

Ukraine: KIEV – TOWN: BULGAKOV’S GUIDE TO KYIV

Saturday 18 January 2025, by [BULGAKOV Mikhail](#), [FINER Emily](#) (Date first published: 22 October 2023).

This is the first English translation of a little known essay by Mikhail Bulgakov (“Kiev - gorod”) originally published 100 years ago, in 1923. At that time, the Kyiv he portrayed was grappling with the aftermath of war, drought, famine, and infectious disease, but the text also reveals Bulgakov’s casual racism and deep-seated aversion for Ukrainian culture. The translation, swiftly crafted by Emily Finer, a writer, translator and senior lecturer at the University of St Andrews, features extensive explanatory notes and an introduction that not only offers context but redirects attention toward the text’s contemporary ramifications.

Mikhail Bulgakov left Moscow in the spring of 1923 to spend three weeks in Kyiv, the city where he was born and educated in the last decades of the Russian Empire. By then, he had abandoned his medical career and was making a living as a Soviet journalist in Moscow. Bulgakov’s diary tells us that his trip to Kyiv was intended to gather material to finish his first novel about the civil war, *The White Guard*, and to have a boil on his left ear lanced. During his visit a policy of Ukrainization was announced, a decision so distasteful to Bulgakov that he wrote the essay “Kiev – town”. [1] The essay evokes what the Ukrainian writer, Oksana Zabuzhko, has described as Bulgakov’s fantasy of a Russian Kyiv. [2]

In “Kiev – town” Bulgakov gave full rein to his nostalgia for the Kyiv of his childhood and to his antipathy to Ukrainian nationalism. The essay belongs to a genre of modernist city sketches and ironic travel guides that were popular among male prose writers at the time. Vladimir Nabokov’s “Guide to Berlin” and Viktor Shklovsky’s “Petersburg in the Blockade” were published in the same year. Shklovsky’s decision to give Petrograd, soon to be Leningrad, its pre-revolutionary name parallels Bulgakov’s choice to spell place names in the language of the Russian Empire rather than in Ukrainian. For Bulgakov, modernity had brought devastation to the “mother of Russian cities” causing it to regress to the status of a provincial town. His accounts of local opportunists, citizens’ shifting religious and political affiliations, an ugly new sculpture of Karl Marx, and even the actions of the competing armies who tried to seize Kyiv during the Civil War are affectionate and mildly cynical. However, the essay’s ironic comparisons of the former glory of the Russian Empire with its inferior modern Soviet version turn to crude hostility when Bulgakov describes his native city’s burgeoning Ukrainian identity. The section labelled ‘Science, Literature and Art’ contains a single damning word: “none”. Kyiv’s citizens are dependent on American charitable aid and find it hard to believe their fashionably dressed visitor’s stories of Moscow nightlife. Had he wished, Bulgakov could have told a vastly different story of Kyiv in the mid 1920s, one of the “jubilant experimentation” demonstrated in the multilingual title of Irena Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz’s 2017 collection of essays *Modernism in Kiev/ Kyiv/ Kuïs/ Kues/ Kijów/* □□□□□.

English language readers are unlikely to recognise the author of *The Master and Margarita* in the author of

"Kiev – town". Beyond Ukraine, Bulgakov tends to be revered as a writer who spoke truth to power, who stood for freedom and creative resilience. The vagaries of censorship and serendipity by which Bulgakov's novels reached their readers against all odds seem to belong to the magical environment of *The Master and Margarita*, to a world where "manuscripts don't burn". So entrenched is this perception among Bulgakov's English fans that when the National Theatre staged John Hodge's *Collaborators*, a counterfactual play in which Bulgakov and Stalin start to act as each other's ghost writers, audiences were horrified. One letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* fumed: "This insulting portrayal of Mikhail Bulgakov as a pathetic puppet manipulated by Stalin into collaborating with and even prompting his atrocities cannot be justified". Those keen to defend Bulgakov's reputation might find it interesting that his writing was marshalled in support of one more genocidal leader of Russia in 2019. A pro-separatist weekly newspaper from Donetsk reprinted "Kiev – town" among its articles belittling the Ukrainian state and sinister editorials calling for Russia to "be more active in Donbas".

Bulgakov's canonisation is also perpetuated in UK universities. As a new lecturer, I was taken to task by a senior colleague for including *Collaborators* in an undergraduate comparative literature course on political drama. How could I present students with Hodge's nasty falsehoods about a great anti-Soviet writer? I agreed to repair the damage by pairing *Collaborators* with Andrew Upton's *The White Guard*, a version in English of Bulgakov's play *The Day of the Turbins*. Confusingly, Upton gave his version the name of the Bulgakov's novel, *The White Guard*, on which *The Day of the Turbins* is based. That was the novel, intended to be a *War and Peace* for the twentieth century, that Bulgakov hoped to finish during his visit to Kyiv in 1923. Set in the years of civil war that followed the 1917 revolution, it depicts a principled and loving Russian Empire family, the Turbins, who are beset on all sides by invading forces, political opportunists, avant-garde writers, and brutish Ukrainian nationalists. By 1925, only two thirds of the novel had been published when the journal in which it was serialised was shut down. Undeterred, Bulgakov began to adapt the novel as a play for the Moscow Arts Theatre. While very popular, *The Day of the Turbins* was more akin to pre-revolutionary Chekhov than the dystopian dramas, propagandistic mass spectacles, and constructivist films set on Mars of its time. The play's survival into the 1940s was probably facilitated by means of an ambiguous musical conclusion: the arrival of the Red Army in Kyiv and singing of the Internationale could be at once sinister, ironic, or celebratory. Where Stalin and the censors were certain that the play celebrated Bolshevik power, my colleague was convinced that the ending demonstrated Bulgakov's concealed and stalwart opposition to the same.

I am myself among the readers who found in Bulgakov a gateway drug to a country obsessed with literature, a place where fiction became true, and truth was somewhat fictional. *The Master and Margarita*, recommended by my dad, was responsible for my decision to move to Moscow rather than St Petersburg in the mid-90s. One more stately, seedy European city could hardly compete with the home of the naughty apartment and the caviar-eating black cat riding the tram without a ticket. Barely literate, with my collection of metro and phone tokens and up to date knowledge of how to avoid using them, I met book-obsessed friends at the real Patriarch's Ponds. Later I joined a crowd of teenagers and their high school literature teacher as they walked for hours around Moscow reciting whole paragraphs from *The Master and Margarita* from memory, in front of the real - and also fictional - places from the novel.

Fond experiences like these, often transmitted uncritically by those of us who teach and write about Russian literature, could explain why Bulgakov's English readers were surprised when, in 2022, his high school removed his blue plaque and the Ukrainian Writers' Union proposed the closure of the Bulgakov Museum. The words of the dashing hero of *The White Guard* who describes Ukrainian as a "vile language that does not exist" were frequently quoted. Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians alike had questions: should one hold an author responsible for the speech of his fictional characters? What had Bulgakov got to do with Putin? The museum's directors, in an irony-laden and deliberately anachronistic demand of their own, asked the Writer's Union to first expel Bulgakov from their ranks for "anti-Soviet activity". But, given Russia's deliberate policy of destroying places of cultural significance to Ukraine, and having read "Kiev – town" which is voiced by the author rather than a fictional character, I found myself in sympathy with victimless and limited actions to 'cancel' Bulgakov. I remembered how antisemitism is exclusively reserved for Ukrainian characters in *The Day of the Turbins*; how in Upton's version Ukrainians celebrate victories with "a huge, ugly, violent cheer"

while the Turbin family make lyrical toasts and sing. Bulgakov's Ukrainians are the fictional predecessors of the fictional enemy imagined today by the Russian government, media, and its audiences: a Ukrainian population of antisemites and fascists. In fact, Bulgakov's actual Ukrainian contemporaries, who are not represented in *The Day of the Turbins*, were both eloquent and courageous in speaking truth to power. A transcript exists of a conversation in 1929 between Stalin and a delegation of Ukrainian writers who requested *The Day of the Turbins* be cancelled due to its dangerous propagation of Great-Russian chauvinism. Stalin did not disagree with their interpretation of the play but reasoned that the Ukrainians' concerns were insignificant given its potential to convince proletarian audiences that even the most reactionary White Guards (and authors) could become Bolsheviks. The most basic material needs of Ukrainians were concurrently to be deemed insignificant with Stalin's genocidal policies of collectivisation and the Holodomor.

By translating "Kiev – town" I hope that those who continue to love Bulgakov at a safe distance from Russia's war and genocide will be able to understand him better. As readers we could start by following Zabuzhko's advice from 2015 to "stop indulging the late Bulgakov's complexes as if he were still alive". We could listen more carefully to those who point out Bulgakov's chauvinism and be slower to accuse them of being the chauvinists. And rather than restricting ourselves to a twentieth-century Russian literary canon of authors regarded as timeless dissidents, we could start paying attention to those they belittle, silence, and exclude.

Introduction by Emily Finer

Kiev – town.

Excursus into history.

In spring the gardens blossomed with white flowers, the Tsar's Garden was clothed in greenery, the sun broke into all the windows and set each one ablaze. The Dnepr River! The sunsets! The Vydubetsky Monastery up on the embankment. The sea of green cascading down the terraces into the many hued, gentle Dnepr. Turbid blue-black nights on the water. St Vladimir's Cross with its electric lights studding the sky...

In short, a beautiful city, a happy city. The mother of all Russian cities.[3]

But those were its legendary times, times when a carefree, youthful generation lived in the gardens of the most beautiful of all the cities of our Motherland. That was when a conviction took root in the hearts of an entire generation that their whole lives would pass by in peace and quiet among the white flowers, sunrises, sunsets, the Dnepr, the Kreshchatik, the sunny streets in summer, and the winter, neither cold or cruel, with its thick, gentle snow...

... but what transpired was the exact opposite.

These legendary times were cut short. Suddenly, ominously, history made an entrance. I can specify the precise moment of its appearance: it was at 10 on the morning of March 2nd, 1917, when a telegram arrived in Kiev signed with two enigmatic words:

"Deputy Bublikov."[4]

I can vouch for the fact that not a single person in Kiev knew what these mysterious 14 letters were supposed to signify. I do know one thing: they were history's starting signal to Kiev. History heard

the signal and kept on going for the next four years. What happened in the illustrious city in this period defies all description. It was as if H.G. Wells' atomic bomb had exploded beneath the graves of Askold and Dir and the flames had thundered, bubbled, and blazed for 1000 days, burning not only Kiev proper but outwards to a radius of 20 versts into its suburbs and the areas where the people have their summer houses.[5]

By the time heavenly thunderbolts have killed every single one of our contemporary writers (even heaven's patience must have its limit) and 50 years have gone by, a veritable new Lev Tolstoi will have arrived on the scene, and an astounding book about the great battles of Kiev will be written. Then publishers will make their livings from this magnificent chronicle of the years 1917 to 1920.

For the moment, we can say this: by their own count, Kievans have had 18 revolutions. Several armchair historians counted 12 from their heated freight cars but I can say for sure that there were 14, having personally lived through 10 of them.

The only people not to have reached Kiev were the Greeks. They didn't get to Kiev because, by chance, their clever superiors had already hurried them out of Odessa. Their final word was in Russian:

"Vata."[6]

I'd like to offer the Greeks my sincere congratulations for not reaching Kiev. Something far worse than "vata" would have been waiting for them. There's no doubt at all that they would have been sent packing. It's enough to remember how the Germans, those Germans made of iron with basins on their heads, appeared in Kiev with Feldmarshal Eichhorn[7] and their magnificently synchronised columns of trucks in convoy. They departed without the Feldmarshal, without their trucks, and even without their rifles. The enraged peasants relieved them of the lot.

The record was broken by an accountant of renown, subsequently an employee of the Union of Cities, one Semyon Vasilyich Petlyura.[8] He entered Kiev four times and was thrown out four times. The very last to arrive, just before the curtain fell, were, for some reason, the Polish gentry (a throwback to the fourteenth century) bearing French long-range canons.

They wandered around Kiev for a month and a half. The experienced people of Kiev looked at the Poles' fat cannons and the crimson piping on their uniforms and confidently opined:

"The Bolsheviks will be back soon."

And it all went according to plan. At the turn of the second month, beneath a completely cloudless sky, the Soviet cavalry were rude enough to pay the Polish gentlemen an unwanted visit, and within a few hours, the latter had departed the bewitched city. But here it is necessary to add a small proviso. All of Kiev's visitors up to that point had left it amicably, restricting themselves to some relatively harmless shooting from their six-inch calibre guns positioned in the Svyatoshinsky district. In contrast, our Europeanised cousins the Poles decided to flaunt their destructive capabilities by smashing three bridges across the Dnepr to smithereens, including the Chain Bridge.

To this day, instead of that magnificent edifice, the pride of Kiev, only dull grey piers are left sticking out of the water. Oh you Poles, you Poles... Ay, yai, yai!...

The Russian people will extend you their heartfelt thanks.

Do not despair, dear citizens of Kiev! Someday the Poles will stop being angry with us and build us a new bridge, even better than the old one. They'll even foot the bill.

Rest assured. Just be patient.

Status praesens.

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that “the Pechersk district is no more”. Pechersk is still here but the majority of its streets have no buildings left. Only gnawed ruins are still standing and here and there in their windows are tangled wires, rusted and twisted. When you walk along the deserted and echoing wide streets at dusk you become enveloped in memories. It is as if shadows are stirring, and the ground is muttering. It seems that flickering chains are dashing by, and bolts are clanking faintly... and look, over there, a blurry grey figure is emerging from the cobblestones, gasping hoarsely, “Stop!”.

A flickering chain is hurrying past and gold epaulets flash in the murk; reconnaissance scouts in *zhupans* and hats with raspberry-coloured tails dance in a soundless trot; a lieutenant with a stiff back and a monocle flies past, followed by a well-polished Polish officer and the shadows of some Russian sailors, their bell bottom trousers flapping, their obscenities rabid and deafening.

Oh, pearl that is Kiev! What a restless place you are! ...

But this is all fantasy, twilight, memory.

During the day, in the bright sun, in the wonderful parks atop the cliffs, it is magnificently peaceful.

The crowns of the chestnut trees are beginning to turn green; the lindens are getting dressed. The watchmen are burning heaps of last year’s leaves and the smoke wafts down deserted alleys. A few people wander around Mariinsky Park, stooping to read the inscriptions on the wreaths’ faded ribbons.

Here are the green war graves. There’s a shield bordered with withered greenery. The shield depicts mangled pipes, bits of measuring instruments, a broken screw. This marks the place where an unknown pilot fell from a battle in the sky and lay down in a coffin in the Mariinsky Park.

A great peace reigns in the gardens. The Tsar’s Park is bright and silent, awakened only by birds singing and the occasional bell when the Kiev ‘communal’ tram arrives.

There is not a single bench left anywhere. Not even the traces of a bench. What’s more, there is a bridge made of air: it is slung like an arrow from one cliff to another in the Tsar’s Garden and none of its wooden pieces are left. Every last slat of it was taken apart by the people of Kiev for firewood. Only the iron frame remains and boys clamber across it, risking their precious lives.

The city itself also has some very respectable gaps. In what used to be Tsar’s Square, at the start of the Kreshchatik, there’s a charred skeleton where an enormous seven-storey building used to be. It is interesting that the building survived the most tempestuous of times, only to decline under the for-profit economic model.[9] According to exacting reports from the inhabitants, it happened like this. There used to be a commissary office in the building. It had, as indeed it should, a boss. As one might expect, he was supposed to remain at the helm until either the building fell down of its own accord, or its offices caught fire. One night, the offices did indeed catch fire. Firefighters circled the building like birds of prey. The boss came out and hovered around the firefighters in their copper helmets. It was as if he had bewitched the hoses: the water poured out of them, the firemen cursed and climbed up their ladders, but nothing came of it and the offices could not be saved.

The cursed fire, acting in its own interest according to the for-profit model, was immune to the magic power of the hoses. It climbed up and away from the offices and the building burned down as

if it had been made of straw.

The people of Kiev are a truthful people, and this is the story they recounted in unison. Even if that was not how it happened, the fact remains that the house burned down.

It's not important. Kiev's public utilities have started to show signs of vibrant energy. Over time, if everything works out and God is willing, everything will be rebuilt.

Even now, the lights are on in the apartments in Kiev, water is flowing from the taps, repairs are being done, the streets are clean, and that same 'communal' tram is running along the streets.

Attractions.

Kiev signboards. The mind boggles at what is written on them.

I will say this once and for all: while all languages and dialects are worthy of my respect, the signboards in Kiev must be rewritten nonetheless.

If you are hoping to turn a Russian pharmacy into a Ukrainian one, it's not enough just to clip the letter я off the end of the word "гомеопатическая" on its signboard. It should surely be possible to agree on one name for the place where citizens get a shave and a hair cut: "голярня", "перукарня", or "цирульня". Or, simplest of all, leave it in Russian: "парикмахерская"!

There are four new options for a dairy signboard: "молошна", "молочна", "молочарня", and "молошная", but a fifth, "молочная", is still the most suitable.

Maybe I'm getting lost in the details, but my general principle is solid: it should be possible to establish uniformity. If it has to be in Ukrainian then let it be in Ukrainian, spelled correctly and the same everywhere.

What, for example, can "С. М. Р. іхел" possibly mean? My first thought was that must be someone's name. The dots after each of the first three letters are completely distinct against the blue background of the signboard. Does that mean they are initials? Whose?

I asked a local as he was walking by, and he answered:

"How would I know?"

The sign with "Карасик" is obviously a tailor's name, "Портной Карасик". The sign on the kindergarten, "Дитячий притулок", also makes sense because they provide a Russian translation for the convenience of national minorities: "Детский сад". But even when you find out that "С. М. Р. іхел" stands for "смеріхел", you'll be none the wiser. For comparison, *Kotstu Vsekomпota* is only marginally more comprehensible, and "ідальня" only marginally more perplexing.[10]

Population: morals and customs.

What an acute difference there is between Kievans and Muscovites! Muscovites are sharp-witted and assertive, Americanised, flying around in a hurry. Kievans are quiet, slow, and completely unamericanized, for all that they love American clothes. When a man in a garish blazer cut for a woman's figure and flashy trousers rolled up nearly to his knees, bursts into their hallway straight off the train, they hurry to offer him tea, and their eyes betray the liveliest interest. Kievans adore stories about Moscow, but I wouldn't advise a Muscovite to bother telling them any. You can tell

them the absolute truth but as soon as you walk out the door, they'll start chorusing that you are a liar.

Whenever I opened my mouth and began a dispassionate narration, my listeners' eyes would light up so happily that I'd instantly take offense and stop talking altogether.

You can try to explain to them about casinos; the Hermitage with its gypsy choirs; Moscow pubs where people swim in an ocean of beer; choirs accompanied by accordions who sing the song about Kudayar and the twelve thieves, the one that that starts "[We pray to thee, O Lord...](#)". You can tell them what the traffic is like in Moscow; how Meyerhold is staging plays; how radio communication has been established with Konigsberg; how young swells sit at their desks in new businesses etc.

Kiev is such a quiet backwater these days. Moscow's pace of life is so different that Kievans cannot possibly understand any of it.

Kiev falls quiet by midnight. In the morning, clerks go to work in their All-Russian Welfare Committees, their wives look after the children, and their sisters-in-law, miraculously still in employment, powder their noses and go to their jobs in the American Relief Association.

If the ARA is the sun, Kiev is the earth in its orbit. The whole population of Kiev can be divided into the happy people who drink cocoa and work at the ARA (first-class citizens), the happy people who it provides with trousers and flour from America (second-class citizens), and the rabble who have no connection to the ARA at all.

The ARA director's wedding (his fifth and counting) is the event everyone is talking about. The tattered building of the European hotel where the Kiev rickshaws are parked is a mighty temple stuffed with pork fat, quinine, and jars with labels in English saying, "Evaporated milk".

It is all coming to an end. The ARA in Kiev is being closed down; in June, its newlywed boss will leave on a steamship for his America and there will be much gnashing of teeth among the sisters-in-law. It is unclear what will happen. The for-profit model will seep out of all the crevices into this quiet backwater. The house manager will threaten to repair the steam central heating and rush around with some kind of invoice on which is written "estimated in gold standard".

How can Kievans pay in gold standard? They are much poorer than Muscovites. How can our young ladies support themselves after the ARA has dismissed them? It is a narrow foothold and the Welfare Committees do not have enough for everyone.

Asceticism.

The New Economic Policy is rolling slowly out towards the periphery, much delayed. Kiev in 1924 is like Moscow was in 1921. Kiev has still not emerged from its ascetic period. Operettas, for example, are still prohibited. The shops in Kiev are trading (rubbish, by the way) but you won't be affronted by any pleasure gardens like the Hermitage. You won't find lotto being played at each intersection, or anyone lounging around on inflatable tyres into the early hours drunk on Abrau-Durso champagne.

Overheard.

This is why Kievans reward themselves with gossip. It must be said that a morass of old women and elderly ladies are lingering in Kiev with nothing to do. The turbulent years of fighting have shattered families like nowhere else. Sons, husbands, and nephews have either disappeared without trace, died from typhus, or ended up accepting hospitality in other countries and do not know how to get back. Or they have been "made redundant". The welfare committees have no use for these old ladies

and the social services cannot feed them, neither have enough money. The old women are in an unbearable situation, they live in a strange dream-like state. When they finally manage to sleep, they dream of a different reality, the one they desire and long for. Pictures ferment in their heads...

The Kievans, to do them justice, do not read newspapers, being firmly convinced that they are "lies". But, because it is unimaginable that anyone on this planet could tolerate being uninformed, they have to get news from the *evbaza* (Jewish market), the place where needy old women sell their candlesticks.

The reasons why people don't see anything implausible in the news that circulates in the Jewish market are as follows: Kievans are cut off from Moscow; they are perniciously close to places where followers of General Tyutyunik spring from; and lastly, they've been convinced of the earth's fragility ever since 1919.[11]

As a result, they believe the following: the Archbishop of Canterbury came to Kiev incognito to see what the Bolsheviks were up to (I'm not joking); the Pope has announced that if "it doesn't stop" then he will go into the desert; the proletarian poet, Demian Bednyi, was the true author of the late Empress's letters.

In the end, there's no point trying to dissuade them. All you can do is spit and let it go.[12]

Three churches.

Here's something even more noteworthy than the signboards. The Old Church, the Living Church and the Autocephalous or Ukrainian Church. Three church denominations are too many for Kiev.

The wits of Kiev have given the representatives of the second denomination a nickname: "living priests".

I have never heard a more appropriate nickname in all my life. It entirely sums up the aforementioned representatives, from the point of view of their affiliation and their character traits. In liveliness and agility, they are outdone only by priests from one other organisation, the Ukrainian Church.

They are the polar opposite of the representatives of the Old Church, who, in addition to demonstrating a lack of liveliness, are slow, confused, and utterly gloomy.

The situation is as follows: the Old hates both the Living and the Autocephalous, the Living hates the Old and the Autocephalous, and the Autocephalous hates the Old and the Living.

The ministers of all three denominations nourish themselves with malice and I can predict with complete certainty how their activities will come to an end: with the mass desertion of believers from all three churches and a descent into the abyss of the most blatant atheism. The guilty parties will be none other than these priests who have completely discredited not only themselves but the very idea of faith.

Children's voices can be heard in the beautiful old Sofia Cathedral among the gloomy frescos. The descants offer up prayers tenderly in Ukrainian, and a young man, clean-shaven and wearing a mitre, comes through the holy doors in the iconostasis. I will refrain from mentioning the way his sparkling mitre sets off his whitish face and lively, restless eyes, so as not to upset the faithful of the Autocephalous Church or cause them to be angry with me (I should say that I am not writing this for fun, but out of bitterness).

Nearby, in a little church whose ceiling is funereally festooned with years of cobwebs, members of the Old Church conduct their service in Church Slavonic. The Living also frequent places where the service is in Russian. They pray for the Republic, the Old are supposed to pray for the Patriarch Tikhon. Given that they cannot possibly do that, you might imagine they are not so much praying as silently anathematizing him. I don't know what the Autocephalous are praying for, but I have my suspicions. If my guess is right, I can advise them not to waste their energy. Their prayers won't get there. Petlyura the accountant will not come to Kiev.

As a result, the old women of Kiev's Jewish market live with heads full of fog. Representatives of the Old Church have started running lectures on theology and these old women appear among the ranks of their listeners (you couldn't make it up!). The point of the lectures is simple, Satan is to blame for the whole three-denomination craziness.

It is an innocuous thought and people remain immune to the Old Church's lectures, as with any institution that can only harm its own members.

I personally was at the receiving end of the first unpleasant consequence of these lectures. A good elderly woman, known to me since childhood, heard me talking about the churches. She was horrified and brought me a fat book which contained interpretations of Old Testament prophecies. She ordered me to read it immediately.

"Read it," she said, "and you'll see that the antichrist is going to come in 1932. His reign has already begun".

I did read the book and my patience exploded. Shaking with fury, I pointed out to the old woman that, firstly, the Antichrist was not going to come in 1932, and secondly, that the book was written by a grubby, dubious, and ignorant charlatan.

After that, the old lady went to the lecturer, told him the whole story, and tearfully begged him to lead me to the true path.

Then the lecturer delivered a lecture that was specially dedicated to me, and from it I deduced that just as two times two is four, I was none other than one of the servants and forerunners of the antichrist. I was disgraced in front of all my Kiev acquaintances.

After that, I swore an oath to myself not to dabble in theological affairs, whether they be old, living, or autocephalous.

Science, literature and art.

None.

I do not have words to describe the black bust of Karl Marx they've framed with a white archway and placed in front of the Duma. I do not know the artist who created it, but it is intolerable.

One should refrain from entertaining the thought that the sculpture of this notable German academic could have been accomplished by just about anyone not too lazy to have a go.

My three-year old niece, pointing at the statue, said tenderly:

"Uncle Karl. Black."

Finale.

A beautiful town, a happy town. Above the overflowing Dnepr everywhere is green with chestnut trees and dappled with sunlight.

Now the town is completely exhausted after those terrifying, tumultuous years. Quiescent.

But I can hear the tremor of new life. It will be rebuilt, its streets will simmer again, and it will rise above the river loved by Gogol', a majestic city once again. And may the memory of Petlyura vanish.

Mikhail Bulgakov

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