



## KÄTHE KOLLWITZ

Reproduced above are six prints from a new portfolio, just published by Curt Valentin, honoring the great German graphic artist. Today, at 74, still living in Berlin's slums, she has become a symbol of the suffering everywhere, the "voice of those who have no voice" against brutal oppression and fascism, speaking out passionately for all people who ask for the freedom to live and the right to a secure life.

Beautifully direct, eloquently simple, these lithographs need neither introductory note nor analysis. Above, "These Children Are Starving," "Self-Portrait," and "Death Attacks," below, "Bread" and "Two Prisoners Listening to Music," and on the opposite page, "Working Woman with Sleeping Child."





WHEN the Soviet troops, battering back the Nazis in the last counter-offensive, recaptured the little villages near Smolensk, the partisan bands came out of the dark forests to inspect their homes. At the collective farm named Kirov, the weather-beaten soldiers of the night, uniformed in sheepskins and peasant boots, armed with machine guns seized from German columns, appeared suddenly in the village square.

Without words the partisans moved delicately through the gutted remains of the great granary, built with such loving care in the days of peace. Silently, they fingered the twisted remnants of the phonograph and the moving picture machine they had bought with the surplus from the rich 1940 harvest. One of the younger men, the schoolteacher, went directly to the smoldering, smelling fragments of the schoolhouse. He poked in the rubble with a long stick, his face preoccupied, his eyes vacant. After a time he looked up and saw on the still-standing frame of the door, a swastika, chalked in mud. With a businesslike air, he climbed up and, using his sleeve, rubbed the wood until the mark was gone.

A little before noon the partisans of the Kirov collective farm gathered in the square. The details of the ceremony had been arranged long before. The schoolmaster, working while the others slept, had carved the wooden marker weeks ago. Now he unwrapped it and brushed it carefully, so that the dust did not lie in the beautiful letters, worked over with such care in the old cave they had used for headquarters.

The captain called the men of his village to attention. The schoolmaster sang a note, to get the pitch right. Then singing, swinging their arms smartly as the Red Army men did on parade, the partisans marched off to the burying place. Peter Shenko pointed out the untidy heap of earth, and the captain called "Halt." The partisans arranged themselves around the grave in an orderly square.

In the silence the schoolmaster stepped forward, carrying his board. The captain helped him dig the earth around it, and hands

# Strictly Personal

by RUTH McKENNEY

## ALEX SHENKO

reached out to test its strength. The partisans stared at the marker, reading its words again, although they already knew them by heart. Many heated arguments had passed before the wording of this epitaph had been composed to please the majority vote.

The captain signed to Peter Shenko, and he stepped forward from the ranks, a blond young man, just twenty. Peter Shenko cleared his voice, and then, with his back to the grave, he recited the words.

"This is the burying place of Alex Shenko, a child of twelve years. He was tortured to death by the Nazi soldiers, and suffered more than any man should have to bear. He gave his life to make men free. The people of the whole world will always remember Alex Shenko. The Nazis could not conquer him."

Peter Shenko paused. The captain nodded to the schoolmaster. The captain said, "We will now hear the eulogy of Alex Shenko, by his teacher."

The schoolmaster took the brother's place at the head of the grave. He opened his mouth, but the words stuck. He looked wildly around him, and then whispered hoarsely to the captain, "I find that I can't."

The partisans frowned. The ceremony had been arranged. The captain whispered to the schoolmaster, "Go on, go on."

The schoolmaster began to weep. The partisans all looked at their boots; their faces red with embarrassment. The schoolmaster shuddered, trying to master his emotion. At last he began brokenly, "Friends, comrades, soldiers of the 18th Partisan Group. We meet here today. . . ."

The schoolmaster paused and wiped his face with his sleeve. He looked despairingly at the captain, but the captain shook his head grimly. The schoolmaster drew a deep breath and began rapidly, "Comrades, I can't recite the oration. You know that I wrote it out very carefully, but now I can't say it. Alex was such a fine lad, comrades, we all knew him. He was like the bright dawn, Alex was. When we thought of what our country would be like when we were old and gone, we thought of Alex. Remember the radio he built all by himself. A smart lad, he was. In school there was none to beat him. He recited poems with such a passion on his face. He felt so much. Remember the time he ran away to Moscow. His mother was furious, and so was I. It was not discipline, I told him. But he said he had to put his eyes on the city of the Kremlin—I could not blame him. But, comrades, he

learned socialist discipline. Comrades, our partisan band could never have had its victories without Alex Shenko. Night after night he crept through the dark fields, slipping past the sentries, pretending to be a lost little fellow when the Nazis saw him. How many times did he make that dangerous trip from our cave to his father's house? And how many times did the message he brought back cost the invaders their officers, their lives, their guns?

"Comrades, we all know what happened to Alex Shenko. The Gestapo agents waiting there in the barn, watching the father; and Alex at last, in the dark hours after midnight, slipping into the familiar doorway. And then the agony.

"Oh! What manner of men are these who have come with the gun and the bomb to our country? He was only a child! We could not do it to a child, not even the son of the highest Nazi. We could not find it in our hearts to torture a *child*. Alex, he was only twelve years old; they could not mistake him for more; he hardly looked that. A youngster with wiry legs and a little monkey face and a cowlick on his forehead.

"Oh! What shall history say of men who burn a child to death?"

The schoolmaster sobbed, suddenly, breaking into his next words. With his hand across his face he cried out, his voice muffled and hoarse, "But he did not give our hiding place away. They burned him to death. But he would not tell."

Turning abruptly, the schoolmaster walked hurriedly away. In the silence the partisans moved uneasily in their places. One of them cried out, his voice terrible, "Alex! We shall avenge you!" A rumble of voices echoed, "Yes!"

The captain looked uncertainly around him. Then he said, "About face!"

The soldiers of the 18th Partisan Group turned in their tracks. The captain said, "Forward march!" The men of the Kirov collective farm marched rapidly back to the village square, swinging their arms smartly, as the Red Army men do on parade.

PLEASE tell everyone you know about Alex Shenko, and how he died. It is time that America came face to face with the tremendous reality.

For Alex Shenko was not the exception to the rule. Remember that. Oh, remember it, and act upon it.

