The Great Day: A Fantasy Play in Five Acts, Six Scenes by Vladimir Kirshon

Christopher Lee Philips
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities_etds

Part of the Playwriting Commons, Russian Literature Commons, and the Translation Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities_etds/114

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for the Humanities at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for the Humanities Theses by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.
THE GREAT DAY

A fantasy play in five acts, six scenes

by

Vladimir Kirshon

Introduction and English Version

by

Christopher Lee Philips

B.A. May 1982, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HUMANITIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

December, 1984

Approved by:

[Signature]

Dr. Charles O. Burgess (Director)

[Signature]

Patrick Rollins
ABSTRACT

THE GREAT DAY

A fantasy play in five acts, six scenes
by
Vladimir Kirshon

Introduction and English Version
by
Christopher Lee Philips

Christopher Lee Philips
Old Dominion University, 1984
Director: Dr. Charles O. Burgess

Vladimir Kirshon was a proletarian playwright of the Soviet Union who died in the Great Purge. The thesis presents an English version of the author's last play, The Great Day, which is preceded by an introduction which places Kirshon and his plays in their proper historical context. The introduction details Kirshon's political and artistic background and his politico-literary position as a playwright. The introduction and analysis of the play produce an understanding of Vladimir Kirshon as a Soviet proletarian playwright and an understanding of the spirit in which The Great Day was written.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. KIRSHON'S YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. KIRSHON'S CAREER AS PLAYWRIGHT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. AN ANALYSIS OF &quot;THE GREAT DAY&quot;</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE GREAT DAY</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. SCENE ONE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SCENE TWO</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SCENE THREE</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. SCENE FOUR</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. SCENE FIVE</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. SCENE SIX</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The last dramatic work of the proletarian playwright Vladimir Kirshon is a play entitled The Great Day. It was produced in Moscow, in 1937, shortly before Kirshon was swept up in the Great Purge. The play is typical of Kirshon's political and artistic values. His political values arose from his youthful participation in the Revolution and his subsequent membership in the Communist Party. As a playwright, Kirshon succeeded in writing plays which were ideologically useful to the Party in theme, plot, and content. Artistically, Kirshon succeeded in creating realistic characters which gave a human veneer to his political, propagandistic plays.

Kirshon's Youth and Development

Vladimir Kirshon was born in Nalchik, on the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountain range, on August 19, 1902. Kirshon's parents were members of the "revolutionary intelligentsia" of the period. He fought with the Eleventh Red Army as a youth of fifteen. At sixteen he joined the Communist Youth League. The Komsomol was a proving ground for Kirshon in becoming a member of the Communist Party. In the Komsomol, Kirshon received his Marxist political indoctrination. Komsomol members considered themselves to be the future leaders of the Party and prepared themselves accordingly (Harper 42-43).

The Komsomol was under the control of the Communist Party and
its activities served Party needs. Komsomol members were especially useful in raising the political consciousness of workers and peasants at the regional level. Samuel Northrup Harper describes the activities of the Komsomol as follows:

With the spread of the Komsomol to the rural districts, the reading room became its basis of organization; in fact, the Komsomol was assigned the special task of assisting and directing in the work of this center of political education. Wall newspapers, Lenin Corners and various types of circles, particularly dramatic circles, grew up around and in this center. (275)

Kirshon probably participated in such dramatic circles within the Komsomol. The general emphasis of Komsomol activities during and immediately after the Civil War was on agitation and propaganda. Among its other activities, the Komsomol's dramatic presentations were often referred to as "agitprop" because of their crude dramatic quality and blatant political themes. The acute awareness of political issues in Kirshon's later plays further suggests his activities in dramatic circles of the Komsomol.

Two examples of "agitprop" by Komsomol members were the "living newspaper" and the "animated poster." America had its own version of the "living newspaper" during the Great Depression. It was basically an acting out of current events as reported in the newspaper. Nikolai Gorchakov reports that the Soviets had their own version as early as the Civil War period in 1918.

Originally, the "living newspaper" was presented in the clubs of Red Army men, factory workers or villagers. . . . The "living newspaper" was compounded from the operetta, choral singing, folk-rhymes, songs, dancing, gymnastics, acrobatics, declamations and pantomimes. (145)

The "animated poster" was a less dramatic presentation but of equal political and ideological value. Gorchakov describes it as follows:
An enormous political poster was placed on the stage in which holes had been cut for the arms and heads of living performers. These people would recite their speeches, dialogues, or verse in this position and accompany them with gestures. (143)

Kirshon was a Komsomol member from 1918 until 1920. During that time his political orientation developed. He proved to be energetic, loyal to the Party, and capable. These aspects of his youth facilitated his entrance into the Communist Party.

In 1920 Kirshon was demobilized from the Red Army. He moved to Moscow, entered Sverdlov Communist University and joined the Communist Party. Sverdlov was under the administration of the Commissariat of Enlightenment: Narkompros. Its chief administrator was Anatole Lunacharsky. Kirshon studied under Lunacharsky, who was an "old bolshevik" and a playwright himself. Lunacharsky was a frequent lecturer at Sverdlov.

Although Sverdlov was a Communist university, Kirshon and other Communist students constituted a minority of the student body. In 1920 the universities were still full of "bourgeois" professors and students who were not completely in favor of the Soviet Government (Fitzpatrick, Ed. and Soc. Mob. 90-92). Sheila Fitzpatrick observes that "the Communist student had both to acquire an education and retain his proletarian Communist identity--to learn from the "bourgeois" professors without being influenced by them" (92). Kirshon met this challenge successfully. His first published writing appeared during his studies at Sverdlov from 1920 until 1923. He wrote novelettes, songs, poems, and scenarios. His song "Carmagnola," based on the story of an Italian adventurer, was sung in the proletarian May Day celebrations and was popular in local proletarian clubs (Gorbunova 20). Kirshon wrote the scenario for the first Soviet adventure film,
Struggle for the Ultimatum, which was produced in 1923 (Gorbunova 8). Kirshon's writing on proletarian themes proved him to be a literary proponent of the Party and of proletarian culture.

After graduating from Sverdlov in 1923, Kirshon became a teacher in a Party school in Rostov-on-Don, where he followed a curriculum prescribed by the Communist Party. Students were provided with a basic education and then thoroughly instructed in Marxism, Party history, and Soviet government (Harper 285). The Party school was intended to replace the Gymnasium of old Russia, just as the Communist universities were intended eventually to replace "bourgeois" scholarship.

During his two years as a teacher, Kirshon organized the Rostov Association of Proletarian Writers (Gorbunova 8). Similar groups had developed in Moscow, Leningrad, and in other regions. Kirshon's group was highly productive. It published its own regional periodical entitled Lava. Under Kirshon's editorial and organizational direction, the Rostov writers were among the best known in the growing proletarian literary movement. Robert Maguire suggests that "they had made Rostov-on-Don practically a third literary capital" (374).

From 1923 until 1925, Kirshon continued to write and publish in Rostov. He wrote articles and literary criticism for Lava and for the Periodical Young Guard. The latter was a publication representing the Komsomol. It was in this periodical that Kirshon's first full length play, The United Front, appeared. Kirshon's least known dramatic work, it depicts the activities of Komsomol members during the Civil War. When Lenin died, in 1924, Kirshon wrote a lengthy article in memory of the bolshevik leader which appeared in Lava.
The following year, he traveled to Moscow to represent the Rostov proletarian writers at the first general conference of proletarian writers.

The object of the first proletarian writers' conference, held in Moscow in 1925, was to organize the many proletarian writers' groups under one administrative body. The participants generally recognized that the existence of a proletarian state demanded the existence of proletarian culture. This view originated with the Proletarian Cultural Organization, founded in 1917. Prolecult was originally an autonomous body. Its members included Marxist theoreticians, writers, and Party members, who set to the task of defining proletarian culture. Various writers' groups emerged after the Revolution and during the early twenties. Groups like the Smithy and October were among the first to write and publish poetry and prose dedicated to proletarian themes. The proletarian writers' conference succeeded in uniting a majority of the writers' groups and established a platform for proletarian culture.

An important characteristic of the platform was to draw a clear distinction between proletarian and non-proletarian writers. Proletarian writers considered bourgeois writers to be alien to proletarian culture. They referred to bourgeois writers as "fellow travelers." The term originated with Leon Trotsky, who applied it to those individuals who were sympathetic to the Revolution but had not joined the Party. An essential demand of the platform was that proletarian writers be given hegemony over "fellow travelers." The platform was adopted with the establishment of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers: VAPP. In 1925, VAPP appealed to Party arbitration as it struggled to become the literary vanguard of
proletarian culture.

When VAPP was formed, Kirshon was invited to join its adminis-
trative body as a secretary of the theatre section. Kirshon's
position was largely an administrative one, with editorial duties in
the VAPP publication, On Guard. As a Party member and VAPP admini-
strator, Kirshon was an influential figure in Soviet politico-litetary
matters.

Among the issues considered by the Fourteenth Party Congress
in April 1925, was the question of Party policy in regard to litera-
ture. Marxism offered no specific doctrine in literature. Lenin had
written specifically on the organizational use of the Party press.
However, he had avoided defining the literature of the proletariat.
Trotsky, in a lengthy series of articles, had insisted that proletarian
culture was impossible in the new Soviet state. But Trotsky had been
expelled from the Party in January 1925. The VAPP leadership turned
to the Party majority, under Joseph Stalin, to favor them in the
sphere of literature.

Party intervention was basically a compromise between VAPP and
the remaining writers' groups. While the Party favored the proletarian
writers, it did not abandon the "fellow travelers." The following
excerpts from the resolution of the Fourteenth Party Congress indicate
the direction of literary matters as seen by the Party. In regard to
the proletarian writers, it concluded that "proletarian writers do not
yet have hegemony, and the party must help these writers to earn their
historic right to this hegemony" (McNeal, vol. 2:249). As for the
"fellow travelers," "here the overall directive must be to develop a
tactful and solicitous approach to them, i.e., the sort of approach
which would ensure all the conditions for their transfer, as rapidly as possible, to the side of communist ideology" (Ibid.).

Some members of the VAPP leadership were disenchanted with the Party decision. Others, including Kirshon and the critic Leopold Averbakh, accepted the Party decision and constituted the VAPP majority. During the next six years the VAPP leadership attempted to create a truly proletarian literature, endeavored to win "fellow travelers" into their ranks and strongly criticized "bourgeois" writers.

Kirshon's Career as Playwright

In discussing Kirshon's major plays, it is important to draw a distinction between the two basic types of theatres that existed in the Soviet Union in 1925. In general terms, these two types of theatres may be described as state theatres and revolutionary theatres.

The state theatres were those whose founders were the paragons of Russian theatre. The Moscow Art Theatre was the most exemplary state theatre. Its productions under Stanislavsky were the classics of the Russian stage. Innovators such as Nemirovich-Danchenko and Vakhtangov laid the foundations for other state theatres. These theatres were heavily subsidized by the Soviet government in the first years after the Revolution. However, they resisted bolshevik interference in repertoire until 1927, when they were pressured to produce ideologically useful plays. The state theatres were made up of professional actors, directors, and craftsmen. They enjoyed substantial artistic freedom during the New Economic Policy (1923-1927). This freedom declined rapidly with the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928.
Many revolutionary theatres developed during the New Economic Policy and these theatres flourished during the first Five-Year Plan. Their origins were not professional and artistic, but political and propagandistic. The theatres were often churches or large facilities, recently acquired or built by the government, which produced plays by Red Army men, proletarian playwrights, and writers of ideologically useful plays. Actors appearing in such plays were often factory workers, Red Army soldiers, and Komsomol members. Examples of these theatres were the Theatre of Working Young People (TRAM), the Moscow District of Trade Unions Theatre (MGSPS), and the Moscow Proletarian Theatre (MPT). The roots of these theatres were clearly the dramatic circles of the Komsomol with its "Lenin Corners" and "living newspapers."

Kirshon's first major play, Konstantin Terekhin, premiered at the MPT in 1926. It was written in collaboration with A. Ouspensky, a "fellow traveler" who had achieved some prominence before the Revolution. The play concerns a hero of the Civil War whose proletarian values are lost to the bourgeois influences present in the Soviet Union during the NEP (Dana 77). Konstantin Terekhin was one of the first Soviet plays to be produced in America. Harold Clurman, play reader for the Theatre Guild in 1929, chose the play for production in New York. The English version was written by Virginia and Frank Vernon. Production by the Theatre Guild included Franchot Tone, Gale Sondergard, and Lee Strasberg among the cast. Clurman recalls that Konstantin Terekhin, produced under the title Red Rust, "had an engaging quality of youthfulness" (25). The generally positive reviews in the New York Times suggested that Red Rust was written "by
a couple of fellows who were not exactly satisfied with Russia's experiment" ('Red Rust' Is Given By Theatre Guild).

Kirshon's dissatisfaction with "Russia's experiment" was specifically the "bourgeois" tendencies of the NEP. Many proletarian writers considered it to be a period of ideological malaise. During the NEP, the term NEP men came into use as a pejorative describing the "bourgeois" socio-economic opportunists of the period. Kirshon's Konstantin Terekhin was one of several proletarian plays of the period to point out the ideological ground being lost in the NEP.

Konstantin Terekhin was an innovative proletarian play because it was written in the style of "psychological realism." While the plot was ideologically useful in its negative view of the NEP, Kirshon had chosen to explore the personal feelings of thoroughly constructed characters. This was a departure from the style of "romantic monumentalism" which had been prevalent among proletarian writers since the Revolution. According to Harold Segel,

exponents of the monumental school, particularly the playwrights Vsevelod Vishnevsky and Nikolai Pogodin, argued that the revolutionary struggle to create a socialist Russia was so monumental in nature that it could be fittingly expressed only in dramatic terms that effectively conveyed the romance, pathos, heroism, and historical dynamism of the Revolution. (45)

The style of "romantic monumentalism" conveyed numerical strength and objectivity. Vishnevsky criticized Kirshon for the subjectivity present in his characters. Kirshon preferred "psychological realism" to "romantic monumentalism" in part because he considered the latter to be longer, more rehearsed versions of "agitprop." The rivalry which eventually developed between the two playwrights lasted throughout Kirshon's career.
Kirshon's second major play is clear evidence of his ability to adapt contemporary Party goals to the stage. At the Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, Stalin outlined the first Five-Year Plan and its tasks of industrialization and collectivization. Kirshon's play, The Rails are Humming, took up the theme of industrialization. The play premiered on March 14, 1928, at the MGSPS. It depicts the personal efforts of a young communist to increase productivity in a locomotive repair shop (Dana 77). The central theme is a most intentional description of the task of industrialization. This was most evident in the Leningrad State Academic Theatre production of March 31, 1928. In the final scene, the action centered around an advancing locomotive bearing a banner reading "Industrialization is the Route to Socialism" amidst a group of locomotive repair shop workers.

The Rails are Humming received positive reviews from literary journals as well as the Party organ, Pravda. In 1928, VAPP had changed its name to RAPP, dropping "All-Russian" for simply "Russian" Association of Proletarian Writers. The RAPP journal On Literary Guard praised Kirshon's play. One critic wrote that "Such a comprehension of the 'hero' of socialist motivation in the struggle, is the essence of monumentalist art and dramaturgy" (Beskin 48). The journal Contemporary Theatre called The Rails are Humming "a complex play . . . perhaps one of most agitational and sensational plays of the season" (Sobolev 264). Pravda reviewed the season at MGSPS in an article on March 21, 1929. The critic referred to The Rails are Humming as "one of the first plays on the stage to show so completely and so successfully the task of economic construction and all its enthusiasm" (Amchislavskaya 289). In an article in Contemporary
Theatre, Kirshon explained the reason for the scenario of *The Rails are Humming*. He wrote, "I chose the locomotive factory to give the audience the feeling for the gigantic task of industrialization" (0 Pese 14).

By the end of 1928, Kirshon had become one of the leading playwrights of RAPP, which was now the most powerful and influential writers' group in the Soviet Union. RAPP leadership consisted of Averbakh, as primary administrator, the playwrights Kirshon and Afinogenev and the novelists Libedensky and Fadeyev among others. During the following two years, RAPP set itself up as a literary dictatorship. Its leaders harshly condemned "fellow travelers."

RAPP applied Marx's theory of dialectical materialism to literature. "Diamat," the RAPP literary principle, sought to reveal the contradictory elements in life in a literary framework. Within this framework, RAPP adopted the slogan, "for the living man." Edward J. Brown describes the meaning of that slogan:

They maintained that the "living man" should not be treated superficially, but that the proletarian writer must probe his psychology, lay bare the conflicts and contradictions which take place in him, and understand these contradictions as part of a "dialectical" process of development. (78)

The RAPP leaders owed this philosophy of literature to the aesthetic values of earlier Marxist theoreticians such as Plekhanov and Voronsky (Brown 70). The latter described art as a "cognition of life." That was the general basis for the "living man" slogan. As RAPP became more narrow and dogmatic, its critics grew in number.

Kirshon's third major play suffered the criticism which was developing against RAPP literary theories. "The City of Winds" was a somewhat daring attempt on Kirshon's part to write a Soviet tragedy.
It depicts the fate of twenty-six communists of the Baku Commune of 1918. Kirshon wrote an ideologically useful historical interpretation of the event. However, his psychological examination of the characters was criticized for lowering the historic episode to the level of melodrama. The review in *Contemporary Theatre* criticized Kirshon's "psychological realism" as well as RAPP's "living man" literary slogan when it stated that the play "suffers from many contradictions" (Alpers 18). Another critic was more favorable. Former Pravda drama critic P. A. Markov wrote in a memoir that *The City of Winds* "raises the episode of the Baku commissars to romantic, philosophic heights, and enables the audience to understand and appraise the heroism of those days in a new way" (150). Perhaps the most notable feature of *The City of Winds* was that it provided the theme for one of the first attempts at Soviet opera. Leo Knipper, music director for the Moscow Art Theatre during the NEP, wrote the opera *North Wind* to Kirshon's text. The opera was well received. The play, however, closed after a short run at the MGPU in the spring of 1929.

Criticism of RAPP grew steadily in 1930. RAPP writers came under attack for their "literary backwardness" and RAPP leaders for their dictatorial dogmatism in literary matters. Most evident was the failure of RAPP to produce writers of proletarian origins. Kirshon himself was a product of the "revolutionary intelligentsia" as were many RAPP writers and administrators. A strong group of RAPP critics came from within the organization itself. The group called itself Litfront. One of its leaders was the monumentalist playwright Vishnevsky, Kirshon's rival. Kirshon personally defended
RAPP against Litfront criticism at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930. Although Kirshon pointed out many literary achievements in RAPP, he was unable to defend its excessiveness, its exclusiveness, and its failure to produce truly proletarian writers. Kirshon attempted to solve the latter problem by launching an appeal for "shock workers" in literature. The intent was to enlist as many individuals of proletarian origins as possible into RAPP and to turn them into writers. Owing to the varying abilities of these newly inducted "proletarian" writers, the "shock worker" movement proved unsuccessful. Factory workers failed to produce quality writing, with or without ideological content, due to their lack of rudimentary writing skills.

Amidst the controversy over RAPP, Kirshon wrote Bread, probably his best known play. Bread premiered on January 25, 1931, at the Moscow Art Theatre. The play was written with a mixture of styles. Bread is true to the monumentalist genre in depicting the elimination of the kulaks as a class. Their elimination was the object of Stalin's hard line policy of collectivization. The play is also true to the psychological realist genre in that its characters are recognizable as thinking, feeling human beings rather than simply phenomena of the class struggle.

Although Kirshon's depiction of collectivization was ideologically useful, his characterizations caused some ideological concerns. The central figure of the play is Mikhailov, the Party man who represents the Party line on collectivization. His foil is Rayevsky, who represents the Party deviantalist. Olga, Mikhailov's wife, is attracted to Rayevsky because of his "bourgeois" tastes and subjective attitude. Throughout the ensuing love triangle, Mikhailov
remains a clear headed, dogmatic Bolshevik. Ideological concern arose from the observation that Mikhailov appeared to be a strong, but less sympathetic character than Rayevsky. Similar concern arose over the characterizations of the kulaks. The kulaks were considered to be class enemies. But Kirshon included the view of the class enemy in the play. During a scene in which the village is pressed for more grain, the kulak Kotikhin exclaims:

But why the peasants, if I may be allowed to ask? Why not reduce the salaries of the workers and the government employees? Why should the factory workers get new houses, clubs and theatres, and the peasant keep only his bitter fate? (Lyons, Six Soviet Plays 260)

The resolution of the play was ideologically consistent. The Party emerged victorious against the kulaks. In creating psychological realist characterizations, Kirshon showed both sides of the issue. And although Kirshon's in depth treatment of the kulaks and the deviantalist caused some ideological concern, the greater ideological value of the play as a whole made it a great success.

Critics had varying reactions to Bread. According to Gorchakov, the "Soviet press published a good number of articles in praise of Bread, and it was declared almost the loftiest attainment of the entire proletarian dreams" (288). One such article by one of Kirshon's fellow playwrights in RAPP stated that Bread had reached "the Shakespearean perception of reality" (Afinogenev 7). Two western visitors to the Soviet Union had less platitudinous comments about the play and the playwright. W. H. Chamberlin suggested that "the characters should really have worn large distinctive labels: 'General Party Line,' 'Left Opportunist,' 'Right Opportunist,' 'Class-Conscious Poor Peasant,' 'Kulak'" (300). Writer Maurice
Hindus met Kirshon and considered him "an unprepossessing man of little culture . . . with no feeling for the reality of character, but with an excellent knowledge of the stage and of his political catechism" (267).

By the middle of 1931, Kirshon's career as a playwright was secure, but the future of RAPP was uncertain. The memoirs of Ilya Ehrenburg testify to the disbelief Kirshon experienced when the decision was made to dissolve RAPP. Kirshon and Afinogenev were in Paris in the spring of 1931. Ehrenburg acquainted them with the city. The three were sitting in a park together when Ehrenburg opened a newspaper and read aloud that RAPP was soon going to be dissolved. "Kirshon jumped up: 'It can't be! It's a lie!'" (212). Kirshon returned to Moscow on the next train. Bread was still running, but RAPP was quickly becoming history.

The resolution of April 23, 1932, by the Party's Central Committee was an indictment of RAPP which brought forth as evidence the criticisms of RAPP over the previous few years. As to the actions of RAPP and the criticism against it, the resolution read:

This circumstance gives rise to the danger that these organizations, instead of being instruments for maximum mobilization of Soviet writers and artists around the task of socialist construction, will be transformed into instruments of clubbish excessiveness, of isolation from the political tasks of the present day and from the considerable groups of writers and artists who are sympathetic to socialist construction. . . . Hence the need for an appropriate reconstruction of literary and artistic organizations and for an expansion of the basis of their work. (McNeal, vol. 3:115-16)

RAPP was dissolved for its dictatorial dogmatism in literary matters, its alienation of many talented writers such as the "fellow travelers," and its failure to produce writers of proletarian origins.
At first the RAPP leadership appeared to ignore the Party decision. Pravda printed excerpts of the resolution immediately after the decision was made formal. However, no such statements appeared in the RAPP journal, On Literary Guard. "When the editors were taxed with the omission, they offered the excuse that the issue had been on the presses and could not be withdrawn" (Brown 202). The RAPP leadership was slow to admit that their literary organization had been dissolved. Kirshon and others explained that this was "due to their not having understood the meaning of the resolution, and, in part, to the fact that the RAPP leaders felt an injustice had been done them" (Brown 279). Other RAPP leaders were less confused. The novelist Alexander Fadeyev was "one of the first to break with Averbakh after the dissolution of RAPP ... and praise was awarded him at that time for being the first of the former RAPP leaders to break the solid front which they had formed to defend their own interests" (Brown 285). Shortly after the dissolution, Averbakh was virtually exiled from Moscow.

Although the dissolution of RAPP was a definite turning point in Kirshon's career, it did not cause him to lose favor with the Party. In 1932 he joined Maxim Gorky, Fadeyev, and others in writing a history of the Civil War under the auspices of the Party. The writing of the history of the Civil War was a politically complex issue. Kirshon had made a career of writing ideologically useful plays. He could be depended upon to write with ideological consistency, which the Party demanded in the history of the Civil War. In this respect, Kirshon's writing career was that of a "Party hack."

Within the politico-literary constraints of the times, Kirshon
endeavored to create sensitive human characters in his ideologically useful plays. Although ideology permeated his plays throughout his career, he was constantly maturing as a playwright. He abandoned "agitprop" when he left the Komsomol. In writing ideologically useful plays with well developed characters, Kirshon served two masters. He remained loyal to his political convictions and to his dramatic artistry as a playwright.

While contributing to the history of the Civil War, Kirshon became closely associated with Maxim Gorky, who became Kirshon's mentor in the following years of his writing career. Before the production of Kirshon's next major play, The Trial, he sent the manuscript to Gorky for his comments (Amchislavskaya 289). Gorky returned the manuscript with notes pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of Kirshon's characterizations (Ibid.).

The Trial was set in Germany and depicted the winning over of a German Social Democrat to the side of the Communists (Dana 77). A deeply psychological drama, the play had an insignificant run in Moscow and Leningrad in 1933.

The Party resolution of April 1932, calling for the reorganization of writers' groups, paved the way for the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers. The Union developed during the two years following the dissolution of RAPP and was formalized at the First Union of Soviet Writers' Conference in 1934. Andrei Zhdanov delivered the most essential address. Zhdanov's speech outlined Socialist Realism, the "basic method" of all Soviet writers and artists.

Socialist Realism, the basic method employed by Soviet artistic literature and criticism, demands from the writer, an authentic, historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. (Hosking 3)
In establishing the Union of Soviet Writers and the "basic method" of Socialist Realism, the Party exerted complete control in all literary and artistic matters. Unlike the RAPP "Diamat" theory, Socialist Realism did not define a literary style, but left interpretation more open (Hosking 3). However, the loose definition of Socialist Realism and the organizational structure of the Union of Soviet Writers made Party censors the final judges of all literary and artistic expression in the Soviet Union.

Kirshon made the transition from RAPP to the Union of Soviet Writers gracefully and was quick to jump on the socialist realist bandwagon. In 1933, the year before the formal introduction of Socialist Realism, Kirshon wrote:

The bourgeois realist, like the bourgeois philosopher, studies the world but does not change it. . . . Socialist Realism is the method of the proletariat; the class which fearlessly looks ahead. Because it is to this class that not only the present, but the future belongs. (Pishite Pravdu 25)

In 1934, at the First Union of Soviet Writers' Conference, Kirshon spoke at length about the dramatist and Socialist Realism. He was one of a number of playwrights who sat on the presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers. Kirshon assisted his friend and former RAPP colleague Averbakh in securing a position in the writers' union (Brown 228-29). Averbakh had other connections which also promoted his position. His sister had married Genrikh Yagoda, who was appointed as the head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) in 1934. Kirshon was probably closely associated with Averbakh and Yagoda throughout the remainder of his career.

Toward the end of 1934, Kirshon scored perhaps his greatest success as a playwright. Kirshon's new play, The Miraculous Alloy,
won the highest award in a national playwrighting contest (Lyons, Introduction 228). The American literary historian Marc Slonim calls the play "an attempt to reflect reality with daring sincerity" (284). The Miraculous Alloy dealt with the endeavors of a group of young students to find a strong new metal for building airplanes (Dana 78). It was produced in state and revolutionary theatres (a distinction rapidly diminishing in 1934) throughout Moscow and Leningrad and was Kirshon's most popular play. It was produced with a musical score by Leo Knipper. Although socialist construction was the underlying theme, it was primarily a light, youthful comedy.

The following year, Kirshon was among the Soviet delegation to the International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture (Conquest 400). Attending the Paris conference of June 1935, was evidence of Kirshon's prominence in the Union of Soviet Writers. During the conference, Kirshon was exposed to the international tensions of the 1930s. Germany was rearming. There was revolution in Spain and over the next two years Germany and the Soviet Union tested their aircraft against each other with Spanish surrogates (Boyd 88-90). International tensions and the development of the Soviet Air Force provided the impetus for Kirshon's next and last dramatic work.

Kirshon's play, The Great Day, was written in 1936 and premiered at the Red Army Theatre in January 1937. The play depicts the rivalry between an old Bolshevik pilot and a younger pilot fresh from flight school. The play is a defense drama concerning an imaginary attack on the Soviet Union by fascist forces. Shortly after its premiere The Great Day was removed from the stage and all of Kirshon's works were censored. Kirshon had been branded as a
"Trotskyite" and was caught up in the intricate machinations of the Great Purge.

The events which led to his disappearance and death in the Great Purge suggest Kirshon was a victim of guilt by association. Kirshon had been denounced as a "Trotskyite" late in 1936 by Vladimir Stavsky, a little known peasant writer in the Union of Soviet Writers (Brown 224). This occurred shortly after Maxim Gorky's death the same year. When Gorky died, Yagoda and his doctors were accused of poisoning him (Fitzpatrick, Comm. of Enlightenment 300). Kirshon was prosecuted during the second great trial of the purges and appeared unable to defend himself amidst other figures who were confessing to spying, sabotage, and treason (Brown 225). Criticism of Kirshon grew rapidly and eventually Averbakh and the entire former RAPP leadership were labeled as "Trotskyites" (Brown 226-28). Kirshon's plays and RAPP slogans such as the "living man" were found to be ideologically harmful (Ibid.). The evidence at Kirshon's trial amounted to little more than a series of denunciations from Stavsky, Vishnevsky, and others. Vishnevsky demanded that Kirshon explain 'his fourteen-year association with the "enemy of the people" Averbakh' (Brown 229). He also "demanded an explanation of Kirshon's defense of the RAPP organization after the Party decision to liquidate it" (Ibid.).

After the trial Kirshon was linked with Yagoda, who had been found guilty of murdering Gorky. Yagoda had also been charged with embezzling state funds and it was alleged that Kirshon had been a recipient of the money, using it to support his family and to entertain friends (Councils To Curb Soviet Generals).

Kirshon was expelled from the Party in May 1937 (Brown 230). On July 28, 1938, he was placed in front of a firing squad and shot
along with several former Army Commanders, former Politburo members, and the former Commander-in-Chief of the Navy (Conquest 452). Yagoda was also executed during the purge and it is assumed that Averbakh suffered the same fate. Although Yagoda was formally charged with murder and embezzlement, there were no formal charges publicized against Kirshon and Averbakh (Brown 232). Kirshon's death in the Great Purge was not a result of any ideological inconsistency in playwriting. His plays were found to be ideologically harmful only after his denunciation as a "Trotskyite." Indeed, his death testifies to the random nature of the Great Purge.

Kirshon was rehabilitated after Stalin's death. Numerous articles about the playwright and his works appeared in the Soviet press between 1956 and 1965. The Miraculous Alloy was revived in 1956 and well attended (Slonim 284). Kirshon's collected plays were published in 1958. The Party position on RAPP continues to be that it was a "Trotskyite" organization. As for Kirshon's death, the current phrase in Soviet literary history is that he was "illegally repressed." Such is the explanation for many who died in the Great Purge.

An Analysis of "The Great Day"

Kirshon's The Great Day is a Soviet defense drama. It is as thematic to defense as The Rails are Humming is to industrialization or Bread to collectivization. Kirshon did not originate the defense drama. Many such plays dealing with nationalist (attacks on Russia by other countries) and imperialist (the encroachment of capitalism upon communism) conflicts had been written as early as 1934 (Dana 65-67). Kirshon's play was a mixture of both issues. As with his
previous plays, Kirshon created a group of realistic characters whose lives are portrayed against the central ideological theme of the play. A scene by scene analysis proves the play to be ideologically useful and replete with fully constructed characters.

In scene one, Kozhin, the old Bolshevik, and his young ward Zorya are in their room dancing to the gramophone on their day off. Soon, Valya enters. She is Captain Golubev's wife. Golubev is the young bookish pilot with whom Kozhin becomes rivaled. Valya and Golubev have been assigned to stay in Kozhin's quarters until their own room can be painted. Valya is a "girl parachutist." However, Kozhin thinks she is just Golubev's clinging wife. Kozhin shows distaste for women in the military and he and Valya begin to quarrel.

When Brigade Commander Lobov enters, the deference among characters is made clear. This is significant in the play because deference was reinstated in the Soviet military in 1936. Lobov introduces Golubev, who is a captain, and subordinate to Kozhin, who is a major. Lobov anticipates the rivalry developing between Kozhin and Golubev when Kozhin insists on being militarily formal when introducing himself. Rivalry among young and old pilots in the growing Soviet Air Force was common. When Lobov sees that Kozhin and Golubev are less than compatible, he attempts to speed up the preparation of Golubev's quarters. The painter is brought to Lobov and in one of the more humorous scenes of the play, the painter is found to be late in finishing his work because of a hangover. The painter blames it all on the quartermaster.

After the painter and Lobov exit, Kozhin, Valya, and Zorya
converse. Zorya is discovered to be an orphan adopted by the brigade. Valya describes her role as Golubev's wife to Kozhin, who suggests that because Golubev is married, he is sure to be a lesser pilot than Kozhin.

Valya's real purpose for being in the brigade is discovered when Kobrin, the quartermaster, enters. Kobrin is jovial and quite taken with Valya. Kobrin breaks the news to an unsuspecting Kozhin that Valya is more than simply Golubev's wife. She is a "girl parachutist." The "girl parachutist" was a contemporary phenomenon in the Soviet Union in 1936. Pravda carried front page articles about groups of female daredevils who jumped from airplanes in touring air shows. However, their appearance was more a matter of performance than military participation. The news that Valya is a "girl parachutist" puts Kozhin in a tail spin. Alone with Zorya at the end of the scene, he confesses that he had been "cuckoo" for her all along.

Scene one is free of propaganda and ideology, but it does contrast the seasoned old Bolshevik with the textbook trained younger pilot. The scene provides a good picture of the major characters and foreshadows the rivalry between Kozhin and Golubev as well as the ensuing love triangle.

The thrust of scene two is the confrontation between Kozhin and Golubev. In a classroom used to discuss tactics, other officers such as Bobrov, Gorokhov, and Polotski are introduced. As the scene begins, Gorokhov, an inventor, is discussing his new invention. He has received commendations for his work which, through his individual efforts, has proved beneficial to the brigade as a whole. The relationship of the Party to the military is developed when Lazarev is introduced. Lazarev is the Party political commissar assigned to the
brigade. Although he is subordinate to Lobov, their relationship is seen as one of mutual respect and commitment to the goals of the Party and the government. Captain Bobrov discusses his desire to set long distance flight records with Lazarev. The contemporary significance of this discussion was twofold. The Soviets were actually setting such records in 1936, and record breaking achievements were often the subject of Pravda headlines of the period. But more importantly, in terms of ideology and characterization, Kirshon was contrasting Bobrov's desire to set records with Gorokhov's contributions as an inventor. Gorokhov's achievements benefitted the brigade. Bobrov, however, wanted to set records for self-aggrandizement. Lazarev, speaking for the Party, makes it clear that Bobrov's desires are ill motivated. When Lobov enters to discuss tactics, the stage is set for the confrontation between Kozhin and Golubev.

After a brief discussion of an imaginary battle, Kozhin and Golubev come to a severe disagreement over tactics. Golubev calls Kozhin's plan "unrealistic" and Kozhin erupts in a rage, calling Golubev a coward. Lobov dismisses the men and discusses the incident with Lazarev and Colonel Polotski. The latter condemns Kozhin and calls for his court-martial. Lobov suspects Polotski of using Kozhin's outburst as a route to promotion, calling Polotski a "good and clever peasant." Lobov opposes court-martial and Lazarev agrees with him. Polotski is dismissed and Kozhin reports to answer for his outburst. Lobov instructs Kozhin to spend five days in the brig and Lazarev demands that he apologize to Golubev. Lobov realizes Kozhin's restlessness is due to his lack of challenge. Kozhin is an old soldier without a fight. Lobov gives him a special assignment, ordering him
to train a new detachment of paratroopers. Kozhin is happy to be given an assignment, but states that he needs time before he can apologize to Golubev. After Kozhin leaves, Lobov and Lazarev agree that a reprimand was necessary, but that court-martial was not. Their rapport remains throughout the play. As Lazarev leaves, Valya runs in from another room. Lobov has had her listen to the preceding events and she is so impressed by his fairness that she ventures to kiss his cheek. Lobov instructs her to shape up and carry on.

Scene three offers an interesting mixture of media. Part of the scene is acted out on stage and another part is presented on film. The scene provides for the resolution of the rivalry between Kozhin and Golubev and the beginning of the love triangle. The scene is a landing strip. Valya is about to make her first night jump. As she leaves the stage, a film is shown of a parachute jump from an airplane flying overhead. Valya's parachute is slow to open and Kozhin fears something has gone wrong. After the parachute finally opens, the film stops and Valya returns to the stage. When she reports to Kozhin, he insists that she delayed opening the parachute and had not carried out his orders. Kozhin grabs a parachute and marches off to demonstrate a "normal" jump. Meanwhile, Zorya tells Valya that Kozhin is in love with her. The film begins again, showing another parachute jump from an airplane. Suddenly the parachute becomes caught on the tail of the plane. The following action is humorously unrealistic. Just when it looks as though Kozhin will lose his life, Golubev, who is flying the plane, risks his own life by gliding to a soft, slow landing. Kozhin is dragged down the landing strip behind the plane. The name Kozhin is from the word "kozha" for leather. Kozhin survives the landing
because he is a tough old Bolshevik. As he is brought on stage on a stretcher, Kozhin apologizes to Golubev, ending their rivalry as pilots. The love triangle, however, still remains.

Scene four concerns an evening party for Kozhin, in celebration of his recovery from the rough landing he experienced. The party is intended to be a surprise for Kozhin, but Zorya almost gives it away. Before the party starts, Kozhin decides to voice his love for Valya and does so right in front of her husband. He describes colorfully how lonely his life has been. Kozhin ends by pleading with Golubev to become his close friend. When the love triangle is rounded out to a friendly circle, the conflicts among the characters are resolved. The remaining conflict, which constitutes the play as a defense drama, emerges during the party.

The Brigade Commander, the quartermaster, and other officers attend the party. Lobov brings his wife, who provides a striking contrast with Valya in their relationships to their husbands and their attitudes about military life. The party is cheerful with food and drink and even a few songs. Kozhin sings a sad song about lost love. The officers, of course, sing a rousing march in praise of Stalin and of Stalin's Falcons, the nickname for the growing Soviet Air Force. Then Zorya, the gifted young pianist, sits down to play. But before he can finish, the lights go out and an alarm is sounded. In moments the news arrives that the enemy has crossed the border and attacked several Soviet cities.

Scene five bears some interesting political connotations. The scene is a secret air base where the air forces of the Red Army are preparing to respond to the attack launched on the Soviet Union the
previous day. Brigade Commander Lobov tells his men that Moscow is appealing to the League of Nations with proposals which could prevent all out war and that Moscow has agreed to wait twenty-four hours for a response. Perhaps Kirshon was commenting on the intricate system of alliances being negotiated during the period. What is more interesting is that one of the officers mentions two marshals of the Red Army who are preparing to defend the country. They are Budyonny and Voroshilov. Of the five marshals in the Red Army in 1935, only Budyonny and Voroshilov survived the Great Purge (Medvedev 13-14). As the scene ends, Lobov calls for volunteers among the officers to go on a dangerous mission. As expected, everyone volunteers in heroic fashion. But the honor is bestowed upon Golubev and his detachment.

In scene six the fascist enemy is introduced. All the fascists have distinctly German names. The scene is an underground bunker which is the headquarters for the fascist defense zone. In command is baron Hugo von Miesenbach. Kirshon is quite successful in making the fascists rather sinister caricatures. Miesenbach appears as a meticulously efficient military officer. More of a caricature is the Gestapo officer, Kmok. He is a slithering character who looks forward to torturing prisoners but is found to be a shivering coward in the final analysis. Kirshon makes some ideological comments about the fascists. Miesenbach is seen as a bourgeois military man. He is addressed as "your excellency." His loyalties are not with the "present government," which is evident in his distaste for Kmok and what he represents. Miesenbach's loyalties are with the old German royalty and he finds the "present government" not to his liking.

Kirshon also goes to some length in making the battle seem
technologically advanced. The fascists have developed a gas with which men and machines are rendered militarily useless. They have an electro-mechanical device which monitors all aspects of the battle. Kirshon also suggests in the play that while the fascists had been rearming, the Soviets still had many more planes. In fact, Germany outnumbered the Soviets in terms of planes in 1936 (Boyd 83-87).

In the middle of scene six, Golubev and Zorya are brought into the bunker. The fascists' secret gas has caused their planes to crash and they are about to be interrogated. One of the fascists shoots Zorya. Golubev refuses to talk. As he is about to be tortured, Kozhin bursts in with a group of paratroopers. With Kozhin is Lemke, a communist in fascist uniform, who aids in Golubev's rescue. Lemke makes it clear that the communists in his country are opposed to the fascist government. Although Golubev has been rescued, Kozhin and the others grieve over Zorya. Soon they are all trapped in the bunker and all that remains of the scene is their heroic escape to the surface and, of course, the ensuing victory of the Red Army.

Like Kirshon's previous plays, The Great Day was an ideologically useful play. The theme of defense was sufficiently heroic and quite sensitive in 1936. The characters were well developed and recognizable as real people. Given the similarity of The Great Day to Kirshon's previous plays, in terms of ideology and artistry, no case can be made for Kirshon being purged as a result of any sweeping ideological deviations in playwrighting.
THE GREAT DAY

A fantasy play in five acts, six scenes

Written by

Vladimir Kirshon

English Version

by

Christopher Lee Philips
Cast of Characters

Peter Kozhin : Major; commander of the first detachment attack squadron.
Vladimir Golubev : Captain; commander of the second detachment attack squadron.
Valya Golubev : His wife, and a "girl parachutist."
Zorya : Kozhin's ward, an aerial observer.
Epifan Zakharovich Lobov : Brigade Commander.
Anna Pavlovna Lobov : His wife.
Lazarev : Political Commissar.
Polotski : A Colonel; squadron commander.
Bobrov : A Captain in the air brigade.
Gorokhov : A Captain in the air brigade.
Erokhin : A Captain in the air brigade.
Feldyegar : Messenger.
Kobrin : Quartermaster.
Doctor
Painter
Baron Hugo von Miesenbach: Lieutenant General; Commandant of the "fascist" forces.
Knok : Officer of Reich's Commissar.
Lemke : A German communist
Ebrecht : A "fascist" field commander

Soldiers, parachutists, pilots and others.
SCENE ONE

The room where Kozhin and Zorya stay in one of the airport barracks. It is sparsely furnished but it is clean. Two iron beds stand opposite each other. A large window faces the airport. At the window, a table. A bookshelf with books. Over Kozhin's bed hangs a sword, a carbine and a mauser.

Summer. The day off. Morning. The gramophone is playing. Kozhin and Zorya are dancing. They are dressed in slacks, boots and sleeveless undershirts. Kozhin, looking very serious, does a complicated dance step.

KOZHIN
That's the way. Think you can do it?

ZORYA
Sure. (Repeats the step.)

KOZHIN
Not bad. Well, how about this one? (Dances even more complicatedly.)

ZORYA
Sure, it's easy. (Dances, repeating Kozhin's steps. The rhythm is broken as the gramophone winds down. Zorya starts to go to it.)

KOZHIN
Never mind, it's all right. Here, I'll wind it up. (Winds up the gramophone.) Well, cut the rug my boy.

ZORYA
Now how about you trying this one. (Dancing.) It goes like this.

KOZHIN
Hey, you know that's just like . . . oh, well. So you think just the younger generation knows that one, huh?

(Valya enters. She remains standing in the doorway, observing the scene and smiling.)

KOZHIN
(Dancing, humming to himself.) And, then we go again. Now with the leg to the left and the . . . (He notices Valya and freezes with one leg raised. The gramophone begins to wind down again.)

ZORYA
(Without noticing Valya.) I'll get it this time.

KOZHIN
My top shirt!
ZORYA

Huh?

KOZHIN

Give me my top shirt. (To Valya.) Er, yes . . . and what can I do for you?

(Meanwhile, Zorya gives him his top shirt, looking at Valya. Irritating, dissonant sounds come from the gramophone as it winds down again.)

VALYA

Are you Major Kozhin? And for heaven's sake stop the gramophone!

KOZHIN

Cut it off. (Having put on his shirt and buckled his belt, he presents himself.) Yes, I am Major Kozhin.

(Zorya stops the music on the gramophone.)

VALYA

I am Golubev's wife. Captain Golubev's wife. He will be your new detachment commander. He's with the brigade commander now. We have the apartment next to yours. Did you know that?

KOZHIN

I didn't know that Golubev was bringing a wife.

VALYA

He's not "bringing" a wife.

KOZHIN

That's what I thought. Now don't get the wrong idea. That was just a slip of the tongue. Now, seriously, what do you want here?

ZORYA

Peter, the painter is still in their apartment.

SO?

VALYA

The brigade commander suggested we stay here, temporarily.

KOZHIN

Oh. Well, if the brigade commander ordered it, that's the law.

VALYA

There were no orders. I simply came to ask you if it would be all right. Doesn't it suit you?

KOZHIN

It's all the same to me.
VALYA
Well, pardon the interruption. Goodbye!

KOZHN
No, wait! Where's your luggage?

VALYA
My luggage?

KOZHN
Well, you know... packages, bags, suitcases. Your luggage.

VALYA
Well, it's downstairs in the car. Why do you ask?

KOZHN
Zorka! Send for her luggage. (To Valya.) Sit down Mrs. Golubev.

VALYA
No, let me come with you. Old fashioned, aren't you?

(The stage is empty for a while, but the voices of Valya, Koshin and Zorya are heard in the background. Soon the three of them enter, carrying luggage and placing it against the wall.)

KOZHN
There are two more suitcases. Have a seat. I'll get them.

VALYA
I'm not tired.

KOZHN
Suit yourself. (They exit.)

ZORYA
(Alone in the room, he picks up a guitar which was brought in with the other things and strums a few chords. Valya and Kozhin enter. Kozhin carries one suitcase by himself and helps Valya carry the other.) Do you play the guitar?

VALYA
Yes. And you play the piano?

ZORYA
Ah-huh, well, I play a little.

KOZHN
He plays like a genius. He writes his own music. He's a regular composer, you know? And that's not just strumming the guitar.

VALYA
Well that's about all I do is strum.
KOZHIN
I didn't mean you. Oh, what the heck. So, besides strumming the guitar, what else do you do?

VALYA
I am Captain Golubev's wife.

KOZHIN
A serious profession.

VALYA
There's a place for it. Why is it so uncomfortable here?

KOZHIN
Well, you see, I'm a soldier. I'm used to the barracks. And nothing's ever going to make me change my ways. No sir, no pot belly here. But then you've got those types that carry a couple hundred suitcases with them wherever they go, full of pots, pans, petticoats and polishing liquid. Not me. I'm not one of those types.

VALYA
Are you talking about my husband?

KOZHIN
Well it depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Golubev. I'm comfortable in the cockpit. You climb in and take off down the runway. And when you take the plane up for loops and spins ... it's ... well it's the altitude, the air, the flying. You understand?

VALYA
What about on the ground?

KOZHIN
On the ground I'm a bird in a cage. And all I want to do is get away and fly. But you won't catch me just lying around on a featherbed. Of course there are those who are content to sweat in the baths, softening up and coddling like kittens. It's those types that make a kindergarten out of the brigade. And so every couple of days the old corporal drives to the hospital in his own car, taking women to the delivery room.

VALYA
What was that?

KOZHIN
Don't you get it? He drives them to the hospital to give birth.

VALYA
Not that. I mean, about the old corporal.

KOZHIN
Oh, well that's our brigade commander.
VALYA
Why do you call him old corporal?

KOZHN
Oh, it's from some poem. "I was like a father to you men, and now my
head is grey." He used to be a seasoned commander. He led us against
the Poles and now he's been turned into a midwife.

VALYA
Are you saying that pilots shouldn't get married?

KOZHN
Oh they might get married, sure. But then what kind of pilots are
they?

(Enter Brigade Commander Lobov and Golubev. Kozhin and Zorya
rise to attention. The brigade commander greets them.)

LOBOV
I wish you good health. Hello Zorka. Well Kozhin, meet your new squad
leader, Golubev. He'll be replacing Leonov as commander of the second
detachment. Leonov has left us to study at the academy. I trust you
two will get along and work well together.

KOZHN
(Offers Golubev his hand.) Commander of the first detachment, ninth
squadron of the attack air force, Major Kozhin.

GOLUBEV
(Shakes his hand.) Vladimir Golubev.

LOBOV
Now why so official? Are you having one of those days again? Peter,
cheer up.

KOZHN
Yes sir! Cheer up, sir!

LOBOV
Well, well, Pay no attention. He didn't chase you out, did he?

VALYA
He wanted to. Well, it's all the same to me.

GOLUBEV
Valka!

ZORYA
He wasn't trying to chase you out. What you say isn't true.

VALYA
I was only kidding with him Zorenka.
GOLUBEV

(Affectionately.) You've got to be more careful who you kid around with, curly head. Comrade Kozhin might get offended.

KOZHIN

Never mind. I'm not so easily offended.

LOBOV

What a rough rascal you are. What are you growling for? Your neighbors come to visit and you snarl at them. (To Valya.) Did you two quarrel?

VALYA

Yes, and we'd barely become acquainted. I've just now met his son.

LOBOV

That's not his son. Zorya--he's our brigade ward. He just lives here with Kozhin.

VALYA

I thought he was his father.

ZORYA

My father was killed by bandits, and my mother died in childbirth. I lived with my grandmother for a while, but she was very old and soon she died too. So the brigade adopted me during maneuvers.

VALYA

Oh, so that's the way it is. I didn't know.

LOBOV

It's nothing, now you know. Everything will straighten out. Now when will your quarters be ready? I was told that the repairs were to be finished yesterday. Zorya. Go see if you can find the painter.

(Zorya exits.)

LOBOV

Why don't you sit down, Valya? Kozhin, why not offer the lady a chair?

KOZHIN

(Gives her a chair.) Here.

VALYA

(In his tone.) Thank you.

(Enter Zorya with the painter, who salutes.)

LOBOV

Good health. Well, my good man, what seems to be the hold up? Weren't you supposed to be through yesterday?
PAINTER
I was, sir. Yes sir.

LOBOV
So what's the problem?

PAINTER
Fact is sir, is that yesterday I didn't work, sir.

LOBOV
And why not, may I ask?

PAINTER
On account of ... ah ... well I had the headache, sir. Yes sir.

LOBOB
The what?

PAINTER
Headache sir. See I knocked off day before yesterday and was out soakin' 'em up 'til two and . . .

LOBOV
Soaking what up?

PAINTER
You know, sir. My spirits sir.

LOBOV
Russian bitter.

PAINTER
You guessed it ... sir.

LOBOV
Oh that's wonderful. There's still work to be done and you're out with a hangover. What kind of painter are you?

PAINTER
I'm a natural born painter, sir.

LOBOV
Well, you should be ashamed at your natural born self for letting me down like this. When you give me your word, you should stick to it.

PAINTER
Right . . . sir. Yes sir. And I would have finished the work, sir. Except on account of the quartermaster, sir. He made me . . .

LOBOV
And what does the quartermaster have to do with this?
PAINTER
Well, it was like this, sir. He comes in the other day, see. That'd be the day before yesterday. In the morning, sir. So he looks around, and then he looks at me and he says, "My, my. You still have a lot to do. I wager you'll never finish by tomorrow." And so I says to him, "I will too finish." Because I know myself, you know? Maybe some other guy wouldn't finish, but I will. He says--"Nope." And he says it real categorical like. Just like a military man, sir. And that really bothered me all day long, sir. So in the evening, I knocked off on account of 'cause by that time I was feelin' really down. So I started soakin' 'em up.

LOBOV
Your spirits?

PAINTER
That's right, sir.

LOBOV
But you will finish the work today?

PAINTER
You can count on me sir.

LOBOV
All right. But don't let me down again. These people are sitting on their things. Finish.

PAINTER
I understand sir. I'll finish today. (He salutes and exits.)

LOBOV
That quartermaster is a fool. He most certainly has a knack for handling things poorly. You know, I really believe that painter went out and got drunk because of him. Everyone has a breaking point. When you're under a lot of stress, one good slap in the face will do it. It's such a delicate instrument.

ZORYA
What instrument?

LOBOV
I was talking about man, Zorka.

ZORYA
Man an instrument? What do you mean?

LOBOV
Man is like an instrument Zorka, more complicated than a grand piano.

ZORYA
Well, if man is an instrument, then how . . .
LOBOV
Let's just say that practice, dedication and fine tuning makes for a better man. Major Kozhin, have all the pilots under your command been thoroughly trained in cover and support missions?

KOZHIN
Yes sir.

LOBOV
How about night flights?

KOZHIN
Well as you know, our last two practice runs had to be cancelled.

LOBOV
Yes, well you have a deadline to meet in training exercises. Will you meet it?

KOZHIN
I work exceedingly well under pressure.

LOBOV
Very well. (To Golubev.) And you, Captain, will have to take your detachment up for more bombing practice. Some of the men are lagging behind my expectations. They bombed the practice field three days ago. I saw the results myself. Not too promising.

GOLUBEV
Yes sir.

LOBOV
Well, let's get to work. And report to the squadron commander. He's probably at home, since it's the day off. If you need to see me I'll be in the headquarters or at home.

GOLUBEV
Yes sir.

LOBOV
Well, Valya. Let's go visit that born painter and see how he's coming along with your quarters. Or have you seen them already?

VALYA
No. Not yet.

LOBOV
Let's go. Everything must be built according to plan. And my duty is to see that plans are carried out.

(They exit.)

(Golubev looks at his watch, then takes out his notebook and writes.)
Whose picture is that in your watch cover?

That's a picture of my wife.

Why carry her picture around? She's with you all the time. It seems kind of strange to me.

She's not with me all the time. I'm busy all day.

And why carry it around in a watch?

Well, I look at the watch often, and so I get a chance to glance at her.

It seems like a waste of time to me. What's that you're writing?

I'm making out a plan, including the things the brigade commander told me.

What kind of plan?

The usual kind. A plan for a daily routine.

What, do you live according to a plan?

Well, of course. How could you live without one?

What if you get sick? How do you figure that?

Well, if I get sick, I have it in my plan to read all of the books I haven't read yet.

You mean you only read when you're sick?
GOLUBEV
No, I read every day. Even if it's just twenty pages or so. And besides, when is there more time to read than when you're sick? Right?

ZORYA
Right. Do you have a lot of books?

GOLUBEV
See for yourself. Two whole boxes full.

Any books on the Civil War?

ZORYA
Yes, there are a few on the Civil War.

Any books on music?

Sure.

GOLUBEV
Would you lend me some?

ZORYA
Absolutely.

GOLUBEV
Oh, that's great, since lately I've just been reading books in my specialty.

ZORYA
What's your specialty?

I'm going to be an aerial observer. I'm flying already. Peter's teaching me.

GOLUBEV
Wonderful! How old are you?

Fifteen.

That's fine!

GOLUBEV
How old did you think I was?
LOBOV
(Enters with Valya.) Oh. Golubev, your wife really laid it on the painter, telling him what kind of colors to mix, what particular shades to take. Oh boy. We haven't heard the last of this. Well, good day.

GOLUBEV
Good day comrade Commander.

VALYA
Good bye.

ZORYA
Good day.

KOZHIN
I wish you good health.

(Lobov exits. Pause.)

KOZHIN
So. Where did you have your training, comrade Golubev?

GOLUBEV
In Krasnoyarsk.*

KOZHIN
Long ago?

GOLUBEV
Three years ago.

KOZHIN
Ah-huh.

GOLUBEV
The Party sent me to flight school. Before that I worked in an aircraft plant.

KOZHIN
Ah-huh.

GOLUBEV
Are we disturbing you? Perhaps you feel like sleeping.

KOZHIN
Sleeping? Why?

VALYA
Well you been sort of yawning and . . .

*In 1937, the capital city of the Krasnoyarsk Territory in Southern Central Siberia. The city owed its twentieth century growth to the Trans-Siberian railroad.
What do you mean, "Valka!" Just a while ago, before you'd even met, Major Kozhin had already sized you up. "Feather beds, suitcases, pots and pans, wives, what kind of flyers are these?"

I was just generalizing, actually.

Even if he was referring to me, there's nothing wrong with that. I must be going now, to see the squadron commander. Please excuse me.

Will you be back soon?

As soon as possible. And try not to be so sensitive, okay? (Pulls her to him and kisses her affectionately.) Good day my sharp tongued little wife.

(Kozhin stares at them in amazement, then looks at Zorya as if to say, "did you see that?")

Good day comrade Kozhin.

I have the honor.

(Golubev exits. Valya goes through her things, silently. Kozhin hums something, drumming on the table with his fingers. He lights up a cigarette.)

Go on, smoke. It's all right. Although I didn't hear you ask if I'd mind.

Didn't what? I . . . oh . . . ah ha. So that's it. I'm not used to asking permission for that sort of thing. You'll have to be patient. It's a little late for me to change old habits.

Why is your voice so hoarse? Have you caught cold?

It's from the wind. I've breathed many a breath flying, and some of them were ice cold.

How long have you been flying?
Seventeen years. Kozhin

That's a long time. Valya

It's not that long. Kozhin

And so what's your profession now? Valya

I'm a stevedore. Kozhin

Ah-huh. Valya

I haul barges on the Volga. Kozhim

Ah-huh. Valya

Now you're the one saying ah-huh. Kozhin

Well, positively, of course. Just like you were a moment ago? Where's the lavatory? I'd like to wash up a bit. Valya

Zorya, show her to the bathroom. Kozhin

Zorya, that's some name you have. Valya

Well my name is Zakhar, but Peter calls me Zorya. It's this way. Zorya

(Zorya and Valya exit. Their laughter and conversation is heard behind the scene. Kozhin remains alone. He smokes, staring at his cigarette. He inhales deeply, blowing out smoke slowly. He flicks the ashes in his own special way.)

Valya

(Enters with Zorya. Her face is red from the cold water. Her curly, close cropped hair is wet.) That water's cold as fresh melted snow. Valya

Have you been married long? Kozhin
Two years.

What did you do before you were married?

I finished high school.

And got married right after that?

Yes.

Ah-huh.

Well, I can sew. I mend my dresses and my husband's underwear. I can cook well and darn socks.

You can darn socks? So...

Volodka comes home tired at night. He always has his supper waiting for him. And I knit warm slippers for him. But here you sit with your boots still on. You don't have anything to change into.

Well, to each his own. Some have slippers, I have my mauser.

Volodya doesn't wear his mauser on his feet. That's his shortcoming.

(Zorya grins.)

That's not very funny, actually. I can tell whether a man's a flyer or not before he leaves the ground.

You pass judgment too quickly.

It's not everyone's calling to be a flyer.

Well, you weren't exactly born in the air either. A stevedore isn't a pilot and a barge isn't a cockpit.
KOZHIN
Hey, that sort of rhymes, you know? Well, I guess you're right. But don't you see? Every muscle in my body has always yearned for flying. Before the war, when I was hauling cargo, I was like a prisoner on the earth. But I used to look up in the sky at the birds—at how easily they floated through the air—over the clouds. And I'd think to myself, in my next life, I'll be a bird. I mean, even now I think of our planes as birds, you know? The fighter plane is a swallow, the dive bomber—a hawk, and heavy bombers—eagles. Yes. I started flying in the Civil War. Some of the officers taught me. I remember the first airplane I flew. All wood and canvas. A regular insect's paradise. I mean, you'd put your ear up against the wing and hear them buzzing around in there; beetles and moths, bzz . . . buzzz, buzzing around, you know?

VALYA
That must have been something! Seventeen years you've been flying.

KOZHIN
And you're a softy. "Warm slippers" and all. Yep. You're a nice, curly-headed little wife . . .

KOBRIN
(Knocks, then enters without waiting for a reply.) A good day to Kozhin, and to the musician and . . . why, are you Mrs. Golubev? You've just arrived? My, my, let me look at you! Aren't we a beauty. I wager you and I will become, better acquainted, shall we say? I am Quartermaster Kobrin. The brigade commander has sent me, personally, to oversee the repairs to your quarters. I just don't know what that man wants from me. He says to me, "Well the day before yesterday, you managed to convince the painter he'd never finish his work in a day's time. Now why don't you go and convince him he can." Man, what a mess. (To Valya.) And the airborne commander wants to see you right away. My, my. Well I'm sure I've interrupted you comrade Kozhin, but I do deserve . . .

KOZHIN
Cut the chatter, will you Kobrin? Now why would she need to see the airborne commander?

KOBRIN
What's that? What do you mean, why? Who else does a new parachutist report to?

KOZHIN
What new parachutist, Kobrin?

KOBRIN
You up to your old tricks again? Sure, you're trying to bribe me, right? And I wager you think I'll fall for this one, right? Wrong. You can't kid a natural born comedian, Kozhin. This—is parachutist Golubev, who has made twenty-one successful jumps, received commendations from the civil defense corps, and is now standing right in front of you. I just wish she didn't bring a husband.
KOZHIN
Twenty-one jumps? (To Valya.) Well now why in the heck did you feed me all this business about being Golubev's wife and . . .

VALYA
I'm his wife and I told you the truth.

KOZHIN
Well, yes and no . . . and . . . well . . .

VALYA
I think I'll be going now. If Volodya comes in, tell him where I am. 'Bye. (To Kobrin.) Good day, comrade lady-killer. (Exits.)

KOBRIN
Ha! . . . Ah, do what?

(Follows her out.)

KOZHIN
(Puzzled.) She's been teasing me like I was a schoolboy. Man, what a fool I was.

ZORYA
Why don't you like her?

KOZHIN
Like her? You fool, I went cuckoo over her. Like someone had poured a bucket of ice water over my head.

ZORYA
If you're so cuckoo then why were you so mean to her?

Because I liked her.

KOZHIN
I don't get it.

ZORYA
What do you mean your blah, blah, blah? She's married.

KOZHIN
Well, that doesn't mean she has to stay that way. We could win her over, Zorenka. Anything can happen.

ZORYA
Win her over? For what?
KOZHIN

Zorka, go do something for cryin' out loud. Go sit down and play, play something powerful, yes. Go on play, before I do or we'll have the whole barracks jumpin'. You know what I mean?
SCENE TWO

An air brigade classroom. There are maps on the wall. Golubev sits behind a desk writing.

LAZAREV
(Enters with Polotski and Gorokhov.) Hey Golubev. Finished your work? We'll be discussing tactics shortly.

I'm through.

GOLUBEV

LAZAREV
Hey, did you hear the news?

No, what?

GOLUBEV

LAZAREV
Gorokhov's gotten an award, and a commendation from the commander himself.

GOLUBEV
Really! What for, Gorokhov?

GOROKHOV
Hmm? Oh that, that's nothing.

POLOTSKI
Commendations from the commander, that's nothing?

GOROKHOV
Hmm? No, no. I mean my invention. It's just a map case I designed for the cockpit. It's simple. Right now I'm working on a project that involves real technology.

KOBRIN
(Entering.) Greetings. How is Major Kozhin getting along?

GOLUBEV
Well, I suppose he's getting along fine. Why?

KOBRIN
Getting along is he? (Laughs.) My, my.

GOLUBEV
I fail to see the humor in that. (To Lazarev.) I'll be here on time, comrade Commissar. I still have six minutes. (Exits.)

POLOTSKI
Yes, what's the laughter all about? And why your sudden interest in Kozhin?
KOBRIN
What? You mean to tell me you don't know? Oh, c'mon comrade, you can't play games with me. It's as obvious as the nose on your face. Major Kozhin has fallen head and ears in love with that young woman, Valya--Golubev's wife. I've been watching how he plays up to her.

LAZAREV
You'd be better off watching your weight.

KOBRIN
Well someone's got to stay informed. And I'm the supply officer, aren't I? Nothing gets by me. I wager you've never seen a chicken hawk around a young chicken. That Kozhin swooped down on her the minute she arrived. But nothing's come of it yet. "The heart of Emile is like the Bastille." So far anyway. But believe me, Kozhin gets what he wants. You couldn't count the women he's had in his life. There's something about him. I mean broads just fall all over him. I wonder if it's the way he walks, or maybe just the way he looks at them. I just don't get it. I mean, I've tried to copy his style, good God I've tried. He acts so tough, and still they just cling to him. Well, keep this in mind: The Bastille will be taken!

LAZAREV
The hell with you, Kobrin.

(Captain Golubev and the remaining commanding officers enter. They greet Lazarev. They talk among themselves and take their seats.)

BOBROV
(Enters with Kozhin. To Polotski.) Good day, comrade Colonel. Did I get the authorization?

POLOTSKI
I'm afraid not.

BOBROV
That's too bad. I know I could set the long distance flight record if I had a chance. Don't they think it's worth the attempt?

POLOTSKI
The squadron is setting records even without your long distance flight.

BOBROV
But everyone else is breaking records, and I hate to just sit still. That's not progress. Like the song says: "We'll break the record, cross the line, we won't let up or lag behind, we won't let up or lag behind."

LAZAREV
Yes, Captain, but there's more to progress than breaking records.
BOBROV
Well, that's true. But as pilots, our job is to fly. I mean, why hoist sail if you're not going to use the wind?

LAZAREV
Yes, well my job has several tasks. I, for one, would like a shot at the long distance record. I fly pretty well myself. But I'm occupied with political matters. And I can tell you right now, you don't fly very far without politics, no matter what kind of pilot you are.

BOBROV
I know what you mean, comrade Commissar. The long distance flight has its politics.

LAZAREV
And politics has its long distance flight.

POLOTSKI
Attention! (Reports to Lobov, who enters.) Comrade Brigade Commander, the senior officers of your brigade have assembled for tactical exercises.

LOBOV
At ease. Take your seats. Map please!

(One of the officers hangs a relief map on the board. The officers take maps from their map cases.)

LOBOV
Now, the last time we worked on this imaginary scenario we dubbed the operation "Battle on the Bystraya."* We've worked out the situation as it stands. I asked you to present a solution today. So, need I repeat the situation?

VOICES
No. No need. No.

POLOTSKI
It's understood.

LOBOV
Excellent. Now, who will be first?

Permit me.

LOBOV
Proceed.

BOBROV
(Stands.) Here is the plan comrade Brigade Commander.

*A river in Kamchatka and also in Krasnoyarsk. In this case, more likely a less significant river in Byelorussia or a completely imaginary one.
LOBOV

Plan? I hadn't asked for a plan. Explain.

BOBROV

(Goes to the board.) I recommend a troop drop and the destruction of the enemy fortifications. In spite of the threat of frontal assault, I will order the mechanized units to strike immediately from the left flank and then have the cavalry corps charge through the opening. I will then swing around and pin the enemy to the riverbank. Simultaneously, I will order the air force to destroy the bridge, in order to cut off the enemy retreat. Then I will attack the enemy cavalry with dive bombers.

(Kozhin raises his hand.)

LOBOV

Major Kozhin!

KOZHN

(Goes to the board. Bobrov sits down.) Bobrov's plan is a good one. With just a slight change it will succeed. We know, of course, that there are enemy fighters in the area defending the bridge. And so a bombing raid in that area could be costly. And as to whether or not they will succeed in destroying the bridge--this is yet to be seen. (Shows on the map.) Now, he has set himself to the task of destroying the bridge, and, if possible, pinning the enemy aircraft to the ground. His dive bombers should then be attacking the landing strip, not the enemy cavalry. If he is successful, and proceeds to the right flank, he will pin the enemy to the riverbank as he proposes, making it impossible for them to cross the river. The sky will be ours, and they will be sitting ducks.

Captain Gorokhov?

GOROKHOV

I agree.

Captain Bobrov?

BOBROV

Yes, absolutely.

FELDYEGAR

(Enters.) Comrade Brigade Commander Lobov?

LOBOV

Yes.

FELDYEGAR

Urgent message from the Party's regional committee. Answer please.
Here. (Take the message.) I'll be right back comrades. Comrade Lazarev, come with me. Take a break. (Exits with Lazarev and the messenger. Several of the officers rise and go to the board.)

BOBROV
(To Golubev.) What's your opinion?

GOLUBEV
Well, I agree with your plan generally, but I can't accept Major Kozhin's proposal.

BOBROV
Explain.

GOLUBEV
The bridge and the landing strip are so well guarded that a bombing run would just be impossible.

KOZHIN
We'll fly in here, from the left--make the parachute drop and head down the river toward the bridge.

GOLUBEV
If you make the troop drop on the left flank, they will be discovered before the bridge can be destroyed.

KOZHIN
Not at night.

GOLUBEV
At night, in an unfamiliar area near the enemy base. It's completely unrealistic Major Kozhin.

KOZHIN
Is that right? And what's so unreal about it? Is the air drop unreal too then?

GOLUBEV
There on the frontal sector, yes.

KOZHIN
Oh, so you only drop troops in the rear sector, here?

GOLUBEV
In my opinion, yes.

(General commotion.)

GOLUBEV
Well I consider it my duty to voice my opinion.
POLOTSKI

Let's hear it.

GOLUBEV

We've never even attempted a parachute drop on a frontal position. It's militarily unjustifiable.

BOBROV

There've been a hundred troop drops, everybody knows that.

GOLUBEV

Where? On maneuvers! Of course our troops can jump. But if we're talking about real battle conditions with a real enemy . . .

KOZHIN

Many are inexperienced in battle.

GOLUBEV

We know all the troops will jump. But what will be waiting for them? With modern communication the enemy will be on to them in no time. You can't have maneuvers on the front comrades. Any drop under these conditions would be a trap. It's reckless.

KOZHIN

This is nursery school talk. It makes me sick!

POLOTSKI

Not so harsh, Major Kozhin.

KOZHIN

What do you mean, harsh? That's the talk of a coward! He should be kicked out of the brigade!

Major Kozhin!

POLOTSKI

GOLUBEV

Are you calling me a coward, Major Kozhin?

KOZHIN

That's exactly what I'm calling you! A coward! (Points at Golubev.) You! You hear me?!

GOLUBEV

On what grounds are you accusing me?!

KOZHIN

You've just proved it yourself! But I still have a thing or two to say. I consider it my duty to share my opinion. You said, that if you were to be taken prisoner by the enemy, you wouldn't be responsible for your actions. You said it, didn't you? Say it now, in front of the other men!
(Silence. Everyone looks at Golubev.)

GOLUBEV

Yes. That's what I said.

(Commotion.)

GOLUBEV

But let's put it in context, shall we? Here's what I said. If I was in battle, or even if I was in front of a firing squad, I would die like a man if I stood shoulder to shoulder with my comrades—if, at the last minute, I was able to reach out my hand to my friend. But it would be hard for me if I was alone in the hands of the enemy. That's what I said.

KOZHIN

That's the same thing! You shame the brigade and betray the Party. You're a coward! You hear me?!

(General commotion.)

GOROKHOV

This is outrageous.

BOBROV

I can't believe it.

POLOTSKI

Major Kozhin!

KOZHIN

No! I will have my say! We need men in this brigade; men who are sharp as knives. And what do we get? School boys! We put them through school, give them a command and trust them with our planes!

GOROKHOV

That's the damn truth!

KOBRIN

My, my, this is some "Battle on the Bystraya!"

KOZHIN

A pilot must hone his skill just like the engineer must perfect his plane. On the ground, a pilot is nothing. How can he prove himself? Just look what we have here. I'm ashamed. I feel like a bearded old man attending kindergarten. Schoolboys! Oh sure, they can fly! They're all accurate and polished. They've studied lots of theories. They all have little notebooks and live by little plans. Pedantic little pilots! But what will happen when they fly into a hail of bullets? When you're flying through the clouds to find the enemy, and you bear down on him with your machine guns poised at his heart, how will it be then?

(Enter Lobov and Lazarev, unnoticed.)
KOZHN
I can't take any more of this! Kozhin will leave this kindergarten and load cargo! It's over for the Kozhins! The Golubevs are coming!

LOBOV
What's this all about? Stop these hysterics, immediately!

KOZHN
Me? Here you have a coward in your brigade and you tell me to hold my tongue?! Politics! Midwife politics, you hear me?!

LOBOV
Attention!

(Kozhin snaps to attention.)

LOBOV
Major Kozhin, go directly to headquarters and wait for my orders. March!

(Kozhin makes an about-face and leaves the room in silence.)

LOBOV
Well, you've had a good twenty minute break. Now, if you please, you are all dismissed. As for this incident, I can assure you that it will be resolved quickly and as I see fit. Carry on.

(Golubev is the first to leave and does so quickly. The other officers split up, showing outward signs of anxiety.)

LOBOV
What the hell was going on in here?

POLOTSKI
Sir, after you left with the messenger, the officers continued to discuss Captain Bobrov's plan. Golubev came out against Kozhin's proposal. Kozhin lit into him! First, he called Golubev a coward, and then he proceeded to insult everyone else present. I think he should be reported to the commanding officer immediately for dismissal and court-martial. The evidence is quite clear.

LOBOV
You think so?

POLOTSKI
Absolutely. Besides his insolent reference to the flying personnel, he even insulted your comrade Lobov. He did so in front of the officers. That's a serious matter.

LOBOV
It is.

POLOTSKI
Midwife politics. How do you like that!
LOBOV

Hmm. I like that.

POLOTSKI

You what?

LOBOV

See here, I enjoy being a midwife. It's an honorable profession, you know. Where would mankind be without them?

LAZAREV

Well, it's especially glorious to be the kind of midwife Marx wrote about; the midwife of history.

POLOTSKI

You aren't laughing at me, are you?

LOBOV

No, no. This is completely official. We stopped this matter with Major Kozhin before it started. And his outburst, if you wish to call it that, will be discussed at the next Party meeting, after I have taken a few measures of my own. That's all.

POLOTSKI

Well, seeing that it's this serious, I'm afraid I must categorically disagree with you. It's difficult for me to do this, because you and I have worked together for years, but I am going to make a report to the commander personally.

LOBOV

You have that right, according to regulations.

POLOTSKI

Well explain to me how someone could be allowed to remain in the brigade after an outburst like that. It was more than an outburst. It was a political statement!

LOBOV

Oh you are a good and clever peasant. But you're got one shortcoming.

POLOTSKI

Tell me.

LOBOV

You think in straight lines.

POLOTSKI

Thanks for the criticism. But it's not me we're talking about here.

LOBOV

(To Lazarev.) What do you think?
LAZAREV
I agree with you completely. (To Polotski.) You haven't told the whole truth and, consequently, haven't told the truth at all. Let's start with what Kozhin said. He made a sharp, malevolent remark, like a hooligan. But if you look at the root of the matter, what is Kozhin really all about? Does he want to help or harm the brigade?

POLOTSKI
The fact remains . . .

LOBOV
Answer the question. A straight question deserves a straight answer.

POLOTSKI
Well, frankly I think his trouble with Golubev is tied to something else all together. It's also just plain ugliness.

LAZAREV
That means, so far, we drop the political charges.

POLOTSKI
We don't drop the charges. We just come to the conclusion that bad luck in love caused Kozhin to shoot his mouth off. As you say, I think in straight lines.

LOBOV
Listen, you let yourself be insulted for nothing and now you're trying to get Kozhin court-martialed for nothing. I've known him for years. He can be obnoxious but his discipline is beyond reproach. This is the first time anything like this has ever happened and I'm sure it's a case of not having his brain in gear when his mouth started going. And perhaps the young woman did play her part in it. Surely that was subconscious. But there's certainly no need to lower it to the point of scandal. It's just not like Kozhin.

POLOTSKI
Well, what is the matter with him?

LOBOV
Depression.

POLOTSKI
What?

LOBOV
Depression, restlessness. It happens to everyone. But it happens to everyone in a different way. Take Kozhin, here he is working as a stevedore, but they've heard of him on every front.

POLOTSKI
That's no excuse.
LOBOV
You're right. But he has to be treated differently from someone else. Major Kozhin's hot blood does it, comrade Colonel. But we'll have a little talk with him. Have him sent to me.

POLOTSKI
Yes, but only . . .

LOBOV
Only I am not a brigade commander but a midwife? Well, finish what you have to say.

POLOTSKI
That's all I have to say. I'll return to continue the tactical exercise in fifteen minutes, comrade Brigade Commander.

LOBOV
Very well.

(Polotski exits.)

LAZAREV
He was offended.

LOBOV
He'll be all right. He'll think it over and probably come to his senses. We'll discuss it at the general meeting or the squadron meeting, one. Which do you think?

LAZAREV
I'd suggest the general meeting. It will be a good lesson in disciplinary action.

LOBOV
I agree.

(Valya runs in, flushed and breathing heavily.)

VALYA
Is Major Kozhin in here?

LOBOV
No. Just the chief of the political section and a midwife.

VALYA
What? What kind of . . . oh, did he mean you, comrade Brigade Commander? I know he must have offended you.

LOBOV
It's all right. When the time comes for you to bring a little boy into the world, I'll take you into town. Now, what do you want with Kozhin?
I'd like to smack him!

Is that all? No more, no less?

Well, now. Get a hold of yourself little curly head. Isn't that what your Golubev calls you?

(With tears in her eyes.) He shouldn't dare talk that way to Volodka. My Volodka is a thousand times better man than he is ... a million times. But Volodka keeps things bottled up inside himself. He's modest. He never talks about himself. It's not Volodka's fault he was born too late to fight in the Civil War. He never brags, but he pushes himself so hard. Just now, he comes back from class white as a sheet. He lies down and doesn't say anything. So I ask him, Volodya, what's wrong? And he just stares at the ceiling. He breathes deeply like a man gasping for air. And then his friends come. They told me what happened. They all shook his hand. They're with him. How could he dare! (Cries.) Why is he after my Volodka!

(Puts his arm around her, fatherly.) Well, well little girl--tears like little beads. No need to cry now. Calm yourself girl. You are a parachutist!

(Still crying, but beginning to regain her composure.) Yes, I am, but why does he throw his weight around like he does? Because he's been decorated? All the same I'd like to smack him!

Kozhin's on his way over.

Here?

We're going to have a little talk with him.

You're going to sack him, then? The men were saying he could be thrown out of the brigade, maybe out of the air force all together.

We'll have our little talk and then decide. We'll either sack him or punish him. But you wait for a moment because I'll want to talk with you when we're finished.

With me?
LOBOV
That's right. Now into the next room with you, quickly. Here comes the bad guy. Go on.

(Valya goes into the next room. Lobov and Lazarev sit down. Kozhin enters, looking gloomy.)

KOZHIN
Major Kozhin reporting, sir!

LOBOV
Sit down.

KOZHIN
I'd prefer to stand sir.

LOBOV
Well, you had your say didn't you? You lost your cool.

Yes sir.

KOZHIN
Are you ashamed of yourself?

Yes sir, ashamed sir.

LOBOV
Sit down, Peter.

(Kozhin takes a chair and sits down.)

LOBOV
Listen, Peter. Let's say you're walking down the sidewalk. And somebody else is coming the other way and one of you has to move to let the other pass. What do you feel like doing in such a situation?

KOZHIN
Like pushing the man aside if he doesn't get out of my way.

LOBOV
So what do you do?

KOZHIN
Well, I might stop and let him go around . . . and I might say, "Where the hell do you think you're going?" Or something like that.

LOBOV
But you certainly wouldn't step aside and let the other man pass, would you?

KOZHIN
Certainly not.
LOBOV
You couldn't, could you?

KOZHIN
I couldn't.

LOBOV
I see. Well, what if you knew that for every time you refused to step aside and let another man pass, that it would mean one less soldier in the army? Then would you give in?

KOZHIN
I would.

LOBOV
That means, then, that you can suppress your urges? You have the will, don't you.

KOZHIN
Yes, of course I have the will!

LOBOV
Well then, why did you let yourself go like you did today? You usually show more discipline than any man in the brigade, but you blew it today. Only a man with no will would do that.

KOZHIN
It's my nerves, Epifan Zakharovich.

LOBOV
Don't plead nerves with me, Peter. Now if you were to drop a glass and break it because of nerves, I'd find that easy to believe. But don't try and tell me it was your nerves that made you lose your will. Even a midwife wouldn't fall for that.

KOZHIN
Forgive me for saying that. It shames me to tears.

LAZAREV
Well, go ahead and cry some. You've driven others to that point so maybe you should shed a few.

KOZHIN
I don't know how to cry. Who's been crying on my account?

LOBOV
Who hasn't? Why did you insult the younger members of the brigade? They're some of the finest we've got!

KOZHIN
I know.
LAZAREV
Where have you seen a better group? They're top notch! They're the kind you usually just dream about.

KOZHIN
I know.

LOBOV
I know, I know. So why were you such an ass toward them?

KOZHIN
All right. So I dropped the reins under the horse's tail and went after them. But I'm telling you, Epifan Zakharich, honestly. I'm bored to death! Here we are, sitting on our backsides, when we should be waging war! An army cannot last for long without fighting!

LOBOV
Don't be a fool. What would you have us do, start a war for you?

KOZHIN
Not for me, for everybody! Can't you see, Epifan Zakharich, the time has come? Don't you read the same newspaper I do, Epifan Zakharich? In some countries children are being executed with machine guns. I've even read where they lop off youngsters' heads with an axe! And I have to ask myself—how much longer will we stand by and wait? I've kept a tab on how many they've killed, Epifan Zakharich. And one day soon I'm going to present my bill! That will be a great day, you hear?!

LAZAREV
Major Kozhin, we are at war at all times. Mining coal is a battle. Now, if we are not forced, we will settle some battles without weapons. But don't forget just how great a struggle this is. The man in uniform doesn't march alone.

KOZHIN
I understand all that, comrade. And believe me, I would like to shake the hand of every worker that helps to build my plane. They labor to produce it, and I fly it into battle. So we work side by side. But don't you see? This soldier was made in the war and he's got to have a fight! Otherwise, his sword will rust in its scabbard.

LOBOV
I've been thinking about that Peter. That's why I want you to take a special assignment.

KOZHIN
Special assignment?

LOBOV
Yes. I spoke with the commander three days ago. We need more parachutists. Right now, we've only got one detachment and we need three. I want you to go on and train. Prepare yourself. You'll be in command.
KOZHIN
Me?!

LOBOV
That's right. We need someone who's daring, even a little reckless. Someone who laughs in the face of death. And you're the man.

KOZHIN
When do I start? Epifan Zakharich, I feel like a new man! You'll have your parachutists. Definitely.

LOBOV
Very good. We'll make it official in five days.

KOZHIN
Why in five days?

LOBOV
Because, Major Kozhin, you're going to spend the next five days in the brig, thinking about discipline. Comrade Stalin does not spend day after day tempering our cadres and strengthening our air force so that we can become lax! The People's Commissar did not award ranks in vain! Now, this nonsense about midwifery is a drop in the bucket for me. Before the Revolution, you were a stevedore and I was a lathe operator. I made three roubles a day more than you, and that never come between us. But now I am your commanding officer, appointed by the People's Commissar. It would be a crime not to punish you. They expect iron discipline from us. We have both sworn an oath to the people.

KOZHIN
Five days in the brig.

LOBOV
That's right.

LAZAREV
And you'll take back what you said about the brigade.

KOZHIN
Yes.

LAZAREV
After that, you will apologize to Golubev.

KOZHIN
Apologize to Golubev? I can't!

LOBOV
You'll have to.

KOZHIN
I can't do it! Don't force me to! Give me time.
Then I will say a few words about Golubev. I will evaluate his position in this matter, but I will also mention your behavior in this case. It will be worse for you.

KOZHIN
Say what you have to say. But I just can't do it right now. I just couldn't do it. Not now.

LOBOV
Very well then. You can go now.

(Exits.)

LOBOV
Valya!

(Valya runs in.)

VALYA
You ... you're such a . . .

LOBOV
Hold on a minute! What are you doing, declaring your love for me? I warn you, I'm a married man!

VALYA
He offended you. But you think of him, and of Golubev . . . and I just . . . oh. (She moves as if to kiss Lobov's cheek.)

LOBOV
Attention! What has come over you? First fighting and then kissing. Animal passions. Now march! Go and tell Colonel Polotski to come in here. Lazarev and I will continue the exercise. Well, don't just stand there all goggle-eyed. Carry on when your Brigade Commander orders you. Well?!

(Valya runs out of the room.)
SCENE THREE

Night. A landing strip. Lights swing back and forth—the starter's signals. To one side, a searchlight. Standing nearby are Kozhin, Lobov, Lazarev, Bobrov, Zorya, the starter and a group of parachutists.

Who's next?

KOZHIN

Golubev's wife.

LOBOV

Has she ever jumped by searchlight?

KOZHIN

No. This will be her first time.

LOBOV

Have you instructed her thoroughly?

KOZHIN

Yes sir.

LOBOV

Who's the pilot?

KOZHIN

Golubev.

LOBOV

Oh? The whole family's in the air, huh? How did that happen?

KOZHIN

Personal request, sir. I didn't object to it.

LOBOV

Remarkable how you've become so agreeable.

KOZHIN

Merely staying out of the way, comrade Brigade Commander.

LOBOV

That's excellent. A ha, here we go.

(The starter signals the airplane. Behind the scene an engine starts. Then, the sound of a plane taking off.)

LOBOV

What's the distance on this jump?
KOZHIN

Eight hundred meters.

LOBOV

How many in your command have jumped at night?

KOZHIN

Four hundred fifty-six. Three hundred of them have made an average of five night jumps.

LOBOV

Good. (To Lazarev, about Zorya.) He's jumped too, you know?

ZORYA

I've jumped twice.

LAZAREV

Were you scared?

ZORYA

It's pretty scary the first time, when you're all alone up there. But after that I got used to it.

LAZAREV

You got used to it after only two jumps?

ZORYA

I got used to it after the first one.

KOZHIN

(Begins to listen overhead.) The plane is almost over us now, comrade Brigade Commander.

LOBOV

Let's have the searchlight.

KOZHIN

Yes sir. Prepare searchlight, sir! (Loudly.) Let's pick up that plane!

(The beam is lit and pointed upward. At the same time, as if from the searchlight, the screen lights up and a sound film shows the airplane flying through the sky.)

KOZHIN

Well. Here goes.

(A little black figure jumps from the plane and glides for a moment without opening its parachute.)

KOZHIN

What's she doing? What's the matter? The searchlight has blinded her! The ripcord! Pull the ripcord! What's going on?!)
(At that moment the parachute opens above the little figure. For a few moments the searchlight beam follows the parachu- tist.)

LOBOV
Kill the searchlight.
(The light on the screen goes out.)

LOBOV
You're edgy Major Kozhin.

KOZHIN
(Gloomily.) On the first jump, comrade Brigade Commander, you worry you might lose one.

ZORYA
What's all the fuss about? She was making a normal jump.

KOZHIN
You be quiet! No one asked you, you two-jump expert!

LOBOV
Yes, you are edgy, Major Kozhin.

BOBROV
She opened her 'chute too late, comrade Brigade Commander. Kozhin is right.

LOBOV
Yes, I can see that. But there's no need to get so nervous, especially in front of the troops.

VALYA
(Runs in, holding her parachute rolled up in her arms. She stands at attention before Lobov.) Comrade Brigade Commander, request permission to address Major Kozhin!

Permission granted!

VALYA
(To Kozhin.) Night jump from eight hundred meters completed, as ordered sir.

KOZHIN
The jump was not carried out as ordered. Did you take the liberty of showing off up there? Are you trying to pluck my nerves? This is not guitar playing, you hear?

VALYA
I don't understand, comrade Major.
KOZHIN
You don't understand? You fell one hundred and fifty meters without opening your parachute. Did I order it? Where's your discipline? This is the air force, not a ladies' sport club. You hear me?

VALYA
I didn't fall one hundred and fifty meters.

KOZHIN
You were ordered to make a normal jump. Bail out, fall ten meters and open your 'chute.

VALYA
Well, I beg your pardon, comrade Major. That was my twenty-sixth jump. It was almost normal.

KOZHIN
What? Are you teaching me now? Maybe you would like to change places and have me be an enlisted man, is that it? "Almost." Stubborn female. (Grabs a parachute.) I'll show you a normal jump. You hear? (Exits quickly.)

LAZAREV
Where does he think he's going?

LOBOV
To the plane. Let him jump. It will be good for him to get it out of his system. (To Valya.) Although you've made twenty-six jumps, there's no use in arguing. That was a delayed jump. You must follow your commander's orders.

VALYA
Yes, comrade Brigade Commander.

(The starter gives a signal.)

BOBROV
Golubev is going up with Kozhin.

LOBOV
Now watch this jump. And hold your head up! There's no reason to be upset.

(Valya remains silent.)

ZORYA
(Quietly.) Don't be upset. Peter was worried about you, see?

VALYA
He should worry about himself.

ZORYA
Well, don't tell him I told you this, but he loves you. He admitted it to me. He loves you.
VALYA
Me?! What are you talking about?

ZORYA
Swear to God he does. Every night he keeps me up all night long going
on about you. Like a painter in front of a fresh canvas, he raves about
you. He even makes me play music about you.

VALYA
Music? About me?

ZORYA
Honest to God. And what's worse, is on account of your Golubev, he and
I had an argument.

VALYA
What about?

ZORYA
Well, it's like this. I said, "I like Volodka." And he said, "If you
like him so much, why don't you go move in with him?" You know? He's
been really crabby lately.

LOBOV
Searchlight!

(The searchlight flares up on the screen . . . the plane is
visible, flying.)

BOBROV
He's tipped his wings. Now he'll jump.

(Everyone looks upward. A figure jumps from the plane, its
parachute catches on the tail of the plane.)

LOBOV
What's going on up there? I can't see.

LAZAREV
I can't make it out either.

VALYA
Oh no! What's happened?

BOBROV
Comrade Brigade Commander, Kozhin's 'chute's caught on the tail.

LOBOV
Yes, yes. I see him now, just hanging there. The plane's dragging
him through the air. Kill the searchlight!

(Searchlight goes out.)
ZORYA
Peter! What's going to happen to him?

VALYA
What has he done? Oh, it's all my fault!

LOBOV
Lay out the cross so Golubev won't land!

(The starter does so.)

FIRST PARACHUTIST
(To another.) Golubev doesn't know. Look, he's making his descent.

LAZAREV
What are you going to do Epifan Zakharovich?

LOBOV
Golubev won't land, but that's the least of our worries.

BOBROV
Does he have a knife? Maybe he could cut the line and come down on his emergency 'chute.

ZORYA
He doesn't have one. I've got it.

SECOND PARACHUTIST
Golubev's breaking off, he's turning back. He must know what's happening.

VALYA
Maybe he can pull himself up on the wing.

LOBOV
No way. The wind resistance is too great.

VALYA
What are you going to do? What can we do? Epifan Zakharovich, wouldn't the landing kill Kozhin?

LOBOV
(Points out Zorya to Valya.) We don't know. It's hard to tell.

ZORYA
Don't try to keep it from me, I can see what's happening.

VALYA
Why are you shaking Zorka? What's wrong? Your teeth are chattering.

ZORYA
Peter . . . Epifan Zakharovich, we've got to save Peter . . .
How much fuel has he got?

BOBROV
It's spent comrade Brigade Commander. This is the twelfth flight.

LOBOV
So he's got to land . . . now?

Yes sir.

LOBOV
So.

VALYA
What have I done?

LOBOV
Mrs. Golubev, take Zorya. Leave the area immediately.

ZORYA
I'm not going. I'm not! We've got to save Peter. Comrades, we've got to save him . . .

LOBOV
Stop shaking like that. Why don't you go ahead and cry, you'll feel better.

ZORYA
Men don't cry, Peter told me. A-a-a! (He bursts into tears and throws himself on the ground.

VALYA
Zorenka . . . Zorenka please . . . it'll be all right.

LOBOV
Ambulance!

BOBROV
Yes sir, comrade Brigade Commander! (Passes the order on to one of the parachutists, who runs to carry it out.)

LOBOV
(Quietly.) Well, let him land. And get the boy out of here.

LAZAREV
(The same.) Epifan Zakharovich, it will kill the man.

LOBOV
There's no alternative. Let him land while he still has fuel.

LAZAREV
And so Kozhin will be killed, Epifan Zakharovich?!
LOBOV
I know that, comrade political commissar. Calm down—there're other pilots around. Prepare for Golubev's landing!

ZORYA
It would be better if it was me up there. No one needs me. I . . . Epifan Zakharovich, I don't want to . . .

LOBOV
(Walks up to Zorya.) Give me your hand, young man. Here now. It's ice cold. You need gloves, you hear?

ZORYA
Epifan Zakharovich, do something to save Peter. You can do anything—I know you can!

LOBOV
Courage, young man, courage. You're not momma's little boy anymore! You're an observer. Get a hold of yourself.

ZORYA
I can't let Peter be killed. I can't . . .

He's landing.

LAZAREV
I hear it.

LOBOV
He's cut the engine.

BOBROV
What?! It's way too early!

LOBOV
What's he doing? Can you make it out?

BOBROV
Something's happened.

LAZAREV
He's landing on low speed. He can't be doing more than fifty kilometers now. (Quietly, to Lazarev.) Now I've lost two pilots . . . and the plane.

(The rumble of the plane comes nearer.)

VALYA
I can't look.

LAZAREV
He's landing.
VALYA
I can't. (Covers her face with her hands.)

(Everyone runs behind the scene except Lobov, Valya and Zorya. The rumble of the plane, voices.)

VALYA
What?

LOBOV
He's landed!

ZORYA
What about Peter? Let me go . . .

LOBOV
Stop! (Grabs him by the hand.)

(A group of people bring Kozhin in on a stretcher. Zorya and Valya run to him.)

ZORYA
Peter . . . is he? Peter?

KOZHIN
(Excitedly.) I'm alive! I'm alive young man! I'm alive, you hear me?

(Zorya buries his head in Kozhin's chest. Kozhin strokes him.)

KOZHIN
Ha ha! It's you, you little rascal you! I'm alive, see? And the doctor says I'll be able to fly again, he promised!

VALYA
Peter! Peter . . . Major Kozhin. Forgive me . . . I'm such a fool, I . . .

KOZHIN
Don't be silly! You had nothing to do with it. I didn't even get a chance to show you a normal jump. I just had a little accident, that's all. At least I'm back in balance again.

VALYA
What do you mean?

KOZHIN
Well, I've broken my other leg now. So I'll limp on both of them! Ha ha! But now . . .

LOBOV
Very well. It's good things worked out this way. Take him.
KOZHIN
Just a minute. Comrade Brigade Commander, I have a report to make.

LOBOV
Later.

KOZHIN
Comrade Brigade Commander, I would like to speak now, with your permission. This is like coming back from the dead, as they say.

DOCTOR
What is this all about? Take him away as ordered! No more talking!

KOZHIN
Hold it, Doctor. Don't interfere.

DOCTOR
What do you mean, don't interfere. It's my duty. I am responsible for you. Now take him away, I order it.

KOZHIN
Stop I say! Whose leg is it anyway, mine or yours?

DOCTOR
Mine. Whether it's broken or dislocated—it isn't yours now. It's mine.

KOZHIN
Okay, if it's yours, you can wait. Don't be so anxious to get a new leg. I've got to say a couple of words to the Brigade Commander.

LOBOV
You can't argue with him. Speak.

KOZHIN
When I started to bail out, the lines got caught and I was thrown backwards and got hung on the tail. They got tangled. I tried to pull myself up but that didn't work. I didn't have my knife. Volodka Golubev was flying smoothly through the air and I was tumbling along behind him, unable to cut myself loose. Where is Golubev?

LAZAREV
He's coming.

KOZHIN
Well, I knew I was done for. I'm not a little boy, you know. I figured I'd hit the landing strip and split into slices like a watermelon.

(Enter Golubev.)

KOZHIN
There's the captain. (Pointing to Golubev.) He's coming now. He
KOZHIN (cont.)

was right. We had flown far enough together. Ha! But the plane had to be saved. So I closed my eyes and said a little prayer.

LAZAREV

What kind of prayer?

KOZHIN

Our father, who is in heaven ... I know comrade political commissar. Mourning for me is boring for you, but I'll drive by later and we'll have a drink.

(Everyone laughs, Kozhin sighs.)

LOBOV

Take him away!

KOZHIN

That's all right. Just a moment longer. Golubev landed on such low speed he could have lost the plane and his own life. But no, he just cuts the motor and glides in. You see, he risked his life for me.

GOLUBEV

I had no other choice, comrade Brigade Commander. There was only one chance and I considered myself obliged to take it. Any one of us would have done the same.

LOBOV

It was certainly a hundred to one shot.

KOZHIN

Right. But he pulled it off. I cried out to him, don't risk it! Land like you're supposed to! But he did it anyway.

GOLUBEV

I heard you too.

KOZHIN

You see? He heard me. I put the emergency 'chute under my head so it wouldn't crack when I hit the landing strip. Ha! And he kept on dragging me. (Sighs.)

VALYA

He's in pain. Take him away? Volodya, let's take him.

KOZHIN

Okay, okay. But please, everybody step aside for a minute. Captain Golubev, come here, you hear me?

(Everyone steps aside. Golubev walks up to the stretcher.)

KOZHIN

Bend down here, like this, here. Forgive me, Volodya, for everything—can you?
GOLUBEV

Forgive you? For what?

KOZHIN

Well, for the Battle on the Bystraya. You hear? (Pulls Golubev to him and kisses him heartily.)
SCENE FOUR

Kozhin's room. It is much more comfortable than before, and has been cleaned up. Kozhin sits in a large armchair. He has a boot on one foot and a slipper on the other. He is reading the paper. Golubev is studying at the desk. Zorya is sitting on a small foot stool next to Kozhin, looking through a notebook. Dusk.

ZORYA
Volodya, who was this fellow Kozlov?

GOLUBEV
A traveler.

ZORYA
Then why did he write poems?

GOLUBEV
Poems? Oh, that's another Kozlov—the poet. And a good poet too.

ZORYA
Yes, I see here where you've copied down one of his poems. It's awfully good.

GOLUBEV
Which one?

ZORYA
"The Burial of Sir John Moore."

GOLUBEV
Oh yes. That's a wonderful poem. He translated that one. It's by Wolfe. Only I didn't copy down the whole thing.

ZORYA
Who was Wolfe?

GOLUBEV
An English poet.

ZORYA
And John Moore, the general, who was he?

GOLUBEV
Well, see, he was a great English general. He commanded the British forces in Portugal and was killed at Corunna in ... 1809 I think.

KOZHIN
What was this general's name?
Sir John Moore.

KOZHIN
Sir John Moore. Really quite impressive the titles they had. Well go on.

ZORYA (Reads.)*
"Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his course to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line and we raised not a stone--
But we left him alone with his glory!"**

KOZHIN
That's something! Let's hope we'll all be honored like that. Read the last quatrain again.

ZORYA
"Slowly and sadly we laid him down
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line and we raised not a stone--
But we left him alone with his glory!"

KOZHIN
"But we left him alone with his glory!"

Courageous words. The poem itself is a monument to him.

GOLUBEV
So why did you dig up this poem?

ZORYA
I wrote music to it.

*Of eight quatrains, four through seven are omitted.

**See Wolfe in Works Cited.
GOLUBEV
There's already a song to those words.

ZORYA
I don't mean a song, I mean music on the theme. I'll play it at Peter's party this evening.

KOZHIN
Party? This evening?

GOLUBEV
He's just babbling. Don't pay any attention.

KOZHIN
What party? Well, young man, out with it. And no tricks, you hear?

ZORYA
I think I'd better go now. It's nothing Peter ... really Peter, nothing ... (He files out of the room.)

KOZHIN
(Jumps up, grabs a cane and hops off after Zorya.) Hold on, you little pigeon you. (He bumps into the Doctor, who enters. Vallya enters behind the Doctor. Zorya peeps out from behind the door.)

DOCTOR
Well, here's my patient. And why don't you try soccer? No sense in jumping around for nothing.

KOZHIN
I haven't got a ball.

DOCTOR
What do you mean, ball?

KOZHIN
You can't play soccer without a ball. Got it?

DOCTOR
Got it. I understand completely. Sit down.

(Kozhin sits down. The Doctor examines his leg.)

DOCTOR
No ball, no soccer game. Got it. God sent me some patient when He sent you. If you insist on following your own tune, you'll mess up your recovery. I guess it's just your character, eh?

KOZHIN
Listen, don't you go harping on my character. I've got plenty of character and it doesn't belong in a rest home. Let Vallya tell you.

VALYA
I wouldn't set foot in a rest home.
KOZHIN
Well, the Major will get up and take a bow for that one. You're supporting me. I'm touched. (Sits down.) You see Doctor, I just tend to do things bass-ackwards. And it's bad for me because sometimes I just can't cope with myself. But being hard-headed saved my neck once.

DOCTOR
Your neck, huh? No kidding?

ZORYA
Tell us Peter.

KOZHIN
I fought in the Caucasus in 1918. I had my own detachment. Good men, good fighters, but always brawling. No discipline. And none of them were the type that graduated from finishing school, no sir. I remember once we took a real thrashing down on the river Prokladnoi. Things really got heated up. They raised holy hell. I mean they let go enough cussing to make an armored train blush. I thought they were going to turn on me. "We were sold out!" they shouted. "You sold us out!" And the next thing I knew I had a revolver in my face. And man, with the anger that came over me I just blew up! I bellowed out at them, "I wish I could sell you! But who'd buy such a lousy bunch of S.O.B.'s!" Ha! They liked that! They all broke out laughing! Kids.

DOCTOR
That's remarkable. So you saved your own neck once. But this time it's me that's going to save your leg. Now I had intended to give you permission to walk tomorrow, but after all . . .

VALYA
No, Doctor. Now we agreed . . .

DOCTOR
So we agreed, but what if he finds himself a ball?

VALYA
Everything's been set, we can't postpone it now.

Postpone what?

KOZHIN
Doctor . . .

DOCTOR
Well, if you insist on drilling me with those eyes of yours . . . okay. You can play ball tomorrow. Goalkeeper.

KOZHIN
You tell the brigade commander. If it wasn't for his orders I'd have been walking around long ago.
VALYA
He's already spoken to the brigade commander. Everything's been said, Peter. The doctor's going to let you try walking tonight. We're going to have a little party for you tonight to celebrate. Everyone's coming; Epifan Zakharovich, the guys from Golubev's detachment. It's a surprise party.

DOCTOR
Well, they're waiting for me in the ambulance. Goodbye. (Exits.)

KOZHIN
(To Zorya.) Oh, so that's the cat you let out of the bag.

ZORYA
I knew about it all along. I'm going to play tonight. We're having roast pig. It's going to be great.

KOZHIN
(To Valya and Golubev.) Did you two think this up?

VALYA
We're trying to butter up the bosses.

KOZHIN
You're two fine young people. It's really kind of you. By golly, I love you both.

VALYA
Well, Peter. You couldn't love one of us without the other. You know what I mean?

KOZHIN
Huh? Oh, so that's what you mean! Ah-huh.

GOLUBEV
Curly head. She's joking, Peter.

VALYA
No, I'm serious. Really.

KOZHIN
Well then. If you're so serious, then it's time we had a little talk. There's no need to hide anything.

ZORYA
What do you mean love one without the other? Is one of you going somewhere?

KOZHIN
Take a walk, Zorka.

ZORYA
Thanks, but I don't feel like taking a walk.
KOZHIN
Well, go find the rigger and learn how to pack a parachute or something.

ZORYA
I don't feel like it.

KOZHIN
Well, what do you feel like doing?

ZORYA
I'll sit down and play. I need to practice my music for tonight. I'm still making mistakes. It would be awful if I embarrassed everyone. I'll play quietly.

KOZHIN
That's fine. Play. And even though the party hasn't started yet, don't make any mistakes.

(Zorya begins to play quietly.)

KOZHIN
So now . . . I have a confession to make. You listen too Volodya, while I confess my love for your wife.

VALYA
Peter!

KOZHIN
No, now you listen. I love you, Valka. You hear? I love you desperately, like the air I breathe. Sit down now. I know—that you don't love me. I don't have to hear it, I can feel it. You see Valka, there was never any spring or summer in my life. My life started with the fall and that's where it stayed. I was never given that . . . that poetic ration that everyone else gets. I've never had a real love. And now . . . well, it seems like the first time I've ever really been able to express it. I used to dream about finding a real love one day, because in my heart I knew it had to exist. My heart stopped beating once because I really thought I'd found her. It happened in a spa once, a long time ago. I bumped in to an old friend, a really decent fellow. We sat down and talked old times over a smoke. And all of a sudden, this young woman walked up. She was tall and slender, like a young poplar. The kind of woman you dream about. I grabbed my friend by the hand and said, "Look, my destiny has arrived!" And he said, "Please let me introduce my wife . . ." Play louder Zorka! Don't worry, you're not disturbing anything.

ZORYA
But you're not even listening!

KOZHIN
Go on, play! And now you, Valka.

VALYA
Peter, don't . . .
KOZHIN
No, listen. Now I'm a fighting man. And I wish I could fight for your love—but Volodka has disarmed me. (Golubev smiles.) That's a good man you've got there. Damn it all. Now I mean that respectfully, Volodka. We could become close friends.

GOLUBEV
Of course.

KOZHIN
I understand friendship and how valuable it is. This is the way I look at it. Say I had a friend in America who had something happen to him one night. Lying in my sleep, I would know. I'd feel it. I'd wake up, there in my room, restless. I'd run to the telegraph and call across the ocean, "What's happened?" You know what I mean? If my friend and I live for the same reasons, if we have the same ideas in common, then that kind of friendship is sacred. It means a lot when you can turn to someone in good times and in bad times, when you can understand each other because . . . because you are friends. That is the friendship I want to feel for you, Volodya. I know I'm a hard-headed old fool. But tell me, face to face, can we be friends?

VALYA
What were you playing, Zorenka?

ZORYA
Were you listening?

VALYA
Of course I was. You play so well.

ZORYA
Here's the beginning. It's night time. A forest on the enemy side. It rustles with the wind. You hear it? (Plays.) And there, just a small group of them, look down on him. He lies there in the rain, dead. Like my pappa. They have to move on. They're unarmed and the enemy is all around them. Can you hear them? (Plays.) They stand there, taking one last look at his face. And they think. Thoughts like these. (Plays.) They say goodbye. Like men. And in each one's heart, dreadful, threatening music. It's his glory. Here. And that's the end.

KOZHIN
That's the way men say goodbye.

ZORYA
Men don't cry.

KOZHIN
That's right.

VALYA
(Squeezes Kozhin's hand.) Thank you for everything you've said. If my heart didn't belong to Volodka, I'd give it to you. We've become so close, like family. (Runs out of the room.)
KOZHIN
And I thank you for that. Well, Volodka, let's have a smoke. Oh that's right, you don't smoke. Then I will. Yes, have a smoke you crippled old devil. And curl, little smoke rings.

(Bobrov and Gorkhov enter.)

BOBROV
Peter, put it there. We're the first ones here? Volodya!

KOZHIN
Everyone will be here soon enough. Have a seat.

BOBROV
Hey, why so gloomy, huh?

KOZHIN
It's personal.

BOBROV
Oh. You know, it beats the hell out of me. But I just got a letter from my kid brother, who's working in a fishery. Something really strange must've happened during fishing season. I mean, either all the fish swam to shore or the sea just belched 'em all out. What a fish story. He and his crew are all going to Moscow. The government's going to receive them. Can you believe it? The guy is riding into the Kremlin on a Red Herring! Ha! If they'd let me, I'd fly around the Tropic of Cancer on a herring tale like that! Get it? Herring tale? Hmm. You know, I bet I could set a flight record even the Americans couldn't beat.

GOLUBEV
We hold first place for bombing in the military district, comrade Bobrov. If we push harder, we could go for the all-Soviet. That would be a record.

BOBROV
Yeah, I know. But I want to do something that'll get me recognized, personally. Take our inventor here. He's got it made. And he's already back to the drawing board. What else could he want?

GOROKHOV
Hmm, yes. Well, it's not as easy as it looks. For instance. Three nights ago I was dreaming, and the most remarkable thought came to me. I wanted to get up and write it down. I tried and tried, but then I started dreaming about something else. My head was going 'round like a carousel at a fair. And so my great idea went spinning off into a corner in my brain somewhere. Morning came, and I'd lost it.

GOLUBEV
What are you working on now?

GOROKHOV
Well, it's very technical. And I have to make doubly sure it's perfect. Drop by sometime and I'll explain it to you.
(They step aside.)

KOBRIN
(Enters.) Greetings, brave aviators of the Soviet Union! My, my. This is definitely not the festive spirit. Is Peter Vasiliavich in a bad mood again? Ah! Major, did I get some Cognac for you! "Super Special." This comes in three types; the one you sell, the one you give to your friends, and the type you drink yourself. What I have here falls into the third category. And where's the woman, eh?

KOZHIN
What woman?

KOBRIN
Valushka, our little dandelion. You know, when she lands with that parachute, I tell you she looks just like a little dandelion. One puff, and she'll fly away. And so beautiful. Right Major?

KOZHIN
I lost interest in flowers long ago Kobrin, and suggest you do the same.

KOBRIN
Oh? When? I thought you were a regular Michurinite.*

KOZHIN
Have you ever flown solo, Kobrin?

KOBRIN
Not solo, no.

KOZHIN
Well, keep talking like that and you'll get your first chance ... out that window!

KOBRIN
See here, now I came here to have a good time.

VALYA
(Entering.) Hello, everybody!

KOBRIN
Greetings, sweet young Valya. Oh, you should see what kind of cognac I brought for the party tonight. There are three types . . .

VALYA
Not now, comrade lady-killer. You can tell me later. Right now, why don't you go with Zorya to our room and get some chairs.

KOBRIN
For you, my dear . . .

*Twentieth century Soviet horticulturalist.
ZORYA
Come on, let's go. Don't get mushy. (He goes.)

KOBRIN
Show some respect Zakhar. We've tried to raise you and look what's become of you . . .

ZORYA
Okay, okay. Later.

(They exit.)

GLUKHOV
(Enters with a group of officers. Their faces are rosy and they are breathing heavily.) Ho boy! We've just come from the Party bureau. I suggested a cross country race. We ran twenty minutes.

EROKHIN
Yeah. Phew! The terrain's pretty rough in this district.

GLUKHOV
Oh, it's good for the appetite. We heard the Major's treating us to dinner.

KOZHIN
Okay, don't brag. I'll be running again soon.

LOBOV
(Enters with his wife, Anna Pavlovna. Everyone gets up.) Oh sit down, please. Was it you that flashed past us? I wanted to catch up with you, but ah . . . well, it's the gravity, you know.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Greetings everyone! Oh, except Valushka, to whom I must bid an individual greeting. How are you, my dear? And congratulations, Major, on your splendid recovery.

KOZHIN
Thank you, Anna Pavlovna. I had my friends to help me.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
You must confess, Valya. Surely you were especially responsible?

VALYA
And Volodya and Zorka. It was a communal effort.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Let me look at those eyes. (Kisses Valya.) Your eyes are so bright and clear. Whatever thoughts are in your mind--I can see in your eyes. You're like an open book.

LOBOV
And yours, my dear, conceal a great deal. Is there anything to hide?
ANNA PAVLOVNA
I've told you. I'll run off one day. Then you'll find out.

LOBOV
You leave me and I'll come catch you with a fighter plane.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Oh, please. Airplanes, airplanes. Believe your ears. He comes home at night and I'm sound asleep. In the morning when I get up, he's off again.

LOBOV
Don't listen to her. She waits up for me every night. And in the morning, she's up before I am making our morning tea. That's my sweetheart. She's my peace of mind.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Ha! Your peace of mind will leave you one day.

LOBOV
(Under his breath.) And I'll be singing as I wave goodbye. Ah! We were to have a song here, weren't we? Now, shall the hostess begin the concert or sit us down to the table?

KOBRIN
Oh, let's sit down to the table! Epifan Zakharovich, you should see the cognac I brought. "Super Special." You see, it comes in three types . . .

VALYA
My pie's not quite ready. If you're not all starving, we'll wait a few minutes.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Of course we'll wait. Won't we . . . gentlemen?

LOBOV
Then we have time for a drink!

KOBRIN
My appetite is sinful, as usual. But since the pie isn't ready . . .

Tighten your belts!

LOBOV
Let's ask Kozhin to sing. I'll join in, and then we can hear Zorka play.

At the piano, ladies and gentlemen, the young aerial observer, Zakhar! How's he coming along, Golubev?
GOLUBEV
He excels in everything he does.

LOBOV
How do you like your new instructor? Don't you miss Kozhin?

ZORYA
How could I? We still room together. But I'm not flying on his coat-tails, no sir. He's gotten a new assignment now, and I'm happy right where I am.

LOBOV
Is Golubev a good teacher?

ZORYA
Sure! Super! He lays it all out for me. He's even teaching me theory. He's terrific!

GOLUBEV
Nothing out of the ordinary, I assure you. I work at it like everyone else. Zorya exaggerates, as usual.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Oh for God's sakes! This boy should go to the conservatory and stop studying how to drop bombs.

ZORYA
But I don't want to go to the conservatory.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Well he's foolish. And some fellow you are. This youngster is wasting his time. Look at him—he's a composer. He should perfect his art, you understand? Well, Major Kozhin, what do you have to say?

KOZHIN
Our school isn't so bad, Anna Pavlovna. And anyway, if a person starts to create right away, without having experienced anything, he'll never become a great artist. When it comes to art, we need the type of person whose works will stop people in their tracks. One day he'll move mountains. But to write that kind of music he needs to harden his heart. Then he can enter the conservatory.

LOBOV
That's right. He needs to strengthen himself to develop his talent.

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Soldiers! You're all in love with yourselves!

KOZHIN
We are in love with the army, Anna Pavlovna.

LOBOV
Well, shall we argue or have a little concert? Madame General, kindly leave the Major alone for a while.
KOZHIN
Well, Valya. Let's sing a love song. Get your guitar.

VALYA
How about this one? (Plays a few notes.)

KOZHIN
That one's fine.

VALYA
Good. Anna Pavlovna, please sit down now. (To Kozhin.) I'll sit next to you on the bench here and play. (She sits down next to Kozhin with the guitar.)

(Kozhin sings. Valya plays accompaniment.)

"One night I asked the solemn moon,
Oh moon where could my true love be?
It disappeared behind a cloud
And said it could not answer me.

So then I asked the jealous cloud,
Where will I find a love that's true?
The cloud was gone with break of day
And left me empty skies of blue.

I chanced to ask the poplar tree,
If I would ever find my love.
The poplar did not answer me,
But swayed beneath the summer wind.

I wandered to an ashen tree
And asked it where my love could be.
But fall soon swept the ashen tree
And sadly shed its leaves on me.

I asked the autumn ever plain.
Where could she be? I asked in vain.
And autumn answered much the same,
A hard and steady, driving rain.

I wanted so to find my love,
I dared to ask the driving rain.
Like sadness from a face of old,
Its tears fell on my windowpane.

Now friend of mine, my closest friend,
For whom is it I'm longing so?
Please now, tell me if you can,
Where did she my true love go?

My friend, so sympathetically,
Told me a story late in life.
Seasons come and seasons go
I took your true love for my wife."
ANNA PAVLOVNA

Oh, such a sad song.

LOBOV

How about something a little more lively? Something rousing!

VALYA

We'll sing a march. Zorka, sit down to the piano. Now, let's hear the pilots sing.

(They sing.)

First
Verse:  'We march to the song of a nation young,
To the task our song so joyously sung.
Our air force--armies on the wing,
Today with all our people sing.

Chorus:  The straight and narrow course begun,
The eye of the plane's machine gun.
The courage every pilot feels,
Like their fellow soldiers on the field.
Our planes like flocks of birds above,
Defend our nation, the land we love.

Second
Verse:  Our enemies gathered like a figure in black,
Poised above for their lightening attack.
The words that guide the way are Stalin's,
And on his command fly Stalin's Falcons.

(Repeat chorus.)

Third
Verse:  No sooner has our song begun,
Than amidst the battle it is sung.
And when the enemy soon we meet,
Our wings on the wind sing his defeat.

(Repeat chorus.)"

LOBOV

Now that's the kind of song for me.

ANNA PAVLOVNA

Well. Now that that's over . . .

VALYA

We'll listen to Zorka. Play something, Zorka.

ANNA PAVLOVNA

Yes, Zorya, our bright little star.

LOBOV

Yes. Let's hear the young aerial observer.
Show us what you can do, Zorka.

(At the piano.) Well, I won't tell you what it's about. Just listen.

(Enters quickly.) Epifan Zakharovich!

Yes.

A moment, please.

Comrade Lazarev. Why are you so late? Please . . .

Not now. (Says something to Lobov.)

Well, you go ahead. I'll be there shortly.

Now where are you going?

Epifan Zakharovich! We won't let you!

Your commander has been called to the telegraph. Please, continue.

(Exits with Lazarev.)

We can wait for them.

No, no. They might be gone an hour or more. Better then just to hear it again.

Play, Zorya. We're listening.

(Zorya begins to play. The music begins softly, as if muffled. It slowly becomes stronger, aggressive and then stormy toward the end. It drains everyone listening. They sit there immobile, tense. Suddenly the lights go out. Silence fills the room. Then, the moan of a siren.)

Alarm! Close the curtains!
GOLUBEV
Yes sir!

KOZHIN
Zorka, flashlight!

ZORYA
Flashlight! (Lights a flashlight.)

(The pilots run out. Golubev and Valya go with them.)

KOZHIN
Zorka! My jacket! Mauser! Boots!

VALYA
(Rushes in, already dressed.) You're going too?

KOZHIN
Don't ask dumb questions. Help me get my boots on!

(Valya gets down on her knees. She and Zorya help Kozhin put his boots on.)

GOLUBEV
(Runs in quickly.) Come on!

ANNA PAVLOVNA
(To Kozhin.) You should not go with them. They can get along without you. Your leg . . .

KOZHIN
What are you talking about, Anna Pavlovna? I Cane on!

(Exit all but Anna Pavlovna.)

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Hurry back! I . . . oh that siren is just horrible! And the lights will be out half an hour. Why is it every time there's a siren the lights go out? I'm not walking home in the dark either. At least I'll open the curtains. (She gropingly makes her way to the window and draws open the curtains.) If I only knew how to play . . . (Goes to the piano.) How can that boy play like that? Where did he get such talent? (She casually strikes the keys a few times. The lower bass notes ring mutedly, like the sound of distant gunfire.)

VALYA
(Runs in with a flashlight.) The maps! Where are they? I didn't get the maps! (Looking on the table.) Anna Pavlovna, why are you just sitting there? Go and say goodbye to your husband!

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Say goodbye? Why?
VALYA
Why? We're taking off right now! You mean you don't know?

ANNA PAVLOVNA
What's happened?!

VALYA
They've crossed the border! They're bombing our cities! We're at war!

ANNA PAVLOVNA
Oh no Valya, no! Tell me you're joking!

VALYA
There's nothing to joke about. Several hundred have been killed already! (Finds the maps.) Here they are! Come on! Come on now! (Takes the maps and runs out of the room.)

ANNA PAVLOVNA
War!

(Behind the scene, the sound of dozens of motors running as the brigade begins to take off.)
SCENE FIVE

Evening. A clearing in a forest by a small hill. A line of people stand at the entrance to an underground communication post. A group of pilots. Among them are Zorya, Bobrov, Gorokhov, Erokhin and Glukhov. They are all dressed in leather flight suits, helmets and gloves. They are armed. At the entrance to the communication post stands a sentry. Golubev stands on a stump.

GOLUBEV
I've had you assemble here, comrades, by order of the commander, to discuss what has happened. Without warning the fascist army has crossed our borders. Enemy aircraft have bombed several Soviet cities. Considerable forces have driven into the country and threaten to attack Moscow.

(General commotion.)

VOICES
Moscow? How? So that's it! Fascist bastards!

GOLUBEV
We are committed to our international obligations. Therefore, we have appealed to the League of Nations with proposals which we hope will prevent full scale war. We agreed to wait twenty-four hours for a response. The enemy's first offensive was liquidated. Their squadron has been devastated. Only a few of their aircraft made it home.

EROKHIN
Which of our units led the fight?

GOLUBEV
Our units haven't seen action so far. And we don't want to be left out!

VOICES
Right! Let us fight! We'll show them!

GOLUBEV
Time is running out. If we don't get an answer soon, we will respond to the attack.

GOROKHOV
Right!

GOLUBEV
That's all I have to tell you at this time.

EROKHIN
I wonder what they hit us with.
GLUKHOV
Dive bombers, more than likely.

(The field telephone crackles. Glukhov walks down into the communication post.)

GOROKHOV
Our twelfth and thirteenth squadrons must have met the attack. It must have been a fierce battle.

BOBROV
I bet. If only we could get a shot at them.

GOROKHOV
They asked for a fight. Now they'll get one.

GOLUBEV
Still no word. I'll keep you informed. Take up your positions and wait for orders.

(All except Golubev, Gorkhov, Zorya and Erokhin disburse.)

GLUKHOV
(Appearing.) Comrade Captain, you're wanted on the phone.

GOLUBEV
I'm coming. (Exits.)

BOBROV
Boy, time drags.

ZORYA
Sure does. It's a shame Peter isn't with us.

GOLUBEV
(Enters from the communication post.) Comrade Erokhin, find out if there're any new radiograms from the command post.

EROKHIN
Yes sir!

GOLUBEV
Quickly.

(Erokhin exits.)

GLUKHOV
(Walks up to Golubev and salutes.) Comrade Captain, the tanker has arrived.

GOLUBEV
Have the quartermaster fuel the planes. Make ready.
GLUKHOV
Yes sir! (Goes into the communication post.)

(The sentries change shifts.)

NAVIGATOR
(Walks up to Golubev and salutes.) Comrade Captain, the reconnaissan-

cce group is awaiting your orders.

GOLUBEV
Very well. Proceed as planned.

NAVIGATOR
Yes sir. (Exits.)

DOCTOR
Any new developments, comrade Captain?

GOLUBEV
I dispatched a man to the command post. Except for the announcement

from the Party and the government, nothing.

BOBROV
The Party announcement was transmitted throughout the world in all

languages.

GOROKHOV
Let's hope everyone hears it. When I heard it myself, it made my heart

quiver. It made me want to do something . . . heroic. You know, if I

could join the Party a second time, I'd do it. Word of honor.

DOCTOR
Many wounds will have to be healed if we are to be at war. I can

imagine what it's like out there. A whirlpool of death.

BOBROV
The world's probably running a fever of a hundred and thirty right now.

DOCTOR
A high temperture always accompanies illness.

(An automobile pulls up.)

KOBVIN
(Running in.) Comrade Captain, I wish you health. How was your

supper? Everything in order? No interruptions?

GOLUBEV
It was excellent.

KOBVIN
Thank you. I bring you greetings from Valya. I've just come from

Major Kozhin's regiment.
GOLUBEV

Thank you.

GOROKHOV

Kobrin! Comrade Kobrin! What's the news? Tell us something!

KOBрин

No news is good news, comrades! But I've got to prepare the planes.
(Runs out.)

GLUKHOV

(To Gorokhov.) Did you write home?

GOROKHOV

Huh? Oh yes, I wrote to my little brother. But he's in the infantry and I don't know whether he'll get it or not.

GLUKHOV

Yeah. The infantry is moving pretty fast.

BOBROV

So is everything else. Everything but the time. It just lumbers along like an ox drawn cart.

EROKHIN

(Walks up to Golubev and salutes.) New radiogram, comrade Captain.

(Glukhov exits.)

GOLUBEV

It's a decree.

BOBROV

Read it!

GOROKHOV

We're listening.

GOLUBEV

(Reads.) "The Party and the government proposes that everyone who has submitted a statement of their willingness to join the army, remain in their places, continue working and wait for the orders of the People's Military Commissariat. No one will be accepted into the army without submitting such a statement. According to preliminary data, during the past nineteen hours, six million volunteers have joined the army. Eighty per cent of the Party and the Komsomol have joined."

BOBROV

It would be better if those figures weren't released until tomorrow. If the enemy hears those numbers it will kill the chance of cease-fire.

GOLUBEV

It's not that simple, comrade Bobrov.
EROKHIN

What do you mean?

GOLUBEV

They won't retreat now. They knew what they were doing. They must be
testing their new instruments.

GLUKHOV

New weapons, you mean?

GOLUBEV

Yes of course. New instruments of war. No doubt weapons of great
destructive strength. They've been preparing for several years.

GOROKHOV

Well, we've come up with a few things ourselves. These will be highly
technical battles we fight.

GOLUBEV

True. And yes, we are completely capable of defeating the enemy. But
there are always surprises.

BOBROV

You talk as if you could be . . . a little scared perhaps.

GOLUBEV

I'm not afraid of anybody or anything! I just don't want my men to
think we're going on another training mission, that's all. This is
real.

GOROKHOV

Ha! You know, I've wanted to go abroad for years. Just to get a
glimpse of . . .

ZORYA

You'll see a lot from the plane!

GOROKHOV

What do you mean from the plane? We're going to drop in and stroll
around awhile! We didn't study languages for nothing, you know.

BOBROV

Damn, time drags. I'm ready to go. Now! I hate waiting more than
anything else in the world. Anything else to the bulletin, comrade
Captain?

GOLUBEV

(Reads.) "Chronicle. Demonstrations throughout the country. Red
Square running over with marchers. Factory workers march fully armed
beneath banner of Red Guard." And listen to this! "By order of the
People's Commissar of Defense and on the appeal of Marshal Budyonny,
soldiers of the former First Cavalry are gathering the city of N . . .
From all ends of the Soviet Union Budyonny's men hasten to the call of
their commander."
They'll join the shock forces for a strike. I wonder if that'll include us? Well, we'll know soon. You know, I bet if you'd put your ear to the ground, you could hear Budyonny's cavalry coming now!

And in front--Marshals Voroshilov and Budyonny. Five minutes comrades. (The telephone rings in the communication post. Glukhov goes to it.) Comrade Captain, brigade staff for you.

Coming.

Attention men!

(Comes out of the communication post. To Bobrov.) Assemble detachments. The brigade commander has ordered me to assemble the squadron! He's been detained but will arrive shortly. Section commanders report!

(Section commanders report to Golubev.)

Assemble a detachment on the right flank. The rest on the left.

(Runs out.) Section commanders report!

Yes sir! Assemble detachments, sir!

(They disperse. To the right a detachment is assembled under Bobrov. To the left, off stage, heard but unseen, another detachment is formed.)

Attention!

(A car drives up.)

Ten-shun!

(Enter Lobov and Lazarev. Golubev reports to Lobov.)

Ninth fighter squadron assembled as ordered, sir!

Greetings comrades. At ease.

(They all bid him greetings in unison.)
LOBOV
I've come to give you the news you've all been waiting for. Enemy mili­tary actions are continuing. The Party and the government have united our troops under the Red Banner. Stalin and Voroshilov have ordered us to meet the enemy and destroy him!

GOROKHOV
Comrade Brigade Commander, lead us in a cheer to battle!

LOBOV
Save your strength men. Better now just to shake hands. We move out today.

(The commanders, standing in rows, shake each other's hands. A few seconds go by. Roused, the commanders come to attention.)

LOBOV
Our brigade has received its combat assignment. It calls for one detachment of men . . . brave men. This is an extremely dangerous task. So, let me tell you like a true Bolshevik. We don't expect many of you to make it back alive. Now, I've been ordered to call for volunteers. So would those of you here on the first day of the war, who are willing to give your lives for the Republic, please take one step forward.

(Every commander, without hesitation, takes one step forward. For a moment, Lobov is unable to speak. Then he continues, plainly.)

LOBOV
Just as I thought. Thank you.

(Then, in unison, the commanders shout: "We serve the working people".

LOBOV
Since everyone has volunteered, the order will be carried out by the first detachment. Captain Golubev!

GOLUBEV
(Steps out in front.) Yes sir, comrade Brigade Commander!

LOBOV
Here are your orders. At twenty two ten, that is in four minutes, you will open them and proceed with your detachment as ordered. Come here.

(Golubev walks up to Lobov. Lobov looks at him as if he wanted to remember something.)

LOBOV
Well now. (Kisses Golubev firmly. To the detachment.) That's for all of you. Clear? The remaining detachments will remain in combat readiness and wait for further orders. Carry on men.
(Everyone except those in Golubev's detachment proceeds to disburse. Lobov and Lazarev leave quickly.)

GOLUBEV
(Opens his orders and reads carefully. The sound of a car driving off.) Yes. (In commanding voice.) Section commanders! Navigator! Report!

(The section commanders and the navigator report to him.)

GOLUBEV
Zakhar Baikov, get out of the formation.

(Goes with the section commanders into the communication post.)

ZORYA
Why did he call me out?

DOCTOR
He did what had to be done.

ZORYA
You mean he's grounding me?

DOCTOR
Of course he is. And he's doing the right thing. Didn't you hear the brigade commander? It's a deadly matter.

ZORYA
Let him try to ground me! I'm no less experienced than the others. Zorka can come to class, but not to fight! It won't work!

GOLUBEV
(Comes out of the communication post with the section commanders.) Any questions?

VOICES
No. Everything's clear. Understood.

GOLUBEV
Start the engines at twenty two fifteen. (To Glukhov.) Open the hangars.

GLUKHOV
Yes sir! Open hangars sir! (Goes into the communication post.)

(Above the communication post, shrubs and grass that made up the hillcock suddenly part, showing the steel gates of the underground hangar. The gates open noiselessly. In the hangar is a plane, one of many, ready for take off.)

GOLUBEV
Man your planes!
(The men from Golubev's detachment run down into the hangar.)

GOLUBEV

Zorya!

ZORYA

What do you want?

GOLUBEV

You're staying!

ZORYA

I am not! I'm going to fly!

GOLUBEV

Gavin will go in your place.

ZORYA

And I tell you I'm going to fly! No one's going to take my plane away from me! If Gavin sets foot near my plane, I'll shoot him! You hear? I stepped forward with the rest of the men and I know what I'm doing! I'll tell Peter! He won't let you make a coward out of me!

GOLUBEV

Peter wouldn't let you go either! If you're a man, you'll understand me. You're a musician. You're going to be a great composer one day. We've got to save your music for our country!

ZORYA

And I say we've got to save our country for my music!

GOLUBEV

This conversation is finished!

ZORYA

Good! I'm going to my plane!

GOLUBEV

I'll throw you out!

ZORYA

You don't have time to bother with me. We're taking off! (Runs into the hangar.)

GOLUBEV

Where are you going? (Looks at his watch.) Zakhar! Zorka! Get back here! Well, there's another hard head! He's right. There's no time. (Runs into the hangar.)

(After a few moments, the propellers begin to turn. The plane moves from the depth of the hangar to the gate.)
SCENE SIX

An underground headquarters at the defensive zone of the fascist army. On the wall facing the audience is a huge electromagnetic map. An intricate system of lights on the map details the progress of various aspects of the battle which is raging above. Telephones. Radio gear. Maps. A table with dispatches, telegrams and reports on it. In the bunker—the commander of the fascist defense zone, Lt. General baron Hugo von Miesenbach and his aide, Colonel Graudentz.

MIESENBACH
Check saturation density, Graudentz.

GRAUDENTZ
(At the apparatus.) Ninety-eight per cent, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
Excellent. Temperature, Graudentz?

GRAUDENTZ
Eight degrees above zero, your excellency. Normal rate.

MIESENBACH
And so we will destroy their planes with equal efficiency. It's much more pleasant this way. Don't you agree, Graudentz?

GRAUDENTZ
That didn't occur to me, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
Of course. It depends on the person, Graudentz. I am one who prefers neatness. For example, I detest mustard gas. Aesthetically disgusting. It covers the skin with a slimy film. Victims of mustard gas quickly find their bodies covered with sores. In a short time those sores fester. Puss runs from their eyes and nose. Yes, you see Graudentz, I prefer to work with phosgene and its various preparations. As I said, it's quite efficient. An individual poisons himself with it, but after fifteen or twenty minutes he feels normal. Healthy. A day goes by—two at the most, and he very suddenly ... dies. Well, the surface zone commander, Colonel Ebrecht, has he arrived?

GRAUDENTZ
Just now, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
Send him in.
GRAUDENTZ
Yes, your excellency. (Pressing a button and speaking into a microphone.) Commander of the surface zone, report to his excellency.

(A knock at the door.)

MIESENBACH
Come in.

EBRECHT
(Enters and salutes.) Colonel Ebrecht here at your command.

MIESENBACH
Have all preparations been made?

EBRECHT
Yes, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
All detachments have taken up their positions?

EBRECHT
I have positioned detachments according to our calculations of where the planes must land.

MIESENBACH
Your detachments are armed with machine guns?

EBRECHT
Yes, your excellency. Once the enemy planes are brought down, I doubt their crews will show much resistance. We have the support of several anti-aircraft guns should the planes attempt to fire on us.

MIESENBACH
No. We must resist heavy firing. Spare the airplanes if at all possible. We may have use for them.

EBRECHT
Your orders will be carried out to the letter, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
Of that I have no doubt.

EBRECHT
Is the enemy still advancing, your excellency?

MIESENBACH
You must be prepared for them at any moment.

EBRECHT
Yes, your excellency. May I be permitted to return to my duties?

MIESENBACH
Yes.
(Ebrecht salutes and exits.)

MIESENBACH
So. Everything is in order. Now we will fight.

GRAUDENTZ
I'm not used to this kind of war, your excellency.

MIESENBACH
It does have its peculiarities. Throughout the entire war we must sit together in this... this underground bunker. I almost said it. This laboratory.

GRAUDENTZ
If I may be permitted to say so, your excellency, that is what you meant to say.

MIESENBACH
But aren't we like professors, Graudentz? And the science of destruction is, by no means, less honorable than any other. You're of the old school, Graudentz. You're a dried up old man.

GRAUDENTZ
I'm a soldier, your excellency. I've been a soldier for thirty-five years. It's my profession.

MIESENBACH
And there's no shame in that Graudentz. But the weapons have changed. Just think what it would have been like twenty years ago if we'd been attacked by several hundred airplanes. Today we will destroy no less than a thousand. And here we sit, you and I, chatting comfortably.

(A knock at the door.)

DUTY OFFICER
(Enters and salutes.) Your excellency. Karl Krrok, officer of the Reich's Commissar, has arrived and wishes to be received by you.

MIESENBACH
Yes, I know. Send him in.

(The Duty Officer exits.)

MIESENBACH
So. He has decided to honor us with his presence. Let's look him over, Graudentz. You remain standing. I'm going to sit down. Ah.

(A knock at the door.)

MIESENBACH
Come in.
KMOK
(Enters wearing a black military uniform and service cap. On the cap--skull and crossbones. On his sleeve--a yellow armband with swastika. Upon entering, he extends his right hand and speaks in a pompous manner.) Heil Fuhrer!

MIESENBACK
(Without extending his hand.) Greetings.

KMOK
I expected praise for our glorious head of state.

MIESENBACK
We must avoid any further misunderstanding. Only one man have I called glorious leader. (Gets up and salutes a picture on the wall.) He is our great Emperor. I'm too old to change my conviction. Nothing can replace him for me. You have been appointed as my Reich's Commissar. That is the right of the present government. Please produce your authorization.

KMOK
(Produces authorization.) The document is signed by the Minister of Aviation.

MIESENBACK
By the minister, very good. You have an order for my command?

KMOK
Here it is. (Produces the order.)

MIESENBACK
(Looking at it.) That is sufficient. Now, I must acquaint you with the technical aspects of the defense zone and its plan of operation. Colonel Graudentz?

GRAUDENTZ
Yes, your excellency. (Goes to the electro-mechanical map.) Before you is a map of the country. The defense zone has been divided into various sectors. Central headquarters are here. (Shows on the map.) And the zone here? It has been completely gassed. We call the gas Z.

MIESENBACK

GRAUDENTZ
Z. The gas has three virtues. First. It will not support combustion. Second. It does not disburse in the air. Third. It's invisible. Saturation is controlled at the central station, here. (Shows on the map.) In short, we have gassed this zone to such a degree, from the ground to a sufficient height, that nothing, no planes, tanks or men, can cross it. Planes flying into this zone will find their engines will fail, forcing them to crash land in the vicinity.
And this map?

GRAUDENTZ
A recent invention of ours. It plots and details all military information. It too has three virtues. First. It automatically fixes the position of enemy planes. Second. It plots and monitors their course and speed. Third, it gives the number. Everything.

MIESENBACH
You see, herr Kmok, as the enemy planes attack . . .

KMOK
Attack? They're going to bomb us?

MIESENBACH
They will never reach us. They will crash just within the zone.

It's hard to envision.

MIESENBACH
Graudentz explained it rather dryly. You are about to witness an amazing episode. From within this very bunker we must secure victory for our air force. If we had as many planes as the Bolsheviks, we would have hit them with all our strength yesterday. But the odds are not in our favor. Voroshilov usually says he hasn't as many planes as he needs. We know that is more than enough. If we dispatched all our squadrons they would still knock us out of the sky. Yesterday we forfeited a large part of our strength. Although our planes were able to bomb, Russia, their air force responded and we suffered heavy losses. Today, and of this I have no doubt, will be the day the Red Army responds to our attack. And they will strike here, in this zone, from which they will find it impossible to escape. Their planes will fall like game to an unseen hunter. Today we will incapacitate their strongest detachments. And tomorrow, with all our forces, we will strike Moscow. It will be a short and efficient war.

KMOK
I'm pleased to hear you say that. I've been promised a significant post in Russia.

MIESENBACH
How very interesting. What is it? If, of course, it's not classified.

KMOK
No, no. I'll be the governor-general of Kharkhov.

MIESENBACH
Ah! (The phone rings. Miesenbach takes it.) Yes. Yes. Commander of the defense zone Lieutenant General baron Hugo von Miesenbach here. Yes. Your order will be carried out quickly and efficiently. (Hangs up.) Colonel Graudentz! Open a line to sector four.
Graudentz works with the radio gear, pressing a button on the telephone board which lights a red bulb on the electro-mechanical map designating sector four. A voice comes over the receiver.

VOICE
Chief of sector four awaiting orders.

MIESENBACK
In two minutes you will degas the seventeenth corridor of sector four for a period of ten minutes.

VOICE
Transmission received and understood.

(Graudentz ends the communication. The light on the electro-mechanical map designating sector four goes out.)

GRAUDENTZ
Tanks?

MIESENBACK
Yes. Flame throwers. First corps. Tomorrow they will burn all the territory within twenty kilometers and make an assault on the enemy fortifications.

KMOX
Very good. Flame throwers are most expedient.

(Miesenbach smiles.)

GRAUDENTZ
Your excellency! The map!

(Red arrows light up on the electro-mechanical map. They move from east to west toward the defensive zone.)

MIESENBACK
Ah! Graudentz. The course?

GRAUDENTZ
Now bearing on . . . sector six.

(On the electro-mechanical map, the letter S appears, followed by the number nine.)

MIESENBACK
Nine planes. First detachment. Raise sector six!

(Graudentz works the radio gear.)

VOICE
Chief of sector six awaiting orders.
MIESENBACH
Nine enemy planes approaching your sector between twenty-first and
twenty second corridors.

VOICE
Understood.

MIESENBACH
Advise the detachment of the twenty-first corridor to make preparations
for enemy attack. Once the planes are downed, bring me a few prisoners.

VOICE
Transmission received and understood.

(The red arrows on the electro-mechanical map continue their
course toward the defensive zone. Kmok stares anxiously at
the map. Graudentz stands. Miesenbach clinches his fist. As
the red arrows reach the defense zone, they go out. The letter
S and the number nine disappear from the screen and are re­
placed by an X.)

MIESENBACH
Ah! We've done it! They're down! Near the woods. Graundentz, make
a report.

(Graundentz begins to type out a report.)

KMOK
Well. Now that it's finished I'd like to be with the detachment.
Surely they have prisoners.

MIESENBACH
If they do, they'll be brought to me. I must have whatever information
they possess.

KMOK
I will be glad to extract any information they have. My last com­misi­
sion was at a concentration camp. I have reached down into the depths
of many men's souls.

(The crackling of the radio gear. Graudentz opens communi­
cation.)

MIESENBACH
Ah!

VOICE
Chief of sector six reporting. The enemy attack has been liquidated.
Two planes were destroyed by their own crews. Remaining planes downed
in nearby field and captured with crews.

MIESENBACH
So. They destroyed two of their own planes. It's tactlessness. Put
that in the report, Graudentz.
(Graudentz continues.)

MIESENBACK
Have the highest ranking prisoner brought to me.

VOICE
Transmission received and understood.

KMOK
A Bolshevik. He and I will have a pleasant talk.

MIESENBACK
I will talk with him. This is an army, not a concentration camp. This man is an officer and a prisoner of war.

KMOK
But he's a Bolshevik!

MIESENBACK
He's an officer first! If he doesn't talk, then he becomes a Bolshevik and you will deal with him. You seem highly agitated. The very word Bolshevik makes the blood climb to your face.

KMOK
I hate the Bolsheviks! I'll be happy when they have been crushed!

MIESENBACK
Crushed? All of them?

KMOK
We've crushed their organization. Only the rag tags remain. They have no organization, no ruler, nothing.

MIESENBACK
And what about the entire nation on the other side of the border?

KMOK
On them I will transfer my hatred!

(A knock at the door.)

MIESENBACK
Come in.

(Enter an officer, two soldiers, Golubev and Zorya. Golubev's helmet is missing. His arm is in a sling and his face is burned. Zorya's hands are tied behind his back. The officer goes up to Miesenbach and salutes. Kmok looks over the prisoners.)

OFFICER
Your excellency, the highest ranking prisoner has been brought to you as ordered. (Quietly.) I brought this boy along. He may be a
brother, your excellency. Perhaps he too has information. Or you can
use him to get information from the older one.

Knok
Work on the boy. That will make the older one talk.

Miesenbach
Why is the boy tied?

Officer
He put up a fight, the crazy kid.

Miesenbach
You may return to your duties.

(The officer salutes and exits. The two soldiers remain by the
prisoners.)

Miesenbach
Were you injured in the crash?

Golubev
Yes.

Miesenbach
Do you wish to see a doctor?

Golubev
Yes. Thank you.

Miesenbach
Graudentz!

Graudentz
(At the radio gear.) Get the doctor.

(A knock at the door. A doctor enters silently with a medi-
cine chest.)

Graudentz
See to the prisoner.

(The doctor walks up to Golubev and takes a look at his hand. Dres-
ses it.

Miesenbach
War is often unpleasant, isn't it? Ah?

Golubev
Yes. Few comforts.

Miesenbach
You're a prisoner now.
GOLUBEV

(To doctor.) Thank you. Yes. I was setting fire to my plane. They had me. I wasn't quick enough.

MIESENBACH

As I was saying. You're a prisoner now. Perhaps you have a wife at home. Ah?

GOLUBEV

Perhaps. But why don't you get to the point? What do you want from me?

MIESENBACH

I'm a senior officer. You should speak to me with a little more respect.

GOLUBEV

Sorry. I'm no actor. What do you want?

KMOK

Permit me, your excellency!

MIESENBACH

That's all right. So. You say you're no actor. I think I understand what you're saying. Besides, I don't like actors. They play life rather poorly.

ZORYA

He asked you want you want. You hear?

MIESENBACH

That's some boy there! And what if I take my belt to you?!

ZORYA

Go ahead!

MIESENBACH

Well, Herr Kmok. When you see children like this, what do you feel like doing?

KMOK

Like squashing them!

MIESENBACH

Oh, no. It makes me want to be a father! To breed more like him!

GOLUBEV

I thought they brought me to the headquarters, not to a circus.

MIESENBACH

Oh this is no circus. Of that I can assure you. Please believe me. If you do not tell me exactly what I wish to know, I will have you put against a wall and shot like a dog! Now, I must know the location of the secret airport in your region. I want to know its dimensions and
the number of planes it supports. I will give you one minute. If you
talk, I give you my word as an officer you will live. You'll be sent
to a camp for prisoners of war. If you choose not to talk, you will
play a most amusing role in this circus. That of a corpse! You have
forty-five seconds.

Volodya . . .

Wait. If I talk--I live?

Yes.

And if I don't--I'm dead?

Correct. And your minute is expiring.

Oh, Zorka my boy . . . it's tough to be alone. I'll talk.

Volodya! What are you doing? Volodya, you can't!

You've made an intelligent choice. I had no doubt you would. I'm
listening.

You want dimensions?

Yes.

Our airports are all quite spacious. Just like our mother land is
. . . quite spacious. You understand?

So.

Numbers. We have many secret airports. And they house enough planes
to cover your entire army like a shadow! Have I made myself clear?

Oh yes. Quite clear. Herr Kmok!
Now! (He jumps out of his chair and walks up to Golubev, looking straight into his eyes. He speaks almost silently.) You ... mongrel bastard. You're a filthy animal like all your people. You dare to taunt people of the master race! (Raises his hand and strikes Golubev with his fist. Golubev recoils. The soldiers hold him.)

ZORYA
Why you ... (He throws himself on Kmok, grabbing Kmok's hand in his mouth and biting it with all his might.)

KMOK
Ahh! My hand! You little bastard! (He tries to shake his hand loose, but Zorya will not let go. Then Kmok pulls out his revolver and shoots. Zorya falls to the floor.)

GOLUBEV
Zorya! You fascist bastard! (He tries to strike at Kmok, but the soldiers prevent it. Then he drops to his knees and bends down over Zorya. Zorka! Zorenka ... it's me, Volodya. Zorka. (Puts his head to Zorya's chest and listens for his heartbeat. Suddenly, Golubev let's out a cry of anguish that affects even the enemy around him. He gets up and takes a long, cold look at Kmok.)

MIESENBACH
You didn't have to shoot the boy.

KMOK
He nearly took off my hand, your excellency! The fool.

MIESENBACH
(To Golubev.) Was he your brother?

(Golubev remains silent.)

MIESENBACH
There is nothing you can do. This is war. Graudentz, get him out of here.

(Graudentz makes a call. Then, a knock at the door.)

MIESENBACH
Come in.

(Soldiers enter. Graudentz points to the corpse. They pick it up and carry it out.)

KMOK
(To Golubev.) Now will you talk? Filth!

(Golubev remains silent.)

KMOK
You will talk!
(Golubev remains silent.)

**KMOK**

Bind his legs!

(The two soldiers bind Golubev's legs with a belt.)

**KMOK**

Bring him over here, to the table.

**MIESENBACH**

(Walks up to Golubev.) For the last time. This is a most unenjoyable procedure. Now, will you talk?

(Golubev remains silent.)

**MIESENBACH**

Now it will be worse for you.

**KMOK**

Give me his hand. His fingers. Fingers!

**MIESENBACH**

I highly recommend that you talk. You see, we are alone. No one will know. I swear to you, the word of an officer and a soldier, I will keep our secret. Ah?

(Golubev remains silent.)

**KMOK**

Are you going to talk? Or shall I begin to break your fingers? (Kmok and Miesenbach both bend down over Golubev's shoulders.)

**KMOK**

Talk!

(Again, a knock at the door. This time, much louder.)

**MIESENBACH**

Damn! Yes, who's there? Come in!

(The door bursts open. Kozhin enters very calmly, clad in a blue flight suit and carrying a mauser.)

**KOZHIN**

Thank you very much. Now I suggest you leave your weapons where they are. You are surrounded.

(Enter six of Kozhin's paratroopers armed with machine guns.)

**KOZHIN**

And don't touch the radio or I'll shoot you where you stand. Greetings Volodya. We released the other commanders. They told us you were here.
MIESENBACK
(Backing up.) No, no ... Graudentz, what is this? Am I seeing things?

KOZHIN
Yes, you are! Communists in your headquarters, armed with machine guns.
(To Golubev.) Ha! And you, Volodya, said this operation was unreal-
istic. Why these paratroopers . . .

GOLUBEV
Peter! Peter!

KOZHIN
(Walks over to Golubev, releases the belt from his legs and gives him a revolver.) You're wounded, huh? Yes, they've tortured you.

They started to.

GOLUBEV
That's when I knocked. Just in time.

KOZHIN
You're crazy! Why did you knock?

GOLUBEV
Politeness, of course! We've just arrived in Europe, you know. Let's have their weapons.

(The paratroopers confiscate the arms.)

KOZHIN
(To Knok.) Interrogation is not very nice, my friend. It's unbe-
coming. What's this?

GOLUBEV
He killed Zorka.

KOZHIN
(Steps back.) Zorka's been killed?! Zorka was with you? He's dead?

GOLUBEV
He's dead, Peter.

KOZHIN
Zorka ... he's dead. They've killed Zorka. (Goes up to the wall in silence.)

(Pause.)

KOZHIN
(To Knok.) You ... you killed Zorka? (Picks up his revolver.)

(Knock squirms, covering himself with his hands. The phone rings.)
KOZHIN
Where's that call coming from? (To Miesenbach.) Well?

MIESENBACH
Straight from the headquarters of the high command.

KOZHIN
Well then. You will tell your commander that everything is in order and that he can pop in any time he likes. Move!

MIESENBACH
Graudentz!

KOZHIN
Oh, so he's going to do the talking? (To Graudentz.) Well talk. But I warn you. One wrong word, one sound, and you're dead. (Goes to the telephone.) Here!

GRAUDENTZ
(Takes the receiver, turns his back.) Hello! Yes. Colonel Graudentz reporting. ( Quickly.) Bolshevik paratroopers armed with machine guns have captured our headquarters. They're about to kill me. Tell my children Wilhelm and Frederic their father died in the line of duty and . . .

KOZHIN
(Takes the receiver from Graudentz and hangs up, smiling.) Well men. Now what should we do with such a brave old soldier? Ha! What a fix we'd be in if I hadn't disconnected the telephone! (Holds up the cord. Golubev and the paratroopers laugh.) Come here you. (Kmok comes quickly.) Take the receiver. Now look. It's plugged in. One word . . . you understand? (Kozhin stands there, not looking at Kmok.)

KMOK
(Takes the receiver.) Hello? Yes, there was a break in the line. Commissar Karl Kmok speaking. His excellency is busy interrogating prisoners. Yes, yes everything is in order. (Hangs up the phone. Looks shiveringly at Kozhin.)

GRAUDENTZ
You . . . swine!

KOZHIN
Have you no will? No control? Ha! We will take you back to the Soviet Union. A cheap import . . . ah, but Lobov asked me to hold my tongue. Well, march!

MIESENBACH
I am a Lieutenant General and a baron! I should be . . .
KOZHIN
And I am the first born son of a first guild farm hand.* I understand
etiquette!

(Glukhov, Erokhin and Lemke enter, armed.)

GLUKHOV
Volodya! Comrade Captain, you're alive! (Embraces him.)

LEMKE
Contact has been made with the central station, Kozhin. Things are
moving right along.

KOZHIN
Good. By the way, permit me to introduce you, Herr General. A
sergeant from one of your detachments, Hans Lemke.

LEMKE
An honor to make your acquaintance, your excellency.

No . . .

MIESENBACK
Oh yes, your excellency!

LEMKE
Oh what a shame. You seem disappointed, your excellency. You see,
before you stands the commander of the Red Frontniks of the eighth
army. Lemke.

LEMKE
Stevedore Lemke is actually my title.

KOZHIN
You, a stevedore? No kidding!

LEMKE
Yes, Port Stevedore. Don't you believe me?

KOZHIN
No, it's not that. Oh never mind. Just one of those personal things.

LEMKE
We had the honor to work under your excellency's command. We worked
conscientiously and studied the science of war with the rifle you made
us carry. We know how to handle a rifle.

MIESENBACK
You served with the troops?!

*In the late nineteenth century, the most wealthy of three strata of
agricultural merchants.
LEMKE
That's correct. Until the last moment, your excellency. Until the last moment. But when I realized who my real enemy was, I joined the real army. The Red Army, your excellency.

KOZHIN
Well, I don't need to detain you any longer, your excellency. We've got a lot to do. (To the paratroopers.) Put them in the planes. Tell them the Major ordered the thirteenth auxiliary to dispatch right away.

(The paratroopers exit with the prisoners.)

GOLUBEV
This is all like a dream. I look at Lemke and think I must be dreaming.

LEMKE
It's no dream my friend. We're here.

GOLUBEV
(Offering Lemke his hand.) Comrade!

KOZHIN
(To Golubev.) Can you raise brigade headquarters?

GLUKHOV
I'll try. (Goes to the radio.)

KOZHIN
Get Lobov. (Looks at the message Glukhov is writing.) Zones in sector six have been completely degassed. The central station will be liquidated at three o'clock. (Reads a list of numbers.) 220, 337, 116, 69, 33, 498, 348. Well, Golubev. We've saved your skin. Ha! (To Glukhov.) Here, add this to the code. Eight.

(Glukhov works at the radio gear.)

GOLUBEV
But tell me how you . . .

KOZHIN
How we landed?

GOLUBEV
Exactly.

KOZHIN
Well, you know about the zones? (Pointing to the apparatus.)

GOLUBEV
Right. I was ordered to fly in, estimate enemy strength and convince them we knew nothing of it.
KOZHIN
And you did your duty. Once you had, we were able to walk right in without resistance. Ha! My men thought we'd gotten lost in the stratosphere. You know how high we were flying?

GOLUBEV

Well?

KOZHIN
Eighteen thousand meters. We all flew in winter gear. And, it was cold up there!

GOLUBEV
The whole brigade?

KOZHIN
One squadron. Only my squadron is equipped for winter flying. I tell you though, at that height, it was like flying over Tver boulevard.

GOLUBEV
Why didn't this ... contraption pick you up?

KOZHIN
A little surprise from our radio specialist. I don't know how, but he jammed the airwaves on our descent. The ... contraption, as you put it, was blind as a bat.

GOLUBEV
So are we going to try and move in any further?

KOZHIN
No way. We've done our job. We're going home.

GOLUBEV
But there are surface troops between us and home.

KOZHIN
Yes, they've taken up position in the woods. But we've still got the upper hand. We've got the element of surprise. Well, we've still got a few minutes. But they're short ones. We didn't come to pick mushrooms.

GOLUBEV
I'm ready for orders, sir. Just one thing, I ... I only wanted ...

KOZHIN
To know where Valya is? I know. I sent her off on reconnaissance. I didn't bring her in here because I didn't know what kind of shape you'd be in. It's war, you know.

GOLUBEV
But she's here?!
KOZHIN
Don't worry, loving husband. Ha! You can count on a long talk and lots of kisses.

VALYA
(Runs in.) Volodya! (Runs to him, but stops halfway. Reports to Kozhin.) Comrade Major! Enemy fortifications at the edge of the forest include artillery. Two tanks. Flamethrowers. We didn't fire on them because we didn't want to give away our position. What are your orders?

KOZHIN
My orders? Ha! That we show them what it's like to be beaten! Follow me!

(Everyone runs out behind Kozhin. Glukhov remains, trying to raise the brigade on the radio.)

GLUKHOV
Hello! Hello! This is star . . . hello! This is star . . . come in! Calling nineteen! Calling nineteen, come in!

(Behind the scene the sound of gunfire.)

GLUKHOV
Hello! Yes! Transmitting dispatch now. Paratrooper strength consolidated at enemy headquarters. Ready demolition. Repeat. Ready demolition. The enemy is upon us. They are pulling back toward us. Our strength here is insignificant. Repeat. Insignificant. Major Kozhin is in battle. Hello . . .

(The gunfire becomes heavier.)

GLUKHOV
Hello! The enemy is surrounding . . . is surrounding our position. Hello . . .

VALYA
(Behind the scene.) Carefully!

(She and Erokhin and other paratroopers carry in Gorokhov, who is wounded.)

VALYA
Here against the wall. Put his coat under his head.

(They lay him down.)

GOROKHOV
Go on, I'm all right. It's nothing.

(Erokhin and other paratroopers run out. Valya loads a rifle and runs out behind them.)
GLUKHOV
Your leg?

GOROKHOV
Just above the knee. Damn. It's nothing.

(Gunfire grows stronger. Voices behind the scene.)

GLUKHOV
Are we pinned down?

GOROKHOV
Tanks ... pincer move. Damn.

LEMKE
(Runs in.) Command must be moved west! Here!

GLUKHOV
(On the electro-mechanical map.) Here?

(Lemke runs to the apparatus, bends down over it and reads.)

LEMKE

(Behind the scene the sound of voices.)

GOLUBEV
(Runs in.) Lemke, did you find it?

LEMKE
I'll know in a second.

(Golubev looks behind him, toward the surface. Lemke works the apparatus. Behind the scene, voices and gunfire.)

GOLUBEV
The map!

LEMKE
(Presses a lever.) Got it! (He shuts off the gas.)

KOZHN
(His voice behind the scene.) Position yourselves here! Machine guns over here! To the left! (Enters with Erokhin, carrying a machine gun. Behind him—Valya, Bobrov and paratroopers.) Captain Bobrov, place your detachment here. (Points on map.) The devil made this cement box. Take a look at this place! Armed to the teeth. Double the guards on the prisoners! Carry on.

BOBROV
Yes sir. (Exits with paratroopers.)
KOZHIN
Tell me something, Lemke. Where's the back door in this place.

LEMKE
Sorry.

KOZHIN
I see. Well, so this is our new home. Ha! The landlord is angry. He's slammed the door in our faces!

EROKHIN
A mousetrap.

KOZHIN
A concrete one. And here we are, caught with the cheese. Well, they won't get to us in here.

LEMKE
That's the truth, Major Kozhin.

KOZHIN
(To Glukhov.) Have you reached headquarters?

GLUKHOV
We were just cut off, comrade Major. Just now.

KOZHIN
Well, raise them again, damn it! Where's Gorokhov?

GOROKHOV
Over here.

KOZHIN
Are you all right, Misha?

GOROKHOV
Oh yes. I'm fine.

KOZHIN
Spoken like a brave soldier. I'm going to put in for a medal for you.

GOROKHOV
That's something. (Over Kozhin's shoulder.) But what a mistake!

KOZHIN
Gorokhov, are you sure you're all right?

GOROKHOV
Huh? no, not about the medal. The map. (Pointing to it.) Move me over closer! Closer . . .

KOZHIN
You save your strength for . . .
(A loud explosion behind the scene. Everyone stops and listens.)

KOZHIN
I don't know what the hell that was. But I don't think I like it.

(The radio gear crackles. A light flickers on the map.)

KOZHIN
Hold it! Glukhov! Is that transmission coming in here? Ha! Signal from the other world!

(Glukhov works the radio gear. A voice.)

VOICE
Hello! Hello!

KOZHIN
I'm listening.

VOICE
This is Colonel Gaber of the combined air group.

KOZHIN
What can I do for you?

VOICE
To whom am I speaking?

KOZHIN
Major Peter Kozhin, of the Red Army.

VOICE
Major Kozhin, I suggest that you and your men surrender immediately.

KOZHIN
Surrender? Could you explain that one for me? I seem to forget what the word means.

VOICE
Don't waste time. You don't have much of it. I'll give you fifteen minutes.

KOZHIN
Thank you for your consideration. But it would be nice to know what's going to happen in fifteen minutes.

VOICE
You've apparently realized how to close the ducts that flood the sector above you with gas. So we had to use dynamite to blow the valves open again.

KOZHIN
So?
VOICE
In fifteen minutes we will flood that sector with gas. You cannot close the ducts. And you will not be able to leave the bunker. You're trapped.

(The transmission ends.)

KOZHIN
(Looks at his watch.) Damn. Does everyone have a gas mask?

GOLUBEV
I do.

GLUKHOV
They took mine when I was taken prisoner.

EROKHIN
Mine too. They took them from all of us.

VALYA
Mine's no good. The hose is torn.

KOZHIN
(To Valya.) You don't have one either? So. (Takes a deep breath.) Prepare gas masks! Gorokhov, check for gas masks. You hear?!

GOROKHOV
(On his knees by the electro-mechanical map, with pencil and paper.) What? Yes, yes of course. I'm just looking over this machine. Well made, but it could stand a little improvement. Don't pay any attention to me. I'll be done soon.

KOZHIN
Ah, excuse me, comrade inventor. You see, I don't want to disturb you, but we're going to be gassed in just a few minutes.

GOROKHOV
What? Gassed! Oh yes. Very well then.

(Everyone strains a smile.)

EROKHIN
Thirteen minutes.

BOBROV
(Entering.) Weapons in place, as you ordered.

GOLUBEV
But gas masks?

BOBROV
I didn't find any.
KOZHIN
(Takes a deep breath.) So. A trap it is.

EROKHIN
Comrades, there aren't any gas masks!

KOZHIN
Calm yourself. Sit down.

(EROKHIN sits down.)

KOZHIN
Well, looks like this is it. Funny. Volodya, I never asked you, do you have any family?

GOLUBEV
My mother.

KOZHIN
How about you, Valushka?

VALYA
My mother and father. A sister . . .

KOZHIN
A sister?! Well why the heck didn't you tell me earlier, curly head?! Take this gas mask.

VALYA
What do you mean?

KOZHIN
Take it, I say.

VALYA
What about you?

KOZHIN
Listen, this is no ladies' sport club. You hear? Take it. And that's that!

GOLUBEV
She can take mine.

EROKHIN
Eleven minutes.

VALYA
I'm not taking one from either of you. You're both commanders and more important than I am.

KOZHIN
Maybe none of us will need them. Captain Bobrov! Call the detachment together.
BOBROV

Yes sir!

(He exits, and paratroopers enter, armed. Bobrov is behind them.)

KOZHIN

Attention! Now everyone listen carefully.

(Silence.)

KOZHIN

In a few minutes, the enemy is going to hit us with gas. Now. Those in Golubev's detachment, who were taken prisoner, don't have gas masks. And I myself don't want to sit around and wait for the enemy to come kill us where we sit.

VOICES

Right! To the surface! Let's fight.

EROKHIN

Let's fight, comrade Major! Better to die in battle than in this mouse-trap!

KOZHIN

Now listen. At exactly three o'clock the demolition team will finish their operation and return here to join us. Our task is to wait until the last minute and then break out to meet them. Understand?

LEMKE

We can make it!

GOLUBEV

We'll separate and make our way to the woods.

KOZHIN

There will be three explosions. After the third, on my command, we'll make a run for it. Several of you men will follow me with hand-grenades. Captain Golubev!

GOLUBEV

Yes sir!

KOZHIN

Your group will fall in behind us with machine guns.

GOLUBEV

Yes sir, comrade Major!

GOROKHOV

Give me a rifle. My hands still work!

VALYA

Glukhov and I will carry Misha.
KOZHIN
For whoever dies--honor. Whoever makes it home, Josef Vissarinovich
will decorate with medals. Here at the front, we Bolsheviks have done
our duty. Well, Valka! (Grabs her and kisses her.) Lemke! (Shakes
his hand.) Carry on!

LEMKE
Goodbye. We'll cross paths again soon.

KOZHIN
It might not be soon. The war has just begun. But yes, Lemke, we'll
meet again.

LEMKE
Yes Kozhin. My country will be free of the fascists one day. We
communists must fight on many fronts. Perhaps, one day, we will fight
together again.

GOLUBEV
We will, Lemke.

KOZHIN
(Looks at his watch.) So. Still one soldier remains. The last one,
Captain Golubev!

GOLUBEV
Yes sir, comrade Major.

KOZHIN
It's time.

(Golubev exits with Valya and Bobrov.)

KOZHIN
Quiet!

(Armed paratroopers stand in columns against a wall. Kozhin
rises. Lemke lowers his head. Golubev enters. Behind him,
Valya and Bobrov carry a body covered with a flag. Kozhin
removes his helmet. Everyone follows his example. Valya and
Bobrov let down Zorya's body. Silence. Kozhin looks at the
figure and then at the other soldiers. He begins to talk
quietly, simply, as if to Zorya.)

KOZHIN
A child can become a man, but no one can start a silent heart beating
again. If I could, I would bring you back to life again so you could
write music for us. For our life, our death, our country. You came
to us like an only son. Your family stands before you now with head
bowed. I dreamed that you would give your talent for the good of our
country, but you gave your life. People, this boy Zakhar Baikov, our
Zorya, died for us. For our children. For our country. Zorya . . .

(Pause.)
KOZHIN
Zorka, the minutes we had are gone now. It's time for us to go. Please understand, we must leave you. It's like in the poem, remember?

"Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line and we raised not a stone--
But we left him alone with his glory."

This is no longer foreign soil, my friends. This is our land. For stevedores, carpenters and steelworkers. And they will reclaim their land! And on this spot, if Kozhin lives, he will place a granite monument inscribed: People . . .

(Behind the scene, the sound of an explosion.)

GOLUBEV
(To Kozhin.) Central station demolition completed as ordered!

KOZHIN
... in the name of your children . . .

(A second explosion. Everyone stands motionless.)

GOLUBEV
Artillery warehouse demolition completed as ordered!

KOZHIN
... Zakhar Baikov died . . .

(A third explosion.)

GOLUBEV
Main railway bridge demolition completed as ordered!

KOZHIN
... whose family called him . . . Zorya.

(Pause. Emotion fills the room. The electro-mechanical map lights up with red arrows coming from the east. Valya breaks the silence.)

VALYA
Peter! Major Kozhin! Volodya!

KOZHIN
What is it?

VALYA
The map! Our forces! We're advancing! Look!

(The red arrows on the map begin to move from east to west. Numbers appear on the screen. Red lights depicting zones
light up. TB 300, TB 500, LB 300, LB 500, IC 300. Simultaneously, green lights come on, depicting incoming forces. DD 100, DD 200, DD 300.)

VOICES
Fighters! Two hundred! Bombers! Tanks! Hundreds!

LEMK
Land and air forces!

GOLUBEV
We've penetrated the zones! The enemy defenses have been destroyed.

KOZHIN
Attention soldiers! The old corporal is coming to liberate us! We're striking on three sides! Well, who's in this mousetrap? The devil's mice! Our forces are coming! We're advancing! The Great Day is coming!

End of Play
WORKS CITED


