

Life and Works of I.A. Bunin During the Second World War

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores life and works of I.A. Bunin between 1939 and 1945. Harsh life of Bunin and members of his household during the Second World War is revealed through public records and mailing exchange with contemporaries. It also identifies the circle of people who received Bunin's support in 1940-1943. The paper uncovers the background behind the creation of "Dark Alleys", the short-stories of which were almost exclusively written during the war. The comparative historical and typological methods applied within the research, provide for unbiased evaluation of the writer's actions and tracing of his attitude towards the totalitarian regime and the German occupation. Chronological approach towards presentation of the paper's text is called upon to portray the life and works of the writer in their entirety and interaction with the events of the Second World War.

Keywords: I.A. Bunin, Life and works, the Second World War, "Dark Alleys", G.N. Kuznetsova, M.A. Stepun, A.V. Bakhrakh, A.B. Liberman.

1. INTRODUCTION

Life of Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin can be subdivided into two periods: pre-revolutionary and emigrant. Though the writer endured tough times during the emigrant period, the Second World War undoubtedly appears to be one of the most tragic parts of his life that is reflected in the letters and diaries of the writer. New archive materials from the Leeds Russian Archive (Great Britain) have become available in recent years, including complete transcripts of I.A. Bunin and V.N. Bunina diaries and correspondence with the contemporaries. These materials (which gave cause to the current paper) are being prepared as the foundation for the multi-volume publication within the academic series of "Literary Heritage" ("Literaturnoye Nasledstvo") and contain actual details regarding life and works of Bunin during the Second World War.

The writer and his wife V.N. Bunina spent the war years at Villa "Jeanette" in Grasse in the Southern France, sheltering a number of other Russian emigrants. With most of Bunin's works of the emigrant period, including "Dark Alleys" – an unsurpassed masterpiece -written in Grasse, the

town turned out to be a hallmark spot for the writer. Though faced with unbearable living conditions, the starving writer managed not only to find moral strength to continue creative pursuits, but also to help those in need, even at expense of jeopardizing his own life and well-being.

The couple had to endure stringent budget, cold, hunger, even expulsion and arrest. Notwithstanding the harsh circumstances, the Grasse house was also home to G.N. Kuznetsova, M.A. Stepun, E.N. Zhirova with her daughter Olga, who were later joined by A.B. Bakhrakh, staying for the long four years. This is but a small list of people, supported by the Bunins during the war time.

The article separately tackles the fact of saving of the pianist A.B. Liberman and his wife by the writer during the German anti-Jewish raids.

Despite all hardships endured during the war, Bunin persisted in his creative pursuits while paying a thorough consideration to the developments on the Eastern front.

2. LIFE OF I.A. BUNIN AT "VILLA JEANETTE" IN 1939–1945

Though life of Bunin during the war time was profoundly investigated in earlier studies [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], it appears rationale and cogent to provide a more comprehensive picture of this period on the basis of new documents and accounts. Starting from 1923 most of the emigrant years of Bunin were spent in a small town of Grasse in the Southern France, where he rented modest villas that were perfect for solitary and tranquil work. This was also true in 1939 when Bunin stayed at the "Villa Belvedere". The Second World War broke out on 1 September 1939. The writer was keen to flee as far as practically feasible from the hostilities, however mediocre finances and lack of eligible transport prevented him from taking this route. In addition, the rental period was also expiring and the landlord had already found new long term tenants starting 1 October 1939. Nevertheless, the housing issue was soon resolved: on 17 September 1939 Bunin managed to cheaply rent "Villa Jeanette" from the English woman Edith Hulbert (Edith Wareing Hulbert, née Beardsley, 1868-1956) who repatriated to England. As a result, Bunin remained in Grasse, having moved to a more comfortable and cheaper dwelling, compared with the "Belvedere". The move to "Villa Jeanette" was completed on 27 September 1939. V.N. Bunina (wife of the writer) registered in her diary on October 3, 1939 the following: "Villa Jeanette. Tomorrow will mark the first week since we moved here. We've almost settled down. Most of the windows are boarded up. One can live, work and pray. <...> It is quite cozy in here. I feel a bit ashamed of the comfort we enjoy" [6]. "Villa Jeanette" was located higher than the "Belvedere" and had a breathtaking panoramic view of the surroundings. In his letter to M.V. Karamzina as of 18 November 1939 Bunin conveyed: "We are residing at the most beautiful English villa so high in the mountains that the view is spectacular. I am in no mood for writing though and whiling away the time in reading and idling in the sun (very hot) in the garden. Monotony, sadness and loneliness" [7].

It is worth pointing out that Bunin and Vera Nikolaevna were housing a number of other people at the "Belvedere" (and subsequently at "Villa Jeanette"): Elena Nikolaevna Zhirova (née Lishina, 1903-1960) with her daughter Olga (1933-1964), young writers Leonid Fyedorovich Zurov (1902-1971) and Galina Nikolaevna Kuznetsova (1900–1976), professional singer Margarita (Marga)

Avgustovna Stepun (1895 or 1897–1971) – sister to F.A. Stepun and a friend to G. Kuznetsova. The Bunins and their lodgers lived through significant daily turmoil and had straightened financial circumstances during the war time. In reality all Bunins' guests were living in their care, unable to provide for themselves. There was gloomy atmosphere within the household. Judging by the contents of correspondence the friendship between Bunin and G. Kuznetsova were almost broken¹, while E.N. Zhirova was feeling increasingly jealous to V.N. Bunina who was teaching her daughter Olga foreign languages and other studies. There were also additional anxieties that aggravated the tension.

It was in January of 1937 that L.F. Zurov left Grasse for Paris in order to start an independent life. In mid-April 1940 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and V.N. Bunina, who was extremely agitated by this news, decided to go to Paris to facilitate Zurov's assignment to a proper sanatorium. After 6 months at the sanatorium Zurov came back to Bunin's house in autumn of 1940, this time to "Villa Jeanette".

At the end of May of 1940 Bunin literally salvaged M.A. Stepun from the arrest and concentration camp since she had a German passport. M.A. Stepun's Russian background was confirmed thanks to joint efforts from V.A. Maklakov and others, as well as suretyship from the writer himself. One can find the following remark in the diary of V.N. Bunina dated 31 May 1940 regarding the attitude of G. Kuznetsova, M. Stepun and the issue with the passport: "One week since I'm back to Grasse. And yet again I encounter this tormenting air of enmity and certain rancour <...> from those strange women, who seem to be perpetually irritated by me. <...>".

This week passed under the banner of the concentration camp. Marga was finally given up as being ill. We all did our utmost to relieve her from this pain. Maklakov, Protopopov, Deville, Florence, Suretyship from Yan, proof of her Russian origins and spinal bone affliction – everything eventually contributed to her freedom <...>. We also feel fully invested into that week, having lost a lot of energy" [9].

On May 9, 1940, Bunin visited Paris for the last time before the German occupation in order to pay visit to doctors, hire out his apartment for the period of hostilities and salvage his archive. The

1. For further details please refer to [8].

latter was subdivided into two parts: the first one was put into custody of the Turgenev library, while the second was moved to Grasse. However, the Germans moved all books and art out from the Turgenev library after the fall of Paris in October of 1940. This period was expounded upon by L.F. Zurov in his letter to A.K. Baboreko dated 11 October 1967: "During the war time and before moving to Grasse Ivan Alekseyevich moved part of his archive to the Turgenev library, while the most valuable part (that contained letters, notebooks, notes and commentaries, verses, documents etc.) was taken to Grasse. During the air raids I was forced to take the suitcase down to the basement at "Villa Jeanette" and hide them in the small attic above the villa that was hammered in the cliff. Grasse was spared by the aviators – they bombed the outskirts. The Germans seized all books from the Turgenev library, however paid no attention to the big baskets spliced from willow with latches and locks <...>. The archive was transferred to rue Jacques Offenbach after Bunins' return to Paris" [10]. The history behind the transfer and preservation of Bunin's archive during the Second World War is still unknown and requires additional research and studies.

The military action escalated quite quickly: Italy joined the war as the German ally on 10 June 1940 and Paris was under the Nazi occupation by 14 June 1940. This news prompted the Bunins to flee from Grasse: on 16 June 1940 Bunin and Vera Nikolaevna hired a cab and, joined by E.N. Zhirova with Olga, G.N. Kuznetsova and M.A. Stepun left the town. The writer would leave the following notes in his diary: "I was afraid to leave, to plummet in the sea of refugees overflowing somewhere towards Vendee, the Pyrenees, alongside most of France, the six of us, with 30 pieces of luggage... Marga was the primary reason for the move since the gendarmerie ordered her to leave the Alpes Mar<itimes> within 24 hours!" [11]. The route, quite long and insecure, was chartered through Nimes, Toulouse, Montblanc and into the town of Lafrançaise, where the Bunins stayed for more than 20 days without minimal accommodation for living and work. Bunin wrote from that location to M.V. Karamzina on 5 July 1940: "My dear friend, it has been three weeks since we left Grasse and are currently residing in the townlet of Lafrançaise (Toulouse – Bordeaux line), and there is no way to describe the hardships we've endured! We do hope to be returning home soon" [12]. The group came back to Grasse on 10 July 1940 without E.N. Zhirova and Olga Zhirova.

On 14 July 1940 in his letter to T.D. Loginova-Muravyeva Bunin expounded on the details of the trip: "We left Grasse once Italy declared war on France. We drove in the direction of Montblanc. Having found nothing and no one in Montblanc we decided to continue towards Lafrançaise, as advised by Lyalya <E.N. Zhirova> as she claimed to have acquaintances there. And so, we descended upon the poor people who sheltered everyone for a single night, while our ladies were later moved to the local hotel and we resided for the next 22 days. <...>

Our journey cost us dearly in monetary terms and took emotional and physical toll. There are no facilities at Lafrançaise! Our choice for the night was between stables and open field. Food was scarce. There was nowhere to prepare food while the restaurants became unaffordable. Vegetables are scarce, fruits are too expensive (though they cost a fraction of a price here). Peaches are 1.5 francs here and 7 there! However, the meat there is of perfect quality (rivaling even that of Paris) and cheaper" [13].

It was on the "Villa Jeanette" that Bunin and his retinue spent all of the war years.

3. GUESTS AT THE BUNIN'S HOUSE DURING WWII

In August of 1940 M.A. Aldanov and M.S. Zetlina were trying to convince Bunin to emigrate to the US. M.A. Aldanov, who had moved to USA in December of 1940, was informing Bunin that he would be able to secure entry visas for the writer and his wife, and that he even managed to accumulate certain monies for the move. However, Bunin couldn't not make up his mind for yet another emigration. On 20 March 1941 he wrote to M.A. Aldanov: "I have no plans and hence have nothing to bring alongside. I swear to you that my poverty at present is unprecedented and I foresee only famishment in the near future. With only salted turnip and hot water (that we refer to as soup!), with not a single drop of oil, I'm turning into a frail Gandhi, while V<era> N<ikolaevna> is seeing "flies" in front of her eyes. The house is ice cold, we do not burn wood, having only 100 logs to spare for the kitchen as we lack money to buy some more. And I'm being chased for the property tax for the villa in the amount of almost two thousand" [14].

Later, in September of 1940, the Bunin's house had another guest – a young journalist Aleksander Vasilyevich Bakhrakh (1902–1985). Bakhrakh, as

ethnic Jew, was saved from the imminent arrest and subsequent concentration camp by the proper documents received with the help of Bunin. He intended to pay visit for 3-4 days but remained for 4 years with the Bunins (till September 1944) until the Germans were expelled from France. A.V. Bakhrakh would later write a book titled "Bunin in dressing gown: drawn from memory and notes" (Bayville (N. J.), 1979) in which he elaborately described the circumstances of his introduction to Bunin, their discussions and their chummy in Grasse during the war.

It is crucial to underline that A.V. Bakhrakh was not the only person who was sheltered at the Bunin's hospitable house. Bunin used to visit Cannes (located not far from Grasse) at the outset of war. Aleksander Borisovich Liberman (1896-1977), a pianist, and his wife Stephanie resided there at the time. Judging by the information from the diaries of V.N. Bunina the writer was introduced to the pianist on 27 September 1941 [15]. A.B. Liberman would later pay visits to the Bunin's dwelling in Grasse. The residents of "Villa Jeanette" would celebrate the new year of 1942 (old style) with A.B. Liberman and his wife being among the guests. V.N. Bunina remarked in her diary on 1/14 January 1942: "We had a rare pleasure in celebrating the New Year with Ganshina and Liberman. The dinner was joint, with tasty foods and pleasant mood of all of the participants. Liberman toasted in poetical form" [16].

Once in Cannes, Bunin decided to pay a random visit to the Libermans and was astonished to find them packing. Below is the description of this encounter by A.B. Liberman in his letter to A.K. Baboreko dated 23 June 1964: "Yes, indeed we knew Ivan Alekseyevich and Vera Nikolaevna very well. They used to live in Grasse during the war, while we dwelled in Cannes in the Southern France. Ivan Alekseyevich often visited Cannes and paid us visits to discuss the news of the day.

I can vividly remember that hot summer day in August of 1942. The French Resistance alerted us to the upcoming night arrest of all foreign Jews (the French Jews were not spared the same fate later on). We rushed to pack our small belongings to flee into hiding. It was precisely at this moment that Ivan Alekseyevich entered our house. He inquired on the reason for our behaviour and, once briefed, he insisted on our move to his villa as a hideout. We declined at first as we didn't want to risk his well-being, however he told us that he wouldn't leave

without us agreeing to arrive at his house by the same evening.

We did that and spent a couple of restless days. This happened during the battle of Stalingrad and we listened with quivering to the English radio station, totally forgetting our own misfortunes.

After spending roughly, a week at the Bunin's house we came back to our home in Cannes. Ivan Alekseyevich proved to be a true Russian patriot as his thoughts and prayers were dedicated towards salvation of his Motherland from the invasion of the barbarians" [17].

Research into Bunin's diaries revealed that A.B. Liberman and his wife spent 11 days at the "Villa Jeanette". On 1 September 1942 the writer briefly mentioned the events of the preceding days: "On 25 August 1942 I had a breakfast at J<uan> les Pins <...>. I reached Cannes <...> by taxi <...>. Paid visit to the L<ibermans>. They will move to our place in the evening" [18]. On 5 September 1942 he made a laconic remark in his diary: "They are gone" [19]. Thus, Bunin salvaged the Liberman family from the imminent deportation and death in the concentration camp. Bunin was running high risks since he would have to share the fate of the unfortunate should the Hitlerians find out about the harbouring. However, the writer acted as a true Christian, as an orthodox person, having rendered fair support to the people in need. Currently the documents are being submitted for assignment Bunin Righteous Among the Nations status. This title is assigned to a person of any race or creed who was saving Jews during the Second World War.

Notwithstanding meager finances at his disposal during the tough war years Bunin strove to support Elena Aleksandrovna Pushkina (married name – von Rosen-Meier, 1889-1943) – granddaughter of A.S. Pushkin – who he got acquainted with in July of 1940 in Nice, where she lived. He used to raise money for her benefit. She passed away on 12 August 1943, having failed to meet the hardships of impoverishment and grievances. Bunin left the following note in his diary on 7 September 1943: "I'm in receipt from a letter from Nice: Elena Aleksandr<ovna> Pushkina (von Rosen-Meier) passed away on 14 August after the second surgery. Yet another wretched human soul has dissolved from Nice, this time own granddaughter of Aleksandr Sergeevich! It is quite possible that such unfortunate end resulted from extreme poverty which forced her to carry heavy items which she sold and re-sold to fend for herself. And Nice, with

its sun and sea would continue to live forward! I've been depressed the whole day" [20]

Life of the Bunin family in Grasse during the war time was full of hardships, as they had to endure hunger, debilitating cold, constant poverty, regular spectre of banishment, evacuations, air raid hazards and many other perils and privations. In his letter to M.S. Zetlin and M.O. Zetlina the writer stipulates that: "... we are in the state of catastrophe: we are living out a pittance, being overwhelmed by hunger and blistering cold. I beg you, for God's sake, to find a way to help us!" [21]. On 29 January 1941 he writes again to M.S. Zeitlina: "Even though we suffer from hunger and cold, the costs are enormous <...> since we are 6 persons and there is nowhere, I could send M.<Stepun>, G.<Kuznetsova>, Zurov, Bakhrakh! They are beyond broke and ill! I cannot write – my hands are chapping with cold!" [22]. In his letter to M.A. Aldanov dated 6 May 1941 Bunin states that: "Our life deteriorates day by day, we survive on the St. Anthony's food, and even this meager nourishment is becoming ridiculously expensive. I'm also suffering from taxes as I have to cover <...> costs for all of the members of the household as I cannot imagine expelling them into the street without a penny! – so I pay the apartment tax..." [23].

The fact that E.N. Zhirova and her daughter remained at the farm near Lafrançaise in the summer 1940, while G.N. Kuznetsova and M.A. Stepun left the household on 1 April 1942 didn't change the drastic conditions the Bunins lived in. In his letter to N.Ya. Roshchin dated 12 March 1943 Bunin states: "Our life <...> teems with devastating monotony, grueling loneliness, boredom, tormenting winter cold and constant odious hunger, despicable, sickish and squalid food. It is painful to look at the thinness of V<era> N<ikolaevna> <...>, my health has deteriorated during the last year, not to mention the constant poverty. I am exhausted and have started to dispose of some personal belongings since there is no chance of getting any remittances from my international publishers, who managed to provide meager funds a year ago. What else can I say? There is four of us in the house – Zurov and one homeless young man (of roughly forty years)" [24]. A.V. Bakhrakh is mentioned under the disguise of the "young man".

4. BUNIN'S SENTIMENT TOWARDS THE EVENTS ON THE EASTERN FRONT

On 22 June 1941 Hitler's armies poured into the territory of the Soviet Union. There was the following note in Bunin's diary: "I input the events of this day from a new page – a grand event – Germany declared war on Russia this morning, so did the Finnish and Romanian governments and penetrated into its boundaries.

Right after breakfast (that consisted of thin soup made from frayed peas and salad) I lay down to read Flober's letters <...> when I heard Zurov's scream: "I.A., Germ<any> has declared war on Russia!". I thought he was joking, however Bakhrakh's voice confirmed the same. I rushed to the dining room to listen to the radio. The war is confirmed! We were extremely agitated" [25].

Notwithstanding harsh conditions during the war period, Bunin deliberately refused to get involved with the press that was being published on the German-occupied territory of France. L.F. Zurov recollected the following: "Ivan Alekseyevich didn't publish a single word under the German occupation.

Ivan Alekseyevich received a proposal from Switzerland to collaborate with the newspapers and magazines from the occupied territories, which he declined. A man was sent to us from Cannes later. We thought him to be another guest, however her proposed to Ivan Alekseyevich and me to write for the newspapers and magazines. We refused" [26].

Bunin continued to tackle the events of the war by reading the French and the Swiss newspapers (for instance, «L'Éclaireur de Nice», «L'Éclaireur du soir») and listening to the radio. Right after receipt of the Noble prize he bought the best and the most powerful radio-set in order to gain access to the international broadcast and even Sovinformburo.

A.V. Bakhrakh recalled the following: "The events on the Russian front were of the general concern. Bunin brought in Nice huge maps depicting border areas of the Soviet Union and even started marking the developments on the frontline with pins, however his "staff" activities didn't last long. By the time Hitler's armies penetrated deeper into the Soviet territory, Bunin declared that he is not capable of moving the ribbon (that marked the front line) and he cannot trust the German reports since the locations that they refer to are not present

on his maps. <...> He was particularly upset when the bulletins started referring to the familiar places – Yelets, Orel, Tula" [27].

Bunin referred to Hitler as "idiot and madman" in his diaries of 1941 [28]. The writer tried his best to get a glimpse of true status on the frontline by reading between lines. On 24 July 1941 he noted in his diary: "Newspapers and radio broadcasts are yelps. One thing is clear: 'it did not go as expected'" [29]. On 21 June 1944 Bunin wrote: "3 years ago at night from 21 June to 22 June Hitler, as he liked to say, "fell like a lightning bolt" on Russia. He shouldn't have!" [30]. On 1 September 1944 Bunin highlighted in his diary: "5 years ago Hitler leaped on Poland. A somber anniversary for this bastard!" [31]. A. Sedykh outlined in his letter to A.K. Baboreko: "Similar to all of us <...> Ivan Alekseyevich wished the victory of the Russian people and German defeat with all his heart. He hated everything tainted by the Nazis and Hitler, and even openly despised the Russian "collaborationists", both openly and discreetly, and was celebrating each and every victory of the Russian arms... But he hardly could do anything in the hunger-torn Grasse during the war. Even the slightest public protest would have led to immediate arrest, deportation and imminent death" [32].

The Germans commandeered two rooms at "Villa Jeanette" in 1944, which is registered in Bunin's diary on 15 February [33]. On top of this "packing" the family was under constant risk of deportation and spent almost two months ready for the move, waiting for the surprise evacuation. The danger passed soon.

When France was finally liberated from the German occupation, Bunin told to his wife: "Anyway, if the Germans somehow managed to take Moscow and St. Petersburg and I would have refused even the most lucrative proposal as I wouldn't stand Moscow under German rule and command. Though there is much that I hate in Russia and the Russian people, there is a plethora of things that I love and venerate so I wouldn't tolerate a foreign role over it!" [34].

5. WORKS OF I.A. BUNIN DURING WAR YEARS

Notwithstanding all hardships endured during the Second World War, I.A. Bunin continued his creative pursuits. During those years, filled with various privations and dangers, Bunin created his

most famous masterpiece – collection of short-stories titled "Dark Alleys". A.V. Bakhrakh recalled the following: "He was binge-writing his book, jumping from novel to novel without a single break as if in a hurry, as if afraid of missing out. He was afraid that the war hostilities would prevent him from finalizing the book. There were such weeks when he used to lock himself (with the key!) from early morning till late night in his giant room with almost no way of getting him out" [35]. In reality there were days when he created two short-stories, or created a new short-story day by day: "Rusya" was written on 27 September 1940; "A Beauty" and "The Simpleton" on 28 September; "Antigone" on 2 October; "An Emerald", "The Visitor" on 3 October; "Calling cards" on 5 October; "Wolves" on 7 October; "Zoyka and Valeria" on 13 October; "Tanya" on 22 October; "In Paris" on 26 October; "Galya Ganskaya" on 28 October; "Heinrich" on 10 November. The short-story "Natalie" was finished on 4 April 1941; "The Godmother" on 23 September 1943, "The Beginning" on 23 October 1943, "A Riverside Inn" on 27 October 1943; "The Oaklings" on 30 October 1943; "Miss Klara" on 17 April 1944; "Madrid" on 26 April 1944; "A Second Pot of Coffee" on 30 April 1944; "Iron coat" on 1 May 1944; "A Cold Autumn" on 3 May 1944; "Pure Monday" on 12 May 1944; "The Steamer Saratov" on 16 May 1944; "The Raven" on 18 May 1944; "The Camargue" on 23 May 1944; "One Hundred Rupees" on 24 May 1944; "Upon a long-familiar street" on 25 May 1944; "Vengeance" on 3 June 1944; "The Chapel" on 2 July 1944; "The Swing" on 10 April 1945.

32 out of 38 short-stories that constitute "Dark Alleys" were written during the war time. The remaining 6 short-stories of the first part of the book were created in 1937-1938. It should be specifically underlined that all of these short-stories centre around the pre-revolutionary Russia. There are only two exceptions: "In Paris", where the action takes place in the capital of France and "A Cold Autumn" which covers the emigrant life of the main protagonist.

On 8 May 1941 Bunin wrote the following in his letter to N.D. Teleshov: "Dear Mitrich, <...> we are trapped in Grasse (near Cannes) where we spent 17 years (occasionally leaving for Paris) and are in bad shape. I used to be "rich", yet now as fate would have it, I'm poor, as Job. I used to be "famous all over the world" yet now no one is interested in my fate. Vera Nikolaevna is very ill that is aggravated by our constant state of hunger. I continue writing, having finished a whole new book

of short-stories, but there is no way I could put it to good uses <...>

I'm gray-haired, shriveled, thin and have become extremely tart. I'm desperate to go home" [36].

In April 1941 Bunin sent the manuscript of his new book "Dark Alleys" to the USA to M.A. Aldanov. On 6 May 1941 he wrote to M.A. Aldanov: "I'm sure you are in receipt of "Dark Alleys" <...>

I would like to point out that I decided to have this book sent to you as I have ideas coming to my mind that "something might happen to me and at least this one copy of the new (most accurately last) book should be sound in safe hands for the sake of future generations". I have little hopes for its publishing" [37]. M.A. Aldanov provided his feedback to the book in his answer to Bunin dated 2 August 1941: "I have received your short-stories and remain extremely grateful! They are wonderful and some bring sheer delight! Ivan Alekseyevich, you are indeed a brace person! As you are most likely to be criticized due to the frivolous nature of some of the episodes..." [38]. Later, on 25 October 1941 M.A. Aldanov informed Bunin about the preparation of the first issue of the "New Magazine" with publication of his short-stories: "The first <book> would start with "Rusya" and "In Paris". I told you about emolument of 100 francs for each printed page equivalent to "Sovr<menniye> zapiski", but in reality, you will be granted a little bit more money... Both short-stories are relatively small. But we would, should we succeed, print "Natalie" in the second book. I consider this short-story to be your best and marvelous creation, even the greatest of your works..." [39]

Separate short-stories from the book "Dark Alleys" started to appear in the New York publications: "Wolves" (Novoye Russkoye Slovo. 1942. 26 April (№ 10658). P.8); "Rusya", "In Paris" (New Magazine. 1942. №1. P. 8-27); "Natalie" (New Magazine. 1942. №2 P. 5-37); "Heinrich" (New Magazine. 1942. №3. P. 5-19); "Zoyka and Valeria" (Ark: Collection of Russian Foreign Literature. New York, 1942. P. 7-23); "Tanya" (New Magazine. 1943. №4. P. 22-41).

On 8 August 1942 Bunin approached M.A. Aldanov for help in obtaining a US visa: "Yes, I definitely made a mistake by not leaving. I sent a postcard to you roughly a fortnight ago - av<ion> and dispatch – with the petition regarding entry

visas for V.N. <Bunina> and myself. She is so insufferably thin and weak from peptic ulcer and hunger that she rants about not making it. But it is hard to envisage what could possibly happen to us here in autumn and winter which would definitely be much worse compared with the previous ones, bearing in mind absence of any income from any source. We live off by winding up my meager assets, with payment for the Paris apartment still in arrears (it has been once already distrained alongside the 9 suitcases containing my archive) totaling 12 th<ousand> which I have no means of honouring. <...> I would be grateful if Zwie<back>would have my book published and I do hope to be in position of sending the final manuscript shortly" [40].

A limited version of "Dark Alleys" was released in 1943 in New York by "Novaya Zemlya" publishing house, created by Ya.M. Zwieback (A. Sedykh) exclusively for the purpose of this project. This first publication of "Dark Alleys" incorporated only 11 short-stories and was composed not by Bunin, but most likely by Ya.M. Zwieback and M.A. Aldanov. The complete author's edition was released only in 1946 in Paris by the O.G. Zelyuck publishing house and consisted of 38 short-stories. Bunin later bequeathed to expand the series by two additional short-stories: "In Spring, in Judaea" (1946) and "A Place for the Night" (23 March 1949).

Bunin made the following description of the book in his letter to B.K. Zaitsev on 11 November 1943: "I once wrote to you about a new book I managed to compose (I'm sorry, but it is all about love!) ... <...> The whole book is titled after the first short-story "Dark Alleys" – with story line of all other novels centred around the dark and often quite grim "alleys of love". Most of these short-stories have the size of the printing page while some are actual 1-pagers, as I've been quite entertained by this format recently and extreme laconism has always been my obsession. One more thing – this autumn I felt inclined to create something cute, trifle and light-hearted about the affection in order to deviate my thinking from death and diabolic developments in the world! Boccaccio's "Decameron" was written during the plague time, while I wrote "Dark Alleys" [41]. On 19 November 1943 Bunin sent 8 short-stories from the book "Dark Alleys" to B.K. Zaitsev alongside the following cover letter: "My dear friend, I can hardly write due to severe cold. I've been frantically sending my short-stories to you recently" [42]. Upon receipt of the novels Zaitsev reverted with his

viewpoint on the book in his letter dated 28 November 1943: "My dear Ivan, I'm in receipt of all of the 8 short-stories which I have immediately devoured. I consider "Natalie" and "Rusya" to be the best of them (at least they appealed to me mostly). Rusya resembles a peculiar image of a young girl, an image profoundly and vividly portrayed. The swamp, the peak cap and the night are brilliantly depicted. I hope you understand. The second part of "Natalie" and the overall mood of the short-story are great and it appears that this should be considered the "weightiest" and is quite eligible to be the opening story of the book. One could emphasize the quality depiction of the village, the winter and Tanya the girl in the short-story "Tanya", while the novel "Heinrich" excels in the description of the voyage and the final part" [43].

Bunin outlined some of the short-stories of the new book. For instance, he left the following comment about the short-story "Pure Monday": "I'm grateful to God for the opportunity to write "Pure Monday"" [44]. This short-story was also sent to B.K. Zaitsev on 12 May 1944 with the following remark: "All of my writing is out of date, but who cares! You will find depiction of Moscow in this novel and you might reflect upon something..." [45]. B. K. Zaitsev provided his feedback upon receipt of the text: "I was very glad to have received "Pure Monday" that I consider charming. I recalled Zhenya Ustinova at first, then Dichtung, Moscow, the old and its undying beauty – one can only be amazed that everything is written with such vividness and freshness of soul. As if one is thirty again! No melancholy and apathy. Great work! "Madrid" and the "A Second Pot of Coffee" are amiable while the female protagonists are described with tenderness. One could define these short-stories as "humane". You turned out to be a humanist in the end, Ivan, while you used to be occasional debunker" [46].

The newspaper "Russian patriot" was published legally since October 1944 in the liberated Paris². Bunin responded the following to the invitation of A.P. Ladinsky to participate in the new issue on 8 February 1945: "I'm in receipt of the most recent issue of your newspaper and have borrowed the previous ones from Zurov. I've reassured myself that your newspaper is quite politicized while I lost my political ambition long ago; I am delighted with the victories of Russia and the Allies, but this can hardly be interpreted as politics. Therefore, <...>

there is no way I – at least at present – could become a contributor even to the literary column of the "Russian patriot"" [47].

On May 2 1945 the Bunins left Grasse for Paris and never returned.

6. CONCLUSION

The big number of quotes in this paper accounts for the use of both published and unknown archive materials. Various archive sources regarding the life and works of the writer during the war were assembled and structured. Extracts from the private correspondence and diaries, used in this paper, provide a comprehensive and multi-aspect depiction of the brilliant wordsmith, and depict his complex life at the "Villa Jeanette" during the German occupation. The letters and diaries are called upon to reveal the true sentiment of the writer to the war and events on the German-soviet frontline. We also made a special reference to those people that received Bunin's support in 1940-1944.

Bunin remained an apodictic critic of the dictator regimes, revolutions, wars and personal violence. Notwithstanding the hardships endured during the war, the writer denied even the idea of collaboration with the press, published on the German-occupied territories. Enduring hardships and exposed to mortal peril Bunin never failed to support those in need and never ceased his creative pursuits, having finished one of his best books "Dark Alleys", which turned out to be not only a Russian, but also a masterpiece of the world literature. Bunin remained firm antagonist of the Soviet rule in both his life and creative works which is also reflected in his non-fiction. He considered the Bolsheviki regime to be evil that devastated the "lapsed" Russia and mutilated millions of souls with its ideology. Nevertheless, Bunin constantly evaded politics and apotheosis, that can be traced through his letters and works.

Bunin's sentiment towards the Russian people who were engulfed in the whirlpool of the revolutionary and war hostilities did not change over time. The writer passionately monitored the developments on the German-Soviet front and was waiting with impatience and celebrated the final victory of the Russia people in the Great Patriotic War, having remained a true patriot of his Motherland.

2. «Russian Patriot» was clandestinely published in the occupied Paris since November 1943.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Sergey N. Morozov.

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