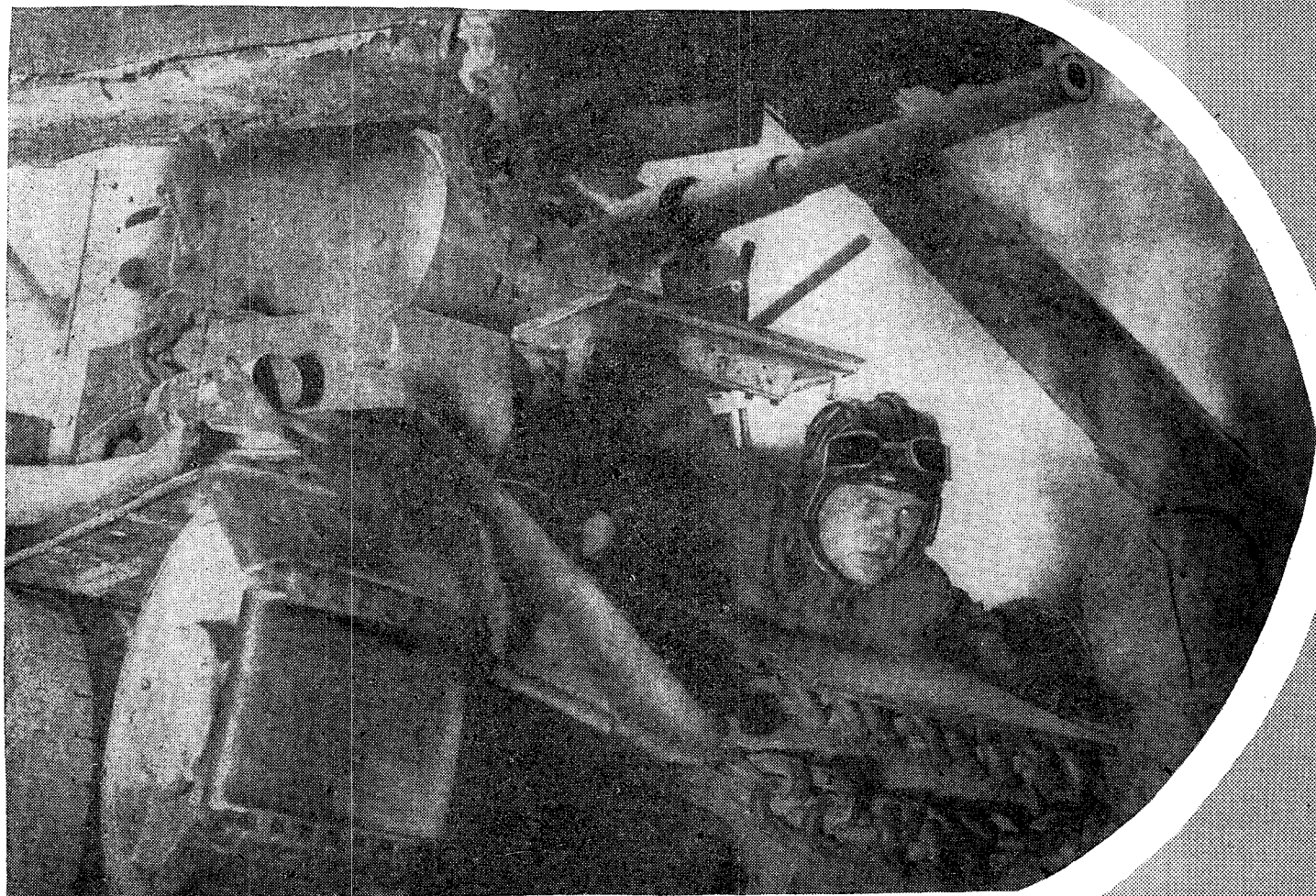


TANK CHARGE ACROSS THE ICE



Last week in the first installment of this remarkable report, the writer recounted the story of the birth of a tank in a plant evacuated from Leningrad and now operating deep in the interior of the Soviet Union. The author accompanied the tanks and their crews back to the northern front where they are poised ready for action.—The Editors.

Kuibyshev (by cable).

THE tanks imperceptibly entered the village hidden in heavy snowdrifts. This was the concentration point before the offensive. The machines had to be hastily camouflaged, for morning was already breaking and there was danger of being spotted by enemy aircraft. On an incline which sloped down toward the river, Lieutenant Astakhov noticed an old bathhouse. The place was very convenient for guarding the village. But no doubt the German planes had already been over the place. "Look here," Astakhov said to Lieutenant Chilikin, "you certainly can't settle yourself right next to it. Get into the bathhouse," he ordered.

That morning enemy reconnaissance planes repeatedly circled above. They flew singly and in pairs. But there was nothing to arouse suspicion. There were the same village huts with smoke curling up from the chimneys. The tops of two KV tanks on the outskirts were covered with canvas to simulate roofs and chimneys. Smoke came from them and they were in

no way different from other village huts. The bathhouse by the river was also there, only slightly swollen, for a tank had pushed aside one wall and nosed into the building. After their long trip the crews slept some twelve hours. Only sentries kept vigil.

The following day several trucks brought tankmen from the neighboring unit who had been at the front since the beginning of the war. The oldest of the guests was Major Segeda, tank battalion commander. This lively Ukrainian with a keen sense of humor, typical of his people, described one unusual tank attack. "This was a stiff fight," he said. "The driver was wounded in the arm, and I had to take his place. Our ninth attack was at its height when suddenly I heard the voice of Gun Commander Kononov: 'Comrade Major, the shells have given out!' 'Use machine gun,' I ordered. 'Comrade Major, we fired the last cartridge!' 'All right,' I said, 'keep good watch from the top, we will get at them with the caterpillars.' Stepping on the gas, I headed for the biggest trench. 'Nazis with hand grenades,' Kononov cried from above. I looked in front and right there was a Nazi emerging from the trench with hand grenades ready to be thrown. I stopped abruptly and automatically pressed the tank horn. A terrific roar rent the air and frightened the German who ducked back into the trench.

"When he again appeared, I was racking my brains what

to do, when suddenly my cannon poured forth a pillar of flame straight at the face of the fascist. He fell at the edge of the trench, pressing his burned snout into the snow. It turned out that my gun commander decided to add a simple signal rocket to the hooting of the tank. Training the gun on the German, he fired the rocket point blank through the gun. Well, everything is possible in war, think of it, horn and rocket, would you believe it? And now get ready for work," announced Segeda when he finished his story. He decided to acquaint the new arrivals with the experience of tank warfare in local conditions. Segeda's mechanics, drivers, wireless operators, gunners departed to instruct respective specialists who just arrived.

The Command decided on a partial exchange of tankmen. The less experienced of the newcomers were temporarily transferred to Segeda's unit. In exchange, Astakhov received Corporal Bolshunov, who had 200 hours in battle to his credit; Senior Sergeant Tenditny, who led his tank into twenty-eight attacks; Junior Sergeant Gordeyev, expert at ramming; Senior Sergeant Kononov, gun commander who never missed his mark, and Gun Commander Mashev, with the experience of twenty battles behind him. The men were given a joyful welcome by our tankmen.

Later I witnessed one more interesting object lesson: the reading of the latest German regulations on the struggle against the Soviet heavy tanks. The regulations were found on an anti-tank battery officer. "The fact that the enemy is using heavy tanks which cannot be crushed by the German tanks, compels us to look for a way out of the situation," reads paragraph one. The Germans are therefore looking for this way out. "The German tanks," the regulation reads on, "which are designed for fighting in normal conditions to destroy the enemy tanks in an offensive battle, are unable in the present war to fulfill this task with their former equipment. It becomes therefore the task of the infantry shock detachments to destroy the super-heavy tanks." A fine testimonial for Hitler's panzer armies! We were, of course, interested in the methods of the "shock infantry detachments" now formed in the German Army and therefore did our best to study them and be ready to give them a fitting reception.

FIVE rivers flow into Lake Ilmen from the south alone. Seventy-five meters to a half kilometer wide, these rivers in turn take in dozens of rivulets, tributaries, and streams. The lake itself and the river mouths afford the best natural protection for troops on the defensive. This splendid defense line had been in German hands since autumn. Taking advantage of it, they could continue the blockade to Leningrad. During the winter the fascists laid many mines and succeeded in putting up a great number of fortifications and barbed wire entanglements. The entire locality of hundreds of kilometers to the south of the lake was converted by the Germans into a strong fortified district.

"That's why I invited you comrades tankmen to part for the day with your beloved wheels and caterpillars and take to your skis to carry out a deep reconnaissance operation," said the commander of the formation in which our tank battalion was included.

In twenty-four hours the tankmen on skis under the command of Major Maximov covered some forty kilometers. Dressed in white hoods, the scouts penetrated not only far into the frosty forest by shore but also onto the lake itself.

Then followed the day of rest. Lighter machines were now added to the KV tanks stationed in the woods. Taking advantage of his leisure, a young tankman clad in a well fitting fur coat carefully painted on the turret of his machine in scarlet letters, "Let's Avenge the Soviet Girls!". Suddenly the tankman paused, inspecting his work as if displeased with the results, and then promptly dipping a piece of matchwood into the can of red paint, added one more word. "Let's Avenge our Beloved Soviet Girls!" he read, smiling contentedly. I

later learned that the sweethearts of four of the tankmen were in occupied territory.

Finally orders were received for the tank battalion. They were instructed to cross Lake Ilmen and tributaries during the night, penetrate the enemy position—thirty to forty kilometers deep—and launch a surprise attack on the flank of his main forces in the district of Staraya Russa. It was a question of encircling the 290th Rifle Division and SS Division, part of the 16th Army. As dusk fell, the engines were charged and the battalion prepared to leave its temporary camp.

The five KV tanks started out with a roar which sent the earth trembling. A heavy blizzard covered up our approach to the starting positions for an attack. We were on the outskirts of a small village, the last halt before the decisive thrust. We had to cross water barriers and reach the place of battle in full order. Lieutenant Astakhov inspected the tanks. "How's your machine?" "In full order," the tankmen replied as one man. The last minute preparations were completed. The tank column was to go, together with the tank-borne infantry. The machines at the head were to carry sappers who were to destroy the anti-tank mines. It was hard to distinguish in the darkness the KV tanks in the column.

A ten-kilometer thrust and we were on the ice of the ancient Lake Ilmen. The heavy tanks which carried the infantry cautiously crawled onto the ice. Old Ilmen, as if annoyed by the sudden disturbance of its peace, seemed to crack and grumble like an old oak shaken by a gust of wind. Over 150 kilograms of pressure per square centimeter of ice. Where the ice did not reach the bottom, it gave way, bending appreciably under the weight of the tank. The other heavy machines didn't move along the trail of the first but took to the left or right. Finally the ice of Lake Ilmen was left behind.

But the river which virtually bordered on the Nazi lines was still to be crossed. The ice on the river was much thinner and had to be reinforced for the heavy tanks to cross. A few minutes before our approach, tankmen of another unit paid dearly for ignoring it. Right in the middle of the river, one tank collapsed under the ice, the crew barely saving itself. The sappers prepared 2,000 logs with which to span the river and let a new coat of ice form on top. But we had crossed the lake ahead of the fixed schedule and the logs were still en route. What's to be done? Not a minute to be lost. It was midnight. In a few hours day would break and the enemy aircraft could spot us. The main thing was a fast crossing of the river which formed the outer wall of the fascist fortified district. Nevertheless, the logs were not yet in sight. Every passing minute threatened the failure of a well conceived operation. Some fast thinking and a decision. "Let's tear down the fences and the uninhabited houses of the nearest village to cover the ice," suggested Major Maximov to the sapper chiefs. Barely had he uttered these words when the sappers were on their feet. An hour later they brought all the lumber necessary for the cross-

The sappers stretched a log road for the KV's.



ing. Overjoyed, the sappers immediately took to work. Of course we were sorry to have to tear down the village fences. But this was unavoidable. For they were to line our road to victory. In the meantime, the icy water rushing up through the pumps cemented the rows of logs. The bridge was ready.

AND so we lay in the open. One after another the small and medium tanks crossed, followed by the KV tanks. We crossed to the opposite bank unnoticed by the enemy. Four powerful tanks took the drowned machine in tow. At the command "Go," thousands of horsepower pulled the fifty-ton bulk out of the river. The tank was saved. After two hours of fussing, its engine began to roar. The tank crew who escaped death several hours ago were jubilant. "With our tank we fear neither water nor fire," the tank commander jested merrily.

And so farther and farther through the forests and swamps our column moved on. Day began to break when we reached another barrier, but the Germans were still unsuspecting. The sappers worked splendidly. The logs were brought up on time. Soon we were again moving across. A pleasant surprise was in store for the German soldiers: on awakening, they would find a tank column suddenly appearing in the valleys by the rivers which comprised their line of defense. The fascist artillerymen relied entirely on their infantry patrols. But precisely that night, their patrols were unable to sound their alarm, having been quietly removed by our skiers without a single shot being fired.

One can easily imagine the confusion which ensued in the enemy camp. The Germans had to turn their guns ninety degrees to the left before opening fire. The first enemy shells burst on the bridge. "Shut the hatch, watch the enemy," Lieutenant Astakhov commanded. The infantry took cover behind the tanks. Apparently frightened out of their wits, the Nazis missed their targets. Astakhov had already crossed to the opposite bank. The enemy mines and shells were bursting closer and closer to the wooden bridge. Some sappers were wounded, but none left his post. Under fire, they bravely continued to help the tanks across. Heavy shells hit the bridge, tearing up logs and big blocks of ice. No one was killed, but two Red Army men, slightly injured, fell into a hole in the ice. Their comrades immediately rushed to the rescue and carried them to safety.

There was a new roar of explosion, but this time it was Astakhov's tank which fired. The lieutenant had already located the enemy battery. Three more tanks opened fire and the German battery was silenced. The sappers again got to work. The doctors and orderlies were busy with the two Red Army men who were pulled out of the river. With the forty-degree frost, their drenched uniforms froze into icy coats.

Apparently Astakhov so skillfully handled the German artillerymen that for a half an hour we moved unhindered and reached the third crossing. The familiar concert of automatic

rifles and machine guns resounded through the forest. Our advanced infantry units struck at the enemy flank and rear. The third crossing wasn't too difficult, but was carried out in exemplary fashion as regards stratagem. When we reached the appointed place, there was no bridge in sight, so skillfully was it camouflaged. A fascist bomber appeared in the air. We were ordered to lie still in the snowdrifts in the forest until the fascist plane got through with its work. Our sappers prepared plenty of work for the fascists—a false pontoon a kilometer away from the real one.

When the fascist bomber dropped his whole load and was satisfied with his work, he returned to his base. Our battalion quickly thrust across. There were still some seven or eight kilometers to be covered across swamps. A little to the side, the swamp was overgrown with sparse wood. "Trample down the forest and clear the way for the battalion—this in my opinion is the job for your KV," said Major Maximov, addressing Astakhov. After inspecting the forest, Astakhov undertook to lead the column. The trees bent under the weight of the KV as if they were a thin garden fence. The road was cleared.

We reached a new water barrier 300 meters wide with steep banks rising to a height of twenty meters. Here the Germans were not taken by surprise. On the opposite banks they were furiously resisting our advanced infantry detachments. Nevertheless, the fascists were yet to learn what was coming. Major Maximov ordered the battalion deployed for attack and open fire across the river. "Lieutenant Astakhov! You remain in my stead in command on this bank and cover up my movement," he said. The major himself, with the small tanks, dashed across the ice onto the opposite bank. The Germans were dumbfounded by the appearance of the Soviet tanks which seemed to jump on them from under the ice. Taking advantage of the confusion in the German camp, Maximov attacked the fire emplacements of the first line of fortifications. In the meantime, the sappers were already putting up new pontoons. The battalion commander radioed an order for the heavy tanks to cross. Twilight fell. Under enemy fire, the machines crossed the fourth river barrier without a single loss.

Already we had been in action twenty-four hours. No one ate, but we didn't even think of food. Our main thought was of intrenching on the enemy line. The Germans retreated. The commander ordered a small respite or rather to prepare for a new fierce battle. The tankmen climbed out of their machines adjusting their uniforms. They could not be recognized at once because of the oil and soot on their faces. Two hours' rest. The tankmen fully merited it. There was a feeling that something had been accomplished—although it was not the main thing, nevertheless, a great achievement—the unprecedented march of the tanks across the ice.

I. POLYAKOV.

In the concluding installment Polyakov describes how the Nazis were routed from their positions.



We lay in the open, waiting for the tanks to haul us over.

POLAND'S ENEMIES IN AMERICA

How a clique of the old Warsaw Cabinet is trying to operate among the 5,000,000 loyal Polish-Americans.

GLANCE through the *Pariser Zeitung* of Dec. 20, 1941: "From September 1939 to September 1941 one million civilians died in Poland alone." The *Kolnische Zeitung* of Dec. 9, 1941, reports: 873,000 "Polish slaves" have been put to work in Germany. Add to that 65,000 death sentences, 250,000 Poles interned in 100 different concentration camps, famine in the ghettos, barbaric destruction of Polish culture—and you have but a pale picture of the conditions in which the Polish people find themselves today.

It would seem only natural that all those caught in Poland, together with the 8,000,000 Polish immigrants scattered over the world, would be unified in opposition to the criminal cancer of Nazism. They are—all except the tiny group of ex-Ministers and officials who live in profligate luxury in this country and Britain. Traveling bags filled with diamonds, furs, and gold, these gentlemen fled Poland with little difficulty, and went abroad to "nurture" the opinion that "*It is still possible to make war on the Soviet Union—it is still possible in spite of the mistakes of Smigly-Rydz, and in spite of the bloody September,*" as Gen. B. Wieniawa-Dlugoszowski, late adjutant of Pilsudski, remarked to me some months ago.

WHO are some of the members of this "Polish-American rapprochement"? The former Colonel and former Chief of the Russian section of the Polish Intelligence Service as well as former Finance Minister, Mr. I. Matuszewski, of the *Nowy Swiat*, 380 Second Avenue, heads this group. Next to him is the former Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr. H. F. Rajchman, who lives at 620 West 113th St., New York City. Then, Gen. B. Wieniawa-Dlugoszowski, former adjutant to Marshal Pilsudski, who can be reached at the Polish consulate, 151 East 67th Street; ex-Minister Adam Koc, creator of the Polish-Nazi party, the OZN; the brothers Jedrzejewicz, and the first wife of Foreign Minister Beck. These are the leaders. They are in close contact with the Fishes, the Wheelers, Lindberghs, Coughlins, and their organizations. They have already collected \$50,000 from various admirers of Hitler and have created under the name of Committee for National Defense, an association of opponents to the present Premier of Poland, General Sikorski.

Why do they oppose Sikorski? Because his government signed a pact with Soviet Russia on July 30, 1941, creating a basis for the common struggle against Nazism. This pact promises a closer collaboration between the two nations after the war and was once again confirmed on Dec. 4, 1941.

To the leaders of the "Polish-American rapprochement," the agreement with Soviet Russia is anathema. They have organized a declaration against Sikorski, and have even gone to the length of canvassing friends in London, to see whether an international movement could not be built up against the Polish government in London, its leaders and its policy.

For example, in December of last year one of this group, H. F. Rajchman, sent four letters to the former Minister W. Neumann in London, letters which found the light of day in a satirical monthly, *OSA*, published in New York.

"Prominent leaders among the former Polish immigrants and among present war refugees will sign this declaration, after which it will be sent to the President of Poland. Please inform General Sosnkowski that, although we do not wish to place all responsibility on him, we still feel for him as our old chief and know he will understand. Please acknowledge this letter by telegram and let us know what kind of life our friends are

living." This last phrase, "what kind of life our friends are living," is obviously intended as the theme of the reply telegram: if "our friends live well," it means that the petition against Sikorski is having success. . . .

This same group created the "Polish National Theater" in America, a company which tours Polish centers presenting a play called *The Fifth Column*, which is a glorification of the Nazi ideology. The heroine of this play is an idealistic girl of good character who acts as sympathizer and agent for the Nazis. Opposite her is the scoundrel and good-for-nothing character who believes in socialism because "no one in the Soviet owns more than another." Also at the instigation of this group a "scientific" institution was created under the name of the Bureau of Documentation and Historical Facts with headquarters at the Polish consulate in New York. There is absolutely nothing in this organization or its functions to suggest science, facts, or history. It is simply a center of anti-Soviet propaganda. Ninety-nine percent of its staff is composed of former members of the old Polish governmental Intelligence Service. A similar "scientific bureau" exists in Washington under the name of the Pulaski Foundation and it is led entirely by ideological colleagues of I. Matuszewski.

This same gentleman is also responsible for the vehement articles in two Polish papers (the *Nowy Swiat* in New York and the *Dziennik Polski* in Detroit) violently attacking the military and political actions of Great Britain, the United States, and Poland. Yet, there is not a word in them concerning German atrocities or concerning Hitler's assassin-lieutenants in Europe.

Here is a sample of Matuszewski's work: "Liberty in Russia means death, but life means slavery." "On Soviet Russia lies the whole responsibility for the fate of the human race, because Soviet Russia is the cause of this war." (*Nowy Swiat*, Dec. 10, 1941.)

Occasionally, these Hitler-collaborationists find gullible victims among university professors. Their latest victim spoke recently over station WNEW. This was Prof. Charles Hodges of New York University, who made a speech in defense of Josef Beck and Marshal Smigly-Rydz and the whole fascist regime in Poland.

Some elements in Washington, on the other hand, are more patient and gentle with these people than they ought to be, this handful who, having brought their own country to ruin and crucifixion, fled as field mice flee from a flaming granary. These elements still believe that such mice cannot destroy with their gnawing the granite structure of democracy, failing to perceive how important the political mood of 5,000,000 Polish-Americans is in these critical days.

Fortunately, a majority of the Polish population in the United States oppose the work of this group. For example, The Polish National Council, which influences 1,000,000 people, headed by Prof. F. X. Swietlik, together with various Polish unions and newspapers like *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, *Gwiazda Polarna*, *Glos Ludowy*.

Here is what *Gwiazda Polarna* of March 25, 1942, says about Matuszewski and his ideological colleagues: "It is the truth that those people are helping Hitler, because war against the Polish government is war against the USA, and war against our common purpose to liberate the human race from Hitler and his allies. Those people are to be condemned without excuses."

ANTONI GRONOWICZ.