
DOCTOR ZHIVAGO
Boris Pasternak

VINTAGE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

Banned in the Soviet Union until 1988, *Doctor Zhivago* is the epic story of the life and loves of a poet-physician during the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. Taking his family from Moscow to shelter in the Ural Mountains, Yuri Zhivago finds himself embroiled in the battle between the Whites and the Reds, and in love with the beautiful nurse Lara.

Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky have restored the rhythms, tone, precision, and poetry of Pasternak’s original, bringing this classic of world literature gloriously to life for a new generation of readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Boris Pasternak was born in Moscow in 1890 and after briefly training as a composer resolved to be a writer. He published a large number of collections of poetry, written under the burden of Soviet Russia's stringent censorship, before publishing his most famous work, *Doctor Zhivago*, in 1958. This novel won him the Nobel Prize for Literature but the USSR's hostility to the West meant he was forced to turn it down. He died in 1960.

Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky have been nominated for the PEN-Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize three times and have won it twice. They live in Paris.

ALSO TRANSLATED BY RICHARD PEVEAR AND LARISSA VOLOKHONSKY

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BORIS PASTERNAK

Doctor Zhivago

TRANSLATED BY
Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Richard Pevear

VINTAGE

INTRODUCTION

I would pretend (metaphorically) to have seen nature and universe themselves not as a picture made or fastened on an immovable wall, but as a sort of painted canvas roof or curtain in the air, incessantly pulled and blown and flapped by a something of an immaterial unknown and unknowable wind.

– BORIS PASTERNAK
Letter (in English) to Stephen Spender, 22 August 1959

1

The first edition of *Doctor Zhivago*, the major work of one of the most important Russian writers of the twentieth century, was an Italian translation published in 1957. The next year translations of the novel into English and a number of other languages appeared and Russian-language editions were published in Italy and the United States. But it would take another thirty years and the reforms of perestroika before the novel could be published in Russia. Those circumstances and all that determined them made the reception of the book highly problematical at the time of its appearance.

Pasternak had spent ten years, from 1946 to 1955, writing *Doctor Zhivago*. He considered it the work that justified his life and his survival, when so many of his fellow Russians had perished during the first decades of the century from war, revolution, famine, forced labour, and political terror. After Stalin's death in 1953 came a period known as the Thaw, when there was a general easing of the mechanisms of repression and ideological control. The ban then in place on Pasternak's work (he had been in and out of favour time

and again over the years) was lifted, and in 1954 he was able to publish ten poems from *Doctor Zhivago* in the journal *Znamya* (‘The Banner’), where the title of the novel was mentioned for the first time. In January 1956, he sent the completed work to *Novy Mir* (‘New World’), the most liberal of Moscow literary magazines, and it was also under consideration by Goslitizdat, the state publishing house.

In March 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party and virtual head of the government, made a ‘secret speech’ to the twentieth party congress denouncing the crimes of Stalin. This speech, which immediately became known all over the world, seemed to herald a further opening up of Soviet society. But in fact the thaw was brief. Stirrings of liberation following Khrushchev’s speech, especially in such satellite countries as Hungary and Poland, worried the party leadership and caused them to tighten the controls again. The Poznan protests at the end of June were crushed by military force, as were the Polish and Hungarian uprisings later that same year.

The chill made itself felt in literary circles as well. In September 1956, the editors of *Novy Mir* returned the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago* to Pasternak with a detailed letter explaining that the spirit of the novel, its emotional content, and the author’s point of view were incompatible with the spirit of the revolution and the Marxist ideology that was the theoretical foundation of the Soviet state.

Pasternak was not surprised by the rejection. He had anticipated it, and in anticipation had even taken an extraordinary step, which surprised and outraged the Soviet authorities when they learned of it. In May 1956, an Italian Communist journalist by the name of Sergio d’Angelo visited Pasternak at his country house in Peredelkino, a writers’ village near Moscow. He had heard about the existence of *Doctor Zhivago* and offered to place it with the Milanese publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (also a Communist) for publication in Italian translation. According to d’Angelo’s

account, Pasternak, after hesitating for a moment, went to his study, brought out a copy of the novel, and handed it to him with the words: ‘You are hereby invited to watch me face the firing squad.’ Since 1929, when Evgeny Zamyatin and Boris Pilnyak were vilified in the press for publishing their works abroad, no Soviet writers had had direct dealings with foreign publishers. Zamyatin had been forced to emigrate, and Pilnyak had eventually been shot. Pasternak knew that very well, of course, but he was intent on seeing *Zhivago* published abroad, if it could not be published at home, and was prepared to face the wrath of the authorities.

When publication of the Italian translation was announced for the autumn of 1957, the news caused great uneasiness in the Soviet literary bureaucracy. Pressure was put on Pasternak to make Feltrinelli return the manuscript for revision, telegrams were sent to Milan, and finally, in October 1957, Alexei Surkov, the head of the Writers’ Union, went to Italy to speak with the publisher in person. But Feltrinelli refused to delay the novel’s release and had already licensed translation rights to publishers in other countries. As Lazar Fleishman wrote in *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics*:

Nothing promoted the swift growth of interest in *Doctor Zhivago* more than these clumsy attempts to prevent its publication. The novel became an international sensation even before its release. Its first printing of 6,000 was sold out on the first day, 22 November. Prospective publications in other European languages promised to become similar bestsellers. The release of the Italian translation was accompanied by a deluge of articles and notices in the European and American press … No work of Russian literature had received such publicity since the time of the revolution.

In the spring of 1958, rumours began to circulate that Pasternak was a likely candidate for that year's Nobel Prize in Literature. In fact, his name had been mentioned for the prize a number of times before. The Nobel Committee's attention was not drawn to him solely because of *Doctor Zhivago*. But the novel, and the politics of the Cold War, certainly had much to do with his nomination this time. On 23 October 1958, it was announced that the prize had indeed been awarded to Pasternak. The Swedish Academy's telegram cited him 'for his important achievement both in contemporary lyric poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition'.

The next day the head of the Moscow section of the Writers' Union, Konstantin Fedin, who was Pasternak's friend and neighbour in Peredelkino, and who had spoken enthusiastically of *Zhivago* when he first read it in 1956, called on him and tried to persuade him not to accept the prize because of its political implications. But Pasternak refused to be persuaded. He sent a telegram of acceptance to the Swedish Academy that read simply: 'Immensely thankful, touched, proud, astonished, abashed.' On 25 October, the attacks on him began with an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* ('The Literary Gazette') suggesting that the publication of the book and the award of the prize were merely a political provocation. On 26 October, the campaign expanded to the national press with a vicious article in *Pravda* ('Truth'). On 27 October, Pasternak was tried in absentia by the governing board of the Writers' Union and expelled from the union, which meant losing his right to living quarters and all possibility of earning money by his work. His house in Peredelkino was surrounded by the secret police, and it was hinted that if he went to Sweden for the award ceremony, he might not be allowed to return. This last possibility, along with the danger in which he had put those closest to him, finally led him to refuse the prize. On 29 October, he sent a second telegram to the Swedish

Academy: ‘In view of the meaning attributed to this award in the society to which I belong, I must refuse the undeserved prize that has been bestowed on me. Do not take my voluntary rejection with any ill will.’

Though this second telegram might seem to be a capitulation on Pasternak’s part, it shows no repentance and clearly places the blame on Soviet society. In official circles this was taken as a still greater offence. The attacks on him continued. And the fact that very few of those who attacked him had read the book was no obstacle. At a meeting in Moscow on 31 October, some eight hundred writers voted in favour of a resolution asking the government to ‘deprive the traitor B. Pasternak of Soviet citizenship’. The text of the resolution was published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* the next day. In response, Pasternak’s close friends drew up a letter to Khrushchev in his name, asking that this extreme measure not be carried out. Pasternak contributed only two brief sentences to the letter: ‘I am bound to Russia by my birth, my life, and my work. I cannot imagine my fate separated from and outside Russia.’ The letter was published in *Pravda* on 1 November and eased the tensions somewhat. A second public statement, also drawn up with very little participation from Pasternak, was published in *Pravda* on 6 November and more or less ended the ‘Nobel scandal’. Pasternak died a year and a half later. In December 1989, his son, Evgeny Borisovich Pasternak, was finally able to go to Stockholm to receive his father’s Nobel medal and diploma.

Pasternak had maintained friendships with some of the best of the proscribed writers of his time – Boris Pilnyak, Osip Mandelstam, Andrei Platonov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Anna Akhmatova – who are now acknowledged as among the major figures of twentieth-century Russian literature. He also befriended and encouraged younger dissident writers like Varlam Shalamov and Andrei Sinyavsky. But he was the first to oppose the Soviet regime and its ideology so openly

and so effectively. And yet Pasternak was not at all a political man; the public realm and the conflict of ideologies did not interest him. *Doctor Zhivago* speaks in the name of something else entirely.

That ‘something else’ caused a certain confusion among readers and critics in the West when the novel first appeared. It was criticised for not being what it was never meant to be: a good, old-fashioned, nineteenth-century historical novel about the Russian revolution, an epic along the lines of *War and Peace*. It was also praised for being what it was not: a moving love story, or the lyrical biography of a poet, setting the sensitive individual against the grim realities of Soviet life. Western Marxists found that Pasternak failed to portray the major events and figures of the revolution – something he never set out to do. Others devised elaborate allegorical readings of the novel, though Pasternak stated explicitly, in a letter to Stephen Spender (9 August 1959), that ‘a detailed allegorical interpretation of literature’ was alien to him. Critics found that there was no real plot to the novel, that its chronology was confused, that the main characters were oddly effaced, that the author relied far too much on contrived coincidences.

These perplexities are understandable, but they come from a failure to pay attention to the specific composition of the novel, its way of representing reality, its way of making experience felt. *Doctor Zhivago* is a highly unusual book, an incomparable book in the most literal sense. Pasternak suggested its unique quality in his reply to a letter from an English schoolteacher:

The objective world in my habitual, natural grasping, is a vast infinite inspiration, that sketches, erases, chooses, compares and describes and composes itself … living, moving reality in such a rendering must have a touch of spontaneous subjectivity, even of arbitrariness, wavering, tarrying, doubting, joining and disjoining elements … Over

and above the times, events and persons there is a nature, a spirit of their very succession. The frequent coincidences in the plot are (in this case) not the secret, trick expedients of the novelist. They are traits to characterise that somewhat wilful, free, fanciful flow of reality. (Letter in English to John Harris, 8 February 1959; published in *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 1984)

To embody this 'living, moving reality' required formal innovation, and therefore *Doctor Zhivago* had necessarily to be an experimental novel. But it is not experimental in a modernist or formalist way. Modernism is essentially defined by absence (Godot never comes). Pasternak's vision is defined by real presence, by an intensity of physical sensation rendered in the abundance of natural description or translated into the voices of his many characters. Pasternak delights in the pathetic fallacy: in his world so-called inanimate nature constantly participates in the action. On the other hand, there is no historical or psychological analysis in his narrative, no commentary on the causes of events or the motives of characters. This gives a feeling of chaos, random movement, impulsiveness, chance encounters, sudden disruptions to the action of the novel. The trains and trams keep breaking down. But owing to the breakdowns, surprising new aspects of life appear. The Russia of three revolutions, two world wars, civil war, and political terror is portrayed in living detail, but from unexpected angles, and with no abstract ideological synthesis. Pasternak portrays happening as it happens, which is what Tolstoy also set out to do. But in *Doctor Zhivago* the seeming chaos of events will suddenly be pierced through by forces of a higher order, coming from a greater depth in time – folkloric, cultural, ultimately religious – which are also really present, which reassert their continuing presence, in the most ordinary everyday life. Now, fifty years after its first publication, when the

circumstances of the Cold War are more or less behind us, we may be able to read the novel in a new way, to see more clearly the universality of the image that Pasternak held up against the deadly fiction of his time. As Viktor Frank wrote in his essay ‘Vodyanoi Znak’ (‘Watermark: The Poetic Worldview of Pasternak’, 1962): ‘Pasternak rolled the stone from the tomb.’

2

Boris Leonidovich Pasternak was born in Moscow on 10 February 1890. His father, Leonid Osipovich Pasternak, was a painter and illustrator; his mother, Rozalia Isidorovna Kaufman, was a concert pianist. They belonged to the cultivated Jewish milieu of Odessa, and moved to Moscow only a few months before Boris, the eldest of their four children, was born. Leonid Pasternak had considerable success as an artist, taught at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, and became an outstanding portraitist, which led to a close acquaintance with Leo Tolstoy, whose works he illustrated and of whom he painted several portraits, the last just after the writer’s death in November 1910 at the railway station in Astapovo. The twenty-year-old Boris accompanied his father to Astapovo on that occasion.

The young Pasternak showed considerable talent for drawing and might have become an artist himself, but in the summer of 1903, while the family was staying in the country, he chanced to meet the composer Alexander Scriabin, whom he overheard composing his Third Symphony at the piano in a neighbouring house, and decided that his real calling was music. For the next six years, he devoted himself to a serious study of composition. But at a key moment in 1909, after playing some of his compositions for Scriabin, who encouraged him and gave

him his blessing, he abandoned music. Meanwhile, he had discovered the poetry of Rilke and had joined a group of young admirers of the Symbolists that called itself Serdarda – 'a name', as he wrote later, 'whose meaning no one knew'. And he had begun to write verse himself.

It was a member of Serdarda who persuaded Pasternak to give up music in favour of literature, but it was Scriabin himself who suggested that he switch his field at Moscow University from law to philosophy. He graduated in 1913, after six years of study, including a semester at the University of Marburg under Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp, but by then he had decided to abandon philosophy. In the summer after his final examinations, he stayed with his parents in the country, and there, as he recalled, 'I read Tyutchev and for the first time in my life wrote poetry not as a rare exception, but often and continuously, as one paints or writes music.' His first book, *A Twin in the Clouds*, was published in December of that year.

Pasternak described these metamorphoses in his two autobiographical essays, *Safe Conduct*, written between 1927 and 1931, and *People and Situations* (published in English under the titles *I Remember* and *An Essay in Autobiography*), written in 1956. Different as the two books are in style and vision, they both give a good sense of the extraordinary artistic and philosophical ferment in Russia in the years before the First World War. The older generation of Symbolists had begun to publish in the 1890s, the second generation, which included Alexander Blok and Andrei Bely, in the early years of the twentieth century. Then came the new anti-Symbolist movements: the Futurists (Vladimir Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebnikov, among many other poets and painters), whose manifesto, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, was published in 1912; and the Acmeists (Nikolai Gumilev, Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova), who favoured Apollonian clarity over Symbolist vagueness. In his

essay ‘The Morning of Acmeism’, Mandelstam wrote banteringly:

For the Acmeists the conscious sense of the word, the Logos, is just as splendid a form as music is for the Symbolists.

And if, among the Futurists, the word as such is still creeping on all fours, in Acmeism it has for the first time assumed a more dignified vertical position and entered upon the stone age of its existence.

Which gives at least a small idea of the lively polemics that went on in those years.

Pasternak first associated with the younger Symbolists around the journal *Musaget* and its publishing house. To a gathering of this group, in 1913, he read a paper entitled ‘Symbolism and Immortality’. The text was later lost, but in *People and Situations*, he summarised its main points:

My paper was based on the idea that our perceptions are subjective, on the fact that the sounds and colours we perceive in nature correspond to something else, namely, to the objective vibrations of sound and light waves. I argued that this subjectivity was not the attribute of an individual human being, but was a generic and suprapersonal quality, that it was the subjectivity of the human world and of all mankind. I suggested in my paper that every person leaves behind him a part of that undying, generic subjectivity which he possessed during his lifetime and with which he participated in the history of mankind’s existence. The main object of my paper was to advance the theory that this utterly subjective and universally human corner or portion of the world was perhaps the eternal sphere of action and the main content of art. That, besides, though the artist was of course mortal, like everyone else, the happiness of existence he experienced was immortal, and that other

people centuries after him might experience, through his works, something approaching the personal and innermost form of his original sensations.

These thoughts, or intuitions, were to reach their full realisation decades later in *Doctor Zhivago*.

In January 1914, Pasternak and some of his young friends shifted their allegiance from the Symbolists to the Futurists, forming a new group that called itself Centrifuge. There were other groups as well – the Ego-futurists and the Cubo-futurists, the latter including Vladimir Mayakovsky, whom Pasternak met at that time. These groups were all somewhat fluid and loosely defined, and their members kept forming new alliances and creating new antagonisms.

On 1 August 1914, the First World War broke out, which somewhat curtailed the skirmishing among literary movements. Pasternak was exempted from military service because of an old injury caused by a fall from a horse in 1903, which had left him with one leg slightly shorter than the other. He supported himself by working as a private tutor and later as a clerk in the office of a chemical factory. In connection with this work he spent the winters of 1915 and 1916 in the region of the Urals, which forms the setting for most of Book Two of *Doctor Zhivago*. During that time he wrote the poems of his second book, *Above the Barriers*, published in 1917. When news of the February revolution of 1917 reached him in the Urals, he immediately set out for Moscow.

In the summer of 1917, between the February and October revolutions, Pasternak found his true voice as a poet, composing poems that would go into his third book, *My Sister, Life*, one of the major works of twentieth-century Russian poetry. He knew that something extraordinary had come over him in the writing of this book. In *Safe Conduct*, he says:

When *My Sister, Life* appeared, and was found to contain expressions not in the least contemporary as regards poetry, which were revealed to me during the summer of the revolution, I became entirely indifferent as to the identity of the power which had brought the book into being, because it was immeasurably greater than myself and than the poetical conceptions surrounding me.

Between that summer and the eventual publication of the book in 1922 came the Bolshevik revolution and the harsh years of War Communism, years of hunger, confusion, and civil war. In 1921, Pasternak's parents and sisters immigrated to Berlin. (After Hitler's accession to power they immigrated again, this time to England, where they remained.) Pasternak visited them in Berlin in 1922, after his first marriage, and never saw them again. He himself, like so many of his fellow poets and artists, was not opposed to the spirit of the revolution and chose to stay in Russia.

My Sister, Life was followed in 1923 by *Themes and Variations*, which grew out of the same lyric inspiration. In the later twenties, Pasternak felt the need for a more epic form and turned to writing longer social-historical poems dealing specifically with the ambiguities of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917: *Lieutenant Schmidt* (1926), *The Year 1905* (1927), *The Lofty Malady* (1928), and the novel in verse *Spektorsky*, with an extension in prose entitled 'A Tale' (1925–1930). *Spektorsky* covers the pre-revolutionary years, the revolution, and the early Soviet period, almost the same span of time as *Doctor Zhivago*. Its hero, Sergei Spektorsky, a man of indefinite politics, apparently idle, more of a spectator than an actor, is in some ways a precursor of Yuri Zhivago.

At the same time, Pasternak kept contemplating a long work in prose. In 1918 he had begun a novel set in the Urals, written in a rather leisurely, old-fashioned manner that was far removed from the modernist experiments of

writers like Zamyatin, Bely, and Remizov. Only one part of it, *The Childhood of Luvers*, was ever published. He also wrote short works such as ‘Without Love’ (1918) and ‘Aerial Ways’ (1924), which sketch situations or characters that would reappear in *Doctor Zhivago*. And in 1931 he completed and published his most important prose work before the novel, the autobiography *Safe Conduct*.

In 1936 Pasternak went back to his idea of a long prose work, this time to be narrated in the first person, and in a deliberately plain style, as the notes and reminiscences of a certain Patrick, covering the period between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Here there were still more foreshadowings of the later novel: Patrick is an orphan who, like Zhivago, grows up in the home of a family named Gromeko and marries their daughter Tonya; there is a woman reminiscent of the novel’s Lara Antipova, whose husband is also a teacher in Yuriatin in the Urals; and Patrick, like Zhivago, is torn between his love for this woman and for his wife. Some sections from the notes were published in magazines between 1937 and 1939, but the manuscript was destroyed in a fire in 1941. The cover, which survived, bears two crossed-out titles: *When the Boys Grew Up* and *Notes of Zhivult*. The odd name Zhivult, like the less odd name Zhivago, comes from the Russian root *zhiv*, meaning ‘alive’.

Pasternak found it impossible to continue work on the *Notes* in the face of the intensification of Stalin’s terror in the later thirties, particularly the great purges that began in 1937. As Lazar Fleishman has written:

All previous historical explanations and evaluations acquired new and unstable meaning in light of the repression directed against the old guard of revolutionaries, and in light of the unprecedented, bloody catastrophe that the great revolution turned out to be for the entire population in 1937.

These events dramatically changed Pasternak's attitude toward Russia, the revolution, and socialism.

Pasternak always had a double view of the revolution. He saw it, on the one hand, as a justified expression of the need of the people, and, on the other, as a programme imposed by 'professional revolutionaries' that was leading to a deadly uniformity and mediocrity. His doubts began as early as 1918 and increased as time went on.

After Lenin's death in 1924, there was a power struggle within the Communist Party leadership, essentially between Stalin and Trotsky, which ended with Trotsky being removed from the Central Committee in 1927, exiled to Alma Ata in 1928, and finally expelled from Russia in 1929. Stalin became the undisputed head of state and ruled with dictatorial powers. In 1928, he abolished the New Economic Policy (NEP), which Lenin had introduced to allow for private enterprise on a small scale, and instituted the first Five-Year Plan for the development of heavy industry and the collectivisation of agriculture. On 23 April 1932, a decree on 'The Restructuring of Literary Organisations' was published, aimed at ending 'stagnation' in literature by putting a stop to rivalries among literary factions. This led to the creation of the Soviet Writers' Union, a single body governing all literary affairs, of which every practising writer was required to be a member. And in October 1932, Stalin defined 'socialist realism' as the single artistic method acceptable for Soviet literature. The Writers' Union drew up a statute at its first congress in 1934 defining socialist realism as a method that 'demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of reality must be linked with the task of the ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of Communism.' The historical theory behind socialist

realism was the dialectical materialism of Marx; its necessary representative was the positive hero.

Pasternak made two trips to the Urals during that period. In 1931 he was sent as a member of a ‘writers’ brigade’ to observe the Five-Year Plan in action and report on its successes – in other words, to be ‘re-educated’. He was curious to see what changes had occurred since his last trip there fifteen years earlier. What he found disturbed him very much – not the scale of the construction, but the depersonalisation of the people. He quit the brigade early and returned home. In the summer of 1932, the official attitude towards Pasternak improved and a collection of his poems, entitled *Second Birth*, was published. He was rewarded with a new trip to the Urals, this time for a month’s vacation with his second wife, Zinaida Neuhaus, and her two sons. Here for the first time he saw the results of the forced collectivisation of agriculture, which had led to the breakdown of farming on a vast scale and a famine that cost millions of peasant lives. These disastrous effects of Stalin’s policy went entirely unreported in the Soviet press. He wrote a letter to the directors of the Writers’ Union detailing what he had seen, but it was ignored.

In another letter, written to his parents in Berlin in the spring of 1933, on Hitler’s accession to power, Pasternak defined the tragedy that was being played out in Europe with remarkable clarity and in terms that reveal the essence of his historical understanding as it would finally be embodied in *Doctor Zhivago*:

… however strange it may seem to you, one and the same thing depresses me in both our own state of affairs and yours. It is that this movement is not Christian, but nationalistic; that is, it runs the same danger of degenerating into the bestiality of facts. It has the same alienation from the age-old, gracious tradition that breathes with transformations and anticipations, rather than the cold

statements of blind insanity. These movements are on a par, one is evoked by the other, and it is all the sadder for this reason. They are the left and right wings of a single materialistic night. (Published in *Quarto*, London, 1980)

After the appearance of *Second Birth*, Pasternak entered a more or less silent period, in terms of publication, which lasted until 1941. But he did address congresses of the Writers' Union several times during those years. In an important speech to a plenum session of the union, held in Minsk in February 1936, he said:

The unforeseen is the most beautiful gift life can give us. That is what we must think of multiplying in our domain. That is what should have been talked about in this assembly, and no one has said a word about it … Art is inconceivable without risk, without inner sacrifice; freedom and boldness of imagination can be won only in the process of work, and it is there that the unforeseen I spoke of a moment ago must intervene, and there no directives can help.

He went on to describe the inner change he was undergoing:

For some time I will be writing badly, from the point of view that has been mine up to now, and I will continue to do so until I have become used to the novelty of the themes and situations I wish to address. I will be writing badly, literally speaking, because I must accomplish this change of position in a space rarefied by abstractions and the language of journalists, and therefore poor in images and concreteness. I will also be writing badly in regard to the aims I am working for, because I will deal with subjects that are common to us in a language different from yours. I will not imitate you, I will dispute with you …

To earn his living during this time, Pasternak turned to translation. In 1939, the famous director Vsevolod Meyerhold invited him to make a new version of *Hamlet*. Other commissions for Shakespeare plays followed during the war years, but the work on *Hamlet* had a profound effect on Pasternak (twelve versions of the play were found among his papers). During the war years, there was a spirit of genuine unity among the Russian people in the opposition to a real enemy, after the nightmarish conditions of the terror – a spirit reflected in the epilogue to *Doctor Zhivago*. Pasternak believed then that the changes brought about by necessity would lead to the final liberation that had been the promise of the revolution from the beginning. What came instead, starting in August 1946, was a new series of purges, an ideological constriction signalled by virulent denunciations of the poet Anna Akhmatova and the prose writer Mikhail Zoshchenko, new restrictions on film and theatre directors, and the 'bringing into line' of the composers Shostakovich and Prokofiev. And a campaign also began against Pasternak, who was effectively silenced as a writer until after Stalin's death.

Pasternak lived through a profound spiritual crisis at this time, what might be called his 'Hamlet moment'. The change in him is suggested by the two versions of the poem 'Hamlet' that he wrote in 1946. The first, written in February, before the denunciations of Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, has just two stanzas:

Here I am. I step out on the stage.
Leaning against a doorpost,
I try to catch the echoes in the distance
Of what will happen in my age.

It is the noise of acts played far away.
I take part in all five.
I am alone. All drowns in pharisaism.

Life is no stroll through a field.

The second, written in late 1946, consists of four stanzas:

The hum dies down. I step out on the stage.
Leaning against a doorpost,
I try to catch the echoes from far off
Of what my age is bringing.

The night's darkness focuses on me
Thousands of opera glasses.
Abba Father, if only it can be,
Let this cup pass me by.

I love the stubbornness of your intent
And agree to play this role.
But now a different drama's going on,
Spare me, then, this once.

But the order of the acts has been thought out,
And leads to just one end.
I'm alone, all drowns in pharisaism.
Life is no stroll through a field.

This second version, adding the figure of Christ to those of Hamlet and the poet, gives great depth and extension to the notion of reluctant acceptance of the Father's stubborn intent. Pasternak draws the same parallel in the commentary on *Hamlet* in his *Notes on Translating Shakespeare*, written in the summer of 1946: 'From the moment of the ghost's appearance, Hamlet gives up his will in order to "do the will of him that sent him". *Hamlet* is not a drama of weakness, but of duty and self-denial … What is important is that chance has allotted Hamlet the role of judge of his own time and servant of the future. *Hamlet* is the drama of a high destiny, of a life devoted and preordained to a heroic task.'

Early in his career, Pasternak had likened poetry to a sponge left on a wet garden bench, which he would wring out at night ‘to the health of the greedy paper’. Now it has become an act of witness, the acceptance of a duty. The second version of ‘Hamlet’ became the first of Yuri Zhivago’s poems in the final part of *Doctor Zhivago*. With the new resolve that had come to him, Pasternak was able to take up the long prose work he had been contemplating all his life and finally complete it.

RICHARD PEVEAR

TRANSLATORS' NOTES

Russian names are composed of first name, patronymic (from the father's first name), and family name. Formal address requires the use of the first name and patronymic; diminutives are commonly used among family and friends; the family name alone can also be used familiarly, and on occasion only the patronymic is used, usually among the lower classes.

Principal Characters:
Yúri Andréevich Zhivágo (Yúra, Yúrochka)
Laríssa Fyódorovna Guichárd, married name Antípova (Lára, Lárochka)
Antonína Alexándrovna Groméko, married name Zhivágo (Tónya, Tónechka)
Pável Pávlovich Antípov (Pásha, Páshka, Páshenka, Pavlúshka, Patúlya, Patúlechka)
Innokénty Deméntievich Dúdorov (Níka)
Mikhaíl Grigórievich Gordon (Mísha)
Víktor Ippolítovich Komaróvsky (no diminutives)
Evgráf Andréevich Zhivágo (Gránya)

There is an extraordinary play with the names of minor characters in the novel. They are all plausible, but often barely so, and they sometimes have an oddly specific meaning. For instance, there is Maxím Aristárkovich Klintsóv-Pogorévshikh, whose name has a rather aristocratic ring until you come to Pogorévshikh, which means 'burned down'. Others are simply tongue twisters: Anfím Efímovich Samdevyátov, or Rufína Onísimovna Vóit-Voitkóvskaya. There are too many of these names for us to comment on them, but the Russian-less reader should know that for

Russian readers, too, they are strange and far-fetched, and that Pasternak clearly meant them to be so. Dmitri Bykov, in his *Boris Pasternak* (Moscow, 2007), thinks they suggest a realm alien to Zhivago – deep Siberia, the city outskirts – and almost a different breed of man.

The place-names for the parts of the novel set in the Moscow region and western Russia are real; the place-names in the Urals – Yuriatin, Varykino, Rynva – are fictional. And there is a corresponding difference in 'worlds' – the one more historical, the other more folkloric. The novel moves from the one to the other and back again. There is also a double sense of time, marked by two different calendars, civil and church-festal, the first linear, the second cyclical. Sometimes the most mundane moment suddenly acquires another dimension, as when the narrator, describing the end of a farewell party, says: 'The house soon turned into a sleeping kingdom.' We have tried to match as closely as possible the wide range of voices, the specific cadences, and the sudden shifts of register in Pasternak's prose.

The poems of Yuri Zhivago, which make up the final part of the novel, are not merely an addendum; they are inseparable from the whole and its true outcome – what remains, what endures. Some clearly reflect moments in the novel; we even overhear Zhivago working on several of them; but it is a mistake to try to pinpoint each poem to a specific passage or event in the novel. In translating them, we have let the meaning guide us, and have welcomed poetry when it has offered itself. We have sacrificed rhyme, but have tried to keep the rhythm, especially when it is as important as it is in 'A Wedding,' which is modelled on a popular song form called the chastushka. Above all, we have tried to keep the tone and terseness of the originals, which are often intentionally prosaic.

Book One