

## *Constructing a Text, Creating an Image: The Case of Johannes Barbarus<sup>1</sup>*

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**Abstract.** The Estonian poet, physician and politician Johannes Vares-Barbarus (1890–1946) is a contradictory figure in Estonian history and culture. He was a well-known and acknowledged doctor named Vares, but also a poet named Barbarus who was notable for his modernistic poems in the 1920s and 1930s. His actions in the 1940s as one of the leading figures in the Sovietization of Estonia have complicated the reception of his poetry. His opposition to the Republic of Estonia and his left-wing views are nearly always under observation when he or his poems are discussed. Predominantly his poetry has been discussed; his other works have received much less attention. This article analyses his travelogue *Matkavisandeid & mõtisklusi* (*Travel Sketches and Contemplations*) based on his trip to the Soviet Union. It was published in the literary magazine *Looming* in 1935 and reprinted in 1950 in his collected works. Travelogues have proven to be valuable materials when discussing the author and his mentality. The article analyses the image of the Soviet Union in his travelogue published in 1935 and discusses notable changes that were made in the reprint some of which have significantly altered the meaning, so that the text fits perfectly into the Soviet canon.

**Keywords:** Johannes Vares-Barbarus; travelogues; Soviet Russia; editing

### Introduction

The position of Johannes Vares-Barbarus (1890–1946) in Estonian history and culture is contradictory. On the one hand, he was a respected doctor named Vares, on the other hand, a poet named Barbarus<sup>2</sup> whose modernistic

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<sup>2</sup> The pseudonym dates back to his school years when one of his teachers called him a barbarian because he did not have enough respect for the subjects, especially Latin. He used this name later with proud defiance, publishing his works under this name (Peep 1959: 11).

poems<sup>3</sup> were not always recognised. The reception of his works has been complicated by his actions in the 1940s when he was one of the leading figures in the Sovietization of Estonia (see also Laak 2002: 97). After the communist *coup d'état* in 1940, Vares became the prime minister of the puppet government.

His left-wing views are nearly always under observation when he or his poems are discussed. While his poetry has been quite widely discussed, his other works have received much less attention. This article analyses his travelogue *Matkavisandeid & mõtisklusi* (*Travel Sketches & Contemplations*) about his trip to the Soviet Union, published in the literary magazine *Looming* in 1935 and reprinted in 1950 in his collected works.<sup>4</sup> Travelogues have proven to be valuable materials when discussing the author, his mentality and (ethical) choices. The article analyses the image of the Soviet Union in his travelogue published in 1935 and discusses notable changes that were made in the reprint in 1950.

## The Specifics of Travelogues

Barbarus's travelogues about Russia have usually been discussed when his worldview is under observation. These travelogues have been used as a proof of his left-wing views (see e.g. Eelmäe 2007: 1532; Valge 2014: 277). It has been noted that

It is in fact not at all uncommon for travel accounts to be read primarily – or exclusively – as autobiographical documents, not necessarily ‘important’ in their own right, but capable of offering us a key to other, usually more prestigious works by the same author, or of clarifying the intricacies of his or her personality. And even when the travel book is the central object of analysis, an autobiographical reading may be used to ‘explain away’ its distinctive features, possibly by invoking an overriding psychological, or psychoanalytical interpretation. (Polezzi 2004: 121–122)

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<sup>3</sup> Barbarus published in the 1920s and 1930s collections of poems that brought expressionistic, futuristic and cubistic ideas into Estonian literature. He was known as a Francophile for whom the ideas of the French literary organisation “Clarté” were close. He tried to reform Estonian poetry setting French literature as an example. He brought technical and scientific achievements and the fast rhythms of the modern city life into poetry. For example, in his collection of poems *Geomeetiline inimene* (*Geometrical Man*, 1924) the graphical experiment and cubistic-constructivist technic is prevailing (Johannes Barbarus). In the 1920s, Paris was one of the most important cities in his poetry, while in the 1940s Leningrad and Moscow have taken the place. About the topic of city in his poetry, see e.g. Mihkelev 2003: 353–357, Mihkelev 2004, Kepp 2003: 361–378.

<sup>4</sup> The travelogue has been briefly discussed in Ponomarjova 2001, Pähkel 2009, Kõvamees 2013 and more thoroughly in Kõvamees 2016.

A travelogue is a hybrid genre which is hard to define. One text may be defined, for example, as a memoir or a travelogue, which is the case of *Esimene välisreis. Pagulasmälestusi Prantsusmaalt ja Itaaliast 1909–1910* (*The First Trip Abroad. Refugee's Memoirs From France and Italy 1909–1910*, 1945) by the Estonian writer Friedebert Tuglas (1886–1971). This text has been defined as a memoir (see e.g. Eelmäe 2000: 616; Puhvel 1987: 147) and as a travelogue (see e.g. Epner 2001: 382; Kõvamees 2008: 43–45). A travelogue “borrows freely from the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and, *most important*, fiction” (Youngs 2013: 1) and “it can include topographical description, history, autobiography, reminiscence about almost anything under the sun that [...] [has] some relevance to [the] journey [---]” (Youngs 2013: 8). This makes it hard to categorize and define. Jan Borm has defined a travelogue as “any narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates (almost always) in the first person a journey or journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming or presupposing that the author, narrator and principal character are but one or identical” (Borm 2004: 17). Therefore, for example the travelogue *Itaalia capriccio* (*Italian Capriccio*, 1958) and the novel *Rooma päevik* (*Roman Diary*, 1976) by the Estonian writer Karl Ristikivi (1912–1977) both belong to travel literature, which is “an overall heading for texts whose main theme is travel” (Borm 2004: 19). However, according to the definition by Borm, only *Itaalia capriccio* can be classified as a travelogue as it is based on the real journey taken by the real person called Karl Ristikivi who is the author of the travelogue, the narrator and the protagonist. While the protagonist and the narrator of *Rooma päevik* is a fictional character Kaspar von Schmerzburg, Ristikivi being the author of the novel.

A travelogue is a construction as “We’re always choosing what we see, what we don’t see, and whom we meet; we’re always inventing our destinations” (Youngs 2013: 10). It is also a mediation as “The scenes and incidents we encounter in a travelogue necessarily come to us in a filtered form, refracted first through the perceiving consciousness of the traveller, and secondarily through the act of writing, the translation of ‘travel experience’ into ‘travel text’” (Thompson 211: 62). Travelogues are set “between subjective inquiry and objective documentation” (Holland, Huggan 2000: 11), while fictional techniques have their role (Youngs 2013: 4). Therefore, travelogues are not just a set of travel experiences as the author makes various esthetical, ethical and ideological choices and applies fictional techniques thus creating an image of a country.

## The Topic of Soviet Russia in Estonia in the 1930s

In Estonia in the 1930s the number of published travelogues increased. Most of the travelogues were published in various journals, as travelogues published in newspapers could be classified as reportages, not as literary travelogues. These foregrounded providing information about a country, fictional techniques and esthetical value remaining in the background (see also Kõvamees 2013: 56–57). Travelogues about Soviet Russia are a good example of this trend. In the 1930s the number of articles about Soviet Russia also increased since 1937 the magazine *Nädal Pildis* (*The Week in Pictures*) regularly published news from the Soviet Union; the magazine *Teater* (*Theatre*) issued a special edition about Soviet Russia in 1939 and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pushkin's death in 1937 was widely celebrated (Karjahärm, Sirk 2001: 377).

Although the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad (also known as VOKS<sup>5</sup>) was founded already in 1925, the Estonian-Soviet Union was founded only in 1940. However, Estonians were invited to Russia before that, for example, writers and society figures Johannes Semper and Nigol Andresen. Mainly Leningrad and Moscow were visited (Karjahärm, Sirk 2001: 377–379).<sup>6</sup> The Soviet Union was a popular travel destination in the 1920s and 1930s when approximately 100,000 foreigners visited the Soviet Union, among them a large number of intellectuals (David-Fox 2012: 1). The period from 1934 to 1936 was “the height of the interwar “pilgrimage” of Western visitors [...]” (David-Fox 2012: 288).<sup>7</sup> Barbarus was one of the writers who visited Russia: he attended Leo Tolstoy's jubilee celebrations in Moscow and Yasnaya Polnaya in 1928 with Semper. While Semper wrote a travelogue about his experiences (see Semper 1928), Barbarus published an article about Soviet literature (see Barbarus 1928). In 1935 Barbarus visited Leningrad and Moscow and published a travelogue *Matkavisandeid & môtisklusi*,<sup>8</sup> which was published in the literary

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<sup>5</sup> VOKS is an acronym for the Russian Всесоюзное общество культурной связи с заграницей.

<sup>6</sup> Estonian historian Jaak Valge has discussed the issue more thoroughly (see Valge 2014, Valge 2013).

<sup>7</sup> About American travelogues about Russia, see e.g. Hudson 2015.

<sup>8</sup> The travelogue has been titled as *Matkavisandeid & môtisklusi*. In Estonian there is a slight difference between the words ‘matk’ (hike, hiking) and ‘reis’ (travel, journey) as the first has a narrower and the second a more general meaning. Although these terms have often been used as synonyms, there is a difference in meaning. ‘Matk’ is a specific way of travelling – hiking in the country with a backpack. Therefore, to be precise, Barbarus did not hike, he travelled, so the title of his travelogue does not correspond to the content.

magazine *Looming*. In the travelogue the emphasis is on culture as Barbarus pays attention above all to architecture and city-planning, theatre and books. Barbarus could be called a cultural traveller as he is mainly interested in various fields associated with culture. Unlike several other authors who wrote about Russia, Barbarus does not concentrate on workers or details of everyday life. His view of Russia could be characterised as sketchy, which is also indicated in the title of the travelogue. He does not analyse deeply, but his ideological aspect is clearly visible.

### The Ideological Viewpoint of Barbarus

Barbarus makes his ideological viewpoint clear already at the beginning of the travelogue by providing an assessment about the situation in Europe in the 1930s. He is very critical of Germany and notes that the situation there has forced him to turn his eyes to the East (Barbarus 1935: 905). This kind of thinking was not uniquely characteristic of Barbarus, as “geopolitical factors and “enemy-of-my-enemy” thinking were hardly unique among the factors pushing many other Europeans toward the Soviet Union” (David-Fox 2012: 63). Barbarus’s sympathy for Soviet Russia is obvious, he views Russia, Estonia’s eastern neighbour, as a powerful force. While the North-South opposition is usually foregrounded in travelogues, here the East-West opposition is present. Barbarus indicates that the great days of the West are over; the future belongs to the East, to Soviet Russia.

According to Barbarus, a reversal has taken place: while once St. Petersburg was a window to Europe, a possibility to look out, now the situation is reversed and there are plenty of reasons for looking in. The author is certain that the experiment carried out by the communists shows the acceptability of proletarian culture (Barbarus 1935: 905). Barbarus underpins his argument by referring to the International Congress for the Defence of Culture, which took place in Paris in 1935. “The most intelligent and most responsible heads of Europe and the whole world, among them several well-known writers, demonstrated their support to the renaissance and cultural achievements of our Eastern neighbour” (Barbarus 1935: 905).<sup>9</sup> The pro-Soviet Russia attitude was a way to emphasize one’s opposition to Nazi Germany. This is a crucial aspect when considering the travelogue by Barbarus.

For those familiar with Barbarus and his works, his sympathy for (Soviet) Russia does not come as a surprise. It is noteworthy that the image of Russia is

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<sup>9</sup> All translations are mine – A. K.

not entirely positive but contains some critical notes that were removed from the 1950 edition of the travelogue. The period from the second half of the 1940s until the beginning of the 1950s is known as the Stalinist era. Then literature was above all seen as an ideological weapon; it had to educate people according to the Soviet ideology.<sup>10</sup> This was also the time of the extremely strict censorship. Considering the fact that for a long time it was possible to read only the 1950 edition, as periodicals published in the Republic of Estonia were banned during the Soviet era, it is important to analyse the changes.

The first omission is to be found already in the first paragraph of the travelogue. The reference to small nations and their unsteady position in the world has been removed. Barbarus compares the situation of a small nation to standing at an open window between two draughts and says that one has to know how to ensure one's independence and culture (Barbarus 1935: 905). The events taking place in the West are seen as dangerous by Barbarus. He is clearly pro-Soviet but still the potential danger threatening small nations has been highlighted. Without that paragraph in the 1950 edition, the image of the Soviet Union is truly positive, it is depicted as the true protector of the peace and the protector of small nations. With the events happening in Germany in the 1930s in mind, the Soviet Union's tolerance of small nations is stressed (Barbarus 1935: 905). "The League of Nations does not have a straightjacket to tame racial rioters" (Barbarus 1935: 906), so the only way is to turn one's eyes towards the East. Thus, both the enemy and the threat (Germany), the help and the support (Russia) have been defined. The author's viewpoint is clear, although not as absolutely positive as in the 1950 edition.

### Leningrad: The City of Metal and Construction

The word repeatedly used in association with Leningrad is steel, even the Neva river is depicted as liquid steel flowing into the Gulf of Finland, and metal rainbows are towering above the river (Barbarus 1935: 906). The technical way of seeing the world and constructivism are evident in the image of the city and in the entire travelogue, Barbarus thus acknowledging the creation of new Russia. The leitmotiv in association with Leningrad is another metal sign – the Bronze Horseman, which begins the train of thought about the great construction. Barbarus refers to Alexey Tolstoy's (1883–1945) *Peter I* (1929–1934) and to the dramatization based on the novel, acknowledging the czar for his *iron* will in creating the city.

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Olesk s.a. Olesk 2011.

The travelogue also gives an idea of how Leningrad looked a few years previously, in 1928 when Barbarus visited the city. The image is contradictory; therefore, the remarks about the city in 1928 have been omitted from the 1950 edition. For example, “talking of cleanliness, much has been done when compared to the earlier time (the year 1928): the streets have been repaired, asphalted *or tarred*, so that picking dandelions for a buttonhole in some avenue seems like a distant dream” (Barbarus 1935: 906, here and afterwards the text in italics marks the cuts in the 1950 edition). Although the statement was meant to be positive and appreciative, it also implies that the city had been in quite a miserable condition. In addition to dandelions growing in the streets, Barbarus also mentions “melancholy queues for bread and milk” (Barbarus 1935: 906), and states that now people seem to be happier than before (Barbarus 1935: 906). In 1950 it was not acceptable to depict Soviet life as miserable in any era.

The depiction of the city in the travelogue has similarities with Barbarus’s city poetry where an important role is played by the technical achievements of the modern era, the telegraph, trams, etc. (see Kepp 2003: 367–371). There is an episode in the travelogue where technical achievements are introduced to the author by a local, with pride shown in the improved machinery in the fields, on the roads and in the sky. Barbarus again compares the situation with his previous visit, emphasising the progress. He remarks how enthusiastic people are about techniques, paying special attention to the flight demonstration. Again, significant omissions have been made in the 1950 edition: the purpose of the flight demonstration is no longer “just for fun”, as Barbarus notes in the 1935 edition of the travelogue (Barbarus 1935: 907). Depicting the leisurely life of the Soviet people did not correspond to the official image of the Soviet working class. The reference to the improved appearance of people is also missing from the reprint, as by emphasising the clothing of people it becomes clear that the situation has been much worse in the past.

Similarly, the reference to the Estonian- and Finnish-looking faces of the residents of Leningrad has been removed.

Some citizens (not refugees) have such a familiar profile of someone from Pärnu<sup>11</sup> that you are surprised not being greeted. Pushkin also emphasizes that breed in the introduction of his *The Bronze Horseman*. [...] Definitely, there are signs of two races blending, but do not think that by saying that I want to support the appetite of the Greater-Finland for all that still has the scent of a tribe from the past. Because of the theatres I would not give Leningrad to anyone else but to the current master, even if it had fifty percent of the Finno-Ugric

<sup>11</sup> A town located in the southwest of Estonia.

haemoglobin in it, as it is both linguistically and mentally a totally Russian city.  
(Barbarus 1935: 906–907)

Barbarus is quite careful in his wording; nevertheless, the paragraph has been removed from the reprint. Even hinting at the situation in the 1930s and the fact that there was a large Ingrian Finns settlement near Leningrad, which was abolished in the 1940s, was too much for the Soviet system.

In the 1950 edition the comment of the Red Army officer about the herd has also been removed, ““There is also addition from your animal farms”, he notes and points to the herd wandering beyond and to a group of pinkish pigs [...]” (Barbarus 1935: 907). In the 1930s context this sentence is nothing special, referring to the normal exchange of goods, but during the Soviet occupation of Estonia when the text was reprinted, this sentence obtains a new meaning. Now it is possible to interpret the sentence as a reference to Estonian agriculture servicing the Soviet Union. There is no room for ambiguity in the 1950s context, so all corners are polished and a potentially problematic sentence has been removed.

### Moscow: Scaffolds and American Exaggerations

The chapter concentrating on Moscow is titled as “The City in Scaffolds”; construction is the main topic encompassing even the theatre. The construction work is depicted in an optimistic and energetic way:

Moscow is constructing enthusiastically. Moscow has to become new – more spacious, happier, more hygienic. The council of the people’s commissar has decided that in July this year. *This is also a demonstration, agitation and propaganda, not only to the inner but also to the outer world because Moscow is “the brain and heart of the revolution”. Moscow has become the centre of tourist interest.* – “Like Paris served once as the hideout and the school for the representatives of the rebellious bourgeoisie, Moscow is now becoming the hideout and the educational institution for the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat,” mentions Stalin in his speech. *The American urge for exaggeration is detectable in all that. So one can see how some lower house has been decorated with a new Monomakh type of hat, which makes it a head taller and adds one or two storeys of rooms. Elsewhere, the additional building is being engrafted onto the house [...]*” (Barbarus 1935: 909).

Despite his positive attitude, Barbarus, however, has noticed the role of propaganda and exaggerations. His remarks did not concur with Soviet ideology,



as in the 1950s the fight against American imperialism was a major topic in Soviet society (see e.g. Olesk 2003: 470–472); therefore, parallels with America were ruled out. Besides, the 1935 version of the travelogue offers the possibility of interpreting the construction work in a less positive way and implies propaganda and exaggerations. The 1950 edition is positive to the core, and there is no room for ambiguity; all potentially problematic aspects have been removed. Sometimes it results in the change of meaning, as is the case with the hat of Monomakh: without the previous text, the sentence obtains the opposite meaning (see above).

A slightly socialist realistic pathos is detectable in the text when extensive construction works are depicted. Besides construction works on the ground, the enthusiastic underground construction is also discussed, as Barbarus writes with great appreciation about the underground in Moscow. It is described as a tremendous achievement, a monument to builders. There is even a special world with the underground poetry and underground writers (Barbarus 1935: 909). However, it is characteristic of Barbarus that the image is not absolutely positive, as he notes American exaggerations concerning the underground that is meant to be the best underground in the world (Barbarus 1935: 909). He states that the underground in Moscow is in every way presentable, spacious, comfortable and bright, which “all speaks of the desire to surprise” (Barbarus 1935: 910), as compared to “all speaks of the will to surpass everything current” (Barbarus 1950: 104–105). While the first version stresses American exaggerations and the intention to amaze, the second version has a different meaning. Since the socialist realistic pathos is detectable, the Soviet construction has to be the best.

The most significant difference between the 1935 and 1950 editions concerning the underground in Moscow is an omitted remark following the praise of the underground:

Maybe they have exaggerated a little with the excessive pursuit of luxury, which is in a great contrast to the barracks-like houses in the workers' quarter. Driven by necessity, these have been somehow cobbled together, in whatever form or with whatever comforts, so that people without lodging would have a place to live. Compared to the finery of the underground, these look like alms-houses. (Barbarus 1935: 910)

The author highlights the significant contrast between the official glossy picture and the real world behind it. Barbarus is not completely blinded by wearing rose-tinted (or red) glasses, which would allow seeing only the positive side of the communist society. He does not address the workers' issue more thoroughly, but with such a remark a significant aspect has been emphasised. As the state

concentrates on greater buildings and public objects, common citizens, who are set in the foreground in the official propaganda, are in real life left in the background and have to make do with poor living conditions. Barbarus notes that there are grand plans to improve the living conditions of common citizens but he doubts whether “the inner domestic culture and hygiene will ever reach the external side” (Barbarus 1935: 910). That sentence has also been removed from the 1950 edition of the travelogue.

Barbarus as a doctor sees the whole city as a living organism, so medical terms are used when great reorganization plans are discussed. He calls the architects surgeons who implement serious changes in the city. It is a significant nuance that in the 1935 edition of the travelogue, the word ‘amputation’ can be found besides reorganization and operation when changes made in the city are discussed. In the 1950 edition only the latter are used probably because ‘amputation’ has a slightly negative connotation (to remove, to separate) that ‘operation’ does not have. This means that all the changes had to look positive, without the slightest negative connotation.

In the end, Moscow is the city where great reconstruction plans and the capital construction are in the foreground, but common citizens are left in the background. They live their lives in rather poor conditions, in the shadow of the Soviet society that is being built.

## Culture: Theatre and Books

Theatre is a major topic discussed in the chapters concentrating on Moscow and Leningrad. Barbarus has attended several performances (drama as well as opera and ballet), and quite long passages are devoted to the analysis. He underlines the temperament and special spark of Russians that can be detected in their art of dance (Barbarus 1935: 908). More thoroughly a performance based on Alexandr Pushkin’s *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray* is discussed. The performance staged in Leningrad State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet has been called “a lesson on choreographic art” (Barbarus 1935: 908). Barbarus is versatile and competent, discussing besides choreography costumes, the work of the artist and actors. He finds it important to stress the collective nature of the ballet of Leningrad (Barbarus 1935: 908).

Based on the operas seen (Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s *Mazepa* and Giacomo Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*), he praises the technical side of the performance, but states that voices were not that good (Barbarus 1935: 908). The high-level dance scenes and costumes are also mentioned, while the clothing of the audience is simple, “so that to look for evening dresses is in vain” (Barbarus 1935: 908).

After seeing the performance, the night-time Leningrad appears to be different and characters created by Pushkin (e.g. the Queen of Spades) seem to appear in the dark (Barbarus 1935: 909). The author has an idea that “Leningrad might as well be Pushkingrad” (Barbarus 1935: 909), a remark that has not been reprinted in the 1950 edition.

As mentioned above, theatre plays an important role in the portrayal of Moscow, which has been described as “the big open-air stage where decorations vary as architects and engineers are being directors, workers and mass scenes being actors. It is not a surprise that these construction problems have found their way to the theatre as well” (Barbarus 1935: 910–911). In Moscow Art Theatre the author has seen Sergo Amaglobeli’s *Good Life*, which is about architects, a topic well connected to the construction theme discussed in association with Moscow. Barbarus introduces the content of the play, analyses the performance of actors and is excited about the rotating stage, a technical achievement that supports the topic of the play.

In Theatre Vakhtangov he has seen Maxim Gorki’s *Yegor Bulychev and Others*, which depicts the collapse of the bourgeoisie world (Barbarus 1935: 911). The play investigates different social circles and contains “the favourite poetry of the upper middle class in all its emptiness and ridiculousness (*à la* pineapples in champagne)” (Barbarus 1935: 911–912). That disdainful remark refers to the poetry of Igor Severyanin.

Barbarus is very appreciative of Russian theatre stating, “It is not at all possible to speak badly about Russian theatre” (Barbarus 1935: 911). However, there are cuts in the 1950 edition of the travelogue. For example, in Tairov Kamerny Theatre Barbarus has seen *Egyptian Nights* based on Shakespeare, Pushkin and Shaw. The sentence mentioning the composer Sergey Prokofiev and the artist Ryndin has been deleted. The reason probably lies in Prokofiev who in 1948 incurred heavy criticism and was accused of formalism, which in the Soviet context was a serious accusation. The fate of the composer is a good example of the carrot and stick method of Stalin’s cultural politics. In the 1950 edition there is also no mention of Mikhail Bulgavov’s *Days of the Turbin’s*, which Stalin had seen at least fifteen times (Ojamaa 2000: 600) and was discussed in the first edition of the travelogue.

Extensive cuts have also been made in the chapter dealing with books and publishing in the Soviet Union. In association with books, there is one of the few parallels with Estonia as Barbarus mentions that while in Estonia books are looking for readers, in the Soviet Union it is vice versa (Barbarus 1935: 912). The author states optimistically that millions of workers can now reach culture, which for a long time had not been available. Culture has been democratized (Barbarus 1935: 912). Here the author also makes a comparison with the past

but contrary to previous examples, this reference has been found to be suitable for the 1950 edition.

However, there are several omissions in the reprint of the travelogue, for example, there is no mention of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* with illustrations by Alexandr Benois. The reason was probably because the artist had left Soviet Union in the 1920s and was living in Paris. There is also no mention of the Russian epic *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, probably because of the price of the book, which Barbarus finds to be too high (Barbarus 1935: 913). There is also the cut, which changes the meaning, "Besides, books are not in comparison expensive *when one does not mention the luxury editions*" (Barbarus 1935: 913).

There are other sayings that have been found inappropriate in the 1950s context. For example, he states that the print run is limited because of technical issues and the shortage of paper. More books should be printed as the demand is high. Barbarus adds that concentrating on outer issues, domestic culture has been left in the background, so that "Books are the only warming items that are possible to obtain" (Barbarus 1935: 913). Observant readers can again notice (as in the case of the underground) a remark referring to the poor living conditions. As the paragraph referred to has been omitted from the 1950 edition, one important topic is missing and the image is much more positive in the reprint than it is in the 1935 edition. Besides Barbarus's comments about high prices and poor living conditions, his comments about the poor quality of the paper and the appearance of books have also been deleted.

## Conclusion: When Positive is not Positive Enough

While after his visit to the Soviet Union in 1928 Barbarus stated that "[...] I do not wish to state: whether there is a paradise or hell" (Barbarus 1928: 761), then in his 1935 travelogue his ideological platform is clearly formulated already in the introduction. Barbarus constructs the image of Soviet Russia from a very clearly stated viewpoint, which has influenced the way he sees and experiences Russia, what he notices and what he does not notice. The Soviet Union is set as an example to the West and a force against Nazi Germany. Barbarus is known for his left-wing views; therefore, his positive depiction of the Soviet Union does not come as a surprise for readers familiar with him and his works. It is noteworthy though that his travelogue printed in 1935 in the literary magazine *Looming* is not as positive as the reprint in 1950. There are significant cuts in the Soviet publication, more critical remarks have been removed (although Barbarus is very cautious in his criticism) and there is no room for ambiguity. On some occasions, the initial meaning changes to the opposite. In the 1950

edition all corners have been smoothed and the text fits perfectly into the Soviet canon. It may be said that the text has been reconstructed, as the image in the 1950 edition is somewhat different from the original. It is an important aspect, as for a long time it was only possible to read the Soviet publication of the travelogue; therefore, the image of (Soviet) Russia created by him reached readers via distortions.

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