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# FIRSTS

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# Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*

## THE FIRST AND EARLY EDITIONS

by Lee Biondi

THE PUBLICATION HISTORY of the most important Russian novel of the Twentieth century is alarmingly complicated. Dealer descriptions (especially those on the Internet), no matter how well-intended, often are filled with errors and incorrect assumptions.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no published descriptive bibliography of this work's first and early editions in Russian, Italian, French and English. The chronology appended below should, therefore, be helpful to dealers and collectors, though it must be considered provisional until further research is published.

The holograph manuscript tree and the Cyrillic typescript tree of *Doctor Zhivago* are so complicated that they may never be sorted out, but in this article we will try to arrange a chronology of the writing of the novel and the first and early editions in Italian (the true first edition), French, Russian and English. I will be as brief as possible, and as accurate as current published information and my experience with the book will allow.

IN THE WINTER OF 1945-1946, Boris Pasternak, long acknowledged and loved as one of Russia's greatest poets, had resumed writing actively on a major prose work that had been chronically delayed by World War Two and by translation assignments he had taken on in order to make a living. But in a very real sense, Boris Pasternak had been working on this masterpiece all his life.

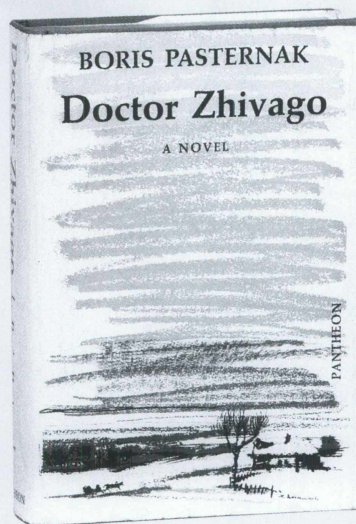
Boris Pasternak was born in Russia in 1890 into a cultured and artistic urban Jewish family. His father, Leonid Pasternak, was a well-known Moscow artist and professor of art, and had been the portraitist of such cultural and literary lions as Rilke, Rachmaninoff and Tolstoy. Boris' mother, Rosa Kaufman Pasternak, was an accomplished pianist. In this encouraging environment, the young Pasternak was exposed to, and absorbed, an immersion course in music, literature, philosophy and art. His early fluency in English and German provided a source of income whenever needed and Pasternak particularly excelled in rendering Goethe, Rilke and Shakespeare into superb Russian versions (although in one of his letters he states it is now time for him to "spoil" *Faust*).

By 1917 he had published his first collection of original poems, and from that point forward—although suffering periods of financial strain—he was never out of the literary and cultural limelight of Soviet Russia. Like all his generation, much of his existence and world view were defined through, or against, the Russian Revolution and its aftermath of Stalinism. The Revolution, and its subsequent growing suppression of artistic and social freedoms, would dominate his literary existence, especially as he moved from poetry to more controversial prose with his masterpiece, *Doctor Zhivago*.

As early as February 1946, Pasternak optimistically told a friend the novel would be ready by that summer, but some translating and critical notes on Shakespeare intervened. Meanwhile, a brief 15-month post-war period of relative liberalism came to an abrupt end in August 1946, when the Party Central Committee passed a resolution "On the magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*" denouncing the publication of material "hostile or alien to the interests of Soviet literature."

Despite his high expectations, by the end of 1946 Pasternak had only a draft of the first two chapters, introducing the key characters of Zhivago and Lara. Even with only this portion in hand, Pasternak had already begun private readings among friends. Pieces of the working drafts of *Zhivago* began circulating in the underground Russian literary community and were being smuggled to

the West through Oxford as early as 1948. (Books covering the subject seem to refer to both typescripts and holograph [handwritten] manuscripts as "manuscripts," so it is not always clear whether a document under discussion in any particular instance is typed or handwritten.) Chapter 3 was debuted at a reading in April 1947. By mid-1948 Pasternak had a full plot and story arc worked out. Several of the poems and portions of prose drafts were in circulation among friends in pencil holograph and typed versions. Pasternak's copyist and typist during the writing of *Zhivago* was Marina Baranovich. By the end of the summer 1948 she had produced a dozen or so typescripts and carbons from Pasternak's continuing revisions. Four complete chapters were smuggled out to friends at Oxford in December 1948. Pasternak encouraged his friends to make and circulate fair copies (handwritten copies intended for personal use



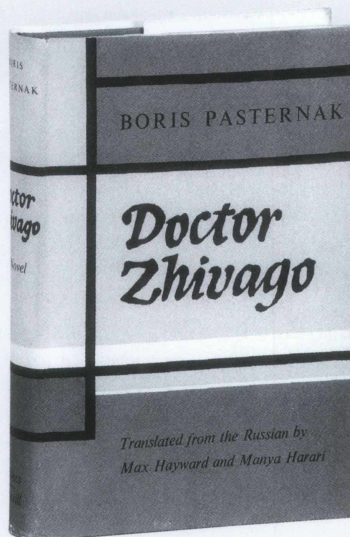
or distribution), but warned against any attempts to print the material, either in Russian or in translation, because such publication “would threaten me with disastrous, not to say fatal, consequences, since the spirit in which it is written and my situation here make its appearance impossible.” (letter of December 12, 1948 to F.K. Pasternak and family). During the late Forties, some of the “Zhivago poems” were integral to the text rather than appended, as in the final form of the book. It is clear from remarks and correspondence that Pasternak was attempting a grand novel in the tradition of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (he even mentions Dickens); he considered the work *important*.

In 1950 and 1951, readings continued among friends and family as subsequent chapters of the novel reached completion. By August 1952, Marina Baranovich had typed a version through Chapter 7 and, by October, Chapter 8. Zinaida Pasternak, Boris’ second wife, was making fair copies for distribution, some of which Boris used for rewrites. By autumn of 1953, the poetic cycle of Chapter 17 was finished in holograph and in December Marina Baranovich typed the last of the poems. The final order was established in Pasternak’s notebooks of 1955. The full text was rewritten extensively through 1954 and 1955. At his residence in the Soviet Writers’ Village of Peredelkino, Pasternak continued to revise and polish the novel until telling Baranovich on August 5, 1955 that the *Zhivago* manuscript in its “second redaction” was ready for her to type it again—from about 600 holograph notebook pages. She had this ready by September and Pasternak did his final holograph revisions on this typescript, from which Baranovich prepared the “final” typescript. Pasternak informed several friends on December 10, 1955 that the novel was finally finished to his satisfaction, though in one letter he confided that he knew that, given the current political climate, the novel was “completely unfit for publishing.”

Going into the new year (1956), Pasternak hired another typist to produce a fresh typescript with multiple carbons. Some of these went to the journals *Znamya* and *Novy mir* and various friends and acquaintances. Pasternak made some changes to some of these in holograph. This profusion of typescripts by two typists—some with different authorial revisions—plus the existence of many partial fair copies led to the confusion of editors of Russian language editions for decades.

Typescripts in Cyrillic and some holograph notes escaped through various routes to other Iron Curtain nations and to the West. The unpublished, and perhaps unpublishable, novel was becoming a *cause célèbre* in Western literary circles. This stir did not escape the attention of the controversial Italian Communist publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli of Milan, who dispatched

a young correspondent Sergio D’Angelo to visit Pasternak in the Soviet Union with the assignment of obtaining a typescript. Much to everyone’s surprise, Pasternak did give young D’Angelo a typescript, but one that he had not proofed. He never expected it to be any more than a sample; certainly he did not expect it to become the translating master for the first edition in Italian. Once Feltrinelli had the typescript in hand he began trying to obtain the rights to publish in Italy, in Italian. Pasternak agreed to such an arrangement. Feltrinelli set the accomplished translator Pietro Zvetemich to work on the novel in Rome. Meanwhile, other typescripts had gone to Czechoslovakia and Poland.



By this time the KGB had issued a communiqué describing *Zhivago* as “a heinous calumny,” thus making its potential publication an affair of the State. At this point, the Soviet journal *Novy mir* officially turned down the novel. The *Novy mir* rejection, backed up by a Central Committee decision, was certainly very bad news, but Goslitizdat (the official State literary publisher) had not yet decided what course it would take, and its decision would be the determining factor within the Soviet Union. Many of Pasternak’s friends and family in Russia and England (notably writer and philosopher Isaiah Berlin, who also had a typescript of the work) tried to persuade Pasternak to postpone or cancel the pending Italian edition. The author’s Oxford circle of friends and

family already had set translators Manya Harari and Max Hayward to work at translating into English the couple of typed versions they had there.

Pasternak had given one of the “best” typescripts to Jacqueline de Proyart, a Radcliffe-Harvard Ph.D. graduate who was attending courses at Moscow University. With it went his authority for her to prepare a French translation for the publishing house Gallimard upon her return to Paris and, most significantly, for her to use it to prepare the first foreign publication of the novel in Russian. She suggested the publishing firm of Mouton in The Hague. Jacqueline de Proyart’s involvement, and the lack of clear definition of her involvement, led to a great deal of confusion and conflict between her and Feltrinelli and put Pasternak awkwardly and uncomfortably in between the two.

Political pressure within the Soviet Union led to Goslitizdat’s cancellation of their publication plans for *Zhivago*. In addition, the State was attempting to recover the typescript in Italy through pro-Soviet channels there, and thus prevent the Feltrinelli edition. Although he was an avowed Communist, Feltrinelli declared he would sooner leave the Party than break his commitment to Pasternak and this great novel. In February 1957, Goslitizdat sent a letter to Feltrinelli asking him to

delay his publication, falsely claiming they were still trying to prepare a Russian edition. Feltrinelli agreed to delay publication until September. But he didn't want to wait any longer than that. He wanted to publish the first edition in order to have international copyright control and he knew that translations were already in the works in English, French, German, Czech and Polish, the publication of any of which would jeopardize his controlling position.

It is difficult to re-create, or even fathom, the intricate, high-level machinations by the Soviets to suppress the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*. But the novel was too powerful to be stopped. In late summer of 1957, much to the consternation of the Soviet powers-that-were, some of the religious poems from *Zhivago* were printed in *Grani*, a Russian-émigré journal based in Germany, and some excerpts from the text of the novel were printed in the Polish journal *Opinie*. Pasternak came under official investigation in regard to how these journals received the texts. Soviet officials, and their not-so-official agents, were doing all they could to squash the pending editions in Italian, French and English, but their efforts along those lines were doomed to failure.

On November 22, 1957, the Italian translation of *Doctor Zhivago* was published by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore of Milan, amidst a huge amount of publicity and controversy. The highly anticipated first printing of 6,000 copies (or 6,300, depending on the source; Feltrinelli reported 12,000 units, but that number is not supported) sold out the first day; many reprints followed immediately. The novel was greeted as a major artistic triumph (almost unanimously, though writer Vladimir Nabokov was a voice of strong dissent). Other translations were rushed into readiness.

Once Feltrinelli had opposed the Soviets and gone forward, the floodgates were open. The book was too strong to be stopped. Soviet pressure on French publisher Gallimard was ineffective, and Soviet pressure on Pasternak to stop Gallimard was also unsuccessful, because Gallimard was legally contracted with Feltrinelli, not Pasternak. The Gallimard edition, in French (with unnamed translators), was released on June 23, 1958. At this point, Feltrinelli was the controlling publisher of the novel and he consolidated and maximized his influence, even writing to Jacqueline de Proyart, Mouton, and the University of Michigan Press to forbid their publishing any Russian-language editions they had in the works. The University of Michigan was planning to publish its edition of *Doctor Zhivago* as part of its projected multi-volume critical edition of the collected works of Pasternak. Other publication schemes were in process because of the above-mentioned proliferation of manuscripts and typescripts throughout Europe and Russia. But Feltrinelli was quite effective, at least in the beginning, in asserting and maintaining his control.

Through a court order in The Hague, Feltrinelli stopped the Mouton publication in Russian. It was well known that Pasternak was under serious consideration for the 1958 Nobel Prize in Literature, and because of complications involving whether or not the novel itself

would be considered part of his Nobel achievement and candidature, publication in the Russian language had to be no later than August 1958. Since Mouton was ahead of him in preparedness for the press, Feltrinelli allowed Mouton to go to press with the Russian-language edition, but *over his imprint*. This edition of a few hundred copies was published on August 24. Some copies of this printing were pirated without the Feltrinelli imprint title-page and were available at the Vatican Pavilion of the Brussels World Fair until October, some say with the connivance of the CIA and perhaps the British Secret Service, MI6—neither group would have been averse to embarrassing the Russians. Within a few months of the Mouton edition over the Feltrinelli imprint, Feltrinelli issued his “real” Russian-language edition in Milan, but with a 1957 date and a slug line securing his copyright through the precedence of his Italian version. Thus, Feltrinelli secured his position as publisher of the Nobel candidate.


What was not yet clear to Mouton and Feltrinelli was that they were not working from the best available Cyrillic typescript. That supposedly was the one in the possession of Jacqueline de Proyart in Paris which was being used for the French translation. It would be years before a reasonably accurate critical edition in Russian would appear.

In late August (although the official publication dates are September) 1958, the acclaimed English-language translation by Manya Harari and Max Hayward appeared in New York via Pantheon and in London via Collins and Harvill.

In December 1958 (with a title-page reading 1959), the University of Michigan Press at Ann Arbor published its first edition in Russian; a revised second edition was out by February 1959. Some argue that the Michigan editions are the first “authorized” editions in Russian, but the case is not crystal clear. There is a decent argument that the Dutch and Italian printings in Russian had at one time or another been, or at least seemed to have been, authorized—or at least condoned—by Pasternak or by Feltrinelli, who believed himself to be Pasternak's authorized representative in the matter.

Numerous translations into many languages around the world followed.

Boris Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1958. Under intense pressure from the Soviet authorities, Pasternak was forced to decline the award. In a letter purportedly written by Pasternak (but actually composed by Pasternak's assistant and long-time mistress Olga Ivinskaya) to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev published in *Pravda* on November 1, 1958, Pasternak publicly rejects the Nobel Prize, but refuses to apologize. It closes, “With my hand on my heart, I can say that I have done something for Soviet literature and I can still be useful to it.”

Boris Leonidovich Pasternak, the towering icon of Russian poetry and prose of the Twentieth century, died in May 1960 at his residence in the Soviet writers' community of Peredelkino. 

# Chronological Bibliography of the First Editions of *Doctor Zhivago*

## True First Edition, in Italian

Feltrinelli's edition, the true first. Translated by Pietro Zvetseremich in Rome. Translation completed June 18, 1957. Published November 1957 over the imprint Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore.

## First Edition in French

The Gallimard edition seen through the press by Jacqueline de Proyart. Anonymous translation.

## First Edition in Russian

[title page in Cyrillic:] Boris Leonidovich Pasternak/  
Doctor/Zhivago/A Novel/  
G Feltrinelli - Milan/1958. [actually:] [The Hague: Mouton,  
1958]

This very limited Dutch pirate (or semi-authorized) edition in Russian precedes the genuine Milan Feltrinelli edition in Russian of later 1958 and the University of Michigan edition in Russian dated 1959, but actually released in December 1958. The Milan printing and the Ann Arbor printing are often misidentified as first printings in Russian, but they are both preceded by this Dutch printing, which is identifiable by its inclusion of the word "novel" on the title-page, a two-page Introduction (dated August 1, 1958), and a text page count of 634 pages. The Russian-language printing by Feltrinelli drops "novel" from the title-page, lacks the two-page Introduction, and runs to only 567 pages.

Original publisher's blue glazed buckram, spine lettered in gilt in Cyrillic, issued without a dust jacket.

This was the principal edition available at the Brussels World's Fair, but another edition, possibly under the aegis of the CIA, was available with no publisher statement on the title-page and no printing on the spine. This edition may have been orchestrated by the CIA with the cooperation of the University of Michigan, as it is reported to be of the same typesetting as the University's edition, which was about to be published (see below). Rumors have circulated of a further CIA piracy in two small volumes; I have no details.

## First Editions in English

Published September 1958 in New York by Pantheon and, simultaneously or just thereafter, in London by Collins & Harvill, both using the well-respected translation of Max Hayward and Manya Harari. Pantheon issued an illustrated edition very quickly on the heels of their first edition.

The copyright page slug of the Pantheon edition reads "FIRST PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 1958," with no other printings listed.

The title page of the Collins edition reads "Collins and Harvill Press | LONDON | 1958."

The copyright page contains no statement of edition, but the copyright information reads:

© Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milano, Italy, 1957 /© in the English Translation / Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London,

1958 / Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. Clark Ltd., Edinburgh / for Collins Clear-Type Press: London and Glasgow.

## Second (or Third) Edition in Russian

This is the "official" Feltrinelli imprint actually printed in Milan, not The Hague, issued in late 1958 or early 1959. The title-page is in Cyrillic but "Feltrinelli" and "Milan" are printed in Latin type (Feltrinelli Editore Milano); no date on title-page. With a copyright-page slug reading: "Prima Edizione Mondiale in Lingua Italiana; Novembre 1957." Issued in dust jacket, except for a limitation of 300 copies within the first edition that were issued in leatherette. The general trade edition was bound in pale green paper with black lettering and encased in a white dust jacket with a pictorial design on the front cover and a black-and-white photograph of Pasternak on the back. 567 pages.

## Third (or Second) Edition in Russian

This is the University of Michigan Press edition, printed in Ann Arbor in December 1958 with a publication date and title-page date of 1959. 566 pages. Orange cloth, issued without a dust jacket. Sometimes catalogued as the first "authorized" edition. This is probably correct, but such a claim may not be able to be substantiated in the general confusion of rights if, in fact, Pasternak had ever "authorized" Feltrinelli to publish in Russian, as Feltrinelli claims. The second printing by Michigan—in February 1959—already incorporated textual changes. (Feltrinelli's 1961 edition [his Third Edition] in Russian was "authorized" and incorporated revisions using the manuscript that had been in the hands of Jacqueline de Proyart.)

## SOURCES

Barnes, Christopher. *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography*. Volume 2, 1928-1960. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. I assume this to be the best available source, although I wish it had a better footnoting and sourcing apparatus, especially, of course, in the matters of manuscripts, typescripts and printings.

Borisov, Vadim and Evgeni Pasternak. "The History of Boris Pasternak's Novel 'Doctor Zhivago'" in *Soviet Literature*, 2 (1989), pp. 137-150. They report, sadly, that Pasternak used preparatory notebooks and holograph draft sketches as fuel for his stove.

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Invinskaya, Olga. *A Captive of Time*. NY: Doubleday, 1978. Unreliable, self-serving.

Proffer, Carl R. *Widows of Russia and Other Writings*. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1987.