

Arkady Gaidar

Campaign



“Arkady Gaidar did not live long enough to write a great deal. But books like The School, The Fourth Dugout, Distant Lands, Military Secret, The Blue Cup, The Drummer Boy, Smoke in the Forest, Chuck and Geek, his frontline articles and stories and other writings, including, of course, Timur and His Squad, a book that is widely known in many parts of the world, will always be favourites with boys and girls who gaze out eagerly on life and are impatient to understand it so as to find a worthy application for their youthful energies.”

Lev Kassil



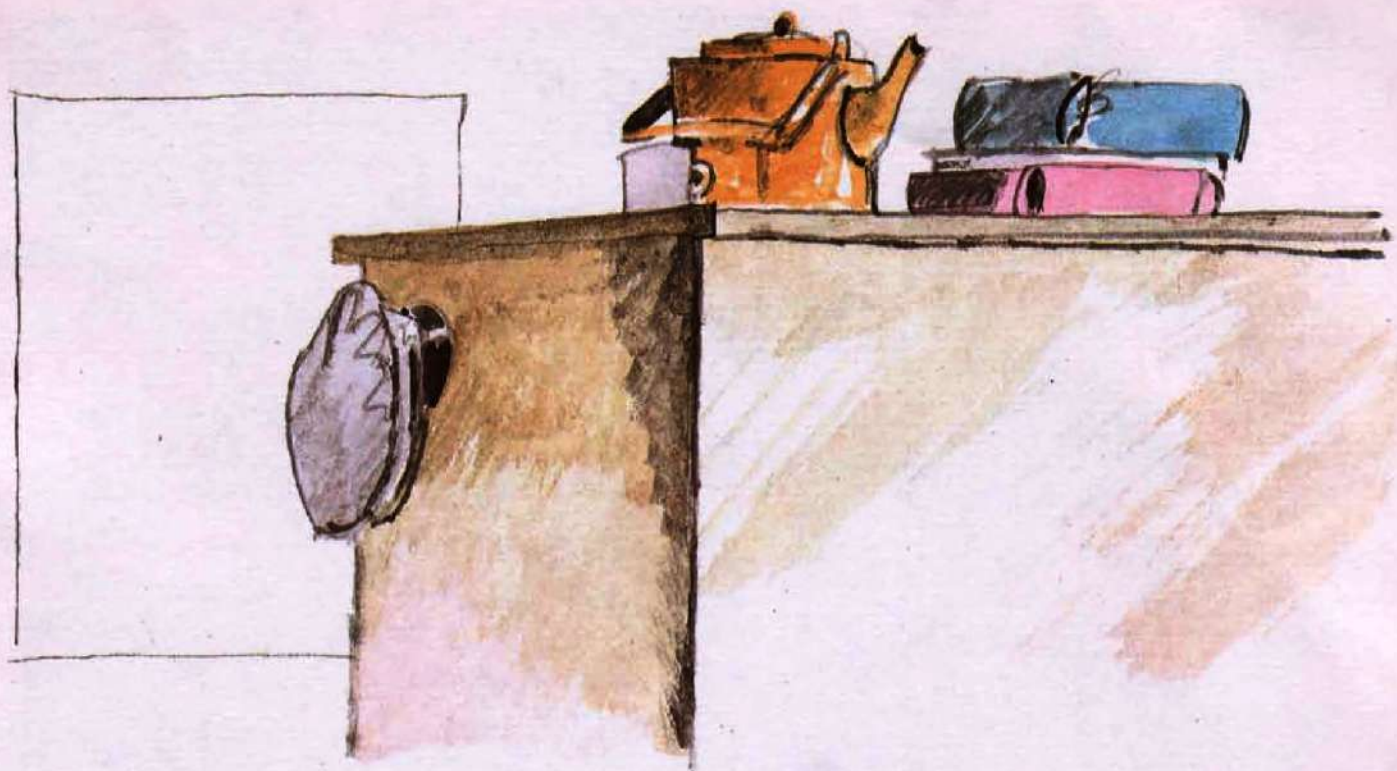
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English: Evgeny Spirin
Edited by Lara Spurr





Soviet Square

(How Gaidar saw Lenin)

It was 1919, February, I think. I had just turned fifteen. And so the commander, who, out of kindness, called me either an orderly or an adjutant, told me.

“I’m leaving for Sovetskaya Square. Hero, don’t frown! I would take you with me, but there is no gas in the car, and therefore I will go on horseback.”

But I already knew why the troops were hurrying to the square. I was shaking and asked: “Comrade Commander, I am so sad! Can’t I ride along with you too?”

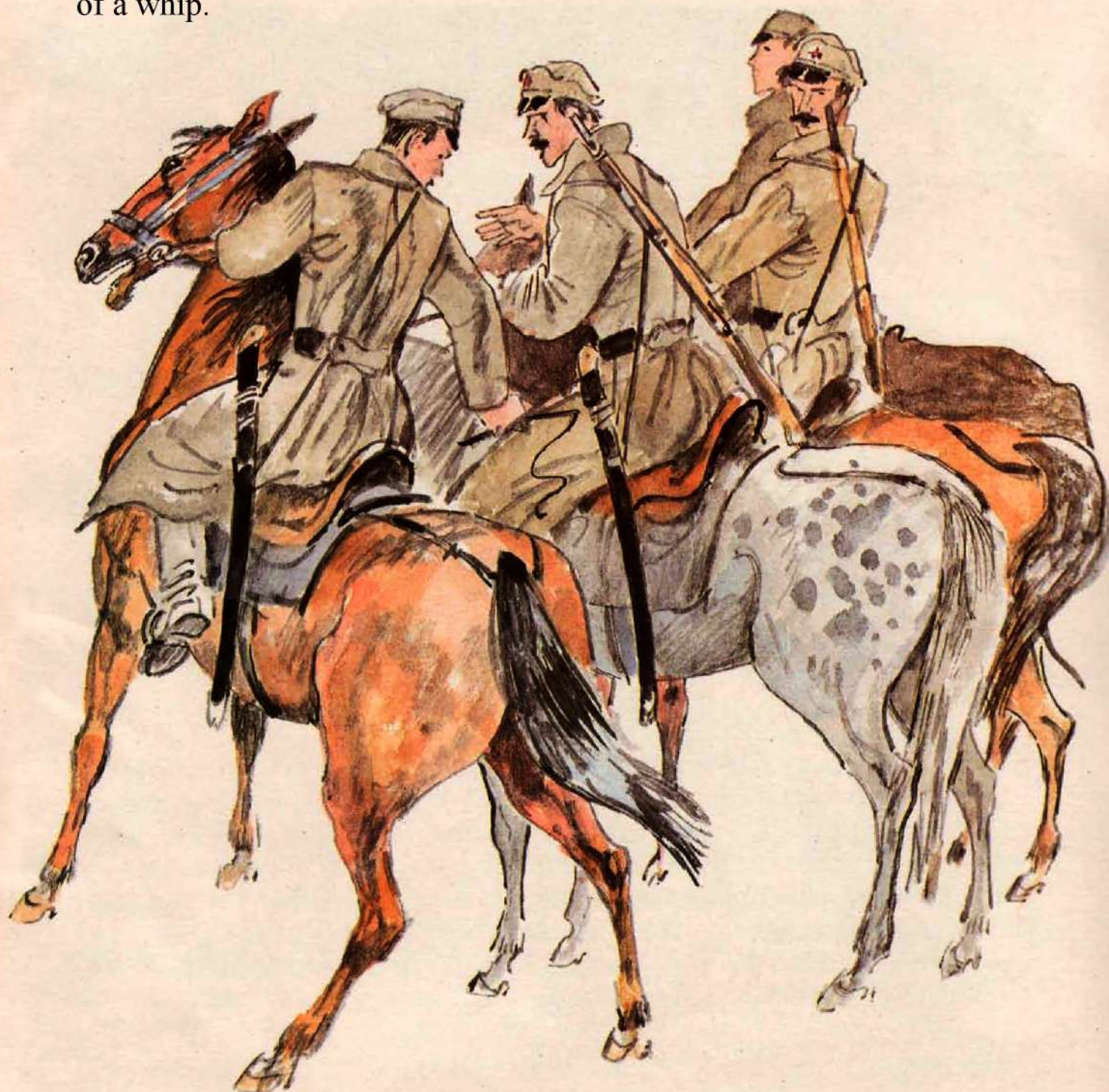
He warned me: “Well, decide for yourself!” And I rushed to the stable to choose a quieter horse for myself, because I was still pretty poor in the saddle. But all the horses that were quieter were nags - miserable, thin.



And they saddled me with a high crafty horse, which, as soon as he found himself on the square, began to snort, twist his muzzle and push other horses with his rump ...

And there was a meeting, and the best communists of many countries spoke from the balcony of the Moscow City Council.

And the riders, looking angrily at me, were quietly cursing and furtively pushing my horse, some with the toe of their boot, and some with the hilt of a whip.





Suddenly the whole square froze, and Lenin came out onto the balcony. I was overjoyed, got up in the stirrups, but my horse shuddered, snorted, backed away ...

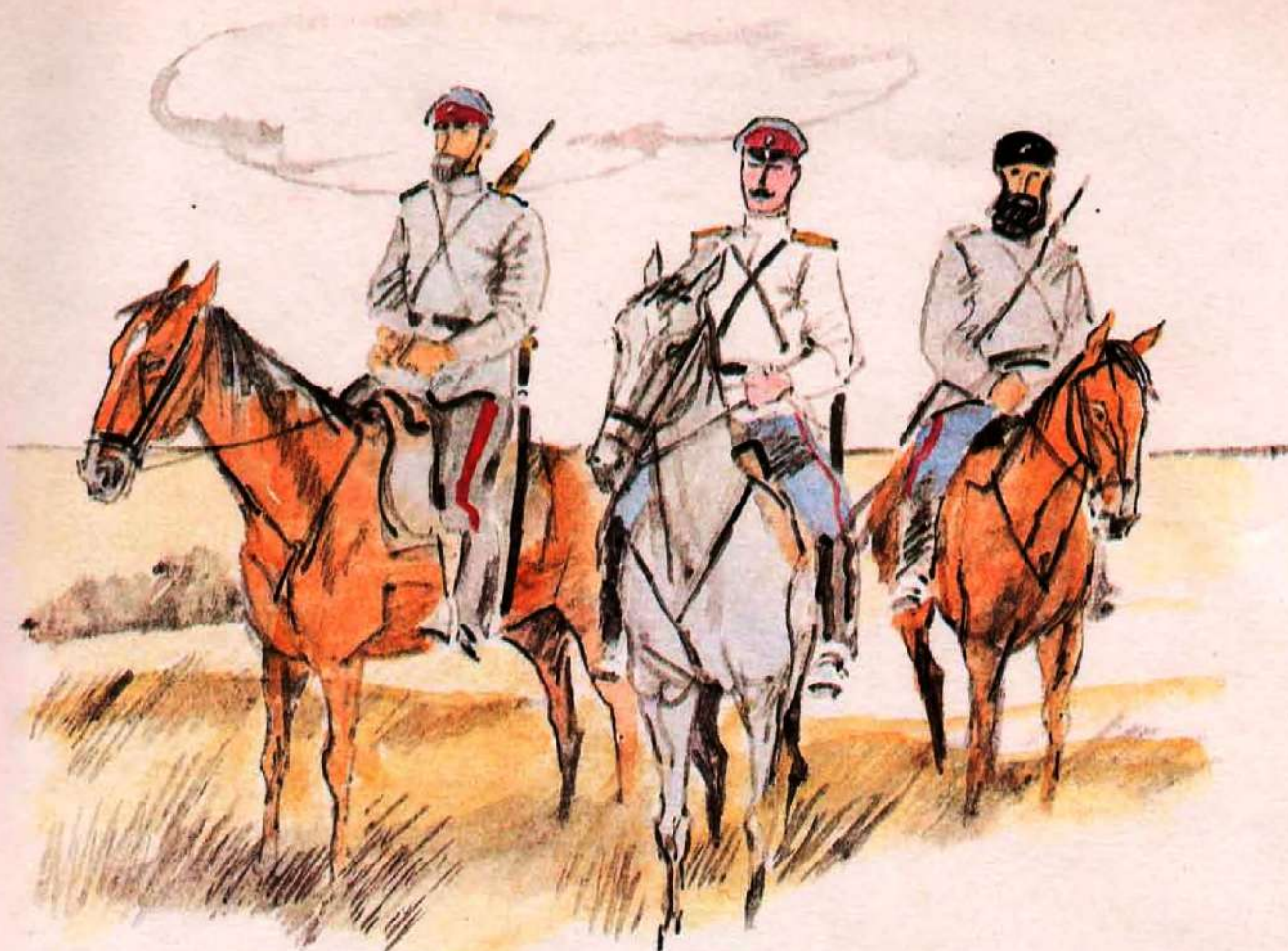
And during Lenin's short speech, I spent all my strength, all my little skill only to ensure that my horse at least somehow stood still. So that if not me, then at least the surrounding people could listen to what the great leader had to say.



But when Lenin had finished speaking and music and shouting rang out in the square, I, in anger and tears, hit my horse with a whip. I flew out of line and rushed wherever my eyes looked, along the deserted streets covered with snowdrifts.

I never heard or saw Lenin again. But on the same day, people recounted to me Lenin's speech as well as they could remember it. And I, considering his words, asked my commander for leave, and soon left with the soldiers of the Red Army to the front - to the distant Twelfth Army.





Vasily Kryukov

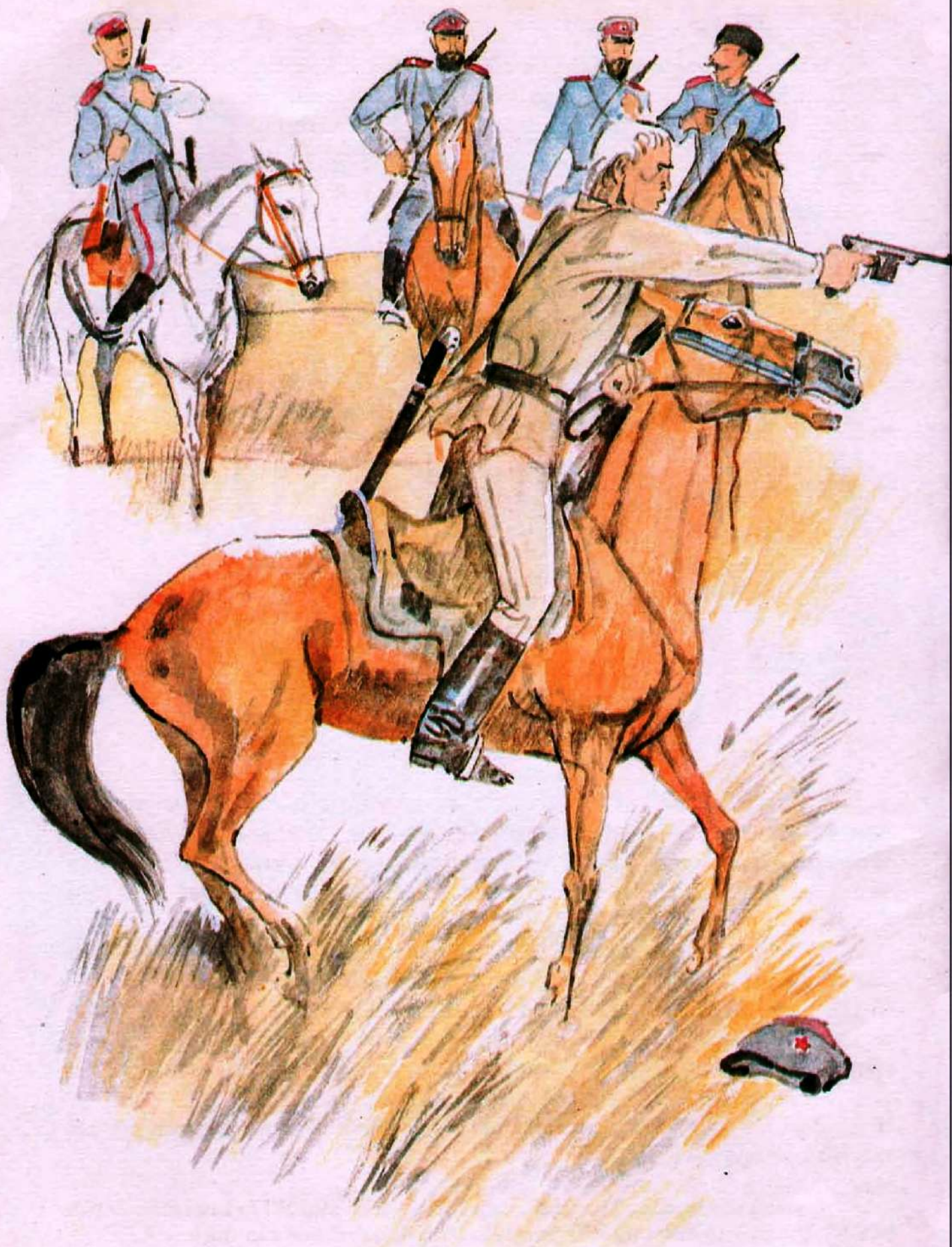
The Red Army soldier Vasily Kryukov had a wounded horse, and the White Cossacks overtook him. He, of course, could have shot himself, but he did not want to. He threw away his empty rifle, unfastened his saber, thrust the revolver into his bosom and, turning his weakened horse, rode towards the Cossacks.

The Cossacks were surprised at such a thing, because it was not in the custom of that war for the Reds to throw weapons to the ground.

Therefore, they did not hack Kryukov to death, but surrounded him and wanted to know what this man needed and what he hoped for. Kryukov took off his gray fur hat with a red star on it and said:

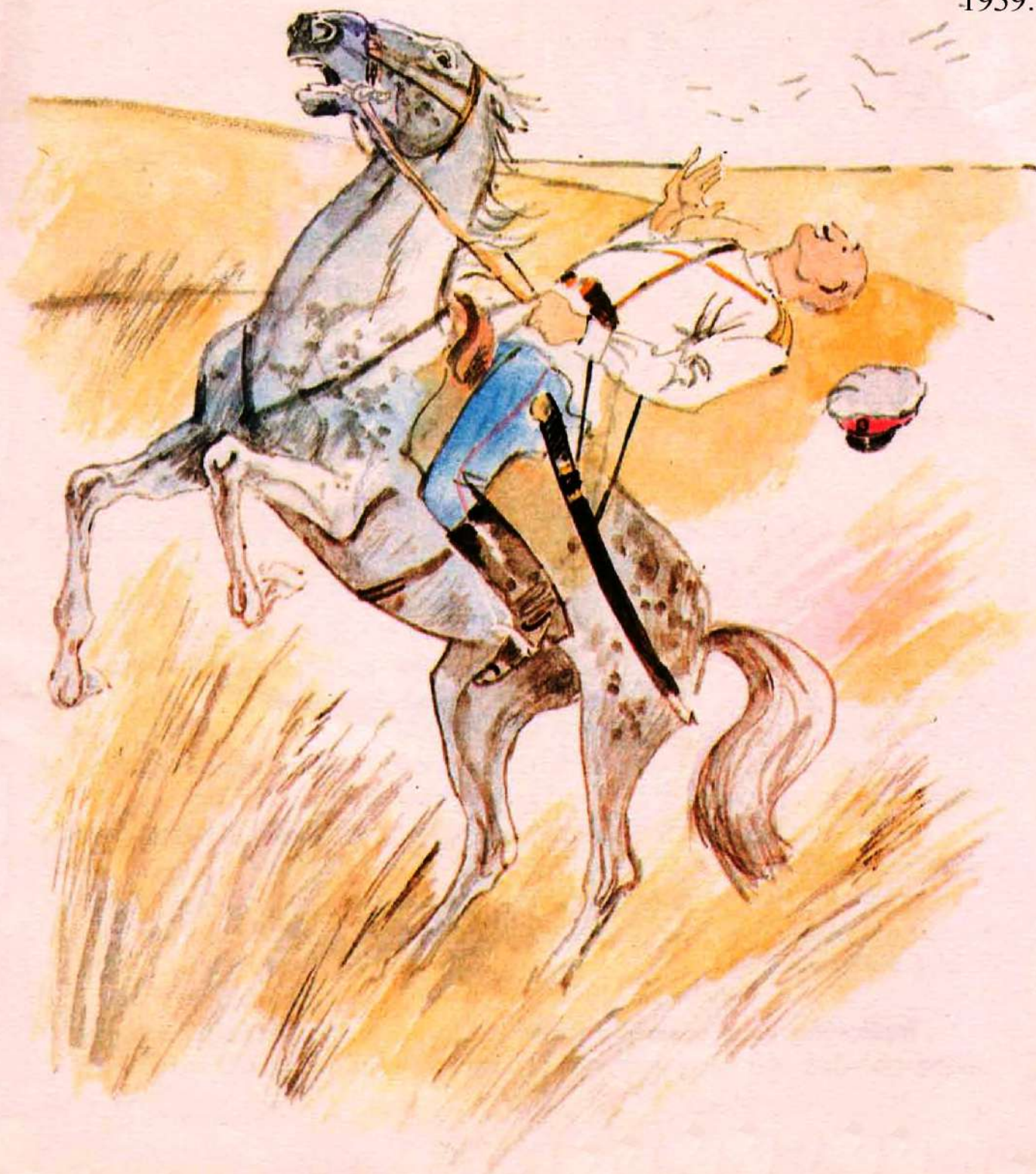
“Who is your leader here? Let him take this hat quickly.”

Then the Cossacks decided that a military package was sewn up in this hat, and they called their chief.



But when he drove up and held out his hand, Kryukov pulled out a revolver from his bosom and shot the officer in the forehead. The Cossacks immediately hacked Kryukov to death and rode on their way. Some Cossacks scolded Kryukov, other Cossacks scolded their officer. But there were also such people who now rode in silence and gloomily thought about what a strong courage those Reds had!

1939.





Cartridges

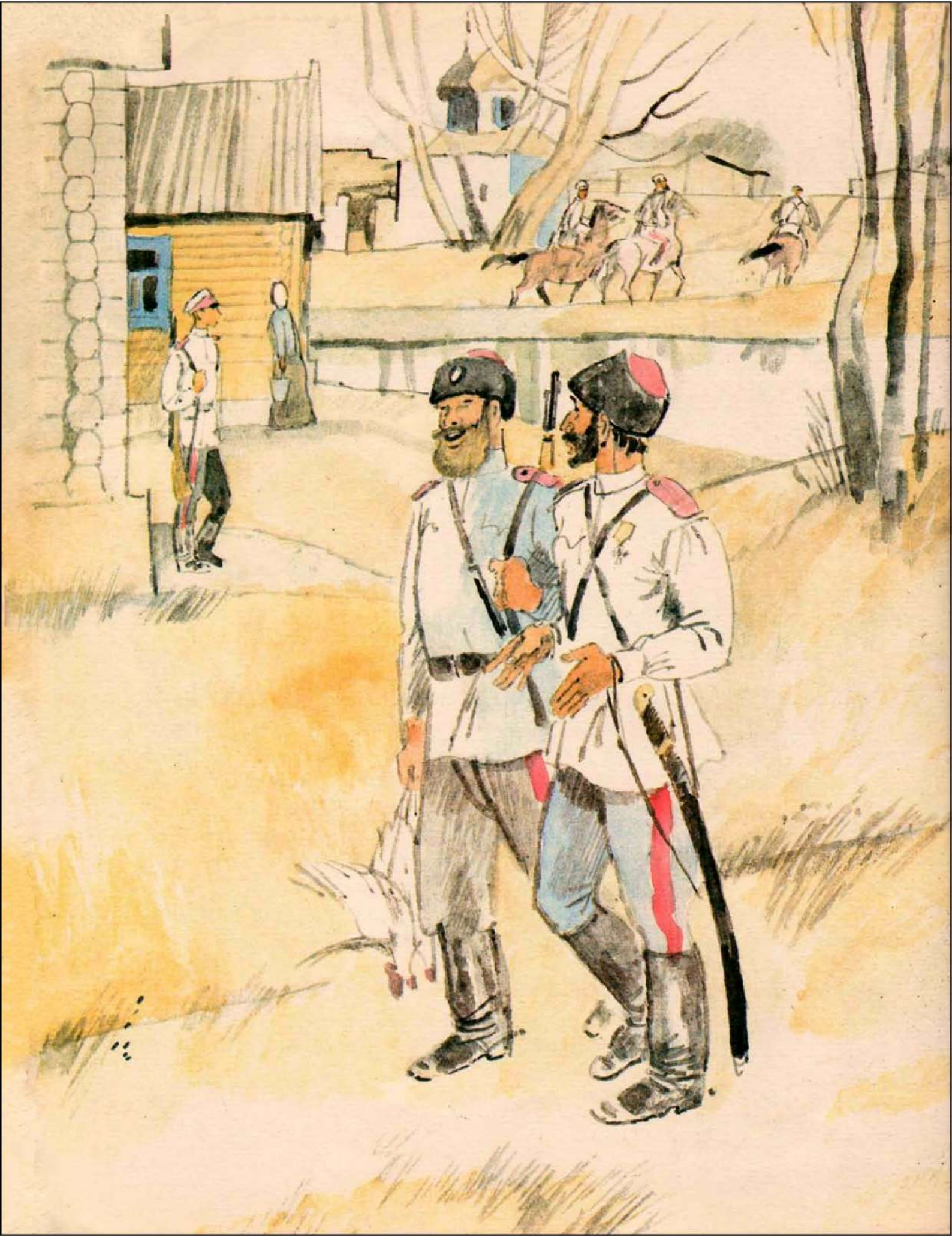
During the retreat, the frightened horses overturned a broken box of cartridges into a roadside ditch. No one picked up the cartridges in a hurry.

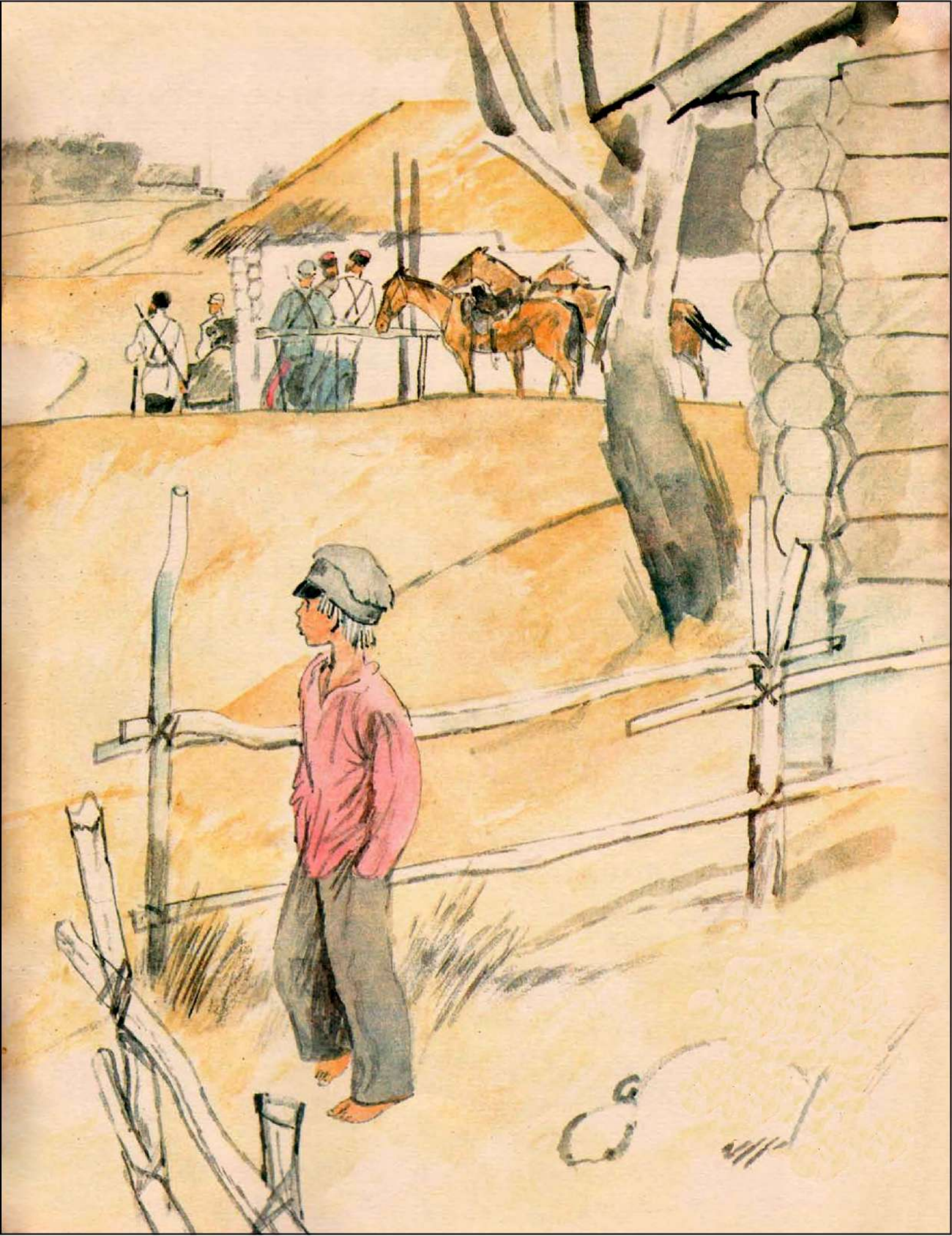
And only a week later Grishka came across the cartridges when he was tearing grass for goats. He shook the grass out of the bag, put a lot of cartridge packs in it, brought it home and boasted to his mother: "Here, Mom! I Found some cartridges! Shiny, brand-new cartridges. I'm going to run back now, and I'll bring a lot more of them!"

But the mother quickly closed the door in the stove where the fire was burning and screamed at Grishka: "Are you smart, Grishka, or are you a bad boy!? Take away this horror right now and sink it in a pond or in a river. Take it away quickly, or I'll call my grandfather!"

Grishka sighed. You can't argue with your mother. He shouldered the bag and carried the cartridges out of the house. But he didn't throw the cartridges into the river. He kept three packs for himself, and dumped the rest in the bushes behind the garden, covering them with straw and dry leaves.







In the morning, Grandfather Semyon entered the hut. He threw down his axe, sat on the bench, opened the window, and lit a cigarette saying: "Trouble, Ganna! It seems to me that either the Makhnovists or the Cossacks are again close to our village. I'm standing at the well and I hear a bomb thundering loudly and hard two times across the river in the meadows."

Then the mother ran into the closet, quickly gathered better clothes: a fringed shawl, a dress, gray grandfather's trousers, a pink Grishkin shirt. She tied everything in a bundle and hid it in the stable, under a dry pig trough.

But the Makhnovists had nothing to do with it.

Grishka returned from the river only in the evening. He brought one carp, two ruffs and one roach. He frowningly hung this fish on a nail so that the cat would not eat it, and carefully and quietly went to sleep in the hayloft so as to avoid his grandfather. He didn't even ask for dinner and didn't brag about his catch.





But the mother immediately noticed that Grishka's hand was wrapped in a rag, his eyes were guilty, and his face was sad. And anxiously she asked: "What's wrong with your hand, Grishka? Your bullets again?" "No, I burned my hand by the fire when I baked potatoes. Put a poultice on my hand and tie it tight, Mom!"

Then the mother said confidently: "Oh, you're lying, Grishka!" But she greased his hand with lard, applied a fresh burdock to the burn and tied the hand with a clean cloth.

Then she left the house and sat down by the porch. The big land lay all around. The big war was on the move. Right here, by the road where the war was going on there was a gray hut with a white chimney in which a mother and her son Grishka lived.

The next evening there was a trampling, knocking and rumbling down the street.



A rifle poked through the door, followed by a bearded Cossack. He slammed his rifle butt on the floor and ordered "Quickly give me good food and a jug of the coldest milk!"

Grishka got scared, took the cartridge out of his pocket and quietly threw it out the window. Yes, that's the trouble! The cartridge fell right under the feet of another Cossack. The Cossack picked up the cartridge, took it into the house and showed it to the senior Cossack.

The elder Cossack pushed the empty jug away. He unbuttoned the collar of his tunic, loosened the belt and said: "There must be an armory here somewhere. Search all the sheds and cellars, and the chests too. And put the owner of this house under arrest in the barn"

"May you disappear with your cartridges! Run, tell Uncle Yegor about our trouble," the mother said.

"Bad tidings Uncle Yegor!" said Grishka.

"We need to help out the old man", said Uncle Yegor, "but I don't know how. You go find out how many Cossacks there are in the village and find out if they plan to stay there overnight, and I'll wait for you by the river," he added.

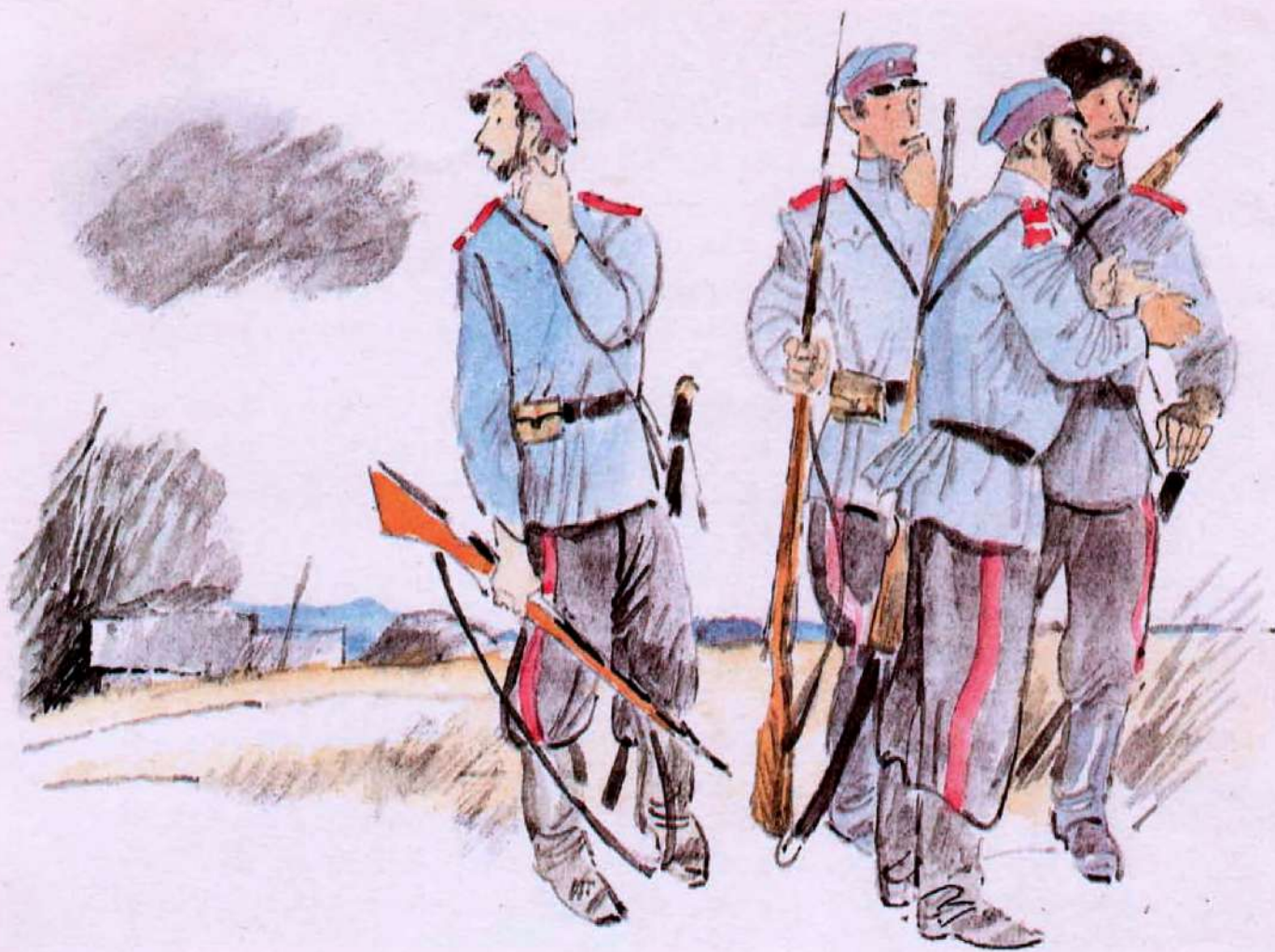
Grishka went to count the Cossacks. But the Cossacks didn't stand still, and were walking back and forth through the village. And it's very easy to confuse one Cossack with another! Then Grishka began to count the Cossack horses that were standing in the courtyards of the houses. He counted twenty-three horses, and wanted to run to Uncle Yegor.

Suddenly a shot rang out behind the bushes. Then a Cossack ran out, leading a horse by the bridle and shouting: "Here, here! The Reds partisans are close here!"

"What are you lying about, muttonhead?" — the senior Cossack asked — "This is our horse."

"No, it's their horse," replied the Cossack. — "I just now shot down a partisan from this horse!"

While they were wondering, another Cossack ran out.



The Cossack's hair was wet and he held his boots in his hands.

The Cossack began to swear: "Hey scoundrels, who stole my stallion?"

"Is this really your horse?"

"Well who else's do you think it is? Or are your eyes blinded?"

Then all the Cossacks gathered and began to try and work out how it all happened. And it turned out like this. The Cossack tied his horse, and he climbed up the steep bank to the river to swim. And in the bushes Uncle Yegor was sitting and waiting for Grishka. Yegor saw a horse without a master and thought, "I'll get on this horse and rush for help to the forest, to the partisans." He had just jumped on his horse when a shot suddenly struck from the side. Uncle Yegor fell off the horse under a cliff and ran back to the village as quickly as he could. Luckily the bullet only tore his belt.



Uncle Yegor made his way to the barn and heard Grandfather Semyon scolding the sentry tasked with guarding him through the wall. He was shaming him, calling him a crook, accusing him of robbery. The sentry got angry, leaned his rifle against the wall, and climbed up the stairs to the attic and began to scold Grandfather Semyon through the window in response.

Then Uncle Yegor snuck out, took the rifle, opened the bolt and took out all five cartridges from the Cossack's weapon then carefully put it back. "Now," - he thinks, "you'll get off duty, and I'll be able to take you quietly prisoner from around the corner." And just as Uncle Yegor jumped around the corner to hide, he stumbled upon another Cossack who asked him "What are you jumping here for? Or didn't you hear our order for everyone to stay at home and not to wander around the streets?"

He took Yegor to the senior Cossack who ordered:

"And you lock up this jumper with the old man in the barn . He can be the old man's neighbor!"

So they took Uncle Yegor and locked him in the barn with Grandfather Semyon.

Grishka thus did not find Uncle Yegor at the river. When he returned to the village, it was almost dark.

"May you fail with your cartridges!" -The mother cried even harder.

"They have now put Uncle Yegor under lock and key!"

And then Grishka felt so sorry for Grandfather Semyon and Uncle Yegor that first two tears flowed down his cheeks, and then four more. But he sighed, stopped crying, and silently left.

He crawled from the kitchen garden to the barn.

Grishka lay in the nettles and whispered softly: "Uncle Yegor, Grandfather Semyon! Both of you rake the ground with your hands under the logs, and I'll dig outside with a shovel."

But the Cossack, who was guarding the door behind the fence, set his ears like a wolf and heard the noise. "Stop!" — he shouted. "Who goes there?"

Grishka turned to run. The sentry pulled the trigger once, pulled the trigger a second time, but there was no shot.

The senior Cossack came running and began to swear: "Why are you on duty with an unloaded rifle you muttonhead!"

"It's not true! "— the Cossack shouted, - "I just put four cartridges in my rifle and I drove the fifth into the barrel! There she is, lying at my feet, the empty clip."

The senior Cossack lifted the clip. More Cossacks came up and began to huddle round together, pondering: "How could this happen?"

The mother was sitting by the window and crying bitterly. Suddenly, Grishkin's shaggy head poked through the window, covered in burrs.

"Where have you been?" mother exclaimed.

"Give me the matches!" said Grishka.

"Why?" asked mother.

"Just give them to me!" Grishka repeated insistently and, grabbing a box from the windowsill, disappeared. And just in time! A Cossack entered the house, looked around and asked: "Who were you talking to, baba, just now?" "Oh I was just talking to myself," the mother answered, frightened for her Grishka.

The Cossack was surprised and called the senior Cossack. The elder Cossack was surprised too and said: "Wonderful things here, Cossacks! People talk to themselves. The dead disappear. Loaded rifles don't fire!"

And then the Cossacks squinted at the dark windows. And everyone thought: "Wouldn't it be better for us to just leave here, get closer to our regiment for the night?"

But then a shot rang out in the dark. And the rifle fire began, the cannonade began. "Reds!" — "We are surrounded!" shouted the Cossacks, jumping into their saddles, the windows ringing from their horse's trampling.

... And when everything went quiet, Grishka's head cautiously poked into the hut: "Are they gone Mom?"

"Yes they've gone Grishka."

"Let's go check the barn, Mom!"

"Wait, Grishka. Let the comrades open it."

"What comrades?"

"Reds, fighters! Who we have been waiting for!"

"There's no one on the street, Mom," — Grishka said gloomily. — "I laid out the cartridges behind the garden, filled them with hay, and lit a match. That's where the bullet rattling came from!"

The mother didn't say anything. She wiped her tears, lit a lantern, took an axe. And she went with Grishka to break the lock on the barn door.

1926-1941

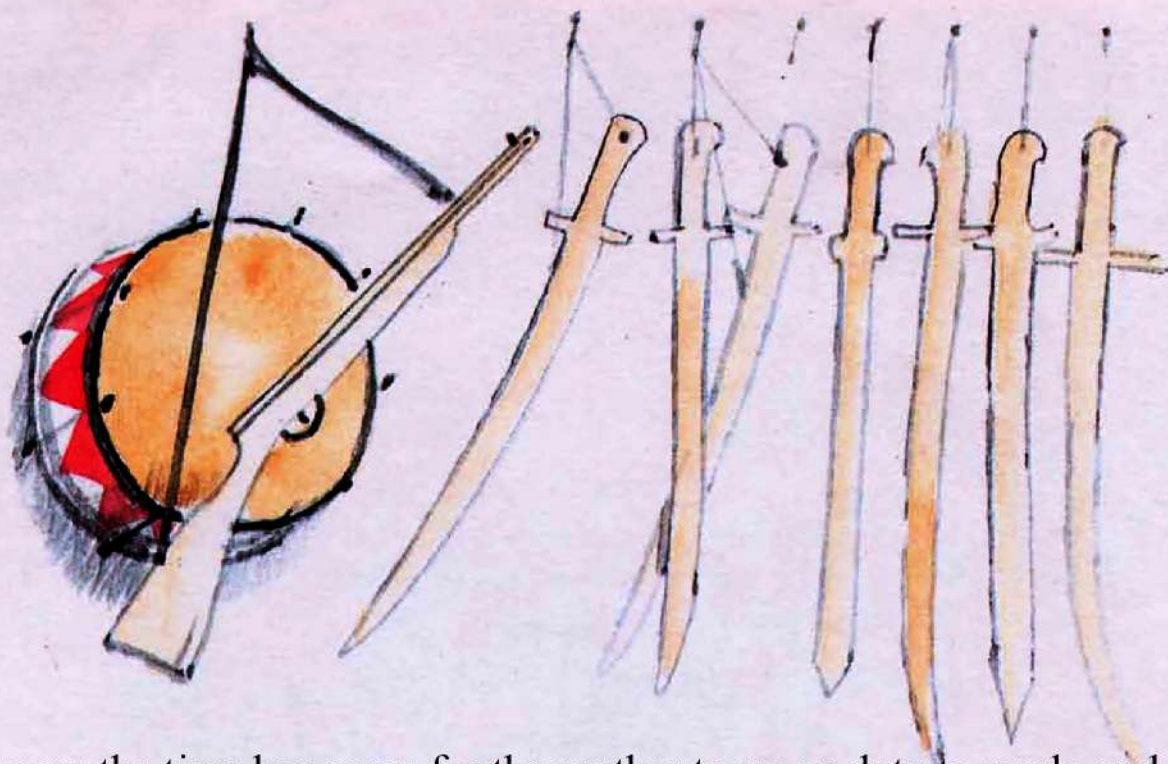


Campaign

One night, a Red Army messenger brought a summons, and the following dawn, the father kissed his sleeping son Alka tightly and went to war - on a campaign.

In the morning, Alka got angry that his father had not woken him, and immediately declared that he wanted to go out on a campaign too. He would probably scream, cry. But quite unexpectedly, his mother allowed him to go out on a campaign!.

To gain strength before the road, Alka ate a full plate of porridge without a whim, and drank a glass of milk. And then he and his mother sat down to prepare equipment for the endeavor. His mother sewed pants for him, and he, sitting on the floor, cut a saber out of some board. And right there, while they worked, they learned marching songs, because with the song "A small spruce was born in the forest", they don't walk in the ranks. And the motive is not the same, and the words are not the same, this melody for the battle is completely unsuitable.



But now the time has come for the mother to go on duty to work, and they postponed their affairs until tomorrow.

And so, day after day, Alka prepared for a long journey. Mother and Alka sewed pants, shirts, banners, flags, knitted warm stockings, mittens. There were already seven pieces of wooden sabers hanging on the wall next to the gun and the drum. And this reserve is not large, because in a hot battle a sonorous saber has an even shorter life than a rider.

And now at last, perhaps Alka could go out on his campaign. But then a fierce winter came, and in such a frost, of course, it would not take long to catch a runny nose or a cold, so Alka patiently waited for the warm sun. But now the sun has returned. The spring snow has turned black. And now it was time to go on the campaign. But just then the doorbell rang.

The father, returning from his campaign, entered the room with heavy steps. His face was dark and weather-beaten, and his lips were chapped, but his gray eyes looked cheerful.

He, of course, hugged his wife. And she congratulated him on his victory. He, of course, kissed his son tightly. Then father examined Alka's campaign equipment. And, smiling, he instructed his son to keep all these weapons and ammunition in perfect order. On this land there will be many more heavy battles and dangerous campaigns!







Marusya

The spy crossed the swamp, put on his Red Army uniform and went out onto the road. A girl was picking cornflowers among the rye. She approached and asked the man in the uniform of a Red Army soldier for a knife to trim the stems of the bouquet. He gave her a knife and asked her her name. The spy knew that people on the Soviet side live happily, and therefore he began to laugh and sing cheerful songs.

"Don't you recognize me?" the girl asked in surprise. - "I'm Marusya, daughter of Lieutenant Yegorov. I will take this bouquet to my dad." She carefully straightened the flowers, and tears glistened in her eyes. The spy put the knife in his pocket and, without saying a word, walked on. At the outpost, Marusya said:— "I met a Red Army soldier. I said my name and he laughed and sang songs."

Then the commander frowned, called the duty officer and ordered him to send some soldiers after this "jolly" man. The riders sped away, and Marusya went out onto the steep bank and laid her bouquet on the fresh grave of her father, who had been killed only yesterday in a skirmish at the border.



Conscience

Nina Karnaukhova did not prepare for her algebra lesson and decided not to go to school.

Nina sneaked into the woods so that her friends would not accidentally see her walking around the city with books during the school day. Putting the bag with breakfast and a bunch of books under a bush, she ran to catch up with a beautiful butterfly and stumbled upon a little boy who looked at her with kind, trusting eyes. And since he was clutching a primer with a notebook in his hand, Nina realized what was the matter and decided to shame the child.

"Unfortunate truant!" she said sternly. "From a young age, you are already deceiving your parents and school!"

"No!" the child replied in surprise. "I was just going to class. But there is a big dog walking in the forest. She barked and I got lost."

Nina frowned. But this child was funny and good-natured, and so she took him by the hand and led him back through the woods. And Nina's bunch of books and her breakfast remained lying under the bush, because it would be a bit awkward to pick them up in front of the child.

A dog jumped out from behind the branches. The dog did not touch the books, but had eaten the breakfast.

Nina returned, sat down and began to cry. No! She did not feel sorry for the stolen breakfast. But the merry birds sang too well over her head.

And her heart was very heavy because of this. A merciless conscience gnawed at her heart!





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