on the chair beside me hung very strange gear: an enormous hat with a ribbon across it, a Magyarka, or jacket of thick Hungarian lambskin, and a leather coat Also a tommy gun, four spare drums, a Mauser, an automatic .

A minute before all this had been on me Probably no less than fifteen kilos! That was why I felt so light now

Comrade Grizodubova had said rooms were reserved for us at the Moskva Hotel and that cars would call for us

We waited and waited, and then Volodin, who was an old Moscovite and knew his way around there better than any of us others, suggested that we take the suburban electric train into town.

The idea appealed to us. We quickly dressed, said goodbye to our hospitable aerodrome hosts and set out for the station

* * *

At first the car wasn't crowded Only a few women and some school children got on at the same time we did Then an old factory worker sat down beside me

As the car filled up we noticed that the passengers were staring at us. The old man was the first to speak to me.

"Say, son, where do you come from?"

"What do you mean where from, dad?"

"Can't make you out—from the guns you're carrying you look as if you're going into battle But from your clothes you don't look like soldiers . "

A grimy-faced trade school boy sitting opposite said in a clear voice:

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"They're partisans!"

"How did you guess?" Yaremenko asked.

"The German tommy guns, the moustaches and the ribbons. Anyone who knows anything can see that. I bet you shaved off your beards, huh?"

That set conversation going. A minute later we were the centre of attention. The passengers showered us with questions.

"Is there a Morozov among you by chance?" an elderly woman called out over the heads of the people in front of her. "Victor Nikolayevich Morozov? They broadcast over the radio that he's serving in a partisan detachment but they didn't say where."

The Moscovites displayed an interest in absolutely everything pertaining to partisan life. Every time one of our boys spoke, the people in the car fell silent, as if they were at a lecture. We were stirred and touched by this attention. We observed that the Moscovites had an exaggerated conception of the danger the partisans come up against. When we tried to belittle it, our audience protested:

"Come, you're being modest. We know...."

I told the trade school boy that we had more than twenty youngsters his age in our detachment. At first he got all excited.

"Can I join up with you, really? How I'd like to! I've got two brothers at the front, and I'd be helping them!"

The people around laughed. The boy flushed in embarrassment.

"No, I understand," he said, looking out of the window, "altogether different people are needed."

"That's right," the old man confirmed. "You have to be a hero. The partisans, my young man, are men of a special mould. You and I, we haven't eaten enough spinach."

This conception of the partisans as some kind of legendary giants—essentially a very harmful conception—had been drummed into people by newspaper feature writers. Later, after reading newspapers and magazines in Moscow, I saw that the stories about partisan deeds were often inventions. The heroes in these stories were so boundlessly brave and so extraordinary that it was hard to belive they were real human beings. And it is no wonder that the average reader thought "how can I compete with such daredevils?"

I often regretted that we didn't have a writer in our ranks, who might have truthfully told how *the most ordinary* of Soviet men and women were battling in the forests, how heroism was becoming an everyday necessity for them.

We in turn were also surprised by everything we saw. No doubt the way I scrutinized a tall thin woman in glasses seemed not at all proper. On her shoulder, like a rifle, she held a spade wrapped in a cardboard folder.

Noticing my glance, she smiled and said:

"Why do you stare at me so?"

"Frankly speaking, it's not at you but at the spade."

"Really? Why, yes, that's true, it must seem funny if you're not used to it. But just take a look around you. . . ."

I followed her advice, and only then did I notice that almost all the passengers carried spades wrapped in cloths or paper. And almost all of them had heavy sacks or baskets.

"Potatoes—the staff of life," a young working woman explained gravely. "We're heroes of the spade, comrade partisans. . . . And why not?" she went on, warming up to her subject. "I guess everybody here dug trenches all around Moscow with these same spades, and how much sand we carried up into the attics!"

"Now you're letting your tongue run away with you," the old man put in, interrupting her "Moscow doesn't put any stock in tales of woe Men are risking their lives out there, and you talk about spades "

We stood up for her What we had heard in the car evoked our admiration, and a thirst for vengeance, and respect for the courage of the ordinary Soviet working people

When we had been riding for some time I felt like taking a smoke. I rolled myself a cigarette and got up to go out on the platform

"That's all right, dad," said the conductress. "Smoke in here, you're a guest If it comes to that I'll explain to the inspector."

I looked at her with interest She couldn't have been a day under thirty.

"I don't think I'm old enough to be your dad," I said.

"How old are you?"

"Forty."

"Well, well! It's hard to believe it. And you probably wouldn't believe I'm twenty-two. So figure it out yourself "

We both laughed Everyone around broke into a smile. Why? You'd think we ought to feel blue....

"That's what we are like, we Russians," the old man remarked thoughtfully

When we came out on Komsomolskaya Ploshchad the general attention we attracted made us throw out our chests. We formed ranks without even being aware of it and marched off in step. We marched into the Metro station that way too.

Ten minutes later we were exchanging kisses with Strokach, Korniets, Spivak, Starchenko and Grechukha. There were many top men of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and the Ukrainian

government living in the Moskva Hotel at the time Leonid Romanovich Korniets arranged a gala breakfast.

As I listened to the speeches and toasts, I could hear the honk of trolleybus and automobile horns out in the street....

"Look here, comrades!" Balabai suddenly cried, interrupting everybody. "Why, this is Moscow, dammit all! We're in Moscow! There's the Kremlin over there, and Comrade Stalin's there! So let's drink to Moscow and to Stalin's health!"

After this toast it became so noisy that of course I could no longer hear either the streetcars or the autos.

To my regret, Comrade Stalin wasn't in Moscow at the time

"Wait a day or two," I was told, "Joseph Vissarionovich will return "

But Comrade Stalin was delayed by battlefront affairs and I didn't get to see him.

I had to content myself with what Comrades Grechukha, Korniets and Strokach related. They had been at the Kremlin reception together with Kovpak and had heard Joseph Vissarionovich's message to the partisans What Grechukha and Strokach related prepared me for my meetings with Comrades Kalinin, Voroshilov and Malenkov. Many of the questions I had planned to ask were already answered.

Knowing how busy the members of the State Committee of Defence were, I thought my meetings with them would be brief and strictly official

Functioning in Moscow at that time was the Ukrainian Partisan Headquarters, the actual chief of which was Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov Notwithstanding the great deal of work he conducted as a member of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, and later of the

Voronezh and First Ukrainian fronts, Comrade Khrushchov personally directed the partisan movement in the Ukraine. The chief of staff of the partisan movement was Comrade Strokach. Also functioning in Moscow was the Central Headquarters, the chief of which was Comrade Ponomarenko, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Byelorussia. In charge of the headquarters was Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov.

During my meetings in Moscow with officials of the Central Committee of the Party and of the partisan headquarters I came to see how large the partisan forces were, what a gigantic scope the people's resistance movement in the enemy rear had acquired. What was perhaps even more important, I came to see and to feel that the partisan movement occupied a significant place in the total armed forces of the country, and that it was being planned and directed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and by Comrade Stalin personally.

In the Central and Ukrainian headquarters I made the acquaintance of highly-qualified officers who were maintaining regular operative contact with the remotest partisan districts. After talking with Strokach and Ponomarenko I learned that when we lost contact with Moscow it had been a misfortune not only for us: the Central Committee of the Party had searched for us and headquarters had sent alarm signals into the ether twenty-four hours a day.

I learned that on an assignment given by Comrade Stalin numerous specialists were working day in and day out on new types of partisan weapons, were designing mines and silencers for firearms. If we hadn't then got lost we would have received some of the new inventions by this time.

I learned that thousands of volunteers in all parts of the country were sending in applications to the Central

Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine requesting, and some even demanding, to be sent to the partisans. These weren't only Ukrainians and Byelorussians anxious to take a direct part in the struggle for the liberation of their native soil Applications were being filed by men and women of the most diverse nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union

All these applications were forwarded to the partisan headquarters. Here the applications were carefully studied, and very many applicants were summoned to Moscow

I learned that schools training the volunteers in the art of partisan warfare already existed These schools trained radio operators, demolition men and officers and gave advanced training to flyers working on partisan air lines.

I learned, finally, that there was a special partisan hospital in Moscow Hundreds of our comrades-in-arms had already been treated in this hospital and had flown back to their detachments.

I will say it frankly—in Moscow my self-respect as a partisan rose greatly, especially after I became acquainted with some of the over-all results of the partisan struggle These figures took my breath away. It goes without saying they could not be published at the time. But I very much wanted to hurry back and tell the men in the detachments what the partisan movement really was.

Yes—to tell the partisans what the partisan movement was. Actually they knew very little about it. only what they saw and were doing themselves Yet in Moscow every person I met asked me one and the same question when he learned that I came "from out there": "What is the partisan movement? Tell us in detail ."

On November 12, 1942, I was received by Comrade Voroshilov. After Ponomarenko had introduced me, Kliment Yefremovich shook my hand and said:

"Be seated. Deliver your report—as fully as possible."

* * *

I reported for more than two hours. Actually it wasn't a report but an animated and informal conversation. It was Kliment Yefremovich himself who set the informal atmosphere. At the very beginning of the talk he said to the generals and officers who were present:

"I must warn you that Comrade Fyodorov is not a military specialist but an R. C. secretary. On certain specifically military points he is entitled to make mistakes."

I strove not to abuse this right, of course. Kliment Yefremovich asked me a host of questions, and although I had prepared long and earnestly for the report, some of them took me unawares.

When I finished reporting, Kliment Yefremovich rose from the table, looked searchingly into my eyes and said:

"You probably realize that the fate of the war is now being decided at Stalingrad and that . . . in the near future the front will come closer to you. The Red Army's offensive will be sweeping. Have you thought about how partisan tactics should be revised to correspond to broad offensive operations by the Red Army?" Without giving me a chance to reply he went on: "Your aid will be very much needed by the Red Army."

Kliment Yefremovich stepped out from behind the table and led me up to the wall, which was almost completely covered by silk draperies. Drawing them apart to reveal a big ten-kilometre scale map which was marked up with coloured pencils from top to bottom, he took a pointer and drew it around the districts where Gomel,

Chernigov and Oryol regions met. I probably wasn't able to hide my surprise at seeing that the entire course of our movement for the previous half year was indicated on the map by blue arrows. What especially surprised me was the fact that the very latest data, which I had submitted to headquarters only the day before, were already indicated.

Noticing my surprise, Kliment Yefremovich smiled.

"Just about correct? Well, don't you think it's time for you to move from here toward some big railway junction, straddle that junction, become the master of the situation there and not let enemy trains through to the front?"

I didn't know what to answer right off. Comrade Strokach spoke ahead of me.

"May I, Comrade Marshal? The Ukrainian Headquarters considers that Fyodorov's united forces ought to return to Chernigov Region from the Kletnya woods as soon as possible."

"Bakhmach?" Kliment Yefremovich put in animatedly. After a moment's thought he continued.

"The Bakhmach junction will do, but so will the Korosten or the Shepetovka. Incidentally, Comrade Fyodorov, do you know that Kovpak and Saburov have set out on a long-distance raid west? That's not a bad thing, either. Here the proximity of the front will hamper you. Wouldn't it be better to withdraw a bit deeper? There's a smaller concentration of occupation forces there. Have you the forces for a long-distance raid? We will give you some help, naturally. Very well, don't answer at once, think it over. Only bear in mind that it's time to intensify demolition work considerably. That's the main thing now. In his talks with us Comrade Stalin directs our attention to this activity. Your united forces have some experience already, haven't they?"

"Forty-six trains," I said.

"What do you use? Where do you get your explosives?"

"We received TNT. We make the mines ourselves. Lately we've been getting explosives too from German shells and from dud air bombs."

Kliment Yefremovich evinced an interest in our homemade products. I told him how we melted down TNT from shells and how we hunted for dud bombs.

"The Hitlerites, Kliment Yefremovich, are training their flyers in precision bombing and are sending them out to bomb separate hamlets, flour mills and small villages. Many of these bombs don't go off. As soon as our demolition men spot a group of such 'trainees' they immediately gallop off to catch bombs. The villagers even get angry at the boys. 'You devils,' they say, 'you're glad when they bomb us. Of course, it's no great joy, but we need the TNT.'

"You mean to say they bomb just like that, by way of training? Not even as punishment for partisan operations?" Shaking his head, Kliment Yefremovich added: "We must write about such facts, tell the people, the soldiers. But let us get back to our conversation. And so," he continued, "what do you need so as to be able to make a long distance raid? You have already thought the question over and agree that you ought to?"

I really had come to such a decision but had resolved to list our requirements before saying so. I asked for more heavy guns, machine guns and anti-tank rifles, for several field guns, radio stations and mobile printing-plants, and spoke about our everyday needs as well. But it so happened that I forgot to mention explosives.

"I see, Comrade Pronin-Strelkov," Kliment Yefremovich said to the chief of staff, "your commander has not done his work."

It was a regrettable mistake, all the more regrettable since I was [illegible]

tion work. There was nothing for it but to set myself right.

"Discuss with Comrades Ponomarenko and Strokach which sector to choose, and plan your route," Kliment Yefremovich said.

Then he returned to details of partisan life He asked how the men's rest and recreation were taken care of, how the food was, and how the partisan hospitals were functioning. He paid especially great attention to ties with the population.

"Build up partisan reserves and Red Army reserves along your route. You understand what I have in mind? The impression you leave with the people as you pass through and your propaganda and agitation work will prepare thousands of helpers for both you and us That is an important phase of your activity, very important."

In parting Kliment Yefremovich said

"You would probably like to see your family, wouldn't you? Will you visit them?"

I replied that I hadn't tried to as yet and that I didn't even know their exact address, but that if I could find the time I would certainly visit them

"Wouldn't it be better, perhaps, to bring your family here, to you? Really, Comrade Strokach, arrange the matter. I will issue instructions about a plane Is such an arrangement agreeable to you, Comrade Fyodorov? Well, that's fine. . . Get ready for the raid, and don't forget anything . "

With this we parted

Two days later I met my wife and daughters at the Central Aerodrome

Incidentally, they claim they recognized me from the window of the plane, although I had changed frightfully and was wearing an outlandish partisan sheepskin coat

They also said that when they climbed out of the plane and rushed up to me my right cheek worked like a telegraph key.

I still don't know whether to believe them or not.

Some time later Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov arrived in Moscow. He invited me to a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine. At this meeting I delivered a report on the year and a half's activity of the Chernigov underground R.C. and the combat operations of our united partisan forces. It was decided at the meeting to split our forces in two and to send one detachment on a raid deep into the Western Ukraine.

Kherson-Moscow,
June 1947-July 1948