

Notes on Translation and Transliteration

Wherever possible, I have cited published English-language translations of the original sources. In these cases, I have specified the English title and translator in the bibliography. If there was no existing translation—which was often the case—we created one. In addition to Jake Schneider, who not only translated my text, but also the German prose of Peter Wawerzinek, Feridun Zaimoğlu, and—with some linguistic assistance—the Czech lyrics of Ivan Jirous, new literary translations of quotations and extracts were also provided by Marián Andričík (for Vladimír Archleb), Donna Stonecipher (for Jacek Podsiadło), and Marek Tomin (for Egon Bondy, Ivan Martin Jirous, Jáchym Topol, and Ivan Wernisch). The translator's names are indicated in each case.

They all have provided artful English renditions of sometimes untranslatable-seeming prose and poetry in order to give a taste of these writers' work even to readers who lack a command of Czech, German, Polish, Russian, Slovak, or Ukrainian. The frequently idiosyncratic spellings and neologisms are faithful to the work of underground authors such as Egon Bondy, Ivan Martin Jirous and Jáchym Topol, as witnessed in their published English translations by Alex Zucker, Marek Tomin, and others.

As for transliteration, I used the Modified Library of Congress System for Russian and Ukrainian, except in the case of common spellings of personal names, e.g. "Dostoevsky." For authors of works referenced in Russian and Ukrainian, I revert to the transliterated spellings, such as "Dostoevskii," or "Iurii," in the bibliography.

“The City”

Ivan Wernisch

There is forest all around, so thick it is impenetrable even to the whistles of trains. Neither the cries of door to door purveyors, and malicious gossip, and mysterious intimations of horrors, nor even daredevils with flame throwers, or prospectors, or health inspectors, can get much deeper than the fringe. And yet: Believe me when I say that I'm not talking about a city in the middle of a forest, but a city that lies above the passageways. That's how they all live here: above passages. They are constantly hearing something new about the strange goings on in the underground, about city cellars, and tunnels of the conspirators. Apparently, there are even small lakes *down there*. As well as dungeons, and sprawling palaces, which may well be inhabited by someone. And also stables and gardens, and harbors. And up above, everyone is waiting for some specific reports. Still, from time to time, some wondrous animal comes running out of the forest, one perhaps even worthy of admiration, and most certainly never before seen by anyone at close range. And the beautiful, horribly bizarre animal struts around the city in front of everyone.

Yes: The forest is strange and probably beautiful and most strangely it constricts the city, which grows smaller day by day, even though there are more and more buildings and people, as well more rumors and mysterious conspiracies. And above all the underground spaces lined with bricks and paved with faintly luminescing stones... Oh my Lord!

(Translated by Marek Tomin)

