

Penguin Modern Classics

# Josef Skvorecky

## The Cowards

Written by one of the outstanding Czech novelists of modern times, *The Cowards* is one of the most remarkable novels to come out of Czechoslovakia since the war. It was banned in 1958 shortly after its first publication because of its critical attitude to the events of May 1945, when the country was liberated from Nazi occupation.

In May 1945 in a small town, Kostelec, Czechoslovakia, Danny is growing up fast in the turbulence of the retreating POWs and the advancing Red Army. He observes the antics of the town's senior citizenry trying to play safe, and he plays at being a dashing partisan when he is not a reluctant conscript in a war more businesslike than the revolution he dreamed of.

*The Cowards* is a story of an uncomplicated, talented youth, refusing to be bored to death by politics, and refusing to die without fighting and thinking for himself. Danny is a character responding freshly and humanly to momentous historic events.

The cover, designed by Germano Facetti, shows a detail from 'German Sorceress' by Otto Dix, in a private collection



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