

SOVIET LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

89173
M1938

S. MSTISLAVSKY

ROOK-HERALD *OF* SPRING

A STORY ABOUT N. BAUMAN



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow 1955

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY DAVID SKVIRSKY

EDITED BY VIOLET LANSBURY DUTT

DESIGNED BY A. LIVANOV AND V. CHISTYAKOV

CONTENTS

PART ONE

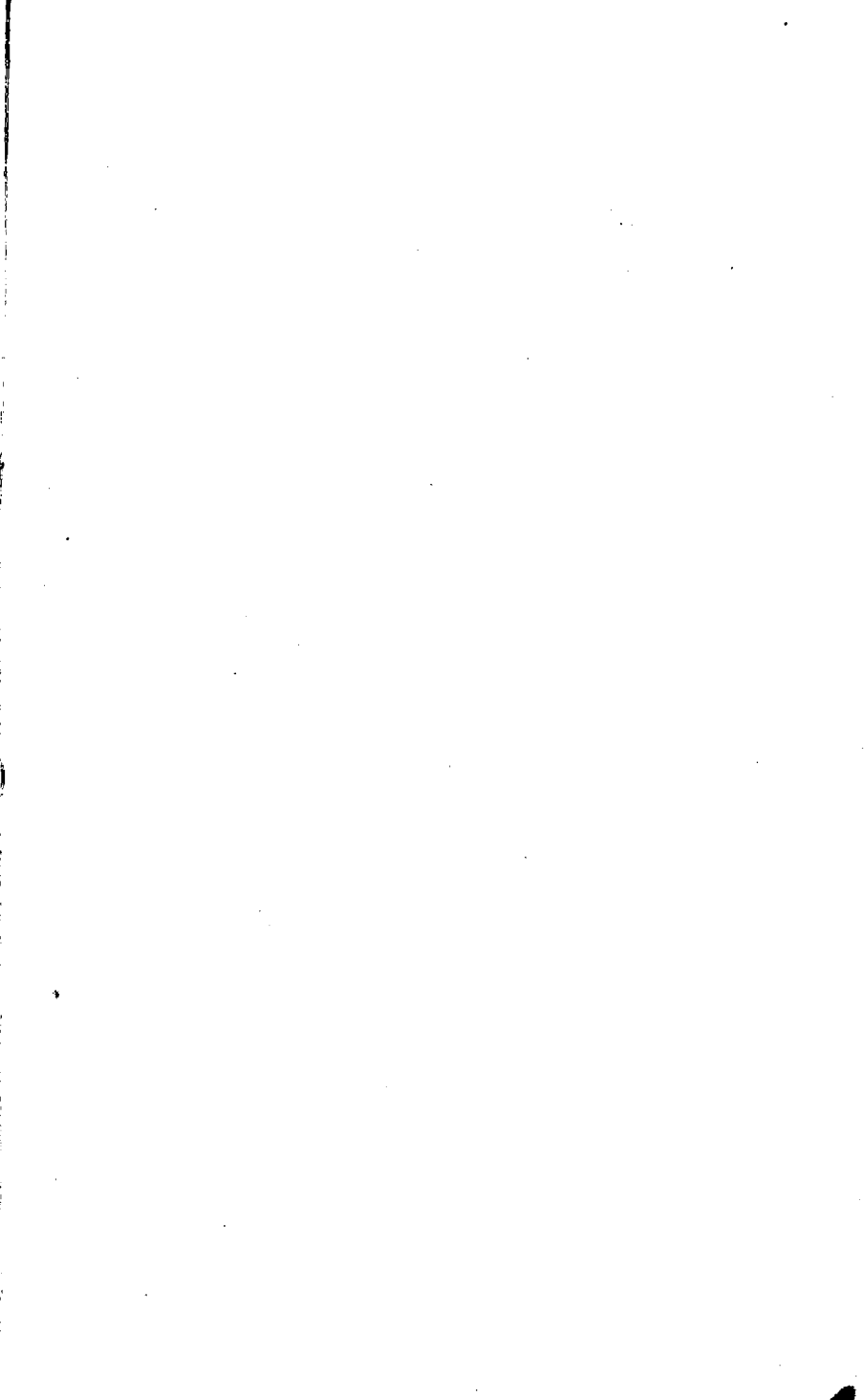
<i>Chapter I</i> IN THE NIGHT	11
<i>Chapter II</i> THE HIDING PLACE	15
<i>Chapter III</i> ON THE ROAD	19
<i>Chapter IV</i> THE INVISIBLE MAN	21
<i>Chapter V</i> YET ANOTHER SCHOOLBOY	25
<i>Chapter VI</i> A REAL ADVENTURE	29
<i>Chapter VII</i> THE BEAR IN A SARAFAN	37
<i>Chapter VIII</i> HIS HIGH DIGNITY	49
<i>Chapter IX</i> FORMER COMRADES	61
<i>Chapter X</i> THE DRYING SHED	71
<i>Chapter XI</i> A NIGHT'S LODGING	76
<i>Chapter XII</i> THE STRIKE	81
<i>Chapter XIII</i> "WHO ARE YOU WAITING FOR, MY FINE FELLOW?"	83
<i>Chapter XIV</i> THE PRINTSHOP	89
<i>Chapter XV</i> THE CHIEF OF POLICE	96
<i>Chapter XVI</i> THE KIEV AFFAIR	101
<i>Chapter XVII</i> IN THE TRAIN	105
<i>Chapter XVIII</i> THE TRAP	110
<i>Chapter XIX</i> PLAYING "CAT AND MOUSE"	115
<i>Chapter XX</i> LAYING STAKES AGAINST THE BANK	120
<i>Chapter XXI</i> THE GINGERBREAD LAD	125

<i>Chapter XXII</i> FELLOW COMPANIONS	131
<i>Chapter XXIII</i> A "CORDIAL WELCOME"	136
<i>Chapter XXIV</i> THE POLICE DEPARTMENT	146
<i>Chapter XXV</i> KIRILL VAGRANKIN	149
<i>Chapter XXVI</i> THREE AND ONE	152
<i>Chapter XXVII</i> HOUSE-WARMING	156
<i>Chapter XXVIII</i> THE DRESS REHEARSAL	161
<i>Chapter XXIX</i> A PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION	165
<i>Chapter XXX</i> THE BALL	170
<i>Chapter XXXI</i> "WHAT IS TO BE DONE?"	178
<i>Chapter XXXII</i> VISITOR	180
<i>Chapter XXXIII</i> THE ALARM	186
<i>Chapter XXXIV</i> THE GRAPNEL IN THE BOUQUET . .	192
<i>Chapter XXXV</i> BALLOONS	197
<i>Chapter XXXVI</i> THE ROSES	201
<i>Chapter XXXVII</i> THE ESCAPE	205
<i>Chapter XXXVIII</i> TALL WEEDS	218
<i>Chapter XXXIX</i> THE NUT-CRACKER	221
<i>Chapter XL</i> A MYSTERIOUS BOX	226

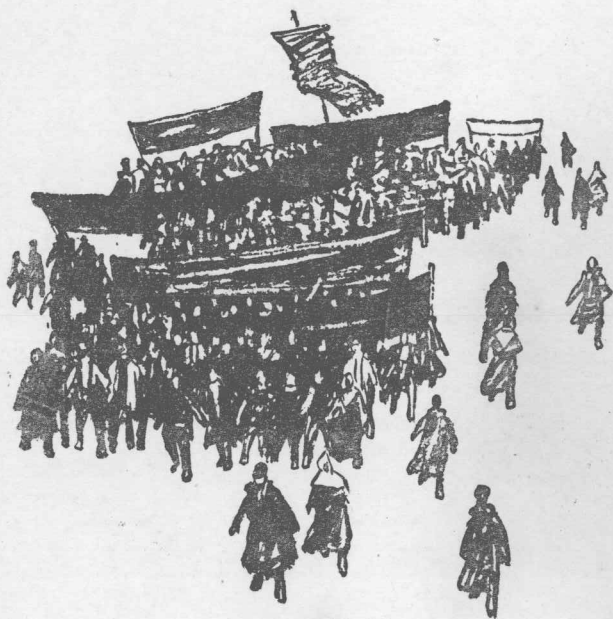
P A R T T W O

<i>Chapter I</i> THE "ARTESIAN WELL" PASSPORT	237
<i>Chapter II</i> MICROBES	244
<i>Chapter III</i> THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS	253
<i>Chapter IV</i> A PATIENT	258
<i>Chapter V</i> AN UNDERSTANDING	269
<i>Chapter VI</i> WAR	275
<i>Chapter VII</i> DEBATING THE WAR	278
<i>Chapter VIII</i> THE SPLIT	282
<i>Chapter IX</i> EXPRESS	291
<i>Chapter X</i> THE ATTACK	294
<i>Chapter XI</i> NYURA'S DEBUT	300

<i>Chapter XII</i> INVENTORY	310
<i>Chapter XIII</i> THE NUT-CRACKER AGAIN	313
<i>Chapter XIV</i> ANOTHER HOUSE-WARMING	315
<i>Chapter XV</i> DOUBLE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL	318
<i>Chapter XVI</i> NIGHT	321
<i>Chapter XVII</i> FROM THE OTHER WORLD	323
<i>Chapter XVIII</i> THE OREL CENTRAL	328
<i>Chapter XIX</i> COTTON	333
<i>Chapter XX</i> THE STRUGGLE GOES ON	338
<i>Chapter XXI</i> IN THE CEMETERY	341
<i>Chapter XXII</i> REPLY	346
<i>Chapter XXIII</i> SCRAPS OF INFORMATION	348
<i>Chapter XXIV</i> THE BAKERS	355
<i>Chapter XXV</i> "ALL BUT BURIED ALIVE..".	359
<i>Chapter XXVI</i> DELIVERED PERSONALLY BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR	363
<i>Chapter XXVII</i> ON THE EVE	368
<i>Chapter XXVIII</i> THE GENERAL STRIKE	375
<i>Chapter XXIX</i> "HE WINS WHO LOSES"	379
<i>Chapter XXX</i> THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE "PEOPLE"	387
<i>Chapter XXXI</i> THE FIFTH DAY	391
<i>Chapter XXXII</i> FREEDOM	399
<i>Chapter XXXIII</i> TWO MILLS.. . . .	401
<i>Chapter XXXIV</i> IN THE STREETS	407
<i>Chapter XXXV</i> FRIENDS	409
<i>Chapter XXXVI</i> UNDER THE BANNER	411



PART ONE



Chapter I
IN THE NIGHT

That night a blizzard raged over the frontier. The prickly snow-flakes whipped their faces savagely; there was no escape, no shelter; the snow swirled and thrashed out from all directions; the frost burned more painfully than fire.

It had been wonderful on the narrow path in the thicket. The crisp snow, blue in the darkness, had crunched softly underfoot as they had carefully picked a single track; the fluffy snow-flakes had lain motionless on the antler-like branches. And only far overhead, among the dark crowns of the tall pines, had the wind been howling.

But as soon as they came out into the open, the blizzard turned its full fury on them, shutting out earth and sky.

The guide stopped and turned round, revealing his bearded face. The suit-cases, strapped together by a broad belt and slung over his shoulder, one at his chest and the other on his back, looked like two fantastic white humps. Through the snowstorm the man resembled some fabulous creature as he stood there in his thick sheepskin coat and high snow-covered fur cap.

He called out but his words were unintelligible. Perhaps the sentences sounded broken because he had to shout every word separately, besides straining his voice to make it heard above the howling wind.

"Frontier now—soldiers—German—Russian. You—what I do—like this. I bend," the giant stooped his shoulders, scattering the snow that had piled on his back and the suit-cases, "you bend—I run—you run—I lie down—you lie down. Understand? Whatever happens, watch—me."

He shook himself as he shouted, and the man following him—he was wearing a felt hat and light overcoat unsuitable for the severe Russian winter—nodded to show that he had heard. He had not heard everything, but that was of no consequence. It was obvious that he had to do as the guide did, or perish.

He listened with his head lowered, his sleeve shielding his face, his eyes almost shut; here was an opportunity to rest for a moment, while they stood still and the guide shouted almost into his ear.

The voice suddenly broke off. The man half-opened his eyes, but found the guide was no longer in sight.

He took a step forward and immediately stumbled waist-deep into the snow; the road seemed to have sagged under him. Was he going in the wrong direction?

He was. The wind was now whistling in his left ear; before, it had been blowing in his face. That meant he had taken the wrong direction. Or had the wind changed?

He could not remain standing there, for every second was taking the guide farther and farther away. He moved haphazardly to the right; the snow was deeper there. He turned again, feeling for firm ground with his foot, and completely lost his bearings.

Then he hallooed, straining so hard that he felt as though blood would spurt from his eyes. But it was the

effort alone that convinced him he had really shouted out; he could not hear his own voice.

Precious minutes slipped by. He could no longer feel the icy pricks on his numbed face. He battled against the wind, grimly pressing forward over the virgin snow. He caught the direction of the wind and trudged on as before with it blowing in his face. The main thing now was not to go round and round in a circle, following his own tracks, after the blizzard had swept them away.

He began to count his steps because that helped him to keep a grip on himself, to think only of what he should be thinking: the trek through the blizzard straight ahead to the break in the frontier, lying somewhere close by. It must be quite near. At any moment he might see rising before him the striped post and, flattened against it, the black heavy-beaked German eagle. Or the double-headed Russian one.

After every ten steps the man would stop to get his breath and to listen. Then silently and rapidly the clinging snow would pile round him up to the waist, the shoulders. If he lingered he would get buried alive.

Through the blizzard he suddenly saw quite near a steady yellow light. He lunged towards it without wasting a second, forcing the snow aside with his knees.

The light blinked and receded some two, four, six, ten steps. It appeared to be stationary, yet it was moving farther and farther into the snow-bound night. But the man already understood, and proceeded more confidently at a quicker pace. Once more he sank up to his waist in the snow. That was when he tripped into a ditch. He took a steep step up out of the ditch and felt a paved road under his feet. It was a highway. On the wayside he made out the clear-cut outlines of a small chapel with an icon lamp burning dimly behind a pane.

There was not a soul about. The blizzard raged. And here, in a desolate field stood a chapel. It was like a fairy-tale.

The man smiled and went up to the chapel.

The icon-lamp was burning on the lee-side. Here, in the shelter of the high marble wall, it was more peaceful than in the open countryside, though the snow was piled up high against the deep window through which the icon was visible.

The man pressed himself against the window. That way he scarcely felt the wind. There was the broad cornice above, and the carved columns on each side, making the shelter complete. He could wait here for the blizzard to slacken. It was all the same now, as, in any case, he had no idea where the frontier was. It certainly did look as though the blizzard was quietening down.

But he did not have to wait. A huge, double-humped figure emerged from the gloom. It was Karl, the guide.

Neither was surprised. Indeed, the two men nodded as though their meeting here was quite natural, as though, when they had separated in the field, they had agreed to meet at the chapel.

"We'll be home soon," the guide said, putting his lips close to the man's ear.

The man lifted his eyebrows in amazement.

"How about the frontier?"

Karl swung back his arm. As he smiled a cloud of steam appeared just below the icicles drooping from his moustache.

"I've passed it. Passed it without noticing," his companion thought to himself.

Karl went round the corner to the chapel and stepped into a snow-drift in the deep roadside ditch. Again the wind whistled in the left ear. But this time the man in the felt hat, which was miraculously clear of snow, was not at all surprised. Two paces ahead of him was the

broad back of the guide, trudging through the snowstorm. Whatever happened now, the main thing had been done. The frontier was behind.

.....
"Look out! Here's a wattle fence!"

They climbed over it. They were obviously in a vegetable garden, because there were ridges of earth on either side of the narrow path. At the end of it a well-built log house loomed in the darkness. The wind had abated, the sky had cleared, and there was a moon.

Karl halted.

"Don't lag behind," he whispered. "The dog the owner keeps is a savage beast."

The moment he said it, the dog began to bark furiously somewhere quite near them.

"There it is. Marvo's its name. Follow close behind me."

His companion laughed.

"It's all right. We'll be friends in a minute. Marvo!" he called, clapping his hands in their thin unsuitable gloves.

Chapter II

THE HIDING PLACE

They entered the house from the yard. The door was opened immediately, at the first light tap, as though they were expected. The room was clean and tidy; the owners were evidently well-to-do. The windows were hung with thick felt curtains and not a ray of light stole outdoors from the paraffin lamp burning brightly under its flower-festooned glass shade. The stove was hot, and there was a fragrant smell, something like caraway-seeds or mint. The mistress of the house was an old woman with a dark kerchief tied over her thinning grey hair; she was busy at the stove. It was warm and cosy.

The important thing now was to rub the blood back into the white numbed cheeks.

Karl went out, leaving his companion rubbing his cheeks hard with both hands over a basin of snow. The host, a tall, kind-looking old man, stood beside him with a towel over his shoulders. The towel was embroidered with long-tailed red cocks.

"It doesn't take long to freeze to death in this weather," he said, shaking his head compassionately. A note of reproach seemed to sound in his voice. "It's a long time since I saw a blizzard like this. And you'll excuse my saying so, but your clothes are not what this weather needs. You're from warm parts, aren't you?"

The host was a Russian. He spoke like a townsman. Instead of answering, the guest asked:

"Did you live in the city before settling here?"

"I've been about. Lived in the city, too. Here, take this towel. Just look at yourself. The colour's back in your face as true as I'm alive. You must have a powerful intercessor in heaven. Who is your saint, if I may make so bold? What is your Christian name?"

"Christian name?" the guest looked up from the basin, smiling all over his wet ruddy face. "Panteleimon."

"A holy man he was," the old man grunted. "A saint and a healer. That's why he helped you. A rubdown with snow comes first in a case like this. And now we'll rub in some grease. By morning you won't even remember the frost."

"Are you sure no one will disturb us during the night?"

"Disturb you?" the host smiled. "No fear. I've got everything fixed up. They'll never find you here no matter how they search."

"You think so? All the same, is there a chance of anyone searching?"

"No one, except God." The old man winked humor-