



“... probably the most important writer in modern Russia,
a sensitive and intelligent critic of his country's condition.”

—*Newsweek*

SANKYA

ZAKHAR PRILEPIN

FOREWORD BY ALEXEY NAVALNY

GLAGOSLAV

Zakhar Prilepin

SANKYA

Glagoslav Publications

SANKYA

by Zakhar Prilepin

First published in Russian as "Санька"

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Represented by www.nibbe-wiedling.com

© 2014, Glagoslav Publications, United Kingdom

Glagoslav Publications Ltd
88-90 Hatton Garden
EC1N 8PN London
United Kingdom

www.glagoslav.com

ISBN: 978-1-78384-016-8

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

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FOREWORD

I didn't read Zakhar Prilepin's novel *Sankya* until later, when those who Prilepin writes about were released from Russian prisons and those whose arrival he foretells were jailed.

In the Russian literary tradition, the "foresight of the writer" is very important, and Prilepin's foresight would make Tolstoy and Dostoevsky burn with envy.

Consider the story of the "Primorsky Partisans", a group of young people from a small town in the Far East who waged a real war against the government and could only be put down by a large-scale military operation. It is hard to believe that Prilepin's book — this book — foretold such events with such precision.

Prilepin has not merely turned inside out the consciousness of the entire post-Perestroika generation of politicized young Russians and laid it bare, but he also, in large part, predicted the patterns of development of radical political groups and the government's strategy in combatting them.

This very post-Perestroika generation will play a huge role in the history of Russia, not least because there are so many of them — this is the last wave of the Soviet "baby boom", and following on its heels is a demographic abyss. And it is very important that they be understood — easier said than done even for those of us whose native language is Russian.

Prilepin's works provide innumerable insights on this count. Probably only a provincial writer with such an insane biography

(a former special forces police officer who served in the Russian military in the rebellious Chechen Republic and who became one of the leaders and instigators of a banned radical political party and, at the same time, one of the most famous and successful authors in the country today) could understand what's going on in the minds of people stuck between eras. They do not remember the Soviet Union and the planned economy, nor do they see capitalism as offering equal opportunities for all. For them, capitalism means the former head of the local party organisation is today the city's chief entrepreneur and the richest man in town.

Even in Moscow, the Russian political process — with its so-called systemic opposition and its Putin-approved lawful methods of political competition — is perceived as total hypocrisy and political prostitution, but in the regions described in *Sankya* it manifests itself as an unbearable daily existence preventing anyone with even a modicum of human dignity from becoming involved.

There have been several attempts to turn the novel into a movie, but every time the government successfully foils these attempts by banning the film's financing. *Thugs*, a brilliant play by Kirill Serebrennikov based on *Sankya*, has faithfully conveyed the spirit of the book, enjoyed huge public success, and been awarded the Golden Mask Russian theatre prize of 2012. The tickets aren't easy to get, and it is quite amusing to watch the standing ovations the performance receives from representatives of the Moscow establishment, who should — one would expect — be squirming in their seats, threatened by the action unfolding on stage, by the unnerving predictions of the book, and by the cheering audience, clearly sympathetic to the perishing young revolutionaries.

For me personally, Zakhar Prilepin is not just a biographer of Russia but also an active politician with influence over the hearts and minds of young Russians. In fact, he and I got to know each other while starting a political movement together — and I can

FOREWORD

assure you that this guy really knows what he is talking about. If you want to feel the real raw nerve of modern Russian life, what you need isn't *Anna Karenina* — what you need is *Sankya*.

Alexey Navalny
Moscow, September 2013

CHAPTER ONE

They were denied the stage.

Sasha looked down, his eyes tired of red flags and grey military coats.

Red fluttered around them, brushing their faces, sometimes stirring the odour of musty fabric.

Grey stood behind the barrier. All identical conscripts — short, grimy, weakly gripping billy clubs. The police had heavy faces, burgundy from annoyance. The indispensable officer glared defiantly at the crowd. His insolent hands on the top rung of the fence separating them, the guardians of the law and of the whole city, from the protestors.

Around them stood some mustachioed lieutenant colonels, lavish bellies under their military coats. And somewhere there should also be the most important and officious of them all, the full colonel.

Sasha always tried to spot this one, the rally's chief security officer. Sometimes he was a lean man with ascetic cheeks, squeamishly bossing around the porky lieutenant colonels. Sometimes he was like the lieutenant colonels, a bigger, heavier version yet at the same time more agile, more spry, with a smile on his face and good teeth. There was also a third type — absolutely tiny, mushroom-like, moving rapidly behind the rows of police on his quick little feet...

Sasha hadn't seen him yet, this full colonel, stars on his shoulders.

A little farther away, behind the fencing, cars buzzed and squeaked, heavy metro doors clanged shut, dusty down-and-outs gathered bottles and surveyed their rims in a businesslike manner. A Caucasian man sipped lemonade and watched the protest from behind the backs of the policemen. Sasha accidentally met his eyes. The Caucasian man turned and walked away.

Sasha noticed some buses bearing the coat of arms with a fanged beast. The curtains in the bus windows trembled. People were sitting in those buses, waiting for an opportunity to step out, to run out, clutching rubber mallets in tough fists, looking angrily for somebody to hit, and to hit them with flourish, to knock them down and knock them out.

“You see this, yes?” Venka asked Sasha. Venka had not slept. He was hungover, his eyes swollen like overcooked dumplings.

Sasha nodded.

Their hope hadn’t panned out. The OMON unit was here.

Venka smiled as if there weren’t a bunch of camouflaged demons awaiting their cue but rather a brigade of clowns handing out balloons.

Sasha wandered into the crowd gathered behind the fence.

Fenced them in like lepers...

The fence was composed of two-metre sections along which the conscripts stood at equal intervals.

Venka followed Sasha. Their crew gathered at the other end of the plaza, and they could already make out Yana’s voice as she lined up the formation of boys and girls.

Sasha studied the unwell and poor as he brushed up against them. Almost all of them were deeply and irritatingly old.

Some sort of despair showed in their demeanour, as if they had gathered their last reserves of strength to get here and now wished only to die. The portraits that they carried in their hands and clutched to their chests depicted their leaders as younger than most of the people here. The face of young Lenin, smiling softly, an enlarged photo familiar to Sasha from his first grammar book. Then the calm face of Lenin’s successor, held up

by trembling elderly hands. The successor wore a military cap and the epaulettetes of a generalissimo.

Thin newspapers printed on grey paper were being handed out. Sasha refused outright, and Venka rebuffed merrily.

The scene was a simple mixture of pity and anguish.

Several hundred or maybe several thousand people gathered in this plaza two to three times a year, united in the unrealistic certainty that their presence would somehow expel a government they hated.

In the years that had passed since the bourgeois takeover, the torchbearers had become definitively old, and they didn't scare anyone anymore.

Then four years ago, Kostenko, a former officer and also, oddly, a philosopher, a wily and original thinker, led into the plaza a crowd of brazen and angry youths who didn't exactly understand what they were doing among the red banners and elderly people.

Within a few years, this group expanded and gained infamy for its brazen acts and noisy brawls.

By now Kostenko's party attracted so many motley youths that a metal fence was needed to contain today's rally. So that none of them spilled out...

Robust, sharp old men periodically surveyed Sasha and Venka with interest, hope, and skepticism.

A representative of the patriotic house faction shuffled in place at the podium. Even from a distance, one could make out his smooth, pink face — the face of a person who ate well, a face that set him apart from all the other grey and anxious faces gathered nearby.

The representative was wearing a black, expensively cut coat. He took off his sheepskin hat and stood before the people with his head uncovered. Someone from the valetry held this hat for him.

Banners with clumsy messages hung along the stage. These would never motivate anyone towards decisive action.

Sasha cringed as he read them.

There was no time for them to do their presentation. They were denied the stage. Sasha, standing on the second-to-last step, looked up at the administrator. The administrator pretended to be distracted by other business.

“Let’s go, guys, let’s go. Another time.”

“What’s happening with Kostenko?”

Sasha heard the deep, clear voice of the representative as he descended from the stage. The representative had noticed Sasha’s red armband and posed this question to the administrator, who had already turned away, relieved.

“He’s been locked up.”

There was a hint of malice in his voice that quickly disappeared when the representative shot back: “I know he’s been locked up.”

“They say he’s going to get fifteen years,” said the administrator. Now his voice belied slight regret for Kostenko’s fate.

In the short time this conversation took place, Sasha stood still on the steps of the narrow ladder and blatantly eavesdropped. One step down from him stood an elderly woman, waiting to ascend the stage.

“Well, are you coming down, or what?” she asked. Sasha jumped off the ladder and onto the tarmac.

“Go and scream down there,” she said to him. “You’re too young for the stage...”

Venka waited for Sasha at the bottom. He quickly understood everything, and asked him nothing. It seemed Venka didn’t care whether they were allowed on the stage or not.

Venka fingered several dozen firecrackers in his pocket. At times, he pulled them out, one at a time, and twirled them in front of his face, almost as if he didn’t know what they were.

“Got a fag?” Venka asked Sasha.

“I’ve already told you...”

“Have you?” Venka smiled, puzzled. “What have you told me?”

Once again, they emerged from the crowd to join their crew, already in formation.

Yana, raven-haired, wearing a short, elegant jacket with fur-trimmed hood and sleeves, marched up and down the ranks, looking absolutely charming.

Sasha knew that she was Kostenko's lover.

Kostenko was in pretrial detention, yes, under investigation. He was arrested for buying firearms, just a few automatic rifles, and now his crew, his pack, his gang stood in nervous ranks, black headbands over their faces, foreheads sweaty, eyes bewildered.

They came from all over the country. Youthful outsiders, freaks, malcontents united by who knew what, maybe just some black mark placed on them at birth.

Matvey, who led their faction in Kostenko's absence, was not among the ranks today. He stood on the sidelines, watching.

Yana lifted the megaphone to her face and raised her arm.

Her voice was swallowed by the collective scream that answered it, and only her very first rolling, sonorous syllable remained.

Having not yet found his place, Sasha stood near the ranks, his mouth wide open. In his peripheral vision, he could see the frightened pigeons leaving the tarmac, an officer twitching nervously, the sluggish hands of the conscripts standing near the fencing as they fondled their batons. As Sasha shouted along with the others, his eyes filled with that requisite void, which, throughout the ages, always precedes an act of violence. They were seven hundred souls, and they screamed the word "Revolution".

"Tishin!" They waved Sasha over. "Come here!"

He joined the left front rank next to Venka, whose hungover eyes, previously doughy, were now red, almost burnt, as if they had been sautéed in a piping hot skillet.

"Go away, granny!" Venka laughed.

An old lady stood near the formation, and Sasha heard her voice in the brief pause between shouting: "Fools! Provocateurs! Your Kostenko goes to prison to become famous! The Jews brought you here!"

Yana walked by, not paying any attention to the old lady, her face bright and exposed, like an open fracture.

“Heathen!” screamed the old lady into her face, but Yana was already walking away indifferently.

Granny’s sharp eye found Sasha.

“The Jews brought you!” she repeated. “You’re a Jew! A Jew and a Nazi!”

Sasha was gently nudged in the back by those standing behind him, and the formation began to move.

The chant “Re-vo-lu-ti-on!” trembled and vibrated across the whole plaza, overpowering the deep voice from the stage, the police radios, and the voices of the other protesters.

“Founding Fathers! Guys!” The voices from the stage appealed to them. “You didn’t come here to scream! Let’s behave ourselves...”

The formation waved red and black flags and moved past the stage in the direction of the enclosure. The screaming was loud enough to puncture eardrums.

“The president...” shouted Yana. The protesters responded with seven hundred throats: “Should be drowned in the Volga River!” “The governor...should be drowned in the Volga River!”

“Well, will somebody please do something, gentlemen,” the speaker pleaded helplessly. And Sasha noted the out-of-place usage of “gentlemen”, and it might even have made him smile if he wasn’t too busy screaming, hoarsely and tirelessly, until his teeth chilled: “We loathe the government!”

The other sounds in the plaza fell into a rhythm with this scream, the squeal of the metro doors, the conscripts fussing with their grey military coats, the hiss of portable radios, the honks of car horns.

“Love and war! Love and war!”

“Love and love!” Sasha improvised, when he caught another glimpse of Yana as she turned sharply in front of the first rank, her jacket’s hood rising and falling.

How sweetly this hood smells, like her head, thought Sasha accidentally, and then he pushed the thought away.

Like a Tula gingerbread. He didn't even understand why he was thinking this.

“You’re ruining the rally,” a woman screamed and tried to grab Yana by the sleeve. “Founders!” the woman said, trying to look into their eyes. “You call yourselves ‘Founding Fathers’! What are you founding? You’re destroying, that’s what you’re doing!”

“Did you come here to protest? In this paddock?” Yana asked her, removing the megaphone from her face. “Go ahead and protest. We’re leaving now.”

They were already standing near the railing, and Sasha could see the shifty eyes of the policemen and the officer, who was yelling into the portable radio.

“Yes,” he shouted. “Send in the OMON. These fucking FF are coming through.”

“We are maniacs and we will prove it,” shouted the formation in chorus, devoutly, on key, stamping their feet and waving their flags.

Venka turned to face the formation, his back to the police and the enclosure, and he quickly distributed the firecrackers to the next rank.

“Fire ‘em up!”

The stage went silent; everyone was looking at the mass of chanting protestors.

Several firecrackers blew at once, an explosive bag flew at the police next — it plopped down next to a frightened officer, spitting out dirty smoke.

Sasha saw one officer’s cap fall off when he, confused by what was happening, turned and ran away.

“Re-vo-lu-ti-on!” The voices resounded, nearing a hysterical pitch, as the formation stamped along in their trainers and worn combat boots.

Several fireworks lit above the protestors at once.

Sasha already had his hands on the fence and pulled it

towards him. From the opposite side, a policeman frantically held onto it.

Another swung a club at Sasha's head.

Sasha let go, ducked, and then, carefully, as if it were hot, took hold of the fence again.

The officer shifted the club to his other hand and landed a sideways blow on Venka's cheek, which immediately erupted in a puffy, crimson welt.

"The staff," Venka yelled, looking back with a demonic smile. "Give me the staff!"

Someone passed him a flag. Venka tore off the material and powerfully swung the staff at the officer, who was busy shoving his club into someone else's face and didn't see it coming.

The officer's cap slid down the back of his head, and the blood began to flow in a thin stream down his forehead to the bridge of his nose, where it parted and spread in a canopy across his brow, cheeks, and eye sockets.

The officer looked up, his eyes bulging, as if trying to see the wound.

Another staff landed on Sasha's shoulder; the flag flapped. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the other flags on other shoulders, like spears, their tips pointing at the policemen and the conscripts holding together the enclosure.

Again, Sasha was pushed from behind so strongly that he fell forward, and as he fell, he pushed his hands into the chest of a conscript who held his club up and began to blink anxiously — either he didn't know how to swing it or he was too afraid.

Sasha managed to stay on his feet, pushed the conscript away, and lifted the section of enclosure above his head.

The tirelessly screaming mass broke through the pen. The policemen backed away, staring at the protestors. Someone led the officer with the busted head towards the police car.

"Guys, I beg of you," someone shouted too late from the stage.

Hefty troops in camouflage, the OMON, arrived.

Three, registered Sasha. For now just three of them.

Sasha threw the fence at them, nearly tearing his arms from their joints. The fence rumbled as it hit the tarmac, falling just short of the OMON unit running towards him. They stopped and yelled angrily, but Sasha couldn't make out the words. They began advancing again, and Sasha threw another section of fence.

One of the OMON fell crookedly underneath the crashing metal. The two others tried to free him.

“Please retain your composure!” the stage shouted. “Continue the rally!”

The formation tore forward, along the avenue. The police stood helplessly, like the honorary guard, overlooking the young, happily howling horde entering the city.

The plaza spilled into a pedestrian street, and the first thing that bore the brunt of the freed crowd's fury was a taxi stand and several stalls selling flowers.

The women merchants grabbed armfuls of flowers and ran off. Not yet deliberately, still by accident, the protestors knocked over one basket with roses, tulips, and carnations — and right away they liked it, right away got hooked. When Sasha came through, the whole street was covered in crimson, yellow, pink, burgundy. The flowers crunched underfoot, and the stems snapped.

For some reason Sasha gathered up flowers, maybe three or four bouquets from a flower rack not yet thrown to the ground, and for a short time he ran with them, fully realizing the uselessness of his act.

As he passed the taxi stands, he saw a scared taxi driver hit the gas pedal — his passenger didn't have time to get in fully and she held onto the door, screaming bloody murder as the cab dragged her a few metres.

The other taxis blew their horns and braked erratically, trying to get out of there.

Sasha showered flowers on an impoverished refugee from god-knows-where sitting on the tarmac with the requisite baby in her arms, and he almost knocked down Venka, who was

stopped near a store window, shopping, it looked like, for the right weapon.

Venka found a rubbish bin, and one moment later it crashed through the store window.

There were still a few ordinary people out on this Sunday morning. The occasional pedestrian scattered, rushed away and didn't look back. A man in a blue coat ran out of a store and trotted up the street. For a moment a security guard in a black jacket appeared, then immediately disappeared into the doorway, yelling something into a mobile phone.

A beautiful foreign car parked on the wrong side of the street — someone parked it here in defiance of the guardians of the road and the rights of pedestrians. The car's alarm squealed, which was probably what irritated the raging crowd. Several boys turned it on its side with surprising ease and then flipped it upside down.

A little farther down the street, there were more cars, and shortly boys and girls were jumping up and down on top of them with a wild, almost animal glee.

Looking for something to break — to break loudly, with a crash, to smash to pieces — they moved down the street, each of them one-on-one against the city.

The kids didn't raise their voices and went about their business viciously and with poise.

With a terrible metal screech, a few arcade games fell onto the tarmac.

One of them managed to dislodge the enclosure of a summer café, snatching off the beautiful black chains and launching the enclosure through the brightly coloured windows.

One of them got cut and wrapped his sliced hand in a piece of satin drape, liberated from the café together with the curtain.

Kostya Solovy, a tall, strangely beautiful, unique type — in a white suit jacket, white trousers, and white shoes with pointy toes that perfectly complemented his pointy vampire ears — grabbed a black chain, and, swinging it nimbly, put out each streetlight he met.

No one got too close to him — the heavy chain drew pretty circles, and if it wasn't for the dumb racket around him, it would be possible to hear the quiet wailing that the chain emitted on its circular route.

Behind the glass window of a clothing store stood thin-armed, pinheaded mannequins pretending to be beautiful women in short skirts and bright blouses.

They broke the window, and tore the beauties into pieces in the street. Those bringing up the rear were startled when they tripped over body parts.

Sasha understood that the cops had been able to block off some of the protestors after the initial break — he saw that fewer of them were left, possibly only about two hundred people. Many of them were already escaping into the inner courtyards, understanding that the free-for-all would not last forever.

“Pigs,” someone screamed, and the horde tore up the street, dropping rubbish bins and crashing merchants’ stalls.

There was the continuous din of broken glass. The city’s mixed-up and finely ground colours became unusually bright that morning.

Journalists with camcorders ran along with the crowd — businesslike, and, it seemed, maybe even happy about what was happening.

“Over there! Quickly!” a person with a microphone urged the camera operator.

Sasha carried on with a clear head, chasing away all feelings other than the desire to smash and break as many things as possible.

In the street, Sasha saw pink and yellow stuffed toys, prizes from a tipped-over glass “one-armed bandit,” pathetic looking, as if they’d got lost.

From god knew where, the short elderly mayor appeared, walking towards them.

“Stop!” he commanded, and the fear in his voice could be heard so clearly that it was obvious he didn’t really want anyone to obey him.

Venka ran and landed a flying kick in the mayor's chest. The mayor fell, his arms splayed.

Sasha stopped near the old mayor, resisting his own desire to lift the man up, help him back to his feet, to apologise even.

The mayor grabbed at his holster with a jerky motion, not because he wanted to use his gun, but for fear of losing it, for fear of being left without it.

The mayor began calling Sasha obscene names, and he changed his mind about helping the fallen old man and even stomped on his nearby cap.

“What are you doing, you?” said the mayor, sitting up. He looked very silly like that — sitting on the pavement, no cap, already an old man.

“You yourself are to blame for everything,” Sasha said furiously.

He turned around, and Venka immediately caught him by the sleeve and pulled him in the opposite direction.

“The cosmonauts are coming. Come on...we need to get out of here.”

They passed the Nature's Offerings shop sign with several letters hanging, half torn off. They skirted the showcase window with beautiful zigzag cracks, flew into a piss-soaked inner courtyard, and immediately found themselves at a dead end.

“Shit, I don't know this neighbourhood!” Venka said, smiling and cheerfully babbling on. “They're pulping everyone, these cosmonauts. A true massacre. They're herding us down towards the cops...”

Sasha surveyed the walls, hoping to find an escape.

“A staircase,” said Sasha.

There was a fire escape ladder leading up the side of a four-storey building, but it was too high up to reach by jumping.

“Stand on my shoulders,” Venka said.

Sasha smiled and looked, tenderly perhaps, at him. Because Venka did not say: “Let me stand on your shoulders.”

“And what about you? You'll hide in the sand here?” Sasha said.

“Pretend to be a water hose,” Venka said, cackling stupidly. “Hey, lady!” He noticed her and stopped laughing. Venka ran up to a first-floor window and began to tap on it rapidly. “Lady, don’t go!”

The woman returned to the window, cocked her head. “What do you want?”

“We are being chased! There! Being beaten and chased! Open the window! Chased!”

Venka gesticulated wildly. He clearly had not yet decided what role to play: the whiney young idiot, emphasizing the “Please take pity on us, ma’am!” or the serious young lad in trouble with the law, going with, “Help me, woman! This can happen to anyone!” As a result, he shifted back and forth between the two, failing to elicit any trust from the woman standing behind the window.

“Damn, if only it was some granny. A granny would have felt sorry for us,” said Venka when the woman, without replying, drew the curtains, but continued standing near the window, her heavy silhouette still visible.

“Probably her other windows face the street,” Sasha said, then cut himself short. It was already clear that if the woman knew what they had been up to she would have never let them in.

“We’ve got about two more minutes...” Venka said, having missed the connection. “Sasha, check this out.” (“Check this out” was his pet saying. It could mean a million things, and in this case, it meant, “Here’s a good one for you!”) “There was a sportsman running in front of us there, a jogger. A simple athlete, right. Out for a Sunday morning run. He was the first one to come upon the OMON. In his red shorts. Christ, they fucked the poor guy up. Morons, shit. Really improved his health.”

There was the sound of steps, and Venka froze with a smile on his face, and for some reason Sasha suddenly felt like sitting or even lying down.

Lyosha Rogov ran into the courtyard — a guy from somewhere in the North. From Severodvinsk, probably.

They barely knew each other, but Sasha had already taken notice of Lyosha for his solid, non-phony composure.

“Why are you standing around here?” Lyosha asked evenly.

“Are the cops already out there?” Sasha answered his question with a question.

“Probably another hundred metres. Is this a dead end? I think the next courtyard is open. I took a stroll here yesterday.”

As they ran back into the street, they marvelled at the chaos and devastation once again.

“They torched a car!” Venka said joyfully.

The air was filled with the barking of dogs, howling sirens, police whistles.

Sasha spotted two more overturned cars, one of which, about seventy metres down the street, was on fire. No one would approach it. It seemed that the police had held back because of this — they were wary of an explosion.

Ten metres away the second car rocked peacefully on its roof.

The alarm wailed incessantly and nearby an alcoholic hag was doing a little dance, her face dirty and her lips moist, like the inside of a cheek. The hag smiled, revealing a toothless mouth.

Nearby stood a young man holding a briefcase and a set of keys.

That is his car, Sasha guessed.

Venka stopped.

“Hey, mate.” He called out to the young man, whose face twitched nervously.

He turned around. “Turn off the noise. It’s irritating,” Venka said, grinning, and gestured as if pressing a button.

They ran into a courtyard and accelerated, jumping over benches, rounding the kiosks and the playground slides. In midflight Sasha bumped the rusty skeleton of a swing set and for several seconds could still hear the swings’ rhythmic creaking behind him.

Three policemen pursued them, stomping menacingly and demanding that they stop. The first one, as Sasha could see when



Zakhar Prilepin, one of Russia's most acclaimed and widely translated contemporary authors, was born in 1975. He is the author of five award-winning novels, three short story collections, and several works of nonfiction. Prilepin had a varied life before dedicating himself to writing, spending time as a labourer, a journalist, and a soldier, serving with the Special Forces in

Chechnya. Prilepin lives in Nizhny Novgorod where he is the regional editor of the independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. Prilepin's work is known for its lucid prose and political engagement, and has drawn comparisons with the Russian classics.

Sasha "Sankya" Tishin, and his friends are part of a generation stuck between eras. They don't remember the Soviet Union, but they also don't believe in the promise of opportunity for all in the corrupt, capitalistic new Russia. They belong to an extremist group that wants to build a better Russia by tearing down the existing one. Sasha, alternately thoughtful and naïve, violent and tender, dispassionate and romantic, hopeful and hopeless, is torn between the dying village of his youth and the soulless capital, where he and his friends stage rowdy protests and do battle with the police. When they go too far, Sasha finds himself testing the elemental force of the protest movement in Russia and in himself.

Originally published in 2006, *Sankya* is a cult sensation in Russia, where it won the Yasnaya Polyana Award and was shortlisted for the Russian Booker and the National Bestseller Prize. *Sankya* is the basis for Kirill Serebrennikov's popular play *Thugs*.

ISBN 978-1-78384-016-8

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9 781783 840168

Glagoslav Publications

ISBN: 978-1-78384-016-8

London