

Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel

Anatoly Kuznetsov

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ISBN-13:

ISBN-10:

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chapter 1

TO READERS

I brought the original manuscript of this book to the Russian literary magazine *Yunost* (Youth) in 1965. They returned it to me immediately — in horror — and advised me not to show it to anyone until I removed the “anti-Soviet” content from the text.

I removed important sections from of the chapters about the Khreshchatyk, the explosion of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, the catastrophe of 1961 and more — and officially introduced a softened version of the book in which some details were obscured, but still could be guessed.

At the time, it seemed to many that a serious liberalization was beginning and Krushchev’s “exposing the cult of Stalin’s personality” was still fresh. The publication of “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich” by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn gave us hope that, finally, true Literature might be possible.

But the softened version of my “Babi Yar” again puzzled the editors. The manuscript was snapped up, everyone read it and enthusiastically responded in private conversation, but officially, they shared murderous criticism. The editors did not dare publish without special permission; in the Soviet language, this is called: “We should consult with higher comrades.”

The manuscript went up the chain — to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where it was read (but without a number of chapters), as I was told, by Suslov (the Second Secretary of the Central Committee), and he generally allowed publication. The editors’ clever argument that sealed the deal with the “upline comrades” was that my book allegedly refutes the famous poem by Yevtushenko about Babi Yar, which caused great scandal and noise when it was published.

But no, of course I didn’t refute this magnificent poem. Moreover, Yevtushenko, a friend with whom I studied at the same institute, actually conceived his poem on a day we went together to Babi Yar. We stood over a steep cliff, and I told him from

where and how people were driven, how the stream washed their bones, how there was a struggle to build a monument, which was not to be.

“No monument stands over Babi Yar,” -Yevtushenko said thoughtfully, and there I learned this first line of his poem. I am not opposed to his book; it’s just that the size of the novel allowed to tell much more about Babi Yar and all of its aspects. In some foreign editions of my novel, instead of the preface, they published a poem by Yevtushenko that speaks for itself.

One way or another, the book was published, but since the Central Committee read and approved it without a number of chapters, these were the first chapters to be removed. Then the Editor-in-Chief of Yunost, Boris Polevoy, Leopold Zheleznyov, executive secretary, and many other people have made so many notes, changes, and markups that sometimes behind their multi-colored corrections, there was no text left.

With great difficulty the book managed to keep its name, despite the categorical demand to change it (“so as not to evoke memories of Yevtushenko’s poem”). However, all critical mentions of Stalin were carefully removed (“the opinion is that now is not the time”) as well as, in general, the slightest criticism of something Soviet (“An anti-fascist novel, criticize only Hitler’s regime”).

It literally came down to a joke. At the beginning of the novel, there’s a phrase about the Germans having huge, heavy-duty red horses, before which the horses on which the Red Army retreated appeared to be foals. The phrase was immediately deleted. I argued that at the end of the book, I describe how the Germans retreat from our undersized horses, because their red-haired heavy-duty trucks couldn’t stand against them. Boris Polevoy objected: “While the reader is reading, he will forget the beginning, and will only remember that the Germans had better horses than we have.” After desperate disputes and general discussions, the phrase was left in a softened form, but it was hardly the only exception.

I wrote about an abandoned tank, for example:

“This tank was the perfect toy for the village children.” They crossed this out with question marks and swearing: in this phrase,

it turns out, there is a terrible sedition — pacifism. “We are not spineless pacifists, we cannot teach young people to disrespect tanks.”

Or I dared to ridicule unsuitable military wagons, which, “God save the war, are not suitable to travel” — it was crossed out, as directly anti-Soviet, with some pathological hatred. And there’s no way to prove anything, and there’s no way to defend a single word. It goes without saying that chapters such as “Cannibals” or “Burned Books” were crossed out with a single stroke, and could not even be discussed. The novel has three chapters under the same title “Burned Books” — first books burned in 1937 during Stalin’s purges, then they were burned in 1942 under the Germans, and finally in 1946 after Zhdanov’s speech. Only the middle chapter was left, the books burned by the Germans.

I argued desperately, proving that I critically described the abuses of the personality cult, which was condemned. I was given objections like this: “The Party has condemned enough. And there’s nothing further to write about it.” And when there was no argument, with the doors tightly closed, they meaningfully told me:

“They’re not letting us in on this, okay?”

“Who are they? I asked, “Let me talk to them, and I’ll be able to persuade them.” But there is a rule: never, under no circumstances allow an author contact with a professional censor. And as much as I have tried, I have never been able to see the mysterious “they” and do not know their names.

All of my previous works, as well as those of the writers I knew, were reworked beyond recognition. We tried to read each other’s works in unpublished manuscripts, because the difference was huge.

Writers in the USSR always faced this dilemma: either print at least what censorship allows, or don’t print at all. Many believe that it is better to bring the reader something than nothing. I thought so, too. I corresponded with Solzhenitsyn on this subject, I told him how my work was disfigured by censorship and despite my desperate resistance, the censor achieved his goal, and my books came out into the world as freaks, and I found myself becoming hateful. Solzhenitsyn wrote that it is possible and

necessary to make reasonable concessions to censorship, but to a certain limit, obviously.

When I saw that a quarter of the most important text was thrown out of “Babi Yar,” and the meaning of the novel was turned upside down, I said I refused to publish and demanded the manuscript back.

That’s where something quite unexpected happened. The manuscript was not returned. As if I was no longer her master. Remember Solzhenitsyn’s statements about having no control over his manuscripts? So, by giving the manuscript to the editors, I couldn’t get it back. It culminated in this wild scene in B. Polevoy’s office, with all of the editorial staff gathered, where I demanded the manuscript back. I was completely stunned, shouting: “It’s my work, my manuscript, my paper finally! Give it to me, I don’t want it published!”³⁴ And Polevoy, cynically, mocking, said: “It is not your decision to print or not to print. The manuscript will not be given to you, and we will print it as we see fit.”

Then they explained to me that it wasn’t an act of selfishness on their part or an accident. In my case, the manuscript had received an approval from the Central Committee itself, and now it was impossible not to publish it. If condemned in the Central Committee, again, the manuscript is needed to be considered “elsewhere.” But then, in Polevoi’s office, forgetting myself, I rushed into a fight, grabbed the manuscript, ran out onto to Vorovsky Street, ripped it and stuffed pieces of it into garbage cans up to the Arbat Square, cursing the day when I began to write.

Later, it was discovered that there was another copy in the Yunost offices, or maybe several, including those copies reprinted for the Central Committee. The editors called me at home and told me that all of the editing had already been done, the new text is re-reprinted, and I’d better not look at it so was not to spoil my nerves. When I met B Polevoy, he agreed to put the following on the first page:

“The novel is printed in abbreviated form.”

I wrote a letter saying that I would sue. But, after thinking about it, I realized that the court would find a way to deny me,

and at the same time everyone would say: “What do you want, because the editorial office itself declares that it publishes a novel in abbreviated form.”

The latter somehow convinced me, again on the basis of the principle of “anything”. And maybe people will be wary when they see the footnote and will look for meaning between the lines...

The manuscript, altered without me, went into a set, they sent me the proofs, I started to read them, and my eyes got darker, I remember, exactly, literally. I didn’t know yet that it wasn’t all. Then I continued to cut out the edges and turn them over, which I discovered only when I bought the magazine at the kiosk. And at the bottom there was a barely noticeable, a silent footnote saying “Magazine version” instead of the promised “Printed in abbreviated form”...

By that time I had a contract to publish the novel in a separate book with the Young Guard publishing house. There was still hope to restore something: the “full” book should be something different than the magazine version.

At once it became clear that the publishing house did not want additions; on the contrary, they demanded still new abbreviations. This is where the story began, only possible in the Soviet Union.

Yunost magazine went abroad. And in many countries, the novel was translated immediately. I received a bewildered letter from the translators: they didn’t understand many places.

For example, censorship reduced the novel to the point that there were no more arsonists in the chapter “Profession: Arsonists”, not even a hint, not even a word is present. Only a few paragraphs are left about how the hero reads Pushkin.

Or: They cut out the guy playing an accordion, in the midst of a general retreat, half-heartedly playing a polka. But the repeated mention of him by mistake remained, and it is completely incomprehensible without the first mention. When Semerik’s grandfather criticizes the Soviet regime, he calls the orders “Kraamedei” and that’s been carved out; and elsewhere it’s not clear what “Kraamedei” Grandfather is talking about again. And so on.

But, most importantly, translators requested the full text as opposed to the magazine variant, naively accepting Yunost's footnote in a literal and serious sense. They sent requests officially through the State-run International Book Company (Mezhkniga). Neither I nor International Book knew what to answer.

Finally, somewhere at the top, it was decided to turn to the manuscript again. It was difficult to select thirty pages of typewritten text, which outside the context looked harmless, and after great difficulties, with the support of the foreign commission of the Writers' Union, "International Book" had to press censorship stamps on each of the pages — solely to prove to foreigners that the full text existed.

But while these pages roamed through the bureaucracy, foreign translations were released, and pages with censorship stamps were too late.

Then I took them to the Young Guard for publishing; These were the chapters "Profession: Arsonists", "Shards of the Empire", "Million rubles" (but again heavily cut), and a few pieces of other chapters. The publishing house didn't want to embed them for a long time. I argued: "Even abroad, they allow them," and they objected: "It may be allowed abroad, but that doesn't mean it's allowed in the USSR." Then they decided to insert them after all, but only if I softened the novel in other places and added ideologically seasoned paragraphs "for balance," the content of which the editors literally dictated to me.

To save the book as a whole, I finished writing. Sometimes you read a good book of the Soviet writer — and suddenly you stumble into places that are so tasteless, so "ideological," that you want to spit. The author has written them, knowing perfectly well that they will cause only bewilderment and contempt in the reader, but not all readers know that only having paid such a price could the work come into the light. This is especially evident in books of poetry. They open with the verses of the duty — ideological, with which the author then earns the right to follow with genuine poetry. Therefore many readers begin to read collections of verses from the end, i.e., from the best.

I always had to fight for every phrase, to bargain, to finish the idea. In the USSR, with its Jesuit publishing business, everything

is confusing, difficult, any book is overgrown with layers and gaping with censorship holes. Publish in the magazine as much as you can, then in a separate book slowly add something, and in re-publication, add still a little more, but suddenly the situation changes, and what easily passed through in the past is today a terrible sedition, and vice versa.

And my manuscripts existed in at least two versions: the main — only for myself, deeply hidden, and another, for the press, which is provided a softened version.

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The situation changed in the USSR just as Babi Yar was published as a separate novel. Competent people told me I was lucky with the book, another month or two, and it wouldn't have come out. The book suddenly aroused anger in the Central Committee of the Komsomol, and in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the publication of "Babi Yar" was generally recognized as a mistake, re-publication of the book was prohibited, libraries stopped issuing the book; a new wave of state anti-Semitism began.

I, however, still held on to my main manuscript. I continued to work on it, so to speak, "for myself and for the truth." I added back the reworked and improved pieces of Khreshchatyk, the Monastery, the disaster, added new facts, and now I didn't think about censorship, but the manuscript was such that I did not store it at home. My things were searched when I left, and once unknown persons set fire to my office and burned it down. I placed the most important manuscript on film, which I buried in an iron box near the house, and the manuscripts themselves I buried in glass jars in the forest near Tula, where I hope they still lie now.

In the summer of 1969, I escaped from the USSR, taking the films with me, including a film that contained "Babi Yar." I am releasing it as my first book without any political censorship — and I ask that only this text of "Babi Yar" be considered valid.

It brings together published work, discarded censorship, and post-publication writing, including the final stylistic polish. This, finally, is really what I wrote. But the main differences I decided to keep, and that's why.

For those who are interested, this can give you an idea of the conditions in which books are produced in the USSR. I emphasize once again: my example is not an exception, on the contrary, it is the most ordinary and typical. When reading a book by a Soviet author, always make adjustments for censorship, look for the idea between the lines.

Further, millions of copies of the censored text of “Babi Yar” was printed. People who read it, and would like to know the full text, will only need to read what is new in this edition, which is published for the first time. Especially since the selected texts contain the main meaning of the book for which it is written.

I must say that it wasn’t so easy to isolate the texts. Should I count, as censored, what I have cut myself after the first manuscript was returned to me marked “anti-Soviet” with advice not to show anyone? No, obviously. It was self-censorship, forced, but self-censorship. Then I reworked and restored these pieces, but it’s my business, and genuine censorship has not seen them.

Next, with which text to compare? The circulation of Yunost is two million copies, Young Guard’s circulation is 150,000. That is, the text of Yunost is known to the majority of readers. Thirty typewritten pages were forcibly added by censorship, only due to foreign inquiries, reprinting is forbidden, and most importantly, all translations into other languages without exception were made only from Yunost. I take this text as a sample of the censored edition.

The next challenge. Due to censorship cuts, sometimes logic required binding words, grammatical sentence rearranging. The editors did it, and a few more words that I particularly hated were added by Boris Poledoy.

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Restoring the text, I removed these edits, and at the same time, I made stylistic improvements of the Yunost text here and there. So if someone with a magazine in his hand checks the text letter by letter, he will find small discrepancies in some places, but do not reflect on the meaning at all. I think it would be too cumbersome to mark them. The main task I set for myself was to show really serious and fundamental censorship interference.

The differences in this publication are as follows: ^[For ease of reading, the formatting the author describes is not included in this translation.]

The usual font — this was published by the magazine Yunost in 1966.

Italics — was cut or censored at the same time.

The brackets [] are additions made in 1967-60.

- Author

London, 1970

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

2.1 Ashes

Everything in this book is true.

When I shared episodes of this story with different people, all unanimously responded that I should write a book.

But I've been writing this book for a long time. I wrote the first version when I was 14 years old. In a thick homemade notebook, I — in those days a hungry, convulsive boy — wrote down everything I saw, heard, and knew about Babi Yar as soon as I saw, heard, or knew about it. I had no idea why I was doing it, but I thought it was necessary. To forget nothing.

The notebook was called “Babi Yar,” and I hid it from prying eyes. After the war, anti-Semitism ran rampant in the Soviet Union: the campaign against so-called “Cosmopolitanism,” Jewish doctors arrested and accused of being “poisoners” — and the name “Babi Yar” was almost forbidden.

My mother found my notebook one day while cleaning. She read it, cried over it, and advised me to keep it. She was the first to tell me that someday I should write a book.

The more I lived in this world, the more I became convinced that I had to do it.

I started writing it as a regular documentary novel many times, never having any hope that it would be published.

Besides, a strange thing happened to me. I tried to write an ordinary novel using the method of socialist realism. It was the only method I knew; taught from the school desk and then throughout my entire life. But turning the truth of life into “Artistic Truth,” for some reason dimmed in my eyes, became banal, smooth, deceitful and, finally, despicable.

Socialist realism requires us to write not so much as things are, how much they should have been, or, at any rate, how they

could be. This false and hypocritical method, in fact, has ruined great Russian literature in the past. I refuse it forever.

I'm writing this book without thinking any more about any methods, or about any authorities, borders, censors or national prejudices.

I'm writing this book as if I'm giving sworn legal testimony at the highest court of honor — and I am responsible for every word. This book tells only the truth — JUST AS IT WAS.

I, Anatoly Vasilievich Kuznetsov, the author of this book, was born on August 18, 1929 in the city of Kiev. My mother is Ukrainian, my father is Russian. In my passport, my nationality is listed as “Russian.”

I grew up on the outskirts of Kiev in the Kureniovka neighborhood, near a large ravine, the name of which was known only to the locals: Babi Yar.

Like other parts of Kureniovka, it was a place we played, a place of my childhood.

Then all at once, in a single day, it became very well-known.

For more than two years, Babi Yar was a restricted area, with a high-voltage wire and a concentration camp, flanked by signs that warned anyone who approached that they would be fired upon.

Once, I even went to the concentration camp office, but not into the ravine itself — otherwise I would not have been able to write this book.

For two years, we heard only machine gun fire coming from the ravine at different intervals: Ta-ta-ta, Ta-ta... For two years, every day, I heard the gunfire, and the sound is still in my ears today.

Heavy, greasy smoke rose from the end of the ravine. It rose for three weeks.

When it was over, my friend and I, though afraid of mines, went to see what was left.

The ravine was huge, you could even call it majestic — deep and wide, like a mountain gorge. You could shout from one end and barely hear it from the other.

Babi Yar was located between the three districts of Kiev: Lukyanivka, Kurenivka, and Syrets, surrounded by cemeteries,

groves, and gardens. A pretty, clear stream flowed along the bottom. Its slopes were steep, precipitous, in some places sheer, and they often collapsed. This was normal for that area: the right bank of the Dnieper River is completely cut through by ravines like this, and even the main street of Kiev, Khreshchatyk, was formed from the Khreshchaty Yar. There is the Revyakhov Yar, the Syretskyy Yar and others — there are many of them out there.

We walked and saw a ragged old man carrying a bag moving from one side of the ravine to the other. He walked so confidently that we knew he must live nearby; this was not the first time he walked here.

“Grandfather,” I asked, “Were the Jews shot here or further on?”

The grandfather stopped, looked me up and down and said:

“And how many Russians do you suppose were killed, and Ukrainians, and people of all nations?”

And he was gone.

We knew this creek as well as our own five fingers. When we were children, we built small dams and swam in the pools we created.

Once, its sand was good coarse sand, but now, it was covered in white stones for some reason.

I stooped down and lifted one of the stones to take a look. It was a burnt piece of bone, the size of a nail. White on one side, black on the other. The stream washed these bones from somewhere and carried them here. From this, we concluded that Jews, Russians, Ukrainians and people of other nations were shot higher up the ravine.

And so we walked for a long time on these bones, until we reached the very beginning of the ravine, where the stream disappeared from whence it came, originating from many seeping springs that seeped out through layers of sand — and that’s where the bones were coming from.

Here, the ravine narrowed and branched into several heads, and in one of them, the sand became grey. Suddenly, we realized we were walking on human ashes.

Near this spot, we encountered a washed out layer of sand with a granite ledge and a layer of coal peeking out from underneath. The coal seam was about a quarter of a meter thick.

On a slope, goats grazed and three shepherd boys, around eight years old, diligently hammered away at the coal, crushing it against the granite ledge.

We approached them. The charcoal was grainy, brownish in color, like locomotive ash mixed with carpenter's glue.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Here!" One of them got a handful of shiny, dirty stuff out of his pocket and tossed it into the palm of his hand.

They were partially melted gold rings, earrings, teeth.

They were mining for gold.

We walked around and found a lot of whole bones, a fresh, still-raw skull and more black ash mixed in with the gray sand.

I picked up one piece that weighed two kilograms. I took it with me and saved it. This is ash from many people, all mixed up — International ash, so to speak.

I then decided to write it all down from the very beginning, as it was, without missing or fictionalizing anything.

I'm doing this because I know I have to do it. Because, as it says in Tille Ulenspiegel, [^][https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Till_Eulenspiegel] the ashes of Klaas pound in my heart.

Thus, the word "document" in the subtitle of this novel means that here I am sharing only true facts and documents, and that the slightest literary speculation — that is, how it "could be" or "should have been" — is not here.

3.1 Soviet Power is Over

From the Soviet Informburo

Evening Announcement

September 21, 1941

During September 21st, our troops fought the enemy along the entire front. After many days of fierce fighting, our troops left Kiev.

Pravda, September 22, 1941. (Kiev was actually surrendered on September 19th, not September 21st as the announcement states.)

I saw them running and I knew it was over. It wasn't common for Red Army soldiers — looking defensive, burnt-out, some carrying their bedrolls, others already without their guns — to run through yards and gardens, jumping over fences.

People said that they ran into houses and begged for civilian clothes. Women gave rags to some and they changed their clothes, hoping to hide. The women then drowned the soldiers' now-useless weapons and tunics carrying military insignia in cesspools.

It was very quiet. Fighting had gone on for days, cannons rattling, sirens howling, bombings carried out one after another. At night, the entire horizon was aglow. We slept in knotted tangles in trenches, as the earth shook and fell on our heads.

But now it was quiet — that silence that seems more terrible than any shooting. And we didn't know where we were: Were we still under Stalin, already under Hitler, or stuck on some narrow island in-between?

The scratching sound of machine gun fire came clear and close from the railway embankment. Small branches and leaves from our old elm fell over our trench. I slammed the hatch down and tumbled into the pit, where my grandfather hissed at me and punched me in the ear.

Our trench, dug in the garden, was a type of anti-aircraft protection typical of those times — a “slit trench.” Dug in the form of the letter T, it was two meters deep and seventy meters wide. Courtyards, squares, and streets were dug out with slit trenches like ours. Soviet radio encouraged us to dig them and told us exactly how to do it.

My grandfather and I worked several days perfecting the circuitry. We covered the earthen walls with planks, laid the floor with pieces of bricks, and made a cover for the top. Of course we didn’t have enough logs, but we used all of the firewood we found in the barn and added one and a half meters of wood to the top of the trench.

Grandfather looked at it this way: if a bomb fell on our trench, it would shake the firewood, the logs would scatter like billiard balls and its explosion would never reach us: Where and how would the villainous bomb be able to destroy such a fortress?

For durability, we threw dirt on the firewood, and for disguise we covered it with turf. This gave us an impressive and clearly visible hill, under which, if you lowered the entrance hatch, it was as deaf and dark as the grave.

We were lucky that nothing exploded nearby and a decent-sized piece of shrapnel didn’t hit us, because all of this wood would have fallen right on our heads. But we didn’t know this yet. We were proud of our handiwork, and we were confident that we were sitting in excellent safety.

Before we’d built this great bomb shelter, Grandpa and I hid from bombs under the bed.

The bed was old, solid, and of good quality, with sheet iron headboards and footboards covered in oil paintings: mills, lakes with swans, and castles. We figured if a bomb hit, it would pierce the roof, then the ceiling, bounce off the spring mattress and featherbed, explode, and the featherbed and two more cotton blankets would of course block any fragments.

To keep us from laying on the bare floor, my grandmother put a blanket and pillows under the bed, so it was very cozy.

And when the shooting started and the windows twitched with the howling of bombers, Grandfather threw himself under the bed first. He would roll away and press against the wall. I'd then roll in, head over heels, and cuddle up against him. And Grandmother, always futzing with the stove 'til the last, would grab Titus the cat and lay at the edge, shielding us with her body — and thus we'd be safe.

Grandpa whispered prayers and swore at me:

“Oh, gomon, why are you wriggling around like you've got a worm inside you?”

After we finished building our powerful trench, we ran into it in the same order, only Grandmother always came running with the pillows and blanket (she wouldn't leave them in the trench to keep them from getting damp).

Titus the cat was used to war; at the first shots, with tail held high, he'd leap straight to the trench's hatch with anguish in his eyes and would meow for us to lower him... because all he knew how to do was climb up the steep ladder; he didn't learn to go down.

Gomon. I still don't know what that word is. Grandpa died and I forgot to ask him. And the worm of curiosity has always tormented me. I stood outside the trench to watch the planes and see the terrible crosses on them, trying to see how the bombs exploded.

But when the Red Army ran away and it became clear that this was the end, I was afraid to watch. I was finally afraid to watch.

A kerosene lamp burned in the trench, filling it with fumes. My mother, who wasn't there before because she worked at her school day and night, sat on a stool with horror in her eyes. Grandpa ate — he always ate at our place when he was worried. His gray beard, divided into two wedges, moved abruptly. He didn't chew because of his false teeth, but instead sort of “gummed” (as Grandma would say) and the crumbs fell into his beard. Grandma's praying was barely audible, as she crossed herself in front of the icon of the Mother of God she

brought into the trench. I'd put nails in the board myself to hang it up; I liked this icon, it was my favorite of all my grandmother's icons.

And in the walls behind the boards something rustled quietly, fumbled. And there they lived their personal lives, absolutely indifferent to the war: beetles, worms, and active ants.

The dirt finally stopped quaking and flaking off the ceiling. And in this terrible silence, it seemed like something terrible was about to happen, some kind of unimaginable explosion.

I was just sitting there breathing, waiting for this explosion. . .

Suddenly, we heard a deaf stomping. The hatch rose, and Elena Pavlovna, a neighbor — excited and unlike her usual self — shouted with joy, amazement, and triumph:

“What are you just sitting there for? The Germans are here! Soviet power is over!”

I was 12 years old. This was the first time I'd ever had a lot going on in my life. The Germans, too, were here for the first time. I flew out of the trench first, eyes blinking from the bright light, and noted that the world had become a different place — like good weather after a storm — although outwardly, it looked pretty much the same.

Elena Pavlovna, breathless, waved her hands and spoke with love and joy:

“...young, such a young boy stood by! My windows are on the street side. The vehicle left, but he — so young and so cute — stayed!”

I immediately ran across the yard, and jumped atop the fence.

At the fence of the square on our Petropavlovskaya Square sat a low, predatory, long-nosed cannon on thick inflated tires. A really young, blond, rosy-cheeked German soldier in an unusually clean and well-fitted grey-green uniform stood nearby. He kept his rifle at the ready and, noticing I was looking at it, straightened up proudly. He made himself look proud in a nice way — preening.

I had a lifelong friend three years older than me, Bolik Kaminsky, I'll tell you more about him later. He was evacuated from the factory worker training school, FZO. Anyway, this German kid looked a lot like my friend Bolik.

You see, I expected it all: that the Germans would be scary giants, perhaps, arriving astride tanks, wearing gas masks and horny helmets, and I was shocked that this kid was so ordinary. Well, he was nothing special, just like our Bolik.

Preening, yeah, I'd be preening, too, if I had a gun like that.

At that moment, the incredible explosion I'd been waiting for happened. I gasped, hit my chin on the fence and almost fell off. And the soldier sat down in disgrace and shrunk, frightened by the blast.

But I have to hand it to him: he immediately came to his senses, got up on his own and started looking somewhere over my head. I turned around and saw the blue sky, beyond the tops of the trees, where pieces of wood fell, spinning and gliding through the air.

"Ach, you blew up the bridge, you damned clods! Eh!" said Grandpa, who approached the fence and stuck out his nose to look at the first German, too.

"Phew-phew, wow! Well, where is Stalin going to fight them, Lord forgive me. It's an army! The Germans aren't our unfortunate — hungry and barefoot. Just look at how he's dressed!"

Indeed, the soldier was dressed perfectly. In newspaper cartoons and in the Soviet films, Germans were depicted as torn-up vagrants and bandits, and the Soviet soldiers were always handsome, fit, and rosy-cheeked.

An angular, boxy and predatory vehicle flew in kicking up dust, turned ominously (my grandfather and I watched eagerly), and as agile as gymnasts, some young German guys pinned the cannon on the truck in an instant, jumped up on the steps and, hanging off both sides of the car, dashingly rushed towards Podil.

"Yes, ah..." said my shocked grandfather, as he did a wide sign of the Cross.

"Glory to you. Oh, my God, I'm out from under that fearful power, and I didn't think I'd live to see it... Go on, help me carry my stuff into the house. It's all wet in the trench. We're really going to live now."

I begrudgingly slunk to the trench. There, my mother carried bundles, suitcases, and stools up from the dark hole, and my

grandmother piled them into a big heap, and I started carrying them in.

So many times in the recent past we'd repeated this process: down into the trench, up out of the trench, down, up. At least if there was something decent to hide, or even some good clothes. . . but it was just patched clothes from tsarist times, moth-eaten, faded pants, and pillows. In general, it was just not a man's job.

My friend Shurka Matza's head poked out from the fence. With huge eyes, he shouted:

"The Germans are on the tram line! Let's go! Let's go!"

And I was blown away like the wind.

The whole Kirillovskaya Street (under Soviet rule it was called Frunze Street, but the name never really stuck) was full of cars and carts from end to end. The cars were angular, with all sorts of projections, grilles, and brackets.

Every vehicle has a face, it looks at the world with its headlights indifferently, or angry, or grievously, or surprised. So these guys, like the first one that carted the cannon away, were watching the carnage. I hadn't seen such vehicles in my life, and it seemed to me that they were very powerful, they filled the street with roar and smoke.

The insides of some of these trucks contained entire small apartments, with bunks and screwed-in tables.

The Germans looked out of vehicles and walked down the street — clean-shaven, fresh, and very cheerful. You'd be fresh and cheerful, too, if you did not go on foot, but rode! They were laughing about everything, screaming jokingly at the first people crawling out on the street. Courageous motorcyclists in helmets with machine guns on their handlebars were dashing jockeying between the vehicles, hauling shells and bags.

The largest, fiery red heavy-duty horses with straw-colored manes we had ever seen — the likes of which we had never seen before — strode slowly and importantly with their big, furry legs, harnessed together in sixes. They pulled cannons as if they were toys. Our small Russian horses, exhausted and half-dead carrying our retreating Red Army would look like foals next to these giants.

In the dazzling black and white limousines, officers with tall hats with silver cords drove, having a fun conversation. Shurka and I were paralyzed by our dazzled eyes. We steeled ourselves and ran across the street. The sidewalk filled quickly, people ran from all sides, and all of them, like us, looked at this armada in shock. The Germans began to smile in response and try to talk to them.

And almost all of the Germans had German-Russian translation books. They flipped through them and shouted to the girls on the sidewalk:

“Young ladies, girls! Bolshevik done. Ukrana!”

“Ukraina,” the girls laughingly corrected.

“Ya, ya! You-krai-eena! Come walk spazieren bitte!”

The girls giggled, embarrassed, and everyone laughed and smiled.

From Bondarsky Lane came some movement: these floating solemn heads became visible, a procession of elderly men and women.

The old man in front, with a towel over his shoulder, carried Ukrainian bread on a tray with a salt shaker. The crowd gathered close for the spectacle, pushed and got stuck.

The old men were late and confused: to whom to hand the bread?

The old man advanced to the nearest white limousine, where the officers were smiling, and he bowed down and served the tray. Shurka and I lost each other. I tried my best to squeeze myself through the crowd. They said something, laughed and the back of the crowd asked, “What did he say? What did he say?” But the column moved on and I saw an officer hand over the bread and towel to the back seat of a passing car.

Around that time, talk began that somewhere nearby the Germans shouted, “Butter, rolls!” and dumped a crate of butter and baskets of rolls right onto the tram line. I darted back and forth, trying to figure out where it was, and I ran to the bridge over Vyshhorodska Street.

The bridge didn’t have any butter or rolls, but there was a fire. The brick house on the corner burned quietly and lazily, set alight by a shell flying through its window. The fence had

already been piled right onto the house, and the flowers growing around the house were stomped on. Two women and a girl used spades to dig up the ground and threw the dirt on the fire because there was no water. A man emerged out of the crowd of gawkers, grabbed a stick and began to ruthlessly smash the glass in the window.

A German jumped off his vehicle, took aim with his camera, squatted down, and took both close-up and wide-angled photos of the fire.

The man who'd smashed the window climbed out of it and started handing chairs to assembled women, throwing out coats and dresses and boxes of linens from the closet. Everybody praised him and even I thought: what a great guy!

Troops kept coming out from under the bridge. The sun shone brightly, and there was no shooting — just the roar of engines, the rumbling of wheels, the voices, the laughter. After sitting in the trench for such a long time, I was completely amazed by all this; staggering, I went home to report back.

And in our yard there was a soldier in gray-green with a gun slung over his shoulder and a rope in his hands. A simple man with white eyelashes and a red forehead, indifferently looking around. My grandfather, gesticulating, invited him to the barn:

"There, nichts, nichts, nichts, and there, maybe, ist! Need to look, bitte."

The soldier reluctantly trudged to the barn.

"They're looking for prisoners," said my grandmother from the porch.

There was a cellar hatch in the barn. The soldier began to show his hands:

"Matshes, mastches."

We gave him some matches. He lit one up and looked carefully into the hole.

"Partisan!" Grandma shouted, loudly and ironically.

The soldier jumped like he'd been stung, spinning his head around and looking suspiciously at us all.

"I'm joking," said Grandma. "Go, go, don't be afraid. No partisans."

But the soldier grumbled in displeasure and said he didn't want to go into the cellar, but instead pointed out the red house flag we hung for holidays to Grandfather.

"That."

"Yes, yes," Grandpa went over, grabbed the flag and tore it off the shaft. "Marfa, hurry up and throw it in the oven. It's a good stick, it'll go on a broom."

Another soldier — also carrying a rope — showed up, excitedly called over to the first one, and they ran off together. Grandma lured me into the house and handed me the flag.

"Here, wrap this in newspaper and hide it in the loft."

"What for, Grandma?"

"Nobody knows anything, son. And the Germans have red flags, too, and they'll tell us to put them up and we'll have to buy a new one again. Do as I say, son."

I got it. I climbed into the loft, snuck into the far corner, shoved the bundle under the beam, and when, after having eaten a cobweb, I went back down, my grandmother stood at the gate with Elena Pavlovna and called:

"Old man! Come quickly, the partisans are caught!"

Our red-skinned soldier led a huge dirty wild boar down the street, pulling it by a rope looped around its belly, while another soldier drove it forward with a twig. A bunch of other soldiers walked around them, self-satisfied.

Eyes wide, Elena Pavlovna exclaimed that soldiers weren't looking for prisoners at all...they were looting. They took the Kaminskys' wild boar, dragged out sheepskin coats, and they looked in the closet, under the bed, removed pillowcases from pillows and took the pillowcases, and for some reason, a towel embroidered with carnations. The neighbor didn't want to give up the boar, so the Germans left a receipt saying: "Officer pay." We were lucky they didn't take anything from us, maybe they hesitated because Grandfather said a few words in German.

Grandfather watched the brave armed wild boar procession anxiously.

"Come on," he said strictly, "Let's bring things back to the trench. Shake their mothers, I forgot, it's the winner's spoils: three days to loot whatever they want!"

3.2 Looting is Damned Interesting, But You've Got to Know How

Our neighbor took the receipt up to the school, where the Germans had already set up their headquarters. I immediately chased after him, thinking: they'll give him German money, and I can ask him to see it.

I waited at the gate of the school. He stood there, in the courtyard, explaining the situation as he walked up to the door. Then I saw him fly out of it with a crash, waving his arms ridiculously. The soldiers shouted and unbolted their rifles. I was afraid they'd shoot and ran around the corner.

The troops still marched through the area, but there were fewer than before. From the vicinity of the market, people ran in all directions and scattered like cockroaches, loaded down with stuffed sacks, faces flushed with excitement. Realizing that I was clearly missing out, I rushed to the market.

I encountered a group robbing a large shoe shop. They'd smashed the showcase window, and people buzzed around it, busily elbowing each other, crunching the glass underfoot, aunties and uncles climbing all over each other. I rushed after them and managed to see them grab boxes of shoes and galoshes. My God, what fabulous goods they were for that time! But while I made my way there, the shelves emptied as if they were swept clean by the wind and the crowd boiled over into a corner. I stopped and jumped on other people's backs, annoyed: Well, that's it then, everything is right there in front of my eyes, but I can't reach it. Friends and lovers were already ripping bundles of shoelaces and boxes of shoe polish from each others' hands.

Then I jumped through the window and back onto the street, looking around: Is there another, unlooted store? Oh, what a shame: While I was tossed about in the shoe store, the hardware store next to it had already been broken into and people were dragging out paint cans, bundles of shovels, and locks.

I dashed in, working my elbows, and squeezed up to the counter, but all I saw were legs and feet trampling over scattered chalk and putty. I noticed the men knocking to get into the back room and climbed over with them, got in through the door and

was hit on my head and in the teeth. I was brutalized from the pain and fled, wedging myself between two men who squeezed me so tightly that my ribs crunched. . . but there, right in front of me, appeared a broken box.

A new kerosene lamp without its glass covering lay in the box, cradled in straw. I reached out, pushing away alien hands, and grabbed one, then another — and then the rest of the lamps were gone.

I trembled, realizing that this was the sum of my loot. But the store was empty, and the robbers ran on. I ran outside and almost roared: They'd already broken into the haberdashery, and it was untouched when I arrived. It appeared to have been robbed by squealing women, and the shop was quaking.

At this point I, like a writhing little beast, made my way there and grabbed a box off the shelf. The women tried to pull it from me, but I clung to it like a cat to meat. They really shook the soul out of me, the wooden box cracked, and basic black coat buttons fell from it. Dozens of hands began to rake through the buttons, and I frantically raked and poured them into my pockets, too, because I had more right to them than all the others.

I noticed clothes brushes rolling under my feet and began to grab at them, fishing out five of them. But in the process, I dropped a lamp, which was immediately snatched out from under my nose by some vile woman.

Crushed, I swayed, and went outside, where I caught sight of bags of salt being dragged out of a store, but when I got closer, I saw that only paper and empty crates were left.

I was ready to cry. I'd never been greedy — my grandmother taught me to be a well-mannered and polite grandson — but suddenly this robbery seized me like a hot avalanche, and I was choked with greed and excitement.

And, most importantly, I understood that this was a unique, rare case — so rich, so magnificent, so much robbing with impunity. I missed the opportunity, I was a little late. . . due to a lack of experience. "Well, okay," I thought, comforting myself. "But next time. . ." But when would there be a next time?

Overcome with grief, I gathered some weights from the scales on the counter and carried all of my loot home.

From the windows, people were peeping at their front gates. Our neighbor Pavel Sochava yelled ironically to the entire street:

“Here comes Tolya home from robbing. Go tell your mother to whip you!”

I felt like cold water had been poured over me. I proudly carried my lamp and brushes, and then I slipped into the yard, unloaded my loot in the hay... and Mom gasped:

“What the hell is this?”

Grandma looked at it and shook her head:

“But don’t we have a lamp, son?”

But my grandfather understood me and praised me:

“Here we go! Well done! The Bolsheviks themselves robbed our people and sold it back to us, so it’s ours anyway. Ach, I didn’t know, I missed it, ach, I missed it! Shatkovsky there has taken out half the deli and rolled out a barrel of sunflower oil. What an occasion! We’re the only ones who get robbed here.”

It turned out that when I was at the market, six soldiers came and demanded, “Eggs, milk!”

“They crawled everywhere through the house, taking potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes... Well, hell, look what’s going on. Some people are robbing there, others are robbing there. It’s business!”

Still shaking with excitement and my grandfather’s praise, I ran to shout for Shurka Matsa and we both went back to the market. It was already empty. No matter how much we looked, nothing. The stores had been swept clean as if by a broom — covered only with paper, straw and glass. In the shoe store, we climbed up to the register and started turning the handle. We pulled out checks for thousands of roubles, went outside, threw them in the street and, already indifferent, watched as the troops entered the city.

There were tractors, all-terrain vehicles, columns of soldiers riding bicycles, and wagons on simple carts. The troops that entered wore knots of junk slung over their coats.

The wind rose, drove the straw and paper, carried smoke from the cars, the armies went on, gliding like a cloud, and there was no end to them. Everything was in order, and like locusts, they’d taken everything they could grab. A quiet, seemingly normal, prosaic robbery... It was Friday, September 19, 1941.

3.3 So, Here We Are in This New Life

KIEV IN THE HANDS OF GERMAN TROOPS

Führer's main apartment September 20

Supreme Command

The German Armed Forces reports:

Along with the operations to surround the Soviet armies in the east, an offensive was launched against the capital of Ukraine - Kiev. After a brave breakthrough of strong fortifications on the western bank of the Dnieper, our troops entered the city. A German military banner has been waving over the citadel of Kiev since this morning.

The offensive operations east of the Dnieper are moving forward irresistibly. We have made great strides in the battles for the fortification of Leningrad, we have made great strides...*

*) From "Ukrainska Slovo" (Word of the Word), September 21, 1941. Newspaper in Ukrainian, published by the occupation authorities.

By the time the Germans took over Kiev, the newspaper "Ukrayinskoe Slovo" (The Ukrainian Word) had published its fifteenth issue, first published in Zhytomyr. It wasn't sold — it was distributed in the streets by triumphant enthusiasts. Grandfather got a copy and carried it into the cottage like a sacred relic, eagerly wanting to read it.

But he wasn't able to read its small print, small even though the paper was as flimsy as wrapping paper, so he entrusted the job to me, and, listening philosophically, he listened to me read it.

I'll only share headlines from this paper:

KIEV IN THE HANDS OF GERMAN TROOPS
POLTAVA IS OCCUPIED

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS SOUTH OF LENINGRAD

OCCUPATION OF FURTHER TERRITORIES SOUTH
OF LENINGRAD

KGR 100 DROPPED BOMB ON PORT OF ODESSA

GIGANTIC ACHIEVEMENTS BY THE GERMAN
TROOPS FIGHTING AT THE BEACHHEAD OF
THE LOWER DNIEPER RIVER

THE STRUGGLE OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE

GROWTH OF THE ARTS IN ZHYTOMYR

REVIVAL OF THE CHURCH IN THE KHOLM RE-
GION OF KIEV, A POEM BY YAKOV NAGORNY

Here I'll digress a little bit and at least briefly tell you about our little family: who we were, what we were, and why.

I can't stand such digressions in books myself, I skip them, and if you find my backtracking uninteresting, you can skip it too, because the important thing in this book is much further.

But if you're wondering how a man dreams of Hitler, at least read about my grandfather.

Fyodor Vlasovich, my grandfather, hated the Soviet power with all his heart and soul and was eagerly awaiting the Germans as deliverers, believing that nothing could be any worse than the Soviet power in the world.

No, he wasn't a fascist or a monarchist, nor a nationalist or a Trotskyite, no red or white; he didn't know a damn thing about any of it.

By origin, he was a Ukrainian serf, a poor peasant. In terms of social status, he was a long-serving city worker. In essence, he was the simplest, smallest, hungriest, and most frightened citizen of the Soviet State — his stepmother.

My grandfather was born in 1870 — the same year as Lenin, but that was the end of the similarities between them. Grandfather would not hear Lenin's name spoken, even though

Lenin was long-dead and many Leninists died or had been killed. He believed that Lenin was the cause of all our troubles; Lenin “played Russia like roulette, lost everything, and died.”

When he said things like that, Grandmother looked around in horror and shouted in the yard:

“Stop the griping, you little bastard. Good people are dying, and you, you parasite, you’re still alive.”

My grandfather was born and raised in the village of Shenderovka, Kanevskiy district, into a desperate rural family with eleven children who, according to him, lived in a dilapidated, smoky hovel.

He spent his youth as a farmhand with German colonists in the Kherson region, leaving his family behind forever. After his military service, he went to Kiev to earn money and hung around searching for work. He found a job as a janitor at the general’s house, married a laundress, and began working on the tram as a conductor, dreaming about his future house and prosperity: to eat and not think about tomorrow — that was the limit of his dreams.

He and Grandmother were starving, getting cold, adding a penny to a penny, and ruining their youth, but they were finally able to buy a tiny piece of swamp in Kurenevka, drained it themselves, and spent a long time building a cottage for themselves... and then the revolution broke out.

The revolution didn’t bring any good to them, just a new hunger, fear — and completely stole their dream away. Grandfather didn’t believe the Bolsheviks’ beautiful words about earthly paradise in some foggy future. He was practical.

Finally, my grandfather worked for many years as a plumber in the sewers of Shoe Factory No. 4 where, in a stinking boilersuit, he climbed through the factory’s dirty pipes carrying tools, and was ultimately wounded by one of the machines. As he was a laborer, there was nowhere else for him to go. And after all these years, he has never stopped hating the power of “these bosses and murderers” and “no, not even masters.”

As a former peasant, he was horrified by the State collectivization of farming communes, which caused unprecedented famine. The construction of factories (noisily enabled in those years by

the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station), the conquest of the North Pole and the heavens — he didn't give a damn about any of it.

The North Pole may have been conquered, but when my grandparents finally got their wished-for dream — a cow — it had nothing to eat. The lines for animal feed were swarming. Next to the cottage, behind the railroad embankment, a huge rich meadow went to waste — we weren't allowed to use it for grazing. No matter how dodgy grandfather was, he had to fight to get hay. He scoured Yaram Babi and Yaram Repyahov with a bag and sickle and carefully cut the grass under the fences. He didn't drink the milk himself, he sent my grandmother to the market to sell it. He remembered that the German baron he worked for had a cow who gave three buckets of milk a day, and he thought that if he fed our skinny Lysku well, maybe she would give as much as the German's cow.

Anyway, he was a great manipulator. And from the constant failures, this convulsive poverty disgusted him and he became extraordinarily jealous. Jealous of half of Kurenevka, especially those who had a good vegetable garden and who could carry baskets to the radish market. Kurenevka has always been saved by their radishes, as well as by their pigs and chickens. Kurenevka was deaf to all sciences, arts or politics... or rather, demanding of politics simply one thing: to be allowed to sell radishes.

Gorky has a song like that, from "Childhood:"

One beggar hung his socks to dry,

And another beggar swiped them.

So my grandfather was jealous. He couldn't get near the success of Kurenevka's real bigwigs: his garden could be measured with his palms, in stripes of eight palms wide, from cottage to barn. Collective gardens were planted behind his fence. One night my grandfather dug up new holes and moved the fence by half a meter, stealing five square meters of land from its gardeners — and the lazy, indifferent collective farm authorities didn't even notice it! In his triumph, Grandfather was in a great mood for a week and made plans to move the fence again by half a meter in a few years' time.

In his old age, he had become terribly cantankerous, sneaking off with the neighbor's pears if they hung over the fence into "his land," killing neighbor's chickens with a stick if they waddled towards us, and as such, he'd quarreled with the entire street.

When he prepared for the market, he spit and swore: "Ooh, too, too, too!" and his nickname among the neighbors became "Semerik-true-two-two-three-buckets-milk."

My grandfather was so stingy that he did not drink vodka, did not smoke, did not go to the movies, tried to sneak onto the tram, and wore his pants and jackets until they were threadbare. If someone drove down the street with a haystack and lost a bit, grandfather was the first to be down on the pavement, carefully raking a bunch of the bits up with a stick and triumphantly carrying them home.

The cow didn't pay off, so he had to sell it.

My grandfather then tried ducks, and we went to the pond with him, hanging out there with a ragged basket, picking duckweed to feed them, but the ducks grew bony and stringy on the duckweed.

Grandfather switched to chickens: they were supposed to walk around, graze, and feed themselves. The chickens starved, hungrily eating up the seedlings in the garden, and they didn't want to leave the yard to graze. Then he got piglets to eat up our leftovers and garbage. Grandfather's piglets grew up to be long-legged, muscular, and lean as hound dogs. And just before the Germans arrived, both pigs fell ill and died. I had to bury them.

Grandfather was very energetic, fighting and pushing all day from dawn to darkness — but he still couldn't get rich.

There were people around who really lived: party members, security officers, thieves, snitches, various trade unionists. Rolling around in public cars, bellying up to the bar at resorts in the Caucasus, and receiving secret extra salaries in envelopes. Grandfather, for all his terrible climbing through the sewers, received half as much salary as the cost of a simple suit. In his entire life, he never owned a suit. He died without ever wearing one.

But there were people who looked at the life of my grandfather's family as a paradise. In collective farms around Kiev, peasants worked as if they were serfs. No, they were worse than serfs. At least when they were serfs, the landlord left them days to work for themselves on their own little fields. In the collective farm, a man didn't have days to work for himself, nor did he have his own little field. For each day of work, his "workday" would be added to an account and in the autumn he was paid. . . or maybe not paid. . . or paid one penny for each "workday."

So when guests came, my grandfather had only one topic to talk about: how the old days were good, and people were well-fed, and rich — and the how the Bolsheviks destroyed everything.

But when, in 1937, his old friend, Zhuka, was arrested for a stupid joke told while standing in line, and old Zhuka immediately went missing as if he'd been drowned, Grandfather was frightened, and went quiet about the Bolsheviks. So then he had only half a topic for guests — that the old days were good.

I suppose he was as right as he was wrong. That's the most "good" of all. It's only in comparison. And to my poor grandfather in 1937, tsarist Russia seemed to be a just, lost paradise.

For some reason, he did not remember his father's hut, his father who rented a piece of foreign land, but instead remembered how well the general lived and how generous he was. And he remembered how low the prices were under the Tsar: a bun cost five kopecks, herring cost two kopecks, and nobody even looked at dried fish.

Now, he shared his hatred for the Bolsheviks only with God, standing before the icons on his knees for a long time, and whispering, whispering and passionately telling him something: he knew that somebody would listen and God wouldn't sell him out.

Soon after the beginning of the war, a German leaflet fell onto our roof and the morning dew stuck it to the drainpipe. My grandfather found me, stood up the ladder, and sent me up to fetch it. I just barely managed to reach it, brought it down, and we started reading.

The leaflet said that Germany was called upon to destroy the Bolsheviks and to establish a new, fair order. A place where “he who does not work, does not eat,” but “everyone who works honestly will get what he deserves.” It said life in already-liberated territories was beautiful: butter cost ten kopecks a pound, bread cost seven, and herring three.

Grandpa’s eyes got so big, they grew into his forehead. This was a personal message to him.

He memorized the leaflet by heart, and only after that did he rip it into tiny pieces. He was now 72, and here was his dream, right in front of him — it was crazy! His cow may well still be able to graze in the meadow and give three buckets of milk, and there may even be enough food in the house for tomorrow and even for after the day after the day after tomorrow, and maybe he may even be able to finally buy himself his first suit.

My grandmother, Marfa Efimovna Semerik (her maiden name was Dolgoruk), was born and grew up in the village of Deremezna, in the Obukhivskiy district, in a cursed hovel, where, like grandfather’s family, there was nowhere even to spit because of the number of children.

The great Ukrainian poet of the serfs, Taras Shevchenko, spent his childhood in such a hovel:

I don’t call it a paradise.

.....

I spilled tears there,

The first of all my tears. I don’t know,

If there is evil anywhere in the world

That did not live in this house.

There were so many of my grandmother’s relatives in Deremezna, and in Peregonovka, and in Kiev “for hire,” that I never figured out how many of them there were, or who I was related to: Gapka and Conon, Hanna and Nina, Thomas and the foolish

Katka... They'd visit sometimes and Grandmother would feed them and give them an old skirt or old galoshes.

The only one I knew for sure how she was related to me was the wacky Katya — she was my great aunt. After she had typhus, she fell into dementia, became a beggar, she sat with her bag in front of churches, went from house to house begging for bread, putting pieces of it into her bag, which grandfather took away for piglets, muttering: "To think, these poor people live this way, and they get so much for Easter!"

I loved Katya. She was like a saint, harmless and kind. If she was served candy, she would definitely save it for me, and sometimes buy me a present — a clay whistle horse — at the market with the kopecks she collected. I later grew up, but she never noticed, and continued bringing whistles, mumbling and muttering... She died in the street, quietly and imperceptibly, as sparrows die. She was loaded on a cart and buried somewhere.

For twelve years, my grandmother worked for other people. She nursed other people's children, then cleaned other people's houses, and then became a laundress. No matter how much I asked, she never wanted to remember or recount her youth or love... maybe because all she remembered was drudgery.

She was completely illiterate. She didn't even know numbers — she could tell paper money apart by the differences in drawing and color, and coins apart by their size.

Since my mother, a teacher, worked two shifts at school and stayed late after school, I grew up with my grandmother. She woke me up, washed me, fed me, beat me, and amused me with Ukrainian fairy tales. And all the while, she stomped around, cooked, stirred, and pounded out our meals, made the piglets' food, drove the cat out of the way, crouched over the vegetable beds, and chopped wood. Consequently, her lower back hurt constantly and from time to time, she'd lay down, moan quietly, and get right up and go back to work.

She was soft and fragile, with a rough country face, and always wore a shabby gray or polka dot scarf.

Like grandfather, she wasn't impressed by airplanes or the airships of the time. On the contrary, they scared her. Putting me to sleep on top of the stove, she told me:

“So, when I was little, when we were put to bed on the stove, clinging to each other naked, barefoot, and hungry as worms, our late and scary granny would say, ‘You sit quietly, everything is still good. There will come a time when the enemy will come to Earth, and the ground will be entangled in wire, and iron birds will fly in the sky, pecking at people with their iron beaks. And that will precede the end of the world.’

And our teeth chattered in fear and we prayed: ‘Do not let us live to see this, Lord. . .’ The Lord did not heed our prayers — we lived. And it all happened just as Granny predicted: the barbed wire and the birds of iron, and soon, we will see the end of the world. . .“

Probably, while waiting for the end of the world to come, grandmother did not care at all about material “good,” but instead gave a lot away to save her soul. Maybe we could have lived a little better, but then Grandmother would not have eaten herself, and would rather give it to another. She carried a penny to the church, the poor, then she would suddenly make up packages to share with hospitals, acquaintances, and neighbors.

Grandfather often lost his temper, screaming: “Hoodlums! The people you feed, when we ourselves are hungry.“ But Grandmother only waved her hand. She hid her charity from him, and the “hoodlums” hid in all corners when Grandfather came home from work. To avoid swearing and so as not to fall into sin, Grandmother would kneel and pray.

She had a lot of icons. A whole iconostasis in the corner of the room, with a mysteriously burning lamp, pinches of incense, bunches of herbs, two wooden crosses — one for Grandfather and one for her to put in her hands in the coffin — and with little notebooks, “grammar books,” where I dictated numerous names of relatives under her dictation as “in good health” and “in the grave.”

And in the middle of it all was the stern, exhausted, fanatical-looking Virgin. Even the baby she held looked like a little angry old man exclaiming, “It’s impossible, it’s impossible!” They had such expressive looks that, if you gazed at them for a long time, you’d get goosebumps. The icon was in a case under glass, with rich, gilded edges, and inside were some half-hidden flowers,

clusters of metal berries... And I madly wanted to touch these berries, but under the glass they were out of reach. When grandma went to the market, I would pull over a stool and prepare to watch these berries for hours. I hoped that when Grandmother died, I would finally get them.

There was a gentle Nicholas the Ugodnik with a blond beard, a brave George the Victorious, and on the side stood another Mother of God with golden hair and a gentle, surprisingly familiar face. She was smiling, and the boy in her lap was plump, very pleased with life, with dimples on his naked body.

And although she was unadorned, I was really in love with this icon. We have a lot of these girls on Kurenevka — blond, soft, and gentle. They go for the first beauties; when they marry, they give birth to such chubby children with dimples, but, unfortunately, quickly fade and age. My very first childhood love was the image of such a woman in Grandmother's icon, and when later, after the war, I really grew up, the first living thing I fell in love with was just such a girl.

My father was a revolutionary and a communist, my mother was a teacher. Therefore, when I was born, baptism was out of the question.

But once, when my parents left for the service, Grandmother wrapped me in a handkerchief, took me to the church of Peter and Paul, and there they threw me into the font. Grandma could not allow me to remain without paradise after death. She revealed this secret only when I was ten years old and recounted that I protested and snapped the priest by the beard:

“Here is the same hatchling, so small, and already at the same time with the current antichrists ...”

Under the guidance of my grandmother, however, I was a religious man until six years old. She took me to the church of Peter and Paul, communion, placed in front of icons, took my hand with her brown, wrinkled hand, taught to be baptized and utter magic words, which, in my opinion, she did not understand. Because that's how she sounded and how I learned for life:

- Afarther who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. Earth to heaven. Give us our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, deliver us from evil. . .

Grandma, apparently, was not aware that the mysterious “Ochenash” is “Our Father.” I decided that Ochenashem called God, that this name glows in the dark, that my grandmother asks for rusks - “daily bread”, and automatically repeated after her this “do not forgive us” and “do not deliver”.

But my father noticed this, was horrified and ordered my mother to urgently pull me out of the clutches of “religion - opium for the people.” Mother, whom I really believed, led conversations with me and, most importantly, said:

- There is no god. The pilots fly in the sky and have not seen any God.

It shocked me. I immediately informed my grandmother this damning argument. She was upset and objected that such atheists as pilots could not see God. I thought and came to the conclusion that it would be better for God to appear to them, well, not to everyone, but at least the most courageous and world-famous pilots Chkalov or Baidukov, they would go down, tell everyone that there is a God, and the disputes would stop. If he is there and sits there in the clouds, so why is he hiding, why does he even allow unwanted atheists to fly, what is he all-powerful?

The theological disputes began with my grandmother, they didn’t lead to anything, she stayed with her opinion, I did with her, but I was reluctant to go to church, and when I went to school I stopped altogether.

He asked his grandfather, but he took a cautious position in divine matters. He recalled that when in 1890 he slaughtered and was called up as a soldier, he prayed very much that they would not take it, he kissed all the icons in the church, but still took it. Again, he has been praying for twenty years for the Bolsheviks to take the devil away, and they all have them. And he recognized the argument with the pilots as convincing, but when he got tangled in debt, he wanted to get mixed feed, or there was simply no one to complain, he was on his knees for a long time, he beat his forehead on the floor, swept him with his beard - and convinced the icons, begged them, snatched, begged at least some luck.

Unlike Grandfather, Grandmother did not have a single enemy, and there were only friends across the street. They

ran to her with misfortune, with poverty, she advised everyone, borrowed, settled family conflicts, looked after infants, treated her all with herbs from the stomach, and expelled worms.

[She saw mysterious and incomprehensible things, believed in miracles that the Soviet government does not recognize. I also believe in miracles. I have seen one.

I was ten years old. Grandma went out into the yard late at night, immediately returned and shouted: “Rather, go. God in heaven! ”

Mom laughed and basically did not go, and my grandfather and I ran. In the black starry sky glowed human figure, similar to Nicholas, Ugodnik. Rather, it seemed to consist of contours, drawn by barely distinguishable points, asterisks. For some reason, I was overwhelmed with such horror that I rushed into the hall and hid out the door. Grandma joyfully called: “Do not be afraid, go quickly, cross.” But I just, choking with horror, looked out from behind the door, and my grandfather and grandmother in the middle of the courtyard, lifting their faces, were baptized into heaven. Then the vision faded, they went to the hut, and the whole evening Grandmother was enlightened, unearthly, and Grandfather was thoughtful, extremely anxious.

I do not know so far what it was, and how it is explained.]

Grandmother was a healer. She was very good at healing the effects of the evil eye. This is a disease with no cause, simply because someone looked at you with a bad eye. In childhood I was very susceptible to this.

So I felt ill, my fever rose, I felt sick, my joints ached ... Grandma looked at me, poured, poured holy water from a bottle into a cup, threw coals out of the oven, looked at what they were drowning, which were not. The embers showed that I had jinxed brown eyes. We go out under the clear sky, grandma holds hands on my head and whispers something. I remember only from these formulas: “From brown eyes, come down trouble, like water off a duck’s back.” And suddenly I feel good, calm, bliss is spreading through the body, the disease is gone.

The grandmother cured malaria- “prypasnitsa”, or else, as they say in Ukraine, “shake”, cured eczema. Only her back she could not cure.

Maria Fedorovna Kuznetsova, my mother, was the only daughter of her grandfather and grandmother, and she gave a lot to her revolution. If she were a servant or a washerwoman, the courses opened, she finished them in 1923, became a teacher of the first and fourth grades, and she taught all her life later.

She was very beautiful, well-read, capable, sang and played in the amateur performances of the People's House, and now Grandfather began to notice that the police were carping at him.

District militiaman Vasya Kuznetsov everything comes and comes: the street is badly swept up, then the house number must be changed. In short, when Vasily was elected a member of the Kiev City Council, Grandfather decided that such a son-in-law was quite suitable: they, the City Council, would get everything for themselves.

How wrong he was!

It was one of the biggest mistakes of a grandfather in life. Then, until his death, he could not forgive the son-in-law for not carrying anything into the house, and even when his grandfather went to the police to re-register the house book, he had to sit in line for an appointment with his son-in-law, like all the others. Vasily Kuznetsov was a Bolshevik.

[And then he was an honest Bolshevik. Such as he, in 1937, were sent to camps or to the next world under their own wretched cries of "Long live Stalin"!]

He was a real hawk, Kursk, in 1917 he stood at the bench when a friend came up: "Vaska, they write to the Red Guard. We write?" - "We write!" - said Vasily and went.

He trashed the bourgeoisie, joined the party in 1918, partisan in Ukraine, became the commander of machine-gunners and under the command of Frunze took Kakhovka, took Perekop and threw Wrangel into the Black Sea.

He seemed to me an extraordinary man, [and his word was holy for me. One day my mother decided to teach me English. We sat at the table when father entered. I looked at how I memorized "ointment," "phase," says indignantly to mother: "What is this? Bourgeois language child teach? Stop!" And stopped.]

Sometimes he sang very nicely with a beautiful baritone, laughed, but for some reason he never told anything seriously.

- Well, how are you in Boshakov there in the Crimea? - Grandfather asked.
- Why? - laughed father. - In Crimea, good wine a lot. They drove Wrangel and the bourgeoisie, all wineries are open. We go to the vats. I look: one already swims in the wine on the ears, as it is - with machine-gun belts and in boots. Then I argued with the lads on the Mauser that I would drink a quarter of the port.
- Three liters? - Grandfather gasped.
- And drank.
- Well, what of them, drunkard, wait? - Grandfather spat. - Drank Russia. Tell me, what did your revolution give you, the beggar?

“And I was introduced to the Order of the Red Banner,” the father boasted. - These were the very first orders, only introduced, Frunze introduced and someone else. And at that time we were bitter, irreconcilable. We make noise: “With the king there were orders, and now again these pendants? Maybe you will introduce epaulettes? We are not shedding our blood for pendants. ” I took and refused. The commissioner says to me: “We will drive out of the party” I am in a bottle: “You went to such a mother, it means if you are such a party”. And expelled.

- Lord! And how are you now party?
- And then I filed an application back. Restored. And the order is not given.
- Oh, fool! - grandfather splashed his hands. - You used it for the money received. And so what you have, only the only police pants.

The father, indeed, emerged from the civil war goal, like a falcon. [Having demobilized, he was sent to Kiev to serve in the police. On the way to the train, he drank hard and sat down to play at the point. Before reaching a hundred kilometers from Kiev, he lost everything, lost his commanding uniform and remained in his pants only. A compassionate attendant at some field station donated to him dilapidated rags with bast shoes in which the former commander of machine-gunners appeared before the authorities in Kiev. They gave him a form, and Vasily began to fight against speculation and for the cleanliness of the streets.]

Mom and grandmother loved him, took care of each other, he soon had a good time, got prettier, and finally, with joint forces, he gave him his first suit, which his grandfather reproached him whenever possible.

My father had two classes in the parish school of education. He went to work school, finished it in the evenings, left the police and entered the Polytechnic Institute.

At nights, he sat over the drawings. He was torn off for a long time — they were sent under Uman to conduct collectivization. Mom went to him and returned in horror. Then he defended his diploma and took me to this defense. When he finished, he was applauded. He became a foundry engineer.

Then they began to cut off with his grandfather in earnest. Father thundered:

- Zaryvaetsya, father-in-law, buzel grind, insult the revolution! Look: your daughter has learned, son-in-law has learned, there is work, there is no speculation, there is competition, deception, and there will be more.

“You are smart once,” his grandfather croaked. - And you let me keep ten cows and give a meadow for grazing.

- Meadow collective farm. Do you like cows - go to the farm.
- Yes Yes! Go yourself to your hard labor collective farms!

By that time, the father and mother had gone wrong. There was another reason - jealousy. Mom was very jealous. I did not understand anything then, I only felt that the characters were with my father and mother to hoo. In the house there was a continuous dispute and tears.

And suddenly I learned from my grandmother that my father and mother had already gone to the court for a long time and divorced, but they could not part with it. Finally, my father took his blueprints under his arm and left to work at the Gorky Automobile Plant, where he soon got married.

[It happened just in 1937, and then I thought a lot about why my father, so implacable, passed that cup. A member of the party at that time could have avoided it only in two ways: either to be silent or to inform others. And my father suddenly became a head of a foundry on GAZ, got an apartment, a car ... But

this is from letters. I didn't already know such a father.] Mom [forbade him to correspond with him, but] continued to love him all her life and never married again.

When the war began and it became clear that the Germans would enter Kiev, the mother, however, sent father some desperate telegrams to receive us. But the answer to them did not come.

Mother cried hysterically at night. Grandma comforted:

- Yes, nothing, nothing, Marusia, we will live under the Germans.
- What will I do with the Germans? - said the mother. - To teach children to praise Hitler? Did she teach to praise Stalin, then Hitler? Take Tolik and go, come what may.
- We'll disappear without you ... - Grandma cried. That's right, the whole family kept on my mother's salary. She was proud, did not want to give alimony to her father, only shortly before the war, her grandfather still persecuted her, and we began to receive transfers from GAZ accounting, the war ended them.

Mom led two classes in a regular school, but often she managed to earn money even in the evening for adults. She was allowed because she was a diligent, talented teacher. [Many times they were going to award her, but never even the smallest prize was given to her, as non-partisan. Only in words praised and customized. Her teachers, who joined the party, knew her, and went to the resort for free, and glittered with orders. There is such a mess, a log-beam, a class has collapsed, cannot teach children anything - and they are deputies, to the presidiums ... And the class is given to the mother to be restored, and the mother sits all days long with the children, sits over notebooks. But she did not go to the party, for her it was just crazy.

She devoted her whole life to the children, and treated herself like a nun.] Sometimes her pupils-evening students, grown baleen uncles, workers, came to us to marry. My grandfather loved them very much, because they brought sausage, canned food, drink, he interpreted with them, ordered to get nails or whitewash, and mother angrily sat for a minute or two and went to bed. Grooms turned sour and disappeared.

Recently, the mother was on duty at an empty school near the phone - in case of air alarms, incendiary bombs. They did not evacuate the teachers in an organized manner, we sat on our suitcases, but we could not leave, and the mother met the Germans with horror, not expecting anything good.

The cat Titus was my faithful friend and comrade, with whom all my childhood was spent. I thought and decided that I would sin against the truth, if I do not mention him as a member of our family. At least for me, he was always like that, and he played an important role in my life, which will be discussed further.

Titus was an old, mentally affectionate cat, but outwardly very restrained and serious. He did not like family names and very sensitively discerned who treats him really well and who only lisps and sucks.

Grandma loved him, and grandfather hated by fierce hatred - because he was a parasite.

One day, my grandfather planted Titus in his bosom and took a tram to the fourteenth line of Pushcha-Voditsa, which is about fifteen kilometers, and all in the forest. He let him out there in the woods, and scared.

Titus came home a week later, very hungry, intimidated and unhappy.

The grandfather was furious, put Titus in a bag, drove through the whole city to Demiivka and threw it there in the Goloseevsky forest.

From there, Titus appeared only three months later, with his ear torn off, his broken paw - he had to walk through the whole huge city. But after that the puzzled grandfather left him alone.

When then I came across Seton-Thompson's amazing story about a cat that stubbornly goes through the cities and rivers to that bin where I was born, I believed every word. Cats can do it.

Our Titus, although he had learned to hide from fascist aircraft in the trenches, still did not understand politics at all. He was, so to speak, the most apolitical of all of us, but in vain, because the new life essentially concerned him.

So we were like this when the arrival of fascism and in general when the war came: insignificant, unmilitary, old men, a woman,

a boy, that is, those who need the war the least and who, unfortunately, get the most out of it.

But by no means am I going to continue to show: look, they say, how women, children and the elderly suffer from the war. If only because no one needs to prove it. Of course, I tell a lot of personal things, but least of all, I emphasize, least of all, the goal here is to talk about all sorts of personal troubles.

This book is about something completely different.

What are these medals? asked Grandfather, looking at the newspaper.

A whole page was occupied by “The Struggle of the Ukrainian People” - a historical overview with medallion portraits of Prince Svyatoslav, Princess Olga, Vladimir the Baptist, Bogdan Khmelnytsky, Mazepa, Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka and Symon Petliura.

[The combination was incredible, to which I, the boy, and then goggled. Svyatoslav, Olga and Vladimir are the founders of Russia, then there was no Ukraine and Russia, but simply Kievan Rus. Okay, it’s all right here. The holy ancestors of Ukrainians and Russians are common.

But further... Khmelnytsky annexed Ukraine to Russia.

Mazepa wanted to tear off. Taras Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka are poets who were extolled by the Soviet authorities.

And Petlyura fought in the revolution for an independent Ukraine, and all the Petlyurites were shot and rotted in Soviet camps.]

- And they have a great Bogdan? Grandfather was surprised. Yes.

- Wonderful! Mazepa... Petlyura...’ Grandfather stroked his beard in puzzlement. “I don’t know about that devil, it was a long time ago, under Peter the Great, but I saw Petlyura myself - both a parasite and a throat grabber. What were they doing here!

My mother was in another room altering my coat for the winter. She went out and looked at the newspaper.

“I don’t believe in anything,” she muttered. - Kind of a nightmare. There were no good kings. They killed everyone from Svyatoslav to Stalin.

“Forget about Stalin, you fool! grandfather said cheerfully. “Now, and forever, and forever and ever.” There will be a good king.

“No,” said the mother. - Maybe somewhere in Madagascar, in America, in Australia, but not in Russia. In Russia? No.

I began to read the details of the revival of the church in the Kholm region and the rapid growth of art in Zhytomyr. Grandfather listened with great pleasure, nodding his head gravely.

“Very good,” he said. The Germans know what they are doing. Listen: when I was young and worked for the German colonists, I already understood then that the Germans are the masters. They love work, but they hate the lazy: what you earn is what you get. But they don’t have theft: they leave the house, they will prop up the door with a stick - and there are no locks. And if, it happens, they catch a thief, they beat him, beat him until they kill him. Now you will see for yourself what a fair life will be. Paradise on earth!

“Nothing will happen,” my mother said in a strange way. “And the Bolsheviks will return.”

We didn’t argue with her, because we knew what she was thinking, but she didn’t say: that maybe someday my father, who she loved and will love until her death, will return.

“Oh, you are happy,” said the grandfather. - It was only in old age that a new life came to me and my grandmother. Marusya does not understand anything. And you are happy, you are young, you will live like this!

I thought, what the hell! After all, I’m really young, and I was so lucky right away: here the German owners came, there won’t even be thieves and castles. And from the foreboding of the coming happiness, I became anxious and surprised.

“Well, the fool is with him, even if Petliura, even the devil, even if the devil with horns hangs an icon on them,” the grandfather said with sudden hatred, “if only it wasn’t that Stalinyuga, the damned shoemaker, the uncut Georgian, the mustachioed murderer with his bare feet!” God, God, bring such a country to ruin. Thousands are strangled in queues for the

unfortunate chintz, but I was the last farm laborer under the tsar, and I could buy this chintz in pieces.

“What is old, what is male . . .” the grandmother sighed by the stove. - How much did you buy?

- Could! Could buy. Because he was. Everything was! I am a laborer, and you are a washerwoman - and we built a house for ourselves. Try to build now. Previously, it used to be that one husband in the family works, the family has seven souls, he alone feeds everyone. And under these Bolsheviks, the husband works, and the wife works, and the children work, and still there is not enough. Was it for that king that they threw it off?

It was bad under the king! I exclaimed.

Yes, that's how they teach you in schools now. Did you see?

- The tsar put people in prisons and sent them into exile.

“You are a fool, you are a fool,” said the grandfather. “People are imprisoned and exiled at all times. Lenin ruined more people than all the tsars before him. And what Stalin did - no tsars, no blood drinkers dreamed of. We had both Grozny and Peter, but God, apparently, sent such a Stalin to us before the end of the world. We have lived to the point that you are afraid of your own shadow. Some informers around, do not say a word. Only one “glory of the party” can be shouted. Yes, the police will slap you with a fine if you don't attach a flag to the gate for their holiday and for their damned elections. In the morning, at a little light, they are already banging on the windows: “By six o'clock for the elections, all as one, a national holiday, one hundred percent voting!” Oh, that you choke on my vote!

They expose themselves, they appoint themselves, they divide themselves among themselves - and they tell me that it was I who chose them! This is a total scammer. Who lives under Soviet rule? Who is a loud-mouthed scoundrel. He opens his mouth: “Our great, brilliant, wise leader, the sun is clear in the sky, our native party, under the leadership!” Tra-ta-ta! For this he receives and eats, you bastard. They bred some parasites. One works, three look after, six guard. Yes, they eat like a goose, but they drive around in cars. They overthrew the bourgeoisie - they themselves became worse bourgeois. Benefactors!..

- From the tongue without bones, - the grandmother shrank in fright by the stove. - Shaw you scream, you can hear it all over the street!
- Here? I say: we are used to talking only in a whisper. Let it be heard! I want to speak at least before death. Their power is no more, their GPU is no more, the damned NKVD draped. Let him die, that Stalin! Let her die, their party! Here! And no one will arrest me again. This is the last time I could speak out loud under the damned bourgeoisie. Twenty years as water in a mouth typed. Good people, let Hitler be better, let the tsar, let the bourgeois, the Turks, but not those a-di-o-you, bandits from the high road!

“Yes, the Turks will give you a lot of good ... And you saw him a lot under the bourgeoisie,” the grandmother sighed. - Have you already forgotten about the batygov kuren? The Soviet government gave you a pension, at least he said thank you for that. And the bourgeois would have given you a muzzle.

- Bourgeois - bastard! Grandfather shouted (“Well, it has begun,” I thought, “now there’s a scandal again until the evening.”) “The bourgeois is a bastard, but at least he knew the business. The Bolsheviks shot at the bourgeois - and what did they themselves bred? Unfortunate Russia, there was no good in it - and there will not be with such barefoot orders. And we ourselves, you see, are worth it. We are cattle, we are ruled by a batog. Here we need the Germans, let them teach us. These craquemedia will not engage. Do you want to work honestly? Work. If you don’t want to, go to such a mother. And those who are used to scratching their tongues and licking Stalin’s ass - the Germans will take them out in no time ... Lord, thank you for the fact that we survived your test alive, this Bolshevik plague! .. Well, son, read what’s there still writing?

I dug around in the newspaper and found an ad that confirmed my grandfather’s words. It stated that "some unemployed men, between 16 and 55 years old, SHUN WORK". They were asked to report immediately for registration.

- Yeah. Here! Grandfather said triumphantly, raising his finger.

3.4 FROM THE AUTHOR

For all you children of the forties, fifties and beyond, who did not see and survive all this: naturally, for you, what I am saying is pure story.

You don't like dry school history. And I don't like it, either. Sometimes it seems only to be a cluster of kingdoms, dates, idiotic battles that I should admire for some reason. Yes — book horrors, meanness for meanness, stupidity on foolishness, so it becomes a shame: this is the history of civilization?

Interesting old people never tire of repeating that your happiness lies in the fact that you spent your youth during peacetime. The horrors of war exist for you only in books. You listen, but do not hear. You say you're tired of this talk. You say, "Go ahead with your wars, with your chaos in the world, which you have created and in which you yourself cannot figure out - to hell with you."

Well said. I understand you.

But if I [from my dormer window croaked]: "Be careful!" - would you understand me? [I'll extend my antenna, and try to receive your signal.

I hear a lot of music, I hear singing, the sound of broken bottles and glasses, the roar of a motorcycle, and suddenly a chorus of "Mao" being chanted. The polite voice of a policeman asks the hippies to move: the Piccadilly fountain is being cleaned.]

Still, how sweet it feels to spit on every kind of politics, to dance, love, drink wine, sleep, breathe. To live. Oh God bless you!

Only [I look out of my dormer window and see how, while some love and sleep, others are actively designing handcuffs for them. What for? But this is the question: This is the predicament of benefactors. They all want to help the entire world and nothing less. To do this, very little is needed: the entire world must fit into the scheme they've created, and God knows how this world is formed in their weak minds, minds exhausted by complexity.

They do not spit on politics, they make them. They gently stroke their heavy cudgels, and then they lower those cudgels on other people's heads to implement their policies.

Watch out, people!]

On the basis of my own, someone else's, universal experience, on the basis of many thoughts, searches, anxieties and calculations I tell you: **THOSE WHO FORGET ABOUT POLITICS TODAY WILL BE SORRY.**

I did not say I love politics. I hate them. I despise them. I do not urge you to love or respect them. I am just telling you:

DO NOT FORGET.

If you have already taken this book in hand, and you have had the patience to finish reading these lines, I congratulate you, and I will ask you: please, in this case, do not drop it: read it until the end.

After all, I'm not offering you an ordinary novel. This is a document, an accurate picture of what happened. And imagine if you had been born one historical moment earlier, this would have already been your life, not a matter for book reading. Fate plays us as it pleases, we're just small microbes crawling around the globe. You could be me, be born in Kyiv, on Kurenivka, but at that moment I could be you reading this page.

And so I invite you: enter my destiny, imagine that you live in my shell, and you have no other life, and you are twelve years old, and the world is at war, and we don't know what will happen next. Just now you were holding a newspaper in your hands with an article about job shirkers. Just. Now.

Now, let's go outside. Above the citadel flies a German military banner. Soviet power is over. It's a warm autumn day, good weather.

3.5 TO THE QUESTION OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

We had a long journey ahead of us, through the whole city, to the Menagerie, and therefore the grandmother put bread, apples, and two bottles of water in the purse.

Kirillovskaya Street was strewn with straw, papers, horse manure: no one cleaned it up. All the windows were broken,

the glass crunched underfoot. In some places the women stood in the open windows and washed off cross-shaped pieces of paper.

From the stream flowing from Babi Yar, the crowd took water. Scooped mugs, glasses, poured into buckets. There was no water in the plumbing, so the whole city reached out with various utensils to the streams, to the Dnieper, they put basins and barrels under the drainpipes to collect rainwater.

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My grandmother and I sat down in the grass and began to watch. Churches, walls, domes - all this sparkled under the sun, looked so beautiful, unusual. We sat in silence for a long, long time. And the world was in my soul.

Then the grandmother said:

- Do not trust, son, people who wear a cap over their eyes.
- Why?

"These are evil people.

- Why?
- I do not know. My mother taught me that.

Are you talking about the Germans?

- And about the Germans, and about the Russians, about everyone. Remember different gangsters, militia, enkavedeshniks, how they wear caps... I've seen enough of these Germans today, my heart sank: enemies! Enemies, my child. There is grief.

Grandmother had a very capacious word: and the disease happened because the enemy got into a person, and it denoted the Antichrist: "the enemy will go across the earth."

- Grandfather says: "heaven on earth."

"Don't listen to him, you old buffoon. Paradise in heaven is with God. It never existed on earth. And it won't. How many of those paradises have been promised to people, all and sundry - everyone promises paradise. And the unfortunate man, as he fought in the sweat of his face for a piece of bread, still fights.

And they keep promising him paradise... Your grandfather remembers herring and calico, but how I washed strangers for fifteen kopecks a day from dark to dark—does he remember that? And you ask him how the Petliurists shot him in Pushcha-Voditsa. What can I say, I have not seen good on earth. Over there is paradise.

She nodded at the Lavra and began to mutter a prayer. I became anxious, not myself. After all, I had been an atheist for a long time, and I studied at a Soviet school, and I knew for sure that there was no such thing as Grandma's paradise.

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The house had not burned down, had not been looted, and everything was in order. Marusya welcomed us well. She had a cheerful, swarthy and unshaven uncle, whom she introduced as her new husband. The grandmother immediately kissed her and congratulated her.

Neighbor Grabarev called out to the grandmother from behind the fence. She gasped.

- Why are you here?

"Yes, such stupidity came out," said Grabarev. "After all, Marfa Efimovna, I took out the Arsenal, went to the Urals, I'm waiting for my family, sending telegrams, and then there's panic, the stations are bombed, they can't leave in any way. Then I dropped everything, rushed here - and they had just evacuated. I rush back - and Kyiv is already surrounded. So they left, and I got stuck.

He was sad, stooped and aged. I noted that his cap was sitting on the back of his head, and I felt sorry for him.

"Oh God," said the grandmother, "but you are a communist!"

- And what do you think, because of this environment, there are few communists left in Kyiv? Yes, and what kind of

communist I am ... I joined the party, like everyone else, in order to live. Registered and paid dues. I was expelled in the summer, didn't you hear? Only they didn't finish it to the end: the war was suspended. Well, now, since I remained in the occupation, they definitely expelled me.

Grandma shook her head sympathetically.

— What are you going to do?

- Work. Carpentry.

He poured a full cap of apples and passed it over the fence to me.

We stayed overnight. I slept well in a new place, but in the middle of the night my grandmother woke me up:

"Son, wake up, son!" she urged. - Get under the bed.

The floor and glass trembled from the shooting, the planes howled disgustingly. My grandmother and I climbed under the bed, where the blanket was already lying (well, a prudent grandmother!) And clung to each other.

It was already bombed by Soviet planes, and in the pitch darkness the bomb explosions seemed especially close and powerful. The bed shook, and the whole house shook as if in an earthquake. They bombed not us, but the railway bridge across the Dnieper near the Lavra, but, I'm afraid, in the dark they dropped bombs anywhere.

"Ochenash, you are in heaven ..." the grandmother whispered passionately and pushed me. — Pray! Pray! God will save us.

I began to mutter:

- Your kingdom come. I am in heaven. That - to the earth. Our dry bread...

In the morning Marusya said to her grandmother:

"I respect you very much, Marfa Yefimovna, but you don't come here anymore. This house will be ours with my husband. The advice will not return, and you do not need it, we will write it down on ourselves.

Grandma threw up her hands.

"That's how everyone does it now," Marusya explained. - - The houses of the evacuees are taken by those who are in need. Moreover, this is the house of a communist, a parasite. Their

time is up! Do not show me your power of attorney, it is Soviet, invalid. And don't forget that you yourself are a relative of a communist.

Her unshaven, cheerful husband came out, stood in the doorway, his hands on his hips, flexing his muscles. Grandmother also mentioned conscience, and God, and that she would go to complain - he only grinned, amused.

Our return journey was dismal. Grandma was walking like crazy.

At the beginning of Khreshchatyk we were suddenly stopped by a patrol.

— Yuda? the soldier asked the grandmother. - Passport! The grandmother, frightened, reached into her bosom to get a passport. Nearby they checked the documents of some old man.

“Yes, I am a Jew,” he said in a thin voice.

- Com! the German ordered curtly, and the old man was led away.
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The soldier looked through the passport, handed it over and turned away. We rather rushed down the Vladimirsky descent to Podol. The aunt said to the grandmother:

- In the morning, they saw a Jewish girl running down the street, fired a pistol, killed two officers, and then shot herself. And they began to catch the Jews. They say that they are being checked and driven to dismantle the barricades ... Lord, they were building them, now they are dismantling them, and all the residents go from house to house, all the young are driven out for dismantling ...

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Only now I noticed that there are absolutely no robbers on the streets, only groups of people read orders and quickly disperse.

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- Bring it.
- No need for at least weights! yelled the grandfather. - We have scales, let them prove that these are not our weights, they do not say that they are from the store! And I'll throw the buttons in the lavatory.

In general, I was forced to return only the lamp and brushes, since the whole street saw me carrying them. I was afraid and ashamed to go to the market. No one has demolished anything yet, I was the first. And I waited a long time until there were no passers-by nearby. Having chosen such a moment, he put the lamp into the window, threw the brushes - and go.

At home, everyone was anxiously discussing what to do with the products. They took into account the sacks of peas, buckwheat, crackers - there were a week and a half of them, and the grandfather was ready for execution, just not to hand it over.

- They're scary! the grandfather cried plaintively. "Let people like Shatkovsky, who robbed oil in barrels, return it!" We'll take a look first.

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suitcases were in a trench underground. We never had a weapon or a receiver.

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"It's true, locks are not needed, you can prop them up with a stick ... Three days have already passed, and they are robbing everything.

- So, they extended it by five, - the grandfather did not give up. - Kyiv is a big city, the capital, it is not so easy to plunder it, so they were given five days. Mark my word, on the twenty-fourth it will all be over.

He was very wrong.

On the twenty-fourth of September, everything just started.

3.6 TO THE QUESTION OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

We had a long journey ahead of us, through the whole city, to the Menagerie, and therefore the grandmother put bread, apples, and two bottles of water in the purse.

Kirillovskaya Street was strewn with straw, papers, horse manure: no one cleaned it up. All the windows were broken, the glass crunched underfoot. In some places the women stood in the open windows and washed off cross-shaped pieces of paper.

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KHRESCHATIK

On September 19, 1941, German troops entered Khreshchatyk from two sides.

One column was coming from Podil - they were those who were met on Kurenevka, brave, cheerful, in cars. The other one entered from the opposite side, through Bessarabka, these were on motorcycles, straight from the battlefield, sooty, and they went in a cloud, capturing the sidewalks, filling the entire Khreshchatyk with crackling and gasoline smoke.

It was like a colossal and disorganized military parade, full of delays, confusion and confusion. Residents watched from the entrances, onlookers ran from everywhere, some willingly helped push anti-tank hedgehogs aside or scraped Soviet posters from the walls.

Obviously, according to a predetermined plan, the troops began to occupy the empty buildings of Khreshchatyk. The fact is that there were more institutions and shops than apartments. Almost all residents were evacuated from apartments. Party workers, Chekists, famous actors lived on this central street of Kyiv, and they all, of course, left. Khreshchatyk was empty.

The commandant's office chose a house on the corner of Khreshchatyk and Prorizna Street, where the famous Detsky Mir store was located on the ground floor. The German headquarters occupied the huge Continental Hotel. The doctor's house turned into the House of German officers.

Everything was thought out, clearly organized in the shortest possible time: engines with dynamos were installed right on the sidewalks, giving electricity, water was brought from the Dnieper in tanks.

It looked like an energetic and businesslike housewarming party for noisily arriving guests, who arrived not to walk, but to act, and the city looked at them expectantly.

The robbery of Khreshchatyk because of these troops did not begin immediately, but later, namely at night, when it became clear that the troops were busy only with their organization. After the first cautious robbers pulled full bags from under the noses of the Germans, people from all over the city ran to Khreshchatyk.

By morning, all the shop windows had already been smashed out, figures were rushing along Khreshchatyk, dragging rolls of carpets and stacks of services, bundles of schoolbags and curtains from theaters. Among them were the Germans. With a menacing cry and slaps on the back of the head, they dispersed the robbers and climbed to rob themselves. As in a torn anthill - everyone was dragging something somewhere.

After dinner, the Bessarabian market suddenly came to life: the first traders brought out hot pies with peas and boiled potatoes, rightly believing that the robbers were hungry. They themselves did not really know what price to ask: give a pack of shag and eat up "from the belly".

Two barber shops have opened. The calculation of the enterprising Jewish hairdressers was accurate: German officers rushed to them.

All this happened so cheerfully, almost festively, and the sun shone, warming up a good mood.

The keys to the locked apartments of the escaped party members and bureaucrats were kept in the house administrations. The Germans, together with house managers or janitors, went from house to house, opened them, occupied or took whatever they liked.

It was then that these house managers and janitors, various watchmen and elevator operators rushed to "scrub". They seized apartments of five or six rooms that belonged to some secretaries of the city committee, full of unprecedented, fabulous things (especially when you consider that until recently this janitor fought for two meters of calico for two days in line!). In these new apartments of theirs, they dragged junk from all the floors, turning them into genuine warehouses. It was said that one janitor, moving from the basement to the mezzanine, dragged twelve pianos to him, placing them on two floors, one on top of the other.

No one returned anything of this when the orders of the commandant's office appeared. It was like it was unthinkable. For his twelve pianos, the crazed janitor would probably have gone under execution, but like this, with his own hands, he simply could not take and return. Could not!

But the hated weapons and dangerous radios were carried away. Perhaps someone first suffered, and everyone, frightened, suffered. They carried a lot of gas masks. He took the gas mask - and, as it were, had already partially complied with the orders. They were dumped into a heap in a cafe-confectionery opposite the commandant's office, at house 27 on Khreshchatyk, and soon mountains of gas masks filled the cafe to the ceiling.

The first to convene (having found lists and addresses in the personnel department) were the employees of the Kiev radio. The radio committee with the studio was at the corner of Khreshchatyk and Institutskaya street. The German chef who had just been appointed came out onto the stage, looked around at those gathered in the hall, and began in a very unusual way:

Jews, stand up!

There was dead silence in the hall. No one got up, only heads moved.

Jews, stand up! the chief repeated louder and blushed.

Again no one got up.

"Jews, stand up!!! shouted the chief, grabbing his pistol.

Then, in different parts of the hall, musicians began to rise - violinists, cellists, - some technicians, editors. Bowing their heads, they walked in single file to the exit.

The boss waited until the door closed behind him. Then, in broken Russian, he announced to the rest that the world must hear the voice of a free Kyiv. That in a matter of days it is necessary to restore the radio station and from tomorrow - all for work. Whoever evades will be treated as a saboteur. Peaceful creative work begins.

Hushed, puzzled people rose to disperse.

And then there was the first explosion.

It was September 24, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The house of the German commandant's office with "Children's World" on the first floor exploded. The explosion was so powerful that windows were blown out not only on Khreshchatyk itself, but also on the parallel streets of Pushkinskaya and Meringa. Glass collapsed from all floors onto the heads of the Germans and passers-by, and many were immediately injured.

A column of fire and smoke rose at the corner of Proreznaya. The crowds ran - some away from the explosion, some, on the contrary, to the place of the explosion, to watch.

At first, the Germans were somewhat confused, but then they began to build a chain, surrounded the burning house and grabbed everyone who was at that moment in front of the house or in the yard.

They dragged some lanky red-haired guy, brutally beat him, and a rumor spread that this was a partisan who brought a radio receiver to Detsky Mir - supposedly to hand it over, but there was an infernal machine in the receiver.

All those arrested were pushed into the cinema nearby, and soon it was chock-full of wounded, beaten and bloody people.

At that moment, in the ruins of the same house, a second explosion of the same force struck. Now the walls have collapsed, and the commandant's office has turned into a mountain of bricks. Khreshchatyk was covered with dust and smoke.

A third explosion blew up the house opposite, with a cafe-confectionery stuffed with gas masks and German institutions.

The Germans left the cinema and shouted: "Save yourselves, Khreshchatyk is exploding!" - they rushed to run in all directions, and behind them the arrested, including the red-haired guy.

Incredible panic set in. Khreshchatyk really exploded.

Explosions were heard at irregular intervals in the most unexpected and different parts of Khreshchatyk, and nothing could be understood in this system.

Explosions continued throughout the night, spreading to the surrounding streets. The magnificent building of the circus flew into the air, and its mangled dome was thrown across the street by a wave. Near the circus, the Continental Hotel, occupied by the Germans, was on fire.

No one will ever know how many Germans died in these explosions and fires, their equipment, documents, as well as civilians and property, since nothing has ever been reported on this score [neither by the Bolsheviks nor by the fascists.]

It was a dry season, and therefore a fire began, which can be compared, perhaps, only with the famous fire of Moscow during the invasion of Napoleon in 1812.

On the upper floors and attics of buildings, a lot of boxes of ammunition and anti-tank bottles with a combustible mixture were prepared, because the Soviet military command was going to fight in Kyiv for every street, for which the whole city was pitted with ditches and built up with barricades. Now, when the fire was approaching them, these boxes hooted with a heavy characteristic explosion-sigh, dousing the buildings with streams of fire. This finished off Khreshchatyk.

The Germans, who had entered here so solemnly, settled themselves so comfortably, were now rushing about Khreshchatyk as if in a mousetrap. They did not understand anything, did not know where to rush, what to save.

We must give them their due: they singled out teams that ran through the houses of the entire center of Kyiv, urging residents to go out into the streets, evacuating children and the sick. It didn't take much to persuade. Residents - who managed to grab the bundle, and who was wearing what - fled to the parks over the Dnieper, to Vladimirska Gorka, to Shevchenko Boulevard, to the stadium. There were many burnt and wounded.

The Germans cordoned off the entire city center. The fire expanded: the parallel Pushkinskaya and Meringa streets, the transverse streets Proreznaya, Institutskaya, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Passage were already burning. It felt like the whole city was exploding.

Before the war, they began to build a subway in Kyiv, and now rumors have spread that it was not a subway, but the laying of monstrous mines under all of Kiev. But belated memories were more plausible that trucks came to the yards at night, and people in the form of the NKVD unloaded something into the basements. But where in those days the NKVD cars did not come at night and what they did! Whoever saw from behind the curtain preferred not to see and forget. And no one had any idea where the next explosion would occur, so they fled from houses far from Khreshchatyk.

From somewhere, the Germans urgently delivered long hoses by plane, stretched them from the Dnieper itself through Pioneer Park and began to pump water with powerful pumps. But the

water did not reach Khreshchatyk: in the thickets of the park, someone cut the hoses.

Above the monstrous bonfire, which was the center of Kyiv, powerful air currents formed, in which, like in a pipe, burning chips, papers, firebrands flew high, sprinkling either Bessarabka or Pechersk. Therefore, Germans, policemen, janitors, volunteers climbed all the roofs, covered the firebrands with sand, trampled down the coals. Fire victims spent the night in anti-air cracks, in the bushes of boulevards and parks.

The Germans could not even get the corpses of their dead or residents, they burned to the ground. Everything that the Germans had looted was on fire, six-room apartments full of pianos were on fire, the radio committee, cinemas, and department stores were on fire.

After several desperate days of fighting the fire, the Germans stopped resisting, came out of this inferno, in which, it seems, there was nothing left alive, and only watched the fire from afar.

Khreshchatyk continued to burn in complete desertion, only from time to time in some house with a dull roar the ceilings collapsed or the wall fell, and then especially a lot of coals and torches flew up into the sky.

The city was completely saturated with burning; at night it was flooded with red light, and this glow, as they later said, could be seen for hundreds of kilometers and served as a guide for aircraft.

The explosions themselves ended on 28 September. The main fire lasted two weeks, and for two weeks there was a cordon of submachine gunners.

And when it was removed and the Germans went there, there were no streets, in fact: the buildings falling from both sides formed blockages. For about a month, work was underway to lay the passages. The red-hot ruins smoked for a long time; even in December, I saw with my own eyes plumes of smoke stubbornly coming out from under the brick.

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The explosion and fire of Khreshchatyk, which have not been described anywhere and by anyone before, should, in my opinion, become a milestone in the history of the war.

Firstly, it was the first strictly prepared action of such order and scale in history. It is necessary to understand what Khreshchatyk meant for Kyiv. (With the appropriate scale, it's the same as if the center of Moscow exploded within the Boulevard Ring, Nevsky Prospekt in Leningrad with the surrounding streets, or, say, the heart of Paris to the Grand Boulevards. It was difficult to imagine this before Khreshchatyk, but the NKVD also imagined, so to speak, opened a new page in the wars. Only after Khreshchatyk, both the Germans and the Soviets, this rule was born: to examine each occupied building and write "Checked. No mines." It was clear that during the retreat of bridges, military and industrial facilities were destroyed.

But here the heart of the city exploded, especially peaceful, with shops and theaters.

Secondly, many took the action with Khreshchatyk as the first manifestation of true patriotism on such a scale. Not a single capital of Europe met Hitler like Kyiv. The city of Kyiv could no longer defend itself, the army left it, and it seemed to be flattened under the enemy. But he burned himself before the eyes of his enemies and took many of them to the grave. Yes, they entered, as they used to enter Western European capitals, preparing to feast, but instead they received such a blow in the face that the very earth caught fire under their feet. Where was it before Khreshchatyk, tell me?

[On the other hand, to destroy the ancient and magnificent center of the capital for the sake of one patriotic slap in the face of the enemy, while destroying many civilians, is not that too much? And this is where things get weird.

Never, neither at that time nor after did the Soviet authorities admit to the explosion of Khreshchatyk, but on the contrary, they attributed this explosion to . . . the Germans. They shouted in the press about the barbarity of the fascists, and then after the war they covered the ruins with posters and wrote in all the newspapers: "Let's restore the pride of Ukraine to Khreshchatyk, brutally destroyed by the fascist invaders."

All Kyiv, all Ukraine, all the people knew perfectly well that Khreshchatyk had been destroyed by the Soviets, and they were told that the damned Germans had done it. That is, that they entered a beautiful city, occupied its magnificent center, worked for five days, laying mines under them, in order to blow them up under them. What for? The answer to this is exact: fascists are barbarians. No one argues with this, the Nazis are barbarians, but the Bolsheviks blew up Khreshchatyk.

Only in 1963, the KGB issued for publication a small "Reference of the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR on the sabotage and reconnaissance activities of a group of underground workers in the city of Kyiv under the leadership of I. D. Kudri."]

[This reference does not speak of the destruction of Khreshchatyk, but only of "explosions", completely bypassing the very word "Khreshchatyk".]

From it it turns out that I. D. Kudrya, under the nickname "Maxim", was an employee of the security agencies, on their instructions he was left in the city along with a group that included D. Sobolev, A. Pechenev, R. Okipnaya, E. Bremer and others. I quote:

"In the city ... fires and explosions did not stop, which took on a special scope in the period from September 24 to September 28, 1941, among others, a warehouse with radios received from the population, the German military commandant's office, a cinema for the Germans, etc. were blown up. no one can say who specifically carried out such explosions, which carried hundreds of "conquerors" to the grave, there is no doubt that persons who had a hand in this had a relationship with the Maxim group. The main thing was that these explosions made it clear to the arrogant fascist "conquerors" that they were not the owner of the occupied land.

It is further reported that D. Sobolev died during one of his many operations, A. Pechenev shot himself wounded in bed when he was seized by the Gestapo. Curly "Maxim", R. Okipnaya and E. Bremer were captured in Kyiv in July 1942, but where they died is not known for certain.

In 1965, Pravda published, without any comments, a decree conferring posthumously the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on I. D. Kudra.

[More than twenty years of hesitation over such a decision, apparently, were needed to make sure that Kudrya really died, and did not defect to the Germans and is not working now somewhere in the West.

The details of the Khreshchatyk epic could be covered only by the KGB, but it keeps a secret. And there remains a lot of unclear, unverified.] There are many rumors and legends: about some KGB suicide bomber who burst into the lobby of the Continental, turned on the fuses and died himself. About the fact that another suicide bomber blew up the Shantser cinema during the screening, when it was full of Germans, and so on. All this is difficult to verify.

[One thing is certain: the mines were laid thoroughly, deliberately, long before the capture of Kyiv by the Germans, and at least in their main part they had a detonation system that allowed them to be detonated selectively and at the scheduled time.

Witnesses who saw the delivery of explosives on NKVD trucks a month and a half before the explosions are alive. At that time it never occurred to them that these were mines, because the Germans were far from Kyiv, and the newspapers and radio choked, declaring that Kyiv would never be given to the enemy. But apparently the security authorities were better aware of the situation.

So why was Khreshchatyk blown up after all? I will express my opinion and the opinion of the majority of Kievans, and you judge for yourself.

The center, which belonged to the aristocracy, the bureaucracy and the Chekists themselves, was blown up. They, of course, did not want to leave their apartments, their easy chairs. And they decided to arrange a surprise. Having blown up Khreshchatyk together with the Germans, they rubbed their hands so maliciously that they did not even think of giving it a patriotic coloring, but immediately blamed the enemies.

This is the meaning of the words from their tortured certificate-confession: "These explosions made it clear to the arrogant fascist" conquerors "that they are not the owner of the occupied land."

Blowing up the peaceful Khreshchatyk, however, they really inflicted tangible military damage on the Germans, and the Soviet authorities never worried about the fact that three times as many civilians would die in this case. Moreover, according to Soviet concepts, people who remained in the occupied territory are not patriots, which means they are not people either.

The Chekists waited for five whole days, with their hands on the detonators, for more Germans to be stationed on Khreshchatyk in order to determine the order of the explosions. The commandant's office was blown up first. And these five days made it possible to blame everything on the Germans.

But there was one more, the most sinister aspect of Khreshchatyk: to anger the Germans so that, having become brutal, they would take off their clean gloves in dealing with the people. The state security of the USSR provoked the Germans to ruthlessness. Fortunately, in ruthlessness they were good students.

And the Germans fell for it. They also published their answer to Khreshchatyk five days later, namely, on September 29, 1941.]

No, they officially announced nothing in connection with Khreshchatyk and did not publicly execute anyone. [But they became gloomy and angry, smiles completely disappeared. It was creepy to look at them, sooty and preoccupied, and it looks like they were preparing for something.]

3.7 THE ORDER

On the morning of September 28, Ivan Svinchenko suddenly appeared to us from the village of Litvinovka. He was walking home from the encirclement.

He was a kind, simple-hearted and illiterate peasant, a great worker and the father of a large family. Before the war, coming from the village to the city to the market, he spent the night with his grandfather and grandmother. I never forgot some simple country guest, only I was shy about him, perhaps because he had

a speech impediment: sometimes in a conversation he choked, and then one indistinct muttering of “bala-bala” was heard. A very strange defect.

Like all the surrounding collective farmers, he had always been in some kind of rags before, dirty. But now he appeared so ragged, so terrible that it was difficult to recognize him. Somewhere he exchanged his military uniform for this rag.

Here’s what happened to him.

Together with his part, Ivan Svinchenko defended Kyiv, then the order came to retreat, and they crossed the Dnieper to its left bank, to Darnitsa. There they circled for a long time and senselessly through the forests and country roads, they were bombed, mowed down with machine guns from the air, none of the commanders had a clue what to do. Then the commanders generally disappeared somewhere, and everyone began to shout that they had to go home. Everyone had the feeling that the war was over.

But in the dense forest they came across partisans. They were led by the NKVD, and the partisans were well equipped, with wagons, food, had a lot of weapons, they scared the Germans and called to them. Ivan hated the emkavedists, and he became homesick.

- Then I waited, bala-bala, night - and duck! he explained.

For several days he walked through fields and forests, and the same ones wandered everywhere, not wanting to fight. And for what, one wonders - for the collective farms, for the Kolyma camps, for poverty? And around was native Ukraine, and quite, not far away somewhere - a hut, a wife and children. The Ukrainians went home, the Russians, whose houses were at the Soviets, wandered without knowing where, or looked for the Germans to surrender.

Ivan stumbled upon a column, about two hundred, who had surrendered. They were led by only two Germans, and even then, obviously unnecessary rifles hung on their shoulders. Ivan was added. The peasants received Ivan with laughter and whistling, they were glad that they fought back and were going to rest as prisoners. But this eccentric Ivan did not want to rest, but kept thinking about his family.

“Then I’m a troshka, bala-bala, hiding in a hole - and duck!”

The grandmother was feeding the starving Ivan, gasping compassionately. Grandfather was about to go outside on some business, but almost immediately stamped his feet on the porch and burst into the room:

- Congratulations! Well!.. Tomorrow there won’t be a single Jew in Kyiv anymore. Apparently, they say the truth, that it was they who burned down Khreshchatyk. Glory to you. God! Enough, fattened on our blood, infection. Let them now go to their Palestine, even though the Germans can handle them. They take them out! The order is up.

We all ran headlong into the street. On the fence was pasted a gray poster on bad wrapping paper, without a title and without a signature:

All Jews of the city of Kyiv and its environs
must report on Monday 29 September 1941
year by 8 o’clock in the morning at the corner of Mel-
nikovskaya and

Dokhturovskaya (near the cemeteries). Take with you
documents, money, valuables, as well as warm
clothes, underwear, etc.

Which of the Jews will not comply with this order
and will be found elsewhere, will be shot.

Which of the citizens will penetrate into the places left by the
Jews

apartments and appropriate things for himself, he will be
shot.*

*) Central State Archive of the October Revolution, Moscow.
Fund 7021, inventory 65, item 5.

Below was the same text in Ukrainian, even lower, in small
petite, in German, so that the poster turned out to be three-story.

I re-read it twice, and for some reason a chill went through
my skin. It is written very cruelly, with some kind of cold hatred.
Moreover, the day was cold, windy, the street was deserted. I did
not go to the house, but, excited, without knowing why, wandered
to the bazaar.

Three yards from us is a large yard of a collective vegetable
garden. There, mud huts, sheds, cowsheds were clung to one

another, and many Jews lived and worked there, miserable, dark, so miserable ... I looked in - there was a quiet panic in their yard, they rushed from hut to hut, dragging things.

Posters hung in other places. I stopped, re-read, still not understanding something.

Firstly, if they decided to take the Jews out, really, in retaliation for Kreshatik, then what does everyone have to do with it? Maybe some ten people blew up, and the rest should suffer for what? True, one can understand: the Germans cannot identify the arsonists, and then they decided to simply take everyone out. Cruel, but true?

Secondly, there are no Melnikovskaya and Dokhturovskaya streets in Kyiv, but there are Melnikova and Degtyarevskaya streets - the order was clearly composed by the Germans themselves and with bad translators. These streets are indeed near the Russian and Jewish cemeteries at Lukyanovka, and nearby is the Lukyanovka freight station. So they will be taken? But where? Really to Palestine, as the grandfather suggests?

But again, this is cruel: to expel thousands of people from their native places by force, to take them to where they have neither a stake nor a yard, and how many of them will fall ill and die on the way! And all because a few of them turned out to be arsonists?

Does this mean that Shurka Matza will also go? But his mother is Russian, and she divorced her father, and Shurka has not known her father for a long time, just like me. So, Shura will be taken alone? Mother will stay, but he will go? I felt sorry for him, sorry to part with him forever.

And suddenly - unexpectedly for myself, just somehow spontaneously - I thought in the words of my grandfather, even with his intonation and anger: "Ah! So what? So let them go to their Palestine. Enough fat! Here is Ukraine, and they, you see, have bred, settled down like bedbugs. And Shurka Matza is also a Jew, a mangy, cunning, mischievous one, how many books he has healed in me! Let them leave, it will be better without them, my grandfather is smart, grandfather is right."

So thinking, I reached the Kurenevsky police station, where my dad once served. Now the police were here. They put a

portrait of Hitler in the window. Hitler looked stern, almost ominous, he was in a decorated cap. And this cap was pulled over his very eyes.

Of course, I could not miss such an incredible sight as the removal of Jews from Kyiv. Waiting for dawn, I jumped out into the street.

They went out still dark so that they could be early at the train and take their seats. With roaring children, with old people and the sick, crying and quarreling, the Jewish population of the garden collective farm crawled out into the street. Knots intercepted by ropes, tattered plywood suitcases, patched purses, boxes with carpentry tools... The old women carried, thrown over their necks like giant necklaces, onion wreaths - a supply of provisions for the road...

You see, when everything is normal, all kinds of cripples, sick, old people sit at home, and they are not visible. But everyone was supposed to get out here - and they did.

I was shocked by how many sick and unfortunate people there are in the world.

In addition, one more circumstance. Healthy men were mobilized into the army, only the disabled remained. Those who could evacuate, those who had money, those who could leave with an enterprise or using connections, they left.

[One Kurenev salesman named Klotsman managed to leave with his family when Kyiv was surrounded. I don't know if it's true, but they say he paid fabulous money to some pilots, and they loaded him with things on the plane. (And after the war he came to Kurenevka alive and well).]

But the real Sholom Aleichem poor remained in the city, and now they crawled out into the streets.

"Why is that? I thought, immediately completely forgetting my yesterday's anti-Semitism. - No, this is cruel, unfair, and very sorry for Shurka Matsu; Why is he suddenly kicked out like a dog?! Let him heal books, is it because he is forgetful, and I myself - how many times have I unfairly beaten him?

In convulsive excitement, I darted from bunch to bunch, listened to the conversations, and the closer to Podol, the more people became on the streets. Residents stood at the gates and

entrances, looked, sighed, laughed or shouted curses at the Jews. One vicious old woman in a dirty headscarf suddenly ran out onto the pavement, snatched the suitcase from the old Jewish woman and ran into the yard. The Jewish woman screamed, but at the gate hefty mustachioed men blocked her way. She sobbed, cursed, complained, but no one stood up for her, and the crowd walked by, bowing their heads. I looked through the crack and saw that there was already a whole bunch of taken things in the yard.

Out of the corner of my ear I heard talk that somewhere here a specially hired cab was carrying the luggage of several families. He whipped his horse and drove it into the alley - and they did not catch up with him.

A solid crowd, a sea of heads, was going up Glubochitsa to Lukyanovka, the Jewish Podil was walking. Oh, this Podil!.. [This most flagrant district of Kyiv could be recognized by one heavy air - a mixture of rot, cheap fat and drying linen. Here from time immemorial lived Jewish poverty, erratic need: shoemakers, tailors, coal miners, tinsmiths, loaders, saddlers, speculators, thieves ... Courtyards without greenery, stinking garbage pits, rickety sheds full of huge fat rats, latrines with cesspools and swarms of flies, dusty and dirty streets, crumbling houses and damp basements - such was this noisy, fruitful and unhappy Podil.]

The noise and din made my head explode. All talk: where will they take them, how will they take them?

In one pile, only one could hear: "Ghetto, ghetto!" An agitated middle-aged woman approached, intervened: "Good people, this is death!" The old women wept as they sang. There was a rumor that the Karaites had passed somewhere here (I heard this word for the first time, it turns out that this is such a small Semitic people) - the ancient old men walked in chlamys to their heels, they spent the whole night in their Karaite synagogue, went out and preached: "Children we're going to die, get ready. Let us accept it courageously, as Christ did."

Someone was indignant: how can one sow panic like that! But it was already known that some woman poisoned her children and poisoned herself in order not to go. At the Opera House, a girl

jumped out of the window, lies covered with a sheet, and no one cleans her up.

Suddenly everyone became agitated, they started talking that ahead, on Melnikov Street, there was a cordon, they let them in, but not back.

Here I got scared. I was tired, my head was buzzing from all this, and I was afraid that I would not get back and they would take me away. He began to push through against the crowd, got out, then walked for a long time along the deserted streets - rare latecomers hurried along them almost at a run, whistled and hooted after them from the gate.

When I got home, I saw my grandfather. He stood in the middle of the yard, listening intently to some kind of shooting, raised his finger.

"And you know," he said in shock, "they don't take them out. They are being shot.

And then it hit me.

Distinct, measured shots from a machine gun rushed from Babi Yar: ta-ta-ta, ta-ta...

Quiet, calm, measured shooting, as in exercises. Our Babi Yar lies between Kurenevka and Lukyanovka, to get to the cemeteries, one has only to cross it. It turns out that they were driven from there, from Lukyanovka, into this ravine of ours.

The grandfather looked puzzled and frightened.

Maybe it's a shooting range? I suggested.

What a shooting range! Grandfather cried plaintively. - The whole Kurenevka is already talking, they climbed trees - they saw it. Victor Macedon came running - he saw off his Jewish wife, barely escaped, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, what is this, but why is it them?

We went to the house, but it was impossible to sit there. Shooting, shooting.

Grandfather went to Macedon to find out, there were a lot of people sitting there, and this guy (he got married just before the war) said that they were looking at passports and throwing them into the fire, and he shouted: "I'm Russian!", Then they torn his wife from him and led him to Yar, and the policeman kicked him out...

It was cold outside, the piercing wind still blew as it had yesterday.

I ran out and listened. Grandmother brought me a coat and hat, listened herself, wringing her hands, muttering: "God, there are women there, and little children . . ." It seemed to me that she was crying. He turned around - she was crossing herself, standing facing Babi Yar:

"Ochenash, joi si . . . in heaven—"

At night the shooting stopped, but in the morning it rose again. According to Kurenevka, they said that thirty thousand people were shot on the first day, the rest were sitting and waiting in line.

Grandma came from neighbors with news. A fourteen-year-old boy, the son of a collective farm groom, ran into the yard of the garden farm, telling horrors: that they undress everyone there, put several people in the back of the head over the ditches in order to kill many with one bullet; they put a pile of the dead, sprinkle them, then put them again, and there are many unfinished, so that the earth moves, and some crawl out, they are beaten on the head and, again, stuffed into the ground. But they did not notice him, he crawled out and ran.

• He must be hidden! Mom said. - In the trench.

"Sonny," the grandmother exclaimed, "run quickly, call him, feed him and shove him."

I hurried to the gardening.

But it was already too late. At the gate stood a cart drawn by a drooping horse, on which sat a German soldier with a whip. Another soldier, with a gun under his arm, was leading a pale boy out of the gate. Actually, he didn't even lead, but they somehow got out nearby.

They approached the cart, sat on it on both sides, and the soldier even moved the hay to make the boy more comfortable. He put the gun in the hay, and the boy lay sideways, leaning on his elbow. His large brown eyes calmly and indifferently slid over me.

The soldier waved his whip, smacked his lips, and the cart started off - so simply and casually, as if they had gone to the meadow to mow hay.

The women in the yard were arguing loudly, I went up and listened. Some were outraged, others objected:

- She did the right thing. Suffocate them all. This is for Khreshchatyk!

A single Russian woman lived on the collective farm and worked as a cowgirl. The boy from Yar ran to his apartment. She saw him, burst into tears, listened to his story, put a jug of milk on the table, ordered to sit quietly, not to go out so that no one would see, then went to the police - and declared. Moreover, when she returned, she guarded until the cart with the Germans arrived.

In those days, a woman, a mother of two children, an actress of the Kiev Puppet Theater Dina Mironovna Pronicheva, escaped from the Babi Yar ravine itself. This is the only witness that came out of there. I am quoting her story, which I personally wrote down from her words, without adding anything.

3.8 BABI YAR

She went to read the order, quickly read it and left: no one lingered at the leaflets with the order for a long time and there were no conversations.

All day and evening there were discussions and suggestions. She had a father and mother, already decrepit, her mother left the hospital after the operation before the arrival of the Germans, so everyone thought: how can she go? The old people were sure that in Lukyanovka everyone would be put on a train and taken to Soviet territory.

Dina's husband was Russian, her surname is Russian, in addition, and her appearance is not at all Jewish. Dina looked more like a Ukrainian and knew the Ukrainian language. They argued, wondered, thought, and decided that the old people would go, and Dina would see them off, put them on the train, and she herself would stay with the children - and come what may.

His father was a glazier, he and his mother lived on Turgenevskaya, house 27. Dina and her children lived on Vorovskogo, house 41.

She went home late, tried to sleep, but did not sleep that night. They were running around the yard all the time, stomping: they were catching one girl from this house. This girl escaped in the attic, then tried to go down the fire escape, male voices shouted: "There she is!"

The fact is that before the arrival of the Germans, this girl said:

- They will never enter Kyiv, and if they enter, I will douse the house with kerosene and set it on fire.

So now the janitor's wife remembered this and, fearing that she would really set it on fire, told the Germans, and just that night she was caught.

It was a dreary, tense, eerie night. Dean was shaking all over. She didn't know if that girl had been captured or not.

When it began to get light, she washed her face, combed her hair, took the documents and went to the old people on Turgenevskaya - it's nearby. The streets were unusually crowded; everyone was busily hurrying with things.

She was with her parents at seven o'clock in the morning. The whole house did not sleep. Those leaving said goodbye to their neighbors, promised to write, entrusted them with apartments, things, keys.

The old people couldn't carry much, they didn't have any valuables, they just took what they needed and food. Dina put a backpack on her back, and at eight o'clock in the morning they left.

A lot of people were walking along Turgenevskaya, but Artyom Street was already full of pandemonium. People with bundles, with carriages, various gigs, carts, occasionally even trucks - all this stood still, then moved a little, stood still again.

There was a strong conversation, the rumble of the crowd, and it looked like a demonstration, when the streets were also crowded with people, but there were no flags, orchestras and celebrations.

It's strange with these trucks: where did they get them from? It used to be that the whole house folded up and hired transport for things, and so they all kept to the sides of their cart or truck. Among the bundles and suitcases lay the sick, the children sat

in clusters. Infants were sometimes carried in twos, threes in one stroller.

There were a lot of people seeing off: neighbors, friends, relatives, Ukrainians and Russians, helped carry things, led the sick, and even carried them on their backs.

All this procession moved very slowly, and Artyom Street is very long. German soldiers were standing at one of the gates, watching, especially at the girls. Apparently, they liked Dina, they began to call her into the yard, showing that, they say, they need to wash the floors:

- Who is yours!

She waved it off. For a very, very long time, this buzzing procession, this “demonstration” with hustle, talk and children’s crying, lasted for a stupefyingly long time. Dina was in a fur coat, she felt hot.

Only somewhere in the afternoon we reached the cemeteries. She remembers that to the right was a long brick wall of a Jewish cemetery with a gate.

Here, across the street, there was a wire fence, there were anti-tank hedgehogs - with a passage in the middle, and there were chains of Germans with badges on their chests, as well as Ukrainian policemen in black uniforms with gray cuffs.

A very tall, active man in an embroidered Ukrainian shirt, with a Cossack hanging mustache, very conspicuous, ordered at the entrance. The crowd poured into the passage past him, but no one came back, only occasionally, empty cabs drove by shouting: they had already unloaded things somewhere and now they were yelling against the crowd, yelling, brandishing whips, this created a flea market and swearing.

Everything was very incomprehensible. Dina sat the old people at the cemetery gates, and she herself went to see what was going on ahead.

Like many others, she still thought there was a train there. Some kind of close shooting was heard, a plane was circling low in the sky, and in general there was an anxious and panic mood around.

In the crowd, snippets of conversations:

This is war, war! We are taken away, where it is quieter.

Why only Jews?

Some grandmother suggested in a very authoritative voice:

- Well, because they are a nation related to the Germans, they decided to take them out in the first place.

Dina pushed her way through the crowd with difficulty, becoming more and more worried, and then she saw that everyone was stacking things in front. Various clothes, bundles and suitcases in a pile to the left, all products to the right.

And the Germans send everyone further in parts: they send a group, they wait, then after some interval they let them through again, count, count . . . stop. As it happens, dozens of people pass the line to the store for chintz.

Again conversations in noise and din:

- Yeah, things go, of course, luggage: we'll sort it out on the spot.
- What can we figure out there, such an abyss of things, they will simply be divided equally among everyone, so you will not have rich and poor.

Dina was terrified. Nothing like a railway station. She did not yet know what it was, but with all her heart she felt that this was not export. Anything but export.

Especially strange were these close machine-gun bursts. She still could not even think that this was an execution. First, such huge masses of people! It doesn't happen. And then - why?!

It can be confidently assumed that the majority felt the same as Dina, felt something was wrong, but continued to cling to this "we are being taken out" for another reason.

[When the order came out, nine Jews out of ten had never heard of any fascist atrocities against the Jews.

Until the war, Soviet newspapers only praised and extolled Hitler, the best friend of the Soviet Union, and did not report anything about the situation of Jews in Germany and Poland. Among Kiev Jews one could even find enthusiastic admirers of Hitler as a talented statesman.

On the other hand,] the old people told how the Germans were in Ukraine in 1918, and then they did not touch the Jews,

on the contrary, they treated them quite well, because - a similar language and all that ...

The old people said:

- The Germans are different, but in general they are cultured and decent people, this is not wild Russia for you, this is Europe - and European decency.

Or such - already absolutely fresh - the fact. Two days ago, some people on Vorovskogo Street seized the apartment of an evacuated Jewish family. The relatives who remained in the house went to the headquarters of the nearest German unit and complained. Immediately an officer appeared, sternly ordered the apartment to be vacated and kindly bowed to the Jews: "Please, everything is in order." It was literally the day before yesterday, and everyone saw it, and rumors immediately spread about it. But the Germans are very consistent and logical, something, and they always differed in consistency.

But if this is not export, then what is being done here?

Dina says that at that moment she felt only some kind of animal horror and fog - a state incomparable to anything.

People were stripped of warm clothes. The soldier went up to Dina, quickly and without a word deftly took off her fur coat.

Here she rushed back. She found the old men at the gate, told what she had seen. Father said:

"Daughter, we don't need you anymore. Leave. She went to the fence. There were quite a few people here trying to be let out. The crowd surged forward. The mustachioed man in the embroidered shirt was still shouting and ordering. Everyone called him "Pan Shevchenko." Maybe it was his real name, maybe someone called him that because of his mustache, but it sounded pretty wild, like "Pan Pushkin", "Pan Dostoevsky". Dina pushed her way to him and began to explain that she was seeing him off, that she had children left in the city, she asked to be let out.

He asked for a passport. She got it. He looked at the column "nationality" and exclaimed:

- Hey, yid! Back!

Then Dina finally understood: they were shooting.

Convulsively, she began to tear the passport into small pieces. She threw them at her feet, to the left, to the right. She went

back to the old people, but did not say anything to them, so as not to excite them prematurely.

Although she was already without a fur coat, she became very stuffy. There were a lot of people around, a dense crowd, evaporation; lost children roar; some, sitting on knots, dine. She also thought, "How can they eat? Do they still not understand?"

Then they began to command, shout, they raised everyone who was sitting, moved them further, and the back ones pressed in - some kind of unthinkable line turned out. Some things are put here, other things are put there, pushing, lining up. In this chaos, Dina lost her old people, looked out, saw that they were being sent further in a group, and the queue stopped in front of Dina.

Were standing. We waited. She craned her neck to understand where her father and mother were being taken. Suddenly a huge German came up and offered:

Come sleep with me and I'll let you out.

She looked at him like he was crazy, he walked away. Finally, her group began to pass.

The conversation died down, everyone was silent, as if numb, and for quite a long time they walked in silence, and the Nazis stood in ranks on the sides. Ahead appeared chains of soldiers with dogs on leashes. Behind her she heard:

- My children, help me to pass, I am blind. She grabbed the old man by the waist and walked with him.

"Grandfather, where are they taking us?" she asked.

"Baby," he said, "we are going to pay our last debt to God."

At that moment they entered a long passage between two lines of soldiers and dogs. This corridor was narrow, a meter and a half. The soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder, their sleeves were rolled up, and they all carried rubber clubs or large sticks.

And blows rained down on the passing people.

It was impossible to hide or dodge. The most severe blows, immediately breaking into blood, rained down on the heads, on the backs and shoulders on the left and on the right. The soldiers shouted "Schnel! Schnel!" and laughed merrily, as if they were having fun with an attraction, they contrived somehow to hit

harder in vulnerable places, under the ribs, in the stomach, in the groin.

Everyone screamed, the women screamed. Like a frame in a movie, it flashed before Dina: a familiar guy from her street, very intelligent, well-dressed, was crying.

She saw that people were falling. The dogs were immediately lowered on them. A man was picked up with a cry, but some remained on the ground, and they pushed from behind, and the crowd went straight over the bodies, trampling them.

Dina's head went dark from all this. She straightened up, raised her head high and walked like a wooden one, without bending. It seems that she was crippled, but she felt and thought badly, she had only one knock: "Do not fall, do not fall."

Crazed people poured out onto a space cordoned off by troops - a kind of square overgrown with grass. All the grass was strewn with linen, shoes, clothes.

Ukrainian policemen, judging by the accent - not local, but clearly from the west of Ukraine, roughly grabbed people, beat them, shouted:

- Get loose! Shvidko! Fast! Schnell!

Those who hesitated were stripped of their clothes by force, kicked, with brass knuckles, clubs, intoxicated with anger, in some kind of sadistic rage.

Obviously, this was done so that the crowd could not come to their senses. Many naked people were covered in blood.

From the side of the group of naked and being taken away somewhere, Dina heard her mother shouting to her, waving her hand:

"Daughter, you are not the same! Save yourself! They were stolen. Dina resolutely approached the policeman and asked where the commandant was. She said that she was seeing off, got by accident.

He demanded documents. She began to get out of her purse, but he took the purse himself, reviewed it all. There was money, a work book, a trade union card, where nationality is not indicated. The surname "Pronicheva" convinced the policeman. He did not return the purse, but pointed to a hillock where a bunch of people were sitting:

- Sit down. Let's shoot the Zhidiv - todi let out.

Dina went to the hillock and sat down. Everyone here was silent, dazed. She was afraid to raise her face: what if someone here recognizes her, completely by accident, and shouts: "She is a Jewess!" These people will stop at nothing to save themselves. So she tried not to look at anyone, and no one looked at her. Only the grandmother sitting next to her in a fluffy knitted scarf quietly complained to Dina that she had seen off her daughter-in-law and now she got ... And she herself is Ukrainian, not Jewish at all, and who would have thought that this would come out with this seeing off.

Here everyone was seeing off.

So they sat, and right in front of them, as if on a stage, this nightmare was happening: batch after batch of screeching, beaten people fell out of the corridor, they were received by the policemen, beaten, undressed - and so on endlessly.

Dina assures that some laughed hysterically, that she saw with her own eyes how several people, during the time that they undressed and went to be shot, became gray-haired in front of their eyes.

Naked people were built in small chains and led into a slot hastily dug in a steep sandy wall. What was behind it was not visible, but shooting was coming from there, and only Germans and policemen returned from there, for new chains.

Mothers especially fussed over the children, so from time to time some German or policeman, getting angry, snatched the child from the mother, approached the sandy wall and, swinging, threw it over the ridge like a log.

Dina seemed to be seized by hoops, she sat for a long, long time, pulling her head into her shoulders, afraid to look at her neighbors, because they were all arriving. She no longer perceived any screams or shooting.

It began to get dark.

Suddenly an open car drove up, and in it was a tall, slender, very elegant officer with a glass in his hand. It looked like he was in charge here. Next to him was a Russian translator.

- Who are they? the officer asked the policeman through an interpreter, pointing to a hillock where about fifty people were already sitting.

“Tse our people,” the policeman answered. “We didn’t know, we need to let them out. The officer will shout:

- Shoot immediately! If at least one of them comes out of here and tells about the city, tomorrow not a single Jew will come.

The translator conscientiously translated this to the policeman, and the people on the hillock sat and listened.

- Well, write! Let’s go! Get up! the policemen shouted.

The people got up like they were drunk. The time was already late, maybe that’s why this party was not undressed, but they were led dressed through the slot.

Dina was in the second ten. We passed the corridor of the pit, and a sand pit with almost sheer walls opened up. It was already dark. Dina didn’t get a good look at this quarry. Everyone was sent in single file, quickly, in a hurry, to the left - along a very narrow ledge.

There was a wall on the left, a pit on the right, and the ledge, obviously, was cut out specifically for execution, and it was so narrow that, walking along it, people instinctively pressed against the sandy wall so as not to fall off.

Dina looked down, and her head began to spin—it seemed so high to her. Below was a sea of bloodied bodies. On the opposite side of the quarry, she managed to make out the mounted light machine guns, and there were several German soldiers. They burned a fire on which they brewed, it seems, coffee.

When the whole chain was driven onto the ledge, one of the Germans separated from the fire, took up a machine gun and began to shoot.

Dina not only saw, but felt how bodies fell from the ledge and how the track of bullets was approaching her. It flashed through her: "Now I . . . Now!" Without waiting, she threw herself down, clenching her fists.

It seemed to her that she had been flying for an eternity, it was probably really high. When she fell, she did not feel any blow

or pain. At first she was covered with warm blood, and blood ran down her face, as if she had fallen into a bath of blood. She lay with her arms outstretched, her eyes closed.

I heard some uterine sounds, groans, hiccups, crying around and from under me: there were many unfinished. All this mass of bodies moved slightly noticeably, settling, condensing from the movement of the littered living.

The soldiers entered the ledge and began to shine down with flashlights, firing pistols at those who seemed to them alive. But not far from Dina, someone was still moaning heavily.

She heard walking nearby, already over the corpses. It was the Germans who descended, bent down, took something off the dead, from time to time shooting at the moving ones.

A policeman walked right there, looked at her documents and took her purse: she recognized him by his voice.

One SS man stumbled upon Dina, and she seemed suspicious to him. He shone a flashlight, lifted her up and began to beat. But she hung like a sack and showed no signs of life. He jabbed her in the chest with his boot, stepped on her right hand so that the hand crunched, but did not shoot, and went, balancing, over the corpses further.

A few minutes later she heard a voice from upstairs:

— Demidenko! Come on guess!

Shovels rattled, there were heard the dull blows of sand on the bodies, getting closer, and finally piles of sand began to fall on Dina.

She was flummoxed, but she did not move until her mouth filled up. She lay face up, inhaled sand, choked, and then, almost without thinking, floundered in wild horror, ready to be shot rather than buried alive.

With her left, healthy hand, she began to rake sand from herself, choked, was about to cough, and with all her strength she suppressed this cough in herself. She felt better. Finally she got out of the ground.

They are up there, these Ukrainian policemen, apparently tired, after a hard day, they dug, lazily and only lightly sprinkled, abandoned their shovels and left. Dina's eyes were full of sand. Pitch darkness, heavy meaty spirit from the mass of fresh corpses.

Dina identified the nearest sandy wall, for a long, long time, cautiously approached it, then stood up and began to make holes with her left hand. So clinging to this wall, she made holes, rising span by span, every second risking breaking.

There was a bush at the top, she groped for it, desperately clung to it, and when she was over the edge, she heard a quiet voice, from which she almost rushed back:

- Uncle! Don't be afraid, I'm alive too. It was a boy, in a T-shirt and shorts, he got out, like her. The boy was trembling.
- Shut up! she hissed at him. - Follow me.

And they crawled somewhere, silently, without a sound.

They crawled for an extremely long time, slowly, bumping into cliffs, turning, and crawling, apparently, all night, because it began to get light. Then they found the bushes and climbed into them.

They were on the edge of a large ravine. Not far away we saw the Germans, who came and began to sort things, put them together. They also had dogs on leashes. Sometimes trucks came for things, but more often they were just horse-riding grounds.

When it dawned, they saw an old woman running, followed by a boy of six years old, who shouted: "Grandma, I'm afraid!" But the old woman waved him off. They were overtaken by two German soldiers and shot: first the old woman, then the baby.

Then, on the opposite side of the ravine, about seven Germans brought two young women. They descended lower into the ravine, chose a level place and began to rape these women in turn. Satisfied, they stabbed the women with daggers, so that they did not cry out, and the corpses were left like that, naked, with their legs spread out.

The Germans constantly passed either below or above, talking. All the time there was shooting somewhere nearby. So much shooting that it began to seem to Dina as if she had always been, and did not stop at all, that she had been at night.

She and the boy lay, forgot, woke up. The boy said that his name was Motya, that he had no one left, that he fell with his father when they shot. He was pretty, with beautiful eyes that

looked at Dina as a savior. She thought that if she managed to escape, she would adopt him.

By evening, she began to hallucinate: her father, mother, sister came to her. They were in long white coats, all laughing and somersaulting. When Dina woke up, Motya was sitting over her and plaintively said:

“Aunt, don’t die, don’t leave me.

It was with great difficulty that she realized where she was. As it became dark again, they got out of the bushes and crawled on. In the afternoon, Dina charted a path: along a large meadow to a grove that could be seen in the distance. Sometimes she forgot, rose, then Motya clung to her, pressed her to the ground.

It seems that she was losing consciousness, because one day she fell into a ravine. They did not eat or drink for more than a day, but the thought did not come to them. It was some kind of shock.

So they crawled for another night, until it began to get light. There were bushes ahead, in which they decided to hide, and Motya climbed up to scout. They did this many times, and if everything is all right there, Motya should have moved the bush. But he screamed piercingly:

Aunt, don’t crawl, the Germans are here!

And shots rang out. He was killed on the spot. Fortunately for her, the Germans did not understand what Motya was shouting. She crawled back, found herself among some sand. She made a hole, then carefully covered it up with a mound, imagining that she was burying Motya, her companion, and wept. She was already insane.

It was dawning, and Dina found herself sitting, swaying, right on the road, that on the left there were fences, an alley, a garbage dump.

She crawled to the dump, buried herself in the garbage, threw all kinds of rags, boxes on herself, put a tattered basket on her head - a “string” to breathe under it.

She lay like that, hiding. Once the Germans passed by, stopped, lit a cigarette.

Right in front of her, on the edge of the garden, she saw two green tomatoes. You had to crawl to get them. It was only then that she wanted to drink, and the torment began.

She tried to think about anything, closed her eyes, convinced herself, ordered her not to think, and she, like a magnet, was turned towards the tomatoes. She did not get out and lay until dark.

Only in complete darkness she got out, felt for the tomatoes, ate them and crawled again on her stomach. She had already crawled so much that she seemed to have forgotten how to walk on her feet.

She crawled for a long time, fell into a trench with barbed wire, and forgot herself. In the morning I saw a hut, behind it a barn and decided to climb into this barn. It wasn't locked, but as soon as she got in, a dog barked in the yard. The neighboring dogs barked. It seemed to her that hundreds of dogs were barking - she did not need this noise so much.

The sleepy hostess came out and shouted:

- Quiet, Ryabko!

She looked into the barn and saw Dinah. The hostess looked gloomy, and when she began to ask who Dina was and why she was here. Dina suddenly began to lie that she was coming from digging trenches, from afar, she got lost, she decided to spend the night in a barn. She asked for directions to the city commandant.

- And where are you bula?
- At Bily Church.
- At Bily Church? And otse here - the road from Biloy Church? Oh well. . .

Dina's appearance was, of course, terrible: all in dried blood, in mud and sand, she lost her shoes in a quarry, her stockings were torn.

The neighbors came out to the noise, gradually surrounded Dina, looked at her. The hostess called her son, a boy of about sixteen.

- Vanka, ides drives him, we will show the way at once.

Dina stood and understood that she could not run - she had no strength, and then these women would scream, let the dogs go. They called the hostess Lizaveta.

The Germans, apparently, were close, because Vanko almost immediately brought an officer.

- Axis, sir, Yuda!

The officer looked at Dina, nodded:

— Com.

And went ahead along the path. Dean is behind him. He didn't say anything, just looked to see if she was coming. She folded her arms across her chest, clenched, she felt cold, her right arm ached - it was covered in blood, her legs ached - they were broken.

We entered a one-story brick house, where two dozen soldiers were having breakfast, drinking coffee from aluminum mugs. Dina wanted to sit on a chair in the corner, but the officer shouted - then she sat down on the floor.

Soon the Germans began to take rifles and disperse. There was only one soldier left - the orderly. He walked, cleaned, showed Dina to a chair: sit down, they say, nothing.

She moved to a chair. The soldier looked out the window and handed Dina a rag, indicating that she should wipe the glass. The window was large, almost the length of the wall, with frequent bindings, as on a veranda. And then, through the window, Dina saw that she was crawling around and around Yar and again ended up in the same place from which she had fled.

The soldier began to speak softly. Dina understood him, but he thought that she did not understand, and tried his best to explain:

“You understand a little. The leadership is gone. I give you a rag to run away. You wipe the window and look out the window where to escape. But understand, dummkopf, you stupid head!

He spoke sympathetically. Dina thought it didn't sound like a provocation. But then she was in such a state that she no longer believed anything. Just in case, she turned her head in an uncomprehending look.

Annoyed, the soldier thrust a broom into her and sent her to sweep the neighboring house, where there was no one at all. Dina rushed about, ready to run, but there was noise and crying.

An officer appeared with Vanka, Lizaveta's son, leading two girls fifteen or sixteen years old.

The girls screamed, sobbed, threw themselves on the ground and tried to kiss the officer's boots, begged to be forced to do whatever they wanted, to sleep with them, but not to shoot them.

They were in the same clean dark dresses, with pigtails.

We are from the orphanage! they shouted. We don't know who we are by nationality. They brought us breastfeeding!

The officer watched them roll and moved his legs away. He told them and Dina to follow him.

They went out to the square where they undressed. There were still heaps of clothes and shoes lying around. Behind things, on the sidelines, sat thirty or forty old men, old women and sick people. True, these were the remains fished out from the apartments.

One old woman lay paralyzed, wrapped in a blanket.

Dina and the girls were put in with them. The girls were crying quietly.

They were sitting under some kind of ledge, and a sentry with a machine gun was walking up and down the ledge. Dina watched him from under her brows, as he moved away, then approached. He noticed this, became nervous, and suddenly shouted furiously, in German:

— What are you watching? Do not look at me! I can't do anything for you. I also have children!

A girl in a tunic and overcoat sat down next to her - she saw that Dina was shivering from the cold, and covered her with an overcoat. They spoke quietly. The girl's name was Lyuba, she was nineteen years old, she served as a nurse and was surrounded.

A truck with Soviet prisoners of war drove up, everyone had shovels. The old people were terrified: would they really be buried alive? But one of the prisoners looked from a distance, said:

- What a score.

Everyone was lifted up and driven into the back of the same truck. Two soldiers lifted the old woman in a blanket and, like a log, thrust her into the truck, where they picked her up.

The body was open, with high sides. One German sat in the cab, the other in the back, and four policemen fit on the sides.

They took me somewhere.

It was hard to see any famous German logic or sequence in this: some were undressed, others were not, some were finished off, others were left to die slowly, those were brought here, those from here . . .

The truck arrived at Melnikova Street, where there was a large car fleet. Many gates of garages and workshops overlooked the spacious courtyard. They opened one gate - it turned out that it was full of people like herrings, they screamed, choked, and fell out of the gate. Among others, an old woman fell out and immediately began to urinate under the door. The German screamed and shot her in the head with a pistol.

A paralyzed old woman in a blanket was taken out of the back and thrust into the garage right over her head. With difficulty, amid screams and squeals, the Germans pulled themselves together and closed these gates, rolling in the corpse of the murdered woman, and began to anxiously say among themselves that there were no places.

It was here that the crowd was driven from the street for the night, and it was here that people sat for several days, waiting in line for execution.

Dina understood German speech, listened and thought: what's next?

The car began to reverse out of the yard. The German jumped off the body, four policemen remained: two at the cab, two at the sides, but they did not sit at the very rear side, but closer to the middle. They looked tired, but not angry.

Dina and Lyuba began to agree: we must jump.

If they shoot, let them. At least there will be a quick death, and not wait in line.

Let's go fast. Lyuba covered Dina from the wind with an overcoat. Looped through the streets. We ended up on Shulyavka, moving somewhere to the Brest-Litovsk highway.

Covered with an overcoat. Dina rolled over the tailgate and jumped at high speed. She fell, smashed into blood on the pavement, but she was not noticed from the car. Or maybe they didn't want to notice?

Passers-by surrounded her. She began to mutter that she was driving, she had to get off at the bazaar, but the driver did not

understand, she decided to jump off . . . She was believed and not believed, but around her she saw human eyes. She was quickly taken to the yard.

Half an hour later she was with her brother's wife, a Pole by nationality. All night they heated water and soaked a shirt on her body, stuck in wounds.

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D. M. Pronicheva was then many times on the verge of death, hiding in the ruins, in Darnitsa, then in the villages under the name of Nadia Savchenko. Her children were saved by people, she searched for them for a long time and found them at the very end of the war. In 1946, she was a witness for the prosecution at the Kiev trial of fascist atrocities in Ukraine. [But because of the rampant anti-Semitism that soon followed, she began to hide the fact that she had escaped from Babi Yar, she again hid that she was a Jewess, again the surname "Pronicheva" helped her out.]

She returned to the Kyiv Puppet Theater, where she still works as an actress-puppeteer. [It cost me a lot of work to convince her to tell how she, the only one of the 70,000 Jews shot in September 1941, managed to escape, she did not believe that it could be published and that anyone needed it. Her story lasted several days and was punctuated by heart attacks. It was in the same house on Vorovsky Street, from where she left for Babi Yar, in an old crumbling room.

Only in 1968, D. M. Pronicheva managed to secure a small apartment in a new house, and she sent me a letter, where she wrote that after the publication of this book, a resident of Kiev came to her, saying that he, too, had escaped from the Yar. He was just a child then and got out, like Motya, he was hidden by the Ukrainian family, he adopted their last name, he has "Ukrainian" in his passport, and he never told anyone that he was from Babi Yar. Judging by the details that he remembers, his story is true. But he just sat there, remembered, and left without naming himself.]

3.9 CHAPTER OF MEMORIES

Cannibals

The biggest famine in the history of Ukraine was under Soviet rule in 1933. This is the first meaningful memory of my life.

Grandmother kneaded hominy in a wooden trough, I spun around to see if a piece would drop. And the father, haggard and tired, sat on a stool and told.

He had just returned from Uman, where he carried out collectivization. Earlier, when he came, he brought flour, pots of honey, then he stopped; and this time brought nothing.

“Well, we drove the peasants into the collective farms with revolvers,” my father said. But they don’t want to work. They put their hands down and do nothing. The cattle died, the fields remained unsown, overgrown with weeds. Talking to people, negotiating - there is no way. Closed, stupid, silent, as if not people. We drive to the meeting - they are silent, we order them to disperse - they disperse. In general, I found a scythe on a stone. We them: collective farms or death. They are on it: death is better. They say: Lenin promised us land, for this there was a revolution. And this one thing has been hammered out, and they stand on it. Some unthinkable, half-witted peasant strike, nothing else to eat...

- Lord, - the grandmother groaned, - so what did you eat there?

“We, the communists, were given coupons so that they would not die, a little bit to the village activists, too, but what THEY eat is incomprehensible to the mind. There are no more frogs, mice, not a single cat left, grass, straw are chopped, pine bark is stripped, ground into dust and cakes are baked from it. Cannibalism at every turn.

- Cannibalism! God! How is it?
- Very simple. Let’s say we are sitting in the village council, suddenly a village activist runs, informs: in such and such a hut a girl is being eaten. We are going, we take weapons, we go to this hut. The whole family is at home, only there is no daughter. Sleepy sit, full. The house smells deliciously cooked. The stove is hot, the pots are in it.

I start asking:

- Where is your daughter?
- The city is quiet . . .
- Why did you go?
- Krama (Fabric -Ukr.) Buy on the dress.

— What about in the oven in pots?

- That cool . . .

I turn this "kulish" inside out into a bowl - meat, meat, a hand with nails floats in fat.

- Pack up, let's go.

They obediently gather like sleepy flies, already completely insane. They're coming. What to do with them next? Theoretically - it is necessary to judge. But in Soviet laws there is no such article - about cannibalism! It is possible - for murder, so how much fuss is there for the courts, and then hunger - is this a mitigating circumstance, or not? In general, we let down the instructions: to decide on the ground. We take them out of the village, turn somewhere in the field, into a beam, slap them in the back of the head with a pistol, lightly sprinkle them with earth. Then the wolves will eat. [The famine was caused artificially, by order of Stalin. All stocks were requisitioned from the peasants who resisted collectivization. Many villages died out to the last person. At railway stations, in the cities, thousands of swollen and dying peasants lay, who fled from the villages in search of bread. Based on census figures, eyewitness accounts, and other data, the researchers find that the death toll was in excess of 7 million. Stalin, in a conversation with Churchill, dropped the phrase that he then needed to eliminate the resistance of 10 million opponents: "Ten million," he said, raising his hands. - It was scary. It went on for four years." (Winston Churchill. World War II. London, 1951. Volume 4, Book 2, p. 447.)]

Who brought the Christmas tree?

My childhood was surrounded by lies.

I went to study in the first grade of the school in the historic year 1937 (at that time they began to study at the age of eight).

The building was ancient, dilapidated, there were fifty students in the classes, classes were going on in three shifts.

We sang a song about a goat and learned the letter "O". My mother taught me to read and write from the age of four. I was bored in class because I read like a machine gun, I had already read the main novels of Hugo and Zola's *Reproduction*, where I was especially shocked by the fact that the surgical prevention of pregnancy leads a woman to premature old age. There, a woman is condemned who did not want to become pregnant, but only to sleep freely with men and have fun, and the doctor cut something out of her, and after a few years she became an old woman. I was very sorry for this woman, but for some reason the sugary picture of a monstrous large family, which Zola painted as a model, seemed to me even more disgusting. I decided to myself that when I grow up, I will never marry a matron, fertile as a fat female silkworm, but I will walk, sleep and have fun.

On the holiday of the 20th anniversary of the revolution, we moved to a new school. She stood on our Kurenevka among the crooked houses and merchants' mansions, like Gulliver among the Lilliputians - with huge windows, columns, wide staircases, a true symbol of the new, a living example of the care of the party and personally Comrade Stalin.

We little bedbugs were constantly told this in class. We moved to a new school with banners, drumming and songs about our beloved Stalin. We were taken in trucks to demonstrations, where we squealed "Hurrah!"

Movies were shown free of charge in the school hall on Saturdays. We first-graders took the best places on the floor under the screen and watched with our heads up, our mouths gaping.

No one knew in advance what kind of movie would be, because boxes with films were brought in at the very last moment. Because of this, there were inconsistencies. So, one of the first showed a picture, the plot of which was like this.

A young shock worker, a member of the Komsomol, marries a backward middle-class girl. Belongs to a bourgeois family. Stormy scenes of struggle between communist and petty-bourgeois ideologies. The young husband leaves home and spends

the night with a friend. During this time, the heroine's aged father wipes away her tears and then sleeps with her, resulting in the birth of a child. The young husband finds out about this at the machine, performing another shock norm. He puzzles: from whom is the child? Because of this, he makes a marriage and does not fulfill the norm. The title and the end of the movie didn't stay in my memory, but it made a deep impression on all of us, who sat in the front rows on the floor.

Opposite the school, a children's agrotechnical station was opened, and various aunts came to enroll in young naturalists in order to grow unprecedented crops according to the method of Academician Lysenko. Zhorik Gorokhovskiy and I signed up immediately, we were given a piece of land and a bag of peanuts. Unfortunately, we tried it and could not stop until we had eaten all of it. They looked at each other and, without saying a word, fled forever, sacrificing the career of Lysenko's followers.

In the old mansion, a children's technical station was opened - DTS - with circles of photography, radio, aircraft modeling, and we signed up for a photo circle. The first job that the manager assigned us was a photograph of a bust of Stalin.

Sidewalks were asphalted on our crooked and nasty street, at that time it was a real miracle.

The newspapers reported that, at the suggestion of Postyshev, an outstanding Stalinist ally, a new holiday was being introduced - the New Year with a Christmas tree. Until that time, since the revolution, there had been no Christmas tree, and for us kids, it was a discovery. A Christmas tree was set up in the new school, the girls portrayed snowflakes, I recited poems about Frost, who patrols his possessions. And in conclusion we sang a song that was printed in the newspaper and ended with the words:

"And Postyshev brought us this wonderful Christmas tree."

Grandma said:

- It's Christmas. Christmas tree Jesus Christ brought. I objected:

— No, Postyshev. There is no Jesus Christ and never was! It was the Soviet government that gave the children a Christmas tree.

“You are a puppy,” said the grandmother, and we had a violent quarrel. Mom said:

- Here, Tolya, how lucky you are. Just went to study - they built a new school for you, opened an agricultural station and a road transport station, introduced a Christmas tree, even laid asphalt for you - just study. You use it and learn, but just read more, read and read, there is wisdom in books.

However, it soon became clear that not all wisdom is in books. Once, during a lesson, we were told to open our textbooks at the page with Postyshev’s portrait and to tear this page out: Postyshev turned out to be an enemy of the people.

And they shot him, even though he brought a Christmas tree. For our children’s brains, this was a shock, but they didn’t even let us figure it out, they immediately made it a system, something ordinary and familiar. Now they were ordered to tear out new pages, then - to thickly smear some lines and names with ink. Ruining textbooks was even fun, everyone liked it terribly.

One day, during a lesson, the door of the class suddenly flung open, the excited director, the head teacher and the party organizer came in, commanded:

- Notebooks - on the desks!

A bouquet of flowers was printed on the covers of beauty notebooks. All notebooks with a bouquet were immediately taken away and taken to the boiler room, where they were burned in a firebox. The school phone was ringing with calls from the city government: have all the notebooks been seized? It turned out that a disguised royal crown was found among the flowers. As in a mysterious picture: "Where is the hunter?" - leaves, strokes, curls, and if you turn upside down and trace some lines with a pencil, then in a lurid bouquet, if you wish, you could find a crown. Or maybe a horse... And they said that many people were arrested for this damned notebook, and they disappeared to no one knows where.

Burning books

- Well, - said my mother, - tear this book, put it in the stove and kindle it.

We had a lot of books, my mother collected them and constantly bought new ones. And so she began to review them, foot by foot, and send them to the oven. Books burn for a long time and stubbornly, they must be stirred with a poker. The weather was warm, and soon it became hot from the red-hot stove, we had to open the windows - and it was still stuffy.

I have already read quite a lot of our books, like this very "Reproduction" by Zola, but I have not had time to do more. It was especially pitiful for the magnificently illustrated, bound annual sets of "Foreign Literature" from 1890 to 1910, "Russian History in Pictures" printed under the tsar, not to mention Gorky's books.

"These are wrecking books," explained the mother. Clear. If notebooks are burned at school, then wrecking books should, and even more so, be thrown into the oven. Gorky died not so long ago, but everyone around whispered that he had been poisoned. First, his son was killed, and then he himself was "healed" in the Kremlin hospital. And since such a thing, it is better not to keep his books.

But I literally squealed when they were sentenced to be burned, Japanese fairy tales:

"Don't, Mom, don't!"

It was the most favorite book of my childhood, I learned to read from it. It told about amusing and instructive stories that happened to the boy Taro and the girl Takei, and the pictures showed ponds with goldfish and Japanese houses among dwarf pines. I clung to the book, and the mother began to pull out, and she was stronger, and my Taro and Takei flew into the fire. The cover was dense, varnished and did not want to burn for a long time. A magnificent children's book lies in the middle of the fire - and does not burn.

"The Japanese are capitalists and our enemies," said the mother. You can't keep Japanese books in the house.

To keep me from crying, she gave me scissors and told me to shred family photos. I put an end to the faces that need to be cut out, they were enemies of the people, and I carefully cut them out. Something turned out to be suspiciously many familiar enemies of the people.

After my processing, the photos looked funny. Here, for example, is a large group photograph, rows of men and women swallowing a arshin, the inscription: "Teachers' Conference of 1935." And in these rows now, after my scissors, there are empty holes in the form of human silhouettes, as if they were not people, but ghosts. All of them turned out to be enemies of the people, now they are gone, they must be forgotten.

And the nights began.

Mom hardly slept at night. She walked from corner to corner, listening to every sound. If a car engine hummed in the street, she tossed herself, turned pale and tossed about. But it was just cars passing by.

Coming home from work, she said that it was very difficult: such and such a teacher did not come, and such and such a teacher, and she worked with two classes at the same time, and every day there are mergers of classes, rearrangements, because teachers are all arrested and arrested . . . She is waiting her turn.

Grandma cried and wailed:

"Oh, you haven't done anything, Marusya. Why should you be arrested!

- What are they for?
- Oh, Mothers of God, why such a punishment?

Grandfather's friend old man Zhuk was a quiet and meek grandfather, he regularly swept the street, painted the fence, ran to vote at six in the morning and always hung out a red flag on November 7 and other holidays. One day he was standing in line for chintz.

Fabrics were of great value back then. They could only be bought by standing in line for a day. The line was terrible, many thousands, and it was lined up not at the store, but in such a way that it was not visible from Kirillovskaya Street, where government cars and foreign guests drove - along the fence of the square, just opposite our gates. She was making a lot of noise, and people in line had breakfast, dinner, and slept on the ground at night.

The police put things in order, counted dozens and led them to the store. Amusingly, they walked: tenaciously grabbing each other's sides, on the back of the head, like children playing train

- this is so that the eleventh one does not cling - exhausted, disheveled, but convulsively happy, they finally got it! At the entrance to the store, the police again counted them, so everything was very civilized, and the order was exemplary, and they were let into the store, as if into a temple. No one knew what they would get there. What a whole car was brought at the moment, they “give” several meters per capita, and the lucky ones all came out with exactly the same pieces.

So the Beetle stood in this line, said something, and someone heard, and maybe for this he received a piece of calico out of turn. At night, the engine of the car hummed near Zhuk’s house, and he was taken away. After that, my grandfather lost his sleep. He went over in his memory all his statements against the Bolsheviks, wondering which of his friends would remember them.

Grandmother prepared two baskets with linen, breadcrumbs, put a bar of soap and a toothbrush each. She jumped up at the sound of a passing car. Cloudy, creepy nights.

Mom again went through all the papers, leaf by leaf, the stove burned again, and my work was gone: my mother decided not to keep photos with holes at all, she threw them into the fire. And we were left with only the most trusted Soviet books, and even the six-volume collected works of Pushkin.

After the cannibals, this was the second horror in my life.

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[I cannot refrain from commenting here on how people understood events in those days.

As soon as Kirov was killed, everyone immediately started talking that Kirov had been killed on Stalin’s orders. The same about Ordzhonikidze. It was stubbornly said about Gorky that he was poisoned, because he did not agree with Stalin. No one ever separated Stalin from the NKVD. Stalin sent Vyshinsky to Kyiv, occupied the October Palace as his residence and began to sign death sentences immediately under huge lists. Many were killed right there in the palace and dumped corpses from the windows into the ravine. Kyiv knew all this very well, and even that dark, deaf Kurenevka, and she was precisely guided in events.

Therefore, when many years later Khrushchev began to "reveal" Stalin, it was not news in the Soviet Union. The news was only the very course of "exposure" and the endless series of monstrous details.

And then some "honest communists" began to beat their chests and shout that they, it turns out, did not know anything. Or that they knew but believed that the real enemies were being destroyed. Or that they thought that the NKVD was to blame for everything, but beloved Stalin did not know, and the party was holy. Many such "honest communists" appeared, separating Stalin and the party from the "Yezhov" or "Beria" crimes.

Hypocrites. In my heart, everyone knew and understood everything perfectly. Only the one who DID NOT WANT TO KNOW - "did not know". And he was hypocritical, and saved himself by hypocrisy, and was steadfast in his hypocrisy, and survived not without his help, and turned out to be so organically saturated with hypocrisy that even now he lies, proving that millions of party members were so mentally underdeveloped.

So after the defeat of Hitler, some "honest fascists" stated that they did not know about the monstrous atrocities in the death camps, or that they believed that only the Gestapo was to blame for everything. Hypocrites. I repeat once again: only those who did not want to know did not know.

For if one believes for a second and assumes that the so-called "honest communists", who undertook to dictate the conditions of life to the world, saw, understood and thought like five-year-old children, then it is even more terrible.]

Pioneer

Coming to school literate, I studied jokingly, received four commendable letters in a row, and I was elected chairman of the council of the pioneer detachment.

It was a ferocious bureaucratic idiocy for children: we sat in meetings just like adults, accustomed to say official phrases. From time to time they lined up, and the commanders reported to me in a military way:

- Chairman of the board of the detachment. There are ten people in the number one link on the list, there are nine people on the line. One is missing due to illness. Zhora Gorokhovsky reports to the team leader.

At the same time, I felt like a fool, Zhorik felt like a fool, and everyone else stood as if dumbfounded. Then the banner was taken out, then the banner was taken away, then the leader taught us to be the same young Leninists as the famous pioneer Pavlik Morozov, who denounced his own parents and was killed by the fists.

Fortunately, our counselor Misha, a handsome Jew, loved children, and he also dragged us around the museums of the Lavra, took the whole crowd to the Dnieper to swim, we went to Pushcha-Voditsa to military games, performed at the olympiads, everyone was in circles.

This side of life remained for me bright, sonorous, sunny. Everything was open before us. Representatives of various institutions came to schools and begged and persuaded high school students to go to them.

Zhorik Gorokhovsky and I, while studying in a photo circle, made a "pioneer chronicle", filmed excellent activists, and got to the exhibition for a photo montage dedicated to Stalin.

It was arranged in the foyer of the Oktyabr cinema, and we were on duty there at our department so that the exhibits would not be stolen. The beauty! One was on duty, and the other ran into the hall and watched movies for free.

Before each film, there was certainly a newsreel-thriller "Stay of V. M. Molotov in Berlin." I watched it so much that I knew every frame by heart.

It was clear from him that the Soviet Union had no greater friend than Hitler. The Soviet people have Stalin, and then Hitler. And now Molotov is going to Germany, we have a pact of friendship and non-aggression with her. He is greeted in Berlin with orchestras, flowers and applause. The Nazi troops march amazingly. Exciting military music. Hitler greets Molotov with brotherly cordiality, shakes his hand for a long, long time, they are talking enthusiastically about something, and around there is a crowd of photographers, flashes. And again, the German troops

are stunningly marching with unfurled banners, on which there is such a courageous, friendly swastika to us.

And I began to choke with delight, looking at the screen: I wanted to march just as dashingly. If only our pioneer detachment would learn to walk like that, and our war games would resemble German operations in Europe!.. Oh, how famously they acted, these Germans. The Soviet Union could hardly keep up with them ineptly imitating.

A wonderful war with Poland took place. Hitler is from the west, we are from the east - and there is no Poland. Of course, to avert our eyes, we called it "the liberation of Western Ukraine and Belarus" and hung up posters where some tattered cotton hugs a courageous Red Army liberator. But that's the way it is. The one who attacks is always a liberator from something.

Pope Zhorik Gorokhovsky was mobilized, went to this war, and one day, drunk, he told how they were actually met there. First of all, they were there, from the biggest commander to the last rider, pounced on shops with fabrics, shoes and began to stuff bags and suitcases. Lord, what our brave warriors brought from Poland. One political instructor brought a suitcase of patent leather boots, but they suddenly began to unravel after the first steps. It turned out that he grabbed decorative shoes for the dead, sewn on a live thread. And Zhorkin's dad even brought a bunch of bicycle bells. We ran around with them, tinkled and had fun:

- Poland skiff!

Bourgeois Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia was a skiff. Bessarabia was taken from Romania and taken away. It's good to be strong. And yet it was no match for the exploits of Hitler.

My grandfather demanded every day that I read to him about Hitler in the newspapers. The Germans were victorious everywhere. They bombed, sank ships with a displacement of thousands of gross tons, jokingly occupied countries and capitals. The clumsy bunglers-Englishmen lived out their last days, Belgium skiff, France skiff.

When my grandfather was resting, I would join him, and we would start an exciting game. Grandfather raised his palm,

planned it in the air, buzzed and shouted "bomb carriers!" dived at me. I laughed.

If there is war tomorrow

Under this song my generation grew up. The pre-war years without it is simply impossible to imagine:

If tomorrow is war, if tomorrow is on a campaign,
If the dark force comes, -
As one person, the entire Soviet people
Stand up for your beloved homeland.
On earth, in heaven and at sea
Our melody is both powerful and severe:
If tomorrow is a war, if tomorrow is a campaign, -
Get ready to hike today!

It was a song from a movie, and the people were urged to be ready for war with some kind of abstract enemy, in general, a bourgeois and a monster that climbed, and a magnificent Soviet warrior, to the enthusiastic animal cackle of the hall, gave him a butt "on kumpol".

A machine gun will fire, an airplane will fly, Iron tanks will rumble, And the cars will go, and the infantry will go, And dashing carts will rush.

Carts, horse-drawn carts with a machine gun, from the era of the Civil War, were an indispensable decoration of all parades until the real war began.

There were three of us, three musketeers, three tankers, in our corner of Petropavlovskaya Square. We were especially united by the fact that all of us were abandoned by our fathers, we grew up with our mothers.

BOLIK KAMINSKY was the eldest, gave us cuffs on the back of the head, we teased him "Bolyambaty" and at the same time loved him immensely.

He was a thin, tall boy with an indistinct, like a girl's face. He watched only militant films: "Chapaev" - twenty-five times, "Shchors" - twenty, "If there is war tomorrow" - seventeen, "Bogdan Khmelnitsky" - ten times.

We all raved about the war, but Bolik was a war fanatic. He was so belligerent, he could talk for hours about the war. Even playing chess was a war for him: a rook is a cannon, a knight is a cart, a bishop is a machine gun, a queen is a dive bomber. You can imagine the battle noise we made when we played chess.

In the shed, in the attic, Bolik had a machine-gun nest, like Chapaev had in the bell tower. We stuck sticks out the dormer window and scribbled at these most abstract enemies, who "if tomorrow there is a war": "S-s-s-s! .."

Bolik entered the FZO - a school for factory training - and despised us, becoming the working class, [the master of the country, according to the Constitution.] But then a real war began, he was mobilized to build defensive structures - to the trenches, as they said then, and he disappeared.

SHURKA KRYSAN was my same age - frail, nimble, enterprising, incredibly sociable, ready for fire and water for company. In street combat operations that regularly took place between our kutok and the neighboring "tanners" (that warlike tribe lived near the tannery), Shurka showed miracles of heroism, but he also got the most.

Of all the films, his favorite was precisely "If there is war tomorrow", well, and, accordingly, the song.

They called him "Shurka Matzah", and I diligently called him the same, because you need to name a person somehow, but in my naivety then I had no idea that matzah was a traditional Jewish Passover food. I innocently believed that Shurka was teased so much because he spoke quickly, as if clattering: tsa-tsa-tsa ...

And if there was something in the world that then interested us least of all, then these were questions of our origin and nationality. We all studied at the Ukrainian school. Our native language was Ukrainian.

Only later did I figure out who is who, and that we are hybrids: half-Polish, half-Jewish and half-Ukrainian. We had a girlfriend, a neighbor girl Lyalya, as it turned out later, a semi-Finnish. I loved her very much, but she did not want to play war. Girl, what will you take from her.

In fairness, I must say that I was teased, although, it is true, very rarely, but insulted to the core. They called me names in

honor of my grandfather: “Semerik labor-tu-tu-three-buckets-of-milk.”

Beat the Jewish political officer

One fine day, Shurka Matza and I went swimming. In the meadow there was a lake called Kovbanka, which in translation from the Kurenev dialect sounds like “Frog”.

The war was already going on, military vehicles were driving across the meadow, Red Army soldiers were running, anti-aircraft guns covered with green branches were standing and balloons were inflating.

Two Red Army men were sunbathing on our Kovbanka.

“Come on, shkets, go away, it’s dangerous here,” they said.

We were offended, we got drunk, but we didn’t leave. We swam to the other side and back, forcing ourselves and being proud of our ability to swim. We swam like dogs. On the way back I got tired. I gasped for air, flailed helplessly with tired hands, my eyes began to turn green, and I saw a Red Army soldier on the shore watching my marathon with curiosity. Then I felt the bottom with my foot, staggered out onto the shore, looked around - but Shurka was not there.

The Red Army soldier, as he was, in riding breeches and boots, rushed into the water, as soon as the waves started, emerged, dragging the green Shurka, carried him out like a kitten to the shore, shook him so that water would pour out of Matza’s belly.

“These are wrecking people,” he said. “Now go home, or I’ll take you to the police.”

Here we scratched so that the reeds rustled. Crawled into the hole and began to share their impressions.

“Yes,” said Shurka, “he interfered with me.

After all, I dived and walked along the bottom to the shore.

Here appeared German planes, about thirty. Anti-aircraft guns soared into the sky. From the first shots we were deafened, and for some reason with each shot we were beaten on the ground with our muzzles.

There was absolutely nowhere to hide on a flat meadow. We clung to each other in our hole, hearing how either fragments or bullets flopped nearby: “Shpok, shpok, shpok!”

Lying in full view under this blue sky, which was cut by roaring planes with black crosses, for the first time I physically felt my vulnerability, the helplessness of a thin human body, into which, like a clot of jelly, it is enough to get this very "spock" - and .. .

And the bombers passed. The anti-aircraft gunners did not hit them, nor did they hit anything. Thousands of white sheets fluttered in the air. The wind obviously did not bring them to the city, they sat down right next to us in the meadow. We rushed to catch. They were all printed in large letters:

"Beat the YID-POLITIRUK ASKING FOR THE Muzzle of a BRICK"

No comma. And then in small letters it was explained that this was the password for surrender. At the sight of a German soldier, it is enough to pronounce these words clearly and distinctly.

"Red soldiers! the leaflet called. — The Red Army is defeated. The power of the Jewish-Bolshevik commissars in Russia ended. Arrest commanders, commissars, throw down your weapons and go into captivity. Good conditions await you, and you will all go home to work in peace. Going into captivity, have a change of clean linen, soap, a bowler hat and a spoon with you.

I liked this leaflet, especially about the bowler hat and the spoon. I felt hungry after bathing and imagined what delicious porridge the Germans cook - and put it in bowlers to the brim to everyone who was taken prisoner.

He sensed something was wrong and turned around. Shurka sat, holding a leaflet, pale, with frightened eyes.

Tolik, he said. But I'm a Jew...

Second Tsaritsyn?

Our suitcases were packed for many days. People are evacuated only with organizations, and it is almost impossible for individuals to leave.

Babkin's nephews promised to take it with Arsenal, they had space on the platforms, they even placed their furniture between the machines.

Uncle Petya came to say goodbye, said:

"We," the special forces, the NKVD forbade taking strangers.

Grandmother cried, shoved him a pot of lard:

"You'll eat at Dorozhy's," she caught up at the gate, handed a small pillow-thinker: "You'll bend your head on the train." No one left empty-handed.

And still there is no answer from my father to my mother's telegrams.

My mother and I picked up our suitcases, under grandmother's lamentations, got into the tram and went to the station. The city was unusual: all the windows were sealed crosswise with strips of paper, the shop windows were blocked with sandbags, barricades were heaped across the streets from the same bags, only narrow passages were left for trams, sheathed with boards. There are posters everywhere: "Let's turn Kyiv into a second Tsaritsyn."

We passed a stop and stopped: a guy was crippled in front. The trams passed through the slots in the barricades, head to head, and the tram was full, the guy could not squeeze in, he was hit against the boards, twisted and torn off his arm. He was carried to the clinic, and his hand dangled on a piece of skin, dragged along the ground.

Slowly, slowly, the tram dragged itself to the new school, on Petrovka, two days ago occupied by a hospital. Bandaged heads peeped out of the windows. Suddenly, sirens began to wail: an alarm. The attendants with red armbands ran along the trams:

- Get out! To the shelter!

But my mother and I ran along the empty trams. Shots were fired somewhere, bombed, but not above us, and we reached Nizhniy Val to board tram No. 13 going to the station. It turned out that trams no longer run to the station.

The sirens wailed again. Passers-by were running all over the street, the confused MPVO on duty did not know where to send them: there are no bomb shelters, only holes in the yards. "If there is war tomorrow" they only sang, but they were going to fight on foreign territory.

My mother and I ran from house to house, she just went crazy, she shouted to the duty officers: "Our house is out, let us

through! - and so we ran to Andreevsky Descent, but there were no attendants there, and many people hurried up the winding steep street, taking advantage of the fact that it was not blocked.

I did not understand why all these ceilings, if there are no bomb shelters. It was just that the city was bombed, and defenseless people rushed about like mice.

When we were near Bohdan Khmelnytsky Square, bombers appeared. We rushed to the entrance. There were a lot of people on the stairs. Shots and explosions resounded in the stairwell, pieces of plaster fell, children cried, residents took out water to drink. It was very scary that the bomb would hit the house and it would fall on their heads.

When it became quieter, we, panting, ran with our suitcases to Khreshchatyk, from where trolleybuses went to the station. The sirens wailed again, we were pushed along with a stream of people into a dimly lit cellar, littered with boards and barrels. The rumble was heard here, the ceiling of a very unreliable kind was trembling. The old man told his mother: "Here, if it fails, it's forever." Mother could not stand it, she began to make her way up the stairs.

No one was let out of the entrance, but the duty officers reported: they were bombing the station, no transport goes there, there are thousands of people, the trains are on fire. The Oktyabrskaya hospital is packed with the wounded from the station.

There were many people like us in the entrance with suitcases, and a rumor spread that they were still putting them on barges going down the Dnieper. Therefore, when they gave the all-clear, we ran back to Podol, but did not make it: anxiety. It was some kind of nightmare.

We were herded to the lower funicular station. And now it was a raid precisely on Podil: a monstrous roar, windows were flying, something was burning somewhere, a downed plane was falling beyond the Dnieper.

Pale women were sitting on the bundles, next to them stood a middle-aged Jewess and said:

— Well, well, they say that the Jews need to run away, but why? Did you hear anything bad about the Germans before the

war? Now some rumors are spreading, why should we believe the rumors? Yes, even if we wanted to run away, tell me how to run away? What, do we have a lot of money? We don't have money. And without money you won't get on the train, you won't leave on foot. So they left our yard alone, went beyond Darnitsa, lost their things, got hungry, suffered hard - and returned to Podol. Now they write that the Germans allegedly hang a yellow star on us and send us to hard work. Okay, we'll work. What else have we seen so far? One grief. The Germans must understand this. We are not counts, not some bourgeois, we are poor people, we work all our lives, it will not get worse. We decided to stay.

The women nodded sadly. Indeed, before the war, only good things were written about Hitler, and no one heard him treat Jews badly. Let the party members, NKVD members, directors scurry about, but why should the poor people run away? And about the yellow star, of course, they lie, and about some kind of mockery of the Germans - all the newspapers lie. Why were they silent before? Lied to the limit, that's what.

Mom listened to these gossip, she was suddenly afraid that the Germans would throw a bomb on the funicular, and we ran through the Postal Square to the river station. Before him was black from people with things. The policemen shouted and whistled, pushing the crowd back. A hoarse man in a white suit and straw hat announced:

- Citizens, enterprises and organizations are being evacuated first of all. Go home, don't make crowds. The population will be announced, everyone will be evacuated as soon as the flow of enterprises subsides. Disperse! We won't plant anyone!

Confused, we sat in the crowd for a while, then walked away. Trams were not running. They said that a school-hospital was bombed on Petrovka. It's amazing how the Germans found out: after all, the hospital was there for only two days . . .

A truck was driving along Nizhny Val, and a Red Army soldier was scattering the Pravda newspaper from the back. I managed to grab one. The summary of the Soviet Information Bureau reported that there were no significant changes at the front. This meant that our deeds are bad.

There was a cordon on Petrovka. The bomb did not hit the hospital, but in a one-story house nearby, only a piece of the wall remained from it, all the residents died, their corpses are now being dug up. But the school was distorted, both glass and frames flew out of the windows, and the wounded were evacuated, carried out and taken to ambulances.

Bolik returns

All this time I was grieving: if I were a little older, I would have signed up for volunteers or, like Bolik, at least for the construction of defensive structures, and there, you see, I would have remained to defend them.

And suddenly the news spread through our hut: Bolik had come.

I rushed towards him. His mother hovered over him, he ate potatoes, choked, and said:

- They dug an anti-tank ditch, long, viper, through all the fields. Thousands of people, all sorts of professors, girls. As soon as the Messer swoops in, as soon as it fires from machine guns, I see that my professor is lying and there are no glasses in his glasses ... And I was hiding in the hay.

Then German tanks appeared, and everyone ran in all directions. Bolik walked through forests and fields, escaped from the "Messers" in the swamp. He was shaking when he talked about them, he hated the Germans so much that he stuttered:

- It flies right at you, aims, now he needs you personally, your death - and nothing, even scream, even cry, even fall ... Okay, brothers, in secret: now we will get a machine gun, install it in the attic and, when they will go, oh, how we scratch:

"Y-s-s-s-s!"

Aunt Nina, his mother, wept for joy that he was alive, washed him, dressed him in a clean suit, gave money for a movie, and Bolik and I went for a couple to the cinema on Khreshchatyk to watch the comedy "St. Jorgen's Holiday". They laughed to tears at the tricks of Igor Ilyinsky, although sirens were heard outside

the walls, explosions were heard: the session did not stop during the raid.

We went out, bought ice cream, wandered around Khreshchatyk, and it was good for us, and we didn't know anything: that a decision had already been made to surrender Kyiv without a fight, that we were seeing Khreshchatyk for the last time and watched a comedy sitting over mines, that tomorrow Bolik would be evacuated from remnants of the school, and he will disappear again without even saying goodbye.

Loudspeakers solemnly shouted along Khreshchatyk: "Kyiv is speaking, Soviet Kiev is speaking! Motherland, do you hear? Kyiv is and will be Soviet!" Moscow answered Kiev: "You have resurrected the immortal traditions of the heroism of the Great October Revolution and the Civil War. You are not alone. The Red Army is with you, all of our Soviet people are with you."

Words words...

Home we went against the flow of troops, obviously a long retreat. The Red Army soldiers were mortally tired, dusty, so that the crust on them cracked. A reckless lad in a lambskin hat was sitting on an oxen-harness, playing a polka on an accordion with a stone face.

And the women poured out onto the pavement, looked, crossed their arms, sighed, blew their noses, wept. A decrepit old man with a stick was standing by the post, crying, saying to the guy who was playing polka:

"My dears, come back, come back ... The people cried a lot, seeing off their retreating men.

The square in front of our house was packed with tired Red Army soldiers sitting and lying down. One was fiddling with the Maxim machine gun, and we sat down and began to look carefully. He said:

- Sons, I will give you a ruble, and you would bring milk.

We rushed to my grandmother, she burst into tears, did not take the ruble, handed us a jug of milk. The Red Army soldiers set up bowlers, we poured, but it was a drop in the ocean.

My grandfather was carrying bread along the street.

Bread was no longer sold in stores, but distributed according to lists. Each family sewed a bag, wrote their last name with

an ink pencil, in the store they divided the bread into bags, and my grandfather contracted to deliver it in a wheelbarrow. We were bursting with a thirst for activity, and we rushed to push the wheelbarrow, knocked on the apartments, emptied the bags. With a wheelbarrow it was difficult to maneuver among the marching troops.

- And what, lads, is it tobacco? grandfather said. - Kyiv surrender.

We were outraged:

Kyiv is the second Tsaritsyn. Wow, grandfather, you still know what the fight will be!

- What kind of fight is there, - grandfather waved his hand.
- You look: where should they fight?

Tired, mutilated horses pulled military wagons, guns, collapsing carts. The Red Army soldiers were ragged, overgrown, wounded. Some, apparently, their legs shattered to the blood, walked barefoot, throwing their boots over their shoulders. Others had no boots or shoes at all. They walked without any order, like a herd, bending under the weight of bags, rolls, weapons, and by no means belligerently clinking crumpled bowlers.

"Oh, poor racist soldiers," my grandfather muttered, taking off his hat.

3.10 CHAPTER OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

ORDER

Residents (all persons) are prohibited from going outside from 18:00 to 05:00 German time.

Violators of this order may be shot. Commandant of Kyiv.*)

*) "Ukrainian Word", September 29, 1941

From the announcement:

"All men between the ages of 15 and 60 are required to report to the housing department of their district..."**)

***) Ibid., September 30, 1941.

Newspaper headline:

"THE BIGGEST ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE IS THE YID"***)

***) Ibid., October 2, 1941.

Entry of persons not residing in Kyiv is strictly prohibited. Those who arrived in Kyiv after September 20 must immediately leave the city. Anyone wishing to stay in the city for valid reasons must obtain permission from the commandant of the city. This permit is issued at the Pass Office, st. Comintern, No. 8.

Whoever stays in the city without permission after 15/X-41 is subject to severe punishment. Commandant of the city.****)

****) Ibid., October 9, 1941.

From the article "The Tasks of the Ukrainian Intelligentsia":

Our task is to restore the Ukrainian national culture destroyed by the Jewish-Bolsheviks. *)

*) "Ukrainian Word", October 10, 1941

Commandant's announcement:

As a repressive measure on the occasion of an act of sabotage, today 100 residents of the city of Kyiv were shot.

This is a warning.

Every resident of Kyiv is responsible for every act of sabotage.

Kyiv, October 22, 1941

Commandant of the city.**)

***) The German-Fascist Occupational Regime in Ukraine", a collection of documents and materials. Kiev, 1963. P. 45.

ORDER

All pigeons in the city and the suburban area must be destroyed immediately.

Whoever keeps more pigeons after October 26 will be SHOT as a saboteur.

EBERHARD,

city commandant.***)

***) Ukrainian word", October 25, 1941

From issue to issue, the newspaper prints, like an appeal, within the framework of:

The Fuhrer of the German people said:

"Millions of German peasants and workers perform their duties in the best possible way."

Ukrainians, do your duty and work diligently!*) *) Ukrainian Word, October 22, 1941.

Fuhrer Adolf Hitler said on October 3, 1941:

"We place the entire continent at the service of our struggle against Bolshevism." Ukrainian, your place is next to Germany in the struggle for a better Europe!***) **) Ibid., October 25, 1941.

Commandant's announcement:

Incidents of arson and sabotage spreading in the city of Kyiv force me to take drastic measures.

Therefore, today 300 residents of Kyiv were shot. For each new case of arson or sabotage, a significantly larger number of Kyiv residents will be shot.

Every resident is obliged to immediately report any suspicious case to the German police.

I will maintain order and tranquility in Kyiv at any cost and by all means. Kyiv, November 2, 1941

EBERHARD, major general and commandant of the city. *)

*) "The Nazi occupational regime in Ukraine", a collection of documents and materials. Kiev, 1963. Pp. 46.

All felted boots, including children's felt boots, available to the civilian population, are subject to immediate requisition. The use of felt boots is prohibited and should be punished in the same way as the unauthorized use of weapons.**)

***) "Kyiv is a hero", a collection of materials about the feat of the Kiyans at the Great Vitchiznyany viyni. Kiev, 1961. P. 234.

City Commissioner's Announcement:

According to an agreement with the Stadtkomendant, the population of Kyiv is informed that civilians have the right to stay on the streets only from 5 o'clock. until 17 o'clock. 30 minutes.

Commissar of the city ***) ***) Nazi occupational regime in Ukraine", collection of documents and materials. Kiev, 1963. P. 55.

Commandant's announcement:

In Kyiv, means of communication (telephone, telegraph, cable) were maliciously damaged. Because pests could no longer be tolerated, 400 MEN WAS SHOT IN THE CITY, which should be a warning to the population.

Once again, I demand that all suspicious cases be immediately reported to the German troops or the German police, so that the criminals will be punished according to their deserts.

Kyiv 29/XI - 1941.

EBERHARD, Major General
and city commander.

3.11 GERMAN TIME

One hundred hostages, three hundred hostages, four hundred hostages ... It was already a war declared on the whole city

..

[The explosion of Khreshchatyk and the subsequent arson were arranged by the abandoned NKVD agents, and the first people who came across were shot for this. The goal was achieved: the Germans were furious. And they were all the more ferocious because they could not grab the real explosives. It's as if they were hit in the teeth by a professional boxer, and they took out their anger on a child who turned up under the arm. In a few days, having shot all the Jews in Babi Yar, they began to drag Russians, Ukrainians and others there.]

Hostages were taken at night, randomly cordoning off any quarter, exactly as many as indicated in the announcements. Once they took it in the afternoon on Khreshchatyk, right on the sidewalks.

Khreshchatyk was smoking, but pedestrian traffic was opened along it. At the very beginning of Khreshchatyk, a small quarter and the Duma building on Kalinin Square, similar to an opera house, miraculously survived. This building belatedly exploded and burst into flames. Then the Germans began to grab everyone who turned up under the arm on Khreshchatyk, put them in cars and sent them to Babi Yar.

On Kurenevka, just above Babi Yar, there is a large psychiatric hospital named after Pavlov. Its buildings are scattered in the magnificent Kirillovskaya grove, and there is still an ancient church of the twelfth century, forgotten and locked, it was slowly collapsing, and we boys penetrated it, climbed up to the very

domes and saw Vrubel's later paintings, which few people know about.

On October 14, a German detachment led by a doctor arrived at this church, with never-before-seen gas chambers.

Sick batches of 60-70 people were driven into gas chambers, then the engine ran for fifteen minutes, exhaust gases entered the van, people suffocated - and they were unloaded into the pit. This work went on for several days, calmly and methodically, without haste, with obligatory hour-long lunch breaks.

There were not only crazy people in the hospital, but also many people who were being treated for nervous disorders, all of them were buried in the pits of Babi Yar. And here's what is remarkable: after the monstrous first days of Babi Yar, the destruction of the huge hospital went unnoticed and even somehow routine... And it's true that everything in the world is relative.

The Germans hunted the gypsies like game. They were subject to the same immediate destruction as the Jews.

The passport was crucial. In the Soviet passport, as a matter of course, there is a column "nationality", the so-called "5th paragraph". No one thought that for the masses, people, this would be fatal. By the way, neither then nor later did I understand and, probably, I will never understand why nationality should be indicated in the passport.

The Germans checked passports, combing houses, arranging raids, and stopped any person on the street whose appearance alerted them. And if he had "Russian" in his passport, then this did not always convince the Germans: he could be dragged for examination. It was better for people with dark hair and long noses not to show themselves on the street.

Gypsies were taken to Babi Yar in whole camps, and they, it seems, also did not understand until the last moment what they were doing to them.

A German soldier came to the old janitor of our school Ratuev, demanded that the old man take a shovel and follow him. They came to the culture park, where another soldier was guarding a Jewish girl, by the look of which the old man realized that the soldiers had raped her.

The old man was told to dig a hole. When she was ready, the girl was shoved into her, but she began to scream and climb, then the soldier began to hit her on the head with a shovel and cover her with earth. But she got up and sat down, and he hit her on the head again.

Finally they fell asleep and trampled the ground. The old man thought that the same would happen to him, but he was released.

The curfew cost many lives. All night long shots were heard here and there. Grandmother saw a murdered young woman in Bessarabka - with glazed eyes, she was lying across the sidewalk, everyone went around her. It was said that in the evening she hurried home after curfew, she was shot dead by a patrol and left lying for everyone to see.

Quite a few people then found their death in Babi Yar because of the pigeons. The fact is that the order came into force the very next day, not everyone even had time to read it in the newspaper.

At first, the orders were printed in three languages: Russian, Ukrainian and German. Then on two: large in Ukrainian and small in German. Then everything became the opposite: large in German and small in Ukrainian ...

The most important things were concentrated in these orders and announcements, life and death depended on them, and after the tragedy with pigeon houses, there were only questions: what new order?

Along with catching the remnants of Jews and Gypsies, the arrests of communists, Soviet activists began, and they were arrested at the first denunciation, without any verification, [which for the people, starting from 1937, was already familiar, and the foreign Gestapo turned out to be exactly the same as the native NKVD . Woe if you had an enemy or someone envied you. Previously, he could write a denunciation that you are against the Soviet regime, which means that you are an enemy of the people - and you disappeared. Now he could write that you are against the German authorities, which means that you are an enemy of the people - and Babi Yar was waiting for you. Even the terminology of the Germans was the same: enemy of the people!]

On the fences hung announcements of the following content:

anyone who points out to the German authorities hiding Jews, partisans, important Bolshevik workers who did not appear at the registration of communists [and other enemies of the people], will receive 10,000 rubles in money, food or a cow.

[Hiding were: in basements, closets. One Russian family saved their Jewish neighbors by blocking off part of the room with a false brick wall, and there in the dark, in a narrow pier, almost without air, the Jews sat for two years.

But this is a rare case. Usually hiding people were found, because there were quite a few who wanted to earn money or a cow. For example, a certain Praskovya Derkach lived near our Kurenev bazaar. She tracked down where the Jews were hiding, she came:

- Yeah, are you there? Do you want to go to Babyn Yar?
Let's go gold! Let's get some money!

They gave her everything they had. She then reported to the police and demanded another bonus. Her husband Vasily was a binduzh worker, usually on his own site and the Jews were taken to Yar. Praskovya and her husband on the way tore off people's clothes, watches:

- You don't need it anymore!

They carried the sick, and children, and pregnant women. The Germans only paid a premium at first, and then they stopped, but Praskovya was satisfied with what she got herself, then, with the permission of the Germans, she ransacked the empty apartment, took the best things, Vasily took the rest to a German warehouse with the following act: "We are the undersigned, confiscated for the needs German army the following things.]

-
-

[It is curious that Praskovya is still alive, lives on Menzhinsky Street and has not been punished, perhaps because she betrayed not the NKVD or communists, but only some Jews. Of course, she has grown old, but in body, not in soul, and the neighbors hear her say:

"Do you think that this is the end of the war? Oto, sche ne te bude. From here the Nimzi will return, from there China will come - then we will arrange such Babin Yar for the Jews! "]

3.12 BOOKS BURNED

"Come on, give me your letters," said the grandfather. - All Soviet books, all portraits - let's put everything in the stove. Marusya, get to work.

On my letters of commendation, there was a portrait of Lenin on the left, Stalin on the right. Grandfather, who had never been interested in books before, now began to send stacks of them into the oven. Mom resisted weakly at first, then waved her hand. There have already been arrests for the Soviet flag, for a portrait of Stalin lying in the house, for telling an anecdote.

The proverb has become popular: "Yudam kaput, gypsies too, and you, Ukrainians, later." Grandmother heard her at the market, came, said, smiling gloomily, to grandfather. Grandfather was silent for a while, only blinking his eyes: indeed, it looked like that was coming. Then he started burning books.

This time it was cold. The stove was well heated with books. Mother brought a shovel, cleaned the blower, shoveled out the ashes stupidly and with concentration. I said:

"Okay, someday we'll have a lot of books again.

"Never," she said. - Will never. I no longer believe. There is no kindness, no peace, no common sense in the world. Evil idiots rule the world. And books are always on fire.

The Library of Alexandria burned, the Inquisitorial bonfires burned, Radishchev was burned, books were burned under Stalin, bonfires burned in Hitler's squares, and they will burn, and they will: there are more arsonists than writers. You, Tolya, live, and you remember this first sign: if books are forbidden, then things are bad.

It means that there is violence, fear, ignorance around. The power of the savages. My God, just think!.. If gangs of savages throw books into the fire in the square, it's scary, but still it's not so bad. Maybe there aren't many of them yet, these savages. But when every person in every house begins, shaking with fear, to burn books... Oh, the people must be brought to this! This must be known. I think: why were you born to me? Living in such a world...

I will remember this speech of hers for the rest of my life. Maybe it was not said exactly in these words, but I convey its exact content - both about the Library of Alexandria and about the Inquisition, which I thus learned specifically, because a direct bridge was laid from them to our stove.

The ashes were taken out and poured onto the beds for fertilizer. Only a good six-volume collection of works was spared by my grandfather. He did not know what to do with Pushkin: on the one hand, a Russian poet, that is, a Muscovite, on the other hand, he had lived for a long time, was not against Germany and was not against the Bolsheviks. So we have only Pushkin left of all the books.

Having occupied a school to stay, the German military unit threw desks, instruments, globes and a library out the windows for several hours.

Books were thrown from the Kurenevskaya regional library right into the garden. Books also littered the streets, trampled down like rubbish.

When the part took off and left the school, I went to look. It turns out that the entire first floor was reserved for the stables. In our classroom there was a layer of straw and manure, in which the foot was buried, and iron hooks were driven into the walls to tie the horses.

In the classrooms on the second and third floors there were bunks with straw, scraps of magazines with naked women, bandages, condoms were lying around.

On the sports ground in the courtyard there is a soldier's dressing room.

That's how they did the restrooms. They dug a long ditch, laid poles over it, and on these poles there was always a long line of soldiers, lowering their trousers, exposing their behinds and firing, while everyone read newspapers and magazines. They leafed through for a long time, as in a reading room, and then used it for its intended purpose.

The mountain of books thrown out of the library was already heavily damaged by the rain: the upper volumes were limp, the pages in them were slippery. I climbed to the top of this heap

and started digging. Inside the pile of books were wet, slimy and warm: preli.

Shriveled by the wind, I sat on a pile, sorted through, discovered Hugo's "Byug-Zhargal" and began to read. I could not tear myself away and when it got dark I took it with me.

The next day I grabbed a bag and went to the books. He selected the most preserved ones, in which the covers were more durable. He brought it and dumped it in the barn, in the far corner behind the woodpile. I came up with this and told my grandfather this: "We don't have enough firewood, but these books will dry up, we'll drown them with them."

He considered. Again, on the one hand, these were books, but on the other hand, they are not ours, and we can always show where they were taken - and they were taken exclusively for the furnace. "Okay, well done," he said. "Just don't bring Lenin and Stalin."

And to hell they gave up on me, Lenin and Stalin, I, most importantly, to train more novels, and science fiction!

We've run out of kerosene. Light bulbs hung lifeless from the ceiling. Therefore, I plucked splinter, inserted them into the split end of the stick, set fire to it, and it turned out that this was not such a bad thing, our ancestors lived with a splinter all their lives. It burns for itself, and you read, with one hand you occasionally correct it, knock down the burnt coal, then light the next one, and it smells pleasantly of pine smoke, and it even warms up.

I settled down on the stove, which was almost cold, because the grandmother began to save firewood very much. The cat Titus came to me, we warmed ourselves against each other, and I read. How much did I read then!

But the grandfather carefully took the books he read for kindling, and we must do him justice, he always asked: "Have you already read this? Well, well, spoil your eyes.

I read until late at night, until the bunch of torches ended. Mother came out, cracking her fingers, looking at me strangely.

- Why are you not sleeping? I got angry.

"The car is humming in the street, I can't sleep," she answered.

3.13 HUNGER

And here comes the strange situation. The shops were broken, nothing was sold anywhere except in the bazaar, but even if the shops were open, then what to buy with?

Before the war, bread cost 90 kopecks per kilogram in the store. Now home-made bread was sometimes sold at the bazaar for 90 rubles per kilogram.

Mother used to receive so much money for almost a whole month of work. And now we have no money left at all.

Grandfather and grandmother decided to sell some things. Rummaged, sorted out what to sell - all junk. Under the Soviet regime, buying boots or a coat was an event, and each thing was worn to the last, then repaired, then turned over.

The grandmother took it to sell some worn-out junk, stood for two days in a row - where there, no one buys, everyone just sells.

Grandmother and mother scraped all the supplies, dry crusts, swept every grain, wised up, calculated how much we should eat a day, came up with some kind of potato "potato pancakes", pea cakes. Baked in dry pans.

Grandfather lost his temper, remembering Uncle Petya: "Why did you give that bastard a pot of lard?" He, a Bolshevik specialist, eats off there in the Urals, and you are his last lard!

And the savings began.

The word was new to me and I liked it. On my stove, I secretly started a box in which I discovered my own economy. What my grandmother gave me, I did not eat to the end, especially the cracker - I hid it, foreseeing the time when there would be absolutely nothing left, and I would please everyone with my stock.

Near the house we had an old spreading walnut tree. Every autumn, the grandmother collected a bag of nuts and kept them for Christmas. Now this bag has become our NZ and hope.

And my grandfather and I climbed over the fence and began to dig up the land of the garden farm: there occasionally came across undigged potatoes. I just squealed with delight when I found potatoes.

On Peter and Paul Square, we combed the square and collected half a bag of chestnuts. These wild, horse chestnuts are tart and bitter, but if they are dried and roasted, they are nothing, even tasty for hungry teeth, it's all a matter of habit. At that time, I was reading Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*, reading and nibbling chestnuts drying on the oven, and the taste of horse chestnuts was associated with *The Quiet Flows* for the rest of my life. And how many years have passed, and re-read, and watched the film, and passed exams on this book, but the taste of chestnuts has not disappeared! ..

In the morning, while washing my face, my mother remarked:

- What an obsession: I feel the whole skull.

I felt my face. Thin skin stretched over the bones so that it was possible to study the anatomy. I felt, I felt, it became terrible.

"Yes, there are." For days on end, a worm of hunger sucked in my stomach. "What to eat?" And at night I dreamed of dinners, happy sumptuous dinners, but I had a strong will, and for days on end I ate almost nothing but chestnuts. Several times a grandmother from the bazaar brought potato peels (in Kyiv they are called "lushpayka"), soaps, rubbed into potato pancakes, they were bittersweet, but it was real food.

In the locker lay a flat brick on which pans and pans were placed. A hundred times I was wrong, imagining that it was bread, then I threw this brick away, I just could not see it in the cabinet anymore.

Suddenly there was a rumor that the Kurenevskaya council was opening a canteen for starving children. Mom ran somewhere to fuss, and now they gave me a card. The first time we went with Lyalya.

The dining room was located in Bondarsky Lane, in a former kindergarten. We entered a large room full of ragged, thin children from the smallest to thirteen. But it was terribly quiet, only the cook's ladle clinked.

We stood in line for distribution and received a plate of real hot millet soup. We carried the plates to the table, sat down, and while we ate we were happy. I savored every spoonful, rinsed the soup in my mouth, sipped through my teeth, before swallowing, I

felt how each sip poured into me, causing hot joy, although in that soup there was only water and millet, nothing more. And such quiet children were sitting around, no one was buzzing, others, embarrassed, licked the plate with their tongues.

Every day we began to run after this plate, as if after a miracle sent down, and then I ran carefully all winter, trying to guess by the closing, because by the end the soup remained thicker at the bottom, and jealously watched how deep my aunt immersed the ladle.

Lyali's mother was a foreman at a cannery, was friends with my mother and, leaving for work, left the baby with my grandmother, and I used to babysit her like a sister. Then we studied at different schools, I made militant friends, she had girlfriends. But now this canteen has made us inseparable again.

Lyalina's mother was a member of the party, she evacuated alone, leaving her daughter with her sister, an old maid, angry and withdrawn, a teacher of the German language. They had a strange non-Russian surname - Engstrem. But you never know what surnames do not exist in the world?

Once after the dining room we went to Lyalya. And suddenly I saw on the table a loaf of real fresh bread, a jar of jam, bags.

I was literally dumbfounded.

"They give us out," Lyalya said.

• Where?

I was ready to run and shout: "Grandma, what don't you know, they are already giving out, but we don't get it, run faster!"

Lyalya showed me the notice. It said that the Volksdeutsche should come to such and such a store on such and such days of the month, carry bags, bags and cans with them.

What does Volksdeutsche mean?

"That means half-Germans, almost Germans.

Are you Germans?

— No, we are Finns. And the Finns are an Aryan nation, Volksdeutsche. And my aunt said that I would go to school for the Volksdeutsche, I would be a translator, like she was.

"This is how you settled down," I muttered, not yet fully comprehending this complexity: there was Lyalya, a girlfriend,

almost a sister, all in half, and suddenly she was an Aryan nation, and I was the lowest . . .

[Earlier, the elected party members lived, they received everything from the bases, they did not know the queues. Now the same thing - the Aryans. Now party members, now Aryans.] Furious, hungry anger flared up in me. So it's the shops that don't work for us, so we eat horse chestnuts, and they already live!

"Well, well, Volksdeutsche," I said grimly. — Do you also go to the canteen for the hungry, zar-raza?

And I left, slamming the door so hard that I myself felt ashamed, but for many years I hated her, although somewhere in the depths of my soul I understood: what does Lyalka have to do with it?

3.14 I DO BUSINESS

Everyone already knew that Shurka Matza did not go to Babi Yar, he was sitting at home and did not go anywhere: his mother was hiding him. She herself is Russian, but she was married to a Jew, and now her child is a Jew.

When Matza finally ventured out and came running to me first, I didn't even recognize him: skinny, like a stray kitten, already blue, fiercely hungry, eyes shining like light bulbs. It looks like they've already made it there.

"Let's go to the market to sell matches, come with me, I'm the only one who's afraid," he shook the bag of boxes.

"Mom asked you not to call me Matzoy, my surname is Krysan. Alexander - from the Greek Alexandros or Alexandris. I am Alexander Krysan, and please don't give me away. . .

"All right," I said, "let's call you 'Alexandris, chairman of the dead rats.' He smiled pitifully, and I rushed to my grandmother:

- Give me matches, let's go to the market.

Grandma had fifteen boxes of matches, and after a moment's hesitation, she gave away ten. In the end, you can constantly keep the fire, or go to your neighbors for coal, and you don't need matches.

It was very cold outside. Shurka was trembling in his light coat and looked around in a haunted manner, as if he were in a zoo with open cages of predators.

The market was almost empty. The price of matches is known - ten rubles a box. We laid out the matches in beautiful stacks on a bare market stall and waited.

Nearby, a woman was selling saccharin: these were sachets, rolled up exactly like powders in a pharmacy, and no one yet knew what it was. And the woman shouted, praised that it was sweet, better than sugar, one bag for four glasses of tea. The devil knows where they got it and where so much of it came from at once, but throughout the war and several years after it, I did not see sugar, only saccharin.

They bought a box of matches from me, I got a crispy gold piece - and I was gone. I had money. Money! Real money, with which I could already buy saccharine for four whole glasses of tea. Shurka was cold, kitty, and a fever rose in me, I passionately waited for more to be bought, more. For the next box, they gave me a German mark, and now, finally, we were able to consider German money. Money went like this: one German mark - ten Soviet rubles. The stamp was yellow-brown, with eagles and swastikas, a small piece of paper, half the size of our yellow-brown ruble, on which it was already strange to see stars, a sickle and a hammer.

Before dark, we managed to sell all the matches, and we had money. We chattered our teeth with excitement, greedily looked at the potatoes in bunches of three, at the flour in glasses. We bought a kilo of bread and a sachet of saccharin.

In the evening we had a party at home: everyone drank tea with saccharin crystals and ate bread. I just burst with modest pride. I already knew what I would do the next day: sell nuts.

Shurka had nothing more to sell, so I went alone. At random he asked for three rubles per nut (or thirty pfennigs) - and they began to take from me. Rarely, but they did.

Our neighbor's boy, my old comrade, and then the enemy, Vovka Babarik, came up, busily laid out a three-ruble note, chose a nut. A minute later he returned:

- Replace. Rotten.

- How do I know, maybe you had a rotten one in your pocket?
I said, because I trembled over every ruble.

— Look, your own nut! he poked the broken halves under my nose; inside the nut is moldy.

- You can eat! I wriggled out, protecting my precious bag of nuts with trembling hands.
- Replace it, Semerik the agglomerate, or return three rubles.
- I will not return! Bought - sold, - I said desperately, although deep down I felt like a bastard.

He waved. I was ready for this and dived under the counter. He is behind me. I rushed between the rows, diving under the counters, holding my bag tightly, ready to run even to Podol, but not to return three rubles. Vovka was tired of chasing, he stopped, looked contemptuously at me:

“Uh, Semerik tru-tu-tu, three-pails-of-milk,” he said with hatred. — Gad. We’ll meet Again.

We really were destined to meet again, and in the end I will tell you how. Now I had to walk along the street with caution, but greedy happiness flared up in me that I got three rubles, as if they had fallen from the sky.

Once Vovka Babarik and I were friends, even though he is a little older than me. The feud started when I released his birds. He was a passionate birder, I went to him, helped, looked at goldfinches, siskins and tits, and then began to pester him: let him out and let him out. I said: “You catch, let them sit, and then let them out, otherwise they get into the cage forever, until they die. Pity them.” And he was sorry to let go. One day he hung the cages on the trees in the garden. I came, and he just left somewhere. I opened all the cages, gave a tear, then for two weeks he caught me in the streets to beat me.

There were already few nuts left when Shurka came running.

- I got the papers. Do you want half?

He had a basket of tissue paper.

- The uncle here alone robbed, but he does not know what to do with it, he is a non-smoker. Gives a dozen for a ruble, and we will sell a piece for a ruble! He’s given a loan. I

thought that there were a lot of kurts, they would be sold out.

I immediately took half of it from him and felt like a great merchant. So to say, 900 percent of the income on each pack of tissue paper is crazy. And terribly simple, just stand there and shout:

"Here's tissue paper! By the ruble!

These were such little books of a hundred leaves, tear yourself and twist cigarettes from shag. But the accursed and ignorant Kurenev Kurets were already accustomed to twisting from the Ukrainian Word, and trade was sluggish. One ruble, some unfortunate ten pfennigs, but come on, they are greedy, squint and walk past. Ooh, bastards!

To attract attention, I built a whole house out of books, with elegant labels outside. There was a woman with a baby, as he saw it, he opened his mouth:

- Mom, buy it!

She looked, hesitated. I stood and prayed that she would buy. The kid thought that the inside of the book was just as beautiful, he was disappointed, but I don't care, I need a ruble.

- Oh, transfer money! - said the mother and took the little one away.

I looked after her with hatred.

On the first day, Shurka and I sold only packs of ten, but even then we bought a hundred grams of bread, ate it right there in the little garden, and again I felt proud that I was earning for myself.

- You can still sell newspapers, clean your boots! - Shurka scattered his mind, his eyes burned with a feverish, hungry gleam.

And we did all this, disappearing in the market from morning to evening. Grandfather was right: a new life really began for me.

3.15 BOLIK RETURNS

A rolling stone gathers no moss. To trade well, you have to run. The wolf's legs are fed. We divided the bazaar into spheres of

action and, each to the best of his ability, wrought in his halves, snooping through the rows, pestering at the gates:

- Here is cheaper than mushrooms first-class tissue paper. Navali, who got the money! Uncle, buy it for a smoke, it suits the old and the young, as you smoke - smoke comes out of the ass! Wow, greedy, Kurenevsky miser . . .

Business was terribly bad, barely scraping together for a slice of bread. But I still ran for a bowl of soup to the canteen, so that's already in order, I'm not dying of hunger.

So I was moaning one day at the gate, when I saw that a ragged, strangely familiar figure was wandering along the street, staggering.

— Shurik! I howled across the bazaar. The pain has come!

It really was Bolik. God, he barely trudged. And what he looked like: emaciated, scratched, dirty to the very eyes.

He was returning from an unsuccessful evacuation. Well, tenacious, damn it, like our cat Tit: wherever you take him, he keeps coming home. We went to his house, Aunt Nina burst into tears, clucked: how, the only son, precious gold! Zolotko ate potatoes with soaked breadcrumbs, he was shaking, beating, he told how bombs fell on their echelon, how everything was on fire, then German tanks were ahead, he abandoned the train and went home along the sleepers.

And he slept in haystacks, and good women in the villages fed him, and now he came.

Why didn't you bring a machine gun? I asked.

Bolik waved his hand.

- Guys, let's look for partisans. But no - the three of us will create a detachment ourselves.

We laughed: look, you fell in body, not in spirit, our militant Bolik, as he was! All is well then, let's go for a walk.

The rails on the railway embankment were already covered in orange rust. Spent shells lay between them. Then all three of us became agitated, walked along the embankment, carefully looking under our feet.

Bolik was the first to find a whole, unopened clip. We found two full machine-gun belts in the bushes. We were downright

mad, rushing along the embankment and collecting cartridges. These were Soviet cartridges, they were left by the Red Army men, who occupied the defense here. Only there were no rifles.

- Machine gun, machine gun! Bolik prayed directly. We didn't find the machine gun either, and if the grandmother found out about it, she would say that God kept us.

But we collected all the bullets and buried them on the slope of the embankment according to all the rules, counting twenty feet from the big stone.

3.16 KHARKOV IS TAKEN

The newsstand, once so colorful and covered with magazines, was now smashed and filthy. The kiosk girl shielded herself from the wind with a piece of plywood and sat alone, like a spider, over a pile of Ukrainian Words.

As always, she was delighted to see us, counted out a hundred newspapers at a discount.

- What's new? Shura inquired. . - Yes, they took Kharkov . . . Successes near Leningrad. These "successes" have been going on for three months now.

We ran to the market, yelling:

— Fresh newspaper! Kharkov is taken! Near Leningrad solid successes! Read who is literate!

But the bazaar was deserted, rare traders were little interested in the printed word, we barely sold four pieces.

We moved on to the next stage - marching down the street, Shurka on the left side, me on the right, pestering all passers-by, until we reached the tram park opposite Babi Yar, and there we were lucky: there was always a crowd hanging around, waiting for a random freight tram. When he left the park gates, people rushed to the platforms, the counselor collected money and drove to Podil or Puscha-Voditsa, depending on where he was going.

People took newspapers from us in very different ways: some with a satisfied smile, some impenetrably seriously, and some with anger. One man, in a good coat, with a briefcase, said:

Well, everything. Soon we will hear about Moscow, and the war will end.

Baba sighed bitterly.

- The fortune-teller in Podil is fortune-telling, she said that the war will end when the potatoes bloom.

“Well, earlier, I think,” said the man with the briefcase.

Angry glances were thrown at his expensive coat, but no one argued.

I was very hungry, often dizzy, and I, as they say, staggered from the wind. The stack of newspapers was heavy, my arms and legs were buzzing. Shurka kept robbing at the gate, and I sat down on some stone steps and thought.

Before the war, my mother and I once went to Moscow. I remembered her well. That means that soon the Germans will take Moscow, they will ride the subway, walk along Okhotny Ryad. They will probably demolish the mausoleum. They will hang up the order and start shooting Jews. Then the gypsies, then the hostages . . . Then the potatoes will bloom, and the reign of Hitler will finally come on earth, everyone will shout “genius”, “father of nations”, “our wise Fuhrer and teacher”, the Aryans will roll out in cars, line up near our square line for chintz. . . I imagined this picture so vividly that everything in me went cold with hopelessness.

And newspapers, you see, are such a thing: you won’t earn a penny on them until you sell everything, and just today: a commodity, so to speak, perishable. Therefore, run, the money will not come by itself, they must be pulled out. However, I did not have the strength to get up, I sat on the icy steps until I was frozen to the bone, with painful hope I noticed from afar every passer-by who could be a possible buyer.

And then Shurka and I saw a large, large crowd. It poured down from Podil, flooding the whole of Kirillovskaya, a dark avalanche, some kind of spontaneous procession. There was something sinister about him, but we did not immediately realize it, but rushed to meet us with our newspapers. Only then did they notice the guards. These were the prisoners. Thousands.

They walked in a disorderly crowd, stumbling, colliding, like a herd that is being driven to the slaughter. And it's true, then they said so: they don't "lead", but "drive" the prisoners.

They were dirty, overgrown, with some kind of completely stupid or crazy eyes. Soldiers' overcoats hung on them in tatters, some had rags wrapped around their legs, others were barefoot, some had knapsacks. There was a rustle and a clatter in the air, they all stomped, staring blankly in front of them, only rarely, rarely did anyone look greedily, hunted at Shurka and me, and the dapper guards clattered their wrought-iron boots and called to each other in German.

Frightened faces appeared in the windows and gates. Someone from the sidewalk threw a cigarette to the prisoners. I just noticed how a white stick fell into their crowd, and suddenly there was a quick silent fight in this place. About a dozen people were on the ground, but they hurriedly got up, and it was not clear whether someone got a cigarette or was torn to pieces.

I forgot about everything in the world. Like crazy, I rushed home, overtaking the column. I jumped straight over the fence, threw the newspapers into the garden, rushed into the cellar where the precious potatoes were stored, grabbed a dozen, climbed the fence, trembling with running and excitement, sat on horseback. The guards passed right under my feet, and the whole street was crowded with moving prisoners. I threw one potato without aiming. The prisoners rushed after her, again there was a silent fight. But I noticed who got the potato: he quickly, quickly began to gnaw on it, crouching down and defending himself with both hands, and they didn't attack him, and no one looked at where this potato came from, as if it were supposed to be, as if they fall sometimes from the sky...

I threw a second potato - the same lightning dump, the same person quickly ate it raw. And my skin was cold. So I threw all the potatoes one at a time, feeling like a participant in some unreal dream, a nightmare. I sat on the fence until I passed the very tail of this incredible procession - limping, similarities of people hanging on the shoulders of neighbors. But no one fell on our street, and there were no shots. I got down and picked up my newspapers in the garden. It was getting dark, it was useless

to go outside. About twenty newspapers with a solemn fanfare report about the capture of Kharkov remained in my memory.

A couple of days later, one of the escaped prisoners took refuge with us. He was from Saratov, his name was Vasily, but I did not remember his last name. He talked all night. About Darnitsa.

3.17 DARNITSA

Darnitsa was a workers' settlement just across the Dnieper, opposite the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, and its name has the good word "dar" as its root.

In the USSR, very few fans of the good soldier Schweik know that there is a continuation of Hasek's immortal book, written by his friend Karel Vanek. The only translation that I could find was published in 1932 in Minsk, in the Belarusian language. The brave soldier Schweik is captured by the Russians and ends up near Kiev, in Darnitsa. It was there that during the First World War there was a giant prisoner of war camp, and it looked like this:

"As far as the eye could see, there were prisoners. Some lay under the trees with a dull expression of muzzled animals, others sat on satchels, half empty, or huddled together in dense heaps and crowded around the boilers, from which the Russian soldiers drove them away with clubs. Finally, there were those who, crawling on all fours, nibbled thin grass and, with a comical expression of greed, wild hunger and disgust, put it in their mouths.

Anyone who happened to stay at least one day in Darnitsa became the most ardent anti-militarist for life ... From 80 to 100 people died there daily from hunger and exhaustion. Further, Karel Vanek describes with gloomy humor the scene of a wild fight at the cauldron with porridge, when some Austrian fell into the porridge under the pressure of the crowd and boiled. Then the Russian guards dispersed the prisoners with clubs, removed the Austrian, the crowd attacked the boiler - and in a few minutes it was clean, only at the bottom lay the cap of the ill-fated Austrian, licked to the last grain.

If the statement is correct that history moves in a spiral, repeating the same points, but at a new level, then this is suitable for Darnitsa. The Germans had no idea about its history and did not read Vanek, but they set up one of the most grandiose prisoner-of-war camps in exactly the same place. Only this time the Russians were in the camp, and the Germans and Austrians brandished clubs.

The spiral cycle of Darnitsa was exactly 25 years, the point was repeated really at a new level: now there was no grass left in the camp at all, and not hundreds, but thousands died every day.

The encircled units of the Southwestern Front were initially tasked with defending themselves in Kyiv to the last. Then they received an order from Stalin to leave Kyiv and break through to the east. They left Kyiv along the bridges across the Dnieper to Darnitsa, and there, on the left bank, they were mowed down from the ground and from the air, crushed, dispersed and taken prisoner. The huge army that defended the center of Ukraine ceased to exist.

Then the Germans in Darnitsa surrounded a huge territory with barbed wire, drove the first 60,000 prisoners there, and then every day drove thousands of parties.

Vasily was among the first. They were driven through the gate and left to their own devices.

At the entrance, however, they selected the commanders, political officers and Jews, whom they managed to identify, and placed them behind a separate fence, forming, as it were, a camp within the camp. Many of them were seriously wounded, they were carried and laid on the ground. This fence was heavily guarded.

Huge masses of people sat, slept, wandered, waiting for something. There is nothing given.

Gradually, they began to tear grass, extract roots, and drank water from puddles. A few days later there was no grass left, the camp turned into a bare, beaten-out parade ground.

It was cold at night. More and more losing their appearance, people, freezing, huddled together: one laid his head on the knees of another, the next laid his head on his knees, and so on, until a

tight ball was obtained. In the morning, when he began to move and spread, several dead remained in place during the night.

But then the Germans set up boilers and began to cook beets - they took them right outside the fence, there were large collective farm fields around with unharvested beets and potatoes, and if anyone was interested, the prisoners could be fed to the full. But, apparently, the famine was planned.

Each prisoner relied on one scoop of beet soup for a day. Weakened from hunger, the captives were forced to line up with sticks and shouts, and then they had to crawl to the cauldron on elbows and knees. This was devised to "control the approach to the boilers".

The commanders, political officers and Jews who were in the inner fence were not given anything. They plowed all the land and ate everything they could. On the fifth or sixth day they gnawed at their belts and shoes. By the eighth or ninth day, some of them were dying, and the rest were like half-mad. By the twelfth day, only a few remained, crazy, with cloudy eyes, they bit and chewed their nails, looked for lice in their shirts and put them in their mouths. Jews turned out to be the most tenacious, some were still moving after two weeks, and commanders and political officers died earlier, and their death was terrible.

- And we immediately walk nearby, - said Vasily, - we look, hungry, brutalized ourselves, it's impossible to watch how they are sitting there behind the wire, they don't understand anything, and the sentry with a machine gun is standing - making sure that nothing is thrown to them.

Word of the camp quickly spread.

And from Kyiv, from the villages, women rushed to Darnitsa to look for their own. Entire strings of them walked along the roads, with wallets, with bundles of gear.

At first there was confusion and inconsistency: if a woman found her husband, he was sometimes released, and sometimes not. Then they stopped letting go.

The Germans accepted the programs, but first they brought them to the duty room, where they selected all the best, or even everything. Therefore, women tried to carry just potatoes,

carrots or moldy bread. They tried to throw themselves through the wire, but the guards shouted and fired.

Most of the transmissions were unaddressed: not finding her husband, the woman still gave the basket away, but you can't carry it back when rows of half-mad skeletons line the wire. But if there was an addressee, the guards never handed the package to him. They just carried them out of the duty room, shouting: "Bread! Bread!" - and thrown to the ground. The crowd fell, attacked - starving people fought, snatched bread from each other, and the guards stood and laughed.

Correspondents arrived and wound these scenes on film. Later I myself saw photographs from Darnitsa in German magazines - creepy, barefoot, overgrown people, and the captions were: "Russian soldier Ivan, the Soviets want to defend their crumbling state with such soldiers."

Soon such entertainment became pleasing to the guards. They began to diversify it. They took out a basket from the duty room, shouted: "Bread! Bread!" - and then they announced that anyone who touched without a command would be killed. The crowd stood still. After talking and smoking, the guards turned and left. Here the prisoners rushed to the basket, but the guards turned around and scribbled from machine guns. Dozens of the dead remained on the ground, the crowd shied back, and so this game dragged on until the Germans announced that bread could be taken.

"I rushed with everyone," Vasily said. "You don't understand anything there: you see bread and throw yourself, you don't think that they will kill you; only when you see that they are falling around, it comes . . . Let's step back, stand, lick our lips, look at this bread. If they allowed it, they rushed about, pulled it out of the teeth of the dead, pulled it out of the mouth with a finger . . . We were all there - not people."

Among the guards was a sergeant major named Bitzer, a passionate hunter. He went out with a small-caliber rifle and hunted in the camp itself. He was an excellent sniper: he shot at some sparrow, then instantly turned around and shot at a prisoner. Once - on a sparrow, once - on a prisoner, and hit exactly in both. Sometimes Bitzer shot two or three dozen

prisoners a day. When he went hunting, everyone rushed to the corners.

Vasily lost count of days and any idea of time. He admitted that he survived due to the fact that he went to the garbage pit near the German kitchen. There was a crowd scurrying about, looking for potato lush rations, onion skins. The Germans took pictures here too, laughed: "Rus is a pig."

Then some kind of regime began to be created. They started driving to work. At six o'clock in the morning they hit the rail, crowds poured out of the barracks (they were gradually built up), non-commissioned officers selected people into work teams and led them to fill up ditches, repair roads, and dismantle the ruins. The team never returned in its entirety: those who fell from hunger, did not work well or tried to escape were shot, and it happened that a hundred came out and ten returned.

From the prisoners themselves, they created the camp police. The former senior lieutenant Tishchenko Konstantin Mikhailovich became its head. This chief of "his" turned out to be worse than the Germans. He beat many to death with sticks, forced them to crawl and squat for hours until people lost consciousness, and his already loud voice terrified the entire camp.

The prisoners wrote notes, wrapped stones around them and threw them through the wire. Women who constantly crowded around the camp picked up and carried these notes throughout Ukraine. The content was always the same: "I'm in Darnitsa, bring potatoes, take documents, try to help out." And the address.

These notes passed from hand to hand. Women walked around the bazaar and shouted: "Who is here from Ivankov? Take the note!" If there was no one from Ivankov, they were transferred to Demidov, from there to Dymer, and so on, until she got to the address.

How many times have I passed them on myself - soiled, worn, so that some had to be outlined in ink.

The people's mail operated without fail, and there was no such soul who would have thrown it away or been too lazy to deliver a note.

Having received the note, relatives, wives, mothers, of course, hurried to Darnitsa, but they did not always catch the writer alive, and if they did, what could they do?

Vasily went to work, buried the dead at the wire, and so he and one Kieville looked after a convenient place, prepared an iron strip, got out of the barracks at night and began to dig.

They sprinkled each other with sand to be inconspicuous. We worked in a place where the searchlight reached the weakest.

Of course, they were still in full view, especially when they climbed through the first row of wire and ended up on loosened earth.

"I was trembling like crazy," Vasily said. - I understand that I need to be careful, but I rush myself. I see, I can already squeeze through - the tunic is cracking, the thorns are tearing on the back, I crawled through and gave a tear! I look around - there is no partner, I realize that he is wider in the shoulders than me, he must be stuck. And then they scratched. . .

In general, I convey everything as Vasily told. His comrade was killed: apparently, he could not quickly climb through, began to dig, and they noticed him. Perhaps the guards decided that he was the only one trying to escape, or they did not want to chase and prowl in a dark field. Vasily heard how they babbled and cursed, and he himself went further.

Finally, he reached the potato field. The ground above is already frozen. Vasily began to tear the ground with his nails, get potatoes and gnaw them along with the ground. He understood that he had to leave and leave, but at first he could not help but eat. Then he did the following stupidity: he got up to his full height and ran. He did not remember how long he ran and wandered, hid in some kind of hole and threw himself on tops.

He spent two days in the fields like a beast, going around the villages, eating potatoes and beets - he didn't need better food.

Came across the battlefield. Corpses were rotting, equipment and weapons were lying around. Someone has already looted here: the dead were without boots, with their pockets turned inside out, or completely undressed. Vasily also looted: he picked up clothes that were safer for him, armed himself with a pistol. A black horse with a broken leg wandered in the woods, Vasily

caught him, sat on horseback and moved on. I saw a two-wheeled wagon in a ravine, harnessed a black to it and drove off on a wagon.

Finally he dared to visit the farm. The women fed him and gave him civilian clothes. He looked at himself in the mirror - an old man with a beard, haggard and ragged.

The women advised to go anywhere, just not to stay in these places: the Germans were still prowling, hunting for prisoners. The deceased partner told him a lot about the family in Kyiv, and Vasily remembered the address. He thought that in a big city one could get lost among the people.

He did not dare to go along the main roads, but wandered along country roads for a long time until he left for the Dnieper. I rode along it, already thinking of abandoning my horse and wagon, and swimming across it myself, when I suddenly found a ferry. He paid for the transportation with a pistol, which he did not need in Kyiv.

Fate took care of him. Until Kyiv itself, he did not see a single German, grew bolder and realized that they walk in groups, formations and whole armies along certain roads, and the earth is generally large, and there are places on it to escape.

He entered Kyiv quite bravely. Then there were so many old people on carts that no one paid attention to him.

He arrived at the address, and the house burned down: it was near Khreshchatyk.

Vasily busily drove through the whole city, and when he found himself on Kurenevka, he no longer knew what to do next. I saw my grandmother behind the fence, asked to spend the night, and my grandmother told me to open the gate. When he told who he was and where he came from, the grandmother crossed herself in shock:

You came from the other world. . .

-
-

Subsequently, investigations established that 68,000 people died in the Darnitsa camp. There were similar camps in Slavuta, in Kyiv itself on Kerosinnaya, etc. [The Germans did not treat any prisoners of any other country so inhumanly as they treated

the prisoners of the Soviet Union. These people found themselves without any protection, or at least any formal help from the international Red Cross, because Stalin put the Soviet Union out of his sphere of influence.]

Trying to determine the future fate of the administration of the Darnitsa camp, I discovered that none of them, including Bitser, went through any process.

[But even more striking was the fate of the Soviet prisoners after the defeat of Germany. By order of Stalin, everyone who did not die in German captivity was arrested and sent to Siberia. From German concentration camps to Soviet ones.]

REMINDER. Please take a moment to open up to the very beginning of this book and brush up on the first line of the opening chapter, Ashes.

3.18 BEAUTIFUL, SPACIOUS, BLESSED LAND

My grandfather came up with this, and, in my opinion, it's right: Vasily couldn't stay in the city, but he had to go to a remote village, where now there is a man, and even with a horse - worth its weight in gold.

And I went as an escort.

The Dymerskoye highway used to be always busy, but now we were driving along it without meeting a soul, and only the roar of the wheels of our military cart, large, in my height, was loudly heard in the forest.

Here and there straw, horse dung and yellowed scraps of newspapers were trampled into the cobblestones. Grass sprouted between the stones and shot arrows. Once upon a time people passed here, but that was a long time ago, and these people disappeared, died out, only I, Vasily and the black horse remained.

There was still peace. Spacious, always alive. The tall old pines of the dense forest of Pushcha-Voditsa rose into the sky, quietly rustled and swayed there in the blue height, calm, wise.

I lay face up in the hay, watched the peaks float, sometimes noticed a red squirrel or a spotted woodpecker, and thought, it seems, about everything at once: that the world is spacious, that Vasily was right, this shooting-killing locust walks along threads

and knots, like of our city, where the devil knows what is going on - Babi Yar, Darnitsa, orders, famine, Aryans, Volksdeutsches, burning books - and all around everything is the same as millions of years ago, softly rustling pine tops, and under the sky there is a huge, blessed land, not Aryan, not Jewish, not Gypsy, but just a land for people, namely PEOPLE, my God, or they are not yet in the world, or they are somewhere, but I don't know about it ... So many thousands of years already the human race lives on Earth - and until now everyone cannot share something.

Oh, it would be worth sharing, otherwise one beggar hangs footcloths to dry, and another beggar kills him for these footcloths. And is it really the only thing that people have mastered to perfection throughout history - is to kill?

When Pushcha-Voditsa ended, on the right, from a height, a view of forty kilometers opened up. Below, in its valley, the blue Dnieper winded, on which neither a steamer nor a boat could be seen. Desert, desert, only fields to the horizon, and this straight, as if drawn along a ruler, light line of a grassy highway, leading, it seems, into the sky.

At the roadside, among the picturesque bushes, stood two crosses - simple, wooden, with German helmets put on them. Flowers were also placed on the mounds, but they had long since rotted and dried up.

Here, probably, somewhere in Germany, mothers are crying, or there are children left. Fathers don't come with suitcases full of junk and bike bells. Was it worth rushing so far to eventually rot under a rusting helmet? Is there really anything in the world worth rotting under a rusting helmet? Centuries follow centuries, and the dead rot for one thing, then for another, and then it turns out that all that was in vain, but it turns out that it is necessary to rot for the third ...

Vasily dozed all the time, sometimes fell asleep, and then the lame crow, who was clearly tired of limping to no one knows where, would slow down, step over more and more quietly, until he completely stopped. Then Vasily woke up, hit him with a whip on the belly, and briskly, willingly tugged, nodding his head actively: they say, clearly, clearly, now I understand everything!

The first village on our way was Petrivtsy, and we crossed it as true aliens from Mars or people from the other world. Women and children ran out to the wattle fences, looked at us in shock, and the whole village looked after us until we drove out into the field again and disappeared on a lifeless highway.

By lunchtime, from shaking on the cobblestones, our livers were mixed with spleens, and we suggested that the crow drive along the sandy roadside. But it was more difficult to drag there, he didn't like it very much, he stopped looking at the road, and only squinted with his eye, apparently praying to his god that Vasily would fall asleep - and then happily turned onto the pavement, but he did not take into account the fact that from shaking Vasily woke up.

Having dragged another seven kilometers, full of misunderstanding, contradictions and insults, the black man went on strike.

We straightened it out, tangled it up and let it graze, we ourselves chewed crackers, laid hay under a wild rose bush, laid a tattered raincoat and no less tattered jacket on top, went to sleep, not hurrying anywhere, and it was one of the best dreams in my life.

After the crosses with helmets, the war once again reminded us of itself with a picturesque blown-up bridge over the Irpen River, near the village of Demidov. There was no village: only ashes with bright white stoves, the pipes of which, like forefingers, stuck out into the sky. [So, there was a battle of some benefactors of mankind with others - for the best, that means happiness in the world.]

Irpen is a poor river, but fast. The German units, passing here, made a gati through the branches of the river, but they themselves so smashed them that we almost drowned our rattletrap while moving, but when we drove into the burnt village and turned off the cobbled highway onto country roads, our goal was close.

I really liked the military stroller - with folding steps, handles on the sides, locks, like in a truck, and boxes under the seat. Everything about it was well thought out, with the exception of

one little thing: its wheels did not coincide with the ruts of dirt roads.

All village carts have the same distance between the wheels, this is the most important rule, God forbid you retreat, then at least don't drive along our roads. After all, the roads in Mother Russia are what? Or a dried-up mess with deep ruts, along which the cart goes, as if on rails; or a liquid mess in which, turning off the track, you will sit down to the very hubs. At best, they are simply two deep ruts-ditches with puddles and frogs cut through the meadows. Around the track.

One wheel of our wagon went along the track, the other desperately jumped, dangled, fell through all the bumps, ridges and pits, so that we rode, leaning, almost tipping over. If we were carrying shells, for which, probably, this wagon was assigned, then their weight would have spread. Five kilometers of such a ride exhausted the soul, giving five times the hardest that we drove in the whole day.

I understood Vasily when he noticed that if we are being beaten up in the war, then there is a modest contribution from the one who designed our military carts.

At Leskov's, Lefty, having visited London, was most of all shocked by the fact that the British do not clean their guns with crushed bricks. Returning to St. Petersburg and dying in the police station, he asks to convey this to the tsar, otherwise the bullets dangle in Russian rifles from the increased cleaning, and they "God forbid war, they are not good for shooting."

We had so many vigilant people, they even found a crown in a bouquet on a student's notebook, but no one was worried that all our military carts, "God bless the war," were not good for driving.

Ivan Svinchenko lived at the far end of Litvinovka, "in the settlement" behind the dam, which was decorated with a burned-out mill. He immediately accepted Vasily as a brother, and only baptized himself, remembering how, almost miraculously, he saved himself from German captivity.

There were a whole bunch of them there, Svinchenkov, and Ivan's sister, Gapka, took me in.

Her typical Ukrainian hut was low, rooted into the ground, with tiny windows under rotten straw. Inside, it looked like a

cave with an uneven clay floor, on which lay rags, straw dolls, children and kittens crawled. In the center stood a peeling stove, next to it there was a platform with a rag thrown over it, which was called "floor" and on which they slept "pokot". The spirit in the hut seemed unaccustomed to be nasty and heavy. Well, well, a village, the usual housing of a collective farmer.

Gapka's husband disappeared in the war, she was left with a bunch of children, and behind the wall a neighbor had children, they all crawled around the hut and yard like cockroaches, barebellied, smeared, snotty, in shabby shirts and dresses, and the smaller ones were completely naked.

And on the stove sat the mysterious grandfather and woman, the patriarchs of the Svinchenko family, who frightened me at first. Grandfather was thin, transparent, constantly coughing and spitting, and the woman was sliding down from the stove, shuffling heavily around the yard, she could barely walk herself, but still tried to do something. She was hunchbacked, bent in half, so she walked, looking straight at the ground she stepped on, as if looking for a penny.

My mother told me at home that Gapka was an unfortunate worker, and that the ancient grandfather and woman were golden people who had done good to other people all their lives. But at first I could not get rid of some terrible feeling.

Having asked about our city life, horrified and gasping, Gapka began to tell about her own.

And it turns out that happiness has come to them: there are no more collective farms. They perished to hell and damn mother.

There were no bosses, parasites, hangers-on, pushers, chauffeurs, and the Germans, as they passed here, have not seen them since. There was the village of Litvinovka, there were just peasants - in themselves, not landowners, not Soviet, not German, Lord, my God, but when was this like that ?!

Therefore, everyone began to live according to his own understanding. And around were unharvested fields, and everyone chose any plot for himself, reaped bread, dug potatoes, stocked up on hay. There was nowhere to take it. And ate, ate, ate.

Even the grandfather and the woman do not remember if there was ever a time when Litvinovka ate her fill.

They stocked up for years, the cellars were bursting with vegetables, the attics were littered with apples and pears, dried fruits hung in garlands under straw eaves, and no one forbade anything, and no one took anything away, and no one drove anywhere . . . The old women crossed themselves and said that this is before the end of the world.

In the evenings, they gathered at the torch for gatherings, gnawed seeds to the point of stupidity and drove moonshine from beets. And during the day, flails were rattling in all the yards: grandfathers, women, girls, children were threshing bread. Grinding grain between two stones, sifting flour through a hand sieve. Litvinovka bathed in happiness.

Gapka boiled a huge cauldron of potatoes, dumped them on a scraped wooden table, and the whole family surrounded this table, and I was between them - take as much as you like, dip it in salt, drink it with sour milk - and I ate, I ate so much that my head went all around, I was swaying like a drunkard, and I already nibbled ripe red-sided apples with reluctance.

Men and horses in Litvinovka were, indeed, innumerable. The next day, Vasily and Ivan, as they went to the field to carry potatoes, did not see God's light until Sunday. Vasily was paid for the delivery from the field "with half" - out of every two bags he received one. He dumped this wealth in Svinchenko's yard, was busy up to his neck, but I "canoeed".

The Svinchenko children led me into a field where there were a mass of small craters, and in almost every one there was a tail from an exploding mine, such a lionfish that made a lovely water mill.

They climbed the long and dark collective farm stables, looking for hidden chicken nests and, having found eggs, they immediately drank them. Having collected warm junk and stuffed "censer" from mosquitoes made of cans with coals, they mounted horses and drove them at night, and I famously rode on my lame raven.

In the field stood a wrecked tank with black and white crosses on the armor, gutted inside, but with still whole seats and

serviceable hatches. While the horses were grazing, we arranged a war: some climbed into the tank, others fired stones at it. There was an incredible clanging inside, a ringing in our ears, and we liked it terribly. This tank was a wonderful toy for village children.

Finally, Ivan and Vasily loaded the cart, and we set off for the city: they went to the market, I went home. A sack of potatoes, half a sack of grain, and a bunch of goodies were put on my share. All day long I stomped on foot, moving far ahead along the deaf highway, thinking and thinking, overwhelmed with strange, conflicting feelings, now I wanted to scream, now I wanted to cry. I came home in some way as the savior of the family.

3.19 [KIEV-PECHERSK LAVRA]

This time Maruska did not even let us into the house, and my grandmother and I sat at Grabarev's, rested before going home.

- Oh, God, - the grandmother was worried, - what will I say to Olya now? This is robbery.

"They are wrong," Grabarev said phlegmatically. "They will regret it very much.

- Olya put her sweat into this house, and they seized it like robbers.

"It will pass," Grabarev said. "Don't kill yourself, thousands of people are dying, and some house is bothering you.

Grabarev planed the board, made the coffin to order. Decided that this is now the most profitable business.

"All this will pass, Marfa Efimovna," he repeated, "and Olya will return, and Maruska will fly out and answer.

Now the law is on her side.

Well, he won't always be.

Will the Bolsheviks return?

Grabarev shrugged.

- If I knew that. . .

"You know," Grandma suddenly said.

“I know the same thing as everyone else. That in any case, Moscow has not yet been taken, and behind Moscow, Marfa Efimovna, is big Russia.

We hardly noticed the distant rumble. Then there was a lot of rumbling and shooting around. They only heard that it rumbled. They went home, the grandmother walked in thought, then said:

- No, he didn't stay so easy, they forced him, like a communist, and they set up all the trouble with his family to make it look like, but he is a kind person. God bless him.

We went to our favorite place, and the Lavra opened before us. She was on fire.

All spans of the main Lavra bell tower shone with a bright orange light, as if it was illuminated, and there was little smoke. There was no Assumption Cathedral - a mountain of stones, from which the remains of walls painted with frescoes protruded. All the museums were on fire, the entire town-monastery enclosed within the walls.

Grandma just sat down where she stood. From there, from the Lavra, people fled, and everyone said that the Assumption Cathedral had exploded. And it contained many old manuscripts and books. The wind carried the burning sheets, and they rained down, setting everything on fire. The Germans are doing their best to put out the fire, but there is no water. And who blew it up, who needed it - is unknown. Probably, all the same explosives as on Khreshchatyk. Now it is clear that it was not the Jews who blew up Khreshchatyk.

It was November 3, 1941. I saw how the Lavra burned.

This affected the grandmother too much, she sat for a long time, occasionally crossing herself, I hardly persuaded her to leave. It was as if something broke in her, broke and never recovered to death.

Only at home she habitually chimed in the oven; while pouring the soup, she said:

How does God endure? And they demolished the Tithes, and the Mikhailovsky Monastery, and in our Peter and Paul, where I baptized you, they set up a factory. And now the Lavra itself has been ruined ... Oh, and you will see enough, my child, another

will not see so much in a lifetime. Lord save you, you unhappy in this world.

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[If you're in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, try asking the guides if it's true that the Lavra was blown up by the Enkavedists, the main of whom was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union - and at the same time look at the expression on their faces.]

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[The Baptism of Russia took place in 988. Prince Vladimir the Baptist of Kiev built the magnificent Church of the Tithes, Prince Yaroslav the Wise built the St. Sophia Cathedral, the Mikhailovsky Monastery was formed in the city, and a little to the south, on the high Dnieper steeps, the Kiev Caves Monastery with the amazing Assumption Cathedral.

In this monastery, the monk Nestor created the chronicle "The Tale of Bygone Years", which marked the beginning of our national historical science; writing and art spread from here.

There was no Moscow yet; in the middle of the XII century, Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, during one of his campaigns, founded the small settlement of Moscow, and he was buried precisely in the center of Russian culture of those times - the Kiev-Pechersk Monastery.

Until 1917, the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra was a magnificent city, a kind of Orthodox Vatican or Jerusalem, where kings went to bow, millions of pilgrims flocked. The Lavra libraries were priceless, the printing house produced books, the walls of the churches were decorated with the most unique frescoes and mosaics, ancient treasures were kept in the cellars.

After 1917, under the slogans "Religion is the opium of the people" and "We will destroy the old, we will build the new", first of all, the Church of the Tithes was destroyed and demolished to the ground. Only individual bricks from it can now be seen in the Kiev Historical Museum.

Dozens of ordinary churches were demolished, others were converted into warehouses, clubs, factories. In 1934, the Mikhailovsky

Cathedral was blown up and dismantled. Historians managed to save only a few small mosaics of the 12th century, which can now also be seen in the museum.

The Lavra was too big to be demolished. She was treated differently: she was turned into an anti-religious museum town, concentrating the main museums of Kyiv there.

During the defense of Kyiv, the museum town was closed, and the Lavra stood deserted; some of the museums managed to be evacuated to the east.

And a month and a half after the arrival of the Germans, the Lavra mysteriously exploded and burned to the ground, and the Germans were desperately trying to put it out.

Shortly thereafter, Molotov appealed to the whole world, accusing the Germans of destroying historical and cultural relics.

Soviet experts compiled a "Report of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation and Establishment of the Atrocities of the Nazi Invaders", which, in particular, says:

"By order of the German command, the military units robbed, blew up and destroyed the most ancient monument of culture - the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra.") [] "Kyiv is a hero", a collection of materials about the feat of the Kiyans at the Great Vitchiznian Viyni. Kiev, 1961. P. 369.]

The same is written in guidebooks and studies. The most extensive explanation is given in the book of the director of the Institute of History of the Ukrainian SSR prof. K. Dubyny:

"As it turned out, the fascist vandals mined the Assumption Cathedral and other buildings in advance, waiting for the right moment for the explosion. On November 3, 1941, Tisso, a traitor to the Slovak people, visited the Lavra.

This was the right moment for the provocation. As soon as Tissot left the territory of the Lavra, explosions were heard. As already mentioned, the occupiers tried to attribute these atrocities to Soviet patriots, who allegedly attempted on Tissot. But even such a hardened bandit as the defendant Scheer was forced to admit that this was the work of the German fascist invaders. **) **) K. Dubin. "In the years of severe trials." Kyiv. 1962. Pg. 96-97.

[This is the official version, confirmed by the truthful testimony of a seasoned bandit. From the explosion of the Lavra, the Germans did not draw any propaganda conclusions, it is enough to leaf through the newspapers of those days. The Germans blew up and burned a lot, but during the retreat in 1943. In 1941, only the Russians blew up while retreating.

These are general thoughts. The real data and documents, if they exist at all, are unlikely to ever be made public.

But witnesses are still alive - residents of several houses on the territory of the monastery. That's what they remember, that's how it was.

The Lavra itself, as a former center of Orthodoxy, was a thorn in the side of the Soviet authorities. It was possible to disperse the monks, arrange wild repressions, gut the riches of the Lavra in the name of nationalization, arrange an anti-religious museum center in it. But when the war began and the Germans marched on Kyiv, the surviving monks began to prepare to revive the monastery, and rumors spread that "The Germans will come, the Lavra will rise again in its radiance."

On the eve of the retreat of Soviet troops from Kyiv, the deserted Lavra, as residents show, was cordoned off by NKVD troops. Nobody was allowed in there. Trucks came and went. Then the cordon was removed.

September 19, 1941, having entered Kyiv, the Germans immediately went to the Lavra and for a long time, solemnly, jubilantly rang the bells.

Then they began to open all the premises, museums, cells, began to drag carpets, silver bowls, chasubles, but then the German command raised a fuss, and people saw how the frightened soldiers were forced to carry the chasubles back.

Lavra stands on the highest point of Kyiv, surrounded by walls, thus being an excellent defensive fortress. The Germans installed guns in it, including anti-aircraft guns to protect the crossing across the Dnieper, and soldiers settled in numerous cells.

It's been a month and a half. Khreshchatyk had already exploded and burned down and the last Jews in Babi Yar were being shot. And suddenly there was a strong explosion in the Lavra. Part of the fortress wall collapsed - right on the guns, but

it seems that no one from the servants was hurt. It was clearly a subversive act.

Before the Germans had time to come to their senses, a second explosion was heard - in a huge, casemate-like building at the main Lavra Gate. In recent years, there was a Soviet ammunition depot there, and apparently they remained, because they were torn in the fire. The building began to burn so intensely, such fountains of sparks and firebrands flew from it, that a fire began throughout the Lavra.

The Germans hurriedly rolled out guns from the Lavra, rushed to extinguish the fires that appeared here and there, but there was no water. Suddenly they left this occupation, rushed in all directions, shouting: "Mines!" They organized a team that ran home, evicting the residents: "Go away! Soviet mines in the Lavra!"

Later, however, it turned out that there were no mines under the residential buildings, but at that moment the residents all ran, escaping in the same way as on Khreshchatyk. It seemed that Khreshchatyk was repeating itself.

Indeed, there was a third explosion, deaf, from which the ground shook. It was an explosion in the Assumption Cathedral. But the cathedral survived. It was built in the 11th century from special flat red clay bricks, so strong that they cannot be broken with a hammer. The layers of a special binder mortar were thicker than the bricks themselves, and in Kievan Rus they knew how to make this mortar even stronger. It was masonry for millennia.

After a short gap (exactly the same as with the commandant's office on Khreshchatyk), a new explosion was heard in the cathedral, and it was so powerful that red flat bricks flew up to a kilometer and sprinkled the entire Pechersk, and the cathedral itself collapsed, turning into a mountain of stone. As one old man recalls:

"The first three explosions seemed like toys to us then, but for the fourth time it gave so much! .." How many trucks of explosives did it take?

The territory of the Lavra turned out to be littered with pieces of mosaics, frescoes, altar carvings, burning sheets of ancient manuscripts, and folios with copper clasps smashed to pieces.

And everything caught fire - the Refectory Church, the Bishop's house in the Baroque style, the ancient printing house, all museums, libraries, archives, the bell tower.

After waiting for some time and making sure that the explosions were over, the Germans again rushed to put out the fire. Miraculously, they managed, by dismantling the burning beams of the ceilings, to put out the fire in the bell tower, and that because it was made of stone, with high spans. The upper tier with chimes survived. But that's about all we managed to defend.]

3.20 NIGHT

The sailors were driven to Babi Yar on a very cold day, it seems even covered with snow. According to rumors, these were rivermen, sailors of the Dnieper flotilla.

Their hands were twisted with wire, but not all of them, because some raised their fists above their heads. They walked in silence (maybe they were shot at for screaming), only sometimes a fist was raised like that, as if a person was stretching and stretching his shoulders.

Many walked barefoot, some naked to the waist, and some in nothing but underpants. The front ones walked especially terribly - in a dense row, looking in front of them, acting as if they were granite.

They shouted and fought already in Babi Yar itself, when they finally saw that they were being shot. They shouted: "Long live Stalin!", "Long live the Red Army!", "Long live communism!". [They believed that they were dying for world happiness, and the Germans mowed them down with machine guns in the name of the same.]

Strange, without the usual fanfare and choking boasting, a summary of the newspaper that I sold on November 23:

FURTHER SUCCESSES IN THE KNEE OF THE DONTS
AND IN THE CENTRAL SECTION OF THE EASTERN
FRONT.

UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS OF THE ENEMY TO BREAK
OUT UNDER LENINGRAD.

Führer headquarters, 21 November. The Supreme Command of the Armed Forces reports:

During the fighting in the knee of the Donets and on the central sector of the Eastern Front, further successes were achieved.

Near Leningrad, enemy attempts to break through were repulsed by German artillery. *) *) "Ukrainian Word", November 23, 1941 204

From an article in the same newspaper under the modest heading: "NATURE OF THE WAR IN THE EAST":

... The Bolshevik army is basically defeated, millions were captured by the Germans, the same number died, and what the Bolsheviks send to the front is only cannon fodder ... Wars are won not by mass, not by adhering to tactical forms, but by spirituality, because it is not matter and mass that fights and wins, but spirit and man. And from this point of view, no one and nothing in the world can compare with Germany, and therefore Germany is invincible.

I think it was the first knock of my manhood, too early, that day.

I was sitting, unhappy and angry, under a locker in the bazaar, and for some reason the wind managed to blow simultaneously from all sides, my hands and feet were icy, my wax froze to hell, but I no longer hoped that anyone would come to clean my boots, because it was getting dark, the last saleswomen were leaving, and the curfew was approaching. I earned no more from cleaning boots than from tissue paper or newspapers, but I did not give up this business, still waiting for something.

And I looked around in wonder, and the veils finally fell from the world, dusty and gray. I saw that my grandfather, an admirer of the Germans, was a fool. That in the world there is no mind, no goodness, no common sense - only violence. Blood. Hunger. Death. That I live and sit with my brushes under the locker for no one knows why. That there is not the slightest hope, or at least some glimmer of hope for justice. There is nowhere to wait and no one from, there is only one continuous Babi Yar around. Here two forces collide and thrash each other like a hammer and anvil, and there are people between them, and there is no way

out, and everyone only wants to live, and wants not to be beaten, and wants to eat, and squeal, and squeak, and in horror they cling to each other's throats, and I, a clot of liquid jelly, sit in the midst of this black world, why, why, who did this? There is nothing to wait! Winter. Night.

No longer feeling his hands, he mechanically began to collect his belongings as a cleaner. The sound of hooves was heard: a column of Don Cossacks was riding across the square. I didn't even really pay attention, although I saw such a masquerade for the first time: mustachioed, red-faced, with stripes and richly decorated sabers, as if they had come from 1918 or from the filming of a historical revolutionary film. Commandant Eberhard called for help, or what? ..

I hurried home because it was getting dark fast. From the Cossack horses in the air there was a heavy smell of a stable; hungry dogs barked in the yards; a machine gun fired at Babi Yar.

THE SECOND PART

4.1 MAN LIVES TO EAT

The books I read talked about love and suffering, about travels and great discoveries, about the exploits of the fighters of the revolution and the struggle for a brighter future. But for some reason, it was rarely said where food comes from every day to fight, discover, travel, suffer and love. They seemed to be fed from the sky, the heroes of most books. Probably, they ate somewhere there, dined - and performed deeds worthy of more attention, feats. But wait with exploits, but how did you manage to dine?

Everywhere you look, most people in life are preoccupied with what to eat. What to wear. Where to live. And many are given to these concerns entirely, without a trace, it is so hard for them to get it. Not because they like it so much, but because they can't do otherwise.

A wise man once said: man eats to live. Another venomously added: he lives to eat.

Yes, of course, the butler proclaimed "Dinner is served", the old eccentric count offered his hand to the countess with traces of her former beauty on her face, and the company, gallantly talking, marched to the table. But that was before the October Revolution.

On very, very many pages of books, feasts of various kings and musketeers were described, certainly worthy of attention, gone into deep antiquity, and I read about them with curiosity, something like the myths about the exploits of Hercules.

But, to be honest, I was much closer to the outcast Sholom Aleichem, whose people so desperately fought for a piece of bread, boiled ink for sale, doing business on them the same as I do on tissue paper. With boundless love and gratitude, I read and reread every line of Taras Shevchenko, whose mother reaped someone else's wheat on the panshchina, and laid her child on the

border, sticking chewing gum with poppy seeds in his rag so that it would not squeak. And as I understood the whole depth, the whole complexity of the problem of Akaky Akakievich's greatcoat with Gogol.

They write that it is necessary to fight and perform feats in order for everyone to have plenty of bread and overcoats. And grandfather remembers that before the revolution there was a vobla and chintz was sold in rolls-pieces. Why does it happen that the more struggle and exploits, the less bread and overcoats?

No, there are more overcoats. Khaki, gray-green, black, red, gray, blue.

There is no bread. And a person is such a boring creature: as soon as he was born, he immediately wants to eat. My God, but this is just to think about it: you need to eat every day, every day in order to live!

I saved money by not eating breakfast, reasoning that if I didn't have breakfast, then there would be more for lunch; and if I don't have dinner, then it will be for tomorrow.

But then my grandmother noticed that my arms and legs were beginning to swell, she and her mother almost stopped eating themselves, giving pieces to me.

I had to forage! Every day I was pounding in my head: how to get food? He walked, carefully and probingly examined the pantry, the shed, the cellar, the yard. Stones, chips, shards, rubbish, dust...

The old mathematician of our school, Balatyuk, died of starvation; for the last few days he tried to work as a janitor. Factories were opened, and the workers were paid a salary of 200 rubles a month.

A loaf of bread at the market cost 120 rubles, a glass of millet - 20 rubles, a dozen potatoes - 35 rubles, a pound of lard - 700 rubles.

Leaving for the war (never to return, either with suitcases or without), Zhora Gorokhovsky's father, a mechanic from Glavpishchemash, left all his tools. The father's workshop in the shed became Zhorkina. The barn was littered from floor to ceiling with iron junk, because Zhorka had a rule of life: whatever piece

of iron he saw on the ground, he immediately picked it up and placed it in his treasury.

After spending four years on the same desk, we became very good friends. Zhora was a serious guy, he believed that man does not live by bread alone, but iron is most needed. And he proved: he adapted to make lighters from spent cartridges. His younger brother Kolka and I only, with our mouths open, watched with respect as he performed the ritual with a soldering iron.

Kolka, he was the direct opposite of his older brother: a carefree lazy person, a tramp. He also loved to destroy: if he found an electric light bulb, then it was destined to be slammed against a stone by fate; the fire extinguisher should be activated immediately upon discovery.

There was plenty of material for this: immediately behind the shed stood a large house of the PVO school, which the Germans occupied, and, as expected, they threw instruments, manuals and books out the windows for two hours so as not to litter their lives.

My first anti-fascist speech was associated with this house and Kolka. A typical latrine-ditch was dug out in the yard of the school so that the Germans with their newspapers sat on the poles with their backs to us. Therefore, we took a good slingshot, chose from Zhora in the box the most clumsy barbed nuts, crept up to the fence and, having determined the widest backside, opened fire. Then Zhora said that there was a lot of noise in the reading room, the German was not too lazy to climb over the fence and was looking for us to share his impressions.

After the departure of the military unit, a canteen for the elderly was opened in the school house. Hundreds of old people crawled with sticks, saucepans and spoons. The government issued cards to the most dying, swollen and lonely, and they, shaking and quarreling, crowded at the dispenser window, received a scoop of gruel, immediately slurped at the tables, savored, smacked, choked, pouring over their beards.

Kolka and I walked dejectedly between the tables, almost hating the old people, looking at the bowls, which they jealously covered with their hands.

Suddenly the cook called us:

- Will you carry water to the tank, lads? Soup ladies.

Eh, we almost howled with happiness, grabbed the largest pot by the handles, scratched it to the column. They wore it until closing time, sucked up, looked the cooks in the eyes, and they poured us a plate, to the brim, and we, proud, happy, sipped for a long time, stretching out the pleasure, praying that water would be needed tomorrow, the day after tomorrow.

My grandfather also tried to get a card. They did not give him: they said that he could still work. He was so grieved that he was accepted into the dining room as a night watchman. He took the jacket and pillow, went to the first watch, and I followed him. I have a bold plan.

While my grandfather quarreled with the cooks and dishwashers that they didn't leave him gruel, I sat quietly in the corner. The doors were slammed, everyone dispersed, the grandfather blocked the front door with a crowbar and began to arrange a bed of benches for himself, muttering angrily: "Damned throat-grippers, full purses were flooded home, aspidki . . ."

I decided to start from the second floor. The house had long corridors with many doors to the auditorium and classrooms, and in all this huge house my grandfather and I were alone.

In the classrooms there were trestle beds on the goats, the floor was strewn with straw, bandages, pieces of paper, and there was a heavy soldier's spirit. I feverishly began to rummage through the straw, rummaging under the platform. Some cigarette butts and magazines.

The photographs in the magazines were excellent, on glossy paper. The Germans stand and look at the cathedrals of ancient Smolensk. Smiling people in Russian folk costumes offer bread and salt to the general. A typical Russian beauty, with a rich braid, as if from the Russian folk choir of the State Concert, naked, sort of busty, sitting with her ass in a gang under a log wall, and the signature: "Russian bath." I slipped this picture under my shirt in order to show Zhorka and Kolka a secret.

Half-smoked, trampled gobies, I collected everything in my pocket. I wanted to eat so much that it darkened in my eyes. Pirates once chewed tobacco, and I began to chew cigarette butts, but it was bitter, burned my tongue, and spat out forcibly.

I found the cracker only in the tenth or twelfth room. It was half the size of my palm, moldy, but it was real white bread. I began to gnaw it, without scratching, so that not a crumb was lost, drooling, breaking it on the windowsill, putting the pieces in my mouth, sucking until they turned into porridge, stirring it with my tongue in my mouth, languishing from the taste, slowly swallowing - I had goosebumps all over my body. I thought to myself: dogs, because they are fools, throw bread at him, he swallowed rubbish, rubbish in an instant, but a person has a head, pleasure can be prolonged, and it seems to be more satisfying.

Excited by good luck, I moved on - to the chemical laboratory, where there were so many shelves, glass and instruments that the Germans, apparently, were too lazy to throw them away, they only beat everything up and squeezed the alcohol out of spirit lamps.

My eyes ran wide: there were so many different test tubes, jars of chemicals, and I didn't understand a damn thing about the inscriptions, I opened the jars, shook them, sniffed them out - no, it didn't look like edible ...

Flasks with the inscriptions "Yperite" and "Lewisite" stood in a row in a broken iron cabinet, and I began to think about them. Lewisite was an unpleasant beet color, but the mustard gas was like black coffee, and now I began to imagine that it was really coffee, with sugar, my veins trembled, I so wanted coffee, open the glass stopper and try: what if this is not real mustard gas, and the textbook, just poured coffee and showed it to students, could this be?

Even without sugar, it's still nutritious... With great difficulty, I forced myself to put the flask back in place, I didn't risk it.

He opened the door to the next office and went cold.

On a table in the middle of the room stood a bloodied man with no legs and no arms. The first thought was that the Germans were tortured here. But I made out the anatomical tables on the walls: it was an anatomy room.

The head and chest of the human model were beaten with bullets, the tables on the walls, especially the eyes, were also heavily fired upon. It can be seen that the soldiers were practicing

pistol shooting here. But the mannequin's belly was intact, opening like a hinged door. I unfastened the hooks, took out of the dummy, as if from a locker, the liver, stomach and kidneys from papier-mâché, looked, looked at them, I remembered the cannibals from my father's stories ... In some instant blind anger, I brushed them to the floor, then became rip off anatomical paintings from the walls, trampled them underfoot, grimacing angrily, trampled and tore until he got tired of it.

In the hall for amateur performances there was a destroyed piano. It looks like he was beaten with something heavy, with sledgehammers or axes - the covers were broken, and the keys stuck out and lay on the floor like broken teeth. How did it stop them, that they dealt with him like that?

I tried to tear off the boards and chips, found that the soundboard with strings was intact, and the keys with hammers just flew out of their sockets, so that something can be restored. I immediately began to restore two octaves, and I succeeded, and I sat, strummed a little, watching how smartly the hammers jumped, listening to the sounds in the empty corridors.

The booty from the third floor was poorer, a twisted black crust the size of half a little finger. But then a mysterious twisted staircase led up from the platform, I immediately climbed it, dropped the hatch with my head and found myself on a tower littered with dusty boxes and fire buckets. The wind howled behind the broken glass. I climbed on the boxes and looked out the window.

Streets lay below, roofs piled up. The chimneys did not smoke - there was no firewood, threatening orders were printed on the surrender of all stocks of firewood and coal, we did not have stocks, the grandmother drowned with various garbage every three days.

There was not a soul to be seen in the courtyard of the Chains of Gall plant, as if it had died out. On the streets, only in some places, rare figures of passers-by were in a hurry; the city seems to be stricken with a plague. A clearly organized column of soldiers appeared in the distance, they moved along the pavement in a long gray-green rectangle, all with the same bundles of

newspapers, probably from the bathhouse, and very amicably, intensely sang, as they worked, a song with the following content:

Ah-ah, ah-ah. Ay-la!

Ah-ah, ah-ah. Ay-la!

Ah-li! Ay-la! Ay-la!

Ho-ho, ho-ho, ha-ha-ha...

It was already beginning to get dark, and the main thing was not done yet, I slid off the boxes and rolled down the stairs. Grandfather snored on the benches. I darted into the kitchen. Here it is!

There was an insipid smell of gruel in the kitchen, but the stove was completely cold, huge dry and clean pots were piled on it, the frying pans were also clean. I rummaged around the tables and under them, examined all the corners - nothing, not a crumb, not even a slop bucket.

I have never seen such a bare, empty kitchen in my life, and only this insipid smell drove me crazy.

Trying to find at least a grain of millet, I began to crawl, examining the cracks in the floor. Everything is clean! I couldn't believe I started the search from the beginning. In one saucepan, something was slightly burnt to the wall and did not scrape off - I scratched and chewed, without understanding what it was. One of the pans seemed to me not wiped enough. I sniffed it - it smelled like fried onions. Ah, the damned throat-grubbers, the aspids, they even seasoned the soup for themselves with onions and sunflower oil! I whined, so I wanted soup seasoned with onions. I began to lick the pan, half imagining, half really feeling the faint taste of onions, whining and licking, whining and licking.

4.2 PUBLIC ENEMIES

The Ukrainian Word newspaper was closed in December. The slogan "Ukrainian in Ukraine," which she boldly printed from issue to issue, turned out to have a harmful essence. The literary almanac "Timpani" was closed.

Explanation:

To our reader!

From today, the Ukrainian newspaper will be published in a new form, under the name "New Ukrainian Word". Extreme nationalists, together with Bolshevik-minded elements, made an attempt to turn the national-Ukrainian newspaper into an information organ for their traitorous goals. All the warnings of the German civil authorities that the newspaper should be neutral and serve only for the benefit of the Ukrainian people were not heeded. An attempt was made to undermine the trust that exists between our German liberators and the Ukrainian people.

The editorial board was purged of traitorous elements. *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", December 14, 1941.

Oh, that meaningful last line! [In Babi Yar, the editor of the Ukrainian Word, Ivan Rogach, the outstanding poetess Olena Teliga, the former chairman of the writers' union and editor of the Timpani, as well as a number of employees of both editorial offices, were shot. And mass arrests and executions of Ukrainian nationalists began throughout Ukraine.]

The new paper took over. She posted an angry article "Scum", where she scourged parasites, this scum that does not want to find a job, but lives by no one knows what, various dubious earnings, littering society with itself. They must be hunted down and severely punished.

Another article was called "Whisperers" - about those who tell spiteful jokes. These petty, stupid anecdotes and dark rumors are spread by traitors and enemies of the people. It is necessary to declare a decisive struggle against such spreaders of rumors and severely punish them.

[- Queen of Heaven, don't you joke with me for an hour? Grandpa got scared. "Are you reading this Bolshevik newspaper to me for an hour?"

- No, grandfather, German! See: fascist sign.
- Well, it means that they took over from Stalin: he imprisoned for jokes, and these, he didn't strangle the Ukrainians, so these will strangle, oh. Lord, where are we going to go?..]

Every day the newspaper became more and more nervous, full of shouts and threats. Half of the ads are only in German. And the reports of the Führer's Main Apartment became

laconic, alarming: "STRONG ATTACKS WERE RETURNED AT THE KNEE OF THE DONT," "SOVIET ATTACKS WERE REMOVED ON THE EASTERN FRONT."

Mom said that in newspapers you should always read not the lines, but between the lines.

I studied.

Grandfather saw a hanged man on Vladimirkaya Hill. Powdered with snow, barefoot, he hung with his head twisted to one side and a black face: either he had been severely beaten, or turned black after death. It was written on the board that he attempted on a German.

A mine exploded at the German headquarters on Dzerzhinskaya. They seized everyone, not only men, but also old people, women with babies, and they said that more than a thousand people were sent to Babi Yar for this mine. Commandant Eberhard did not give any more announcements.

We were now afraid to go out into the street: well, to hell with it, how do you know where else they will make an explosion, and they will seize you for execution . . . !"

It's just a disaster with this German time: there is no radio, and the clocks go as God wants them to, so before going out into the street, the grandmother went to find out the time from her neighbors, then looked through the fence if there were passers-by and asked them time.

Only and conversations; in Babi Yar they shot saboteurs, they shot Ukrainian nationalists, they shot violators of blackout, they shot parasites, they shot spreaders of rumors, they shot partisans, they shot, they shot, they shot . . . The machine gun in the ravine fired every day.

- What is this? - listening, said the mother. Where has culture gone on earth?

The enemy has come. Be quiet! - said the grandmother.

- So they will kill all the "enemies of the people", so that the people themselves will not remain. Then there will be an ideal: no people, no enemies, calm and quiet.
- It is true, Marusya, it is said in Scripture: and then the enemy will devour himself.

“They are shooting, you hear, they are shooting again . . . But really, people will never come to their senses?”

Oh, Marusya, until the day comes, the dew will eat out the eyes.

4.3 WOUNDED ON THE STAIRS

I knew that they would be waiting for me, and I was afraid of this in advance. He unloaded crackers from my box, broke a couple of boiled file cabinets into pieces, wrapped them up and put them in a basket prepared by the grandmother.

This basket was of fabulous value: it contained jelly in a jar, a check of milk, even a glass of butter.

I forgot the taste of it, it was like precious stones: beautiful, but not to be eaten.

At the bazaar, I hitched on an empty truck, sat down in the corner of the body, hoping that the driver would not look through the rear window. He did not look and drove so fast that I was rocking like a roly-poly, but at the tram park he turned and had to jump off. I have been jumping on these trucks for so long, like a cat, the main thing is to catch them on the turns, and if you jump at full speed, then push off with all your might, extinguishing the speed, which I learned very well after I smacked my muzzle on the pavement.

At the park, I climbed onto a freight tram and sat down in the corner of the platform. The conductor walked around, collecting money, I turned away, as if I did not see him. Where can I get money for him?

I jumped off at Podil and went to Andreevsky Descent. Beggars at every step. Some nasally, snarled, others silently put out their stumps. There were quiet, intelligent old men and women in glasses and pince-nez - various professors or teachers, like our dead mathematician. They were sitting so that you wouldn't understand whether he was alive or had already ditched. There were always an abyss of these beggars, even before the war, but now they are simply terrified, wandering around, knocking on the door - now victims of fire, now with babies, now refugees, now swollen.

It was a hard frost, and passers-by wandered through the streets gloomy, shivering in the wind, preoccupied, ragged, in some unthinkable boots, rotten overcoats. A city of continuous beggars, this is necessary!

St. Andrew's Church is stuck over a steep slope, as if hovering over Podil. It was built by Rastrelli - blue and white, light and swift. It, too, was settled by beggars, a divine service was going on inside, I immediately pushed my way there, stood, listened and looked at the paintings of famous masters on the walls. Inside the church there was luxury, gold, gold - and, in an absurd contrast, this ragged, hungry, nasal crowd of pilgrimage women who beat their foreheads on the icy stone floor.

I could not stand it for long and went to the gallery. From there, from a bird's eye view, the Dnieper, Trukhanov Island and the left-bank distances with Darnitsa are visible. Under the feet of the sea of roofs. To the left is a wasteland where there is no longer a Tithe Church. The legendary founders of Russia were buried there, and I thought that if the foundations were preserved, then maybe the bones of Princess Olga or Prince Vladimir were preserved by some miracle, and they lie there now, but no one knows. I so wanted to think. In this place, you always want to lean on the parapet - and think.

A German officer, having climbed up the slope through the snow, photographed the church from a special angle from below, and I, who knew how to shoot a little myself, watched how he skillfully chose a point. I, the only human figure, successfully hit the center to enliven the frame.

I did not leave, but looked at him point-blank and thought:

"Here you click the shutter, then develop the film, make prints and send home to the family so that they can see what you have won. You shoot like it's your own: you got that right by shooting. What do you have to do with St. Andrew's Church, with Kiev? Just what came shooting? Killing? Taking like a thug?

[What is this sheer banditry on earth? Then they came alone, under red banners and beautiful slogans, they killed, robbed, destroyed.

Now others appeared, under red banners and beautiful slogans - to kill, rob, destroy. You are all bandits.] Some people build,

try, fight in the sweat of their brows, then there are robbers who have never created anything, but they know how to shoot. And they take it all.

You, and only you, the shooters, are the true and genuine enemies, [under whatever banners you grimace]. FROM NOW AND UNTIL THE END OF LIFE, I HATE YOU AND YOUR FUTTERS THAT SHOOTING. MAYBE I WILL DIE OF HUNGER, IN YOUR PRISON OR FROM YOUR BULLET, BUT I WILL DIE DESPECTING YOU AS THE MOST DISTRICTE THING ON EARTH.

And I left, choking with impotent bitterness, waking up only on Bogdan Khmelnitsky Square, which was crossed by a strange column of skiers. They did not know how to ski at all: they stomped, glided, tangled. There was a rustle all over the square, the soldiers had a rather pitiful appearance, offended and angry faces. Apparently, they were forced to master this ingenious business by force, so that snow would not be an obstacle in their bandit movement on the ground. The officer was screaming and nervous. Slowly, slowly, they dragged themselves to Vladimirskaia Gorka, I really wanted to see how they would turn their necks there, but I was already late.

Here, in the city center, trams ran. People were standing at the stop under the wind - and among them a very frail German in a light overcoat, tight boots, a cap, only he had woolen headphones on his ears. He was very cold and turned blue. His hands shook and did not fall into his pockets, and his body twitched as if on hinges, he beat his leg with his foot, rubbed his face with his hands, then suddenly he began to dance, throwing his legs up like a wooden clown, and it seemed that he was about to squeal piercingly, not in able to endure the bitter cold.

The fact that he was absurd could not even enter his head, because only residents were standing around, and for the Germans it was like an empty place: in front of us, as if alone, they indifferently took off their pants, picked their nose, blew their nose with two fingers or urinate openly.

Two trucks with something covered with tarpaulins drove out of the gates of St. Sophia Cathedral: again they were taking out something stolen. The devil knows what, they used the word

“culture” every ten words: “thousand-year-old German culture”, “cultural renewal of the world”, “all human culture depends on the success of German weapons” . . . And it sounds, right? Crazy what you can do with words.

This means that the culture was that they took everything clean out of museums, used manuscripts in the library of the Ukrainian Academy for wrapping, fired pistols at statues, mirrors, grave monuments - at everything where there is some bullseye of a target. This, it turns out, is a renewal of culture.

And yet - humanism. German humanism is the greatest in the world, the German army is the most humane, and everything it does is only for the sake of German humanism. No, not just humanism, but GERMAN humanism, as the most noble, intelligent and purposeful of all possible humanisms.

Because there are as many humanisms in the world as there are murderers. And each murderer has his own, most noble humanism, of course, as well as his own cultural renewal.

[Then we had a SOCIALIST culture, “we will destroy the old, we will build the new”, in its name the Churches of the Tithes were leveled to the ground and explosives were planted under the Assumption Cathedrals, scientists were sent to Siberia and poisoned by Gorky.

There was SOCIALIST humanism, for the sake of which NKVD cars rushed at night, the dead were thrown into a ravine from the windows of the October Palace, and Siberia was built up with entire concentration camp cities.

Now it turns out that that was wrong. GERMAN humanism - that’s what is announced] in opposition, [as before,]! universal, vague, ineffective and therefore hostile humanism, for which there is only one place - Babi Yar.

[Soviet humanism, German humanism, Assyrian humanism, Martian humanism — oh, how many of them there are in this world, and each of them, first of all, strives to shoot as many people as possible, starts from Babi Yar and ends with them. Babi Yar is the true symbol of both your cultures and humanisms.]

I had to delve into these concepts of culture and humanism with their subtleties very, very early, because from the very childhood I did only that I was saved, as if not to become their

object. [I have been doing this all my life, and I am still doing it to this day...]

When the tram approached, the crowd rushed through the back door, and the German went from the front. The trams were divided: the back for the local population, the front for the Aryans. Reading about blacks, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" or "Mr. Twister" before, I could not imagine that I would have to ride the tram like this.

The tram passed shops and restaurants with large, clear signs: "Ukrainians are not allowed to enter," "Only for Germans." There was a poster in German at the opera house. There is a flag with a swastika on the building of the Academy of Sciences: now here is the main police department. In full accordance with GERMAN culture and GERMAN humanism.

The fire of Khreshchatyk reached the Bessarabian market and then stopped. Therefore, the square on one side was in horrendous ruins, and the other side sparkled with signs, shop windows, and the sidewalk was full of passers-by, mainly German officers and ladies.

It was awkward and scary to walk among them, as if you had crept in where you shouldn't, and here's why.

Officers - sleek, well-shaven, chest with a wheel, visors over their eyes - walked around without noticing the inhabitants, and if they glanced, it was invisible and gliding, as if they were in a cattle pen, having their own master's goals - here to rebuild, here to increase profitability, here to re-sort - and if an attentive look stopped at you, then your business was not good: it means that you attracted attention by some kind of inconsistency and you can be rejected - God save those in power from such attention.

And the ladies were magnificent - in furs from head to toe, with regal movements, they walked excellently groomed shepherd dogs on leashes. You see, never later in my life, no matter how much I convinced myself, I could not pick out from my soul a cold hostility towards these smart animals. I understand that it's stupid, but German shepherds, with which people are poisoned in all concentration camps in the world, cause reflex enmity in me, I can't help myself.

I moved on. At the covered market there was a long line, two thousand people long, for bread on ration cards. With the advent of winter, cards were issued: workers - 800 grams of bread per week, others - 200 grams per week.

Grandfather, grandmother, mother and I received four cards of 200 grams, I fought in line for a day and brought an incomplete loaf of fresh bread. We have never seen bread like this before.

It was an ersatz: heavily crumbling, dry, with a lagging crust, sprinkled with millet husks. It was baked from ersatz flour, which was used for corn heads, millet chaff, barley, horse chestnuts. The bread cracked on the teeth and had a sugary-bitter taste. After it, heartburn rose, but I, of course, treasured it, divided my 200 grams into seven parts - that's about 28 grams per day - and never encroached on tomorrow's portion.

My grandfather and I could not forgive ourselves for not picking enough chestnuts in the squares until the snow fell.

Now the Council was printing appeals for chestnuts to be used as food, explaining with scientific accuracy how many calories, proteins, and starch they contained. We have eaten chestnuts. Eccentric Germans, they found someone to teach, what to eat - Ukrainians who survived the famine of the thirties! .. We ourselves will teach anyone you want.

Grandpa got sick. It was a whole epic, how grandmother and mother were looking for a doctor and what it cost. Grandfather was found to have stones in the bladder. He was admitted for an operation to the Oktyabrskaya hospital behind the Bessarabian market.

Strange history with this hospital. Usually, hospitals were used as barracks, the sick were shot, but for some reason they left Oktyabrskaya, and it functioned until the summer of 1942, until, finally, it was closed. Moreover, wounded Red Army soldiers from the Soviet era remained in it, and for some reason the Germans did not touch them.

The hospital survived by running out of old stocks of medicines, but there was no food. Once a day, the patients were given a ladle of hot water with rarely floating grains. The townspeople lived by parcels, and the wounded by what they gave. I drove the packages to my grandfather, and it became my nightmare.

Having entered the corps, I was already at the door and got into the ring of the wounded. They didn't throw themselves, didn't shout, didn't pull out, but simply silently, stretching their necks, looked. I pushed my way through them, grabbed a dressing gown from the dressing room, and moved up the stairs.

Wide and luxurious, it led to the second floor, and along it the wounded stood in a line along the wall - skeleton-like, waxen, with bandaged heads, on crutches, they did not say anything - they only looked with feverish half-mad eyes, and occasionally a gray palm folded like a boat timidly stretched out.

I gutted my package, shoved microscopic peels and pieces of potatoes on my hands, feeling disgusting at the same time, a little benefactor in front of these grown men, and when I finally got to the ward, my grandfather immediately guessed and yelled:

- What are you, shaking your mother, handing out, what a rich one was found! Don't you dare give them to the wicked ones, they'll die anyway, and here I'm dying myself!

I didn't know where I should go. Grandfather really looked like a living dead. He had already undergone surgery, a urine tube was taken out through his stomach, a bottle was tied to the end of it. Grandfather barely moved from weakness, but cursed like a healthy man, clung to the basket, pushed the food into the bedside table, secured the door with a stool and put another hand on it.

On a nearby bunk lay a wounded man without legs, overgrown with a black beard, with a haggard face, like Christ from a grandmother's icon.

"You have a bitchy grandfather, son," he said muffledly, turning only his eyes. "I've already quarreled with the whole ward... But move over here, I'll tell you something."

I moved, wishing I'd left him a crust.

"Take up the fallen leaves," he said, "dry it well, rub it with your hands and bring it back: I really want to smoke."

I nodded my head: something, something, but you can get the leaves.

"Cherry leaves are best," he said wistfully. - Cherry.

At home, I rummaged through the snow for a long time, raking out the blackened frozen leaves, selecting only cherry ones,

dried them on the stove, rubbed them, and when I returned two days later with the transmission, it turned out that the legless man had already died. I can't describe how I was executed: I would have known, I had taken it specially earlier, even if he had smoked before his death.

Other wounded greedily accepted the bag of leaves from me, then I still carried them; I just don't know where the wounded went after the hospital was closed.

4.4 BUSINESS GET DANGEROUS

I started my usual working day by taking a bag and went out to the corner of Kirillovskaya and Syretskaya, where about a dozen industrialists like me were already hanging around. Trams carrying peat to the cannery made a turn here, and we, like locusts, rushed onto the platforms, dumped pieces of peat, picked up and divided.

A freight tram with a platform appeared. The conductor in a sheepskin coat and felt boots was sitting on its front platform. We rushed to the attack - and then we saw that on the platform there was not peat, but beets.

My God, we pounced on her like wolf cubs, she was cold, knocked on the pavement and bounced balls. I successfully hung and threw the longest, until the guide's sheepskin coat grew over me, and I slipped out of his very hands.

While I was running back, a fight broke out on the pavement. Everyone went berserk at the sight of beets and forgot about every division. Those who were smarter did not leave, but only collected, and there was nothing left for fools like me.

From resentment, my eyes darkened, because I dropped the most. It seems that for the first time in my life I cursed and rushed into a fight. I tore out one beetroot from some kid, put it in my bosom, but then they punched me in the eye so hard that lightning flashed in it, and for a while I stopped seeing. I fell, knocked down by the footboard, covered myself with my hands, and they viciously kicked me in the sides, tried to turn me over to take away the beets. If at that moment I had a revolver knife, I would have killed them all, killed, squealing like a small

animal. I don't know how it would have ended, but the second tram appeared.

I got up, trembling and alone in this world, like a wolf cub, only for myself - and instantly got my bearings. When everyone was already hanging on the sides of the platform, and the guide, swearing, ran over the beets, beat on the hands and drove, I jumped onto the front platform he had left.

These platforms have nasty steps, only as wide as my palm, and instead of a handle, a thin welded rod. Grabbing the rod and standing with one felt boot on the step, I reached out with all my might, grabbed one, then another beet - and in that moment the felt boot fell off.

I hung, holding on to the bar with my hands, seeing how the gray-steel wheel rolled along the gray-steel rail onto my felt boots dragging in front of it. I couldn't feel my hands, they were numb on the ice rod, and I didn't have a drop of strength to pull myself up. High above me I saw the guide returning; I called out softly and briefly:

- Uncle!

He immediately understood, grabbed my hands and pulled me onto the platform. He dragged the rope and disconnected the arc from the wire. The tram ran a little and stopped.

Then I jerked out of his hands, jumped onto the pavement and ran as I had never run before. The car driver and the conductor shouted at each other, swore, but I did not turn around, ran all the way to the house, flew into the shed, locked myself on the latch and sat there on the box, recovering. Then he went to the hut and solemnly placed three beets in front of the grandmother. She threw up her hands like that.

After resting, I took out my sled, hatchet, rope - and went to Pushcha-Voditsa.

This is a beautiful protected forest, where every tree used to be protected. It was believed that this is a healing forest, there are many sanatoriums, especially for tuberculosis patients, as well as huge government dachas in the best parts of the forest.

The Germans began to cut him down. That is, it was not the Germans themselves who chopped, but those workers who received eight hundred grams of bread a week. They were

chopping down along the tram line in order to immediately take it out, and large bright squares littered with tiers of logs were already gaping in the forest. The saws rang, the tractor chirped, the tops of the pines, shuddering and kicking off the snow, smoothly fell and fell with a sound like an explosion.

A lot of women and children with sleds were scurrying about. It was clean in the cut down places, even the needles were collected, only thick odorous fresh stumps stuck out. Women and children attacked every fallen pine tree from all sides, the workers cursed, driving away.

Having determined where the next peak was flying, I, drowning in the snow, rushed to it and successfully turned out to be the first. I didn't need a hatchet: there were so many branches broken off, I clung to the largest one, heard a cry and saw how from the gray sky the top of another pine was flying right at me, increasing in size. That's why I was the first, because it was impossible to climb here yet.

I threw a bomb into a bush, fell, rolled over, throwing my body as far as possible, there was an explosion, branches and bumps rustled like fragments, and for a second I could not see anything in the snow dust.

What are you doing, you almost killed a man! the grandmother screamed.

"Let him not climb there," answered the workers. - Come on, bastard, let's get out of here, let's beat it!

I pulled my sled out of the thick of branches, they were miraculously intact, circled around the clearing. The workers were yelling, but I couldn't leave empty-handed either. Now there was a scientist, he was not the first to throw himself, but he pulled out branches from under the noses of the women, became wet from this struggle and scored such a pile on the sled that he barely moved.

It's nothing, it's difficult in deep snow - it will go along the road.

I dragged and dragged, greedily not wanting to drop a single branch, I grabbed a bush or a stump - I pulled myself up, taking meter by meter. When I got onto the tram line, steam was pouring off me and my hands were shaking like a paraplegic.

The trodden path ran between the rails, and it took a long time to drag the sled over the rail. But it became much easier to pull, oh, poper, if only the tram did not appear!

At the exit from the forest there was a forestry. I forgot about him and became alert only when I saw heaps of firewood and two men calmly waiting for me. I looked around: I was the only one on the line. Others, probably, leave the forest. The men said:

- Stop. Untie.

My heart sank. I untied.

- Take this one off. This one. This one.

I obediently took off the thickest branches, but they left me the smallest thing and needles. Threatened:

“We’ll catch it again—to the police.”

Thank you, Lord, that at least they let me go. Popper again, I think: every cloud has a silver lining, now the sled runs easily. On the descents: I generally dispersed them, threw myself on the needles and rode.

And at night, the Gorokhovsky brothers and I went to steal Christmas trees. Christmas was approaching, in the bazaar, Christmas trees were sold for 25 rubles - not so much, but still two hundred grams of bread.

Young plantations stretched along the edge of Pushcha-Voditsa, beyond Priorka. We tried not to think that we were violating the curfew: there was nothing to be done, the risk. Patrols almost did not go along Priorka, and we moved along the back streets. They took an ax out of inexperience. Better would be a hacksaw. The sound of the ax is carried far, then this crackling, when you twist the tree and tear it off the stump ... But everything worked out, they put the trees on their shoulders, and the tops dragged after us.

I put the tree in the barn, and now greed began to gnaw at me. There was so much strength and hunting, right at least all night ready to carry. He took out an old hacksaw, listened - there were no patrols, went again, alone.

I chose a small Christmas tree, intending to cut two of these at once. He sawed through the trunk almost soundlessly, and when the tree fell, he heard a bark and a distant cry:

- Well, come here!

I grabbed the Christmas tree (to leave such kindness?) and gave a tear. I didn't look back, but I sensed the pursuit in the back of my head, and the growl of a dog overtook me. The snow was deep, it was difficult to run, but the dog got stuck in it. I shook the tree, hoping to drive it away. But she ran to the side. I did not feel pain, only as if something was hitting me on my legs - on my knees above the felt boots.

I stopped and violently waved the hacksaw, I was angry, I was ready to kill the dog with a hacksaw, gnaw my teeth, gouge out my eyes with my nails, but the dog dodged. I ran, stopped, growling, threw snow at the dog and ran again. They are afraid, all these dogs, like people who look like dogs, if you walk on them, throw something at them, you have to step on them - only on them, otherwise you will be lost, lost! Go straight for them and then they bounce cowardly.

But there was still a man running. Then I found out that he should have given a ten and cut at least the entire landing, but I didn't know, and then - wow, a whole ten! Better let the dog vomit.

Well, she pursued me to the first houses, but she no longer dared to bite, and I did not leave the Christmas tree.

He came home, felt his legs - only shreds hang from his pants, his knees are in blood. I did not grieve, sat down in the shed to catch my breath, began to think about good things, about good luck.

The day was successful, solid production. First, twenty-eight grams of bread on a legal card. A bowl of soup in the children's canteen. Three beets. Fuel sled. Two trees. Yes, I'm a bourgeois. Of course, minus the torn pants, and it would be oh-oh-oh what a minus if I didn't put on my old pants, and you can patch it up. Most importantly, alive.

What is taught in books? That you need to love people, devote your life to the struggle for a brighter future. What kind of people? What, sorry, the future? Whose?

4.5 DEATH

Grandfather was brought from the hospital on the eve of Easter. They brought him on my sled: he could hardly walk, they led him by the arms. He really wanted to be at home for Easter.

Do you want me to tell you what a real Easter is, the brightest holiday of the year?

Firstly, everything should be no worse than that of people. Preparations begin in the winter. Money is saved and set aside, penny to penny, they are inviolable and are kept by the icons. Ahead of time, so that it is cheaper, flour is extracted from under the floor: it is never found in stores. Then the following problems arise - raisins, vanilla, cinnamon, paint in bags. Grandmother disappears for days in the market, runs around friends, brings prey - either fresh guts, or eggs, or rice. At home, she strictly monitors that no one touches them. Great post. Mom and I, although atheists, do not violate it, do not offend the grandmother.

Then the grandmother always makes homemade sausage, smokes a ham herself, cooks a festive "uzvar" compote, such smells go around the house that a mouthful of saliva comes in and the head is spinning.

I am instructed to rub poppy seeds with sugar in the "makotra", for which I am allowed to lick the rolling pin. I help paint the eggs, and then I walk around with my fingers painted in all the colors of the rainbow.

For Easter cakes, a line of clay molds is stored in the pantry at the grandmother. Two large Easter cakes are baked - for the house, and a whole brood of small ones - to take to the neighbors, to clothe the poor, to leave in the church.

A grandmother with a full basket, covered with a napkin, leaves for the morning to hallow, while we, honestly hungry, sleep, and she returns at dawn solemn, enlightened, unearthly, wakes us up and congratulates us. And everything in the hut shines with cleanliness: the walls were whitewashed again, new curtains were hung, fresh rugs stuck to the scraped floor. A holiday in everything, an extraordinary holiday.

The open table is lined with food and paper flowers. But only ill-mannered boors immediately attack him. First you should wash yourself in a large basin, at the bottom of which silver coins sparkle, then put on everything freshly laundered and new. The grandmother solemnly seats everyone at the table in the place allotted to him and passionately, penetratingly pronounces "Ochenash".

- Christ is risen! - licking his lips, the grandfather says happily.
- Truly resurrected! - the grandmother answers happily with tears in her eyes, examining the table for the last time: although it was not easy, it's true, it's no worse than people's, and she allows: - Well, with God, be happy! ..

And after this solemn part, a good life begins.

This happened to us in happy peacetime, thanks that the Soviet authorities, although they did not recognize Easter, did not forbid it either, only these days, of course, were working.

And now the grandmother decided to bake Easter cakes at all costs. It was possible not to have everything else, but she clung to Easter cakes as if otherwise hell was prepared for her. Is this possible: Easter without Easter cakes? Mom had just returned from a long trip "for exchange" in the villages - and brought potatoes and grains.

First, the grain had to be ground. Some people had a mill behind the embankment, they let them grind on it for a glass or two of grain.

We went with grandma. The mill stood in the barn and consisted of two round logs from a log, laid one on top of the other. The upper round timber had to be turned with a handle, pouring grain through a hole in its center. Pieces of iron were driven into the rubbing surfaces of the round timber, so that the grain was crushed and ground into flour.

Standing on both sides, my grandmother and I grabbed the handle and together we barely turned the heavy "millstone". The grandmother sprinkled the grain in the smallest portions, almost pinches, but it was still hard. They worked for half a day, exhausted themselves, rested, they became completely wet. The

wind was blowing in the barn, my grandmother was worried that I might catch a cold.

They walked home - they were already barely dragging their feet, they were frozen in a piercing wind. Grandmother undertook to sift flour - and sifted out a pinch of razor-sharp splinters that had broken off from the pieces of iron on round timber. I took out a magnet and processed the flour, catching many fragments.

Grandma grieved that our home-made flour would turn out not white Easter cakes, but gray bread, but she kneaded it, went to bed, and at night her fever rose, she demanded white flour, raisins, butter.

The next day, my mother ran around people, looking for a doctor. An old man came, he was paid with two glasses of flour, he wrote out prescriptions.

"But I don't know myself," he said, "where you will get it."

- How to be? the mother asked.
- What can I do? he got angry. - Heat it first, so that at least steam does not come out of your mouth. She needs warmth, she needs hot milk to drink, she needs food, she is completely exhausted.

Mother gave the grandmother herbs to drink. I ran around the whole city, somewhere I still got a vial of medicine. But the grandmother was getting worse, she had nothing to breathe, she kept screaming:

- Stuffy! Air!

We took turns sitting, fanning her with newspapers, but for some reason she was better when they simply blew on her from her mouth. Sometimes she came to her senses and worried about the Easter cakes. Mother baked them, they came out black, sticky, sand crunched on the teeth. Grandma looked up and cried.

A friend of her youth, cousin Lyaksandra, and her blind husband Mikolay came. They were kind and harmless old men, perhaps the kindest I had ever seen in my life. Once they had a son, one. He became one of the first Komsomol members in Kurenevka, he was sent to organize the Komsomol in the village, and there he was killed, that was in 1919. Following this, Mikolaj went blind. Grandma said:

“He cried out his eyes,” although, of course, he was blind from illness. Lyaksandra and Mikolay did not understand politics at all, they only knew that their only Kolya was good, and they could never figure out why he was killed, who needed it.

Previously, Mikolay and grandfather worked together, but now Mikolay was completely decrepit and helpless. His head was covered with thin gray fluff, for some reason he had glasses on his nose: blue glass on the right, and the left glass was broken, and Mikolay inserted a circle of thin plywood instead.

Kuma Lyaksandra baptized me together with my grandmother. She worked as a janitor at DTS. Early in the morning she went to the square and took Mikolay with her. She swept with a broom, and gave her husband rakes, and he very carefully, consistently ran the rakes blindly on the ground, not missing a piece of paper or a speck.

So they worked for many hours, because the area was large, but after them it looked smart, covered in rake marks, like freshly sown spring beds.

They were Belarusians, but lived almost all their lives in Kyiv, never learning either Russian or Ukrainian.

“Don’t take one hell of a bad thing, but take another after yourself,” Lyaksandra sighed, sitting by grandmother’s bed. “Cheer up, Marfushka, you’re even younger, you haven’t had time to do good in life . . .

“Pabachitsy, I’m even more pabachitsy,” Mikolay soothed affectionately; he sat and regularly fanned his grandmother with a newspaper.

It was difficult to understand whether the grandmother heard, she breathed with a wheeze, yellow as wax, her face shone.

Suddenly there was a quiet but clear sound of broken glass: a bottle of medicine, standing on a stool by the bed, burst a little above the middle, as if cut along a ruler with a knife. Lyaksandra opened her mouth, horror appeared in her eyes. Grandmother turned her head and looked at the vial with a thoughtful, strange look.

- Wow! I muttered in annoyance, rushing to the vial. - Nothing spilled, now I will pour it.

I heard about this strange sign: that when someone dies, glass breaks for no reason. But I just didn't believe it. Pure coincidence, and it was necessary that this damned crappy bottle burst right now!

I quickly carried the vial to the kitchen.

Mom, her friend Lena Gimpel and grandfather were sitting in the kitchen and talking about the same things that the whole city was talking about. The Germans took people to work in Germany.

"That's right," said the grandfather, pointing his finger at the newspaper. "Here there is hunger, but there they will eat and earn money. Look!

The newspaper convincingly explained: under the Soviet regime, everyone tried to teach their children to be engineers and professors, but the main education is in work. Leaving for cultured Germany, young people will learn how to work, visit abroad, in Europe. It is necessary to go to Germany in the name of the struggle for a happy future.

"It always happens," the grandfather read solemnly, "that one generation must make great sacrifices in order to give the descendants—children and grandchildren—a better life."

Do you hear: a better life for children and grandchildren!

"Oh my God," said Lena Gimpel, "how everything in the world is relative, any abomination can be explained and glorified. This is the thing about sacrifices for the sake of the future, and Lenin said, and Stalin said . . .

Lena's husband, an X-ray technician, like everyone else, went to war and disappeared, she stayed with her child, was desperately hungry and was angry as a thousand devils. It seems that she angered her grandfather even with some pleasure.

"You're stupid, you don't understand anything!" shouted the grandfather. — Shaking their mothers with their future. But you don't equate Hitler with Lenin and Stalin. This is still a smart German, and those were our tramps.

"All the same bastards," Lena said. - Eternal history: no matter what the last reptile came to power, he immediately announces that it was bad before her, and only now the struggle

begins in the name of a happy future, and therefore sacrifices must be made. Immediately - victims! Victims! Bastards!..

- I know only one thing, - the grandfather did not give up, - that it is correctly written here: today's youth must be taught to work. Reasonable people have become too much, they only read books, but who should work? And the Germans are right when they say: education in work.

They just need manpower. Recruit more, my mother said. - That's what they would say.

"That's not right," Lena said. - So no one will go, but you need to exalt. Glory is sung, great calls. Ugh, so you rest... hyenas!

"Fool, what are you talking about?" Grandfather waved his hands in fright. - Suddenly, who walks under the windows? You want to go to Babi Yar, don't you?

"True, you look, be careful with such conversations," mother lowered her voice.

"Cursed age, damned earth, Dante's hell," Lena said, bubbling with hatred. - Maria, what did our youth, twenty years, go to? Day after day, with your head under the axe. You have no right to speak, think over every word, be afraid of your shadow, do not trust anyone. Father, husband, lover, own child - a possible informer and provocateur. At night I want to scream. My nerves can't take it anymore. Sometimes you think: let them drag you, it doesn't matter where, to Kolyma, to Babi Yar, everything is cursed. I hate!

Suddenly there was a quiet but clear sound of broken glass. Everyone started and stared at the lamp. An old kerosene lamp hung on the wall, which had not been lit for a long time, since there was no kerosene. Therefore, it was clean, wiped clean before Easter. Its glass burst - just above the middle, exactly, as if on a ruler. Mom stood up and separated the upper half of the glass, turning it over in her hands in confusion. I saw all this with my own eyes, I do not know the explanation to this day; you can, of course, say "coincidence", but then my whole body seemed to be doused with icy cold.

Lyaksandra ran into the sound. I saw it, immediately understood everything - and began to cross myself in a sweeping way:

God gave a sign. Poor Martha is dying...

I muttered:

- Grandma also saw how the bottle burst.
- What the hell is this? Lena exclaimed.
- Why are you really like little children!

It's an accident, an accident! Mom exclaimed. "But it's bad what she saw, now she'll think..."

When I returned to the grandmother, Mikolaj was still diligently fanning her with a newspaper, unnaturally straight, like all blind men, holding his head, as if peering into the distance through his plywood and blue glass. I went in from the other side and began to blow with my mouth.

Grandmother opened her eyes and looked at me with a long thoughtful look, which made me feel uneasy. As if for the first time she saw me for real and tried to understand who and what I am - in such depths that are inaccessible to anyone and myself, or maybe everything was easier, and she just regretted that she was dying, and I was left without her, and without God, but the enemy is on the ground.

Replacing each other, we were on duty at the grandmother's all night, she was suffocating, sweating, forgetting. The morning came, frosty, sparkling, with a pink sun, from which the snow, and icicles above the window, and the whole room turned pink.

And suddenly the grandmother felt better, she breathed freely, deeply, with happy relief she leaned back on the pillow.

The crisis has passed! Mom exclaimed, turning to me with a beaming face. - My God, everything is fine!

I rushed to the window, shouted to my grandfather, who was in the yard:

- Grandma is fine!

But, turning around, he saw that his mother froze strangely, peering into grandmother's face. The face was pale, pale. Grandmother began to breathe unevenly and weakly - and stopped breathing altogether.

- She is dying!!! squealed the mother. - Money! Money, pennies, hurry up!

In a box with threads and buttons, the grandmother kept old silver fifty kopecks and copper nickels, and she said that when she died, this money should cover her eyes. I rushed to this box, as if it contained all salvation. I brought it, shoved it to my mother, but she screamed, shook her grandmother, stroked her shoulders, then, finally, snatched nickels from me and put them on her grandmother's eyes. And that's it.

Grandmother took on an aloof, stern, and solemn look with those dark, greenish nickels.

There was no money for a coffin. Grandfather took a saw and a planer, took out a few old boards from the barn, I helped, and we put together an awkward and not quite correct coffin. It should have been painted brown, but my grandfather did not have such paint, and there was a can of blue "bed" paint. He hesitated, thought, painted the coffin sky blue and left it in the yard to dry. I've never seen sky blue coffins in my life.

Of course, neighbors, old women, crowded into the house, they dutifully wailed, extolled the virtues of the deceased, vied with each other showing the skirts and shoes that she had given as a secret from her grandfather, and now they furiously poked them under the grandfather's nose:

- Here, Semerik, what a wife you had, and you ate her all your life!

Candles burned, the clerk read prayers, the mother sobbed incessantly, went out into the yard: "I won't survive," and Lena reassured: "Calm down, we'll all die." It all seemed so meaningless and useless to me, and the unnaturally vociferous old women were unpleasant, their voices drilled like knives in my ears, I poked here and there, all tense and worked up to the limit.

Bolik and Shurka came, we climbed astride the fence and began to talk about our affairs, about buried cartridges (and the old women squealed), and my friends spoke to me softly, as if they were sick, but I suddenly wanted to show them how unnaturally these old women voice, and I began to mimic them very similarly, and suddenly I myself began to laugh at this.

I saw that Bolik and Shurka looked at me somehow strangely, but I continued to laugh and infected them, all three of us cheered. We were bursting with a thirst to do something funny, well, so funny!

We quickly tied a thread to an old purse, threw it into the street, hiding behind a fence. The old women going to the funeral greedily bent down, the purse jumped from them like a frog, and we, behind the fence, burst with laughter and rolled on the ground.

But then the priest and the singers appeared, and they began to put the grandmother in the coffin. But she stretched out and did not fit, and the coffin did not dry out properly, the paint got dirty. Kuma Lyaksandra anxiously tossed about: "Men, men, nyast!" And there weren't enough men.

Finally, they lifted the coffin, carried it long and clumsily through the door, tilted it. The grandmother had a paper ribbon with church inscriptions on her forehead, in her hands was one of the two wooden crosses kept by the icons.

The grandfather, without a hat, preoccupied, propped up the coffin with his shoulder along with the others, behind him the blind Mikolaj settled down, taking a wand under his arm. They put newspapers under them so as not to stain their shoulders with paint. Two gonfalons jumped up, the priest muttered, the singers began to wail, everyone moved through the open gates, and the grandmother floated solemnly over everyone.

"You stay, look after the house," my mother ordered me, swollen from tears, somehow immediately aged and ugly.

I looked after the funeral, closed the gate, picked up spruce branches from the ground that had fallen from the wreath. It became quiet. And just then I truly suffocated, and it finally dawned on me. I won't see Grandma again.

"We are all going to die," Lena said. Grandfather will die, mother will die, cat Titus will die. I looked at my fingers, spread them out and looked again at my spread fingers and realized that sooner or later they would not be. The worst thing in the world is death. It is such a horror when a person dies, even the oldest, from an illness, of course, it is normal. Isn't this natural horror not enough that people are inventing more and more new ways

of artificially making death, arranging all these damned famines, executions, Babi Yars?

I could barely stand on my feet, wandered into the hut. It was vile there: trampled, littered, the dead smell of incense, overturned stools around the bare, sagging table. The cat Titus watched with attentive yellow eyes from the stove.

4.6 HITLER'S BIRTHDAY

One day in April, on the 20th of April, a child was born. He was, as expected, red-haired, weighed three kilograms or something like that, was fifty centimeters long, looked with meaningless eyes, like muddy buttons, and often gaped his mouth, as if yawning, but it was he who was looking for a chest.

He evoked indescribable tenderness and pity in his mother, and she did not know that she was holding in her arms one of the most cannibalistic monsters [of the twentieth century, which fate for some reason determined her to give birth to. One of her predecessors - a sweet, intelligent, such a cultured woman - lived in the unknown Simbirsk on the Volga; the other was the dark Caucasian wife of a shoemaker; and this one ended up in Austria; and they did not know each other, never heard of each other, and no angel announced anything to them, which is a pity; maybe they would miscarry. However, there would be others.]

There is always, however, something touching and striking about the birth of a child. And the echo of the touching Austrian event sounded in Kyiv in April 1942 as follows:

AD

By order of the Stadtkommissariat of 18/IV-42, on the occasion of the Führer's birthday, the population will be given 500 gr. wheat flour per consumer.

Flour will be issued in bakeries on April 19 and 20 for bread cards according to voucher No. 16. *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", April 19, 1942.

At dawn, barely waiting for the end of the forbidden hour, I rushed to the bread shop, overtaking the same runners.

It turned out, however, that a thousand and a half eaters had been in line since the night, spitting on the forbidden hour.

Although it was far from the opening, the line was seething, there was already a fight at the door of the shop, and the sweaty red policeman had difficulty holding back the crowd.

I took a turn at the tail, stood despondently, listened to the women's gossip about the same thing that the war will end when the potatoes bloom, that the Germans did not defeat the Russians, but the Russians cannot defeat them either, and therefore they will make peace somewhere along the Volga, and we and disappear under the Germans.

And the blind man could see that he would have to stand in this line until the evening. I noticed who I was behind, ran home for cigarettes and went into business.

My friends have scattered. Bolik Kaminsky was mobilized to restore the bridge across the Dnieper, kept there under escort and was not allowed to go home.

Shurka Matsu's mother took her to no one knows where, finding another apartment: here they sat in constant fear that someone would sell Shurka.

Even my enemy Vovka Babarik, saving me from Germany, was sent by my mother somewhere to a village, to a remote farm, and I could no longer be afraid that he would beat me up.

Zhorka Gorokhovsky was assigned by his grandmother as a servant in the Priory Church, where he walked in a long robe, giving the priest either the Gospel or a censer and bowed with his hands folded.

And with Kolka Gorokhovsky we sold cigarettes. This case is simpler than a steamed turnip. We went to the huge Evbaz - in the Soviet fashion for abbreviations, this meant "Jewish Bazaar", and now there are no more Jews, in the newspaper they began to call it "Galitsky Bazaar", but, strangely, the name did not take root, everyone said only "Evbaz". They looked out for carts with Germans or Magyars there and entered into trade:

— Cigaretten ist?

- Dry Gundert rubel.
- Nine, Nine! Zwei Gundert!

— Nix.

— Ya, ya! Hey, soldier, zwei hundert, bitte!

— Ve-eg!

- Zwei hundert, vein, kulak, do you hear? Zwei Gundert!
- Zwei Hundert Fünftzig. . .

They were speculators what they needed, they sold any kind of junk and bargained, fought, but in the end they gave a box of two hundred cigarettes for two hundred rubles. Only with difficulty.

There is one subtlety in this matter: when you bargain with a German, you need not only to work with your tongue, but to get money and stick it under his nose; at the sight of money, he gets nervous, involuntarily reaches out to take it with his hand, well, if he took it, then he sold it.

The first time we were badly scammed: they opened the boxes at home, and they were missing fifteen pieces of cigarettes. The Germans made a hole and pulled it out with wire. Then we, when buying, printed out on the spot and checked the packs. Such, you understand, is a wide range: on the one hand, cultural renewal is no more, no less than the whole world, on the other, dirty linen is removed from the murdered and cigarettes are dragged with a wire.

And so we rushed around Kurenevka from morning to night - through the market, at the tram depot, and by the end of the shift at the factory gates - and we managed to sell a pack in five days, earning two hundred rubles on it. As much as a kilo and a half of bread in five days, this was already a serious income.

So, at half past six in the morning, I was already cruising along the line, ironing the market, cheerfully yelling:

- There are Levante cigarettes, strong first-class Gunnia cigarettes, two rubles a piece, uncle, buy a cigarette, don't press, you'll die anyway . . . fuck you!

Along the way, he collected cigarette butts, we extracted tobacco from them and sold them for cups.

At seven o'clock in the morning the doors of the store opened. It was impossible to see what was happening there: a deadly crush, wheezing, squeals.

The first ones to receive flour came out torn, beaten, wet, but with happy faces, tightly squeezing sacks powdered with real - not in a dream, not in a fairy tale - white flour.

I called in to my place, but the line had not moved yet, but now I had the same tail behind me as in front.

The women told that several men were shot in Dymer for listening to a detector receiver; that at the opera house there is "Swan Lake", but it is written:

"Ukrainians and dogs are not allowed to enter."

Lowering their voices, they said that the Germans had been completely stopped, that their darkness had died near Moscow, that they had not even taken Tula, and that a second front was expected to open in Europe. I eagerly listened to tell at home. Oh, wireless people's telegraph! Why forbid listening to radios: it's useless . . . You just need to listen to what people persistently say, and it almost always turns out to be true.

At eight o'clock trams with German children appeared. Many bosses came to Kyiv with their families, and so they sent the children to Pushcha-Vodytsia for a day, to a sanatorium, and in the evening the trams took them back. These were special trams: in front of each there was a portrait of Hitler, flags with a swastika and garlands of pine needles.

I ran to meet the German children. The windows were open, the children were sitting freely, well-dressed, rosy-cheeked, behaving noisily - yelling, squealing, leaning out of the window, just some kind of menagerie. And suddenly a spit hit me right in the face.

I did not expect this, but they, boys like me, in the same shirts (Hitler Youth?), were spitting, aiming and spitting at me with some kind of cold contempt and hatred in their eyes. Girls were spitting from the trailer. Without saying anything to them, the teachers sat in furs (they adored these furs, even in the summer they did not part with them). The tram and the trailer floated past me, dumbfounded, and past the entire line, like two cages with vicious, squealing monkeys, and they spat on the line.

I went to the stream, and my legs were like cotton wool. He put his box of cigarettes on the sand, washed himself for a long time, cleaned his jacket, and something metallic sucked in his stomach, in his chest, as if acid or reddish lewisite had been poured into it.

At eleven o'clock the police finally brought order. The doors, which were already without glass, were closed, they let in dozens, but for some reason the line did not move at all. It was getting hot. At noon, the German gendarmes pushed two arrested guys in the back, and by the way they were led, pointing their machine guns, it was clear that these guys would no longer live. But the spectacle was ordinary and did not cause any gossip in the queue.

Cigarettes sold poorly. I spread my brains and decided to try the method that I had resorted to more than once. At all the bazaars, children walked with jugs, sang a drawn-out song:

To whom the water is cold,
Who needs water?

I went home, took a can and a mug, moved along the line, singing at the top of my voice. Mug - twenty kopecks, from the belly - forty. Traded half a pocket of change, but it was nothing, rubbish. German pfennigs went one for ten kopecks, they were some kind of crappy aluminum circles, blackened from oxide, but with an eagle and a swastika. I exchanged change from the traders for one brand new crispy brand. Good: no time wasted.

At four o'clock in the afternoon they began to shout for the line to disperse: there would not be enough for everyone. What's up here!

The line broke up, the battle began again at the door. I almost roared with resentment and rushed into this fight. The adults were fighting, and I crawled between my legs, spread my knees, slithered like a snake, almost knocked a policeman down - and broke into the store.

It was relatively free here, the sellers with fear looked sideways at the door, which cracked, and shouted:

Everything, everything, ends!

But they still tore off coupons and gave out bags. Silently bursting into tears, I crawled to the counter, where about thirty people were strangled. Torn to pieces, the red uncle shouted, waving his passport:

I'm going to Germany tomorrow! Here is my stamp!

"We release only those who go to Germany," the manager announced. - Don't crowd the rest, disperse!

Several people still received flour in this way. I, still silently shedding tears, stubbornly climbed and found myself in front of the seller. He looked at me and said:

- Give it to the boy.
- Everything, everything, no more flour! the manager announced.

The shelves were empty, sprinkled with flour, but not a single package. I could not believe it, I clung to the counter, fumbled and fumbled with my eyes over these whitish shelves: right there just now, even before my eyes, there were packages! ..

The police began to vacate the store, I went out in a fog, trudged home, before my eyes there were white packages that went to the lucky ones, whom I hated all but the very last ones who were going to Germany. These were to be regretted.

4.7 TO GERMANY

This one of the most tragic epics of the people of Ukraine — after the Turkish massacres, [the devastation by Tsars Peter and Catherine, the Soviet famine and terror —] opened on January 11, 1942, with the following announcement in two languages — above in German, and in Ukrainian below:

UKRAINIAN MEN AND WOMEN!

The Bolshevik commissars destroyed your factories and jobs and thus deprived you of your earnings and bread.

Germany provides you with an opportunity for a useful and well-paid job.

On January 28, the first transport train leaves for Germany.

During the move, you will receive a good supply, in addition, in Kyiv, Zdolbuniv and Przemyśl - hot food.

In Germany you will be well provided for and find good living conditions. The pay will also be good: you will receive money according to the tariff and labor productivity.

Your families will be taken care of while you work in Germany.

Workers and female workers of all professions - preferably metalworkers - between the ages of 17 and 50 who voluntarily wish to travel to Germany must report to

LABOR EXCHANGE IN Kyiv

daily from 8 am to 3 pm.

We expect Ukrainians to immediately show up for jobs in Germany.

Commissar-General I. KVITZRAU S. A. Brigadeführer. *) *)
"New Ukrainian Word", January 11, 1942

The first train to Germany was recruited ahead of schedule, consisted entirely of volunteers, and left on January 22 to the thunder of the orchestra. The newspaper carried an enthusiastic reportage - smiling faces against the backdrop of boxcars, an interview with the head of the train, who shows a baggage car full of sausages and ham for meals on the way. Headlines: "Real patriots", "Get skills of cultural work", "School of life", "My dream", "We will be useful there".

On February 25, the second train left, and on February 27, the third, recruited from those who were completely hungry, who had nothing to lose and who were impressed by the words "good", "good", "good", repeated in the advertisement five times, and also this fantastic car with sausages and ham. [Demonstrating it was a far more successful idea than fervent appeals to patriotism, suspiciously similar to the Soviet ones: that, they say, real patriots for some reason always have to leave their native land and go to hell-the-where to work hard.]

Throughout March, announcements were printed in huge letters:

GERMANY CALLS YOU!

Come to beautiful Germany!

100,000 Ukrainians are already working in the free

Germany. And you? *) *) "New Ukrainian word", March 3, 1942

You should be glad that you can go to Germany. There you will work together with the workers of other European countries and thereby help win the war against the enemies of the whole world - the Jews and the Bolsheviks. **) **) Ibid., April 14, 1942.

But then the first letters came from Germany, and they gave the impression of exploding shells. Almost everything was cut out of them with scissors, except for "Hello" and "Goodbye", or it was thickly smeared with ink. A letter went from hand to

hand with a phrase that the censors did not understand: "We live beautifully, like our Polkan, perhaps a little worse."

Summons were carried home. The labor exchange was located in the building of the Art Institute near the Hay Bazaar; it became the second cursed place after Babi Yar.

Those who got there did not return. There was screaming and crying, passports were taken away, they were stamped "VOLUNTEERLY", people entered the transit camp, where they waited for weeks to be sent, and trains left the station one after another to the orchestras. They didn't give a damn thing to anyone, no sausage, no "hot food" in Zdolbuniv and Przemysl.

Those who fled from Germany told: they were sent to factories to work for 12 hours, kept as prisoners, beaten, killed, mocked women, paid ridiculous money - enough for cigarettes.

Others said: they take them to a special market, the German Bauer masters walk along the ranks, select, look into the teeth, feel the muscles, pay from five to twenty marks per person and buy. To work on the farm from dark to dark, for the slightest offense they beat, kill, because slaves cost them nothing, not like a cow or a horse, who live ten times better than slaves. A woman in Germany, in addition, is the right way to become a concubine. Walk with the sign "OST", which means the lowest category compared to slaves from Western countries.

Mom's friend, a teacher, received a short notice that her daughter had thrown herself under a train. Then some were reported: he died tragically. The point is that, in addition to those who were simply tortured and shot, many died in military factories during American and British bombardments. During the raids, the Germans did not stop work, and the eastern workers were not taken to the shelter.

The whole of 1942 was for the whole of Ukraine a year of enslavement.

The notices were circulated in heaps. Those who didn't show up were arrested. There were round-ups in bazaars, squares, cinemas, bathhouses and simply in apartments. People were caught, they were hunted, as they once were blacks in Africa.

One woman on Kurenevka chopped off her finger with an axe; the other entered other people's children in her passport

and borrowed children from neighbors, going on a commission. Forged the year of birth in the passport; brushed, skinned, and soaked in vinegar or kerosene to cause ulcers; they gave bribes - at first, liberation from Germany cost 3,000 rubles, then the price rose to 15,000. The year from which they took bribes quickly decreased: from sixteen, then from fifteen, finally, from fourteen.

On posters, in newspapers and orders, Germany was called only "beautiful." Photographs were printed about the life of Ukrainians in beautiful Germany: here they are, solid, in new suits and hats, with canes, going after work to a restaurant, cabaret or cinema; here is a young guy buying flowers in a German flower shop to give to his girlfriend; but the owner's wife darns his shirt, affectionate and caring ...

From the article "THE REFLECTIONS ON THE SPEECH OF THE REICHSMARSHAL" (meaning Reichsmarschall Goering):

"With the exception of individual letters from spoiled sissies, which often seem ridiculous, Ukraine receives a huge number of letters in which our workers express their satisfaction. These are our Ukrainians who understand that the war has affected the food supply of Germany, who look not only into their pot. . .

Here in Ukraine one could often hear complaints that Adolf Hitler was taking people to work in Germany. But here, too, Germany, in order to ensure the final victory, does not require more sacrifices from the Ukrainian people than she herself brings on a much, much larger scale.

So, brethren, I want to speak to you with complete honesty and frankness. I am ashamed of all those who scold Germany.

When I read the Reichsmarschall's speech, I felt ashamed as never before in my life.

From letters seized in their entirety by censorship and subsequently found in German archives:

"... If someone lagged behind, stopped or deviated to the side, the policemen fired. On the way to Kyiv, one man, who has two children, jumped from the car on the train. The police stopped the train, caught up with the fugitive and shot him in the back. Under escort, we were taken to the lavatory, and if we tried to escape, we were shot.

We stayed in the bath until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Here I was trembling all over, and in the end I almost lost consciousness. Both men and women bathed in the bath together. I burned with shame. The Germans approached naked girls, grabbed their breasts and beat them in obscene places. Anyone who wanted to could come in and mock us. We are slaves and you can do whatever you want with us. Of course, there is no food. There is also no hope of returning home."

"... Now I am 95 km from France, on the outskirts of the city of Trier, I live with the owner. How am I here, you yourself know. The owner has 17 heads of cattle. I need to clean 2 times a day. By the time I clean it, I'll be sick. My stomach is swollen so I can't even cough. There are five pigs in the pigsty, it also needs to be cleaned out. As I clean, so I can't see the light behind the tears. Then clean up the rooms: 16 rooms, and everything that is there - everything is in my hands. I don't sit down all day. When I go to bed, I don't feel where the night has gone, it's already morning. I walk as if beaten ... The hostess is like a dog. There is no female heart at all in her, only some kind of stone lies in her chest. She doesn't do anything herself, she just screams like a man possessed, saliva rolls from her mouth."

"... When we walked, they looked at us like animals. Even the children covered their noses and spit..."

We began to wait for someone to buy us as soon as possible. And we, Russian girls, are not so expensive in Germany - 5 marks to choose from. On July 7, 1942, a manufacturer bought us... At 6 o'clock in the evening we were taken to eat. Mommy, our pigs don't eat this, but we had to. We cooked borscht from radish leaves and threw in some potatoes. In Germany they don't give bread for dinner... Dear mother, they treat us like animals... It seems to me that I won't come back, mother."*)

*) Collection "Listi from fascist penal servitude". Kiev. Ukrainian Press of Political Literature, 1947. Letters from Nina D-ka, Katya Pr-n, Nina K-ko, pp. 7-16.

FROM THE AUTHOR

I'm getting stuck.

I talk about what happened to me myself, about what I saw with my own eyes, what witnesses and documents say, and I am at a dead end before this. What's this? How to understand it?

Dictatorship of twilight idiocy, some unthinkable, phantasmagoric return to the eras of Herods and Neros? Moreover, in sizes that have not yet been, which Herods never dreamed of.

[Thousands of specialists, choosing terms and arguing about them - totalitarianism, authoritarianism, national socialism, chauvinism, communism, Nazism, fascism, and so on - give them explanations in turn after the fact. But the very abundance of these "isms", like the centers of the plague, appearing here and there, does not suggest some kind of universal trend?

The fate of the unfortunate land bearing the ridiculous name of the USSR does not seem to me an accident, an exception, or something limited. On the contrary, this fate clearly screams about a tendency towards some kind of unprecedented barbarism on a global scale.

The most valuable achievements of civilization in the face of such barbarism may be worthless. For example, just as culture fell under the barbarians in the ancient world, so in Russia, after all the achievements of philosophy, literature, and the search for democracy, barbarism suddenly won, and there was no philosophy, no democracy, no culture, just one big concentration camp.

Further, a neighboring concentration camp declared war on this concentration camp, in which a similar process took place, which wanted to expand its possessions, at least to the whole world. The "holy" war of the USSR against Hitler was just a heartbreaking struggle for the right to sit not in a foreign, but in their own concentration camp, hoping to expand it to the whole world.

There is no fundamental difference between the sadism of both sides. In Hitler's "German humanism" there was more ingenuity and savagery, but citizens of foreign nations and conquered countries perished in gas chambers and ovens. Stalin's "socialist humanism" did not think of stoves, but death fell upon his fellow citizens. Such differences make all the difference; don't know which is worse. But "socialist humanism" won.]

This happened in the 20th century, in the sixth millennium of human culture. It was in the age of electricity, radio, the theory of relativity, the conquest of the sky by aviation, the discovery of television. It was on the very eve of mastering atomic energy and going into space.

The Sphinx in Bernard Shaw, when talking about progress, phlegmatically remarks that while he is lying, over the past few millennia, he has not noticed any progress.

If in the 20th century of our era epidemics of ignorance and cruelty are possible on a global scale, if pure slavery, genocide, universal terror are possible, if the world uses more efforts to create deadly devices than to education and health care, then , indeed, what kind of progress are we talking about?

Is there more justice in the world today?

Has there been more goodness? Respect for the human person? What justice, what kindness, what respect! There is only more cynicism and victims. Like a bottomless abyss, they are demanded and demanded by stupid politicians who are ready to at least turn the entire globe into Babi Yar, if only to rule, and otherwise, at least the grass will not grow. Here it is no longer time to think about justice, not about some kind of development, but at least about SALVATION. Wow progress.

Hitler crushed, barbarism not. On the contrary, its foci are becoming more and more. A vague savage force seethes across vast parts of the globe, threatening to break through.

Primitively sweet degenerate ideas, like contagious viruses, multiply and spread. There are clearly developed methods of how to infect millions of people with them.

The development of science and technology - it seems the only thing that humanity can boast of - leads, however, in this case only to the fact that slaves are not driven tied by the neck with

ropes, but are driven by electric locomotives in sealed wagons, which can be turned into idiots by injections of people, and the modern barbarian kills not with a club, but with a cyclone "B" or an impeccable, technically perfect firearm.

They say that science hopes to get out of the servile state in which it is today, serving the politicians faithfully. Then, perhaps, another, "scientific and technical" humanism will appear - and, absolutely hopeless, technocratic barbarism?

No one is capable of being a prophet. Nobody knows what will happen, and neither do I. But I know that HUMANISM is still HUMANISM, and not concentration camps and gallows. That you shouldn't be allowed to be made into an idiot. As long as the heart and brain are working, you should not give up.

Especially to you, young, healthy and active, to whom this book is intended, I once again want to remind you of caution, of the responsibility of each for the fate of mankind. People, friends! Brothers and sisters! Ladies and Gentlemen! Take a moment away from your business, from your entertainment. The world is unhappy.

It is unfavorable if a bunch of rhinoceros can drive a bunch of people to their death, and this darkness obediently walks, sits, waits in line. If the masses of people are plunged into the most real life-long slavery - and obediently become slaves. If prohibited, books are burned and thrown into the trash.

If millions of people from birth to death never say out loud what they think. If enough energy is accumulated today in one small cylinder to incinerate New York, Moscow, Paris or Berlin, and these cylinders rush over our heads around the clock, why? And what is this, if not the steps of barbarism?

People, friends! Brothers and sisters! Ladies and Gentlemen! Stop, think, remember.

CIVILIZATION IN DANGER.

5.1 NO BLESSED EARTH

Again I rode to a beautiful, spacious, blessed land, but now it looked different.

On the city limits near the sanatorium "Throw sadness" a massive pillar was dug in for centuries with a sign in German: "DYMER - 35 km." Under it we put my bundle of underwear, and my mother left me because she was late for work at school.

The Dymerskoye highway, along which the fugitive Vasily and I trudged like Martians, was now busy: cars were driving, people were walking. A house was built by the road, policemen stood by it, stopping everyone passing by.

- Oh, what are you taking! the aunt screamed desperately, rushing from policeman to policeman. - Well, I carried forty kilometers, I traded for my things. Ludonki!

The policeman carried her sack to the house, others were already stopping the old peasant. He was carrying two sacks, a smaller one in front, a larger one in the back, and he was told to take them down to the ground. He took it off silently.

"Goodbye," the policeman said ironically.

The old man turned and, as measuredly as he had come, stomped back along the highway.

This was an order strictly forbidding the carrying on the roads of food more than "necessary for daily sustenance."

A truck stopped at the sign. People climbed on it, me too, and so we rushed along the highway through Puscha-Voditsa, but I did not have a hint of the feeling of joy and peace that I once experienced here. The forest continued to be cut, clearings gaped, trucks with trailers rushed towards them, carrying logs as straight as arrows.

The Germans were in the village of Petrivtsi. People were working in the fields. The forest near Irpen was also cut down, along the highway there were mountains of logs ready for shipment.

On the river Irpen near Demidov, the prisoners were building a bridge. They were rolled in the mud, with their feet wrapped in rags, and some were barefoot; some were pecking at the still unwarmed earth, others were giving beams, standing chest-deep in icy water. Machine gunners sat on towers on both banks and patrols with dogs stood.

In Dymer, a German driver collected fifty rubles from everyone and drove somewhere further, and I headed for the field.

It had not been harvested since last year, rows of tubercles of undigged potatoes stretched, bread fell and rotted. And in the city at that time there was such a famine.

Everything is messed up on the ground.

For a long time, my mother watched me grow thin and lousy. An X-ray machine was set up in the clinic, which was used to check those traveling to Germany. My mother got me looked at, and I was found to have signs of incipient tuberculosis.

Then my mother rushed to the market and began to ask the peasants she knew to take me to the village to get better. A kind woman named Goncharenko from the village of Rykun took me for some junk. So I went back to the village.

I got scared myself. Tuberculosis under Nazism is death. I didn't want to die at all.

I wanted to go through all this and live long, to the very deepest old age, so I had to save myself. I have already learned that only those who are very lucky live to old age, but those who, day after day, are constantly saved, can be lucky.

Goncharenko received me well, put out a jug of milk, a saucer of honey, warm bread from the oven, and I ate so much that it no longer climbed into me - and the feeling of greedy hunger in my mouth did not go away.

She looked thoughtfully, resting her cheek on her hand, as I grabbed the pieces and choked, and told me that things were bad in the village: unheard-of taxes were established, they were threatening with general requisition. They ordered cows and horses to be driven to the parade ground for a veterinary examination, but instead half of the best ones were requisitioned. Such an inspection.

— Oh, sho bulo, sho bulo! she winced. - The women were wailing, they were falling to the ground, they were clinging to the cows . . .

They didn't take her cow, but they gave her a milk delivery book, and every day she carries a bottle to the "dairy shop", they make a mark there. The German manager drives around with a policeman in a cab, does not talk to anyone except the headman. The village council is the police. All the young people were

enrolled for Germany, and her daughter Shura, eighteen years old. And Vasya's son is still small, not fourteen.

Of course, Vasya and I immediately found a common language, he showed mine tails, pieces of explosives - tola, a stork's nest, which is now flying away, but should soon return from Africa. I thought: why can't we fly so freely? Is there really a land in the world without any war? If I were a stork, I would never return, I would live in peaceful lands - and damn you all.

"Then there's nothing to canoe," said Goncharenko. - Take sacks for sorrel to borscht.

Wild sorrel was already making its way in the fields in lush bunches. We nibbled on the succulent leaves, and I could not resist, put it in my mouth, and it was delicious, sour, so that a chill went down my back. The prisoners of Darnitsa would envy me.

Pieces of tol, yellow as Dutch cheese, were scattered everywhere, which had scattered after the explosion of the ammunition depot. We put sorrel for borsch in sacks, and tol for the soul - in the bosoms.

After gathering enough, in our opinion, for some changes in this world, we lit a fire, stuffed a tin can, inserted a dynamite fuse, and threw the can into the fire. She lay there, then such an explosion shied away that her ears were blocked, and a gray hole remained from the fire. After inspecting the damage done, we withdrew with a sense of accomplishment.

The long ditch was partly filled in, partly eroded by spring waters. Jews and other enemies from the surrounding villages were shot in it, and Vasya took me to show this local little Babi Yar. The ditch is like a ditch, and all around there are fields to the horizon.

In one place something was sticking out of the ground: it was a black, sticky human foot in a broken boot. We ran away.

Behind the moat began, it turns out, an unfinished military airfield. It was built by the NKVD, and earlier they didn't even let it come close, because it was all secret, and prisoners built it.

Now the huge airfield was dead, straight lines of pegs went into the distance, ready-made sections of concrete pavements of the runway stretched. Heaps of rubble, petrified cement were piled

up, stretchers, picks, shovels lay where they had been thrown - as if people had disappeared in one minute.

We walked through this dead place, the only ones alive among the mechanisms and building materials, turned the wheels of concrete mixers, unscrewed everything we could. But the stone crusher made the biggest impression on me.

It was a large hollow ball with blades inside. Stones are loaded into it from above, then the motor starts to rotate it, the stones inside rush about like crazy, push against each other in pitch darkness, fall from blade to blade, and there is no salvation for them there.

An accurate model of our life. So people are loaded somewhere, for some reason, they are forced to beat each other, they throw, rotate, they squeak, and everything pushes them, pushes, pushes.

I tried to tell this to Vasya, but he didn't know how, he decided that I wanted to make him laugh and began to laugh willingly, imagining how these sons of bitches squeaked when they got into the crusher.

The bare-bellied children were still crawling around Gapka's hut, and the ancient woman, folded like a triangle, was pushing something in a mortar, and the grandfather was wheezing and spitting on the stove. I went across the field to Litvinovka to visit them, but it would be better not to go.

Gapka was crying. Her hands were swollen, all her bones were aching from work, I thought that these were probably the serfs under Taras Shevchenko - the last line of poverty and despair.

Litvinovka's happiness was illusory and fleeting. The Germans quickly organized the village authorities and began exacting. Everything that they collected and threshed, imagining that it was for themselves, was ordered to be handed over. For each yard the tax is fabulous. And everyone has to work to cope with this tax. Gapka only clutched at her head: she needed to plow, she needed a horse (and where to get it?), she needed a plow, a harrow, grain, and sow so much that even two peasants could not do it.

"I didn't know anything about that at the Kolgосpi," Gapka lamented. - I swore at the Kolgосpi, we thought it was grief.

And then, vykhodyt, yet ne grief Bulo. Otse already - grief! Our death has come, matinko ridna, de our kolgospi, we already agree to them!

"Then the Last Judgment has already come," muttered her woman, crossing herself over the stupa. "Merciful Lord, have mercy on us. . . "

I thought that perhaps there is no God after all. And if he was, then what kind of tormentor is he, a bloodthirsty cannibal, mocks unfortunate women, children, as soon as they are born. A good entertainment was invented by the Almighty. If I had met him, I would not have prayed, and he should have been beaten in the face for everything that he had arranged on earth. I could not respect such a God. It just doesn't exist. Satisfy all people.

Goncharenko had been wailing and lamenting over Shura since the very morning, as if over a dead woman. She sat on the bed, swaying, in a black shawl, swollen, and sang in a low, strangely unnatural voice:

- Oh, my-I read-on-I dy-you-night. . . Oh, I won't cheer you anymore. . .

They voted in all yards. Policemen gathered at the village council, the orchestra tried the pipes.

Vasya and I staggered, as if restless, through this sobbing, screaming, singing village.

I'm already strong, winded. Vasya and I, like men, carried manure to the field, plowed, harrowed. I learned to harness, tangle, ride. The jacket and trousers were burned out, frayed, and I no longer differed from Vasya, except for one thing. Goncharenko fed us the same way, Vasya ate enough, but I didn't. Greed for food constantly sat in my mouth and throat, I was embarrassed to ask for more, and honey, which Goncharenko kept in a closet under lock and key and did not often give, seemed to me especially desirable.

The police went through the huts, chasing those who were leaving. This spurred cries, like fuel was added to the fire. Shura slung her bundled suitcase and purse over her shoulder, went to the square, and her mother ran after her.

My God, what was going on here! The whole village was pushing, a column was built, the policemen shouted: "Ruin!" -

and the orchestra, made up of invalids, burst out. The women ran next to the column, squealing, sobbing, throwing themselves on the necks of their daughters, the policemen pushed them away, the women fell to the ground; The Germans were walking behind and laughing. And the orchestra thrashed and thrashed a merry march, my hair stood on end. . .

The procession dragged itself across the field towards Demidov, and the whole village ran after it. I stayed.

The orchestra gradually died away in the distance, and there was dead silence. I slowly went into the hut and suddenly saw that the door to the pantry was open, and the lock, along with the key, was lying on the bench.

I went into the hut, sat under the window, still trembling at the sight I had just seen, then, as if in a fog, I got up, found a spoon and climbed into the pantry.

The can was covered with oilcloth and gauze, I carefully turned them away, began to scrape and eat honey with full spoons. I choked, swallowed spoon after spoon, without chewing, vaguely thinking that I should finish on the next . . . no, on the next . . . no, on the next . . . That Goncharenko goes to Demidov and wails, and here I am - a bastard in relation to to her who saves me. . . However, I need to eat honey so that there is no tuberculosis in order to be saved, and I will eat it, seizing it. Because in this beautiful stone crusher, the only salvation is to catch the moment when you are lucky, to grab everything that you can reach, that you forgot to lock it up, didn't watch it, slip between your legs, tear it out of your hands - in order to live! And let them go to Demidov for themselves, they won't return soon, but I was not at a loss, and from now on, if I want to live, I will always be like that, I'll take it and survive in spite of everything. There will be some laughter.

5.2 THE EXCESSIVELY INTELLIGENT ARE ENEMIES

When my mother was told to come to school, she did not refuse, because it saved her from Germany. On March 1, Arbeitskarte was introduced - a labor card that has become more important than a passport. It was stamped at the place of work - every

week, always a new one. Documents were checked on the streets, and if you didn't have an "arbeitskarte" or an expired stamp, you just had to thunder to Germany.

The teachers came to the school and began to fill out questionnaires [for the personnel department, as was the case under the Soviet regime.] One teacher, formerly a very quiet and modest person, stepped forward and said:

— I am a Petliurist.

He probably thought that he would be appointed director, but they sent another director who probably had more merit.

They began to clean the building after the Germans stood. They raked out manure, demolished broken desks, inserted plywood into windows, then walked around the yards and copied school-age children.

Until spring, there could be no talk of classes, because there was nothing to heat with. But then came the directive to prepare for classes in the first four classes, covering children up to 11 years old, while older children are sent to work.

"The number of teaching forces for short-term education must be limited... All the school control bodies established by the Bolsheviks and teachers of the senior classes are being fired... Pensions are not paid.

It is forbidden to use curricula, textbooks, student and teacher libraries, as well as politically biased teaching aids (films, maps, paintings, etc.) that existed under the Bolshevik regime; these items must be taken under protection. Until new curricula and textbooks appear, free education is being introduced. It is limited to reading, writing, counting, physical education, games, industrial and manual labor. The language of instruction is Ukrainian or, respectively, Polish. The Russian language should no longer be taught.*)

*) From the directive of the Reichskommissar of Ukraine to all generals and gebitskommissars on the conditions for opening elementary schools dated January 12, 1942. Op. on Sat. "Nimets-Fascist Occupational Regime in Ukraine". Kyiv, 1963, p. 71.

Then the teachers were given a newspaper to study and comprehend the article "School". I repeat, everything that was

printed in the newspaper and orders on the fence was the law, it was necessary to follow and not miss anything, so as not to get into trouble out of ignorance.

Mom and Lena Gimpel read the article together, slowly, often stopping, and I listened, gaining my mind.

The article opened with the caption:

“WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE NEXT IS TO CHANGE OUR EDUCATION. TODAY WE SUFFER FROM OVER-EDUCATION. ONLY KNOWLEDGE IS VALUED, BUT EXCESSIVELY SMART PEOPLE ARE THE ENEMIES OF ACTION. WHAT WE NEED IS INSTINCT AND WILL.”

(From the speech of Adolf Hitler on 27. IV. 1923)

The article itself said:

“... Taking an example from the whole life of our liberators and, in particular, from their school, we will make every effort to educate in our children the qualities necessary for the improvement of our entire people, without which its further steps will be impossible. First of all, this is love for work and the ability to work, it is a strong character, high morality ... The "Fundamentals of Sciences" is very important, but it is far from everything and not the main thing ... Let's get to work!

We wish every success to the free Ukrainian school, to the free Ukrainian teachers. And the example and help of our German friends will be the guarantee for this.” *) *) “New Ukrainian Word”, May 14, 1942.

“Here,” Lena said. - We’ve arrived. The twentieth century needs a work force with some education, but not too much. Slaves must be able to sign, read orders and count. But over-the-top smarties have always been enemies of dictatorships.

“I won’t teach,” said the mother.

- They will, I think.
- They won’t force you, it’s better to let them take you to Germany. Where can I find a job urgently?
- It does not fit in my head! Lena exclaimed, turning the newspaper in her hands in amazement. It’s black and white and serious. Some dark paradox. After all the Renaissances, the philosophies, the great sciences, it is finally revealed that excessive education is evil. They put

all the truths upside down, they taught lies, but still they taught at least something, and these thought that it was not necessary to teach. Go, children, work. In the name of recovery, in the name of further progress, the rainbow happiness of descendants.

- And I? I asked. I have four grades...
- You are already educated, clean your boots and sell cigarettes. By the way, - said Lena, - there is an order that children are forbidden to trade on the streets, go read it as an educated person.
- You heard? mother said.
- BUT! I won't get caught, I said.

Having learned that the Sport plant needed a cleaning courier, the mother hurriedly left the school and went to the plant. And in May classes of the first-fourth grades began. Children learned German and learned German songs.

I walked under the windows and listened to how they sing about the Cuckoo and the Donkey:

Der Ku-kuk und der E-ezel...

But the lists of children older than eleven years old were transferred from schools to the government, that's why they were compiled, and I received a summons to appear for employment.

All of our former fourth "A" class went to learn the love of work. Zhora Gorokhovsky ended up at the Glavpishchemash plant, where his father had previously worked. He carried all kinds of iron there, walked around in greasy rags, stained with fuel oil, small, thin, ugly because of this fuel oil that had eaten into his face.

And I was sent to the garden brigade at the sanatorium "Throw sadness."

The sanatorium, in fact, did not exist, it became a large farm. There were about thirty of us boys and girls, we were given choppers and sent to weed.

I got up at dawn, put an aluminum bowl, a spoon, a bottle of water and bread in a string bag. I left at six in the morning, because I had to stomp for three kilometers, and those who were late were not given breakfast. At half past six we got a scoop of

hot water with millet. Then they lined up in pairs, and the old man, whom we all called the Gardener, led to the gardens.

Each was given a strip of potatoes or cabbage. The gardens were endless, the sun was hot. I hacked: I covered the weeds with earth, although the Gardener sometimes followed in our footsteps, raked the earth, and then hit us in the neck. On the other hand, I often finished my strip first and could rest on the boundary.

In the afternoon there was a half-hour lunch break, a scoop of soup. Then they worked until eight in the evening, for a total of thirteen hours. Tired brutally, sometimes (the sun baked) fell.

But there was also happiness when they bet on tomatoes. They were still green and hard, but we attacked them like locusts. There were luxurious orchards around, but we were only led in formation, not a step to the side, and we only looked at the apples. Fruits are for people of the highest class.

The German chief started the construction of a rabbitry, and a dozen prisoners of war were brought here from Darnitsa. The grass on the territory of the sanatorium was tall, thick, with daisies, and they fell into it on their knees, choosing the most delicious stems, they reveled, blissfully grazing on this grass.

We carried cigarette butts to them and ourselves, sitting in a circle, learned to smoke. I liked it, I started smoking like a real worker, because what kind of worker does not smoke?

I told my grandfather about the Gardener, and he shouted:

"So I know him, this is my friend, I'll tell him not to beat you." The next day, having built us, the Sadovnik asked: "Who is Anatoly Kuznetsov here?" I stepped forward. "Come two more, you're transferring to lighter work."

He sent us to collect lime flowers. And don't feed our brother with bread, we just went to climb trees. The lindens in the Throw Sadness park are huge, two hundred years old, maybe they saw the Empress Catherine II herself, who, according to legend, drove into this park with Potemkin, who for some reason was moping, and said to him: "Look how good it is. Throw sadness!"

The best flowers in lindens at the tops, at the very ends of the branches, are not easy to get. Each of us had a norm. The gardener took it by weight, and if there was not enough, he deprived the soup, we tried so hard, and I climbed such heights

that I didn't even look down. And then one day I broke off along with the top and flew from a great height.

Why am I alive? So lucky! On the way, thick branches met, which accepted me like a hammock, I almost completely passed through them, but managed to grab my hands, dangle like a monkey, and here I am, like a cucumber, climbed again to love work.

Thus, at the age of twelve and a half, my official labor activity began, so that I would not grow up in this world as an excessive clever man, so that I would not cause concern to those who thought everything out for me and determined my place until the end of time.

Well, thanks, benefactors, they explained to me, this, it turns out, for what I was born in the world: to work in the indicated place, fulfilling my duty in the name of further steps, in the name of a bright future for some vague parasites-descendants. Hello descendants.

5.3 POTATOES IN BLOOM

Tram number 12 used to go to Puscha-Voditsa for about an hour one way and almost all through the forest. And he goes fast, like an express train rushing through the endless tunnel of a pine forest, and hazel branches whip through the windows.

It took my grandfather and me almost a whole day to walk this path along the sleepers. The rails were rusty, grass grew wildly between the sleepers, the heads of daisies and cornflowers swayed.

Sometimes upset people came across and said:

Do not go, everything is taken away from the children's sanatorium.

Indeed, three policemen were sitting under a pine tree near the children's tuberculosis sanatorium; a bunch of bundles, cans, rose nearby. And here they set up their predatory post. All roads to Kyiv were blocked, the robbery was completely legal.

A long time ago, grandfather also worked at a mill in Pushcha-Voditsa, where he spent his youth, here he and his grandmother

lived for the first time after their marriage, and grandfather knew the surroundings well.

“Here are the damned cholera,” he said anxiously, “but I know the paths, on the way back we will go around them in the forest.

And our legs were humming great when we reached the fourteenth line in the evening. There is a pond with a dam, and at the dam there were still blackened piles sticking out, on which a mill once stood; grandfather paused and looked at them thoughtfully.

In sacks over our shoulders, we carried grandmother’s things in exchange: skirts, sweaters, high boots with laces.

We spent the night in an empty shed behind a pond, with an old forester who still remembered his grandfather. We went out at dawn through the dew and for another day stomped along deaf forest roads and completely collapsed from fatigue and hunger when the Irpen River and a village with the same name appeared.

We began to walk from hut to hut, knocking, disturbing the dogs.—

- Do you need things? There are skirts and scarves.

The women came out, felt, looked at the light:

That one is old.

Good, new, - the grandfather was angry.

My grandmother only wore it once!

A glass of kvass ladies. . .

For a handkerchief, a glass of kvass?! shouted the grandfather.

- Ah, shaking your mother, come on three, kurkulk.

It would be necessary to find a more remote village, otherwise this one is the first, spoiled by "exchangers" who keep coming, begging, otherwise, look, they will steal. But we no longer had the strength to trudge on, stubbornly knocked on the yards. One sleepy overgrown uncle, scratching himself, asked:

- Is there no gramokhvona? Shaw us your lousy clothes . . .

Somehow we got two sacks of corn, beans and flour. I will not forget the way back until my death.

We walked slowly and heavily, every half a kilometer we sat down to rest, only I would doze off measuredly - my grandfather sighs: “Come on a little more.” He stubbornly carried, groaned,

groaned and sometimes fell: after all, he was seventy-two years old, and even after all these hungers and illnesses. It was necessary to cross the river on masonry, these were swinging poles high above the water. I bravely ran across, and my grandfather stopped - and nothing. I carried the sack to him, and the grandfather for a long time, frightened clinging to me and the poles, climbed on all fours. Who would have looked - died with laughter.

We spent the night in a haystack. In the morning my back, arms and legs ached and burned. Again they flooded, they sat down more and more often; to rise - well, no strength: you get up, but the body does not get up, and the bag seems to be full of cobblestones.

And around the woods, woods, sometimes clearings near the farms with wildly flowering potatoes, I saw it, as if through a fog. Once, they crept up, stole potatoes, tearing them with their hands, stuck the bushes in place so as not to see a trace. Having departed, they baked in the fire, had lunch. Only she was young, small, like nuts, badly baked.

Remembering the predatory checkpoint near the sanatorium, grandfather decided to bypass Puscha-Voditsa from the west, and we came to some hard forest road. Suddenly, a motor was heard behind us, and, having doused us with dust, a truck with two Germans in the cab drove by. He braked sharply, the driver leaned out and watched us approach. My heart sank.

“Bitte,” said the driver, pointing to the body. — Go-go!

It didn’t look like he was going to rob. Well, it wasn’t, we climbed in, the car sped along the road. I turned my face to the wind and enjoyed relaxing. And so we traveled as much as we would not have walked on foot until night. The city appeared, we realized that we were going around it from the west, passing Kurenevka.

Grandfather drummed into the cockpit. The car stopped in the middle of a field. We got down, grandfather held out a bundle of flour - a fare. The driver looked at us and shook his head.

Net. Old ones, little ones. Net.

We stood in disbelief. The driver smiled and touched.

— Danke! Thanks! I shouted.

He waved. Grandfather bowed from the waist after the truck. We shouldered our sacks and walked across the field to the visible rooftops of Kurenevka.

- Ea-, what an ace he is, Hitler, a fool! grandfather said. - The Germans are not so evil at all, it was he who made them scoundrels. How they were expected! Yes, if they come like a human being, Stalin would have been kaput long ago. The people, even under the tsar, even under the bourgeois, agreed to live, but not under Stalin. So this monster turned out to be even worse than Stalin. Ah, your mother's shaking... Pah!

Through various lanes and along Beletskaya Street we went straight to our bridge, from where it was a three-minute walk to the house. We did not feel our shoulders and legs, we dragged ourselves like marathon runners at the finish line.

And here we were stopped by two policemen.

- Are you far away? one asked ironically. We stood and were silent, because it was incredible, it could not be.

"Take it off," said the other, and began to help his grandfather take off the sack in a businesslike manner.

"Darlings," whispered the dumbfounded grandfather, "darlings ...

"Go, go," said the first policeman.

- Doves, falcons! Grandfather was ready to fall to his knees.

The policemen, not paying attention, carried our bags to the post, where several purses were already lying. It turns out that they arranged a new checkpoint here, on the way to the bazaar. I pulled my grandfather by the sleeve, he was completely mad, he could not believe it.

I hardly dragged him home, and he collapsed to rest and sleep, because in the morning I had to go to work.

The gardener, on friendship with my grandfather, let me take a quiet walk for an exchange. Well, then, I took a walk.

This is done very simply and at all times. The purse is loaded with various potatoes, carrots, half a loaf of bread and a piece of lard are placed on top, all this is covered with a newspaper. Then the mother takes you by the hand and leads you to the council.

Entering it is creepy, this is a place where everything is decided: human life, food, work, death, from where they are sent to Germany or can be recommended to Yar.

There are no Germans, Volksdeutschi or “wide” Ukrainian guys in embroidered shirts with mustaches are sitting at the tables. You can’t fool these like the Germans, they know their people.

[And they are always found, and they helped the Bolsheviks to create collective farms, dispossess kulaks, and inform. The first pillar of power, these very “flesh of the flesh” of their people, that they know who had dinner with what, who buried potatoes somewhere in a pit. And who did the village councils consist of, and all these district executive committees, city executive committees, trade unions, courts? Now, look, they are exactly the same again, they are again!]

They sit, write agendas, draw up lists, file files, and a dense, energetic woman with masculine gimmicks, dressed in a strict gray jacket and gray skirt, with a cold look and peremptory voice, walks around:

- If you do not want to work, we can transfer you to the Gestapo ... In case of non-compliance, the Gestapo will deal with you ...

Your mother brings you to the table of some filthy aunt who has your fate in her hands. He puts the purse on the leg of the table and shifts the newspaper so that bread and a corner of lard peek out from under it, a tiny piece of lard, like a matchbox, but from under the newspaper you can’t see what it is, you can only see that it is lard.

Bowing down humbly, your mother explains that you are in danger of tuberculosis, work hard in the gardens, bears other heresy, and at this time you also do not stand idle and, hunched over, do your best to put on an unhappy look.

Your aunt looks at you, snores in displeasure, silently rummages through the lists, finds your last name, crosses it out, writes it on another list and says:

- Tomorrow at seven at the checkpoint of the cannery.

You portray happiness, your mother thanks and bows and quickly takes you away, forgetting your wallet under the table.

At the cannery, a sour, pungent smell eats into the nose as if screwed in. But here only the one who is completely stupid will remain hungry.

Truckloads of pumpkins would arrive in the wide yard, and our boy crew would unload them. Split pumpkins came across, but not - they themselves broke them, scooped out white slippery seeds and stuffed their mouths with them. From now on, I didn't eat anything at home, I ate seeds all day. A misfortune happened: I gaped, the side of the car opened on me, and pumpkins fell down like a landslide. It got bumps, a piece of a tooth broke off, but lay under the wall and walked away. It's not lucky.

In the afternoon, at lunchtime, we were led in pairs to the dining room. Here I contrived, climbed among the first, got my plate, rushed into the corner, quickly, quickly, without a spoon, burning myself, drinking soup - and I myself looked askance if the queue was passing. Which in the tail received the first time, and I was already attached again. I turn my back to the wall, quietly lick the plate, wipe it with my sleeve, and now, with an innocent look, I hand it out for distribution. The cook took my plate and poured half a scoop, thus showing that she had noticed me, but that she was sorry for me, and she would not make a fuss. I ate this portion already calmly, enjoying it, sipping through my teeth, savoring it and not even licking it like some other profitable ones, but going to rinse it under the tap. Lucky.

Most of all, I hated when we were put on loading jam. It was in half a pood sealed jars, you carry it, here it is, at hand, and you won't profit. This is for the elect.

The workshops were heavily guarded, but one day, having loaded another car, we saw that the watchman had left, and together with one boy rushed to the workshop. It was dark and hot there, the cauldrons gurgled and boiled. We rushed to the first worker in a soiled dressing gown:

- Aunt, I saw it!

Oh, poor fellow, come here, hurry!

She pushed us somewhere under a tangle of iron racks, brought us a crumpled box half-filled with hot pumpkin marmalade. With black hands, we climbed into the box, burned ourselves, shoved and shoved jam with our fingers into our

mouths, swallowed, trying to put more of it in the belly. Wow, lucky!

Then we got completely insolent, darted into the workshop, where they begin to boil the pumpkin. We got a piece of pumpkin from the cauldron with chopsticks - it was damp, but tasty! Some grey, furry-haired worker looked:

Who let you in?

We are silent, we ignore him: what do you care? He went - it turns out, to call the master. He appeared, a powerful uncle. Balls to my comrade in the ear, balls to me! The comrade whined, but I, the fool, kept silent, well, and I got more. He thrashed me so viciously, professionally, firmly holding his shoulder with his fist, now under the ribs, now at the back of the head, so that my little head only dangled. Released and pushed out. We moved behind the warehouse, and I vomited marmalade with pieces of pumpkin. It's not lucky. Every day is not Sunday.

Our working day lasted twelve hours. Then they built, led to the entrance and carefully searched, releasing one at a time. Everything was legal, and I thought that I was still more lucky than unlucky, I boasted at home and told my grandfather about the wealth at the cannery, about how I gorged myself. But he was fiercely hungry and therefore held a different opinion. He was angry that I didn't bring anything into the house.

"There's a beetle here," he said one day. - Makes sausage on the sly without a patent, looking for a reliable assistant, so as not to chat. Let me arrange for you, and he promises to feed and pay with bones.

"The bones are a must," I said. - How can I quit my job? I'm on the list.

"Bring the purse," said the grandfather. - If you don't put it on, you won't go.

I worked at the factory for some time, then I decided. Brought the wallet. Greased up. I went.

5.4 "DYNAMO" PLAYERS;. LEGEND AND REALITY

This almost unbelievable story took place in the summer of 1942 [when the Germans were at the Volga and it seemed that their

victory was a foregone conclusion. The story shocked everyone] and was so popular that at one time they said about the ravine: "That Babi Yar, where the football players were shot." She then walked in the form of a legend, which is so good and complete that I want to quote it in its entirety. Here she is.

The Ukrainian football team "Dynamo" (Kyiv) was one of the best teams in the country before the war. [In football battles between Kiev and Moscow there is always something more than just a sporting passion, namely the issue of oppressed Ukrainian honor.] Kiev fans therefore adored their players, especially the famous goalkeeper Trusevich.

Due to the encirclement, the team was unable to evacuate. At first they sat quietly, got a job in all directions, met. And, yearning for football, they began to arrange training in some wasteland. The boys, the residents found out about this, and then it came to the German authorities.

They called the players and said: "Why do you need a wasteland? Here is a beautiful stadium empty, please train. We are not against sports, on the contrary."

Dynamo agreed and moved to the stadium. After some time, the Germans call them [(note how accurate the legend is: the authorities always call),] and say: "Peaceful life in Kyiv is getting better, cinemas, an opera are already working, it's time to open the stadium. Let everyone see that the peaceful reconstruction is in full swing. And we offer you a meeting with the German Armed Forces."

Dynamo asked for time to think. Some were against it, believing that playing football with the Nazis was a shame and a betrayal. Others objected:

"On the contrary, we will defeat them and raise the spirit of the people of Kiev." We agreed on the second. The team began to prepare intensively, it was called "Start".

And then posters appeared on the streets of Kyiv: "FOOTBALL. Team of the Armed Forces of Germany - the team of the city of Kyiv "Start".

The stadium was full; half of the stands were occupied by the Germans, the high authorities arrived, the commandant himself,

they were cheerful and looked forward to the pleasure. The worst places were occupied by the Ukrainians of Kyiv, hungry, ragged.

The game has begun. Dynamo were exhausted and weak. Well-fed German football players were rude, frankly knocked down, but the referee did not notice anything. The Germans in the stands screamed with delight when the first goal was scored against the Kievites. The other half of the stadium was gloomy silent: and here, in football, they spat on us.

Then the Dynamo, as they say, took. They were filled with rage. It is unknown where the powers came from. They began to outplay the Germans and, at the cost of a desperate breakthrough, scored a return goal. Now the German tribunes were disappointedly silent, while the rest shouted and hugged.

Dynamo remembered their pre-war class and after a successful combination scored the second goal.

The ragged people in the stands are shouting: "Hurrah!", "The Germans are being beaten!"

This is "The Germans are being beaten!" already out of the sport. The Germans rushed about in front of the stands, ordered: "Stop!" and scribbled into the air. The first half is over, the teams have gone to rest.

During the break, an officer from the commandant's box came to the Dynamo team and very politely said the following: "Well done, you showed good football, and we appreciated it. You have supported your sporting honor enough. But now, in the second half, play calmer, you yourself understand: you need to lose. It is necessary. The team of the German army has never lost, especially in the occupied territories. That's an order. If you don't lose, you will be shot."

Dynamo silently listened and went to the field. The referee whistled and the second half began. Dynamo play well and score the third goal against the Germans. Half the stadium is roaring, many are crying for joy; the German half goggles indignantly. Dynamo score one more goal. The Germans jump up in the stands, grab their pistols. Gendarmes ran around the green field, cordoning it off.

The game goes to death, but our tribunes do not know this and only shout with joy. German football players are

completely broken and depressed. Dynamo score another goal. The commandant with all the officers leaves the podium.

The referee crumpled time, blew the final whistle; the gendarmes, without waiting for the players to go to the locker room, grabbed the Dynamo players right there on the field, put them in a closed car and took them to Babi Yar.

Such a case has not yet known the history of world football. In this game, the Ukrainian Dynamo had no other weapon, they turned football itself into a weapon, having accomplished an immortal feat. They won knowing they were going to their deaths, and they did so to remind the people of their dignity.

In reality, this story was not so solid, although it ended just like that, but, like everything in life, it was more complicated, if only because there were not one game, but several, and the anger of the Germans rose from match to match.

The Dynamo people were occupied not because they could not leave, but they were mobilized into the Red Army and were taken prisoner. Most of them began to work at bakery No. 1 as loaders, and at first they made up the bakery team.

There was a German stadium in Kyiv, where Ukrainians had no access. But indeed, on July 12, 1942, posters were posted around the city:

OPENING OF UKRAINIAN STADIUM

Today at 16 o'clock the Ukrainian stadium opens (B. Vasilkovskaya, 51, entrance from Prozorovskaya).

Opening program: gymnastics, boxing, athletics and the most interesting number of the program - a football match (at 5:30 pm). *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", July 12, 1942.

Indeed, in this match the team of some German military unit was defeated, the Germans did not like it, but no excesses occurred.

It's just that the Germans, get angry, put up for the next match, July 17, a stronger military team "PGS". She was literally crushed by the "Start" with a score of 6: 0.

An incomparable account of this match in the newspaper:

"... But this win cannot be recognized as an achievement of the Start players. The German team consists of individual rather strong players, but it cannot be called a team in the full sense

of the word. And this is not surprising, because it consists of players who accidentally got into the part for which they play. There is also a lack of the necessary training, without which no, even the strongest team will be able to do anything. The Start team, as everyone is well aware, mainly consists of the players of the former Dynamo masters team, therefore, much more should be demanded from them than what they gave in this match. *)

*) "The new Ukrainian word ", July 18, 1942

Poorly hidden irritation and apologies to the Germans, sounding in every line of this note, were only the beginning of the tragedy.

On Sunday, July 19, a match took place between "Start" and the Magyar team "MSG. Wal." Score 5 : 1 in favor of "Start". From this match report:

"... Despite the overall score of the match, we can assume that the strength of both teams is almost the same."**) **) Ibid., July 24, 1942

The Hungarians proposed a rematch, and it took place on 26 July. Check

3:2 in favor of "Start". Just about, it seems, they will already break it - and the Germans will enjoy it.

And on August 6, a meeting of the "Start" with the "strongest", "strongest", "always only winning" German team "Flakelf" is scheduled. The newspaper was choking in advance, describing this team, citing a fabulous ratio of goals scored and conceded by it so far, and the like. It was at this match that the defeat that became legendary took place. The newspaper did not publish a report on it, as if there had never been a match.

However, the players have not yet been arrested. And they were given much more to think about than a half-time break - three whole days. Several lines in the New Ukrainian Word on August 9 were the last announcement about football:

"Today at the Zenit stadium at 5 o'clock. In the evening, the second friendly meeting of the best football teams of the city "Flakelf" and bakery No. 1 "Start" will take place.

"Start" was given the last opportunity. He defeated the Germans in this match as well, but there are only various fantastic

rumors about the score. Only after that the players were sent to Babi Yar.

This, I repeat, was the time when the Germans were on the outskirts of Stalingrad.

5.5 FROM THE AUTHOR

REMINDER. Here you are reading these stories. Maybe somewhere you calmly run your eyes. Maybe somewhere (my fault) you get bored and scroll further. In general, "fiction is fiction." But I remind you again and again that there is no fiction here.

IT WAS ALL. Nothing is invented, nothing is exaggerated. All this was with living people, and there is not the slightest literary conjecture in this book.

There is a trend. Yes, I write tendentiously, because even with all the striving to be objective, I remain a living person, and not a calculating machine.

[My tendency is to denounce any violence, any murder, any disrespect and mockery of a person.

In one village, partisans killed two Germans. The Germans were young, about 18 years old, lying powdered with snow. The gendarmes drove all the inhabitants of the village to the square. The peasants thought that they would shoot, but no, they did not shoot. Suddenly, one dark grandmother - her son was killed in the Finnish war - how to sing: "My sons! Somewhere, your mothers still don't know that you were killed! .. "And she fell on them, lamenting. Her villagers dragged her away, whispering: "Shut up. Ours will return, they will kill you for crying over the Germans. And she said: "Poor sons!"

I have the same tendency as this simple woman.]

But regardless of the views, I am fully responsible for the absolute RELIABILITY of everything told as a living witness.

And so, guys, born in the forties and beyond, I confess to you, at the risk of seeming sentimental, that sometimes I look at the world in amazement and think:

"What happiness, just to think that today you can walk the streets whenever you want, even at one in the morning, even at four." You can even listen to the radio or get pigeons. Annoyingly

awakened in the middle of the night by a motor, you are sleepily angry: “A neighbor came from a booze in a taxi,” and you roll over to the other side.

I do not like the night howl of aircraft; as it buzzes, it seems that it twists your whole soul, but then you say to yourself: “Calm down, they are still training, this is not it yet.” And in the morning newspapers come in which write about small wars here and there . . .

They say that we do not notice health while it is there, we cry only when we lose it.

I look in amazement at this blinking, oscillating world.

5.6 BABI YAR: THE SYSTEM

Vladimir Davydov was arrested simply and casually.

He walked down the street, met a friend Zhora Puzenko, with whom he studied, worked in the sports section, went to the girls together. We talked, Zhora smiled:

- What are you, Volodya, walking the streets? Are you a Jew? Come on, let's go.
- Where?
- Let's go, let's go . . .

What are you?

Zhora was smiling.

Will you go or not? I can show documents.

He took out the documents of the police investigator, shifted the pistol from pocket to pocket, demonstrated it as if by accident.

The day was good, sunny, the street was full of passers-by. We moved. Davydov quietly asked:

- Are not you ashamed?

“No,” Puzenko shrugged his shoulder. “I get paid for this.

So nice and calm they came to the Gestapo, on Vladimirskaia street, house 33.

This house is located near Bogdan Khmel'nitsky Square, almost opposite the side gate of St. Sophia Cathedral. It immediately catches the eye - huge, dark gray, but seeming almost black because of the contrast with neighboring houses. With

columns and a portico, it, like a giant chest of drawers, rises above the reeking dust of the Vladimir centuries, there are no cars near it, there is no sign on it. The house was built before the revolution for the provincial zemstvo council, but not finished, and under Soviet rule it became the Palace of Labor. But not for long: the state security agencies liked him.

Until the retreat in 1941, the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR was located in it, and the building was best suited for its needs. Behind the majestic façade there are well-equipped interrogation rooms, rooms for torture, stone cellars, and in the courtyard, hidden from prying eyes, there is a prison of several floors, connected to the main building by passages. Sometimes screams could be heard from the cellars to the street. It was believed that for a mere mortal, only entry into this house was possible, rarely anyone went out.

[Having blown up Khreshchatyk with shops and theaters, having blown up the history of Russia - the Lavra, the NKVD, however, left its house intact, as if on purpose so that the Gestapo would immediately have all the conditions for work. The Gestapo accepted and appreciated this courtesy, immediately settled behind the stately facade, and the screams resumed.

(Looking ahead, we can add that during the retreat, the Germans set fire to neighboring houses on Bogdan Khmelnytsky Square, University, but left house No. 33 intact. Now it is the KGB of the Ukrainian SSR. Many Soviet and German data are stored there, which this book so lacks, and also new ones are continuously accumulated, probably, so that future researchers will not be left idle. But it will be a miracle if descendants open a museum in this building: "The destruction of man in Ukraine and his transformation into a monkey"...)]

Davydov was a private in the 37th Army, was taken prisoner near the village of Borshchi, passed through the Darnitsa camp and several others, and fled near Zhitomir. He had an acquaintance in Kyiv named Neonila Omelchenko, a doctor connected with the partisans in the Ivankovsky district, and Davydov was supposed to go with medicines to Ivankov when this ridiculous arrest took place.

It remained unknown what and where Puzenko knew from, but Davydov was placed in the most terrible, so-called "Jewish" cell, stuffed like herrings with people waiting to be sent to Babi Yar. Davydov realized that his case was hopeless.

He was summoned for interrogation and demanded to confess that he was a Jew, and also to tell what he knew about the partisans.

Davydov began to shout that he was not a Jew and not a partisan, but Puzenko was settling personal scores with him. He was sent to a commission, where German doctors examined him and, with magnifying glasses in their hands, looked for traces of circumcision, they did not find it and gave a negative conclusion.

Nevertheless, he was taken back to that terrible cell, because it was not customary to let him out of house No. 33, as before. It's like a conveyor belt: hit it - roll, there is no reverse.

People were taken away from the cell, they did not return, but Davydov was still sitting. Finally, when ten people remained, they were led out into the yard, where a car was parked, which they immediately recognized.

It was one of the gas chambers known to all of Kiev, the "gas wagon", as the Germans called it. It was something like the current refrigerator cars. The body was deaf, without windows, sheathed with clapboard, painted in a dark color. Behind there was a double-leaf hermetic door. Inside the body was lined with iron, on the floor there was a removable grate. Ten men were accommodated spaciouly, and another girl, a very beautiful Jewess from Poland, was connected to them.

They all stood on the bars, holding on to the walls, the doors were closed behind them, and so, in complete darkness, they were taken somewhere.

Davydov understood that now they would arrive at Babi Yar, but they would not see him, because gas would be released through the hole near the driver's cab.

The suicide bombers did not speak, but only waited for the moment to say goodbye and then, in pitch darkness, panting, rolling out their eyes and tongues, to die.

But the car kept moving, swaying, stopping, moving off, and now, it seems, it stopped completely. Gas did not go, Davydov

thought that maybe something had gone bad. Suddenly the door clanged, light splashed out of it - and a voice:

- Come out!

"That means they will still shoot," thought Davydov. "And it's easier: faster."

The prisoners hurriedly, swallowing air, went out, out of habit, stood in a row. There were thorny barriers around, towers, some buildings. SS and police.

A healthy, well-built Russian guy came up in a hat, riding breeches, boots polished to a shine (later they found out that this was foreman Vladimir Bystrov), he had a stick in his hands, and he hit everyone on the head with a flourish:

This is a dedication to you! Listen to the command. On charging step march! Run! .. Stop! .. Around! .. Lie down! .. Get up! .. Goose step march! .. Fish step! ..

The police officers rushed at the prisoners, hitting them with sticks, boots, screaming and swearing. It turned out that the "goose step" is to squat down, stretching your arms forward, and the "fish step" is to crawl on your stomach, wriggling, with your hands behind your back. (We also found out later that such exercises were given to all beginners in order to stun them; they beat them to the conscience, the sticks broke on their backs, the guards cut out new ones.)

They crawled to a fenced area inside the camp, lined up again there, and a centurion named Kuribko read the following moral:

- Here. Know where you are. This is Babi Yar.

Is the difference between a resort and a camp clear? You are accommodated in dugouts, you will work. Whoever works badly, breaks the regime or tries to run away, let him blame himself.

The girl was sent to the women's half of the camp, the men were taken to the dugout.

Dugouts stretched in two rows: ordinary dugouts, brigadier, "Jewish", "hospital".

The one into which Davydov was brought was an ordinary dugout without windows, with a single door and rows of two-story bunks; the floor was earthen, a stove at the far end, and a dim light bulb under the ceiling. The spirit was unbearable,

heavy, as in a lair. A place was assigned to each, and camp life began.

Later, Davydov thought why the Germans did not turn on the gas or shoot immediately, but gave a reprieve, placing him in this strange camp? Why did he even exist?

[The camp was built by the spring of 1942 just above the Babi Yar ravine, becoming a kind of "checkpoint" to it. For a change, or something, the Germans called this camp "Syretsky", although the Syrets area itself is much further away. Maybe a new name was needed because the words "Babi Yar" have already become odious in Kyiv. The German name "Syrets camp" was then used in the Soviet official terminology, introducing confusion. But the ravine and the camp were essentially and geographically one whole, and among the people there was always only one name for this complex: Babi Yar.]

It's just that the Germans did not immediately come to their system of Buchenwalds, Auschwitz and Dachau, they experimented, and on the territory of the USSR at first they simply shot from machine guns, only then, as economic and pedantic people, they set up a "death factory" in Babi Yar, where, before to kill people, some other benefit was derived from them.

Sorting issues were resolved somewhere in the offices at Vladimirskaia, 33. Those who arrived in Babi Yar could immediately be sent to the right into the ravine, or to the left - behind the barbed wire of the camp.

The Babi Yar ravine, with daily executions, continued to function normally. In it, such enemies were immediately shot, who were put in the camp - only anxiety. They were driven into a ravine along a path, laid on the ground under a cliff and scribbled from machine guns. Almost everyone was shouting something, but from a distance it was impossible to make out. Then the cliff was blown up to fill up the corpses, and so they moved further and further along the cliff. They didn't waste ammunition on the wounded, they were simply finished off with shovels.

Others, however, like Davydov and his companions, especially those who looked healthier and whose guilt was questionable, were placed first in the camp, where they received some respite. With executions and the very image of camp life, natural selection

took place. The stubbornly surviving Germans were in no hurry to shoot: they knew that this would never leave them.

Every day at half past six in the morning there were blows on the rail. The prisoners quickly, quickly, in about a minute and a half had to get dressed and, to the shouts of the foremen, they poured out of all the dugouts - overgrown, bony, animal-like. They quickly lined up, counted, and the command followed: "Step march, with a song!"

Exactly. They didn't take a step without a song in the camp. The policemen demanded to sing the folk: "Unharness, lads, horses", "Oh, you, Galya, young Galya", or the soldier's "Nightingale-birdie, the canary sings plaintively", and they especially loved "Dunya - I, Dunya - I, Dunya my berry ". The brigadier himself shouted obscene verses, and the whole column picked up the chorus. There were cases when the column, embittered, sang "Katyusha", then the massacre began.

So with songs they crawled out to the central parade ground - in line for breakfast. They received a slice of ersatz bread and two glasses of coffee, or rather, some kind of cooled muddy water.

I asked Davydov: what did they get? You need some utensils. He said: yes, it was difficult with the dishes, who had a bowler hat, who took out a tin can in the garbage, but, most importantly, people were constantly dying, so the dishes were inherited.

After breakfast, again with songs, they went to work in teams of twenty people. What was this job?

Here listen.

1. The inhabitants of the "Jewish" dugout went to dig the earth in one place, poured it on a stretcher and transferred it to another place. All along the way, guards with sticks lined up in two rows, and people carried a stretcher at a run along this corridor.

It was supposed to put so much on the stretcher to barely lift it, and the Germans thrashed with sticks, yelled, cursed: "Schnel! Schnel! Faster!" - not work, but some kind of panic.

People were exhausted, fell, and these "goons" were immediately taken out over the wire into the ravine and shot, or they

simply broke their skulls with a crowbar, so they ran with their last strength and fell, only losing consciousness. The teams of guards got tired, changed, and the carrying of the earth continued until night. Thus, everyone was busy, the activity was seething.

2. An incomprehensible structure was erected in a remote wasteland, some of the prisoners were sent there. The construction was carried out under great secrecy, so those who went there to work said goodbye to their comrades: they did not return back. (The secret was revealed only later: an experimental soap factory was set up in Babi Yar to make soap from the executed, but the Germans did not have time to complete it).
3. There was a dismantling of dilapidated barracks, which remained from the Soviet military unit that stood on this place before the war. The camp authorities decided that they were spoiling the view and blocking the view. By the way, here, in the brigade of "nail pullers", the most emaciated "goal" from Russian dugouts entered. Before giving their souls to God, they spent their last day pulling and straightening rusty nails.
4. To make the territory clearly visible, all trees were cut down and stumps were uprooted both in the camp and around it. The Germans felt better when everything around was bare.
5. A small group of craftsmen - carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, locksmiths - worked in the workshops, serving the guards and doing various small crafts around the camp. These were "thieves" works, to get to which was considered a great success.
6. "Exit" brigades, under strong guard, fussed at Institut-skaya, 5, where the Gestapo building was being built.

Sometimes they were sent to dismantle the ruins on Khreshchatyk.

7. Women were used instead of horses: they harnessed several to a cart, and they carried heavy loads, took out sewage.

The camp was led by Sturmbannführer Paul von Radomsky, a German of about fifty-five, with a hoarse voice, shaven-headed, well-fed, but with a dry, oblong face, wearing horn-rimmed glasses. Usually he drove in a small black passenger car, he drove himself, next to him sat an ash-dark shepherd Rex, well known throughout the camp, trained to tear people's meat, in particular the genitals. In the back seat was the interpreter Rhine, from the Volksdeutsches.

Radomsky had deputies: Rieder, nicknamed "Redhead", a complete sadist, and a specialist in executions, "Willy", very tall and thin.

Then came the administration of the prisoners themselves - centurions, foremen. A Czech named Anton, Radomsky's favorite and right hand, stood out in particular. Howling is known: what Anton will offer the boss, it will be. They feared Anton more than the chief himself. For women, the foreman was twenty-five-year-old Liza Loginova, an actress in the theater of Russian drama, Anton's mistress, who was not inferior to him in sadism, brutally beating women.

Davydov tells in detail about this strange life, not so much as half-life, because every day one could easily die. They died mostly in the evening.

After work, the prisoners (with songs, of course) gathered on the parade ground and lined up with the letter "P". The most important thing began: the analysis of the faults accumulated during the day.

If there was an escape, it meant that the whole brigade would now be shot. If Radomsky orders, every tenth or fifth person in the line will be shot.

Everyone was looking at the gate: if they were carrying machine guns, it means that today is a "concert" or "amateur evening", as the policemen ironically said.

Radomsky with assistants came out to the middle, and it was announced that every fifth person would be shot today.

Those standing on the edge in the top ten had a wild silent struggle: everyone saw what he was in a row. The Reader started the countdown, and everyone stood frozen, cringing, and if "Five!" fell, the Reader pulled his hand out of line, and it was completely

useless to ask, to beg. If a person continued to resist, shouted: "Sir, have mercy, sir . . ." - Rider fired at him in passing from a pistol and continued counting further.

Under no circumstances should you look him in the eye: he could stare at someone and pull out without a count simply because he did not like you.

Then the selected ones were pushed to the center of the parade ground, ordered: "On your knees." SS men or policemen walked around and carefully laid each one with a shot in the back of the head.

The prisoners, again with songs, went around the circle along the parade ground and went through the dugouts. [By the way, says Davydov, this is how the Dynamo goalkeeper Trusevich, whom the Germans kept in the camp for a long time without shooting, fell under the countdown.]

One day a batch of prisoners arrived from Poltava. They hit the rail in the middle of the day, gathered everyone on the parade ground and announced that Ukrainian partisans would be shot now, and Ukrainian policemen would be shot. What's the news? Usually, the partisans were immediately driven into a ravine down a slope, without leading into the camp.

Sixty people were kneeling in the center of the parade ground, with their hands behind them. The policemen came out in formation and stood behind them in rows. Suddenly, one young policeman shouted: "I won't shoot!" It turned out that among the partisans was his own brother, and the Germans deliberately set up this performance: for brother to shoot at brother.

A German ran up to the policeman and pulled out a pistol. Then the young policeman fired, but he immediately became ill and was taken away. He was nineteen years old, the murdered brother was twenty-five years old. For some reason, everyone else was shot with explosive bullets, so that the brains flew right into the faces of those standing in the ranks.

And for petty offenses, a flogging was prescribed. They took out a table made in a carpentry with a recess for the body, they put a person there, pressed a board on top that covered his shoulders and head, and two healthy foreheads from the camp sipped conscientiously with sticks, which they jokingly called

"automatic machines". To receive two hundred "machine guns" meant certain death.

In one brigade, during the evening verification, there was not enough man. He was quickly found by a dog in the restroom, in a hole under the toilet seats. Apparently, he wanted to wait for the night to run, but maybe he just lost his mind, like a beast, huddled anywhere. The centurions beat him on the machine until the meat began to fall off in pieces, beat the dead man, slapping him into the dough.

A boy of about seventeen went to the garbage heap to look for food. This was noticed by Radomsky himself, he cautiously, on tiptoe, began to creep up, taking out a revolver on the move - he shot at point-blank range, hid the revolver and left, satisfied, as if he had killed a stray dog.

Shot for standing in line for food a second time; they poured "machine guns" for not taking off their hat. When many patients accumulated in the "hospital" dugout, they were driven out, laid on the ground and scribbled from machine guns. And "charging" was not even considered a punishment, it was all the time: "get up", "lie down", "fish step" . . .

Davydov saw all this with his own eyes, he was beaten, he sang songs, he stood in the ranks under Reader's countdown, but the fatal figure still did not fall on him.

[There was no chance to ever see the will. Such tiny dubious chances were for the centurions and foremen, for which they tried. Davydov was a candidate after the "Jewish" dugout also because, to his misfortune, there was something Jewish in his appearance. Dina Pronicheva was saved by her Russian surname and appearance, although she was Jewish. Davydov was Russian, but who here remembered the results of that "medical examination", and his appearance ruined him.

By that time, Jews in Babi Yar already made up an insignificant percentage: someone who miraculously hid all winter and was nevertheless caught, half and a quarter Jews, "converts" and, finally, just suspiciously similar. Radomsky dragged out their destruction, as if for pleasure, savoring, inventing special methods.]

Here, for example, is one of its unique ways. The prisoner was forced to climb a tree and tie a rope to the top there. Other prisoners were told to saw the tree. Then they pulled the rope, the tree collapsed, the one sitting on it was killed.

Radomsky always personally went out to see and, they say, laughed a lot. Those who were not killed, those Anton finished off with a shovel.

Another entertainment of Radomsky: he went out on horseback and galloped at a crowd of prisoners. Those who did not have time to dodge, whom the horse touched or dumped, Radomsky shot with a pistol - as unviable. Most often, this was done precisely with the inhabitants of the "Jewish" dugout, whom the German guards, with their characteristic humor, called the "giml-team", that is, the "heavenly team".

The prisoners were not given clothes. From the arrivals they took off what was better - boots, a coat, a jacket, and the policemen changed it in the city for moonshine. Therefore, everyone tried to get clothes from the corpses, and if someone died in a dugout, he was immediately stripped naked.

Food was more difficult. In addition to the morning "coffee" they gave a gruel in the afternoon. With hard, exhausting work on such food, of course, it was impossible to stretch, but sometimes transmissions were received.

Women wandered around the camp, looking for their own. Sometimes bread was thrown through the wire. If they gave the policeman at the gate a liter or two of moonshine, then he could give the prisoner a bag of millet or potatoes.

In the mornings, duty officers stood out, who, under escort, bypassed wire fences under a voltage of 2200 volts - and with long sticks they got out dogs, cats, crows that had died during the day, sometimes even hares came across.

They brought all this to the zone, and a "flea market" began: a piece of a cat was exchanged for a handful of millet, and so on. It was possible to steal potato lush rations from the garbage heap. They folded and together cooked their soup on the stove, thanks to which Davydov and others like him managed to pull.

One of the curses was scabies. The prisoners lived worse than the animals in the den, eaten by thousands of insects. Those with

scabies were not treated, they were simply shot. The wife of the imprisoned carpenter Trubakov managed to pass on an ointment for scabies, which saved many from immediate execution.

About twenty people arranged a conspiracy to escape, but it was discovered, all twenty were shot, and it is only known that a certain Arkady Ivanov led the conspiracy.

So the days went by. No one, including Davydov, guessed how long the end would be delayed. The craving for life exists in us as long as we breathe, that's how it works. Some arrived, others died - whether on their own, on the parade ground, or in a ravine.

The machine was running daily.

5.7 GRANDFATHER, THE ANTI-FASCIST

We lived as in a cut off world: it is difficult to understand what and how is happening in the world. Newspapers can not be trusted, radio is not. Maybe someone somewhere listened to the radio and knew, but not us. However, for some time now we have not needed a radio. We had a grandfather.

He ran from the market excited and laid out when and what city the Germans had recaptured and how many planes were shot down. Bazaar knew for sure.

- No, no, Hitler can't resist! he shouted. - Our scoundrels will be beaten. Here, remember my word.

Now the Bolsheviks, scientists, have come to their senses. They already say for sure: after the war there will be no collective farms, small private property and trade will be allowed. And in the old way they can not be saved, what are you, such devastation! May God, merciful, live.

After the crash with our last exchange, my grandfather got really scared. He hated Hitler with the most bitter hatred he was capable of.

The dining room for the elderly was closed long ago. It was pointless for my grandfather to go to work somewhere as a watchman: you can't buy anything with a salary. How to live?

And then one day it occurred to him that my mother and I were a stone around his neck for him. He immediately

redistributed all the junk, took the biggest and best part for himself, and declared:

- Live behind the wall on your own, and I will change things and look for a rich woman.

Mom just shook her head. Sometimes she would knock on her grandfather and give him two or three pancakes, he greedily grabbed and ate, and it was clear that he was terribly hungry, that no one takes the rags that he wears to the market, but he still wants to live to better times. when there will be no collective farms, and private initiative will be given, and therefore he clings to life as soon as he can. He envied my business and started selling cigarettes himself. He dug up all the pieces of land, even the courtyard, and planted it with tobacco, plucked the leaves, dried them, strung them on twine, cut them with a knife, and crushed the stems in a mortar and sold shag for glasses. This saved him.

Sometimes the old Sadovnik came to him, his grandfather gave him linden tea without sugar and told how he used to be the owner under the Soviet regime, had a cow, fattened piglets if they had not died of distemper, and what kind of sausages grandmother fried for Easter!

I have been working all my life! grandfather complained. - I could now live on one Soviet pension, if not for these zar-razes, thieves, a-di-ots! But ours will still throw them out, ours will come, you mark my word. The people now saw that you can't wait for good from strangers, Hitler taught him a lesson, taught him a lesson for a thousand years ahead!

His hatred grew the more the hungrier he was. Lyalya's grandfather died of old age. My grandfather came running in joyful excitement.

— Aha! Here! Although there was a Volksdeutsch, he died! In the house next to us, where Elena Pavlovna lived, the apartment of the evacuated Jews was empty. Some aristocratic Volksdeutsches came to move in. Grandpa saw it first.

- Wow, s-bastards, bourgeois muzzles, damned gentlemen, the Soviet government didn't whip you a little, but wait, you're fattening early, your time will run out!

[It was interesting for me to see such a change with my grandfather: it was as if his memory had been knocked out. What would grandma say to him? I was sorry that I couldn't believe in God like she did. I would not trust anything human, but would pray to myself . . . How else in this world, what to hope for?

Sometimes I talked with the cat Titus, trying to find out his view of what was happening. His answers were vague. We used to say this:

- Cat Titus, go thresh.
- My head hurts.
- Cat Titus, go eat.

"Where's my big bowl?"

You are an irresponsible element. What's on your mind?

- Brains.
- What's in the brain?
- Thoughts.
- What's on your mind?
- Mice. . .]

5.8 Fragments of the Empire

I was very curious what kind of damned bourgeois they were moving into a neighboring house. I climbed the fence.

There, in the yard, a lot of things were thrown from the carts. A very ancient, twisted old woman and a youthful, intelligent man with glasses carried things, clumsily fiddling together, unable to lift a heavy chest of drawers or a secretary.

I jumped over the fence and offered:

- Let's help. What to carry?

A strange thing happened here. They froze and looked at me with horror. I stood, embarrassed, and they looked at each other, the horror in their eyes began to pass, then the old woman pointed to the ottomans with a gesture of a thin hand:

- This is the living room, please.

I grabbed two ottomans, threw them into the house, not really understanding where the living room was, but in general I put it in the largest room.

"But I live behind the fence here," I said to the old woman. - Are you new residents?

"That's it," she said dryly. - Do you have parents?

"Mother," I said.

- Who is your mother?

— My mother is a teacher, but now...

Oh, teacher? exclaimed the old woman. - Is your mother a teacher? Then it is clear.

"Pedagogical education," the man said and looked at me strangely, "is inappropriate in the light of a certain actual depression, although from a practical point of view it is sad that ...

"Mima," said the old woman, interrupting him, "teachers are the only thing left of intelligent people. Boy, when we are settled, we will be most humbly glad to invite you and your mother, and we ourselves will gladly pay you a visit.

I marveled at the pompousness of their speeches, but regularly dragged everything that the old woman pointed out. He ran home, brought nails and a hammer, helped hang photographs in old frames.

What I liked about them was their wonderful stuffed animal heads: a huge shaggy boar with bloodshot eyes, the heads of a wolf, a deer, and elk horns. They also had many books in old bindings, tableware with monograms, porcelain figurines, but not a single new book, not a single modern object.

When everything was arranged, the old woman thanked her in refined terms and once again invited her to come.

The next day, she saw my mother through the fence, got acquainted, and in the evening we went to them.

Mom was solemnly introduced to the strange Mime (his full name, it turns out, was Mikhail), he shuffled and clicked his heels and kissed Mom's hand. We sat on old Viennese chairs around an antique round table.

"I confess to you: we were most afraid of the boorish neighbors," the old woman said confidentially. - What a blessing that you are cultured people.

"Cultured people, as a necessary integral in the current situation ..." Mima began, but the old woman interrupted:

Mima, you're right. Culture remained in units. The Bolshevik terror killed culture along with the intelligentsia, the era of rudeness and the triumph of mediocrity has come. These so-called Soviet cultural cadres - earlier maids were a hundred times more cultured.

My mother and I were embarrassedly silent: my mother was just such a Soviet "cultural frame". But the old woman, apparently, lost the time scale and mistook her mother for a pre-revolutionary teacher.

"We are Kobtsy," she said. - I am the widow of the late Kobets, of course, you heard?

Yes, we heard. The old people still called the Kurenevsky tannery the Kobts factory. Fabrikant was shot during the revolution.

"We had a large family," said the old woman, shaking her head sadly, and began to list names, names, after each of them adding: "shot in the eighteenth", "died in Denikin's army", "shot in the thirty-seventh", "died in the camp in the fortieth.

As if the line of the dead had passed the table.

"I have two sons left," said the old woman,

- Mima and Nicolas, that's who of us is left. And that's all we have left.

She looked around the living room with a broad gesture, but now all these old, dilapidated things, moth-eaten scarecrows made a depressing impression.

"Mima was just a baby when it all started," the old woman continued. "Like your boy, maybe just a little older. He studied mathematics. The Bolsheviks put him against the wall like a bourgeois offspring, but I fell to my knees and asked for mercy. They showed off and left without shooting, but it had such a strong effect on him that he went crazy.

- Insanity as such for elementary understanding, if it is differentiated into . . .
- Yes Yes. Mima," the old woman agreed casually. - He spent twenty years in the Kirillov hospital, he is quiet, they let him go for a walk when I visited. It is amazing how the Lord advised me to take him home when the front came.

We were sitting in a pit, then I found out that they didn't feed him in the hospital - and I didn't take him there. All the patients were shot there, but Mima stayed with me. This is my only consolation.

She gently stroked his head. I felt uneasy.

Mima did not look like a lunatic in any way. He had an intelligent, thoughtful, thin face. The glasses were strong, magnifying, horn-rimmed. His manners are soft, a little insinuating, and he listened to everything that was said, whether it was about himself, attentively, with an air of complete understanding.

What about your second son? Mom asked.

- Nicolas is the only one, the lucky one, who fled abroad. Now he is a chauffeur in Paris. Chauffeur and translator from German to French. For twenty years I had no news of him, but now he sought us out, and we began to correspond. He even sends parcels - washing powder, thread, needles, cologne. You understand, it is difficult for him to live there. Here, out of respect for our family, we are classified as Volksdeutsches, and he is a simple Russian emigrant there, a taxi driver and translator from German to French, but there are many of them ...

"How strange," my mother said, "from German to French."

"It's strange that the languages don't differ," Mima said softly. - It is strange that people are different, it is impossible to agree, it is impossible to understand, therefore the world is obviously hopeless.

The old woman took out thick albums in morocco bindings, laid out a scattering of old photographs on thick cardboard with gold rims from a chest of drawers, found a photograph of Nicolas in his youth. A cheerful boy was standing next to a car of the beginning of the century, with wheels like a cart and with a rubber pear-horn.

"And Sevochka," said the old woman, "was a desperate aviator. Here he is at his airplane.

Another guy - curly, slender, in overalls and with a helmet in his hand - was leaning on the wing of an antediluvian whatnot.

"We bought this plane for him," the old woman explained. - We had three cars, not counting horse trips. When I was young, I

didn't know what it meant to walk. And how good I was! When we arrived in St. Petersburg, they said that I was a candidate for the first beauties, I was predicted to be a lady-in-waiting, and I was introduced to the Empress Maria Feodorovna . . . After all, your name is also Maria Feodorovna? Good name. . .

So the Empress was a beauty, despite her age. When she was in the prime of beauty, the doctors gave her an injection into the skin of her face. The face froze, remaining forever dazzlingly beautiful. When they brought me in and I sat down, she began to say something cheerfully, and I looked, completely bewildered, because her face was motionless. Her mouth was open - such a round hole - and I can feel her saying something cheerful, but her face is absolutely motionless, like a mask. It was very strange.

"It's scary," Mom muttered.

"There are so many terrible things in this world," Mima said sadly, "that you stop reacting to it. I don't believe in universal goodness.

"Mimotchka, it's better to show the photographs, don't talk," the old woman exclaimed anxiously. - I'll make tea.

She began to put on the table tiny cups, saucers, sugar bowls, tweezers, gilded and shabby twisted spoons.

"I use soap powder for washing," she explained, "and we sold needles and cologne, then we sold our ration of black bread and bought cakes. We decided to celebrate the housewarming with cakes. Like a long time ago.

And she solemnly brought to the table an ancient vase with cakes on saccharine, and I just opened my mouth at the sight of this miracle; mother pulled me under the table.

We sat up until late at night. Mima started talking and spoke very coherently, expressing stunning thoughts. I even doubted: had he been pretending all these years, hiding in a psychiatric hospital?

But then something happened to him, he began to speak more and more incomprehensibly, or maybe I didn't have the mind to understand? The old woman picked him up, led him like a child, put him to bed, and it was strange to see how she lisped with him, slapped his hands - such an adult, beautiful and helpless.

The next day, I heard the ringing of a saw in the neighbors' barn. The back wall of the barn faced us, there was a gap in it, I looked in and saw that Mima was sawing firewood. He put a thick block on the goats and scratched it with a rusty two-handed saw. The free handle dangled, the saw bent and jumped off, and Mima clumsily, but with extreme zeal, scratched and scratched this clumsy chopping block. My heart sank. I jumped over the fence and appeared as an old acquaintance.

"Let's go together, it's uncomfortable to be alone," I suggested in a businesslike way.

He looked at me in horror and turned pale. He was silent for a while, then he muttered:

- Maybe...

I was good at sawing firewood. But this time, for some reason, it didn't work. I was worried and embarrassed under the gaze of Mima, his eyes behind the magnifying glasses of glasses seemed dark, with huge bottomless pupils.

With great difficulty, we sawed off one round timber from the chopping block. Mima put the saw against the wall and said, looking thoughtfully at me:

- No more.
- No need?
- No need.
- Well, why not?
- I'm afraid.

Very carefully, timidly, I went out, climbed over the fence - I somehow staggered, - suddenly, as if a switch clicked in my ears, I heard the sounds around me to unbearably clearly, the sound of a cart near the bridge, the barking of dogs, the vague rumble of the bazaar, "ta-ta- that one from Babi Yar, and in the shed the saw scraped gently, barely audibly. I fell into the gap. Mima was scratching at the chopping block in solitude.

5.9 KILL FISH

I keep thinking, thinking, and it begins to seem to me that it will be difficult for humane and intelligent people who will live

after us, if they live at all, to understand how it could still be, to comprehend the origin of the very idea of murder, the more massive. Kill. Like this? What for?

How does she, this idea lives in the dark recesses of the brain of an ordinary human being, born of a mother, who was a baby, suckled at the breast, went to school? .. As ordinary as millions of others - with hands and feet on which nails grow, and on the cheeks - since it is, say, a man - stubble grows, which mourns, smiles, looks in the mirror, tenderly loves a woman, burns itself with a match, and itself does not want to die at all - in a word, ordinary in everything, except for a pathological lack of imagination.

A normal human being understands that not only he alone, but others want to live. At the sight of other people's suffering, even at the mere thought of them, he sees how it would happen to himself, in any case, he feels at least spiritual pain. Finally, he doesn't raise his hand.

Killing a blind kitten is very difficult. When they are drowned, some move their paws in a bucket of water for an hour. Being engaged in this muddy business, grandfather drove me away so that I would not look, and covered the bucket with a sack. I looked from afar at the bucket, wrapped in a sack, and I began to tremble: I imagined how they swim there up to their ears in water, they cannot breathe, they only convulsively twitch their paws.

That is why, when a cat strayed to my mother and me and gave birth to two kittens, one of which turned out to be a freak with dry twisted processes instead of paws and at the same time desperately "meowed", out of pity, I decided not to drown him, but to kill him right away.

He was a damp warm lump of life, completely meaningless and insignificant, like a worm. Slap him - just spit. I took it with two fingers, swollen and writhing, carried it out into the yard, laid it on a brick, and threw another brick flat from a height on it.

It was strange - the little body sprung, the brick fell on its side, and the kitten continued to "meow". With trembling hands, I took a brick and began to pound the elastic tenacious lump until

the intestines crawled out of it, then it fell silent, and I scraped off the remains of the kitten with a shovel, took it to the trash, and my eyes grew dark and sick ...

It's not easy - to kill some there - ugh! - blind kittens.

Sometimes fish were sold at the market. We couldn't afford it, but all the time frantically thinking about where to get food, I thought: why shouldn't I fish?

We used to go fishing with the boys. This, you know, is a great pleasure. True, I used to feel sorry for the fish, but you usually put it in a bag or keep it in a bucket, it jumps for itself there until it "falls asleep", but then what an ear it turns out! ..

My fishing rod was primitive, with a rusty hook, but I decided that this was enough for a start, I dug up worms in the evening, and as soon as it began to get light I went to the Dnieper.

The vast meadow between Kurenevka and the Dnieper in the flood often flooded to our very embankment, it turned into a sea to the horizon, and then lushly green, fertilized with silt. I walked for a long time through the tall grasses, and my feet were completely wet, but hunger and the dream of catching a lot of fish inspired me.

The banks of the Dnieper are sandy, with magnificent beaches and cliffs, the water is brownish. Here, nothing reminded of war, famine and horrors. And I thought that the Dnieper was exactly the same as in those days when the boats of the prophetic Oleg sailed along the road or the caravans of merchants went along the great path "from the Varangians to the Greeks", and how many princes, kings, regimes have changed since then, and the Dnieper is still flowing. Such thoughts come later many times in life and, in the end, become beaten. But I was thirteen.

I cast my line, put the box of worms in my pocket, and followed the float downstream. The current in the Dnieper is fast. There are two ways out: either sit still and recast the line every minute, or go along the shore for a float.

He probably walked a good kilometer until he ran into impenetrable thickets of willow trees, but did not catch anything. I ran back and again did the same way - with the same success. So I ran like a fool, annoyed, nervous, but, apparently, I didn't know how to do something, either I didn't set the sinker in the

right way, or the place and bait were not the same. The sun had already risen, it began to bake, but I never pecked, as if the fish had run out in the Dnieper.

Frustrated, almost crying, realizing that the best time for biting was hopelessly lost, I decided to try my luck in a small mud in the thickets, although I was afraid that there the hook would catch on a snag, and I have only one.

This pool was isolated, the current captured it only indirectly, and the water in it went in a circle slightly noticeably. I did not know its depth, randomly raised the float as high as possible - and threw it. Almost immediately, the float began to bob softly.

As soon as he went under the water, I pulled and grabbed an empty hook: someone ate my worm. It was already good, the hunt had already begun. I baited and again abandoned, in the depths the game began again.

No matter what I did, no matter how I hooked, the hook invariably flew out empty. The fish were smarter than me. I was all worn out, I needed to catch at least a ruff the size of a little finger!

Suddenly, pulling, I felt heaviness. I thought with horror that the hook had finally caught on, and at the same moment I realized that it was still a fish. Impatiently, not at all thinking that it could break loose, I pulled with all my might, so that it flew high above my head, and now I triumphantly threw myself into the grass where it fought: "Aha, smart cunning, finished her game! I still took you." Happy moment. Anyone who has caught a fish at least once in their life knows what I'm talking about.

It was a perch, and at first it seemed to me larger than it really was. A beautiful perch, with green stripes, bright red fins, resilient and as if doused with glass, even paint a picture from it.

But failure haunted me: the perch swallowed the worm too greedily. The line went into his mouth, and the hook caught somewhere in his stomach. With one hand, I firmly squeezed the elastic twitching fish, and with the other I "dragged", trying to pull the hook out of its stomach, but it caught on there, apparently, on the bones. And I kept pulling, pulling, pulling hard, and the fish continued to beat with its tail, silently opening its mouth, looking at me with bulging eyes.

Having lost my patience, I pulled with all my might, the line broke, and the hook remained in the fish. At that moment, I imagined a hook being pulled out of me, and cold sweat broke out on my forehead.

I know perfectly well that, in your opinion, these are children's "calf obscurities", I readily surrender to the laughter of any fisherman. But I was alone on the shore, it was so good around, the sun was blazing, the water sparkled, dragonflies sat on the sedge, and I had nothing to catch on.

I tossed the perch further into the grass and sat down to wait for it to fall asleep. From time to time there was a rustling and clapping: he was jumping. Then quieted down. I went up, touched him with my toe - he jumped up and down, already covered in dust, covered with rubbish, having lost his beauty.

I left, thought and waited for a long time, completely lost my patience, visited him, and he kept jumping, and now this began to torment me in earnest. I took the perch by the tail and began to beat its head on the ground, but it opened its mouth, looked and did not die: the ground was too soft.

In a rage, I swung and threw him to the ground with all my might, so that he bounced like a ball, but when he fell, he continued to twist and jump. I began to look for a stick, found some kind of clumsy knot, put a perch to the head - senseless fish eyes continued to look at me - and began to press, pick, pierce this head until I pierced it through - finally it calmed down.

Only then did I remember that I had a knife, not without shivering I cut the perch, poked around in it for a long time, turning my nose away from the nasty smell, and somewhere among the thin insides I found my rusty hook with a whole worm. Moreover, the perch acquired such a shabby and vile appearance, as if pulled out of a garbage heap, which was strange: what was such a strong life kept here, why was it necessary to destroy it, elastic, deftly cut, in green stripes and red feathers, so mediocrely destroy. I was holding miserable, stinking fish pieces in my hand, and as hungry as I was, I realized that after everything that had happened, I could not eat it.

It was I who was just beginning my acquaintance with life, then I killed many animals, large and small, it was especially

unpleasant to kill horses, but nothing, I killed and ate; but more on that later.

...It was a sunny day, and while I was fiddling with perch, there in Yara, and all over the continent, machines were working. I talk least of all here about the killing of animals. I'm talking about imagination, with which it is very difficult to even kill a fish.

5.10 CHAPTER OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

AD

It is very strictly forbidden to help Russian prisoners of war in any form during their escape - either by providing them with accommodation or food.

Violation of this prohibition will be punished by imprisonment or the death penalty.

Stadtkommissar ROGAUSH. *) *) "The New Ukrainian Word", May 23, 1942.

Kyiv, May 8, 1942

All able-bodied residents of Kyiv aged 14 to 55 are required to work in jobs on the agenda of the Labor Exchange.

DEPARTURE OF WORKABLE PERSONS FROM Kyiv CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS.

In cases of unauthorized departure from Kyiv, as well as failure to appear on the agenda of the Labor Exchange within 7 days from the time of unauthorized departure, the perpetrators are held accountable AS FOR SABOTAGE, AND THEIR PROPERTY IS CONFISCATED. **) **) Ibid., May 10, 1942. " Decree No. 88 of the Head of the city of Kyiv.

MAY 1942 WATCH IN THE CINEMAS:

GLORIA - "These are the men", "Three times a wedding".

METROPOL - "First Love", "Wedding Night Three".

ECHO - "Yes, I love you", "Wedding with obstacles".

LUX - "Woman of Intention", "Salto Mortale".

ORION - "Dance around the world", "Only love".

WE ARE RECRUITTING TO THE UKRAINIAN POLICE.

Requirements: age from 18 to 45 years, height not less than 1.65 m, morally and politically impeccable past. *) *) Announcement in the New Ukrainian Word from issue to issue during May 1942.

OPERA HOUSE, season 1942 (only for Germans)

OPERAS: Madama Butterfly, La Traviata, Bells of Corneville, The Queen of Spades, Faust. BALLETS: Coppelia, Swan Lake.

Street renaming:

Khreshchatyk - von Eichgornstrasse,

Boulevard Shevchenko - Rivnoverstrasse,

st. Kirov - st. Dr. Todt,

The streets of Hitler, Goering, Mussolini appeared.

"The liberated Ukraine welcomes the Reichsminister ROSENBERG" – under such a heading the newspaper gives an enthusiastic and detailed account of how the Reichsminister of the occupied eastern regions attended a dinner with the Commissar General, examined the outstanding monuments of Kyiv, was at the ballet "Coppelia" and visited a farm in the vicinity of the city, "where I talked with the peasants and had the opportunity to verify their readiness to fulfill the tasks facing them." *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", June 23, 1942.

AD

Anyone who directly or indirectly supports or hides gang members, saboteurs, vagabonds, captured fugitives, or provides any of them with food or other assistance, will be executed. All his property will be confiscated.

The same punishment will befall everyone who, knowing about the appearance of gangs, saboteurs or captured fugitives, does not immediately report this to his headman, the nearest police leader, military team or German agricultural leader.

Whoever, with his message, will help to catch or destroy members of any gang, vagrants, saboteurs or captured fugitives, will receive 1000 rubles of reward, or the right of primacy in obtaining food, or the right to allot him land or increase his personal plot. Military commandant of Ukraine Reichskommissar of Ukraine. *) *) "Kyiv region during the Great Patriotic War". Collection. Kyiv, 1963, pp. 282-283.

Rovno, June 1942

The headings of the reports of the Führer's Headquarters:
"HUNGER AND TERROR IN LENINGRAD".

"THE OFFENSIVE GOES PLANNED. DESTRUCTION OF
SIGNIFICANT ENEMY FORMS AT THE DON.

"SOVIETS CONTINUE TO SUFFER BIG LOSSES."

"YESTERDAY THE SOVIETS ALSO ATTACKED THE
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SECTIONS OF THE EASTERN
FRONT. **)

**) "New Ukrainian word", July 4, 7 and 20, 1942.

Prices on the market in autumn 1942:

1 kilogram of bread - 250 rubles.

1 glass of salt - 200 rubles.

1 kilogram of butter - 6000 rubles.

1 kilogram of fat - 7000 rubles.

The salary of workers and employees at this time is 300-500
rubles per month.

CINEMA

TODAY YESHNAPUUR TIGER

Great great adventure movie. For the first time on the screen
REAL LANDSCAPES OF INDIA.

In the title role - LA-JANA, a beloved dancer of extraordinary
beauty.

SENSATION! STRONG ATTENTION! ADVENTURES! DRAMA!

From Friday in the cinemas "Gloria" and "Lux".

INDIAN TOMB

Starring LA JANA.

An even stronger, even more dramatic and exciting film - this
is the second, fully completed part of the Eshnapur Tiger.

Watch in the cinemas "Gloria" and "Lux".

5.11 AMONG THE RAIDS

I went to the "Indian tomb", but got into a round-up. Trucks
burst into our square at high speed, Germans, dogs, and
policemen rained down from them. The women in the bazaar
rushed about with a screech, baskets flew off the counters,
potatoes fell, some managed to jump out, some did not, the

crowd rushed from one gate to another, where the Arbeitskarte was already being checked.

What about me? I am not yet fourteen, I am eligible for labor service, but not to Germany. He sat down on the step of the chest, huddled up just in case, to look even smaller, and watched.

They took mainly women, village girls who came to the market. [What kind of "arbeitskarte" do the peasants have? They didn't even have passports under the Soviet regime, so-so, some powerless people - live until they grab you.] The girls were quickly put into covered trucks, they squealed there, shook the tarpaulin, stuck their hands out into the holes:

"Oh, matinko, help, advocate!" The disheveled aunt unbuttoned her jacket, pulled out her large white breasts, shook them, sticking them in the nose of the policeman: "I have a baby at home, look, milk!"

The policemen walked in a chain, combing the bazaar, urging the rest, but they didn't touch the obviously decrepit old women, looked at me and also didn't say anything. The raid ended as suddenly as it began. The cars left full. The ground was strewn with crushed potatoes, broken bottles, filled with milk.

These round-ups were now every day, but what is surprising is that people got used to them, somehow immediately took them for granted. It's so natural: some catch, others are saved. But does it happen otherwise?

[People in Russia in all ages were beaten and caught, strangers and their own, and Polovtsy, and Tatars, and Turks, and their own Groznys, Peters and Nikolais, then gendarmes, then Bolsheviks, drumming, it seems, such historical intimidation that the real one - now German - hunting for people seemed natural. On the contrary, a long absence of hunting would seem incredible and even suspicious...]

I had a paycheck in my pocket, new Ukrainian money. Soviet money stopped going in one day. Suddenly it was announced that Soviet money was invalid. Instead, they came out printed in Rivne "Ukrainian". In my opinion, this was one of the most uncomplicated monetary reforms in the world: throw the old money in the trash, period.

The new money was printed on very bad fragile paper, on the one hand - a swastika and inscriptions in German, on the other - also in German, and only at the very bottom in Ukrainian: "One karbovanets", this is what was called "Ukrainian" money .

In the cinema "Gloria", the former "October", I took a ticket, went into the hall and suddenly heard a joyful cry: "Tolik!"

He turned around - Shurka Matza . . . ugh, Krysan. He rushed to me, shook, felt, I, too, was glad that he was alive and nothing had happened to him. He rushed to the lobby, brought a bottle of soda and two paper cups, and right in the hall we began to pour and drink, feeling like real men, good old comrades, for whom friendship is sacred.

"But no one knows me in Podil," Shurka said. - I am Ukrainian for everyone.

- What are you doing?

- Business. I sell silver rubles.

- Yes, Bolik has come! I remembered. - Drapanul from under the protection, says: "A little machine gun did not grab." As soon as he came home - his tsop, and to Germany. And he was scratching from the transit camp itself - and he came again.

- What a survivor! Shura rolled with laughter. "Wherever they take him, he keeps coming home. But will he be caught again?"

- And he sits in the cellar, catching mice.

- What-oh?

- Makes mousetraps.

The lights went out and they shushed us. The film magazine "Come to beautiful Germany" has begun.

Here are cheerful and cheerful boys and girls, energetically puffing out their chests and looking ahead with inspiration, get into the freight cars. [Only the Komsomol march is missing.] Instead, Ukrainian folk songs are sung to the sound of wheels. Here is beautiful Germany - amazing cleanliness everywhere, little white houses. Laughing with happiness, visitors put on new clothes, pull on chrome boots, and now the guys famously rule well-fed horses, and the girls hug thoroughbred cows by the neck. Evening... Now you can relax. They go out to

the shore of a charming pond and enchantingly sing “Blow the moon, blow the clear”, and the good-natured German owner, moderately respectable, moderately funny, quietly creeps up, smiling affectionately, listens to a thoughtful song, like a father. . .

For a long time, since Khreshchatyk itself, I have not been to the cinema. Therefore, each frame was etched into the memory, especially following the Indian Tomb magazine.

At first I looked at it trustingly, of course, authentic Indian landscapes and so on, then I gradually became alert, and thoughts entered my head that were not foreseen by the film. I was suddenly filled with hatred.

Behind the figures of the rajah, the lovely German engineers and the dazzling European woman, flashing on the screen, I suddenly saw endless lines of slaves building this damned senseless tomb. They went through the second, even the third shot, but it was enough to make me shake with rage, and the curtains flew off the film.

They were already approaching India and filming its authentic landscapes. All of them - these slave owners, exploiters, rulers - have a special life, and there, in the background, by the way, are slaves divided into brigades.

I died on this movie. Before that, I only learned to read between the lines in newspapers, now I peered into everything: what is behind this? Especially if I am ordered to admire.

The instructions to admire great statesmen woke me up with particular fury. Perhaps, as a boy, I have lost a lot. But I never survived my passion for either Alexander the Great or Napoleon, let alone other benefactors. An almost morbid hatred of dictators, behind whom strings and strings of victims invariably pass in the background, prevented me from reading and studying, prevented me from perceiving the greatness of even Shakespeare or Tolstoy themselves, leading to paradoxes. I was reading Hamlet and trying to figure out how many lackeys were working for him so that he could be tormented by questions. I read about Anna Karenina, thinking: due to whose sweat did she feed and drink and never forget to dress up beautifully, the suffering caterpillar? Somewhere in my spinal cord I understood that I was a fool in

some way, but I could not overpower myself. Being determines consciousness. Only Don Quixote was and remained close to me.

Shurka and I came out of the cinema gloomy as hyenas. German soldiers walked along the sidewalks of Podil, hugging local prostitutes. The girls were decorated in the latest fashion: long hair that was curly and casually falling on their shoulders, coats unbuttoned, hands always in pockets. The two couples in front of us said goodbye, and we overheard this conversation:

What did he give you?

- Two stamps, a tangerine and candy.
- Three tangerines for me.

Shura shrugged contemptuously.

- Self-employment. Here's the real whore they have in the Palace of Pioneers - Deutsches House, a first-class brothel. At 72 Saksaganskogo, it's also a huge mess... Listen, do you have three thousand? Here one pimp is selling a bag of Soviet money, he decided that they were gone, he asks for three thousand. Let's take?
- I have two hundred, the entire salary.
- It's a pity ... Otherwise, he went to the ass with his bag, it is still unknown whether the Bolsheviks will come and whether we will be alive by that time.

Caricatures were displayed in the window of the barbershop. On one, Stalin was depicted as a falling colossus of clay, which Roosevelt and Churchill are trying in vain to support.

Another depicted the same Stalin in the form of an overgrown mustachioed gorilla with a bloodied ax, which tramples on corpses, children, women and the elderly with its paws. Familiar as hell! Only Soviet caricatures depicted Hitler as a gorilla.

The signature reported how many millions of people Stalin rotted in concentration camps, that he was not a worker, but the son of a private shoemaker, his father brutally beat him, because he grew up defective, came to undivided power over the corpses of his rivals, crushed the whole country with fear, and himself out of fear crazy.

We respected, yawned.

"In Pervomaisky Park," said Shurka, "Komsomol members were hanged. They shouted: 'Long live Stalin!' They put on

boards "Partizan", and in the morning instead of these boards, others hang: "Victims of fascist terror." The Germans became furious like tigers, they put the police on guard. On the third morning - there are no corpses, but the policemen hang . . . That's it, I went! Tell Bolik I'm coming!

- Where do you live? I shouted, wondering why he was leaving so quickly.
- There! he waved. — Tick, roundup! Bolik hello!

Only now I saw covered trucks speeding down the street. People, like mice, ran through the yards, scurried into the porches. I leaned against the wall, not very worried: in extreme cases, the metrics can show that I am not fourteen.

5.12 HOW A HORSE IS MADE INTO SAUSAGE

Degtyarev was a stout, slightly round-shouldered and baggy, but lively and energetic man of about fifty years old, with gray hair, a large fleshy nose, and knobby hands.

He was badly dressed: a soiled jacket, dirty patched trousers, worn boots covered in dung, and a pancake cap on his head.

The most frequently used expressions are:

"A pound of smoke" - in the sense of "trifles", "nothing".

"Perturbations" - change of political regimes.

"Burn on devaluation" - lose your fortune during the monetary reform.

I arrived at six in the morning, and the first thing Degtyarev did (and very correctly) was to feed me to the fullest.

In his house it was cozy and clean, white napkins, bedspreads, snow-white linen on the beds; and in the midst of such cleanliness, the owner himself looked like a grey-pawed peasant worming his way into the restaurant.

I eagerly devoured the fat borscht with lamb, porridge with milk and donuts, which the old woman slipped me, and Degtyarev watched with curiosity how I was choking and brought me up to date.

Once he had a small sausage factory. During the revolution there were upheavals, devaluations, and the factory was taken

away. Then there was the New Economic Policy, and he again became almost a factory, but smaller. She was also taken away. Now he just has a workshop, but underground, since the patent costs a lot of money. So she will be taken away.

- Revolutions, upheavals, wars, upheavals - well, do we have to live somehow? I think: lucky - dance, no luck - a pound of smoke! Neighbors know everything about me, I pay them with bones. Others don't need to know. If they ask what you are doing, answer: "I help with the housework." Like in the old days a laborer. You will lead the horses, otherwise when I lead along the street, everyone points with a finger: "There Degtyarev led the nag to the sausage."

I pulled on my cap, and we went to the square to the school.

There was a landing on the double-horse platforms of the bindyuzhniks, which now played the role of trams, and buses, and taxis. Women with baskets, peasants from the countryside, intellectuals in hats climbed, quarreled, brought sacks, sat down with their legs dangling on all four sides.

We squeezed between baskets of radishes, the cart whirled with a whip - we drove to Podol faster than the wind, three kilometers per hour, only the bushes flickered.

I was shaking, overwhelmed with the consciousness of the legality of the passage (otherwise, everything was a hare and on foot, and here Degtyarev paid for me as for a decent one), and with a sense of superiority looked at the sad figures dragging along the sidewalks in torn jackets, rotten overcoats, galoshes or barefoot .

Zhitny market - the human sea and the womb of Podol (I already read Zola, having found it in a landfill). Tradesmen shouted, beggars twang, children sang: "Who needs cold water?" At the gate there was a skinny, very skinny (as we say, "shkiletik") girl and she was selling cakes from a plate: "Fresh cakes, very tasty, please buy." Oh, damn it!..

A grandiose flea market stretched along Nizhny Val, endless lines stood. "What is it?" - "Coat." - "Where is the waste, such a coat?" "Good coat! Warm as a coffin."

Degtyarev confidently made his way through the crowd, I grabbed his jacket so as not to fall behind, I almost knocked

over an old woman who was selling one spoon: so she stood and held a steel (even if it was silver!) Spoon in front of her. Oh, damn it!..

The large parade ground was packed with carts, dung and trampled hay underfoot, cows roared and pigs squealed.

"And to give?" - Seventy thousand. - "What are you choking on!" - "Let's shiisit!" Degtyarev was only eyeing the pigs, in memory of the good old days, but he grabbed an old, lame, lichen-covered gelding. The gelding's lips hung down, drooling dripped from them, his mane was full of burrs, he stood dejectedly, half-closing his eyelids for eyelids, and did not pay attention to the flies that covered his muzzle like clouds.

"I'll take it for five!" - "Are you talking about it? It's a horse!" - "Head, four ears, six on the hands?" - "Take it for seven, the owner, he will carry everything you want, horse-fire, he will only ride on the epodrome!"

Degtyarev bargained terribly, graspingly, waving money, hitting his hands, spitting, leaving, returning again, but the uncle turned out to be lop-eared only in appearance, they no longer converged only on some ten, finally, the occasion passed into my hands, and we hardly got out of this cauldron. At the cab stop, Degtyarev admonished me:

"You can ride if you don't fall, but God forbid, don't drive past the police."

I led the gelding to the pedestal, climbed on his back and pushed him with my heels. His spine was like a saw. He dragged along slowly, limping, every minute expressing a desire to stop, I encouraged him this way and that, thrashed him with a twig, then I felt sorry for him, I got down and led him by the bridle.

For a long time we trudged along side streets, quiet and overgrown with grass. I named the horse Greyback, and I liked him because I did not even think of kicking or biting. I let him graze under the fences, let him go completely, then called:

- Gray, click here, the grass is better here. He raised his head, looked at me - and walked, understanding, a calm, intelligent and kind old man. We became quite friendly.

Degtyarev was waiting for me in Kosice lane. We poked our noses out of him for a long time, waiting until there was no one

on the street, then quickly, at a run, we led Greyback into the yard, straight into the shed.

“Give him hay so that he doesn’t whinny,” Degtyarev ordered. The gray one perked up at the sight of the hay, actively began to chew, snort, apparently, he did not expect that he would bring such good things.

Degtyarev was in a great mood, full of energy. He sharpened two knives on a bar, made of strips of steel and wrapped with insulation instead of a handle. I took an ax, a tub, buckets in the passage, and we went to the barn, and two cats ran after us, worrying and meowing, running ahead, as if we were carrying meat to them.

Gray crunched hay, suspecting nothing. Degtyarev turned him around, put his muzzle against the light and ordered me to firmly hold the bridle. Grunting, he bent down and tied the horse’s legs. Gray, apparently accustomed to everything in this life, stood indifferently, without resisting.

Degtyarev stood in front of the horse’s muzzle, corrected it like a hairdresser, so that it kept straight. He swung with lightning speed - and hit the horse with an ax in the forehead.

The grey-haired man did not move, and Degtyarev struck again and again, so that the skull was fractured. After that, the horse began to sag, fell to his knees, fell on his side, his legs stretched out in a cramp and trembled, tied with ropes. Degtyarev threw away the ax, as the kite fell on the horse, sat on horseback, shouted shortly:

- Badiou!

I pulled the tub. Degtyarev lifted the horse’s trembling head with both hands, I slipped the tub under the neck, and Degtyarev slashed the knife across the neck. Pink meat peeked out from under the wool, deeper - a white, slippery and convulsively moving windpipe. The knife mercilessly cut through the throat tube, cartilage and vertebrae, so that the head was almost cut off and unnaturally thrown back. Blood gushed from his neck in a stormy stream, it poured, as from a drainpipe, in jerks, and red foam rose in the tub. Degtyarev held on with all his might to the twitching torso of the horse so that the blood would not flow past the tub. His hands were already bloodied, and his fleshy face was

spattered with blood. Fumbling over the horse, jumping up with him, clinging tightly, he was somewhat similar to a spider that grabbed a fly.

I stuttered out of nowhere. He lifted his splattered face.

- What are you afraid of? You'll get used to it, you won't see enough of it in life. Cognac - a pound of smoke! Roll up the log.

The blood poured out all over and immediately stopped, as if the tap had closed. It can be seen that the heart, like a pump, stopped. Degtyarev turned the horse on its back, propped it up with logs from the sides. Four legs, finally untied, spread out, sticking out at the ceiling. Degtyarev made circular incisions on them, at the attendants, from them he made incisions to the belly, and we began to pull the skin. She slipped, as if peeling off, just a little help with a knife, and without the skin, the carcass had already ceased to be a living creature, but became the meat that hangs on hooks in the meat row.

Then the cats crawled up and clung to the meat, where some stuck, biting off pieces, growling angrily.

Degtyarev did not pay attention to them, he was in a hurry, did not brush off the drops of sweat from his forehead, and so the four of us began to pull Sivoy apart.

Degtyarev dumped the hooves, head and skin in a corner, opened the belly in one fell swoop, scooped out the insides, and now the liver is flying into one bucket, the lungs into another. Legs, brisket are separated in one touch, as if there were no bones in them. Butchering the carcass Degtyarev was a master. Wet, soiled, icicles of hair stuck to the red forehead, nodded at the shapeless pile of meat:

- Bring it to the house!

And his house is cunning: in front there is a porch, living rooms, and in the back there is another separate room, with an entrance from a narrow pier littered with rubbish, and you won't guess that there is a door there.

On large zinc-studded tables, we separated the meat from the bones and sprinkled it with salt. The knives were like razors, I cut myself a hundred times, and the salt plucked wildly. So I then constantly walked with my fingers in rags. Degtyarev consoled:

- And I started with the same thing, I got out of the laborers. I feed you, but they didn't feed me a damn thing, I worked for one science. Here you are big-headed - study, I will make a man out of you, you will get the profession of making sausages, and this is not a pound of smoke for you, you will never disappear, you will survive all the upheavals and devaluations. Don't poke your nose at the ministers - they are always shot at. Be a humble sausage maker. Learn. I studied.

In the center of the workshop was a human-sized meat grinder with two handles, screwed to the floor. Degtyarev knocked on the wall, his old woman appeared, flabby and phlegmatic, with a whitish country face, sighing, climbed onto a stool and began to push the meat into the funnel with a rolling pin. We took hold of the handles, the machine chugged, gnashed, the old gears rattled. After the hunger, I was not strong, the owner did the main scrolling, he worked like an ox, breathing heavily, powerfully spit and spit. Worked hard. I was suffocating, and at times it was not I who turned, but the handle dragged me.

Ready stuffing plopped into buckets. Then Degtyarev turned it into troughs, sprinkled salt, pepper, handfuls of whitish crystals of some kind of dirty saltpeter.

- Isn't it harmful? I asked.
- Needed for color. The devil knows, in general, they eat - no one died. I personally don't eat sausage and don't recommend it to you ... Now study: water is pouring, and two buckets of meat absorb a bucket of water, here's your weight and profit.

It was amazing to me. Putting on aprons, we rubbed the minced meat with water, like housewives rub linen on washboards: the more you rub, the more water will be absorbed.

Again my eyes turned green. I ran into something in minced meat, cut myself: a piece of half-da.

"The funnel in the meat grinder is peeling," Degtyarev said anxiously. "Go tie it up so it doesn't bleed."

Will people eat?

- Shut up. Let them not eat, what, I force them? Free will.

The syringe, like a red fire bucket laid on its side, also had a shell with a handle, gears and a long tube at the end. Having stuffed it with minced meat, Degtyarev twisted the handle, pressed, and I put the intestine on the pipe and, when it was full, tied it up.

They worked for many hours, like on a conveyor belt, turned out to be littered with slippery damp rings. But the blood sausage turned out to be the most unpleasant. Porridge oozed from the syringe, and the blood was from the last time, spoiled, stank, there was nothing to breathe, and the end of the intestine was not visible - hands up to the shoulders in porridge and blood. When all this was over, I staggered out into the yard and breathed in the air for a long time.

And Degtyarev worked as a hundred-man. In the corner of the workshop was a stove with a walled-in cauldron full of green, stinking water from past brews. Degtyarev poured sausages into the cauldron, they were boiled, becoming red from saltpeter. I used to wonder why homemade sausage is never as beautiful as in the store. We strung sausage rings on sticks and dragged them into a smokehouse in the garden, disguised as a toilet.

In the dead of night, the last sausages were unloaded from the smokehouse - hot, deliciously smelling, they were placed in baskets, covering them with the New Ukrainian Word. I don't even remember how Degtyarev took me to sleep on the couch. I lay overnight, as if in a pit, and as soon as it was light it was already disturbing:

To the market, to the market! Who gets up early, God gives him.

On yokes, like the Chinese, we dragged the baskets to the parking lot, took them to Podol, in some dark, dirty yard, the merchants received them. Degtyarev walked with his pockets puffed with money. Again we went to the flea market, he whispered with different types, left me at the post, returned with thinner pockets, slyly asked:

Have you seen gold money?

I did not see. He led me behind the locker, took out a handkerchief tied in a knot. In the bundle were four gold coins of royal coinage. Degtyarev gave me one to hold.

- By horse! he said cheerfully. Everything we've earned.

I looked in amazement at this tiny coin, which old Greyback had turned into. And I also appreciated Degtyarev's trust. For a long time, orders had already been printed for the surrender of gold, for the possession of which, or even simply for not informing about it, - execution.

- With all the revolutions, changes, upheavals, only with this, brother, you will not be lost. The rest is a pound of smoke," said Degtyarev. - You will understand when you grow up. You listen to me, you don't look around, you will still remember the old Degtyarev more than once ... And now let's go to trade a new horse.

I worked brutally for Degtyarev. He shifted the entire delivery of sausages to the merchants on me: he was already noticed with baskets. He gave me money for a cab driver, but I saved money, "haunted", jumped on trams. The cabbies drove, beat with a whip. Baskets are difficult. Once fell off the truck, a crowd gathered. My clothes were frayed, I was always convulsive, restless, like a stray kitten.

Once, when cleaning the workshop, he ventured and pulled off a large ring of sausage, hid it in the snow under the window. I was trembling all evening because Degtyarev was counting. And I hit the bill. Leaving home, climbed into the snow - no sausage. Then my soul went to the heels: Degtyarev will kick me out. I took a closer look - there were cat tracks in the snow ... Ah, damned vipers, I'm at Degtyarev's, I have them. Never tried sausages. On the first day Degtyarev gave me four bones of Greyback, and then he gave me bones from each horse. But there is little gain from them, especially from the old ones.

5.13 Cannibals

They hanged a cannibal. There was a lot of talk about it in Kyiv, people ran to watch. I did not go: there is a lot of work.

Actually, he himself was not a cannibal, but forced others to be cannibals. And there was a sausage maker, like Degtyarev. He went out to the market, chose some simpler woman or peasant

and offered cheap salt, supposedly he had it at home. He led him to his house, let him through the door, beat him on the back of the head with an ax - and butchered him into sausage. Caught in negligence. One housewife brought home sausages, sat down to eat - what the hell, a piece of a human finger in the sausage. They rushed to the merchant, and through her they took the industrialist. He confessed that he worked like this for almost a year. He fed a lot of people with human flesh.

Degtyarev commented:

- Fool. The old horse is worth a penny, and he was stingy with that. True, he passed off his sausages as pork sausages, that's right, a man and a pig have the same taste, so they still pulled money. I knew him, the same traders both from him and from me were taken. No, in every profession there is still a limit to impudence. Have you heard about this cemetery gang?

I did not hear.

- Well, how! True, they were spanked without advertising. The cemetery watchman was their chief, he invented it himself. After the funeral, they dug up the grave, mined the dead man - and let it feed the pigs. They set up a whole pig farm there at the cemetery. Then these pigs - for sausage. Actually economic. He, the present dead man, though thin, is still meat, with such a hunger, why should the good disappear? And no one would know, but they themselves quarreled, did not share the income, and one sold the entire gang. The main thing here is that you do not know what you eat. Sausage is a convenient thing for this, shove whatever you want into it, just grind it well. They famously came up with this pig farm, I even liked it. If pigs are fed meat, they grow fat by leaps and bounds. Get used to it, I tell you: you won't see enough of that yet. Horses are no longer a pity to kill?
- It's a pity.
- Oh, you fool, why pity them? You see, what life is, not like horses - people go for sausage ...

5.14 I'M VERY LUCKY IN LIFE, AND I DON'T KNOW WHO TO THANK FOR IT

Yes, I considered myself very lucky. He worked hard, but was full, brought the bones. It was worse for my mother: she only received a bowl of soup at the factory once a day.

The most deft step was thrown out by the grandfather: he went "to the priymaki" to the woman. He long and gallantly wooed visiting peasant women at the market, insisting that he was a landlord and owner, but lonely old women had their own huts in the village, they did not want to move to a hungry city even for the sake of such a brilliant groom.

The grandfather soon understood this and realized that if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed goes to the mountain. He urgently fell in love with one old lonely woman named Natalka - from the village of Litvinovka, locked his room and went to the village as a "priymak".

Grandfather diplomatically calculated that Baba Natalka would cook borscht and donuts, serve him on the stove and add moonshine on Saturdays, but he did not take into account the fact that the contract was bilateral. Baba Natalka was as cunning as he was, and expected that her grandfather would plow, sow, reap, thresh instead of her. Grandfather Semerik's stay in Litvinovka turned into one continuous misunderstanding and continuous scandal.

This lasted for several months, because the grandfather still desperately clung to the opportunity to eat borscht and porridge every day, but at the age of seventy-two he still could not plow, and the offended woman Natalka expelled him with a bang. He consoled himself with the fact that he became acquainted with the whole of Litvinovka, and now the peasants more and more often stayed with him for the night, paid one for a handful of potatoes, some for a glass of peas, and he began to live on this. He envied me again, asked Degtyarev to be a second worker, but nothing came of it - what kind of worker is he again?

And suddenly Degtyarev disappeared.

I, as always, came early in the morning, but the worried old woman ordered me to go home: Degtyarev had left on business,

it will be tomorrow. But he wasn't there tomorrow or the day after. Then he himself came for me, excited, with a large basket:

- Let's get to work!

The basket contained fresh fish, which he contracted to smoke. He scribbled a few notes, sent me with them to the merchants on Podol. When I returned, the fish was already ready, lying in a heap on the table in the workshop - bronze sparkling, dizzying smell.

Degtyarev sat thoughtfully in front of her, somehow haggard, tired, for the first time limply laying his previously so active hands on the table. I didn't understand anything, but my heart sank.

- And nothing fish turned out! - I said.

"That's right, nothing. Ruined! Degtyarev said. "I haven't smoked it for a long time, damn it, I mixed everything up. It's embarrassing to carry.

He began carefully placing the fish in a basket lined with newspapers. I didn't see him screw up there.

- That's what. You take it," he said. - You will say: Degtyarev feels bad, he could not. God forbid you pick it off: they are in a row. You will go along Syretskaya, past the cannery, past the brick factories, the road will turn left uphill; Walk along it for a long time, you will see a military camp with towers, at the gate you will say: "This is for Pan Officer Radomsky." Explain to him that I'm sick and couldn't come. Give it back with the basket, don't take it back.
- Basket is new...
- To hell with her. And don't tell me I messed up, he might not understand yet. Give it up and go home. Understood?

What is there to understand? I put the heavy basket on my shoulder (it always hurts, rubbed to the blood with rocker arms) and stomped. Already exhausted, barely reaching Syretskaya. But I know this: there seems to be no more strength, but you drag and drag, and they all come from somewhere.

I sat down to rest on the windward side, so as not to hear this damned smell of smoked fish .. And I passed the cannery, and passed the brick ones, and the road went uphill to the left.

I was so glad, so pleased, when I finally saw a military camp to the left of the road. And he was healthy, the dog, I walked and walked, but the gate was not visible.

Shields: "DETAINED ZONE. DO NOT GO MORE THAN 15 METERS. FIRE OPEN WITHOUT WARNING."

Therefore, I instinctively huddled to the right side of the road and looked askance at the sentries on the towers. There were three rows of wire, and the middle row on the cups, obviously under the current, which means that the camp was very important, maybe even secret.

I finally got to the corner where the gate was. I decided that the fifteen-meter zone was invalid here, went up to the sentry, who was bored, leaning on the gate post.

"To Pan Officer Radomsky," I said, pointing to the basket.

He nodded at a long squat building right there at the gate, said something, I understood only one word "Vakhshtube" - guardhouse. I climbed the steps to the porch, entered and found myself in a long corridor. There was no one there, only the sound of a typewriter was heard, and I went towards it. The door to the room was ajar, several girls were chatting - our local secretaries or something. As in some office - ink-splattered tables, abacus, lined statements with columns of numbers. The girls were Kurenevski beautiful:

rosy-cheeked, plump, curled; they stared at me.

"This is for Pan Officer Radomsky," I said my sentence.

— Ah! Put it here.

One of the girls helped me put the basket on the table and immediately reached under the paper and broke the fish:

— Wow, nothing... mmm... but it's delicious!

They surrounded the basket and with their plump fingers in ink began to tear the fish and put it in their mouths, such simple, mischievous Kurenev girls. I was worried, but since they so bravely clung to this fish, then they had the right, so I thought - and was glad that they liked it. Live for health.

"This is from Degtyarev, he is ill, he could not come," I said, completing my mission.

"Yeah... mmm... let's pass it on." Thanks.

I left, however, a little worried that I did not personally give it to the "pan officer", they can gobble up half. And then I regretted that I myself had not eaten at least the smallest fish: no one was going to count them.

Degtyarev was extremely happy when I returned and gave a full account of how and to whom I handed the fish. He did not like that I did not give it to the "pan officer" himself, but when I described how the secretaries ate and praised him, he jumped up and walked around the room.

This is good, maybe even better! They're stupid, they won't understand. And did you lick your fingers? Thank God, maybe this perturbation will come down. I won't take it again, well, to hell with it. Fu, thank God! Go home, no more work.

I left, wondering why all this alarmed him so much. Well, even if you spoiled the fish, you think it's a big trouble. I understand, of course, that he, as a master, is ashamed in front of the German customer, apparently an important person . . .

And suddenly I thought: wait, where have I been? After all, this is the camp above Babi Yar, about which horrors speak. But for me, tired and stunned by this basket, it did not fit that I was approaching him from the rear. They brought him from the city center, through Lukyanovka, and I came through Syrets, from the rear.

So Degtyarev was there - and left? Why, how? For gold, for a basket of fish? And my happiness was precisely in the fact that the "pan officer" was not there: well, he would be angry that Degtyarev did not come, because he could have left me. Oh, you vile bastard, you sent me instead of yourself! Like a minefield.

I began to remember this barbed wire under current, I remembered that I had seen dull prisoners of war in the yard, but did not look closely: where are they now? And he heard shots behind the barracks, but did not listen: where are they not shooting now? I'm like a sparrow, flew into the cage and flew away, and I was lucky.

And, in any case, I still have great luck in general, I don't know who to thank for this, people have nothing to do with it. There is no God, fate is a pound of smoke. I'm just lucky.

Quite by chance, I didn't turn out to be either a Jew or a Gypsy in this life, I don't fit in Germany by age, bombs and bullets pass me by, patrols don't catch me, I miraculously escaped from under a tram, and fell from a tree - I didn't kill myself. My God, what luck!

Probably, in general, only those who are very lucky live in life. No luck - and at that moment I could be sitting behind the wire of Babi Yar, by chance, by accident, for example, only because the "pan officer" would be out of sorts or suddenly scratched my gum with a fish bone . . .

I walked a little down the street like a wreck. It was already evening, the clouds were heavy and purple. Again he leaned helplessly against the fence. I felt so sick, so longing that at least take it and yelp.

Unbearable feeling of stuffiness; silent world; purple streaks across the sky. I felt like an ant walled up in the foundation. The whole world consisted of solid bricks, one stone, no gap, no matter where you stick your head - stone, walls, prison.

I had a sea of desperate animal longing. Just think about it: the earth is a prison. There are prohibitions all around, everything is normalized from now to now, everything is concreted and partitioned off, walk only like this, live only like this, think only like this, speak only like that. How is it, why is it, who needs me to be born and crawl in this world, as in a prison? We set up barriers not only for ants - for ourselves! And they call it life.

Unhappy people, why are you like this? You are born like hungry, cold, homeless puppies on a garbage heap. And the rain whips you, and the frosts destroy you, and direct destruction. There is nowhere to run, and there is nowhere to hide. But where is this very justice, where are you smart people in the world?

Throw the word "humanity" out of the dictionary. There is no such concept. There is no humanity on earth.

6.1 ESCAPE FROM SILENCE

A thousand years ago, Vyshgorod was a large and glorious city, a rival to the very “mother of Russian cities” Kyiv. Then he could not stand the competition, disappeared, and now this is an ordinary village on the high bank of the Dnieper.

I had ten thousand rubles with me, and therefore I decided to avoid crowded places: the most crowded places have now become the most dangerous.

Degtyarev bargained for a stallion from a Vyshgorod peasant. My task was to carry the money and bring the horse; did so many times. I did not go along the highway, but through the meadows, past the Pochaina River, through the Dubka grove, and did not regret it, because I did not meet a soul.

It's strange, having passed half the village, I already saw German soldiers from a distance, felt something was wrong and could have turned back and disappeared, but I continued, as if hypnotized, to go straight at them, while my head was panicking and stupidly thinking something and could not think of anything.

They stopped me in a businesslike and ordinary way. One paternally took me by the shoulders, turned and led me back, the other continued to walk around the yards.

I immediately understood everything, immediately obeyed and obediently stomped into the courtyard of the hut, where on the mound and just on the ground were sitting a dozen and a half peasants, old men, boys with calm, indifferently absent faces. Just in case, I clarified with a boy of my age:

— A round-up in Germany?

Uh-huh, - he sniffed, - they are taken away . . .

Leaning my back against the wall, I absent-mindedly thought: now Degtyarev will decide that I stole his money. True, when my mother comes and raises the alarm, he will understand that

trouble is with me, but at that time I will already be on my way to Europe. It came to me too.

The raid was calm. The soldiers went around the huts, took all the men, and everyone came calmly, silently, like me. Now they didn't look at any documents, the years of birth did not play a role. Everything is pure and noble: if you get caught, get caught, and shut up.

They drove everyone out into the street, a semblance of a column of prisoners of war formed, we threw down a gray mass, whipping up dust, and the guards walked along the sides with rifles under their arms. And I involuntarily caught myself walking, staring at the ground, that they were chasing me. Neighbors pushed, I felt myself not so much a man as an animal in a herd.

We were driven to a collective farm yard, surrounded by buildings, and stopped among the remains of rusty shovels and seeders. There were few escorts, and they, apparently, were so used to subordination and human herds that they did not even enter the yard, and two remained at the gate, watching the yard, while the rest went somewhere.

The men sat down in a long row under the wall of the hut, it looks like the former village council. In search of a place, I reached the corner of it, saw a cobblestone and settled down on it, although it was in the sun, but the shadow was all occupied.

Although I was unhappy, I differed from the villagers in my clothes. They were all gray and ragged; sat silently, stupidly. The feeling that I, too, was a part of the herd, did not leave me, and I resisted it.

Just think that a herd of cows, that a herd of people - it makes no difference, does it? Cows are driven to the slaughterhouse, sent in batogs, divided into small parties, and the herd obeys, is divided, and each unit in turn, in order, nose to tail comes under attack. This herd is horned - if it reared up, realized its strength, it would smash the whole slaughter. But they kill him one by one, calmly beat him, with lunch breaks.

And nearby here, next to the fence, another herd is grazing, and it's nothing, it doesn't touch it yet. "Animals," we say, "they don't understand." And people understand everything and still

behave like a herd. Apparently, after all, we are not so far away from animals?

How was it before the war? Year after year, our shepherds snatched out singly and in packs, drove herds to Siberia, shot, while others grazed, watched, went cold with fear, waited. And how the Germans drove the darkness on Melnikova Street, and she sat there, waiting in line the next day, and the third, they had nothing to lose - and they didn't rear up, they didn't smash, they just sobbed and went through the procedure in limited groups. It was like a civilized city around, others remained in it, including me, grazing and wagging their tails, they saw, they heard, they went cold with fear, they were silent.

This is mind-boggling! We are slapped, and we just shied away like a herd - and are silent. Shepherds have thousands of years of true experience behind them: to intimidate and drive them into silence with impudent confidence, a club and a batog, and then do what you want, wave a straw, and the herd shied away.

It's like an overgrown bully at school alone bullying the whole class. [Replacing one another, impudent scoundrels brought the people in Russia to the state of a ruminant herd, which no longer understands where to shy away from on this blood-stained land, flat and flat, like a table, so there is nowhere for the herd to hide, and it has no other land No.]

When the soldiers saw something on the street and began to look, I got up from the stone and went around the corner to urinate. There were various bricks and pieces of iron in the nettles. Bumping into them and inadvertently jingling, I reached the wattle fence and climbed through it with a crash. I was almost sure that the soldiers would run up, return or shoot.

But so far, nothing. An alley went down to the left, and on the right it went out onto the main street along which I had come - it went out wide, a whole parade ground, in the middle of which stood an unfenced hut. And I idiotically went to the main street, bypassing the hut on the left, because I came along this road and knew her. Really, I was kind of insane and hoped only for my own happiness.

And everything was fine, the guard at the gate did not see me, although they could have seen me. But those soldiers who were leaving appeared ahead. I picked up a twig from the ground, pulled a cap over my forehead, shrunk as much as possible, shrunk and, carelessly sniffing my nose, walked past the soldiers who were talking to each other. When I had already gone about twenty meters, they evidently caught themselves and called out:

— Hey, malanki!

I kept walking as if I hadn't heard.

• Hey! shouted from behind.

Here I ran. The shutters clicked, but the street was curved, I flew to the turn, wide-eyed, stomping like a motorcycle. A shot rang out, personally MY SHOT, followed almost simultaneously by two more SHOT BY MY, but they obviously fired only in my direction, and could no longer see me.

With my whole body, especially with the back of my head, sensing the possibility of a bullet, I ran and meandered along the street, it went down steeply, there was some kind of bridge, I still wanted to hide under it, but while I was thinking, my legs ran across themselves, and I ended up among the gardens and behind them I recognized the meadow through which I had come here.

And again, precisely because I had come here by this very road, I ran across the level meadow. On it I could have been shot like a hare, but I ran, because my thoughts could not keep up with my legs, I scratched, not looking back, in blind horror, only annoyed that I was running slowly.

They didn't chase me. I do not know why. I ran until my eyes went dark, all the way to Dubkov, fell into the grass and writhed, swallowing air ... "I left my grandmother, I left my grandfather ... "

Vyshgorod was left far behind, in a bluish haze. I drank from the swamp of water, wet my head and gradually came to my senses. Alive!

Ah, perturbation-devaluation, alive! Did you guys get it? You have rifles, I have legs, a wonderful life, how many times have only my legs saved me! Glory to you, legs that save life! She, life, I need.

No, I think now I know why I live, hang around under lockers, gnaw at horse bones - I grow up to hate you and fight you. Here is what I will choose to do in my life:

fight you, the contagions that turn the world into a prison and a stone crusher. Do you hear, contagion?

6.2 THE EARTH IS BURNING

At night, my mother woke me up:

Get up and look out the window!

The windows were blood red. Sparks flew over the railway embankment, and its crest was in pale tongues of flame. From a dream, it seemed fantastic to me: how can an earthen embankment burn? There are stones, rails, our cartridges are still buried there ... It was like a dreary dream, but the earth was really on fire.

"The factory is on fire," said the mother.

And immediately everything fell into place. The Sport plant was immediately behind the embankment, it itself was not visible - only flames. Until the morning we did not sleep, my mother walked, cracking her fingers, thinking what would happen now. She was there, at the factory, stoked the stoves.

It was an ordinary mechanical plant that produced various sports equipment and beds before the war. Now there were few workers on it, and the work went on "don't hit the recumbent": everyone gathered in a corner, sharpened their laces, and one of them pounded the iron with a hammer so that the boss could hear that the work was in full swing.

They repaired all sorts of rubbish: they fix one thing, they break another. Everyone made for himself and took out lighters, buckets, scoops for exchange. They tell the boss: the machine is broken. He believes, dragging the machine to the dump. The engineer gave stupid drawings: they build, rivet, weld, then it turns out that everything is the other way around, let's start over. This is because the rustic chef himself didn't care about this plant. He equipped an excellent apartment for himself in the factory management, locked himself there with the daughter

of the supply manager Lyubka, and in honor of this the supply manager stole everything he wanted.

Mother cleaned office space, delivered papers, stoked stoves, and since she had to be the first to arrive, her working day lasted 15 hours. In winter, she woke me up at three in the morning, we took a sled and walked to the factory. There I climbed into the wall and waited. Mother was bringing out a bundle of logs, and I dragged them home, desperately jogging, so as not to catch the eye of the patrol. So what to do? If not for this firewood, we would have frozen to hell that winter.

The next morning after the fire, investigations and interrogations began. The day before, a hundred army sledges were brought to the fittings, dragged into the workshop, and now they caught fire at night. All the main workshops burned down, the plant in general was gone. The chief fought in hysterics, interrogations went on for many days. The workers were silent. That night there was no one at the factory, except for the decrepit watchman, and he was sleeping, and when he saw the fire, he alone could not do anything.

The most common case. There seemed to be hatred for the Germans in the very air. [Rumors from the East, one encouraging the other: Stalin changed the policy, the Soviet government is now different, religion was recognized, churches are being opened, shoulder straps, officer ranks were introduced in the army, and the country is no longer called the USSR, but as before the revolution - Russia ... Especially surprising it was about shoulder straps. How many revolutions were there because of them! Who is in uniform means a mortal enemy. The Bolsheviks cut out patches of skin in the form of epaulettes on the shoulders of the captured officers, and those, in turn, for the captured Bolsheviks - stars. And suddenly now in the Soviet army - shoulder straps and officer ranks! Live peacefully with the stars. That would be a long time ago. Finally got to grips with it. For such a reasonable power, the people will go into fire and water and forgive her all her sins, because after all - her own, dear.]

In German reports, “defensive battles”, “successful reflections”, “reductions in the front” and “the enemy succeeded on an insignificant ...” appeared completely. Everything is clear, we

envy the Eagle. We are happy with the victory at the Kursk Bulge.

And no matter what the newspapers write, no matter how they dodge, no matter how convincing lies they present, in the end the truth nevertheless emerges. This is vain labor and self-consolation for those who dodge. Our people have learned to read between the lines, to hear between the words, for decades they have developed their own telegraph for the people. Nothing can be hidden from him. This is how on September 29, 1941, every single witness of Babi Yar was shot, and Kurenevka knew the details an hour after the first shots.

[Rumors of Soviet reforms and German defeats gave rise to hope.]

The Germans sat in Kyiv overflowing with hatred, as if on a volcano. Every night something exploded, burned, someone hated was killed.

The feed mill behind the tram depot was on fire, and in the morning, they said, there was an inscription in chalk on the wall: "This is for Babi Yar. Partisans.

The bridge across the Dnieper to Darnitsa exploded, trains were blown up by mines. A huge SS garage was on fire in Pechersk. In the theater of musical comedy, mines were discovered fifteen minutes before the officers' meeting with the participation of Erich Koch. Here and there leaflets appeared in the city, and all that was said was about the partisans.

Behind Irpen and Dymer, the partisans liberated entire regions and established a new, just Soviet government. Rural policemen and elders flew head over heels from under Ivankov, they said that darkness and darkness were coming and there was no salvation from them. Kiev policemen were formed and sent to Ivankov, and before leaving they got drunk, danced, and cried that they would not return alive.

Germans and policemen began to walk only in groups and with rifles. The courtyard of the Kurenevskaya police was dug up with trenches and a powerful pillbox was built with loopholes on the street.

They were everywhere, these elusive partisans, but how to get to them? At night I thought about Grabarev at the Menagerie,

but will he believe it when I appear and say: "Give me leaflets"? He pours apples into his cap again and laughs. Or at my mother's factory those who set fire to it - my mother and I almost certainly knew who did it, but after the fire they are triple careful, they will take me, perhaps, for a small provocateur. Because a lot of money is paid for reporting about an underground worker, and for not reporting - execution.

Everything turned upside down inside me, I trembled at the mere thought that ours were advancing, and this darkness could disappear. Once I was sitting alone in the hut, climbed to look for a notebook, spread the ink, thought it over and wrote the following on a piece of paper:

COMRADES!

The Red Army advances and beats the Nazis. Wait for her arrival. Help the partisans and beat the Germans. Soon they will be kaput. They know it and are afraid. And the policemen, their dogs, are also shaking. We will pay them off. Let them wait. We'll come.

Long live the glorious partisans!

Death to the German invaders!

Hooray!

In the remaining free space, I drew a five-pointed star, thickly shaded it with ink, and the appeal took on, in my opinion, a very heroic look. Especially this courageous hurrah! ", which I myself invented, the rest I copied from genuine leaflets. He tore out the second sheet from the notebook, ready to write a hundred pieces. But my legs jumped on their own: rather run and glue. I already knew where: on the bridge, where many pass and read.

As soon as I finished the second sheet, I put it to the stove so that the densely filled star would dry, spread the paste in a glass, spread it, folded the sheet in half and, putting it in my bosom, holding it with two fingers, ran.

As luck would have it, all passers-by were walking, so when I waited for the moment, the leaflet dried up and stuck together. Panically began to tear it apart, drooling with his tongue, glued it obliquely and crookedly to the cement wall - and left with a desperately pounding heart. That's all. Very simple.

I opened the door and stopped: my mother and Lena Gimpel were standing in the room and reading the second copy of my work, left by the stove. I walked independently to the hanger and took off my coat.

"Nothing at all," Lena said. - But since you decided to write leaflets, do not leave them in a conspicuous place. You still have time to lay down your head, where are you going, in a hurry, something, and this will still be required of you. And what would climb ahead of time?

"Tolik," said the pale mother, "did you want to go to Babi Yar?"

- And for what they only gave you letters at school, - Lena shrugged her shoulders, - the word "help" is written through "o", and "occupiers" - through two "k" Star and "cheers" - it's stupid, you can immediately see that the boy wrote. Fools like you are found by handwriting.

They washed my head a little, but well. They also said that naive people like me are good only to perish uselessly. That I need to understand a lot and understand a lot. That I should grow - and learn, I studied.

[At night, when my mother fell asleep, I began to write down stories from my life with an oil lamp: how my grandfather and I went to exchange, how a cowgirl betrayed a Jewish boy. He began some very heroic story about the noble leader of the uprising, like Hugo's Bug-Zhargal, he already poured the Germans on the first number with me. I instantly hid the sheets of paper with writing in my bosom at the slightest rustle, and then, wrapping them in pieces of old oilcloth, I buried them in a barn, in a corner, in dry sand. It would not have been suitable for publication, perhaps under any authority, because it was too sincere and naive.]

The bombing of Kyiv began, and this said that the front was coming towards us. Soviet bombers flew in at night. At first, anti-aircraft guns rumbled loudly, explosions flashed in the sky, red tracer bullets flew up like peas. The black sky trembled with the howl of invisible planes.

The windows of the grandfather's room faced the meadow, so he ran to our half, we opened the windows, climbed out onto the

window sills in anticipation of the performance, and he did not linger.

Flares dropped by parachutes flashed brightly. They hung in the sky, a bluish smoke flowed from them, and in their ghostly light the whole city became visible - the towers, roofs, domes of Sophia and Lavra ... The planes hummed and circled for a long time, chose, carefully aimed, then bombs hooted. One blurted out directly at the Kobtz tannery.

We were not afraid of them, because they fell only on factories, bridges or barracks, but in no case on the housing of the townspeople, and this proved the new unprecedented justice of the Soviet government. Everyone knew that the partisans at first accurately identified military installations, and during raids they gave signals with lanterns. To do this, you had to sit next to the object and blink, causing bombs on yourself,

On May 2, 1943, a big concert was to be held at the Opera House. At the entrance, festively disposed Germans crowded; cars rolled up, generals and ladies disembarked; soldiers with prostitutes went to the balcony.

The raid began when it got dark. The bomb hit the Opera directly, broke through the ceiling of the auditorium and crashed into the stalls. Sheer bad luck with these theaters: it did not explode, this bomb. The only Soviet bomb dropped on Kyiv that did not explode. She only killed about seven Germans in the stalls, so that pieces of them flew onto the stage, and caused a terrible panic. The lights went out, everyone rushed through the doors, climbed over their heads, the distraught crowd rolled out of the theater, the artists in makeup and costumes ran through the streets.

This went on all summer. Fires and explosions spread. Everything seemed to be saturated with some kind of nervous tension, expectation and anxiety.

An important event happened for me personally: on August 18, 1943, I turned 14 years old, and I became an adult, officially subject to deportation to Germany, suitable for all orders.

At about the same time, we saw strange black and greasy smoke rising from Babi Yar.

6.3 BABI YAR: THE FINALE

On August 18, 1943, all the prisoners of the Babi Yar concentration camp were lined up on the central parade ground. Military trucks drove in, SS men in helmets and dogs began to jump off them.

Everyone understood that this was the beginning of the end.

Recently the camp was bombed by Soviet planes. The bombs fell exactly along the perimeter - it is clear that the goal was to destroy the barriers. The wire was damaged in only one place, it was quickly repaired, but the Germans, apparently, realized that it was time to liquidate the camp.

They took out a table, statements, file cabinets, lined up everyone in a queue, which began to move past the table. Reader looked at the lists and sent some prisoners to the left, others to the right. At first, exactly one hundred people were selected - especially dangerous political ones. The SS men shouted: "Forward! Bistro! Bistro!" Blows rained down, and a hundred went out of the gate.

- We have things in the dugouts! they shouted.

"You won't need anything," the Germans answered.

Outside the gate they ordered to take off their shoes. They left their shoes and went on barefoot down into the ravine. Davydov was in this hundred, he walked in the forefront and thought: "Well, finally ..."

From the landslides in the Yar, terraces were formed, overgrown with thick grass. The hundred descended along the narrow path to the first terrace. Miracle: there was a new, just built dugout.

Yara was noisy and crowded. The Germans literally swarmed around, a lot of SS men, officers in orders, even cars drove in, there were heaps of different tools.

A hundred were stopped and asked: "Are there locksmiths, blacksmiths here?" Some identified themselves, they were separated and taken behind a low earthen rampart. A hundred were divided into fives and also began to be led away behind the rampart. There was no shooting.

Davydov began to hope that this was not yet an execution.

He looked around with wide eyes, but did not understand anything.

Finally they led him over the rampart. There was a long rail, there were a pile of chains, and everyone was chained. A stout, phlegmatic German was sitting by the rail among the blacksmiths-prisoners, also riveting on this rail. Davydov got to him. The chain was about the same as in village wells. The German wrapped it around her ankles, put on the collars and carefully riveted it.

Davydov started walking, taking small steps. The chain hurt. Then she badly hurt her legs, and people learned to put rags under her and tie them with twine to her belt so that she would not drag along the ground.

When everyone was shackled, they suddenly announced dinner and gave them a very hearty meal. The soup was real, fatty, hearty.

Everyone was given shovels. The column, ringing with chains, was led to a narrow spur of the ravine and ordered to dig. They dug for a long time, until the very evening, they dug out a large uneven ditch, not knowing why it was, but it was clear that the Germans were looking for something: they were constantly watching to see if they had dug up something. But they didn't get to the bottom of anything.

For the night, a hundred were herded into a dugout. It was pitch dark, only the voices of a strong guard could be heard outside. In front of the entrance to the dugout, a tower was built, a disk machine gun was installed on it and aimed at the entrance.

In the morning of the next day, they again drove into the ravine. It was just as crowded, there was shouting and swearing. A tall, slender, elegant officer with a stack was shouting hysterically. He was about thirty-five years old, they called him Topaide, and, listening, Davydov was amazed to understand that it was Topaide who led the first executions of Jews in 1941.

Yesterday Topaida was not there, he only sent a plan of quarries with burials, but the local Germans did not understand it and confused it. He hysterically shouted that all the boobies,

they don't know how to understand plans, they started digging in the wrong place. He ran and stamped his foot:

- Here! Here!

They began to dig where he showed. Half an hour later, the first corpses appeared.

The Germans treated Topaida respectfully, and among themselves they either seriously or ironically called him "execution engineer." Now he has become an excavation engineer. All day he rushed along the ravine, pointed, commanded, explained. From time to time his face twitched in a strong and unpleasant grimace, some kind of nervous tic, and he seemed to be a bunch of continuous nerves, the limit of hysteria. He could not live a minute without screaming, rushing about, beating. It can be seen that his "engineering" was not so easy even for himself.

Work boiled over. In order not to be seen, the Germans hastily built shields around the ravine and masked them with branches, in other places they made artificial plantations. It was clear that what was happening here was the deepest mystery.

The road from the city to Yar was blocked. The drivers got off the trucks far from the ravine, the guards got behind the wheel and drove the cars into Yar. Trucks carried rails, blocks of stone, firewood, barrels of oil.

Thus began the final stage of Babi Yar, the first attempt to erase it from history. At first, things didn't work out. Topaide rushed about, raged, and all the Germans were nervous, the prisoners were desperately beaten, several people were shot.

From the camp came new parties to help; in a few days there were more than three hundred prisoners. They were divided into brigades, the measured, productive work of these brigades was an example of German order and method.

DIGGERS were digging holes, revealing deposits of corpses that were bluish-gray in color, caked, compacted and intertwined. Pulling them out was a real pain. [Some of the bodies, especially children, did not have any wounds - these are those who were buried alive. The bodies of some women, especially young ones, were, on the contrary, sadistically mutilated, probably before death.]

The Germans pinched their noses from the stench, and some felt sick. The guards sat on the slopes of the ravine, and between the boots of each was a bottle of vodka stuck in the sand, from time to time they applied to it, so all the Germans in the ravine were constantly drunk.

The diggers did not get vodka, at first they also felt ill, but gradually they got used to it, there was no way out, they worked, clinking chains.

Hookers pulled out the corpses and dragged them to the furnaces. They were given specially forged metal rods with a handle on one end and a hook on the other. By the way, the hooks were made according to Topaide's drawing.

Topaide, after many experiments, developed a system for pulling out the corpse so that it would not be torn apart. To do this, it was necessary to stick a hook under the chin and pull on the lower jaw, then he walked in full, and so he was dragged to the place.

Sometimes the corpses stuck together so tightly that two or three people leaned on the hook. Often it was necessary to chop with axes, and the lower layers were undermined several times.

GOLD DIGGERS - "GOLDZUKHERS" had tongs with which they pulled out gold crowns. Each corpse was to be examined on the way to the furnace, rings and earrings were removed, the pockets of those who were dressed were checked in search of valuables, coins - all this was put into buckets. A sentry stood right there and looked after that the gold was not stolen or thrown into the sand.

CLOSET SHEETS removed from the dead everything that was still intact. Good quality boots that had lain in the ground for a year or two were removed. Sometimes woolen things, field bags were preserved. The Germans carefully loaded it onto trucks and took it away for who knows what purpose, because it all smelled awful. But a lot of junk accumulated: only the lowest layers - the Jews - were naked, the middle layers were in their underwear, and the recently killed were completely dressed.

BUILDERS were engaged in the construction of furnaces. Under heavy guard, they walked across the ravine to the opposite

side - to the Jewish cemetery, where the Germans indicated which granite monuments to break.

The prisoners dismantled the tombstones, carried them into the ravine, laid out the slabs in rows. On them, again under the professional guidance of the universal Topaide, a rather thoughtful and technically perfect furnace was built - with pipes for traction, complex passages, grates. It was stuffed with firewood, bodies were placed on top of the grate with their heads out. The second row was laid crosswise for dressing, then a layer of firewood followed, and so on, until a stack grew three meters high and with each side six meters.

The stack included about two thousand dead. To lay them down, ladders were put up, as at construction sites, and carried along them. The finished structure was doused with oil from a hose, which was pumped from barrels by a compressor.

STOKERS made fires from below, and also brought torches to the rows of heads sticking out. Oiled hair immediately ignited brightly - for this they laid their heads out. The pile turned into a solid giant fire. The heat from him was unbearable; in the ravine and far around there was a strong smell of scorched hair and roasted meat. The stokers fired with long pokers, such as metallurgists have, then raked up the heat and ash, and when the furnace cooled down, they cleaned it, sorted it out again, changed the burned-out grates and again prepared for loading.

TRUMPERS have already dealt with ash. On granite slabs from the cemetery, they crushed unburned bones with ordinary rammers, then heaps of ash were sifted through sieves to again find gold.

GARDENERS were called so because, having loaded the ashes on a stretcher, they carried it under escort around the outskirts of Babi Yar and scattered it in the gardens. This was better than others: they could dig potatoes in the gardens, bring them to Yar and bake them in tin cans in the heat left in the oven.

It was an important reserve of food that supported the prisoners, because the Germans, having fed well on the first day, did not repeat this later, and the prisoners were hungry like animals.

One, for example, maddened by the smell of fried meat, began to eat cadaverous meat, dragging pieces from the fire. At first, the Germans did not see this, but when they accidentally covered him, they immediately shot him - and threw him into the fire, and they were terribly indignant at what savagery he had reached.

Davydov visited different brigades, and went to the cemetery, and dragged corpses, and built ovens. He says that at first, from a terrible smell, from all this fuss with corpses, he was shaking, he almost lost consciousness, but then he got used to it. Apparently a person eventually gets used to everything.

Having worked hard during the day, they slept in the dugout at night like the dead. A growing beard was shaved with fire - a tried and tested method of shaving back in Soviet camps. The day passed in convulsive care not to get a bullet, to get a potato. Quarreled, reconciled, cunning, witty. "What do you think, you didn't tell jokes? Davydov says. - Someone will soak, everyone will burst with laughter. The humor of the gallows. The guards will take a look - and let yourself grin. For them, it also means humor.

And the usual executions in Babi Yar went on as before, but the dead were no longer buried, but immediately thrown into the oven. Another goner among the prisoners, who could no longer work, was also abandoned. Alive.

The Germans were in a hurry, all that was heard was: "Bistro! Bistro! Schnell! But there were a lot of corpses. Davydov had to work unloading the pit, in which there were exactly four hundred of the same hostages who were shot on the orders of Eberhard. He dug holes with a hundred, with three hundred hostages. Everything was exactly, and Topaide knew everything, he showed the places, he absolutely remembered everything.

(By the way, the name Topaide was never mentioned among the convicted Nazi criminals. He may have died, although such rear Gestapo men, as a rule, knew how to hide. Therefore, it is possible that he is still alive . . . Did he get rid of his nervous tic? specifically for Babi Yar, no one was convicted, the fate of the German and Russian administration of it, headed by Radomsky and Ryder, is unknown).

[Towards the end, in Babi Yar, the most diverse enemies were thrown into the fire: from some eccentric who told a joke, to a baker who hid a loaf of bread and similar "saboteurs" - to real partisans and the last communists. Some members of the Communist Party, who managed to prove that they joined the party, like the majority, for careeristic reasons, "they only registered and paid dues," were not arrested for two years, they regularly went to the police to check in. Didn't save. Now they have all been sent to Babi Yar. The Germans even killed their servants, their lackeys, who knew too much.]

Now the destruction looked like this. Gas wagons with living people arrived from the city. They drove as close as possible to the stoves, and only here the gas was turned on. Muffled screams came from the back, then a frantic knock on the door. The car was parked, the engine was running, the Germans were quietly smoking. Then everything calmed down in the back, the Germans opened the door, and the prisoners began to unload. The people were warm, wet with sweat, almost all of them were pissed, pissed, among them, maybe half-dead. They were put into the fire. Davydov remembers how some of them writhed in the fire, they tossed up as if they were alive.

One day a gas chamber arrived with women. After the usual procedure, when the screams and knocks subsided, the door was opened, a light smoke came out of it, and it turned out that the car was packed full of naked young girls.

There were more than a hundred of them, literally compressed, sitting on each other's laps. All of them had their hair tied with kerchiefs, as women do when they go to the bathhouse. Probably, they put them in the car, saying that they were taking them to the bathhouse? Many people had rings, watches, lipstick and other trifles hidden in scarves. Drunken Germans laughed, explained that they were waitresses from Kiev cabarets, and shouted to the prisoners: "Take them for yourself! Come on, love her, fuck her!" When Davydov wore them and stacked them, shabby and warm, air came out of their mouths with a slight snore, and there was also the impression that they were alive, only in a swoon. Burnt.

Some very important ranks came in luxurious cars. They shouted at the Germans working in Yar that things were moving slowly. There were not enough people, and several times those who arrived in the gas chamber were released, immediately chained and put to work.

They began to lead outside the ravine: into a nearby anti-tank ditch, two hundred meters long. It turned out to be filled to the brim with the corpses of Red Army commanders - the prisoners understood this from their uniforms, field bags, and binoculars. There were probably twenty-five or thirty thousand of them. They sent to dig holes in the Kirillov hospital. The land in the ravine and around, on an area of some square kilometer, was literally full of corpses.

In Babi Yar, a distant cannonade was heard from behind the Dnieper. The prisoners knew that the last fire would be lit for them. The Germans did not take them seriously at all as people and at the morning formation they reported:

- Three hundred and twenty-five "figurines" are built!

"Figuren" - it meant figures, shadows, something that cannot be considered a person. It was also humor.

The prisoners did not bathe, they were not given water, many could hardly stand on their feet, were covered with rotting wounds, burning and cadaveric rot. [Among them were those who managed to serve time in Soviet concentration camps before the war, they said: there is no comparison. Any Soviet camp compared to Babi Yar is a resort.

And still there is no such camp in the world from which it would be impossible to escape. Incidentally, this was also testified by a former NKVD officer, some very prominent state security worker, himself previously associated with the camps in Ukraine, one might say an expert on this issue, and now a fireman at the stove.

His name was Fedor Ershov. It is only known that he led sabotage, explosions, but failed. Who knows, what the hell is not joking, maybe it was he who blew up the Lavra. On Vladimirskaia, 33, there should have been detailed information about him, but for some reason the KGB did not declassify this employee and did not even award him posthumously.

In other circumstances, Fedor Ershov would have been a terrible person for prisoners. But now he himself was like them, he fanatically urged to raise an uprising - and they began to listen to him, as a specialist.] He spoke with those who worked nearby, who slept nearby on plank beds in a dugout, groups of conspirators formed, at every opportunity discussed escape options.

Some suggested, right in the middle of the day, to rush to the guards, grab their machine guns and, shooting back, leave in all directions. Fedor Ershov was against this option. The guards of the concentration camps are always ready for this, besides, everyone is in chains and too weak against the hefty Germans.

Among the prisoners were former drivers. One of them, Vladislav Kuklya, offered to seize vehicles that bring firewood, or even directly a gas chamber - and break through the guards on them. It was almost a fantastic, but captivating in its audacity plan. However, it would take too long to drive along the Yar and further through the city among the Germans and the police. It would be just a dashing suicide.

The group, which was driven to the pits in the Kirillovskaya hospital, asked for permission to escape on their own: they had relatively few guards there. Perhaps they would have succeeded, but Ershov was indignant: "You yourself will run away, and then the rest will be covered. No, everyone should rise at the same time.

However, in the far corner of the dugout, young guys came to an agreement and, without consulting anyone, began desperately digging a tunnel in order to escape at night. During the night they did not have time to do it, and in the daytime the Germans opened everything, [seized them, lined them up - seventeen people. Among them was Kuklya, who denied it. Topide asked:

Was this one with you?

"Looks like..." one of the boys muttered. Topaide did not understand, turned to another prisoner, who knew German and acted as an interpreter:

- What did he say?

He said he wasn't.

The doll was returned to work, the rest - sixteen people were immediately put on their knees and killed with shots in the back of the head.

There was another loner who made an extraordinarily daring escape during the day. Nobody knew his last name. He worked on the sidelines, allegedly walked away "before the wind", suddenly jumped into a ravine, ran and disappeared into one of the spurs leading to the cemetery. Shooting rose, alarm, work was stopped, dozens of Germans ran after him - and were not found. He managed to unhook the shackles, and therefore he quickly ran away. In a rage, the Germans killed twelve prisoners that day and shot their own officer, the head of the guard, responsible for protecting the fugitive. Machine guns were placed along the spurs of the ravine.

Escape options disappeared one after another, and Fyodor Ershov's plan was nevertheless adopted: to escape from the dugout and attack the guards at night. It was also disastrous, but the darkness at least gave hope that at least some would leave.

The dugout was a deep bunker with a narrow passage steeply down. A machine gun from a tower is aimed point-blank at this entrance. There is a strong guard around the dugout at night. The dugout had no windows, so the only entrance and exit door was in the form of an iron grate - so that air could pass through and people would not suffocate. From time to time sentries shone their flashlights through it, checking whether everything was calm in the dugout. The lattice door was locked with a huge barn padlock.

It was boring for the drunken guards to stand idle at night, and it happened that all of a sudden all the prisoners were lifted up, taken upstairs and staged a staged execution by the light of the spotlights. It was a terrible joke. People seriously believed. Then the guards laughed and drove everyone back. The nights were dark, damp and foggy.

Someone insistently offered to wait for the next joke and, having torn off the shackles, pounce on the guards. But you can't quickly remove the chains, for this you need to prepare them so

that they barely hold on. And how do you know if there will be a joke that night?

It is incomprehensible to the mind, but this dugout also had its own informer. They, informers and traitors, are everywhere. It was some former police chief from Fastov named Nikon. The bastard ended up in Babi Yar for some extraordinary deeds, fawned over the Germans, rushed to brutally beat the prisoners (and he was as healthy as a bull), listened warily to conversations, and it is possible that the death of sixteen guys was his work. If this jackal knew about the escape plan, he would immediately betray.

That is why not so many people were privy to the escape plan before the time. This alone would prevent them from rising up together during the next joke.

"We must open the lock," said Ershov. - Then announce to everyone, prepare, remove the chains and only then break out. Save yourself, brother! Let half, a quarter, five people be saved, but someone must come out, get through to our people and tell what was done here.

The work in the ravine already resembled a large construction site. The Germans brought construction vehicles, an excavator, a bulldozer. They chirped all day, opening the ditches. [The excavator had a clamshell bucket, it fell on ropes into the ditch, picked up bundles of corpses like a handful and unloaded them to the surface, dropping pieces and heads along the way.]

(The Germans themselves called Babi Yar "Baushtelle", which means "Construction Site." Under the official name "Baukompany", Babi Yar was registered with the German authorities in the documentation, had a bank account, because all these materials and equipment had to somehow be funded.)

One important circumstance must be taken into account here. The prisoners found many different and unexpected items, especially among the bodies of [Jews] killed in 1941 - after all, those people were going to leave, and although they were stripped naked, they managed to carry something important for themselves to the last. Different artisans happened to have tools with them, with which they did not part until the very ditch. For women - scissors, hairpins, nail files. There were penknives.

Someone once found a bottle of Krasnaya Moskva cologne, wanted to drink, but was persuaded to sprinkle it in a dugout.

In the pockets of the dead, there were often keys: from apartments, sheds, sometimes whole bunches of keys.

Ershov divided all those initiated into the plan into dozens, and each dozen prepared his part of the escape. The group assigned to open the lock collected the keys. Went through and tried hundreds of keys. They tried it during lunch, when everyone was herded into the dugout, but the door was not locked. Some crowded in the doorway, and Kuklya quickly tried the keys.

One day, a prisoner named Yasha Kaper, [one of the miraculously preserved Jews], found a key that went to the lock. Some suicide bomber in 1941 brought him to Babi Yar, not suspecting that in 1943 Yasha Kaper would find him, and this would save some lives.

Meanwhile, others collected, carried into the dugout and hid in the walls everything that in the slightest degree could help to remove the chains or serve as a weapon. [David Budnik was lucky to find pliers and a hammer. "Goldzukher" Zakhar Trubakov had tongs given to him by the Germans themselves for pulling out teeth, so to speak, laid down "according to the state."

For some offense, the officer hit one prisoner - he fell, and his bosom tinkled. Immediately undressed him and found rusty scissors. Topaide jumped up like that:

- Why?
- I wanted to get a haircut.

Topaida did not believe. They began to beat the prisoner, interrogating him why he needed scissors. Everyone looked with horror: will he give it out or not? This was the moment when the whole plan could fail. The prisoner did not give out; already unconscious, he was thrown into the fire. And no one even knows his name.]

There was a guy from Northern Bukovina - Yakov Steyuk, an educated person, he knew several languages, at one time he studied in Bucharest. It was he who was used as an interpreter when it was necessary to explain to the prisoners, he saved Kuklya from execution. He said;

"We will do even better than we think. Guys, be bold! You have no idea how cowardly and superstitious the Germans are. We have to break out screaming, screeching, whistling, and they will be scared, they will be stunned, you will see.

The key was ready, the weapons were assembled, night after night passed, but the moment of opportunity did not come. As luck would have it, the security increased, at night they came all the time, shone, checked. Ershov suggested:

- Today!

But the majority was for tomorrow. Today - it meant going to almost certain death, and now I didn't want to die today: "Oh, what if tomorrow an opportunity will be more convenient."

[Ershov agreed. He was some kind of convulsively fanatical person, he pushed everyone, convinced everyone, but he himself was exhausted and weak, and, it seems, had no illusions about himself. He once said to Davydov:

- Crazy luck, Volodya, not for me, I'm already over forty. Younger ones will break out, for example, you ...]

It happened almost by accident - a coincidence of dates - but it was on September 29, exactly on the second anniversary of the start of executions in Babi Yar, that the escape took place. Some superstitiously hoped that this day would be lucky.

The team that went to the Kirillov hospital returned. Yakov Steyuk was in it. On the way he talked about this and that with the escort, an old and talkative sergeant-major named Vogt. Earlier, Vogt was reassuring: "When the work is over, it seems they are going to transfer you to Zhitomir." But that day the old man whispered to Steyuk anxiously:

- Morgen - kaput.

Why did you warn? Just like that, out of kindness? Yes, the prisoners themselves saw that the camouflage shields were removed, the tools were stacked, however, there was one new stove.

At night, two large vats of boiled potatoes were brought to the dugout. And that was incredible too. Did she disappear from the Germans, or something, so they decided to feed the prisoners in the end?

"At night I open the door," announced Kuklya. Fedor Ershov gave a command along the chain: "Today we are going. Stronger nerves. [He gave the order to remove Nikon. Nikon's neighbor Boris Yaroslavsky was ordered to kill him. His hands trembled:

Guys, I have never killed a cat in my life. . .

He was a gentle, intelligent man. They gave him a hammer.]

Waiting for the dead of night. About two o'clock Kuklya put his hand through the bars, inserted the key and began to open it. He made one turn and the lock clicked loudly. The doll managed to pull out his hand and walked away covered in a cold sweat.

The guards heard a click, got worried, went down to the door and shone. In the dugout everyone was lying on the bunk. The Germans left, talking upstairs, striking matches.

The lock opened in two turns. Kuklya confessed in a whisper that his hands were not obeying him. He was encouraged, and he muttered:

"Well, brothers, at least let the guards change. And then if I click a second time . . .

True, the guards were to change soon. Waited for this. The doll stuck out his hand again. I opened it for a very long time, and the lock did not tinkle. The doll fell into Davydov's hands, covered in sweat:

- Everything!..
- Wake up everyone, relax, arm yourself! Fyodor Ershov ordered. [There was a thud, a groan... a second blow. Yaroslavsky killed Nikon - this was a kind of signal.] There was a fuss in the dugout. The nerves of many could not stand it, everyone was in a hurry, a strong rustle arose, clinking, scratching, talking. Everyone, as if in a frenzy, hurried with different chisels, knives, scissors to unclench the collars on the chains.

In the silence, it seemed: the roar had risen.

The Germans immediately rushed to the door:

- What's the matter?

Yakov Steyuk answered for everyone in German:

- Yes, there is a fight for your potatoes.

Everyone in the dugout fell silent. The Germans began to laugh. Of course, it was funny to them that the prisoners were shot in the morning, and they were fighting to fill their bellies with potatoes.

Fifteen minutes passed. The door was quietly pushed open.

- Come on, guys! Yershov shouted. And the crowd rushed up the narrow passage along ten steps with a wild roar, screeching and whistling.

Steuk was right. For the first few seconds, no shots were fired. The Germans were taken aback. Dozens of prisoners managed to jump upstairs when, finally, the machine gun began to fire. Only shepherds attacked at once.

There was darkness and fog. It is impossible to make out where what is being done: some tore the shepherd dogs with their hands, some hit the German on the head with a hammer, they rolled on the ground entangled.

The machine gun failed to capture. But it was also difficult for the Germans to shoot: they did not see where theirs was, where theirs was. Rockets flew into the sky. Shooting went all over Babi Yar. The prisoners ran in all directions, some with chains dangling from their legs.

Shooting, shooting, like at the front. Motorcyclists rushed along the roads and paths.

Davydov ran around the dugout, ran into one, another German, rushed into the darkness - and blindly ran straight into the camp. He shied away along the wire, met Leonid Kharash in the gardens, and they ran towards some huts in the distance. Dawn was already beginning, the shooting continued, cars and motorcycles were driving somewhere, there were shouts and swearing.

Davydov and Kharash saw a woman doing something near the house.

- Aunt, hide us!

She looked, she felt bad.

- God! You are from Yara! I have children, they will shoot me. Her sister ran out.

- Go to the chicken coop under the straw! They climbed under the straw, asking:
- And you will not give out?

No, lads, we will not harm you.

Then she went, cooked borscht, brought them a whole pot - real, fragrant Ukrainian borscht.

-
-

The names of these sisters were Natalya and Antonina Petrenko. Davydov later visited them at Kurenevka, on Tiraspol-skaya Street, where they still live.

Of the 330 prisoners, only 15 survived. They then went to the Soviet Army, some died at the front. Fyodor Ershov did not escape from Yar, he died, as he foresaw. [And Boris Yaroslavsky died. To date, nine participants in this unprecedented uprising are still alive.] Vladimir Davydov works as the head of a construction site in Kyiv. [Yakov Steyuk teaches German and Greek at the Kaluga Pedagogical Institute.

Living and working in Kyiv: Vladislav Kuklya, Yakov Kaper, Zakhar Trubakov, David Budnik, Semyon Berlyand, Leonid Ostrovsky, Grigory Iovenko. Every year on September 29, they can be seen, together with Dina Pronicheva, in Babi Yar, where many people unofficially come to honor the memory of the dead.]

6.4 [FROM THE AUTHOR]

[One former prominent Gestapo man stated in an interview not so long ago that there were no death camps, stoves and gas chambers. All of this is propaganda fiction. So simply, he said: IT WAS NOT. He's not as crazy as he might seem. It automatically continues to work in the same mode that the system programmed it for: "Slander - something will remain, call black white, death is happiness, the leader is God, promise mountains of gold in the future, there will always be believers."

For example, in the USSR for many decades there were no official concentration camps either. And now NO. In this book, you have already read how the Soviet NKVD blew up

Khreshchatyk and Lavra and immediately declared: "These are the crimes of the Nazi invaders," and the Gestapo deployed a whole Baukompany to prove that Babi Yar did not exist.

Systems of lies and violence brilliantly discovered and took advantage of one weak point in a person: gullibility.

The world is bad. Is a benefactor with a transformation plan. According to this plan, sacrifices are needed today, but universal paradise is guaranteed at the finish line. A few incendiary words, a bullet in the back of the head of the incredulous - and now millions of crowds are seized by a rush. Amazingly primitive - but how it works!

Out of the best intentions, with the selfless heroism of believing boys and girls, and patriotic mothers, and gray-haired elders, aggressions, purges, denunciations, executions, bullying, cynicism begin, and, I suspect, it is completely indifferent, in the name of WHAT goal. Suffice it to say that she is beautiful. They believe.

I didn't write this book to tell yesterday's stories. This is TODAY's conversation based on the material of the occupation of Kyiv, which I accidentally witnessed. But this is happening on Earth today, and there is absolutely no guarantee that it will not appear in even darker forms tomorrow. Not the slightest guarantee.

Well, let's calculate how many of the world's population today is covered by systems of violence?

The world has learned nothing. The world has become bleaker. It is overflowing with deceived puppets, sort of programmed dummies who, with inspired eyes, are ready to shoot at any target that the leaders indicate to them, trample on any land they are sent to, and it is terrible to think about the weapons that are in their hands today.

If you shout in their eyes: you are deceived, you are just cannon fodder and a tool in the hands of scoundrels, they do not hear.

They say: "Evil howl." If you give them facts, they simply do not believe. They say: "There was no such thing."

Let's ask people who have lived in this world. When the first information about the Nazi death camps came from Germany,

the world did not believe it. He was more inclined to trust the beautiful words of scoundrels. Many of those who flew out of the smokestacks of the Buchenwalds started out by trusting.

Let us recall how the Kiev Jews believed that they were being taken to some kind of Palestine and, even hearing the shots, still reasoned that things would be “equally divided” there. How many such Palestines have already been promised to the world?

Do you think anything has changed? Only for the worse. With suicidal fanaticism, humanity climbs on poisoned honey, no matter who exposes it, and there is truly no limit to human credulity.

They believe anyone - Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Khrushchev, Mao Tse-tung, Brezhnev and other Fidel Castros of lesser rank. They justify atrocities with great goals, deny the facts, trust naked good intentions.

Trust...

If civilization today is in danger, if it is destined to degenerate or perish, then this will happen with the enthusiastic help of gullible people. Today they seem to me more dangerous than their impudent leaders themselves, because everything is done - by their hands. And there are an overwhelming number of them, and such Babi Yars, Auschwitz and universal Hiroshima seem to be ahead, which we have not yet dreamed of.

I want to be wrong. I pray.

I tell you how it happens.

Please, people, come to your senses.]

6.5 KYIV WILL BE NO MORE

When the roar of guns is beautiful

From behind the Dnieper came the rumble of cannonade. Darnitsa, Svaromye, Vigurovshchina and Trukhanov Island were on fire. The station was packed with evacuating Germans and Volksdeutsche. Refugees came from Rostov, Kharkov and Poltava, they said that the Germans, retreating, were leaving dead land.

They blew up the bridges across the Dnieper, and together with the inhabitants expelled from the other side: the bodies fell into the Dnieper interspersed with carts.

At night, Soviet intelligence officers crept up to the beach on Trukhanov Island and shouted: "We will free you soon!"

There were last desperate arrests. They shot Grabarev at the Menagerie, which, indeed, did not remain at all by accident.

Everything that could be removed was removed from factories, door handles and window latches were unscrewed in offices, and toilet bowls were removed. The Germans were reeling in fishing rods.

Mare Masha was lucky by chance. The German offered Degtyarev five sacks of grain, it was necessary to bring it, and Masha was harnessed, and I went for the driver.

The soldier was good-natured, smiling. The sun was warm, and he unbuttoned, fell apart in the cart. I slapped Mashka with the reins, but she stubbornly did not want to trot, then the soldier asked with signs to let him drive. I moved up.

He, with skill, grabbed the reins, rinsed the mare with a whip - oh, she went at a gallop. The cart rumbled, almost falling apart, and the soldier half-rose—it was clear that he was from the countryside: his eyes shone, he drove with such gusto, with such pleasure, immediately becoming ordinary and familiar, like some Ivan Svinchenko from Litvinovka .

And my mood was good, I wanted to talk, but the stock of German words was small. I rummaged through my memory.

- What is it? I asked in German, pointing to the horizon in columns of smoke. Is it fire, fire?

The soldier looked at me, smiled, saying that you are asking, as if you yourself do not know, and spread his hands:

"War, boy. This is a bolter.

- Where is the front? I asked.
- This is the front. Here, - the soldier suddenly lowered the whip, and his hands went limp. - Dnieper - front. The Dnieper is the border. Here is the world. Bolshovik there, Deutsch here.

“That’s what you want,” I thought. “Are you ready for this now?” But this cannot be.”

“I have such a boy,” the German pointed at me and patted his pocket. - Such a good boy Kurt.

I asked to be shown, knowing that this would melt him. There was not a German who did not carry photographs with him, and when they showed them, they became so sentimental, sad and thoughtful.

The soldier immediately took out his wallet willingly. Frau him with a baby in her arms - a simple aunt, freckled like that. A boy who looks a bit like Shurka Matsu. The soldier was explaining something, drawing circles on a card with his finger, I did not understand, but nodded my head. Here we had to turn off, the cart tilted, and he carefully wrapped his arm around me so that I would not fall out. Like a father to a son. Even my heart fluttered. I have already forgotten my father. We drove into the granary, the soldier presented papers in a respectable manner, dragged and dumped sacks into a cart - that’s how they steal these days! - and I was thinking up phrases for the way back, and when we left, I boomed:

Have you killed a person?

He simply replied:

- Ya, ya.
- How?

He whipped the mare, nodded his head:

- Many. War.

— Yuden? Frau? Kinder? I asked urgently.

Finally, he understood me, looked, smiled slyly and shook his finger:

— Bolshovik!

I looked at his hands - large, peasant, with clumsy thick fingers and broken nails. Well, yes, he was a businesslike strategist, he stole and sold official grain, received a wad of money from Degtyarev, smiled and left, and I never saw him again and never see him again, but he crashed into my brains, drove like a drawbar, maybe because hugged me like a father, and because of him this devilry became even more incomprehensible to me.

Those who wrote in Yar were also probably such guys, they knew how to handle horses, they had freckled frau and lop-eared sons, they brewed coffee on a fire, took hold of the handles of a machine gun, like handles of a plow, and fired, then , cooked again, told jokes . . .

Before going outside, I carefully looked around. Once I leaned out and rushed back: they drove a crowd of old people, boys, among them there were boys smaller than me. To Germany.

Grandfather brought rags to the market, various torn felt boots, galoshes to exchange for a couple of potatoes. A soldier stopped him and took the bag. Grandfather was offended and followed the soldier for some time. A bunch of Germans burned a fire [and had fun with a child. They told him to shout "Stalin kaput!" - he shouted willingly, and for this they gave him a bowler hat to lick.] The soldier shook out felt boots and galoshes into the fire, it turns out that he did not need them, but he needed a bag.

- What villains! grandfather came running, sobbing. - That's where the tramps are tramps! [It was easier to disappear under one's own than under these,] so that death, a shepherd, fire and thunder of the Lord be upon you!

And thunder, only Soviet, rumbled. People stopped on the street, climbed onto the roofs, looked east across the Dnieper, listened to the powerful, solemn cannonade.

Lines of dark greasy smoke floated from the side of the ravine, and sometimes, when the wind caught up with them, it was difficult to breathe because of the smell of burnt hair and meat.

Cities are left unobstructed by the enemy

Soviet troops crossed the Dnieper and reached the right, Kyiv bank. The cannonade rose from the north, because of Pushcha-Voditsa and Vyshgorod.

SUCCESSFUL GERMAN ATTACKS ON
NORTHERN AND SOUTH SECTIONS OF THE FRONT
Führer's Main Apartment, 25 September.

... On the middle Dnieper, the enemy in many places unsuccessfully attacked the bridgeheads to the east of the river.

To the north of Cherkassy, German tank forces smashed small enemy canoes.

Stubborn defensive battles are taking place in the central sector of the front to the east of the Unecha railway junction and to the south of Smolensk, which are still ongoing. The cities of Roslavl and Smolensk were left without any obstacles from the enemy after the complete destruction and destruction of all important military installations. *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", September 26, 1943

TO THE POPULATION OF THE CITY OF Kyiv

The western bank of the Dnieper and the city of Kyiv will be defended by all means by German troops. The districts of Kyiv, located near the Dnieper, will become a combat zone.

German troops these days are located there in their positions. In order to prevent unnecessary casualties among the population and to ensure fighting without obstacles, the combat zone in the city must be liberated ... I hope that the population, in their own interests, will carry out this order without resistance.

Anyone who after the specified time without a special pass will be in the restricted area will face severe punishment. *) *) "New Ukrainian Word", September 26, 1943. Order of Major General and Combat Commandant Virov.

Our house was in the eviction zone. Grandfather and mother argued: to leave or not? Grandfather took all the things that remained into the cellar, then we put buckets of earth into the barn, covered the floor with a hatch, tamped it down, crushed it with hay and dust. Nobody will find.

Then we boarded up the windows crosswise with old boards. Grandfather took a sack and went to his friend the Gardener, and my mother and I parted the hay in the corner of the hayloft, made a hiding place there, put crackers, a bucket of boiled potatoes, a can of water there and began to wait for further events.

The greatness of Degtyarev

The earth has a very pleasant smell. I have always loved digging. And it's nice to sit in a trench: you breathe, you look at the damp walls with traces of a shovel. And especially in the spring,

when with a rake, with a plow, with a shovel you go out onto the rested land, you start to turn it - your head is spinning with joy, from this smell . . .

I can boldly say that people who have never burned last year's tops, who have not dug up to their seventh sweat under the smoke of bonfires, to whom the smell of the earth says nothing and who have forgotten it in the hustle and bustle, are deprived of much beauty.

So, when Degtyarev asked in parting to dig a hole for his things, I dug into the ground so deep that I had to be pulled out by the handle of a shovel. I helped him and mask this hole with black earth and stems, but only time could completely hide it.

The cart, loaded to the top with junk and harnessed by the lucky mare Masha, stood in the yard. The old woman was crying, Degtyarev cheerfully shouted at her. He decided to leave Kyiv to the west.

People with buggies and baby carriages were dragging along the streets, leaving the combat zone. Mashka dejectedly dragged the cart uphill past the Priory Church into an open field, where I once went for fir trees: Degtyarev did not dare to go through the center, but made his way through deaf, only known to him paths to get onto the highway far from the city.

- What's with your nose? - he asked. - This is a curiosity for you, but I have been watching these perturbations all my life, only flags, but have time to change portraits. You'll see red soon.
- Where are you going?
- The world is big, and sausages do not disappear in it. Hitlers and Stalins are fighting, but who will make sausages? If God leaves me alive, I will try to find a place where there are neither fascists nor communists, so that they all drown.

"Maybe we should have waited. . .

- What? What they write in the newspaper is a pound of smoke. The Reds are already near Vyshgorod. Hitler screwed up this war. What do I want, of course, I could stay, wrap up some Soviet warehouses, but it's better when I'm my own boss. I'll go to the West.

The outskirts ended, the cart creaked across the field. Telegraph poles with rusty hanging wire went to the horizon.

"Let's say goodbye," said Degtyarev. "Probably we won't see each other again . . . Come on." Hold on.

- You hold on.

"Don't you worry about me. Look! He opened his tattered baggy jacket. Under the jacket was a wide shirt, all in knots, as if in warts. At first I didn't understand. But Degtyarev shook the bundle, and coins clinked in it. The knots went in uneven rows along the chest, stomach, went under the armpits and behind the back. This shirt was worth millions, even with the money of that time, most likely billions.

Degtyarev smiled tensely, admiring the impression he had made.

- Feel it.

I touched the knots, heavy as stones. I understood it! Someone had to appreciate his wealth, his labors, his greatness. These bundles contained his sweat, my sweat, his wife's sweat, all the horses we killed. Finally, he was able to show someone all his gold, because I stayed, did not know where he was going, and could not inform. We were never destined to see each other again, and so he boasted to me, and then he whipped Mashka and walked briskly next to the cart, along the poles towards the horizon.

Get caught - don't get caught

Walking back, thinking, I realized that I had made a mistake, but it was too late: the street was cordoned off by the Germans, boys and old people were being taken out of the yards.

I immediately applied my signature number: I shrunk, shrank, pulled on my cap and went straight at the soldiers. It probably looked funny, because they received me with pleasure, as if they had been waiting for this, they even laughed. There was a group standing at the fence, I was attached to them.

The soldiers, advancing along the street, drove our crowd behind them. Three with rifles guarded, the rest combed the

houses. We were all silent and so normally, quietly passed six yards, when in the next house there was a bang, in my opinion, furniture flew, a shot hit. Our escorts became nervous and looked uneasily into the yard.

I took off as if I was going to set a world record. While I was running to the turn, I heard the shot assigned to me with my ears. He turned around with lightning speed - he saw that the whole crowd was scattering in all directions.

The shots went up when I was already around the corner, and I don't know how it all ended there, because I scratched a good two kilometers, ran to the Gorokhovskys, burst into them and huddled behind the cabinet. Thank you legs.

Kolka was alone at home. He listened to my story in a business-like manner, said that my mother and grandmother had taken things to the church and that old women from all over Priorka had gathered there, they were going to sit and pray until ours arrived. Grandmother took Zhorka to the cellar of the priest's house so that they would not be captured. And he, Kolka, is not fourteen, he walks around like a free Cossack, he got grenades ...

- Where?
- He stole from the Germans. Watch out, loaded! Lemons.
So I grabbed the grenades.

Give me a couple.

- Take it, just go and steal more.

I thought. Even from the raid, fear sat in the veins, but the weapon is very much needed. Ah, I wasn't, my legs are in ointment.

"Well, stay close," I said. Kolka became. We were the same height, he was just a little thinner.

"Well, can you see that I'm fourteen?"

"I can't see a damn thing," Kolka consoled.

We brazenly climbed the fence of the PVO school, again packed with soldiers, and walked through its yard as if it were our own.

The soldiers looked out the windows, got bored, chirped on harmonicas, cleaned weapons, and no one cared about us. One

compote - when they were rounded up, the other - when they were resting.

At the back door there was a rifle under the wall, we looked at it.

A field kitchen smoked around the corner, and a fat, red-faced cook, without letting go of his cigar, was conjuring in a cauldron. The cigar had finished smoking and smoked poisonously into his nostrils, but this did not bother him. We stood by the kitchen and looked, but the cook paid no more attention to us than if mutts were sitting in front of the kitchen, licking their lips.

We went around the house in a second circle, and the rifle was still standing under the wall. We approached her, bit her, and rolled head over heels into the basement. There was a destroyed stoker-house. One stood on the lookout, the other hastily wrapped the rifle in straw and paper. When we got an awkward bundle, we took it by the ends, threw it over the fence and climbed over ourselves.

Kolka took out cartridges from his warehouses, we went to a wasteland where houses were built before the war, but now there were only trenches and the remains of foundations from which bricks were pulled. We deployed the rifle and began to figure out with our minds what and how it works, and when we decided that we already knew enough, they put up a brick and began to shoot.

Shots were coming from everywhere, so we weren't even very careful. The rifle gave off in the shoulder like a good blow with a heavy fist, I was even offended. After slapping a few bricks, we decided to see where our bullets fly if we don't hit the brick. It turned out - exactly on the street in the distance, along which passers-by walked. God kept them. We squandered fifty rounds of ammunition, and our shoulders swelled, and our hands did not rise, but we were happy that we were armed and hid the rifle among the foundations, deciding that it would be taken by the one who first needed it for business.

Scary night

Even before reaching the house, I realized that things were bad. Weeping women ran with bundles and children; soldiers with

rifles stood at our gates; shepherd dogs twirled on leashes with their tongues out; mother was arguing something in the yard in a weeping voice. Seeing me, she rushed:

- Here he is! Let's go now, now.

The soldiers believed, went to expel further. And we darted into the hayloft and covered ourselves with hay. My mother scolded me softly in the dark. I didn't say anything about the raid, or about the rifle, and even more so about the grenades in my pockets. What should worry her, because of all this she became not herself, she grew old, stooped, thin, only her nose sticks out, so that when she, in a sweatshirt and a black scarf, walked along the street, the former students did not recognize her, but having recognized, marveled: "Maria Fedorovna, what happened to you?"

I picked out a few chips, and I got an embrasure through which I could see the collective farm garden. It was getting dark. Suddenly, gunfire was heard very close - and a desperate squeal or scream, not like a human. The mother was so flustered.

A German with a rifle ran across the garden, kissed and fired. And the second time he also hit: there was a wheezing, yelping, and I saw that he was hunting for a dog.

It became quiet, the night came. We only drank water, but did not eat. I fell asleep, and when I woke up, I saw a faint light in the hay. He put his hand in and took out a piece of rotten bark, glowing mysteriously and beautifully. For half the night I entertained myself with rotten things, but from my fingers it began to fade and went out.

Then a slight rustle was heard: someone was climbing into the hayloft. I went cold, but I thought that it might be that my grandfather had come running from the Gardener. There was a quiet dreary "ma-u", I stirred up the hay, rushed to Titus, pressed him to me, and it became more cheerful.

Cats are amazing people. They live among us, depend on us, but keep their independence high, and they have their own special, complex life, which only slightly touches ours. They have their own calendars, their own special roads and passages, and key places on the earth's territory, which rarely coincide with

ours. I have always respected Titus' privacy, but on this night I was immensely glad that it came into contact with mine.

So we spent a day in the hayloft without going out. And then I woke up in the morning and saw that neither mother nor Titus was there. Convulsively scattered hay. Someone was walking down the street. In the house of Babarikov, opposite, Vovka's mother went and closed the shutters. I feel better. Mother called busily from the yard:

"Give us your things, let's go." There is an empty room behind the tram line. Here they are surrounded by barbed wire.

I searched for Titus for a long time, called, squeaked, but he seemed to fall through the ground. Let's go without him. Across the square, running from pillar to pillar, the German was aiming at someone. At first we got stuck in the fence, then we saw that he was shooting at the cat. And dead dogs and cats lay everywhere. I mentally said goodbye to Titus, who also turned out to be objectionable to Hitler's occupying troops.

Along the tram line, the prisoners dug holes, dug in poles, pulled barbed wire. At the newsstand there is an announcement:

RESTRICTED AREA. FOR A STAY WITHOUT
SPECIAL PERMISSION - SHOOTING

Directly opposite this board was a long, low hut with tiny windows, fit only for demolition; five doors with vestibules led into it from the yard.

Probably Jews used to live here, but now all the rooms were occupied by refugees. But it turned out that there was another leaky door around the corner. There was a stove in the empty closet, and there was a bench.

We spread out a bed on the floor, raised a stool to the rank of a table, and I went to look for chips for the stove.

Masses of people

The last printed communication of the invaders with the city of Kiev:

UKRAINIAN PEOPLE! MEN AND WOMEN! After two years of rebuilding on the ground, the war is approaching again.

The German command wants to preserve its forces and therefore is not afraid to leave certain areas.

The Soviet command, on the contrary, does not spare commanders and fighters at all, frivolously counting on supposedly inexhaustible human reserves.

Therefore, the Germans, with all their reserves, will hold out longer, and this is of decisive importance for the final victory.

You now understand that the German command is forced to take measures that sometimes severely infringe on individuals in their personal lives.

But this is war!

Therefore, work diligently and voluntarily when called upon by the German institutions.

GERMAN COMMANDER *) "New Ukrainian Word", September 30, 1943, after which the newspaper ceased to exist.

It looked like this in real life. With butts, beatings, shooting in the air, they drove out into the streets everyone who could and could not walk - a minute was given for training, and it was announced: the city of Kyiv was evacuated to Germany, there would be no more city.

It was eerily similar to the march of the Jews in 1941. There were masses of people - with roaring children, with old people and the sick. Knots intercepted by ropes, shabby plywood suitcases, purses, toolboxes... Some grandmother carried a wreath of onions thrown around her neck. Several infants were carried in a wheelchair, the sick were carried on their backs. There was no transport other than wheelbarrows and prams. There was already pandemonium on Kirillovskaya. People with bundles, gigs, carriages - all this stood still, then moved a little, stood still again; there was a strong roar of the crowd, and it looked like a fantastic demonstration of beggars. There were no mourners: everyone left.

My mother and I looked out the window at this procession. The appearance of trams was enchanting: I had never seen such a gloomy line of trams in my life.

The Germans let them in to speed up the export. The trams made a ring around Petropavlovskaya Square, the refugees were driven into them, there was a howl and crying, they climbed

through the doors, handed things through the windows, put the children on. All this is right in front of our window. The policeman said ironically:

- Did you want to meet the Bolsheviks? Come on, come on, come on.

Without waiting for the dogs to chase us, we took the bundles and left. Just in time, because the last crowds were running up. Near the school, a gray-green chain of soldiers blocked the street shoulder to shoulder, and behind it was emptiness, complete desertion. We approached a crowded tram.

"Let's go to the next one," said the mother.

They approached him.

"Let's go to the next one," said the mother. The chain of trams started moving, advanced a little and stopped - a traffic jam. We ran from one tram to another, not daring to get on. The Germans no longer shouted, did not shoot - they just waited patiently.

Mother grabbed my hand and dragged me back to the hut, they jumped into the yard. All doors are open, not a soul. We rushed to our closet, closed ourselves on a hook. Mother sat down on the floor, looking at me with terrible eyes with bottomless black pupils. We sat without moving until the last tram left.

It was getting dark outside, the occasional clatter of boots. Peter and Paul Square was completely empty, strewn with pieces of paper and rags. About five meters from the window stood a German sentry with a machine gun on the pavement; I could see him only by looking sideways, pressed against the wall; I froze like a baby and stopped breathing when he turned.

The next day, groups of caught people were chased away, combed, and sentries, taking turns, all stood at our window, and this is what saved us: this is how ducks save themselves, which sometimes live safely under the very nest of a hawk.

We had no idea what would happen next and what happened to our grandfather now, whether he was alive at all. But I came up with a plan. If they find us, then, perhaps, they will not shoot in the room, but will take us out into the yard; there we must jump in different directions and run, only not into the street, but deep into the yard, further along the gardens to the embankment;

it is long, overgrown with bushes, it is difficult to search without a dog, but since there will be dogs, you need to run further - to the meadow, quickly run and dodge, in the meadow you rush into the swamp, into the reeds, and sit there, in which case you dive and breathe through Kamyshin, I read that they did this in Russia, fleeing from the Tatars. Then there will be complete, perfect security.

I told my mother all this in a whisper and offered the grenade. She waved away the grenade, thought about the swamp. We didn't talk, we didn't move. There was complete silence all around.

-
-

Then it became known that the Germans really put the population of Kyiv in freight trains and took them to the West. The main masses spread and fled in Poland, many died along the way, some ended up in Germany, some even ended up in France.

Numbers. Before the war, Kyiv had 900,000 inhabitants. By the end of the German occupation, 180,000 remained in it, that is, much less than lay dead in Babi Yar alone. During the occupation, every third inhabitant of Kyiv was killed, but if we add those who died of starvation, did not return from Germany and simply disappeared, it turns out that every second person died.

6.6 "WAR OF THE WORLDS"

When we ran out of water and there was no food, and the sentry was removed and the city became completely empty and dead, we got out, parted the barbed wire under the very sign "For staying - execution" and went home through the square. They thought: in this zone there is less chance of combing.

In the square there used to be flower beds and a playground with swings - how could you think that you would sneak around here, responding with life! We ran across, crouching, vigilantly looking around, ready at any moment to fall to the ground, but the square was empty and nowhere was a sound. Dog and cat corpses rot.

Mom only threw up her hands when she saw our hut. The gates were open, the doors were smashed and torn off their hinges, the window was smashed, books, broken dishes, my various photographic accessories were scattered everywhere. The Germans were staying in the house: the rooms were full of straw, magazines, tin cans, doors were torn out of the closet, a zinc trough was shot through.

There was an icon lying under the wall of the barn, which, I remembered exactly, my grandfather hid in the cellar. We rushed to the shed. They did not find a hatch, but simply raked the ground and with crowbars dug a hole into the cellar, various shreds of matter hung in it, and there lay an old shabby fox boa with a torn off tail. Mom folded her arms and screamed.

I climbed into the hole, rummaged around, found an empty suitcase and a crowbar with which they were hammering. Icons were scattered around the shed. The most important, strict Mother of God with an old child was broken, and now, finally, all her gilded leaves, flowers and pimples were in my hands. They were primitively twisted, made of tin, cold and hard, nothing interesting.

I tried to look under the salary, unfolded it, and it turned out that there was a painted board of the icon. It was all painted, and then someone made a salary and covered everything, except for the faces and hands of the Mother of God with the Child. Nothing else of interest was found in the case. At that time, we had no idea about Rublev and ancient Russian painting, I was taught that icons are nothing but stupidity and deceit, so I swung and threw the Mother of God so that she, having turned somersaults several times, flew into the garden.

Then a desperate cat howl was heard behind the trash. When we arrived, the cat Titus apparently hid - and only now found out. He got out, squeezing with all his might, with goggling eyes, voicing in a mournful bass voice, telling how bad it was for him here, lonely, how he was afraid and hid. He jumped on my chest, clung to me with his claws, climbed his muzzle into my mouth, bumped his forehead - in a word, he poured out his joy in every possible way.

I myself was very glad that he was so quick-witted that all the time the Germans were standing, he never fell into their hands. We became more cheerful, and we took up the cleaning.

There was a barrel full of water under the drainpipe - we will not perish from thirst. Rummaged in the garden, dug up a few forgotten potatoes. Feral rabbits hopped about the vegetable gardens, as fast as hares, but there was no way to catch them. The mother did not dare to drown: smoke from the chimney is visible. She placed two bricks side by side on the ground and lit a fire between them. There were only a few matches, which is bad, but we decided to keep the coals constantly.

The neighboring houses were gutted, the windows were broken, the doors were open, there was a stool on the street, there was a book, a bucket, garbage. I decided to explore the surroundings and went to the Engstrom house.

He entered, bumping into jars and pots rolling on the floor, examined the shelves of the cupboard, cabinet, looked under the bed - and was not mistaken, he found a rusk lying around.

This inspired me, I jumped over the fence and went on. In the neighboring house there was the same pogrom, even someone shat on the floor.

I examined the cellar. Since there were no matches, he fumbled in the dark, bumped into slippery boards and found what he was looking for: there was a bunch of old, spoiled potatoes, as well as a few wilted carrots. It was already something.

Crossing the street, he looked at the house in which the Kobtsy lived, and almost dropped his prey from horror. From the broken window, the bloodshot little eyes of a shaggy wild boar looked at me.

It was a stuffed boar Kobtsev, apparently, some German joker put it out the window. Taking the potatoes, I returned to the scarecrow, examined it, shoved it in the snout, and it fell into the room. I climbed out the window behind him.

The glass crunched underfoot, the floor was littered with papers, old letters, albums turned out of the drawers of the desk. I picked up, examined now a broken porcelain figurine, now a spoon with monograms, now a book - they lay in piles in the

corners - and threw everything back. All this made no difference to me.

I picked up the stuffed boar and fixed it in the window again. Then he found a deer, a wolf, a fox, for a long time he strengthened and propped them up with books in all windows, in a pleasant company with a boar. It became fun for me, I decided to go outside and see what this doi looks like with animal muzzles in the windows. Nothing funny...

Pulling out the chest of drawers one by one, I found a warehouse of photographs that the old woman had once shown. They stood like a filing cabinet, strictly in size, they were already familiar to me ladies, mustaches, children in sailor suits, Nicolas by a car on cart wheels and Sevochka by a bookcase airplane. It was the most expensive collection of people close to her, and I thought: it means that she and Mima fled very hastily if they left her.

These same-type cardboard boxes didn't say anything to me, but now they were no one's, everything collapsed, and I wondered if they could be used for something. He took out the entire "file cabinet" along with the box, went out into the garden and began to launch photographs in different directions. They flew excellently, spinning and gliding like saucers, stuck in the bushes, flew over the fences into the street.

Finally, I got tired of this too, I pushed the box into the ditch, went to the hut of our neighbor Mishura, remembering that she also had a cellar. Unfortunately, her cellar had already been cleaned out, only a few flattened old cucumbers remained at the bottom of the tub. I began to get them, in dill and mold, wiped them on my pants and gnawed. I sat in a dark, damp corner of the cellar, munching cucumbers and thinking that it had become like in Wells' War of the Worlds, when the Martians came to earth, then they themselves began to die out: everything was ruined, everything was empty, and there were no people.

6.7 PROFESSION - ARSONISTS

We lived in complete solitude and silence. Once or twice German troops passed along Kirillovskaya, tanks rumbled, but they did

not go past our house. It happened that cannons were rattling from the direction of Vyshgorod, but in general everything was quiet, as if there was no front.

I studied all the surrounding houses; for convenience, in order not to appear on the street, he made holes in the fences. My tracks, like those of the cat Titus, passed over the roofs of barns, through manholes and windows: I was looking for food.

And suddenly the street was filled with noise, the roar of wheels. We hid in fear: the German unit had arrived. Officers quickly entered the yard, stomped along the porch, flung open the door, and were frightened. The front one pulled out a pistol and pointed it at his mother:

Mother, baby! Why? Tow truck, tow truck!

Mother began to explain something. The officer, not listening, said:

- Puff! Puff!

We stood neither alive nor dead. But they quickly examined the apartment, showed us with gestures: out.

The soldiers were already opening the gates, and a luxurious passenger car with some big bosses drove into the yard. No one paid any attention to us, we quickly went to the barn.

Frantic activity unfolded: a telephone exchange and radios were dragged into the house; signalmen ran, unwinding coils of wires; batmen briskly dragged a nickel-plated bed, a sofa, pots of flowers from neighboring houses; At the gate, now and then messengers on horseback stopped.

A truck with things drove in, two Russian girls were spinning around and ordering. The German soldiers obeyed them implicitly.

The authorities had a lot of things: women's fur coats, felt boots, cuts, even a baby stroller - apparently, he was going to send to Germany. The radio blared in the house, the cook turned the heads of the geese and gutted them. It became fun and noisy.

One girl was black, the other blond, both pretty, plump, with capricious voices and lazy manners. They called each other Shura and Lyuba.

- Did you stay? the little black Shura asked her mother.
"You could easily get shot. Or maybe they will kick you

out, depending on who you get, they are like animals, these Germans. Nothing alive will remain here anyway, so don't hope in vain, the front will stand here for a long time, and the city will burn down.

- Why so long? the mother asked.

"Our general was ordered not to surrender Kyiv at any cost. The front will stop here, you'll see.

- And you, who are you, translators? Mom asked.
- BUT! Shura waved her hand and laughed. "In general, we are under the general, we are retreating from Kharkov itself with him.

"He likes to sleep with two," Lyuba said cynically, chewing on a pie. - We warm it from two sides, old, it freezes at night.

They laughed. A soldier came and called his mother to the kitchen to peel vegetables and chop meat, she went and fussed there until the evening. She ran for a minute, brought me a rich general's soup.

I decided not to hang around and not loom before my eyes, sat down in the hayloft, took all of Pushkin with me, read Eugene Onegin. It used to be taken more than once, but for some reason it didn't suit me, I liked it more about Pugachev and Belkin's stories. And then suddenly he opened it - and could no longer tear himself away, forgot about the hayloft, about all these Germans, reveled in the music:

You appeared to me in dreams
Invisible, you were already sweet to me,
Your wonderful look tormented me,
Your voice was heard in my soul
For a long time. . .

He read until night, while he could make out the letters, then he lay on the hay, sorted through this music in his memory, grieved that Titus was not there: as soon as the Germans entered, Titus again fell through the ground.

The general stood for three days and withdrew as suddenly as he appeared. They immediately rolled up the wires, loaded the sofa, the nickel-plated bed, the pots of flowers - and the general with the whole unit left to the north, to Pushcha-Voditsa.

But the house was empty for only a few hours: Vlasovites appeared on the street - with an accordion, cheerful, noisy. And we were glad that they were not Germans, but our own, and everyone spoke Russian, and we here, for a long lonely sitting, had already lost the habit of hearing our own speech. They weren't even surprised to see us. They just said that our house is healthier than others, so they will live in it.

They immediately settled down, argued about something, shouted and laughed - such a recklessly convulsive mob. They started a gramophone, and they had an abyss of records, only at first something went wrong: some kind of croaking through hissing and wheezing, it turns out, Lenin's speech (and before the war they sold it with a load to Katyusha). One went out onto the porch, launched Lenin over the fence onto the pavement, so that he shattered into a thousand pieces, and the gramophone began to play "Gop, my Greeks."

"So, mother, we arrived with the task of destroying all this," said their platoon leader, the former commander of the Red Army, smiling gloomily. "Cry, don't cry, this is our order. We will burn all these houses, there will be a dead zone, and there will be no more Kiev, say goodbye to Kiev. And leave before it's too late. Well, while we are here, I will say that you are serving us, and others will come - bang, and you are gone. It's very simple. In truth, and we should spoof . . .

The Vlasovites began by stealing a cow from the Germans. This daring operation was carried out somewhere behind the bridge, but the Germans sniffed out the trail, ran around our square angry, with machine guns. And at our gates there was a formidable sentry-Vlasov, and in the barn the lads tore off the skin from the cow.

In the evening they had a mountain feast, played the accordion, danced so that plaster fell from the ceiling, and desperately drank, crawled out into the yard, lay in all corners. "Oh, let's dance before we die!" they shouted.

But in the morning everyone was in uniform, like cucumbers, lined up and went to Pushcha-Voditsa.

They returned late, tired, sooty and smelling of gasoline, carrying large bales of miscellaneous junk.

- Started, - said the platoon mother. “Hundreds of houses were burned today.
- Doused with gasoline?
- Where gasoline, where straw. It depends on skill. We have a norm for each, and we must watch that it burns to the ground. It is as if for evil: like an accidental fire, it flares up by itself, but as it should be burned, it does not light up. Work!..

And things from there?

- Things from the pits.
- Where do you put so much?

— Change to vodka.

Indeed, two of them immediately went over the bridge with bundles and returned with a canister of moonshine: they were bartered from the Germans. Others, meanwhile, launched a rabbit hunt in accordance with all the rules, only heard: bang! bang!

Still others went through the gardens with ramrods, slowly, in an unfolded chain, as if they were looking for mines. Their eye was shot, they found a hole right away: they stuck a ramrod into the ground, felt it and began to dig. They got a chest or a barrel, dragged a heap of clothes, linen, they were especially happy when they found a gramophone or a guitar.

- The German thugs will take everything!

The second evening they drank, yelled at the whole Kurenevka, broke one accordion, played on another. We got gasoline from them, sat and listened. There was something creepy about this fun.

The platoon commander saw the light, came in drunk, sat down, clutched his head.

“Mother, mother, we are lost. They marched for the freedom of Russia. That’s how freedom is. . .

- Are you one of those who say that the weapon was turned?
- Who turned the weapon, who from captivity, from hunger and death. And the Germans are not fools, they immediately did the most dirty work for us, so that there was no way back, and sat down, up to their ears. And with the

Germans, the path to the first crossroads, and if we get caught by the red ones, they will hang us by the balls.

"Is there really no salvation?"

What salvation? Where is salvation in the world now?

A friend came to call him:

- Michael, come on! It's like this forever: if he doesn't finish drinking, he immediately goes to this bad sophia. Let's go have a drink.

Mikhail jumped up, growled hysterically, tearing at his shirt on his chest:

- Eh, they will spank us somewhere, like sons of a bitch!

"That's possible," the friend readily agreed. "But why ruin a shirt?"

For several days, every morning, lining up in a platoon, they went to their work in the area of the Throw Sadness park. Then they decided that they had to go far and moved behind the embankment. We were alone in the house again.

We sat as quiet as mice. At night, powerful silent glows could be seen from behind the embankment, ominous precisely in their complete silence. The "dead zone" was approaching.

6.8 HOW MANY TIMES SHOULD I SHOT?

By the time I was fourteen years old on this earth, I had committed so many crimes that I should have been shot at least this many times:

1. Didn't extradite a Jew (my friend Shurka).
2. Sheltered the prisoner (Vasily).
3. Wore felt boots.
4. Violated curfew.
5. Hiding the red flag.
6. Did not fully return what was taken in the store.

7. Did not pass the fuel.
8. Didn't hand over surplus food.
9. Hung up a leaflet.
10. Stole (beets, peat, firewood, Christmas trees).
11. Worked underground with a sausage maker.
12. Fled from Germany (in Vyshgorod).
13. Secondary fled (at Priorka).
14. Stole a gun and used it.
15. Had ammunition.
16. Did not comply with the order for gold (did not inform on Degtyarev).
17. Did not show up for registration at the age of 14.
18. Didn't inform about the underground.
19. Was anti-German and pandered to anti-German moods (there was an order to be shot for this too).
20. He stayed in the forbidden zone for forty days, and for this alone he had to be shot forty times.

At the same time, I was not yet a member of the party, a Komsomol member, an underground worker, I was not a Jew, a gypsy, I did not have pigeons or a radio, I did not make open speeches, I was not taken hostage, but I was the MOST ORDINARY, ordinary, inconspicuous, little man in a cap.

But, if you scrupulously follow the rules established by the authorities, according to the principle "if you have done it - get it", then I have already DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE twenty times.

I live stubbornly on, and crimes multiply catastrophically, so I stopped counting them, but I just know that I am a terrible, but still not caught, criminal.

I live almost by a misunderstanding, only because in the haste and confusion, the rules and laws of the authorities are not completely, not perfectly implemented. Somehow I slip into the meshes of nets that were not mended and leave by the grace of chance, just as I could have been caught by the same mercy. Everyone walks on a thread, no one depends on their own will, but depends on the case, situation, someone's mood, and to a very large extent - on their fast legs.

And from what else? Today, one two-legged bastard arbitrarily sets one rule, tomorrow another bastard comes and adds another rule, the fifth and tenth, and God knows how many more will be born in the darkness of the Nazi, [NKVED, royalist, Marxist, Chinese, Martian brains of our uninvited benefactors, their name is legion.]

But I want to live!

To live as long as I have been allowed by my mother-life, and not by two-legged degenerates. How dare you, what right do you have to take upon yourself the decision of the question of MY life:

HOW LONG SHOULD I LIVE

HOW DO I LIVE

WHERE SHOULD I LIVE

WHAT SHOULD I THINK

WHAT SHOULD I FEEL

WHEN SHOULD I DIE?

I want to live long until the very traces of you remain!

I hate you, dictators, enemies of life, I despise you as the most disgusting thing that the earth has ever given birth to. Damned. Damned! DAMNED!!!

6.9 FIVE DAYS AND NIGHTS OF AGONY

November 1, Monday

On Monday night, I felt a death dread. There were no direct reasons. There was just a dull darkness around, in it lay a dead city. I had a premonition that my life would end today.

Everyone has moments when we clearly imagine our future inevitable death. One earlier, the other later, but without fail, with a chilling soul, we clearly understand that the moment will

come when this "I" of mine will cease to exist. He will stop breathing, thinking, these palms, heads, eyes will not be here. And everyone is suffocating in their own way, discarding this disgusting feeling, clutching at a soothing straw: "It's not today yet. It's still a long way off."

For the first time I experienced such a feeling when my grandmother died, but that was nonsense compared to what had piled on me that night. The fact is that I could not grasp the "not yet today" - it was on every day that "today" could happen. I suffocated.

The silence was dizzying. It's like you're tied up in a black bag or buried alive deep underground, you can't even writhe, and it's useless to twitch: there's no way out.

He got down from the stove, groped with icy hands for an oil lamp, matches, carefully, by touch, in complete darkness, went out into the yard. As if he never came out - the same darkness, the same bag, and not a rustle, as if his ears were blocked. I took a shovel and climbed under the house.

A low hole led under the house, barely squeezed through it, and further, between the ground and the beams, there was a space of only twenty centimeters. But I crawled, raking in the sand with my chin, sprawled out, holding an oil lamp with one hand, pulling up a shovel with the other, I stumbled upon poles and dead rats dried up like parchment. I pushed one away in annoyance, it rolled with the sound of an empty box.

When I got far enough, I lit the oil lamp and set it in the sand. The face was covered in dust and cobwebs. I wiped myself off and, lying on my side, began to dig.

At first it was uncomfortable, each shovel had to be taken out, wriggling. Then I rolled into the dug hole, where I could get up on my elbows, and began to dig faster.

The sand was dry and loose, full of broken bricks against which the shovel gnashed. Soon I became wet, but in the pit I could kneel. It turned out uneven, crumbling, like an oblong funnel. I dug out shards, a four-sided nail, newspaper fragments came across in the sand. Everything here has been preserved as it was during the construction of the house under the tsar, and,

probably, there were no longer those people who printed and read these newspapers or threw away broken bricks.

I needed the pit to hide myself. Indeed, I became calmer. Here I could die only in three cases: if they find me with dogs, if a bomb hits the house, if the house burns.

I thought I was all alone, and nearly passed out when two green lights flashed nearby. It was Titus who came and looked with huge eyes.

I almost burst into tears from gratitude to him, joy and warmth. I dragged him to my knees - he did not protest, on the contrary, he bumped his forehead and purred, and we began to sit, read fragments of the press half a century ago.

We carefully studied the trade announcement that some Schmidt has the honor to offer a large selection of the best Swiss gramophones, with Amur needles and you can buy a luxurious set of records from him, and the prices are cheap ... For some reason, he was also buying up watches, pearls and antiques. It's crazy, there were once times on earth: people lived quietly, bought watches, gramophones, pearls ... It's hard to believe. And Titus and I just lacked a gramophone.

I fell asleep imperceptibly, curled up in the sand, and when I woke up, the hole under the house was glowing: it meant it was already daytime. The cat left, I froze, and in general it seemed to me not as comfortable and safe here as at night. Entire curtains of dirty cobwebs hung from the floorboards. This low floor crushed and oppressed. My nerves flared up again: it seemed like the house was collapsing and crushing me with all its weight. I hurriedly crawled towards the hole like bellies, as if rats were biting my heels, and jumped out.

To calm down, he bent over a barrel of rainwater to drink. Many fallen leaves floated in the water, I caught them, blew on the water; she was sweet, very tasty. I also thought: if someday I live and see a real plumbing, I will still drink rain water, I like it.

There were some sounds. I shuddered, raised my head and saw that a German soldier with a rifle was entering the courtyard from the street, and on the street I managed to notice a second

one. Instinctively and very stupidly, I sat down behind the barrel, knowing full well that they would see me now.

When it seemed to me that they were not looking in my direction, I went around the corner of the house, again stooping stupidly, superstitiously not looking back and not seeing them, as if they were not supposed to see me either. I heard: "E! .. E!" straightened up and stopped.

The soldier looked at me sternly. He was dark-haired, stocky, about thirty years old, baggy, in dirty, worn-out boots. His face was very ordinary, everyday, somehow familiar - just like a locksmith from "Sport" ... His cap sat askew, dark curls famously knocked out from under it. He said in German:

- Come on.

I took a few steps along the wall.

"They'll shoot you," he said sternly, and began to raise his rifle.

It was obviously loaded, because he did not click the shutter. Another German approached him, took him by the elbow, said something calmly and indifferently, it sounded something like: "Come on, don't." (That's what I thought.)

The second soldier was older, a kind of elderly uncle with sunken cheeks. The black-haired man retorted, turning his head for a moment. At that moment - I understood - I had to jump and rush aimlessly. Wow, right now my grenades were lying in the entryway. This was the moment I had foreseen.

There was no time even to shout: "Pan! Pan! Wait!" The black-haired man simply raised his rifle, turned his head away for a moment, objecting to the elderly man, and this was the last moment of my life.

I understood all this without having time to move. It's like when you push a decanter or a flower pot with your elbow - you see how it leans, falls right before your eyes, and you have time to think what you need to grab, that now, so whole and perfect, it will break, but you don't have time to make a movement, only with annoyance and resentment, you think - and he is shattered.

In front of my face I saw - not in a movie, not in a picture, not in a dream - a black hole in the barrel, I physically felt how it, singed, smelled disgustingly of gunpowder burning (and the

elderly one, it seems, continued to say something, but dark-haired - grief! woe!—did not listen), and for a long, long time the fire did not fly out.

Then the hole moved from my face to my chest, I instantly, in amazement, realized that this is how they would kill me: in the chest! And the gun went down.

I did not believe, and already believed, and waited for it to begin to rise again. The old man glanced at me, touched the black-haired man on the shoulder, and left the yard. The black-haired man said to me sternly:

- Whee!

Only then did I at last become neither alive nor dead, and drenched in a cold sweat. As if in a dream, I went around the corner on legs that were trembling, cold, thin as wires, entered the passage, stood facing the corner and stood there, swaying.

No matter how much I thought later, I still don't understand what it was. Joke? And the old man said:

"Stop being childish, don't scare him"? Or seriously? And the elderly said: "Come on, why did he surrender to you"? If it was a joke, then why didn't he smile a little later? Seriously, why didn't you shoot? He just had to press a little with his finger. I should probably remember and thank this index finger on my right hand every year on November 1st that left me alive.

November 2, Tuesday

I belong to people who unconditionally love bright light. I never have too many electric lights or too much sun. This is neither good nor bad, but simply, apparently, a biological feature of the body. I never wore dark glasses, because the brighter around, the more dazzling sandy beaches or snowy plains, the better for me, my mood is higher, and my eyes not only do not hurt, but, on the contrary, bathe in a sea of light.

Mother's eyes hurt. She closed the windows with curtains, I opened them. When everyone was tormented by the summer heat, I just got a taste. And on outrageous cloudy autumn days, when you suddenly think that somewhere at this moment in the Crimea, or Africa, or on the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the sun shines brightly and burns, suddenly such longing will come

flooding in, even cry ... Lucky, these migratory birds, without any permission, can take themselves and fly.

I hate the ranks of clouds, when the sun either shines or hides for a long time. You look, you look at this damn cloud: and when will it pass? Recalling an event that took place many years ago, I will unmistakably say whether the sun was shining then or whether it was a cloudy day.

All this to the fact that I was very happy when, after cloudy October days, the sun finally came out.

It was as if they didn't shoot me yesterday: I became carefree, confident. As if since I was lucky, then this is my fate, and I will get out further.

I put grenades in my pockets, now a scientist, I did not part with them, from time to time I checked whether the hats could be unscrewed. I looked around vigilantly, like a cat, ready to disappear at any moment. Overwhelmed by a thirst for activity, he dug a trench under the house, dug a hole so that his mother could fit in it.

She climbed down, looked, but was not delighted, but offered to hide the suitcase there. I quickly did it, and also buried it deeper so that it would not burn out. And in the fire, I had no doubt - if not from the battle, then our hut cannot be saved from the Vlasovites. I looked at her to remember what she was like.

Again steps and voices in the street. I rushed to the hole and saw godfather Lyaksandra and godfather Mikolay moving slowly across our deserted square.

The old woman led the blind man carefully, protecting him from potholes and cobblestones, saying something. He was wearing his famous blue-glass and plywood glasses. When they found us, they both burst into tears. They were looking for people.

The mother immediately took them into the house and fed them. They couldn't find food and hadn't eaten anything for two days.

"Sit down at the graveyard," the old woman complained. - Mustache all the same, old man, let's go to joke people.

Mother almost cried. No, just imagine what loneliness is like in an extinct city! She left the old people to spend the night, they

agreed that they should stick together: save themselves together, die too. They were walking, walking, laying down, but suddenly they decided that they needed to look after their apartment in the DTS building and that it was better for them to sleep there in the basement, they were downright insane, let them go to the basement, and that's it.

Mother gave them potatoes, which they accepted with low bows, and they trudged back across the square. I said:

You poke around the yards, the cellars.

The old woman threw up her hands.

- To other people's pits? Krasci? Lord forgive you, my dzetka!

For a long time I looked after them with apprehension: they would not shoot. They were very unusual, just "out of this world." They walked away across the square, through this ruined world, arm in arm, talking.

I was already falling asleep when the engine started. Beams of light shone through the windows. Directly across the garden, headlights resting against our hut, something like a tank was coming with a roar. Without slowing down, it crashed into the fence, only the chips flew, and it seemed that it would crash into the house, but it stopped under the wall, exactly in the place where my wonderful hole was. It was too late to run. Doors were slamming in the yard, the Germans were talking cheerfully.

The mother, as if someone had advised her, rushed to light the oil lamp so that they would see the light and not be afraid when they entered. It was rightly done: they even wiped their feet on the porch, knocked. The mother responded. They entered, energetic, fit, smiling.

— Guten abend! - and showed with gestures what they want: - Shlafen, shlafen, spat! "Bitte," said the mother.

They habitually walked around the room, settling down, immediately orienting themselves where to hang the overcoat, where to throw the bag. They began to carry blankets and boxes from the car. In the meantime, we rolled up our beds and went to the other half. I calmed down a little, went out and looked at what kind of car. It was an all-terrain vehicle, in my opinion, armored, a gun was attached to it.

The Germans were talking cheerfully, ten minutes later they knocked on our half:

“Matke, boy, come here!”

We entered. In addition to the oil lamp, which the mother did not dare to take away, a dazzling carbide bulb burned, but blinked, and one fiddled with it. There was a mountain of food and drink on the table. Wine - in clay bottles with colorful labels, instead of glasses - iron cups. The Germans pointed to the table like hospitable hosts:

- Bitte, bitte! Eat!

One handed me bread and ham. Shocked, I began to devour it, and my head began to spin.

There were three of them. Franz is elderly, red-haired, very calm. Herman is seventeen years old, black-haired, handsome and slender. I did not recognize the name of the third, he was the driver, sent a carbide, chewed a little and collapsed from fatigue.

Old Franz poured wine for my mother and me, shaking the clay bottle, and boasted:

France, Paris!

The wine was sweet and fragrant. Mom drank and told Franz that they are good Germans, but others go around and want us "bang-bang."

Franz frowned.

- This is not a soldier. This is a bandit, shame on the German nation. We are a front-line soldier, an artilleryman. War is bang-bang. Uterus, kinder - "bang-bang" no.

Herman took a harmonica out of his side pocket and played it. Franz drank the wine all the time, choosing his words with difficulty but stubbornly, telling them how terribly tired they were. The three of them were first in Norway, then they fought in Africa near Rommel, and now they have been removed from that Western Front. And everywhere they had to fight:

- Mein gott, mother! Here is war! There is a war! War, war.

This Franz was serious, courageous, as if salty, as if smelling of gunpowder through and through, I was afraid of him. But young Herman, only some three years older than me, this one was naive and likeable, like my Bolik, and he talked more to me.

“Franz is von Hamburg, their ist von Berlin,” he said proudly.
- I have been fighting for a year!

Is it scary to fight? I asked.

He smiled.

“Telling the truth is scary. France is not very scary. Russia is scary.

He immediately took out a photograph where he was taken with his father: a very respectable uncle in a hat, with a stick, and next to him a timid, bony boy in short pants against the backdrop of some kind of Berlin square.

Mother asked where the front was and whether Kyiv would be surrendered.

Franz immediately darkened. No, Kyiv will not be surrendered. The front is here in the forest. But the Russians will never enter Kyiv. There will be a terrible fight. If troops were transferred from France itself, oh, there will be such a thing! Yes, there will be Stalingrad, only for the Russians. He thought for a while and, after sitting for a while, repeated, pronouncing quite clearly: Stalingrad.

Mom said:

- The seventh of November is the biggest Soviet holiday.

— Ya, ya! Franz exclaimed. - Advice to want to take Kyiv holiday - October. But they don't take it, they die.

I became sad. He did not lie - he had a desire! And they treated us like people. It was a serious conversation. I asked:

- What if they take it? Are you retreating?

“Ya, ya, understand,” old Franz said seriously. - You are advised to wait, but I said, I am an alter soldier: you leave, leave, please. Here, die.

He began to explain that we needed to run somewhere to a village or a forest, dig a hole, sit and wait until the front moved back, and Kyiv was turned into a dead zone, that was Hitler's order.

Franz tapped his chest with his finger:

— That's me talking, alter soldier. I fight another Poland. This is how it is: advance, retreat. The Russian is tired.

The driver slept on the couch without undressing. Herman became depressed and put down his harmonica. Franz was drunk. We went to our room, heard that Franz and Herman had not slept for a long time, they were talking about something.

At night I woke up screaming. Mother desperately called:

- Tolya, Tolya! Oh help!

There was a fuss, a stool flew. Sleepy, I screamed:

- Who is there? Whom?

He lit a match, at first he was blinded by its light, then he saw how his mother was fighting with the red-haired Franz. He was heavily drunk, muttering in German, persuading her, pushing her.

On the stove, I always had torches prepared. I lit one and resolutely began to descend from the stove. Red-haired Franz turned into the light, stared at the fire with drunken eyes, looked thoughtfully at me, and dismissed his mother.

— Krieg, mother. War, nihts gut,” he said. - BUT!..

And, staggering, drunk to smithereens, hitting the door, he went out.

The mother, trembling, blocked the door with a pole.

"He's drunk, he's quite drunk," she said. It's good that you turned on the light. Sleep... Thank you.

For the first time I really felt like a man who can and should protect. I woke up many times until the morning, listened, checked the grenades under my pillow. Calculate days and hours. There were ninety-six hours left until November 7th. And all around is silence.

November 3, Wednesday

Wednesday November 3rd began on a glorious morning. The sky was very clear and blue. I went out onto the porch and literally choked on this freshness, purity, the morning sun.

You know this state when you look at the sky in the morning and want to have a good day, and if it's a day off, then you want to rush to get ready, wrap sandwiches in a bag and go fishing or just grass.

It was the day of the decisive battle for Kyiv, and now, reliving its beginning again and again, even if you kill me, I cannot

understand why on this beautiful, blessed land - with such a sky and such a sun - among people gifted mind, thinking, not just animals with instincts, but among thinking, understanding people, such extreme idiocy as war, dictatorships, terrors, all these mutual murders and sadistic bullying of some over others is possible.

Yes, yes, of course, all this is thoroughly analyzed by specialists of all “-isms”, and from the point of view of everyone it is perfectly explained politically, historically, economically, psychologically. Everything is dismantled, proven, everything is clear. But I still don’t get it.

Herman and the driver scooped up water from a barrel, washed themselves, laughed, and splashed. Red-haired Franz walked around rumped, he must have cracked his head after yesterday; the night incident seemed to have never happened, so he wanted to show.

Mom spread the chips under the bricks and began to cook. In daylight, the all-terrain vehicle did not look scary, an ordinary all-terrain vehicle, wheels in front, tracks in the back, a body under a tarpaulin. He stood peacefully at the house, looking at the world with attentively interrogative headlights, smelling of gasoline and dusty.

Franz and Herman lifted the tarpaulin and began unloading sacks of potatoes from the truck. I hung around, trying to guess why they needed so many potatoes.

But it turned out that there were shells under the potatoes. Either the quartermaster forced them to carry these potatoes, or they themselves grabbed this stuff somewhere, in any case, they were not going to trade it. They unloaded everything clean, asked for a broom and swept in the back. Herman untied the sack, poured a pood and a half on the ground, winked at me: take it, they say, this is for you.

Suddenly the earth shook.

It was so strange and out of place that I didn’t have time to get scared. The earth just shook underfoot, as probably happens during an earthquake, firewood fell in the barn, the doors slammed. This shaking of the earth lasted for several seconds

with a clear sky and a clear morning, and then a roar came from the direction of Pushcha-Voditsa.

It wasn't even a roar, it was a roar - a continuous avalanche, a sea of roar. I never heard anything like it again in my life, and I don't want to hear it: it was as if the earth itself was being torn and turned inside out.

Somehow I was thrown into the middle of the yard, I didn't understand: what was it, why, was the world collapsing, were the ramparts coming from there along the ground, like a tsunami? And the Germans also rushed about, anxiously looking in that direction, but behind the embankment there was only a blue sky.

The driver quickly climbed into the cab, craned his neck, but also saw nothing. Here the Germans exchanged two or three short phrases and quickly, busily began to load potatoes and shells back. Herman ran into the house, took out machine guns. Franz took out helmets and handed them out to everyone.

Mom stomped around the bricks, not knowing whether to continue cooking dinner, or she would not have time.

Far beyond the embankment, over Pushcha-Voditsa, the black dots of airplanes appeared. Because of the roar, they could not be heard, only dots crawled across the sky like mosquitoes. The sky around them was immediately covered with white flakes. They quickly passed over Pushcha-Voditsa, and as soon as they disappeared, a second wave appeared from behind the Dnieper - a little closer.

They passed through the explosions of anti-aircraft shells in the same rapid arc, and behind them came the third wave, even closer.

Wave after wave they bombed Puscha-Voditsa, capturing new and new arcs, exactly to the next.

Franz, Herman and the driver left the all-terrain vehicle and in helmets, with machine guns, stood by the barn, frowning, watching with concentration. Here the arc passed along the edge of the forest, now in the "Throw sadness" area, even closer . . .

I walked over and stood by, listening. The gunners were talking quietly, not taking their eyes off the bubbling, exciting performance in the sky:

— Ilyushin.

-Yes.

- There's a trench there.
- Set your sights.

Red-haired Franz took me by the shoulder and began to speak very seriously, anxiously, pointing to the garden, to my mother: they say, run, hide.

- Bang Bang. Council Ilyushin ... "Schwarzer Tod". I nodded my head, but, I don't know why, I didn't leave. Everything in me was tense to the limit. The Black Death was approaching, and maybe it was already the last minutes of life.

At that moment, one of the planes caught fire. He slowly, sideways went and disappeared behind the embankment. A parachute dome flared in the sky - one of the crew jumped out, and it was carried by the wind to the forest. A dot of a man hung under the white circle of the parachute - blatantly defenseless among anti-aircraft pops and trails. I do not think that he flew to the ground alive, and if he did, then he got to the Germans. The gunners were by no means happy looking at him. They, like me, frowned as he descended and disappeared.

Black, desperately roaring, almost at a strafing flight, attack aircraft in threes passed behind the embankment. They both bombed and fired - in general, a flurry of fire, and some debris, boards, earth flew up there. The sky was all pockmarked with ruptures. The next wave was supposed to come at us.

And she came.

They emerged from behind the gardens and houses, desperately low, monstrously low, right at hand. They roared so that their voices could not be heard, troika after troika rushed, each had a sparkling fire in front, and the last thing I remembered was the red-haired Franz clinging to the barn in an unnaturally sprawled position, who was pointing up a machine gun shaking from firing, but this it was like in a silent movie: the machine was shaking, but there was no sound, because there was a continuous roar; and everything started up.

I was thrown, knocked down, I screamed piercingly, not hearing myself: "Bombs!" - but it went something like "Bo-ay!",

it became black, it became light, the earth was thrown over, the earth fell into place, I found myself running on all fours, now I will hit my head on the porch. And there were no planes.

Herman came out from behind the barn, covered in sand from head to toe, with a contorted face, grabbed a new clip from the car to reload the machine gun, but did not have time.

From behind the gardens and houses, more planes shot out like black arrows. Herman climbed under the tracks of the all-terrain vehicle. I rushed into the house; at the same time, the glass in the window cracked like a star, lime and dust fell on me, and the hair on the top of my head moved, as if someone had stroked my hand. The planes disappeared, and the sound of crumbling glass was heard.

I somehow automatically and efficiently began to clean, shook my head so that the plaster would fall off it, looked at the stove and was surprised: in it, exactly one finger above my crown, there was a perfectly round hole gaping. I did not believe it, I leaned back against the stove, felt over my head, and my finger stuck into the hole. So that's who stroked my hair. I walked around the stove and looked from the other side. The opposite wall was intact, a fragment stuck inside the furnace.

Then I finally realized that I needed to save myself in a trench. I had no idea where my mother had gone. He went out, looking around, thinking: "Maybe she is already there," and at that moment, planes appeared from behind the gardens and houses.

I was shocked because, like a hare, I ran across the even and open garden to the trench, at the same time knowing perfectly well that I was an excellent target and that I would not run.

Out of the corner of my consciousness I noted that the planes were already in front of me, that in the garden next to me there was a huge hole and everything around was strewn with a layer of fluffy sand, on which I softly stomped, leaving a chain of footprints.

There were already planes - here. I saw the heads of the pilots and red stars on the wings, with the same edge of consciousness I automatically noted that columns of sand were flying up around me, and I felt very hurt that they were killing me, a fool, mistaking for a German. It was more an insult to themselves

and to fate, because at such a speed they wanted to look at who was down there: a German or not a German, especially since they knew that there was no population in the city.

There were so many sand columns, and somehow I ran between them. The planes and the trail caught a cold, but I kept running to the trench. He burst into it half-stunned, rushed into the darkest and farthest corner, badly bruising his mother. Joy! She was there and she was alive. But it rumbled again.

Airplanes burst out from behind gardens and houses, the earth shook as if some angry cyclops drummed on it, floor beams shook, jets of earth fell, mother roughly pushed me into the depths, fell from above, covering herself, and when the roar subsided, she looked out, muttering, as if praying:

- So them, so them!

She grabbed me, distraught, swaying, and said not so much to me as to "them":

- Let us die, but as much as possible - drop it. Beat them, so them! Let us, but let them!

I'm afraid you won't understand or believe it. OUR OWN people were sitting on the planes, who scratched and drove ALIEN, and they poured what they needed. That means how they are driven, bastards.

- Scratch, darlings, scratch! That's how it started.

Human adaptability is amazing. By lunchtime, I could already tell by the sound where the planes were flying and whether the danger was great. I got used to this kind of life. At intervals he ran into the house.

It looked picturesque: the walls were beaten with splinters, every single piece of glass flew out, on the roof - as if someone had thrown heaps of sand with a shovel, there were burnt bricks, although the pipe was intact. The bomb pit next to the hut was big enough for two trucks to fit in. There are many small craters everywhere, the earth is like smallpox.

The gunners were sitting in the crack behind the shed, huddled together, sprinkled with earth, they were no longer scribbling, but apparently they were thinking only about one

thing: how to survive. Machine guns were scattered around the yard.

Franz waved his hand at me.

- Leave! Leave, boy!

I waved it off. I looked around and thought: "It's a pity that this bomb didn't fly about twenty meters, but it went exactly at an all-terrain vehicle with a gun, however, our hut would then be gone."

A worried soldier came through the broken fence, called our gunners, they got out, but then a plane appeared, they, like rabbits, rushed back into the gap. I thought: "Yeah, you already have enough of a single plane."

After waiting, they ran after the soldier. I follow them, see what's up. There was no third Korzhenevsky house from us. Instead, there was a gaping hole, partly littered with boards and spattered with blood.

A poplar tree stood nearby, all peeled off by fragments, and the door of the house hung high on its top, catching on branches. That's where the bricks came from on our roof.

Soldiers and gunners began to pull apart the boards in the pit. On a table in the yard lay bright red, sand-stained chunks of meat, some with rags stuck to them. I thought maybe a cow was being slaughtered here. But I saw that the Germans were getting new ones out of the pit, passing them to each other and putting them in a heap on the table. They gave me a piece of the head with white protruding teeth. I got sick and left.

Many times I noticed that with a strong cannonade the weather deteriorates. Maybe it's accidental, but under the roar from Pushcha-Voditsa, the sky, so clear in the morning, began to be covered with clouds by lunchtime, and they, low and gray-haired, made the day dull, bad. They did not interfere with the stormtroopers. "Black Death" flew almost above the ground.

The gunners were washing their hands of blood, surrounding the barrel, when a rider galloped down the street, shouting something sharply, in a guttural voice. They rushed into the all-terrain vehicle. The engine was spitting smoke, the car drove out of the gate, taxied sharply, only the cannon dangled, and

all-terrain vehicles roared somewhere else, rushed, clanging along the pavement, to the north, to Pushcha-Voditsa, into the inferno.

November 4, Thursday

We thought we would never see them again, but they are back. During the night, the trembling of the earth and the cannonade subsided. Suddenly, the windows lit up under the headlights, the all-terrain vehicle drove into the yard and stopped under a lilac bush. I thought: "That's it, we went to battle, as if to the service, and in the evening we returned for the night."

They did not immediately go into the house, but in the dark they began to break the bushes and disguise the car. I went out, they ignored me. They unhooked the cannon, rolled it out into the street and pointed the barrel at the embankment.

The tarpaulin of the all-terrain vehicle hung in tatters. And when they entered the room and lit a carbide, it turned out that their appearance was indescribable: their burnt, soot-covered, bandaged hands were trembling. Young Herman looked especially shocked. He poked aimlessly in the corners, and seemed about to burst into tears. Franz handed me a bowler hat and asked me to bring some water.

- Big fire? I asked.
- ABOUT! - said Franz, and suddenly they all started talking, explaining, telling: they needed to speak out, and they did their best to explain with gestures and words of all the nations of Europe, how terrible it was there, impossible to describe, hail, fire, hell . . . Herman pulled out a dictionary from the bag, rummaged through it until he found the right word and repeated it several times with a desperate expression in his eyes:

— Horror. Horror! Understand? Horror!

From the whole flow of words, I caught the general meaning: that France or Africa is a resort compared to today's battle. The Russians hit with Katyushas. The rumble and earthquake in the morning - these were mostly Katyushas. The Russians advanced from the village of Petrivtsi and entered Puscha-Voditsa. The German units are crushed, defeated, the forest is on fire, the earth is on fire. They don't know how they survived.

“Oh boy, mein boy!” Red-haired Franz clasped his head in his hands, shook it, and froze like that, resting his elbows on the table.

All this was unexpected, because they arrived so cheerful, courageous, and now they behaved like frightened women.

Does Franz have children? I quietly asked Herman.

“Ya,” he replied. - There are three children. Dry.

Three.

I went out. The horizon in several places shone with strong crimson glows, from which the night seemed somehow blood-red. Occasionally, gunshots were heard.

Cars were honking near the school, commands were heard, some hysterical cries. It was like a demon was pushing me. I went out into the street, clinging to the fences, began to sneak up to the school to see what was there, and if the machine gun was bad, then steal it.

At the Engstrom house, a sudden fear stopped me. I turned my head, trying to figure out what was threatening me, and in the bloody light I saw a glow behind the barred fence of a man.

It was a man with a bag or box on his side. He stood motionless, looking straight at me. I froze as if hypnotized. I still imagined that he did not see me, and perhaps he hoped that I did not see him.

After standing like that, I slowly and soundlessly moved back, and when I darted into the house, everything in me was pounding, as if I had met a ghost. What kind of person, I realized only the next evening.

The glows faded, then flared up all night. The gunners did not drink, did not play the harmonica - they slept wearily.

Lyaksandra came running in the morning. She said that there were Germans in the school, the yard was full of all-terrain vehicles, the whole first floor was crammed with the wounded, they were screaming there, they were running out, the floors were covered in blood, there were few doctors. They came and took all the sheets and towels from Lyaksandra for dressing.

She heard that somewhere here, on Kurenevka, many people hid in a cave, if only they could cling to them. But where is this

cave? Mom again gave Lyaksandra potatoes, she went to feed her husband.

It seemed that at any moment a cannonade would begin and planes would fly, but time passed, and everything was quiet. The gunners began to patch holes and hesitantly say that the Russian breakthrough had been stopped, but they themselves hardly believed it. However, the day passed in painful silence.

In the twilight, the glow again became visible, rare gun rumbles were heard. And suddenly shells howled over our house. Explosions struck quite close. A bright glow broke out in the school yard. The shells hit the very crowd of all-terrain vehicles, the cars caught fire, ammunition began to burst in their bodies.

I climbed out onto the fence, with a pounding heart I watched the Germans rush about against the background of the fire, and then suddenly they ran in all directions and fell, hiding in the pits. Shells exploded in the fire, raising clouds of sparks, and scattered, snorting, fragments; the roar was like a bombing. I realized that yesterday's man was a scout and transmitted the coordinates, and was amazed at the accuracy with which the shells arrived without any adjustment, and there were only two of them.

The Germans began to pull out all-terrain vehicles from the school yard with a cable. From the flying shells, the DTS house caught fire. I ran, told my mother, she put on a scarf, and we rushed to save the old people, but we met them already on the street.

Lyaksandra and Mikolay were sitting in the basement when they saw that they were on fire. The old woman took the old man outside, rushed into the house herself, but only managed to grab a pan, a kitchen knife and spoons in the corridor. She kept walking, leading Mikolaj with one hand and carrying an aluminum pan with the other.

The DTS house burned like a torch all night, so there was no need to turn on the lights. Now there were four of us: the old people had no choice but to hold on to us. We thought about our grandfather that he had already died.

But he did not die, at that time he was sitting in sewer pipes, he knew them well.

November 5, Friday

Tit the cat got fat. I slept in a hole under the house, he came at night, lay on my chest, and all night I was choked with nightmares, I shoed him, but he stubbornly climbed on me to warm himself, dense and heavy, like a pig.

In the abandoned houses, an abyss of rats and mice divorced. Tit hunted in the barns, and slept in his free time, and it seems to him alone that the arrival of the front benefited. He was lonely because there was no cat or dog around.

In the morning I woke up from gunfire. The stormtroopers again arced across the sky. The same thing was repeated as on the third of November, but there was a difference.

The nerves of the Germans could not stand it. As soon as the plane was heard, they rushed in all directions. Stormtroopers flew over the very ground and worked with impunity, as if the fields were treated with pesticides.

Again the gunners were picked up by a messenger, again they left for Puscha-Voditsa. The ATVs that survived moved away from the school. At noon in the garden, other artillerymen set up a gun and began firing across the embankment. They fired so often, as if overfulfilling the plan, but disgracefully scattered at the sound of the aircraft. I did not give myself away, I only watched through the gap: how they load, clang the shutter, how ringing golden shells fly off. I thought: okay, you'll wash off, all these shells will be mine.

The firing of this gun, like the others, bothered me no more than the noise of a tram. When the "black death" flew, it was worse, but I regularly rushed somewhere, then got out, determined new funnels and was surprised that the hut was all intact.

I found the cat Titus in the barn, completely ignoring the war, took him, sleepy, in an armful, carried him to the trench, arranged him on a sack - he slept peacefully, not even waving his ear at breaks.

My mother didn't sharpen me: they say don't get out and don't look out, and then she was completely confused. How do you know where you will be shy: shy everywhere. I run into the trench, and she meets her from the trench to the hut, laughter and grief, one hope for good luck. It was so ingrained in her that

even later, when I desperately wandered among the minefields, engaged in defusing bombs and explosions, she did not scold me, she stopped forbidding me. From a life of constant fear, something seemed to break in her. She hardly saw anyone else in her life. She had only one me, she was so worried about me before, she was so worried, and there was no end to the reasons - that it turned into the opposite, otherwise the ordinary soul would not be able to endure.

The old men Lyaksandra and Mikolay flatly refused to go into the trench. They stayed in the house, and so I became a liaison between them and my mother. The old men removed the spring mattress from the bed, leaned it at an angle against the stove, covered it with wadded blankets on top - it turned out something like a hut in the room. They climbed in and sat cuddled up to each other. I came, turned away the blanket:

- Are you alive here?

Live, son. Thank God! Lyaksandra answered. - Is mom alive?

Full order, we will have lunch soon!

Blind Mikolay, very sensitive, said:

- From itch, itch, lyatsya two planes ...

I didn't hear anything at all, but Lyaksandra grabbed her hand:

- Get on, get on!

I climbed into their "hut", and indeed two planes flew over the roof, and small shells were fired.

Get away from the cannon," Mikolay said.

I rushed into the yard: indeed, the all-terrain vehicle was taking away the gun. I was delighted, went to collect the cartridge cases, but only stamped my foot in frustration: here, the devil, they collected all the cartridge cases and took them away.

Suddenly I saw Lyaksandra and Mikolay desperately rushing through the garden to the trench. She pulled him by the hand, but the old man did not keep up, brandishing a stick.

The Germans are there, the Germans! Lyaxandra screamed. Luxurious limousines drove into our yard. Signalers were already running, unwinding coils of red wires. The general returned. The yard was filled with officers, messengers rode on horseback, the

general shouted on the phone. I thought: well, now our hut is no better than others, and in general you won't sit here for a long time.

- Are you still alive? Shura called me from the window.
- Where is the front? I asked.

"Oh, oh, no one knows anything! Oh, what a fear," she said, eyes wide. - At night, Soviet tanks went, headlights were burning at each, and howling sirens, howling so terribly that they were tearing apart the soul, darkness, just darkness of these tanks, and they roared - and fire, and roar, well, death, the Germans just went crazy, fled like mice, and how we are still alive - I don't know. Kyiv surrender. Now. They don't hold anymore. There the general shouts to blow up the bridges and burn everything. We will now be followed by the last raid and torchbearers. Run, tell your mom! Tick somewhere.

- Where to tick?

I don't know anything, tick wherever you can!

I moved away from the window, decided not to tell my mother anything, because there was nowhere to run anyway.

Figures of German soldiers ran along the embankment, set up machine guns, and laid down. Rifle and machine-gun fire rushed from Pushcha-Voditsa. I was waiting for the last raid.

6.10 CHAPTER FROM THE FUTURE

Missing

Once, in early December, the guys and I went to Pushcha-Voditsa to collect grenades and mine explosives.

The forest was crippled, felled. Under the pines, in the bushes, there were broken cannons, burned-out all-terrain vehicles, tanks without turrets, unfired shells and mines lay in piles. And there were a lot of corpses around. Someone had already taken care of them, they were stripped and piled into heaps up to three meters high - pyramids of killed naked Germans of gray-blue color, decomposing, despite the frost.

[In one village, children rode down the mountains on naked corpses, sat down in twos, threes on horseback and descended as

if on ice. Gray-gray, straight, with cloudy glass eyes, the corpse in severe frost is hard to ringing. But now the frost was weak, and the heaps stank unbearably.]

One of the victims had red hair, I only saw half of the face, but I would swear it was old Franz. I can't be one hundred percent sure, however, but we didn't begin to approach and turn over because of the smell, and so what? I think many families in Germany still do not know where and how their men died. If these lines catch the eye of the children of the missing Franz from Hamburg, an elderly red-haired artilleryman who participated in the capture of Poland, Norway, took Paris and fought with Rommel in Africa, then they may know that their father died in the Soviet Union along with thousands of others fathers just like that - and lay, gray-blue, in a pile of corpses throughout the winter of 1944, then in the spring they were raked into ditches and ditches and covered with earth.

The forests have grown again, and now these places are no longer to be found.

Need a sliver of history?

Retreating, the Germans nevertheless caught Bolik and took him into the convoy. He fled from there and came on the third day after the liberation of Kyiv. There were no relatives, the house was gutted, he lived with us, with a neighbor, then he was mobilized into the army. And our Bolik went, finally, to fight for the front for real; I thought that it was there that he reached the machine gun.

The next time he came only somewhere in the autumn of 1944. He was still the same lobastenky, lanky, but even more stretched out and matured. He even had the rank of junior sergeant. He spent seven months on the Finnish front, somehow fell into the water, caught a cold, lay sick in the village for a long time, and now something went wrong with his lungs and heart, he was sent to Kyiv for treatment. He was thin, pale, they say about such people: he staggers from the wind.

- How? What? Where have you been? I pounced. How did you fight? He waved his hand sadly.

- Yes ... in the medical service, in the wagon train.
- And the machine gun?
- It didn't work out. He only shot at planes with a rifle.

Wasted cartridges transfer ...

I did not recognize Bolik - thoughtful, absent-minded, was at war, but does not want to tell.

"They gave me a medal," he said indifferently.

- Show me!
- Houses.

We stood in our yard, and it was a cold, gray day. Grandfather came from the street (he also survived), surprised Bolik:

"So you've come?"

- Came...

Well, look how you got it! It would be such a fate for Tolya, if only a little older.

Grandfather looked at Bolik intently.

- You know what, lad, your business is bad. You will die.

— Ho-ho! Bolik said.

"Here you are, ho-ho," said the grandfather, waved his hand and went into the house.

We were stunned into silence.

"Here's an idiot," said Bolik.

"Don't pay any attention to me, my grandfather went completely mad after the war," I said. - Come on, I have a library in the shed, I again collected everywhere with a bag.

He boasted of his wealth, showed Bolik albeit sour, but quite readable books about travel, Wells' science fiction, magazines "Technology for Youth", but he looked at them absently and could not calm down:

No, he's not normal. How can you say that? What a grandfather!

A few days later, Bolik was taken to some sanatorium in Pushcha-Voditsa. I was happy for him, because there are good sanatoriums in Pushcha-Voditsa, it was always difficult to get into them, and most importantly, he would not go hungry there.

At that time I was doing my best at school, I was fond of mathematics, I spent the nights on theorems, and I didn't often

think about Bolik. Therefore, it was a surprise to me when my mother ran into the room and cried plaintively:

"Go see Bolik off, they're burying him!"

Funerals were moving along the street. Uncle Bolika walked in front and carried a single medal on a small pillow. Then two or three wreaths, a truck with a coffin, followed by a dozen or two people. The coffin was open.

My Bolik lay yellow, with his hands uncomfortably folded across his chest, in an ironed suit. Aunt Nina, his mother, was sitting in a car nearby, very small, crooked, as yellow as he was, and looked at her son without stopping.

There were potholes opposite our gates, the truck rocked, and the mother swayed, clinging tenaciously to the boards of the coffin. I thought maybe she couldn't walk, so they put her on a truck.

Something with me was unclear, I can not explain. While the truck was passing by the gate, a lot of thoughts flew by in my mind - vaguely and in some general batches. How did my grandfather guess the death of Bolik? They say: "He has the seal of death on his face." So, grandfather saw this seal? What is this seal?

And why didn't they cure him in such good sanatoriums, and why didn't anyone tell me that he was dead, and why didn't anyone call me while he was lying at home? Where he will be buried, I know: at the Kurenevsky cemetery, next to the monument to his grandfather, the Pole Kaminsky, I know this place well, because the grandmother lies there; I'll go there in a few days, but now I don't want to, but I just have to see and remember Bolik. He, swaying, swam along with his mother past me close, so I had a good look. My mother pushed me, saying in a tearful voice:

— Go, go, see Bolik off.

But I rested silently, stubbornly. The procession went on and on towards the bazaar, and I just watched until it disappeared.

The pain is gone.

Million rubles

[I first saw how people are hanged not under the Germans, but already under the Soviet regime. Gallows were built on Kiev squares - each with five to eight loops. They hanged Ukrainians and Russians who collaborated with the Germans and failed to escape. They were brought up on a truck, they put on loops, opened the tailgate, then the truck drove off, and they began to dance, swinging on the ropes. Some of them screamed a lot, fought until the truck moved, did not want to die. Then they hung, stiff, some with calm faces, others with their heads turned inside out, bulging blue tongues, they were not removed for a long time, as a warning.]

Those prisoners of war who survived in the German camps were automatically transported to camps in Siberia as traitors who surrendered to the enemy, and did not fight to the last. The famine continued after the war, but now it has also engulfed the village. In 1948, a campaign against the "Jews" began. Not being Jews, prisoners of war, or German henchmen, my mother and I found ourselves in the category of "former in the occupation," and from now on, until the end of our lives, this circumstance left an imprint of the third grade on our questionnaires. A lot of trouble, a lot of explanations about this, I would have in the future.]

In the meantime, I worked as an extra in the theater, studied, thought about world problems and cosmic pessimism, got a fancy to wander, thinking, through the streets. So one day I was walking along Troitsko-Kirillovskaya Square and saw an old woman bent in half, dry as a snag, at the water pump, in whom I was surprised to recognize the widow of the leather manufacturer Kobets.

She took half a bucket from the dispenser, moved away, swaying. Then I, without thinking twice, flew up, took the bucket, refilled it to the top. The old woman took everything calmly and stupidly.

"You must remember me," I said, "we were neighbors. My mother is Maria Fedorovna, a teacher. When you lived on Peter and Paul Square under the Germans. . .

"Yes, we lost everything there," said the old woman, looking at me intensely, but obviously not remembering. "Yes, yes, very

glad to see you. How noble of you to help, since I am already ninety years old.

"How is Mima," I asked, "healthy?"

"Mima is in the Kirillov hospital," said the old woman. - When the Germans drove us out, we ended up in Poland, then it took a long time to get here, and there was nowhere to live. They are now feeding in the hospital, and I gave Mima there.

He is a quiet man, they let him out, he sweeps the paths there, they are happy with him, but he is incurable. When he was a boy, the Bolsheviks put him against the wall, like a bourgeois offspring, but I fell to my knees and asked for mercy . . .

"Yes, I know that," I assured him. - We lived in the neighborhood, came to you. You were still receiving parcels from France from Nicolas.

"When the Germans drove us out," said the old woman, "every connection with Nicolas ceased, and I am afraid that he is no more. The only thing I have left is Mima .. Not even photographs left.

I said nothing: I knew who destroyed all the photographs. We came to some old house, to a semi-dark, cramped closet under the stairs, where janitors usually keep their brooms. The door was full of holes, somehow knocked together. The closet barely contained a trestle-bed with scattered rags, a stool, and a crude makeshift table. The old woman ordered the bucket to be placed in a corner, covered it with plywood, and placed a blackened and crumpled aluminum mug on top.

"I don't remember you," she said. Don't remind me, I still don't remember. But tell me, are you a collector? Do you collect old money?

I muttered that no, I didn't think about it, but I have many acquaintances, I can ask around.

"The thing is," said the old woman, "I have old money. We took care of them, hoping that they would still walk. Lord, my husband died because of this money and valuables. We ate the values, but the money remained. I'm tired of carrying, I could sell, I would take it cheap. You tell your friend.

She reached under the trestle bed and took out a small tattered sack tied with string. When she untied it, it turned out that in the bag were bundles of paper banknotes.

"There's about a million here," she said. - Fabulous money in the old days. Whole, good, look.

I've never seen a bag of money in my life, I didn't even feel comfortable. I took and examined the banknotes, there were bundles of royal hundred-ruble notes - pale iridescent, with a portrait of Catherine; there were green five hundred rubles - with Peter the Great in knightly armor.

"There are Kerenki here, as well as the money of the Don Cossacks," said the old woman, folding up the packets. - You tell your friend, let him come and look, I'll give it cheap.

Little by little it dawned on me that after all, she had been taking care of the bag all these many years, the authorities were changing, her husband and relatives had died, her son had gone mad, monetary reforms were taking place - and in her lifetime, some pieces of paper were replaced by others many times, and she was all for something. sometimes she hoped, and even took the sack with her when the Germans expelled all of Kyiv—and only now was she finally convinced that her money was only good for a collection.

I left, promising to send a collector, but I forgot, and soon heard that the old woman had died.

Then somehow I wrote a story about her called "Million", but the editors returned it to me, saying that it was an unsuccessful invention. And then: what did I want to say by this, what follows from this? .. Perhaps nothing. That's just about fiction: since all this really happened, the reproach for an unsuccessful invention should, perhaps, be addressed to this incredible life itself?

Burning books

As a result of the construction efforts of the Germans, the Jewish cemetery above Babi Yar turned into chaos. There is literally not a single undestroyed monument, crypt or slab left.

It seemed that whole companies went to the cemetery to practice shooting and tossing weights. Only some strong, unprecedented earthquake could cause such destruction.

The cemetery was huge, distinguished by an extraordinary variety of monuments and picturesque corners. One of the spurs of Babi Yar ran into it, building material for furnaces was delivered through this spur, and for a long time a stone scree of discarded but not used slabs remained in it.

The last dates of burials ended in 1941, but on some, very rare, graves, attempts to restore were already noticeable: dried feces were scraped off, a split slab was clumsily glued with cement, wilted flowers lay.

Young trees have grown in front of the rusty doors of some crypts, so that you can open them only by cutting down a tree, but no one was going to open it: this genus, apparently, has ceased, and there is no one to open it.

At that time, I got used to walking here with a sketchbook - to draw. He was fond of painting at one time, but he drew poorly, which is a pity, because there were objects for sketches - there was not only a worthy artist.

At that time, the neighbor boy Valya got in touch with me. From the side of Repyakhov Yar, the cemetery was rounded by a deaf and completely deserted road, which had fallen into disrepair due to rain gullies. Someone thought of dumping rubbish into these scours, so sometimes trucks with rubbish would come here from Lukyanovka. I used to draw, and Valya collected various pieces of iron, springs and other useful things from landfills.

We saw a huge fire. There was a truck, a mountain of books was thrown from it - and burned.

The instincts of a collector of gratuitous books woke up in me, I thought, maybe I'll pick up something for myself, since it burns uselessly. But the men from the fire yelled sternly:

What do you want? Well, come on.

- What, are you sorry?
- Come on, get out!

That's it. I thought that, probably, this was burning Zoshchenko and Akhmatov - then only they wrote about them as slanderers of Soviet reality, and the Central Committee issued a decree on raising the ideological content of literature.

Valya and I sat down on the remnants of the cemetery wall and watched from a distance as they struggled to raise their ideology.

In appearance, there are still good books, in different formats and colors, one might say, a good library. There were four men, sort of healthy, with a military bearing, but in civilian clothes. With long poles they poked around in the fire, stirring the books so that they burned better. It's a pity, it's a shame. The Germans just threw it away, even though you could rummage around, but these won't even let you in.

Our presence apparently irritated them, one of them separated and energetically headed towards us, showing his fist.

We slid off the wall and hid in the thickets, out of harm's way.

Babarik sits

I was carried around the world, I worked at construction sites. Stalin died, those who were in the occupation moved from the third grade to the second, I managed to enter the Literary Institute, studied in Moscow and wrote. I came home one day, and my mother said:

— Vovka Babarik is at home. He was blown up by a mine near Warsaw, he was a sapper, and only recently left the hospital, God forbid anyone, motionless, without a hand, dark, did not want to return home like this, but they persuaded him, they brought him. You would go to him: he rejoices when they come.

It was that Vovka Babarik, with whom I was friends, then at enmity, released his birds from the cages, and also sold him a rotten nut.

I crossed the street and knocked on the door of Babariki. The yard was the same, the garden, the same trees on which Vovka hung his cages. Vovka's mother came out and threw up her hands:

- Tolik! How Vovochka will be delighted! Come on, come on.

I entered excitedly, recognizing their hallway, their kitchen, and the "big room," which now seemed very small to me. Brown rabbits jumped on the floor.

By the window on a chest sat a fat, puffy man, with an absurdly cropped head and one arm. It even seemed that he was not sitting, but, as it were, hoisted on this chest, like a sack of flour.

He was blind - instead of eyes, watery slits. The face was an unhealthy color, shiny, all with blue dots and stripes, as if it had been drawn with an indelible pencil. And through the open collar one could see terrible scars on the chest near the neck. He was completely motionless, like a statue of Buddha, and his only hand, a large, masculine one, lay powerlessly on the edge of the chest.

Mother did a strange thing: she approached, unceremoniously took her head, put her lips close to her right ear, and in an unnatural, thin, piercing voice, like a flute, shouted into her ear:

- Tolik Semerik has come! Tolik Se-me-rik! Do you remember?

I looked shocked, realizing that this was Vovka, and did not recognize him at all, realizing that he was also deaf to everything. And Vovka became agitated, moved his head and shouted in a thick, hoarse voice, raising his hand:

- Tolik! It's good that you came! Where are you?

"Sit down like this, on the right side, speak into his ear," said the mother, smiling with emotion and making me sit down.

I sat down, slightly pressed against the fat body so that he felt me, gave my hand to the hand convulsively searching in the air, this hand grabbed, squeezed, squeezed, and then she did not let go of my hand, holding on to it, then stroking, then shaking.

"Yes, yes," Vovka said, "you have come. It's good that you came. I heard that you studied at the institute. Well done. Are you into writers, they say?

He stuck out his ear.

"Yes," I shouted, "I am writing!"

- They say you're into writers? he repeated his question, and I realized that he did not hear me. What institute you say?
- Literary! I shouted desperately into the hole in my ear.

The mother came up, took his head and again shouted in a piercing thin voice in his ear:

- He says: literary! He's in writers!

"Aha, aha," Vovka nodded his head in satisfaction and gaiety. - Well . . . well done. Is your mother healthy?

- Yes! I shouted and at the same time shook his hand from top to bottom in the affirmative, making it clear that it meant "yes."
- And grandfather Semerik?
- Not! Died!
- Grandfather Semerik is dead! - the mother shouted in the same way, and Vovka heard her.
- What you? So grandfather Semerik died? .. - drawled Vovka. — I didn't know... Well, well. Well, I'm happy for you. Here I am, as you can see. I was completely motionless, but now I seem to be moving away, I'm sitting here. The hearing aid does not work, I have one nerve thread left there. Maybe my mother will get me a ticket, at least give her a rest ... As long as my mother is alive, everything is fine. Boys come to me sometimes. We read newspapers. Agriculture is all "on a steep rise", huh? ..
- Yes Yes! I shouted, helping myself with my hand, I held on to his hand as if it were the only channel of communication, I sat nearby, too pressed against this motionless, loose body, and the face was nearby, but I did not recognize him, did not recognize him at all, only his voice and manner of speaking slightly reminded Vovka of the former.

Mother left us, went to the stove. Trying to pronounce the words as clearly as possible, I shouted into Vovka's ear:

- I'm sorry! For a nut in the market, remember?

"Yes, yes," he said, "such and such things. You are young. Higher education... And I remember you, tramp, letting out birds from me.

- Yes! Yes! I yelled, jerking his arm vertically again, then for some reason from right to left.

"I keep rabbits now," he said. - Mom, give me a rabbit. I wrapped his arm horizontally:

"Mother is out!"

I looked around - not a single rabbit, they hid somewhere. Vovka waited patiently, then, without waiting for the rabbit, he asked:

- Do you read how it is in the UN? About tension, twist! I shook his hand vertically.

“They should put me on the podium there,” Vovka quipped. — I would report to them. Listen, will there be a war?

I moved his hand horizontally. He understood, but did not agree.

- There will be war. We live under the gun. It’s like everyone aimed at one another, lowered the fuses - that’s how we live, missiles are aimed at all the cities, only a little where they got stuck - press the button, and the fun began ... Mom, where is the rabbit?

“Nothing,” I shouted, however, not hoping to be heard, “perhaps there will be no war, as long as everything is fine!”

“Yes, that’s right, Tolik,” he said affectionately, stroking my hand. - So, mom is healthy, and you have become a man ... But you come in, don’t forget.

I shook my hand vertically.

“I can’t hear with my left ear,” he explained, “but I can hear with my right. You speak clearly into your ear.

“Vovka, Vovka,” I muttered, shaking his hand.

- Do not forget, come in, otherwise take it and describe me as I am.

With what it, then, the war is eaten ... Okay?

I shook it vertically with my hand.

Here I am fulfilling this promise, describing Vovka Babarik, my comrade, who now, when you read these lines, is sitting there, in Kyiv, Petropavlovskaya Square, 5, one of the millions of participants in the Second World War who survived. And his mother is still alive.

6.11 LA COMMEDIA É FINITA

6.12 LA COMMEDIA É FINITA

{“The comedy is over” (Italian) - the final phrase of Tonio in the opera “Pagliacci” by R. Leoncavallo.}

The general got into the car, the girls also desperately climbed after him. The whole motorcade of luxurious limousines took off and left in just three minutes, leaving the phone with all the wires. (Then they served my mother for a long time as excellent clotheslines).

Tense, I rushed aimlessly around the yard, looked out into the street, and the retreating troops were walking along it. I have never seen such a mass of confused, preoccupied people. This picture cannot be described in words, it could still be approximately shown in a movie.

Trucks, all-terrain vehicles, carts raced in the direction of Podol, Germans, Magyars, Vlasovites, and policemen alternated. Cars roared, honked, pearled on their own. The horses were in soap, the drivers, some kind of possessed, whipped them. They retreated on our little horses, not a single fiery-red heavy truck: apparently, they had died, unable to stand it.

Bundles, gramophones fell from the carts, the road was strewn with junk, as well as cartridges, abandoned rifles, a light machine gun leaned against a post, left by someone.

The windows of the school lit up, as happens at sunset, but there was no sun: a gray, overcast evening, it was getting dark. The view of the school was inexplicably ominous. Then it dawned on me that it was on fire - it was on fire on all floors. As they left, the Germans doused the classrooms with gasoline and set them on fire. The troops were walking past, and the school burned slowly, lazily, because it was stone and empty.

Near the bazaar, a close column of black smoke rose, straight as a column, it was not known what was burning, but the Germans were carrying out their plan. That's where I got lost! From different sides shots rushed, a roar, you wouldn't understand anything, but suddenly there was such a strong explosion that the house shook and the mirror on the wall crumbled. I went deaf and sat down: it seemed to me that it had exploded in the yard. There was another such explosion, and I sat down again.

- Oh, it's hot! Bridges are breaking! the mother screamed piercingly in the yard.

I looked at the embankment—instead of a bridge, it was a failure, cluttered with boulders and sand. The Germans who remained on the other side continued to climb through it, others fled through the embankment. (When they dug it up later, it turned out that the explosion covered the car with four officers. Some believed that these were explosives who committed suicide. Others, in my opinion, more correctly thought that the car died by accident: after all, many troops remained on the other side .)

I was already stunned by all this, wandered, poked into the barn, found the cat Titus, took him in my arms and carried him like a child.

Night came, but it was not dark. Everything was bathed in red light. Reflections on the clouds, as on a screen, ran, fluctuated, as if someone was having fun, blowing bunnies with a lantern. A lot was burning, as if you were in the center of a fire, solid fires.

And it became very quiet.

In the silence, from time to time, a dull rumble came from the school, and then sparks flew up like a geyser - this was the collapse of the ceiling.

Mikolaj and Lyaksandra sat in the room under the mattress and wept. If someone else came in, they would be frightened: an empty room, a hut by the stove, strange, thin, whining sounds from under it ... I never heard the old people whine and squeak like that.

Mom took them by the hands and led them, like children, into the trench. I also sat there, but I was too excited, I was pricked like needles from all sides, got out and again began to rush about, intensely remembering my plan: to fight with grenades, a gun with me, an embankment, a meadow, a swamp - and excellent security ... In any case case, I won't become cheap, if only I don't miss the moment, my head doesn't understand anything anymore, but I still want to live.

There was no thought about sleep. Cat Tit betrayed me: the darkness revived him, he became springy, angry and went, a predatory creature, to his rats, he doesn't care that the regime is being changed today.

Friday, November 5th is over.

I stood on the porch with a rifle. Behind the embankment, a green rocket soared silently into the sky. Then came a shot, another. . . . Another rocket. They looked fantastic: green rockets against a bloody sky.

I thought that finally the torchbearers were coming. I would gladly write that at that moment I became calm, took out grenades, slowly unscrewed the hats . . .

But it wasn't. All my weapons seemed to me completely helpless, hammers pounded in my head, through which I caught screams from the side of the embankment. What to do? Where to go?

Suddenly, a truly brilliant idea flashed through me like lightning: you need to climb a tree, high, to the very top. They will burn everything on the ground, but the trees will stand, the trees will always remain. And if they notice, it's so convenient to throw grenades from above, like stones, and until they slap, I'll at least count. The cries from the embankment became louder, many people shouted:

- aa-ah . . . shchi . . . it . . . a-ah!

I jumped like a wild cat on a tree, peeling off my nails, flew up to the first fork, held my breath, listening.

From the embankment they screamed in the purest Moscow-Russian language:

- Comrades! Come out! Soviet power has come!

Where are the torches? Oh my god, are we still alive? Fir-trees-sticks, everything swam before my eyes.

He mumbled something incoherently, shouted, fell from a tree and rushed into the street. Along this red street under the red sky, I stomped to the red embankment, saw that I was still convulsively holding a grenade in my hands, stopped, put them side by side on the ground and ran further.

The blockage of the bridge near, and even in this bloody light, was terrible and ominous. Some living creatures, either people or animals, climbed on all fours onto a steep embankment.

I realized that they were the same ones hiding as we were, I rushed up, overtaking them, but I was no longer the first. Up there, on the rails, women hugged, cried, squealed hysterically,

ragged old women threw themselves on the necks of Soviet soldiers.

The soldiers asked in a businesslike way:

Are there any Germans?

- Not! Not! - sobbing, shouted to them.

There were few soldiers, a few people, obviously, intelligence. They had a chat, and then one of them fired a green rocket into the sky. Out of breath, from the other side climbed up another, blond, good-natured, quite our crest, some kind of bundle in the hands of a pen.

- Nu sho, tormented? he asked cheerfully.
- Were worn out! the women howled with one voice.
- That's it, chop on the houses. Celebration. The bundle he brought turned out to be a bunch of red flags, not much bigger than the ones children hold at demonstrations. The women attacked the flags. I climbed too, the soldier shouted:

Not all, not all! You need more for Podol.

The soldier with the flare gun fired a second green flare and they ran downstairs. But I did not run - I flew to the house, burst into the trench, shouted at the top of my lungs:

Ours have arrived!

Not enjoying the effect, he jumped back. He climbed into the attic, fumbled in the dark, found a bundle. Grandma, grandma, you were right here too. In the barn I broke a rake to have a pole, nailed the flag in the semi-darkness, beat myself on the fingers. The world was blood red, and the flag looked vaguely white in that light.

The liberation of Kyiv continued throughout the night. In some places there were street fights. Houses exploded and burned - the university, schools, warehouses, huge residential buildings opposite St. Sophia Cathedral, but St. Sophia Cathedral itself, fortunately for history, remained intact this time.

Through Kurenevka, the main units of the advancing army entered the city. The blown-up bridges blocked the street, so the road was laid bypassing through Beletskaya Street, from where tanks, never-before-seen American Studebakers, artillery, and carts were pouring down.

The infantry snaked right through the rubble. They were soiled, smoky, tired, mutilated, amazingly the same ones that left in 1941, only now with shoulder straps. They walked out of step, baggy, mouse-yellow, with prosaically jingling bowlers. Some walked barefoot, treading heavily with red feet on the ground, already frozen from the November frosts.

6.13 FINAL CHAPTER, MODERN DAY

[DESTROY ASH]

And again I come to Kyiv, where my aged mother still lives in the same house at 28 Peter and Paul Square.

[She has bad eyes, she is half blind, because] she left the school where she worked for almost forty years. [Due to this unfortunate stay in the occupation, she was not given a raise, was not awarded, and was given the lowest pension that she could not live on, but she has a true talent in the market to buy cheaper.

She lives alone. Most of all he is afraid when a car is buzzing on the street and when there is a loud knock on the gate. She asked me to report arrivals by letter, not by telegram, because telegram peddlers knock and demand to sign. She's scared.

Mom helped me a lot when working on this book, clarifying the details. But if I started talking about politics, she could suddenly shut up and say: "Why are you asking? Are you collecting political material against me?" After that, I stunnedly waved my hand and left to repair the roof.

Sometimes she visits her friend Nina Iosifovna Kaminskaya, Bolik's mother, at 38. She is ill, does not get out of bed, is completely dry, her fingers are twisted and do not move. Both are afraid of the upcoming demolition of the houses. The plant "Kinap" in the former church of Peter and Paul was transformed into a "numbered", that is, military, and is expanding. When a house is demolished, a separate apartment is not supposed to be lonely, but only a room in communal housing and, as a rule, on a distant outskirts, where there is no market, and the last thing for a mother is a disaster.

Construction is expanding.] Kurenevka has changed a lot: [trolleybuses run along the main Frunze (Kirillovskaya) street,

"Seagulls" with government members on their way to their dachas in Pushcha-Voditsa often fly past], along the route there are nine-story houses, white and modern, like ocean liners.

[I loved walking around Kiev. The parks above the Dnieper are very good in it, the ancient streets full of gray history.

The center of Kyiv is unpleasant to me. It was built after the war, under the slogan "Let's restore our native Khreshchatyk, destroyed by the Nazi invaders" - Stalinist pompous, with houses that look like sugary cakes.

At the corner of Khreshchatyk and Prorizna, where once there was the first explosion in the commandant's office, now there is the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, Russifying the remains of this culture. In the name of socialist humanism, political processes are going on all over Ukraine, and freethinkers are being put in camps. KGV of Ukraine - all in the same place, on Volodymyrska, 33.]

St. Andrew's Church still hovers over Podil. Excursions for schoolchildren go to St. Sophia Cathedral. In the Lavra, oppressing tourists with its ruins, now again the "Museum Town". [Exhibitions in rebuilt premises. Tourists pass through an anti-religious museum before entering the caves. The chimes are ringing in the bell tower. In the former Church-refectory, diagrams of the growth of public education in the USSR are presented and Foucault's pendulum swings, showing that the Earth is spinning. It's not clear which way. Because nearby, over the ruins, over piles of ancient bricks, there is a shield with the inscription: "The Assumption Cathedral (XI century), brutally blown up by the Nazi invaders on November 3, 1941."]

There is no Babi Yar. [According to some leading figures, it never existed.] The ravine has been filled in, a highway passes through it.

[Since the war itself, voices have been heard (I. Ehrenburg began) that a monument should be erected in Babi Yar. But the Ukrainian Central Committee of the party, which was then headed by N. Khrushchev, believed that the people who were shot in Babi Yar did not deserve a monument.

More than once I heard such conversations of the Kiev communists:

- This is in which Babi Yar? Where were the Jews shot? And why should we put up some kind of shaggy monuments?

Indeed, the state anti-Semitism of 1948-1953 set in, the question of the monument was removed.

After Stalin's death, cautious voices began to be heard again that Babi Yar, in fact, was not only a Jewish grave, that the percentage of Russians and other nationalities there was three or four times higher.

Such arguments always seemed wild to me: it means that if you prove that a certain percentage is higher, then the monument should be erected only in this case? How can interest be calculated? There are PEOPLE in Babi Yar.

The Ukrainian Central Committee, which was headed by N. Podgorny in 1957, apparently considered the percentages, found them unconvincing, and a Solomonic decision was made: in order to put an end to talk forever, destroy Babi Yar and forget about it.

Thus began the second attempt to erase Babi Yar from history.

Filling up such a huge gorge is a titanic work, but with the huge scale of construction in the USSR, the task is doable. An ingenious engineering solution was found: not to fill it up, but to wash it out using the method of hydromechanization.]

Babi Yar was blocked by a dam and they began to pump pulp through pipes from neighboring quarries of a brick factory into it. The lake spilled over the ravine. Pulp is a mixture of water and dirt. In theory, the mud was supposed to settle, settle, and the water flowed through the dam along the gutters.

I went there and looked in shock at the lake of mud, absorbing ashes, bones, stone scree of gravestones. The water in it was rotten, green, motionless, and day and night the pipes were noisy, supplying the pulp. This went on for several years. The dam was poured, it grew, and by 1961 it became the height of a six-story building.

On Monday, March 13, 1961, she collapsed.

Spring meltwater rushed to Yar, overflowed the lake, the gutters did not have time to let the flow through, and the water went through the crest of the dam.

With its wide mouth, Babi Yar went out onto Frunze Street, that is, Kirillovskaya Street, right on the tram park and the densely populated area around it, even at the very mouth of the Yar, houses were molded along the slopes.

At first, water flooded the street, so that trams and cars got stuck, and at that time people hurried to work, and crowds gathered on both sides of the flood, unable to cross.

At 8:45 am, a terrible roar was heard, a shaft of liquid mud about ten meters high rolled out of the mouth of Babi Yar. The surviving eyewitnesses, who watched from afar, claim that the shaft flew out of the ravine like a courier train, no one could escape from it, and the screams of hundreds of people were drowned out in half a minute.

Engineering calculations contained an error: the dirt, which was pumped for many years, did not compact. It remained liquid, since the main part of it was clay. Clay slopes. Babi Yar, like water-resistant walls, reliably kept it in a liquid state. Babi Yar was thus turned into a bath of mud, as monstrous as the idea that gave birth to it. The dam washed out by spring waters collapsed, and the bathtub spilled out.

Crowds of people were instantly swallowed up by the shaft. People who were in trams, cars, perished, perhaps, without having time to figure out what had happened. It was impossible to emerge from the moving viscous quagmire or, somehow floundering, to get out.

Houses along the rampart were demolished like cardboard. Some trams rolled and carried about two hundred meters, where they buried. The tram depot, the hospital, the stadium, the tool factory, and the entire residential area were buried.

The police cordoned off the area and made sure that no one took pictures. People were visible on some roofs, but it is not known how to get to them. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon, a Mi-4 military helicopter arrived and began to evacuate the surviving patients from the roof of the hospital, filming other survivors.

The crash site was very quickly surrounded by high fences, traffic along Frunze Street was closed, the remains of the trams were covered with iron sheets, the routes of civil airlines were

changed so that the planes did not fly over Kurenevka and could not be photographed.

The quagmire, having spread widely, finally got the opportunity to condense, the water from it gradually flowed in streams into the Dnieper, and by the end of spring it was possible to start excavations.

The excavations lasted two years. Many corpses were dug up - in houses, in beds, in air cushions formed in rooms under the ceiling. Someone called in a telephone booth - and died with a receiver in his hands. In the tram depot they dug up a group of conductors who had just gathered there to hand over the proceeds - and the cashier who accepted it. The number of the dead, of course, was never named. Babi Yar has no luck with numbers.

[The attempt to erase Babi Yar turned out to be an unexpected side, led to new mass casualties, even superstitions arose. The phrase "Babi Yar takes revenge" was popular. The main feature of the Bolshevik character, however, is that he does not give up.

In 1962, the third attempt began - and the most serious one.] A huge amount of equipment was thrown at Babi Yar - excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, scrapers. The soil was put back into Yar, partly laid out on the site of the lost area. Babi Yar was still filled up, a highway was laid through it. Further, the following work was carried out.

On the site of the concentration camp, a new residential area was built, one might say, on the bones: when digging pits, they constantly ran into bones, sometimes twisted with wire. The front row of these houses looks out with balconies just to the places of mass executions of Jews in 1941.

A new one has been built on the site of the old tram depot.

Nine-story buildings, white and modern, like ocean liners, have been built on the site of the lost residential area.

[The remains of the dam are planted with young poplars.

And, finally, the Jewish cemetery was destroyed. Bulldozers were launched, which tore off graves and slabs, turning bones and zinc coffins along the way.

On the site of the cemetery, the construction of new premises of the television center, equipped with the latest science and

technology, was launched, which once again confirms that science is not a hindrance to barbarism.

At the epicenter of all these works, over the covered places of executions, the planning of the stadium and various entertainment complexes began. In the summer of 1965, I wrote this book at night, and during the day I walked around and watched the bulldozers work. They worked sluggishly and poorly, and the freshly poured soil sagged.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first executions, namely on September 29, 1966, people from all over Kyiv flocked to Babi Yar. They say it was an impressive sight. A spontaneous rally arose, at which Dina Pronicheva, the writer Viktor Nekrasov, the young Ukrainian publicist Ivan Dzyuba spoke - and again they talked about the monument ...

Kiev newsreel operators, having heard about the rally, rushed and filmed it, then a scandal broke out at the studio, the director was fired, and the film was handed over to the KGB.

But the authorities seem to be worried. A few days later, surprised residents found a granite stone a little away from Yar with an inscription that a monument to the victims of German fascism would be erected here. No one saw when this stone was brought and who placed it. But now, if foreign guests insist, they can be taken to this stone, having previously overlaid it with flowers. After the guests have left, the flowers are removed.

The stadium project remained unrealized. Nothing is being done in the damned place now. Between the residential area on the site of the camp on one side and the television center on the site of the cemetery on the other, in the middle lies a huge wasteland overgrown with burdocks and thorns.

So, on the third attempt, Babi Yar nevertheless disappeared, and I think that if the German Nazis had time and so much equipment, then they could not even dream of a better one.

It can be added in brackets that the former secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine N. Podgorny, under whom such a feat was accomplished, has now gone up the hill. He is the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, that is, the President of the country.]

Until recently, the watchman M. S. Lutsenko, Aunt Masha, lived in the cemetery house above the ravine, whom the Germans completely overlooked in their time and did not suspect that she was sneaking up in the thickets and saw everything they were doing. We walked with her, she showed again and again where it began, where the slopes were undermined and how “there and there they were laid on the ground. And they are screaming! .. Oh Mother of God ...

They beat them with shovels, beat them.” At the same time, she pointed with her hand underground, in depth, because we were standing over a non-existent ravine. Only such old-timers can still indicate the boundaries of Babi Yar, the remains, dams and other traces of events. But there was no evidence of the crimes. The ashes, as you remember, were partly scattered, the ashes and bones now lie deep, deep, so that nothing remains of the dead. How many there were - also never know. All official figures are conditional, they change depending on the situation.

And yet I think that no public crime remains secret. There will always be some aunt Masha who sees, or fifteen, two, one who testify will be saved. You can burn, dispel, fall asleep, trample - but there is still human memory. History cannot be deceived, and it is impossible to hide anything from it forever.

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I started writing this novel in Kyiv, in my mother's hut. But then he could not continue and left: he could not sleep. At night, in my sleep, I heard a cry: either I lay down, and they shot me in the face, in the chest, in the back of the head, or I stood on the side with a notebook in my hands and waited for the start, but they did not shoot, they had a lunch break, they burned from books a fire, pumped some kind of pulp, and I kept waiting for this to happen, so that I could conscientiously write everything down. This nightmare haunted me, it was neither a dream nor reality, I jumped up, hearing in my ears the cry of thousands of dying people.

We dare not forget this cry. This is not history. It is today. What about tomorrow?

What new Yars, Maidaneks, Hiroshima, [Kolyma and Potma] - in what places and what new technical forms - are still hidden in oblivion, waiting in the wings? And which of us, living, is already, perhaps, a candidate for them?

Will we ever understand that the most precious thing in the world is the life of a person and his freedom? Or is there yet to be barbarism?

On questions, perhaps, I will cut off this book.

I wish you peace. [And freedom.]

1969