

My father's writings from the front, 1943-45



Translator's note: Among my father's belongings I found a small notebook (a bit smaller than A5). It is filled with short essays in Russian, written during spare time between August 1943 and shortly after the end of the war in the summer of 1945. Since I have difficulty reading handwritten Russian, my sister Irena translated the essays into Polish earlier this year, and my translation is based on the Polish text.

At first, I thought it was some sort of a diary, but it is not. Rather, these are brief essays on topics related to the war, written, as far as I can tell, during lulls in the fighting. The quality of the writing is amazing considering the circumstances and the fact that my father was only 18 when he started this endeavour. The essays reflect his mood at the time: the bitterness over what had happened to the Jews and to the other peoples of occupied Europe; the belief in ultimate victory; the pride in the Soviet Union and the love for the Russian people. At that point in his life, my father was a true believer in Communism, as were many other Jews of his age. The hope was that Communism was going to finally liberate mankind from the crass nationalism that had led to such tragedy. Today, we know that it was a naïve hope, but keep in mind that what is written here is from the perspective of 1943-45, when the world looked very different.

The essays also show that even at this young age, my father had extensive knowledge of the world, remarkable for a young man who had never travelled far from Lublin until the war forced him to flee east. It is also clear to me that despite the horrors he was witnessing, he did not hate the German people as an entity—he hated the Nazis but apparently already then did not believe in collective guilt. I have discussed this issue many times with my father over the years, and ironically, it was always I who tended to take the harsher line (towards the Germans) in those discussions.

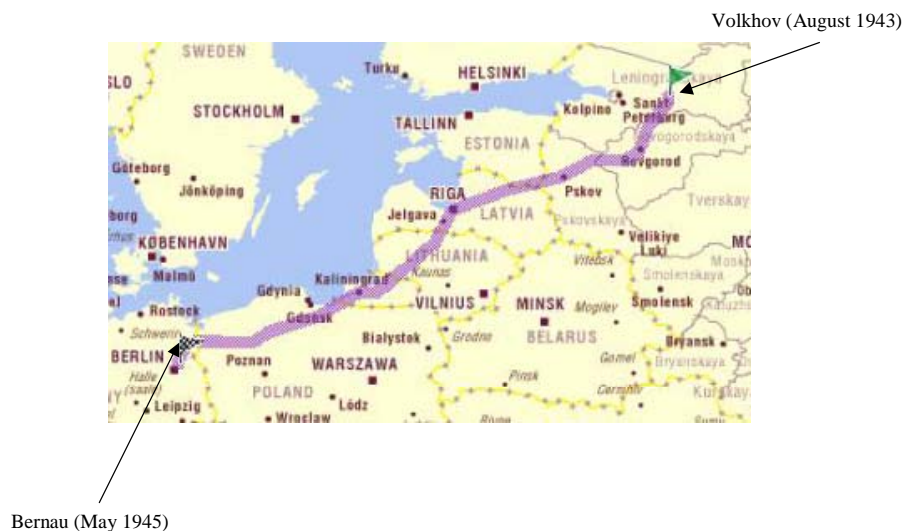
As with every such body of work, the quality of the essays is uneven. I have included them all, omitting only a couple of poems written by others which my father had written down in his notebook. The extent to which my father edited these writings after the war is unclear. There is a foreword which was clearly added later; but the essays themselves seem to be fairly unedited, except perhaps in the immediate few days after writing each.

For me, these writings provide an amazing insight into my father's mind as a young man, and I am very grateful that he kept his little notebook along with the medals he was awarded and a few other mementos from that time. I want to share them with the rest of the family.

*Nathan Wajzman
December 2005*

Geographical note

The first essay was written in August 1943, when my father was at the Volkhov front, north-east of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). When the war ended in May 1945, he was in Bernau, 35 km north of Berlin. According to the Michelin route planner, this is a distance of approximately 1900 km if driving today (see map below). Obviously, the forces of which my father was part did not take the direct route, and so it is fair to assume that the distance travelled by my father while he was writing these essays was somewhere between 2500 and 3000 km.



Foreword

I am not a writer. I did not write this in order to have it published. I simply felt like writing during my free time in the forest and mud of the Volkhov front, while listening to the “music” of Katiusha and Vasiuta artillery. In those days I went through a lot. Each event, every victory or defeat, produced many strong emotions in me. Sometimes these resulted in short essays or articles, reflecting the day’s events. There was no paper, no pencils, no time; but I put a lot of my heart and my feelings into those writings. I am not a writer, but I wrote about the things I lived through and the things I was thinking of. These articles are my own memory of an important part of my life.

Location and date unknown, but clearly added some time after the war.

The Encounter

They met at an altitude of 1500 m. The Russian lieutenant Piotr (Pietia) Lytaev and the German *Ober-Leutnant* Kurt Rosenberg. Lytaev in his Yakovlev plane, Rosenberg in his Messerschmidt. At that moment Pietia's whole life flashed in front of him: alone with his mother; the tough years of the Civil War; starvation and chaos. In 1922 he had been taken to a children's home where he was brought up. Then the school bench, the air force academy, two years of gruelling training. And now he, Piotr Lytaev, the son of the Russian people, must defend his country and justify the trust it had placed in him.

Kurt Rosenberg is not reflecting on anything. He knows what he is doing, he is after all an officer in Adolf Hitler's mighty force. After he had bombed Warsaw and killed Polish children fleeing the bombing, he had been rewarded with the Iron Cross. Göring himself had called him "The Eagle of Germany." When Belgrade and Coventry were burning from his bombs, he had received a second cross. Now it was Moscow's turn.

They met accidentally while Rosenberg was heading toward Moscow. The German decided to press forward, the Russian decided to stop him. There, in Moscow, people were sleeping. Here, in the air, a life-and-death struggle was taking place. There, in Moscow, people felt secure—they were being defended by Stalin's soldiers. Here, the air reverberated with explosions and the sky was lit up by tracer fire.

Kurt Rosenberg realised that he was not going to make it to Moscow and that life in the Russian sky, facing a Russian hero, was becoming dangerous. The German finally blinked and retreated.

Lytaev thought of the destroyed towns, of the wounded Russian soil—and he took up the pursuit.

The next morning peasants from the *kolkhoz* (collective farm) found the German. He was lying next to his burning plane. Piotr Lytaev had carried out his task. The squadron leader sent a message to his general: "Lieutenant Lytaev has brought down a Messerschmidt."

In the Sovinform agency they wrote: "our pilots have hit many German planes."

Mala Witawa region, Volkhov front, August 1943.

The Barrage from Moscow

Moscow is shooting. Can you hear it, Berlin? Can you hear how Moscow is shooting and celebrating? Can you see the grey-haired Russian general crying with joy? If you can hear and see Moscow—remember, Moscow is mocking you now!

In 1941 you screamed: “The Russian air force has been destroyed!”; “The Red Army has been surrounded!” Do you remember how Goebbels boasted of an entire Russian battalion taken prisoner by a single German soldier? You came to us to destroy our people, our country. Ordinary Frau Gertrud, Frau Elsa wrote to their ordinary Fritz, Kurt, Karl: “By the winter everything will be over and you will be back home. Kill the Russians, but don’t spend too much energy on it, they are not worth it...”

But then in 1941 Moscow shot back at you—do you remember, gentlemen? Do you remember how you fled, without even looking back?

In the summer of 1942 the Germans again advanced. The whole Soviet Union was shooting back at them. In early 1943 the Germans got their Stalingrad, later Bielgorod, Oriol—Moscow was shooting back! Later: Kharkov, Taganrog—Moscow was shooting back!

Moscow is shooting, Moscow is saluting her heroes! Berlin is crying, and it will cry a lot more. It will cry just like the children of Kiev, Minsk, Tomsk, Lvov, Warsaw, Lublin. It will weep just like the children of Europe wept when their parents were killed. Moscow is saluting and the salute is heard everywhere: in Siberia and the Far East, on the shores of the Dniepr, the Donau, the Volkhov, the Bug, the Vistula. People there see Moscow and they know: “They will come and liberate us too!”

Moscow salutes, the whole country salutes its heroic army. Today for Suma, tomorrow for Kiev, for Minsk, for Lvov. The day after tomorrow for the final victory.

On the banks of the Volkhov river, August 1943.



The Death of a Dog to Mussolini!

Rome radio has transmitted a brief news bulletin: Prime Minister Mussolini has resigned. Just like that, as if it were nothing special. Mussolini ruled for 23 years. For 23 years he held the land of Italy in his iron fist and led her to disaster. And now, in his 24th year, he suddenly stopped and stepped down.

Humanity is breathing a sigh of relief. Benito Mussolini, the bloody *Il Duce*, who came to power by killing thousands of the best sons and daughters of Italy, a professional murderer and fraud—has left the political scene for good. But the people of Europe will never forget him, the people of Spain, the people of Ethiopia. Hitler and Mussolini are together responsible for the war. When they perish, the people of Europe will say: “Let these dogs suffer a dog’s death!”

On the Kirov train, Volkhov front, August 1943.

The Russian Soldier

One day historians and writers will describe these heady days of the autumn of 1943. In the meantime, while waiting my turn at a transfer point, I want to write a few words about the ordinary Russian soldier.

If you want to meet a typical Russian soldier, then go to a transfer point, no matter which front. There you will meet men of various ages, backgrounds and professions. You will see young soldiers, hardly needing to shave, and yet with bars on their uniforms already, signifying that they had been wounded in battle. You will also meet old, battle-hardened veterans who are taking part in the second or even third war of their lives.

Do you want to understand the morale and bravery of our army? Do you want to know how the men feel? Then spend some time with those who are spending the third year in the mud and dirt, who are sleeping on plain wood if they are lucky and on the ground otherwise, with their uniforms on, not even removing their boots...

I too am a plain soldier. I did not choose my company; I lived with these men, ate with them, spent countless evenings sitting on a wooden bench in a hut.

Two years ago Goebbels claimed that the core of the Russian army had been destroyed. Now, having seen what the Russian soldiers did in the autumn of 1943, he has understood that our army is only getting started.

Here is one man: an infantryman with heavy boots, his feet wrapped to keep warm. Private Ivashchenko, a Russian warrior. During a transfer of his unit he was left behind at some train station, and for the past ten days has been hanging around the transfer point looking for a way to re-join his comrades. He is 45 years old. He fought in the first World War and in the Civil War. Now he has already been wounded twice; this is his second year at the Volkhov Front. The more I speak with him, the more I respect him. He does not speak in vain, does not use empty phrases that everyone knows. He speak plainly: “I raised my children, I taught them, and I thought that I would have a peaceful life in my old age.” But Hitler started the war, and the peaceful *kolkhoznik* Ivashchenko had to pick up a gun and fight for the third time in his life.

What is Ivashchenko fighting for? What do you mean, for what?! For Russia, for his family. Hitler must not be allowed to step on our soil. Ivashchenko is not thinking of death. Already wounded twice, he is still looking forward to returning to the front—and most importantly, to his unit, to his comrades! “My unit is the best, how could I leave my boys now, after three years together, when the end of the war is near (since that is what everyone assures me...) No matter what the orders are, just send me back to my own unit!”

I am resting on the wooden bunkbed. Next to me is Ivashchenko, snoring. In the bunk below Yagulov from Azerbaijan is singing folk songs; next to him a couple of other soldiers from Central Asia are talking in their own language. I am thinking of this Ivashchenko next to me. This man, already in his third year of war, a man who has already experienced the bitterness of retreat and the joy of attack, he is now peacefully sleeping in the bunkbed next to me. Tomorrow he will be in the trenches, shooting, fighting—he is the typical hero of our time, an ordinary Russian soldier.

At a transfer point, October 1943.



Our Revenge

Lately many people have started thinking about the punishment to be meted out to the German Fascist beasts for their misdeeds. No ordinary man can help being horrified by the crimes committed by the Germans during this war.

Here she lies before you—Europe, the continent of culture, the continent which has created societies like our Soviet Union—now bleeding, downtrodden, deformed. No cannibal could have even imagined the barbaric acts committed by Hitler's savages. Reading the newspaper, listening to the radio, one does not want to believe one's eyes and ears. This is not possible! So much tragedy! So many tears! So many orphans, widows, cripples! So many homeless! And all this because of the Germans—the superior race.

Let us start with the beginning. Let us look at Warsaw, the old, beautiful city by the river. What did the vandals do to it?! Warsaw lies in ruins; drunk German sons-of-bitches are driving around in rickshaws pulled by barely alive Polish professors. But it is not just about the cities! The people!! Entire peoples are being destroyed. It is a fact that in all towns and villages the Germans are murdering all Jews. My poor unfortunate Jewish people! The pogroms of yesteryear are nothing compared to what the German beasts are visiting upon us now.

Ilya Erenburg writes: "The old Jews, the excentrics, the teachers are gone from our cities." There are no more tailors and shoemakers, no watch repairers. Jewish blood is flowing from under German knives—but the Nazi butchers will lose in the end!

Belgrade, Paris—Paris, the wonder of the world! Trod upon by Nazi boots, Russian war prisoners serving champagne to the Germans in the bistros, while the French look on—hungry and demeaned but not giving up.

Let us remember Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, Sevastopol, Stalingrad, Leningrad! Cities of Russian glory, ancient fortresses, where in 1918 the greatest achievement in human history took place!

Smolensk, the city of the white cathedrals, is gone. What have the Germans done to Leningrad?! Leningrad, the Tsar's capital, Nevsky Prospect, the place where Lenin and Stalin worked, the town built by Kirov!

Gone are many Ukrainian and Belorussian villages and towns, gone are the flourishing collective farms. No country girls are signing in the evening. Ashes is what is left of all that.

Remember the tears of the mother whose daughter has been sent into German slavery, remember the screams of the girl being raped! Remember the fear of boys and girls being herded into forced labour! Remember all who were tortured to death by the Nazis. Remember the little girl lying under the body of her mother...remember and reflect: how shall we punish the German executioners?!

I believe that, despite everything, the best revenge would be to force the Germans to rebuild all that they have destroyed. I am sure that they will go insane if forced to rebuild Stalingrad!

Europe will live again!

Griady, Volkhov front, November 1943.

November 6th, 1943 (Liberation of Kiev)

The time is 16:15. I hear the familiar jingle of Radio Moscow. How can I ever forget this day? How can I ever forget the voice of the announcer, reading the statement issued by our head command? The statement announced that Kiev is again ours!!!

Kiev—the mother of all Russian cities. Beautiful, ancient Kiev, the pride of the Ukrainian people, is now free of the fascist intruders! Every one of its streets is the whole of history.

For two years the Germans occupied Kiev. They turned the city into a Gestapo hangout; they destroyed many precious artifacts; but they did not destroy the city. A city like Kiev is indestructible.

The elite troops of general Vatutin—you should only know the affection with which every free man thinks of you today! And what panic you have sown in the ranks of the enemy!

Czech soldiers fought bravely during the liberation of Kiev. Thank you, brothers! The fact that Kiev is free means that Prague too will be liberated soon!

This day will pass into history as a day of glory for the Russian army and for the Russian people. This is a wonderful gift delivered by the Red Army on the 26th anniversary of the October Revolution.

Near Novgorod, 7th November 1943.



Leningrad-Moscow

The wheels of the train are making their monotonous knocking sound. The forests and the mud, the trenches, bridges and embankments, the Volkhov front—all is disappearing in the distance. The wheels keep up on knocking. Suddenly I feel sad. Do I really miss these forests on the Volkhov front? Didn't I get enough of the dirt, the mud, the flooded streets of the small towns around Leningrad?

The Germans have killed my whole family. I was never prone to tears, not even when they killed my mother; now I feel like crying.

How can I ever forget those days, spent on the front, with fellow soldiers and officers who became my entire life and vice versa? Those were the days of hard, intense effort, when you forget about hunger, cold, lack of sleep. But also the days of Komsomol meetings in a cold hut, warmed by our youthful hearts.

You don't forget people who understood you, who picked you out of the grey mass of uniformed humanity, who taught, mentored and trusted you. Inspired people, working for a great cause!

You don't forget commanders such as Captain Litayev, who combine stern leadership and Bolshevik beliefs with a warm Russian heart and the directness and understanding of a simple soldier.

You don't forget people who were building shelters and trenches while standing in water to their knees, hungry, barefoot, under fire.

The wheels keep on knocking. I know that I am leaving my unit for good; I am going to join the Polish army. That is how it should be. Where are you now, my dear comrades, who brought me up, and those of you whom I brought up? Where are my comrades from the Komsomol, young, full of life and gaiety? What I got from you—the devotion, the friendships—will always stay with me. You understood me, you taught me; we were together during battle, often cold and hungry, going wherever we were sent. Now I am leaving you—but my heart is forever with you.

On the train from Leningrad to Moscow, December 1943.

Memories

Almost four years have passed since I fled occupied Poland. Today, as the defeat of the German aggressors is fast approaching, and the liberation of Poland is near, I want to tell my young Russian friends about the horrible two months that I spent under Nazi rule in Lublin.

When the Germans entered our town in September 1939, many of us doubted whether the Germans were really as brutal as we had heard. On the second day of the occupation I saw the answer with my own eyes. I remember like it was yesterday: two older Germans standing in front of a completely destroyed neighbourhood, with satisfied smiles on their faces, and their words, "Our pilots did a good job here..." On their belts they wore the inscription, "Gott mit uns" ("God is with us"). At that moment I understood that the Germans were savage animals, not humans.

On the third day I remember seeing long queues for bread. Two Germans—a soldier and an officer—approach the queue and pull out an elderly man. A few moments later I hear a gunshot. The old man is lying in a pool of blood. And the Germans are just standing around, taking pictures of the body! Imagine how I felt witnessing this scene! The next day this Fritz, Hans or Karl sends his family, his girl in Germany, a picture of an old man whom he himself had killed. And they are rewarded for this with Iron Crosses. Yes, these are the Germans, this is the German army which destroyed my country, decimated my family, forced me to leave my town, my ill mother, and to flee into the unknown.

With what pleasure the Germans kill, torture, rape! The road to the Russian border—100 km of occupied territory, full of perils, roadblocks and searches along the way. German savage brutality towards Polish peasants, young girls having been raped—I will never forget that.

The Germans have turned Europe into a house of horrors in which they commit their unspeakable crimes. The whole continent is a giant prison, concentration camp. Where are you now, my 15-year old brother? In Germany as a forced labourer with a yellow star on your chest, or somewhere in the forest with fellow resistance fighters? Maybe you are no longer among the living? Where are my friends, my classmates?

Black clouds have darkened the skies over Europe. But you must know—we will persevere and win! And let the Germans know—that after having destroyed Europe, after having bombed Warsaw, Smolensk, Leningrad, Belgrade; after having killed the old man in the bread queue; after having waged war, killed, raped with the words "God is with us"—after all that they will not escape revenge, they will have to answer for it all!

Let us go forward—we, the young people of Russia, England, America, Europe—let us destroy the enemy! Europe is waiting for us, the modern Europe of the 20th century which has been turned into a Gestapo playground. Our mothers, fathers, sisters, girlfriends—they are all waiting for us to do our work. Poland, downtrodden and ruined by the Germans, is awaiting us Poles!

That is why all Polish citizens in the USSR are joining the Kosciuszko division. We are eager to get to the front as quickly as possible, to fight and defeat the Germans, to achieve peace and to create the Poland that we want.

Camp of the 1st Polish Army, January 1944.

Spring

It is the spring of 1944—we are welcoming it with the most glorious victories of Soviet might.

Spring brings such joy every year! It is a time of rebirth, a time of good feelings. This spring is a time of a fierce offensive by the Red Army, a time for liberation of millions from the Fascist tyrants. Europe is shaking! The battalions of the Red Army are moving forward. It is a liberating army, one that has known both the joy of attack and the bitterness of retreat.

Europe is welcoming the spring of 1944 like a volcano about to erupt. And even though drunk Germans are still strolling around Warsaw and Lublin, in Krakow, Vienna, Paris and Prague; even though they are still hanging on to Hungary—everyone knows: “Hitler kaput,” as the German prisoners say to us.

German trains are derailed; German equipment is burning. It is the work of Poland’s partisans, of the Free French, of the Yugoslav people’s army. They are helping their Russian brothers and thanks to them, the end of the Fascist chaos is near.

Europe is wounded; the Europe of the 20th century, that was flourishing before this war—is now lying wounded before us, transformed by the Germans into a giant Gestapo lair, an enormous factory of death. The Germans are already sensing the end; the Europe that they have so abused will not forgive them. Look out, you Germans, the army of justice is coming, the army of the working men, the army of the Soviet Union!

This is the end of the “higher race!”

Camp of the 1st Polish Army, March 1944.

The Heroes of Krasnodon

Oleg Koshevoy knew that his friends, fellow members of the Leningrad Komsomol, would avenge his death. Liza Chaykina and Zoya Kosmodyenyanska knew that too. The entire Soviet people knew that. The only ones who did not know were the Fascist cannibals who carried out the execution of Zoya. The Germans did not even think that one day they would be held to account.

I was thinking of all this not long ago, on a train station in a small town in Germany. The German prisoners were huddled together on the tracks. They had been put to work there. A detachment of Cossacks from the Don river valley was passing by. These Cossacks, mostly very young, were singing a joyful song, “March forward, you people of Komsomol...” They made for an impressive sight, these Don Cossacks, the heroes of Soviet literature, the heroes of Sholokhov, in their small Cossack caps, eagerly pushing westward.

The Germans look on. What are they thinking? How far they are now removed from the days when they were killing the heroic members of the Young Brigades in Krasnodon! Maybe one of these prisoners is the one who pulled the trigger?

The Germans watch. The Cossacks watch them. They don't even know where they are going, and they don't care. They do know what they are fighting for. They have seen the wounds of Russia; they have seen Majdanek, Treblinka, Auschwitz. The heroes of Krasnodon are on the mind of these young soldiers; they wanted to live—and they not only knew how to live but also how to die a hero's death. And this sacrifice inspired thousands of other young men in their westward quest.

Oleg Koshevoy and his friends knew that they would be avenged. They were right. Their memory is always on my mind; I will not rest until the red banners fly above Berlin.

Forward, the people of Komsomol!

Somewhere in Germany, on the way to re-join the unit, April 1945.



The Long-Awaited Day

The 9th of May--millions have been waiting for this day. The soldiers defending Stalingrad were dreaming of this day; the defenders of Moscow during the hard days of 1941 were yearning for it; and the millions of victims in Majdanek, Treblinka, the heroes of the Warsaw ghetto uprising—all were dreaming that this day would come.

Everybody everywhere knew that this day would come. In the forests of Smolensk, in the mud of Volkhov, in besieged Leningrad, in the fields near Moscow—everywhere they knew.

And all of us to whom military service was a civic duty, for whom the army became our family—we too knew that this day would come! The liberating warriors have walked a long, tough road. They all deserved to reach this day—but many did not.

We remember the hard times in Europe. We remember the fall of Poland, the capitulation of France. We will never forget the summer of 1941 and the bitter retreat forced upon us then. We remember the bad news from the Soviet Information Bureau. But we did not cry or whine. The Russian people asked for nothing. The more we lost, the more battle-hardened we became. When we saw the blood and tears of our mothers, wives, sisters and brothers, when we witnessed the destruction of our towns and villages—when we saw all this, we responded not with tears but with bullets!

Better days arrived. They did not just arrive on a plane; they arrived because we made it so, because there was no other way! And the more we remembered the bitterness of defeat, the more we cherished the joy of attack.

Now the day has come—the 9th of May 1945. The day for which our brothers, the best among us, gave their lives. It is here. Can there be a more joyous occasion in anybody's life?

But on this day let us also remember those who perished in the hands of the Fascist executioners, those whose graves are scattered around Europe, and those who were burned in the crematoria of the camps. Let us commit to them that we are able to not only win the war but also conquer the whole world!

Bernau, 35 km north of Berlin, 9th May 1945.



Our First Army

We are all proud to be soldiers in the First Polish Army. Our beloved First Army, the pride of the Polish people, was raised in the huge plains of Russia, on the shores of the Oka river.

Our devotion to our army stems first and foremost from the fact that we are steeled in fight and hardship. Our army is forever young. We remember how we started with just a few people, then we were in the hundreds, day by day new units, battalions, regiments were created.

It was difficult work at first. Everything had to be done from scratch. We were short on experience, there were too few leaders, many of the people who joined us were already tired of war and losses... But all of us had the warm hearts of Polish patriots. All harboured a deep hatred of the Germans. Finally they were ashamed when they looked at the sacrifices of the Russian people. Ashamed—because while the Russians were fighting the enemy with such bravery, we Poles, young and healthy, stood aside.

And so, on the shores of the Russian river, a new song arose, a song about Poland, about the struggle, about revenge.

The army grew in numbers, and each of us grew as a person. Young officers came up through the ranks. People wanted to fight. The dream of fighting, of avenging what the Germans had done to Poland, kept us awake at night.

Finally, one day the Soviet Information Bureau told the world about the heroic first Polish division. The world learned that the Poles had entered the fight, that they were no longer waiting with their rifles at their side.

We are proud of our army, because we fought side by side with the workers and peasants of the Red Army, and we took up the fight when the enemy was still deep in Russia. The path of our army is linked with the Red Army by the bonds of brotherhood. The Polish army was created thanks to the Soviet Union. We were eating Russian bread. Our first commanders were the best of Poland—Red Army officers. The blood that we have spilled together is the best proof of the eternal friendship between Poland and the Soviet Union. And for that we love our army.

We are proud of our army, because it always told the truth, always explaining clearly and understandably to the troops what was expected of them.

There, in the faraway Russian forests, we were told that the road to Warsaw leads through Smolensk—and that was true. We were promised that we would be the first soldiers to enter Poland, that our banners would be the first ones to sway in the wind at the Baltic coast—and that too turned out to be true. For that we love our First Army.

We are proud of our army because she became the kernel of the new, democratic Polish Army. The leaders of the new Poland came from our ranks. Poland was liberated by our army, fighting together with the Red Army. For the, we love our army.

The war is over. The First Army fulfilled its duty with honour and bravery and made the Polish people proud.

We are proud of our army because she is the bane of the reactionary forces, of fascism and nationalism. The army is the first supporting pillar of the new democratic Poland and all the people who are working for it.

Let the Polish peasants work in peace. Let the Polish workers and the Polish intellectuals work in peace. The banners of our First Army, red as they are from the blood of our finest sons and daughters, will never leave her strong hands. We will defend with honour the ideals for which our finest brothers and sisters gave their lives!

First Army Officers School, June 1945.

Six Years

“...Farewell to my beloved city...” Soon we will say goodbye to the Soviet Union, we for whom the Russian land became our second home, for whom Volga and Oka became the substitutes for the Vistula—we the Poles in the USSR.

Six years have passed. Six years of my life. And what a life! We were spread over all corners of the Soviet Union. We got no special treatment—we were simply expected to live and work, like everyone else.

These people have become tough and hardened in battle. These are the kind of people most needed in the new Poland.

Time and place unknown.

