

Translators' Note

In translating this text for a general audience, we have attempted to clarify in footnotes anything that wouldn't necessarily be common knowledge to a non-Russian reader, such as historical events and figures, geographical names, and cultural elements. For flavor, we have left certain Russian words and phrases in the original when they refer to well-known Russian-specific concepts, with explanatory notes.

Some of these footnotes exist to shed light on the "unofficial" story of the "Great Patriotic War" (which is how Russians refer to *their* World War II). While these may occasionally contradict Ms. Yegorova, they are in no way meant to discredit her, but to uncover the truth behind the propaganda and evasions promulgated by the Soviet government in the war years and for decades afterward. In some cases, these evasions have been so effective that a reliable historical account remains subject to some speculation to this day. We have relied on several excellent historical texts for help. For a full list of sources and recommended reading, see the pages following the translators' note.

Russian names can be especially confusing for outsiders. Please note that Russians have a first name, patronymic, and a family name, with endings corresponding to gender, used in different combinations according to relationship to the speaker. For example, Anna Alexandrovna Yegorova (the patronymic means "daughter of Alexander") might be called the more formal "Anna Alexandrovna" or "Comrade Yegorova" by a subordinate, or one of many diminutive nicknames (such as "Anya," "Annushka," or "Nyurochka") by a close friend or relative. Masculine endings vary from feminine ones in the patronymic and family names (e.g. Vasily Alexandrovich Yegorov, or "Vasya" for short).

The political language of the Soviet era can be particularly difficult to fathom for a non-native speaker. Russians often referred to Soviet institutions by common abbreviations, frequently created by uniting first syllables. For example, *zampolit* (a type of military commissar) stood for *zamestitel komandira po politrabotye*, or "deputy commander of political work." We have left only the most familiar and widely used of these in their original form.

Official speak, with its penchant for overblown rhetoric, can also seem oddly fervent and sanctimonious to the Western ear, sometimes naively so. In some cases, we have toned down the more extravagant patriotic embellishments for the sake of readability and to eliminate repetitions, but often, we've left them, to give a sense of the tone of that era.

In rendering proper names, we have usually used transliterations that would most closely approximate the pronunciation of the word rather than adhering to any specific linguistic system. We have seldom anglicized proper names, except when the name or place is well-known in English, such as "Moscow" or "Peter the Great." We've attempted to render any non-Russian foreign names in their original spelling rather than a phonetic equivalent. For place names, we've chosen what seem to be the most popularly used and accepted spellings.

Lastly, we have taken slight license in editing Ms. Yegorova's memoir (with her permission), occasionally deleting or changing the order of sections or chapters for the sake of readability and narrative flow, and sometimes eliminating passages which digress from the main story or seem redundant. We have made every effort to retain both the facts and the essence of her life story, using a literal translation whenever possible.