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Critical Introductions to the Reissued Classics

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XL

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FICTION

Malachite Casket: Tales from the Urals

Bazhov's Urals tales of miners, stone-carvers and the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, in Eve Manning's Moscow translation with Korovin's headpieces. Lenin appears once, in the last line. With a new critical introduction.

Pavel Bazhov

Critical Introduction about the 1950 Edition

The last tale in this book ends with a boy looking out of a shanty in the dark.

His grandfather, an old prospector, has spent the night in the woods at Adui with a stranger who came along the path carrying a berry basket, and who took from it a cut stone that throws a light, and showed him, in one blinding moment, every vein and pocket of aquamarine under the hill. Then the light goes out, the stranger says he has gone on, and the old man asks who he was. The answer comes back from far away: "Ask your grandson. He knows." And the boy says it:

> *"Grandad, that was Lenin wi' ye."*

The old man is not surprised. "It's right, then, what folks say, that he wanders through our parts."

That is the only time the name Lenin occurs in this volume. The tale is dated 1945. Everything before it — nineteen tales of serf miners, stone-carvers, gold-washers, a supernatural woman who owns the copper in the mountain, and a great many bailiffs — is set in a Urals where the state is a master, a steward and a Tsarina in St Petersburg, and where the word "Soviet" appears once, in the first paragraph of that same last tale. Over eighty-six thousand words: Stalin 0. Marx 0. Party 0. Communist 0. Revolution 0. Against that, gold 159, Master 140, malachite 82, Grandad 80, Mistress 50.

So this is a book whose politics are almost entirely somewhere else, and the one place where they arrive on the page, they arrive as a folk tale about Lenin walking the hills like a mountain spirit. Both halves of that are worth understanding.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title carries LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE, the same series as Panova's Looking Ahead and Novikov-Priboi's The Sea Beckons elsewhere in this collection. A photograph of the author faces a title page drawn in a folk style: the title on a scrolled ribbon, and in a cartouche below it a young workman with a pick.

The credits leaf reads:

> *TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY EVE MANNING ILLUSTRATED BY O. KOROVIN DESIGNED BY A. VLASOVA*

There is no date and no copyright line. The book closes, after the date under its last tale, with the single sentence "Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". The library records date it variously to 1950 or to the 1950s; this edition follows the earlier of those, and the latest year the book itself prints is 1945.

Korovin's work is the first thing a reader of the printed volume meets, and it is good. Every tale opens under a pen-and-ink headpiece across the top of the page: a young miner sprawled asleep on a hillside while a girl with a long black plait sits on the rocks below him; a stone-carver brooding at his bench beside a carved piece of fruit and leaves; an old man in a long coat leading a little girl in a headscarf across the snow, with a kitten at their heels; an old man with a white beard drawing a long bow. There are also colour plates through the book. The twenty headpieces and the author's portrait are reproduced in this edition; the colour plates are not.

The translator's note

Then comes the one piece of editorial matter the volume has, and it is signed:

> *Perhaps the most heartbreaking thing in translating a work of this kind is the inevitable loss of vivid local colour. The Malachite Casket is written in Urals dialect, dynamic and rhythmical, as rich in association as the singsong of the*

> *Scottish Highlands, the "broad" speech of Yorkshire or the drawl of Kentucky. Although I have made every effort to recapture the spirit of the original, in returning to the Russian text I am conscious that it is still but a pale copy. I offer it therefore with apologies. Eve Manning*

It is a modest note and an accurate one. What Manning chose to do with the dialect is visible on every page: a plain spoken English with "ye" and "naught" and "wi'", a "maid" for a girl, "folks" for people, sentences that stop and start the way a teller's do. The first tale begins:

> *One day two of the men from our village went to take a look at the hay. Their meadows were quite a bit of a way off. Somewhere the other side of Severushka. It was a Sunday and real hot. That sort of fine weather you get after rain.*

That is a voice, and it holds for two hundred and fifty pages. It is not a pale copy.

What the note does not say is that the Moscow house was not the first to put this book into English.

The other English edition

In 1944 Hutchinson in London published The Malachite Casket: Tales from the Urals, translated by Alan Moray Williams, on war-economy paper and with no date or copyright line. It was not a casual acquisition. In November 1943 Ivan Maisky, the former Soviet ambassador in London, then Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, wrote a confidential note to Alexander Shcherbakov, head of the Soviet Information Bureau, about the contract just signed between Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga and Hutchinson. Under it, he wrote, Hutchinson "is obliged to publish upon our request". He was precise about what to send. British readers were in an "escapist" mood and wary of anything that looked like propaganda, so war books should be mixed with books on general topics, and Soviet writers

> *should be mixed with books of our classical literature, our folklore, etc.*

His list for Hutchinson ends with "Works of folklore (in particular, a collection of Russian fairy tales for British children)". (Maisky to Shcherbakov, 27 November 1943, AP RF f. 3, inv. 64, file 365, pp. 177–184, in the British-Soviet relations archive at LSE IDEAS.) Bazhov is not named in the note, but a Soviet prize-winner's collection of Urals tales, published by Hutchinson the following year, is exactly the kind of book it describes.

The Williams translation was a different text, and a different book. It opened with Bazhov's own foreword, which presents the tales as the stories of an old watchman at the Polevskoy works, heard by Bazhov as a boy in the 1890s and set down from memory half a century later; and its selection of tales was not this one. The Moscow volume drops the foreword altogether. It has no storyteller's frame, no account of where the tales came from, and no word about the author. It runs to twenty tales instead, dated from 1936 to 1945, and the latest of them, the ones written in the war, include the tale that ends with Lenin.

So the house that had arranged for a London firm to publish this book in wartime then translated it again for itself. The second English Malachite Casket is the one the Soviet state made with its own translator, its own illustrator and its own selection, and the selection is the place to look for what it wanted the book to be.

What the tales are about

They are about work. Under the dialect, the lizards and the jewels, tale after tale turns on skilled labour: who owns it, what it costs the man who has it, and what a master will do to get it.

The first tale sets the terms. Stepan, a serf miner, meets the Mistress of the Copper Mountain in the woods; she sends him with a message to the bailiff, and the bailiff has him flogged and sent down the pit, chained in the worst working the overseer can find. The bailiff then promises him his freedom for a hunk of malachite of a hundred poods. Stepan finds it, and the promise is not kept. The Master, who owns the works and lives in Petersburg, promises it again if Stepan will find him malachite for columns thirty-five feet long — and Stepan, who has been cheated once, makes him write the paper first, for himself and for the girl he is to marry:

> *"I'm free but my wife's still a serf."*

He gets the paper and finds the malachite, and the Master sends the columns "as a gift to the very biggest church in all St. Petersburg". Then the riches of the mine dry up, and Stepan, free and married, with a house and children, mopes and sickens. "He just pined right away."

That is Bazhov's characteristic move, and it is not a folk-tale move. The supernatural gift does not make anyone happy.

Stepan's widow cannot wear the jewels in the casket he leaves her: a ring that fits "just right" makes her finger ache "as if it was pinched", and the earrings pull at her ears "till the lobes were all swollen". Danilo the stone-carver, in The Flower of Stone, wants to make something as alive as the Mistress's stone flower, and goes into the mountain to see it. The Mistress herself owns the copper and is indifferent to the mine's output. She punishes bailiffs, rewards the workman who is after something beyond the job, and makes nobody content.

It is a real subject, and a workers' subject, and it did not need a doctrine applied to it. Serfdom is the ground of every tale, and the book is frank about it: the floggings are counted, freedom is a piece of paper a master can promise and withhold, and a man worn out at the works is "let off" to feed himself, which is called making him free. When Pugachev's rising reaches the district in Cat's Ears, the tale reports what the people say of him without comment — "it's freedom for the people and death to the gentry with him" — and has the bailiff run.

The war, and the tale at the end

The tales are dated, and the dates matter. The first and greatest of them — The Mistress of the Copper Mountain, The Malachite Casket, The Flower of Stone — are 1936 to 1938. The collection was first published in 1939, and in 1943 Bazhov received the Stalin Prize, second class.

A prize for Urals folklore in 1943 was not only a literary judgement. The Urals were where Soviet war industry had gone: the factories evacuated ahead of the German advance were rebuilt there, and Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk were turning out tanks. A book that gave the region an ancient mythology of craftsmanship, reaching back through serfdom, was worth a good deal that year, at home and, as Maisky saw, abroad.

The later tales in this volume run from 1939 to 1945, through the war, and they show it less than one might expect. Zhelezko's Covers is set "a bit after nineteen-five" and has a Tsarina who cannot stand the sight of a red stone after the revolution of that year. Silver Hoof is a few pages about an old hunter, an orphan girl, a cat and a deer, and has no politics in it at all. Then the book ends with The Eagle's Feather, dated 1945, which is set "just a bit after the Civil War" among villagers "that were for Soviet power", and brings Lenin into the woods at night.

It is worth looking closely at what the tale does with him, because it is not what a socialist-realist novel of 1945 would do. Lenin is not named until the last line, and then by a child. He gives no speech. He sits on a stone and lets the old man tell him his whole life, and says: "Ye've worked well and honestly, Grandad." He takes nothing, and he is gone before anyone can thank him. He is a stranger with a gift who shows a skilled old man what is under the hill, and his one piece of advice is about the old man's own trade: an arrow is no arrow without an eagle's feather, and there is "no need to turn round three times or shut your eyes", which is how the old prospectors' ritual had it. The grandfather's last words make the moral:

> *"And teaches folks wisdom. So they shouldn't take pride in their little wings, but reach up to the high light. To the eagle's wings, that is."*

The Lenin of this tale is a figure of the folk imagination, of a piece with the Mistress of the Copper Mountain and the Great Serpent who shows the way to gold, and he belongs to the hills and the work rather than to any office. There is no Stalin anywhere in the book; in 1945, in a prize-winner's collected tales, that absence is itself a kind of statement. Whether Bazhov meant it as one is not something the volume can tell us. What it does show is that the one political figure he admitted into his Urals was made to behave like everything else in them: he rewards craft, he answers to nobody, and he cannot be kept.

The writer

None of this is in the volume, which says nothing about its author.

Pavel Petrovich Bazhov was born on 27 January 1879 at the Sysert works in the Urals and died in Moscow on 3 December 1950. He belonged to the Socialist-Revolutionary Party until 1917 and joined the Bolsheviks in 1918, in the Civil War (en.wikipedia.org, Pavel Bazhov).

He was expelled from the Party twice. In 1933, on a denunciation, he was accused of claiming Party membership from 1917 and expelled; he was reinstated a few months later. In 1937 the commander of the Civil War division whose history Bazhov had written was repressed, and on a second denunciation Bazhov was expelled again. For a whole year, the record says, his large family lived on a vegetable garden and the small wage of his sister-in-law (ru.wikipedia.org, Бажов, Павел Петрович). The first tales of this book were being written and published in those years. Six years after the second expulsion he had the Stalin Prize, and he ended as a deputy of

the USSR Supreme Soviet.

That is the biography of a man who came very close to the machinery of the Terror and came back from it, and who wrote, in those years, a book about serfs who are cheated by masters, flogged by bailiffs and promised freedom on paper, and who find their only justice in a power under the ground that belongs to no one. It would be too much to say that the tales are a coded account of 1937. It is not too much to say that a man who had been put out of work by a denunciation knew what he was writing about when he wrote a bailiff.

What the volume will not tell you

It does not say when the tales were first published, or where, or that they won a state prize. It does not say who Bazhov was, or that he had been expelled from the Party twice. It does not say that there was an earlier English translation, or that the Soviet state had arranged it. It does not explain what a skaz is — a tale told in the voice of a particular teller — though the whole book is written in one.

What it does have is the translator's note, the illustrations and the dates. Of the three, the dates are the most informative. They put the best of the book in 1936 to 1938, and the tale about Lenin in 1945, and they let a reader see that the folk Urals of the first tales were made before the war and the folk Lenin at the end was made after it.

Reading it now

Read The Mistress of the Copper Mountain and The Malachite Casket first, in that order: they are one story, and the second begins after the hero of the first is dead.

Read The Flower of Stone and The Mountain Craftsman together for the argument that runs under the whole book: that a craftsman who is only competent is in a kind of hell, and that the way out of it is owned by somebody who is not his employer.

Read Silver Hoof for a few pages with no politics in them whatever, written by the same man in the same years.

And read The Eagle's Feather last, as the book intends. Watch how carefully the tale keeps its stranger unnamed until a child names him, how little he is given to say, and how the old man's moral is about prospecting. Then go back to the bailiffs in the first tales and ask which of them the stranger at Adui resembles. None of them, is the answer, and that is the most interesting thing in the book.

FICTION

Looking Ahead

Panova's Stalin Prize factory novel of 1944: a director and a union chairman who are both right, written before the question of Stalin arose. With a new critical introduction.

Vera Panova

Critical Introduction about the 1950 Edition

The half-title of this book carries three lines, and the third is the one to look at:

> *Vera Panova LOOKING AHEAD STALIN PRIZE 1947*

No other volume in this collection advertises the prize on its own front matter. It is a small thing and it dates the object precisely in a way the copyright page does not, because the copyright page does not exist.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title reads LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE — the second of the two FLPH series, distinct from the Library of Soviet Literature that most of the other FLPH volumes in this strand belong to.

The credits leaf gives three names:

> *TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY DAVID SKVIRSKY DESIGNED BY O. KOROVIN V. CHISTYAKOV*

David Skvirsky is the translator of Medvedev's partisan memoir elsewhere in this collection and the editor of record on Polevoi's A Story About a Real Man. Two designers is unusual; most of these books have one.

And for the ninth Foreign Languages Publishing House volume in a row in this strand: no date, no copyright line, no press named and no printer. The last leaf carries one sentence, "Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", and nothing else: no year, no edition number, no order number, none of the production data a Soviet colophon normally carries. Our catalogue's 1950 is a library record; the object dates itself only by the prize year on its half-title.

The title, which is not the title

The Russian title page gives the book's real name: КРУЖИЛИХА — Kruzhilikha, the name of the factory.

Kruzhilikha is a place. It is the name Panova uses on the first page and on the last, it is what the characters say when they mean the thing they belong to, and the novel's closing sentences are an address to it:

> *my place on earth, my drop of blood—Kruzhilikha. What made me love you, Kruzhilikha? You did not nurse me, you did not rear me, and yet I am yours!*

Looking Ahead is a phrase from nowhere. It converts a novel named after a works into a novel named after an attitude, and it is the first of several ways this English edition tidies the book.

The counting

Here the count runs the other way from almost everything else in this strand.

Stalin appears ten times — once on the half-title as the prize, and otherwise inside the novel, as a working part of 1944: his Orders of the Day read out on the radio and summarised in the morning papers, his speeches read by a Party official in Kiev, and once as the object of a man's thoughts. Party: fifty-one. Lenin: thirteen. Communist: seven. Komsomol: eight. Marx: zero.

Set that beside the books that follow it. Polevoi's A Story About a Real Man, revised in 1957, contains the name nowhere except inside Stalingrad. Paustovsky's Selected Stories has Party zero. Upits's twelve stories have Party once, and it is a hunting party. Bondarev's Hot Snow of 1971 makes Stalin a character with a face.

Looking Ahead is the only volume in the fiction strand in which Stalin is simply there — not scoured out, not restored as a portrait, not made into a problem, just the man whose Order

of the Day comes on at nine o'clock. That is what a Soviet novel looked like before the question arose, and it is the chief historical value of reading it now.

The passage worth marking is the quietest. A wounded man named Ryabukhin lies in hospital and thinks:

> *He thought of how the Kremlin looked this winter and imagined himself somewhere in blacked-out and snow-covered Moscow. He thought of Stalin, of his family and of the people he knew. He saw them and heard their voices. He thought of the human heart, of life and death.*

Stalin between the man's family and the people he knew, in a list that ends at the human heart. No emphasis. It is the most completely internalised the cult ever gets in this collection, and it is done in one clause.

The novel

Kruzhilikha is a factory novel set in the last year of the war and the first months after it, and its subject is an argument between two men who are both right.

Listopad is the director: a general, decisive, admired, contemptuous of procedure, the man who gets the plant's output up. Uzdechkin is the chairman of the factory trade union committee: shell-shocked, widowed — his wife went to the front as a nurse and was killed at the very beginning of the war, leaving him with two baby daughters, her teenage brother and a sick mother-in-law — and, the novel says, "In domestic life Uzdechkin was a martyr." He is thin, awkward, badly dressed, and not liked.

Their first exchange, in chapter one, is the whole book:

> *"Please don't meddle in that," Listopad told him. "That's my business." "Excuse me, Comrade Director," Uzdechkin said, "don't you know that's just what the trade union's for?" "I don't know," returned Listopad, who had taken an immediate dislike to Uzdechkin. "You ought to know what your job is."*

It goes on, and the next two lines are the ones to keep:

> *"What about socialist emulation?" Uzdechkin inquired. "Are you making us answerable for it?" "I'm not," Listopad said, "the front is."*

That is the argument of the whole novel in two lines. Uzdechkin wants to know who the union answers to; Listopad answers that the question has been settled elsewhere, by the war, and that nobody in the room is entitled to reopen it. It is an unanswerable reply and it is also a way of not answering, and Panova gives it to the man whose energy the book most obviously enjoys, without a word to tell the reader that it will not do.

Panova declines to settle it. Listopad's energy is real and so is the plant's record; Uzdechkin's insistence that the union exists for something is also real, and the novel gives him the humiliations — the lost button on his tunic pocket, picked up off the floor and handed back to him while he is trying to speak — that make a reader take his side against his own worse manners. Listopad "had no use for him and these stories left him indifferent." That sentence is doing something a positive-hero novel cannot do: it makes the admirable man's indifference a fact about him rather than a flaw to be corrected in chapter fifteen.

This is why Kruzhilikha was controversial when it appeared, and the controversy is not in this volume. A book whose conflict is between a successful director and a union that cannot make him listen, published in 1947 and given the Stalin Prize, is a book whose politics were argued about; the English edition offers a reader no way of knowing that, because it offers a reader nothing at all — no foreword, no note, no date.

Panova is also very exact about how a director spends a day, which is rarer in this genre than it sounds. Listopad is told off for never being at his desk — "It's a habit you've got from the time our construction started, when the standard reply to, 'Where's the chief?' was 'On the scaffolding'." And the narration takes his side and undercuts it in the same breath: he "always felt depressed when he had to stay in his office", stayed "for an hour and a half at the most", and then went to the shops; but "the minute he appeared in his office the telephone would ring and he would find callers waiting for him, needing to see him." A man whose virtue and whose problem are the same restlessness.

Around the argument Panova builds the thing she was actually best at: a crowd. The maternity home on a frosty January evening; the chief designer; Lukashin coming home; the factory's children; Nonna's birthday, which takes two chapters; Sunday; troubles at home and at work; love; at night. The chapter titles are a list of ordinary evenings, and the war is what happens between them.

Two of the fifteen chapters step outside the factory altogether, and they are the best-written. "Mother" is a boy and his mother

walking in heat, and then:

> *Suddenly they saw before them a clump of willows and felt a coolness about their feet. Somewhere among the willows a spring gurgled softly but distinctly. Sashko and his mother knelt down in the dusky shadow of the willows, in the cold, crazily tangled grass, and quenched their thirst and sprayed themselves with water from the spring.*

He lies down with his head in her lap and falls asleep at once. That is the register Panova reaches for whenever the plant is out of sight, and it is why the book survives being a production novel: she is not interested in production, she is interested in tiredness, and a factory in 1944 is where tiredness was.

The page that was missing

Before chapter one, and listed in no contents page, stands a single unheaded leaf. It is the novel's overture, and until this edition it was not in the ebook at all.

> *In translucent gold, in ethereal ruby splendour, the sun rises over the broad river. And with it a slow, solemn whistle mounts to the sky, drowning the roar of engines, the rumble of machinery, and the hum of human voices...*

The whistle is heard in the town nine kilometres away. A human tide pours in through the gates — some on foot from the settlement, some by tram, most by train — and the page ends: "The human stream flows by and branches off into the shops. Only the guards are left at the gates—The shift has begun."

Two hundred and fifty-six words, and they set the frame the last page answers. The novel begins with a shift beginning and ends with a man coming home through a snowstorm to the same place. Without the overture the book starts with a director driving his wife to a maternity home, which is a different novel.

A note on this text

The leaf carries no heading of any kind. To restore it to the ebook it had to be given one, and the label Overture in the contents of this edition is ours, not the book's. Nothing else has been supplied: the words are Panova's and the page is complete.

Everything else here checks out. The fifteen chapters run at 261 to 318 words per printed page across the whole volume, which is as even as any book in this strand, and the chapter titles are the book's own — Listopad, The Chief Designer, Lukashin's Home-Coming, Uzdechkin and Tolka, and the rest.

Panova elsewhere in this collection

She turns up in it twice more, and both are worth knowing.

The Progress Soviet Authors Library advertised her Selected Stories in its 1976 list, so the house was still selling her thirty years on.

And her voice appears on the jacket of another volume here. The flap of Paustovsky's Selected Stories quotes her:

> *"I think the reading public likes Paustovsky because he so generously dispenses good.... A person can fight for good in many ways. One way of serving it is by cultivating the finer feelings. This is the way Paustovsky chooses."*

That is the author of Kruzhilikha on the author of The Golden Tench — a factory novelist recommending a writer of birch woods on the grounds that cultivating the finer feelings is a form of fighting. Read the two books together and the sentence stops being jacket copy and becomes a position.

What the volume will not tell you

Nothing, is the short answer, and by this point in the strand that is a finding rather than a complaint.

There is no foreword, no afterword, no note on the author, no date, no copyright, and no statement of what the book is or when it was written. The English reader is given a Stalin Prize year on the half-title and a novel. Everything else — when and where Kruzhilikha first appeared, what the argument about it was, what Panova wrote before it or after — has to come from outside the object. The volume does not even say that the book is a novel of the war, or which year its action covers; a reader works that out from Stalin's Orders of the Day on the radio.

What makes the silence worth naming here, rather than merely noting for the ninth time, is that this is the one book in the strand that would have lost least by speaking. There is nothing to hide in it. The novel is not a rehabilitated text, its author was not shot, its subject is not a purge. It is simply a good factory novel that won the state's own prize. And it still carries no date, no copyright, and not one editorial sentence — which suggests that the silence in these volumes is not a policy about difficult books. It is just how the house made books.

That is worth holding on to when reading the volumes where the silence does cover something. The absence of a note on Victor Kin, who was shot, looks like concealment; the absence of a note on Vera Panova, who was garlanded, looks like the same absence. Whether the first is more than the second is a question the objects cannot answer, and an honest introduction should say so.

Reading it now

Read the overture first, since you now can.

Read chapter one for the exchange between Listopad and Uzdechkin, and then watch for the two of them through the rest of the book, because Panova never lets either win and never tells you which she prefers. That refusal is the novel's achievement and the reason it is still readable when almost nothing else about Soviet production fiction is.

Read Ryabukhin in hospital for the one paragraph in this collection where Stalin is a thought a man has between his family and the human heart. It is four sentences long and it explains more about how the cult actually worked than any of the forewords in this series manage in a dozen pages: not adoration, not fear, but a name that has become one of the fixed points a tired man's mind goes round.

Read the last two pages against the first one. Panova closes the book with a car coming through a blizzard, and then drops the third person twice over. First for the weather: "Dance, dance, have your day, you wild, irresistible, beautiful Russian winter!" Then, a few lines later, for the factory, in the apostrophe to Kruzhilikha quoted at the head of this introduction. Notice what that sentence does grammatically: a novel narrated throughout in the third person ends with an "I" and a "you", and neither of them has appeared before. The "I" is nobody in particular — it is not Listopad or Uzdechkin or Nonna, it is whoever has been watching them for fifteen chapters — and the "you" is a works. An English reader holding a volume called Looking Ahead has no way of knowing that the word being addressed there is the book's own title. Then the closing image: "The domain of Labour, the ruler of the world, stood as white as a swan. And over that white domain the generous Russian winter lavished its sparkling, flying gems." The novel's last line is a driver saying, "We're home, Alexander Ignatyevich." Sunrise and a shift beginning at one end; snow, night and a man arriving at the other. It is a more carefully made book than its genre has any reputation for.

And keep the half-title in view. STALIN PRIZE 1947 is printed there because in the year this translation was made it was a recommendation. Within a few years the same three words would have had to come off the page. Nothing else in the volume is dated; that line is.

FICTION

The Sea Beckons: Short Novels and Stories

Sea stories of 1911-1924 by the sailor who survived Tsushima, among them an engineer who sinks a White transport to save his son. Not one Stalin in 137,000 words. With a new critical introduction.

A. Novikov-Priboi

Critical Introduction about the 1950 Edition

At the foot of the last page of every story in this book there is a year.

Destiny ends 1920. Story of the Boatswain's Mate, 1912. The Surprise Gift, 1912. Sedition Approved, 1920. Loony, 1917. The Stowaway, 1911. The Sea Beckons, 1919. The Voyage of the "Communist", 1923. In Otrada Bay, 1924. A Woman at Sea, 1923-24. Submariners, 1922-23.

Eleven dates, and not one of them later than 1924. The volume itself carries no date at all: no copyright line, no year on the title leaf, no printing statement beyond a single sentence on the last leaf, "Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". So the only chronology the book supplies is the one it prints under its own stories, and that chronology says something the packaging does not. This is a book of writing made before Stalin, issued without a date at the height of Stalin.

The counting bears it out. In a hundred and thirty-seven thousand words there is not one occurrence of the name Stalin. Lenin appears once, and it is the second half of Leningrad. Marx: none. Party: seven, and the most prominent of them is a woman's private alarm — "She may be a Party member for all I know!" — followed by the reflection that "One has to keep one's tongue between one's teeth these days." Bolshevik: twice, both of them a nickname thrown at a man who denies it.

No other volume in this collection reads like that.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title carries LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE, the smaller of the two FLPH series and the same one that carries Panova's Looking Ahead elsewhere in this collection.

The credits leaf gives two names and no more:

> *Translated from the Russian by Bernard Isaacs Designed by Yuri Krasny*

Four hundred and fifty-seven pages, twelve pieces, one translator. Isaacs is among the best the house had — his work is in the Turgenev and the Lenin volumes in this collection — and the consistency shows. The sailors talk like sailors in English, which is a harder thing than it sounds and is the first reason to read this book rather than merely inspect it.

Krasny's contribution is not a credit line either. Every story opens with a small woodcut vignette above its title — a lighthouse and a moored hull, a couple at a rail, a submarine half-awash — and then a large swash initial cut into the first line. They are good, and they are the work of a designer who had read the stories.

And for the tenth FLPH volume running in this strand: no date, no copyright, no press, no printer, no order number. Our catalogue's 1950 is a library record, not the book's own word. The latest year printed anywhere in the volume is 1944, the year of the author's death.

What the stories are

Alexei Novikov-Priboi wrote about the sea and about almost nothing else, and the twelve pieces here are arranged neither chronologically nor thematically but roughly by length, opening with the shortest and ending with the two that are novellas.

Destiny, which comes first, is autobiography barely disguised: a peasant boy walking home from a monastery with his devout mother, who intends him for a monk, meets a sailor on the road. The boy reads the gold letters on the man's cap band — "I read the mysterious words 'Storm Conqueror' over several times" — and that is the end of the monastery. The sailor delivers the book's manifesto without knowing it:

> *"The sea!" he exclaimed, glancing at me with his keen grey eyes. "That's where you have free space, my lad! No matter*

> *where you turn your ship's head, you have an open road before you."*

Everything after it is a variation. The sea as the only place where a Russian of that class could turn in any direction he liked.

What Novikov-Priboi can do is the working detail, and he can do it without slowing down. A ship being loaded with pulpwood for the Dutch paper mills; the jib "resembling the long bill of some fabulous bird"; an engine room examined by a man who loves engines. He is also exact and entirely unsentimental about people. Here is the ship's servant in A Woman at Sea, the longest piece in the book:

> *She was a stout woman of about forty, born and bred in the waterside slums. She went forward with the rolling waddling gait of a seaman, her body sweaty, flabby and heavy, like soft cheese.*

That is not an approved way to describe a working woman in a Soviet novel, and it is 1924.

Submariners opens with two epigraphs, which is itself a piece of information:

> *When a man goes to his death the least he can ask is what for. WAGNER A woman, like death, is inescapable. GORKY*

and then a first line that earns them: "OUR submarine is a tiny string in the thundering concert of war." The story goes back to the narrator's childhood in a port slum, a blind fiddler, a hat taken round the red-light houses, a prostitute offering to teach a small boy the game for fifty kopeks. It is worth pausing on the fact that a Moscow state publishing house put that into an English export volume, unglossed, with no foreword to explain it away.

The story to read first

In Otrada Bay is twenty-eight pages long and it is the best thing in the book.

An elderly ship's engineer, on a night passage to England, tells the narrator his life. He begins by establishing what he is:

> *I'm a peaceful man, you know. If there's a row on anywhere, or a fight, you can count me out. My motto is neutrality. I can't help it, that's the way I'm made. I don't care much for politics except to hear people talking it.*

Then the Revolution happens to him anyway. One son deserts the army and joins the Red partisans; a second announces he will run away and join them too; the Seamen's Union elects him to its executive against his wishes; the White secret police raid the premises and arrest him. He ends up in a prison barge, and then, because he is the only man available who can run an engine, aboard a White transport steaming to land troops against the partisan detachment his own son is in.

Through the whole of it he is being taunted as a Bolshevik by a drunken engineman, and through the whole of it he denies it:

> *"I don't know. But tell me, why do you keep calling me Bolshevik? I never was one, not even in my dreams." "Tell it to your grandmother! I know an owl by its flight."*

What he then does — quietly, technically, over several days, by over-oiling a cylinder and finally opening the sea-cocks — is reported in one of the coldest sentences in Soviet literature:

> *I had carried out my plan completely. Nothing now could save the ship. Three hundred men had been struck off life's register.*

The story is dated 1924. It is impossible to imagine it being written ten years later. Its hero is not a Party member, does not become one, is not shown acquiring consciousness, and does not repent or rejoice; he kills three hundred men to save his son and tells it afterwards as a yarn to a stranger. Nobody explains him. Nobody in the story is qualified to.

The note at the back, which is the apparatus

For nine volumes running, the Foreign Languages Publishing House books in this strand have carried no editorial matter whatever — no foreword, no note, no date. This one is the exception. On page 457 there is a two-page unsigned piece headed ABOUT THE AUTHOR, and it is worth reading closely, because it is the first chance this collection has had to see what the house wrote when it did write.

It is, on the face of it, generous and informative. It gives the year of birth, the mother who wanted a monk, the meeting with the sailor and the cross-reference to Destiny, the conscription, Tsushima, the prisoner-of-war camp, the pamphlets, the emigration, Capri and Gorky, the first story, the 1919 return to the sea, the unfinished last novel and the death in 1944. It names dates and titles. Beside the silence in the other nine volumes it looks like candour.

Read it twice and three things move.

First, a man in a battle becomes a man collecting notes about one. Novikov-Priboi was aboard the battleship Oryol at Tsushima as an ordinary seaman, went into the water when she was overwhelmed, and was taken prisoner. The note says only this:

> *After the Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War, which began in 1904, we find Novikov in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. It was here that he conceived the idea of telling the nation the truth about the war and the Battle of Tsushima. He interviewed the men who had taken part in the battle and collected their diaries and notes.*

"We find Novikov in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp" — by what route it does not say; and "the men who had taken part in the battle" are other men. The single fact that makes Tsushima what it is, that its author was in it, is not in the sentence.

Second, an arrest for revolutionary propaganda becomes a suspicion. The note:

> *Novikov was conscripted when he turned twenty-two, and he became a seaman in the Baltic Fleet. His arrest on suspicion of being connected with the revolutionaries, and the subsequent investigations into his case led to his being transferred to the Pacific Fleet.*

The Russian record is blunter: he was arrested in 1903 for revolutionary propaganda, after an article in a Kronstadt newspaper, and released when the war made sailors scarce (ru.wikipedia.org, Новиков-Прибой, Алексей Силантьевич; en.wikipedia.org, Aleksey Novikov-Priboy). "Suspicion of being connected with" converts a propagandist into a man the police were wrong about.

Third, a banned book becomes a noticed one. The note:

> *On his return to Russia in 1907 Novikov published two pamphlets about the Battle of Tsushima under the pseudonym of A. Zatyorty. Written by an inexperienced literary tyro, these pamphlets were remarkable for their wrathful condemnation of those who were responsible for the Tsushima disaster. They immediately attracted the attention of the tsarist censorship.*

The pamphlets were Madmen and Fruitless Victims and For Others' Sins, and they were banned by the government outright (ru.wikipedia.org, as above, which also dates them 1906 rather than 1907). "Attracted the attention of" is a phrase that could cover a review.

And one thing the note does not mention at all. Tsushima won its author the Stalin Prize, second degree, in 1941, for the second book — the state's highest literary honour, given three years before he died. Panova's volume in this same collection prints STALIN PRIZE 1947 on its half-title as a selling line. This volume, introducing a writer who had one, does not say so.

That is the shape of the thing. Every softening runs the same way: away from a sailor who was arrested for propaganda, survived a battle, wrote a banned book about it and was decorated for the epic he made of it thirty-five years later, and towards a talented man of the old generation who kept notes. It is not falsification. Nothing in it is untrue. It is the removal of every edge.

What the volume will not tell you, and why it matters here

The Russian fleet is where the 1905 revolution began. Tsushima was fought on 27 and 28 May 1905; the news of the annihilation of the fleet, as one account in the Trotskyist press puts it, "had an especially electrifying effect on the sailors", and the mutiny on the Potemkin followed on 14 June (Militant International Review no. 37, Summer 1988, "The History of Bolshevism", part eight). The petty officers led it, as they usually do — the ablest of the lower deck, close enough to the officers to have learned exactly what they are worth.

Novikov-Priboi was a Baltic and then a Pacific Fleet seaman, arrested for revolutionary propaganda, who went to Tsushima and came back to write about it. He is a figure from the inside of that story. And this collection of his sea stories, published by the Soviet state for foreign readers, contains no sailors' committee, no mutiny, no fleet, no 1905 and no 1917 — except as weather in the background of In Otrada Bay.

That absence is not the house's doing. The stories are what he wrote, and what he wrote in 1911 and 1912 was pre-revolutionary lower-deck life: bullying, boredom, icon-painting to order, a boatswain's yarn, a surprise gift. The house's contribution is the framing, and the framing declines to tell an English reader that the man who wrote them had been in the navy that rose.

What is left instead is the Revolution as it reaches ordinary men sideways, which is the volume's real and unexpected subject. In A Woman at Sea the whole political content of the

Soviet Union is a crew meeting held after tea, at which a pipe-smoking seaman named Brikalov gets up to propose a rise in the library subscription:

> *"I don't like jawing, comrades, so I'll be short. You all know that since we've wriggled out of the capitalist yoke we've got to run the country ourselves. To do that we've got to buy more literature and read more. A book is to the brain what a hone is to a razor—it sharpens your wits. So I move that we deduct a ruble from our pay for the library instead of the fifty kopeks we are now giving."*

A rouble instead of fifty kopeks. That is the whole programme, moved from the floor by a man with a pipe, and it is more convincing about what the early Soviet years felt like at sea than any number of foremen and secretaries.

The company it keeps

Elsewhere in this collection, Mikhail Sholokhov's At the Bidding of the Heart prints an extract from his speech to the Twentieth Party Congress — the congress of February 1956 — in which he complains that Soviet literature is not replacing itself, and lists the generation that was left when Gorky died in 1936: "Sergeyev-Tsensky, Prishvin, Serafimovich, Yakub Kolas, Gladkov, Olga Forsh, Marietta Shaginyan, Veresayev, Alexei Tolstoi, Novikov-Priboi, Shishkov, and others. They are the veterans."

Three of that list are in this collection — Serafimovich, Forsh and Novikov-Priboi — and the point Sholokhov was making about them is the point this volume quietly documents. They were writers formed before the doctrine, who went on working after it. What they made in the 1920s does not look like what came after, and the difference is legible in a book like this one precisely because nobody retouched the stories. Only the note at the back.

Reading it now

Read In Otrada Bay first, and read it as a test case. Ask what the socialist-realist novel of twenty years later would have had to do to that engineer: given him a Party mentor, made his neutrality a stage to be outgrown, supplied a paragraph of reflection after the sinking. Novikov-Priboi supplies none of it, and the story is stronger and stranger for the omission.

Read A Woman at Sea for the crew, and for a picture of a Soviet merchantman's social life — the drunken carpenter who calls himself a surgeon, the elections, the library rouble — recorded by someone who had lived it rather than researched it.

Read Submariners and Destiny together, the last and the first, as the two ends of one life: a boy on a road hearing about the open sea, and a man on a shingle beach between war patrols, still looking at it.

And read the note at the back last, with the stories already in your head. It is a small masterpiece of its kind, and its kind is the removal of edges. A reader who knows that its subject was on the Oryol, that his pamphlets were banned, and that the state gave him its prize in 1941, will find the note's two pages more revealing about the Soviet publishing house of the early 1950s than about Alexei Novikov-Priboi — which is, in the end, what an edition like this is best used for.

FICTION

Light in Koordi

The Stalin Prize novel of Estonian collectivisation, printed in English in 1951 - two years after the deportations of March 1949 did in four days what the book shows done by persuasion. With a new critical introduction.

Hans Leberecht

Critical Introduction about the 1951 Edition

This book carries two dates, and the distance between them is the whole subject.

The half-title says:

> *Hans Leberecht LIGHT IN KOORDI A Novel STALIN PRIZE 1948*

The title leaf says FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE, Moscow 1951.

Between those two dates — between the year the novel was honoured and the year this English translation was printed for foreign readers — lies March 1949, when the Soviet state collectivised Estonian agriculture by deporting twenty thousand Estonians to Siberia in four days. Light in Koordi is the novel about Estonian collectivisation that the Soviet Union chose to give a prize to, and then chose to translate and export, and it describes a process that in the country it is set in did not happen the way the book says it happened.

That is not a reason to dismiss it. It is the reason to read it carefully.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title carries LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE, the smaller of the two FLPH series in this collection.

The credits leaf reads:

> *TRANSLATION EDITED BY LEONARD STOKLITSKY ILLUSTRATED AND DESIGNED BY E. OKAS*

Read that again. The volume names the man who edited the translation and does not name whoever made it. Nine other FLPH volumes in this collection name their translator plainly; this one names an editor and stops. It does not say what language the book was translated from, either, which matters more than it looks: Leberecht was born in St Petersburg to an Estonian family, wrote in both Russian and Estonian, and worked after the war on the Russian-language paper Sovetskaya Estoniya.

E. Okas is Evald Okas, one of the significant Estonian graphic artists of the century. He supplies a vignette for the title leaf — a man in a cap lifting a sheaf of rye — and full-page plates through the book. A reader of the printed volume gets an Estonian artist's Estonia; a reader of a text-only edition does not, and should know what is missing.

The title leaf is dated, which breaks a run: this is the first Foreign Languages Publishing House volume in the strand for ten titles to print a year at all. It still carries no copyright line.

The novel

Koordi is a village. The novel opens in it, at a kitchen table, on a morning:

> *The family at Vao farmstead had just finished a hearty breakfast in the large kitchen. Johannes Vao's three strapping daughters now rose from the table and immediately went out to attend to their duties.*

and for a long stretch it stays exactly there — inside farmhouses, in the smell of a kitchen, among people who have known each other and disliked each other for thirty years. Leberecht is good at this. He is good at the seasons, and better at the shape of a grievance.

> *January 1946 came in with thaws and with moist warm winds from the sea. Then a sudden. frost struck, a heavy snowfall covered the fields and forests, and bright frosty days set in. The farmsteads of Koordi village on the fringes of the woods stood snowbound and quiet, looking exactly like their counterparts on the Christmas postcards of Pats* days*

Pats is Konstantin Päts, and the asterisk is one of the volume's own footnotes: "President of bourgeois Estonia."

He is also good at people who are not the hero. Mihkel Koor, the rich farmer, is not a cardboard villain but a man with a grip — he buys Roosi's consent with a cow and a loan of seed, and the transaction is done in three sentences of dialogue and a handshake. Vasilisa-like minor figures come and go with a phrase apiece. The best writing in the book is the quarrelling: about a cow, about a boundary, about who is a windbag, in a register that survives translation intact.

The plot is the one the genre requires. Paul Runge comes home from the army to a village where the land has been redistributed and nothing has been organised; he takes a ruined farm, works it, is obstructed, builds a machine cooperative and then a collective farm, exposes the kulak Koor, and at the end leads the village out to drain Snake Swamp. The last page is a bonfire on the edge of the bog and a twenty-day-old baby held up to see it:

> *"Look, the fire's burning, the light," the mother said, gently uncovering her son's face. "Daddy has lit a bonfire, Ants..."*

It is a well-made ending and the title earns it — and the title is doing more work than a reader coming to it cold will expect. Light in this book is first of all electrification, the oldest promise the Soviet countryside was made. Koordi has electricity already, on exactly two farms: "some people in Koordi, on the Kurvest and Koor farms, for instance, had long had radios, and had installed electricity from their own wind motors. But all the rest in the district had always lived without electricity, just kerosene lamps, and there hadn't been anyone to take up the matter". When Paul Runge is asked what the collective farm is going to do, the answer is one sentence: "We'll drain the swamp and install lighting too." Light is a utility, and the man who owns it owns two farms.

But Leberecht is a better writer than the scheme needs, and he lets the word do something else as well. Saamu, the brother of the dying Anna, is blind — he can make out the window and a lamp and tell the time by the sun, and nothing more. In one of the quietest scenes in the book he tidies the kitchen, washes his hands, goes into his sister's dark room and says, "Now we'll soon have a light... ." Then he lights the lamp he cannot see. Nothing in the novel's argument requires that scene. It is there because the writer wanted it, and it is the best page in the book.

The apparatus, which is a set of footnotes

Most of the volumes in this collection have no editorial matter at all. This one has none either — no foreword, no afterword, no note on the author, not a sentence of framing. What it has instead is twelve foot-of-page footnotes, and they are the only editorial voice in the book.

Ten of them gloss Estonian: Kurg means crane, Känd means tree stump, Elu is New Life, and so on for a song title, an expletive, a harvest cry. They are useful, and they are also the doctrine of national form and socialist content in its most literal available shape — a novel in which Estonian survives as a set of proper nouns requiring a footnote.

The other two are political. One glosses Päts. The other glosses the name of the pre-1940 Estonian state, and the gloss is: "Name given to the bourgeois Estonian government." The independent republic that existed from 1918 to 1940 is disposed of in eight words, in six-point type, at the foot of a page.

That is the whole of this edition's commentary on the history in which its novel is set.

What the book does not, and could not, contain

Here the counting is worth doing. In seventy-eight thousand words: Party 37, kolkhoz 30, kulak 10, Stalin 4, Lenin 3 — and two of the three Lenins are the second half of Leningrad. Marx: none. Communist: none. Komsomol: none. The word "class" occurs twice in the entire novel.

One of those two is the sentence the book turns on. Muuli, the district Party organiser, addresses a meeting:

> *The recent events in Koordi testified to an intensification of the class struggle. The poor were becoming more active, and in speaking of plans for the spring we should speak about conducting a correct class line in the district.*

Intensification of the class struggle. That is not an Estonian formula and it is not a 1946 formula. It is Stalin's thesis of 1928–29 — that class struggle sharpens as socialism advances — the proposition that licensed dekulakisation in the Soviet Union twenty years earlier, arriving in an Estonian village in the mouth of a district organiser, in the novel's only substantive use of the word "class".

What follows from it, in the book, is a court. Mihkel Koor is indicted and tried in Chapter Eighteen, in the building of the

district Soviet, before a judge who reads out a written indictment that the farmer Vao, sitting in the hall, can only partly follow. There is evidence, there is a hearing, there is a sentence. The novel is scrupulous about the legal form.

And the enemy beyond the kulak is named too:

> *There was disagreeable news in Koordi as well—a group of bandits, the "forest brethren," had appeared in the neighbourhood. Farmers complained about the disappearance of sheep and calves. Some activists in the district were said to have received anonymous letters with a skull and crossbones drawn on them*

and elsewhere, through a frightened woman's thoughts, they are "those dreadful despised men, German hirelings who during the German occupation had stained their hands with the blood of their countrymen and who now lurked in the forest like lone wolves".

Hold those three words together: kulak, bandit, "forest brethren". They are the novel's categories of enemy, and they are the categories in which the book's readers were taught to think about the Estonian countryside.

March 1949

The Soviet order for Operation Priboi, executed on 25–28 March 1949, named its targets as kulaks, nationalists, bandits (the Forest Brothers), their supporters and their families. Between 25 and 28 March, 90,844 people were deported from the three Baltic republics to Siberia and Central Asia; about 20,480 of them from Estonia. The operation's stated purpose was to break the armed resistance and to make collectivisation possible, and it did both. At the end of 1948 around 3 per cent of Estonian farms were in collective farms. Between 20 March and 20 April 1949 the figure went from 8 per cent to 64 per cent. By the end of that year it was 80 per cent (en.wikipedia.org, Operation Priboi).

Light in Koordi was published in 1948 and was awarded the Stalin Prize, third class, in 1949 (ru.wikipedia.org, Леберехт, Ганс Фридрихович). Its 400 pages describe the collectivisation of one Estonian village by argument, example, a machine cooperative, a drained swamp and one court case, in the years when 3 per cent of Estonian farms had been collectivised. The thing the novel shows being achieved was in fact achieved in four days, by trains, with no indictment read out in any hall.

The prize is worth naming precisely, because a Stalin Prize is not a review, it is an instruction. It was awarded by the Council of Ministers, in classes, and it told publishers, translators, theatre managers and school curricula what to do next. Light in Koordi got the third class — the lowest of the three, the working grade, the one given to competent books that did the job. It was not being called a masterpiece. It was being called correct, and correctness at that moment meant: this is what the collectivisation of the Baltic countryside looks like, and this is the account that is to be circulated. Everything that followed for this book — the English translation, this series, the Moscow printing of 1951, the copy in your hands — followed from that classification.

This is the point at which an introduction has to be careful about what it is claiming. It is not that Leberecht lied. A novelist writing in 1947 and 1948 about a village in 1945 and 1946 was writing about a period before the deportation, and the persuasion, the machine cooperatives and the drainage schemes were all real things that really happened in those years. Nor is it that the book is a commissioned falsification: it reads like a book someone wanted to write.

It is that the state which gave it a prize in 1949, and translated it into English in 1951, and put it into a series called the Library of Selected Soviet Literature, was by then using it for something the book could not have known it was for. After March 1949 Light in Koordi was no longer a novel about how collectivisation was going in Estonia. It was the only account of how collectivisation went in Estonia that a foreign reader was going to be given, and its function was to occupy the place where the trains were.

The scale is worth having in a sentence written by an Estonian. Mart Laar, then running the Estonian Heritage Society's oral-history project and later the country's prime minister, put it this way in the Fourth International's own English magazine in 1989:

> *We have, once and for all, to realize that there can hardly be a single family in Estonia that did not have someone sent to Siberia, that did not have someone killed, victimized or forced into exile.*

(International Viewpoint 157, 20 February 1989, pp. 24–25.) He reckoned the Estonian losses of 1940–50 at a quarter of the nation.

The writer

None of this makes Hans Leberecht contemptible, and an introduction that treated him as the villain of the story would be both unjust and uninteresting.

He was born in St Petersburg on 1 December 1910 to an Estonian family, and he fought the war in the Estonian Rifle Corps of the Red Army as a reconnaissance soldier — Velikie Luki, Narva, Saaremaa, Courland. He joined the Party in 1944. After the war he was a correspondent for Sovetskaya Estoniya, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR, and chaired the cinema-dramaturgy commission of the Estonian SSR Writers' Union. He died in 1960, aged forty-nine.

That is the biography of a man who believed it. The Estonians who came back from Siberia and the Estonians who wrote Light in Koordi were not the same people, and the distance between them is not hypocrisy; it is what a revolution betrayed looks like from the inside, where the belief is genuine and the machinery is not.

Paul Runge comes home from the army at the start of this novel to a village that has been through the German occupation, and the book's warmth about him is the author's warmth about himself. What the book cannot do — what the doctrine would not let it do, and what Leberecht may never have wanted to do — is ask by what means the thing it is celebrating was going to be finished.

The company it keeps

Ivan Melezh's People of the Marsh, elsewhere in this collection, is the Belarusian novel of the same subject, and it does the opposite: it reaches the eve of collectivisation and stops, and Melezh spent the last eleven years of his life failing to write the volume that would have had to cross. Read the two together and the shape of the constraint becomes visible. Melezh, writing in the 1960s, could decline to cross. Leberecht, writing in 1948, could not — the crossing was the commission.

Reading it now

Read the village. Koordi in the first half of this book is a real place with real quarrels in it, and the writing about farms in snow, about a cow changing hands, about a man too proud to ask for help, is the reason the novel survived long enough to be worth an introduction.

Read Muuli's sentence about the intensification of the class struggle, and mark the date the novel gives it.

Read the trial, and then read what actually settled the question eleven months later, and ask what a court was for in a procedure that could be done without one.

And read the last page — the bonfire at the edge of Snake Swamp, the baby held up to see the light — knowing that the light in Koordi was switched on, in the historical record, by the trains of 25 March 1949. That is not a reason to refuse the ending its beauty. It is a reason to know what you are being asked to feel, and by whom, and when.

FICTION

Spring on the Oder

Kazakevich's Stalin Prize novel of the drive to Berlin: sixty-four Stalins, a love story, and an ending on the Elbe that the doctrine overwrites. Read between Star and its sequel. With a new critical introduction.

Emmanuel Kazakevich

Critical Introduction about the 1953 Edition

Three volumes by Emmanuil Kazakevich are in this collection, and the interesting thing about them is a number.

In the Progress Selected Works of 1978, over three hundred and forty-three pages, the name Stalin occurs twice, one of them a city. In this novel, over five hundred and fifty pages, it occurs sixty-four times — and not as scenery. Stalin is a presence here in the theological sense: absent from the page, omniscient, awake at four in the morning, telephoning generals, present in the mind of every officer at every crisis.

This is the book Kazakevich wrote in 1949, and it won him the Stalin Prize. It is also, and this is the point of reading it now, the middle volume of three by the same writer that this collection happens to hold — and the outer two are by a man who could not have written the middle one.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title carries LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE, and under the title:

> *STALIN PRIZE 1949*

The title leaf is dated Moscow 1953 and calls the book A Novel in Three Parts, under a drawn title and a vignette of a tank and infantry going forward past a burning building with a flag over it.

The credits leaf gives two names:

> *TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY ROBERT DAGLISH DESIGNED BY Y. YEGOROV*

Robert Daglish is the best translator the house had, and this is one of the largest jobs he did for it — a hundred and fifty-four thousand words, alone. His English here is unobtrusive and quick, and it is the reason the novel still reads.

There is no copyright line, which by this point in the strand is unremarkable. What is unusual is the contents page. It has three entries:

> *Part one. MAJOR OF THE GUARDS — 7 Part two. WHITE FLAGS — 191 Part three. ON THE ROAD TO BERLIN — 349*

That is the whole of the volume's apparatus. Seventy-four numbered chapters, no foreword, no note, no afterword, nothing about the author, no explanation of what the prize on the half-title was for. The book is handed over with a table of three lines and a date.

What Kazakevich could do

He was a reconnaissance officer, and he writes reconnaissance the way a man writes his own trade. The novel opens:

> *ONE MISTY winter morning when the crows were cawing as insistently and hoarsely as their kin near Moscow, a neat little pine forest appeared round a bend in the road, exactly like the one through which the soldiers had just passed. But this was Germany.*

That is very good, and it is good in a way the book's politics do not require: the shock is that Germany looks like home, and the shock is delivered by crows.

The best writing in Spring on the Oder is in two places. The first is the front-line road — the congestion, the shouting, the ordinary irritation of an army moving, and the discovery that the irritation has gone out of the shouting because everyone knows they are winning. The second is the small talk in the trenches, where the book is funny and exact and lets its soldiers be stupid:

> *"Only Stalin knows such a military secret as that." "Stalin is not asleep," said Meshchersky. "I am sure he is thinking about us. Absolutely sure."*

You can read that as piety, and it is. You can also read it as overheard: two tired men in a hole in the ground, consoling each other at four in the morning with the thought that somebody responsible is awake. Kazakevich was in that hole. He served from 1941 to 1945, ended as a captain, and from October 1944 to March 1946 was assistant chief of intelligence of the 47th Army — which is to say that the job Major Lubentsov does in this novel is the job its author had been doing eighteen months before he wrote it.

The Germans are the third thing the book does well, and here it does something the genre of 1949 did not oblige it to do at all. The political officer Slivenko, a miner, works out in front of his men why he must not hate Germans as such:

> *"And now, of course, it's up to us to show a working-class, Soviet consciousness, and to understand 'why' and 'how,' in order to avoid hating all Germans in general—those who did the fooling and those who were fooled."*

The authority he cites for it is Stalin, and the leaflets the political workers paste on the walls carry Stalin's line, "Hitlers come and go, but the German people and the German state live on." The Germans in the street, the novel notices, whisper only the first half of it, looking round in case a blockleiter is listening. That is a real observation, and it is not a flattering one about the state of a liberated town.

The passage the prize was for

Somewhere in Part Three, on the eve of the Berlin operation, General Sizokrylov thinks about the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and Kazakevich gives him a page and a half:

> *And Stalin's calm and vigilant glance penetrated everywhere, into all the innumerable details of those preparations, into the gigantic labour of millions. The design of a high-speed fighter, the calibre of a new gun, the tactics of a rifle company and the military art of the front commanders, the political situation on a world scale and the supplying of the soldiers with bread and tobacco—everything was the concern of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.*

and then:

> *To be like Stalin was impossible, but to learn from him, to envisage every action of one's own in the light of Stalin's teaching and his method of leadership—that is what Sizokrylov and others, big and small workers in the Party, strove to do.*

This is the cult in its finished form, and it is worth being exact about what is strange in it. The claim is not that Stalin is wise or brave. The claim is that he is everywhere and in the detail — tobacco rations and gun calibres and world politics, all one man's personal concern — and that the right relation to him is not obedience but imitation, which is impossible, so the right relation is a permanent striving towards an unattainable model. That is a religious structure, set down in a war novel by a serious writer, three years after he had written one of the best short novels of the war.

A Stalin Prize, second degree, was awarded for it in 1950, for the year 1949. The half-title prints the year the prize was for; the award itself came the following spring.

The two books on either side of it

Here is why this collection is the right place to read Spring on the Oder.

Before. Star appeared in Znamya in 1947 and won a Stalin Prize, second degree, in 1948. It sends a reconnaissance group across the German lines and kills them, and it refuses the general his speech over them: "Then, overtaken by some sad memory, he started to add something but checked himself and waved his hand." Two Men in the Steppe, of 1948, puts a military tribunal's error on the page and says plainly that the witness who would have cleared the condemned man "had not been present in court". Both are in the Selected Works volume in this collection.

After. The House on the Square was published in 1956, in the almanac Literary Moscow, which Kazakevich himself edited and which was attacked afterwards. It is the direct sequel to this novel — the same Lubentsov, the same Chokhov — and it is in this collection too, in an undated Foreign Languages Publishing House printing that names no translator at all. Its central document is Lubentsov's Memorandum of a Soviet Commandant, fifteen numbered rules for governing a conquered country, of which the tenth reads: "The commandant must see to it that the citizens of the area under his jurisdiction blame him personally if things go wrong, and credit Moscow for all the good."

Set the three side by side and the shape of a career under the doctrine becomes visible, without anybody having to be denounced for it. The man who wrote Star could see what a

war does to the people in it. The man who wrote Spring on the Oder wrote a hymn. The man who wrote The House on the Square went back to the same two officers and gave one of them a private theory of occupation that he is too embarrassed to let his friend read.

Nothing in any of the three FLPH or Progress volumes tells an English reader that these are the same characters, or that the middle book has sixty-four Stalins and the last has a political theory. The house printed all three and connected none of them.

And the counting does it in one line. Take the same two officers, written by the same man, and count the General Secretary:

| | Stalin | Party | Communist | |---|---|---|---| | Spring on the Oder, 1949 | 64 | 109 | 25 | | The House on the Square, 1956 | 3 | 65 | 55 |

Sixty-four to three, and the three are a portrait on an office wall, a rumour in a town, and a fragment. Meanwhile "Communist" goes from twenty-five to fifty-five — because in the later book the word has work to do: German Communists, the merger of the parties in the Soviet zone, the elections, the land reform, who is to run a town. In this one it is mostly an honorific.

Where the book is better than its job

Two places, and both are near the end.

The first is Part Three's account of the meeting on the Elbe. American soldiers come up the bank shouting "Long live Stalin!" and "Long live Russia!"; the Russians and the Americans talk mostly in gestures; one Russian soldier tries the word poryadok, and an American gives it back as "Poriatok," and then, in his own fashion, "Okay!" — and the Russian says "Okay" back. Written in 1949 and printed in English in 1953, at the bottom of the Cold War, that scene is doing something the year did not want. It is not a political argument. It is two men who cannot speak to each other agreeing that things are all right.

The second is four pages from the end, and it is worth following to the finish because of what happens to it.

On the bank of the Elbe, with the war over, a soldier from a collective farm in Krasnoyarsk region stands in the stillness and finds himself in tears. He asks, as if puzzled, what he is crying for like an old fool. The General has nothing to say. Then:

> *"Sorry for the dead," the soldier answered himself. "And it's from joy, too."*

He goes on to explain that he has dug himself a fox-hole out of habit, just in case, and that soon he will be back in Siberia going for walks with his Vasilissa Karpovna. It is the best ending the book could have had, and Kazakevich found it.

He then does not use it. The soldier listens to the stillness again and says quietly, "Thanks to Stalin," and the General takes the thought and finishes the novel with it:

> *Yes, thanks to him, thought the member of the Military Council, looking at the glistening waters of the Elbe. Thanks to his mighty mind, iron endurance, incomparable resolve and measureless foresight.*

The final paragraph is the Motherland, "hope of the oppressed, dread to the oppressors."

That is the whole problem of the book in two pages. The writer had the ending; the doctrine required another one; and the doctrine is printed second, so it wins.

There is a third, and it is the strangest thing in the book. Tanya goes into an abandoned barracks where foreign labourers had been held, and reads the walls:

> *"We'll never get out of here. Farewell, my native Volyn!" ran one inscription. "Dear mother! ..." somebody had begun, but the rest was unreadable. And many times there was written here, in various handwritings: "Stalin."*

Then she goes out into the street and sobs like a child in front of strangers.

Whatever one thinks of the Sizokrylov passage, this is a different order of thing. It does not assert that Stalin was wise; it records that people in a camp wrote his name on a wall, over and over, among their farewells — which is a fact about what the name was for, to them, and is left standing without a gloss. A page like that is why the cult is worth studying in a novel rather than in a speech.

Two people

The book also has a love story, and it is better than the machinery around it.

Lubentsov and Tanya, an army doctor, met for six days in 1941 when he brought her out of encirclement, and lost each other; the novel begins with them meeting again by accident on a road in Germany three and a half years later. Kazakevich writes the reunion in four lines and then gets out of the way:

> *"You are still as gay," she said, "nothing gets you down." "And you are still a little sad," he replied, "but more grownup." "Older," she laughed.*

And later, when he finally asks about her husband:

> *"He was killed," Tanya replied. "In '42," and added dryly, "On the Stalingrad front."*

followed by a sentence of free indirect style that is worth the whole of Part Two: "The sudden flatness in her voice meant: Please don't be sorry for me, don't waste words and don't pretend that you are interested in my husband."

That is a novelist at work, and it is the same instinct that produced Star: the refusal to let a character be consoled on the page.

What the volume will not tell you

Nothing, and by now that is a finding rather than a complaint — but the shape of the silence is specific here.

There is no foreword, no afterword, no note on the author, and a contents page with three lines on it. Seventy-four chapters are numbered and unlisted, which means that an English reader has no map of the book at all: no way to see, before reading, that it is built as a march — a winter approach in Part One, the crossing and the white flags in Part Two, the Berlin operation in Part Three. The sequel in this collection is set out exactly the same way, three parts and no chapter list, which suggests a house style rather than an oversight.

Nor does the volume say what the prize on its half-title was. A Stalin Prize came in three classes and this was the second; it was awarded by the Council of Ministers and it was an instruction to publishers, not a review. Everything about the object in your hands — the translation by the house's best translator, the series, the Moscow printing of 1953 — follows from that classification, and the volume records only the two words and the year.

And it does not say that the novel has a sequel, though the house published it; or that the sequel was written seven years later in a different political world; or that Lubentsov and Chokhov are in both.

The writer

He was born in Kremenchug on 24 February 1913 and died in Moscow on 22 September 1962, of cancer, at forty-nine.

He was a Yiddish poet first. He went to Birobidzhan in 1931 at eighteen, ran a theatre there, worked on the newspaper Birobidzhaner Shtern from 1935 to 1938, and published his verse in Yiddish — Birebidzhanboy in 1932, Groyse velt in 1939. He became a Russian prose writer in the war, and the Yiddish literature he came out of was destroyed while he was becoming one.

None of that is in this volume, which says nothing about him at all. It is barely in the 1978 Selected Works either: one relative clause, in Tvardovsky's preface, about a writer "who before the war had been known only as the author of verses and poems in Yiddish". That is the whole record, in this collection, of where Kazakevich came from.

Reading it now

Read the first chapter for the crows and the pine forest, and the trench conversations wherever you find them, because the man who wrote them could write.

Read Sizokrylov's meditation on Stalin as a document, and do not skim it. It is the clearest specimen in this whole collection of what the cult actually asked of an intelligent man: not belief in a policy, but the adoption of another mind as the measure of your own.

Read the Elbe and the last four pages, and watch the novel find its ending and then decline to use it. The warmth in this book is reserved for soldiers, foreigners, a woman who will not be pitied and a man crying on a river bank; the solemnity is reserved for a name. They are not the same faculty, and in a worse writer you would not be able to tell them apart.

And then read Star and The House on the Square, which are both in this collection. Three books by one writer, made in 1946, 1949 and 1956. The state gave prizes for the first two and made trouble over the third, and the only way to see that from inside these volumes is to count.

FICTION

Sand and Other Stories

Ten stories by the author of The Iron Flood, nine of them written before 1917, with not one Stalin, Bolshevik or Communist in them. A writer checked against his reputation. With a new critical introduction.

Alexander Serafimovich

Critical Introduction about the 1955 Edition

At the foot of the last page of each of the ten pieces in this book there is a year, and the ten years are the argument:

- On the Ice — 1889 - Switchman — 1891 - Into the Storm — 1903 - Rebellion in Presnya — Moscow, 8-18th December, 1905 (the only one dated by place as well as time) - Dead March — 1906 - Under the Cliff — 1907 - In Port — 1908 - Sand — 1908 - Galina — 1917 - Two Deaths — 1926

Nine of the ten were written before the Soviet Union existed. The tenth was written in its ninth year. And in eighty-eight thousand words of them, the name Stalin does not occur; nor does Bolshevik; nor Communist. The word "Party" appears three times and every one of them is a social occasion — a Christmas party at a village school, and a foreman sneering that two girls think they are on a petting party.

Alexander Serafimovich is in this collection twice: here, and in The Iron Flood, his Civil War novel of 1924, which is where his Soviet reputation lives. The introduction to that volume had to deal with Trotsky's judgement of 1936, that "Mediocre but 'right-thinking' storytellers like Serafimovich or Gladkov are inaugurated as classics." This book is the other half of the case, and it changes what the sentence can be made to mean — because most of what is in it was written before there was anyone to be inaugurated by.

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title carries LIBRARY OF SELECTED SOVIET LITERATURE.

The credits leaf gives two names:

> *TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY GEORGE H. HANNA ILLUSTRATED AND DESIGNED BY M. KLYACHKO*

George H. Hanna is the translator of the Progress Andromeda elsewhere in this collection, and his English here is plain and steady; the nineteenth-century descriptive writing survives it, which is the test.

Klyachko's contribution needs describing, because it is the most striking thing about the physical book and nothing of it is visible in a text-only edition. Every story opens with a large woodcut across the top of its first page — a woman on a cart in the rain, an old man and a woman in a headscarf at a table, a paddle steamer with a family in the foreground, a barricade of overturned carts. And then the first letter of the story's title is not typeset at all: it is cut into the picture. The G of GALINA is drawn in the block; the R of Rebellion in Presnya is a shape in the barricade; the S of SAND stands in the millhouse. The titles run out of the illustrations.

The title leaf carries no year, and there is no copyright line anywhere in the volume. The catalogue's 1955 is a library record. The only dates the book itself prints are the ten at the feet of the stories and the handful in the biographical note on the jacket.

The jacket, which is the whole apparatus

There is no foreword, no afterword and no editorial note inside this book. What it has instead is a jacket, and the jacket does a great deal of work.

It opens with an epigraph:

> *"Serafimovich was a great man, a real artist whose stories are near and dear to us; he was one of that generation of writers from whom we learned in our youth." Mikhail Sholokhov*

Sholokhov is in this collection too, and the remark is of a piece with what he said at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, where he listed the writers who were left when Gorky died in 1936 — "Sergeyev-Tsensky, Prishvin, Serafimovich, Yakub Kolas, Gladkov, Olga Forsh, Marietta Shaginyan, Veresayev,

Alexei Tolstoi, Novikov-Priboi, Shishkov, and others. They are the veterans."

Then the biography, and it is worth reading closely, because it is the only place in the volume where politics appears at all.

It says Serafimovich was born in 1863 in the Don region, the son of an army clerk; that his father died when he was twelve and the family entered a period of unflagging poverty; that he entered St Petersburg University in 1883 to read physics and mathematics; that there he became an active member of the revolutionary circle led by Alexander Ulyanov, Lenin's elder brother, and that the two became close friends; that after Ulyanov's execution he wrote an appeal to the people, was arrested in 1887 and banished to the shores of the Arctic Ocean; that in exile he met professional revolutionaries and, in his own phrase, graduated his second Marxist university; that his first story appeared in 1889 and Korolenko praised it; that Gorky thought highly of him and published him; that Sand won Lev Tolstoy's admiration, full marks written in the margin of his copy; and that he died in 1949 at the age of eighty-six.

Most of that is right, and it is more than the other Foreign Languages Publishing House volumes in this collection tell a reader about their authors. He was born Alexander Serafimovich Popov, on 19 January 1863; he was a friend of Alexander Ulyanov at the university and it was Ulyanov who introduced him to Marxism; he was exiled to Mezen for spreading revolutionary propaganda; Gorky brought him into the Sreda circle in Moscow and printed him in the Znanie collections; he died in Moscow on 19 January 1949, his eighty-sixth birthday (en.wikipedia.org, Alexander Serafimovich).

But one sentence is not right, and it is not a small one. The jacket says that the authorities executed Ulyanov after the assassination of Tsar Alexander III.

Alexander III was not assassinated. He died of nephritis in 1894. Ulyanov was hanged on 8 May 1887 for a plot against Alexander III which never took place: the conspirators were picked up on Nevsky Prospekt on 1 March 1887, carrying their bombs, before they could act — and they had chosen 1 March because it was the sixth anniversary of the assassination of Alexander II, in 1881 (en.wikipedia.org, Aleksandr Ulyanov).

So the jacket of a Soviet state publication, on the subject of Lenin's brother, converts a failed conspiracy into a successful regicide and moves an assassination from one tsar to another. It is not propaganda; nobody gains anything by it. It is carelessness, in the one paragraph of the volume where accuracy was cheap and available, about the one episode the house had most reason to get right.

And it is worth setting beside what the jacket quotes Serafimovich himself as saying: that he had always been disgusted with everything in literature that runs counter to the truth.

The stories

The writing is the reason to have the book, and it is not the writing of a functionary.

On the Ice, the first story he published, is eight pages of men caught on breaking sea ice, and it ends:

> *A soft bluish light played over the limitless expanse of water on which a thin film of ice had formed, and in the frozen distance a human figure covered in white frost lay hunched up on a lonely ice-floe.*

That is 1889, by a man of twenty-six writing in Arctic exile, and Korolenko was right about it.

Sand, the piece the book is named for, is the strongest thing here. An old miller and his wife live by a mill on a stream, and the sand advances on them year by year, and what the story is actually about is a marriage that has calcified into cruelty and cannot be got out of. Its last sentence is one of the best in the collection:

> *The mirage faded away, the sands gleamed white and motionless, dead, black shadows spread from the sandhills.*

Galina, which takes a third of the volume, is a full novella: a village schoolmistress, a priest's household, a doctor, a landowner who is thanked with bread and salt and treats everyone including the priest as a servant. The word "priest" occurs ninety-six times in this book and "God" sixty-two, against three Parties and no Communists, and that is the true measure of its world.

Two of the stories reach the revolution. Rebellion in Presnya — dated to the days themselves, 8–18 December 1905 — is the Moscow rising written from inside it, barricades going up at the ends of the streets and artillery coming from the centre of the city. And Two Deaths, of 1926, is four pages about a grey-eyed girl who comes to the Moscow Soviet in October 1917 and says:

> *"I can't do anything useful for the revolution," said the girl.*

> *"I'd like to get information for you about the cadets. I don't know anything about nursing—you've got plenty of nurses, anyway"*

She becomes a spy, is caught, and the story ends:

> *They led her out to the whitewashed wall and she lay obediently with two bullets in her heart on the same place where the worker in the cotton shirt had lain.*

Obediently is the word that makes it, and it is not a word a hagiographer reaches for.

Dead March, of 1906, is the shortest piece in the book and the one that gets closest to what the collection is for. It is a political funeral moving through a city that will not stop for it:

> *SCARLET BANNERS, their every fold dyed with the heart's blood of those who fought for them, waved heavily over the black, serried ranks swarming through the centre of the big city. They marched between rows of tall houses decorated with stucco ornament, statues, mosaic and paintings, houses whose shining plate-glass windows gazed down on them with cold indifference.*

Six pages later the procession has passed, and the last line before the date is that the sun shone brightly and the city's thousands of suppressed sounds again came to life. The city absorbs it. Written in 1906, by a man who had watched the December rising the year before, that ending is not a defeated one and it is not a triumphant one; it is accurate, and accuracy of that kind is exactly what a doctrine cannot commission.

The words that are in it

It is worth setting the counting out in full, because the shape of it is the finding.

Stalin 0. Communist 0. Bolshevik 0. Komsomol 0. Trotsky 0. Party 3, and all three are social. Lenin 1 and Marx 1, and both are on the jacket, not in the stories.

Against that: priest 96, God 62, Cossack 46, peasant 31.

That is not a Soviet vocabulary. It is the vocabulary of the Don and of the Russian provinces before 1917, and it belongs to a writer whose subjects were millers, switchmen, fishermen, village schoolmistresses and the clergy who ran their lives. The state that published this book in the 1950s had a use for the man; it had no use at all for most of what is in it, which is presumably why the volume was allowed to go out without a foreword telling anyone what to think. There was nothing obvious for a foreword to say.

What the arrangement does

The ten pieces are not in chronological order. The book opens with Galina (1917), the longest and the least political, and buries the 1905 and 1917 material in the middle and at the end. A reader who did not check the datelines would take this for a collection by a Soviet writer with a taste for village subjects.

That may be nothing more than an editor putting the novella first. But it has an effect, and the effect is to hide the book's real shape, which is a career: 1889, 1891, 1903 — then the revolution of 1905 and its aftermath in four pieces running 1905 to 1908 — then a gap of nine years, then 1917, then a gap of nine more. The gaps are where the life was, and the book does not mark them.

Nor does the volume mention what Serafimovich became. He edited Oktyabr from November 1926 to August 1929, and in 1943 he was given the Stalin Prize, first class, for long-term excellence in literature (en.wikipedia.org). Panova's volume in this same collection prints STALIN PRIZE 1947 on its half-title; Kazakevich's and Leberecht's do the same. This one does not mention the prize at all, though its subject held the senior grade of it. The house was not consistent about what it advertised.

The Trotsky question, from the other end

The Iron Flood is in this collection with its own introduction, which sets out the 1936 charge and answers it. This volume adds one piece of evidence that the novel cannot.

Trotsky wrote in The Revolution Betrayed about writers being "inaugurated as classics" by political criterion, and he was right about the mechanism; the Progress jacket on The Iron Flood, which calls that novel a classic of a doctrine proclaimed ten years after it was written, is the proof. But the judgement was passed in 1936 on men encountered as ornaments of a machine then at full power. Nine tenths of this book was written before the machine existed, by a provincial who had been exiled for propaganda at twenty-four and who spent the next thirty years writing about millers, switchmen, priests and fishermen, with no Party in it anywhere.

What the state made of him afterwards — the editorship, the first-class prize, the inauguration — is a fact about the state. What is in these ten stories is a fact about him, and the two are

not the same fact. That is the use of a collection like this one: it lets the reader check the verdict against the work, which is what neither the jacket nor the verdict invites anyone to do.

One more thing the volume does not say. The Iron Flood is in this collection under the Progress imprint, and the two books are the same writer thirty-five years apart. Nothing on this jacket mentions it, and nothing on that one mentions these stories. A reader who buys both gets the whole arc by accident; a reader who buys one gets half a writer and no way of knowing it.

Reading it now

Read the datelines. They are the only chronology the book supplies, and they change what you are reading: On the Ice is a young man's first published story, Sand is a mature writer at forty-five, Two Deaths is a man of sixty-three looking back nine years.

Read Sand for the prose and Galina for the village — a hundred pages of Russian rural life in which the state, of any kind, barely appears.

Read Two Deaths last, and notice that the one story in the book written under Soviet power is also the one in which a young woman is shot against a wall, and that the author gives her the same wall as the man on the other side.

And read the jacket once, for the Sholokhov, and then read it again with the dates in front of you. It is the only politics in the volume, it is at one remove from the stories it is wrapped round, and in the paragraph where it reaches for Lenin's brother it gets the history wrong.

FICTION

Such a Simple Thing and Other Soviet Stories

Seventeen Soviet stories from 1924 to 1958, Lavrenyov to Tvardovsky, each with a headnote that gives a death date and never a cause. With a new critical introduction.

Various authors

Critical Introduction about the 1960 Edition

Before each of the seventeen stories in this book there is a leaf carrying an author's name and dates, and then a page of biography. Sixteen of them. They are short — a hundred to two hundred words — and they are the reason to take this anthology seriously, because whoever wrote them was not filling space.

Here is the whole of the one for Alexander Malyshkin. It begins by letting him speak:

> *"We were poor, we came from the snub-nosed, shy common folk, and I was the first of our line that Father dared to send to high school to sit at the same desk as the nobility," wrote Alexander Malyshkin about himself. He grew up to be an important writer, author of "The Fall of Dair" (1923), "Sevastopol" (1929-1930), the novel "People from the Backwoods" (1937-1938), and a series of short stories. He was a writer who possessed the "secret of joy," which evades many other artists.*

And the display leaf above it reads: ALEXANDER MALYSHKIN (1892-1938).

The edition

Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. The half-title reads LIBRARY OF SOVIET LITERATURE. The Russian title, as the scan renders it, is Рассказ о простой вещи — A Story About a Simple Thing — the title of Boris Lavrenyov's 1924 novella, which leads the book.

The credits leaf carries one line: DESIGNED BY G. DAUMAN. No translator is named there, because there are six of them and they are credited story by story at the foot of each. Harvested, they are:

- Robert Daglish — five stories - Olga Shartse — four - S. Apresyan — three - Margaret Wettlin — two - Helen Altschuler — two - Bernard Isaacs — one

Daglish again, as in half the volumes in this strand; Shartse, who did the German novel; Apresyan, who carried a third of the other anthology in this collection single-handed. Five or six people made the English of Soviet literature for the world, and no catalogue records it.

And, for the eighth Foreign Languages Publishing House volume in a row in this strand: no date, no copyright line, no colophon. The last text leaf is followed by a "TO THE READER" card and the line "Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". Our catalogue's 1960 comes from a library record. The internal evidence is consistent with it — Tvardovsky's "Stovemakers" is dated 1958 in its own headnote, and Andrei Merkulov, born 1924, is described as a writer whose "artistic career has only just begun" — but the object does not date itself.

The counting

Stalin: zero. Marx: zero. NKVD: zero. Lenin appears eighteen times, Party twenty-eight, Komsomol three.

For an anthology of seventeen Soviet stories spanning the Civil War, the first five-year plans, the siege of Leningrad and the late fifties, that is a remarkably thin ideological surface. The Party is present where the stories are about Party members; nothing is invoked.

What the book is actually organised around is visible in a different count. Of the sixteen authors, eight have their own volume elsewhere in this collection: Gorky, Alexei Tolstoi, Paustovsky and Tvardovsky directly, and Lavrenyov, Antonov, Kazakov and Nagibin by way of the books this house advertised alongside them. Read this anthology after the single-author volumes and it works as an index to the whole strand — the same translators, the same house, the same decade of exporting, sampled at story length.

The headnotes, and what they can say

They are the best apparatus in the FLPH run, and the fairest way to describe them is that they were written by someone who had read the books.

On Vera Inber, the headnote does not summarise; it quotes her Leningrad siege diary:

> *"Yesterday bombs fell on Novaya village. Fifty people were brought from there. A wounded girl of about seven kept complaining that the tourniquet was hurting her leg. They comforted her, saying that she would soon feel better, and then put her to sleep and amputated her leg." On coming to she said, "How nice, it doesn't hurt any more." "The girl didn't know she had lost her leg."*

And then, in the next sentence, a phrase to slow down over: "It was in Leningrad that Vera Inber, whose path in literature was a tortuous one, came closest to life and people." A tortuous path. Inber began in the Odessa avant-garde and ended a Stalin Prize laureate; whatever the phrase is doing, it is doing it in four words and expecting the reader not to ask.

On Irakli Andronikov, whose The Portrait runs forty-four pages here, the headnote is an accurate account of a genre:

> *Irakli Andronikov is one of ths [sic] creators of what may be called the "literary research" type of story, in which the quest for facts and documents of literary history carries us away in much the same manner as Jack London's good old tales of the quest for gold.*

Andronikov's subject is a lost portrait of Lermontov, and readers who have the Lermontov Selected Works in this collection — the volume that reproduces four artefacts of Valerik and omits the poem — will find the two books arguing with each other without either knowing it.

On Alexander Tvardovsky, the headnote is doing something else again, and it is worth watching:

> *"Stovemakers" (1958) is one of the few prose works that Tvardovsky has written. He is better known for his lyrical verses and the poems "Land of Muravia" (1936), "Vastly Tyorkin" (1941-1945), "A House by the Road" (1946), and "Far Beyond."*

"Vastly Tyorkin" is the scan's error for Vassili Tyorkin; the poem is in this collection in its own bilingual volume. What follows is the interesting part. The headnote says "Stovemakers" is "a peculiarly Russian story in spirit and character", and then produces, in quotation marks and without a source, a definition of its hero: "the real Russian character, fearless and unselfish, devoted in feeling, brave and persistent in work, in appearance rather simple and docile, in action bold, noble and merciless to himself".

The reader of the Tyorkin volume will recognise the manoeuvre. That poem contains the name of neither Lenin nor Stalin and mentions the Party only in a translator's footnote, while using the words Russia and Russian seventy-seven times. Here the house supplies, for a prose story of 1958, exactly the national frame the poem had supplied for itself in 1945 — and does it by quoting an unnamed authority. Tvardovsky, by 1960, was editing Novy Mir; none of that is in the headnote either.

The stories

Such a Simple Thing opens the book and is the strangest thing in it. Lavrenyov wrote it in 1924, and its first section is headed CINEMATOGRAPHIC and set as a film script:

> *A street Dawn A notice slapped crookedly on a wall... URGENT! REDS ARE LEAVING TOWN THE VOLUNTEER ARMY IS IN THE SUBURBS THE PUBLIC ARE REQUESTED TO KEEP CALM A dusty Red soldier limps past dragging his rifle. Sees the notice... and tears it down in a sudden frenzy of hatred. His lips move. A long choking [sic: both scans read "chokitig"] fit of cursing.*

Sixty-two pages of Civil War underground work follow, in a prose that keeps reverting to montage — the broken mirror "pulled apart by this jagged crack", so that the face in it has "the mouth extended to the left ear in an idiotic grimace". This is 1924 writing: Constructivist, cinematic, interested in faces as surfaces. It is the earliest story in the book by a quarter of a century and by far the most formally adventurous, and it is printed first, without comment, in a collection published at the end of the fifties.

At the other end, Tvardovsky's "Stovemakers" — a man hires two stove-builders, they drink, they build the stove, the neighbours come in and praise it, and one of them boasts he could build better. That is the whole plot. It is the last thing in the book and the quietest.

In between: Gorky's First Love; Alexei Tolstoi's The Marie Antoinette Tapestry; Malyshkin's A Train to the South (1925, "the action is set in the first years of Soviet power"); Inber's

Maya; Gorbatov's Delivery on Cucumber Land; two Paustovskys, The Golden Tench and Good Luck Flower, the shortest pieces here and the best-made; Pavlenko's The Lost Son; Kozhevnikov's The Captain; Antonov's Rain; Andronikov's The Portrait; Kazakov's The Hound; Zabelin's Without Witnesses; Merkulov's In Flight; Nagibin's Newlywed.

Yuri Kazakov was thirty-three when this appeared, Igor Zabelin the same age, Andrei Merkulov thirty-six. The anthology's shape is deliberate: a Civil War modernist, then Gorky, then the thirties, then the war, then four writers under forty. It is a house showing that the literature had not stopped.

The dates on the display leaves

Read them in a column, because that is where the book's history is:

Lavrenyov (1891–1959). Gorky (1868–1936). Alexei Tolstoi (1883–1945). Malyshkin (1892–1938). Inber (b. 1890). Gorbatov (1908–1954). Paustovsky (b. 1892). Pavlenko (1899–1952). Kozhevnikov (b. 1909). Antonov (b. 1915). Andronikov (b. 1909). Kazakov (b. 1927). Zabelin (b. 1927). Merkulov (b. 1924). Nagibin (b. 1920). Tvardovsky (b. 1900).

Six of the sixteen were dead when the book was made and the volume gives every one of them a closing date. That is more than most of the books in this strand manage. What the dates cannot carry is the difference between them — between Gorky in 1936, Malyshkin in 1938, Gorbatov in 1954 — and the headnotes do not supply it. Malyshkin's ends with his books and his "secret of joy"; the year 1938 stands above it on its own leaf, unexplained, exactly as (1899-1937) stands above Aksel Bakounts in the companion anthology in this collection.

That is not a claim that Malyshkin was shot. It is a claim about a format. A book that prints a death year and a bibliography, and never in sixteen tries says what anybody died of, has adopted a convention — and the convention was adopted in a decade when the answer, for a good many Soviet writers, could not be printed.

A note on this text

Until this pass, this ebook did not have the biographies at all in the right places.

Each headnote sits on two leaves: a display leaf with the author's name and dates, set decoratively, and a leaf of prose. The display leaf comes through the scanner blank, so nothing marked any of the sixteen; the biographies were being swept into the end of the preceding story's division, and Lavrenyov's — which comes before the first story — fell outside the built text altogether and was simply lost. The page map could not place them either, because the headnote leaves are unnumbered and printed page 10 is the first page of the first story.

All sixteen are now inserted by content anchor, each on the first words of its own biography, each anchor checked to occur exactly once in the book. The volume runs to thirty-five divisions: sixteen biographies, seventeen stories, and the publisher's card. The contents page, which the build had been reading, has been dropped: its last line runs on across the page break into Lavrenyov's biography, which is how his name came to be glued to the wreckage of the contents' last entry, `ALEXANDER TVARDOVSKY-STOYE^\A}{ERS . ... 429.`

What the book will not say about itself

Two silences are worth naming, because they are of the kind this series exists to find.

The first is institutional. Sixteen headnotes describe sixteen careers, and not one of them mentions the Union of Soviet Writers, a congress, a decree, a journal's editorial board, or a prize committee. Malyshkin "grew up to be an important writer" and possessed "the secret of joy"; Inber, in Leningrad, "came closest to life and people". Things happen to these writers the way seasons happen. Nothing that happens to them has an address, a date, or a signature. Tvardovsky is "better known for his lyrical verses"; that he had been editing Novy Mir, and would be removed from it, is not the kind of fact this form admits. The headnotes name books and never once name a body that could stop a book being printed — which is, on the evidence of this whole collection, the single most consequential thing in any of these careers. The careers are narrated as weather, exactly as Olga Forsh's conversion is narrated as weather on the flap of Palace and Prison in this same collection.

The second is chronological, and it is the more interesting. The anthology reaches back to 1924 for its opening story and forward to 1958 for its last, and it prints them in an order that is almost exactly chronological by composition. What it skips is instructive. Between Malyshkin's A Train to the South of 1925 and Gorbatov's Delivery on Cucumber Land there is nothing from the first five-year plans; between the war stories and Antonov's Rain there is nothing from 1946 to 1952. The

two long gaps in this book are the two periods in which Soviet literature was most tightly administered — the years of the writers' congress and the years of Zhdanov.

That may be accident; seventeen stories cannot cover thirty-four years evenly. But the effect on a foreign reader in 1960 is a literature that ran from a brilliant, formally free 1924 straight to a relaxed, humane, provincial 1958, with the war in the middle and nothing in between that anyone had to explain.

Reading it now

Read the headnotes. They are the volume's argument and they take twenty minutes altogether.

Then read the two shortest things in the book, Paustovsky's The Golden Tench and Good Luck Flower, which together occupy eleven printed pages and are the only pieces here that a reader will still be thinking about a week later. The first turns on a pike and a boy; the second, on a flower. Neither has a position on anything.

Read Such a Simple Thing for what Soviet prose looked like in 1924, before any of the rules existed, and then read Stovemakers for what it looked like in 1958, when a man who was about to spend a decade fighting the censor wrote four thousand words about building a stove.

Read the two Paustovsky pieces next to his own Selected Stories in this collection, where he explains that romanticism is not a failure of political seriousness, and that "even the smallest grain of truth concealed by the author from his readers was a crime against his own conscience."

Read The Portrait if you have any appetite for the archive — forty-four pages of a man chasing a lost likeness of Lermontov through Russian collections, written by a scholar who was also a professional mimic, and one of the few things in Soviet letters that makes research itself the adventure.

And read the column of dates. It is the only place in this book where the twentieth century is allowed in, and it is allowed in four digits at a time.

PHILOSOPHY

The Materialist Conception of History

Plekhanov's 1897 review of Labriola: the clearest short account of why Marx's view of history is not "economic materialism", and why there are no separate historical factors. With a new critical introduction.

Georgi Plekhanov

Critical Introduction about the 1976 Edition

In 1897 a book arrived in Geneva from Paris: two essays by a Roman professor of philosophy, Antonio Labriola, translated into French as Essais sur la conception matérialiste de l'histoire, with a preface by a retired French engineer named Georges Sorel. Georgi Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, then forty years old and in his second decade of exile, opened it expecting the worst. Italian writing on Marx had so far meant, for him, Achille Loria, whose work had left him wary of the whole school. By the end of the first pages he had changed his mind, and he wrote the review printed here to tell Russian readers so. It opens with a confession of prejudice and a line of verse, "Worthwhile books are not too plentiful!", and it closes with one of the plainest statements of what Marx's view of history is, and what it is not, that anyone has written.

The essay is short, and it carries two titles. In Russian it is "On the Materialist Understanding of History", and that is the heading under which the Progress translation of 1976 prints it and under which it appears below. In English it has circulated since International Publishers issued it as a pamphlet in 1940 as The Materialist Conception of History, the name readers look for, which this edition carries on its cover. The text is the Progress text, taken from the second of the five volumes of Plekhanov's Selected Philosophical Works that Progress published with the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences, in the translation by Julius Katzer, with the edition's notes kept in their own numbering.

The quarrel about "factors"

The essay was written for the legal press under the tsarist censor. It appeared in the St Petersburg monthly Novoye Slovo (New Word) in September 1897, signed with the pen name N. Kamensky, and it bears the marks of that. Marx is never named. He is "a certain teacher of certain Russian disciples", and the edition's note explains that this was how the legal press referred to Marx and his followers "in view of the censorship". The real target is not Labriola at all, whom Plekhanov treats with warmth, but the Russian Narodniks (Populists) and their best-known theorist, N. K. Mikhailovsky, who had spent the middle of the decade denouncing the young Marxists as "economic materialists": people who reduced the whole of life to a single economic "factor" and tugged history along on an "economic string".

Plekhanov's reply is that his opponents have the doctrine exactly backwards. Plenty of writers had assigned the economy the leading role in history: Guizot, Mignet, Thierry, Tocqueville, the English economist Thorold Rogers. But each of them treated the economy itself as the product of human nature and human knowledge, and so, Plekhanov argues, "economic materialism does not yet preclude historical idealism". Marx's view is something else. It is not a claim that one "factor" outweighs the others but a refusal of the whole idea of factors. The essay explains where that idea comes from with a historian's example: the struggle of the Gracchi over Rome's public lands can be narrated as a clash of passions, of legal forms or of property interests, and a narrator may take whichever thread makes the best story. The trouble begins when a philosopher mistakes those threads for independent forces. "A socio-historical factor is an abstraction", useful in the division of labour between the social sciences, misleading once it is treated as a cause. Plekhanov credits it fairly, quoting Labriola's verdict that the factors are "something far less than the truth but far more than simple error in the gross sense of a blunder or illusion". But it belongs to an earlier stage of science, as the separate "forces" of physics belonged to the stage before the theory of energy.

What replaces it is what Plekhanov calls the "synthetic view". Men make their own history, not to fulfil a plan laid down for them, but "in a striving to satisfy their needs", and the means of satisfying those needs depend on the productive forces at their disposal. From the productive forces come the economic relations; from those come interests, classes, law and the state; and from the whole of it, at one remove, the arts and sciences. The final paragraph puts the result as clearly as it has ever been put: from the standpoint of the factors, society is "a heavy

load which various 'forces'—morals, law, the economy, and so on and so forth—are each dragging severally along the road of history", whereas in reality men are creating "not several and separated histories" but "a single history of their own social relations".

What Plekhanov adds, and where he argues with Labriola

Two things make the review more than a summary. The first is the place it gives to what Plekhanov calls social psychology. To understand the history of thought or art, he writes, "a knowledge of its economy is not enough. What is needed is the ability to go over from the economy to social psychology", meaning the habits, tastes and associations of ideas of a given class at a given time. This is the first sketch of the ladder he set out fully in Fundamental Problems of Marxism eleven years later, and it is the part of his thinking that has worn best. It is the reason his writing on art still repays reading when most of the economic determinism of the Second International does not.

The second is that the review argues with its subject, and on three points it wins. Labriola had allowed that "race" and the influence of the natural environment might colour a people's art and ideas. Plekhanov will have none of it. The Italians of his own day, he points out, lived under the same sky as the Romans, yet the "temperament" of the army beaten by Menelik's Ethiopians at Adwa in 1896 bore little resemblance to that of the conquerors of Carthage. He quotes Chernyshevsky's image of a steel nib that might, for all chemistry can prove, contain a particle of platinum, and concludes that any racial influence is so slight that research should treat it as nil: "References to racial features are inconvenient because they bring research to an end where it should be started." Written in 1897, in a decade when race science was respectable across Europe, that is a principled and far-sighted position, and it should be read alongside the period vocabulary ("savages", "Redskin tribes") that also runs through the essay.

On the state, Plekhanov corrects Labriola's definition of it as simply the organisation of one class's rule over another. In China and ancient Egypt, he writes, "the rise of the State can be attributed in a most considerable degree to the direct effect of the needs of the socio-productive process": the control of great rivers and the organisation of irrigation. There, the ruling classes owed their position to the state rather than the state to them. And on "ignorance" he presses Labriola hardest. Labriola had written that "History is full of errors", that ignorance, passion and corruption shape how history is made. Plekhanov answers that ignorance is itself a social product which must be explained, not cited as an explanation: "When it is a matter of a scientific understanding of history, references to ignorance testify only to ignorance in the researcher."

Here the honours are more evenly divided than Plekhanov allows. As a rule of method his reply is right: an error that is simply blamed on ignorance has not been understood. But Labriola's sentence holds a truth that Plekhanov's tidier account tends to lose. People and parties make choices that their circumstances did not dictate, and some of them are simply mistakes. A theory in which every outcome turns out, on inspection, to have been conditioned can slide into one in which nothing was ever wrong. Plekhanov's own political course, from this kind of confidence about the necessary stages of Russian development to his condemnation of the October Revolution in 1917, shows the cost of that slide. That story belongs to the introduction to The Role of the Individual in History, the essay he wrote the following year. Here it is enough to say that in this exchange the professor in Rome was the one who left room for human error.

Labriola's readers

The book Plekhanov reviewed reached others in the same year. Leon Trotsky, eighteen and held in an Odessa prison in 1898, read it in the same French translation. In My Life (1930), in the chapter on those first prisons, he recalled that "It was in my cell that I read with delight two well-known essays by an old Italian Hegelian-Marxist, Antonio Labriola", and that Labriola "made short work, and in marvellous style, of the theory of multiple factors which were supposed to dwell on the Olympus of history and rule our fates from there". After Labriola, he wrote, "all the Russian proponents of the multiplicity of factors, Lavrov, Mikhaylovsky, Kareyev, and others, seemed utterly ineffectual to me". It is the argument of Plekhanov's essay, aimed at the same Russian opponents, arrived at independently in a cell. Trotsky kept Labriola's refrain for the rest of his life. In 1934, answering the Dutch socialist de Kadt, whose argument implied that ideas rather than classes decide history, he wrote in "A Centrist Attack on Marxism" that "social ideas – as the old, wise Italian Antonio Labriola said – do not fall from heaven, but give expression to immediate or historic interests of classes".

The theory of factors did not stay buried. In Fourth International for October 1943, Joseph Hansen took apart James Burnham's The Machiavellians, a book that explained

society as a collection of competing "social forces", and reached for the same weapon. "Almost a half century ago", he wrote, "Labriola called the doctrine of social factors 'that old bore'". Hansen also noted where Sorel, the author of the preface to the French Labriola, had ended up: as the prophet of the "crisis in Marxism" that Masaryk proclaimed in 1898. Plekhanov answered that proclamation too. His "On the Alleged Crisis in Marxism" stands two essays further on in the same Progress volume, which also prints his review of a book by Labriola's pupil Benedetto Croce, who by then saw Marxism as no more than a method of historical interpretation.

The Moscow edition

The Progress volume deserves credit for what it is. It is a careful scholarly edition, prepared with the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences, and its notes on this essay are almost all accurate and useful. They identify the "subjective old gentlemen" as Mikhailovsky and his circle, decode "Nikolai—on" as N. F. Danielson, explain the Gogol allusion, and gloss the Italian defeat in Africa as the result of an "aggressive" war, a word that is fair. Nothing in the annotation steers Plekhanov's argument.

Two things in the apparatus are nonetheless worth a reader's attention. The first is a small slip that shows how quickly such notes were put together. The headnote to this essay says it was published in the journal Russkoye Slovo (Russian Word), No. 12, 1897. Russkoye Slovo was the radical journal of the 1860s that the government closed in 1866. The headnote to the very next essay in the volume, "On the 'Economic Factor'", gives the correct place: the September 1897 issue of Novoye Slovo.

The second is a silence. Plekhanov's paragraph on China and Egypt, with its irrigation states and ruling classes raised up by the state, describes the kind of society Marx had called "Asiatic". After a Leningrad discussion in 1931 that concept was ruled out of bounds, and in 1938 Stalin's Dialectical and Historical Materialism fixed a single ladder of five types of society, from primitive communism through slavery, feudalism and capitalism to socialism, with no room for it. Soviet scholars reopened the question in the 1960s and the argument was still unsettled when this volume appeared. The 1976 edition prints Plekhanov's paragraph in full, which is to its credit, and passes it without a note.

There is a larger irony too. The essay is a demolition of the idea that history can be read off from one predominant "factor" set apart from the rest. The philosophy taught in Soviet schools in Stalin's time, and long after it, presented "the economic basis" and "the superstructure" as two fixed floors of a building, with the productive forces moving the whole by a law that needed little help from anyone's social psychology. Plekhanov himself was a revered but awkward ancestor: Lenin wrote in 1921 that no young Party member could become a real communist without studying everything Plekhanov had written on philosophy, while the same man's politics after 1903 made him a Menshevik and, in 1917, an opponent of October. Progress printed his philosophy in five fine volumes, and the textbooks of the period mostly left it on the shelf.

Why read it now

The essay has lasted because the confusion it attacks has lasted. Whenever Marxism is summarised as the claim that "the economy determines everything", the summary is the "economic materialism" that Plekhanov spent this review taking apart, and its critics are still mostly attacking the version he disowned. Against that caricature the essay offers a better account in a few thousand words. History is one process, not a contest between separate forces. The economy is not a first cause but the activity of people meeting their needs with the means they have. And the passage from material life to ideas runs through the habits and associations of particular classes, which have to be studied and not assumed. It is also a model of argument. Plekhanov is generous to the author he reviews, exact about where he disagrees, and confident enough to say plainly when the man is right.

Read alongside Labriola, whose essays he recommends and whose doubts he could not quite answer, it is the best short introduction there is to the question of how material life shapes the history of ideas. It also shows that Plekhanov was a better reader of other people's books than he was, in the end, of his own time.