THIS IS HOW IT WAS . . . *

In Four Parts

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Part I – End of Childhood

To whom can I call,
With whom can I share
That sad and joyful fact,
That I remained alive?

Sergey Esenin

Oh, what a jump that was! Alik screamed out something in a warlike chant and jumped from the highest *skalka* or "little cliff," which was perhaps some four meters high. It is interesting that in Zaporozhye in southern Ukraine they call them "little cliffs" – not just cliffs or rapids. He leaped up, stretched out like a swallow, and faded away. Yes, he faded away in the air and winked at Yura and me! We also screamed something out and began to climb up the *skalka*. Suddenly, Alik smoothly spun around in the air and very slowly descended, closer and closer to the water, and entered it hands first, then his head, then all of his body – and not one splash...

"Alik, it is wonderful!" – I cried out again and began to climb up to the top of the *skalka*, but for some reason both Alik and Yura disappeared. I turned my head around, but could not find them anywhere. Then something prickly began to scratch my neck and I found that there were no guys, no Dnieper, no *skalka* and, little by little, as an image develops on photo-paper – as one comes out of anesthesia – God, so this was only a dream?! My God, so there is no Khortitsa, no Dnieper, no sun, no guys – there is nothing, nothing at all – only this frightening awakening inside this haystack and the faint moan of my Mother – as it was yesterday, as it was the day before...

Chapter 1 – A Thousand Years Before Our Era. June 15, 1941

Ha! Show me a guy from the 6-B class who would refuse to walk with Yura and Mikhail Fedorovich [a] along the dam to the right bank of the Dnieper!

Well, okay, I do see Yura almost every day – we go to the cinema together, to the cliffs, to see the ships, and generally do everything together. But it is something else with Mikhail Fedorovich!

Alright, of course, my father is very special. When it turned out that it was only I who could solve both of the problems in Physics: "...it pours into pipe A and pours out of pipe B..." – do you think that it was really I

[a] The polite way of addressing a person in Russian is by the person's first name and *patronym*. The latter is a derivative of the first name of that person's father. For instance, Mikhail Fedorovich means Mikhail the son of Fedor. – Editors' note.

who did it all by myself? Yes, sure – it was Father's work!

And when I beat everyone in class in chess with only my left hand, so to speak, even when I play with Tolik and even Ruvka Gutarovich – do you think that it was Botvinnik or Capablanca who taught me how to play? No, bollocks to you – all Father's work!

Who bought me my first real bicycle? Who tuned it up and taught me how to ride it in just one hour? – Father, of course! And what about the books from the library – Jules Verne, Migne Reed, Jack London, Walter Scott, Alexander Dumas, H.G. Wells, K. Doyle. Who do you think brought them for me – Pushkin? No, Father. Almost everyday he walked to the library of the "Club of Busy People," because I swallowed books – I read them avidly . . . Believe me, I have a wonderful father – even Ruvka Gutarovich said so! Have you ever heard Ruvka praising anyone before? . . .

But, Mikhail Fedorovich . . . He is a kind of another father, you see. Well, first it's the door, or, rather, it's not the door but the yellowish, glittering plaque on it (probably made of copper!) with the inscription: "Engineer-Technician M.F. Leshchinski." Not bad, hey?

I did not know what the word "technician" meant, but the word itself was enchanting. This word probably somehow describes what is done with that slide-rule which I saw on Mikhail Fedorovich's desk. It has a little glass piece that slides up and down. Yura told me its name, but I forgot. Lo-ga-ri . . . , no – I forgot. Well, never mind. Yura said that one can count anything one wishes using this slide-rule, but he did not know how to do it. Well, the slide-rule is not the point. You'd better tell me – how many people have such plaques on their doors in Zaporozhye? Well, maybe one can find such a plaque on Dr. Galperin's door, but of whom are we talking about here? – Dr. Galperin, a person known throughout Zaporozhye! And you thought what . . . ?

What about the evening when the three of us – Mikhail Fedorovich, Yura, and I – went to the circus? I had never attended the circus in the evening before – I was allowed to go there only during the daytime, on Sundays.

"Mikhail Fedorovich, will they let me in?" – I asked.

"Of course, they will!"

And they did. The arena was flooded with light – no, not with the sun rays that used to seep in through the windows of the cupola and reveal the millions of dust particles dancing in the beams. No, it was the electrical light of projectors, which also lit the red carpet ablaze in their rays. What about that fellow in the black suit – he wore the same outfit during the day, but this one was different, of course, since he would not wear the same one during the day as at night!

"The flight in the air! The acrobats under the cupola of Circus Albi ..." – the black suit would announce. And then Krivorebrenko's jazz would play:

"Ta-ta-ta-ra-a-ti-ti-ta!!!" And nine fellows in red tights under the cupola – and here, and there, and here and there again, and everywhere; and then Krivorebrenko's jazz:

"Ta-ta-ta-ra-a-ti-ti-ta!!!"

"Bouncing acrobats on the tossing boards – Ingo – 4!!!" – the black suit would exclaim. And then Krivorebrenko's jazz:

"Ta-ta-ta-ra-a-ti-ti-ta!!!"

Well, how can one forget this? And, the third act – French wrestling! Only in the evenings! Parade – allez! You should have seen this – never again would champions like Ivan Poddubny, Frank Good (who was as black as the top of a boot), Yartsev, Kalishevitch, Zagoruyko, and others step out into the circus ring... All the boys of Zaporozhye raved about "double nelsons", "touché", "tour des bras", and other magical words which touch the soul oh so much! Well, I am just rambling, never mind...

But how about the ships? What would you say about the ships? You see, Mikhail Fedorovich was just that person who called Yura's and my attention to the warships: we began to collect all their pictures, drafts, descriptions, all sorts of data on different kinds of navies – oh, how interesting it was for me!

It turned out that each of the French battleships Dunkirk and Richelieu had four naval guns per turret – can you imagine this? And those fools – the Japanese – had just one gun per turret on their Kako cruiser: is it not enough to make one's sides split with laughter? What can one ask of the Japanese...? And then in spring when that fascist scum, the Bismarck, sank the beautiful British battlecruiser Hood, Yura even cried. But I understood him very well – first you look at that Hood and then you just try to say something...

Overall, life is beautiful when you are thirteen; when the water in the Dnieper is warm enough to swim; when you have to return to school only in September; when Lora did not transfer to School #24 but remained in my School #50; when you may just walk a couple of hours along the dam with Mikhail Fedorovich; and when you know for sure that he will tell you about something truly interesting! If I were born a beautiful girl, like, for example, Ira Kucherenko, who lives in apartment #34, I would definitely fall in love with Mikhail Fedorovich and marry him! He is such a fine fellow! White pants, white shoes, white shirt in the Ukrainian style, and the little mustache – the kind found on Charlie Chaplin's face – not bad, hey!

He was already waiting for us near the Tankman – do you know that monument to the Pilot and Tankman, located on the corner of Lenin and Enthusiasts Avenues? This is not a "Maiden with an Oar" for you! Tolik said that he had not seen such monuments even in Moscow – and do you know how many monuments there are in Moscow? Be sure of it, there are many of them there! The heroes stand there wearing helmets, their overalls, leggings – they are tall and snow-white (whitewashed before every May Day celebration). One look at those heroes and the song

...If war begins tomorrow, if tomorrow we have to battle –
We are ready for it today!

comes instantly to mind. ...Mikhail Fedorovich was not very jolly today, and while Yura and I were arguing about the guns on the Marat – were they twelve or thirteen inches – Mikhail Fedorovich was constantly thinking about something, something quite gloomy. Then, as we walked up to the dam, he suddenly put his hands upon our shoulders and embraced us as he said or asked:

"Well, boys, are we going to war?"

We just about stumbled over at these words.

"What war? With whom? – "Boys!" He always called us "guys," "kids," even "brothers," but now "boys"..."

"With Germany..." – he said.

But this is just something ridiculous, ludicrous...Ribbentrop – over here, Molotov – over there, holding hands with Hitler; "Alexander Nevsky" and "Professor Mamlock"[b] were prohibited and were not shown in any movie theater; one could not check out Karl Brunner from any library. And now we are speaking of war?! Well, if we should talk about war with Poland or Finland – no problem: with only our left hand we will take them out; Lithuania, Latvia, or Bessarabia – we will take them out without a shot being fired. But, war with Germany?!

"And so, Mikhail Fedorovich, the treaty, the Comintern,[c] and the German

[b] This is a play by the German playwright Friedrich Wolf; it was written in 1933 in France where Wolf found temporary refuge from Nazis. Wolf himself adapted the play and co-directed the production of a 1937 Soviet film which is considered the first dramatic film on the subject of Nazi anti-Semitism to be made. The story centers on the persecution of a great German surgeon Professor Mamlock. – Editors' note.

[c] The Communist International, otherwise known as the Comintern, was an association of national communist parties founded in 1919. Though its stated purpose was the promotion of world revolution, the Comintern functioned chiefly as an organ of Soviet control over the international

Communists, they will be behind us, yes?"

Mikhail Fedorovich sighed, grunted, and said: "Alright, brothers, let me tell you about an American writer – named O. Henry . . . "

Do you know the Dneproges Dam? 800 meters across, you don't have to measure it, it is a scientific fact – it has already been calculated. And for all of those 800 meters Yura and I had died of laughter – in that story there is this guy who placed a piglet on its four legs, aimed and kicked it so that the piglet flew for 10 meters before the sound of its own squealing arrived! Only the name of the story I have forgotten – it was something swinish . . . And another story – there, a cowboy loved a girl and there is something about pancakes – also very amusing! Mikhail Fedorovich was a great storyteller! When we returned in the evening and were saying farewell, I asked him:

"Mikhail Fedorovich, did you joke . . . well, when you spoke of the war?"

"Oh! Ilya, Ilya, my dear, who jokes about such things?"

Chapter 2 – Farewell Childhood! August 18, 1941

Who could have thought that in a month and a half the Germans would have come up to the Dnieper! Where is our legendary invincible army? – that which is strongest of all from the taiga to the British seas?! Where are you looking, what are you thinking – Voroshilov and Budennyi, Timoshenko and Kulik, Shaposhnikov and Zhukov? Why are you standing, as fools, Pilot and Tankman? Was it you, Stalin's hawks, who knocked out flocks of Messerschmitts and Caproni in the sky above Madrid and Guadalajara? Was it you, the three tankmen, the three merry friends, who beat the hell out of the Samurais at Hasan and Halhin-Gola, kicking their asses and wringing their necks! Was it you who broke the line at Mannerheim and took Vyborg! It was you – "if war begins tomorrow, we are ready for it today" – bang-bang, boom!! Or was it not you? Or was it not you who shot, knocked out, and blew up . . . ? Of course, I could not even imagine that the war was so badly botched – totally, forever. Well, if not forever, then for some time – even if the fascists strolled along the dam for only a month or even a week – does it get any easier to think differently? The only widespread word of the day was "evacuation!" People are leaving in droves as fast as possible; factories are dismantled down to the last screw[d]; and troop trains are being loaded – in the warm cattle cars, on the platform – everywhere workers with

communist movement. – Editors' note.

[d] As the Germans advanced on the great industrial area around the city of Kharkov much of the vital heavy machinery was dismantled and moved out by train to the east where it was rapidly re-assembled and soon turning out military equipment again. – Editors' note.

families, bundles, suitcases, trunks, tears, cursing – fun...

Timoshkov offered a place to Mother as well on the troop train, although he knew quite well that this is all baloney; the director of "Koksokhim" knew that Yakov Efimovich Shapiro, the former Chief Bookkeeper, is dying and is almost unable to get out of bed: in 1932 the Chekists[e] knew how to beat what they wanted out of irresponsible Jews... Chekists wanted gold... While Mother was collecting money from the relatives – who could give what – Father slept for a month in winter on the ice-cold floor in a prison cell. The Soviet state rewarded my father with good tuberculosis for his good labor! And Timoshkov – what? Timoshkov – a good fellow, gave my father leave for rest, rations in the hunger-year of 1933, and awards. When Ordzhonikidze came to the "Zaporozhstal" and swung on by "Koksokhim" – all of the *udarniks* and *stakhanovets*[f] were assembled, and Father was there and Sergo shook his hand. However, tuberculosis cares little whether you are Anton Pavlovich Chekhov or Yakov Efimovich Shapiro or some young woman in a painting hanging in the Tretyakov Gallery... So, here lies my father, coughing into a jar, and there cannot even be any talk about an evacuation. And Father's eyes are sad, and he cries when he thinks that no one is looking... And always asks Mother – God forbid that you hear of such requests! Mother scolds him, and assures him that God will provide – that Father will get up and we will all leave together! Perhaps, it would not even be necessary to leave anywhere, since the Germans may be stopped on the Dnieper and will be pushed back! On this they ended their jolly chat.

... On July 28^{th}, perhaps 29^{th}, Yura came early, at about 9, and he looked like he'd got a B:

"Today, we are departing – Father took tickets on the passenger train..."

So, here it is – now Yura is leaving... I knew, of course, that Yura would be leaving very soon, but it was still unexpected. The longing became even stronger, and a desire to weep came over me... Well, yes, that is the last thing!

"Are all of you leaving?" – There is a question for you! Now, of course, Yura will say something like "No, only Father and Mother, while I will stay to fight the Germans...". No, not quite:

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[e] Forerunners of the KGB. The Soviet acronym for the name of the secret police at that time was NKVD. The Soviet secret police has changed acronyms like a chameleon. It started out as the Cheka, and then became the GPU, the OGPU, the NKVD, the NKGB, the MGB, and finally the KGB. In colloquial language people often simply referred to the secret police as "the Cheka" and the secret agents as "the Chekists." – Editors' note.

[f] Semi-mythological selfless workaholic "builders of socialism." – Translator's note.

"Mother and us. Father will travel in the troop train when the blooming (mill) is loaded."

I already knew that blooming is not Blumin, or Blumkin, or some Bluminfel'd – this was a huge machine, perhaps weighing 1000 or maybe 10000 tons, so very long and some sort of metal parts are made with it. This blooming is the only one of its kind in all of Zaporozhstal and Mikhail Fedorovich is the supervisor of this blooming.

Mother hugged and kissed Yura and I went to see him off. We walked in silence and only at the very "round house", where Yura lived, we stopped. Perhaps we understood – had a premonition that we were parting for the duration. Probably we understood – we had grown up a great deal during the last month and a half. So we parted as adults would: awkwardly embraced and split up without looking back, parted for the next 34 years . . . Oh, War – what have you done, you scoundrel . . . The morning was just the same as any morning – an excellent Zaporozhye August morning – just the time to go to the Dnieper and it is such a pleasure there! I had not been to the sea once, but I simply knew that the beaches there are of different kinds – some better than others. I would bet that some have small sea cliffs – only the water is salty and one cannot see the opposite shore . . . . But, the one thing that is clear is that better water than that flowing in the Dnieper cannot be found anywhere else! I had a chance to swim in many other water-bodies later – in the Black and Red Seas, the Volga, Don, Neva, and the little-known Cheptsa, and even Lake Michigan – but none of them are akin to the Dnieper! That water smells of youth – that carefree and barefoot childhood – and this smell will never be aired out . . . .

The air was so clean, transparent – why is it that I had not noticed this earlier? Having only looked more attentively the day before yesterday at the factories – and they can all be seen as if on the palm of one's hand, for real – I suddenly understood: the factories had died. The huge chimneys no longer belch out smoke, nor do the high twin chimneys of the "Koksokhim" which stood in a pair, nor the Aluminum Factory, nor Iron-alloys. No longer is the sky half lit with flares of red, no more casting of iron . . . The factories had died . . . It again became sad, and the desire to walk to the Dnieper had disappeared. In addition, Father's health had turned for the worse – he scarcely could get out of bed and the radio – best not to listen: ". . . after long and heavy battles, our forces left . . . " or ". . . with the aim to even the lines of our front, our forces left . . . " cities, cities, cities – large and small, familiar and some I heard of for the first time. How much more can be "left"?? When will we start to "take"?!

A very upset Stepanida Ignatyevna entered – "have you heard? They say that the Germans have landed their marines on the right bank – can you hear the shots?" True, one can hear shots – at some distance, but one can hear them! Incredible – marines on the right bank – and the Dneproges (electric plant) is there! Slavka yelled from outside: "Ilya! Let's go to the roof!" The three of us ran up – Slavka, Shurka from building 87, and I. On the roof, there was a multitude of boys all of whom were staring somewhere, pointing at something, but what can you see there? It is about two kilometers to the right bank from here – but one can see some sort of explosions. Shurka is messing around with his pearl-colored theater binoculars – what's the use of them? And from the side of Khortitsa Island, across the bridge, there is an endless stream of people, cattle, cars, combines, mowers, flayers of all types. From the top, one has a good view – some 500 meters of the stream and the end is not in sight... Suddenly, among this stream – explosions, blasts! One car was ripped open into shreds and people scattered... Boys were dumbfounded – wow! – the marines are being destroyed! The shells were getting closer and closer – now exploding inside the city, near buildings, between houses, in homes! Like peas, the boys scattered from the rooftop – and I flew into the apartment, dumb from fear. Mother stood near my father's bed, calmly, as it seems to me. Her eyes were dry and somehow empty as she said:

"Ilya, son, listen carefully! Father is dying and he is no longer conscious..." Only then did I notice that Father, kind beloved Father, is in bed his eyes closed and breathing fitfully... "You will help me move Father into the kitchen, only first we should place something on the floor there since the bed will not fit through..."

"Why in the kitchen?" – I asked.

"Because they are shooting from the right bank – it seemed so, didn't it?"

We removed everything from my mother's bed and went to the kitchen to lay out a makeshift bed. But the bedding was not necessary... The blast was frightening. Instinct works well – Mother and I immediately found ourselves under the table. This saved us from the falling debris of plaster – but we were okay... Dust had not yet settled when we ran into the room, but the room was already gone – no wall with the window, no large part of the floor, all was covered with brick, plaster, and glass. And no Father! No more. No need for the bed, no need for the broth, which was cooking on kerosene in the kitchen... And there are no tears. Good that they are absent since there is no time to weep; it is necessary to bury Father somewhere, for the attack seems to have subsided – this is not for long, however. Perhaps the Germans' soup had also come to the boil – lunch break has come...

We ran to the bomb-shelter under building 88 and a light is burning there! Electric! But not for long – while we were searching for a stretcher, it went out. It went out for a long time, for years – there was Dneproges but it had come to an end... We asked the janitor, Mustafa, to help and place Father on the stretcher. Where to take him, good people had shown: nearby, in the lot of the hospital there is a large pit – now it is a mass grave that is not yet full. To carry a body some 100 meters is very difficult – yes and with the bombs still exploding in the distance – but this is the time for a burial... We arrived. Yes, there is still some space. On the top lies a young soldier, but positioned somehow inhumanely – with face downwards... Mustafa turned him over, said something in Tatar, poured some earth over him, placed Father on top, again said something in Tatar, and the three of us began to put earth over him – faster and faster, since the shelling was coming closer. Having almost covered him, only the tips of his home shoes are partially visible, here come the bombs, let them be damned! We ran away, determined to return and complete the burial... When we came back about two hours later there is nothing more to do. The burial was completed without us – the pit was full and only a small mound of earth could be made on top. We returned to the bomb-shelter and it was here where I could no longer restrain myself. Never in my life before nor after had I cried so much. I wept for all – for the wrecked childhood, for Father whom we could not even bury in a decent human fashion, for the sorrowful land of ours which had been so despoiled, for the Dnieper water which has been mixed with blood, for our beautiful Zaporozhye, for Mother's suffering – for all, for all... At age thirteen my childhood was over while 1941 was only just beginning...

Chapter 3 – And They Came, Scourged By the Sun... Germans. August 1941–June 1942

Mother and I spent a couple of days in the shelter of building 88, came to our senses a bit, gathered some of our belongings, bade farewell to Father and neighbors, and went to the factory to catch the troop train. We left at dusk, it was just getting dark – a time when there was little shooting. It was also not so hot outside, and we had to walk for some 3-4 kilometers to the factory. Halfway en route, we sat to rest. We were silent... Suddenly, the earth trembled. I looked west and was in awe: somewhere near the Dnieper silently arose a huge mushroom... The dam! They've blasted the dam!

"Mother, open up your mouth!!"

"What?"

"Open! Wider! Mouth!"

And it blasted! Oh, how it exploded! Our pride, the beautiful Dneproges! With what pain your mortal wound resonated in our hearts. It will not heal soon! But, how many more wounds like this will be ahead? Here it is, death – how it swings its scythe – swinging it for real, without holidays or weekends – the count is rising in the millions. Who is next? – Step up! And they went scourged by the sun, watered by the rains, blown by the winds, covered by the snows – on wagons, cars, freight trains . . . This is only on the geographic map – here is Zaporozhye for you, here is Voroshilograd for you, half a day's travelling with a layover in Volnovakh. And in this half day of travel by the front lines there are also the bombings, and hospitals, and sleeping in the open field, and much, much else. . . . Oh, it will be a long time until Mother and Aunt Nina will embrace and cry their guts out, I will warm myself by the hot Holland stove, eat the indescribably delicious borscht, and lie down to sleep on a white, crisp bed sheet. It will be a long time until I will fall asleep while listening to the incomprehensibly old clock – Uncle Grisha's pride, reconstructed by him down to every screw and bolt – make its ticking sound, counting out the first minutes of December 1941. God, how good it is!

Our suffering seemed to be over! The Germans were stalled near Moscow! To the south we retook Rostov-on-the-Don and Taganrog, and in Donbass – Lozovaia and Barvenkovo. In the Crimea – Kerch and Feodosiya! Under Leningrad – Tikhvin (who knew of Tikhvin before this?). Now, only ahead! Although von Kleist stands with his tanks in Debaltsevo some 70 kilometers or about three hours away, it's okay – his turn will come too! In the same way they came here, the same way they will run away. We will make a decent burial for Father and we will stroll along the rebuilt dam! The schools reopened and I went to 7^{th} grade, sitting behind the same desk with my cousin Musya. I could not even imagine earlier what happiness it would be to sit behind a desk and solve various problems, and even study 7^{th}-grade English, having not yet learned 5^{th}- and 6^{th}-grade German well. If it is necessary – we will learn it! So, I finished 7^{th} grade, but only in the spring and summer of 42, it did not turn out quite so well. More correctly, not well at all . . . I surely never reckon, could not even guess, that this year – yes, what a year of Voroshilov – Red-bannered Voroshilovgrad, they will surrender without giving battle! In the spring, tremendous booming began in the west. It was very alarming. From all sides people began to talk about the possibility that they were blasting ice on the Donets River – what a pleasure it was to believe this! The front, after all, was very near and it was attractive to think and wish that soon, very soon, the front would move, booming ahead. Well, it moved, but not in the direction we hoped for ... And what a fine spring it was! How warm and radiating the earth was then! How fragrant the acacia! It was so cozy in the evenings at home with the open windows, behind which squeaked the cicadas. How slumbering was the voice of Grandpa Aronson who popped in for evening chats and with diligence described the dignity and civility of the German occupation of 1918:

"They gave white bread, as if made of gold – if I could live so now!"

This is how you lived, Grandpa, until November 1 of 1942 ... Oh, the Russian concept of "perhaps,"[g] how much misery, past present and future, you have caused. It was time to leave, but how? There were no troop trains; passenger coaches were not running; and, the timid offers of Dora, Musya, and myself to leave by foot were only waved off. Indeed, go where, if there is shooting somewhere in the east ...? Probably on July 12^{th} there was a frightening bombing of the station. It seemed as though the bombs fell just nearby – since we lived on Olkhovskaia Street. On day two, the petrol depository behind the Artem factory burst out into flames. The sky above the city turned black while the city died out and the streets were empty.

Our neighbors – the Shustermans – who just recently returned from evacuation, came to prefer and speak kindly of Tashkent which they so recently derided. And Grandpa Aronson is nowhere to be seen. And here they are, the Germans on both sides of the street wearing their helmets, green tunics, their sleeves rolled up, carrying their automatic guns in their lowered arms, walking, talking, and laughing. This is not "Professor Mamlock" for you, nor "if war begins tomorrow ...". Real-life fascists are strolling along our Olkhovskaia.

Chapter 4 – Hell. Third Month in Hell. June 17, 1942 – October 31, 1942

So it began .... Well, Grandpa Aronson, where are the generous Germans, where is the bread, as of gold? Do you know what *peich* is Grandpa? Grandpa is silent ... I saw this *peich* in practice. Thank God, I did not experience it myself, just saw and will never forget it. Several days after the German arrival, amongst the many posters, leaflets, orders, and appeals there appeared a decree on the mandatory registration of Jews – for disobedience: the firing squad. How much longer will we live? All of the furniture

[g] Famous *'avos'*. – Translator's note.

from the home of our uncle and aunt, where the six of us lived, was confiscated. At the threat of firing squad, we were ordered to wear armbands with the Star of David. Unbridled anti-Semitic propaganda: from the posters glare repulsive mugs of Yids – bloodsuckers, calling in frenzy – beat, beat, and beat them... And how they beat. They beat well. Order: to be at the labor exchange – *arbaitsbergerd* – each day by 8 in the morning. "Work-providers" select 5 or 10 people, as many as they need. The very first day I found myself engaged in picking up trash in the yard of this very exchange. Sometime between 10 and 11, I saw something that I will not forget until the end of my days. A group of officers headed by Commandant Zoffner walked out onto the high porch, as if onto a podium. A person wearing rather elegant attire was pushed out into the middle of the yard – clearly he knew not where and for what reason he was being led there... At a distance of some 10 or 20 meters from each other, coachmen were ordered to stand holding their riding-crops (just a bit earlier some wagons entered into the yard with furniture, hence the coachmen). The entire episode was supervised by the manager of the exchange – Stetsenko, apparently. He said something to this terrified person who ran, limping along, to one of the coachmen. The latter hit him with his riding-crop, but not hard. The person yelled out and ran to the other coachman... The frightened coachmen beat him with obvious displeasure. The enraged Zoffner shouted out something to Stetsenko and tossed him his *peich*. A *Peich* is a long whip covered with leather.[h] God knows how it is made, but that it's a serious device, this I saw immediately... Stetsenko grabbed the *peich*, the Pole Stas, one of Zoffner's lackeys, seized the coachman's riding-crop and then began the real work – a multitude of direct hits... I recognized the unhappy fellow – this was the barber from Lenin Boulevard. He had once cut my hair... The clothes of the poor fellow turned into bloody rags, he fell on the ground, screamed something out in Yiddish, and fell silent. They trampled him with their feet a bit and dragged him away. The spectators departed laughing. I stood there half-conscious – having seen for the first time in my life the beating of an adult. Passing by, the heated Stetsenko barked out:

"Why are you not working, Yid? You want a whipping too?"

"No..." I breathed out and resumed waving my broom about the ground.

So the days passed by, frightful in their hopelessness, despair, and hungry existence, full of horror from the waking hours at dawn, agony and

[h] A bullwhip. – Translator's note.

torment . . .

There is one more day I will never forget. Fifteen men and teenagers were counted out, placed inside a huge truck, and taken to the outskirts of the city. On the rail-line stands a trolley, a regular trolley fitted with an automobile engine. Two Germans – an officer and a private – stand next to it. Order: dismantle the trolley and load it into the truck. Understand? Do it!!! And the order was carried out. Toward evening, the trolley was loaded – I only hoped that I would survive until evening . . . Beautiful lads these Germans, charming – similar looking types appear on posters:

"Drink Soviet champagne!" "Fly on planes of Aeroflot!" "Save money in *Sberkassy*!"[i] But, in the hands of these "charmers" there are sticks a finger thick.

"Left – right, left – right, don't speak"– and on the head, on the shoulders, on the hands, on the backs – but not to death, no! The trolley has to be loaded! Mother looked at me in the evening and she felt sick . . .

Otto, Willy, Hans, Hubert – here, this person is old enough to be your father, and this one – wearing the glasses – your grandfather; they did not do anything bad to you, why are you so against them?! Do not judge God based on what is found on Earth, since Earth is not His best creation . . .

Well, another day passed – how many remain? Tomorrow is Sunday – at least we will sleep in late . . . We dined late, under the light of a kerosene lamp. Steamed beets were not so bad, if some salt was sprinkled on them. Soon even this ran out, but we tried not to think about it too much. The door was not locked, so a police officer entered without knocking: he walked in business-like – did not call us Yids – sat down, and unfolded on his laps some sort of papers with lists of names:

"Turoki and Shapiro live here?" – and then he called out Uncle Grisha, Aunt Nina, Dora, and Musya and then me and Mother. Without waiting for an answer, he said:

"Tomorrow, November 1, at 6 in the morning come to Voroshilov Stadium. Take your most expensive possessions – get it? You will be sent off to a ghetto, to Stalino . . . See to it that you are not late. Otherwise, I have to run around and gather you all! Well, farewell . . . those Gokh . . . how is it . . . Gokh-ler-ne-rs live in apartment #24?" Then he left.

"I have ruined you, my dear son – forgive me, forgive me!!!" – said Mother.

Aunt Nina in frenzy began to kiss the girls and also bade forgiveness.

[i] The Soviet Savings Bank. – Editors' note.

Uncle Grisha was running around the room and was shouting out something in Yiddish. This lasted probably about two minutes. The first to come to her senses was Aunt Nina. In general, she was great.

"Quickly, get dressed – we are leaving before the curfew hours!" Suddenly, she had a revelation – "Dora, grab Musya, and run to the Italians – perhaps they will save you! My God – run fast!"

We grabbed what we could and ran in all directions: Aunt Nina, Uncle Grisha, Mother, and I ran through the settlement of Budennoe to the Krasnodonskoe highway; while Dora and Musya ran to the Italians. Ordinary Italians – from Italy . . . May you be blessed for centuries, beautiful Italy, the country that sheltered and saved my sisters!

These Italians were stationed as some sort of irregular division in the city, perhaps a garrison, maybe on leave, or something else. Charming fellows – no one looted, no one killed anyone – fine lads: Bersaglieri with rooster feathers inserted in their helmets; Carabinieri in pre-"Great Flood" three-cornered hats, promenading in pairs, showoff officers in their elegant light-gray tunics; combat pilots, I even once saw a sailor. From morning to morning they sang their Neapolitan songs and drove the girls of Voroshilovgrad crazy! In the movie theater "October" they had something like a club and they felt it necessary to bring some order to it. So they came to the labor exchange and five women were counted out to them. Dora turned out to be amongst this group of five. They swept and washed the floors, and during the break Dora sat down at the piano. Dora was a student of the Kiev Conservatory and played so well that they wrote about her in the "Pravda" newspaper. So, she sat down at the piano and began to play. After that, the Italians fell in love with her. They made her the official cleaning lady in "October."

When Dora and Musya came to them that frightful evening, the Italians sheltered and hid them, and Capitan De Beni managed to send them off to Italy, to his family, to Signora Iza. There, the two girls lived as members of the family until the end of the war, and then returned home. Captain De Beni and his wife Iza have been placed posthumously into the Yad Vashem Museum and granted the title "righteous of the World."

I, together with Mother, Aunt Nina, and Uncle Grisha came to the outskirts of the city and waited until dawn in a revoltingly untidy tram stop. With sunrise, we came out on the road and walked east – in the direction of the rising sun. The highway was teeming with people – city folk were going to the villages to barter what they had for provisions: a suit, gramophone, a piece of cloth, a watch . . . Many people were on the road, it was joyful – so we melted into this stream of people. We walked all day long, walked just so, simply, without any aim – we just did not want to die. We spent the night sleeping in a haystack. In the morning, Aunt Nina and Uncle Grisha returned to the city to get news of what had happened to the girls. They did not find the girls,of course, but they were able to save themselves. They survived thanks to the neighbors who harbored them – Liudmila Fedorovna and Ivan Nikolaevich Anosov – for this they will not be forgotten, may the earth be like down to them![j]

Chapter 5 – Third Day of the New Era. Policeman. November 3, 1942

...What a wonderful morning it was, and what a dreadful awakening! We climbed out of the haystack and came out onto the road. The road was already boisterous – many people were walking along it, pushing carts with all sorts of junk from the city, with produce from the villages. We walked in silence. I tried not to look at Mother; her face was...No, I better not tell you what kind of an expression she had. After that frightful evening, she no longer asked for my forgiveness. We simply walked, as yesterday, as the day before – east, facing the rising sun and, as yesterday, as the day before, somewhere deep-deep inside a sensation of hope came over me – well, we should not die, when we face the sun so! Well, dear God – well, dearest – well, You can do anything. Perform a Miracle! Can it really be that the eighteen people buried in Mariopol are too few?! How many more do we have to surrender? Grandmother, Aunt Ginda, and Aunt Lida, and Uncle Yasha, and Mosya, and Eva, and also Mosya, and also Eva – how much more lamentation can be expected from us – God?! Why do You also need us – for a round number, yes? God, how much I want to live! Do You hear, God, I do not want to die! Dear God, dearest, You have saved me so many times before – do You recall, in Zaporozhye, when I was drowning? And when the bomb exploded above our apartment and killed Father – do You recall? And in Voroshilovgrad when the bombs were falling next to us; on the railroad station – You had saved us then, right? Then save us now too – You are the All-Powerful, Compassionate, Great...

We sat on the side of the road having lowered our legs into the trench. Behind our backs walked ordinary lucky people – Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, and others who did not have to worry about the possibility of being shot right here, on the road...Lucky people who do not even suspect how lucky they are...

[j] The Russian equivalent of “may they rest in peace”. – Translator’s note.

...Suddenly, Mother embraced and pulled me to her; with an almost alien voice, low and coarse, she said, no – she squeezed it out of her self:

"Do not be frightened my son, it will be quick..."

What will be quick? I glanced left, then right – and saw a policeman approaching us...Policeman, how can it be a policeman? – wearing a cheap frayed grayish suit and boots which had long since smelled no wax; a worn cap and a washed-out shirt...Shabby policeman, overall – but he can do whatever he wants with us, since behind his back he has our [k] rifle, on his arm he has a white band with a fascist eagle, and he is authority – small, stinking – but authority. And we are Yids, having been sentenced to death we have no right to live, and probably in five minutes he will walk away along the road having finished smoking, while on the side of the road Mother and I will lie still...Simple as that, Eva Solomonovna...Later on I tried to figure out how frightening this was; did I understand that these may have been my last seconds on Earth – God knows, I still have not figured it out...

"Hello..."

"Hello..."

"Who may you be?"

"Well, we are going to trade some clothing, perhaps we can get some produce in exchange..."

"Jews – are you?" – God, will he really kill us?! He did not say "Yids," nor "Kikes," but "Jews!" He had recognized us (and what was there to recognize? – one could see that from a mile away!), but did not remove the rifle from his back! God, can it be that we will survive?! He said in a seemingly non-malicious way:

"Jews – are you?"

"Jews..."

"So then why are you sitting here, like some kind of...? "

"We don't want to die..."

"So get away from here for Christ's sake – go wherever you can. Your brothers and sisters are piled in huge heaps at High Grave..." – and he stood with his hand above his head and said:

"The heaps are this high!"

"If you are such a good person, I beg you, tell us where to go?" – said Mother.

"Where to go, where to go...go to "ours,"[l] below Stalingrad...But, maybe it would be best for you to go to the Cossacks, beyond the Donets –

[k] I.e. Soviet. – Translator's note.

[l] I.e. behind the front line to the Soviet side. – Translator's note.

the areas there are very remote, and there are few Germans there. From Krasnodon it is not far, it would be some 20 kilometers. Go through Shakhtar, Glukhovo, and the rest . . . Be careful walking, and look out – do not fall prey to bastards like me!"

"May God provide more bastards like you" – this was me joining in the conversation.

"And you, kid, be silent – you know nothing; 'ours' (Soviets – tr.) will come, and I will get the first bullet . . . "

He looked at us for one or two more seconds, turned around and marched off towards the city . . . I do not remember his face – it was rather ragged, an unremarkable face on this not-so-young-man; but the eyes – these I will never forget! They were filled with sorrow, terrible longing, and unforgivable guilt. It is probably not an easy trade – shooting Yids. Letting us off – I bet, wiping off sin? And, maybe, he did not shoot anyone, but watched how others shot innocent people.

. . . Maybe, there is another life up there, and when my hour has come I will ask the Lord to arrange a meeting with that policeman and I will forgive him the blood of my brothers and sisters. I will bow low, very low to him for not killing us and for telling us the correct route to take: we took that road via Krasnodon and swung left – we remained alive. For this generous present I give my gratitude – for 60 years I have been happy, for the beloved wife, son, grandchildren, for my interesting and beloved occupation that brought me many years of joy – for everything. If only I could see him, recognize him there among the billions . . .

Chapter 6 – Happy Holiday, My Son! November 7, 1942

Lord God granted us five passable days. Warm – not one cloud in the sky – first-rate Indian summer. We walk slowly towards town – it makes no difference to us where we go, since there is no hope and we are simply playing hide-and-seek with the unknown. Perhaps we will live one more day . . . We look and suddenly see Germans riding bicycles with their helmets and automatic guns – on their chests appear huge plaques – field-gendarmes – field police . . . there were six of them. Now they will check our papers and that will be the end of the comedy. Here now . . . Here . . . Can it be that they passed? They passed! They tossed around some words in their filthy language, but were too lazy to get off their bikes – again we escaped . . . And, on the sixth day, we get out of the haystack and see that it is curtains for us. The sky is gray like lead and it is raining, dreary cold rain. Towards evening, there was not one thread on us that was not wet, but the rain had stopped.

Instead, however, there was frost and a wind that blew right through our haystack so that our clothing turned into an icy chain mail, it crunched ...

The night was frightening, but we survived; only our toes were frostbitten. But is this really a disaster? Toes – this is a trifle; if we can walk, it's okay... As soon as it was dawn, we walked out onto the highway, Mother embraced and kissed me with her shivering, cold lips she said:

"Happy holiday, my son ... " – I was petrified, can it be that I had gone crazy? Oh, yes, today is November 7^{th}...[m]

"Happy holiday, Mummy ... "

"Tell you what, my dear – I have no more strength ... Let us go and surrender? On arriving in Krasnodon, we will walk into the police station ... It will be quick ... You will see – it will be quick ... Let's go, son, hey?"

"No, I don't want to! I want to live, God – I want to live! I do not want to die, Mummy – lets live a little more ... Perhaps in Krasnodon we should go left, to the Cossacks, as that policeman said?"

"Sure, they are all waiting for us there, already have supper prepared ... " – and after a pause, in an acquiescent voice said – "well, okay, let's live a little longer ... "

And so we went across Krasnodon to the left via Shakhta, Glukhovo, and other farmsteads ... No, we were not destined to slumber in any more haystacks – had enough of that! Thank God that we are still alive, not frozen and had not caught pneumonia. We have not forgotten that terrible night for the rest of our lives. And not one soul would let us into a hut overnight without permission of the village elders: the Germans had decreed a special order that all violators would be shot immediately. Mother decided that there is nothing to loose and made a desperate move – on approaching the first farmstead, she went to the village elder. She told him that she had lost her papers, that she was with her son, looking for work, that she is a good tailor (Mother, indeed, sewed excellently), and that perhaps Lord Elder would issue her a document that would permit her to stay overnight. In gratitude, she would give him her husband's watch which was manufactured by Pavel Bure – "perhaps you have heard of them? It's a good watch – wear it and prosper ... " And the elder gave her the document. He earned it honestly – perhaps the first watch he ever had in his life.

... It was at first embarrassing to stretch out my hands for a handout, to remove my hat and cross myself; it was painful, but later we grew accustom to it, only at first I made the cross with my left hand (I am left-handed ...).

[m] The 25^{th} anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. – Editors' note.

They gave modestly, but they gave – there was almost no sense of hunger. Thank you, good people, for your kindness. You also did not have it so sweet... Our first night was spent in a rather poor but clean hut. Earthen floor. The lamp was made out of a mangled spent shell. Our hosts, an elderly woman of some fifty years of age and her son Ivan, a lad of twenty years – light-haired with blue eyes – blind since childhood. God, how happy he was at our arrival!

"You see Mother, I had a dream – that we will have some good fortune! Here come some guests!" – said Ivan.

My God! Two of the most unfortunate people in the world, destitute, convicted to death, escaping from death, hungry, homeless, deprived of all emotions and feelings except one – the feeling of fear, filled to the brim – and we are "good fortune"? And we are "guests"? Oh, Ivan, Ivan, it would have been better if Dr. Aibolit [n] had knocked at your door and given you a magical pill so that you would see how good the world is, even under occupation... The hostess served us pumpkin porridge with wheat! The Tsar was probably served all sorts of beef steaks and the like for dinner – he was the Tsar after all – but, undoubtedly, pumpkin porridge with wheat was presented as a side dish! And, I – fool – turned up my nose at it before the war ... Later, Ivan and I talked or, more accurately, I became talkative and told him the story of *Mysterious Island*.[o] Before the war, this was my favorite table book. So I strolled along the paths of Lincoln Island, through the "Woods of the Far West" to "Snake Peninsula", along the shores of Washington Bay, visited the Granite House, recalled Engineer Cyrus Smith and his loyal friends. I did not even forget Top and Jup, visited captain Nemo, and waited until the arrival of the sailboat "Duncan". Ivan strolled along with me across the island – and, may lightning strike me, he saw it all, I swear to God, he saw it all! He was wildly happy when Engineer Cyrus Smith was saved; or when a box of quinine was found near the dying Herbert; and shaken with excitement when the pirates seized the noble Ayrton. I have never had nor ever will have such a grateful listener!

In the morning, we thanked the hostess, said farewell to the sad Ivan, and walked ahead into the unknown...

[n] Dr. "Ouch-It-Hurts" – a character from a popular children's book by Korney Chukovsky. – Translator's note.
[o] One of Jules Verne's novels. – Editors' note.

Chapter 7 – My Dear Grachiki! November 13, 1942

Donets – stern, gray, inhospitable. What awaits us Zaporozhians beyond the Donets? A boatman carried us across the river and we walked along Cossack land, on a path through a wood – but where? Well at least there was just one path. Otherwise, who knows which one to take? This path led us to Gundorovskie Grachiki farmstead – let there always be God's blessing upon you, our cherished farmstead, which harbored, warmed us – saved us during the harsh days of occupation! And it is not our fault that our salvation was paid for with the lives of fifteen Jews half a year earlier. It so happened that already in the autumn of 1941 three Jewish families had arrived at this farmstead. They were peasants from some sort of a Jewish state-commune farm: fifteen people – elderly folk, women, and children. They lived in friendship with the Cossacks and the children played together. But, this "Friendship of Peoples" did not last for long. In the summer of '42 Germans came – someone had informed on them. So, the punishment party came and all the Jews were shot right there in the yards – why transport them some 25 kilometers! One youngster, however, they did not finish off, but the Yid did not get far away ... They tracked him down by the blood trail and corrected the mistake... This shook the Cossacks. Of course, it seems that all is right: "beat the Yids and save Russia!" All is clear and understandable, what's there... Suddenly, however, it is revealed that these people aren't so bad, these Jews – see how they work their fingers to their bones in their peasant tasks! Their kids are also agreeable! And right before the eyes of the farmers, the SS shoot Grandpa Moisei, his daughter Anna, and the three-year-old Lizochka... What is going on, good people? What for? When Mother and I came to the farmstead, many told us about this tragedy. But, no one ever asked us who we were and no one ever asked us for papers – not the hetman[p], nor the village elder, nor the policemen (there were two of them) – it was a forbidden subject. But, even if not everyone knew, very many did. Mother sewed, we were fed, and concerning the forbidden topic – it was all hush-hush.

For two months we lived like this. Two months – every day, every hour, every second we lived in fear. Will we be betrayed or not? Will we survive or not? Will ours (Soviets – tr.) come or not? Despair changed to hope and hope to despair. When it became totally intolerable, I recollected the sun rising to greet us... My poor mother, my dear, beloved mother – I stand before you on my knees, kiss your overworked hands. How was it for you

[p] The local Cossack military commander. – Editors' note.

during such a frightful time, to carry twice the burden? How did your heart withstand it, and what about your senses! In what Neo-Platonic debt I am to you! Only when 'ours' came, the farmers began to talk – people with whom we were and were not acquainted came up to us, clapped us on the shoulder and were joyful that we survived. Perhaps they were fulfilling their promise that they would save at least these two? I do not know, they did not say. They saved us and that's all. My dear little farmstead Gundorovskie Grachiki, Glubokinskii region, Rostov oblast – you are always in my heart!

Ours, the liberators, came on January 17, 1943 – wearing worn cotton jackets and greasy coats which were once white; they came cursing in the appropriate native tongue, with front-line chaos and bombing, which nearly brought our attempts at survival in this meat-grinder to nothing... The Germans bombed our miserable farmstead for two days; and we have news! Mother has come down with typhus! Six bombs fell around the house – six craters now; the porch is torn off, a piece of shrapnel burst through the wooden wall, but Mother lies there unconscious! But, God helped again – the bombing ceased and Mother recovered. Here is the sun – rising to greet us!

The front is near, just behind Voroshilovgrad, some 50-60 kilometers away. But, another misfortune befell me – sickness, delusion of some kind probably. Jack London has a story, I think it's called "Love of Life". A fellow walked through a snowy desert, walked until his last bit of strength; then he crawled, rolled over... He finally made it to the shore and he was spotted from a ship and saved. When he came to his senses, it suddenly "came to him" – he was afraid that there would not be enough to eat. He hated everyone who sat at the table – they ate, they depleted the reserves of food! Everyone told him that there were plenty of products, took him to the storeroom, galley – but he did not believe them. He begged for crusts of bread from the sailors, stole bread crusts – his whole cabin was packed with dry bread. The doctor said that this would all go away – and it did. He became well again. Something similar happened to me. I was afraid of the Germans' return to the point of sickness, to cold sweat, to awful dryness in my mouth. I slept very badly and could not wait till morning. Then began the everyday ritual:

I walked about the farmstead and encountered every single soldier whom I saw with a single question – how are things at the front? Had the Germans returned? I was calmed down, but I did not believe it... When the front moved ahead, there were no longer any soldiers at the farmstead. Thus, my suffering strengthened. I came to myself only in March when Mother and I moved east, towards Stalingrad. We were sent off with great warmth – goodbye, our precious Grachiki, God protect you! And you, my fifteen brethren in blood, I will never forget you. May there be eternal memory of you and our eternal gratitude!

Chapter 8 – Mikhailovna and Pronya. Kettle. March 1943

We are alive! We survived! And so, Zoffner, Bekker, Krauze, Laich – Hitler's dogs, you vile fascists – did you take us?! Maybe you are now rotting in the soil of Russia, while we are walking on this beautiful ground east to Stalingrad. The sun is rising to greet us! Oh, You, my God, how good it is! How the earth radiates! How high up in the sky sings some sort of bird – a skylark probably! How gorgeous is the endless Don steppe – our winter clothes are gone to rags and we are too hot in them but no matter, we shouldn't chuck them out – that's the last thing we should do! It doesn't matter that the only other thing we own is a twisted soldier's kettle which was given to us in Grachiki by Sgt. Kostin. It doesn't matter that we still have to walk some 300 kilometers to Stalingrad. It's okay – we will make it!

On the first day, we walked some 25 kilometers and came to Glubokaia. We spent the night somewhere near the station and quickly left early in the morning. Good thing that we did! ... Some 3 kilometers away, we sat down on a mound to rest and suddenly saw above us three groups of Junkers, 60 planes, flying north without resistance in perfect formation, probably towards Millerovo. Some 5 or 6 of them separated, quickly reformed into a "carousel" and began to dive on the station. Everything is on fire and in smoke. Again, our lucky star had shielded us ...

We became quite engaged with our journey. In one day, we would walk some 20 to 25 kilometers. Sometimes we walked while at others we got a lift. Our destination was the station at Tatsinskaia from where trains ran to Stalingrad. More specifically, these were freight trains – passenger trains were not yet running. We have to hurry ... but one link in our journey muddled up all our plans. That day, we walked for some 42 kilometers. There were no villages or farmsteads on the way and we walked as though through a desert. In the evening, we wobbled towards the Titov farmstead, walked into the nearest hut, Mother sat down on the bench, but could not get up – her legs gave way. Her legs had done their utmost ... What luck it is that on our miserable journey we came across kind people! A neighbor walked in, perhaps for some salt, maybe to chat, and became engaged in a conversation with Mother.

"And, lad, who are you ... – Ilya? Ilya, let's carry her to our place!" –

she said without questions, discussions...

Two women lived on the farmstead – a beautiful and graceful Cossack named Pronya and her mother-in-law Mikhailovna, a middle aged woman who was probably also quite something in her youth. Pronya's son, a student at Leningrad University, was fighting somewhere; her husband was killed in 1941 – she received the notice... The second son, Kolka, was about fourteen and was helping around the farmstead. God – what wonderful people we encountered! They lived so calmly and beautifully amongst themselves; how they loved and adored each other!

Mother related to them one allegory:

"There stand, they say, two chairs – one for the mother-in-law and one for the bride, for those who lived on Earth with love and in harmony. These chairs stand vacant till today, awaiting the two of you!"

And they both bellowed with laughter at this:

"Oh, Semenovna, Semenovna, we would be happy in paradise, but our sins don't permit that! But, thank you for the tale!"

So these two miracle-workers began to nurse Mother back to health. For 22 days they steamed, mashed, rubbed her legs and gave her special herbal drinks. In this way, they restored my Mother to health and put her back on her feet!

Oh, if only I could be God for a couple of days! I would bring order to Earth, reduce the Evil, increase the Good – I'd work from morning till night, but in this whirlpool would not have forgotten about Mikhailovna and Pronya. I would have set aside several minutes to make sure that they would not land in an inappropriate place, but somewhere they could take their chairs!

The time came to depart. The women wept a bit, we said farewell to Kolka – and hit the road.

Here is Tatsinskaia, a tiny, tiny station. Who had ever heard of it? A passenger might glance out of the window at the warehouses to read the station's name, and then return to eating their chicken... There are thousands of people near the station. Passenger trains are still not running (Germans were here just two months earlier – there were furious battles here, burnt tanks stand in the steppe with charred tankmen still inside – I saw it myself). So, people are taking the freight trains, platforms, and warm cattle cars by storm – all waiting for many days to depart. During the Battle of Stalingrad, the Germans deported some 60000 civilians from the city to farmsteads and stations in the Stalingrad and Rostov regions on just such freight trains, as well as trucks! So, now this mass is all trying to get back home, to their totally demolished houses. And it does not bother anyone that there are still quite a few corpses hidden in the ruins; the city is a forest of black smokestacks and a sea of iron beds. There are so many beds available all around that one could open a furniture store... Home, home, like fish swimming upriver to spawn – home! We also flowed into this massive stream, climbed onto the coal carrying railroad cars and dozed off to the sound of the pounding wheels... There are people on the platform as far as the eyes can see, but no one ponders on the possibility of a German air attack (and they make their raids often). Another problem is tormenting me: when the train stops at some post, which now can hardly be called a post (there was one track but now there are four, scorched buildings, smokestacks, and the steppe with no beginning and no end stretches to the horizon) – what happens then? According to the unspoken rule, men go left and women right... And there is also the engineer – a prankster – who will sound off the locomotive whistle (and it is possible to understand this person – the entire trip he leads the engine with one hand while with the other is on the lookout in the sky for Junkers or Heinkels). How can one not joke around when gazing out of the engine cabin and seeing hundreds of people in the most interesting way running to catch the train and ascending the cars' high platforms? One could die laughing at the thought! They say that at the Oblivsk station one such prankster was pummeled a bit...

So, this is how we travelled for two days. Towards evening we arrived in Beketovka – this is one area of the city where there were no Germans. We descended from the car and entered the station. Hello Stalingrad! Receive new residents! We ate our few remaining morsels of food and lay down on the ground to rest. We were terrifically tired and fell asleep immediately. I awoke to the sound of Mother crying. It was not often that Mother cried. And she cried hard. The reason was serious – our kettle had been pinched – the very same one that Sgt. Kostin gave us in Grachiki: it was our only possession, and now we had absolutely nothing. A soldier ran up:

"Why are you sobbing, woman?" I answered:

"Our kettle has been stolen..."

"Whaaat? Tfu, mother of...!!!" – the soldier tossed around several curses and ran off further to attend to his duties.

Mother calmed down a bit, and the two of us began to climb through the crowd towards the exit.

"Hey, woman, wait!" – that same soldier yelled out, and shoved into my mother's hands a new, green aluminum kettle, half filled with some sort of kasha, a half loaf of black bread, and ran off – we did not even have time to thank him.

So began our life in Stalingrad.

Chapter 9 – The Last . . .

Here, I put my last "..." in my notes and started pondering again – why did I really write all of this? For many, many years I have felt something like guilt before the people whom I had not thanked, whose hand I had not kissed, and before whom I had not knelt. I do not remember and in part do not know their names. So, let God, who knows everything, tell them that I remember them... Maybe someone will read my notes and conjure up a kind thought for these people – and this would be true joy for me. I dedicate my "confessions" to the bright memory of my mother and father, to the bright memory of my six million brethren, the bright memory of all the righteous of the World, to those for whom the trees in the Yad Vashem Museum were dedicated, and to those who have not received that honor....

Dixi et animam meam livavi.[q]

[q] I spoke and lightened my soul. – Latin.

Part II – Stalingrad

... An Iron wind blew in their face, but they strode and strode ahead,
And the enemy wondered with fear and confusion – are these people, immortal are they?

V. Grossman

"Are these people? Immortal are they? People are mortal... And how they are ...." I do not know when these words of Grossman entered into my soul and came to rest there. Perhaps it was during one of his field reports from the front during autumn or winter 1942 or maybe from his novel *Life and Fate*, which, in the light of circumstance, I had never finished reading and now probably never will .... I read these words on the memorial at Mamay's Kurgan[a] and I stood there for a while mystified with the precision and laconic nature of this question-epithet, which recollected a question I first had in that distant April of 1943: how You, my people, could endure – where did all the strength come from?!

Our "Drang Nach Osten", our "leap to the east" had ended. The battles in Zaporozhye, the demise of my father, flight, tribulations, bombings, Voroshilovgrad, occupation, firing squad, and Grachiki – my love until the coffin's lid, my outstanding debt ... Grachiki!

And here is the final leap forward to Stalingrad ... Of course, God could have filled these years of mine with something quite different. But, I am not grumbling. In the main, he did not abandon us – we are alive, we are among ours – we even had two bread ration cards for 800 grams per day. A whole 800 grams! What is 800 grams of bread in '43?

However, let us turn back a bit to Beketovka ... Beketovka, Sarepta – a small part of town – at its outskirts – an area where the Germans had never penetrated. Many buildings here escaped ruin. Among them were the factories of STALGRES. They operated during the siege. All of the administrators of the city and oblast were stationed here. So it was into Beketovka that our coal train crawled that warm April evening. The next day, a commuter train took us to the center of the city, to the Stalingrad 2 station. Mother had in her pocket an order indicating her place of work as the Nizhne-Volzhsky River Steam-Shipping construction agency.

... Have you ever had the chance to be in this city, which even before the war stretched a good 50 kilometers along a fine stretch of the Volga? In spring and summer, when glancing out of the train window somewhere at the bend between Beketovka and Elshanskaia, you will gasp with awe!

[a] A hill holding a commanding position over Stalingrad which became the focus of the Red Army's resistance in 1942 and which never fell to the Germans. – Editors' note.

The Volga is amazing in its width and turns some 90 degrees. Look south – you will see Sarepta, Beketovka, and smoke billowing from the chimneys of STALGRES. Look north – you will see the entire city, as if on the palm of your hand; and, behind it – the factory chimneys and the factories, "Red October", "Barricades", "Metizny", "Tractor" ... And the train is bent like a bow – one may get the urge to tie the locomotive to the last car with sinew! The locomotive is sparkling green, and the wheels are red; it seems as if it stands still while the city moves on by. One can see how the levers and pedals are moving like mad around the wheels, and the cottony chunks of vapor escape from the pipes – puff-puff-puff! And on the Volga, up and down, here and there – one sees steamships, barges, towboats, tankers, rafts with cabins and fires, wet logs soaked through with tar and tied together with stump-root cables, and steamship smoke!

... Today, behind the car window, it is April 29, 1943 and we are beginning to live once again – with a clean slate. The living Beketovka came to an end; now begins dead Stalingrad. What is there to Vereshchagin's [b] "Apotheosis of War!" A pile of sculls and two thousand crows, that's all – nothing to look at. There are about 30 kilometers from Petrov to the Tractor factories, but the scenery behind the window is all the same – one can see the hand of one "great builder." War, may it be damned now, in the past, and for centuries to come! Wreckage and ruins – looking at the exterior, one may not even understand what it was – a school? A home? Perhaps a hospital? And this building made of brown brick was built to withstand centuries – not a missile nor bomb nor mine could topple it ... I bet that when the German Gerhard was building his mill before the Revolution he never imagined that he would enter history, that he would stand in the center of a city which changed its name thrice. This monstrosity, which vaguely looks like a building, is a monument to edify those who followed (but these descendants don't want to learn from the mistakes of others – only from their own experience). Everything around has been rebuilt, but Gerhard's mill still stands as it did sixty years ago – and the charred smell endures ... However, I've got carried away a bit – to the end of the century! Behind the window it is the year 1943.

... Hurray! Life goes on! I am in Lomakin's brigade while Mother is in Samsonova's brigade. We have a ration card for provisions – bread, meat-fish, pasta, and even sugar, even soap ... ! Hurray!

[b] Vereshchagin, also spelled Verestchagin, 1842 – 1904, Russian painter noted for his war scenes. – Editors' note.

. . . Many years later I stood in a tiny museum at the Piskarev cemetery in Leningrad, in front of a stand which displayed Tanya Savicheva's diary. I was barely able to hold my tears when I read "Grandmother died", "Uncle Leka died", "Mother died", "all the Savichevs died, only Tanya remains . . . " She also died. I believe she was twelve . . . I looked at this diary and at the famous Leningrad scales which had a weight with 125 grams in one cup and a tiny piece of something that looks remotely like black bread in the other. This morsel of bread was the daily ration of a resident of Leningrad during that frightful winter of 1941-42. It was painful to think that in '43 I could not pinch off a piece from my rations and give it to Tanya Savicheva. Then, considerably later, to this pain was added shame for my country which I was so proud of for so long and believed to be the best in the world – for all that, it fought so selflessly but still could not defend tens, hundreds of thousands of such Tanyas . . . Next to me in the museum stood a very elderly gray-haired man . . . Our eyes met and he said to me, painfully squeezing out his words, with just as painful pauses:

"And yesterday . . . there were . . . Germans here, maybe Austrians – hell knows the difference . . . Tourists, maybe . . . And they laughed . . . " We stood there a little while longer, shook hands and parted.

Back to 1943. The NVRP construction agency[c] provided all the infrastructure for the dockers and sailors who ran the river traffic; their homes, hospital, kindergarten, port facilities and wharfs. The first days of work – the brigade of Lomakin, what was his name . . . ? Nikolai? Petro? Yes, Petro. Lomakin was not an old man, but demobilized due to a wound. He was a good man – he took pity on us, protected us and did not load us with overwhelming work. "Us" were Volodya Krasnoperov and I, each about fifteen and a bit. Lomakin's brigade – this is the "transport-shop" of the construction agency: a wagon with nine ropes with loops tied to it. Everyone has his "personal loop" – like Repin's[d] "Burlaks" – and go straight ahead! A ton of cement from the wharf? Done! Two U-beams #20? We will do that! Logs from the timber agency? Well, if need be . . . Need to bury the Uzbek from Girchenko's brigade? What, no one else to do it? Fine, I guess that the guy shouldn't just lie there in the heat . . .

[c] Nizhne-Volzhsky River Steam-Shipping. – Translator's note.

[d] Ilya Repin (1844–1930), a famous painter of the Russian social scene known for the power and drama of his works. His treatments of Russian subjects tend to be grim in tone, sharply drawn, and boldly composed. The powerful "Volga Burlaks", barge haulers in pre-Revolutionary Russia (1873), epitomizes the stark realism and socially critical cast of much of Repin's work. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 he lived and worked on his estate Penates in Kuokkala, Finland. – Editors' note.

So many years have gone by, but even today I still think of these kids with such warm sadness! Times were not easy, but we never quarreled! The ever-smiling Volodya Krasnoperov; the never annoyed, calm Sharip Matveevich Beleulov, a hereditary Volga dockworker who had a perpetual "goat"[e] on his back. A grand piano could be mounted on this "goat" before the war. I saw how he could haul two sacks of cement: Volodya and I placed them ourselves on his "goat" – 160 kilograms! He hauls, groaning a little! ... Joker Vasya Iakovlev, there are no limits to his pranks! And the great lover of pre-war *chibriki* Mitia Kuznetsov (by God, I have no idea what *chibriki* are – bread rolls, perhaps?). During his endless recitals of tales he consumed them in unbelievable quantities, from morning to night. This theme was boundless, for all circumstances of life – he would begin with the start of the war in Kursk, but would end with *chibriki*.

... We worked from 7 to 7, with a one-hour break for lunch. Lunch – this is speaking rather grandly. I will never forget lunch – record breaking (by price, of course!) – 7 (seven) kopeks! Stalingrad, 1943 – and lunch for 7 kopeks (a loaf of bread at the bazaar at that time cost 250 rubles)! Lunch was like this: a plate of warm, opaque-grayish sludge in which floated 4 (four!) pieces of rice. But, overall, we managed somehow: something from the ration cards, something from the bazaar, and something from the cafeteria garbage bin. We held on, otherwise where would the strength have come from – to chop up by hand, using smithy mallets and sledgehammers, one of those iron U-beams #20 which we carried ourselves? And we chopped them up not in one minute, and not in five, but we did it; then we had to drag the parts up two or three flights. We also did much else ... The key is not to loose the ration cards and to remain sensible and not get bread for several days in advance. Otherwise, it is the end, as was the case for that Uzbek from Girchinko's brigade ... It is very tempting to eat to the fill and later be as it may ... God, how I wanted to eat! Many lost self-control and only God knows how they got out of the mire ... Thanks to Mother – probably her iron will saved us. We never indulged ourselves – one day at a time!

Mother, of course, was also not sitting with her arms crossed. She worked at dismantling the ruins under the scourging sun and in the dust. Once she came home with an empty face. All night long she was turning inside out with thoughts. Some bricks and fragments of a house fell away from under her feet and there was a German, or what was left of him ...

[e] A primitive device for carrying heavy objects. – Translator's note.

Our home was a stack of broken bricks. On August 23, 1942 hundreds of Junkers and Heinkels turned a beautiful city into flaming Hell. That day, our six-storey building became a mountain of broken bricks with a surviving corner, on the third floor of which stood a decent cupboard. At one time, people even called our building "the house with the cupboard." The basement of the building survived because it was covered by wreckage. It was this basement that sheltered us until the fall. Just imagine a giant basement room, lacking windows, light, toilet and with an uneven earthen floor and gaps in the ceiling through which you can see the stars and rainwater dribbles. Can you imagine such a picture? Have your eyes got used to the dark? Now fill these "apartments" with iron beds (there were lots of burnt iron beds everywhere), any one you like, take your choice! Put on these beds some boards or plywood or an iron sheet, or pieces of conveyor belt, then a mound of rags and you're done, that's where you'll live – Happy Housewarming! How many people lived there – who knows? Perhaps forty, maybe sixty ... Elderly, children, ill, drunk, love, fights, songs, tears, cursing, cooking, brawls, and even death – in a word – "Friendship of Peoples." Despite this frightening cocktail made of fear, despair, hunger, sickness, dirt, lice, and homelessness, there was one ingredient which in the most trying, terrifying, uncertain minutes did not permit total submersion in the mire and helped us to stay afloat. This was elation from knowing that we remained alive, whole – we climbed out! It's okay – we will swim the rest of the way! Here, from afar, faintly-faintly, one could begin to hear the distant sounds of the Victory Fireworks! The Kursk Bend! Orel! Belgorod! The first firework displays, first flares in the sky – not a signal to attack, not a light for illuminating the battlefield, not a show of direction for aim – no, these were flares of victory fireworks! How many more of these fireworks will there be on the road to those Ultimate Fireworks in May?

Stalingrad did not miss a single victory – congratulated them all, gave them all honor – for two years the cannons remained on Bazaar Square. I also had a bit of personal good news – Volodya and I were transferred to a woodworking shop as apprentices. Even today a supply of pine shavings is like wine! Volodya was trained by Boris Moiseevich Gikher, a very old, very sad man, a joiner of the highest rank, a master with golden hands – one could admire his work for hours ... Perhaps during that other, pre-war life he was a lively, happy person – now there was no time for fun. In 1941, he was taken to the "labor front" while the family remained somewhere outside Vinnitsa ... Sometimes he questioned me about the occupation. But, as a rule, he practically never spoke to me ... I was trained by Luka Stepanovich

Izhko who was a joker and very kind person. The harshest words he ever sent in my direction were "From the Devil, Devil's hand!" – this was when I, a lefty, adjusted his frame-saw for my hand. He taught me the art of joining, taught me to love wood, various woodworking techniques – he knew his craft exquisitely.

There were two dreadful events in that distant 1943 which even today throw me into a chill when I recollect them. The head of our shop was fixing up the circular saw. He put it together all by himself, every bolt and screw, and was very proud of that. Having done so, he sawed very narrow planks out of a thick board which was soaked through with water and totally frozen – ice mixed together with wood . . . the wildly spinning saw threw this board, as if it were a sling, directly into our Ilya Nikolaevich's forehead – right before my eyes . . . We buried him and, several days later, I was ordered to go out at night to shave some boards on the joint-machine. I am working alone, not a soul in sight. Suddenly there was a blow on my right hand. My glance immediately falls on two developments: my arm, in the serrated sleeve of my cotton coat, was clamped very hard to the table of the saw, while the flat belt which connects the electric motor to the saw was wildly whirling around like a snake . . . When I understood what had happened, I was horrified. Apparently, I passed out for a very brief moment. God, what luck that the belt jumped off! I forgot to sprinkle some rosin! The loose rags coming from one of the sleeves of my not-so-flashy coat were swallowed up into the machine that caused it to stall, choke, and throw off the loosely fixed belt. I came to my senses when I heard the running of the motor without the saw. Having managed to free my hand by hook and by crook, I began to vomit . . . Very many years have gone by since then, but even today I shudder at the thought of what happened that frightening night; from the idea of what would have happened to me if the belt had not been so loosely fixed – even now I feel ill at the idea. Needless to say, Mother found out nothing about this incident . . .

So it is winter . . . Where are we residing? Obviously, not in the basement . . . The "mansion" is a little brighter; it welcomingly threw open its doors to the same forty or sixty people with the same charred beds, with the same problems but now increased twofold (it was winter after all!), the same cursing, tears, fights, love, drunkenness. This crowd, the so-called "collective of builders with families," relocated into a huge hall in the renovated section of the hospital of water-workers, at one time one of the finest hospitals in the city. However, it was still a room. Two 60-watt light bulbs rather adequately lit our "apartments" in the evening. During the day, these bulbs were assisted by the windows, "glassed in" by greased paper! We took great pleasure in the light, we revelled in it, and we swam in it!

...As a rule, the first to awake was the darling of the room – the seven-year-old Zhora Veleulov. He came to the window, poked his finger through it, and declared: "Comrade Stalingradians – it is winter out there, cold!" – and laughed joyfully. ...His Mother, of course, slapped him around and the old women grumbled, but without anger. Firstly, it did not get any colder in the room from Zhora's tricks. Secondly, it was impossible to get angry with Zhora – he was simply too charming a kid!

...Two large-bellied brick stoves swallowed up raw logs in boundless quantities, but could hardly maintain a room temperature of $+8^\circ$ C, at best $+10^\circ$ C. We put on all the clothes that we had and began the new day. We suffered from furunculosis, various pests and the like unclean things, but we lived, listening in and reading the reports of Sovinformbiuro (Soviet Information Bureau) and catching rumors, believing in the good and distrusting the bad...

The city was rising out of the ruins. Slowly, with difficulty, but it was rising. The first freight trains carrying new cannons passed through Stalingrad 2 station – courtesy of the now-operating "Barricades" factory. The first chimneys of "Red October" began to belch out smoke; "Marteny" produced the first steel; and, in "Stalingrad Pravda" there flashed reports about some sort of an Ilgner motor and the start-up of a blooming (mill). There was talk of the first tractor from the "Tractor" factory. The cranes began to nod decently with their heads over the piers. Day and night the locomotives and boats conversed with each other with their whistles. River taxis ran across the Volga ceaselessly. The beaches were full of people on Sundays. The docks were crowded with white beauties – steamships: a wide red line on the chimney – a passenger vessel; a wide blue – express. Oh, that wide blue line on the snow-white chimney! Hawaii or is it not Hawaii, or is it the mystic Yalta, as seen on the pictures of pre-war magazines; no, no – what comes into the mind of a sixteen-year-old... ...Somehow, unnoticeably, the stands displaying mines disappeared from the city streets. During the spring and summer of 1943, such stands could be found along the streets and squares. Dummy mines were displayed on these stands, since there were countless examples of real ones throughout the city...Here is a "saucepan" for you, a German anti-tank mine; here is an anti-infantry "frog," which jumps up and explodes a meter up in the air. And this wooden box is our anti-tank mine, while this wooden object is the handle for a German grenade – just pull the little knob and it will be the end...Quite a few people died because of these mines. I will never forget the shriek of one soldier who died after stepping on one of these mines right before our eyes in May of 1943. Volodya and I went to the Volga with buckets to fetch some water (there was no working plumbing yet). The path was marked with signs – no veering off to the sides! We suddenly see a soldier overladen with flagons strolling right through the entrance to the Volga-Don docks – walking towards sure death! We yelled and waved at him and he waved back to us with a flask, made a few more strides, and a mine went off...

... "We will renew you, our dear Stalingrad!" – was perhaps the most popular slogan in the city. It stared at us from all the ruins. My God! With what pride in 1943 (and in 1975) I looked at the little two-level house, the first kindergarten in Voroshilovgrad region – for it was I, after all, who hauled on my own back those U-beams #20, it was I who chopped them up with the smithy mallets, it was I who dragged them to the second floor, and it was I who cut my first frames and doors in the wood-shop for this kindergarten!

... In the area of the Voroshilov regional city administration building stood a piano on a rather small, hastily built wooden platform. The platform was encircled by people – all workers who were filthy, covered with grime, and certainly hungry. They all came directly from work, since they were notified too late of the event. They were standing, sitting, and half reclined on the ground. The majority were novices to this type of concert, if not novices to any kind of concert. Two performers came out. The one who was taller went to the piano – he came out first and introduced himself as Mikhail Kusevitskii, and then introduced his companion. How he sang! And how the crowd listened to him – celebration of the soul, rebirth of the heart! Hello to you, dazzling Neapolitan, from the grateful Stalingrad!

... One more piece of good news – the first cinema theater opened its doors among the ruins. It was a bit later that every club endlessly screened various relics – Tarzans for anyone's taste. But our theater was the first! And let us remember "George From Dinka – jazz," and "Lady Hamilton," "Waterloo Bridge," and "Sun Valley Serenade..." We came to the movies alone, but left together with Deanna Durbin, some with Douglas Fairbanks... Return home with the "Three Musketeers," and it would seem as though the light bulb below the ceiling burns a bit brighter...

In the winter of 1944, Volodya and I were transferred to the electrical workshop where we were given "cat's claws" made of iron so that we could crawl up and down the poles. We carried them on our shoulders – they were heavy! Apparently, all hopes rested on us; without us the order of the Head

Construction Bureau would not have been fulfilled . . . On the whole, I do not mind becoming an electrician – let them teach me . . . Well they taught me! Until the very end of the war, I climbed the poles and worked with the high-current wires in the rain, snow, wind, inclement weather and sunny days – Stalingrad and the wharfs, let there be light!

What can be said about safety considerations? Let's think about this after the war, okay guys? If there would have been such a system, then Ilya Nikolaevich would have finished sawing his frozen board and would have lived to 120, and the sleeve of my coat would have remained intact . . . Sixty years have passed, but I close my eyes and still see how my brigadier Volodya Dediurin plunged head first down from the frozen pole – he unluckily touched a hot wire and the "cat's claws" flew off . . . By some miracle, he was able to twist himself into the right position just before hitting the ground. He just lay around for a week or so and then got back on the poles.

. . . The city was reviving, growing, looking better – muscles were growing around the bones. Mother and I are no longer living in the huge water-workers hall. Try better! We have our own personal room! Before the war, there was a respectable "House of Carriers" in Stalingrad where all the river-workers' management resided with one actual worker squeezed in for "democratic correctness . . . " During the renovation of this massive building, several small rooms were thrown together in a hurry. One of them was ours! The ceiling leaked en mass and during spring when the snow was melting we had a terrific torrent. But we had our own room! The stove emitted a great deal of smoke while producing practically no heat – but we had our own room! The room was filled to the brim with centipedes and all types of other living things. But, it was our room! And what joy it was to return from work to your own home, take a little snack with what God sent that day, climb under the hobbling table made with my own hands, and devour books under the illumination of the "table lamp" (a light bulb stuck into a liter-sized glass jar), listening to the measured water droppings from the ceiling into a basin which stood on the table. It was a great pleasure to read every book, every tiniest phrase, quickly, since on the shelves of the city library, supervised by the dearest Zoya Genadievna, stood tens, hundreds of unread books. It was an incomprehensible treasure and not to read them all would have been a crime! I probably never read as much, without being selective, as during these war days.

. . . Oh, if only you could have seen these American boots – extraordinary, of enchanting fairytale beauty, reddish-brown, sparkling, with a wonderful protective layer on the soles, with an amazing scent – foreign! I received the ration card for these boots as a prize for good work. I was proud of them as only I could be – if it were possible, I would not take them off even in the bathhouse... For two whole weeks, I flashed around in them here, there, and everywhere until a part of the sole on the left one broke off... The right held on for another week. God – what luck that I listened to Mother and did not toss out my old ones, the other brown boots that I wore earlier. In connection with this, some words should be said here about American aid. I think that the episode with the boots was an unfortunate exception rather than the rule. Sometime during the winter of 1944, all of the high ranking city heads became true dandies as they came to flaunt leather overcoats of the same reddish-brown color as my boots, but of incomparably higher quality. As the well-informed people said, for every Studebaker, Ford, and Dodge, one of the above-mentioned overcoats was tossed in for the driver. In fairness, it should be noted that one driver in Stalingrad did receive such an overcoat – the one who drove the Oblast Party Secretary. Overall, it was great – canned meat, egg-powder, peanut oil, soldier's rations, cigarettes Camel and Chesterfields, clothing, and much else: all that can be eaten, drunk, worn, smoked – all that from what was called in a respectful and ironic way, the "second front"! A good man, Uncle Sam – your help went to good use!

More should be said about gifts. Once, sometime at the end of December '44 (or '43? – when we had that conference in Tehran – my memory fails me[f]), Zoya Genadievna, with a devilish smile, took me through to the back room of the library. In the middle of the room an elderly policeman benevolently slept in a chair and on the table lay that miracle about which I had heard on the radio several days previously. Inside a beautiful chest covered in white satin lay a sword, all covered in gold, rubies, and red saffian – a gift from King George VI of England to Stalingrad – the Hero-City. Churchill presented this sword to Stalin in Tehran and Stalin gave it to Voroshilov. The latter, in turn, gave it to God knows whom else and now here it is in Stalingrad, but there is no place to store it! So, while they were preparing an appropriate place for the sword, it was stored in the library of the Party Cabinet of the City Committee under the watchful eye of a kindhearted policeman... To miss out on such an occasion?! I took the sword in my hands and began to move the blade out of the scabbard, but the guard immediately reacted:

[f] It was December 1, 1943. – Translator's note.

"Now put it back!" – and I complied, carefully placing the sword on the satin panel...

For quite some time after, Zoya Genadievna gave me an earful of carping about this and I begged for forgiveness. The one thought that often revisits me is what would happen if one could make a fingerprint study of this sword – would my prints be there alongside Churchill's, Stalin's, and Voroshilov's?

...And the war – raging, filling the Earth with blood and shaking the World – was moving towards May 1945. Practically every evening the sky above Stalingrad brought us joy from the fabulous bouquets of victory fireworks. The people, understanding full well the price they paid for these fireworks, seeing in every star of these bouquets the souls of their deceased husbands, sons, and daughters, uncontrollably roared, moaned, and howled – Go! Go!! Go!!!

God, when will it finally be over, this damned war?! There are more and more of Stalin's proclamations and the voice of Levitan [g] roars as a triumphal trumpet in the opera Aida. The Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarus names of cities are coming to an end and the Polish are beginning to hiss and sizzle. The radio announcers are twisting their tongues in pronouncing the unimaginable and strange Hungarian Szekesfehervar and Sator-Aljaujhely, and, finally, do you hear? – grinding out the German... And few thought at that time of the great disaster which came to the German soil, about the deaths of German women and children. We thought about something quite different in those unforgettable days. Go! Go! Whose tongue would turn to admonish us in this?

...There are many celebrations in Russia, but there was nothing before and never will be in the future anything like it was during those two days of national frenzied excitement. On the morning of May 8, the city was bubbling and boiling – the war was over! Who said? Everyone is saying it! Songs and marches are heard on the radio! On the Worker's-Peasant's Avenue, it is impossible to break through the people and transport is rerouted around the city, sent by Kovrovskaya. Masses of people gathered around the megaphone – at midday, Stalin will speak! No, at one... at two... At four... After five, cheerless and downcast, we began to disperse to the sound of marches. Eight in the morning! The calls of Moscow – here it is! Go! No, only a bulletin – Prague is taken... and even the fireworks shot out from 220

[g] Yuri Levitan (1914-1983), a famous wartime Soviet Radio announcer and prominent announcer in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. For Soviet people his mighty and highly driven voice was "the voice of history." For almost four decades he was announcing the most important events in the country. – Editors' note.

barrels are not enough. Nine o'clock – a call again! Well, and, and... No, again a bulletin – Leipzig or Dresden this time...

Only at four in the morning on the Ninth of May Levitan screamed across Stalingrad, across the whole nation – VICTORY!!! Do you hear, people – VICTORY!!! Run out into the streets, embrace, kiss the stranger standing next to you, dance, sing, laugh and weep and laugh again, because VICTORY has come! With your last kopeks buy a bottle of vodka and drink to VICTORY! Pour your neighbor a glass, the person next to you, or the next one you meet and reminisce about the bright memory of those who had walked to this VICTORY, but never made it! Drink to our great joy, which we awaited for four unbearable years!

Along the Worker's-Peasant's Ave. walk two men with mustache – one has a 3-liter flagon of vodka in a wicker basket while the other holds a snow-white towel and a glass. When these fellows meet a decorated soldier, a full glass for him: drink, son, for Victory! Then they go on looking for the next, but they themselves are sober...

God, can it truly be our Nina Nikolaevna, proud, unapproachable, cold like an iceberg, smiling only at big celebrations, our beautiful Nina Nikolaevna. Can it be she who is dancing the "barynya" so boisterously with the indolent Zhorko, a workman from our brigade? Take pity on your heels, Ninochka! The hell with the heels – Victory! Do you understand, Victory! And here is a lieutenant with two medals of the "Red Banner". They grabbed him and tossed him in the air, but did not catch him so well – he fell and sprained his leg. Well, don't be angry, lad, we did it with love – Victory you understand? He understood, smiled, and walked away hobbling as he said:

"I have been at the front for two years and did not receive a scratch, and you, you mother f..."

Two fellows, drunk out of their minds, "painted" each other with blood – found a great time to settle old scores! ... Tears, tears, and tears of joy and tears of sorrow – neighbors of Ragozin's just days ago received the notice of the death of their son who was killed at the end of April somewhere in the Baltic region. The battles had ended there – it was an accidental bullet...

On the road to School #2 sits a lonely Willy Schramm, a tin-worker from Vienna and brigadier of the German prisoners (our construction agency had two prisoner-of-war camps under its supervision – one German and one Hungarian). We were often given several men to assist us. They were digging holes for the poles and sat them in the ground; usually, this was Schramm's brigade and during breaks we had endless conversations. Among the prisoners there were many who were not supervised. They walked about town and you could even meet one at the theater of musical comedy.

"Why are you crying, Willy? The war is kaput. Soon you will be off to fatherland, to your frau!"

Willy's shoulders are shaking and he turns his tearful face – it turns out that this joyful Willy is not so young and far from joyful ... Using a wild mix of Russian and German words, he tried to say something, sobbingly, chocking on his tears. But, I understand practically everything: for what did his son die outside Kiev in '41? Oh, Willy, Willy, you should ask me a simpler question ...

In the evening there were fireworks! No, not fireworks – the mother of all fireworks! The sky above the city glared from Sarepta to the "Tractor" factory. The cannons boomed. If I am not mistaken, the fireworks were from one thousand barrels! Go!!!

A few more words should be said about the prisoners of war. The huge "House of Carriers" was mostly restored by the Germans and Hungarians. Often, one of them would stand in the closet next to our front door. Most often, they did not ask for anything but simply stood there and looked silently ... What torture it is to constantly see the eyes of a truly hungry person! Mother would sometimes give one of them a piece of bread (although I truly had my stomach full only when ration cards were discontinued in 1947). Often enough the Germans or Hungarians left empty handed and one of them always said in broken Russian:

"Fine, mother, you will give tomorrow ... " Get it? In other words, do not worry, mother, I understand: today there is none, but tomorrow God will send something and you will give ... Sometimes, one of them would bring, looking around like a thief, two or three logs and delicately walk away – not waiting around for a piece of bread ... They returned home in 1947 or '48 and I saw these troop trains, covered with green tree branches, banners, and portraits of Pieck, Telman, Grotewohl, and some others. I saw their happy faces and I was glad for them and their families to whom great joy was to come several days later ...

... There was a knock at the door, I opened it, and in came Robert, a young fellow from Munich. He said several words and Mother understood, since she knew a bit of German. Robert got on his knees, kissed my mother's hands several times, and began to weep ... It seems that it is said in the Bible that on the "Day of Judgment" a repentant sinner will be worth more than one hundred righteous. There is great wisdom in this, and it will be so! I do not know how great Robert's sins were (who among us is without sin?), but he walked out righteous that minute when he left our room.

I continue to climb up poles, install circuit switches, and dream of study. During the war, it was unrealistic to think of getting a formal education. But now, it was different... Even today, I still love mechanics, machines, and machine building. I can stand for a long time and admire the work of a lathe or a milling machine, as if in a spell, watching how metal cuts metal – fantastic! I dreamed about going to a machine building technical college. It had to be machine building!

So passed – flew – days and months of study, endless commutes in the suburban train (I lived in the heart of the city, but the school was in Sarepta – 20 km in one direction) where I drew diagrams on old newspapers with a pencil (ink froze up – there were inscriptions written on the frost of the walls – "We are freezing, but we are not surrendering!"). Time passed as if overnight, as though nothing happened. What is there to four years, after all? It was like a flash. Somewhere in front I see a glimmer of a faint red light of the last train car...

With diploma in hand, I said farewell to Stalingrad! Think well of me! I helped you as best I could. Thank you for your teachings, for the hot sun, for the Volga, for the golden sand of your beaches, for the crimson watermelons, for first love – my deep gratitude for it all!

Greetings, the unfamiliar and hitherto unknown city of Glazov! Who will you be – a loving father or a mean stepfather? It turned out to be the former, for the next long forty-one years... My dear Glazov – you have taught me how to live! You gave me the most interesting and wonderful occupation as well as offering me presents – my wife, son, and grandchildren. You will always be in my heart.

Part III – Glazov

Today is the Internet age – having clicked on your keyboard, you can easily find out about Glazov – a city in Udmurtiya, established in the sixteenth century on the Cheptsa River. You will also learn that its main economy is based on the Chepetskii Mechanical plant – a key producer of uranium and zirconium in Russia. Some ten percent of the city's residents are employed at this plant. Ten years ago, even the mention of the existence of this plant in Udmurtiya would have been considered the most serious of crimes – a breach of State Secrets. Today, they advertise their products around the world and recently some Italian jewellers purchased a large shipment of zirconium from Glazov directly at an exposition. But, earlier, this was unheard of...

Who knew of it before, this Glazov? I found out in the following way. It started in Moscow, in the personnel department of some highly secret ministry – so secret that it did not even have a name (at least I did not know it until much later). So, in the office of the personnel department a clerk by the name Orlov, or aptronym "Eagle" (by-God, he was more like a "Sparrow" or a "Rooster" at best ...) was clumsily leafing through a huge notebook with tens, hundreds of "FIOs"[a]. Puffing on his cheap cigarette, carelessly, in passing, without glancing at me, he pronounced that there should not be any talk of going further with my studies (farewell Kharkov Polytech by which I was accepted without an exam just ten days ago!). Instead, I will go ... I will go ... Two-three pages are turned in the ledger and the clerk's finger comes to rest on some momentous spot. He finally grants me the honor of a glance with his unexpected black (not grayish-lead!) eyes as he pronounces in a rather ordinary way a seemingly boring and unknown name – Glazov ...

Glazov?! Almost in a panic, I rush through the corridors, alleys, and dead ends of my mind in search of Glazov. Glazov? I know Glasgow; Glukhov, not so well but at least I know it. But Glazov? Where is it? With a glimmer of hope, I ask:

"Where is that, in the Ukraine?"

"... No, no it's in Kirov oblast ... "

Again I run to the corridors, alleys, and dead ends of my mind – Oh, where is Kirov oblast? Silence ... So where is that Kirov, devil take it! It's my fate that's at stake here – where am I going?

And it all began so well ... ! In the winter of 1948-49, I finished my seventh semester in technical school. As usual, I did not get even one B, all were

[a] Acronym for "family name, given name, and patronym" – Translator's note.

A's. A diploma with excellent marks stood on the horizon, in all of its magnificence. The next step was to undergo a pre-diploma practicum, diploma's defense, and, skipping the entrance exams, enroll in Kharkov Polytech to study the dear to my heart "machines and instruments"! Hurray! Indeed, hello Life – you marvellous and astonishing thing!

Sometime in February Tolya came to visit me:

"Let's go."

"Where?"

"To the technical school. They are calling us – it's urgent. Hurry along – we must catch the train at 10-52 ..."

So we ran and made it. We come in and see all the rest of the pre-diploma recipients. What is this all hands' job? Some officials have come from Moscow and require us all to fill out huge sixteen-page forms. Why? You'll find out later... Why such an urgency? You'll find out later... And what if I don't want to? And you, young man, should not ask questions... (Later, some half a year afterwards, in the office of "Sparrow-Eagle" I learned that THEY can do anything... A very beautiful and seemingly very unfortunate girl – a resident of Moscow – was weeping bitterly. It turned out that her mother who had lost her legs was being left on her own, since the daughter – the girl – was being sent to some Tmutarakan.[b] This very same "Sparrow-Eagle" quietly was telling her the very "correct" words of the debt, of Motherland, of patriotism, of "what would happen if everyone's mother became ill..." He said such "correct" words, but the girl cried non-stop).

...Four o'clock in the morning is striking, but we were still filling out the forms...

"Should we indicate this? Should we write about that?" – we ask.

"Write – write it all, young man..." – they said...

We finished in the morning, trampled with exhaustion towards the end. We all went to our homes and the crafty guest from Moscow, who gained one day off work, rolled back home. A week later, this "night" episode was forgotten. Then came June and I defended with an A. I was then accepted for Kharkov Polytech, received the corresponding paperwork, 1000 rubles for starters (very little money at that time[c]), and a ticket to the unknown Glazov. Tolya was also going to that same Glazov. We wandered about

[b] An old Russian principality on the eastern shore of the Kerch straits, overlooking the eastern end of the Crimean Peninsula, which was established in the 10^{th} century and fell in the 13^{th} century. In the modern Russian language it is synonymous with a "God-forsaken remote place." – Editors' note.

[c] Pre-monetary-reform rubles – Translator's note.

Moscow for three days – visited the Tretyakov Gallery, "Dynamo" stadium, and a musical concert in the "Hermitage" theater. Then it was up onto the upper-tier bunk bed of the communal train car with the destination "Moscow-Molotov (now Perm)". The mood was so-so, a C, and where would an A come from? Judge for yourself – I still felt like I was a student, but here – my mug into the pole of reality! Kindly, be off to some Glazov! I want to study! And you, young man, should not ask questions . . .

. . . What marvelous potatoes with dill! What salted cucumbers, crunchy and covered with little bumps! What mushrooms women sell at all the stations! What Polenov-Levitan [d] scenes are outside my car window! So this is how you really are – Russia! Not bright, not hot, not at all exotic, but so lovely – simply breathtaking! Forests, woods, rivers . . . and here is the Volga. Here it is a bit narrow – ours in Stalingrad is considerably wider, more commanding.

How much time does a decent train take to travel some 1000 kilometers, from Moscow to Glazov? Twenty hours? Now it would take 18, but Tolya and I walked out from car #9 in 32 hours, all in bewilderment as to what is next . . .

What? Is this really Glazov? Hey, it is written on the station name-board . . . Here it is, the station. Yes-yes . . . the beauty – the locomotive "Joseph Stalin", hissed steam from under its wheels, sighed, and the train began its routine journey further east, to Molotov. We parted from it with not so joyful glances, picked up our austere suitcases, asked directions to the plant, and marched off . . .

Have you had the chance to walk on piano keys, or perhaps on plank pavements, wooden sidewalks? Both are about the same . . . Decrepit, in part rotten, boards move around to all sides here and there – there was nothing left but the memory of the nails that once had held them together. Hence, when stepping on each board, you should be ready for interesting consequences. About five minutes of such walking, we had learned the proper art and were striding along these boards as if it were nothing. The section of the street designated for vehicles was made of wooden blocks. I bet you have never seen such a road! We also saw this for the first time. Imagine an entire street paved with wooden log blocks, one placed against the other. It would seem like not a bad thing. However, time is a trickster, and the rains as well as frosts played a joke on this pavement – some logs shifted up, others sank down, while yet others fell out like rotten teeth . . . Have you had the chance

[d] Famous Russian painters of the 19^{th} century. – Editors' note.

to see a picture of an anti-tank barrier, the so-called "dragon's teeth"? So – with clanks and clatters – cars, wagons, and tractors rode along these "teeth" in clouds of dust. These were our "first impressions for the rest of our lives". The rest was all as usual, like it is in all other newly-founded residential projects: assemblies, installations, launchings and housewarmings, communal living, parties, dancing, overtime, night-calls, weddings, quarrels, sometimes accidents, insurmountable mud on future streets (in the autumn of 1949, one of my galoshes was swallowed up in it – I still can't find it . . .), weddings, becoming accustomed to new professions, bachelor drinking merrymaking, and weddings, weddings . . . .

Tolya and I arrived first in that "Great Migration of Peoples" of '49, before all the others. After us came many hundreds of engineers, technicians, highly trained workers, and inexperienced artisans. We received living quarters in dormitories, but these were quickly taken. So, they began to settle the newly arrived in the auditorium of the club, and even there space became very tight. Beds stood around the club, in the open air. And the workers were building new living quarters at mad speeds. All were finally settled, but that was later, towards autumn. In the meantime, paperwork and permissions of entry had to be officialized, swimming in the rather charming Cheptsa River, and familiarizing ourselves with the little wooden makeshift town... This is Russia's boondocks, with a special minor gloss of an Udmurt flare . . . Udmurtiya, Udmurts – who are they? The only thing I know is that the capital of the region was Izhevsk; in the geography textbook there is a photograph of an Udmurt hunter-gatherer. This is all, not too much more . . . Moreover, Izhévsk is not Izhévsk at all, but Ízhevsk.[e]

To me, a southerner, everything is novel – the dusky fir-tree forests that look nothing like the southern pinewoods. Even the pinewoods here are not as fragrant as the southern – there is not enough sun here. Mushrooms – a miracle of the woods – can be found in the forests. Like gnomes with multi-colored caps, they play hide-and-seek with us.

Glazov is a town with a biography! Passing through the town, Empress Catharine the Great presented it with its own coat of arms. See!.. Second, Vladimir Gallaktionovich Korolenko[f] lived here in exile. While residing here, he earned his bread by working as a cobbler. So he named Glazov as an "unreal town". He was probably right . . . Now, everything in the town reminds one of Korolenko – there is the Korolenko street, a monument to

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[e] Note the accent marks and accordingly different pronunciations. – Translator's note.

[f] Russian short-story writer and journalist (1853 – 1921) whose works are memorable in showing compassion for the downtrodden. – Editors' note.

Korolenko, and an institute and library in his name. To call it a real city, no – but it is a small and successful town!

And it is not so small, actually – more than one hundred thousand now. Olga Leonardovna Knipper-Chekhova[g] was born here – that makes three. Sometime in the 20s, Glazov even became the capital of Udmurtiya – not for long, however. Izhevsk took over . . . But, 1948-49 were the first years of a new era. The city was still full of log houses which had been darkened by time and rain; they had settled and sunk into the ground, but still gaze out into the light with their tiny squinting windows. The cats here are somewhat reddish-violet in color, carefree, and sleepy. On sunny frosty mornings or during early evening hours, what unspeakably delectable smoke seeps out from the chimneys that stand on the patched-up and over-patched roofs of the huts! And the train station – that veteran, a contemporary of these houses – greets the few visitors from afar with its meagre platforms and the services of baggage-handlers wearing white aprons and metal plaques on their coats are nowhere to be found. There also stands a white stone church on the Cheptsa shore, counting out its last years. Oh, how much it wanted to live on! It was pounded by sledgehammers, dynamited, and bulldozered – but could it really withstand humans?! In the old cemetery, which found itself in the center of town, serenely slumbered its respectable occupants in eternal rest – the well-intentioned townspeople, petty officials, retired orderlies, and merchants of the second- and even first-rank guild. Even in their deepest nightmares they would not dream that in a few years lively excavators and bulldozers would roll, creep in and disturb their rest; they will dig up and down the cemetery and the boys would come to play soccer with their sculls, which were tossed all around everywhere. So it happened. A "palace" of sports and other sport facilities were erected on this spot.

The town of Glazov is seeing its last patriarchal dreams. The first urban buses are already running up and down the streets, swaying along the wooden block-boards from one side to another like ducks. The first buildings of the uranium plant are also rising up, while the soaring chimneys are painting the sky with different colored smoke. The first pigeons plunge to their deaths having dived into this smoke, which came to be called "fox tails". As if on yeast, residential buildings rise up in the second section – first small but later "high-rises". Already the first TETs (Central Electric Station) chimney stands like an obelisk, and will very soon begin to smoke . . . But stop! My memory runs too fast, ahead of itself. Let us rewind a little. 1949.

[g] World-renowned Russian actress (1869-1959). She was also the wife of Anton Chekhov.– Editors' note.

Tolya and I just received our entrance permission papers and – go with God! Workshop #16 – you should go this and then that way... once you come, you will find out... So we came and found out – TETs! You (to Tolya) – will be the master of the boiler shop; you (to me) – will be the master of the turbine shop, it is the same as the mechanical hall. But we are technicians – mechanics, we are... we are... Its okay, you will get used to it – it's necessary. Well, if it's necessary... So I went to work with thermo-energy, which became my favorite occupation. I found out with amazement that turbines are of the same great interest to me as machines. But the most important thing was the people. From the first days, I worked with wonderful people. Of course, there were also petty people. It is not them who I miss or recollect in a pleasant light...

Fedor Gavrilovich Varopaev, "father" Varopaev, was the chief supervisor of the turbine shop... With what wisdom he guided us, yellow-beaked youths, through life as he taught us and learned from us (he was not very literate – a head officer on a destroyer – received seven years of incomplete middle school...). With such nobility, possessing some innate intelligence, he resolved various conflicts; although, when necessary, he could be firm... I will never forget one winter night which began the previous morning as we worked in the workshop for 34 hours straight. Everything that could break-down did. Everything that could not break down also broke down. It was the first winter for our TETs – our cauldrons, turbines, deaerators, boilers, pumps – and we, yellow-beaked kids, young specialists who are receiving our professional experience in the midst of battle, are acquiring our learning from trial and error. We came out of this tribulation with great joy. There were 2 or 3 minor accidents – can't do without that – but we never left the plant without electricity, nor did the houses in the city go without heat for even a minute. But we paid a price for this.

Once, we ploughed away for 34 hours, took a shower, and half asleep put on our coats, since a bus was waiting for us. We – that is Fedor Gavrilovich, the senior master Boris Kurbatov, and me. Of course, just as it happens according to Murphy's Law, the ball bearings of the condensation pump went awry. It was then that I finally lost it – I began to express myself endlessly! I yelled and cursed. Fedor Gavrilovich was not left with a "debt" on his part... My God, how we screamed at each other as we dressed ourselves back into our filthy overalls! Our dialog was far from "parliamentary".Towards the end of our replacement of the mean ball bearing we worked in silence. We departed sometime past midnight and for the rest of the night I pondered on whether to go to the personnel department immediately or first go to the shop . . . Varopaev intercepted me just at the entrance with an extended arm – "Hello Ilya! Listen, the two of us said many unnecessary things yesterday – well, it happens . . . Let it be as though nothing happened and just forget about it, yes?" My dear Fedor Gavrilovich, Teacher of bright memory, how can one forget this?!. . .

Well, once again I veer too far off track. I walked into the shop, having shaken the first hands, feverishly trying to remember everyone's first names – hoping not to confuse anyone. Varopaev Fedor Gavrilovich . . . Kurbatov Boris, senior master from St. Petersburg, one year older than me. Andrei Kurochkin, from Kalinin, same age as me, in charge of the turbines . . . Yuminov Leonid Petrovich, master of the pumping station on the Chepsta bank, older than us, over 30. Fate was generous as it gave me excellent friends to work with for many years. We were very close friends, particularly with Andrei. We skied together, rode skates, went to parties, and from the first to the last day attended the studies and exams at the Ural Polytech Institute (we had a holy tradition – ready or not for the exam – we always went to the theater the night before: and it helped, since we never failed an exam . . .). And how great the two of them – Andrei and Boris – were! They knew the turbines and thermo-energy! Do you know what a Kingsbury ball bearing is? And what pressure there has to be in the deaerator? Do you know how and with what accuracy one needs to center the feeder pump? You don't know? This was also the case with me at first – I had absolutely no knowledge of it. While with time I became a decent turbine specialist, Fedor Gavrilovich, and Boris, and Andrei all played a huge role in this – let their memory shine . . . They departed one after another – each, as in Haydn's Farewell Symphony, extinguished his own candle; and the World became a little bit darker.

It took a little getting used to, but suddenly I realized that I liked it! I liked it that this iron monstrosity, like an untamed stallion, suddenly subordinated itself to my abilities, know-how, learning, and began to work smoothly, without vibration, without overheating of the ball-bearings, and without leaking oil. But this is later. In the meantime – three kids, simple technical apprentices who knew much less that I, a room where we ourselves set up the DiP-200 lathe, a pile of tools in an iron case, and a great willingness to prove that I am worth something . . . It is August 1949 and TETs is still feverishly getting ready to be launched into production. The new workshop, like hungry chicks with opened beaks, are yelling – energy, give us energy! The tiny factory's TsES ("shop of electric supply") with its two tiny turbines of 1000 kilowatts each, and a small locomotive brought from somewhere for help, are puffing and wheezing from the effort, but are obviously in no position to perform a miracle . . .

Officially, her name was Ellis Chalmers, born in 1942 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was a full-fledged American. We simply called her Alisa and she did not mind. She was very tidy, precise, and hardworking! She will begin a marathon, rest a bit, and back to work for a year or two . . . How charming she was! . . . well-formed and elegant – in one word, a foreigner. So she continued to perform in this way until the end; she left with dignity, at her battle post when she began to rumble with her broken blades and came to a halt. Forever. Farewell, Alisa, remember us fondly!

Relations with the other turbines were more operational, not so sentimental. The third – and a period. The fifth – and that's enough. But, that Alisa – our dearest! I loved her very much and it seemed to me that she had reciprocal feelings . . . And when I left the shop, I would surreptitiously kiss them all!

Again, my memory took me to hell knows where . . . But we launched Alisa at the very same time that our TETs came to count out its first minutes of operations. The plant was built by convict labor. A huge area around the plant – known as TETsConstruct – was zoned off for the convicts. For many years, two columns of convicts – one of men and the other of women – where brought in the morning and led away in the evening. Due to my youth and naiveté, it never even occurred to me on what a powder keg we all sat when we worked there. All this time TETs was being built, expanded, new turbines and boilers where being installed. There was simply too much work and we cooperated brilliantly with these convicts! I intuitively understood that the key to having a successful and safe working environment in these unique circumstances – with their own unwritten conventions – was one-hundred percent cooperation, giving an open and unlimited line of credit, trust, assistance, and, if you want, respect. When lending to someone a one or three ruble note, I cannot recall a time when the money was not returned to me!

Boris Melnikov, a master installer from "CentrEnergInstal", an intelligent young fellow with "golden hands" (and such do exist – rarely, but they do!), was running, rushing somewhere and failed to notice a workman ahead of him carrying a pipe on his shoulder. It was a very long, thin-walled pipe about 40 cm in diameter. More precisely, Boris probably saw the workman, but did not notice the end of the pipe before his nose . . . The hit was quite significant and Boris' lips took bad cuts (just like cutting circles with a glass on a sheet of dough when making dumplings). If the blow had been a bit harder then our Boris would have become "a person who always smiles" – recall Guinplen in Victor Hugo? Boris' teeth also became playful, just like those planks on the Glazov sidewalks. One of the first to rush to him was a doctor-convict who was nearby (he was a doctor when he was free, but now he tugged around U-beams). He did well – saved Boris' lips and teeth . . .

The thermometer outside the window tells us it is –24° C and it is 7 p.m. The boiler is malfunctioning. A decision was made – it should be fixed in the morning and drain the water in the meantime. There was no time to change clothing and it so happened that all of these cubic meters of brown liquid, which did not even look like water, fell on me. Like Alexander Matrosov on the gun-port,[h] I jumped to shut down all the running motors of the condensation pumps . . . When all had their fill of laughter and I had washed my eyes, we walked home (there was no bus back then) . . . All of my clothing was soaked through with that warm liquid and in about three or four minutes it began to crunch in a rather disgusting way, having become an icy chain mail. I was able to climb up to my second-story flat, but with some difficulty (just try to ascend a stairway when instead of wearing cotton breeches you have two wooden pipes on your legs!). The guys, laughing, extracted me from the icy trap and I began to bring myself back to rights over a basin of hot water. The pants stood for a few minutes like two pipes at the plant and then sorrowfully faded away into a hefty puddle, reminding me of my heroic deed . . . Obviously, this was an excellent reason for me to partake in some measured drinking – let the first person toss a stone at me if they would have done differently . . . It should be said that in those bachelor days we drank inappropriately much and without knowing how to do it properly. It seemed as though there was a contest between all the types of beverages produced at that time – who can best astonish the citizens of Glazov, people who have never seen anything other than vodka. My God! What exotic cocktails, liquors, and wines we sipped by the bucket-full during our first Glazov years!

Sometime towards the end of winter 1950, Mother came. So, I was given a room, a real room in a real apartment . . . The guys loved to come for a visit after work – they liked my mother's hospitality. To be sure, they sat with us until quite late at night. Oh, what wonderful sittings these were!

In the beginning of the winter of 1951, I was sent to Moscow for half a

[h] Private Alexander Matrosov, the celebrated war hero. In 1943 his regiment was attacking Nazis near the village of Chernushki (in the Pskov region). The attack was about to fail because of fierce resistance by the Germans. Alexander Matrosov threw his body against a Nazi embrasure closing it.Then the Matrosov regiment advanced and the Germans were defeated. – Editor's note.

year of training in master-repair practice at Mosenergo.[i] It was made very clear to me that I should not say a word about my mid-technical training. If you were sent to learn, then you should learn! Well, if that's the case, I will study. For half a year I had fantastic fun – I sat on countless rows of theater seats, restaurant chairs, and chilly benches on the marvelous TsPKiO[j] ice-rink... Just a tit-bit more and there would have been two weddings... God protected...!

I do not recall, more precisely I do not know, who was the first to get this idea – the "Great Hike" for the engineer diploma. It seems that the initiator was Volodya Teleshkov. For about a year, some 250 young guys and girls, young specialists, were insisting, attaining, demanding, and finally got it! It was the establishment of UKP ("learning-consulting center") under the auspices of the Ural Polytech Institute, staffed by decent teachers who were selected from among factory engineers. Six years of study, then the diploma, and goodbye.

Of course, not everyone who began their schooling finished. Some left early, others managed a year or two more; but, most did finish and on time. In the restaurants "Glazov" and "North" smoke was billowing like out of a chimney – everyone was celebrating their diplomas. Many of my fellow students became heads of factory shops and divisions. It was not for nothing that they sweated, staying up until two or three in the morning, and declined to participate in all sorts of fun and tempting activities, which were many... With the words "white nights" comes to mind Leningrad, but to me it is Glazov: all the banks of the Cheptsa are as if covered by a white foam of bird-cherry tree flowers; volleyball until one in the morning and then sunrise at three... Go ahead and try to grind out differential equations and hammer out *pluskvam perfektum* and the fifth chapter of "Party History..." But what can one do? So we ground and hammered...

The first and second year exams were held in Glazov. Beginning with third year, twice annually, we all travelled to Sverdlovsk. We all went together in hordes of several dozen "diploma hunters." The train cars are full of smoke; intense preparation for the upcoming session; and, cork screws cannot open enough bottles... We were housed in student dormitories. Andrei and I were always together – we were even called "twins" and so we kept this nickname until the defense of our diplomas. Our studies went well enough – we took the exams without too much effort, although there was a

[i] A company providing electricity and running electrical grids in Moscow and its suburbs. – Editor's note.
[j] Central Park of Culture and Recreation, the famous Gorky Park in Moscow. – Translator's note.

chronic lack of sleep . . .

In the summer of 1959, we defended our diplomas. Before the defense we were stuck in Sverdlovsk for half a year – writing, drawing, calculating. There was no time to escape home even for a few days. I was bitterly upset that I could not hear how my son Ian was goo-gooing – and this is such a marvel! It was at this time that I began to smoke. I smoked a pack a day.

I was married in January of 1956, in my twenty-ninth year of life, a time when my mother had practically lost all hope that she would have a chance to go out for walks with her grandchild, having him wrapped up in her fur coat . . . I wandered and wandered around, dated and dated, but suddenly realized that Nadya, a neighbor of my friends, is *the* one – that lucky ticket with whom I will blow out our 120^{th} candle! We celebrated our wedding and gave birth to Ian, whom we have cherished for the last 45 years. It is a great pity that we now see him rarely, since some time ago we left our dear Glazov and now live in the little town of Afula, Israel, located in a valley between the Galilee and Samaria mountains. One can see from the window of our tiny apartment a fabulous view of the holy Mount Tabor, the "Mount of Transfiguration" and the town of Nazareth from which left the Greatest of all Jews of the World on his final journey to Jerusalem. If one climbs on the roof of our building and jumps about 50 or 80 meters up in the air, one will get a glimpse of Lake Kineret (Lake Tiberius or Sea of Galilee), located some 20 kilometers away. This is the one across which Christ walked "as on land"; and the telephone conversations with Lord God here, as the anecdote goes, are priced at local rates (I have not yet had a chance to call . . .).

But, we cannot see our Ian from the roof. Our dear friends, who were indispensable company in our cozy table gatherings, partners in skiing as well as gathering mushrooms and berries, live even further away or have already passed away . . . Ian is a professor at Oxford University, about an hour away from London. He is a physicist – having graduated at the Moscow Institute for Physics and Technology,[k] defending his candidate's degree[l] at the age of 25. He has had a chance to work in Trieste, Geneva, Zurich, Vancouver, and Princeton. After wandering for a bit, he settled in England. Oh, how quickly the years fly by! Nadya and I are already over seventy-five, but it seems like it was just yesterday that I celebrated my diploma, became a

[k] Soviet counterpart of MIT, located in Dolgoprudny, 15 miles to the north-west of Moscow. – Editor's note.

[l] The academic hierarchy in Russia follows the German rather than the Anglo-American pattern. The equivalent of PhD in the US is the so called *candidate* degree. The highest academic degree, doctoral, is analogous to the German *Habilitation*. – Editors' note.

senior master, and the turbines ceased being "terra incognita" for me. Here, Ian had already become "infected" with physics; and the physics contests began, first citywide, then republic, and then nationwide. Our chests are bursting with pride with the phone calls from the Municipal Department of Public Education: "...Ian Kogan – our pride!"

Next, Ian was a student of Moscow PhysTech, while I stepped out of my managerial seat at the turbine shop to retire.... It has been 12 years since Nadya and I moved to Israel. We would live here happily, if it were not for our "cousins" who are beyond the green line. The end to this adversity is not in sight. We go to sleep thinking about it and wake up with it in our minds...¿From our other window we see Mount Megiddo; the word "mountain" in Hebrew is "ar," hence, the word "Armageddon" – you see? Yes, that very same Armageddon, the great battle between the forces of good and evil. Anytime now it is supposed to start, perhaps on Wednesday or maybe on Thursday. So, I am thinking, why not grab a few bottles of beer, sit by the window, and see how all of this commotion will end. But, is it possible that the Earth has had enough of the sweat- and blood-letting? Let it flow, as prophesied from above, with milk and honey. Let it be that people live without fear of entering a bus and stores, in discos and cafés – let it be! Oh, if only I could have it my way...

Part IV – Kaddish

My precious! I do not know if I am taking upon myself too difficult a task? Will my heart withstand it? I will speak to You – will You hear me? I never thought that my "Memoirs" would have an additional Part Four. Need I say that our thoughts are only with You? Wherever we are, whatever we speak about, You are always near. Sometimes we even admonish You for something. But, do not be angry, since it is simply the grumbling of old age. Do You recall how Boris Platonych brought us all home from the maternity ward in his "Pobeda"?[a] We washed You (not in the bathtub, of course, but on the table which grandmother prepared for You!). How she shined with exhilaration – our grandmother! The grandson she had dreamed about for so many years now lay on the pillow! Oh, what a wonderful infant – a charming brunet with astonishing eyelashes! What a marvelous Romanian crib I brought for You a few weeks later from Moscow! All of Glazov gazed at this crib with admiration. You probably remember it, this work of art with the sliding side and some sort of a special mattress, which all our doctor friends viewed with great esteem. It served You well for the first four years! How appetizingly You sniffed with Your little nose as You slept while the three of us grew numb from watching You.

... Son, do You recall our outings to Nikolaevka, Druskinenkai, "my" Zaporozhye, Berdiansk, "my" Stalingrad, Leningrad, Ufa, and Istrinskoe water reserve? How well You drove the car when You were eight! Do You remember when we were on the road to Kirov, You sat behind the wheel for some forty kilometers and God knows how our brave mother sat there absolutely peacefully, not at all perturbed – or was this when You were ten? How long ago that was! I am beginning to forget ... Also, do You recollect that fearsome soccer match in Luzhninki, when that screaming thousand-man crowd almost trampled us to death? Thanks to the nearby guys who surrounded us and carried us out into some niche. This was early on – there were still school years ahead, contests, Moscow PhysTech, marriage, Zhenya ...

... What wonderful friends You have, son! With what warmth they spoke of You and how their words relieved our pain! How touchingly careful they were in their interactions with us! ... I read a kaddish over Your coffin:

> Ladies and Gentlemen! Dear Friends!
>
> I have to apologize before many of you for my inability to present this speech in English. Therefore, I will say farewell to my son in my

[a] A Soviet car make in the 1950's – Translator's note.

> own native Russian tongue, the language in which he pronounced his first words – "mama" and "papa." Our dearest! You know that according to our tradition it is the son who reads the farewell prayers at his father's grave. Lord God, apparently in his busy schedule, has confused this order. So, it is I who read the kaddish over Your coffin... Our dear! We thank God that He gave You to us. We thank God for giving us the opportunity to be in contact with You for 45 years, for the 45 years of joy which only now we fully came to realize... We thank God for giving You a beloved and loving wife, beloved and loving children, and a grandchild... We thank God for surrounding You with wonderful friends, many of whom are now among us and share our great anguish... We thank God for lovely England that called You her son, for giving You work and shelter... We thank God for Your dedication to Your marvelous study of Physics and for giving You the opportunity to add Your word to this science... Who knows God's will? We do not know why God took You away from us. Perhaps, a person has to leave into the better world before understanding the great mysteries, the great unknown of Being. We obediently accept God's will... Farewell, our joy, our happiness, which has been torn away! Let the English soil receive You with peace, and let this earth be as light as feathers to You!

Misha was very helpful, for he translated my every word, while I translated my soul into words. The last words I could scarcely utter, pauses between words were great. ...Some people came up to me, said something, and embraced me. I wept but had no more tears left.

We had a son... What a wonderful word – Son! It smells of infant's milk, freshly ironed diapers, interesting books with charming pictures, and collections of stamps. It smells of frost on ski tracks, sea waves, and mountain wind. It smells of beautiful symphonic music and the magical symphony of mathematical formulas – this word smells of joy and happiness! And then suddenly falls onto this enchanting word "Son" the terrible word "was," an enormous boulder that shattered our joy and happiness.

Son, do You recall our trip to Nikolaevka? The entrance to our lodging was closed by a huge and heavy branch, covered with amber peaches the size of a fist. In Nikolaevka, You learned how to swim – do You recall? How I tried to convince You to exhale into the water! No, no, no! You raised Your head, smacked the water with Your arms, and somehow managed to swim some 5-10 meters and then tired out... I lay on the pebbles with closed eyes while You got up, looked around like a thief, and entered the water. I was watching You. You exhaled into the water and began to swim! A wild scream of exultation and an Indian dance – and You swam along the shore while I walked nearby and counted the streetlights! You swam 400 meters and the next day we had an unscheduled trip to Simferopol to visit the doctor, since water got into Your ear . . . However, it was still a small celebration, a little victory. I often also remember another small celebration, one more little victory – You and I frequently recalled it. The year was 1963, October 3 – my birthday – though my age was not a round number. But, we knew that someone would pop by and we had some with us . . . Of course, Mura came with Semen, Nina with Boris, Tolya with Lilya, and someone else . . . We assembled the table, placed on it a white tablecloth that had not yet been stained by wine. The men are smoking and discussing Khrushchev while the women are running back and forth between the kitchen and the table – all are in anticipation . . . We look and see that Ian is already sitting at the table in proud solitude! I tell him without thinking – go ahead son, go to your room and play; we will sit at the table, just the adults – you will be bored! He got up and left. Mother comes in:

"Ian is crying in there!"

"Why?!"

"You greatly upset him. He said: 'When it was my birthday, he sat at my table and drank tea with pies. When I came to his birthday, he chased me away!"'

So, I go out to the kitchen and see Ian shedding tears in three streams!

"Son, I upset you by accident . . . I did not want to hurt your feelings – forgive me, please!" Then, I invited You to join us for my birthday!

Oh, how much You loved the circus! You enjoyed it even more than the Soviet Army Museum, and this museum we visited regularly! And in the circus there were clowns – Your passion, Your deep desire. To the question "what do you want to be when you grow up?" there was only one answer – a clown! "I want to make people merry – I love it when people laugh . . . "

Later, the circus was replaced with physics to which You stayed true until the end. We live by our memories before our eyes, as if we are gazing through a kaleidoscope at Your childhood and youth – the schooldays, competitions, and the first substantive academic achievement in the 9^{th} grade. At the age of thirteen, You stated Your first words which indicated to us that physics is not a simple school pastime for You, but a true commitment, perhaps for life. You said:

"If I am deprived of physics, I do not want to live . . . "

I was concerned whether You were overloading Yourself. I even consulted with doctors on this matter . . . Artur Volochkov – Your guardian angel from Your earliest years – knew You very well. He said: "It's okay – let him study – he is a hardy fellow . . . "

We calmed down and You were accepted to Moscow PhysTech. At the age of seventeen, You left home and entered the world of studies – the world of science – becoming only a guest in Your native home, only a guest . . . We were so proud and happy with Your "Red" (with Honours) Diploma, took great pleasure in associating with Zhenya when she lived with us, marveled at Your charming friends, and laughed at their kindhearted epigram:

Our Ian has no apparent flaw –
The tall and handsome brunet;
But if he arises and glances at a woman –
She will collapse on the floor tiles!

God . . . in all of 46 years of living with Nadya I have seen her weep perhaps only five times. She was solid before the turn of the new era . . . But now, we hide from each other and weep.

"Ilya, I want to add several lines."

"Of course, Nadya . . . "

> Son . . . You are three years old. You came in from outside and were upset – with tears in Your eyes You said – "some woman said to me that only girls should have such eyes and eyelashes." I explained to You that it is nicer and easier to look at the world with such large eyes – there are so many interesting things in the world to see! You believed me and calmed down . . .
>
> You are just over four years old and a new know-it-all appeared in our family. Right before our eyes You read the name of the magazine – "Cro . . . cro . . . co . . . di . . . Crocodile . . . What is it?" You began to read the signs outside, names of stores, and placards . . . And, once again, distress and tears: "*Yan*kee, Out of Vietnam!" This time it was necessary to climb into the depths of the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia* and sweep out all that there was about Ians – famous and not so famous. . . . You understood and calmed down. Ever after, we became eternal friends with the encyclopedia – leafed through all of its fifty volumes, which was clearly reflected in their outward appearance. When Lena, Your babysitter, asked You what interesting things can be found in those books, You decisively told her "Go Lena, there are no dolls here!"
>
> What close friends You became with the skis! Do You recall, You

were four years old: You and Father in twenty below frost run down the slopes near the water station. Many years had passed and You came for Your winter break. Despite Your father's protests, You did the "large circle" route twice – this was 50 kilometers! If it were not for physics, You may have become a great athlete.

You are five years old – the first real test, the first shakeup. Otolaryngologists – the doctors are unanimous in their diagnoses – remove both the glands and adenoids. They persistently recommend that You should be seriously prepared for going to the hospital without fear. So, we did our best – You walked to the hospital dancing and joyfully exclaiming: "I am going to an operation, I am going to an operation!"

Later, You lay in bed all exhausted and faded, and gazed with Your huge eyes full of tears and whispered:

"You fibbed... You betrayed me..."

No, our son, we never betrayed You, never... We left our native land to be closer to You – but it did not turn out that way.

Ilya:

Two flags stand before my eyes... Both flutter in the wind; both whisper of You... Do You remember when You came from school, feeling a bit shy and a bit elated? You were nominated to be the flag bearer of Your school for the May Day parade! The school principal, administrators, teachers, and others would be marching behind You and the flag! I stood there on the corner of Soviet and Belinsky Streets with the camera and watched the schools pass by – the first ...sixth...tenth...and here it was, the fourteenth and our Ian with the flag! You found me with Your eyes and laughed, while I jokingly saluted the flag and snapped two shots. ...And a month and a half ago, the Master of Your college brought me out into the middle of the street to show me the flagpole on the roof of the college (one cannot see it from the sidewalk). The flag of Your college flapped in the wind at half-mast – Your colleagues were giving You their last respects... I saluted the flag and bowed down low to it... Zhenya stood close next to me. I kissed her, we bowed to the flag once again, and walked away...

July 2003