



SEVASTOPOL

A Soviet war correspondent, Boris Voyetekhov, tells a story of extraordinary fortitude—the defense of the Crimean stronghold. . . . A soldier's last letter to his wife.

IN STALINGRAD's darkest hour a Red Army man named Gavril Khasbodin hurriedly got off a letter to his favorite war writer, Ilya Ehrenburg. Gavril had good news. An expert sniper, he had rid a suffering world of 140 Nazis. He wanted to share them with Ehrenburg. "I am crediting seventy to your account," he wrote, "for it was really you who killed them." And the Soviet author gratefully replied: "These seventy dead Germans are the best present I ever received."

Nothing could more clearly define the role of the Soviet war correspondent. He is more than a reporter at the front. He is a warrior, not an observer. His sentences are well aimed bullets. As President Mikhail Kalinin said recently: "Ilya Ehrenburg is engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Hitlerites. His is a spirited attack; he smites the Germans with whatever comes to hand at the moment; he shoots them with his rifle, and when the ammunition gives out, clubs them with the butt, hitting wherever he can." And this is true not only of the dean of Soviet war correspondents but of all the others as well.

It is noteworthy that the foremost literary figures of the Soviet Union have served as correspondents for *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, or *Red Star*. For the war correspondent is not placed in an isolated literary category. He is the novelist or playwright or poet employing his talent for a specific purpose under specific circumstances. The novelist Eugene Petrov covered the fighting from Murmansk to Sevastopol; the poet Nikolai Tikhonov celebrated the valor of his native city in *Tales of Leningrad*; the poet and playwright Konstantin Simonov wrote first-hand accounts of Stalingrad as well as of the action *On the Petsamo Road*; Mikhail Sholokhov has inspired millions with *The Science of Hate*; Alexander Polyakov, who like Petrov was killed in action, wrote two memorable volumes, *Russians Don't Surrender* and *White Mammoths*. And to these works, all of which are available in this country, one may now add the magnificently stirring and eloquent *The Last Days of Sevastopol*, by the young dramatist Boris Voyetekhov, which was translated and cabled to America by Ralph Parker of the *New York Times* (Knopf, \$2.50).

All these volumes are sections of a vast collective enterprise. It is perhaps necessary to explain that the dedication of every ma-

jor Soviet writer to this enterprise does not mean the abandoning of literary creation for topical reporting. This impression has been circulated by some of the reviewers who appear to believe that when the guns roar the muses are necessarily silent. It is based on two fallacies. The first is that Soviet writers are doing nothing but war correspondence. The second is that the particular character of Soviet war correspondence does not differ essentially from the conventional idea of war reporting.

ACTUALLY, of course, the Soviet writer does not face the *alternative* of war correspondence or continuing with his fiction, drama, poetry, and so on. He may do both simultaneously. For instance, Simonov's play *The Russian People* was written at the same time that he was composing a volume of verse and sending his frequent reports to the papers. Alexander Korneichuk's work for the press did not prevent his completing his Stalin-prize play *The Front*. Indeed, as both writers testify, their plays would have been impossible without the daily involvement in the war reflected in their correspondence. The lack of time and quiet was compensated for by intense



experience, quickened understanding, and burning purpose. The indefatigable Ilya Ehrenburg in eighteen months of war had written over 600 articles for the Soviet press, over 300 for the foreign press, and about 100 for Red Army papers published at the front; and at the same time, as I think many critics will have to acknowledge soon, he published one of the really great social novels of our time, *The Fall of Paris*. Moreover, there is considerable flexibility in the Soviet writer's manner of work, as the example of Sholokhov demonstrates. The author of *The Silent Don*, having first given up fiction for correspondence, has now turned to a war novel which will unquestionably be all the greater for his experience at the fronts as a correspondent.

The second fallacy involves a misunderstanding of what the Russians mean by war correspondence. The Soviet reader expects the creative writer to apply his special skills and insights to the job of reporting the war. The external facts he can read in communiques as well as in military and political analyses. What he expects, above all, from a Sholokhov or Alexei Tolstoy, is people. He wants the meaning of the war in human terms. The great drama of his life, the grandeur of Soviet heroism, the abysmal degradation of Hitlerite bestiality, the pity, terror, hate, and hope of the war, its epic sweep and its individual tragedy, its fateful meaning for the life of his nation and of all other peoples—all these the Soviet reader, whether he builds a tank or mans one, wishes to see recorded. The war correspondent is aware of his responsibility as the articulate expression of his people. And to fulfill this responsibility he must command all the resources of truthful and imaginative language that the reader looks for in his plays and novels.

Unless one understands this one can scarcely account for such a book as *The Last Days of Sevastopol*. This is war correspondence; it is at the same time a work of art. It cannot be "dated" by later events any more than Tolstoy's sketches of Sevastopol in 1854 and 1855. Like Tolstoy, Voyetekhov witnessed the heroism of the Crimean stronghold under siege, and like the great novelist he has portrayed this heroism in terms that cut beneath the surface to the permanent truth of the event.

It is interesting to compare the two treatments of Sevastopol. Separated by

NEW MASSES

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

50c a line. Payable in advance. Min. charge \$1.50.
Approx. 7 words to a line. Deadline Fri., 4 p.m.

CHILDREN BOARDED

A FEW CHILDREN FROM 2½-10 to live all year round in quiet, comfortable country home. Progressive playgroup on premises. Excellent public school in village. Understanding affectionate care. Housemother up-to-date nutritionist. Excellent references. Moderate prices. Write NORA ZHITLOWSKY, Croton-on-Hudson, N. Y., or phone Croton 469.

BUNGALOWS FOR RENT

Modern—8 Rooms, all improvements, beautiful surroundings, V Garden, swimming nearby, ON BUS LINE. Unlimited season \$225-\$300. Kirshman, New City, N. Y. Phone New City 2297 or PL. 5-0938 evenings.

FLOYD WILSON FARM

SMALL FARM CAMP for children 5 to 14. Sports, crafts, homelike. \$29.00 for 1 week, \$170.00 for 9 weeks—Woodstock, N. Y. Catalog—Box 144.

SACKS FARM

Unusually beautiful countryside; pine woods, restful; all conveniences; finest A-Jewish cooking. Sports, horseback riding, low rates. Booklet. Saugerties, N. Y. Tel. 590-J.

BARLOW FARM

BARLOW FARM—Sherman, Conn. Delightful vacation. Swimming, tennis, etc. Fine Russian-American cooking. Children accepted. Free booklet.

HOUSE ON HUDSON

WRITER will sell or share large house overlooking Hudson. 2½ acres, garden, woods, suitable Outing Club. 125th St. Ferry. Cliffside 6-1943 R.

PIANO TUNING

PIANO TUNING, Repairing, Reconditioning. Reliable advice on purchases and sales. Member Nat'l Ass'n Piano Tuners, Inc. Ralph J. Appleton, 505 5th Ave., N. Y. City. MU. 7 52-37.

FUR STORAGE

FOR COMPLETE PROTECTION store your furs with us now. Special summer rates on remodeling and repairing. Revitalize your furs by cleaning, glazing or blending. We extend trade-in allowances on your old furs toward new purchases. See Mr. Armand, 145 W. 30th St., N.Y.C. Armand et Soeur. CH. 4-1424.

GYMNASIUM

Get in shape. Reduce—build up—relax. Trial visit \$2.00 includes Swedish massage, handball, vapor baths, individual exercises, posture correction, etc. Men, women, separate days. Open roof gym. GOODWIN'S GYM, 1457 Broadway at 42 St. Wisconsin 7-3250.

INSURANCE

PAUL CROSBIE—Insurance of every kind—whatever your needs — FREQUENT SAVINGS. 799 Broadway. New York City. Tel. GRamercy 7-5980.

MANUSCRIPT TYPING

Manuscripts neatly and efficiently typed. Union rates. Apply Box 1809, New Masses, 104 East 9th St., N.Y.C.

The New Vacation Idea



Meet the people you want to know in the intimate atmosphere of a country estate at Fishkill, New York.

TENNIS, SWIMMING, HANDBALL

LIVELY ENTERTAINMENT, LECTURES, COURSES AND RECITALS

\$35 PER WEEK. OPENS JUNE 27
Writers workshop weeks of July 11th & Aug. 1st
Additional \$10 tuition fee.

Write or phone for illustrated folder, reservations

SCHOOL FOR DEMOCRACY

13 Astor Place, New York GRamercy 7-4086

almost a century, they have much in common. What impresses both writers most is, in Tolstoy's words, "a joyous conviction of the strength of the Russian people." This conviction is gained, said Tolstoy, "not by looking at all those traverses, breastworks, cunningly interlaced trenches, mines, cannon, one after another, of which you could make nothing; but from the eyes, words, and actions—in short from seeing what is called the 'spirit'—of the defenders of Sevastopol." In Voyetekhov the traverses and breastworks have become underground fortresses and factories. Dive bombers and tanks appear on the scene. But the story is still of the people and "happenings which surpassed in valour, bravery, and endurance anything my imagination could picture."

But there is an interesting contrast here too. Tolstoy's Sevastopol defenders were soldiers; the civilians showed no particular enthusiasm or determination; the townspeople were "ordinary people quietly occupied with ordinary activities." In Voyetekhov's Sevastopol all the people are defenders, the old and the very young, the women as well as the men. In the long dark tunnels one sees a cook and a typesetter working side by side, the one peeling potatoes, the other composing the front of a newspaper. Painters are finishing sketches made at the front. The machines work twenty-four hours a day turning out the mines. "Before me was an elderly woman," the author reports, "turning the handle of a stamping machine. She had no right hand. It had been torn away by a bomb blast. After leaving the hospital she refused to go from Sevastopol to her native town. She was the best Stakhonovite of the works and all were proud of her. Beside her was a beautiful young woman with a nursing baby at her breast. . . . At night the mother took him into the fresh air for a while. He got excited and cried. 'It doesn't matter, dearest,' his mother soothed him. 'Lie still. They will come and fly away again'—talking of bombers as if they were birds."

TOLSTOY had written of Sevastopol: "You will see ghastly sights that will rend your soul; you will see war not with its orderly beautiful and brilliant ranks, its music and beating drums, its waving banners, its generals on prancing horses, but war in its real aspect of blood, suffering, and death. . . ." Voyetekhov has an equally stern conception of war realism. "Especially since Sevastopol," he writes, "I do not believe people who say you can get used to war. Yes, you can become passive or indifferent through fatigue in a single engagement, but to a daily round of battle, never. The men before me now were not braggartly poseurs briskly mouthing loud slogans and oaths, but just the opposite. These men, who were stirred to the depths of their souls by the urgency of the situation and were growing

pale and tight-lipped, had their eyes fixed on the enemy as keenly and anxiously as in their first experience of battle." In Voyetekhov, as in his Soviet colleagues, one feels a great pride in military achievement, but at the same time a hatred for war as such; he is firm, toughminded, eager to get at the enemy, at the same time that he expresses a very gentle, warm, compassionate sympathy for human beings who suffer the horrors of battle. And it is in the subtle interplay of these factors that much of the drama resides. In the most profound sense this is *anti-war* literature, just as our fight against the Axis, being a fight for the survival of free and peaceful nations, is a fight *against* war.

THIS suggests a final contrast between Tolstoy and the Soviet writer. In his second and third sketches of Sevastopol, it will be recalled, Tolstoy became increasingly disillusioned with the war, even if not with the valor of Sevastopol's defenders. The czarist censor cut out many passages in which Tolstoy criticized the undemocratic features of military organization at the front. "Discipline and the subordination that goes with it," he wrote, "like every legalized relationship, is pleasant only when it rests on a mutual consciousness of its necessity, and of a superiority in experience, military worth, or simply on a moral superiority recognized by the inferior. But if the discipline is founded on arbitrary or pecuniary considerations, as is often the case among us, it always turns into pretentiousness on the one side and into suppressed envy and irritation on the other, and instead of a useful influence uniting the mass into one whole it produces a quite opposite effect." Tolstoy is conscious of the vanity and ambition of commanders whose rank was based on wealth or social position rather than ability. A dimension of doubt appears in his sketches.

The Soviet defenders of Sevastopol defend not merely a city but a way of life that has given each of them dignity because it has measured each of them in terms of his personal worth. These people that Voyetekhov so glowingly portrays understand; they know "that their Ural and Siberian lands without the Caucasus and Crimea were too narrow for the Russian people and all who with them were building socialism." The enemy is not as in Tolstoy's Sevastopol sketches a fairly vague entity, simply another military power; it is a Hitlerite army whose hateful meaning has been burned into the consciousness of the defenders. It is such consciousness that gives rise to one of the most inspiring statements in world literature. It is the letter which a second rank captain asked Voyetekhov to mail to his wife in Moscow. The Crimean fortress could no longer be held; the last survivors were being evacuated:

"Yes, Anka [the letter reads in part], we shall not see each other. An hour ago I was called and told: 'We trust you to die

here. You will do this job and you will not get back alive. We are not trying to frighten you, but don't deceive yourself. The wounded are being withdrawn to Chersonese. Cover them—until the last man, the last yard, the last breath. Some one of us will be with you. Whom we shall decide now. You may refuse. We shall not shoot you. You have behaved here very well.' I was deadly silent. I wanted to refuse, but I could not. Suddenly, just as before the attack, my thoughts became disturbed, and for the first time I began to consider what was going to happen to me, and how. But, however hard I thought, it did not help me to find the place and hour of my death or to recognize the hand of my executioner. That meant I was healthy. That was a wise man who said: 'ignorance is the best drug before dying.' But I know, and I am going. I am not a hero and you know it, Anka. Death never stood very close to me before. I was promised life. Why and for what reason am I doing this? And while waiting for my regiment and looking into my seething mind I find the answer. Here in this war the most splendid deeds are done not only because men are great in spirit but because they have learned to obey automatically, and that is a great force. From discipline to heroism is only one step. And if we talk about our idea of a fighter, first of all we have got to consider him as one who fulfills orders. One who understands that he is being true to the principles of our country. Damn it, we can't even die without philosophizing. When I said: 'Yes, General,' this former officer in the czar's army came to me and, patting me on the shoulder, said: 'We didn't order you because in these times it is important that a man should order himself. There are Germans who go to their death as consciously as you. There are! And they do it quite well, sometimes better than we. But that is not heroism, just gangster pride. Your deed is heroic because you will die in the defense of your soil while they die trying to conquer territory. I congratulate you. I know that you will do this job. Take my medal. Old medals suit youngsters. . . .'

" . . . and when a new Sevastopol is built, come here, and somewhere on Chersonese, somewhere near the sea, plant poppies. They grow here very well. And that will be my grave. It may be that you will make a mistake. Maybe it won't be me but another who lies there. It doesn't matter. Someone else will think of her own and plant flowers above me. Nobody will be left out, for we shall lie close and there will be no space to spare where we lie.

"Farewell. I am glad they warned me about death. Otherwise I would not have talked to you—my joy, my blood, my life—I shall gnaw their throats for you. I love you. I love you till the last drop of my blood. . . ."

There is nothing one can add to that—it says everything.

Provocative Study

THE THEORY OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, by Paul M. Sweezy. Oxford University Press. \$4.

"THE THEORY OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT" is a contribution to the English language literature dealing with Marxian political economy. Professor Sweezy seeks to present in concise form Marx' historic analysis of value and surplus value, his original categories of constant and variable capital, his concept of the organic composition of capital, as well as various other elements of Marxian economic theory. The book also discusses the views of such men as Eduard Bernstein, Tugan-Baranowsky, Conrad Schmidt, Henryk Grossman, and Louis B. Boudin. And in the last third of his volume Professor Sweezy deals with questions related to the period of imperialism, such as the nature and role of the state, the development of monopoly capital, militarism, fascism, racism, etc. There are also a couple of appendices, one of which consists of an interesting extract from Hilferding's *Finance Capital* entitled "The Ideology of Imperialism."

If you are interested in the easy reading of a popular novel, please don't bother. Besides the ordinary difficulties associated with highly theoretical treatment of politico-economic problems, we have the added difficulty of algebraic formulae and equations, and these not always of the simplest kind. Your mathematical difficulties will be limited most likely to Chapter VII and the appendix to Chapter X, and if you cannot follow the mathematics through, you can still get the reasoning.

Sweezy's treatment of the qualitative nature of value as a social relationship, manifesting itself as something entirely different, as a relationship between things (commodities), is on the whole excellent. He calls attention to the historical character of Marxist thought and explains Marx' method of abstractions and successive approximation. Paradoxical as it may seem, this abstraction is in a way the most concrete sort of reasoning, and without it Marx could never have reached such pinnacles of scientific achievement and given us a trustworthy insight into the laws of motion of capitalist society.

BUT when it comes to the question of periodic crises, I have a bone to pick with our author. It all revolves around his insistence on rehabilitating an "underconsumption theory" and wrapping it in the cloak of Marxism. It is all very well to translate, if possible, the scientific concepts of political economy into the accustomed jargon of bourgeois economics or the practical terminology of the ordinary business world. But beyond a certain point the limitations of the term employed by the business world and its "economics" for business purposes must inevitably warp our thinking.

SWIMMING • TENNIS • BADMINTON • HANDBALL • BOATING • ARCHERY • SEAYATZ RECORDINGS • BASEBALL • RIDING • FISHING

Having wonderful time

An informal adult camp offering every facility for your entertainment. **EASY TO GET TO.**

Send for free booklet
N. Y. Office: 33 W. 42 ST., PENN. 6-3063

ALLABEN ACRES ALLABEN, N.Y.

TEDDY HOLMES' BAND • ALLABEN PLAYERS

Camp CHI-WAN-DA

FOR BOYS and GIRLS
ULSTER PARK, N.Y.

On the Mountain Lake
Esopus Overlooking the
Beautiful Hudson River

Modern cultural environment for your children. All cabins with latest improvements. All activities, reasonable rates. For full information, write or call for booklet.
JACOB DOROSHKIN, Director
545 Fifth Ave. MU 2-4217—DI 2-4745—DI 6-3849

"We must be confident in our abilities, and bold and tireless in our work among the masses. We must constantly think and discuss with them, transmitting to them the political line of our party which brings us into step with the great march of history."

—EARL BROWDER.

THE COMMUNIST

JUNE CONTENTS

- The Strike Wave Conspiracy
Earl Browder
- The Victory in Africa
Eugene Dennis
- Lessons of the Party Building Campaign and the Next Tasks
John Williamson
- The Crisis in Fascist Upper Circles in Italy
M. Ercoli
- The Strike of the Coal Miners
William Z. Foster
- The Provocation of the Polish Reactionaries
Hans Berger
- A Year of American Slav Unity
A. Landy
- On the 73rd Anniversary of Lenin's Birth
L. Yudin
- "One World"—Wendell Willkie's Challenging Book
Joseph North
- Single copies 20¢
Subscription \$2.00

At All Workers and Progressive Bookshops and Literature Centers

Workers Library Publishers

P. O. Box 148, Station D (832 Broadway),
New York N. Y.