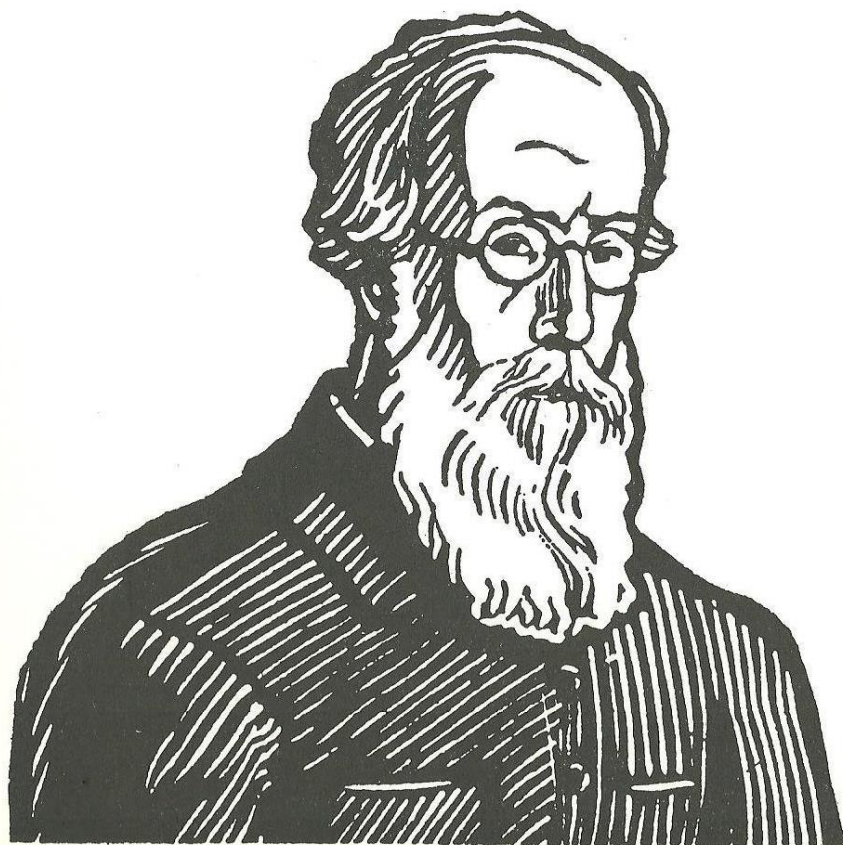


10th July - 17th Aug 1962

FAVORSKY

GROSVENOR GALLERY Sevenarts Ltd 15 Davies Street London W1 MAY 2782





Favorsky. Hitherto the name has not meant much in the west, yet it should. Not simply because in Russia he has a great reputation, but because he is one of the best book illustrators of the 20th century. This is an age in which the artist having won a hitherto unknown degree of freedom has too often allowed it to go to his head. Nowhere is this clearer than in book illustration; many of the traditions inherited from 19th century graphic artists were stultifying. That they have often been swept aside is salutary, but in so doing our contemporaries have frequently forgotten both the text they are illustrating and, more serious, the requirements of the printed page; the list of such artists is long and includes some like Picasso and Braque who in their own right have produced fine prints. Favorsky has fallen into no such trap.

Wladimir Favorsky was born in Moscow in 1886. His parents were of the professional class, his father being a lawyer, his mother a painter. In his youth he studied both painting and sculpture, the former at the school of K. F. Yuon and J. D. Dudin, the latter in evening classes at the Stroganov School. Yuon, in particular, is well represented in Russian galleries and is popular for things such as his 'The Dance of the Matchmakers' and for views in Moscow; also he is not unknown in the west, two pictures by him being included in the 1959 exhibition of Russian art at the Royal Academy. Favorsky then went to Munich and, before returning to Russia and Moscow University, travelled widely in Europe. He absorbed many influences. On the one hand early Italian painting, and in particular Giotto, enchanted him and, on the other, he studied the Impressionists, Cézanne and Van Gogh. Soon after the Revolution his work was recognised and as early as 1923 the Russian critic Abram Efros acclaimed him.

Since then his output of wood engravings has been vast. He has worked for the theatre, and in Russia has a reputation as a painter, but above all he is revered as a book illustrator—he has embellished Burns, Dante, Dostoyevsky, Anatole France, Gogol, Keats, Merimée, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Russian medieval literature and much else. In his own country his reputation, culminating in the award of a Lenin Prize has outstripped that of all others in his chosen field. Is this justified?

In my opinion, the answer is yes! So attuned are we to the new in the arts that two things need to be said. First Favorsky has not been caught up in the experiments that have characterised 20th century art. Not that he has been out of touch with *avant-garde* movements. When

he was in Munich the place was a hot-bed of ideas; he was influenced by the Cubists; and in the years immediately after the Revolution was familiar with the most progressive artists in Russia. Thus in 1919 he exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, along with Kandinsky, Pevsner and Popova and, at the same time, had a studio in company with Kandinsky, Malevich, Tatlin, Pevsner and Falk in the institute that grew out of the old College of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, and the Stroganov School of Applied Art and was to be known by the somewhat cumbersome title 'Higher Technical-Artistic Studios'. His course was to differ from that followed by these compatriots (and others, today almost forgotten). The second point not to be overlooked is that Favorsky has never imposed too much of himself upon the text he is illustrating. This modesty and his acceptance of traditional methods lay him open to the charge of undue conservatism. This is unjust. He has been compared with Bewick, often without much relevance.

A comparison with Edward Calvert, whose inner fire and poetical insight Favorsky matches, would be more relevant. The one thing that, in fact, has never vitiated his work is too close a dependence upon precedent. His methods are those developed by long practice and it should be remembered that Russia has a strong tradition of book illustration, but Favorsky has never been a follower. What he has done is to develop within a tried framework and, again and again, to reinterpret great writers. On occasion, as in his illustrations to Tolstoy's 'Stories about Animals', he makes use of bold, simple design with a good deal of effective distortion, equally often, as in his illustrations of old Russian folk tales and the great medieval poem about Igor's army he fills the print with a fine network of lines.

Time and time again we are delighted by his sense of the requirements of the printed page, and the insight and sympathy with which he has illustrated works as different as, on the one hand, those of Dostoyevsky and the anonymous bards of the epics of Russian history and folklore and, on the other, such things as Marshak's translations of Kipling's poems or Krylov's 'Fables'. His Minn and Pozharski are men of steel who fill the page, while his rabbit smoking a pipe must delight any child, and his portraits of Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Burns, Kutusov, Babanova, and Orlov display a rare insight into character. The impact of such very different illustrations is to a large extent due to Favorsky's technical abilities. He is a superb craftsman,

a master of effective shading, but also an artist-craftsman who knows what to leave out. The vignette lies easily upon the page; or the figure is silhouetted against a blank background; his skill in such things is particularly clear in his splendidly bold lino-cuts of the life of the Uzbek people, executed in Samarkand, where he was evacuated during the war.

Apart from his own work Favorsky has wielded great influence. Indeed in Russia something like a School of Favorsky has grown up. Soon after the Revolution he strongly influenced artists such as Deineka and Pimenov. That influence has continued and today a new generation of young Russian illustrators turns to Favorsky.

He will be remembered though not for his influence, but as a craftsman who has clearly understood the limitations of his medium and has exploited its potentialities, and at the same time has added something of his own to the interpretation of much of the greatest literature of Russia and other countries.

TERENCE MULLALLY



| | | |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| 1912 | Madonna in the style of Giotto | Cat No 1 |
| 1917 | Title page of Yermolinski's drama 'Griboyedov' | 2-3 |
| 1918 | Illustrations to Anatole France's story 'The Opinions of Father Jerome Coignard' | 4-8 |
| 1918 | Views of Moscow | 9-11 |
| 1918 | Memorial notice for Raphael Rabinowitch | 12 |
| 1919 | Still Life | 12a |
| 1923 | Illustrations and frontispiece for P. P. Muratov's book for children, on the development of power 'Energia' | 13-16 |
| 1923 | Illustrations to Andrei Globa's tragedy 'Tamar' | 17-19 |
| 1923- 1931 | Ex Libris for T. Dervise, S. Razumovski, Papa Athanasopolo and Catherine Kushev | 20 |
| 1925 | Illustration to Lermontov's poem 'Prorok' (The Prophet) | 21 |
| 1928- 1935 | Illustrations to Prosper Merimée's works Metal engraving for poster 'October 1917' | 22-28a 29 |
| 1929 | Portrait of Dostoyevsky | 30 |
| 1929 | Title page and illustrations to Andrei Globa's children's story, 'Peter-Peter' | 31-34 |
| 1929 | Title page and illustrations for Leo Tolstoy's 'Animal Stories' | 35-44 |
| 1929 | Title page and illustrations for Pushkin's 'A Little House in Kolomna' | 44a, 44b, 44c |
| 1931 | Illustrations to Gogol's story 'Ivan Fedorovichshponka and his Aunt' | 45-46 |
| 1931 | Portrait of Mikhail Lermontov | 47 |
| 1932 | Title page and illustrations to Boris Pilnyak's 'Rasskazy' | 48-60 |
| 1932 | Portrait of Goethe | 61 |
| 1932 | Illustrations to Sergio Spasski's novel, 'Novogodnaya Noch' (New Year's Eve) | 62-68 |
| 1932 | Illustrations to George Storm's 'The Works and Days of Michael Lomonosov' | 69-77 |
| 1933 | Illustrations to Prishvin's nature story, 'Zhen-Shen' | 78-81 |
| 1933 | Five studies of the actor Orlov in the role of Yusov in Ostrovski's comedy, 'Dokhodnoye Mesto' | 82 |
| 1933 | Portrait of the actress Babanova in the role of a boy in Faiko's play 'Chelovek iz Portfellm' | 82a |



Still Life, 1919

| | Cat No |
|--|-----------|
| 1935 Portrait of Pushkin as a pupil in the Lycee | 83 |
| 1942 Linocuts from the Samarkand suite | 84 – 91a |
| 1944 Illustrations to Krylov's Fables | 92 – 93 |
| 1944 Illustrations to Edward Hale's 'A Man without a Country' | 94 – 95 |
| 1945 Portrait of Field Marshal Kutuzov | 96 |
| 1946 Illustrations to Shakespeare's 'Othello' | 97 – 98 |
| 1947 Minn and Pozharski | 99 |
| 1948 Illustrations to Shakespeare's 'King Lear' | 100 – 102 |
| 1948 Illustrations to Shakespeare's 'Sonnets' | 103 – 106 |
| 1948 Illustrations to the works of A. S. Pushkin | 107 – 113 |
| 1948 Illustrations to A. S. Pushkin's 'Malenkie Tragedii' | 114 – 130 |
| 1949 Illustration to A. S. Pushkin's 'Boris Godunov' | 131 |
| 1950 Illustrations and end papers to 'Slovo O Polku Igoreve', the Russian medieval epic poem | 132 – 140 |
| 1950 Illustrations to the works of Robert Burns | 141 |
| 1953 Illustrations for poems of Keats, Byron, Kipling, Petofi, Dzhambul | 142 – 150 |
| 1953 Illustrations for articles in a Children's Encyclopaedia | 151 |
| 1954 Illustrations to Lermontov's poems, 'The Merchant Kalashnikov' and 'A Pine Tree' | 152 |
| 1954 Illustrations to the 'Byliny', anonymous Russian folk tales | 154 – 157 |
| 1954 Preliminary illustration to Pushkin's 'Malenkie Tragedii'. Linocut | 158 |
| 1955 Prince Igor leading his army | 158a |
| 1955 The Quintet of D. Shostakovich. Linocut | 159 |
| 1955 Views of the Kremlin and treasures of the Kremlin | 160 |
| 1956 A group of Soviet artists, A. N. Kardashev, V. A. Favorski, I. G. Frich-Chara and N. M. Chernishev. Linocut | 161 |
| 1958 Title page and vignettes for Russian catalogue for the Brussels Exhibition | 162 – 163 |
| 1959 Flying Birds. Linocut | 164 |
| 1961 Poster for disarmament. Linocut | 165 |
| Various undated engravings | 166 – 168 |
| 1961 Poster for Peace. Linocut | 169 |

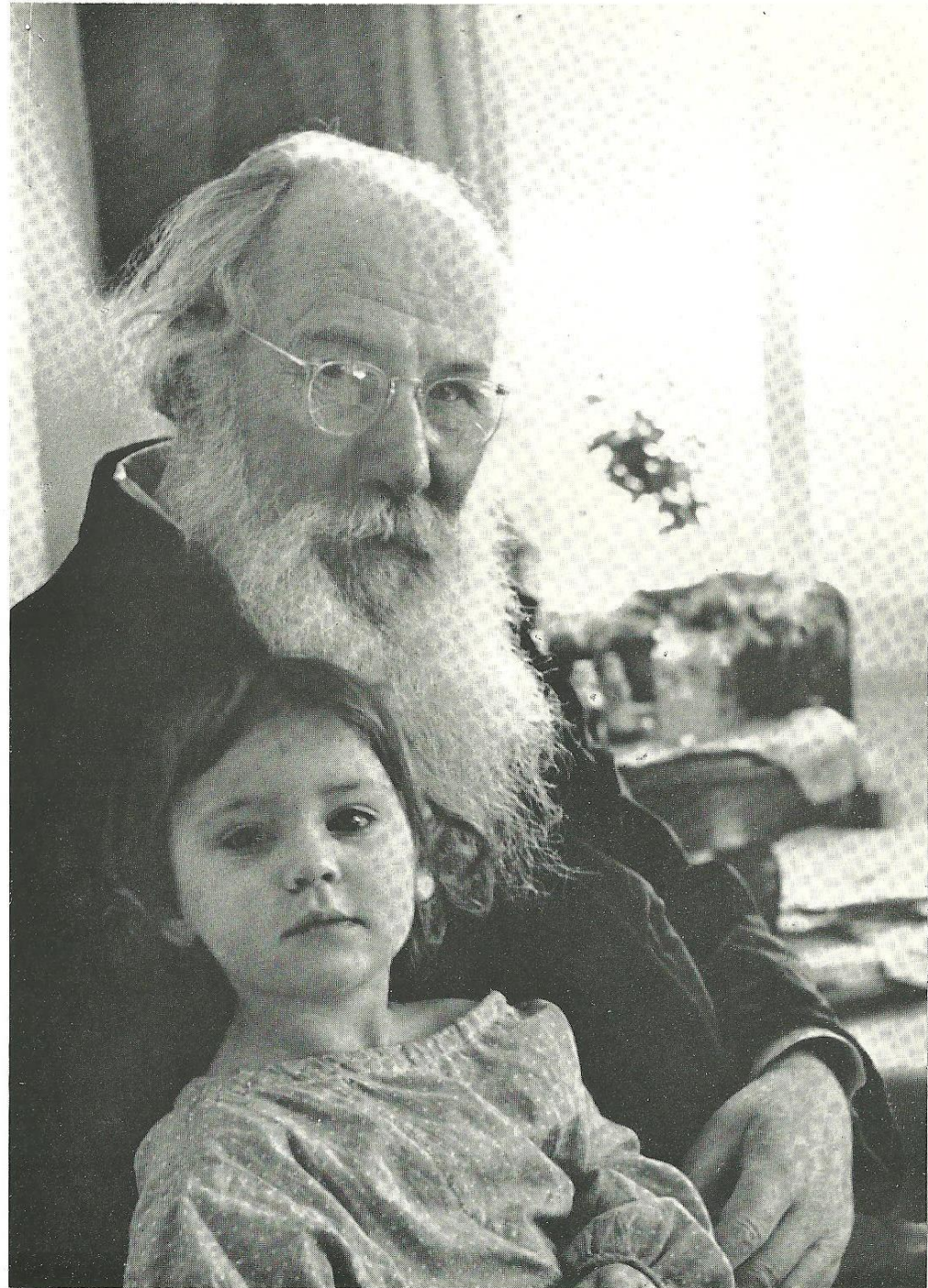
The Catalogue Numbers relate to the frames rather than to the individual works within those frames—the individual works are comprehensively listed in a special supplement.

СЕРГЕЙ СПАССКИЙ
НОВОГОДНЯЯ
НОЧЬ



ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО
ПИСАТЕЛЕЙ
В ЛЕНИНГРАДЕ

1932



Favorsky and his two-year old grand-daughter 1961

This exhibition could never have reached fruition without the friendly, active assistance of Wladimir Favorsky himself, for only scattered examples of his work are to be found in Soviet shops specialising in graphic art. In December, 1961, when I first visited him, Favorsky, though bedridden, directed his secretary to portfolios in faraway reaches of his studio, and studied the contents of each of them. Galitzine and Zacharov, two of the most brilliant of the younger generation of Soviet wood-cut artists, representatives of the newest generation in a long succession since before the Revolution which composes what has been termed the School of Favorsky, watched with increasing excitement as work after work, many of which they had never seen before, emerged. With them, I had first visited Favorsky at his flat on the outskirts of Moscow. Here, in the thirties, Favorsky, with Efimov, the famous puppetmaker, ceramicist, painter, had built a house with four apartments and studios, in grounds where horses freely grazed. In 1961, this house was a kind of old world enclave surrounded by the burgeoning housing developments of Moscow. At the bottom end of the Boulevard Enthusiastica, on the road to Gorki, where the extending boundaries of Moscow push out into what was only recently countryside, this house is a living museum of past, present and future. I have referred to Galitzine and Zacharov as two of the younger generation of artists. This statement is incomplete. Favorsky's five and three year old grandchildren are already making woodcuts as part of their play activity as did another generation of Favorsky's – his son's, whose promise was perhaps even greater than his father's when as a soldier he was killed in the last war.

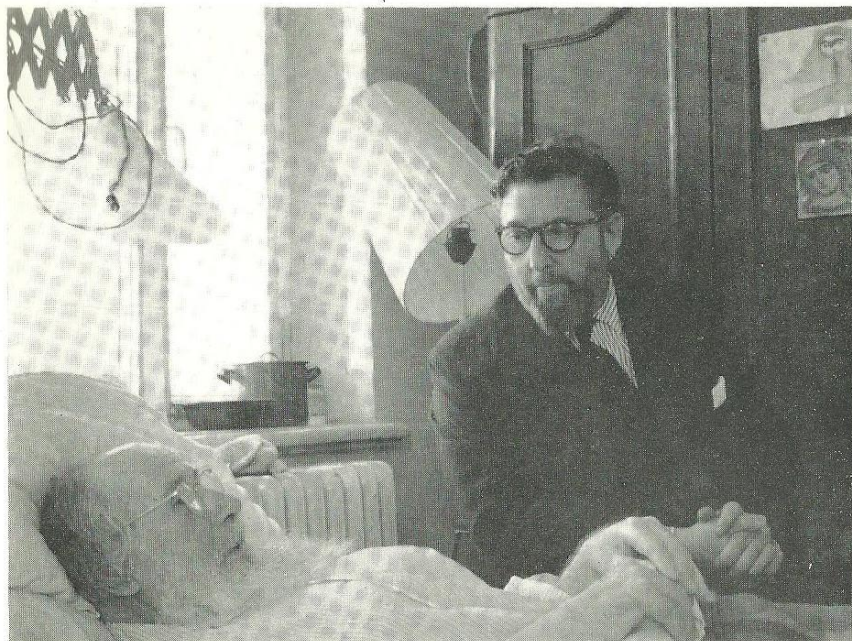
A low spoken word, a turn of his long, sensitive fingers, indicated which work would be available. With a full smile, which raised the enormous bush of his beard, regarding his viewing of these works as irrelevant – his pauses had less to do with making selective distinctions than the chain of remembrance evoked by sight of them – he informed me that I could have all his works where a woodcut still existed. War and fire had cut through his store of woodcuts in two studios and where only a single copy or two remained of a work he felt I would understand his reluctance to part with such examples.

The result is that the present exhibition is as complete a retrospective cross section of Favorsky's work as could possibly be mounted without recourse to the collections of Soviet art museums and academies. For this I am grateful not only to Favorsky himself, and the unfailing kindness of his daughter and his secretary, but to the Soviet Ministry of Culture, Mr. C. Suslov, secretary of the all-Russian Union of Artists, Mr. A. Amsislavsky, director of the Moscow Graphic Salon, and his assistants, Mr. Y. Gradov, and Mr. C. Annikovich of Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, and to Mr. N. Kashashvili of the Soviet Embassy, and Mr. Y. Leonov of the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, for their active assistance on my behalf.

In April 1962, with Pablo Picasso, who was awarded the international prize, Favorsky received the Lenin Prize for Art, the most honoured, annual award in the Soviet Union. When I visited Favorsky again, in May 1962, he was tired and still confined to his bed. He inquired how plans were progressing for the exhibition and added a number of additional works which had been found since my previous visit in December. The following day he received the Lenin Prize at his bed and then began a series of treatments.

I look forward to visiting him again soon.

ERIC E. ESTORICK



Wladimir Favorsky and Eric Estorick, Moscow (May, 1962)



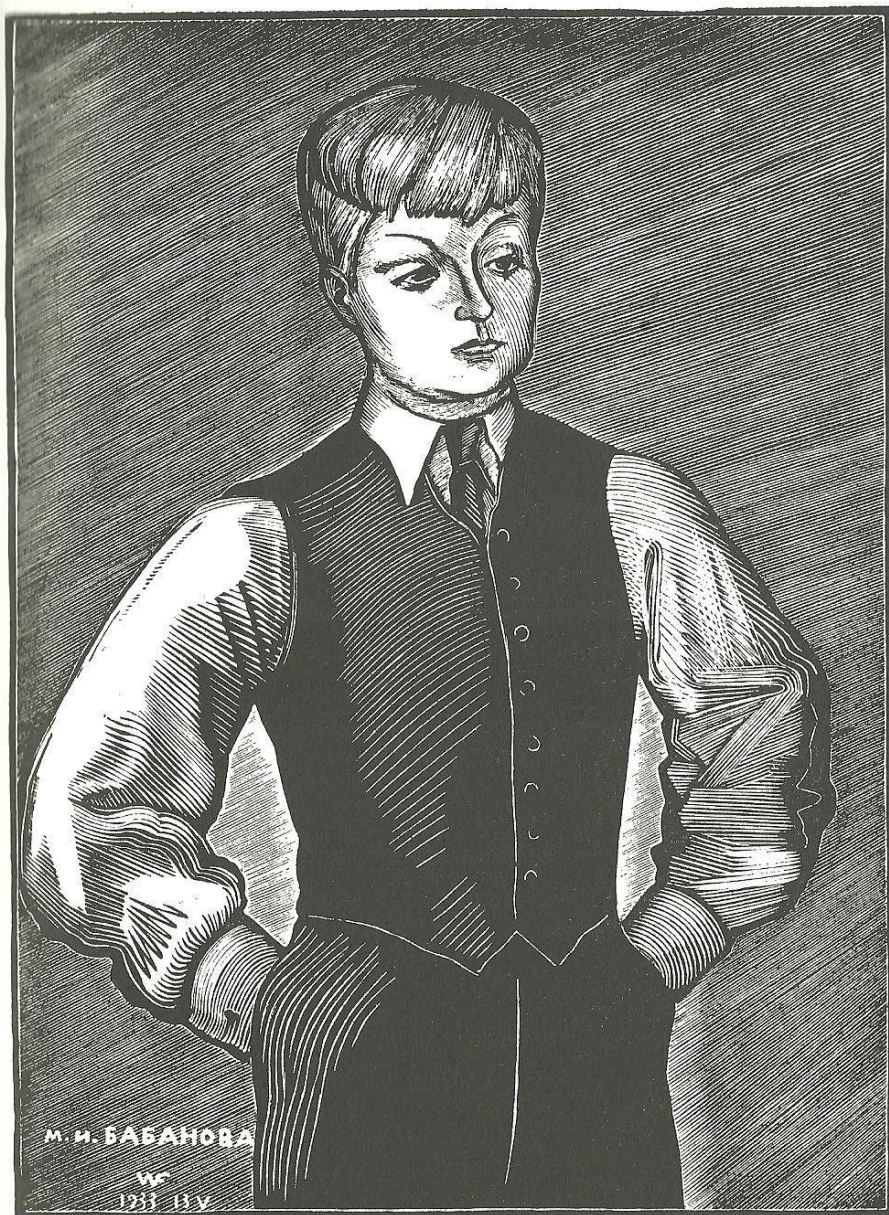
Galitzine and Zacharov (December, 1961)



Favorsky (December, 1961)



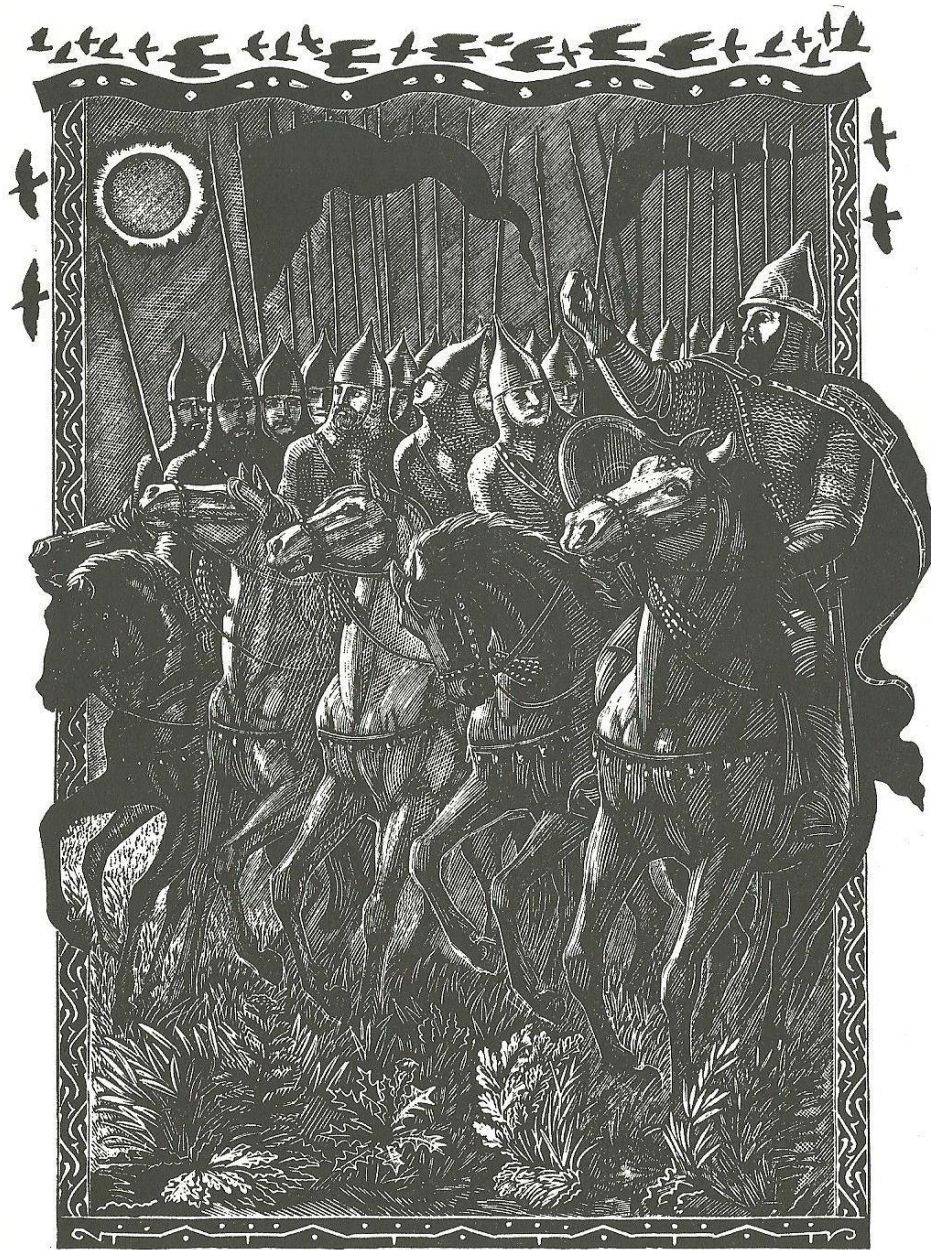
Favorsky with Efimov outside their house 1957



Portrait of the actress Babanova in the role of a boy in Faiko's play 'Chelovek iz Portfellm', 1933



Five studies of the actor Orlov in the role of Yusov in Ostrovski's comedy, 'Dokhodnoye Mesto', 1933



Prince Igor leading his Army, 1955

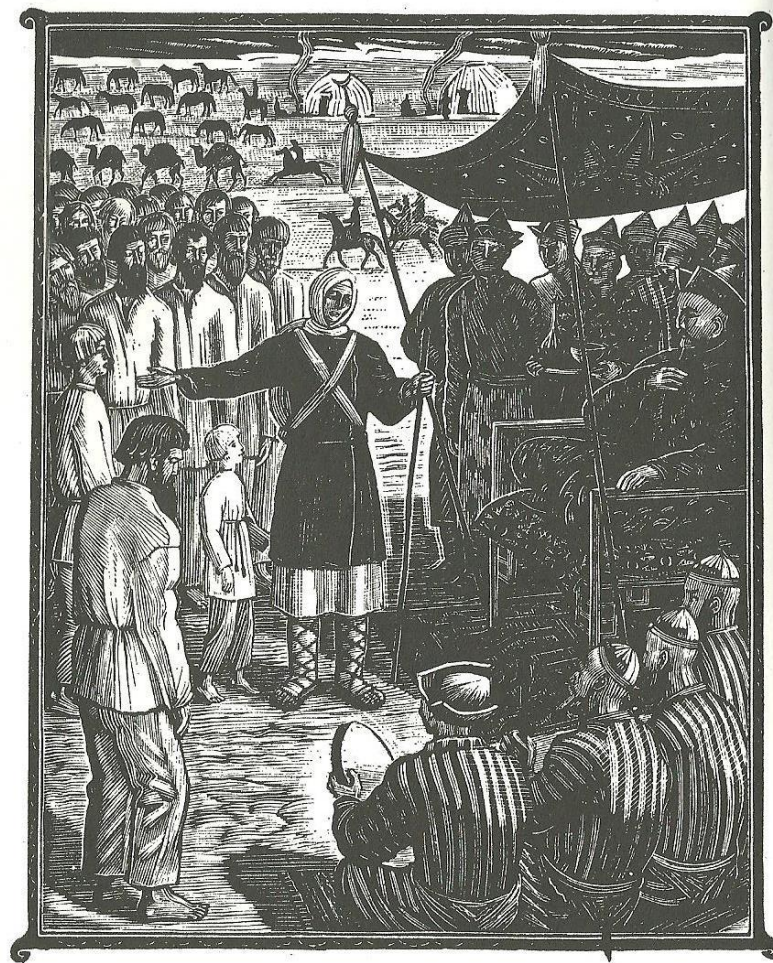


Illustration to the 'Byliny', anonymous Russian folk tales, 1954

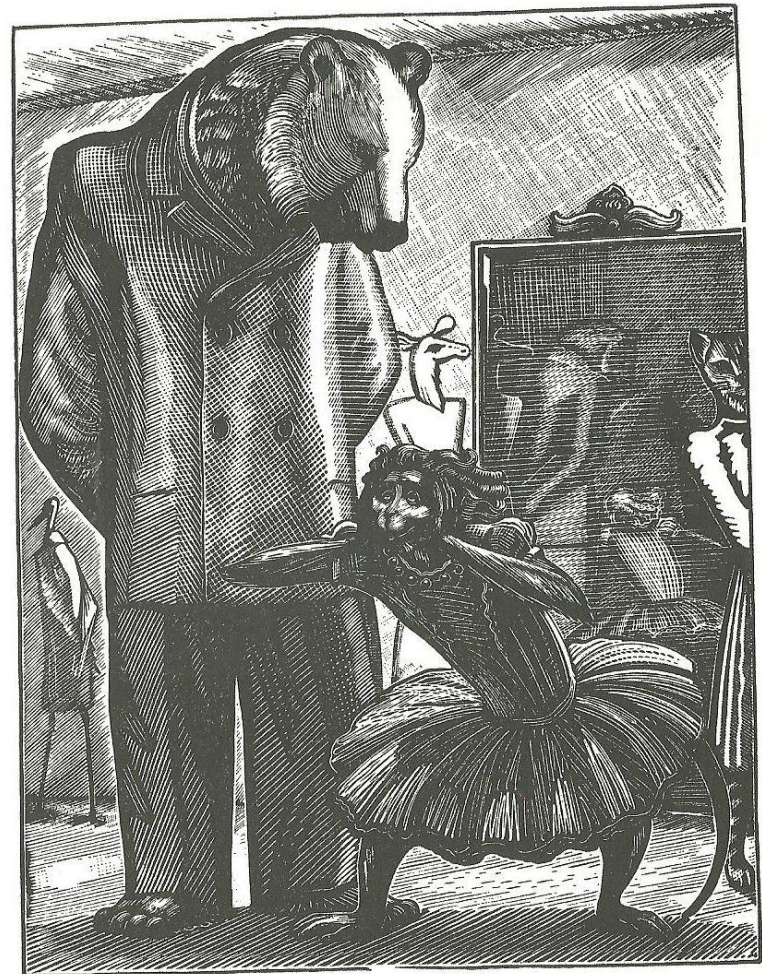
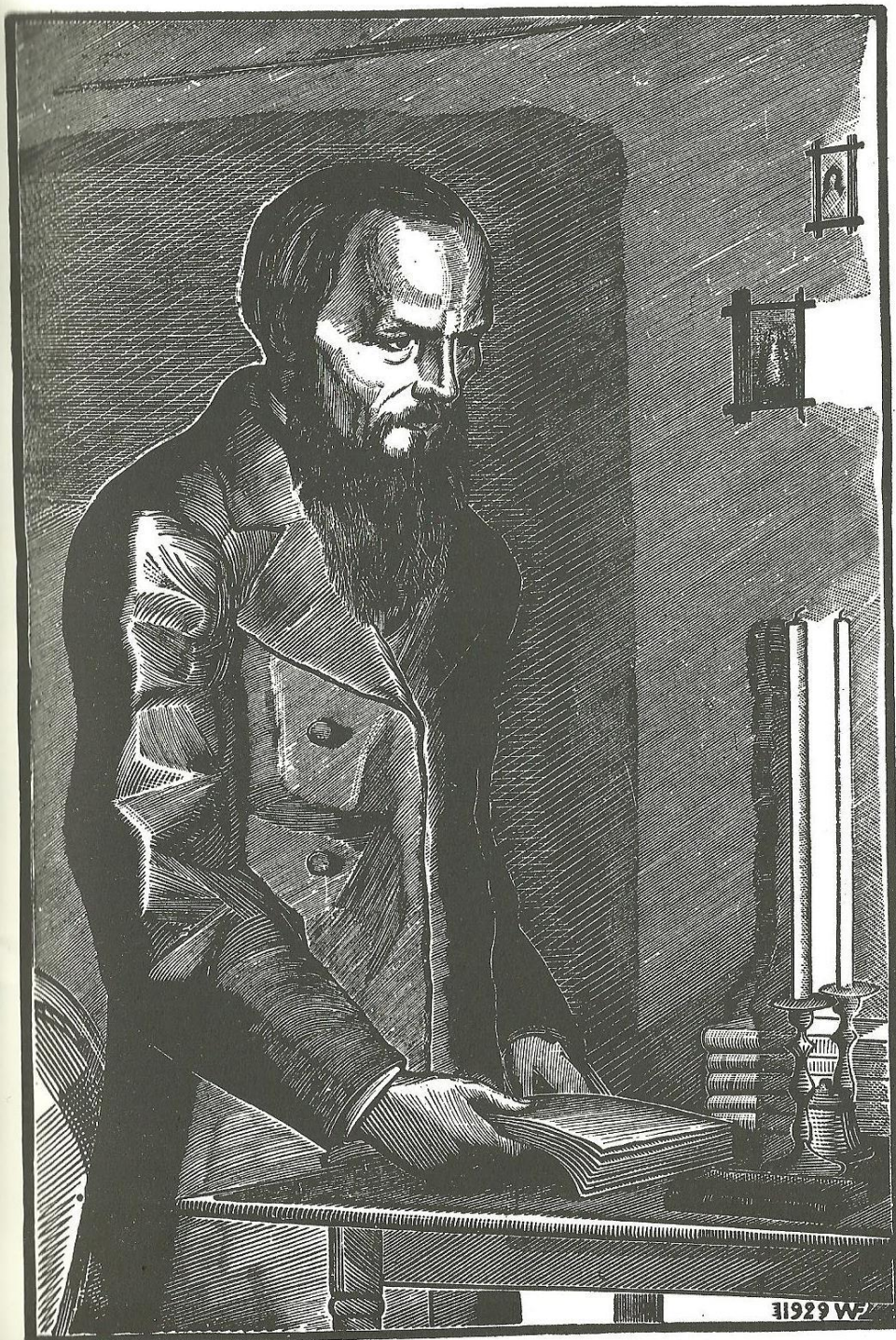


Illustration to Krylov's Fables, 1944

Portrait of Dostoyevsky, 1929

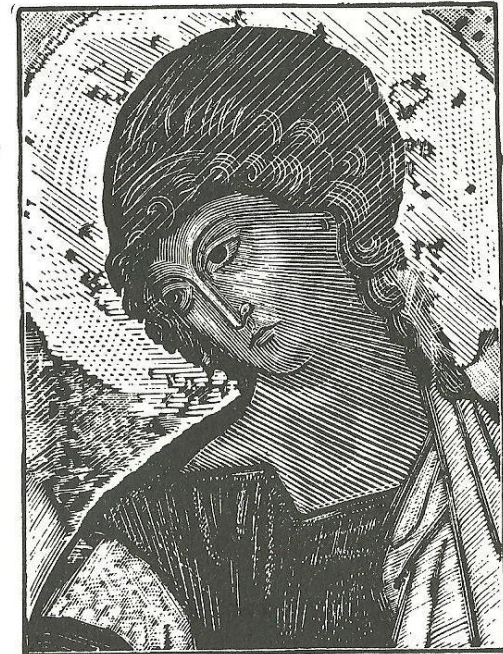


Portrait of Pushkin as a pupil in the Lycee, 1935

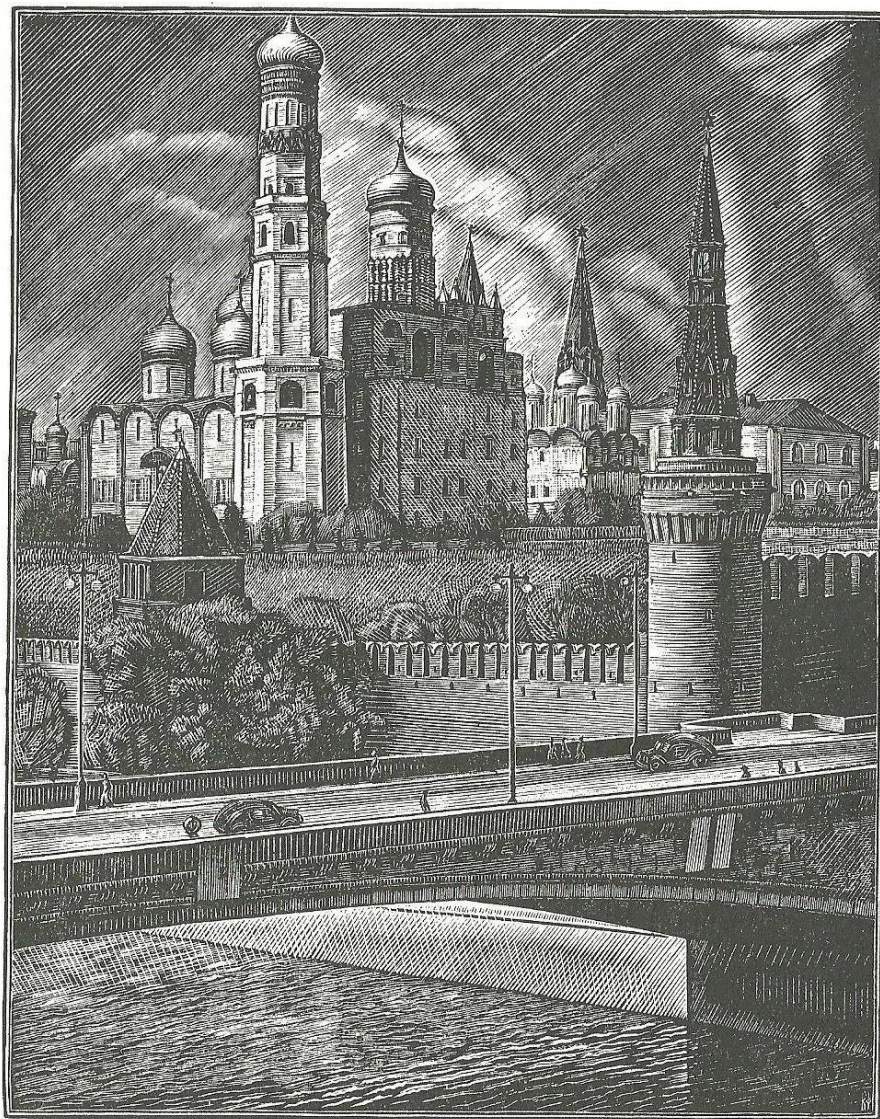




'Slovo O Polku Igoreve' Igor directing the battle, 1950



Madonna in the style of Giotto, 1912



View of Moscow, 1918



Illustration to A. S. Pushkin's 'Malenkie Tragedii', 1948

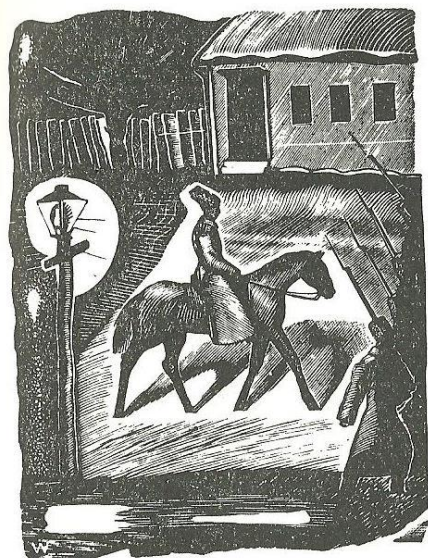


Illustration to Sergio Spasski's novel,
'Novogodnaya Noch'
Red cavalryman, 1932

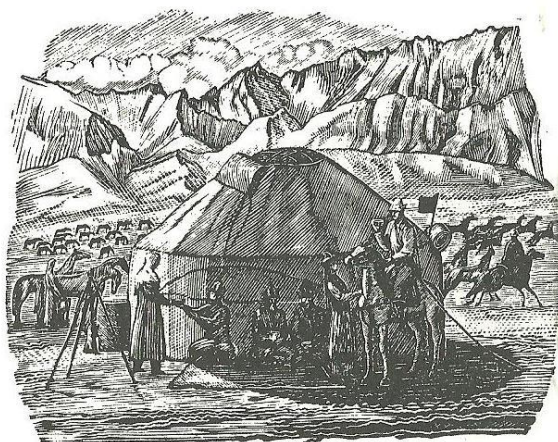
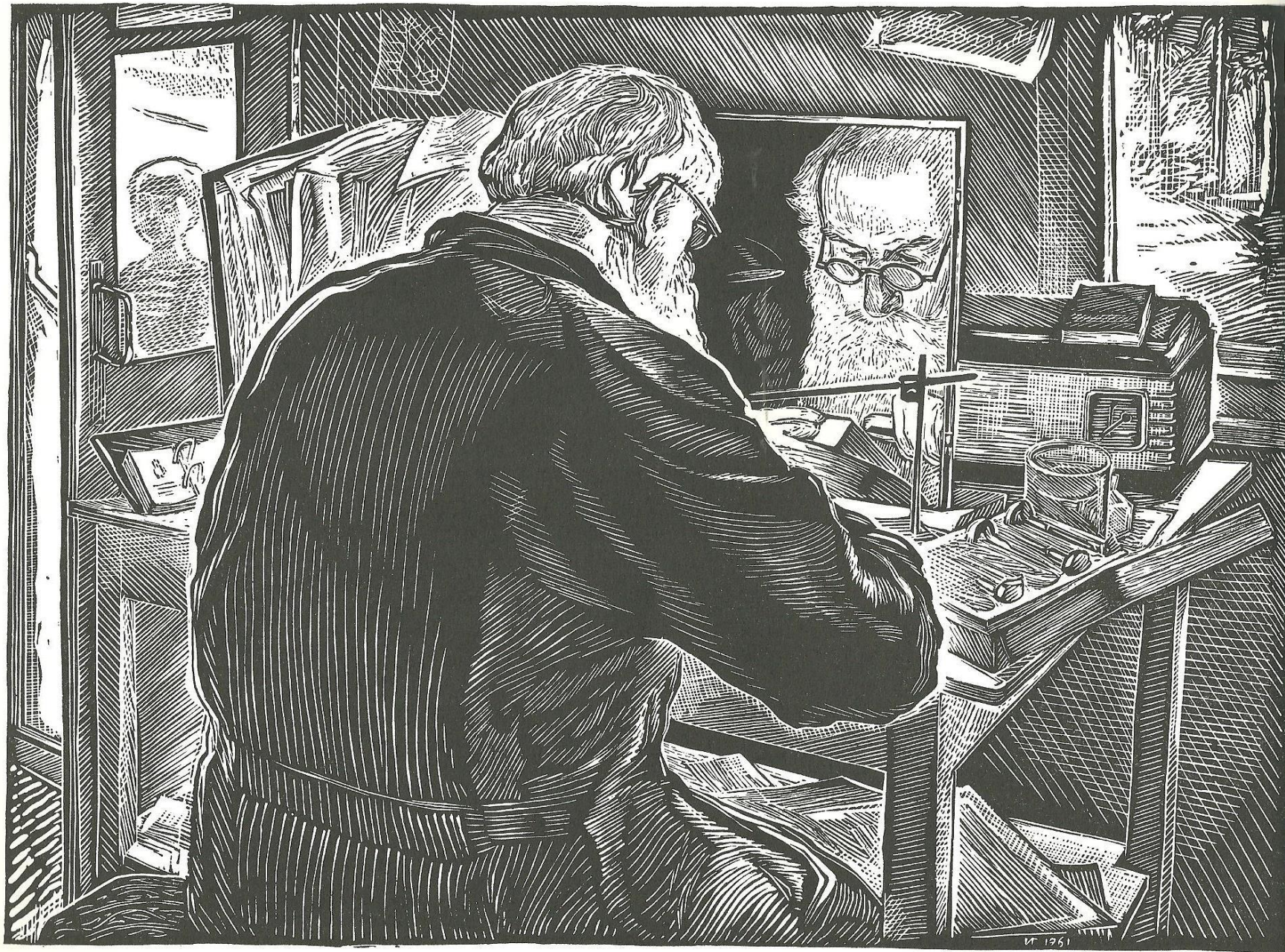


Illustration to the poem of Dzhambul, 1953



Othello killing Desdemona, 1946



ВЛАДИМИР АНДРЕЕВИЧ ФАВОРСКИЙ

Favorsky at work Woodcut by Galitzine, 1961

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ФАВОРСКИЙ