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《WAR AND PEACE》

BY Leo Tolstoy

(三)

Chapter 14

KUTUZOV had, on the 1st of November, received from one of his spies information that showed the army he commanded to be in an almost hopeless position. The spy reported that the French, after crossing the bridge at Vienna, were moving in immense force on Kutuzovs line of communications with the reinforcements marching from Russia. If Kutuzov were to determine to remain at Krems, Napoleons army of a hundred and fifty thousand men would cut him off from all communications, and would surround his exhausted army of forty thousand, and he would find himself in the position of Mack before Ulm. If Kutuzov decided to leave the road leading to a junction with the Russian reinforcements, he would have to make his way with no road through unknown country to the mountains of Bohemia, pursued by the cream of the enemys forces,

and to give up all hope of effecting a junction with Buxhevdén. If Kutuzov decided to march by the road from Krems to Olmütz to join the forces from Russia he ran the risk of finding the French, who had crossed the Vienna bridge, in advance of him on this road, and so being forced to give battle on the march, encumbered with all his stores and transport, with an enemy three times as numerous and hemming him in on both sides. Kutuzov chose the last course.

The French, after crossing the river, had, as the spy reported, set off at a quick march toward Znaim, which lay on Kutuzov's line of routes more than a hundred versts in front of him. To reach Znaim before the French offered the best hopes of saving the army. To allow the French to get to Znaim before him would mean exposing the whole army to a disgrace like that of the Austrians at Ulm, or to complete destruction. But to arrive there before the French with the whole army was impossible. The road of the French army from Vienna to Znaim was shorter and better than the Russians' road from Krems to Znaim.

On the night of receiving the news Kutuzov sent

Bagrations advance guard of four thousand soldiers to the right over the mountains from the Krems-Znaim road to the Vienna and Znaim road. Bagration was to make a forced march, to halt facing towards Vienna and with his back to Znaim, and if he succeeded in getting on the road in advance of the French, he was to delay them as long as he could. Kutuzov himself with all the transport was making straight for Znaim.

Bagration marched forty-five versts, by night in stormy weather, through the mountains, with no road, and with hungry, barefoot soldiers. Leaving a third of his men straggling behind him, Bagration reached Hollabrunn, on the Vienna and Znaim road, a few hours before the French, who marched upon Hollabrunn from Vienna. Kutuzov needed fully another twenty-four hours to get to Znaim with all the transport, and so to save the army Bagration would have had, with his four thousand hungry and exhausted soldiers, to have kept at bay the whole army of the enemy confronting him at Hollabrunn for four-and-twenty hours, and this was obviously impossible. But a freak of fate made the impossible possible. The success of the trick that had given the

Vienna bridge into the hands of the French encouraged Murat to try and take in Kutuzov too. Murat, on meeting Bagrations weak detachment on the Znaim road, supposed it to be the whole army of Kutuzov. To give this army a final and crushing defeat he waited for the troops still on the road from Vienna, and to that end he proposed a truce for three days, on the condition that neither army should change its position nor stir from where it was. Murat averred that negotiations for peace were now proceeding, and that he proposed a truce therefore to avoid useless bloodshed. The Austrian general, Nostits, who was in charge of the advance posts, believed the statements of Murats messengers and retired, leaving Bagrations detachment unprotected. The other messengers rode off to the Russian line to make the same announcement about peace negotiations, and to propose a truce of three days, to the Russian troops. Bagration replied that he was not authorised to accept or to decline a truce, and sent his adjutant to Kutuzov with a report of the proposition made to him.

A truce gave Kutuzov the only possibility of gaining time, of letting Bagrations exhausted forces rest,

and of getting the transport and heavy convoys (the movement of which was concealed from the French) a further stage on their journey. The offer of a truce gave the one and totally unexpected chance of saving the army. On receiving information of it, Kutuzov promptly despatched the general-adjutant, Winzengerode, who was with him, to the enemys camp. Winzengerode was instructed not only to accept the truce, but to propose terms of capitulation, while Kutuzov meanwhile sent his adjutants back to hasten to the utmost the transport of the luggage of the whole army along the Krems and Znaim road. Bagrations hungry and exhausted detachment alone was to cover the movements of the transport and of the whole army, by remaining stationary in face of an enemy eight times stronger numerically.

Kutuzovs anticipations were correct both as to the proposals of capitulation, which bound him to nothing, giving time for part of the transport to reach Znaim, and as to Murats blunder being very quickly discovered. As soon as Bonaparte, who was at Schnbrunn, only twenty-five versts from Hollabrunn, received Murats despatch and projects of truce and capitulation, he detected the

deception and despatched the following letter to Murat:

To Prince Murat.

Schnbrunn, 25 Brumaire, year 1805,

at 8 o'clock in the morning.

It is impossible to find terms in which to express to you my displeasure. You only command my advance guard and you have no right to make any truce without my order. You are causing me to lose the results of a campaign. Break the truce immediately and march upon the enemy. You must make a declaration to them that the general who signed this capitulation had no right to do so, and that only the Emperor of Russia has that right.

Whenever the Emperor of Russia ratifies the aforesaid convention, however, I will ratify it; but it is only a stratagem. March on, destroy the Russian army you are in a position to take its baggage and artillery.

The Emperor of Russias aide-de-camp is a Officers are nothing when they have not powers; this one had none. The Austrians let themselves be tricked about the crossing of the bridge of Vienna, you are letting yourself be tricked by one of the Emperors aides-de-camp.

NAPOLEON.

Bonapartes adjutant dashed off at full gallop with this menacing letter to Murat. Not trusting his generals, Bonaparte himself advanced to the field of battle with his whole guard, fearful of letting the snared victim slip through his fingers. Meanwhile the four thousand men of Bagrations detachment, merrily lighting camp-fires, dried and warmed themselves, and cooked their porridge for the first time for three days, and not one among them knew or dreamed of what was in store for them.

Chapter 15

BEFORE FOUR OCLOCK in the afternoon Prince Andrey, who had persisted in his petition to Kutuzov, reached Grunte, and joined Bagration. Bonapartes adjutant had not yet reached Murats division, and the battle had not yet begun. In Bagrations detachment, they knew nothing of the progress of events. They talked about peace, but did not believe in its possibility. They talked of a battle, but did not believe in a battles being close at hand either.

Knowing Bolkonsky to be a favourite and trusted adjutant, Bagration received him with a commanding

officers special graciousness and condescension. He informed him that there would probably be an engagement that day or the next day, and gave him full liberty to remain in attendance on him during the battle, or to retire to the rear-guard to watch over the order of the retreat, also a matter of great importance.

To-day, though, there will most likely be no action, said Bagration, as though to reassure Prince Andrey.

If this is one of the common run of little staff dandies, sent here to win a cross, he can do that in the rear-guard, but if he wants to be with me, let him hell be of use, if hes a brave officer, thought Bagration. Prince Andrey, without replying, asked the princes permission to ride round the position and find out the disposition of the forces, so that, in case of a message, he might know where to take it. An officer on duty, a handsome and elegantly dressed man, with a diamond ring on his forefinger, who spoke French badly, but with assurance, was summoned to conduct Prince Andrey.

On all sides they saw officers drenched through, with dejected faces, apparently looking for something, and soldiers dragging doors, benches, and fences from

the village.

Here we cant put a stop to these people, said the staff-officer, pointing to them. Their commanders let their companies get out of hand. And look here, he pointed to a canteen-keepers booth, they gather here, and here they sit. I drove them all out this morning, and look, its full again. I must go and scare them, prince. One moment.

Let us go together, and Ill get some bread and cheese there, said Prince Andrey, who had not yet had time for a meal.

Why didnt you mention it, prince? I would have offered you something.

They got off their horses and went into the canteen-keepers booth. Several officers, with flushed and exhausted faces, were sitting at the tables, eating and drinking.

Now what does this mean, gentlemen? said the staff-officer, in the reproachful tone of a man who has repeated the same thing several times. You mustnt absent yourselves like this. The prince gave orders that no one was to leave his post. Come, really, captain, he

remonstrated with a muddy, thin little artillery officer, who in his stockings (he had given his boots to the canteen-keeper to dry) stood up at their entrance, smiling not quite naturally.

Now aren't you ashamed, Captain Tushin? pursued the staff-officer. I should have thought you as an artillery officer ought to set an example, and you have no boots on. They'll sound the alarm, and you'll be in a pretty position without your boots on. (The staff-officer smiled.) Kindly return to your posts, gentlemen, all, all, he added in a tone of authority.

Prince Andrey could not help smiling as he glanced at Captain Tushin. Smiling, without a word, Tushin shifted from one bare foot to the other, looking inquiringly, with his big, shrewd, and good-natured eyes, from Prince Andrey to the staff-officer.

The soldiers say it's easier barefoot, said Captain Tushin, smiling shyly, evidently anxious to carry off his awkward position in a jesting tone. But before he had uttered the words, he felt that his joke would not do and had not come off. He was in confusion.

Kindly go to your places, said the staff-officer,

trying to preserve his gravity.

Prince Andrey glanced once more at the little figure of the artillery officer. There was something peculiar about it, utterly unsoldierly, rather comic, but very attractive.

The staff-officer and Prince Andrey got on their horses and rode on.

Riding out beyond the village, continually meeting or overtaking soldiers and officers of various ranks, they saw on the left earthworks being thrown up, still red with the freshly dug clay. Several battalions of soldiers, in their shirt-sleeves, in spite of the cold wind were toiling like white ants at these entrenchments; from the trench they saw spadefuls of red clay continually being thrown out by unseen hands. They rode up to the entrenchment, examined it, and were riding on further. Close behind the entrenchment they came upon dozens of soldiers continually running to and from the earthworks, and they had to hold their noses and put their horses to a gallop to get by the pestilential atmosphere of this improvised sewer.

Voilà l'argument des camps, monsieur le prince, said

the staff-officer. They rode up the opposite hill. From that hill they had a view of the French. Prince Andrey stopped and began looking closer at what lay before them.

You see here is where our battery stands, said the staff-officer, pointing to the highest point, commanded by that queer fellow sitting without his boots; from there you can see everything; let us go there, prince.

I am very grateful to you, Ill go on alone now, said Prince Andrey, anxious to be rid of the staff-officer; dont trouble yourself further, please.

The staff-officer left him, and Prince Andrey rode on alone.

The further forward and the nearer to the enemy he went, the more orderly and cheerful he found the troops. The greatest disorder and depression had prevailed in the transport forces before Znaim, which Prince Andrey had passed that morning, ten versts from the French. At Grunte too a certain alarm and vague dread could be felt. But the nearer Prince Andrey got to the French line, the more self-confident was the appearance of our troops. The soldiers, in their great-coats, stood ranged in lines

with their sergeant, and the captain was calling over the men, poking the last soldier in the line in the ribs, and telling him to hold up his hand. Soldiers were dotted all over the plain, dragging logs and brushwood, and constructing shanties, chatting together, and laughing good-humouredly. They were sitting round the fires, dressed and stripped, drying shirts and foot-gear. Or they thronged round the porridge-pots and cauldrons, brushing their boots and their coats. In one company dinner was ready, and the soldiers, with greedy faces, watched the steaming pots, and waited for the sample, which was being taken in a wooden bowl to the commissariat officer, sitting on a piece of wood facing his shanty.

In another company a lucky one, for not all had vodka the soldiers stood in a group round a broad-shouldered, pock-marked sergeant, who was tilting a keg of vodka, and pouring it into the covers of the canteens held out to him in turn. The soldiers, with reverential faces, lifted the covers to their mouths, drained them, and licking their lips and rubbing them with the sleeves of their coats, they walked away