

Mikhail Bulgakov

This is the full, post-*glasnost*' critical biography of Mikhail Bulgakov (1891–1940), a great comic writer whose works are now regarded as modern classics both in the Soviet Union and in the West. It is only very recently that all Bulgakov's works have been published in the Soviet Union, where his literary rehabilitation is regarded as an important barometer of *glasnost*'. A flood of hitherto concealed biographical information has also emerged.

This account of Bulgakov's career as playwright and prose-writer makes full use of these new sources. It examines all his works in the context of the changing demands put upon artists in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s, who were faced with the choice of integrity at the price of silence, or publication and production at the price of conformism with the totalitarian State. Lesley Milne traces through Bulgakov's career an ethical concept of the writer's role, his response to his time, and his search for an audience in and beyond that time.

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Lesley Milne

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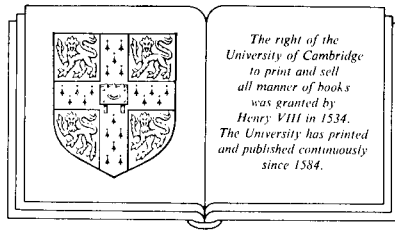
Mikhail Bulgakov, 1933.

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A Critical Biography

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For my family

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No one could joke like you
(Ty kak nikto shutil)

Anna Akhmatova, 'To the Memory of M. B-v'
(‘Pamyati M. B-va’)

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PREFACE

This book has been a long time in the brewing and I have accumulated debts of gratitude to many people. The book itself is an act of homage to my two intellectual mentors, the late Nikolay Andreyev of Cambridge, England, and the late Konstantin Rudnitsky of Moscow.

I hope that it will also express my thanks to those friends and colleagues in the Soviet Union whose help, hospitality and conversations helped me to understand Russian life and letters: Tatyana Bachelis, Galina Belaya, Marina Belaya, Sergey Belov, the late L. E. Belozerskaya-Bulgakova, Alla Burakovskaya, Marietta Chudakova, Grigory Fayman, Anatoly Grubin, Violetta Gudkova, Viktor Levadny, D.S. Likhachev, Ya.S. Lur'e, Aleksandr Ninov, Tanya and Emil Sobol, Yury Smirnov, Svetlana Sushkova, the late Lev Shubin, Vyacheslav Vozdvizhensky. In addition to help and encouragement Feliks Balonov and Anatoly Smelyansky also provided photographs for the volume (Ills. 10 and Ills. 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13 respectively). I am grateful to them and to Bulgakov's niece, Elena Zemskaya, whose first-hand knowledge was extremely useful and who gave photographs from the family archive of N. A. Zemskaya, Bulgakov's sister (Frontispiece and Ills. 1, 3, 5, 8, 12).

I must also acknowledge generous assistance from my colleagues outside the Soviet Union: Andrew Barratt, Viktor Borovsky, Julie Curtis, Rita Giuliani, Henry Gifford, Michael Glenny, Malcolm Jones, Volker Levin, Avril and Kirill Sokolov, Colin Wright. Special thanks are due to Martin Dewhirst whose encyclopedic bibliographical knowledge was invaluable.

I owe a great deal to Girton College, Cambridge, where I spent my undergraduate and post-graduate days and which supported me with a research fellowship at a timely moment in my career. I should also like to record thanks to the British Council, which enabled me to pursue my research in the Soviet Union for extended periods in the early 1970s and during a shorter trip in the latter half of the decade. I am grateful also to the British Academy which financed a splendidly fruitful research visit to Moscow in June 1987, in the heady days of new-born *glasnost*'.

The University of Hull, where I held the position of lecturer from 1975

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to 1989, provided an excellent library and an atmosphere of scholarly comradeship. I thank all those Hull colleagues who put their knowledge at my disposal when I approached them with the next set of unlikely questions on their fields of specialization.

I take great pleasure in thanking Pamela Roger and Catherine Ready, who carried the brunt of the typing. Thanks are also in order to Gary Aitken and Phil Wade of the Hull University Computer Centre, who stepped in with expertise when I eventually, and to the general relief, acquired my own word-processing equipment.

On the domestic front, my most heartfelt gratitude goes to Margaret Dickinson, who kept the house in order and looked after my children.

Finally, I must thank my husband, Michael Smith, whose encouragement and intellectual responsiveness never flagged. His voice, with its historical and literary information, is an integral part of the dialogue in the following pages. The responsibility for any error and misunderstanding remains of course my own.

The quickened intellectual pace of *glasnost* ' in the Soviet Union has resulted in major publishing activity. In the case of Bulgakov, important scholarly compilations of primary source material have recently made their appearance. Several of these items were not available for reference at the time of writing this book. They have, however, been included in the bibliography for the sake of completeness.

ABBREVIATIONS

In the absence of a complete *Collected Works* at the time of writing the following editions have been used. Works by Bulgakov are referred to in the text in brackets, with the letter code for the source followed by the volume number, where appropriate (in Roman numerals), and the page number.

- B Michail Bulgakov, *Belaja gvardija. P'esa v četyrech dejstvijach*, Arbeiten und Texte zur Slavistik No.27 (Munich, Otto Sagner, 1983).
- C Mikhail Bulgakov, *Dni Turbinykh (Belaya gvardiya)* (2 vols., Paris, Concorde: vol.I, Chapters 1–11, 1927; vol.II, Chapters 12–20, 1929).
- Ch Mikhail Bulgakov, *Chasha zhizni* (Moscow, Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1988).
- D *Družba narodov*, 8 (1987).
- Iz Mikhail Bulgakov, *Izbrannaya proza* (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1966).
- N *Neizdannyy Bulgakov: teksty i materialy*, ed. Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor, Ardis, 1977).
- O *Oktyabr'*, 6 (1987).
- P Mikhail Bulgakov, *P'esy* (Moscow, Sovetskiy pisatel', 1986).
- R Mikhail Bulgakov, *Romany* (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1973).
- S Mikhail Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochineniy*, ed. Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor, Ardis, in progress, 1982–).
- Sa Mikhail Bulgakov, *Sochineniya* (Minsk, Universitetskoe, 1988).

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration system is intended to be minimally alienating for the general reader while retaining maximal precision for the specialist. It is that employed by the *Slavonic and East European Review*, apart from the fact that e and ě are always given as e, with one exception: Yeshua and not Ieshua.

In the text the endings -ый and -ий at the end of proper names are always transliterated as -y and names familiar in other transliterated forms are given as in common usage: Beriozka, Djugashvili, Eikhenbaum, Gogol, Gorky, Mandelstam, Meyerhold, Prokofiev and, by analogy, Koroviev. The names of tsars are anglicized: Nicholas I, Nicholas II. Otherwise Christian names are given in their Russian form: Aleksandr, Nikolay.

In Appendix A, the translation by Michael Glenny of the 'prophetic dream' from the novel *The White Guard*, the transliteration system followed is that of the original English translation by Michael Glenny (London, Collins and Harvill, 1971).

NOTE ON DATING SYSTEM

At the end of the sixteenth century when most of Europe adopted the Gregorian or New Style calendar the Russians retained the Julian or Old Style calendar. By the nineteenth century Old Style dates were twelve days behind New Style and in the twentieth century the difference was thirteen days. The New Style Calendar was formally adopted by the Soviet government in February 1918, when 1 February (Old Style) became 14 February. Dates before February 1918 are identified as either Old or New Style if this is necessary to avoid ambiguity of record. Dates after February 1918 are given according to the New Style calendar.