STALINGRAD TO GROZNY

The war reporting of Vassily Grossman and Anna Politkovskaya.

James Rodgers. City University London.
Vassily Grossman, 1905–64
The Battle of Stalingrad, 1942–3
‘When I first got the rifle, I couldn’t bring myself to kill a living being: one German was standing there for about four minutes, talking, and I let him go. When I killed my first one, he fell at once. Another one ran out and stooped over the killed one, and I knocked him down too ... when I first killed, I was shaking all over: the man was only walking to get some water! ... I felt scared: I’d killed a person! Then I remembered our people and started killing them without mercy.’

(2006: 157)
No I don’t believe she is still alive. I travel all the time around areas that have been liberated, and I see what these accursed monsters have done to old people and children. And Mama was Jewish. A desire to exchange my pen for a rifle is getting stronger and stronger in me.

(2006: 224)
There were black holes and craters from bombs everywhere along the railway. One could see trees broken by explosions. In the fields there were thousands of peasants, men and women, digging anti-tank ditches.

We watch the sky nervously and decided to jump off the train if the worst came to the worst. It was moving quite slowly. The moment we arrived in Novozybkov there was an air raid. A bomb fell by the station forecourt. This train wasn’t going any further.

(2006: 8)