

Ivan Korsak

The last lover of the Empress.

Novel-essay .

The main character of a new book written by Ivan Korsak, a famous Ukrainian litterateur from Volyn, Arceniy Matsievich (1697-1772 is the representative of the second wave of Ukrainian enlighteners generation in Russia. The son of priest from Volynian nobility. The member of saint Synod. Rostov metropolitan for 20 years (it's the "lightest period in the history of Rosrov"). The Great preacher: he wrote 217 gospels. He passionately defended the rights of the Church from government interference.

The lasting fight ended in defrocking and life imprisonment. The metropolitan had been judged "for perverse and repellent interpretation of Holy Writ and for ruffling of the lieges" for seven days. After the first court Catherine II sent him as a simple monk to the monastery situated near Arkhangelsk. Then he was brought to justice as a political criminal ("who should be excruciated and killed") and the czarina ordered to immure him in the casemates of Revel fortress.

1

Each word, even said quietly, deliberately and insinuatingly, sounded very distinctly under a sonant ancient arch. Those words of severe judges, whose faces were stiff and immobilized with paroxysmal fear because of the presence of Empress, the honorable dignitaries, Orlov, Glebov and Sheshkovskiy, those words soared with surprising ease, but fell down like heavy stones on metropolitan's shoulders.

Rostov metropolitan Rostov Arceniy Matsievich was being judged. Yellowish light from numerous candles made the faces of great hierarches older and thinner: Timopheiy of Moscow, Amvrosiy Krutitskiy, Dimitriy of Novgorod, Athanasius of Tver, Gavriil of Saint-Petersburg, sitting in a row, and even the face of the youngest, thirty six-year old frisky fidget bishop Gedeon of Pskov seemed to be cut from an old dried lime.

The Empress Catherine II was sitting silently at a distance, with her people, and only flame of candles was flashing on some jewels of her finery, then on the others, as if it were moving from diamond to diamond from a turn of her head. The chair wasn't given to the metropolitan, he was standing in full canonical according to his dignity, he was standing and praying for patience and humility, for judgement as he was passionate and vivid.

Arceniy Matsievich couldn't take offence at world judges in his years, rustling quietly behind, they weren't judges for him, he knew too much about them. There were many legends about Glebov, a former clerk, who was then a public prosecutor, about his ability to give and take bribes, the legends were spreading not only in Petersburg and Moscow but in the most removed provinces. Sophiya Frederica Augusta Angelt-Tserbtskaya benefited by turning from Lutheran into Orthodox Catherine II... Sheshkovskiy, a factual leader of Secret expedition, who personally beat the most honourable noblemen's teeth out with a stick, amusing himself and smiling friendly... Crack, as if the dry branch were being broken over the knee, white enamel on the floor, bloody mouth... No, they aren't judges for him. And bishops?

The metropolitan didn't take offence at them. As a member of Synod he taught some of them, catechized, ordained, divided bread from one table with the others. He didn't take offence for betrayal – “and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who sinned against us”... Arceniy didn't reproach them with fear in his heart, because he knew consuetudes of throne very well. He felt the only disquiet, such strong heartache as if somebody sticked a needle in his heart and didn't take it out but was twisting it and ripping up that fresh wound. If lands and estates are taken away from abbeys and churches (officers are now prowling in the churches attaching church property as prisoner's property, even candlesticks and altars), the Church will not belong to Christ any more but to Glebov and Sheshkovskiy.

The metropolitan Dimitriy of Novgorod stood up, stood up slowly, reluctantly, started speaking in the same way, but he became strict immediately and the ring of his voice was strong when he glanced at Glebov.

“Didn’t you, Lord, write that the Saint Church was in trouble and destruction at present... That It couldn’t be saved from beasts of prey who perished and crushed the church property as godless and criminal czar Julian did. And if you did, can the answer of Economy College to Senate be fair? There are terrible and keen things in the answer, terrible style, why they tell about Julian apostate if Economy College has been existed only since 1701 and has been executing all Majesty’s orders. What’s your choice, Lord? Enemies of the throne?”

The metropolitan Arceniy breathed on a complete breast slowly and hard as if he were going to raise break-breaking burden: he caught a cold on his way, the prisoner was taken to Moscow in a hurry, tantivy, exhausted and foamy horses were changed only from time to time.

On that Palm Sunday in 1763 snows did not yet get off, only on the hills fancy strips of unthawing arable appeared and blackened somewhere in unshaded places, such an exciting and crafty spring air, unthinkable blue sky, pure and sonant, even moving, where sad nostalgic bebies quietly floated; blue rivers were bringing the last clinking sky-blue ice. Arceniy looked around with a deep feeling and surprising peace – awakening of life, time of light hopes, expectance of exciting Easter night, even cloudy, but to which stars ran through darkness and obscurity... But Maundy Thursday was ahead, how to live up to see it.

The metropolitan coughed before answering Dimitriy. He thought, “Nice man, he hid simple prompt in angry question: find your letter wrong, agree with Economy College – facilitate your fate...”

“Dimitriy, God created a man free. But God gave a man the right to choose the way himself” – and the metropolitan looked in bishop’s eyes without blinking.

Only candles were crackling in an established quiet as if they were talking, and Dimitriy lowered his eyes.

“Eh, how cunning the metropolitan is” – Sheshkovskiy whispered to Glebov, but whispered so that the empress could hear it – “if I took him, he would speak otherwise.” The empress maybe didn’t hear, but the corner of her mouth twitched involuntarily.

“Lord, who let you change wilfully the text of anathema, which had been the same for ages?” – Novgorod metropolitan started at last.

“Dimitriy, for the sake of Christ Lord, don’t choose this way... For pity’s sake, Dimitriy,” the metropolitan didn’t say but groaned.

Earlier Dimitriy had a strange dream. He saw hierarch who was like metropolitan Arceniy and judged in Latin, “As our fathers, even saint ones, cursed the thieves of a property which they gave to the church, so do I, sinful

and reproachful servant of the Church, not from my lips but from my fathers' lips I pronounce you an anathema and sudden death..."

2

The metropolitan Arceniy worried about something else. Since that field-day in the yard of Kiev academy (many years passed, much water ran away in the Dnieper and his native river Luga on which banks he grew up in a prince town Vladimir-Volynskiy), since that day he had fated to carry hard burden. He, young boy, almost a child, even without moustache, was sitting then on simple wooden bench in a cosy yard of academy. He must have nodded under the gentle sun (he had been studying Lukreciy overnight so hard that varicoloured circles were floating in his eyes instead of letters), as suddenly an unknown man appeared on the road. He was tall, slim, with long hair falling on his shoulders – he must have obstructed the sun, because his silhouette gleamed an easy refulgency.

That man said, "Arceniy, you are a prescient. You will know the future even in many years."

The boy palmed his eyes perplexedly, understood that he was nodding in the sun.

"Shall I know my future?" he asked again for show.

"No, nobody can know his future. But if you know future of other people, you will know what you shouldn't do."

"Can I tell the others about their future?"

"You can."

"Will they listen to the warnings?"

"God gave people free choice."

The boy began to hesitate suddenly.

"How to understand if it is not the dream?"

"Doubting Thomas hesitated too" – smiled the foreigner – "to make sure it's not a dream take..."

Arceniy awaked, the sun rose and was parching, there wasn't anybody on the road. He recalled his dream and looked at his palm.

Wooden cross on scratchy thread lay on his palm, it was ordinary cross made of dark wood.

...When Dimitriy recalled an anathema, Arceniy was first terrified. He understood that fear for life and dignity misled Novgorod metropolitan. Arceniy didn't think about himself, he really changed an ancient text so that it could be understood as anathema for the empress and for other offenders of the Church whose avarice to monastic estates could deprive the Church of independence. Arceniy was shocked by Dimitriy's spiritual betrayal...

But Dimitriy couldn't stop.

3

"Metropolitan, you addressed yourself to the Synod with a letter on March 6... Everything written there is an offence for the Majesty."

“Woe is us, poor pontiffs, trouble not from foreigners but from ours who consider themselves to be true believers.”

“It would be easier for pontiffs if the secular clergy and the regular clergy were generally on the pay from treasury.”

“A pontiff isn’t a pontiff if he has a pay from treasury, that means from state persons... Bless the state without pontiffs” – Arceniy breathed and kept silent for a minute – “otherwise there will be a great defection from our ancient apostolic Church. Otherwise any other belief will overrule and even atheistic state will appear...”

... The trial continued. The empress Catherine II was listening to it for show, reluctantly, looking without interest at flame from candles shining on the medals of Glebov and Sheshkovskiy, or looking at severe faces at the top, in the darkness, faces painted by ancient artists, those faces became severer because of melting light. In fact she made an effort to control herself, there was fever in her soul, and every word told by insolent metropolitan created new flames by sudden wind. “This metropolitan is not honest. He tells here one things and he tells absolutely other things to the charge...” – the empress thought.

Regular report about metropolitan’s talks in Rostov was put on her table three days ago. Somewhere in his set Arceniy Matsievich told, “Our Majesty isn’t natural and she isn’t steady in laws and she needn’t have mounted the throne, Ivan Antonovich should have done this. Nothing is constant and real heirs aren’t respected.”

4

Catherine II was preparing for metropolitan’s trial before: she asked dignitaries’ opinion, personally looked through hundreds of beslavered pages from reports of sleuths of the Secret expedition, spitting upon fingers squeamishly. There was nobody she could be afraid of, because some were dead, others were imprisoned in immovable casemates, the last recourse for possible opposition to throne was the Church. The higher clergy was being chased and it was helpful. She remembered when archbishop Warlaam was deported because he had written in private letter the words “Her Majesty” instead of “Her Empror’s Majesty.”

For the empress Arceniy Matsievich’s case wasn’t only his case, danger was greater and more important. In fact in her opinion metropolitan of Moscow spoke on behalf of the whole higher episcopacy, there were even rumours that in the next exactions and expropriation of churches they could reach inhibition to say a service in the whole state.

One day the empress invited Stepan Ivanovich Sheshkovskiy and asked straight, without cunning and looking in his eyes without winking, “You know about the Secret expedition even more than Attorney-General Glebov knows... Can you advice what to do with that clergy who didn’t become a tower of strength for the throne?”

“But they all are tarred with the same brush” – Sheshkovskiy understood her scrutiny and amiable smile appeared on his oval face – “take one of them and teach him a lesson...”

“Do you advice me to arrange hierarchs’ revolt?” – one empress’s eyebrow was rising up slowly, another didn’t move as if it were frozen.

“No, Your Empror’s Majesty” – Sheshkovskiy shook his head as if he was adjusting it more comfortable on his short body, then he looked at the handle of his famous stick – “no, we can take one of them but the rest pastors must judge him themselves.”

“But what if they won’t judge?” – empress’s eyebrow went down slowly, only her lips fastened.

“They will” – Stepan Ivanovich went on inspecting handle of his stick cut with curlicue, as if it were the main theme of their conversation – “there is much direct evidence.”

Sheshkovskiy recognized his speech very well. He understood that the metropolitan Dimitriy’s case was the easiest: Catherine II granted him, not the churches, thousands of buns after she had mounted the throne. Stepan Ivanovich was looking through the private letters of Amvrosiy and Timopheyy carefully and deliberately, they had a fear to contradict to their own aims aloud, but it looked as if they pushed Rostov metropolitan to it, called him “great-hearted”, “alive”, “true well-doer” – lists from those letters are saved in the Secret expedition, in Petropavlovsk fortress. Sheshkovskiy also knew that patronage of world dignitary would be vain. Bestuzhev-Ryumin tried to write moderate and delicate letter to the empress, but he became (and thank heavens!) full resistance from her Empror’s Majesty, “I have never seen such patronage for the offender of the Majesty as for Rostov metropolitan who is now arrested by the whole Synod. I don’t know the reason for doubting in my clemency and humanity. Priests were beheaded without ceremony and form long ago, and even for not so important matters.”

5

... The trial continued, though slowly, day by day, sad words of charge were flying off the ancient walls, rising to the arch and falling down like heavy stones on an old Arceniy’s head.

“Metropolitan, you dared to send discourteous letter to Saint-Petersburg which was given to the Majesty at the congregation of generals by hierarchy monk Luka and was read with stops by the secretary... That letter caused great anger of a prince... and their anchorite went out of his head because of fear and was sent to Nevskiy monastery, where he was secured for six weeks. And now he is in the cell under surveillance. You are a causer, metropolitan...”

“Why did turn against empress’s will, metropolitan, against the empress’s will which called us to observe the rules of mind, to dispose of vanity and to serve God on a state pay? Why do you need herd of six hundred horses and ten thousand tithes if treasury can subsist us without difficulties?”

“Didn’t you offend pontiffs for obedience to throne, saying that they were looking like dumb dogs without barking?”

After the regular trial, on the porch Sheshkovskiy told Glebov, peeping by force of habit, “What does Attorney-General think?”

“Stepan Ivanovich, our Secret expedition has already hunted him down.” Glebov was watching his step on stony stages slowly as if he weren’t sure in their strength. “When he sees the rack, and how executioners check their whips and ropes, prepare fire-pans and instruments for torture... He will confess of everything immediately, he will even recollect that he is the Vicar of Christ’s cousin and Turkish sultan’s godfather.”

“I believe he must be mine” – Sheshkovskiy smiled amiably and gaily.

...The trial drew to a close and the day of metropolitan’s unfrocking was appointed. Although there wasn’t any information about it, people were going to Kremlin and Synod like a flow, such solid and disobedient that even double bands couldn’t be a barrier for them.

“They are bringing him! Bringing him!” – the crowd cried seeing Arceniy among soldiers’ coats.

He was going slowly in full canonicals, on the stones, which seemed to be hot even through soles and sulk soldiers were cleaning the way with butts.

He was going, dressed in pontiff cloak, in omoforion and white hood with panagias on his breast, he had a crosier in his hand, but he was going not as doomed slave but with a dignity of metropolitan who was ready for the trial.

The sky, covered with clouds, parted for a moment, and metropolitan’s canonicals shone suddenly in the sun, flashing yellow on the faces of silent and frightened people; somebody threw him some blossoming willow branches, some willow buds – metropolitan even stopped for a minute to look at a dare-devil but he was pushed in the back and the soldier on the right clubbed the last in the crowd without looking for causers but simply for order.

Dimitriy was the first who came up to Arceniy in the trial and spread trembling hands to him.

“What a sadness, Dimitriy” – Arceniy moved away and began to take off his hood in spirit praying.

“Your arch and fawning tongue leads you to trouble – that arch tongue will smother you and you will die from it.”

Pontiff Amvrosiy came, casting down his eyes to take off an omoforion.

“Where are you going, Amvrosiy?” the metropolitan asked again with sadness taking off his omoforion himself. “You ate with me at the same table, bread from the same knife, so you would be sticked with the knife as an ox.”

Petersburg Gavriil had to take away the crosier, but Arceniy took it himself from crosier-keeper Zlatoustov and passed to Gavriil.

“You forgot what a pontiff must be” – the metropolitan was looking over his head as if the pontiff’s fate were written there in the space and it was necessary

only to read it attentively and deliberately – “your rival will strangle you for your Herodias, because you judged me faint-heartedly, dancing with it.” Gedeon had to take off a mantle.

“Sorry for your young years” – Arceniy only breathed – “you will no longer see your throne.”

Misail had to do the last thing – to remove the metropolitan’s cowl. “You baked your bitter bread prepared for me very quickly” – Arceniy said hushfully and tiredly – “don’t you see that you will roast yourself like bread in the oven?”

There was silence as at the cemetery and nobody could break it till everybody heard low sobbing and all turned their heads towards it. This was Moscow Timopheyy, he couldn’t bear, his eyes streamed tears, tears were running on his old wrinkly and grey face, his face was like a southern land, chappy with oppressive heat and unable to absorb water.

“You see, he is crazy!” – Orlov leaned to Glebov and Sheshkovskiy and he was whispering discomposedly as if leaves were whispering in late autumn forest. – “he must be locked up or closed at best as monk Luka and detained.” Arceniy couldn’t hear that whisper, dignitaries were sitting too far, but he heard by the other voice and the most passionate and hot-headed metropolitan turned to Orlov abruptly.

“And you, count, will have to crown those whose blood is on your hands. And I’m not crazy but your brother will finish his life in an insane asylum for his evil deeds.”

“How dares he!” – the empress turned white with anger, her temper ran away with her, she clasped her fists so strongly that nails were pressed on her palms – “and this is told near the Church!”

Arceniy turned to her and he was looking at her for a long time, reproachfully and sadly, he was looking at the woman who was an arbiter for thousands of people, who had an opportunity to change countries and the future of peoples reluctantly and playing, people were trembling before this woman even more than the most terrible penitent before the icon.

“And your Majesty will meet your killed husband... But you won’t die by Christian” – the metropolitan shook his head – “and you will die without confession in the scaperyard... Your lovers strangled your husband, they will strangle your son too. You fucked up the temple yourself and it will fall...” There was silence as at the cemetery again, nobody could even move of fear. It seemed that there were not people but simply waxworks in the court, only shades from numerous candles were shining on stiff and fixed faces. The empress came to herself first, she was pale as from the moonlight, she closed her ears with hands and cried in a gruff unknown voice, “Gag him!” The shadow of scaffold appeared like an evil twinkle and it was blinking in everybody’s eyes.

Orlov made efforts to pull in when the metropolitan predicted the coronation of the killed emperor. Count set his teeth so that they scraped like a runner on a frozen snow: first the death of the emperor Peter I was reminded him in public, and he was accused of murder. How dares this worthless metropolitan, who is an ordinary defrocked and very old monk, say this him, whose name and whose brother's name means almost the same as the empress's name on the vast of empire? And what can this monk understand in real imperial interests of Russia... Such state didn't need stupid emperor, drinker from ten-year old age who could only play at soldiers. Orlov believed firmly that the empress Catherine II was able to develop the power of Russian land, to enhance its territory for account of weak deam purlieus who couldn't help themselves. He was sure that the secret of that repast would disappear together with this generation and if it arose incidentally, then clever people would appreciate his ingenuity and associating for the sake of Russian future. Everything was prepared quickly but well-thought. The first note as a document on emergence was short not to suspect future empress, "Mother dear Empress, we all wish you health... Our monster is ill... Lest he should die today." Aleksey Orlov with light smiling face and the celebrity guests came in the house where arrested emperor Peter III was kept.

"We brought nice news" – the guests told the prisoner immediately – "you will soon be released."

Peter III was invited to the repast about an expected freedom. They all were joking, laughing, valet Bressan was outside the door at the moment, and insensibly for the emperor Orlov he poured poison, prepared before by their doctor, into a goblet.

After the first goblet the second one was poured but Peter III began to guess because of a sudden, strong pain.

The cramped emperor said, "They kept me out of Swedish throne, stole my Russian crown, in addition they want to take my life."

At that moment there wasn't any need to play bo-peep: they all sprang at the emperor and began to strangle him with a pillow. He fought desperately, but poison was taking away his forces inexorably. Quickwitted Baratynskiy made a loop of napkins and slipped the noose around the emperor's neck. Peter Fedorovich tried to free, but it was in vain, they firmly grabbed his arms and legs, and quard sergeant Engelgardt tightened the noose around Peter's neck. Emperor's body jerked several times, defying death, went limp immediately and was quiet for ever.

"Horses!" Orlov cried, poured one more full goblet and began to write on grey and dirty sheet of paper, which turned up, "Mother, Gracious Majesty! How can I explain, describe what happened. You won't believe your faithful slave but I say as before God. Mother, prepare me to die. I can't understand how this grief happened. We'll die if you don't have mercy on us. Mother, he isn't alive. Nobody planned this, nobody thought to lay hands on the emperor, but it

happened, we were drunk, he too, he began to argue with prince Fedor at the table, we couldn't set them apart and it happened, we didn't remember what we were doing but we all were guilty – all are worthy of punishment. Have mercy on me for the sake of brother; I confessed everything and there is nothing to find out – forgive or order to kill sooner, light is not nice, we angered you and destroyed our souls forever!”

As a secretary of French enambassador Ryuler, a contemporary of those events wrote, on that very day Catherine II sat at the table with her approximate “in a merry pin”. Suddenly Orlov came running at the moment of animated talks: he was dishevelled sweaty and begrimed with dust, in lacerated clothes. The empress saw him, stood up silently and went to the cabinet, Orlov followed her. They called count Panin in some minutes too.

“The emperor is dead. How to tell people about this?” Catherine II asked directly.

“It's nessesary to wait the night” – count considered, he wasn't surprised very much, judging by his imperturbable face – “only in the morning.”

Everybody returned to their places and gay and lively dinner continued.

In the morning the capital was rocked by sad news – his Majesty Emperor died from “haemorrhoids colic”.

Graph Orlov beared yellow and stormy malice against Arceniy Matsievich, not only for telling the secret of throne to successors aloud, but for ingratitude, the eruption even was out all over him. He and his brother were sure that if the life changed, Peter's backing wouldn't sleep. Peter managed to liquidate the Secret chancellery which was so necessary for the throne (thank God, the empress reestablished it, having given only new name, the Secret expedition), he allowed to go abroad, he promised to establish public trial (but hadn't time)... Everything could happen, and in that case his and his brother's heads would be cut and would roll hopping and splashing, with not roped blood, among cries and admiring hoots under foot of onlookers who were eager to circuses.

...During the short break of trial Orlov said to the empress in a voice as cold as Epiphany ice, “He has deprived himself of life right.”

“There he told Dimitriy about the tongue” – Glebov turned his head, loosing his collar because he felt it became tight – “but if his tongue can move, he will tell much more...”

The empress kept silent – life taught her to be careful. She wanted to remember herself at last, to get peace of mind, because her heart was thumping from nerve-strain, temples roared like a long wistful rain...

7

The Eempres Catherine II was not offended by the metropolitan for “lovers”, she even smiled proudly at her heart – old Matsievich would never dream of such pleasure and enjoyment. She couldn't accuse herself of changing her relations with a husband, even not in the least. Bright love which flamed in the

youth warmed them both, and the whole world seemed them to be rosy from that love and the years seemed rosy – Peter wasn't crying, he was sobbing when she was ill, he didn't hide, smearing the tears on the face with his hand. Eventually love was replaced by simple friendship, which turned into indifference, then into circumspection, then she took a fancy for other men, as if she desired fragrant, tender, melting roast so much after long eating tasteless and lean food.

She became pregnant by Grigoriy Orlov by surprise, not even knowing it, but when understood it was already late. She hid the pregnancy with ease, under the magnificent gowns and fancy dresses with laces. The exposure tormented her more than labor pains.

She was lucky, only faithful servant Vasiliy Sckurin heard the first cries, the pregnancy wasn't a secret for him; he understood everything in Catherine's eyes, because he saw not only birth pangs, but first of all a fear in the eyes, which was a fear of frightened animal, back-breaking and terrible fear. "Don't be afraid... Everything will be well-done" – an idea suddenly struck Sckurin and he darted to the door – "I'll do my best, maybe you won't forget me," he said already at the doorstep...

Catherine didn't know where the servant ran, she didn't care – labor pains alternated by burning heartache and fear before terrible near future. Catastrophe of her life was inexorably approaching: husband would make her take the veil because of his character, a child would be taken to a prison as Ivan Antonovich was taken, Grigoriy, her beloved and darling Orlov, would be put to death of a surety. And her body was flinching, labor pains again, terrible cramps were twisting and she tried to restrain a cry of mothers last legs. Suddenly something shone in the windows, red reflection was twinkling on the glass, and Catherine looked at unknown shine.

The house of butler Sckurin, which was situated not very far from the palace, was burning. The fire burst out of the windows, climbed rapidly upward, as if trying to lick the roof several times, then the whole building was blazing and crackling, showered angry sparks into the sky...

Alarming roar went up in the neighboring apartments, all were running out, one were hasting to save, others were on tiptoe with curiosity and no one cared about her – husband was hasting to the fire too, because half of Petersburg could turn into ashes from the fire.

Soon Vasiliy Sckurin appeared at the doorstep again. "It's clear where he ran" – happy conjecture flashed with lightning at the pregnant woman, which took off with the soul stone – "the butler burnt his house."

"Everything is good" – the teeth were shining on sooty face – "now I'm homeless..."

Fortunately, she quickly gave birth, baby was washed with warm water and wrapped in beaver fur coat very quickly.

“What about baby’s name?” unwashed and shining Sckurin asked.

“Let he be count Bobrinskiy, then we’ll think about the name,” she joked, calm in the heart and body.

When husband returned to the palace the baby was being brought to a reliable cache.

It was differently with Ponyatovskiy. She liked count Ponyatovskiy at one of the balls, he was dancing with elegance and knowingly, the wave of music raised her with count and moved down fluently. Besides, Ponyatovskiy always was very witty, funny a little, always cheerful.

In the evening Catherine secretly dressed in men’s clothing, and slipped to the back door of the palace gently, on tiptoe.

The coach of Ponyatovskiy’s friend, Naryshkin, prepared before, promptly yanked from the place and raced in the rattling pavement to the count’s apartment.

Next night secret procession in the apartments passed again insinuatingly, the silent servants turned aside and preferred not to see a rattling coach on sleeping empty streets again, otherwise no end of trouble.

Ultimately, the lovers stopped behaving in a cat-and-mouse way, Ponyatovskiy and Catherine began to meet in public, then he stayed at night in her bedroom in the Oraniembaum palace.

But one morning guardsmen stopped his way when he was leaving the bedroom.

“You are arrested,” the officers reported without preambles and explanations, and they took him into the basement.

They managed to settle a scandal for a wonder. Catherine bore Ponyatovskiy a daughter Anna, as like her father as two peas. The baby was too weak, she had been living for two years and one night sobbed quietly and died.

Mother was mourning briefly, a new passion captured her heart.

... The empress wasn’t offended by the words of Arceniy Matsievich about lovers – what can you wait from an old man? And what can he know about love passions? There was another offence stinging her as if somebody threw a peace of coal into her collar, offence was burning and inexcusable.

8

Arceniy tried to reproach himself with imprudence in the break, but he couldn’t. He told pastors bitter words not of despite, revenge or desire to frighten somebody, he wanted to keep them out of trouble, to admonish and anticipate. Because he really saw in his dream as quick horses were bringing Gedeon to Pskov so that even manes were flying in the wind; suddenly cabman stopped them and they stopped almost on end and limp Gedeon clutched his heart instantly. And he saw that furious men and women flocked him round and grabbed weak Amvrosiy, the knife shone over him avidly... Arceniy saw the fire, as through the window glass, forks of flame were licking the stones, and there was a face in the fire which looked like Misail’s face.

No, he didn't invent the story, he described only what he had seen without adding anything.

He wanted to stop the way spreading the hands as for an easy-going child who was running and who didn't see a gulf before him, he begged and asked – but in vain.

And Arceniy had nothing to stop them, only the word. The metropolitan understood what his words would mean for him in the court. But he didn't pity and reproach himself, because insincerity and archness (silence is often only a weak part of it) truly are born of the devil. And Arceniy wasn't able to try on this weak clothes even when mortal danger was looming over him like a bluish thunder-cloud.

Swearing underage emperor Ivan Antonovich in 1740, he refused flatly to swear his mother-regent. On formidable demands to explain the reason he answered openly by prayer, "I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins..."

Mother-regent was a Protestant.

But for the upheaval then scaffold would wait for him. Arceniy, as a participant of the second Bering's expedition to Kamchatka, happened to deal with his captain who was stubborn and obstinate and didn't accepted any disobedience. On that day they had to put out to sea at dawn, cloudless sky favoured, but vague anxiety seized him, something invisible restrained him.

"We shouldn't set sail now," he said to the captain. Stocky captain looked at the priest as if he were a small annoying bug and nobody knew where this bug came from.

"Who is captain here?" he asked in such a voice after which everybody in the expedition usually expected outbreak of headlong anger.

"You won't put out to sea at least till noon," father Arceniy stood across the ladder.

Light splashing of water on the shore stones was heard in evil and tense silence.

"If you interfere in the afternoon, I'll shoot you," captain's brown face turned purple.

In an hour a small cloud appeared suddenly on absolutely cloudless sky, it was running up, swelling, became severer, then half of the sky was already covered, and the sky wasn't seen at last, fitful wind turned to storm which became global mistress, piping and howling; it seemed as if flurried and bitchy sky fell on the earth and was roaring like a strange unknown beast, shore stones were rolling like a thunder before a harvest. Only the smallest blade of grass seemed to be able to save in this terrible gulf.

The storm, which appeared so suddenly, became weaker, the worst of the storm was over and it died at last in the afternoon.

The ship really started in the afternoon and the priest of the expedition didn't have conflicts with captain any more.

Being already Tobolsk metropolitan, Arceniy met those who from their own tops looked proudly at pastors' matters, and did their best the clerks agree with every turn of officers. On the last day of February, in 1742 the representatives of Siberian power were wide-eyed, their eyes were as round as saucers when they had read the new metropolitan's decree. This had never been as Arceniy ordered: "ecclesiastics and churchmen can't plead the world trial without their bishops on penalty of overthrow of Antioch cathedral according to the rule number 11."

The metropolitan thought that Christianity outstayed when apostles were excruciated, crucified, when martyrs of belief were thrown into the cage with lions, who were roaring with hunger and licking greedily waiting for the victim. So now Christianity would outstay and keep contumacy to the world sinful power. The metropolitan confirmed his words by new circular letter in response to dignitaries' complaints in June to save pastors: the metropolitan "ordered that none of the clergy would listen to the decrees sent by world command without permission of their clerkly command and if somebody from the world command brought clergy to trial violently, without clerkly command, to ask about evidence, to send decrees, they would soon receive particular written protests..."

The hierarchs were changing on Tobolsk pulpit, had been visiting frozen Siberian land for twenty springs, but the metropolitan's decree was invisible defence for local clergy.

...The orchestra sounded, the sun shone on the musicians' trumpets, on medals and ornamentals of courtier people who gathered from across the empire, the flowers were falling under the empress's feet – they were celebrating the coronation of new Mistress Elizabeth.

New empress had already signed the decree about an appointment of Arceniy Matsievich as Rostov metropolitan, it was his turn to swear to the present Mistress of the throne.

"Your Majesty, I can't," the metropolitan bowed.

"I have signed the decree and you don't want to swear me!" – wrinkles on the Empress's face appeared quickly and spoiled the work of all hairdressers.

"I can't swear according to this text," the metropolitan answered quietly but firm. "Empress Majesty can't be the highest judge as it is said here, because only our Lord Jesus Christ has this right."

The empress didn't want even the smallest cloud to spoil such populous celebration, triumph of her life, and she made efforts to remove her wrinkles.

"So be it," she tried to smile. "Go to your eparchy but prepare the project of an oath yourself."

Then the document prepared by Matsievich was put on her table, "I confess to an oath God and our Lord Jesus Christ is the Highest Judge of this Church

Government, powerful header of Church and Great Priest and czar who domineers and can judge everybody – alive and dead...”

Much time would pass and Rostov metropolitan would have to protest again for once against the robbery of churches, because the decree about the secularization of glebes was given to empress Elizabeth to sign.

“Even the Tatar khans were hesitant at this,” lord Arceniy would forewarn.

But the empress would say, laying the pen aside, “No, I won’t sign and after me – as you like.”

...In a short break between trials the metropolitan Arceniy couldn’t reproach himself with imprudence in his serious reflections. He is a simple Christian and he doesn’t defend recusancy of the Church to the lay clerks and the state, otherwise –his faith is vain. The Church belongs to Christ, not to these people who call themselves senators, Privy Councillors or empresses. He was taught so by his father, Ivan Matsievich who was serving God honestly and people in far Volyn, in Ukraine, he was taught so in Lviv Theological Academy, in unforgettable Kiev-Mogila Academy, he told so as a preacher in Novgorod-Siversk, in Spassky Monastery in Chernihiv, in other towns and villages where the fate threw him. Because if the Church is under the heel of the official, of the state, there will be much evil in the world: the states, especially Russia, will make war and make dependent pastors bleed blood. And this means betrayal of Christ, the state always makes outrageous (sometimes it repents hindsight, but only it’s always too late) and a pastor will be a companion in all crimes and enormities. And if the murderess of her husband is on the throne, stray from unknown countries who doesn’t have any rights to that throne, she will lose ecclesiastical estates at cards, estates collected sacrificially by our fathers, she will simply give them to her numerous lovers...

The metropolitan thought that he would stay the course.

9

Empress Catherine took a dislike to Arceniy Matsievich long before the meeting – feed the wolf or not but he looks at his way, so complained she to Orlov before the trial. Feed a Ukrainian or not but he looks at his steppe. Only Kalnishevskiy is worth...

After her coronation, after solemn service when it seemed that church choirs offered up her name to September skies, the empress was giving an audience to the highest dignitaries of the empire.

The personalities who received this honor had to feel the whole greatness of the moment, true mightiness of a new empress, her ambitions and intentions. It was caused also by unseen grandeur celebration – triumphal arch was built quickly for the empress to enter. Builders wielded axes even at night, by the fire in Tver street, in Earthen city, in White, in China Town, decorated the houses with fir branches and carpets, the belfry of Ivan the Great was shining with illumination, tables with drinks and food stood in Red Square. The words “the law directs, the sword protects” were written on triumphal arches.

The empress was giving an audience to the dignitaries graciously. She told ataman Peter Kalnishevskiy, who arrived from Ukraine, only some words, but the ataman conversed lively with crown-prince, son Pavel.

“I do my best to protect my country,” seventy-year old ataman told respectfully, his hair was grey, but he was good-looking, one could feel a special power in him who was weather-beaten by all prairie winds, taut and slim as if there weren’t so many crusades and events. “The Serbs, the Volokhs, the Greeks and other unknown people take our land. Your landlords occupied salt-pans in Prognoy...”

The Empress didn’t forget to ask her son about that conversation.

“Did Kosh Otaman ask pay, powder or anything else again as his precursors?” – sly smile shone in bluish empress’s eyes, she was walking long after her coronation so as if the land underfoot were so flexible that it sagged. Son shook his head. “No, he said that Crimean Khan threatened with new raids, that Russian landlords took salt pans violently, took many lands with forests and fish through the length and breadth. And he was concerned that an unfair tax on the export of cattle, beasts, fir and on import of goods was removed... He reminded of March articles written by Khmelnitsky...”

“He can’t be a Kosh Otaman” – the empress’s eyes flashed yellow lights and the land underfoot became firm – “if we need him or not, we’ll tell him.” She estimated in the mind who could possess such fertile ground, remembered those who helped her in enthronement; she, but not Kalnishevskiy had to think about settlement in those lands. Mentally she connected Arceniy Matsievich with Kosh Otaman not incidentally. They met before the Elizabeth’s death about three years ago accidentally, when Kalnishevskiy, war clerk Artem Kupman and former ataman Pavel Kirillovich came with delegation again to bother. The walls of Petropavlovsk castle are very thick, they keep the smallest secrets in Secret Chancellery very surely, for example the conversation between Matsievich and Kalnishevskiy.

“Peter, in spite of your grey hair, you are still a nice Zaporozhian Cossack” – Arceniy was looking at Kalnishevskiy with a smile – “and the clothes fit you, I see you are from Cossacks’ land.”

“It was Cossacks’ land, but now I don’t know whose land it is,” said Kalnishevskiy darkly. “Foreigners go to our land: Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Valahs, Russians-Old Believers who served in Rzeczpospolita. Their numerous settlements appear, in the court they are said to guard the border from the South, but what warders they are... Maybe your soul is calm, because pastor lives under God’s laws.”

“If it were so” – Arceniy couldn’t hide bitterness in his voice – “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, but today Caesar needs much more... The empress’s decree demands lands of pontiffs and monasteries to be governed not by monastery servants but by ex-servicemen. They are wandering in

monasteries, arrest horses, instruments and other property, as if for treasury, but treasury will never see it... Monastery forests are cut down.”

“Lord, why do you keep silent, why don’t other clerics defend themselves?” Kalnishevskiy said and stumbled, he was sorry for words which burst involuntarily. But didn’t he keep silent too when they ordered from St. Petersburg to teach Russian in schools and soon eight hundred Ukrainian schools were closed on the Left Bank? Didn’t he keep silent when the history of his land was stolen in Gluhov, when all diplomatic and state documents were taken to Moscow archive of the General Staff?

“Peter, don’t think about it” – Arceniy shook his head as if Kalnishevskiy had uttered his thoughts aloud – “it is written: there is time to cast away stones and there is time to gather stones. God will judge, this means stones will be gathered...”

Arceniy was genuinely glad to meet his fellow countryman, his heart warmed as if he were able to go back to the homeland for a moment. To Golden Domed Kiev, Peter Mogila’s academy, St. Sophia Cathedral in which there is a spirit of Yaroslav the Wise, Bishop Warlaam under the cathedral rang, archbishop of Kiev who in far 1723 dedicated him to monkery. He often thought about return to Ukraine, he filed a petition about it. He wrote angry letter when there were more soldiers than monks in monasteries. The metropolitan confirmed that College Savings wanted to make a slave of the Holy Church and its servants. The College complained to the Senate and the Bishop was summoned to the Moscow Synod office, and they declared him a reprimand. Indignant metropolitan asked to release him from the leadership of the Diocese of Rostov referring to the disease. Lord Arceniy wrote, “Let me go to Novgorod-Siverskiy, Spassky Monastery in Chernihiv...”

Synod was happy with retirement of Arceniy and prepared a report for the empress. But Elizabeth did not approve of the report in vain. Meeting with Kalnishevskiy, news from native land warmed the Lord’s heart. But it was the last meeting – not destined to be more...

10

What the empress should do with Arceniy Matsievich? Should she execute or pardon him? To break him on the wheel or send to his diocese as Elizabeth did, clenching her teeth?

Catherine II saw breaking on the wheel. Criminals are taken to a special penalty on a chariot, riflemen are holding candles in their hands, the closer to the execution site, the greater the crowd of onlookers, who are greedy to the spectacles; and now the high platform on which there is the pillory with chains, gallows, rack, block, pointed stakes on which severed heads will be put, executioner takes whips, branding, curling tearing nostrils, mites and saber blades to cut off noses, ears and tongue; executioner is doing it slowly and with obvious pleasure, because he is the most important here and hundreds of eyes are looking at him. According to the decree about breaking on the wheel

criminal was tied to the rings, they hit his backhand on the joints – sentence always ordered to break ribs, hands or legs, and bones cracked as dry branches with groans and shouts of criminals and squeals of delight, and fun of the crowd.

The empress thought that Arceniy Matsievich deserved punishment without doubt. On the other hand, Catherine II was always cautious, she wared of possible unrests among people, she didn't want to create a martyr for the faith from this liar, discourteous pastor. Secret expedition did not eat bread from treasury in vain, the empress knew about palms which were thrown under metropolitan's feet when he was taken to the trial, and there were rumors about a prophetic dream of monk Theophylact: he addressed as if with a prayer to St. Demetrios who answered, "Why do you address to me, humble Theophylact? There is one among you who deserves no less holiness, this is Rostov metropolitan Arceniy..."

The empress was putting her thoughts on invisible balance, scales were rocking and couldn't stop. And she didn't have right to make an error at that moment.

Eddies of fate raised her and were twirling her long and threw her on Imperial Throne at last, her, who was German, who was of other confession and didn't have a drop of Russian blood. She will have a chance and time to express her opinion about Russian state and people, about Russian ruling elite, opinion which appeared incidentally in the letter to baron Friedrich Grimm, "Half of those who are still alive, or idiots, or madmen: try to live with these people when you can."

And she, who was educated and energetic, had to lead this stupid nation to something better, Didro was in communication with Voltaire about this. There must be no obstacles on this way and any resistance must be crushed down. Her husband, thrown emperor isn't a barrier any more, he will not be able to get out from under the gravestone of Alexander Nevsky Lavra. One more legitimate emperor Ivan Antonovich is a prisoner in reliable walls of Shlisselburg fortress: he won't see human face for a long time, he is ordered to hide behind the screen when a guard enters the cell. Reliable guard is ordered to kill immediately those who tries to dismiss a prisoner.

On the way to the great aim – to lead these half fools, half madmen to wealth, there was the last barrier: contumacy of the Church and such pastors as Arceniy who tell that she was not a legitimate empress. But her mind will master it. She will gain new living spaces for Russians, and she will let contemptible Jews live only below the limit of settlement, and only first guild merchants, highly educated Jews, former recruits, registered prostitutes and baptized Jews will be out of the limit.

But there is one more barrier, about which only some people in the whole empire can guess – Mikhail Lomonosov. But she managed to clear this hurdle providently before her enthronement.

... The emperor Peter I was dying very hard. He didn't know the reason for his illness – either cold, or poison, or maybe running syphilis, poorly cured by bad doctor – but somebody put the burr on his chest and each breath cost him an incredible effort. But when the emperor understood that it was his hour of death, he confessed to Feofan Prokopovich, “Lord, I have one more sin” – Peter was wheezing, not talking, rattle was pulling out of the chest with a stop, piecemeal – “I have a son, nobody knows about him, his name is Mikhail Lomonosov.” The emperor told about that distant sin, now with a rattle, then in a whisper. Since persecution of Old Believers in Russia they began to move to Siberia, to the North, to run the show there – how valuable only shipyards of Bazhenov brothers are. The emperor spent three-quarters of the budget on wars and he looked at those riches more and more often, narrowing his lids. By Peter's mischance his son Aleksey was against parental innovations, the wife gave birth only to daughters. Old Believers conceived a cunning venture when the emperor came back again to the northern lands. They thought not only about Peter's heir but how to have crown person from their surroundings, and they clapped him on a very nice blond beauty, Helen. Czar had been toying with her for a week in Ust-Tosno, he enjoyed the beauty of the young, chasing messengers with their government worries at the door. When it became known that Helen was pregnant, Old Believers married her quickly to the nephew of Peter Dwinskiy's trusted elder clerk Luka Lomonosov – Vasilii Dorofeev. The next emperor's decree appeared very quickly. “My son and betrothed father Vasilii are ordered to have the surname Lomonosov and to live in this family under the supervision of Luka Lomonosov, not to forget to keep the secret. I'll remember to thank.”

... The health of the emperor Peter went from bad to worse, now he tried to utter a word with ruckle, then he was light-headed and saw snow dazzling spaces of Kholmogory, and he was tobogganing rapidly as fifteen years ago, the wind raised snow-storm behind him, and minute powdery snow glistened in the slanting rays of the sun. And when he revived again he ordered Prokopovich, “Lord, teach him in Moscow schools and attach to the rank of the priests or to state service according to his abilities.”

Feofan Prokopovich looked after Mikhail but he didn't want to keep the secret when he was dying and told everything Peter's daughter Elizabeth. “He is not a barrier on the way to the throne,” Prokopovich told carefully. “He is illegitimate and he won't trench upon throne but he is a kinsman and you must care for him well.”

Five winters passed between this conversation and Elizabeth's enthronement. But in first years of her reign she appointed her stepbrother an adjunct of the Academy of sciences, then a professor and gave him unthinkable sum – two thousand roubles for the ode, there was a lack of money in the treasury, that's why goats were brought as a present, brought by a horse cart. Nobody knew whether Mikhail was aware of the mystery of his birth, but he didn't rely upon anybody – on foot to Moscow, then Petersburg Academy,

Kiev-Mogila Academy, Marburg, Freiburg... A man who has been hardworking since childhood, can fly very high.

A shadow was twinkling when Elizabeth died, no, throne didn't belong her according to traditions and laws, it was only the shadow of the empress's name, shadow of the wife of possible emperor Peter III, and then she got to know Lomonosov's secret by chance. That's why one trusted hand prepared a delayed poison for them stealthily at the waking dinner, after Elizabeth's death where Mikhail was invited with his wife.

Wedded pair fell ill almost on the same day – Mikhail's legs were paralysed and his wife could scarcely move, catching on backs of the chairs. The empress Catherine II wanted to visit the Lomonosovs, to see influence of poison and to cheer up the couple in that trouble.

Everything was clear with Lomonosov, only Matsievich was the last problem. What? The block, torn nostrils, fire-pan and a confession forced by intrusive Sheshkovskiy and his people? And if he won't repent? If she creates a martyr for the faith and rebellion herself? It is very far from nice Shtettin with its cosy and small German streets... Or maybe quite the reverse, high empress's pardon, Christian clemency?

Only one thing is obvious: if she loses the moment now, the Church will never become a support of the throne. And she could give lands of monasteries to those who helped her in enthronement and who would defend that throne willingly...

What? Thoughts were floating like a mill-stream and this mill wheel was flying round, whirling and couldn't stop...

11

...The trial was over at last and the words of judgement sounded in tense silence.

“The former Rostov metropolitan Arceniy misapprehended and spelled backward beneficial distribution of the church property and had an impudence that Holy Synod had obvious written documents about his reproaching and scandalizing observations, he failed in his duties to Spiritual Assembly where her Majesty was a president.

Holy Synod found him guilty and worthy of not only arrest but the court too, for such resistance of the supreme power and decrees, for crime which was offensive for her Majesty. He dared interpret his offence of Majesty wrong and cleverly (offenced her not only as the highest person, as president of Synod, but as his autocratic Sovereign).”

The words of judgement weren't rising up, they were rustling as last year's discolored leaves which had wintered under snow until spring, but Arceniy heard their true, ruthless, and menacing sense very well in this rustling: he was brought to world, criminal justice, not to ecclesiastical court. And this court would pass him a sentence...

The empress Catherine thought over every opinion of influential courtiers, she was twisting and turning the thoughts like hot potatoes in hands, she simply didn't have right to make a mistake, to lose. She had the only right to win. Meanwhile anxious rumours were spreading among people in Moscow: they told, somewhere carefully, somewhere openly, that greedy courtiers set her to sinful deeds. It was quickly reported in "Moscow news" that "protests of Rostov bishop are filled with poison of insult of Majesty from beginning to end", but people didn't believe it completely.

No, she will win, but she must remain compassionate, kind and hearty Christian for people, Christian who mitigates the synodal verdict of Synod. "According to this sentence he must be defrocked as a metropolitan and a priest and if holy and other ecclesiastic rules allow, he can be a monk at an old age for more comfortable repentance, we deliver him from civil trial and tortures because of humanity, we order our Synod to send him to remote monastery under the supervision of clever superior, and he will not corrupt weak and simple people in writing and verbally."

It was the final empress's word, God was a witness, she was against "civil trial and tortures."

Meanwhile there was a search and expropriation in monastery cell of the Rostov metropolitan.

"One mantle, three long robes," told clerk, his pen was squeaking and he repeated it aloud. "One calotte, old cap, three pairs of glasses, iron buckle, porcelain teapot, three pairs of cups and sugar..."

To everyone's surprise the metropolitan of the richest eparchy didn't have money, he didn't have time to give beggars sugar before the trial, chest and package with clothes was all his property.

Arceniy was simply brought from Cross Chamber to Ferapont monastery, then they ordered to bring him far to the North, to Karelian Nicholas Monastery near Arkhangelsk. An ensign and four soldiers were ordered to guard.

Safeguard had no trouble with a humble old man, but one night soldiers were mortally frightened. They were travelling by the temple as suddenly a bell sounded gloomy and depressing on the belfry in silent darkness. A commodore began to clear up if any criminal knew about transit of the metropolitan, but the belfry was closed. Frightened watchmen were crossing themselves when the procession was departing because candles lit spontaneously, flashing lights were blinking in the windows.

12

And land under the empress's feet was firm, even sagged again, she walked easily as if she were raised by a force – Matsievich's trial became a real victory. Rebel resistance of clergy was suppressed by the clergy itself without disorders or disturbances of cautious people.

Pleasant feeling of victory sounded in a voice of the empress Catherine when she was speaking at regular meeting of the Synod. Her moist eyes were

sparkling, posture was confident and proud, the empress had good reasons to speak as a victor, as a mistress of the situation.

“Why aren’t you shocked by your great riches which make you so powerful that you had to feel that your position contradicts to the spirit of your calling. Aren’t you the successors of the Apostles who are commanded by God to preach contempt for the riches and who could be only the poor? Their kingdom was not of this world. Do you agree with me? Aren’t my words true?”

The empress could afford light reproach in her voice only at the beginning. Let one of these pastors, accustomed to high worship, try to contest against her – she will be able to bring him to his level. In the cell of Arceniy Matsievich there were many letters found during the search from many people, who were present here and were dressed in shining clothes; let these arrested letters lie until a certain time, but she could take them at any time she wanted. The empress can and must talk to them in an other tone, tone with iron, but not with women’s accusations.

“How can you use the riches without contradiction to your position which must be inseparable with Christian poverty? How dare you use such property and lands which make you as mighty as czars without compunction? Ah! You have more slaves than some European princes have the lieges, don’t you? You are too educated and understand that this property causes so many malversations in the state, that you can save this property only being unfair to the state itself; and you must recognize that you must be more fair than anybody else and if you aren’t, you are more guilty because you know your duties more than others.” Spotted and angry blush appeared on the empress’s face. How can one explain them: now you are not servants of altar, not dignitaries, but you are public officers and diadem is the main thing for you.

“If I can rely on your trustiness, devotion, so I can hope that you will be my faithful subjects. If I’m right, return me those things which you had stolen insensibly and gradually.”

Immovable members of Synod were sitting as if they were rock-hewn, they were afraid even of looking around, of moving. Are they thieves now? Those who saved and had been multiplying property given to monasteries and churches for ages? Those who opened schools, printings, and hospitals for poor people? It meant that they robbed this sweaty and angry foreigner who turned up on their grey heads and didn’t have even a drop of Russian blood, who declared them fondly and boldly as if she were throwing sand at them, “Everything Russian is mine!”

But who dares express such thoughts aloud? There are letters of Saint-Petersburg Gavriil, Tver Aphanasiy, Amvrosiy Krutitskiy and Moscow Timophey among Matsievich’s arrested letters. It is enough to shake off the dust from the pages and ink will not have time to fade. Who dares, when Arceniy Matsievich is before eyes, Arceniy who caught a cold on his way and scurvy influenced him after expeditions to Kamchatka – he was bald, running sores

appeared on his body; Matsievich, respected hierarch became defrocked as if he were a real thief?

The empress was looking attentively at wrinkly faces of pastors, she guessed about discourteous thoughts in their wise heads, but she didn't take on this, it pleased her and set her laughing; something forced her to answer in a funny Russian word – she began to learn Russian sayings with pleasure, she wanted to say something like “There you are!” but she couldn't.

But she sat at the writing table immediately after the Synod. She had to tell Voltaire about her mellowness, “Arceniy, Rostov bishop... was judged by Novgorod metropolitan and by the whole Synod as a fanatic, guilty in enemy intentions towards both Orthodox and supreme power, he was defrocked and then he was under world command. I forgave him and made him a monk.” Runners were rushing at night and didn't pity horses as it was ordered in the highest direction, they were bringing one more direction too. Curly lines on the expensive paper told, “Comparing himself with Chrysostomin in patience, trying to arouse clamour and displeasure towards the government, he used all means in cunning contrivances, took aspersion, predictions, devotions and God's name in vain unscrupulously... And that's why – under strong supervision, and they will give him neither ink nor paper.”

Horses were rushing in hollows and forests so fast that even white foam was flying from a bit, runners were in a hurry...

13

Prosecutor Naryshkin found Arceniy Matsievich in the monastery yard. The metropolitan was cutting wood, he was breathing heavily – he had to mop the floor, to cut wood and to do other hard work several times a week, according to judgment. Arceniy was just cutting thick billet with expiration, but it was gnarled and couldn't be taken at one dash, so Arceniy raised it over the head together with stuck ax to cut it at woodblock for the second time; whether the billet was too heavy or his strength oozed away, but he was wobbling as if he were drunk.

“I have to make an examination,” Naryshkin said.

Arceniy began to free his ax out of the billet, twitching an ax-handle silently, at last he managed to do it and followed Naryshkin without saying a word.

It was clear that prosecutor knew Matsievich's life in the monastery very well.

“Did you say that previous emperors and czars had given Church different riches? Now one couldn't hope for the honours, he could be even robbed. They had taken away even ornaments in Yaroslavl?” Naryshkin was looking at the paper, sticking, as if he were reading the written very carefully or didn't want to look at metropolitan.

“God knows it's harsh truth.”

“Even Turks award their mosques, but there is Sodom and Gomorrah in Russia.” Are these words yours?”

“An angel will come down from heaven on the last day – and the enemy of the Church won’t hide.”

“Did you tell a watchman Alekseevskiy that nobility forgot their ancestors who had given monasteries lands and that now nobility was robbing?”

“Only holy heaven know the truth.”

“At present courtiers, greedy for church property, clapped on that bad decree to the empress, because she didn’t know Russian laws and life, then she signed it blindly...” Do you affirm that it is true?” Naryshkin had his eyes glued to the paper as if they were stuck there.

“Who has ears let he hear what Spirit tells Churches...”

“How cunning he is, he is hiding behind the Revelation,” Naryshkin’s thought was buzzing as angry and annoyed wasp. Arceniy is not only a rebel himself but he gives the others unreasonable expectations. Archimandrite Anthony believed in this old prisoner’s chatter and comforted among monks, “There will be changes on the emperor’s throne. Arceniy will be dismissed, he will become a pontiff again, property will be given back to monasteries and Arceniy will take me with him.” And archimandrite was pleased with talks among clergy, that Synod took place with the violation of indigenous rights, that’s why the metropolitan wasn’t actually defrocked and everything ended in ordinary disguise. God took the mind away of the heartless judges at that moment. Everything was written in prosecutorial papers and Matsievich finished with excuses in vain, he didn’t know that there were interrogatories, when drunkard deacon Lebedev gave denunciation, at that moment Antony denied him and in addition he told at the inquest as Arceniy accused the Holy Synod.

“Didn’t you tell about Synod, didn’t you insult it?”

“No, I didn’t, I told only that I wrote to Synod, being a bishop, so as to stand before the Judgement safely. And Synod explained my thoughts wrong, that’s why I would plead with him at the Judgement,” Arceniy shook his head, his back hurt because he he had been cutting the jag of wood for the whole day. It was difficult for him to stand, pain was worse, now he felt as if he lay with his back on bare-heated oven.

At last Arceniy took out a copper coin from his pocket and put it on prosecutorial papers.

“You give alms? Me?!” – Naryshkin’s face turned pale, he banged his hand on the table hammer and tongs, there was even a pat under ringing set of ancient monastic cells – “I’m a prosecutor but not a beggar!”

Arceniy only shook his head sadly. In his vision he saw Naryshkin and people who were bowing him ingratiatingly, because he became a great superior, proprietor of state plants, he saw as if Naryshkin was being examined, because he spent much money, as if he were imprisoned in the castle, and had only five copecks a day – he would never have more.

The metropolitan told quietly, “Take it, you will see you need it.” Annoyed Naryshkin was looking for facts about Arceniy even harder, examining monks, world monastery servants, he closed them in cells for several days without water and food “to think and remember.” And he found so much that the empress gave this case immediately to an Attorney-General Vyasemskiy.

“Learn, if there are particularly robust casemate for this liar in Vyborg, Narva or Reval” – the empress ordered and she was pleased with the casual word – “name him the Liar and nobody will know the other name. Nobody will have right to know...”

14

In Autumn 1770 crows were circling over Moscow, and their evil cry under high lead clouds was curdling the blood of frightened Muscovites. While the bands of loud balls were ringing about bigger or smaller victory in Turkish war in Saint-Petersburg, an invisible enemy, for whom there weren't any barriers, penetrated into almost every home of Moscow – plague entered the town unexpectedly and decimated the population as mature grass. Doctors and scientists sent urgent dispatches to Petersburg, asked what to do to stop epidemic, but those dispatches were left in the offices, went from one table to another; one of fortune-tellers advised to make a fire to smudge a trouble – and those black smokes in shaky columns were rising up over Moscow as enigmatic and illusive forest.

Disease began in General overland hospital, among those who returned from Turkish attack, then moved to Sukonniy yard. Governance couldn't isolate workers from Sukonniy yard, fearful people were running away, preading plague in the town.

A boy from the Strahovs family brought a note with a number of dead people every day, that's why people opened windows, seeing crimson coat with blue collar of small messenger and were asking anxiously.

“Hey, boy, how many?”

“Six hundred!”

“How many, how many?”

“Six hundred!” the boy cried again and the inhabitants crossed themselves gladly, “Thanks God, thanks God...”

People hoped for grateful sign, because yesterday the same boy in crimson coat answered, “Eight hundred!”

One could hardly take away bodies covered with black and green thick flies, that's why crows got used to it and were not afraid of people. Superintendent ordered to dismiss criminals from prisons and to create brigades responsible for burial – those criminals robbed poor people at the same time. Members of those brigades, in masks and greased coats, were pulling bodies with hooks like blocks, threw them on carts, brought them out of the town or threw them there in pits, broke into houses and pulled alive people to isolation – Muscovites hid

the sick not let healthy men get into isolation, because they could only die there. General governor count Saltykov left Moscow and ran to village Marphino as if from the fire, officers went after him, noblemen, clerks were running away. Eleven months later, after the beginning of the epidemic, the empress Catherine sent prince Grigoriy Orlov, General-in-chief with wide latitudes, general and her favourite to Moscow.

There was a phobia of fear. And spreading rumours were quick too in this period of human grief.

There were talks, “The icon of Bogolub Our Lady near Varvar Gates will save us!”

All people went there, elbowing and swearing, they had hopes for the last save. People were touching the icon, gave expensive contributions, read devotions at prayers served by impersonal celebrants who appeared immediately and didn't have right to do it without pontiff's blessing.

New trouble burst out and flamed like a fire at the harvest time. That icon was ordered to be taken to the Church of John and Kir by somebody to stop plague, and priests had to be brought to ecclesiastic command. Annoyed people defended priests by force, and soldiers tried to take away the chest with contributions.

The bells were ringing anxiously near Spass Gates and their sounds were floating over frightened Moscow streets.

“They rob Our Lady!” this cry raised thousands of people, some of them grabbed oak pile, the others took any stones they saw.

The rebels broke into Chudov monastery in the search of guilties, smeared merchant Ptitsin's wine-cellars, dashed to revenge on hateful general Yeropkin. Huge hordes of people streamed to Kremlin, intentions of rebels were unquestioned.

There was a command, “Drive cannons up to Spassky Gate, Borovitskiy and Nikolskiy Gates!”

The white flag, carried by officers to rebels, was treaded down and torn up, and the truce agents could hardly save.

The order sounded, “Fire by buck-shot!”

Cannons hammered away almost together, cannon-balls were falling, arcing, with evil whistle among people: cries, groans, crippled bodies and a new command “Aim!” stopped the rebels.

On the next day cavalry went on the attack, shining with swords in September sun.

Rebellion was suppressed. Clerk wrote on the paper an urgent report to Petersburg, splashing ink nervously after the events, “78 people are killed, 279 are arrested, 72 are beaten with whips and lagged, 91 are beaten with whips and sent to official works, 4 are hung.”

Meanwhile craftsmen were bothering in foundries in Petersburg and metal was melted for the urgent order. The empress ordered to make service medal for

suppressing of the rebellion “For releasing Moscow from canker” in honour of general Orlov. Prince Grigoriy was greeted in the court with music, ceremonies as a real hero.

But Moscow didn't care an orchestra – the carts were groaning, bodies of killed people and those who died from plague were brought away, new cemeteries were built – Vagankovsk, Dorogomilovsk, Danilovsk, Miusk, Preobrazhensk, Vvedensk... Two thousand Muscovites died, almost as many inhabitants as there were at the beginning of that century in the town, they died from plague which was brought from victorious war with Turkey, which was celebrated loudly with parties, balls and high honours.

15

She was sure that she would never meet this metropolitan (former metropolitan, for luck) who was really wrinkled from years of living, like a dried pear, sharp-tongued old man, with mangy hair from old scurvy, unpleasant and acid monk: fast horses brought him far to the North. If recollections about Arceniy flitted through her mind, the empress tried to sponge them out like an intruder.

First she couldn't divest herself of the recollection about Matsievich. At that time there was an unexpected news about sudden death of bishop Gedeon on the way to Pskov – he could only clutch at his heart and cry, a cabman couldn't even stop the cart. “All in a lifetime, annoying and unexpected things happen” – she divested herself of the evil recollection: Arceniy's prediction about Gedeon in the court – “concourse of circumstances, that's all.”

In less than two months the second sad news came in Petersburg, news was strange, unforeseen, obscure.

The Dome of holy Three Church, near Cross Chamber in the Kremlin where the metropolitan was judged, fell. The building wasn't very old, it was built by good workers, even foreigners were invited to control.

The church ruined; thank God a service wasn't being said, and there was nobody there, it ruined without rhyme or reason, without wind and storm, without earthquake: only the land jumped and clubs of grey dust like ashes rose into the sky.

Could it be coincidence? People were surprised – their fathers and grandfathers didn't remember falling churches, rumours were spreading.

“For our sins...”

“Maybe not ours.”

“The righteous was judged here.”

“But the metropolitan warned...”

“This is the end of the world: God shows signs.”

The crowd was thickening, the ring round people was narrowing, they were even mobbing on broken brick, only a powder soared from under the feet.

“Dismiss!” guard cried and aimed a blow as if they were going to hit, but they cried so timidly and uncertainly because they were horror-struck themselves.

“And they mocked metropolitan Arceniy,” people were gossiping in low voices, looking around carefully, were afraid of strangers near them, because one could smell not only this powder of bricks, but casemate mold for careless words. The empress couldn’t divest herself of the recollections and bitter unwilling Matsievich’s words. Dignitaries, called urgently, could just spread their arms, only Sheshkovskiy dared express his opinion.

“Somebody is reported to give the Lier relics of Dimitriy... That’s why he has inexplicable strength now.”

Sheshkovskiy told and stumbled, he was sorry for his hastiness: the empress’s face was transforming and he became red in the face, the spots appeared on his face.

“You have to guard sparrows but not the state criminal!” – the courtiers have never seen their empress in this state, usually she was deliberate and composed – “Find out who is guilty!”

Sheshkovskiy was quietly hiding behind the court, a goose-skin appeared on his body as if he got out of water to a cold wind – he could get in prison in this situation where his prisoners were kept earlier.

Several nights after it she dreamed of unusual picture of the church which was breaking down, earth groans and clouds of dust in the sky; she awoke shivering, tried even to read, but at the moment she was going to sleep the church dome began to turn and fall...

Misfortunes never come alone. There were many alarm reports from Sheshkovskiy who began to bumble or to get a habit of thinking longer than usually after that conversation. Her secret enemies, who considered Ivan Antonovich to be fair pretender for throne, became very active.

Next day after her enthronement Catherine II sent major-general Silin her decree.

“On receiving this letter you must, on that day or the next one, bring the prisoner kept in Shlisselburg Fortress to Kexholm under your control and to prepare, according to the decree, to clean and tidy up the best rooms in Shlisselburg.”

On July, 4 major-general reported about unusual adventure from village Morya, in three dozen miles from Shlisselburg. A storm broke their simple boat on the lake and they were waiting for another boat with a prisoner to get to Kexholm. Ivan Antonovich was delivered back to Shlisselburg at last.

The new empress visited her rival in casemates of evil glory with an unknown obscure compassion. She looked, shook her head and calmed down. “He is crazy, let he linger out his life.”

Now she couldn’t calm down, she couldn’t be light-headed to new reports, it would be an unforgivable error.

“And there are those who envy my luck.” She made a face as if she had a toothache and this dull pain didn’t stop.

“If somebody wants to dismiss Ivan Antonovich – even the smallest attempt...”
– the empress ordered in such a voice that nobody wanted to find out the details.

16

Music sounded in Saxon pub, nice Gipsies were dancing in Saxon pub, Gipsies were dark-complexioned and slim, one were more beautiful than others; if one of them turned her waist and began to twist her bright skirt, officer Shvanchich was seized with languor, a blush mounted to his face and his young body was boiling and springing. Officers liked to come here, Shvanchich didn't avoid it either. He tasted red wine brought from far Spanish lands, quick music excited him, and it called to dance, but he was interested in one Gipsy who was winking at him. Shining and hot, she winking at everybody, but Shvanchich, heated with wine, thought that she was winking particularly.

Brothers Orlov tumbled in the pub as in their own house, Fedor and Aleksey, both were tall and square-built, drunk, went to Shvanchich's table, seeing him, Aleksey managed to pinch Gipsy who was smiling and winking at Shvanchich, on the way.

Shvanchich muttered genially, “Don't touch, it's mine.”

“Did you buy her on the market?” Aleksey asked, showing his teeth.

“Gipsy tribe belongs to the world,” Aleksey continued joking. “And they belong to those who are stronger.”

Husky understood the challenge and roared like an angry bear awaked in winter. He was not shorter or weaker than all five Orlov brothers, he could break a brick in the wall and he took to fight like a duck to water – fought for dear life, smiling.

“Go to hell,” he said and pronounced swear word as twisted as sheep's horns. Aleksey landed a blow on his ear, without long thinking, but poorly, the rival beat a hand back and, in his turn, Aleksey got the kick and fell head over heels.

In a moment a ball of three bodies was rolling among tables, bundled out at the doorstep, broken door cracked; Shvanchich managed to spring to his feet and beat both brothers, his back was turned towards the wall.

Wine was mixed with blood, adding fever in the fight, he was holding long against two, till Aleksey stroke just in the face: very strong, he even felt the hand in his shoulder, the hand which could cut off a head of an old beef at one fling of sword.

When Shvanchich fell there was a real fun for Fedor and Aleksey – he was kicked in the pope and ribs, they stroke his hands which covered the face, they beat him vilently together, and in turn, untill the body was silent and didn't move.

Shvanchich lay in the dirt long, under a night rain, he was breathing hard and groaning till Aleksey, overfull with foreign wine, came out to wind.

Shvanchich managed to stand up, straining every nerve, whipped out his sword and cut Aleksey's face. He could be splitted, but for Shvanchich's beaten hand

(he was lucky), the blade cut only the cheek from ear to mouth. Fedor managed to bring bloody, insensible brother to a surgeon – a scar like a deep rut remained which now became blue, now turned purple.

That event was the only Aleksey's defeat. He could do what he liked and he was sure in impunity – there was a broad back of brother Grigoriy behind him.

Catherine noticed Grigoriy when she was a great princess, long before enthronement. Having taken Grigoriy from her good cummer countess Bryus, great princess appreciated countess's taste – young and tough Grigoriy's body was fumbling her violently, was throwing her into rage, into desperation, she forgot her husband and previous lovers, she was carried by stormy waves and she wanted this headlong flow never to stop. Truthful valet Vasiliy Shkurin opened the door every time softly, without lighting up, and Grigoriy stealed in a bedroom.

But once, enjoying young and tough lover's body and incurving like a fish thrown on the bank, she touched gently his cheek in the ecstasy of caress. She touched and ran cold, she felt a deep Aleksey's scar under fingers.

She jumped out of bed and lighted a candle.

“How dared you?” – indignant half cry – half whisper didn't affect Aleksey.

“Isn't it all the same to you” – tired Aleksey began to put on his pants – “you shouldn't quarrel with the Orlovs because they are guardsmen not only in the bed but...” he didn't finish.

Aleksey's words became predictive if there was a need to hide a man.

Grigoriy really turned out to be smart not only in bed, he was a sharp man.

When the empress became very gentle with Grigoriy Potyomkin who carved out a career for himself quickly from a corporal to a bedchamber, and Potyomkin was looking at plump empress's body with languishing look, the Orlovs found him alone.

“This flesh isn't for your teeth,” Grigoriy Orlov said and punched Potyomkin's teeth so that they even crunched.

“This is nice pestle but for another mortar,” Aleksey smiled with wry smile and smashed him in the pope.

He saw stars, Potyomkin fell and couldn't defend himself from kicking. lying between brothers. They beat him in a stomach, ribs, blood flowed from his mouth; although he covered his face, hit in the eye prevented him from consciousness: rounds of different colours shone in the eyes suddenly, then went out suddenly too; night fell.

He was spitting blood long, toddled again as in the childhood, but powerful natural force of the body won at last, he only went blind in one eye. Twenty-year old bedchamber didn't appear on the Imperial Court long.

And Grigoriy Orlov showed himself well not only in the bed. When Voltaire sent his first letter to the empress Catherine, admiring her future reforms, Grigoriy was whether giving advice or expressed his opinion aloud, “It would be nice to send him sables...”

The empress looked sharply, it was look of hesitation or categorical incomppliance: would she be understood right?

Grigoriy said in a hard tone, “Sables are in France sables too.”

The empress listened to his opinion about Glebov carefully.

“People say everywhere that Glebov mixed the Imperial Treasury with his own one,” she expressed her thoughts direct like a soldier, in her usual manner, without twisting them in cunning lace of courtesy. “He assumed the bigger part of money which was given for resettlement of Serbs, Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks to Ukraine.”

When the empress called Glebov he didn't refuse to her surprise, he bowed his head like a lamb as if he put it for execution.

“I'm quilty, empress,” Glebov answered with the same obedience in his voice.

“Do you understand that there is a Siberian cold?” – angry, but still far lightnings began to twinkle in the empress's eyes.

“I'm quilty, your Majesty,” dignitary said without changing his voice. “But you were a great princess when I gave you twenty five thousand roubles not once, I gave you ten thousand, fifteen thousand roubles which you gambled away, where could I take money?”

The empress dismissed Glebov carefully but didn't bring him to justice – let threat hang over him like a sword of Damocles, maybe he would keep silent.”

But the empress refused Orlov in one thing – to get married to him.

“But your aunt Elizabeth got married to Rasumovskiy and nobody would criticize you,” Grigoriy insisted.

She began to talk with count Panin about it nicely, she supposed him to know everything. At the same time she considered him to be cunning and wise snake from Bible Engraving who could calculate everything a few steps forward.

This time Panin answered without usual frills, “The empress's word is a law for me. And who will obey a countess Orlova?”

17

“Banker Suderland, Your Majesty!” – both halves of gilded door opened, Suderland entered, stepping out briskly as usual.

“I'm so glad to see you, my dear banker.” The empress smiled sincerely, really she became more cheerful from every meeting with this stranger who was educated and gallant, but he never went down to an annoying and ordinary at the court treacle of flattery.

“I celebrate the day of audience as a holiday in my calendar every time.” – Suderland was looking tenderly at the empress's seal-ring with wonderful stone which was shimmering with an unusual, almost purple hue, – he hadn't seen it before.

“You guess, why bankers are invited – we need money.” Suderland was very easy for the empress, she was sure (she had checked it thoroughly many times) that not a word would pass from his lips outside the court. “We need much money.”

“Great people need much money,” a banker bowed because he tried to hide an acid uncertainty which could appear on his face and betray him, he had troubles with previous loan which hadn’t been returned.

“I see you master science of court flattery as a model bushel.”

“No, Your Majesty, I simply cite words said by Diderot, and by Voltaire, and by Grimm in all European crossroads.”

Although, Suderland had troubles with loans before, he was sure they would be repaid many times: the throne was strong, revolts were suppressed, therefore they would pay.

“I like bankers not only for giving money but for the ability to put stupid questions: what is this money for?” the empress came up to the window and looked at a spring distance silently. Gloomy clouds were floating on an innocent and virtuous sky-blue, washed after winter, but clouds were glooming factitiously, not in earnest, they didn’t awake dreary autumnal sadness in a soul; a flock of rooks sat on unblown branches where greenness hardly appeared and didn’t glory – black flecks in greeny smoke as deliberately drawn in ink by clumsy child’s hand. And it is so every spring, and many, many springs, and hundreds of years changeless time of revival of nature will come; there won’t be the great empress on the earth but birds will be playing airily again on unblown branches. But she must have time, remain, it’s not nice – to power half of the world and disappear without a trace, be covered with a grass.

“My glorious predecessor Peter I” – she turned to a banker again – “he spent almost three thirds of treasury on wars. And what? He remains Peter the Great in the memory of grateful Russians. Maybe I must reach this amount of expenses.

“The greater an aim, the bigger a need in money,” Suderland didn’t want to tell clever things, he had a toothache, but it wasn’t time for making faces.

“Sometimes I can’t, sometimes I have a fear to tell my thoughts to courtiers, because somebody will explain them wrong by all means,” the empress wanted to share her thoughts as if they were wallowing and aspiring to a wide world.

“What remains after a man when he goes away?”

She looked at a banker so as if he was the only in the world who knew the answer. Surprised Suderland said in a prolonged voice: “I don’t kno-o-w. I have enough hardships in this life.”

“What remained after Persian King David? Or after Alexander of Macedon? Or after an owner of all the worlds Chingishan?” – she insisted as on an examination and a banker had to give the right answer – “where are towns built by them, where are palaces lovingly built by them? They aren’t. Where are the roads made by them? There is only an unbelievable number of foreign and our killed fighters. But their names – Dariy, Alexander of Macedon and Chingishan are floating proudly over the centuries like these clouds over a spring Petersburg. I’ll tell you what remains after the great in the world history: a myth remains. This is an unbelievable discovery for me... A myth is something

ephemeral, ethereal, intangible, only myth is able to win incomprehensible flow of centuries. Time and wars will destroy palaces and towns, peoples will disappear, but the myth of Dariy, Alexander of Macedon and Chingishan will remain forever.”

“But I don’t know the price of myths on the market... And is it possible to get them for money?” Suderland’s toothache even stopped.

“We need money, more and more,” – the empress didn’t take offence at an irony – “if destiny threw me into this country I must take the opportunity... I must be more Russian than the Russians themselves, expand the boundaries of the empire. And it costs something... I must create myth about great Russia from this dirty country of drunkards, thieves, beggars, from recent ulus of remote Chingishan’s province – they will remember who earned this greatness for centuries. I’ll build palaces too, of course, but I’m not sure that time and wars will save them. And myth about great Russia and its empress will be stronger than all prisons...”

“Conception is worth Your Majesty” – Suderland couldn’t hide his doubt – “but chroniclers had already written about the past at various parchments, I’m sorry, but not everything is so rose-coloured in Russia today because simple people don’t live in a luxury.”

The empress answered wearily, “Banker, it’s nonsense. My honied courtiers think that I don’t know how peasants eat acorns, marsh grass and straw in hungry winters, sleep in a dirt with stock, landowners create harems of women serfs. But believe me, it will be forgotten, only the greatness remains. Grateful descendants will put monuments to me – I’ll be standing proudly on a high pedestal, and glorious men of the empire will be somewhere below, my assistants, my favorites, sculptors will understand themselves who to represent and in what posture... We’ll redact the past as we need, whatever chroniclers, witnesses, philosophers, statesmen and military men tell. We’ll put all chroniclers to rights – we’ll rewrite the history of Russia, real parchments will be burnt but their right lists remain. All historical documentaries will be cleaned thoroughly, beginning with Nestor the chronicler and up to nearest times, everything must correspond to the great myth, it will be impossible to prove something other. Not only foreign land but its history will be heroic history of Russia.”

“I suppose to agree with bank houses of Netherlands,” Suderland translated greatness of plans from one language into another, into his finance.

But the empress thought over the sum from a banker. Burden of military spendings was not easy, but there were many expectants. Separately, not for prying eyes, she kept records of gifts for those who comforted her in a bedroom, who could make her forget about back-breaking labour on the throne. She gave Orlov very little: one hundred roubles for building a house, a right for using wine-cellars and carriages of royal court during a year, left him all presented estates and one hundred and fifty thousand of annual pension. She gave Zorich a

town, Vasilchikov received fifty thousand roubles, a silver service, a house in Million street and a village in addition, Yermolov got one hundred and thirty roubles and four thousand bonds, Potyomkin today – one hundred thousand more... And petitioners from all sides, yesterday there were petitioners from Kiev-Mohyla Academy who asked for professors – thirteen copecks a day is enough for them. And Suderland isn't idle to think – a banker is a nice man, he presented with such a pretty dog. He will try to converse with her if he is quickwitted. Expenses are very strange things, they grow as raised pastry. Once she wasn't lazy and decided to count the sum of presents for lovers, except for current expenses, with German punctuality. Orlov brothers got seventeen million roubles, Vysotskiy didn't cost more than three hundred thousand, but Vasilchikov – one million one hundred thousand, Zavadovskiy – one million three hundred eighty, Zorich was a great comforter – one million four hundred twenty, Korsakov was able to get only nine hundred and twenty thousand, Lanskoj, sweet child, she didn't pity seven million twenty hundred and sixty thousand, Yermolov was worthy only five hundred and fifty thousand, Mamonov, who was a real beast in bed, cost one million eight hundred eighty thousand, Zubov brothers were over them with three million and a half. But nobody could be compared with Potyomkin: fifty million – this was without palaces, jewelry and tableware, without bonds. And the Orlovs got almost fifty thousand of those bonds, Vasilchikov received only seven, Zavadovskiy had six thousand in Malaya Rus and two in Poland, Korsakov was presented with four hundred Polish bonds. She couldn't count them all because one must borrow money and then return it, and bonds are free of charge, they reproduce themselves.

“Besides, I'll be grateful for advice: how many assignments can be emitted and will it be troublesome for a treasure-house if Russian people pay taxes in paper assignments, but White Rus and Mala Rus pay in real silver roubles?”

Suderland knew local finances very well, he understood external and internal debts, otherwise there is nothing to do in this country. A roll of paper assignments, created by Catherine II, grew, they depreciated – only limit of this roll was a problem. Tax payment in paper money for Russians but in silver for White Rus and Mala Rus meant to quintuple a burden in those lands – one silver rouble cost twenty two paper roubles. Nobody told about it aloud but Suderland understood well that besides the burden which came upon White Rus and Mala Rus, the empress's intention would have rather far repercussions. Water is running down from a mountain, money will run in the same way – merchants and plant owners won't invest money in lands where a tax mountain, gold and silver will flow to a valley – they'll see decline of those lands only within years. And the prices from paper roll are running across – bread cost seven times cheaper when the empress was mounting the throne, the price rose from ninety six copecks for a quarter of rye to seven roubles. How to survive. But it's not Suderland's trouble.

“Your Majesty, as far as I know, Russian debts exceeded three times an annual income of treasury. That’s why I advise not to coin money so quickly... It’s your will to make different taxes in different lands but can’t it lead to a displeasure, to a rebellion?”

“I have good doctors for this disease – Michelson, Suvorov, that’s why it will be cured.”

Next day Suderland’s coach was running to Netherlands, jumping on the spring potholes and splashing mud, leaving behind, mile by mile, this state, enigmatic and obscure for ordinary mind.

18

Kalnishevskiy and Matsievich were not fated to meet again, but that conversation crossed Peter’s mind not once. He recalled his returning to Ukraine after the coronation too.

“What shall we expect, lord?” Kalnishevskiy asked the metropolitan. Two old people in their sixties, one was white-headed, the other was bald, were talking silently that nobody could hear them. “It’s bad in Ukraine, and an air is not for me here...”

Kalnishevskiy inbreathed by his nose so as that air, smelling curiously, was his main problem.

“Light Easter days, it seems that goodness and appeasement, good words must be in the soul... But no, sozzled kern was going to meet yesterday, stumbling and falling, having seen his friend he was screaming in the street, “Christ has risen from the dead...fuck!”

“I even crossed myself,” and Kalnishevskiy put a cross on himself as if this picture were before his eyes.

The metropolitan recalled other bitter cases, because he didn’t outstay long, he travelled much in Rostov and Yaroslavl lands. “Peter, I don’t know. God punished Russia for something...”

“Our people say that czarevitch Aleksej damned Peter I, murderer of his son, and he prophesied, dying, “God will punish Russia because of you.”

“Who knows, maybe a curse fell down on earth because he killed his son, and because he changed the words “Do you believe?” into “Do you drink?” on confession” – Arceniy took breath, his health was weak because of Siberian trips – “I think not only degenerate emperor is guilty... All those who are called “blossom”, educated, important, scientists, pastors, are accountable to God.

From their consent, sometimes for a mean benefit people are soldered, kept for a cattle. And besides, they explain people that they are the best and the bravest, that they are prepared not for handicraft and plough but for brigandage and wars. And then everything is simple: neighbour’s house is white and full of food, neighbour is heartless, though he worked hard to be wealthy, but he doesn’t share with those who had fun in a pub; they tell poor people to go and take away everything from white house, everything is yours too... And they even make a pastor bless brigandage. And nobody among that “blossom”,

courtiers and scientists, tells that brigandage is brigandage, and they explain hungry people that they will have very little, greedy dignitaries get everything received in brigandages and wars. Having robbed one house, they go to rob the next one, and this repeats again and again...”

“It can’t be everlasting.”

“I wouldn’t like... The worst can happen in this human pot. It’s time for new Chingishan to come, he will be in trousers or in a skirt, it doesn’t matter, he will lead ruinous people, hungry and enraged people with his finger. And people will believe this Chingishan, they will even sing of him, build monuments to him. This imperial plague of envy and robbery is more dreadful than the plague itself, because this communicable disease die neither in a frost nor in the sunshine. And so as God saved Chingishan, and new Batiy comes, and everything returns...”

“Lord, what should we do? Can we wait for Batiy?”

Kalnishevskiy crushed down an unexpected irritation, but badly. He thought with anger, “It’s easy for the metropolitan to consider from his remote pulpit, because he is a member of Synod and can tell the empress everything he likes... Tried he in my place: on the one hand flame is flashing over the houses from Tatar raids, on the other hand there – Poland is looking awry, and besides, Russian dignitary stretches an avid paw, and unknown people are swarming like mosquitoes in wet summer.”

“Peter, well wherein we are not present,” the metropolitan burst into laughing, and Kalnishevskiy even didn’t notice that he answered that was unsaid aloud.

“What to do? To pray and ask Divine benediction. And to run the show. God gave Cossacks beneficial land, so do you expect him to send by post an order to ennoble it so that rye, wheat made noise instead of feather-grass? God grants not every day... Or you expect people, who were not happy in their land, to settle in yours?”

Kalnishevskiy thought much on the way home, weighed everything said by acid metropolitan, first he got angry with him in mind, but he began to consider, calming down, that really they hadn’t to miss time for economy. There are people among Zaporozhian cossacks who want to get married, who are tired from campaigns – why not to help them to have their own farms? Even unmarried one will work on the land with pleasure. To make farms on the Samara river, let them plant gardens, work near hives. There can be half a thousand of such farms. And peasants from Hetmanschyna, Slobozhanschyna can settle, even escapees from Polish Ukraine. They won’t have burdens of taxes and other obligations here. There are more than ten thousand Sech cossacks, and even nearly twenty with those in tents. And a couple or more married cossacks who live in their farms and suburbs. There are nearly one hundred fifty thousand peasants, and maybe two hundred thousand peasants in Zaporozhian lands in total – this is a huge strength... There will be those who can enrich the land.

A coach was swinging on a far way, Kalnishevskiy was looking at fields and forests through the window, he seemed not to notice them – he wanted to see the future, in years, to see sounding gardens and hives buzzing anxiously. But he didn't have to run the show then. Not hives were waiting for him at home – fathers' synod was booming.

“You must lay down a mace, Peter. Catherine didn't like you somehow,” fathers lowered eyes. “You are a good man and a nice ataman. But it's not time to make the empress angry.”

Kalnishevskiy laid down a mace silently. He would like to ask why they troubled him, an old man, when hunger was coming up to Sich, and now they don't need him? But he didn't say a word, only thanked and bowed in all sides.

19

Fogs were flowing to Shlisselburg fortress. They were born above water, covered banks, stone castles, and fogs were very thick till midnight – lanterns on walls seemed to be only yellow dots with easy nimbuses through this grey viscid haze. A guard walked around with torches, but there was no point in doing that, nothing was seen in three steps, only calling of guard helped.

Second lieutenant Mirovich, who was watching as a guard officer, thought, “It's just his time, just starlight time to begin a great matter. A nature even helps.”

He was bothering long and he got an appointment to Shlisselburg fortress at last at one moment and not without help. He, an ordinary second lieutenant Vasilii Yakovlevich Mirovich, must perform great matter this night, two nations will thank him, he has to dismiss a heir to the Russian throne, Ivan Antonovich, who was an emperor from infancy, – he will be thanked from far great-grandfather land. A boat is prepared to bring heir to the safe place.

The clock said two at night, fog didn't lift, became even thicker.

“To arms!” Mirovich's voice was husky, whether with emotion or from the wet weather.

Stamping of soldiers' feet, ghostly flashing of torches. He has very little at disposal, only thirty eight bayonets, but it's enough for the brave.

“Charge!” – second lieutenant's voice becomes firm.

Sleepy lieutenant colonel, commander of the prison guards, jumped out in his underwear.

“Who gave the right to declare an alarm?”

He is pushed so that he is flying upside down. Mirovich reads out a manifesto about the release quickly, sometimes slurring the words.

A prison guard woke up after a mess, firing back, but to no avail, you can not get in the fog.

Mirovich gives soldiers a new order, “Shoot over the heads!”

A prison guard resists, and then cannon is rolled, core and powder are brought quickly.

“Charge!”

But suddenly a cry from the side of a prison guard, “Don't shoot! We give up!”

Silhouette of a captain Vlasev floats out of the mist, as out of muddy water, goes to Mirovich.

“Go with me, second lieutenant” – Mirovich goes after a captain.

“Can it be so simple?” – the recent excitement gave way to an incredible surprise in his soul – “can this great matter be solved so quickly? And no killed soldiers!”

Tramp of soldiers who went to the officers, silences their solid steps that echoed first, on the damp floor of the fortress. “Is it possible in the world – so simply?” – Mirovich’s body froze more than from the pre-dawn dampness – “and a boat with strong rowers, who are ready, will bring an innocent prisoner?”

Finally, Vlasev stopped near a rough door, covered with mold and fungus.

“Here,” he said, took out a candle and lighted.

Vlasev, Mirovich and one officer from a guard, Checkin, entered the cellar slowly.

There was nobody in the cell, only rags, which are called clothes, hung on the wall, on the table and bed, and on the bench...

“And where is ... Ivan Antonovich?” – Mirovich looked at Vlasev slowly.

And here, in shimmering of purblind flame, he notices something on the floor, bends to see, catches captain’s hand with a candle, tilting it lower.

A man, lying on a stone floor, didn’t move, his neck was in blood, and bleeding pool was running, a squirmed man was lying: either he was defending before death or recent seizures reduced the body.

“You?” – Mirovich turned to Vlasev and Checkin – “are you murders?”

Second lieutenant Mirovich didn’t recognize his voice, which was calm now, even too ordinary.

Just a drop of moisture fell from the ceiling, slamming, in silence, which set in suddenly.

“We have an oath” – Checkin sniffed like a schoolboy and backed – “we performed our duty.”

Now everything that happened in Mirovich’s head, was in the same mist, which wrapped up the whole top of the fortress. Soldiers carried the body of the dead former emperor on the ground, lined up in silence.

It was daylight, the sun could not possibly get through the gloom, only the contours of the casemates were outlined against the background of a light sky.

“Weapon to the guard!”

The rustle of clothing, movements, memorized to subconscious as of mechanical toys.

“Last respects to the Emperor – discharge!”

Shots were heard almost at the same time as a rolling thunder, that thunder was darting on the ground, it overcame a squeeze of the ground at last, broke away from a fortress and rolled over the river, hollows, it was rolling and calling to one another.

“You are arrested” – commandant of the prison guards, dressed in a uniform, came up to Mirovich – “your arms, second lieutenant. And you, Vlasev and Checkin, you are arrested too. Handcuff them.”

20

Kosh Otaman’s mace returned to Kalnishevskiy’s hand unexpectedly – elections fell as a white snow on his white head.

“Kalnishevskiy must be Kosh Otaman!”

“He knows well, we agree!”

He began to exhort society, “Brothers, why shall we change one man into another one?”

There was nothing to prove: cossacks were booming, crying out objections, cackling like disturbed geese.

Then he began to tell about more important reasons.

“One can’t do this without edict of the empress. It’s bad to quarrel for a mace. And time is not the best for it.”

“We can do without somebody’s guidance! Somebody foreign has been stringing us as blind beasts for a long time...”

“Be afraid of God, we can elect from ours!”

“Kalnysh! Peter, don’t neglect us!”

It would be better warm the bones, these bones deserved rest, they worked hard, but people were crying so loud that he agreed at last.

First years flashed as one day. And Kosh Otaman began the matter discussed with Matsievich, matter he got angry for and advised – for economy. Appletrees and pears raised in the gardens on new farms, bushed, animals were bleating in those backyards; eventually land was covered not only with hamlets but with whole settlements.

And when new clouds hung over Sich, he invited war clerk Glob and captain Golovatyy, because Christmas continued, mummers didn’t leave doosteps.

Kosh Otaman called Jura by a bell when they had dinner and drank a glass.

“Don’t let anybody!”

And then he took out paper, quill with ink, put it before Glob, “Write!”

Everything may happen in state matters, it doesn’t always look through calendars, that’s why he sat comfortable and dunked quill.

“Peter, what to write?”

“Write a report about me for the empress.”

Glob even bowed head and narrowed his lids as if he were going to pull the thread into a small eye of a needle.

“Peter, we’ve drunk only one glass.”

“Write, write. And if you think that I’m bored one in a report, add something about you, about Pavel for company.”

Glob was still looking, narrowing his lids as if he were aiming at that invisible needle and began to understand Kosh Otaman.

“Ivan, write a report that Kosh Otaman Kalnishevskiy together with the same villain war clerk Glob and captain Golovatyy are going to commit an evil deed. If in the nearest time the empress disobey the cossacks in dispute between Zaporozhian Kosh Otaman and Russia for borderlands, Kosh Otaman will be going to Crimean Khan with a deputation. They will choose nearly twenty people and will ask there to receive them under the patronage of Khan. And sign “Pavel Savitskiy”, I agreed with him yesterday.

Golovatyy only scratched behind his ear.

“Peter, isn’t it a bit thick? Siberian frost is stronger than ours” – he put his finger in the window glass with ornate pattern which flourished as fabulous ferns.

“Brothers, I’m old, it’s late to be afraid. And you decide whose name to strike out – I don’t force, and there is enough paper to rewrite.”

“Who are you taking us for?” – Glob growled and looked at Golovatyy who only shook his head.

“Peter, did you consider everything to be well? If they don’t believe, we say, and call trouble for an innocent man?”

“No, Pavel, after Iskra and Kochubey who were executed in vain, in their opinion, nobody would seize an executioner’s ax.”

“But if they take us? Why to prevaricate?”

“Investigation has to prove it. A man heard a bell, but didn’t know where, so he curried favor with the empress, wrote sincerely.”

“Eventually, one can call big trouble to Sich. Nobody knows what slanderer or another lover has on mind...”

Kosh Otaman didn’t answer at once, only closed his eyes as if he were sleepy.

“They won’t go now to fight with us. But some day or other Petersburg will cut our Sich at the root, I’ve never told you this, brothers. But not now: they need us in a war with Turkey.”

Kalnishevskiy raised his bell again.

“Runner!” he said to smart Jura.

Tramp of horses’ hoofs, that raced from the place abruptly, moved away, calmed down and finally stopped.

21

Two foreigners came unexpectedly late in the evening in a confined room over a hall, room taken by lieutenant Mirovich, with obsolete walls and cracked stove. He didn’t have money for better accommodation, because he hadn’t received pay for eighteen months.

“A grandee calls you,” guests told, introducing themselves, but they asked in a firm unquestioned tone.

Mirovich didn’t understand where he was brought in a coach with blinded windows. He managed to look around when he entered: marble stairs of luxurious palace, chiselled fancy banister... “What does this invitation mean?” – Vasiliiy was surprised.

Young well-built man was waiting for him in a spacious hall, dressed in an embroidered kaftan.

“Sit down, second lieutenant.”

“Count Grigoriy Orlov! Powerful favourite, not crowned sovereign of the empire” – Mirovich ran cold.

They remained double.

“We’ll discuss state business now,” count said silently, but underlining each word as if he were standing in front of soldiers’ rank. “You’ll help to fawn her Majesty, your Cossacks’ land, yourself personally. If you are ready, I’ll continue, if not, so audience is over. But don’t forget that there isn’t return after the word “yes”.”

Mirovich felt as if somebody threw two cold douches on him, he hardly came himself after sudden meeting with that personality and new order at once as “go there you don’t know where, do that you don’t know”...

Vasiliy didn’t know what to answer, he stood like a string, he was only blinking, then said, “Your Grace, I can’t so... Or maybe I’m not able, maybe it contradicts my nature and honour, maybe...”

“Enough!” count washed out as if he sabered. “Fortune gives everybody his chance, it’s yours now.”

“Your Grace, we would like to specify...”

Graph shook his head nervously, he didn’t want to keep on talking.

Mirovich begged mentally, “Good gracious, you give me whether reward, or trial, or cunning temptation. How to understand, not to commit unrecoverable evil?”

At the same time Vasiliy has many examples when a man takes the only chance to change his life, these examples are near by, here is count Orlov.

And if it’s such a chance, why not to take it airily? He could continue glory and power of the previous Miroviches, it’s consequence and honest name. His ancestor, colonel Mirovich was spiked on tarred boards during execution of Hetman Ostryanitsa, was burning on a small fire, but he uttered neither cry nor groan. Great-grandfather Ivan, Mazepa’s companion, married his sister to him. When nonconformity of Cossacks’ land was concerned, Fedor Mirovich gave his capital, he wasn’t afraid of stamp of betrayer, got in emigration with Orlick, was in a great engagement up to the end of his life, caring for his land, wandering in Turkey and living in Warsaw. Peter I took away all family property to treasury, deported family to Siberia. And children were allowed to return to Ukraine long after, to their uncle, Hetman Pavel Polubotock.

Grandmother was dismissed two years after children, and she gave her last money to construction of cathedral which was begun by her father-in-law and husband.

Grandmother had been writing numerous petitions for years in vain, asking to return her portion even though. And he, Vasiliy Mirovich, must be worthy his

family and he must not wander in foreign flea-pits, in foreign lands and stand at attention before drunk major.

“Yes,” Mirovich said at last with a deep expiration, as if he jumped in a gulf with closed eyes and didn’t know if it was deep.

“So, listen” – a shadow from a cloud seemed to run across count’s stout red face – “Ivan Antonovich, a former emperor, emperor since infancy, had been kept in Shlisselburg fortress for many years. The empress Catherine wants to dismiss him, bring him out and release. Kind heart of the empress can’t stand this injustice, all the more so, Ivan Antonovich is her remote relative.”

“And who will dare go against her Majesty’s will, who opposes her?”

“Everybody has his enemies, she has many enemies too. Ivan Antonovich must be released under arms, guard is not big, less than twenty bayonets. You’ll have twice as many soldiers when you mount guard.”

Suddenly Mirovich felt anxious, even nails on his fingers were cold, he wasn’t afraid that everything could happen in a fight, random bullet could reach, he had a fear because people would add him an undeniable personal blame to his seeming sins.

Graph noticed Vasiliy’s hesitation and uncertainty, he kept on talking, chopping and underlining each word as if he were nailing.

“On the chance of success all your family estates, both maternal and paternal, will be returned to you. And one more. Her Majesty empress thought up great reforms. If it’s possible to fulfil these plans among all the others, reforms will be connected with Mala Rus – an autonomy will be returned as it was when czar Aleksey Mihaylovich and Bohdan Khmelnytsky were alive. Surely, Hetman will be changed. How he can be a Kosh Otaman in Zaporizhian Sich – there are only very old men among fathers, it’s enough to look at Kalnyshevskiy or Fedoriv – they are like a powder and they are moss-grown. The empress will advise Cossacks to take only young men... Friendly and free Mala Rus, as one hundred years ago, in empress’s opinion, is more profitable to us than land where Mazepas will appear in sequence.

Orlov looked at Mirovich so as if he hung on him deliberately and now it wasn’t easy for the count to bundle an intrusive visitor off; looked so as if he said crossly, “What else do you want?”

“I agree,” Mirovich answered in a cold voice like a water from polynia. “But if something unforeseen happens, I’ll be a state prisoner, in this case an executioner will be my conversationalist, not you.”

Count took a sheet of paper from the table instead of answer, and held it so as to read, not giving it to Mirovich.

Vasiliy ran through the lines talking about his youth, inexperience, wrong concepts about greatness of one or other things – the empress granted him mercy. Clear signature aslant, which the whole empire knew, was unquestioned.

The empress, Orlov and Panin were talking about Turkish matters at the loo- table after dinner. Catherine II would like Grigoriy and Panin, satisfied with food and drink, to quarrel less and not to tell each other come-backs as opportunity offers – there may be many possibilities.

“They say, Turks are pleased with Koliivshchina in Ukraine” – Orlov was skimming cards by a fan, looking for the necessary one as if Turk was hidden somewhere in a pile of cards – “malorus rebel is together with Mussulman one though he is an Orthodox...”

“And this is Turkish fun but for French money. And their prompter has Paris pronunciation too” – Panin droned and raised his eyebrows in surprise when Catherine discarded – “Your Majesty, gambles are forbidden in Russia...”

“Gambles mean to play for money. And we are playing for stones,” joyous, a bit sly smile passed on empress’s face – her answer was witty, and besides, she confused Panin with an unexpected, rather risky, and really venturous move. Some more movements – and Panin made face as if from brash, and he looked at handful of “stones” – diamonds discontentedly; empress pulled the gain towards herself.

“Nikita Ivanovich, concerning story with Turks” – her comfort from the gain disappeared suddenly – “a letter from a Cossack came, they wrote that Kalnyshevskiy was preparing a deputation to a Crimean khan in addition. If we don’t climb down in a dispute about boundary, he will ask khan’s drag, that is Turkish drag.”

“It’s difficult to choose worse time” – Orlov was giving away cards knowingly, having flown over the table, they were clamping flatly as if somebody sticked them – “here is not Siberia for Kosh Otaman, it is a hanging matter.”

“Prince, we still remember Matsievich” – the empress shook her head alertly as if she were looking back whether the metropolitan was within call – “a liar is in a safe cage but he manages to trouble people there.”

“Maybe it’s one more Ukrainian trick” – an idea suggested itself to Panin and couldn’t be kept there and sounded aloud.

“In my opinion it’s time for carpenters to cut a block for gallows. It would be terrible if poor Cossacks joined Turkish army consisting of half a million people” – Orlov waved his hand lubberly and cards rained on the floor – “don’t oversee!”

“Grigoriy Grigorievich, one must brandish here not with hands, sword or rope” – Panin didn’t get used to an imprudence or hastiness – “one have to think it over very well. I see a trick in this letter: maybe they want to frighten Petersburg, maybe get out our actions, it’s necessary to weigh everything thoroughly...”

“While weighing” – Orlov uttered a word as if he were imitating – “Kosh Otaman will get in touch with khan. And call to memory, Nikita Ivanovich, how Vygovskiy joined khan and blossom of our troops was downtrodden in mud

near Konotop, only their foolishness and quarrels saved us from dangerous campaign to Moscow.”

“Maybe simply to wait, not to let the letter go, and then something will be clear,” the empress considered aloud.

“Your words are wise, Your Majesty” – Panin fastened upon words – “I would like to add only one thing. What if to send Kosh Otaman a letter as if from Crimean khan, to think it over thoroughly, so Kosh Otaman’s intention will be clear like an awl from a sack, and we’ll know everything from Kalnyshevskiy’s nearest encirclement.”

“Childish device” – Orlov held his own – “old wriggler will understand the plan.”

“If he understands, we’ll lose nothing. We checked faithfulness, or we would find other excuse.”

“And what if to do worse – to help Cossacks to unite with Crimeans? It will be a performance, even a French can’t invent this...”

Then the empress played only for show, Turkish vision touched her to the quick. She had been hatching for years and would be thinking over her nourished idea more thoroughly, idea which would become the most colossal myth for ages.

She must confirm Voltair’s words thrown to the whole Europe: “Great man by name Catherine!” The time will come and she’ll tell everything she thinks.

Because she was sure that she would come to an understanding with this strange Joseph II, the emperor of the Empire. She snaps his fingers at his tricks – he is dressed in vulgar clothes, goes by an old shabby coach, prohibits the lieges to kneel down and kiss a hand. She’ll find means how to assure Joseph, they will break to pieces Mussulman empire together, where pashas are terribly hard-mouthed, bandits rob towns and villages – even revolted Christian lieges will help. The whole Europe will be rebuilt. They’ll create new state Dakia headed by Christian emperor in the place of Moldova, Valahiya and Bessarabia. Russia will take Ochakov and the Dnieper firth and a land between the Bug and the Dniester in addition.

Ancient Greek monarchy will be renewed on the ruins of barbarous Mussulman state by the will of great man by name Catherine. Her grandson may be throned, for example.

Any trick is possible for the sake of this great game, and any actions, because this game is not for these stones shining before her on the loo-table, this game is much more serious and risky.

Meanwhile the game for stones was going to be over, the empress’s thoughts were far, Panin wasn’t lucky today, that’s why Orlov was banking diamonds from the table with badly hidden pleasure.

The empress said to Panin, “Write, Nikita Ivanovich, write to this Zaporizhian barbate old man, letter from khan, let’s play bo-peep a little. And then we’ll see who among us is nailed in a crown.”

A little time passed after Kalnyshevskiy with Globa and Golovatyy wrote the report for himself to Petersburg, and Kosh Otaman visited the house of Ivan Globa. While hostesses were laying the table, men were discussing how to settle Ukrainians-escapees on lands which were still under Polish rule. A cat entered the room gravely, as a real mistress, walking under hostesses' feet, looked around and began to chafe at feet, at Kalnyshevskiy's feet too.

"Your cat is calm" – Kosh Otaman surprised – "domestic, it's not afraid of people at all."

"There isn't such cat anywhere" – a host smiled darkly – "it even knows German."

"You are a fabler" – Kosh Otaman quackled, shaking his sides.

"And try" – Globa was winding up – "tell some Ukrainian names of women and one German name."

The cat was really domestic, sat on Kalnyshevskiy's knees without ceremonies and began to purr contentedly.

"Pelageya, Mokrina, Gorpina, Nadezhda" – Kosh Otaman rose to clerk's bait and he was stroking the cat slowly, which arched with visible relish – "Marusya, Stepanida, Tecklya, Angelt-Tserbskaya..."

At the last word the cat screamed wildly suddenly, jumped up as it were scalded, looked around, even sparks hissed in its eyes, then darted around the room, incredibly funky by something, it was darting from corner to corner like lightning, with ruffled hair and incessant screaming, at last it jumped on the table, throwing food over, then jumped into the window – a glass from the window rattled and spilled to sides.

"I told you that it knew German" – a host scratched his head, looking at unanticipated losses of a cat."

Kosh Otaman only looked around in bewilderment.

"No, it doesn't speak German" – Globa pitied a guest – "but it smells sausage a mile away. I caught it on the wickedness of a servant, hit it as sheaf, saying "Fredericka", "Augusta", "Angelt", "Tserbskaya". So the cat thought that it would be beaten now..."

Hostesses were laying the table again, smiling and grumbling, servant screened window with a guilty face, and a runner arrived at this time with a post.

"Both letters are from the Crimea" – Globa began to read and explain, subsiding from time to time, deciphering the written – "this is khan's charter. Crim-Girey writes that he can return us Chumaks and Cossacks who were led to yasyr by evil fate. But he holds us to ransom as for his own mother-in-law. And the second letter from khan's man writes that he can help us gratuitously if he faces Bakhchisarai instead of Petersburg."

Kosh Otaman and Globa had been peering at this writing, almost smelling it, considering each word.

“They are different, they seem to be written in one language, but in a different dialect” – war clerk was curling his lips and even licking his lips – “I don’t like something here.”

“It seems to me too – a needle is hidden in this sack of words, unseen from above, but it pricks a hand” – Kosh Otaman made a long face.

Men were twisting, twirling, everything on the table was already cold, till they discussed all problems together.

“Send the other letter to Petersburg. But we should add a word from us, how kind and friendly we are, serve the empress faithfully,” Kosh Otaman said in the end. “I have already thought over how to release our people from captivity.”

24

Metropolitan Arceniy was washing floors on that day, crawling on hands and knees all day till he felt a backache, and a pain was down a little only in the evening as if a pain went to rest at a sunset too.

“If God gave a man wings, I would fly to far countries where neither injustice nor human despite exist, where truth prevails and conscience is on the throne,” monk Feophilakt told at the supper, eternal dreamer, a child at heart, though this child’s beard is covered with frost.

“We’ve had our fill of it, Feophilakt, you wake us before all the cocks” – they hinted of his habit of waking up early and starting to mess around, and to wake all by his faltering.

“Lord, would it be better if we were fed up with officer-drinker and I would rise to clouds and fly to places without officers in monasteries, where only God’s love saves everybody?”

Metropolitan didn’t want to answer willingly, his hands still hurt after afternoon work, and nobody got angry with Feophilakt with his baby talks, and it was impossible simply to get angry, it was even a sin to fulminate with this kind-hearted codger who could share his last crumb with everybody, and help everybody.

“And I happened to see man-bird,” metropolitan answered.

Nobody still paid attention to Feophilakt’s chat, they were tired at the supper, and that’s all, but now everybody turned head as if they arranged.

“It was in Rostov” – metropolitan put away his spoon – “one peasant, I remember, his name was Yevsey, he was able to do any work: a skilled carpenter, a clever cobbler – he managed to do everything. He got into his head that he could make the wings and fly with those wings. But wings must be made of daze, it’s very expensive.”

And metropolitan told how a man visited different official departments, asking for loan, without telling about his unexpected matter. At last he got money, made wings of daze. Many different people gathered to see Yevsey’s flight, there was a big crowd. He took a run at first, flapped his wings. Once, twice, he really rose three fathoms, then suddenly fell on the ground. He didn’t die, of

course, only got bruises and he seemed to have broken a rib. But official people were worse than pain.

“To swindle loan out of a state? Sorcerer, magician, bring him to justice...”

They came to the metropolitan to bear witness that a man hatched sinful, ungodly thing, there weren't words in the Holy Bible that a man could fly like an insect.

The metropolitan Arceniy disappointed too zealous officials, “It's not a sin. A man can swim in a water, why can't he float by air?”

And the metropolitan told that a priest made an air-balloon for flights more than fifty years ago, and a clerk Kryakutniy from Nerehta made the same air-balloon for himself in 1731 in Russia. God let a man learn secrets of nature deeper, He gave him a mind for this, and there are no limits for this learning. God will take care himself about what is not given to know. It doesn't matter if people fly by air-balloons, with help of wings, by unknown means, it's not important, let only human mind be not lazy. Maybe our descendants will fly faster than any bird?”

Broyher Feophilakt began to tell ordinary people and wave his hands next day: “If I'm fed up with this life and the metropolitan allows, I'll make wings and fly to fertile lands” – and he tried to show with his hands how he would float under clouds.

People only observed Feophilakt's hands which had to bring him to promised lands.

“Can the lord bless this?” – they asked each other again to make sure.

“He'll let me! He lets everybody!” – a monk crossed himself for verification widely, so as he was showing his flight.

People had been blowing for a long time, considering gimmick which they heard from a monk, they believed and didn't believe in Feophilakt's boast, but rumours were already spreading, people were retailing news, adding something from them, because this life was too depressing.

The metropolitan Arceniy's words about descendants flying faster than any bird would come true, and a descendant of his family Levko Matsievich would gain the world glory as a pilot, air and water engineer. He would erupt like a dazzling meteor on the horizon of human memory, he would manage to do so much till his age of thirty tree years. Levko Makarovich Matsievich would master the science of shipbuilding in Germany, aviation in France, in a famous Anry Farman's aviation club, where he would certification of a pilot; Matsievich would fulfil the first night flights, give projects of fourteen submarines, first aircraft carrier for 25 planes in the world, prepare a book on aeronautics, and die in the skies over St. Petersburg in front of the crowd of 175,000 thousand people. “Our best aviator died” – the press would write – “he was appointed to the leaders of the aviation business by fate.” More than one hundred thousand of his fans would see him on his last journey, and his friend Simon Petlura would put circlet of flowers from Ukrainian Community among three hundred fifty wreaths, he would tell a report about life of his famous countryman and friend at

the party of honoring the memory. And Levko Matsievich would organize workers' theater with Ukrainian repertoire in Sevastopol, carry out the celebration of anniversaries of Taras Shevchenko. Eugene Raht would write about him and his friends, "They were revolutionaries at heart, dreamed of separation of Mala Rus." A photo of opening a monument to Ivan Kotlyarevskiy in Poltava. Nickolay Mihnovski, the author of a programme "Independent Ukraine", was standing near Levko Matsievich, Michael Starytskyi, Eugene Chikalenko, Nikolai Arkas, Sergej Efremov, Elena Pchilka, Michael Kotsjubinsky, Lesia Ukrainka.

They are standing together among famous people of Ukrainian history. Alexander Oles printed an obituary to L. Matsievich in the newspaper "Sovet" obituary on the 1st of October, 1910, "He was ours in spirit and in blood. Ukrainian Community must honor his memory independently from the rest. People are collecting donations for the monument to Matsievich. This comforting message can only please us, but not calm.

We must honor Matsievich's memory ourselves, with feeling of deep surprise and pride, and erect a bust of him, at least, in the heart of Ukraine, Kiev. Lev Makarovich was ours, Ukrainian, our companion and he would remain ornament and honor, first of all of our forgotten nation."

And Nikolay Voronoy would express his vision of Lev Makarovich in such a way, "Matsievich's fame spread throughout the world, but Ukraine has the honor that one of its sons wrote his name down in scrolls of human progress."

25

Stepan Ivanovich Sheshkovskiy was entering the empress's hall so as if he were walking with bare heels on a red-hot floor, he didn't want to go, but whether an invisible force, or duty, or fear of self-force pushed him in the back; if he didn't report, he would be guilty.

"Your Majesty, there is an annoying news" – he inhaled air, as if he was about to dive – "metropolitan Arceniy's letters are found in some towns, I'm sorry, the Lier's letters... Letters are delivered here and now it is being checked if they are true... Our people took them in Pskov, Kholmogory, Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Rostov. By the way, this liar appeals to You too, asking to conduct the most thorough investigation of the murder of Ivan Antonovich. If it isn't done, Your Majesty will be considered an accomplice of the murder."

After a long silence, to Stepan Ivanovich's surprise, the empress's face remained immovable, she only drank a small sip of water.

"Who guarded the Lier?"

"Four soldiers and one officer."

"Officer must be reduced to the ranks, whips and servitude are for soldiers."

Sheshkovskiy was surprised at the empress's calmness from annoying news but this calmness had neither part nor lot in indifference, the empress managed to control herself constrainedly. She could expect resistance to her intentions everywhere – from courtiers with their endless intrigues, from army where

soldiers were underfed and officers had not seen their pay for half-year, from tribal nobility in the province, who considered themselves to be autocratic kings, having right to pardon and punish up to death, but she didn't expect this from Russian clergy, tamed by Peter I long ago, lured and intimidated. And not even from the whole clergy but from one man who was aged, suffered from scurvy, bald, wrinkled, flattened. She could negotiate and bargain with everybody, by gold, by hot and thirsty body, by manors, ranks, but she was helpless only with one man. Name of Arceniy Matsievich stuck as a constant threat, indestructible and overwhelming, he was hidden in a hole which was far away from active world, but he managed to rile water even from there.

It was out of place, especially because they didn't have to waste time with church reforms – who knew, maybe unrest would break out. Only one hundred and sixty one monasteries remained in Russia from seven hundred and thirty two, and only thirty nine convents from two hundred and twenty two. She knows whom to give lands taken from monasteries and churches, but now seven eights from this four million income goes to treasury, as chancellor reported. Despite disagreements of Synod, new Synod public prosecutor Melissino forces reforms: he insists on reducing of Lents, banning bringing icons into houses, to allow the bishops to marry, to cancel the wake of dead, to allow more than three marriages, to ban to communicate children under ten.

“Not to stop Lier's case” – the empress interrupted her thoughts – “and Mirovich, how does he conduct himself?”

“He is walking in a cell, speaking something in his beard, maybe he's writing his verses...”

Sheshkovskiy was reported about Mirovich twice a day.

“It would be better tackle him with zeal, he may tell much interesting. But terms of investigation should be extended...”

“By no means” – the empress didn't agree – “unbelievable rumors, fabrications and fantasies roam in Europe. And trial must say its fair word sooner.”

The empress didn't want to delay this case, she made senate push things on, and senate made Supreme Court do it. She prepared a list of judges personally, considering every surname. Both local dignitaries and representatives of other states, who had to report in monarch's houses, had to spread rumors about her innocence in death of former emperor Ivan Antonovich, and it must be established forever. She was turning her head as a schoolgirl of primary school, because it was still difficult to her to write in Russian, she had to express regret for her terrible orthography, but she wrote out names of future famous in the empire judges personally: “metropolitan Dimitriy, archbishop Gavriil, bishop Athanasius, archimandrite Laurentiy, archimandrite Simeon, count Razumovsky, count Alexander Buturlin, prince J. Shakhovskoy, count P. Chernyshev, count Z. Chernyshev, count I. Chernyshev, count M. Skavronsky, count G. Vorontsov, count N. Panin, count P. Panin, F. Ushakov, N. Muravyov, F. Miloslavskiy, A. Olsufyev, prince P. Trubetskoy, count V. Fermor, S.

Naryshkin, L. Naryshkin, count Ernst Minih, S. Mordvinov, count Minnih, I. Talysin, count A. Golitsin, vice-chancellor count A. Golitsin, count I. Gendrikov, D. de Bosket, I. Betskiy, count G. Orlov, count S. Yaguzhinskiy, F. Emme, baron A. Cherkasov, I. Shlatter, A. Glebov, F. Vadkovskiy, G. Veinmarn, baron von Dits, N. Chicherin, J. Yevreinov, D. Volkov...”

The empress thought that at worst they would be guilty in unfair and unjust proceedings, they would be answerable to the world and next generations. But the matter shouldn't come to it.

26

He could barely cross the threshold of his cell, even climbed, because his legs bent badly as if somebody tied rough sticks to them; quietly limped to a chair and sat so carefully as if there were needles. Mirovich touched his head with hands and he was sitting moveless for a long time – time stopped suddenly as an hour-glass which was broken for unknown reason and a thin trickle of a fine sand fell away and ended up. Properly, he didn't need time now – man doesn't need a thing he can't use. Not because he is in prison, in a fast stone cage, in a clap-net (he caught himself!), but because he can't change circumstances even a little.

He was judged yesterday. Therefore, is it all?

In a cell, which was spacious and dry and didn't look as a blind and musty cell of the late emperor Ivan Antonovich, Vasiliy Mirovich had time to think over all last events. All the more so, first he wasn't called anywhere, nobody came to him, Mirovich felt as if he were on a desert island.

What happened? Why? What did these unexpected, unpredictable, not contracted events foreshow?

He began to skim page by page in the memory, as quickly read book, and to consider not only separate line but separate letter and sign – each could conceal an answer.

First of all, why did count Orlov and the empress choose him? If they plotted not noble matter from the very beginning and wanted to commit an abomination, an ordinary bloodhound of a Secret Expedition could come in handy more. Why him?

Having arrived in Petersburg from obscurity, Mirovich became famous in two years. Vasiliy was pleased that his verses were wandering in manuscripts in a capital, he was cited. Incorruptible Mikhail Lomonosov, who was walking in corridors of university, both in winter and in summer, dressed in his eastern felt boots decorated with glass which he made himself, he cited Vasiliy Mirovich's verses as an example of the newest poetic school. And when there was competition for the picture of rail bridges in St. Petersburg declared, Vasiliy Mirovich won it. He, a man of family, eight emperors and eight convocations of a Senate had been engaged in his capital more than half a century, he dared judge with a Senate, that very Mirovich dared, whose grandfather was still alive, bothered about independence of Ukraine from Warsaw, solicits European

diplomats. Petersburg had troubles too: French King Louis XV had not recognized the title of Empress II Catherine the Great, and when he wanted to joke at a lady he said that she was dressed like Catherine...

So why did Orlov and the empress choose him? It seemed that at the beginning everything was according to agreements. Instead of expected punishment for complain of Senate, the empress promoted Mirovich to the rank of lieutenant rank ahead of schedule on the 1st of October, 1763.

Something ended up in his soul when he saw Ivan Antonovich's body on a moist floor, in the shadow, in twinkling of purblind candle, dead body in a pool of blood, with intersected obliquely throat – blood was running from a wound. He was praying every time he went to regular meeting of the High Court, Petersburg didn't know higher Court: forty-eight dignitaries in gold coats and spiritual hierarchy in fluffy robes – he was praying to control himself and not to tell a secret of agreement; he was mistaken and he had to be responsible before God.

And only today, when a sentence was passed, he allowed himself to tell sly judges, "Peter III had been on the throne not long, his wife became his murderer. She stole unhappy Ivan Antonovich's throne, she was robbing this land. Don't you know, that at her direction, ships with gold and silver for twenty five million were sent to her brother, prince Friedrich August? They were taken from those who was eating today bark from trees and straw. Catherine won't be able to excuse herself before God."

That's all. Tomorrow sentence will be executed. And maybe runner on a horse will come at the last moment, and he will read a pardon gaspingly? The same pardon with sprawling signature of the empress, which he saw in count Orlov's hands with his own eyes?

27

A banker Suderland wrote a letter hard, he was writing forcedly, and a pen was scratching and squirting ink with displeasure as if it felt the host's mood. It was his third letter to the Netherlands about credit for the empress, because the previous two letters came with refusal because of delay in payment.

"A police-officer came," a valet appeared at the doorstep, interrupting his stray thoughts.

A police-officer was doubting long under an inquiring look of the banker, he couldn't come to the scratch to explain his presence there.

"Mr Suderland, I must execute the empress's order," he said at last, stumbling.

"I don't know the reason for the empress's displeasure, but punishment is smart."

"Maybe she is angry because I didn't bring her money in time" – it was the first banker's thought – "but why I'm quilty if banking houses fear."

"Will you arrest me?"

"Even worse, Mr Suderland, I shrink from telling you this punishment."

"Will you send me to Siberia?"

“Maybe the empress understood that she had told many unwanted things in the last conversation... And she had to dispose of an eyewitness of her revelations concerning the great Russian myth?”

“But what did she order?” – banker lost his temper – “won’t they beat me with a the stick and pull the nostrils as you usually do here?!”

“Her Majesty” – a policeman cringed – “ordered to make a jack-straw of you.” Even Suderland’s hands were stiff, he couldn’t get it, understand what it meant. “What does it mean – a jack-straw? If you are drunken, go to bed at once, and if you are crazy, go to the doctor.”

“I can’t feel quite myself too,” a policeman was complaining. “I tried to explain the empress how to do it with an alive man, but she got angry with me, cried and put me out, saying, “Your obligation is to perform my order!”

Banker couldn’t remember himself long from unprecedented attack, in which he got unknowingly, but he had to go, because he had only fifteen minutes. He began to ask a policeman to write a letter for the empress and find any explanation to this unprecedented and terrible curiosity.

“I can’t” – a policeman was shaking his head perplexedly – “I’m afraid...”

Ultimately, Suderland managed to persuade him, but a policeman refused to bring a letter to the empress flatly, only to count Brus.

Having read the letter, count was winking as if he had a mote in his eyes, then he turned round to see if there was nobody of servants near, and shook his finger to his temple, “You are crazy for a long time...”

Brus jumped into a coach and rushed to the Winter Palace, not wasting time.

Having heard the count, the empress only caught her head.

“My God, this policeman is really crazy! Count, run quickly to prevent that fool from trouble, and calm the banker.”

Count turned sharply, but at the door the empress’s laughing reached him.

“Now I understand what happened. I had a pretty dog, I loved and petted it, but, unfortunately, it died today. I called it Suderland, because it was banker’s present. I didn’t want to part with a dog, so I ordered to make a jack-straw of it... And I cried at a policeman because I thought that he didn’t want to do it, supposing this order to be beneath his dignity...”

Suderland, who was pardoned, couldn’t write the letter to the Netherlands up to the end for long, his head was splitting as if after heavy prolonged drinking bout. It was as Orlov had treated him after the ball recently, “If you don’t drink, they will pour it into your collar.” And he drank the whole glass and he preferred to drink then.

“Destiny brought me to a gay country,” a banker thought. “They will make make a jack-straw of you willingly... And maybe it’s well, it’s easier to earn on such people.”

And it was his only comfort.

Axes of carpenters clattered across, echo of that sound was rolling on adjacent sleepy streets of Petersburg. Carpenters were hurrying to catch the morning, in a weak light of fires, joining and crackling, disgruntled with wet branches. They managed to repair the scaffold somehow before sunrise, painters even smeared a paint – it was one-off deal, so no sense to do their best.

Vasiliy Mirovich was brought beforehand, in a closed booth, and guard was put immediately from twenty dull and sleepy soldiers. Vasiliy didn't see what happened outside, he was in his thoughts, bitterness and resentment of fraud left him, remained in a cell, he didn't commit any evil, he only tried to dismiss an innocent man who had become a prisoner of stone casemates since young years. He was released from a dark booth when human roar filled all around, Vasiliy stepped in the opened door and even blinked. Innocent blue sky, sweeping, incredible blue space was rising over a bright crowd, humming and crying, waiting for bloody show, over trees burnt with orange flame by autumn.

The crowd was silent for a minute, and first executioner began to climb the stairs to the scaffold. He was dressed in a red-black sweatshirt with a hood, only narrow slits for the eyes, he was going uncertainly, as if he was not convinced of the strength of steps made in a hurry, he had never been an executioner, he was an ordinary soldier who was engaged in misconduct and was simply forced. But when he began to refuse, they made him learn, cutting off the sheeps' heads.

A priest didn't have usual solemnity too, he was hunched and subdued, looked as if an ax, shining ominously on the shoulder of the executioner, had to fall on his head.

Vasiliy looked around last as if he tried to measure bottomlessness of serene sky with his eyes, he was looking a little longer at the South where the land of his great-grandfather was.

Mirovich was looking at people who gathered, pushing and striving to get ahead, closer to the scaffold, at the children who were sitting on fences like sparrows, and who even climbed on the trees, looking with interest among yellow leaves which hadn't fallen down. Suddenly he noticed Vlasev and Checkin in the crowd, both with shining faces, gay and smiling. "How?" – surprise, maybe the last in Mirovich life, touched him very much. "They were arrested with me as murderers of the emperor."

And he understood everything. The empress sent Mirovich to make Ivan Antonovich free, but she sent them to kill him. By one stroke of the razor across the throat of the legitimate claimant to the throne, she got rid of a competitor, and of possible Cossack chieftain, whose generation still bothered the throne. And Vlasev and Checkin only winked merrily, they had reason to rejoice. Each of them, tacit scammers of Secret Expedition, got seven thousand roubles, today in the morning, army captain had only fifty roubles a year, but they earned for one hundred and forty years ahead by one stroke of the razor. They worked hard

a little while writing secret denunciations, Record Office will keep forty secret denunciations up to the day of Ivan Antonovich's death.

And Vasilij wanted to look if a fast runner was riding with a pardon, as in a fairy-tale, pardon which he saw with his eyes, a straw of saving, naive and ridiculous desire. But there isn't any fairy-tale, there is only a scaffold, awkwardly made, painted in a hurry.

Mirovich crossed himself and waved with his hand at the executioner – so it be... Blade glinted in the sun, the crowd cried and Vasilij's head was rolling on the platform, splashing blood. Executioner leaned and raised it up solemnly, stepping aside a bloody stream – he learned not in vain, he made a smart job...

29

Potyomkin was the first who entered an empty temple, and just an echo of his footsteps caused unexpected excitement. His dream came true, his persistence outweighed, he would get married today. Empress with her matron-of-honour came after him, the czar's gate opened, and a priest was bringing cross and Gospel.

Invisible chorus sounded, because nobody could see this wedding according to the agreement, except for a priest. Potyomkin was standing near the empress and he couldn't hide his excitement, he only felt sweat under band on the forehead, covering his sightless eye.

The priest is coming up to them with two candles, blesses thrice, and when there was time to step on a wrap, Grigoriy stepped first, he even twitched. The empress who knew a sign (that who steps first, will be the head of the family), and burst out laughing softly, as if she choked, but pulled together at once. The priest is asking God and witnesses, in a tremulous voice, clearing his throat, to confirm the decision to join the church marriage, and he asks bride to vow daet.

"I, Grigoriy, wive you, Catherine, and promise you husband's grace, faith and civility, and we'll be together till death, so we, God, in Holy Trinity, help and all saints."

"I, Catherine, promise you grace, faith, civility and wife's obedience."

The priest was reading The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians in a firmer voice, but he stumbled at the word "obedience", the ordinary text sounded in a head in an unexpected secular manner, "How the empress can obey her vassal even if he is her husband?" The priest looked at the bride, he didn't dare read prayer, but the empress agreed to continue by a silent nod of the head.

The wedding continued without adventures and surprises.

"Lord, give slaves of God, Grigoriy and Catherine, many good years, in the health and salvation..."

"Congratulate you, husband, I give you a general-in-chief and appoint a vice-president of the Military Collegium."

He was appointed a Governor-General of Mala Russia two months ago. Now he received one hundred thousand roubles on birthdays and holidays, and he lived in all imperial residences and was served free of charge by palace staff.

Then the empress followed Potyomkin's honours with German punctuality. She especially liked to get foreign orders for him. It was not always easy – wishers whispered, how to give honours to the lover of murderer of czar, who occupied the throne? – but stubbornness of foreign rulers had capitulated under the skilful actions of diplomats.

First of all Potyomkin was prized with Order of Alexander Nevsky and Order of the Polish White Eagle sent by Stanislav August. Things went better. The empress awarded Potyomkin with Order of St. Andrew, Frederick II sent the Prussian Order of White Eagle, Denmark sent Order of the White Elephant, Sweden presented the Order of St. Seraphim. It was humiliating, of course, that Louis XVI refused to give the Order of the Holy Spirit and the Golden Fleece, saying that only Catholics can be awarded with this Order. George II will make round eyes, when the ambassador in London gives the request of the Order of the Garter.

Prince de Ligne once told Potyomkin that he could become Prince of Moldova and Wallachia.

“These are the little nothings of life,” Potyomkin denied. “If I wanted, I would become a king of Poland, I would refuse from Duchy of Courland. I'm higher.” Catherine II is the empress. And she had the right to write Potyomkin orders for treasure-house on an occasional piece of paper, “Take how much you want.” The empress's generosity didn't get round Grigoriy's relatives. Second cousin Pavel Potyomkin became the governor of the Caucasus, and Pavel's brother Michael became a Chief Inspector of Military Office, sister's nephew Alexander Samoilov received an appointment of Secretary of the State Council and the rank of general, other nephews became the empress's adjutants.

30

Bergman, Rontsov and Korsakov had been sitting in the empress's reception-room for a long time, they felt constrained, from time to time they twitched with anticipation and unusual atmosphere for them all – first they had privilege to be in this hall. Three men were sitting side by side, each holding a bouquet of flowers and they were looking at each other askance, jealously, by a peripheral vision.

At last the empress came, she moved her aging body not so easily as once, but she was smiling and cherubic – she never forgot to graze her face with a piece of ice before coming; officers stood at attention, holding bouquets on the right side, as muskets needed for fight right now.

The empress came up to the officers, found some gentle words for everybody as mother empress should do, she only stood near Korsakov longer, looked at him up and down, as if capricious customer were evaluating unbroken stallion, trembling with impatience and fear, on the market.

“I hope for soon meeting,” she only said to him.

And then life twisted the officer as in spring rough and muddy stream, with a sudden whirls of wells. Korsakov was brought to a court physician Rogerson, who had been examining him nearly two hours. Rogerson put his ear to the back, then to the chest, bobbed on his knees and demanded to show tongue, he was going round the officer, purring an unknown song as if his main task was to pick at something, he tried to do his best, but in vain. In the end, he slapped with his palm on the back of the officer, maybe it meant approval, and pointed at the door, where long-term valet Zahariy Konstantinovich appeared like ghost at that moment.

“You must demonstrate your abilities of a man first of all,” valet explained in the dining-room. “I advise to have a solid meal, because you have to pass exam for three nights to maid of honor Anna Stepanovna Protasova – she is very wise in love joys, she will twist you as an experienced soldier twists his leggings.” The valet didn’t lie, Protasova didn’t let him laze all three nights: he had enough of her, because she had halitosis, bandy hairy legs, and turning aside, was forced every time, he was trembling, as in the old cart on the road which was dirty and broken by autumn bad weather.

“He is a good man for troop duty” – maid of honor sent recruit back to valet at last.

And when he felt quite himself in some days, Anna Stepanovna and Zahariy Konstantinovich invited him to a dinner. Then the valet was smartening him up till evening, smoothed him over with something fragrant, and at ten o’clock lady’s-maid Maria Savvichna Perekusihina, with stern triumph on her face, led him, dressed in Chinese luxury dressing gown, to the empress’s bedroom to read books at nights.

Korsakov read many pages, he was even reeling when he left the bedroom, but then he surprised at the world which changed during one night: valet who was talking down to him yesterday, today was bowing creepingly, leading him to his suite of rooms.

Only once Korsakov was quivering. He had scarce found himself in new apartments as Petersburg metropolitan entered. “They may have decided to kill me if lord came to unction?” – sinister suspicion flashed, shackled body as tetanus. But lord began to sanctify the premises and he sprinkled Korsakov with holy water, removing his eyes, muttered a prayer under his breath, and he was sprinkling largely, even Korsakov could not restrain himself and wiped his moist forehead with a sleeve.

“Her emperor’s majesty” – Zahariy didn’t stumble to tell – “condescended to appoint you as adjutant and gives you one hundred thousand roubles as the first pocket-money.”

And he gave adjutant’s uniform with a diamond agraphia.

Now Korsakov had an honour to walk with the empress arm-in-arm in the Hermitage in winter, and in Czar Village in summer. The most senior

government officials, who were busy on the personal and public issues, were awaiting his attention in the waiting room patiently, they came with greeting and bounties.

“And everything is for one night” – one could think.

Korsakov was wrong, simply he was lucky, because his successors had to pass exam, besides Protasova, countess Brus, Perekusiha and Utochkina.

31

People in the Secret Expedition hesitated, whether to report this news to empress. On the one hand, it was tempting, you could earn high praise: everybody knew in Expedition. But on the other hand one could have trouble, especially if to meet a bad mood. “And what are you doing? Why do you eat state bread?”

At last they risked and reported that metropolitan Arceniy was feted in Zabaikal no less than in Rostov and Yaroslavl, in his former dioceses.

There were rumours that metropolitan was brought to Irkutsk, kept in Ascension Monastery, then conveyed behind Baikal, to Troitskoye, then secretly to Nerchinsk until there was a rescript to bring him back to Russia. Arceniy fell ill on the way and in one hundred and seventy miles from Verhneudinsk he asked a soldier to stop near the lake. The metropolitan washed there, put on fresh shirt, he threw away the old one, and he was praying on his knees long.

Then he presented the soldier with a prayer book, signed personally, and a silver rouble.

“I won’t reach Verhneudinsk,” metropolitan said. “I’ll die soon and remember monk Arceniy and bury at the place where the horses stop.”

So it happened. The metropolitan came in Verhneudinsk, being already dead, coffin with his body was placed in the Church of the Transfiguration. But they had fear to bury this important prisoner without high permission, sent messengers to the bishop and the governor.

The servant of God Arceniy had been lying for twenty five days, and in spite of a heat his body wasn’t spoiled, it was imperishable, and people told that many wonders had happened at that time.

One night the church bells rang in alarm as during the fire.

“The church is burning!” – frightened people were running with pails and shovels.

They came running – but there was nothing, silence in the church and round.

“It’s curiosity” – parishioners were surprised – “but we heard with our own ears...”

Suddenly somebody shouted in alarm, “And look, look up!”

All raised heads and began to cross themselves: a new dawn shone high above the belfry, nobody had seen this before.

“The metropolitan’s soul blesses us” – they were talking – “this man, metropolitan Arceniy was really saint...”

He was buried at the cemetery, on the mountain, near a cross, this mountain is in Troitsa, in Zabaikal, on the way to Nerchinsk. And now people gather there, read prayers and memorial services, many pilgrims come there... And they tell that dawn goes up at a lovely night, the same one that was seen above the belfry of the Church of the Transfiguration, and the candle lites on the grave.

...The empress neither thanked nor scolded servants of the Secret Expedition.

She only had been thinking for a long time: she had almost won the metropolitan, exiled to an incredible distance, and he is among people again.

The empress surprised, she had great forces, the army and hundred of thousands soldiers, numerous cannons, not to mention muskets, and, besides, great number of policemen together with the Secret Expedition, and Arceniy didn't have even a censer – and she couldn't win him?!

She is the empress Catherine II, and not simply the second but Catherine the Great. Already in the first year of ruling the Senate is discussing the creation of a monument to her and conferment of the title of “Mother of Motherland”. Let the senators are not very sincere, and not always, but this was. Less than four years passed when she was announced Catherine the Great. She knows how to act with Voltaire, she can propitiate Diderot – she bought his library and gave it him back for storage, paid Diderot fifty years ahead. Now philosopher and famous writer must tell in all European crossroads about her wisdom and education, and Voltaire would even call her “Our Lady of St. Petersburg”. And nobody would guess that her numerous letters to Voltaire, depth of thought and elegance of style of which was admired in many capitals, in fact were written by count Andrey Shuvalov, because she knew well neither Russian nor French... And Hrapovitskiy would write all necessary documents in Russian instead of her.

She, the empress Catherine the Great, can remake European map as an old shabby kaftan, make a seat for her John wittily of royal throne of proud Poland. She is Catherine the Great, but who is this Arceniy, this Lier? What is the secret of his unconquerable force?

Something is wrong here in nature – the empress thought.

She strung thought by thought on a logical thread as a necklace of small beads, but nothing came to hand somehow: now the hole in beads was too small, now thread twisted and sometimes tore treacherously, and then the whole necklace was torn...

32

Chief of Police Tolstoy had to acquaint newcomers with the court at a reception of the presentation of credentials.

“Who is this handsome man with a scar across the face?” diplomats asked, trying to find their way around.

“Prince Aleksey Orlov, influential statesman, the old pillar of the throne.”

“And this must be Potyomkin, whose eye is tied up with a black ribbon?”

“Yes, the empress relies on him especially, and you must have heard about the talent of general yourselves.”

“Their faces are so fearless, they must have suffered injury in battles...”

“Oh, of course” – stamina never left Tolstoy, all the more so in difficult state affairs.

“And who is that fair tall officer, standing a little aloof?”

“His surname is Lanskoj, little-known newcomer.”

Chief of Police kept on satisfying the curiosity of arrivals, telling or introducing famous court, but the empress called Tolstoy and ordered to introduce her handsome newcomer at the court, an officer.

“Lanskoj, Your Majesty,” he said his surname and title and blushed as if he were asked something disgraceful.

Fair husky with clumsy manners and modesty of a teenage girl stroke the empress’s eye, she hadn’t had such man before.

After the meeting life twisted Lanskoj by such abrupt and unexpected twists, that he didn’t have time to look back at those turnings. Court physician tapped him as a pecker tapped dry wood, long and weary, Lanskoj had been swinging on Perekusiha for three nights, in the end he was nearly sick, but restrained, then he passed exam of two maids of honor, they were younger, till Perekusiha brought him to the empress’s bedroom to read the book.

“What about him, Maria Savvichna, does he read well?” – she wondered, smiling, not without archness.

“Literate” – an old maid of honor answered earnestly, waring to praise too much at the same time.

In the morning the metropolitan was wearily sprinkling the new lucky with holy water, and a valet was giving respectfully a luxury adjutant’s uniform and told about substantial monetary reward.

Empress of fifty was resting heart with Lanskoj, it was seldom with his precursors. Twenty six-year old Sascha, four years younger than her son, could do in a bed in such a manner that empress didn’t remember Indian summer sunset. She may have forgotten some of her former lovers, but Zaharij Chernyshov remained in the memory by unrestrained power, how could she forget Grisha Orlov, – son, count Bobrinskiy is already adult, son from Sergey Saltykov can possibly take over the throne, daughter from Ponyatovskiy, unfortunately, died so early. Vasilchikov and Zavadovskiy flashed as a temporary toy, Zorich barely flickers in memory, Korsakov, Levashov and Vysotskiy are forgotten quickly though the recent ones, as if half a century passed. She tried Mordvinov and Yermolaev too, but she caught on and returned Lanskoj, no sense to conceal a sin.

“Stars of St. Anne and Alexander!” – courtiers were whispering at receptions, either enthusiastically, or with ill-concealed envy, having seen new shining awards at the Lanskoj’s chest.

“And two more were sent for him from Warsaw and one from Swedish capital...”

“There aren’t any wars, but orders are pouring as out of the bag” – the envious reviled.

“There aren’t wars only by day...”

Either the envious jinxed or something else happened, but Lanskoj noticed that trouble was approaching, approaching inexorably – his man’s force began to fade away. He ran to doctors, they were brought secretly, and they were using enchantments, whispering, rolling eggs, but in vain. Then an old fortune-teller appeared, like a rotting fungus which dried and shriveled on the vine, and she brought him a dark brew, smelling turpentine. And a wonder – the force returned, he could withstand a night again, only in the morning he became exhausted and twisted like a rag, hanging on a fence to dry. But wonder can’t be long, he had to drink that brew, beveling and pinching his nose, more and more, not to disgrace. Once he took a risk, drank too much and fell in a fever in the next morning.

Five days and nights he had been thrashing about in fever, barely regaining consciousness, he was lying as if not in a soft feather bed, but on the cinder, and on the sixth day, sobbing and greedily inhaling the air last, he died.

This happened on Day of Ivan the Baptist.

33

Radishchev considered him to be reserved, austere, maybe even with self-esteem, – it’s clear, publisher known in the whole empire who dared print rebellious journal “Shershen”, not durable “Pustomelya”, and now thoughtful people are snapping his “Painter”. Radishchev considered Nikolay Ivanovich Novikov to be other, not so cheerful, playful and sensitive. Radishchev has already printed some works in “Painter”, of course, not under his own name. “Welcome to the brave and national defender” – Novikov uttered so that there wasn’t a drop of irony – “I long wanted to meet.”

“What the brave” – Radishchev languidly waved – “I’m hiding under a false name.”

“It’s not a sin, it’s a right of a man” – Novikov gave the latest issue of the journal – “you haven’t seen yet, I’m sorry, here is your publication.”

While Radishchev was thumbing through, holding children’s eagerness to see everything first, Novikov was stirring up tea with a spoon so that it nearly threw out.

“You write well, Alexander Ivanovich, but style is very scientific. Do not be afraid of old-vulgar words, because all our troubles are from oblivion, neglect of Russian antiquities... But we picked up foreign words, like fleas, we beat them bows... Sorry, I don’t mean you, I don’t blame you that you had studied in Leipzig, I tell about our life in general.”

“One can learn from foreigners too” – Radishchev found his publication at last, but it was awkward to stop on his place, he began to thumb through the

remaining pages – “but we can only adopt a cut of pantaloons from foreigners. We do not have enough intelligence at rest.”

“Who must adopt? Who?” – Novikov jingled a teaspoon as if it caused his resentment – “a peasant, this slave in hopeless poverty? Landowner, the owner of the slaves, does he need it? The courtiers, who reached the inaccessible peaks of speculation? The empress who doesn’t have time because of lovers who she changes as gloves?”

“Really... People are laughing on back streets that she will put her genitals in the Russian coat of arms instead of the bicephalous eagle... You see, I wouldn’t like to keep silent, because it hurts, and I’m afraid to write. Shall I spit on this bad time, and print the history of the Church... I became interested in figure of Philaret the Merciful – what great people they were, the Church was so inofficial.”

“Did decent people live only in ancient times, at the dawn of Christianity?” – Novikov’s face darkled, he recalled his hard battles in publishing – “Catherine’s censorship banned to print article of St. Dimitri of Rostov “On the church estates”. Try to explain any sensible man if you are able: holy word is banned...”

“On a silver frame of Dimitriy of Rostov there are fairly words coined: “Having written “Life of saints” he was awarded a refinement to be a saint” –

Radishchev was silent for a moment – “neither emperors, nor any state people can erase these words of Mikhail Lomonosov, even if they throw a stranglehold on the neck of the Church, doing crafty faces that the Church is so inofficial.”

“Forget about inofficial, three-quarters of the property confiscated from churches, went as if to the treasury, but it was given to the empress’s lovers in reality. A priest, who had always been a conscience, now is also official, because he is paid from treasury. And nobody will even squeak...”

“But why didn’t metropolitan Arceniy Matsievich break, he could tell truth openly, his letters and instructions are spread among people in secret. Don’t you know anything about his fate?”

“Even his name is not allowed to tell.”

“Only not to forget to amuse with you funny news” – Novikov took out a letter and gave it to Radishchev – “if a reader, loyal to the throne, awarded you with a bunch of letters with a brief assessment “Lies” for the publication in the fifth issue of “Painter”, they received a promotion in the eyes of sycophants after the fourteenth issue – a Kazan landowner is looking for you to duel. Isn’t it ghastly?”

Radishchev scanned a few lines, where there were not many fresh thoughts, except for some curses of the author, twisted the letter in the hands, not knowing what to do with it, and handed it back to Novikov.

“I have three small children, I’m afraid very much. Sin is for those who knows and remains silent.”

“And those who don’t remain” – Novikov smiled bitterly – “they will get Shlisselburg, Siberia, or poison. You only notice: no Russian, I underline, Russian artist, has risen with her to the top, no poet or architect, the empress needs only the others, and only as a decoration, one more stone on the brooch. My friend, the French historian, said frankly, “Michelangelo would not have survived more than three weeks at the court of Catherine.”

How can Novikov know that expert of the time, Polish historian Kazimierz Waliszewski, Doctor of Laws, who went through the archives of Paris, London, Berlin and Vienna very carefully and would quote it almost verbatim, “In general, national art is obliged to Catherine only with some models of the Hermitage, which served for the study and imitation of Russian artists. And apart from these models, she did not give him anything, even a piece of bread.” Suddenly Novikov recalled something and began to rustle his newspapers and magazines.

“I’d like to show you, read aloud” – he gave an issue of “St. Petersburg News”. “Adult girl” – Radishchev was reading – “who can sew, wash, iron, cook, is sold. Light used hearse are for sale too. Family of people are sold at bargain prices: husband, a skillful tailor, his wife, a cook, a daughter at the age of fifteen, a good seamstress, as well as two children of 8 and 3 years.”

Radishchev gave Novikov the newspaper.

“What of,” he asked. “Will anybody change orders in this country?”

Radishchev rubbed his eyes with his hand – the type was too small for him.

“I can not deny. Why to invent manufactories as in England when people can earn easier here: one “sold a girl at bargain price” – and received fresh money.”

“You see” – Novikov folded brought editions – “I talked with the courtiers a lot, preparing historical materials. There were different people, envious, honest, so somebody calculated that the empress had spent more than ninety million rubles only for the first dozen lovers – apart from serfs, donated castles and other things. Catherine II mounted the throne when Russian budget didn’t reach even seventeen million. So, how many years must Russia work for the vagina of German-empress?”

Radishchev took out a sheet of paper as in an answer, and gave Novikov: “For the comparison with lovers look at concern for our spiritual. This is not a secret, good friends gave me to rewrite.”

Novikov looked through the list written in small letters.

“According to papers it is necessary to issue:

- 1) for St. Petersburg, Novgorod and Moscow departments with the cathedrals – 39,410 rubles;
- 2) for second-class (8 departments) – 5,000 (2,600 – for bishop personally);
- 3) for third-class (15 departments) – 4,232 and 20 copecks (1,800 – for bishop personally);
- 4) for Trinity-Sergius Lavra Monastery and all monasteries – 174,650 and 40 copecks;

- 5) for all convents – 33,000 rubles;
- 6) for 22 churches, not cathedral – 2,530 rubles;
- 7) for the whole clergy – 365,203 rubles.”

“She doesn’t pity a foreign nation, a foreign country and faith.”

They were talking long, thought over editorial intentions and Novikov’s offer to issue full “Journey from Petersburg to Moscow” in his printing-house. They would hope, not knowing, of course, how far and hard the way to this was. Black coach would approach Radishchev’s house in the dull morning, two barbute noncommissioned officers jumped out quickly. They turned everything upside down in the house of Alexander Nikolaevich, looking for sedition, in front of four small orphans’ eyes (mother has already died), of children slamming with frightened eyes from the corners. They didn’t find what they needed and arrested father.

Sheshkovskiy interrogated Radishchev personally.

Stepan Ivanovich put the candle so as to see Radishchev’s face, to see every muscle in twinkling light, the smallest movement of thought, which could manifest itself inevitably in good interrogation.

“Why this lampoon is written? Tell truth, our empress’s heart is kind, she appreciates the sincerity of the human, she will gift you with a weasel...”

“I prepared this “Journey” only because of the writer’s ambition. It’s not a lampoon, but probation of my pen.”

“You encourage slaves to revenge their masters. Do you call this writer’s work?” – Sheshkovskiy spoke gently in interrogation, sometimes fondly on the surface.

“I think troubles of man are caused by the man himself. If he could impartially look at himself, look inside himself it would be otherwise in the world” – Alexander Nikolaevich tried to talk slowly, choosing his words carefully, as if he were sifting them, because Sheshkovskiy had a talent to make a clutch at said cautiously, as with pinchers – “I don’t think that nature is mean to a man, that it hid the truth – a man is born kind. I wanted to explain it, maybe, I’m wrong, but I don’t have other thoughts.”

Radishchev was looking into Sheshkovskiy’s eyes and surprised at human effrontery, incredible for him, still vast: sister-in-law, who brings up orphans now, brought together all the family jewels and gave Sheshkovskiy, he thanked and gave his best regards; and now he is before him, looking into Radishchev’s eyes so innocent, sincerely and naively... “Is it possible to learn, can it be so, without blinking?” – during words play – Alexander Nikolaevich was surprised. That sac with jewels drowned then in the bottomless pocket of Sheshkovskiy’s robe, tingling softly, that sac saved Radishchev from inquisition, but it didn’t change the punishment.

“For encroachment on the health of the empress, conspiracy and treason, belittling the proper respecting of authorities... capital sentence” – the judge of criminal department would read a long list of writer’s defaults. As there were

very few articles of “Criminal laws”, he would recite also articles of “Military regulations”, breathing from time to time, and even would add something from “Maritime Rules”.

Sentence was passed on the 24th of July, and Radishchev, expecting the military execution in a condemned cell, tried to finish the long-conceived work in a hurry. He wrote about Philaret the Merciful, and projected in his time and his circumstances. Saint Philaret, a real person, historians proved his life, he was very faithful and did good. He gave the poor the last measure of wheat, and God returned him forty times more, as if by chance, he handed out everything, but he got much more – czarina was looking for a bride for future emperor Konstantin, and ambassador came to him. He didn't have anything to treat, but kind neighbours brought what-not and there was a real spread, he shared his last with beggary though, there weren't any bread-crumbs in the house, and he got more – Philaret's granddaughter became the wife of an all-powerful and passing rich emperor. Why don't his contemporaries, those who are on the throne and near throne, believe and do so as Philaret?

The sac with jewels helped him to escape Sheshkovskiy's tortures, but it was too small to release even though his written work about saint Philaret, if not him.

On the 4th of September the empress “under her mercifulness and for everybody's joy” pardoned Radishchev, changed capital sentence into ten-year deportation to Siberia. He was brought to Siberian prison “for everybody's joy” in in irons and without warm clothes...

Nikolay Ivanovich couldn't fulfil that he had discussed with Radishchev too, his dreams didn't come true. His publishing work was honoured with fifteen years of Shlisselburg fortress according to the empress's decree.

The sun appeared several times in Radishchev's life – he was released after the empress's death, was called to Petersburg and appointed member of Laws Commission. He would prepare “Project of liberal laws”, project about equality of everybody before laws, freedom of press and many attractive ideas. But once count Zavadovskiy, head of the Commission, favourite of the dead empress, called him and bothered as never before during his long-suffering life.

“Do you want to Siberia again? You won't come back this time!”

Alexander Nikolaevich returned home, something snapped in his heart finally, snapped, and it was impossible neither to stick it together, nor to add up. “They drank the state and pushed it into the German whore's vagina” – Radishchev connected thoughts without anger, with cold sadness, but they couldn't be connected – “even after the death of the empress her lovers continued to rape this land and people. I have nothing to do in this Russia, and there is not another one.”

He poured a glass of poison with the same cold composure, drank without a break, as you could drink only alcohol – and incredible pain increased, its flame grew, blazing, then everything was broken and subsided at one moment, the

pain disappeared, only blue sky remained, sky without injustice and evil, blue and comprehensive, as his faith in the goodness.

34

After the wedding Potyomkin with the empress fled in Tsaritsyno for a time – they bought an estate from Kantemirs to their liking, it was very comfortable among the hills and mounds, blue ponds, forests, and broad troughs.

Potyomkin caught the empress in Vasilchikov's place – he would become simply a “cold soup” for her. “I was like a kept woman” – Vasilchikov would complain – “so I was treated. I wasn't allowed to see anybody and I was confined. Nobody answered me when I moved for something. The same was if I asked something for myself. I wanted Anna's ribbon, and when I asked it, I found 30 thousand in my pocket the next morning.”

“Cold soup” was poured out familiarly, apartments for Potyomkin were arranged in the Winter Palace, and now he was riding proudly to the Palace by six frisky horses, with impetuous and impulsive force. Now the empress belonged only him, Grigoriy felt it particularly here, in Tsaritsyno, where there weren't flattering and crafty courtiers' faces, vanity and worldly tricks. He could afford to walk, arm in arm, along picturesque banks of the ponds, where the peace was comprehensive and immeasurable, and could be broken only by pat of carp's tail in the water under the reeds.

But the state cares were clinging here too, as an annoying burr. They had been discussing long what to do not to repeat Pugachev.

At the mere mention of Pugachev clammy and cold horror rolled on the empress every time like a strong wave. And not only because the flame of the uprising spread to vast areas, and after Kazan a court was trembling: would the rebel go to Moscow or not?

The empress was imagining a reproachful glance of metropolitan Arceniy Matsievich many times at night, she heard those sad words said by him on the trial, “You will meet your husband killed by you...”

There has been massive tombstone on the husband for more than ten years, but the riots light up from time to time, riots headed by Peter III, her dead husband, according to rumours of people. She cuts the head of the next pretender, but her husband rises again from a hopeless darkness of the grave, and the riot lights up again.

Yemelyan Pugachev became the fifth pretender who had taken her husband's name, Peter III.

She still dreamt of that sad look of an old, bald from scurvy Matsievich; without metropolitan canonicals, only in robe, he invoked the rest not to step on that path, not to do things prepared by the empress; he only reproached her bitterly, without devilry and revenge:

“You will meet...”

An executioner cut Pugachev's head by a wide stroke of the ax, and raised it high, bloody, on a stick, over heads of frightened people, but then a pretender

came up. She called herself a sister of the rebel, bastard daughter of the dead empress Elizabeth Petrovna. People said that Elizabeth had given birth to her from Razumovskiy.

“I wonder what’s her real background,” the empress thought aloud, going home from ponds by nice alley.

“Hell knows” – only the remembrance of her was unpleasant for Grigoriy –

“One people say that she is a daughter of publican from Prague, the others say – from Nuremberg baker.”

“They say she is unusually beautiful and clever...”

“I don’t know if she is beautiful. But the Secret Expedition reports she is clever enough to send manifests to Sultan, even to Orlov, to count Panin...”

“I’m fed up with five dead husbands who put the empire on its hind legs, and now their sisters appear. By the way, where is she now?”

“She was travelling all over Europe, they say she is in Italy at present, in town Ragusi.”

“Arrest this tramp. Who is able to do it neatly, properly, so that nobody of any Regal Court can guess?”

“Orlov,” Grigoriy said at once as if he knew the question before.

The empress only shook her head – Grigoriy didn’t forget who had deformed his eye.

“Let it be so...”

Potyomkin understood that he exposed count Orlov-Chesmenskiy, his offender, and what a grand European scandal could happen in a case of failure. But Grigoriy was wrong this time. Orlov, being very adventurous, coped with the request brilliantly.

First Alexey pretended to be in love, soon the princess reciprocated, then a fortune helped. British Consul in Leghorn had sent a letter, telling about a fighting between Russian and English sailors, he asked Orlov to get outside of it personally. Alexey didn’t know English and he asked the princess to translate and was going to start. She was sad and she wanted to go with him.

“The empress should see her future fleet...”

It was only required. As soon as she climbed aboard the flagship, they came up to her,

“In the name of her Imperial Majesty, you are arrested!”

Then the princess’s fate was clear: tiring road of prisoner, Petropavlovsk Fortress.

In stone walls of the fortress the princess quickly burned from tuberculosis, and took to the grave the secret of her birth. Therefore, the entire extended Razumovsky family was present at crowded funeral.

35

Moscow rang bands, festively dressed people filled the squares in fine morning, on the 13th of July 1775, even more fun had been in bars and taverns – Moscow was celebrating Kuchuk Kaynarzhinsky peace.

People were arriving even in the morning in emergency rooms of the Prechistinskiy palace, where the empress was, to congratulate on his victory. One people came, the others had already gone, diamonds were throwing playful gleams on the sweaty wigs, but unfortunately, none of the respectful guests won an audience.

“The empress feels bad” – the same answer was for the curious.

A rumor about the empress’s indigestion spread among the famous visitors quickly. She was given badly washed fruit because of inattention of servants who were unnecessarily spoiled, and that was the result...

“They deserve not only the whip for this...”

“Goodness of the sovereign led to such consequences,” the courties were resenting.

The empress was indifferent to festive thunder of bands and gossips of respectful people in emergency rooms, she had to give birth. Labor pains began in the morning, besides the pain, she was tormented by the fear. Be that as it may, but she was forty six, it was late, it was different earlier from Ponyatovskiy, Saltykov or Grigoriy Orlov.

Nobody knew about birth, nobody had to know, as well as about the wedding with Potyomkin – so, people were whispering in the corners and no more.

To her surprise, she gave birth quickly and easily, she even didn’t cry much – a pretty girl drew the first breath. The empress didn’t have to suckle babies, that’s why it was washed and swaddled, then brought secretly to Potyomkin’s sister, Maria Alexeevna Samoiloa. The baby was named Elizaveta Temkina, the Samoilovs brought her up, then she was brought to a boarding-house, she would become a mistress of large estates in the province of Kherson.

Meanwhile, court life moved in a groove: receptions of foreign guests, dinner parties, after dinner they went to a hall, where the empress played cards, whist or pharaoh, arranged drillabilities or charades. Once in the end of May, in 1777, she visited new Potyomkin’s estate in Ozerki. The owner honored guests in a big way, guns fired in their honor at dinner, nearly thirty first state persons sat at the table. But the empress often paid attention not to Grigoriy’s second cousins or the Engelgarts, she was interested in a novice most of all, Hussar Major, thirty-year-old dark Serb, curly husky Semen Zorich. But Grigoriy and all the rest at the table had the impression that they had known each other before.

Soon Zorich occupied apartments of the official favorite in the Winter Palace. Having heard about the new rival, Zavadovskiy quickly returned to Petersburg, he was suffering, rushing, not knowing what to do until he was advised to keep silent. Zavadovskiy obeyed, the empress adequately appreciated his courtesy. He would get four thousand people, and for the empress’s money he would build a palace in Yekaterinburg, palace with two hundred fifty rooms and cupronickel fireplaces.

The empress felt as usual, passed notes to her lover Sima, as she named Zorich, with the help of Grigoriy. Sometimes Potyomkin went to wars, sometimes he

went to fulfil different tasks, but he could return to Winter Palace at any time, to his apartments connected with the empress's bedroom by a direct corridor. Grigoriy was attentive to every new favorite, who were mostly his former adjutants, he didn't forget to send them presents from far places. He sent Zorich feather with a luxurious diamond on a hat and an expensive stick, even the empress was glad and wrote in the letter, "Sima is sporting, by Your grace, You sent him an excellent stick, he looks like King of Sweden, but he surpasses him in gratitude to You."

Only once Grigoriy's temper ran away with him, when he entered the bedroom as usual and saw the empress with Zavadovskiy in bed; he turned red in the face, looked around the room with wild eyes, seized massive candlestick and threw at a couple who didn't expect the visit. The empress mewed like a cat, as if somebody set foot on a cat's paw, rolled off the bed at once, and bare Zavadovskiy rushed to the door like a bullet.

Potyomkin had other problems, of course: cunning Panin, and especially an old lover Orlov, tried to put their man in a bed. Basically, their tricks were in vain, Grigoriy selected the reliable and consistent himself, appointing them to adjutants for a month or two. When he invited Alexander Dmitriev-Mamonov after adjutant term, Alexander couldn't guess what waited for him.

"Undress!" the prince ordered sternly.

Mamonov's eyes were round as saucers.

"Fully, fully," Potyomkin told.

He walked around bare Alexander, examining him, as if he were choosing goods and looking for a flaw in order to fault and slow down the price. And when he pressed pressed the desired location, Mamonov's body became firm and rose up, Potyomkin only smacked, "You will delight the empress."

Not only Mamonov's face, but also his back turned red with a shame, he wanted to curse without paying attention to the prince, but he restrained at the last minute because of incredible thought, "If it is true?"

Then everything was as usual in the court: all three women, testing Mamonov, were pleased with him, especially Perekusiha, "Honey, amused me very much, so you would delight the empress even better!"

36

"Mr Richard Suderland?" – courier, a young officer, asked, just in case, jingled with his spurs dashingly – "it is ordered at the hands personally."

The banker only looked at a packet covered with wafers, he knew who had sent it without reading.

This packet was from Potyomkin. "As her Majesty deigned to give privileges to mennonites who wanted to settle in Ekaterinoslav Province, I ask you to give them the required amounts in Danzig, Riga, Kherson."

The banker read some more lines and his eyebrows went up in surprise – it would be difficult for him to find these sums, especially in several towns at the same time. "It's the prince's manner" – Suderland rubbed his temples

reflectively – “he has schemes of vast dimensions, and I must think where to find money for the next adventure.”

Two hundred and twenty eight families of mennonites were going from Danzig to Ukrainian steppes, and a group of Swedes were going to Kherson to a settlement, there were houses built for them, Moldavians, Wallachians, Romanians were flocking across the Turkish border. They all were exempted from taxes for ten years, they were given cattle and agricultural instruments, allowed to be engaged in wine... Russian embassies abroad vigorously recruited new settlers.

“European papers praise the new settlements in Mala Rus” – the prince reported the empress.

“Privileges of Greek, Armenian and other settlements attracted a lot of people: poor landowners and peasants, retired soldiers, serfs-escapees who had run away to other countries, religious dissenters, poor Orthodox priests from remote Russian provinces went there from Russia, sometimes they went to fertile regions by the whole beggarly villages.”

“Potyomkin is in a hurry” – Suderland read the letter down to the last page – “the prince is afraid lest local Cossacks should settle in these lands. But it’s not my trouble, I’d like to earn money on the prince’s haste.”

Suderland went to the Winter Palace the next day to discuss the conditions of such large-scale project, but there he was sent to a new favorite Platon Zubov, referring to the empress’s business.

It was found out in prince Zubov’s rooms that there were too many people. In white marble rooms near the empress’s hall nearly fifty petitioners were looking at the white door, where important person had to appear to decide fates.

Somebody was expecting his hapless child to be appointed to the state office, somebody hoped for estates, the others wanted to attract the empress’s attention, but first it was necessary to honor the almighty prince. Honorable ambassador in a turban patiently fingered the rosary, French nobleman, judging by their clothes, was looking with amazement at those present at the reception, perhaps, he was a newcomer there, only one thick general with an eye bandaged with black braid, complained impatiently, “And coffee will be cooled completely...”

Suderland was introduced to Lieutenant-General, man of the world, already famous general, who considered for the honor to come every morning, an hour before Zubov woke up, to cook and serve coffee for the prince in bed personally.

At last the door opened widely, and adjutant announced triumphantly, as about the second coming, “His lordship, Platon Alexandrovich Zubov invites!”

The crowd rushed to the door, pushing and paying no attention to the ranks and uniforms, everybody wanted it quicker, they had been waiting for four hours, but instead of this suddenly a funny monkey appeared at the door before people, monkey was dressed in a short skirt and lacy panties, it began to ape, screaming fun.

Platon Alexandrovich was sitting before a mirror, having put his foot on the edge of the table, he even didn't move, because his wig was being crinkled and sprinkled with powder at the moment. Visitors with a bow at his feet, politely took place, and lanky adjutant was commanding as if they were children in parochial school, "You, count, will be the first, you, general, after count, and you after general..."

Zubov didn't notice anybody while he was being brushed, he was breaking letters and gave them to adjutant to read – everybody saw that he was busy with affairs of state. If Zubov addressed himself to somebody in the queue, that man had right to approach only after five or six bows, and receiving the answer, he had to return to his place on tiptoe; those who weren't lucky could take place in the queue for three years.

But there was a real fun for the monkey in lacy panties. It was small, the size of a big cat, extremely agile, it was rushing on the ledges, chandeliers, curtains, visitors' eyes could hardly follow it. It could jump from the chandelier on a hat of petitioner, accurately enter and stay there if it like, especially if it was the Greek Toope. Such lucky petitioner bent courteously and was waiting courteously until the monkey was feasting on the headgear.

"What do bankers need?" – Zubov closed one eye, as if powder fell there.

"Deuce take it!" – Suderland cursed inwardly – "do I need this?"

"Your Highness, I beg your attention: we need a lot of money to settle lands of Mala Russia with foreigners..."

"But you are there in the world" – duke was watching with narrowed eyes, as if he were aiming a musket.

"Certainly, it's my trouble, but provisions, percentage... His grace, duke Grigoriy Potyomkin demands sooner."

"Potyomkin?!" – Zubov got angry and shook his head, so that even powder fluttered – hairdressers recoiled in fright, and the monkey rushed headlong for the curtain – "if he demands, let he gives!"

Suderland was standing near Zubov without saying a word, waiting long, and he went away at last. He understood that only the empress could free him of the scourge, in which he got between the two favorites.

When Suderland met the empress, fortunately, he found her in a good mood – she was feeding her parrot at the moment. Seeing the stranger, the bird flapped its wings with displeasure, and yelled, as if for help: "Pla-a-to-o-sha!"

"Don't worry, dear banker" – the empress calmed Suderland – "your conditions will be met, if only duke Potyomkin get money in time – he makes a big deal, settling the lands of Mala Rus with Greeks, Armenians or Voloiks. The duke confirms these lands to be Russian, because foreigners from any countries are subjects of the imperial throne there forever. And even if something changes: for example, history moves the boundaries, – Russia will have right to defend its people diplomatically, or with arms in case of need."

The parrot flapped its wings again, and vailing its head, stared suspiciously at Suderland.

“It’s the most sincere favorite” – the empress smiled, nodding at the parrot – “all the previous betrayed, and this is the most true lover, it will always love me.”

The parrot, as if understanding something, proudly stretched out his neck and cried, “Glory to Catherine!”

Whether his teacher didn’t pronounce a letter “r”, or because of bird nature, but he said “Cathegine”.

Eventually, words of the empress would come true: this bird would be the most loyal and reliable pet. A century would pass, after the October Revolution, Red Guards would confiscate estates of old families. They would take away all but the last in the house of prince Saltykov, and when they are already at the doorstep, a grandmother would cry then, “If you took everything, take the bird too – it’s also historical value.”

“Revolution doesn’t need this” – Red Guard smiled of fun.

“Don’t smile, it’s a parrot of Catherine II, for your information.”

As to confirm the words of the old mistress, the bird tossed with wings, shabby with age and cried, “Glory to Cathe-g-g-ine!”

Smiling, soldiers took the cage with the parrot which was shabby, with a cataract in the eye. But the bird either did not want to expect a world revolution, or from the food of Red Guard, but after three weeks it died.

Thus the story of the last lover of the empress ended.

37

At the beginning of the meeting of the State Council at the empress the prince Potyomkin’s eye, which was plucked out, suddenly itched – it itched so strongly as if a mote hit there. It was impossible, because it was always tied with a densely braid, but in spite of it, itching intensified and turned into pain at last. He rubbed his eyes with his hand over the tape and muted itch for a while. “Bad sign” – the prince thought – “people say it means tears. But these are inventions of old women.”

Potyomkin had to report about the situation in Mala Rus today.

“Victorious war is over, Zaporozhian Cossacks had done their work” – the prince’s memory was good and he exactly named number of troops, towns and villages where the heaviest fightings took place.

“It’s time to eliminate Zaporozhian Sich. It is a distemper for us – nobleman punishes his peasant and this peasant begins to look towards Zaporozhian steppes. The orders from Petersburg often are not performed, or they are performed with tricks characteristic for Ukrainians – it’s impossible to find out who is guilty. The settlement of foreigners in the south of Mala Rus especially troubles, because we are waiting for the arrival of one hundred thousand

German families. And Kalnyshevskiy, obsequiously nodding in our direction, really he heavily colonizes the south with Zaporozhians – forty five villages and more than five thousand farms appeared only recently thanks to his efforts. That's why it is necessary to cut Zaporozhian knot.”

He spoke persuasively, because nobody traveled on the dusty southern roads as he did, and nobody knew better the situation in that country. Suddenly Potyomkin saw an old bishop among people, he was surprised, because State Council was not for bishops, not parish meeting; there was even buzzing in his head when the bishop dared to interrupt him:

“Prince, don't cause injustice to people, don't step on the road of evil... You entered for kosh as a Kosh Otaman Gritsko Nechesa, but you called Kalnyshevskiy “dear father”, – bishop said reproachfully – “and if you worship injustice, land will not accept your bones, and descendants will call you the prince of darkness...”

“I'm prince of Tauride!” – Potyomkin slipped out and pull together, rubbed his eye which was already healthy – there wasn't any bishop, it seemed.

Dignitaries in the Council looked at each other in surprise: why did he make boast of his title, reading a report, and the empress began to rally, surprised at a long break:

“Prince, we know all your honourable titles. But what do you offer?”

Having made excuses and complained of overwork, Potyomkin expanded how to use the troops of Tekeli and Prosorovskiy, what to do with Kalnyshevskiy.

There weren't big debates, because it was impossible to find better time, everybody was considering how to share vast lands and everything on them.

...Agreements adopted at the State Council were performed under particular control, as never before. Five columns of troops of one hundred thousand soldiers of Peter Tekeli were going to Sich quickly, surrounding it from different sides. But Serbian Tekeli was afraid of any actions until Prosorovskiy occupy Cossacks' tents with his troops – every invader knows that flame of rebellion can burst out very quickly, and it's very difficult to blow out that flame even with soldiers' overcoats.

Meanwhile the council of fathers took place in the Sich.

“Let them burn out our eyes, but we will not give the Sich-mother,” somebody was stubborn.

“Brothers, there are some thousands of us, but there are much more Muscovites, they are like midges, which it is difficult to count” – more cautious people warned.

“We will not give Zaporozhye till the sun shines...”

Kalnyshevskiy didn't interrupt anybody, even the hottest, he saw much for his eighty years. He parted with his life many times, and sometimes he didn't have time even to part. But it was the most difficult time, it would be better not live to see that time... And if he was fated to live, he would have to adopt a decision, worthy of his old years, anyhow.

He had a strange dream last night. He saw a bishop, very similar to the metropolitan Arceniy, it was as if the last conversation with him continued. "There will be time to gather stones, Peter" – Arceniy hadn't changed since that time, only his face was grey as in the darkness – "you only need to believe and live."

A dispute broke out at the father's council when they were discussing priest Vladimir who shared troubles and joy with the Cossacks.

"Resignation will save us" – the priest said and the council began to boom indignantly and discomposedly, but the bishop didn't pay attention – "we'll not compare ourselves with enemies, spill Christian blood."

The word of priest had always been a law for veteran Cossacks, but now they were ready to shred him.

"He is a spy from Moscow! He is a ban-dog!"

"Brothers" – Kalnyshevskiy said at last – "we are not strong enough to start a fight. Hear my grey head... If you die here, even as heroes, who will have children, who will run the show here... Foregners?"

Kosh Otaman was silent, then he added cap in hand, "Moses with his people was going away from a captivity for forty years, but you may do this even longer. I prefer not to talk what these gadders will do with Sich. Let your heart say you where to go..."

The oldest went to Tekeli the next day, Solovki waited for Kosh Otaman, Turuhansk expected clerk Ivan Globa, and military judge Pavel Globa had to get in Tobolsk.

Different people went to Sich as midges – they were bringing out ammunition, flags, archives of Zaporozhian military chancery, they earthed cannons. Many people came in the church, they were not praying but packing silver and gold from ornaments in their sacks in a hurry.

Cossacks managed to save only the icon of saint Sich Pokrova.

"Go where you heart says," Kosh Otaman advised his sworn brothers.

First of all they went to Tekeli.

"General, let us preserve fish, because your people took away everything.

General didn't grudge fish."

Cossacks went in tens by day, and in thousands at night from Sich to Turkish lands.

There weren't enough carts, of course, so they went on foot, crossing themselves and greeting their land. "In 1775 nearly 5000 Cossacks left Zaporozhye and went to Turkish lands," contemporaries wrote.

Rather big hordes went to the Dniester firth, to the town Akerman. Local pasha understood the trouble, helped with food and others, allowed to become Kosh Otaman. Cossacks who got used to campaigns, divided into units, and forty dignified Cossacks were chosen to go to a sultan with deputation.

Sultan didn't deny a request, guaranteed belief, military order, helped with clothes and gave island of Saint George in the mouth of Danube for Sich, and

steppe near the southern tributary in addition. Cohort got usual ammunition – mace, horse-tail and gonfalon, patriarch from Konstantinopol laid hands on them.

People were going to new Sich from Ukraine, Cossacks and their families were plodding along far prairie roads under hot southern sun – they brought the icon of saint Sich Pokrova there on foot.

Arrivals had their troubles on their land, quarrels and disagreements till they divided the booty. Public prosecutor prince Vyasemskiy took two hundred thousand tithes, prince Potyomkin took one hundred and fifty thousand, and each Russian nobleman got a thousand and a half tithes at least if he carried three Russian peasant families there. Four and a half tithes of Ukrainian land was shared in all.

Other troubles were smaller: prince Potyomkin got much temporalities, and when Cossacks went to Turkey as refugees from prince Grigoriy, “arrivals from Slavonic provincial chancery major Grigoriy Borsenko and commissar Ivan Deryaev stroke out all icons in silver ornaments in the church and took with them. They took also silver gates, bowls and other things in empty Zaporozhian sacristy.” P. Korolenko described this so, paying attention to details. Cossacks’ cemeteries were destroyed, prince Vyasemskiy used gravestones and crosses for a basement, building the estate. P. Korolenko told about steward of prince A. Vyasemskiy’s estate, too who was an owner of village Pokrovskoye, Ivan Roselnantser who “broke the biggest bells in that church, and sold copper to Jews in Poland, 11 roubles for a pood”...

38

She couldn’t keep her anxiety and triumph in a voice from showing this time, she even set her teeth not to show joyful smile, it was in vain; the empress was dictating a secret order,

“The main Polish rebel Kostyushko and his secretary Nemtsevich, adjutant Phisher must be sent to Saint-Petersburg. As this secret is very important and is brought under the foreign name, you have to tell from the very beginning that this is major-general chevalier Miloshevich, injured in Warsaw, his documents are inclosed. I order strictly to have control over him...to bring Kostyushko by himself and to... guarding officer must fix his eyes on him from morning till night, and nobody among grassroots can see him and talk to him.”

There was one more victory, one more step in the creation of a great myth of her empire and of truly Catherine the Great. Rebellious Poland is suppressed, its national leader Tadeush Kostyushko is captured. How, such notability... Famed brigadier of America who had built inaccessible West-Point, which was then famous all over the world, he was declared a freeman of France by the French convention, now he was its usual prisoner, he would become prisoner of Petropavlovsk fortress.

Tadeush Kostyushko had difficulties in unlucky fight near Matseevich. Battle with Russians which had begun at dawn, was with varied success in the

afternoon, and multiple advantage of artillery of Russian general Phersen made rows of Polish cavalry thinner.

Kostyushko was going as hard as one could lick on the field of honour, nestling to the mane of horse; he was rushing to the other flank, subconsciously avoiding explosions of cannon-balls, which were hacking autumn land and raised it into the sky as black columns with a painful groan. He avoided fire of cannons, but the bullet of muskets stroke down his horse – and it was rolling with its rider on the field. Russian cavalry hurried to Tadeush, seeing this.

Overpowering pain, Kostyushko put a barrel of pistol into the mouth and pulled the trigger.

Misfire...

Russian cavalry came up at this moment, one of them shot at him, the second piked him, and the third bited with a sword.

“This Polish farter has good boots” – the first was taking off the boots from Kostyushko who lost consciousness. The second turned inside out his pockets and exulted at gold watch. The third was taking off seal-rings and whistled in surprise, seeing an inscription on them.

It was written on seal-rings: “Motherland – to her defenders”.

Kostyushko awarded his swore brothers with such seal-rings instead of medals. The empress knew how difficult it was to suppress the flame of rebellion, sometimes they overdid there.

They shot civilian population in Kobryn and Malorita, were bringing babies impaled on bayonets, and Suvorov forbid to bury the dead Poles in Warsaw suburb to intimidate – what to do: war is war.

Russian general von Klugen would write about those events, “Our soldiers fired into the crowd. They were trigger-happy – and screaming of women, cries of babies horrified. It’s right that shed human blood raises to intoxication... “No quarter to be given,” – our soldiers cried and killed everybody without distinguishing neither age nor gender...”

The empress had to appreciate Suvorov’s contribution, decree was already prepared about presenting him with parish Kobrino, with 13279 men bonds. She thought that the third division of Poland had to be the last forever, and the throne of proud Polish kings would take place in john instead of chair.

She even concluded that her predecessors had not been able to complete.

Destroying Sich, erasing Poland from the map of Europe, the empress began to suppress the most recalcitrant Litvins of White Russia. Tsar Alexei

Mikhailovich, examining that land, didn’t kill only one million three hundred and fifty Litvins of two million nine thousand, he brought many of them too, because Moscow arrows had long sold Litvins on Astrakhan markets in the Persian bondage for three rubles for a person. Peter I blew Polotsk Sophia, drawing in, because there couldn’t be temples more ancient than in capitals of the empire. She completed their case, she distributed two hundred thousand

souls of Litvins among favorites, and half a million serfs to different Russian landlords.

... Face of Secretary of State became longer when he gave Catherine II sheet of paper, entirely clean, only three words were written in a rush.

“A letter for you, Your Majesty. Will you order an answer?”

The empress recognized Suvorov’s handwriting: “Hurra! Warsaw is ours!”

“Write” – she smiled contented – “Hurra! Field Marshal Suvorov!”

The empress could reward loyal subjects adequately, assigning a high rank in this way.

Now she could do everything, she won.

Her husband rose from the grave fourteen times, he raised another rebellion under the name of Peter III. The most difficult matter was connected with the fifth, Pugachev, but it was easier with successors after the sentence: “Emilian Pugachev must be quartered, stick his head on a stake, spread the body parts in four parts of the city and put on the wheels, then burn on these places.”

Now her husband behaves politely, lies quietly under the heavy gravestone.

She couldn’t put the head of Arceniy Matsievich under the ax of executioner, of course, as the rest. Ultimately, there is no difference between husband and metropolitan: they both are in stone sacks, and Arceniy couldn’t talk to anybody in Revel prison up to death – it was forbidden to appoint guard who knew at least one Russian word.

All victories belong to her, to the greatest man whose name is Catherine...

39

Years were passing, many events had happened since Arceniy Matsievich was judged. And there was a strange wonder: all metropolitan’s predictions in court came true. First Gedeon died on the way suddenly, church of Three Saints, which was situated near Cross Chamber where Matsievich was judged, fell at that moment. Reverend Demetrius unexpectedly fell ill in his prime and glory: sudden temperature, swollen tongue. Doctors were caring for him from morning till night, because he was the most respectable person in the State and he really had strong influence in the empress’s court. Pills didn’t help Demetrius, tongue became thicker, there wasn’t place for it in the mouth, he gasped, his face was blue, he couldn’t say a word as if he put a stone under the tongue.

“The metropolitan warned...” – Demetrius croaked hardly and thickly, breathed frantically and died.

Bad rumours were spread among people about Gavriil’s death. They told he had taken a fancy woman from lay brother who strangled him with a pillow in a fit of rage.

“Your rival will strangle you for your Irodiada” – metropolitan’s prediction was retailed even in ten years.

Misfortune waylaid Ambrose during the height of the plague, and it wouldn’t be so offensive if he died from illness. He sent many people to Barbaric gate because there were rumours that icon of the God’s Mother gave salvation. Lord

Ambrose was an educated man and he understood danger of such crowds, he ordered to bring the icon to the church of Saint Cyrus and Ioann.

“The lord takes money of God’s Mother!” – somebody’s cry heated disturbed crowd.

Revolted people rushed to Miracles monastery, looking for Ambrose everywhere, they didn’t find them and were disappointed. Smashing wine cellars, the rebels went to the Donskoy Monastery, because they heard that the lord was hidden there.

Ambrose tried to break out of Moscow but it was already late. The lord communicated and hid in the loft. Stamping of feet and an unusual buzz in the temple, a vain attempt of a prior to persuade teased people; steps are heard on a stage of the loft. The curled up lord was praying below his breath, begging God to to forgive all sins, and betrayal of metropolitan Arceniy too.

“He is here! Robber of Bogoliubsk Dame is here!” – chasing cried triumphantly almost over the head.

Archbishop was caught and pulled down like a sack with potatoes, he was dragged by the feet, and the lord painfully hit his head on stage. At last he was pulled to the monastery courtyard, he got many kicks there. Some of them were beating with feet, others – with sticks, but Ambrose didn’t feel pain, as if it wasn’t his body and he didn’t pity it; incomprehensible suffocating bitterness burned through the soul instead of pain. And before insensibility he saw shine of knife in the hands of a man with wild bloodshot eyes, and there was a well-known voice from a distance, “Don’t step on that way, I beg you, Ambrose.” The prince Potyomkin’s matters shaped well for long... Battle successes in the south brought new orders and estates, and besides, charming Sophia Witt, another of his passions, was heady. Potyomkin was seriously thinking about marriage with her and coronation for new realm. He saw revived Byzantine Empire in his unrestrained dreams. According to legend, the ancient Greek civilization was born in the Northern Black Sea, and it spread on the lands of historical Hellas from that place. The capital of new empire had to be near ancient Olbia, it would be better in Nikolaev, his favourite town.

Although the new designs didn’t have place for the empress Catherine, she continued to send caring letters, she even sent young doctor for Potyomkin from Petersburg.

Strange obscure events began to occur unexpectedly. At the funeral of prince of Virtenberg, brother of princesses Maria Fedorovna, in town of Halacha, after the ceremony a funeral coach came up to Potyomkin instead of his luxurious coach.

The prince was scared, he even stepped back and crossed, his back was cold as if somebody spilled water: he understood that it was somebody’s mistake, but horror did not diminish.

The prince died suddenly in the desert. He had bouts of fever on that day, but he wasn’t afraid of road, he even prepared an entire goose for it.

But he was buried not in his favourite Nikolaev, but in Kherson, he didn't like this town and called it "coffin".

Archbishop Ambrose was speaking with sincerity and emotion in a memorial speech over the body of the deceased,

"The empress is now without counselor, associate and friend."

Shrewd tongues were whispering: "Prince was poisoned, that young doctor did it, doctor who was sent by Catherine." But there are not people who were not discussed.

The other thing was unexpected. Potyomkin's vision about plan of destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich at the The Council of State came true: stories about his actions issued first in Hamburg journal "Minerva", but then in a separate Gelbig's book "Potyomkin of Tauride", subsequently the book was reprinted many times in Germany, France and England, at last it was translated into Russian under the title "Pansalvin is the prince of darkness", then it began to roam on the spaces of empire. The name "the prince of darkness", given Grigoriy by the author, stuck to the Potyomkin's surname by firm and inseparable epithet for centuries.

Strange adventures happened to the body of prince Grigoriy too. He was put in a coffin in the church of Saint Catherine, the empress had commissioned a marble tombstone, but it wasn't made for five years even during her life, and Potyomkin remained not buried. The next emperor Pavel I signed the order for Attorney-General Alexander Kurakin, "that his body must be buried in the same coffin in special pit without taking air, and the pit must be covered with soil so flatly as if it wasn't there". And they told Kurakin the other things, "Everything that reminds of Potyomkin must be destroyed, and his bones must be spread out in the Devil's Canyon."

So strange name for a canyon... And Ukrainian land hadn't taken the prince Potyomkin's body for six years. The grave was dug under the moon and buried empty.

The next emperor Alexander I ordered to erect a monument to Potyomkin in Kherson. A famous painter I. Martos had to prepare a draft, but the work didn't come to hand, heirs squabbled over money. Official commission opened the coffin many times, checking the remains; Potyomkin was buried eight times, as historians estimated, and every time there were reasons for abruption of his dust.

A writer Boris Lavrenev in 1930 entered former church with a plate on the door "Museum of Atheism" and examined the exhibits. In a showcase under glass he saw a human skull, darkened by the time, and a table "Skull of Potyomkin, lover of Catherine II". In the second showcase – remains of clothes, stockings and shoes, in the other – human skeleton with a rotted pieces of muscles. The same table: "Bones of Potyomkin, lover of Catherine II".

The local priest had been keeping yellow photos of excavation of graves for a long time: farmers are standing above the skeletons in the remnants of Catherine

uniforms, and leather jacket of chekist is seen near by – worthy successor of the Secret Expedition of Catherine II and prince Grigoriy Potyomkin.

40

Everything faded away in the palace of the late autumn night, daily hustle and bustle of the court subsided, empress had long been in the bedchamber, only the maids of honor did not sleep on duty. Only light and calm crackle of firewood occasionally broke the silence of the huge building.

Suddenly the door of the bedchamber opened, empress came out with a candle in her hands and went to throne room. Maids of honor were surprised at such late visit and long absence of the empress. Bell for servants from the bedchamber broke their hesitations and whisperings.

Maids of honor entered and were numb with fright. The empress who had just passed them in a night clothes and with a candle in her hands, really was lying in her bed as if she didn't come out.

“Who is mooching and making noise?” she blinked her eyes sleepily and discontentedly, looking at maids of honor.

They lost courage and were making excuses and humming, fueling Catherine's curiosity who suspected something and made them tell the truth.

Maids of honor had to tell everything they saw.

“Help me to dress! Quickly!” – empress lost her sleep immediately.

They went together to the throne room, door was opened, and they petrified, barely crossing the threshold.

A huge hall was illuminated by an unusual greenish, ghostly and shimmering light, and on the throne... empress Catherine II was sitting.

Timid, seized with terror, from which the skin on the head tightened and body was frozen, empress was looking with bewitched gaze at herself, at her double who was sitting on the throne moveless under unusually greenish otherworldly light; she was looking and couldn't revert the eyes as if she was bewitched by a witch, or unseen, unknown and powerful magnets held that gaze until she fainted.

And in a minute ghostly light and vision disappeared, throne room was empty, as well as the throne. The empress came to.

Maids of honor crossed themselves and swore never to tell about it.

The empress came to herself only in two days, when she woke up cheerful, with renewed forces, ready to new efforts. She drank coffee, joked with a valet, went to a lavatory. Cosing on the throne of Polish kings which was used as a seat in toilet, she tried to relieve herself, when suddenly something happened, sparks were quacking in a temple. Then there was buzzing in her head, the world lurched and began to tremble, drifted uncontrollably like a boat which got in a violent whirlwind of a river; flocks of crows came over her, even not crows, they only superficially resembled them, they were quicker than sinister bats with webbed wings: they circled over her with a terrible cry, showed large black

claws, trying to catch her, but she was able to dodge and wriggle for a while till dusk and night.

Valet Zahariy Zotov had been waiting for the empress patiently for a long time until his heart jumped and he dared: smashing the door with a shoulder, he broke into lavatory.

The empress was lying in the floor, her face was fligid, and painful rale broke from her throat.

There was an anxiety, courtiers ran up and pulled heavy body from the lavatory, but even six men couldn't put it on the bed, that's why they put morocco mattress on the floor and laid dying empress on it.

Then palace was buzzing like a hive: carriers were running, runners were rushing with reports to son Pavel to Gatchina, courtiers were arriving.

Doctors were bothering near the body. They put blister-beetles on her feet, let her blood from a hand. But there wasn't any hope in doctors' eyes.

At nine in the evening a surgeon in ordinary to the Empress told that the empress was dying. Lord was waiting in vain, he had to confess the empress, but she didn't regain consciousness. He tried to communicate her too but failed, "because of foam from the mouth" as eyewitness wrote.

Lord recalled words of metropolitan Matsievich, words said reproachfully on that age-old trial, "You will die without Christian confession and communion." And in the next few days there were familiar and at the same time unusual preparations for the funeral of the empress.

Unprecedented spectacle took place in front of thousands of people. Emperor Peter III rose from the grave. Son knew that his mother had killed father, as many people in Russia knew. Taking the throne, he decided not to bury mother until he paid his last respects to his father – now he would crown him, because Peter II had been strangled before coronation. Catherine II had been lying in a coffin unburied for a month.

Runners were rushing to Moscow for the royal regalia, and at this time excavated coffin was brought from the cemetery of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery and it was put near the coffin of the empress Catherine II. Murderer and victim, husband and wife still met.

"Who will carry the crown?" – they asked emperor Pavel at the beginning of ceremony.

"Orlov" – he answered without hesitation, he uttered words which were conceived long ago, that was lurking in the soul for long years.

Alexey Orlov took the crown as if it was white-hot, and it really burned his fingers and palms, calling unnatural, unconscious animal terror which was curdling the blood. "You will crown that whose blood is on your hands" – words said by metropolitan on the trial sounded for Alexey from the distance of three decades, came, reached as if a distant echo was rolling through the woods and thickets.

They broke into the emperor's hall rapidly, being red and excited of drinks, they acted without caution.

Hearing crash, emperor Pavel could hide and he was standing in underwear in surprise near curtains.

“You are arrested, Your Majesty!”

Emperor began to understand that it was so unexpectedly, began to wake, stood straight and cried at Zubov in usual dictatorial voice.

“Are you out of your mind, Platon Alexandrovich!”

“You aren't the emperor any more” – Zubov said at once, red from running on the stairs – “Alexander is our emperor!”

Conspirators tumbled one after another in the bedroom – Benigsen, Platon's brother Nikolay, Yashvil, Tatarinov, and Platon took out pre-prepared text of abdication when they surrounded the emperor by a semicircle.

The emperor, exasperated by unheard and incredible arrogance, was going to aim a blow at Platon, but brother Nikolay stroke his hand so that it hung like a wiper. Pavel managed to rush to the window and to strike window glass with a healthy hand – the glass clinked, but the emperor was knocked down immediately, and he found himself in a semicircle of conspirators. Platon was looking for something proper, and suddenly he saw gold snuffbox: pick at the temple, and Pavel reeled, his feet wore, and fell on the floor.

“If he is alive, we won't live!” – Benigsen cried.

Everybody ran at Pavel in the darkness, cursing and spitting in his face, they were kicking him in turn and personally; Platon was aiming at a lower part of belly, repeating mentally, “This is for taken estates to the treasury, and this is for my deportation abroad!”

The emperor managed to curl up, covering his face with healthy hand, he was whirling on the floor, trying to avoid kicks or to ease them, because blows were raining down from all sides, deaf kicks.

Conspirators didn't notice in excitement that emperor stopped whirling and defending, he lost consciousness, but deaf kicks rained down on the lifeless body like a sack of potatoes.

Platon was kicking heartily, not knowing the reason for his despite, only once reproachful thought flashed: why he did so with his beloved woman's son, woman who he strained to his heart and petted, but he suppressed the treacherous thought as if he blew out a candle by one breath.

They tried to raise him, but he couldn't keep his legs, they reduced, he could keep himself only on knees. So Platon and Nikolay caught a scarf, roped the neck and compressed with might and main, pressing a knot by a knee.

The next day stunned people heard that emperor died suddenly of apoplexy, and in fifty years publisher Suvorin would release a collection of documents

“Regicide on the 2nd of March, 1801. Notes of participants and contemporaries”. The emperor's body will be described in details, “There were many signs of violence on the body. Wide strip round the neck, heavy bruise on

his temple, red spot on the hip, but no wounds made by a sharp instrument, two red scars on both thighs; significant damages to the knees and near them which proved that he was forced to kneel to make it easier to strangle him. Besides, the whole body was covered with small bruises; they may have originated from kicks after death.”

And then it was known about a private coach, in which the son of the killed emperor, Alexander would move to Winter Palace. Witnesses were surprised why it was not a court coach, instead of two footmen there were two officers, one of them was adjutant general Uvarov. Accidental coach couldn't get there, only by a drawbridge, and it had to carry Pavel after abdication. Then they wrote that son agreed for father's abdication, for upheaval on condition to keep going of his father – but everybody understood that it was impossible. Herzen wrote, “Alexander let kill his father not to death.”

Mother kept at son: depressed by the news of husband's death, she told first: “Ich will regirien!” (I want to reign!). She even wanted to rush to the balcony to address the army which surrounded the palace, but officer F. V. Ridiger didn't let her.

In ten years son would put a monument to his father. When the cloth was removed from the monument, it would fall down as quick as thought in front of a huge crowd, and the rope would remain on the neck of emperor Pavel's monument, swaying like a menacing sign.

People would cry of this and recall metropolitan Arceniy's prediction, “Your lovers strangled your husband, they would strangle you too...”

42

Chief commandant of the Reval fortress Fabius von Gizengauzen was dissatisfied on the second day of Christmas, there are already many troubles and besides, they brought Andrey the Lier, an ordinary man, nobody knew how he had managed to mess things up. That man was old and weak, he was being brought in severe frost, so prisoner was carried into a casemate in hands. But von Gizengauzen knew what kind of prisoner was brought on his own responsibility and his old head. He would be punished if prisoner made up his mind and was able to fly away like a bird. They demanded a note from a doctor, who was called not in a hurry, note confirming that he wouldn't tell anybody about mysterious prisoner.

Guard for the old man was ordered to consist of soldiers who didn't understand Russian.

So Arceniy Matsievich found himself in stone cage which was treasured like an apple of eye by the major Gibner after von Gizengauzen, then by chief commandant Benkendorf.

According to the last sentence the door of the casemate was mured, food was given through a small window. Glass was broken on the window with yellow bars, that's why only a snow-storm could be his guest.

But local people guessed that not simple prisoner was guarded zealously behind strong walls; authorities were afraid of him. Somebody kind managed to give prisoner a basket. And when the metropolitan didn't receive not only clothes but food, he lowered the basket on a rope from a window, and somebody gracious put a crust of bread or water for the suffering one.

Metropolitan didn't see human face, didn't hear human language, he could only listen to the bird language – happy sparrows were twittering carefree behind bars on a window sill, and once a pigeon sat with a crust of bread. It cooed, then flapped with blue-gray wings and flew away, leaving the crust – whether it wasn't hungry and lost interest, or bread seemed to be stale and the bird couldn't eat it. Arceniy smiled unwittingly: you see, bird from the sky, but it understood the trouble: shared its last with him...

Metropolitan had more time than necessary to think about his life, skimming page after page like a famous and read book, and consider every page. And once Arceniy had a strange dream. It was as if he was sitting in a cosy yard of Kiev-Mohyla Academy, he was not young but old as now, and he saw that stranger with long hair falling over his shoulders again; maybe he covered the sun by himself because his silhouette shone with soft and light radiance.

“Arceniy, did you use the gift which had been given you since youth?” – a stranger asked.

“Yes” – metropolitan said firm and he bowed his head sadly for some reason.

“So why do you doubt?”

“People listened to the warnings very little, did a lot of evil in spite of warnings and didn't believe in inevitable punishment.”

“Arceniy, you are wrong. You sowed good which is like an air – nobody sees it but nobody can live without it. And good doesn't come up only today or in spring, harvest can be in years and centuries. God arranged this. Even though you are alive immured, but secular authorities did not overpower you with all its evil and wickedness, because its pride and triumph are fleeting, but the truth is for the ages.”

Arceniy woke up, he didn't forget his dream, on the contrary, the stranger's voice was in his memory. His heart felt better, there was a relief in his stunted and emaciated old body; he took a stone which turned up and trying like a schoolboy, hardly scratched three short words, “Blessing, He humbled me”. And behind the window stork's bevy was floating high in the young autumn sky. Metropolitan followed it with a long look as if he passed last greeting to native land by these tireless birds – even his father told that storks gathered in bevvies to warm countries from Scandinavian countries, even from England, from Baltic Region, and fly to Volyn by invisible heavenly road, then over Pripyat, the Dnieper, fly across the sea to winter in the far southern lands, in Turkey, sometimes they even reach South Africa, where they can meet their Indian stork relatives – let the power and might not leave your work-weary wings.

Arceniy understood that his soul wouldn't be immured in this stone cage long. On the penultimate day of February 1772 metropolitan, collecting the remnants of the forces, asked the guard to call a priest.

They broke the wall where there was a door, and rector of the Reval Church entered stone cage. He had scarcely entered when astonishment and terror swept over him: walls and ceiling were shining with a special light, and bishop was standing in the middle of the close chamber in full festive regalia, shining with unearthly radiance. Priest was impressed by silent and exciting music, sounds were pouring somewhere, they appeased, heart felt easy and relaxed, it was the church and not the church music, music of the high sky, emphasizing the futility of existence, the temporality of human vanity.

Priest rushed back to commandant with fear and misunderstanding, and they squeezed into a stone bag together.

But bishop in full festive regalia disappeared, walls didn't shine with gilding, they only were covered with a green moss, unearthly music wasn't heard – only a strolling musician was playing ancient local instrument.

A sick prisoner was lying on the prison bed instead of the bishop, dressed in worn cold clothing.

When prisoner closed his eyes after confession and communion the priest seemed to hear music not of ancient simple instrument, but another one, music which couldn't be created by a man; world primitive colors and sounds returned, soot on the snow, accumulated during the winter, was disappearing behind a window, the sky enlightened and gained an immeasurable and boundless deep blue, smut and scale were falling off the world, not only strings created sounds, trees, snows, birds in the high sky sounded too, even heavy and severe walls covered with mold and moss sounded – music of high heaven and of eternal and irresistible Truth.

Instead of notes

Those events and facts at different times were described by...

French Ambassador to Russia Laurent Berenger in telegram to Foreign Minister of the 23rd July 1762,

“What a picture is before the eyes of the whole nation! On the one hand, a grandson of Peter I, dethroned and put to death; on the other hand, grandson of czar John, languishing in chains, while the princess Anhalt Tserbskaya usurps the crown, starting her reign with a regicide.”

K.-K. Ryuler, secretary of the French ambassador, "Revolution in 1762" (p. 68-69),

"One can not truthfully say how the empress took part in this events; but it was known that she had been very funny, sitting at the table on that very day when it happened. Suddenly the same Orlov arrived, he was disheveled, in a sweat and dust, in torn clothes, his face was troubled, full of terror and haste. Entering the room, his fast and sparkling eyes were already looking for the empress. Without saying a word, she stood up, went to a cabinet, Orlov followed her; she called count Panin in some minutes, who was appointed her minister. She told him that the emperor died and asked how to inform people. Panin advised to miss one night and to tell news the next morning as if it happened at night. Accepting the advise, the empress returned with the same face and continued to have dinner with the same joy. In the morning, when everybody knew that Peter had died from hemorrhoidal colic, she appeared with blubbered face and heralded her grief.

Letter of Catherine II to baron Grimm,

"... half of those who are alive, or fools, or madmen; try, if you can, live with such people!"

A. Pushkin about the reign of Catherine II,

"Catherine destroyed the title (rather the name) of slavery, but she gave away about a million of state peasants (free cultivators), and conquered free Mala Rus and Polish provinces. Catherine destroyed inquisition, but secret office prospered under her patriarchal rule; Catherine liked education, but Novikov, spreading its first rays, moved from Sheshkovskiy to prison where he was kept up to his death. Radishchev was exiled to Siberia..."

Alexander Pushkin characterizes Catherine II,

"Voice of betrayed Voltaire will not save her from the curse of Russia."

"The very sensuality of this sly woman claimed her dominion. Producing a faint murmur among the people, who used to respect vices of their rulers, it caused nasty competition in higher states, because neither intelligence, nor deserts or talent were necessary to achieve the second place in the state."

A. Herzen about the reign of Catherine II,

"... an uninterrupted orgy of wine, blood, depravity was running."

"History of Catherine II shouldn't be read in presence of ladies."

Son was afraid of being poisoned by his mother, Catherine II.

L. L. Bennigsen, general in the reign of empress Catherine II,

"Pavel suspected even Catherine II of designs on him. Once he complained of a pain in a throat. Catherine II answered, "I'll send you my doctor who had

treated me well.” Pavel was afraid of poison, he couldn’t hide his embarrassment, hearing the name of his mother’s doctor. The empress noticed it and calmed her son, assuring him that it was the most harmless drug and he would decide himself to take it or not. When the empress was living in Tsarskoe Selo during summer, Pavel was living in Gatchina, there was a large detachment of troops. He surrounded himself with guards and pickets, patrols constantly guarded the road to Tsarskoe Selo, especially at night, to prevent all unexpected attempts. He even pre-determined a route where he could go away with the troops, if necessary: according to his order roads of this route had been studied previously by trusted officer.”

Voltaire about Russia,

“Customs are as hard there as the climate: envy at foreigners is the strongest, despotism is boundless, society is worthless.”

Historian and publicist, prince Shcherbatov in his treatise “On the injury of morals” writes about Catherine II,

“Does she believe in God’s Law? But – no! She is keen on unthinking reading of new writers. She doesn’t respect Christian law (although she pretends to be pious). She suppresses her thoughts, but much is revealed in talks with her... And one can say that this inviolable support of conscience and virtue collapsed during her reign.”

Karl Masson wrote about the reign of Catherine II,

“... it was particularly disastrous for the nation and empire. All springs of control were damaged: any general, any governor, any head of department became a despot in his field. Grades, justice, impunity were sold at public auction. About 20 oligarchs, led by a favorite, shared Russia, they were robbing or allowed to rob finance and competed in the robbery of unhappy people.”

A. Herzen about morals in the reign of Catherine II,

“Stupid princes, who were not able just to speak in Russian, Germans and children mounted the throne, were unthroned... handful of intriguers and condottieri managed the state.”

HOW THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH BEGAN

K. Waliszewski “Ivan the Terrible” (p. 275-276),

“... military execution began, the horrors of the first Livonian campaign paled in comparison with it. Systematic destruction of the entire region followed: czar left a desert behind him from Klin to Novgorod.

On the 2nd of January his advanced troops appeared at the walls of the city and surrounded it from all sides. Suburban monasteries were looted and about 500 monks were taken away. Guardsmen entered the city the next day, gathered all

priests and deacons and put them near monks. They were beaten from morning till night, demanding 20 roubles for everybody. According to documents there were lucky people who avoided execution, paying demanded sum. Terrible fate awaited the others. The czar bailiffs roamed from house to house and rounded up residents to the place surrounded by fence and guarded by troops. On the 6th of January, on Friday Ivan arrived himself with his son and 500 archers. He ordered to beat all monks with sticks up to death... Their bodies were then taken to monasteries and buried there.

It was the turn of the clergy. On Sunday, in the morning before dinner archbishop was going in procession to meet the czar on the Volkhov bridge and he was going to bless him. Ivan didn't accept the blessing and called him "ravenous wolf". But he ordered him to serve Mass in Church of St. Sophia. He wanted to repeat the scene of executions with St. Philip. Czar even accepted the lord's invitation to dinner together. He seemed to be gay and he was eating with pleasure. Suddenly he cried loudly during the repast. Guardsmen began to perform the order according to that sign. Archbishop's house was destroyed. His clothes was torn off and he was thrown into the prison together with servants. Terror reached horrifying proportions in the coming days. On the city's main square a construction was built, it was similar to tribunal, surrounded by instruments of torture. Czar began quick trial. Hundreds of townspeople were brought and tortured, burned on a small fire with sophisticated techniques, then almost all of them were sentenced to death and brought to drown. Bloodied victims were tied to sledge and they were let down the steep slope to the place where Volhov had never frozen. Unhappy people plunged into the abyss. They tied babies to their mothers and drowned them. Guardsmen were standing on the boats, observing that no one could escape.

According to the third Novgorod record, beating had lasted for five weeks, there were very few days when 500-600 people were not launched into eternity. Sometimes the number of victims increased to fifteen hundreds a day. First Pskov record says that in general, about 60,000 people of both sexes were killed...

Be that as it may, horrible massacre reached appalling dimensions, and when Ivan had no one to kill, he directed his anger at inanimate objects. He attacked the monasteries with particular ferocity, suspecting them of betrayal. Probably, he began to destroy trade and industry of this big town for the same reason. All shops in towns and in the suburbs were robbed and rased, as well as houses. Czar was present there. Guardsmen, if to believe records, were knocking about and doing the same things in 200-250 miles from Novgorod... Novgorod could never recover from that strike."

K. Waliszewski "Ivan the Terrible" (p. 113-114):

Especially wise men were destroyed and persecuted. For example, archbishop of Novgorod was put on the mare. Ivan the Terrible called that mare

“archbishop’s wife”, saying, “You are not an archbishop, you are a buffoon.” And they were shepherded by whips to Moscow in front of crowd’s eyes. They tried to win freedom of speech, freedom of thought and conduct by these methods. We remember that archbishop of Novgorod was elected by people!.. “Fiction of the existence of a high morality at a low level of cultural development is refuted by history... Naive Muscovites consider themselves to be superior to all others. They generously give out promises and they are not going to carry them out. There is an absolute lack of confidence among them. Father shuns his son, the son does not trust his mother, no one lends a copeck without gage. It is noted by Germans Buchau and Ulfeld, Swede Pearson and Litvin Mihalon...

Their words are confirmed by Englishmen Fletcher and Jenkinson, “One can say justly... that almost all without distinction Russians don’t believe in what they are told and they do not earn the smallest trust themselves...” But they go further and mark the feature which I had indicated earlier – this is violence. But Fletcher excuses it, explaining, “Nation which is treated harshly and cruelly by rulers and high classes, becomes outrageous with others, especially with the weaker...” This phenomenon is observed in the history of all the barbarians, but especially in this country... In this case national historians tried to shift the blame to the Mongol invasion in vain, saying as if that invasion spoiled the morals, corrupted people, accustomed them to violence and trickery.”

Diderot about “Order” of Catherine II for deputies of Committee on the conclusion of the laws,

“Russian empress, without doubt, is a despot.”

“MERITS” OF CATHERINE II TO UKRAINIAN PEOPLE,

1762-1763 – Catherine II issued two manifestos about foreign colonization of Ukraine-Rus: Serbs, Bulgarians, Moldovans, Germans from Prussia, Austria and other countries recruited. Foreigners were given 65 acres of land per capita, they were exempted from taxation. Ukrainians had to provide carts free to transport their future landlords.

1763 – decree of Catherine II, banning the teaching in Ukrainian in Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

1764 – direction of Catherine II for prince O. Vyazemsky on russification of Ukraine, the Baltic states, Finland and Smolensk.

1764 – cancellation of Ukrainian Hetman by Catherine II, liquidation of Ukrainian educational and cultural institutions and taking power from Ukrainian-speaking officials.

1764 – cancellation of Ukrainian Hetman state.

1765 – liquidation of Cossacks’ settlements and schools in Sloboda by Catherine II.

1766 – the Synod issued a strict edict for Kiev-Pechersk Lavra to print only those books which are printed in Moscow Printing and validated by the Synod.

1768 – suppression of anti-Polish uprising in the Right-bank Ukraine-Russia by Moscow troops under the leadership of Gaunt and Zaliznyak, known under the name Koliivshchina, after their insidious and treacherous seizure by Muscovites who were fighting with Poles.

1769 – the Synod's order, according to which Ukrainian books were replaced by Russian ones in the churches.

1769 – the Synod of Russian Orthodox Church prohibited Kiev-Pechersk Lavra to print primers in Ukrainian and it ordered to take away all available primers.

1775 – insidious attack of the Moscow troops on Zaporizhian Sich and its destruction after decisive help of Cossacks to Muscovites in Moscow-Turkish War in 1768-1774. Robbery of the Cossacks, spoliation and expulsion of many of them to Siberia. Closure of Ukrainian schools in the regimental offices. Twenty-five years of imprisonment of the last Kosh Ottoman Petro Kalnyshevskiy in Solovki up to his death in 1803 at the age of 112 years.

1777 – plan of eviction of the Crimean Tatars from the Crimea, Ukrainians from Ukraine, and resettlement of Muscovites from Moscow to their habitable places. A. Suvorov evicted from the south of Ukraine 32 000 men for a few days to implement the plan.

1777 – after the death from persecution and poverty of great Ukrainian composer, academician of Bologna Academy of Music Maxim Berezovsky (was born in 1745 in Sluhov), government of Catherine II prohibits the discharge of his works and eliminates many of his manuscripts.

1780 – burning of the library of the Kiev-Mohyla Academy which had been collected for more than 150 years and it was one of the richest libraries in East Europe.

1781 – destruction of the remnants of the Cossack government on the Left Bank and the introduction of Russian control in 1783.

1782 – Catherine II created commission for the establishment of public schools in Russia, their task was introduction of a single form of learning and teaching exclusively in Russian in all schools of the empire.

1783 – enslavement of the peasants of Left-bank Ukraine.

1784 – there were 866 Ukrainian schools on the territory of the seven regiments of Hetman in 1747 (information about three of them is not preserved), that is one school per every thousand of population. Population tripled at the end of the century, and the number of schools decreased by half, not a single Ukrainian school was among them.

1784 – the Synod ordered Samuel, metropolitan of Kiev and Galich, to punish students and to dismiss teachers of the Kiev-Mohyla Academy for deviation from Russian language.

1785 – order of Catherine II to say a service in Russian in all churches of the empire. Russian language is implemented in all schools of Ukraine.

1786 – the Synod ordered metropolitan of Kiev to control printing of Lavra, that there was no difference from Moscow editions, and to introduce education system, licensed for the whole empire, in the Kiev-Mohyla Academy.

1789 – “A comparative dictionary of all languages” was published at the initiative of Catherine II in St. Petersburg, Ukrainian language was defined as Russian language distorted by Polish.

1793 – Muscovites suppressed an uprising in the village of Turban and severely punished the peasants: more than twenty peasants died, unable to withstand torture, or were shot, the rest were exiled to Siberia or to other provinces after flogging.

(newspaper “Day”, № 159, 21.09.2006)

V. Belinsky, author of “The Country Moksel”,

I have higher education. I am a civil engineer by profession, as well as the author of this novel study. I graduated from Odessa Institute of Civil Engineering. Now I’m a teacher of this Institute. I’m not so naïve as it could seem. I knew something and guessed that not everything was so simple and uniquely in our common history. I knew that Peter I had stolen the old name of our country from us and ordered to call Moscow state as Russian. But it was a discovery for me that Catherine II had destroyed all the ancient chronicles. That’s why, maybe, they can’t find a famous library of Ivan the Terrible? If Catherine II really had destroyed all documentary curiosities of the past, it would have been a crime before later generations. I feel sorry for the Russians. In my opinion, it’s better to be the heir to the Great Tartar-Mongol Empire than to be rootless Ivans with falsified history and with a stolen name of the country.

Characterization by A. S. Pushkin,

“Catherine knew tricks and robberies of her lovers, but she kept silent. They were incited by such indulgence and their covetousness was measureless, and the most distant relatives of the temporary worker enjoyed his brief reign with greediness. All were stealing, from chancellor to a simple recorder, and everything was bribable.”

A. M. Turgenev,

“After examination of a man (designed to the highest rank for the empress) by Surgeon in Ordinary Rogerson, and after recognition him available-for service concerning health, he was brought to Anna Stepanovna Protasova on trial for three nights. When he satisfied the requirements of Protasova, she reported the Most Gracious Majesty about his reliability. Next day after the first date with the empress, new lover was brought to his rooms and reported about assignment to a position of adjutant, they gave him coat with diamond agraphia and 100,000 rubles of pocket money. Metropolitan came to a favorite on the next day for consecration and he was blessing him with holy water.”

Prussian envoy Solms reported in Berlin,

“I can not hold back any longer, and I can’t help reporting Your Majesty about an interesting event which has just happened in the court. The absence of count Orlov found very natural, but, nevertheless, an unexpected circumstance: Her Majesty found it possible to do without him, to change her feelings for him and to focus on a different subject. Horse Guards cornet Vasilchikov, who was accidentally sent with a small detachment to Tsarskoye Selo to bear the guard, attracted the attention of the empress, quite unexpectedly for everybody, because there wasn’t anything particular in his appearance, and he had never tried to succeed in life and he was known very little in the society. Her Majesty first showed sign of her attention during the movement of the court from Tsarskoye Selo to Petergof, presenting golden snuffbox for correct bearing the guard. Nobody attached any importance to this case, but frequent Vasilchikov’s visits to Petergof, her care to distinguish him from others, her more relaxed and cheerful spirit since removal of Orlov, displeasure of Orlov’s relatives and friends, and many other minor circumstances opened courtiers’ eyes. Although so far everything is kept secret, nobody doubts that Vasilchikov is in full favor with the empress; all have seen this especially since the day when he was appointed a bedchamber.”

Gelbich tells that Catherine went to the reception when there were all three applicants, appointed to the audience. Each of them stood, holding a bouquet of flowers, and she was speaking graciously to Bergman, then to Rontsov, and to Korsakov at last. His extraordinary beauty and elegance captivated her. Catherine smiled graciously at all, but she sent Korsakov with a bouquet of flowers to Potemkin, Korsakov became the next favorite. It is known from other highest quarters that Korsakov reached the desired position not immediately. In general, Catherine experienced a kind of moral breakdown in 1778, and she liked several young people at the same time. Englishman Harris notes Korsakov’s rising in June, and in August he already tells about his rivals, who try to take away the grace of the empress; they are supported by Potemkin from one side, and by Panin and Orlov from the other side; Strahov, “buffoon of the lowest level”, gains the upper hand over all in September, in four months major of the Semenov regiment Levashov takes his place, young man sheltered by countess Bruce. Then Korsakov returns to his position, but now he fights with Stoyanov, Potemkin’s favorite. In 1779 he wins a complete victory over rivals at last, he became a chamberlain and adjutant-general. Catherine wrote to Grimm, who considered his friend’s interest to be an usual whimsy, “Whimsy? Do you know what this is: this word isn’t proper here when they talk about Pirr, King of Epirus (so Catherine called Korsakov), and about this subject of seduction and despair of all the artists of all sculptors. Excitement, enthusiasm, but not whimsy promote such ideal creations of nature... Pirr had never done

any ignoble or graceful gesture or movement... But this is not effeminacy, but vice versa, courage, he is how you would like him to be..." Besides his amazing appearance, Korsakov charmed her with his wonderful voice. Reign of a new favorite makes the era in the history of Russian music. Catherine invited first actors of Italy in order Korsakov could sing with them. She wrote to Grimm, "I have never met anybody able to enjoy harmonic sounds as Pirr, King of Epirus." Unfortunately for himself Korsakov couldn't stay on the reached height. Once at the beginning of 1780 Catherine saw her favorite in the arms of her friend countess Brus. It strongly cooled her ardor, and soon twenty two year-old Horse Guards Alexander Lansky took Korsakov's place.

Chancellor of Catherine II, count Bezborodko,

"What matters!.. They go on themselves. Mr Platon Zubov planned matters till 1797. Count Valeryan Zubov will have taken all important places by garrisons in Persia and Tibet to trade with India. Suvorov will go through Andrianopol to the Turkish capital, and fleet is prepared for it. They're going to pacify China too..."

(Nikolay Ravich "Two capitals" (p. 300).

A. V. Khrapovitsky, Secretary of State of the Empress Catherine II,

"26th January, 1792. Papers were asked and Potemkin's project about the conquest of Persia was found; these papers were taken and hidden."

("Notes of A. V. Khrapovitsky, Secretary of State of the Empress Catherine II". Moscow, 1862).

"Notes of Alexander M. Turgenev" say that during the siege of Ochakov, when "army died of cold, hunger and living in dug-outs, but prince Potemkin gave balls, feasts, burned fireworks in his main flat, at the camp..., made love with... former laundress in Constantinople, then with wife of Polish general, count Witt, then with bought wife of count Pototskiy, and at last countess Pototskaya whose lovers were ministers and kings, being already old, she attracted attention even of Alexander Pavlovich."

Igor Litvin. "The Lost World, or little-known pages of Belarusian history",

When two years passed after the first division of Rzeczpospolita, territories were divided for the second time. Incipient rebellion led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko was suppressed with cruelty. In 1794 Suvorov's army was raging in Belarus and Poland. Suvorov's degenerates shot civilians in Kobrin and Malorita. They destroyed all life in their path on the outskirts of Warsaw. The entire population was shot in the Warsaw suburbs, Prague outskirts. In Warsaw Russian soldiers were carrying infants on their spears and bayonets in the streets. Perhaps the Poles will always remember this.

A. Langeron about P. Zubov,

“Every day since eight o’clock his hall was full of ministers, courtiers, generals, foreigners, petitioners, applicants or blessings. Usually they had been waiting for four or five hours and went away to return the next day. Finally, desired day came: door was opened, the crowd rushed there and found a favorite, sitting before the mirror and being combed, leaning a leg on a chair or table edge. Visitors were bowing at the feet, sprinkled with powder, ranked before him without moving or speaking. Favorite didn’t notice anybody. He was breaking letters and listening to them, diligently pretending to be busy with affairs. No one dared speak to him. If he addressed himself to somebody, that man was approaching to him after five or six bows. Having answered, he returned to his place on tiptoe. Those who Zubov didn’t speak to, couldn’t come up, because he didn’t give an audience. I can prove that there were people who had been coming for three years and were not deigned a word...”

SUCCESSORS...

“I have already started to produce my own geopolitical conception. I don’t want to give it my name, for example, Zhirinovsky’s formula, but the last “rush” to the South, access of Russia to the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea is really task of salvation of the Russian nation...”

“The idea of the last “rush” appeared, the last, because it would be the last redivision of the world and it had to be made in a state of shock therapy, suddenly, quickly, efficiently. “The last rush” to the South. I wish Russian soldiers to wash their boots by the warm water of the Indian Ocean and to have only summer dress forever. Light boots, light trousers, shirts with short sleeves, no tie, open collars, light forage-caps. And small and modern Russian gun manufactured by the Izhevsk plant. These guns are much better than Ultrasound. Any platoon would be able to bring order to any space.”

“...we’ll make this last “rush” to the South. We need it, this is the medication to be taken. Medication is not always sweet. Maybe somebody in Kabul, Tegeran, and Ankara doesn’t like it. But millions of people will feel better of this.”

V. Zhirinovsky

Words from Anthem of the Russian National Unity:

We are not afraid of any bullets or shells,

We believe that we can win:

Because one order must be in the world.

And it rightfully should be Russian.

Ludmila Voronkova. Odessa: History of one memorial from barracks to a monument (Newspaper “Today”)

Count Platon Zubov, the last favorite of empress Catherine II, Novorossiysk Governor-General, when Odessa was being built. “Everything was crawling at

Zubov's feet, only he was standing, that's why he considered himself to be great," contemporary wrote. Suvorov was in his command, then he gave his daughter to marry to one of three brothers of Platon Zubov, Nikolay. And lieutenant-general Golenishchev-Kutuzov, the future field marshal and the savior of Russia, personally brewed coffee in a special way one hour before awakening of Zubov... for him to his bedroom. Platon's brothers, Dmitry, Valerian, Nicholay were among those who had killed Pavel I. Platon Zubov struck the first blow to the head by a snuff box. The first wharf of Odessa port bore his name, "Platonovskaya". Today nothing reminds of him in Odessa.

Simon Sebag Montefiore:

In 1930 young writer Boris Lavrenev arrived in Kherson, his native town, to visit his sick father. Passing the castle, he saw a church sign: "Museum of Atheism". He entered, something dark, "round, and brown" was in a glass showcase. The subject turned to be a skull and there was a sign: "Skull of Potemkin, lover of Catherine II". In the next window a skeleton stood with the remains of muscles: "Bones of Potemkin, lover of Catherine II". Potemkin's clothes, remains of a green velvet coat, white trousers, socks and shoes were in the third window.

<http://yareparhia.ru/>. *Official website of the Yaroslavl Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate:*

"Memory of confessor, metropolitan of Rostov, saint Arceniy Matsievich has been marked in the calendar of the Orthodox Church recently, on the 13th of March.

Lord Arceniy established not only Seminary in Yaroslavl but also enamel industry in Great Rostov. Saint Arceniy taught some painters (iconographers) of his bishop's house in Rostov an art of painting on enamel. These works, made in a small workshop, were then used to decorate pontificalia and ornaments and were called enamel. Another event was of a tremendous value. In 1752 relics of St. Demetrios were got, Rostov metropolitan, and in 1757 canonization of this sainted took place. Rostov became Russian spiritual center again, and it became a busy place of pilgrimage. Enterprising Rostov inhabitants began to rent rooms and apartments at that time, and all visitors wanted to take something as a souvenir of their arrival in Rostov. The art of masters with enamel from bishop's house came in handy then. They began to paint enamel images of St. Demetrios, and of others saint people of Rostov who were celebrated during centuries. Mastery of artists strengthened, and soon all Orthodox Russia was provided with enamel icons from Rostov. Later more than one hundred people from Rostov began to work in this truly national industry. No doubt, painters on enamel from Rostov found their heavenly patrons in the face of St. Demetrios and Arceniy.

New empress Catherine freed the nobility from compulsory state service, but at the same time she forgot to free peasants who served them. She decided to subordinate completely the Orthodox Church to the public interests. Nobody resisted, but St. Arceniy. Probably, he never betrayed that he believed in. The case took a political turn and the saint metropolitan of Rostov was defrocked and sent into exile to Arkhangelsk region. It was in 1763, then his independence of mind and behavior moved the empress to do more severely with him. He was hopelessly imprisoned in the fortress tower in Tallinn and died from hunger when they stopped his feeding. Martyr Arceniy was never afraid of work and hardship, he was at the height of the throne of metropolitan of Rostov, he could find force and desire to repeat feat of the ancient hermits and holy fools. He was sunk into political obscurity in Russian Empire, and he was posthumously restored to the rank of metropolitan of Rostov at the Local Council of the Russian Church in 1917-18, and at the same Council in 2000 he was sainted. So we see that besides heavenly glory, St. Arceniy left a significant mark in history and culture of the ancient and sacred Rostov.

Chapel dedicated to St. Arceniy is situated in Monastery of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Great Rostov. This day marks 235 years since the righteous death of a father confessor St. Arceniy Matsievich, metropolitan of Rostov.”

Metropolitan Hilarion (Ogienko):

State Moscow power, basically the highest authority, beginning from Peter I, began to persecute cruelly the Orthodox Faith and Church, both Russian and Ukrainian, to persecute openly and consciously. State power was seized by Germans-Protestants who did their best to suppress Orthodoxy.

Orthodox Church was falling and nobody could protect it... St. Dimitriy Tuptalo, metropolitan of Rostov died in 1709, so, who would protect further? But there was a defender who shouted in a loud voice for all of Ukraine and for all of Russia, and stood up for the Orthodox Church.

It was metropolitan of Rostov Arceniy Matsievich, who came from Volyn, one of successors of St. Dimitriy Tuptalo on Department of Rostov.

The Church seemed to be falling and nobody could protect it. But it just seemed. Because God's Church is immortal and hell forces can't win It.

“While the Spirit of Grace is with the Church (and It will be with true Church until the end of the world), whatever the Zeitgeist is, zealots of the Spirit of Christ will always be in the Church!” – archbishop of Chernigov Philaret Gumilevsky wrote.

Metropolitan Arceniy Matsievich was such zealot of the Spirit of Christ.

Higher secular Russian power had been oppressing Orthodox Church sarcastically in XVIII, strongly humiliating It. Basically it was a German-Protestant power which ridiculed the Orthodox faith, despised its rites. During this period Russian power was destroying the freedom of Christ in the Church

gradually, step by step, it consistently subordinated the Church to a secular power, because its head had been Russian czar since the time of Peter I. And Orthodox Church in Russia became the department of professions in Home Office.

Faith itself among the Russian intelligentsia was destroyed in the bud, and Russian intelligentsia became become if not an atheist, then quite indifferent to the Church. Moreover, a deep disrespect to clergy originated in Russia, ridicule as a class. Ridicule of Priest began in literature, it had never stopped in Russia. During the reign of Catherine II, German-Protestant, even an atheist, the clergy was struck a blow financially, it was subordinated to mercy of parishioners. They took away the Church possessions, and Clergy became mendicant. Catherine II deliberately stroke a killing blow at the credibility of the Clergy and made it beggar.

Sources of Russian Communism are laid down in church politics of czars and czarinas of XVII century – they prepared fertile soil in Russia for the perception of communism.

And metropolitan-Ukrainian Arceniy Matsievich appeared as a great spiritual knight, confessor martyr in Orthodox Church of that time. He began a courageous struggle against the church communism propagated by the ruling elite in Russia. Metropolitan Arceniy Matsievich devoted his entire life to move lofty Ideals of Ukrainian Orthodox Church to Moscow Church. He wasn't able to do this, because dark forces in Russia proved to be stronger ...

And Metropolitan disappeared on his glorious way, being immured alive in prison. Czarina Catherine destroyed the Metropolitan and Confessor – and she was shouting with laughter. Her laugh is heard today in the laugh of Communists...

Reader will learn about it from my book.

Work of Ukrainian Hierarchs of the Russian Church is a great and hard work, it is not developed in Ukrainian literature. But we have to know it, and I want to show it in detail on the example of Metropolitan Arceniy.

GLOSSARY

Ataman (Kosh Otaman) – was a commander title of the Ukrainian People's Army, Cossack, and Haidamak leaders, who were in essence the Cossacks. At the end of the sixteenth century, the commanders of the [Zaporizhian Cossacks](#) were called [Koshovyi Otaman](#) or Hetmans.

Cossack – a member of a national group of South Russia, famous as horsemen and cavalymen. The descendants of Russian and Ukrainian serfs, the Cossacks settled on the steppes (16th c.), establishing the Ukraine as a separate state. The word *Cossack* means a free and independent man. Cossacks were first mentioned in writing in 1492. In the sixteenth century the Cossacks united in a single military organization. The first fortifications were built on Mala Khortytsia Island, in the lower reaches of the Dnieper, behind the rapids, where

the rocky river bed made navigation hard and risky. Hence, the name “Zaporizhya” (“Beyond-the-Rapids”).

Hetman was the title of the second-highest military commander (after the [monarch](#)) in 15th- to 18th-century [Poland](#) and the [Grand Duchy of Lithuania](#), which together, from 1569 to 1795, comprised the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](#), or *Rzeczpospolita*.

“*Hetman*” was also the highest military office, and [head of state](#), in Ukraine’s [Cossack Hetmanate](#). The title was used by [Ukraine](#)’s [Cossacks](#) from the 16th century, and by the [Czechs](#) (*hejtman*) in [Bohemia](#) from the [Hussite Wars](#) (15th century) on. *Hejtman* is today the term for the elected governor of a [Czech region](#) (*kraj*).

In 1572, the hetman was a commander of the [Registered Cossack Army](#) of the [Rzecz Pospolita](#) too. >From 1648, the start of [Bohdan Khmelnytsky](#)’s [uprising](#), a hetman was the head of the whole Ukrainian State - Hetmanshchyna.

Although they were elected, Ukrainian Hetmans had very broad powers and acted as heads of the [Cossack state](#), their supreme military commanders, and top legislators (by issuing administrative decrees).

After the split of [Ukraine](#) along the [Dnieper River](#) by the 1667 [Polish-Russian Treaty of Andrusovo](#), Ukrainian Cossacks (and Cossack Hetmans) became known as Left-bank Cossacks (of the [Cossack Hetmanate](#)) and Right-bank Cossacks.

In the Russian Empire, the office of Cossack Hetman was abolished by [Catherine II of Russia](#) in 1764. The last Hetman of the Zaporozhian Army (the formal title of the Hetman of Ukraine) was [Kyrylo Rozumovsky](#) who reigned from 1751 until 1764.

Metropolitan – is a head of an ecclesiastical province, ranking between archbishop and patriarch (Orthodox Eastern Church); an archbishop (Western Church).

Rzeczpospolita (*disambiguation*) is a traditional name of the Polish State, usually referred to as *Rzeczpospolita Polska* (Polish Rzeczpospolita). It comes from the words: “rzecz” (thing) and “pospolita” (common), literally, a “common thing”. It comes from latin word “respublica”, meaning simply “republic” (“res” – thing, “publica” – public, common). In terms of etymology and meaning, the closest English term is “commonwealth” (i.e. “common wealth”, “common good”), but a more modern translation is [republic](#) (a form of governance).

The term “Rzeczpospolita” has been used in [Poland](#) since beginning of the 16th century. Originally it was a generic term to denote a state or a commonness. The famous quote by [Jan Zamoyski](#), the Lord Chancellor of the Crown, on the importance of education, is a great example of its use.

The meaning of Polish term “Rzeczpospolita” is well described by the term “Commonwealth”. As a result the literal meaning of “Rzeczpospolita Polska” is “Polish Commonwealth”, or “Republic of Poland”. However, the connotation

with the term “republic” may be somewhat misleading in a context of Polish State within period from 16th to 18th century, because Poland in that time was an [elective monarchy](#) and the “Rzeczpospolita” was reflected in the official name, the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](#).

Shlisselburg is a [town](#) in [Leningrad Oblast](#), [Russia](#), situated at the head of the [Neva River](#) on [Lake Ladoga](#), 35 kilometers east of [St. Petersburg](#). From 1944 to 1992, it was known as Petrokrepost. The first fortification was built in 1299 by [Lord High Constable of Sweden Torgils Knutsson](#) but was lost to the [Novgorodians](#) in 1301. A wooden fortress named Oreshek was built by Grand Prince [Yury of Moscow](#) in 1323. Twenty-five years later, King [Magnus Eriksson](#) attacked and briefly took the fortress during [his crusade in the region](#) (1348–1352). It was largely ruined by the time the Novgorodians retook the fortress in 1351. The fortress was rebuilt in stone in 1352 by Archbishop [Vasilii Kalika](#) of Novgorod (1330–1352). In 1702, during the [Great Northern War](#), the fortress was taken by [Russians](#) under [Peter the Great](#). During the times of [Imperial Russia](#), the fortress was used as a notorious political prison; among its famous prisoners were [Wilhelm Küchelbecker](#), [Mikhail Bakunin](#) and, for 38 years, [Walerian Łukasiński](#). [Ivan VI of Russia](#) was murdered in the fortress in 1764, and [Lenin](#)'s brother, [Aleksandr Ulyanov](#), was hanged there too.

Zaporizhian Sich – the appearance of the “Zaporizhian Sich” is inseparably bound up with the formation of Cossacks as a separate social stratum with its own traditions and way of life. This process was the direct result of a continuous struggle between settled farmers and the nomadic tribes ruled by the Crimean Khan and the Turkish Sultan. The word “sich” comes from the Ukrainian verb “sikty,” meaning to chop up, cut – and the Zaporizhian Cossacks made their fortifications of wood, falling trees and cutting branches in the nearby forest.