

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Noman's people.

Mann, Erika

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) N O M A N ' S P E O P L E . (

only
There were nine of us but the small room seemed thronged with people. In a collective effort to tell me their story, the Russians - three men and 5 women - tended to talk simultaneously. ~~They~~ ^{Babbbbbb} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~say~~ ^{huhhh} ~~what~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they~~ ^{huhhh} ~~were~~ ^{huhhh} ~~doing~~ ^{huhhh} ~~here~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~this~~ ^{huhhh} ~~barnlike~~ ^{huhhh} ~~house~~ ^{huhhh} ~~at~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~outskirts~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Le~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Mans~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Department~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~La~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Sarthe~~ ^{huhhh} ~~from~~ ^{huhhh} ~~where~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~come~~ ^{huhhh} ~~and~~ ^{huhhh} ~~what~~ ^{huhhh} ~~was~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~become~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~them~~ ^{huhhh} ~~now,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~was~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~subject~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~our~~ ^{huhhh} ~~converation.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~But~~ ^{huhhh} ~~that~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they~~ ^{huhhh} ~~were~~ ^{huhhh} ~~far~~ ^{huhhh} ~~from~~ ^{huhhh} ~~happy~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~been~~ ^{huhhh} ~~evident~~ ^{huhhh} ~~before~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they'd~~ ^{huhhh} ~~uttered~~ ^{huhhh} ~~a~~ ^{huhhh} ~~sound.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~For~~ ^{huhhh} ~~some~~ ^{huhhh} ~~reason~~ ^{huhhh} ~~or~~ ^{huhhh} ~~other~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~men~~ ^{huhhh} ~~looked~~ ^{huhhh} ~~poorer~~ ^{huhhh} ~~and~~ ^{huhhh} ~~more~~ ^{huhhh} ~~seriously~~ ^{huhhh} ~~undernourished~~ ^{huhhh} ~~than~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~women,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~although~~ ^{huhhh} ~~neither~~ ^{huhhh} ~~sex~~ ^{huhhh} ~~seemed~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~be~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~possession~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~teeth.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Some~~ ^{huhhh} ~~displayed~~ ^{huhhh} ~~glittering~~ ^{huhhh} ~~rows~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~silver~~ ^{huhhh} ~~teeth,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~whereas~~ ^{huhhh} ~~others~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~do~~ ^{huhhh} ~~without~~ ^{huhhh} ~~any~~ ^{huhhh} ~~such~~ ^{huhhh} ~~spectaculat~~ ^{huhhh} ~~subistute.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Under~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~wide~~ ^{huhhh} ~~cheebones~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~cheeks~~ ^{huhhh} ~~were~~ ^{huhhh} ~~disquietingly~~ ^{huhhh} ~~hollow.~~

Eigth barren cots, a table and four chairs formed the furniture of the place which, however, was fairly neat and livable. ^{Just what they were doing here} ~~They~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~been~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~this~~ ^{huhhh} ~~barnlike~~ ^{huhhh} ~~house~~ ^{huhhh} ~~at~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~outskirts~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Le~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Mans~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Department~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~La~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Sarthe~~ ^{huhhh} ~~from~~ ^{huhhh} ~~where~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~come~~ ^{huhhh} ~~and~~ ^{huhhh} ~~what~~ ^{huhhh} ~~was~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~become~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~them~~ ^{huhhh} ~~now,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~was~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~subject~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~our~~ ^{huhhh} ~~converation.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~But~~ ^{huhhh} ~~that~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they~~ ^{huhhh} ~~were~~ ^{huhhh} ~~far~~ ^{huhhh} ~~from~~ ^{huhhh} ~~happy~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~been~~ ^{huhhh} ~~evident~~ ^{huhhh} ~~before~~ ^{huhhh} ~~they'd~~ ^{huhhh} ~~uttered~~ ^{huhhh} ~~a~~ ^{huhhh} ~~sound.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~For~~ ^{huhhh} ~~some~~ ^{huhhh} ~~reason~~ ^{huhhh} ~~or~~ ^{huhhh} ~~other~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~men~~ ^{huhhh} ~~looked~~ ^{huhhh} ~~poorer~~ ^{huhhh} ~~and~~ ^{huhhh} ~~more~~ ^{huhhh} ~~seriously~~ ^{huhhh} ~~undernourished~~ ^{huhhh} ~~than~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~women,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~although~~ ^{huhhh} ~~neither~~ ^{huhhh} ~~sex~~ ^{huhhh} ~~seemed~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~be~~ ^{huhhh} ~~in~~ ^{huhhh} ~~the~~ ^{huhhh} ~~possession~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~teeth.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Some~~ ^{huhhh} ~~displayed~~ ^{huhhh} ~~glittering~~ ^{huhhh} ~~rows~~ ^{huhhh} ~~of~~ ^{huhhh} ~~silver~~ ^{huhhh} ~~teeth,~~ ^{huhhh} ~~whereas~~ ^{huhhh} ~~others~~ ^{huhhh} ~~had~~ ^{huhhh} ~~to~~ ^{huhhh} ~~do~~ ^{huhhh} ~~without~~ ^{huhhh} ~~any~~ ^{huhhh} ~~such~~ ^{huhhh} ~~spectaculat~~ ^{huhhh} ~~subistute.~~ ^{huhhh} ~~Under~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~wide~~ ^{huhhh} ~~cheebones~~ ^{huhhh} ~~their~~ ^{huhhh} ~~cheeks~~ ^{huhhh} ~~were~~ ^{huhhh} ~~disquietingly~~ ^{huhhh} ~~hollow.~~

First Lieutenant Maria Grechanoff was born in Leningrad on July 6th 1914. Without being handsome her grave peasant's face with its broad forehead, its light grayish eyes, its short nose and its firm mouth and chin was undeniably attractive. So was her way of hiding her emotions behind a veil of soldierly sternness. Around her right sleeve she wore the brassard of the "Maquis" with the Croix de Lorraine.

Her story, though highly personal in some respects,

is typical in others. In recalling it one touches upon the plight of thousands of Noman's people in liberated France who are known to the authorities not as refugees, but as "displaced persons".

After having listened for a while to the poliphonic concert performed by Maria and her freinds and turned towards the ~~Whhh~~ former. Here is what she told me:

"When I joined the Red Airfoce in 1935 I was ~~21~~ ^{old} ~~21~~ ²¹ twenty one. Three years later I graduated as a private first class ~~alternately~~ ~~Shhhhhhhhhhh~~ I worked as a pilot, a bombardier, or a signalist. In 1939 I was sent into the Finnish war. At first I did photo reconnaissance in a two motored plane. Then I was made a Sergeant and given a YAK 10 - a four motored bomber. I loved to fly and later ~~when~~ when we were fighting the Hitlerites, I even loved to bomb and to kill."

I asked if she'd ever "got" any of the Luftwaffe. She smiled a dreamy and tender smile. ~~SHORELESS SMILE~~ "Many" she said; "many many."

Did she recall the figure%?

There was a pause during which she ~~pondered~~ ~~Shhhhhhh~~ and scribbled. "80" she then said firmly. "At least 80 - perhaps 90 or 100. Two ~~20~~ ²⁰ years is a long time and I was flying constantly, Aslo, I used to be ~~Shh~~ lucky."

Her luck ended on February ~~Shhh~~ 17th 1943 when her bomber was ~~ht~~ shot down in the district of Smelosnk.

"It was ~~a~~ ^{like} a nightflight" she said "and it was flak that got us. I bailed out. When I woke up I was in a hospital in Kandisep, in ~~Lithuen~~ Lithuenia. I'd been operated on by a Russian doctor and although I was very ill for more than three months I was having a tolerable time. Later on life became - well, it became less tolerable."

Among the two thousand prisoners in the prison ^{Nazi} camp at Pskow there were seven women - 2 parachutists, 4 nurses and

Maria, the pilot. The camp was typhus ridden. An average of 70 Russians a day died from typhus, starvation or because they'd been beaten to death.

"We were so hungry, it was horrible" said Maria; "Our daily ration consisted of 100 Grammes of bread - two small slices - and half a liter of something they called soup. We were doing all kinds of hard labour - personally I kept cutting trees; and when our strength failed us - as it often would - we were told to eat our dead." ~~And...~~

Suddenly she noticed a small object I'd put before me on the table, and which she eyed with undisguised terror.

The object in question had been found recently - along with others of its kind - in a Gestapo torture chamber in Rennes and I had been asked to identify it. ~~It was a small iron hook which had been used to chain prisoners to the wall during beatings. I wished to make certain.~~ Though I thought I knew what its purpose had been I wished to make certain.

"Remember?" I said, shoving the thing - a strong iron hook linked to a short chain across the table towards Maria.

She ~~realized~~ ^{Then} ~~up to now she had been calm and composed~~ set out to prove jumped to her feet. Employing gestures rather than words she ~~showed~~ ^{showed} how painfully well she remembered. ~~The object had served to chain prisoners to the wall and keep them standing upright during beatings. 75 strokes was an average punishment. Without the metal hook in the wall and the chain fastened to a ring that was laid around the victim's neck, he'd have collapsed prematurely.~~

After five months in Pskov Maria and five others succeeded in tunnelling their way out of the camp. Making for Lening

grad they were stopped in the village of Pushgorod. It was the Russian police who stopped them.

newly
"They were traitors" she said; "and they surrendered us to the German H.Q. The railway station of Pushgorod is Velja."

How eager she was to convey the whole truth and not to ~~but~~ forget any pertinent fact. And how honest she was. At Headquarters, she admitted in a low voice - the Russian police had joined the Germans in beating her unconscious. One month past - a month spent in prison - before she was ~~informed of her impending execution~~

~~How she had been informed of her impending execution. Maria was to be shot. That at this crucial junction her small daughter, aged 11, should have arrived on the scene~~
~~was an act of providence which she'd never quite understood. Suffice it to report that the little one had been picked up by the Leningrad police whose effort to find her was their first task~~
~~who had finally discovered her whereabouts. Katia had been brought to Pushgorod whence she proceeded to the German H.Q.~~

alone
~~"She was all by herself" Maria;~~ said
"and she was only ~~eleven~~ eleven; but she saved my life. ~~When she'd talked to the German Commandant~~
~~When she'd talked to the German Commandant my death sentence was suspended. I was pardoned to hard labour."~~

Harder ~~than~~ even than the labour to which she was convicted was the work she chose for herself. It so happened that a Russian secretary at the commandantur was a member of the underground. ~~who'd~~
~~made it his business to provide the~~

To get the with Maria

partisans with German ~~papers~~ identity cards. ~~When~~ He'd embezzle the
papers ^{which} ~~papers~~ Maria ^{forwarded} ~~forwarded~~ to her fighting friends.
~~Most of the time~~ "she said" "I was working in the woods" she said;
"and we'd arranged for certain spots where I'd leave ^{the} ~~the~~ cards."

When more than 1500 Paritsans had been thus equipped, the theft was discovered and the secretary killed. Maria got away with what she ~~had~~^{had} called "a fearful treatment" and which ~~she~~^{she} had cost her her teeth. ~~Had they been knocked out, they would have been~~ Not that they had been knocked out; no such primitive ~~torture~~^{handling} had been ~~considered~~^{considered} adequate. She'd lost them in the process of highly scientific torture which she was unable to describe but which she ~~called~~^{termed} "electrical".

Oddly enough A Russian dentist at the concentration camp in Riga ~~where~~ to which she ~~spent the whole time~~ subsequently transferred, was permitted to furnish her with ~~the~~ ^{the} silver teeth. 2

"And little Katia?" I asked; "what's become of her?"

She swallowed "Her mother" she said "has never seen her again."

Time passes slowly at the Riga camp. ~~The~~ Four months ~~that~~ seem like an eternity. But Maria knows that the war will be won and when in April 1944 the frantic enemy entrusts tens of thousands of foreign slave laborers with the building of his western defenses ~~she is~~ she is ~~happy~~ happy to be sent into France where she might ~~succeed~~ succeed in joining the ~~fight~~ fight of the "Maquis".

It is at this point that the story of Maria the pilot ceases to be hers exclusively. From here on her tale blends with that of an incalculable number of woman's people becomes one and the same.

As involuntary members of the "Organziation Todt" she and her

an odd crowd of Russian, Czech, Polish, ~~and Balkan~~ ^{Belgian and Dutch} prisoners
and deportees are put to work on Hitler's Atlantic wall. In Saint Mars
La Briere, ~~along~~ ^{along} Six weeks before the Germans begin to retreat from
that ~~sector~~ ^{sector} she ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~ten~~ ^{ten} of her compatriots - 8
women and 2 men - are making their getaway. In La Suze they ~~find~~ ^{find}
~~come across~~ ^{come across} a small bunch of Maquis and are admitted into their
ranks. Maria is happy. To fight the Germans is all she wants. Instead of
~~there is no four motored~~ ^{There is no four motored} ~~jet~~ ^{jet}
bomber now from which to rain death on the hated ones; there isn't a
single machine gun and though there are a few rifles, ammunition is
~~shockingly scarce~~ ^{shockingly scarce}. The Maquis do ~~their best~~ ^{their best} ~~to equip~~ ^{to equip}
~~their eager allies~~ ^{their eager allies}, but a couple of
handgrenades is all they can spare for Maria. Even so she considers her-
self lucky and fortunate. Within three days she ~~and her Russian~~ ^{and her Russian}
friends capture ~~and kill~~ ^{and kill} 16 heavily armed Germans. They have
weapons now and the struggle ~~is on~~ ^{is on} in earnest. It doesn't last long.
With the arrival in France of the French Government and the Armee Le
Claire ~~the French Forces of the Interior~~ ^{begins the} ~~normalisation~~ ^{normalisation} of
and who are to be incorporated, gradually, in the ~~regular~~ ^{regular} French
army. To exclude foreigners is one of the first steps in this direction
and ~~although the French government~~ ^{although the French government} ~~is not~~ ^{is not} ~~prepared~~ ^{prepared} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~accept~~ ^{accept} ~~foreigners~~ ^{foreigners}
~~and all aliens~~ ^{and all aliens} are ousted from the F.F.I. ~~for which they've fought so hard~~ ^{for which they've fought so hard} -
Without papers, ~~and~~ ^{and} means, without lodgings and nourishment they are left
on their own. ~~until the French authorities~~ ^{until the French authorities}
~~For some time to come~~ ^{For some time to come} their plight is nobody's business. They've
bled for France ~~and~~ ^{and} are passionately eager to continue the struggle,
but the ~~military authorities~~ ^{French} will have none of it. They are citizens of
allied nations, ~~started~~ ^{started} in France, but the civilian authorities ~~are~~ ^{are}
~~distinguish~~ ^{distinguish} ~~between~~ ^{between} ~~refugees~~ ^{refugees} and displaced persons ~~takes~~ ^{takes} no interest in
the latter. ~~Finally~~ ^{Finally} their ~~case~~ ^{case} is reconsidered. There are too

did their dislike of the Organisation Todt and their preference for the adventurous life of the partisans prove their dependability? Moreover - and assuming that it did - were there not others of their kind, countless thousands of foreign slave labourers who'd been abandoned by the fleeing enemy and were now our prisoners of war. They, too - many of them - said that they wanted to fight the Germans and who was to tell whether they, too, had not attempted to flee? If they had who was to discriminate against them in favour of ~~those who had succeeded?~~ those who had succeeded? ~~Displaced persons, as well as prisoners of allied nationalities can be judged by their own respective governments. The investigation of their cases represents an intricate task the solution of which will have to wait until all pertinent facts are available.~~

Meanwhile the prisoners are treated according to the rules laid down in the Geneva Convention, while ~~the "Roman's People" fight~~ the "Roman's People" ~~with~~ ^{they feel about} ~~our refusal to let them fight,~~ wretched though ~~our refusal to let them fight,~~ ^{they feel about} ~~may~~ ^{may} ~~seek consolation in work.~~ seek consolation in work.

~~Some~~ In a small village between ~~the Mans~~ and Chartre
~~Some~~ Somewhere between Le Mans and Chartre There was nothing extraordinary
 the small village between Le Mans and Chartre which I passed a few days
 ago - nothing except the Soviet flag that waved from one of its houses.
 As I entered the premises and ~~walked~~ sauntered lined by barracks; the place
 seemed devoid of life. I ~~found~~ ~~what~~ ~~looked~~ ~~like~~ ~~a~~ ~~reception~~ ~~office~~ ~~of~~
 sorts but there was nobody to receive me. When I was about ready to
~~leave~~ take a puzzled leave
~~When~~ a young woman appeared in the window frame of one of the
~~barracks~~ barracks. She ~~was~~ ~~carrying~~ ~~a~~ ~~baby~~.

"You live here?" I asked ~~Katharine~~
but she spoke no English, but explained in the French-Russian-German
hodgepodge characteristic of the Soviet woman's people, explained

I learned,

hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-

~~that~~ this camp was inhabited by 221 Russian women - former Todt-workers
all ~~in the~~ and ~~that~~ usually it was quite a lively spot.
she said "

"Only ~~him~~ today"the correspondent has come and everybody is listening
to him", ~~even though he is a foreigner~~

As to herself she'd been afraid that Peter would cry and disturb the correspondent. Were there many ~~babies~~ children in the place? ~~hmm~~

" Four. But they are much older. The oldest one is four months; ~~but~~ ^{just} Peter is ~~only~~ three weeks."

Иван Иванович liked to know "Are you happy here?"

Do let let you work? Have many of you escaped to join the Maquis?"

She said that eight had escaped and that she didn't know what had become of them. ~~hhhhhhhh~~ Those who had stayed had been working for a while - helping with the harvest. At present there didn't seem anything for them to do. Nor was there any point in wondering whether or not one was happy, ~~hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh~~ when one ~~hhhhh~~ barely remembered the meaning of the term. Did I not wish to go and listen to the correspondent?

I went. ~~And then I forgot the happiness~~
~~And~~ If Peter's mother was right and the
~~And~~ the women whom I found gathered in one of the barracks had
 forgotten what happiness was.

Even an hour ago the
I went. ~~Wha~~ 220 women whom I found gathered in one the the baraks
might not have remembered what happiness was. But now they knew.
~~It was a grave and solemn happiness that beautified their faces~~
~~as they listened, soundlessly and~~
~~with~~
~~religious attention to the voice of "The Correspondent". There~~
~~were no chairs. Crouching on the ground at the speakers feet the~~
~~listeners~~

~~and when they look like~~ Soundlessly and with religious attention
they listend to the voice of the Corresepondent .

a uniformed young Russian
Crouching on the floor at the feet of ~~the~~ they
listened soundlessly and with religious attention. Their upturned
faces ~~selemn though they looked~~ were bathed in
unmitigated happiness. ~~It was that~~
I do not know what "The Correspondent" - a Soviert war reporter -
told his enthralled audience ~~about~~ had come from
home. He talked about Russia o-her sufferings and her glory, ~~about~~
And ~~while he talked~~ those to whom he talked
were noman's people no longer Those at his feet, And while he talked,
the wretched ones at his feet
were no longer wretched. these displaced persons, these noman's people
In the ringing presence of his voice The noman's people had found home.

Ray
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