

Ukrainian fiction

Nothing New on the Eastern Front

Novel. Kharkiv. Ukraine 2024. 255 pages

Angelina and Gleb have known each other since school. Their school is one of only two in the small town of Kozachye, in the east of Ukraine. When Angelina and Gleb are getting married, Angelina is pregnant. Finally, at the age of 32, she marries Gleb, who as a twelve-year-old schoolboy climbed the 250-meter-high chimney of the disused Soviet factory as a sign of his love. While they have had as many fights as tender moments, Angelina knows Gleb is one she is meant to be with. And Gleb knows.

What they don't know is that two days after their wedding, Russian tanks will roll through their town and destroy everything. They don't know yet that seven months of occupation with all its harrowing moments lie ahead. The wedding guests see no reason to believe in the threat of an impending attack either. Not grandmother Katya, not father Grigory, not his wife Natalya, not the bull Semyon and not the dog Gavchik, none of the neighbours on Grushevaya Street. Only Gleb's school friend Pavel knows what is going to happen. He had gone to Moscow for training and has now returned as a soldier in the Russian army.

The Lugenko oligarch family and their four children are the first to flee. Gleb will later find their burned-out BMW with the corpses sitting upright inside. Angelina and Gleb's families stay. That's why Angelina and Gleb stay too. And in the end, none of them are spared suffering – not the people, not the animals, not the fruit trees, not the houses. And the readers are not spared either, although Gerasimov tells the story calmly, almost gently melancholically, even comfortingly.

Just as Gerasimov in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, with his *Notes from Kharkiv* since day one of the attack, has subjected himself and his readers to the painful realization of everyday horrors and absurdities, so too in this novel about the war in Ukraine, which is permeated with true experiences, it is his unerring eye for the small details that make the great suffering the war has brought to Ukraine and Kozachye, with all its cruelty and psychological abysses, tangible, understandable and bearable from afar.

(about his diary of the first 2 months of the war, published as a book)

"A disturbing testimony." FAZ

"A stirring testimony and an appeal for peace and understanding." MUSIX MAGAZINE

"A document of terror and a document of Ukrainian courage and resistance." WDR

"A darkly shimmering panorama, a tableau made up of descriptions, reflections and memories." TAGESSPIEGEL

Sergei Gerasimov was born 1964, in Kharkiv where he has lived all his life. In the early 1990s he studied psychology and graduated at Kharkiv State University, wrote a psychology textbook for schools and a book on psychology in relationships. Since then he has been concerned with the psychological question of how human interest arises and functions. He is the author of several academic articles on cognitive activity with interest in popular literature as a phenomenon and object of human interest. So he became a writer, poet, and translator of poetry. His stories and poems written in English have appeared in many literary magazines. Gerasimov and his wife together with several cats live in the centre of Kharkiv in an apartment on the fourth floor of a high rise building, remaining in the embattled frontline town until today.



THE AUTHOR

text available
in full English

Sergei Gerasimov