



POEMS

A GREAT POET OF THE SOVIET EPOCH

In 1917, at the time of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Vladimir Mayakovsky was twenty-four years old, but had already accumulated extensive and manifold social and literary experience. "My revolution"—so he defined his attitude to the historic events in Russia and directly went to work at the Smolny. The building of the former Smolny institute, a boarding school for daughters of the nobility, now housed the headquarters of the October uprising guided by V. I. Lenin. Here throbbed the heart of revolutionary Russia, here, in the Smolny, her future destinies were being decided.

The poet immediately found his place in the ranks of Lenin's followers, applying all his poetical fervour to the inspired and inspiring everyday work of building a new socialist society. The dream he had long cherished as a poet and revolutionary was coming true. "And he, the free man of whom I'm yelling—he'll come, believe me, believe, he will," Mayakovsky prophesied back in 1915 in his early poem *War and Peace*. In the revolution Mayakovsky's forceful revolutionary oratory and soul-searching lyricism acquired full scope and he became the first poet of the Soviet era. The ideas of the revolution made Mayakovsky's poetry what it was: an expression of Russia's new national culture, in which her great classic heritage was developed in new forms. Mayakovsky's work may be correctly understood as a manifestation of the Russian national spirit and national art, only in the light of the struggle for the humane and universally significant ideals of the revolution.

A reader making his first acquaintance with Mayakovsky's poetry will naturally ask himself what kind of man the poet was, how he came to accomplish his great artistic mission. Let us, therefore, throw a cursory look at the main landmarks of his life and work.

*

Mayakovsky spent his childhood in the remote Georgian village of Baghdadadi, renamed after the poet's death into Mayakovsky. The village lies in a deep pic-

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

P O E M S

In 1960 Progress Publishers put out in English a small book of Mayakovsky's verse, which was well received by poetry-lovers abroad.

This new selection, we hope, will offer our readers abroad a better idea of Mayakovsky, one of the finest poets of the twentieth century.

The translations were made from texts included in the 13-volume "Collected Works" of Mayakovsky prepared by the A. M. Gorky Institute of World Literature. The book presents a wider sampling of Mayakovsky's pre-revolutionary writings, as well as the full text of his long poems "Cloud in Pants", "It" and "U. I. Lenin".

The book's preface is by one of our most eminent authorities on Mayakovsky, Victor Pertsov, Ph.D., who knew the poet personally and worked with him in the twenties.

The "Selected Poems" were rendered into English by Dorian Rottenberg, already known to readers from the 1960 edition and other published translations.

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