

Krínik in Khurbn

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קאפיטל דריי

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Chapter 3, Pages 52 - 57



In 1939, the fortress of Brest, Belarus (near Bialystok and Krynki) was handed over to the Russians in accordance with the Hitler-Stalin- Pact. In the picture, we see German, Russian and Polish soldier(s). Photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski (own collection).

Life under Russian Power

<p>Di royte army hot bazetst ganzs Veysrusland un Ukrayne. di grenetsn zaynen ayngeshtelt gevorn tsvishn Daytshland-Rusland. der krig tsvishn Poyln un Daytshland iz farendikt. Poyln iz bazigt. England un Frankreykh zetsn vayter far dem krig. di sibe farvos di royte army iz azoy shnel gelofn in der rikhtung fun Bialystok iz mir in etlekhe teg arum klor gevorn. di daytshishe makht vos hot bazetst Bialystok hot aroysgegebn a bafel tsu ire zelner, az men zol oysreynikn di shtot fun alts vos lozt zikh aroysfirn.</p> <p>vegn dem hot zikh dervust der rusisher general-shtab un er hot aroysgegebn a bafel shnel arumtsuringeln di shtot un tsu kontrolirn yedn daytshishn oyto vos fort aroys. di Daytshn hobn shoyngihat ongelodn a gantse ray mit oytos, oyf velkhe es zaynen shoyngeshtanen farshidene tekstil- un ney-mashinen, vol, kuper un zeyer fil shtofn.</p> <p>tsvey teg zaynen zey geven arumgeringelt fun di rusishe tanken un nisht gekent farlozn di shtot, biz Ribentrop, der daytshisher oysern-minister iz spetsyel gefloygn keyn Moskve un dort gefirt unterhandlungen vegn dem inyen. in etlekhe teg arum hobn di daytshn, mit der hilf fun rusn un ortike yidn un kristn, alts tsurik aropgenumen fun di oytos un mit aropgelozte kep aroys fun shtot unter der bagleytung fun shteyner, vos zaynen</p>	<p>The Red Army has occupied the whole of Belarus and Ukraine. The borders are set between Germany and Russia. The war between Poland and Germany is stopped. Poland is defeated. England and France continue to fight in the war. A few days later, the reason why the Red Army moved so quickly towards Bialystok, becomes clear to me. The German "power" that occupied Bialystok, had issued an order to its soldiers to empty the city of all goods that could be exported.</p> <p>But the Russian General Staff was informed about this item and ordered to quickly surround the city and to control every German vehicle driving out of the city. The Germans had already loaded a number of trucks with various textile and sewing machines, wool, copper and many fabrics.</p> <p>For two days, they were surrounded by Russian tanks and could not leave the city, until Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, flew specially to Moscow to negotiate over the matter. After a few days, the Germans - supported by Russians and local Jews and Christians - unloaded everything from the trucks to leave the city with their heads hanging, accompanied by stones thrown at them from all</p>	
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<p>oyf zey gefloygn fun yeder balkon un fentster. zey hobn gekritst mit di tseyen, gebeylt di foystn, ober gornisht gekont ton: in loyf fun</p>	<p>the windows and balconies. They gritted their teeth, clenched their fists, but they could do nothing: In the course</p>	
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<p>drey sho hobn zey gemuzt zayn oyf der tsveyter zayt fun shtot. dos leben in shtetl iz geflosn vi frier. di fabrikn arbetn. di gesheftn zaynen ofn. dos gelt vos tsirkulirt iz nokh poylishes. men zet nokh nit keyn shum untershid. azoy iz geflosn dos leben in meshekh fun tsvey monatn. un plutslung, in a kaltn, regndikn frimorgn, derzet men plaktn oyf di vent, vos zogn on vegn groyse enderungen in shtotishn leben: ale fabrikn vern fun haynt on natsyonalizirt un dos zelbe-ale gesheftn.</p> <p>glaykh hobn zikh bavizn in shtetl frische ponemer mit tekes untern orem un zaynen arumgegangen in di fabrikn loytn seyder. di fabrikantn hobn glaykh gedarft farlozn di fabrikn un voynungen. dos zelbe iz geven mit di groyse kremer. drey teg hot gedoyert di arbet fun natsyonalizirn alts. glaykh zaynen geshafn gevorn arbeter-komitetn, velkhe hobn farvaltet mit di fabrikn. fun ale bazundere kleyne fabriklekh iz geshafn gevorn eyn groyse fabrik, velkhe hot farnumen di gantse gabarske gas. ale parkanes zaynen tsenumen gevorn un di arbeter hobn fray marshirt ibern</p>	<p>of three hours, they had to be on the other side of the city. Life in the shtetl and work in the factories is going on as before. Stores are open. The money in circulation is still Polish. One does not notice the slightest difference, yet. Thus, life flowed in the period of two months. And suddenly, on a cold, rainy early morning, there are posters on the walls, announcing great changes in urban life: "All factories and all shops will be nationalized from today!"</p> <p>Immediately, new faces appeared in the shtetl - people with files under their arms - who went around the factories according to the order. The factory owners had to leave their factories and homes, immediately. The same happened to the big store keepers. It took three days to nationalize everything. Immediately, workers' committees were created, which co-managed the factories. All the special small factories were merged into one big one, which employed the whole Gabarska Street. All fences were removed so that the workers could march freely across the</p>	
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<p>groyasn hoyf. oykh dem Viryans hoyf hot men natsyonalizirt, ibergegebn di parobkes di erd un zey zaynen gevorn di balebatim. mitn Shalker vald iz fargekumen dos zelbe. ale arbeter hobn gemuzt tsurikgeyn in di fabrikn arbetn, nor itst nisht mer bay di frierdike balebatim. der direktor fun der groyser fabrik iz gevorn a rusisher yid-Kroyman. oykh iz gekumen a tekhnisher direktor mitn nomen Lievit. maysters zaynen gevorn di frierdike arbeter. ikh bin oykh tsurik avek arbetn in leder-fabrik un in etlekhe vokhn arum hot men mikh bashtimt als <i>mayster fun khrom (a typo?)</i>.</p> <p>dos arumike dorfishe leben hot zikh oykh glaykh geendert. es zaynen geshafn gevorn kolkhozn, tsi di poyerim hobn yo oder nisht gevolt. di distsiplin iz mit yedn tog gevorn shtarker. der arbets-tog iz geven fun 8 inderfri biz 5 farnakht un di fabrik hot gearbet in drey shikhtn, dos heyst, di gantse 24 sho fun mesles. di fabrik hot geheysn „kozsh-zavad numer 6“- dos iz geven eyne fun di greste fabrikn fun Veys-</p>	<p>large yard. "Virian's Yard" has also been nationalized and its land handed over to the farmhands, who become the new owners. The same happened with the "Schalker Forest". All workers had to go back to work in the factories, but no longer for the previous owners. A Russian Jew, named Kroyman, became director of the big factory. Also, a technical director, named Lievit, joined. The former workers were now becoming masters. I also resumed my work in the leather factory and after several weeks, I was appointed <i>master of suede(?)</i>.</p> <p>The surrounding village life also changed immediately. Thus, collective farms have been created, whether the peasants wanted it or not. The discipline was getting stronger every day. A working day lasted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. late in the afternoon, and factories worked in three shifts, that is, around the clock, 24 hours a day. Our factory was called "Kozsh-Zavad (<i>leather factory</i>) Number 6"- and was one of the largest factories of Belarus,</p>	
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<p>rusland, mit a groyser un guter produktsye. der togsloyn fun a geveynlekhn arbeter iz geven 7-8 rubel. di merste fun di arbeter un bikhlal shtotishe aynvoyner hobn zikh farnumen mit shvartse handl, trots dem vos dos iz geven shtreng farbotn. bay undz in familye-hobn mir ale</p>	<p>with a profitable and high-quality production. The daily wage of an ordinary worker was 7-8 rubles. Most of the workers, and urban residents in general, were engaged in black market trade, although this was strictly forbidden. Everyone in our family worked in the factory. Me, my oldest</p>	
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<p>gearbet in fabrik. ikh, der eltster bruder, mayn foter un der yingster bruder. nokh etlekhe khadoshim arbetn, farlirt mayn foter tsvey finger fun der rekhter hant un blaybt arbetsloz. er bakumt 300 rubl a khoydesh, nit arbetndik.trots dem muz nokh di muter oykh tsuarbetn baym neymashin.</p> <p>dos leben vert tayerer fun tog tsu tog, es heybt on shteyn groyse rayen oyf tsu krign farshidene skhoyres. un in di rayen shteyen mentshn vos zeyer leben un fardinstn hobn zey getsoygn nor fun dem, vos zey flegn di ayngeskoyfte skhoyre farkoyfn tsen-un fuftsik-fakhik tayerer, vi zey flegn dos krign, oyf regirungs-prayz, aza arbet hot gedrot fun 5-6 yor turme,</p> <p>ober mentshn hobn dos vayter geton, un vos a tog alts mer, vayl der fabrik-arbeter hot nisht gekent gebn der familiye genug gelt oyf tsu firm a leben. fun tsayt tsu tsayt hot der arbeter bakumen in fabrik oder gesheft farshidene skhoyres oyf regirungs-prayzn un mit dem flegt er shoyn zayn tsufridn.</p> <p>bikhlal zaynen kimat ale geven tsufridn. trots dem vos dos materyele leben iz geven shverlekh. yeder eyner hot zikh gefregt: nu, vos volt geven, ven di daytshishe merder blaybn bay undz? un yedn tog zaynen gekumen troyerike yedies fun der zsveyter zayt, fun der daytshisher, vegn di shreklekhe laydn fun der yidisher bafelkerung.</p>	<p>brother, my father and my youngest brother. After a few months at work, my father loses two fingers of his right hand and remains unemployed. He, no longer working, receives 300 rubles a month. Nevertheless, my mother also has to work - at the sewing machine.</p> <p>Life becomes more expensive day by day, and it begins to be necessary to stand in long queues to get various goods. And in the queues there are people who can get their living and earnings only by selling purchased goods for ten and fifty times more expensive than the purchase price determined by the government; for such activity one risked 5-6 years in prison.</p> <p>But people used to continue doing so, and every day even more, because a factory worker could no longer give his family enough money to live on. From time to time, workers in the factories or stores received various goods at government prices, about which they were, actually, happy.</p> <p>In general, almost everyone was satisfied, although material life was very deprived. (Finally,) everyone was asking, "Well, what if the German murderers had stayed with us?" And every day, sad news came from the other side, the German, because of the terrible suffering of the Jewish population.</p>	
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<p>yedn tog zaynen ongekumen yidn „bezshentses“ un hobn alts dertseylt vos es iz geshen mit zeyere familyes un heyman. nokh etlekhe khadoshim hot men eyntsne fabrikantn un poylishe antisemitn opgeshikt keyn Rusland. oykh di ale naye ongekumene „bezshentses“ hot men avekgeshikt unter geveer keyn tif Rusland.</p> <p>yeder iz geven gliklekh un tsufridn vos mir leben nit in keyn toyt-shrek farn morgn. der morgn iz bay yedn geven farzikhert, vayl men hot gezen un geredt fun der shtarkeyt fun der royter armye, velkhe hot gehit di grenetsn. yedn zuntik hot men</p>	<p>Every day, Jews arrived, the "bezshentses" (refugees), who told us what had happened to their families and homes. After a few months, individual factory owners and Polish anti-Semites were sent to Russia. The newly arrived "bezshentses" were also sent away to deep Russia at gun point.</p> <p>Anyway, we were all happy and satisfied that we did not have to live in mortal fear of what the following time would bring. The next day seemed assured to all of us. We saw, and it was also talked about, how strong was the Red Army guarding the borders. There was no work on Sundays.</p>	
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<p>nisht gearbet.</p> <p>der ershter vinter iz ariber. der krig tsvishn England-Frankreykh un Daytshland vert mit yedn tog shtarker un do kumt di yedie az Frankreykh iz gefaln. London vert bashosn mit harmatn fun Lamansh („La Manche“)-kanal</p> <p>nor di frayntshaft tsvishn Rusland-Daytshland iz a gute un yeder iz tsufridn vos mir zetsn for(t) undzer ruik leben.</p>	<p>The first winter is over. The war between England-France and Germany is growing stronger with each passing day, and then, breaking news that France has fallen! London is shelled with cannons from the English Channel.</p> <p>But the friendship between Russia and Germany is stable, and everyone is glad that we can continue our quiet life.</p>	
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זומער 1941
Summer 1941



Drawing courtesy of the painter, Zdzislaw Nitka

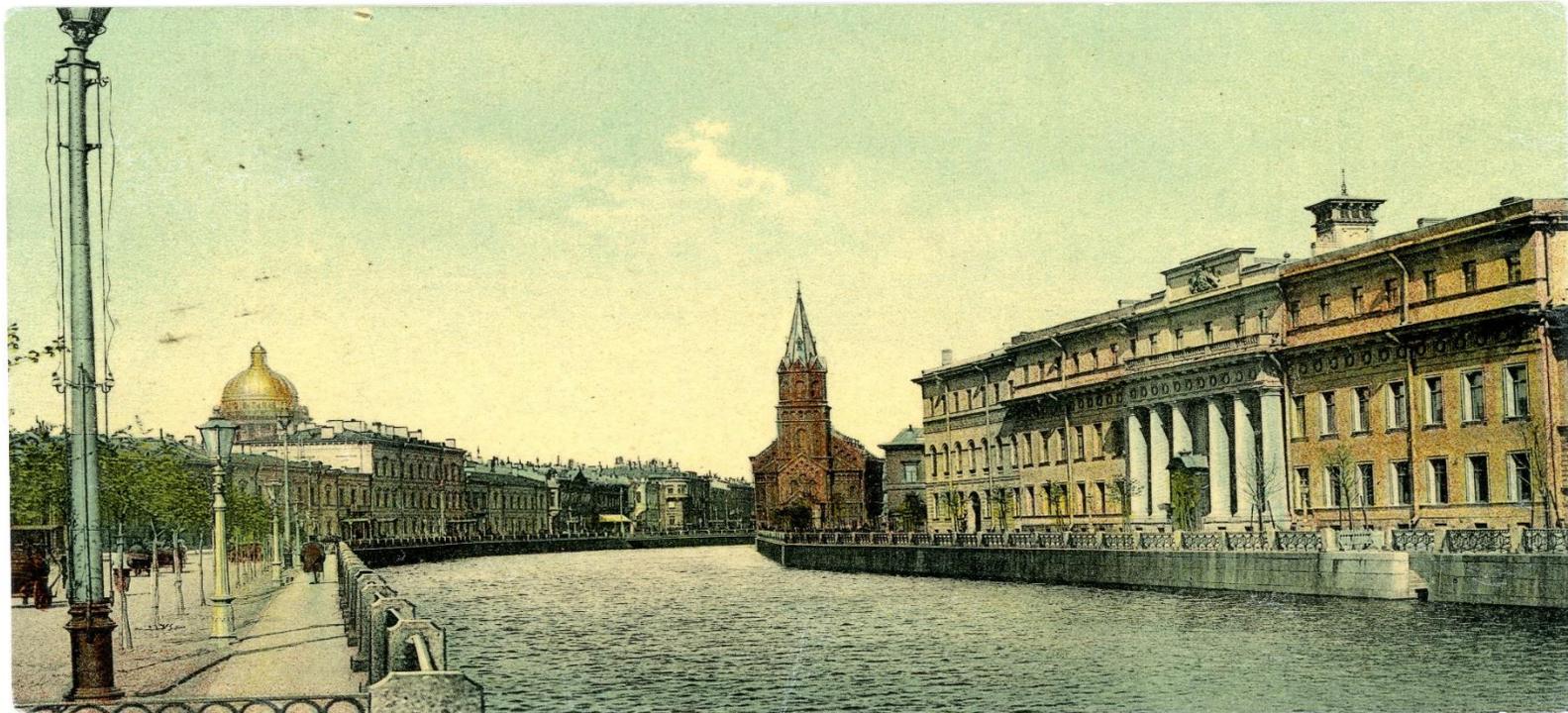
<p>di yugnt vert gegreyt tsum militer. yedn tog kumen for (i)bungen nokh der arbet. ikh ver oykh gelernt vi tsu haltn a biks in hant. dem 2tn mai nemt men fir yorgeng in militer oyf 2 yor. dem 6tn mai bakumt mayn bruder a tsetl un geyt avek in militer.</p> <p>tsuzamen mit im geyt avek mayn kuzin <i>Menye Yelenovitch</i> velkher kumt in 4 vokhn arum tsurik tsuzamen mit nokh etlekhe yidishe yugntlekhe. di sibe iz alemen umbakant. zey brengen mit zikh a farmakhtn briv un vern tsurikgeshikt in shtub arayn. mayn bruder dint in an army-opteyl bay Kharkov.</p> <p>in etlekhe vokhn arum nokh mayn bruders opforn shikt man mikh oyf kursn keyn Leningrad. ikh for mit der ban durkh Bialystok, Minsk, Smolensk, Oryol-biz Leningrad.</p> <p>a naye velt efnt zikh oyf far mir ven ikh shtel nor dem ershtn trit in der rusisher shtot Leningrad.</p> <p>ikh meld zikh oyfn ongegebenem adres un heyb zikh on tsu lernen 7 sho in tog. tsayt tsu bazukhn di shtot hob ikh zeyer veynik. ikh ver tsemisht fun groysn tuml un rash. dos arbeter-leben iz dokh zeyer a shvers. ikh fleg zikh lernen 4 sho praktik un 3 sho teorye.</p> <p>di zeks vokhn zaynen shnel ariber un es iz gekumen di tsayt tsuriktsuforn in kleynem shtetele, Krynki, ontsuheybn arbetn vi frier. ikh kum tsurik un tref groyse enderungen in shtetl. der gevezener milits-komendant, David, iz</p>	<p>The youth is prepared for military service. Every day after work, there are drill-units. I, too, learn how to hold a rifle. On May 2, four year groups are drafted into military service for 2 years. On May 6, my brother receives a "note" and joins the military.</p> <p>With him goes my cousin <i>Menie Yelenovich</i>, who comes back after 4 weeks with some more Jewish youngsters. No one knows the reason. They bring a taped up letter, and are sent back to the parlors. My brother serves in an army detachment near Kharkov.</p> <p>A few weeks after my brother's departure, I am sent to Leningrad for training courses. I travel by train through Bialystok, Minsk, Smolensk, Oryol - to Leningrad.</p> <p>A new world opens up for me as I take the very first step into the Russian city of Leningrad.</p> <p>I register at the given address and start studying 7 hours a day. Time to visit the city I have very little. I get all confused by the great bustle and noise. Worker's life is very hard after all. I use to study 4 hours of practical and 3 hours of theoretical knowledge.</p> <p>The six weeks are quickly over and the time has come, to go back to my little shtetl, Krynki, starting to work as before.</p> <p>When I return, I encounter major changes in the shtetl. The former militia commander, David, has</p>	
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arestirt. di sibe veyst keyner nisht. yeder zagt vos er vil. ale gevezene fabrikantn mit zeyere familyes zaynen opgeschikt gevorn keyn Sibir.

der direktor fun fabrik iz a nayer rusisher yid-*Fridman*. ikh kum tsurik fun Leningrad dem 15tn Yuli. ikh tref zikh mit royarmeyer, leytenantn.

been arrested. No one knows the reason, everyone says something different. All former factory owners were sent to Siberia together with their families.

The director of our factory is a new(ly arrived) Russian Jew - *Fridman*. After my return from Leningrad on July 15, I meet with lieutenants of the Red Army.



The Neva River, Old St. Petersburg/Leningrad, photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski (own collection)

yeder iz farton bay di manevers un abisl farzorgt vegn shokhn. zey taynen ale, az zey zaynen gute fraynt mit di daytshn, nor zey veysn, az der Yeke iz zey a blutiker soyne un er vet nokh firn krig mit undz.

dem zuntik kloybn zikh ale tsunoyf in Shalker vald, vu es darf haltn a politishe rede der polkovnik fun shtotishn tankn-opteyl, velkher shteyt ayn in Viryans hoyf.

dos iz geven dem 20tn oygust. dos vald iz shvarts fun mentshn. der tog iz zeyer a sheyner. di zun laykht un ire shtraln tsegisn zikh tsvishn di gedikhte beymer. der himl iz tif-bloy. Feygelekh shpringen iber di nodlen fun boym tsu boym un lozn aroys a zis gezang. di luft iz shmekedik. alts arum lakht.

es kumt der polkovnik. an alter, groyer man, abisele an ayngboygener. er kumt bagleyt fun etlekhe hoykhe ofitsirn un komisarn. zeyere ponimer shtraln ven zey varfn a blik oyfn ongezamltn oylem. tsvishn tsvey yunge beymer hengt men oyf a mape un der polkovnik, mit a shtekele in hant, geyt tsu un nemt dos vort.

Everyone is heavily involved with the maneuvers and somewhat concerned about our "neighbors". They all claim that they were good friends with the Germans, but they know very well that "the Jekke" is a bloody enemy of theirs and that he will still wage war with us.

On Sunday, everyone sets out to gather in the Shalker Wood, where the colonel of the city's armored division, who has taken up residence in Virian's yard, will give a speech.

It is the 20th of August. The forest is black with people. It is a very beautiful day, the sun is shining and its rays are fanning between the dense trees. The sky is deep blue. Little birds jump over the pine needles from tree to tree, chirping a sweet song. The air is fragrant, everything around is laughing.

The colonel appears, an old, gray, somewhat hunched forward man. He comes accompanied by several high officers and commissioners. Their faces light up when they take a look at the assembled audience. They hang a map between two young trees and the colonel, with a stick in his hand, approaches and takes the floor.

<p>er redt shtil, gelasn, opgehakt. fun tsayt tsu tsayt lozt er aroys a hilkhikn hust, velkher klingt op mit an ekho un blaybt hengen iber alemens kep. zayn hant mitn shtekele bavegt zikh oyf der groyser layvntener mape.</p>	<p>He speaks quietly, deliberately, choppily. From time to time, a loud cough slips out of his mouth, echoing over everyone's heads. His hand with the stick moves on the big linen map.</p>	
<p>do iz er in England un do in Frankreykh. ot vayzt er dos indzl Malta. ot zet men di grenets fun Daysthland -Rusland. vayter git er a fir mit der hant un vayzt dem shetekh erd vos shteyt in flamen un zogt:</p>	<p>Here he points to England, there to France, and there he shows the island of Malta and the German-Russian border. And further, pointing with his hand to the territory of the earth that is on fire, he says:</p>	
<p>ir zet arum undz brenen tsvey shtroyene dekher un mir shteyen inmitn. ot falt a funk oyf undzer dakh un mir zaynen arumgekhaft fun flamen.</p>	<p>"You see that there are two thatched roofs burning around us, and we are right in the middle. If only a single spark spreads to our roof, we will be taken over by the flames".</p>	
<p>un er redt vayter mit a hekhere ton un in zayne oygn tsindt zikh a fayerl: -derfar muzn mir ale zayn greyt un haltn ofn di oygn.</p>	<p>And more emphatically and with fire in his eyes, he continues to speak: "Therefore, we must all be ready and keep our eyes open".</p>	
<p>un di letste verter zayne zaynen geven: ir, arbeter, kent ruik arbetn un derfiln dem regirungs-plan, mir, di royte armey, veln aykh shoyn farhitn fun yeder</p>	<p>And his last words are: "You workers can work with peace of mind and fulfill the government plan. But we, the Red Army, will protect you from</p>	

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<p>gefar. mir shteyen greyt tsu farteydikn yedn shpan erd, ven er vet nor ongrifn vern.</p>	<p>any danger. We stand ready to defend every sliver of earth if it is attacked".</p>	
<p>dos zaynen geven di letste verter fun polkovnik.</p>	<p>These were the colonel's last words.</p>	