

NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

Editors

BARBARA GILES, A. B. MAGIL, RUTH McKENNEY,
BRUCE MINTON, JOSEPH NORTH, JOSEPH STAROBIN,
JOHN STUART

Business Manager

CARL BRISTEL

★

Hopkins' Trip

HARRY HOPKINS' dramatic visit to Moscow was a tribute to what the President has already described as the "magnificent resistance" of the Red Army. If the Soviet armed forces were in as bad a shape as the Nazis had claimed, or as some high-placed Washington observers originally believed, there would not have been much point in Mr. Hopkins' visit. It is because the Soviet peoples' heroic defense amazes and heartens the whole anti-fascist world, that encouraging developments are beginning to take place toward the realization of anti-fascist cooperation among the great powers. The most significant development of the week comes as we go to press, the exchange of notes between the United States and the Soviet Union in which the former pledges "the speedy completion and delivery" of war materials to the fighting fronts. This is clearly an outcome of Hopkins' visit, and his favorable impression of the Soviet Union's optimism and confident resistance. Washington has at last recognized the cardinal fact in the new world situation, namely that the attack on the Soviet Union threatens the security and independence, not only of the Soviet Union but also of other nations, and that "the strengthening of the Soviet Union's resistance," as the note puts it, "is in the interest of the national defense of the United States." The issuance of "unlimited licenses" for Soviet purchases here therefore transcends questions of trade. The United States has in effect underwritten the Anglo-Soviet alliance. Thus a coalition of the three most powerful nations on earth is coming into being, a welcome development for all peoples who want to see Hitler defeated quickly. What the world waits for now is a British Expeditionary Force on the continent.

The British press has been talking about the possibilities of an invasion. Last week, there was a fleeting indication of Anglo-Soviet cooperation in the form of air raids over the Finnish corridor, near Petsamo, and the Arctic town of Kirkenes. Our own Colonel T. this week (page 11) discusses four different routes for such an invasion, through the four peninsulas of Europe: the Scandinavian, the Iberian, the Italian, and the Balkan. Without pretending to have precise military information, it seems to us that the Scandinavian route is obviously the best and most direct. This is the way to shorten the war, to make it less costly for the heroic men and women of na-

tions fighting fascism. Hitler promised the German people that he would avoid a two-front war. The best way to weaken him inside Germany, the quickest way to make the V campaign a reality, is to open the Western Front. Hopkins' trip will appear in retrospect even more audacious and encouraging than it seemed, if it prepared the path, from the American end, for a British invasion of Europe.

IN A MILITARY WAY, the situation does not seem to have changed on the Eastern Front. Around Smolensk the Nazis are still stalled and they are losing heavily in the face of Soviet counter-attacks. The same seems to be true in the Leningrad direction, while, after several air raids on Moscow, the Nazis have admittedly done nothing more than local damage. In the north, the Finns are reporting heavy Soviet pressure; only in the south, in the Kiev direction, does the Nazi war machine seem to make any progress, although heavily contested. As we go to press, it is too early to say how the threat against Kiev is developing: fighting goes on somewhat south of this historic Ukrainian capital. Meanwhile Soviet reports declare that early harvesting is taking the grain off the collective farms so that where the invader does not find the fields burned, he often finds them shorn. And stories keep pouring in of the unprecedented mobilization of the Soviet people in industry. In every field of work, especially in mining, oil drilling, and metal fabrication, wartime patriotism is fulfilling the peacetime plans in record time.

Diplomatically, also, the past week developed favorably for the USSR. First, there was the agreement with the Polish government in exile, guaranteeing an independent Poland and the formation of a Polish army on Soviet soil. And it seems that similar agreements are in the making with Yugoslavia and possibly Greece. The Polish agreement nullifies the Soviet-German border arrangements of the fall of 1939. It definitely buries the canard that the Soviets, like Czarist Russia, were opposed to an independent Polish nation. Of course, many unsolved problems remain, especially the problem of the Ukrainian and Byelo-Russian minorities who have already rejoined their respective Soviet republics. Many Polish conservatives balk at the idea of losing these minority peoples and the lands on which they live. But the issue has wisely been left to the future, when precise definitions of boundaries will be in order. The job today is to defend the very existence of free peoples in Europe.

The V campaign seems to have produced its first results in the news that Norway has been placed under martial law. The Nazis now admit that their much touted civilian administration, under Vikdun Quisling and the Nazi administrator, Terboven, has failed. This is the only possible interpretation of the declaration of martial law for the entire country, unless it be that Hitler is already preparing for a British invasion from the Norwegian north.

Germany, Too

EVERY day that passes brings new reports of mass discontent in Europe. In Rumania hundreds of people have been shot for assisting the Soviet forces and sabotaging the Rumanian mercenaries; in Serbia, the guerrilla warfare goes on, although savagely repressed, while from Holland there is news of large scale strikes and popular actions against the invader. Within Germany itself signs are also beginning to multiply of popular discontent. The Nazi hope of confining the wounded to Hungarian hospitals has not been realized; troop trains overflowing with wounded soldiers are pouring into East Prussia, so that the German people are learning of the million and a half casualties in the East. From Stockholm come reports that the Nazis are undertaking new persecutions of the Jews, with Gestapo investigations spreading to many non-Jews as well. Even local Nazis, in villages near Koenigsberg, have been reported under arrest because they doubted Hitler's wisdom in attacking the Soviets.

At the same time, reports multiply that various Nazi leaders are increasing their bank balances in foreign countries, as for example, Baldur von Schirach, the Nazi youth leader, was reported to have done only last week in Switzerland. In New York the *Herald Tribune* made public an exclusive story to the effect that Fritz Thyssen, supposedly on the "outs" with the Nazis, has some \$3,000,000 in cash salted away in American bank holdings. The *Herald Tribune* speculates that Thyssen may not really have quarreled with the Nazis at all, and may be building up a reserve against the day when some of his pals will be wanting to leave the Third Reich. There is no way of knowing how many of the stories about Europe are true, and in which particulars. But there is no doubt that the remarkable stand of the Soviet forces, plus the prospect of imminent action in the West, fills all of Europe with the hope of liberation.

Siam

THE crisis in the Far East has not abated; in fact, if the London reports of Japanese pressure on Siam are true, the crisis has intensified. The Siamese government agreed ten days ago to economic negotiations with the Japanese puppet, Manchukuo, and now there are signs that Siam is faced with the Tokyo demand for the use of military and naval bases plus access to the tin, rubber, and rice resources of the kingdom. In return the Japanese are supposed to be promising more Indo-Chinese territory. Most of Indo-China, it should be remembered, originally formed part of a Siamese kingdom, before the imperialists grabbed it away in the nineteenth century. Last January some sections of the rich Mekong River valley were returned to Siam after a brief struggle with the Vichy forces, and it is not improbable that in exchange for more territorial gains, the Siamese Bangkok regime would consider closer relations with Tokyo. The net effect, however, would mean bringing

Nippon's armies to the borders of Burma and Malaya, that is, to the Indian Ocean and the rear lines of Singapore itself. The British have long held a certain hegemony in Siam, and they might now choose to stop any further Japanese pressure southward. Australian troops are known to have been brought to Malaya, well equipped and ready for action.

Meanwhile the United States has clamped down further on trade with Japan, this time prohibiting the shipment of gasoline above the 1936 quota, which means a reduction of about fifty percent in gasoline the Japanese will be able to get. But, as we pointed out last week, there's still no full embargo on trade with the Far Eastern member of the Axis. In permitting the Japanese steamer *Tatuta Maru* to land in San Francisco last week, Sumner Welles made it clear that trade would continue subject to license. That still leaves the way open to the kind of dickering that's still going on with Franco and with Marshal Pétain. A complete embargo, and it's not yet too late, is the only way to thoroughly shake up and frighten the men at the helm of the waterlogged Japanese ship of state.

Soviet Morale

WAR casualty number one has been the myth of Nazi invincibility. War casualty number two has been the illusion that Soviet morale was one of the "imponderables" of the campaign. An interesting example of how this second illusion disintegrates in the face of reality was furnished by a cable sent to the New York *Times* last Sunday by its Moscow correspondent, Cyrus L. Sulzberger. Reading this cable, one senses that Mr. Sulzberger was in a pretty low frame of mind before reaching the Soviet border. He found the optimism of the Soviets a "pleasant surprise and refreshing relief to a visitor from gloomy, downtrodden Europe." Everybody was confident of victory—workers, army men, peasants, government officials. Wounded soldiers from the front invited the correspondent to accompany them soon on a victorious march to Berlin. Sulzberger found that food is plentiful, that train service is regular, that industry is going on without interruption.

And Mr. Sulzberger reports all this with the air of an exhausted man who has just been revived with a potent tonic. He is in effect saying: "My God, how we have been taken in by our own propaganda!" He shows that the Nazis have eagerly spread lies about Soviet weakness, and the *Times* reader can't help reflecting that he has been reading about nothing but weakness and more weakness in his morning newspaper for years. In fact, Mr. Sulzberger seems a little embarrassed at negating the legend which is of such long standing in his home office. He ends his dispatch by giving the impression that the superb confidence and unflinching morale of the Soviet people is somehow a "Slavic" trait. The absurdity of this conclusion is apparent in the fact that the "gloomy, downtrodden" area from which the correspondent sent his previous dispatches included Slavic countries under Nazi domination. And one must note that

under the Czars—there were Slavs then too—the dominant tone of literature and the dominant impression of observers were that of gloom and pessimism.

No, Mr. Sulzberger is simply meeting for the first time the reality of a socialist society. "It is difficult to analyze the basic reasons for this optimistic frame of mind," says the reporter, with an obvious reluctance to face the truth. In any case, the universal testimony of firsthand observers in the Soviet Union today is reducing to a mockery the speculations of the "restaurant generals." The New York *Times* has already expressed "surprise" that Soviet tanks work, that Soviet military leaders think, and that Soviet workers eat. You can't go on surprising people forever. The game becomes tiresome.

He Must Be Freed

UNANIMOUSLY 2,500 members of a New York local of the United Radio, Electrical, and Machine Workers Union have demanded the release of Earl Browder from Atlanta penitentiary. The roster of unions and peoples' organizations taking such a stand grows impressively as they are realizing more and more that unity is essential in the struggle to destroy fascism. The leader of the Communist Party has consistently and unrelentingly fought the spread of fascism. Hitlerism has no more dangerous foe in this country. To keep him in prison is to weaken the struggle to defend our nation.

Squeezing Little Business

SIX corporations received 31.5 percent of all War and Navy Department contracts up to the end of May, according to a report of the research bureau of the Office of Production Management. These and fifty others received almost three-fourths of all defense contracts. Of the six that got the lion's share, two—General Motors and du Pont—are closely linked, while GM, in addition, is tied to Morgan, which is also influential in the corporation that heads the list, Bethlehem Steel.

This highlights a growing problem: the squeezing out of small business under the defense program. The prodigious research of the Temporary National Economic Committee has called attention to the advance of big business monopoly and pointed to the fascist implications of this phenomenon. Yet both here and in England defense programs that are supposed to be directed against fascism are accelerating the trend toward monopoly. In a general sense this development is inevitable under capitalism. In specific instances, however, it is possible to modify and curb monopolistic trends and strengthen the people's struggle against them. But when the defense program is in the hands of the monopolists themselves, as is the case in this country and in England, what else can be expected but the further fattening of the hogs? In the New York *Post* of July 24 Edward P. Flynn points out: "Both the big business men in the OPM and the New Dealers in the agency set up to control prices and allocate civilian supplies are

inclined simply to take for granted that middle-sized American business is to be blighted. Most of the \$1-a-year men at OPM come from corporations well loaded with defense orders. They have a minimum concern with the problems of smaller firms."

This is further underscored by a survey made by the National Small Business Men's Association which shows that while seventy-three percent of ninety-four small industrial plants in Illinois had applied for subcontracts in the defense program, less than one-third of the applications had been granted. Sixty-four percent of the companies believe they will be forced out of business unless they can secure defense contracts or materials for civilian production, and another seventeen percent will have to curtail production. The survey also shows that fully eighty-eight percent of these plants are adaptable, in whole or in part, to defense work.

The closing down of a large part of these factories will mean increased unemployment, the ruin of industrial towns, with consequent distress to farmers who supply these towns. But something more is at stake: the effectiveness of our whole defense drive. Who will maintain that the action of the Aluminum Co. of America and of certain OPM officials in preventing any competitors from entering the aluminum field has not done incalculable harm to the nation's defense? The same is true of other branches of production. In a letter the other day to Rep. John D. Dingell of Michigan, President Roosevelt declared: "I am vitally interested in preserving small business enterprises, and it would be most unfortunate if the defense program served in any way to stimulate monopoly and eliminate small business." The President wrote that he was passing on to the OPM Dingell's suggestion that manufacturers who are unable to obtain basic materials be certified to the OPM so that they may become eligible for a contract or subcontract. But it looks as if something more than suggestion-passing will have to be done to break the stranglehold of the big corporations on the national defense effort.

Georgia's Fascist

FUEHRER Talmadge of Georgia is democratic in at least one respect. When he decides to burn books, he doesn't go out and build a bonfire like one of your ordinary two-bit dictators. He submits a bill to the legislature—never mind about its being in his vestpocket—and he adorns himself with the panoply of due process, habeas corpus, pax vobiscum, and whatnot. The books to be burned, with all proper legal sanctity, include one called *We Sing America*, which tells of white and Negro children attending a school together, playing together, becoming friends and sharing a sandwich. The book has been distributed to libraries of Negro schools through the Rosenwald Fund. Why does a book like this get the governor hot under the collar? An interesting answer was provided in the streets of Charleston, S. C., the other day, where citizens booed an open Ku Klux Klan meeting so vigorously that it was practically

forced to disband. A new spirit is abroad in the South, and Talmadge is out to crush it.

Genuine Americanism is having difficulty up north too. Pennsylvania's Board of Censors has banned two Soviet films, *The Red Army* and *The Soviet Frontier on the Danube*. Instead of hailing these films as evidence of the great fighting strength now arrayed against Hitler, the censors express fear that their showing might encourage "subversive groups." Actually, subversive groups like the Bund and the Christian Front would have the wind taken out of their sails by such pictures. While Harry Hopkins flies to Moscow, a group of arbitrary censors hobnobs with Hitler in the Keystone State. The citizens of Pennsylvania and the citizens of Georgia have a common cause for indignant action.

Price Control

THERE can be nothing but the strongest agreement with President Roosevelt's statement in his message on price control: "We are determined that the sacrifice of one shall not be the profit of another." This can be achieved only through a many-sided attack on profiteering and the monopoly grip on the nation's defense program. Undoubtedly, the regulation of prices is a most important element in the successful solution of this problem.

The new price-control bill introduced in Congress is on the whole a good measure. Under the bill the President, or any agency or official whom he designates, is given broad powers to establish ceilings on the prices of commodities, based on the level prevailing on or about July 29. Ceilings may also be placed on rents in defense areas. In regard to agricultural products the measure provides that no ceilings can be fixed below 110 percent of parity prices or the market prices prevailing on July 29. The bill specifically exempts wages from regulation, as well as common carrier and public utility rates (these are already regulated by federal and state agencies).

The price-control bill would be improved if rents in non-defense areas were also included. These have as yet risen only slightly, but they will tend to increase further unless checked. Control of installment credit, which the President requested in his message, should likewise be included. It is also questionable whether the entire complex price mechanism can be regulated from Washington. In actual practice it may be found necessary to set up supplementary local agencies directly responsible to the President. However, the bill itself is actually only a skeleton. Everything depends on the kind of flesh and blood with which it will be clothed—on how it will be enforced. It is not the small retailer who is possible for rising prices and the danger of inflation, any more than it is the small farmer. The big monopolies, which corner available stocks of raw materials and jack up prices of manufactured products, are the ones primarily to blame. In enforcing the bill the whole emphasis must be on curbing the selfish price- and rent-gouging of these monopolies which victimize not only the consuming public, but the farmer, the small merchant, and small investor

as well. Particularly flagrant offenders are the food trusts that fleece farmer and consumer alike. And to assure proper enforcement the President should set up a democratic body to include representatives of the trade unions, farmers, and consumers' organizations.

Additional measures are also required. Excess profits are still not being effectively taxed; one of the shortcomings of the new tax bill is that it refuses to come to grips with this problem. The creation of artificial shortages by the monopolies and the failure of the government to press for expansion of all production, civilian as well as defense, are likewise major factors that contribute to the dangers against

which the President warned. We feel he is entirely wrong when he declares that one of the solutions is the taxation of purchasing power. This is the kind of cure that may well prove worse than the disease. Official government statistics show that the majority of the American people are suffering from too little, not too much, purchasing power. Greatly expanded production, increased participation by labor in organizing and directing the defense program, regulation of monopoly prices, and stiffer taxation on large individual and corporate incomes—this is the kind of full-bodied program that can halt spiraling prices and end the nightmare of inflation.

Shortage "Crisis"

THE problem of shortages for the first time invaded the everyday lives of millions of average Americans during the past week. When gas could not be bought between 7 PM and 7 AM, when a ban on the processing of raw silk by non-defense industries threatened to make the silk stocking as obsolete as the dodo, Mr. and Mrs. America and their sons and daughters sat up and took notice. And they are asking questions: Are these measures absolutely necessary? Are they the best that could be devised? Is everything being done to cope with the attendant dislocations? Are further shortages inevitable? Could these particular ones have been prevented?

The problem of reducing shortages to a minimum is basically one of planning. In the case of gasoline, for example, the shortage is not in the commodity itself but in tankers to transport it from the Gulf. Because large numbers of these tankers have been turned over to Britain for defense purposes there are not enough to carry the gas required to feed all the motor vehicles in the Eastern states. Wasn't this shortage foreseen at the time the tankers were given to Britain? If it was, nothing was done about it. Had construction of pipelines been started immediately, they would be operating now or ready to begin carrying oil shortly. And no effort seems to have been made to knock down the rates of the railroad companies, which have the cars to transport a large part, if not all, of the oil for which tankers are lacking.

Bungling is further evident in the method of curtailing consumption. NEW MASSES urges its readers to cooperate with the government and refrain from purchasing gas between 7 PM and 7 AM. But at the same time we cannot blink the obvious: this measure curtails not gas (since almost all motorists are doing their buying during the day), but time. It may have some value psychologically, but its chief practical effect is to throw workers out of jobs. The curfew appears to be only the forerunner of actual rationing which, according to reports, will be started after Labor Day. If this becomes necessary, might it not be a good idea to give a voice to those who can be counted on to organize rationing in a truly democratic way—representatives of labor and the consuming public?

The silk ban has been necessitated by the

government's restrictions on trade with Japan. Here too a little foresight and planning could have obviated at least part of the difficulties. Certainly, production of synthetic substitutes such as rayon and nylon could have been expanded long ago. Low supplies of a third commodity, scrap steel, are the result not merely of bad or non-existent planning, but of reactionary policies as well. This shortage, which may cut steel production ten percent, is directly due to appeasement of Japan; our own defense program pays the price for the fact that in eight years 25,000,000 tons of scrap steel were exported, mostly to Japan.

Planlessness is, of course, inherent in capitalism. In its grim war against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union is reaping the fruits of the over-all planning of industrial and agricultural production made possible by its socialist system. But even under capitalism a larger measure of planful organization of production in the national interest can be introduced provided the selfish activities of predatory big business are curbed. The big obstacle is that the defense program has been turned over to those for whom profit, not production, is the supreme law, as is shown by Julian Webb in his article on page three of this issue.

In dealing with the problems created by the shutting off of silk supplies the CIO Textile Workers Union of America has already taken the initiative and brought forward a series of practical proposals. The TWUA urges various measures that will make possible a large scale expansion of the output of synthetic yarns to substitute for silk. For the protection of the 175,000 workers who are threatened with loss of jobs, the union proposes that the government institute a relief plan to supplement the inadequate unemployment compensation benefits. We are happy to note that Leon Henderson, federal price administrator, has announced that an advisory panel, which will include representatives of labor and the consumers, will be appointed to consider future adjustments. But it would be far better if this panel were given real power instead of being merely advisory. The shortages in oil, silk, and scrap steel underline the urgent need of overhauling the entire defense program and reorganizing it along the lines proposed by CIO Pres. Philip Murray in his plan for joint management-labor industrial councils.

EPIC OF THE DON

In its sweep and grandeur Sholokhov's monumental work illuminates the spirit of the Soviet people. Samuel Sillen begins a series on "The Silent Don" and its significance.

THE SILENT DON, comprising two volumes: AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON and THE DON FLOWS HOME TO THE SEA, by Mikhail Sholokhov. A. A. Knopf. Vol. 1, \$3. Vol. 2, \$3.50. The set, boxed, \$6.

THERE is a stroke of historical justice in the fact that the completed American edition of Mikhail Sholokhov's masterpiece appears at this moment. For *The Silent Don*, in its epic grandeur and reverent humanity, illuminates the spirit of the Soviet peoples. The anti-Nazi war is shattering illusions, sedulously built up by anti-Soviet propagandists, concerning the morale, leadership, purpose, and military might of the Soviet Union. And *The Silent Don* will shatter equally persistent illusions concerning Soviet art. Contrary to the myth of "artists in uniform," contrary to the myth of repression and regimentation, here is a monumental work of literary art whose beauty, scope, and strength must be universally celebrated wherever fine literature is loved. Sholokhov's novel is the exalted artistic expression of that faith in a free and beautiful life which has welded the people of his land into the indestructible unity of socialism.

This work, wrote Gorky shortly before his death, can only be compared with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The comparison is inevitable for more than one reason. Tolstoy's immortal novel reconstructed the whole epoch from 1805 to 1812, the period of storm and strife which culminated in Napoleon's ignominious retreat from Moscow. On a similarly broad canvas Sholokhov depicts the era which begins in 1914 with the participation of the Russian armies in the World War, takes a fateful turn in the Socialist Revolution of November 1917, runs its course of conflict through the period of foreign military intervention and civil war from 1918 to 1920, and ends with the victory of the Soviet Government over its counter-revolutionary enemies at home and abroad.

In both novels the events of history are imaginatively integrated with the personalities who participate in these events; the interaction of social and human forces is complete. Sholokhov, like Tolstoy, exercises consummate skill and restraint in portraying his characters objectively, viewing life always as it was felt and understood, in all its dramatic immediacy, by the characters themselves. Both writers exhibit the same astonishing range of human types representing different social strata, beliefs, temperaments. And in *The Silent Don*, as in *War and Peace*, the colorful profusion of scenes does not obscure or interrupt but rather enriches the underlying continuity of theme; the resourceful multiplication of char-

acters does not prevent anyone from emerging with his unmistakable individuality and his distinct role in the narrative.

TO NOTE these parallels, important as they are, is only to clear the ground for a discussion of *The Silent Don* and its significance for the literature of our time. The differences between the two epics are equally impressive. It would be futile to discuss the superiority or inferiority of one book to the other, for the qualities of thought and sensibility which distinguish each are rooted in quite different epochs. If Tolstoy's novel achieved the highest reaches of progressive art in the nineteenth century, Sholokhov's illustrates the new horizons of life opened up in our own period. His work is permeated with a Marxist understanding of the vast and contradictory forces which he portrays. He is occupied with the behavior of human beings in a period of the most complex and momentous social upheaval in history, and it is his sure analysis of that upheaval which enables him to avoid the opposite errors of schematism and indecision. His major characters are the men and women of the folk. He places in the center of his picture the Cossacks of the Don region, a people, as we shall see, who had an unusually intricate relationship to the social transition from czarism to socialism. Imbued with a profound compassion, he creates a new type of tragedy in which the stark and irrevocable fact of death is treated in a meaningful historical matrix rather than in bleak abstraction. And if he knows how much the world has been sullied and poisoned and how much misery has been poured out under capitalism, he can make one of his characters speak with confidence of a future that one could hear above the din of battle as a magically beautiful music, "not a separate, slender melody, but a mighty, growing, perfectly harmonized hymn."

In the forging of that future Mikhail Sholokhov has himself taken an active part. His career illustrates the new type of writer and the new conception of literature which have been created in the Soviet Union. Sholokhov was born in 1905, the year of the first Russian Revolution, in the Cossack hamlet of Krushlino near Veshenskaya, where he now resides. The village of Veshenskaya stands on the very shore of the Don River, and this neighborhood, known and loved so deeply by the author, is the scene of much of the action in *The Silent Don*. The village square on which the Cossacks mustered for their marches, as described in the novel, is now a small park with an obelisk over the common

grave of those who died for the Revolution. Today, cables Sholokhov from Veshenskaya, mobilized Red Army men and those seeing them off are hurrying to the square, filled with cold fury for the aggressor.

SHOLOKHOV'S FATHER came to the Cossack land from the Ryazan province in Russia. His mother was half Cossack and half peasant, a woman of strong character who learned to read and write in order to correspond with her son. Native to Sholokhov was the Cossack tongue, which the Soviet writer Serafimovich describes as "vivid, pungent, colorful, with its bright imagery and unexpected idioms—the language which blossomed so magically in his [Sholokhov's] writings where the life of the Cossacks is so powerfully depicted." In 1920, at the age of fifteen, Sholokhov left school to enter the Red Army. For two years he took part in food requisition work, fought the kulaks who hid their stores of grain, and routed the bandits who operated on the Don until 1922. When the civil war abated, Sholokhov began to write. His earliest work appeared in the publications of the Young Communist League, of which he was then a member. His first published volume, *Tales of the Don*, appeared in 1925 and was greeted warmly by the Soviet critics. The following year, at the age of twenty-one, he started work on *The Silent Don*. His work on this book was held up by work on another novel, dealing with the period of collectivization, the first part of which appeared in this country as *Seeds of Tomorrow*.

Many American readers may be astonished to learn that this thirty-six-year-old author can celebrate not only the fact that his book has been read by several millions in the Soviet Union, but that he has been elected to represent his district in the highest legislative council of the country, the Supreme Soviet. In a world where thousands of writers live in exile, perish in concentration camps, or starve in obscurity, it is inspiring to contemplate such facts. His active work in the Veshensk District Committee of the Communist Party and in the life of his community, Sholokhov told an interviewer, enriched him as a writer and furnished material for creative work. His native steppeland has not been for him a retreat. We learn that he has been instrumental in founding a Cossack theater in Veshenskaya, that he talks frequently in nearby factory halls and library forums on literature and Cossack history, that he carries on a voluminous correspondence with his readers. In addition to the warm response of his millions of readers, Sholokhov has been