

**YET ICEBOUND RIVERS  
FLOW. TRANSLATED  
FROM THE LETTISH**

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Yet icebound rivers flow. Translated from the Lettish by Miervaldis Birze & T. Zalite

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**MIERVALDIS BIRZE & T. ZALITE**

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**MIERVALDIS BIRZE •**

**YET  
ICEBOUND  
RIVERS  
FLOW**

I took to writing when I was in my thirties. By then, I had finished secondary school in Valmiera on the lovely Gauja River, had been a medical student in Riga for two years, had spent four years of the war in various concentration camps in Latvia and in Germany, Buchenwald included, had resumed my medical studies, graduated, and been a doctor for several years. My first short stories and humorous sketches were published in 1953. In 1957, I discarded humour and wrote *Yet Icebound Rivers Flow*.

Why did I touch once more the wounds inflicted on the Latvian people by German fascists? Does not every human being, like you and me, yearn for sunshine, for peace, for kindness? Is it necessary to bring back to mind pain and sufferings? Yes, it was necessary to write this book. First, because I knew all the people in it, good and bad, and was present at the funeral of those two whose bodies were burnt. Second, because it would have been unjust to allow the heroism of true enthusiasts to slip into oblivion, to forget those who gave up everything for the happiness of their people. Finally, this event has to be recalled so that what happened then may never reoccur. I did not succeed in rendering the event in its entirety. But who has been able to paint the ocean in all its fathomless grandeur? I only hope that the events described here will never repeat themselves, so that I may continue to live in Cesis, a little town on the Gauja, and cure people with weak lungs, and write humorous short stories.

*Miervaldis Birze*



MIERVALDIS BIRZE

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**MIERVALDIS BIRZE**

**YET ICEBOUND  
RIVERS FLOW**

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МЕРВАЛДИС БИРЗЕ  
И ПОДО ЛЬДОМ РЕКА ТЕЧЕТ...

TRANSLATED FROM THE LETTISH BY T. ZALITE

DESIGNED BY V. ALEXEYEV



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*Roses bloomed for all in gardens,  
Not for me the roses bloomed,  
I was born to be a soldier,  
And my roses never bloomed.*

From a Lettish folk song

Remember—there were no nameless heroes. There were men and women; and each had his own name, his own face, his own hopes and aspirations. And the sufferings of the most insignificant among them were no less than the sufferings of those whose names will go down in history. May those who fell in the struggle always remain as dear to you as your friends—as your next of kin—as you are to yourselves!

*Julius Fučik*

One day in September, when they were storing potatoes in the cellar of the Gauri farm, a patch of plaster crumbled off the cracked wall, and a small brown-paper package dropped to the floor. The Gauri farm-house is now the kolkhoz kindergarten, so the package was turned over to its director. When she had acquainted herself with its contents, she called me up in hopes that, since I

hailed from these parts, I might tell more about the discovery. I lost no time in going down to Gauri.

In the spacious verandah where the kolkhoz children played on rainy days, on a low white table I saw a piece of sodden brown wrapping paper, and on it a small sheet of still shiny silver foil that had evidently preserved the dark-grey Komsomol membership book inside. The pages were stuck together in one corner, and I had to turn them over carefully. Here and there the black ink had run, as though a tear had dropped on it, but the words were still legible. The book had been issued in January 1941, by our local Darzciems District Committee. The dues had been paid last in May 1941. Surname—Apenajs; first name—Reinis; father's name—Eduard. Born 1921. The small photograph showed the face of a boy with wide forehead, a thick mop of dark hair, and lips firmly compressed, proud and gently ironic.

How did this document find its way into the Gauri farm-house cellar? The former owners of the place had fled to the West. There was nobody left to answer our question. The next day the kindergarten director took the Komsomol book to the Darzciems District Committee of the Komsomol, while I set out to make inquiries about Apenajs, whose name sounded vaguely familiar to me. The